

Beauty Alchemy: Inside Influencer-Brand Collaboration

Exploring the Dynamics of Influencer-Brand Collaborations in Kazakhstan's Beauty Industry

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the dynamics of influencer-brand collaborations within Kazakhstan's beauty industry, aiming to understand the benefits, cost structures, and strategic imperatives of these partnerships. Leveraging a qualitative approach, the study involves semi-structured interviews with Kazakhstani beauty influencers and brand representatives, providing in-depth insights into their collaborative experiences. The theoretical framework integrates relationship marketing theory, social exchange theory, the theory of planned behavior, and brand equity theory, highlighting the importance of authenticity, trust, and strategic alignment in successful influencer marketing.

Findings indicate that influencers prioritize alignment with their personal values and audience interests when selecting brands, fostering trust and long-term relationships. Brands, on the other hand, consider factors such as engagement rates, cost-effectiveness, and authenticity to maximize their marketing ROI. The study reveals that successful collaborations are characterized by high-quality, authentic content that resonates with the target audience, enhancing brand visibility and credibility. However, challenges such as misalignment in expectations and inconsistent content quality are prevalent, necessitating clear communication and detailed contracts.

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Keywords

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media influencers represent a diverse group of individuals, ranging from lifestyle gurus and fitness enthusiasts to beauty aficionados and fashion mavens (Alves De Castro et al., 2021). These influencers have power in terms of significant amount of followers across platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, where they share specific content, authentic experiences, and personalized recommendations with their audiences. Through their relatable personas, motivational lifestyles, and compelling narratives, influencers gain genuine connections with their followers (Afsaneh Khodabandeh & Lindh, 2020).

Social influence has great value in the beauty industry. Beauty influencers possess considerable impact over their audiences, offering product recommendations, honest reviews, skincare routines, makeup tutorials and expert tips that resonate deeply within the beauty community (Vo, 2023). Collaborations between beauty brands and influencers have become one of the primary ways of advertisement. Brands leverage influencers' reach and credibility to enhance brand visibility, drive product awareness, and stimulate consumer engagement (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021).

There are a lot of countries with a high level of demand in the beauty industry. Kazakhstan, situated in Central Asia, is a great case of a country with high importance of physical attractiveness. Therefore, it provides a wide range of opportunities and challenges for influencers and brands collaborations (Amantayeva et al., 2024)

The beauty industry in Kazakhstan reflects a mix of cultural influences, consumer preferences, and market dynamics, characterized by a rich influence of trends, modernity, and innovation. As the country embraced digital transformation and social media populization, influencer marketing has gained force in shaping consumer behaviors and brand interactions (Satybaldiyeva et al., 2023). From skincare enthusiasts to makeup mavens, beauty influencers in Kazakhstan have considerable influence over their engaged audiences, offering personalized recommendations, product reviews, and tutorials. Take, for example, Azis (@uzhees), a beauty blogger with 55,000 followers on Instagram and 110,000 on TikTok. Originally from Kyrgyzstan, Azis has gained popularity in Kazakhstan and then became well-known across many Russian-speaking countries. As his focus covers both skincare and makeup, Azis provides his audience with personalized recommendations, insightful product reviews, and engaging tutorials that resonate within the local beauty community. Similarly, Eleonora (@tantum_eleon), with her 29,000 followers on Instagram and 7,000 on TikTok, has become as a notable influencer within the Kazakhstani beauty area. While Eleonora's primary focus lies in video

creation processes, a significant part of her content revolves around beauty-related topics. Through her interesting content and creative approach, Eleonora catches the attention of her audience. She often collaborates with local and global beauty brands on barter or paid conditions. Advertisers cherish the unique perspectives for beauty product recommendations.

However, in the rapidly developing industry of digital marketing in Kazakhstan, a notable gap exists in our understanding of the influencer-brand partnership aspects of the beauty industry (Filipov, 2020). While the benefits of such partnerships are apparent, ranging from enhanced brand visibility to authentic audience engagement, the complexities surrounding cost structures, return on investment (ROI), and long-term sustainability remain underexplored. Moreover, as brands navigate the process of influencer selection, negotiation, and campaign execution, questions regarding transparency, ethics, and regulatory compliance become more and more significant. It requires a nuanced examination of the evolving influencer-brand dynamic in the Kazakhstani beauty ecosystem (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021).

