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Effectiveness of the Use of Micro Influencers in the Advertisement of Select Health and Fitness Brands in Nigeria

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Abstract

The rate of influencer marketing in Nigeria may allow for the proliferation of misinformation, especially in health-related areas where misleading information can pose significant risks to public health. This however, necessitated the investigation. The source credibility, and social influence theories guided the study. Survey research design was adopted. The study's population was 974, 865, from which a sample size of 384 was determined using the smart survey sample size calculator. The multistage sampling technique was used with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. Results showed that 39% of the respondents come across health and fitness posts promoted by micro influencers on social media very often. At a mean of 3.1, the majority of the respondents have a favourable and positive perception towards micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands. Micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness products have been effective in aiding the choice of health and fitness brands among the respondents at a mean score of 2.8. Also, reliability, authenticity and credibility of the influencer, testimonials, positive online reviews, influencers' trustworthiness, and content relevancy were some of the factors that induce the patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers. It was concluded that, micro influencers' followers can convincingly accept health and fitness brands recommended by these influencers because they believe them to be credible. Amongst others, it was



recommended that, health and fitness brands should always continuously prioritise partnerships with credible, trustworthy, and reliable micro health influencers who align closely with brand values.

Keywords: Advertisement, Fitness Brands, Health, Effectiveness, Micro Influencers.

Introduction

The increasing number of internet users across Africa has offered a fertile ground for businesses to take advantage of DM strategies, especially those focused on social media engagement (Raji et al., 2024). SM platforms, like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (X), and lately TikTok, have become crucial tools for businesses that seek to engage with a broad and increasingly young audience (Attah&Sule, 2022). However, the growth of niche marketing is integral to this DM evolution, as brands align their messaging to well-defined, specific market segments (Adeola et al., 2022). The emergence of social media has greatly enhanced the impact of micro influencers, especially in the realm of health and wellness.

Molenaar (2025) asserts that social media platforms have transformed into a central hub for health and wellness content. Beyond general fitness and mental well-being advice, various health-related sub-niches such as holistic wellness, mental health advocacy, and fitness transformations are also gaining traction. Their capacity to share authentic experiences and product endorsements resonates profoundly with their audience, who often view these influencers as relatable, credible, and trustworthy individuals. As consumers become more selective regarding health marketing, they are inclined to favour micro influencers, whose recommendations are perceived as more reliable than those of prominent figures. This trend illustrates a change in consumer behaviour, where authenticity and meaningful interaction are prioritized over extensive reach. Micro influencers typically focus on specific niches or areas such as wellness, fitness, or healthy living, thus enabling brands to engage with distinctly committed communities (Akinz, 2025). According to *Emarketer's* 2023 Digital Health Survey, approximately a quarter (24.5%) of millennials follow and interact with health influencers, while 28.9% of Gen Zers engage with influencers in this sector without necessarily following them (Molenaar, 2025).

Micro-influencers have the exceptional capacity to create authentic relationships with their audience, which promotes trust and engagement in a manner that macro-influencers often find challenging to accomplish (Gerlich, 2022). This is exceptionally applicable in Africa, where historical and socio-economic factors have resulted in low trust in brands (Watkins, 2021). Thus, promoting products/services within their peculiar niche allows micro-influencers to effectively improve brand loyalty and consumer trust in the brands they work for (Harrison, 2024). Examples of health and wellness brands who leverage micro influencers in advertising their products, include: Aquafina (Aproko Doctor), Wigmore Trading Nigeria (Chika Ezeani), Quincy Herbals (Quincy SumboAyodele), GSK Consumer Healthcare, Emzor Pharmaceutical, Fidson Healthcare, May & Baker, and Evans Medical. Others include; Pure Organic Skincare, Didi Fit, Efunsewa Herbs, Oosa Herbal Care Ventures, and Amaryadotcom Spa.

These influencers are frequently perceived as authentic and relatable, rendering them attractive channels for advertising, particularly among younger, health-conscious Nigerians (Ogunmola, 2024). Research indicates that when consumers view an influencer as authentic and knowledgeable, they are more inclined to follow the recommendations provided by the influencer (Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, this is especially pertinent in Nigeria's health sector, where skepticism regarding commercial motives, misinformation, and barriers to healthcare access can hinder the success of traditional advertising.

Furthermore, while international research indicates that micro-influencers may surpass macro-influencers in terms of engagement, Fadenipo (2024) observes that the Nigerian environment introduces distinct cultural, socio-economic, and technological factors that could influence the success of marketing campaigns. For example, the level of audience trust may fluctuate considerably based on perceived



authenticity, local relevance, and the expertise of the influencer; however, brands frequently emphasize follower numbers over these qualitative aspects (Bazunu, 2025). Additionally, Eze (2024) avers that the unregulated landscape of influencer marketing in Nigeria allows for the proliferation of misinformation, especially in health-related areas where misleading information can pose significant risks to public health.

