

Branding and Identity Construction: A Digital Discourse Analysis of Beauty and Fashion Influencers

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Abstract

Through digital discourse analysis, the study examines the construction of personal brands and identities by beauty and fashion influencers. With the rise of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, influencers have become key figures in shaping consumer behaviors, particularly within the beauty and fashion industries. This article investigates how influencers balance authenticity, aspiration, empowerment, and commercialization in their online content and how these elements contribute to their identity construction. Using a mixed (qualitative and quantitative) approach, the study analyzes a sample of 100 posts from US, UK, UAE, Canada, Australia, South Korea, and Brazil influencers with significant followings, focusing on visual content (images and videos), textual elements (captions, hashtags), and audience interactions (comments and likes). The findings reveal that authenticity is a dominant theme in influencer branding, with influencers sharing personal stories and relatable content to build trust with their audiences. However, aspirational content, showcasing idealized lifestyles, and commercialized posts, mainly sponsored product endorsements, are also prevalent. Influencers frequently combine these elements to create a balanced yet strategically crafted persona that appeals to their followers. Additionally, audience engagement plays a significant role in the ongoing construction and negotiation of influencer identities, with positive interactions reinforcing influencers' authenticity and empowerment messages. Despite the aspirational and empowering content, the commercialization of influencer identities raises ethical questions regarding transparency and authenticity in digital branding. This article contributes to understanding influencer culture and provides insight into the complexities of identity construction and brand management in the digital age. Future research should address the evolving relationship between influencers and their audiences in the context of increasing commercialization.

Keywords: digital discourse analysis, influencer branding, identity construction, social media marketing, commercialization

1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms have emerged as influential spaces where individuals, brands, and businesses converge (Appel et al., 2020; Jensen, 2022). Among the many forms of influence that these platforms facilitate, influencer marketing has garnered considerable attention. Influencers who have cultivated large online followings through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become key players in shaping consumer behavior and trends. This development is particularly evident in industries such as fashion and beauty, where influencers have successfully navigated the digital landscape to craft personalized identities that resonate with their audiences. The construction of such identities is not merely a matter of presenting a lifestyle but is deeply intertwined with branding strategies that reflect and shape cultural perceptions (Leaver, 2020). This article examines the intersection of influencer branding and identity construction through a digital discourse analysis of beauty and fashion influencers. By investigating how influencers in these domains present themselves and engage with their audiences, this study explores the mechanisms through which online personas are constructed and the broader implications for influencers and followers.

Influencer branding has evolved from a marketing tactic into a highly sophisticated cultural phenomenon (Vrontis, et al., 2021). Influencers are no longer just promoters of products; they are brands in their own right, curating an image that extends beyond advertisements. These self-fashioned brands rely heavily on constructing authentic, relatable, and aspirational identities, allowing them to build trust with their followers. The authenticity of an influencer's brand is critical, as it serves as the foundation for their credibility and the perceived value of the products they endorse (Helme, 2023). However, the line between authenticity and commercialism is often blurred, leading to a complex negotiation of identity that is simultaneously personal and strategic (Vallas & Cummins, 2015). This article seeks to unravel the discursive

practices through which beauty and fashion influencers navigate this delicate balance, focusing on the linguistic and visual elements they employ to construct and communicate their identities.

As a psychological and sociocultural process, identity construction is increasingly mediated by digital platforms, which amplify self-presentation's visibility and fluidity (Choi et al., 2020). For example, influencers in the beauty and fashion sectors constantly negotiate their personal and professional selves, often blending both in ways that appeal to diverse audiences. These influencers are tasked with creating simultaneously individualized content that conforms to their target demographic's norms and expectations. Within the context of beauty and fashion, identity construction is often intertwined with the ideals of beauty, style, and trends, and it is communicated through visual imagery, captions, and hashtags. The visual nature of platforms like Instagram and TikTok adds a layer of performativity to identity construction, making it a dynamic process of presenting curated moments that project an aspirational yet attainable persona (Taylor, 2020; Skinner, 2023). Therefore, self-presentation discourse is a personal endeavor and a carefully managed brand strategy designed to engage and grow an online following.

Understanding the role of digital discourse in identity construction necessitates an exploration of how language and imagery function as tools for meaning-making (AlAfnan, 2025a; Pastor, 2018). Influencers, particularly in the beauty and fashion industries, rely on a unique blend of language, aesthetic choices, and social interactions to build a narrative around their persona (Hund, 2023). This narrative, constructed through overt and subtle means, allows them to connect with their audience while reinforcing certain cultural norms and values. For example, beauty influencers often build an identity that revolves around ideals of self-care, empowerment, and body positivity while simultaneously promoting products that promise to enhance these attributes. Fashion influencers, on the other hand, often focus on style, trends, and self-expression, presenting curated lifestyles that their followers can emulate. These constructs are not neutral; they are informed by broader societal discourses surrounding beauty, class, and gender, which influence how identities are shaped and communicated.

In this article, the focus is placed on understanding how the digital discourse employed by beauty and fashion influencers functions not only as a tool for brand construction but also as a mechanism of identity negotiation (AlAfnan, 2024). Through analyzing the linguistic and visual elements of influencers' posts, captions, and interactions with their followers, this research aims to shed light on how influencer branding contributes to the broader social construction of identity in the digital age. By examining the complexities of self-presentation, authenticity, and audience engagement, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of digital influence and its impact on individual and collective identity formation.