There is a lack of research on the topic of influencer-brand collaborations within the Kazakhstani beauty industry. While studies on influencer marketing abound in global contexts, they predominantly focus on Western markets, overlooking the unique cultural, socio-economic, and technological factors that shape influencer-brand dynamics in Kazakhstan. Consequently, there exists a critical need to bridge this knowledge gap, offering empirical insights and theoretical frameworks tailored to the Kazakhstani beauty landscape.

Against this backdrop, this research aims to examine the multifaceted dynamics of influencer-brand collaborations within the beauty industry of Kazakhstan. By employing a holistic approach encompassing qualitative research methods, literature review, and theoretical analysis, the aim is to provide insights into the benefits, challenges, and strategic imperatives inherent in influencer-brand partnerships. Through a nuanced exploration of the Kazakhstani beauty ecosystem, this study seeks to empower stakeholders (beauty brands, influencers, marketers, and consumers, etc.) with beneficial insights to navigate the evolving landscape of influencer marketing with efficacy and integrity.

Research Question:

The main topic of this research is formulated in the question: *What are the benefits and cost structures regarding the collaboration of social media influencers and brands in the beauty industry of Kazakhstan?* By unpacking this question, we aim to define the complexities of influencer-brand collaborations, shedding light on the underlying mechanisms driving value creation, relationship

dynamics, and market outcomes within the Kazakhstani beauty ecosystem.

This research contributes to the theoretical discourse on influencer marketing, relationship marketing, and consumer behavior within the context of emerging markets. By analyzing the results of empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights, this study enriches our understanding of partnerships between influencers and brands.

This research holds valuable observations for industry stakeholders, offering actionable insights to inform strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and campaign optimization within the Kazakhstani beauty landscape. The findings of this study are whether and how brands seek to establish authentic connections with their target audience or influencers while navigating the complexities of brand partnerships.

2. THEORY

This section discloses the theoretical concepts guiding our research and defines the relationships between key variables shaping influencer-brand partnerships. Through the development of a comprehensive research model, this study aims to find out the interplay between influencers, and brands, based on the Kazakhstani beauty ecosystem.

At the heart of influencer-brand collaborations lies the essence of relationship marketing theory, which states that enduring relationships between brands and consumers are fundamental to sustained business success. Within the context of influencer marketing, this theory underscores the importance of authenticity, trust-based relationships between influencers and their followers, as well as between influencers and partnering brands (Joshi et al., 2023). The main concepts of relationship marketing, such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, and reciprocity, are mirrored in the interactions between influencers, brands, and consumers, shaping the nature and outcomes of collaborative endeavors (Afsaneh Khodabandeh & Lindh, 2020).

Complementing relationship marketing theory is social exchange theory, which elucidates the dynamics of reciprocal interactions and exchanges within social relationships (Ahmad et al., 2023). In the environment of influencer-brand collaborations, social exchange theory offers insights into the implicit contracts and mutual benefits exchanged between influencers and brands. Influencers offer access to their engaged audiences, credibility, and creative content creation prowess, while brands provide financial remuneration, product endorsements, and collaborative opportunities. The balance of give-and-take within these exchanges influences the sustainability and effectiveness of influencer-brand partnerships (Simon et al., 2022).

The theory of planned behavior provides a psychological framework for understanding the determinants of human behavior, particularly in the context of decision-making and intention formation (Desselle, 2019). Within the area of influencer marketing, this theory sheds light on the cognitive processes and motivational factors guiding consumer responses to influencer-generated content and brand endorsements. Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control play pivotal roles in shaping consumer intentions to engage with brands promoted by influencers, thereby influencing the effectiveness of influencer-brand collaborations (Chopra, 2021).

Brand equity theory explores the factors contributing to the perceived value and strength of a brand in the minds of consumers (Reham Shawky Ebrahim, 2019). In the context of influencer-brand collaborations, brand equity encompasses both the intrinsic value of the brand itself and the augmented value derived from associations with influential personalities. Collaborating with reputable influencers can enhance brand visibility, credibility, and desirability, thereby augmenting brand equity and fostering positive consumer perceptions. Conversely, misalignment between brand values and influencer content can damage brand equity and undermine the effectiveness of collaborative efforts.

Drawing upon the theoretical foundations outlined above, the study conducts research on the relationships between key variables shaping influencer-brand collaborations within the Kazakhstani beauty industry. At the core of this model, there is the interaction between influencers (I), brands (B), and consumers (C), mediated by a series of interrelated factors influencing collaborative outcomes.