Therefore, it was necessary to examine the effectiveness of the use of micro influencers in the advertisement of select health and fitness brands in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the level of exposure of social media consumers in Imo State to health and fitness campaigns promoted by micro influencers.
2. Ascertain the perception of social media consumers in Imo State about micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of micro influencers' campaigns on the purchasing decisions of health and fitness products among social media consumers in Imo State.
4. Identify the factors that induce the patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers among social media consumers in Imo State.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on social influence theory and source credibility theory.

Social Influence Theory (SIT)

The theory, proposed by Kelman (1958), is rooted in social psychology, suggesting that the attitudes, decisions, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the presence and actions of others (Bartal et al., 2019; Liang et al., 2024). It posits that individuals are influenced through compliance, identification, and internalisation. Davlembayeva, Chari and Papagiannidis (2024) highlighted that "compliance" happens when an individual engages with an entity to gain rewards or avoid punishment. For example, a consumer can engage with brands to gain rewards (obtain discounts or vouchers using an influencer's promo code) or avoid punishment (an influencer's experience can help consumers avoid negative experiences or financial loss). "Identification" occurs when individuals associate themselves with someone they admire or perceive as similar (Kelman, 2017). Applying this logic, followers usually perceive micro-influencers as role models or peers and therefore want to adopt their attitudes and behaviours. "Internalisation" is the deepest level of influence, and it occurs when people adopt beliefs or values that align with their values/beliefs. This ultimately strengthens long-term belief (Kelman, 2017).

Some scholars like Ko (2024), Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021) observed the success of influencers in driving engagement through identification and internalisation. Other scholars argued that such influence, primarily through identification, may be subject to change if the admired person no longer holds influence (Chalke et al., 2023). Moreover, despite SIT's emphasis on social interactions, its relevance to niche markets in Africa can be criticised. Some research suggested that there might be an overemphasis on the impact of micro-influencers, especially when bearing in mind the increasing commercialisation of SM platforms, where biases in algorithms weaken authentic engagement (Erdmann & Ponzio, 2021). In addition, socio-economic forces in African markets influence power dynamics (Watkins, 2021); this indicates that micro-influencers' impact might be driven more by perceived financial wealth and status rather than their authenticity. This makes this theory apt for the study.

Source Credibility Model (SCM)

The source credibility theory was propounded by Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley in the 1950s and later advanced in 1963 by the propounders. SCM is a critical framework focused on the notion that the credibility of a source that delivers information significantly impacts the message's reception, persuasiveness, and influence (Nan, 2013). Kong and Fang (2024) argued that only trusted information could influence or change personal attitudes and behaviours. Thus, the credibility of information sources



is an essential factor in influencing people's behaviour (Fleury et al., 2020). However, influence sources can be interpersonal or social, with interpersonal influence originating from family and friends, while social influence stems from online social networks (Zhuang et al., 2021). Yeow et al. (2024) highlighted that SCM evaluates how a source's perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness influence communication success, especially in marketing. Micro-influencers' niche and highly engaged followers make them credible "sources"; therefore, their perceived expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness can strongly impact CE and consumer commitment to repurchase or recommend a particular brand.

In relevance to this study therefore, niche influencers who possess personal experience or credentials in health-related areas (like fitness coaches or mental health supporters) are regarded as reliable sources. Their credibility increases the effectiveness of wellness initiatives. Also, their followers can convincingly accept health and wellness brands recommended by these influencers because they believe them to be credible and their information/contents in that regard credible as well.