Key Variables:

Influencer Characteristics (I1): including credibility, expertise, and authenticity.
Brand Attributes (B1): encompassing brand reputation, values, and image.
Consumer Engagement (C1): reflecting consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors towards influencer-generated content.
Collaboration Effectiveness (CE): the perceived impact and success of influencer-brand partnerships in achieving marketing objectives.

Hypothesized Relationships:

- Influencer Characteristics (I1) positively influence Consumer Engagement (C1) with brand-sponsored content.
- Brand Attributes (B1) moderate the relationship between Influencer Characteristics (I1) and Consumer Engagement (C1).

- Collaboration Effectiveness (CE) is positively influenced by both Influencer Characteristics (I1) and Brand Attributes (B1).
- Consumer Engagement (C1) mediates the relationship between Influencer Characteristics (I1) and Collaboration Effectiveness (CE), as well as between Brand Attributes (B1) and Collaboration Effectiveness (CE).

To address the research question, a qualitative research design was chosen, focusing on detailed interviews with key stakeholders to gather in-depth insights. By focusing on these variables and the relationships between them, sets of questions for influencers and brand interviews were made (Appendix 8.1 and 8.2.).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of influencer-brand collaborations based on the Kazakhstani beauty industry. Qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews with Kazakhstani beauty influencers, will be employed to capture rich, contextual insights from key stakeholders. The option of semi-structured questions is chosen because they allow in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights. The interview structure will consist of 5 open-ended questions designed to retrieve relevant responses and encourage participants to reflect on various aspects of influencer-brand collaboration.

The participant selection process will involve identifying and recruiting Kazakhstani beauty influencers who actively engage in collaborations with brands within the beauty industry. Criteria for participant selection will include influencer status, audience reach, content relevance, and diversity of experiences within the Kazakhstani beauty ecosystem. Efforts will be made to ensure a diverse sample, encompassing influencers representing various demographics, content niches, and levels of industry experience. In order to provide as accurate analysis as possible, the participants with different sizes of audiences are chosen: micro (up to 100 000 followers) and macro (more than 100 000 followers) influencers within Kazakhstan. Moreover, this paper studies social media bloggers with different backgrounds: some have specialized in the beauty industry, others create beauty content as an addition to their main blog. For representing different demographics, influencers from different cities, ages and genders were chosen.

A purposive sampling approach will be employed to select participants who meet the specified criteria and possess insights relevant to the research objectives. The sample size will be determined based on data saturation.

The measurement of key variables will be conducted through a combination of qualitative data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions will be designed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward influencer-brand collaborations, as well as their perspectives on benefits, challenges, and best practices within the Kazakhstani beauty industry.

Data collection will be conducted through semi-structured interviews with 5 Kazakhstani beauty influencers, supplemented by analysis of relevant articles, industry reports, and social media content. Interviews will be conducted remotely. Each interview is expected to last approximately 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Data analysis will involve a careful process of thematic analysis, wherein interview transcripts and document extracts will be systematically coded and analyzed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights. The process will encompass several iterative stages, including familiarization with the data, coding of themes and sub-themes, and interpretation of findings within the context of the research objectives. Constant comparison techniques will be employed to ensure consistency and reliability in data interpretation.

4. RESULTS

The qualitative research was conducted on social media influencers and brands within the Kazakhstani beauty industry to gain deep insights into their collaborations.

The analysis is structured around key themes identified during the coding process: Collaboration Preparation, Partnership Goals, Performance and Benefits, Implementation and Strategy, and Future Trends and Advice - for brands and Collaboration Experience, Selection Criteria, Benefits and Outcomes, Authenticity and Alignment, Future Trends and Advices - for influencers. The data is drawn from semi-structured interviews with both beauty influencers and company representatives, providing insights into the dynamics of these partnerships. The findings are supported by quotes, tables, and figures to illustrate the themes and answer the research question: What are the benefits and cost structures regarding collaboration of social media influencers and brands in the beauty industry of Kazakhstan?

4.1. Collaboration Preparation and Experience

Influencers mentioned specific criteria for selecting brands to collaborate with, highlighting alignment with their personal values and audience interests. Influencer #1 mentioned, "I have several criteria: if their brand is

interesting to me and I would like to get to know each other better, and if their positioning and views coincide with mine." This statement was supported by Influencer #2, who stated, "I pick brands that match my style and values. I look at the brand's reputation, the quality of their products, and if their target audience is a good fit with mine."

Companies also have clear criteria when choosing influencers. Company #1 considers "the influencer's reach, engagement rates, previous collaborations, cost-effectiveness, and reputation in the industry." Similarly, Company #2 focuses on "demographic influence, engagement level, authenticity, and creativity in content."

4.2. Partnership Goals

The main goals for both influencers and companies in these collaborations are increasing brand awareness, driving sales, and enhancing brand perception. Company #1 stated that the goal is "to increase brand awareness, drive sales, and enhance brand perception in the Kazakhstani market." Influencer #2 highlighted their goal "to share good quality beauty products with my followers and grow my brand."

There are differences in the process of initiating and negotiating partnerships. Company #1 approaches influencers "directly or through their management, focusing on deliverables, timelines, compensation, and performance metrics." Meanwhile, company #2 often receives offers from influencers and selects candidates accordingly, then negotiates terms with them.

4.3. Performance and Benefits

Both influencers and companies use various metrics to assess the success of collaborations. For instance, Influencer #2 uses "engagement metrics like likes, comments, shares, and follower growth." Company #1 tracks "engagement rates, website traffic, sales conversions, and social media mentions," using tools like Google Analytics.

Collaborations provide multiple benefits. For influencers, these include increased visibility and access to products. Influencer #1 answered "Case, recognition, friendship, and loyalty to the brand." For companies, the advantages include enhanced brand awareness and the ability to convert influencer audiences into customers. Company #2 stated, "Partnering with influencers allows us to convert their audiences into our clients."

4.4. Implementation and Strategy

The most successful collaboration for Company #1 involved a well-known blogger in Kazakhstan, Madlen, who created a series of storytelling using their skincare products. The success was caused by "her genuine

enthusiasm for our products, high-quality content, sincere storytelling, and her strong connection with her audience." Influencer #2 shared a similar experience with a skincare brand, Nature Republic, which resulted in a significant follower increase.

Both influencers and companies face challenges in collaborations. Company #1 identified "misalignment in expectations, inconsistent content quality, and influencer controversies" as major issues, which they address through "clear communication, detailed contracts, and contingency plans." Influencer #2 emphasized the difficulty of balancing brand expectations with authentic content, handled by "having clear talks with the brand about our expectations and sharing honest feedback."

4.5. Authenticity and Alignment

It is important to ensure that influencers' values align with brand values. Company #2 pays "a lot of attention to her/his target audience and moral fundamentals, so it would be as close to ours as possible." Influencer #1 achieves alignment "during the process of negotiations when the blogger agrees or refuses to work with the brand."

Maintaining authenticity while meeting brand expectations is a balancing act. Influencer #1 adopts "a creative approach to content management," ensuring no conflicts with brand demands. Influencer #2 creates content that shows "how I actually use the products in my daily life, instead of just promotional posts."

4.6. Future Trends and Advice

Both influencers and companies expect significant trends in the future of influencer marketing. Company #1 anticipates a "trend towards micro-influencers who have smaller but highly engaged audiences," with a focus on "authenticity and transparency." Influencer #2 also foresees "a bigger focus on sustainable and ethical brands as consumers demand more transparency."

Advice for future collaborations emphasizes the importance of alignment, communication, and creativity. Company #1 suggests, "Carefully select genuine influencers, clear communication, detailed contracts, open to creative input." Influencer #2 advises, "Stay true, partner with brands you believe in, clear communication."

The findings reveal that influencer-brand collaborations in Kazakhstan's beauty industry are driven by alignment of values, authenticity, and strategic planning, with both influencers and brands benefiting significantly from these partnerships. However, challenges such as misalignment and content quality issues occur, necessitating clear communication and detailed contracts. These insights set the stage for a deeper exploration of the implications and theoretical relevance of these results.

5. DISCUSSION

This analysis explores the main patterns, similarities, and differences that emerged from the research, providing explanations for these observations. Moreover, this study discusses the implications of these findings for stakeholders within the Kazakhstani beauty industry and offers insights into how these results advance the current state of theory in influencer marketing.

The results showed that influencers prioritize alignment with their personal values and audience interests when selecting brands to collaborate with. This finding is consistent with relationship marketing theory, which emphasizes the importance of trust and alignment in successful collaborations (Lipovetsky, 2023). Influencers select brands based on mutual interests and values, ensuring that their endorsements remain authentic and resonate with their audience. This approach fosters trust and long-term relationships, which are crucial for the effectiveness of influencer collaborations (Khodabandeh & Lindh, 2020).

The alignment between influencer values and brand values ensures that the marketing message remains consistent and credible. This consistency is vital for maintaining the trust of the audience, which is a core aspect of relationship marketing theory. By selecting brands that resonate with their own values, influencers can create content that feels genuine and authentic, which is more likely to be effective in influencing consumer behavior (Chopra, 2021).