Method

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the survey research design was implemented. The population of this study comprised social media users in Imo State, Nigeria. Due to lack of statistics of social media users in Imo State, the estimated statistics of social media users in each State in Nigeria is 974, 865 according to the statistics of social media users in Nigeria provided by Data Reportal (2024) which is 36,070,000. The study adopted the estimated population of 974, 865 social media users in Imo State. A sample size of 384 was determined and adopted for the study using the smart survey sample size calculator at a threshold of 95% confidence interval and 5% margin error. The multistage sampling technique was employed in sampling the respondents for equal representation. At stage one: The researchers purposively selected two Local Governments Areas from each of the senatorial zone (Owerri West and Owerri North from Owerri Zone; Nkwere and Orlu from Orlu Zone; and Okigwe and Ehime Mbano from Okigwe Zone), making a total of 6 L.G.As studied. From each of the L.G.A, 2 communities were purposively selected, (in their order of appearance according to the L.G.As: Nekede and Obinze; Orji and Egbu; Owerre Nwkor-Orji and Amaigbo; Amaifeke and Umuna; Amuro and Umulolo; Agbaja and Umunumo) making a total of 12 communities to be sampled in order to represent the whole Imo State in stage two. In stage three, quota sampling was applied in which the samples size was divided by the number of communities sampled in order to arrive at an equal representation. Thereafter, the researchers purposively distributed 32 copies of the questionnaire to respondents in each of the selected communities. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument comprised 18 items which was structured in both dichotomous ("yes" or "no" variable) and Likert scale formats, utilising a 4-point scale (1-4) of "Strongly Agree", Agree, "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree". In establishing the reliability of the instrument, test re-test was used. The instrument was face-validated by research experts in Communication and Media Studies. Responses retrieved were compared via Pearson Moment Correlation and result indicated very high reliability at 0.8. The study duly followed ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all the respondents with clear explanations provided about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and all data collected on self-administration basis spanning across two weeks were used solely for the study. Meanwhile, simple percentages and mean analysis were used to analyse the data.

Findings

Following the sample size, 384 copies of the research instrument were distributed in the course of the field work. Out of the distributed copies, 372 (96.9%) copies were retrieved and found valid. While 12 (3.1%) were inappropriately filled by the respondents and thus, found invalid for the analysis. Therefore, this implies that the response return rate was 96.9%. However, the benchmark rule for the decision was



2.5. If the result was 2.5 or above, the decision was accepted, and if the result was 2.4 or below, the decision was rejected. This was the basis upon which decisions were made in the mean analysis.

Research Question One: What is the level of exposure of social media consumers in Imo State to health and fitness campaigns promoted by micro influencers?

Table 1: Respondents' responses on whether they have come across any posts from influencers on social media promoting health and fitness products such as fitness, supplements, skincare products

Items	Frequency	Percent
Yes	372	100
No	0	-
Can't Say	0	-
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Analysis above shows that 100% of the respondents have come across posts from influencers on social media promoting health and wellness products such as fitness, supplements, skincare products. This means that all respondents are exposed to posts from influencers on social media promoting health and wellness products such as fitness, supplements, skincare products.

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the type of health and wellness posts from influencers they see most on social media

Items	Frequency	Percent
Weight loss/fitness products	122	33
Mental wellness/therapy	66	18
Natural/herbal supplements	79	21
Healthy food/dietary plans	105	28
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Analysis on the table two above shows that weight loss/fitness products (33%), and healthy food/dietary plans (28%) are the health and fitness products that the respondents see most from influencers on social media. This implies that weight loss/fitness products (33%), and healthy food/dietary plans (28%) are the health and fitness products that a majority of the respondents always come across from micro influencers' posts on social media.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on how frequently they come across health and fitness posts promoted by micro influencers on social media contents

Items	Frequency	Percent
Very Often	144	39
Often	120	32
Rarely	60	16
Can't Say	48	13
Total	372	100

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Analysis above shows that 39% of the respondents frequently come across health and fitness posts promoted by micro influencers on social media contents. This means that a higher number of the respondents come across health and fitness posts promoted by micro influencers on social media very often.



Research Question Two: What is the perception of social media consumers in Imo State about micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands?

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 4: Responses of the respondents their perception about micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I feel that the health and fitness products promoted by micro influencers are safe to use	154	132	48	37	3.1	Accepted
I feel that the influencers are sincere in their endorsements of health and fitness brands	137	150	53	33	3.1	Accepted
I believe that the influencers are very knowledgeable about the health brands they promote	184	157	16	15	3.4	Accepted
I think the influencers are credible, authentic and have a personality that aligns with the health and fitness brands advertised	112	150	57	53	2.9	Accepted
I trust the information provided about health brands by influencers to be very credible	127	156	46	26	2.9	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.1	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Variable Keys: SA (Strongly Agree) = 4; A (Agree) = 3; D (Disagree) = 2 and SD (Strongly Disagree) = 1.

Result of the mean analysis on the perception of social media consumers in Imo State about micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands indicated that at a mean of 3.1, the majority of the respondents have a favourable and positive perception about micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands.

Research Question Three: What is the effectiveness of micro influencers' campaigns on the purchasing decisions of health and fitness products among social media consumers in Imo State?