Beauty brands consider factors such as engagement rates, previous collaborations, cost-effectiveness, and reputation. De Veirman et al (2017) highlighted the importance of these criteria in maximizing the ROI of influencer marketing campaigns. Moreover, brands focus on demographic influence, engagement level, authenticity, and creativity in content, which are critical for ensuring that the influencer's audience aligns with the brand's target market. By focusing on these criteria, companies can ensure that they are partnering with influencers who have the ability to effectively reach and engage their target audience. This strategic selection process helps maximize the impact of marketing campaigns and ensures a positive ROI (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). The emphasis on authenticity and creativity also aligns with the overall trends in influencer marketing, where audiences increasingly value genuine and creative content (Sánchez-García & Currás-Pérez, 2018).

The alignment between influencer and brand values and the focus on audience fit is consistent with the principles of relationship marketing and social exchange theory. These theories emphasize the importance of mutual benefits and clear expectations in fostering successful partnerships (Homans, 1958). The focus on engagement rates, previous collaborations, and reputation highlights the

importance of credibility and track record in influencer marketing, reinforcing the findings of De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017).

Social media influencers and companies aim to increase brand awareness, drive sales, and enhance brand perception. The use of direct communication or management for initiating and negotiating partnerships ensures clarity and mutual understanding, which is crucial for achieving these goals. According to Homans (1958), the social exchange theory explains how mutual benefits and clear expectations lead to successful partnerships. By providing influencers with financial remuneration and product endorsements, brands can leverage the influencers' credibility and audience reach to enhance their own brand image and sales. The alignment of objectives between influencers and companies demonstrates the mutual benefits emphasized by social exchange theory (Homans, 1958). Both parties seek to enhance their visibility and credibility, which are key drivers of successful influencer marketing campaigns. The process of initiating and negotiating partnerships involves clear communication and setting mutual expectations, which are crucial for ensuring successful collaborations (Chopra, 2021).

The use of various metrics to assess the success of collaborations, such as engagement rates, website traffic, sales conversions, and social media mentions provide tangible evidence of the effectiveness of influencer collaborations and help measure ROI. The theory of planned behavior explains that consumer engagement and behavioral responses to influencer-generated content are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Emerald Insight, 2021).

When social media influencers receive and review products, it reinforces their image as trusted and knowledgeable figures in their niche, thereby attracting more followers and engagement. This phenomenon aligns with the principles of social exchange theory, which emphasizes the mutual meaning of relationships. By providing valuable content to their audience, influencers receive social capital in the form of trust and loyalty. For companies, these collaborations are equally advantageous. One of the primary benefits is the ability to convert the influencer's audience into customers. Influencers act as intermediaries who fill the gap between the brand and potential consumers by creating authentic advertisements. This authentic promotion often results in higher conversion rates compared to traditional advertising methods. Additionally, collaborations with influencers significantly enhance brand awareness. When influencers with large and engaged followings work with a brand, it increases the brand's visibility across social media platforms, reaching demographics that might otherwise be inaccessible through conventional marketing channels (Chávez et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with brand equity theory,

which posits that a brand's value is significantly enhanced through associations with respected and influential personalities (Aaker, 1996). According to Aaker, brand equity is built on several key dimensions, including brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations. By associating with influencers who are perceived as experts in their field, brands can improve their perceived quality and create strong, positive associations in the minds of consumers. This strategic alignment not only boosts immediate sales but also contributes to long-term brand loyalty and equity.

Successful collaborations happen as the result of authenticity and quality in influencer marketing. High-quality content that genuinely reflects the influencer's voice and style can significantly enhance the credibility and appeal of the promoted products. This finding is in line with social exchange theory, which posits that successful relationships are built on mutual benefits and trust (Homans, 1958).

The most common challenges in social media-brand collaborations in the beauty industry in Kazakhstan are misalignment in expectations, inconsistent content quality, and influencer controversies. These challenges are addressed through strategies like clear communication, detailed contracts, and contingency plans. Clear communication is crucial for setting expectations and ensuring that both parties understand their roles and responsibilities. Detailed contracts help formalize these expectations and provide a framework for managing the collaboration. Inconsistent content quality and influencer controversies can be particularly challenging. To mitigate these issues, companies often include clauses in their contracts that outline quality standards and expected conduct. Contingency plans are also put in place to manage potential risks, such as negative publicity or changes in influencer behavior. By addressing these challenges proactively, companies can enhance the stability and effectiveness of their influencer collaborations. This approach not only safeguards the brand's reputation but also ensures that the collaboration delivers the desired outcomes.

One of the trends is the shift towards micro-influencers, who have smaller but highly engaged audiences. This trend reflects a broader industry shift towards more targeted and authentic marketing strategies (Sánchez-García & Currás-Pérez, 2018). Micro-influencers are often perceived as more relatable and trustworthy compared to macro-influencers with larger followings (Madina et al., 2022). Their smaller audience size allows for more personalized interactions and higher engagement rates. This can be explained by the theory of planned behavior, which suggests that consumers are more likely to engage with content that they perceive as authentic and relevant.

Another anticipated trend is the growing emphasis on sustainability and ethical practices. As consumers become more environmentally conscious, they expect brands to align with their values. This shift is likely to drive more collaborations with influencers who advocate for sustainable and ethical products.

One key recommendation identified by this research is the importance of careful selection of influencers who genuinely align with the brand's values and target audience. This alignment ensures that the marketing message is consistent and credible, enhancing the effectiveness of the collaboration. Clear communication and detailed contracts are also crucial. These tools help set expectations, formalize agreements, and provide a framework for managing the collaboration. By outlining roles, responsibilities, and quality standards, companies can ensure that both parties are on the same page and committed to the partnership's success. Another important piece of advice is to allow influencers creative freedom. Influencers know their audience best and can create content that resonates more deeply with them. Allowing creative freedom not only enhances the authenticity of the content but also ensures that it aligns with the influencer's style and voice.

5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research contributes to the theoretical discourse on influencer marketing, relationship marketing, and consumer behavior within the context of emerging markets. By analyzing the results of empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights, this study enriches our understanding of the partnership between influencers and brands. The alignment of influencer and brand values, as well as the strategic selection of influencers, underscores the applicability of relationship marketing and social exchange theories in the context of influencer marketing. Additionally, the study validates the theory of planned behavior in understanding consumer engagement with influencer-generated content.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The qualitative approach, while providing in-depth insights, limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample size, consisting of a limited number of influencers and brands within Kazakhstan, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives in the broader influencer marketing landscape. Furthermore, the rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms and influencer marketing trends may impact the relevance of the findings over time.

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should consider a larger and more diverse sample, including influencers and brands from different regions and industries. A mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, could provide

a more comprehensive understanding of influencer-brand collaborations. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impact of these collaborations on brand equity and consumer behavior.

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7. APPENDICIES

7.1 Interview questions for companies

Collaboration preparing

1. What elements do you consider when deciding to partner with influencers for your marketing efforts? How do you determine which influencers are a good fit for your brand?

Partnership goals

2. What specific objectives do you aim to achieve through collaborations with influencers in the Kazakhstani beauty market?
3. How do you initiate and negotiate influencer partnerships?

Performance and benefits

4. How do you assess the effectiveness or ROI of your influencer collaborations?
5. What advantages do companies gain from working with influencers in the Kazakhstani beauty sector?

Implementation and strategy

6. Can you describe a particularly successful influencer partnership and the key factors behind its success?
7. What challenges have you faced in influencer collaborations, and how have you overcome them?
8. How do you ensure that influencer-brand collaborations align with your brand values?
9. How do you ensure that influencer-brand collaborations resonate with your target audience?

Future trends and advice

10. What future trends or developments do you anticipate in influencer marketing within the Kazakhstani beauty industry?
11. What advice would you give to other beauty companies considering influencer partnerships in the Kazakhstani market?

8.2. Interview questions for social media influencers

Collaboration experience

1. Please describe your experience collaborating with beauty brands within the Kazakhstani market. Why did you pursue these collaborations and what were the results?
2. Please tell me about a collaboration with a beauty brand that elevated your status as an influencer. What made it special?
3. What challenges have you encountered when working with beauty brands, and how have you addressed or overcome them?

Selection criterias

4. How do you approach selecting brands to collaborate with? What criteria do you consider when evaluating potential partnerships?

5. What strategies do you employ to ensure that collaborations with beauty brands align with your personal brand values and resonate with your audience?

Benefits and outcomes

6. Please name the key benefits of influencer-brand collaborations within the Kazakhstani beauty industry for both influencers and companies.

7. What metrics or indicators do you use to measure the success or effectiveness of influencer-brand collaborations?

Authenticity and alignment

8. How do you navigate the balance between maintaining authenticity in your content and meeting brand expectations during collaborations?