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 5: Responses of respondents on the effectiveness of micro influencers' campaigns on the purchasing decisions of health and fitness products

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I have tried a product that aligned with my lifestyle as a result of learning about it from an influencer's endorsement	108	123	80	59	2.7	Accepted
I have given a try of health and fitness product because of the recommendation from an influencer on social media	110	108	76	78	2.7	Accepted



I have been convinced about a health product because of the review from the endorser	117	133	74	48	2.9	Accepted
Micro influencers' promotion of health and fitness brands have helped me in the choice of health and fitness brands I use	138	120	67	47	2.9	Accepted
Grand Mean					2.8	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Result of the analysis on the effectiveness of micro influencers' campaigns on the purchasing decisions of health and fitness products among social media consumers in Imo State revealed that at a mean score of 2.8, micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness products have been effective in aiding the choice of health and fitness brands to use among residents in Imo State.

Research Question Four: What are the factors that induce the patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers among social media consumers in Imo State?

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 6: Responses of respondents on the factors that induce their patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Reliability and credibility of the micro influencer	198	124	32	22	3.3	Accepted
Authenticity of the product endorser	183	170	14	9	3.4	Accepted
Advertised brand's perceived benefits and testimonials	180	182	8	6	3.4	Accepted
Positive online reviews about the advertised brand	175	181	12	8	3.4	Accepted
Influencers' reach and trustworthiness	178	158	26	14	3.3	Accepted
Content relevancy	165	188	14	9	3.3	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.5	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, (2026)

Result of the mean analysis on the factors that induce the patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers among social media consumers in Imo State at a mean of 3.5, reliability and credibility of the micro influencer, authenticity of the product endorser, advertised brand's perceived benefits and testimonials, positive online reviews about the advertised brand, influencers' reach and trustworthiness, and content relevancy were the factors that induce the patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers among the respondents.

Discussion

In the first research question, data analysed showed that the all respondents are exposed to posts from influencers on social media promoting health and wellness products such as fitness, supplements, skincare products; weight loss/fitness products (33%), and healthy food/dietary plans (28%) were the health and fitness products that a majority of the respondents always come across from micro influencers' posts on social media; and (39%) of the respondents come across health and fitness posts promoted by micro influencers on social media very often. This findings corroborates the findings of Byrne et al. (2017) who found that 59 % of the survey participants followed social influencers on social media platforms. Similar



to this result, Kataria et al. (2023) indicated that there is no significant difference in the gender of individuals surveyed and the type of influencer they prefer to follow, indicating that both men and women are equally likely to follow influencers.

Result of the mean analysis on the perception of social media consumers in Imo State about micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands indicated that at a mean of 3.1, the majority of the respondents have a favourable and positively perception about micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness brands. The respondents feel that the health and fitness products promoted by micro influencers are safe to use; they feel that the influencers are sincere in their endorsements of health and fitness brands. A majority of the respondents also believe that the influencers are very knowledgeable about the health brands the promote; they feel that the influencers are credible, authentic and have a personality that aligns with the health and fitness brands advertised; and they trust the information provided about health brands by influencers to be very credible. In line with this result, Eze (2024) underscored the potentials of micro-influencers as strategic assets in digital marketing, who possess unique capacity to promote trust and interactions crucial in driving engagement within niche markets. In agreement, Shengnan et al. (2023) revealed that perceived influencer-product congruence positively affects followers' perceptions of the credibility of, and attitude toward, influencers, and negatively affects perceptions of paid communication. Corroborating further, Ibáñez-Sánchez et al. (2022) indicated that renowned brand-influencer collaborations, in comparison to non-renowned brand-influencer collaborations, enhanced consumers' attitude towards the message, their purchase intentions and the perceived credibility of the influencer.

On the third objective, result of the analysis on the effectiveness of micro influencers' campaigns on the purchasing decisions of health and fitness products among social media consumers in Imo State revealed that at a mean score of 2.8, micro influencers' advertisement of health and fitness products have been effective in aiding the choice of health and fitness brands to use among residents in Imo State. The result indicated that the majority of the respondents admitted to having tried a product that aligned with my lifestyle as result of learning about it from an influencer's endorsement; they have given a try of health and fitness product because of the recommendation from an influencer on social media; and they have been convinced about a health product because of the review from the endorser. Also, it was found that micro influencers' promotion of health and fitness brands have helped a majority of the respondents in their choice of health and fitness brands usage. Relating this result to previous findings, Folkvord et al. (2020) established that parasocial interaction mediated the relation between the type of influencer and product attitude as well as purchase intention. Parasocial interaction was higher for participants exposed to the popular real fit influencer compared to the fictitious fit influencer, leading to higher healthy food brand attitude and purchase intention. Also, Kaňková et al. (2024) revealed a wide range of different outcomes influenced by SMIs, including both positive and negative changes in health-related attitudes and behavioural intentions among their followers.