9. What strategies do you employ to ensure that collaborations with beauty brands resonate with your audience?

Future trends and advice

10. How do you see influencer-brand collaborations evolving in the future within the Kazakhstani beauty market? Are there any emerging trends or changes you anticipate?

11. Can you provide any recommendations or advice for influencers looking to collaborate with beauty brands in the Kazakhstani market, based on your experience

8.3. Key words evaluated from the interviews with social media influencers

Category	Influencer #1	Influencer #2
Collaboration experience	Brands now value local influencers; realized likes/subscribers less important; negotiations handled by Insdrr agency	Sharing quality products; growing brand; test products before ads; a full campaign with a skincare brand gained 100 000 followers; Balancing brand wants and genuine content; clear talks with the brand about our expectations
Selection criteria	Interesting brand; align with my views; align values during negotiations	Match style/values; brand reputation; product quality; research brand values
Benefits and outcomes	Benefits: case recognition, friendship, loyalty Success measure: Brand satisfaction, professionalism, creativity	Benefits: visibility, quality products, brand awareness, sales Engagement metrics: likes, comments, shares, growth
Authenticity and alignment	No issues with brands because of using creative approach; Product interest, more refusals than acceptances	Genuine use, daily life content, open experiences; Personal stories, real-life uses, audience interaction
Future trends and advice	Market growth, more benefits for influencers; Know your positioning, be	Focus on sustainable, ethical brands; Stay true, partner with believed-in

8.4. Key words evaluated from the interviews with beauty brands

Category	Company #1	Company #2
Collaboration preparing	Engagement rates, previous collaborations, cost-effectiveness, reputation	Demographic influence, engagement level, authenticity, creativity
Partnership goals	Increase brand awareness, drive sales, enhance brand perception Communication is direct or through management, focus on deliverables, timelines, compensation, performance metrics	Drive product sales, build customer base, enhance brand image Receive offers from influencers, select from applications, negotiate with relevant candidates
Performance and benefits	Engagement rates, website traffic, sales conversions, social media mentions, Google Analytics, insights Convert audiences into clients, stay relevant, competitive	Specialists analyze social media metrics, coordinate with financial department Relatable content, significant fee difference comparing to celebrities
Implementation and strategy	Storytelling, enthusiasm, high-quality content, sincere connection with audience Challenges: misalignment, inconsistent quality, controversies Solution: clear communication, detailed contracts, contingency plans Select influencers matching personal values and content style, monitor audience feedback, adjust strategies	Genuine use, daily life content, open experiences; Personal stories, real-life uses, audience interaction Challenge: measuring impact Solution: use trackable links, promo codes, analytics Pay attention to reputation, analyze activity, ensure target audience and moral alignment
Future trends and advice	Trend towards micro-influencers, focus on authenticity, transparency Carefully select genuine influencers, clear communication, detailed contracts, open to creative input	Expect more creative content, ways to engage audience Allow creative freedom, natural product presentation

8.5. Transcript of answers

Influencers

Influencer #1

1. I started my blog back in 2017 and the times then and now are very different. Now brands are more aware of the importance of collaborating with local influencers, which is very encouraging.
2. I have several criteria: if their brand is interesting to me and I would like to get to know each other better, and if their positioning and views coincide with mine.
3. It was a great achievement for me to win a year's supply of Maybelline cosmetics for the most creative makeup. And then I realized that the number of likes and subscribers does not play a huge role.

4. Only with negotiations. Fortunately, now I am a member of the Insdr agency and therefore they themselves carry out this part of the work.
5. I go for a creative approach to content management, so such questions have never arisen from the brands.
6. Case, recognition, friendship and loyalty to the brand.
7. If the brand is pleased with our work, my professionalism and creativity in my approach.
8. I try to achieve it in the beginning, during the process of negotiations, when the blogger agrees or refuses to work with the brand.
9. I clearly know whether this product will be of interest to my audience, so I more often refuse than accept advertising for work.
10. Yes, sure. The market is growing and developing by leaps and bounds, now there are more benefits for influencers, but before they worked just for products from the brand
11. Be clearly aware of your positioning and your preferences, do not accept everything on advertising, be selective and careful in order to take care of your reputation.