Similarly, Yazar and Kurşun (2022) found that social media influencers have an effect on many issues such as smoking cessation, increasing knowledge against flu vaccine, diet, and exercise, food choices, etc. In the same agreement, Byrne et al. (2017) 16 % of participants reported influencers as having a high influence in determining their food choices. 32 % of participants stated that social influencers motivated them to make healthier food choices and 41 % said they motivated them sometimes. Also, Kataria et al. (2023) found a positive correlation between the fitness level of the influencer and the self-reported level of self-implementation of the content. This means that individuals who follow fitness-conscious influencers are more likely to adopt the healthy habits and lifestyle promoted by these influencers. The research highlighted the potential for influencer marketing to have a positive impact on the health and wellness industry and provides valuable insights into the role of social media influencers in shaping



young people's health and wellness habits. It was concluded that influencer marketing has the potential to promote healthy lifestyles among young people, as influencers who advocate for healthy eating and exercise can inspire their followers to adopt similar habits.

Theoretically, this result underscores the social influence theory in that followers usually perceive micro-influencers as role models or peers and therefore want to adopt their attitudes and behaviours.

Finally, findings on the factors that induce the patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers among social media consumers in Imo State at a mean of 3.5, reliability and credibility of the micro influencer, authenticity of the product endorser, advertised brand's perceived benefits and testimonials, positive online reviews about the advertised brand, influencers' reach and trustworthiness, and content relevancy were the factors that induce the patronage of health and fitness brands advertised by micro influencers among the respondents. This result aligns with the findings of Prerna and Sivakami (2025) which showed that influencers' efficacy is greatly influenced by their credibility, authenticity, and reliability rather than just their reach. These elements play a key role in mediating whether influencer-driven campaigns result in lasting brand loyalty and meaningful engagement. It was found that micro and nano influencers having a smaller fan base or followers, build closer para-social bonds with their audience. As result, increased interaction rates and more trust-based brand advocacy result from this stronger relationship. Buttressing this further, Shengnan et al. (2023) indicated that both perceived credibility and attitude foster positive behavioural responses toward the influencer; influencers must enhance these factors to retain their influencing capacity.

Furthermore, Palazon et al. (2025) suggested that micro celebrities' and micro influencers' influence on consumers' perception and behavior in terms of post relevance, brand attitude and purchase intention toward healthy food brands depends on the consumers' healthy lifestyle. Thus, micro celebrities have more influence on individuals with unhealthy lifestyles, while micro influencers have more influence on individuals that pursue a healthy lifestyle. In the same vein, Añaña and Barbosa (2023) revealed that purchase intention of healthy foods is positively influenced by digital influencer perceived credibility, involvement with healthy foods, and attitude toward advertising on Instagram.

This findings underscores the source credibility theory in that micro influencers who possess personal experience or credentials in health-related areas (like fitness coaches or mental health supporters) are regarded as reliable sources. Their credibility increases the effectiveness of wellness initiatives. Also, their followers can convincingly accept health and wellness brands recommended by these influencers because they believe them to be credible and their information/contents in that regard credible as well.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Micro influencers are like trusted friends to their followers, sharing valuable insights and personal stories about health, fitness, nutrition, and overall well-being. Brands' partnership with these influencers can boost the brand's credibility and help them promote their products, services, or initiatives in a more genuine and relatable way than traditional ads. However, customers evaluate an influencer's expertise and reliability before developing opinions about the brand they are promoting. Credibility on its own, is insufficient; audience trust is further strengthened by reliability, or the constancy and dependability of an influencer's recommendations. The credibility of micro influencers increase the effectiveness of wellness initiatives. Therefore, customer engagement is influenced by influencers' trustworthiness, reliability, and authenticity. The researchers, concluded that, micro influencers' followers can convincingly accept health and fitness brands recommended by these influencers because they believe them to be credible and their information/contents in that regard credible as well. On the strength of the findings of the study, the researchers put forward the following recommendations:



1. Health and fitness brands should strategically partner with micro influencers to maintain and increase their reach to the target audience because they have proven to have strong visibility and engagement within their niche.
2. Health and fitness brands should leverage on encouraging influencers to share personal, authentic experiences that resonates with products in order to foster trust and emotional connection, thereby, ultimately enhancing brand loyalty.
3. Micro influencers should always use call-to-action strategies to prompt decision-making of their followers by demonstrating product use, benefits, and comparisons.
4. Health and fitness brands should always continuously prioritise partnerships with credible, trustworthy, and reliable micro health influencers who align closely with brand values.

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