Influencer #2

1. Working with beauty brands has been great. My main goal of collaborations is to share good quality beauty products with my followers and grow my brand. Before advertising something on my page, I test the product for a few weeks before posting an ad, and I don't take any products that I don't like for advertising.
2. I pick brands that match my style and values. I look at the brand's reputation, the quality of their products, and if their target audience is a good fit with mine. It's important that I genuinely like and use their products so my followers know I'm being honest.
3. One special collaboration was with a skincare brand Nature Republic. It was unique because we did a full campaign with exclusive product launches, live tutorials, and other events. In result, this collaboration gained me around 100 000 followers in few weeks.
4. A big challenge is balancing what the brand wants with keeping my content genuine. I tackle this by having clear talks with the brand about our expectations and sharing honest feedback.
5. I make sure to only work with brands I truly use and like. I create content that shows how I actually use the products in my daily life, instead of just promotional posts. By being open about my experiences, I meet brand expectations while keeping my content real.
6. For influencers, benefits include more visibility, access to great products, and opportunity for content creation. For companies, working with influencers boosts brand awareness, reaching the right audience, and product endorsements that can increase sales and loyalty.
7. I look at engagement metrics like likes, comments, shares, and follower growth.
8. I do my research on the brands to make sure their values match mine.
9. Storytelling and real-life uses of the product makes the content more engaging. I also encourage my followers to interact and give feedback, making them feel part of the process.
10. I expect a bigger focus on sustainable and ethical brands as consumers demand more transparency.
11. My advice is to stay true to yourself and only partner with brands you believe in. Clear communication is key to setting the right expectations.

Companies

Company #1

1. We consider the influencer's reach, engagement rates. We also assess their previous collaborations. Cost-effectiveness and the influencer's reputation in the industry are also critical considerations.
2. Our main objectives in influencer collaborations are to increase brand awareness, drive sales, and enhance brand perception in the Kazakhstani market.
3. We reach out for influencers that suit our requirements directly or through their management. During negotiations, we focus on deliverables, timelines, compensation, and performance metrics to ensure mutual understanding and satisfaction.
4. One of our most successful collaborations was with a well-known blogger Madlen who created a series of storytelling using our skincare products. The success was attributed to her genuine enthusiasm for our products, high-quality

content, sincere storytelling and her strong connection with her audience. The campaign significantly boosted our brand visibility and sales.

5. Sometimes there is misalignment in expectations, inconsistent content quality, or sometimes there is influencer controversies. To address these issues, we ensure clear communication and set detailed contracts outlining all aspects of the collaboration. We also have contingency plans in place to manage potential risks.
6. Through various metrics such as engagement rates, website traffic, sales conversions, and social media mentions. Also, tools like Google Analytics and social media insights help us track these metrics and check the effectiveness.
7. Partnering with influencers allows us to rconvert their audiences into our clients. Also, these collaborations enable us to stay relevant and competitive in the market.
8. Our team carefully selects influencers whose personal values and content style match ours.
9. We monitor audience feedback and adjust our strategies accordingly.
10. We think about the trend towards micro-influencers who have smaller but highly engaged audiences. Also, authenticity and transparency will continue to be key.
11. It is important to carefully select influencers who genuinely align with your brand. Also, clear communication and detailed contracts are vital to avoid misunderstandings. Also, its goof to be open to creative input from influencers to create compelling and authentic content.

Company #2

1. To choose if we want to work with a particular influencer, we study the demographic influence of their audience, the level of engagement, and their authenticity and creativity in content.
2. To drive product sales, and build a loyal customer base. Due to influencers' credibility we can enhance our brand's image and reach a wider audience.
3. We receive many offer from influencer themselves and most of the times we choose amongst them, theother times our team looks for relevant candidates in tiktok or instagram and then we negotiate with these bloggers.
4. One of the most successful collaborations was with Karina. It was during our first year since opening and itwas our first collaboration with a big influencer. However, now we prefer consistently collaborate with smaller bloggers.
5. Measuring the direct impact of collaborations is a big challenge we discussed recently. We mitigate it by using trackable links, promo codes, and analytics to assess performance accurately.
6. We have specialists who analyze the social media metrics once in a period and coordinate it with financial department to evaluate to what extent the collaboration was successful.
7. The main benefits of collaborating with influencers rather than with celebrities is creating relatable content that resonates with potential customers and significant difference in fees.
8. We pay attention to influencer's reputation among local people and before reaching to the management we trackand analyze blogger's activity.
9. On the stage of choosing the influencer we want to work with, we pay a lot of attention to her/his target audience and moral fundamentals, so it would be as close to ours as possible.
10. We expect influencers to produce more an more creative content with brands' products and invent the ways to engage the audience more.
11. Allow influencers the creative freedom to present your products in a way that feels natural to them.