2. Literature Review

The intersection of influencer branding and identity construction in the digital age has become a prominent area of research, particularly in fields such as marketing, media studies, and cultural sociology. Influencer branding is often discussed as a strategic practice where individuals leverage social media platforms to build personal brands that resonate with a specific audience (Marwick, 2015). Social media influencers, particularly in the beauty and fashion sectors, have emerged as key figures shaping cultural trends, consumer behavior, and societal values (Alexander, 2024). Research on this phenomenon typically revolves around the authenticity of influencer identities, the construction of personal brands, and how digital platforms mediate the formation of these identities (Bull, 2022; Duffy & Hund, 2015; Van Driel & Dumitrica, 2021; Vear, 2020).

One central theme in the literature is the concept of authenticity, which is central to developing influencer brands. Influencers are often expected to project an image of genuineness, as authenticity is vital to trust-building with followers (Freberg et al., 2011). However, scholars have noted that the authenticity of influencers is complicated by the commercialization of their online personas (Arriagada & Bishop, 2021; Van der Lindén et al., 2020). The tension between authenticity and marketability has led to debates about the extent to which influencers can remain true to themselves while promoting products. This has been described as a negotiation between personal identity and the pressures of brand endorsement, where influencers must carefully craft content that aligns with their values but also appeals to sponsors and followers (Zadeh et al., 2021). For instance, influencers in the beauty and fashion industries balance self-presentation with the need to attract brand partnerships, often requiring presenting a curated, idealized version of their lives (Abidin, 2016).

Building upon the notion of authenticity, another critical area of research focuses on how influencers construct and present their identities through digital platforms. According to Goffman (1959), identity construction is a performative process in which individuals present themselves according to the expectations of their audience. Influencers on platforms like Instagram and YouTube engage in what Goffman describes as "front-stage" performances, managing their image through carefully curated posts, videos, and interactions with followers (Goffman, 1959). In the beauty and fashion sectors, this performativity is particularly evident, as influencers share not only product reviews but also aspects of their personal lives, including their self-care routines, fashion choices, and lifestyle preferences. This constant self-presentation is a form of identity negotiation where influencers continuously adjust their personas to reflect evolving trends, audience expectations, and personal branding goals (Marwick, 2015).

The role of visual culture in influencer identity construction has also been a subject of extensive analysis. Platforms like Instagram, which prioritize visual content, encourage influencers to craft identities through images, which are often heavily edited and stylized. According to Manovich (2001), the dominance of visual media in contemporary culture plays a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive themselves and others. Beauty and fashion influencers' aesthetic choices- from outfit selection to makeup application- are part of a broader visual discourse conveying meaning to followers (Duffy & Hund, 2015). These images often create aspirational ideals, where influencers embody particular lifestyles, styles, and beauty standards. This visual curation contributes to constructing an identity that is not just personal but deeply entangled with societal trends and expectations (Marwick, 2015; AlAfnan, 2026a, 2026b).

A significant body of research also explores the social interactions between influencers and their followers, highlighting the dynamic nature of influencer identity construction. Social media platforms facilitate direct communication between influencers and their audiences, allowing for a sense of intimacy and relationality that traditional advertising lacks (Schouten et al., 2020). Influencers often engage in dialogue with their followers through comments, live streams, and Q&A sessions, further blurring the boundary between personal and public personas. This interaction helps reinforce the sense of authenticity, as followers perceive influencers as more relatable and accessible. However, some scholars argue that this interaction is part of a broader marketing strategy, where influencers create a sense of community to foster loyalty and engagement, thereby enhancing their marketability (AlAfnan et al., 2025; Abidin, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2021; Leung et al., 2022; Vrontis et al., 2021). For instance, beauty influencers often discuss self-care, beauty standards, and body positivity while promoting products that align with these values (Zadeh et al., 2021).

The commodification of influencers' identities has been increasingly concerning. As influencers become more integrated into marketing strategies, their personal brands risk being co-opted by corporate interests (Van ver Lindén et al., 2020). This raises questions about the authenticity of influencer identities and whether they remain credible when they engage in paid promotions. Some scholars argue that while influencers may maintain a degree of authenticity, their involvement in brand collaborations introduces commercialism that may distort their perceived authenticity (Duffy & Hund, 2015; Baumgarth, 2022; Kalla, 2022). Others suggest that followers are aware of this commercial aspect and are increasingly adept at discerning when influencers promote products for profit, which has led to a growing focus on transparency in influencer marketing (Marwick, 2015).

The literature on influencer branding and identity construction highlights the complex interplay between authenticity, performativity, and commercialism. Beauty and fashion influencers navigate a delicate balance between maintaining an authentic online persona and fulfilling the demands of marketing and sponsorships. Digital platforms, particularly those that prioritize visual content, provide influencers with the tools to construct and project their identities in ways that resonate with their audiences. However, these identities are constantly in flux, shaped by evolving trends, audience expectations, and commercial interests. This article builds upon these themes to further explore how beauty and fashion influencers employ digital discourse to construct their identities and the broader implications of this process for both influencers and their followers.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative content analysis with qualitative Digital Discourse Analysis (DDA) to investigate how beauty and fashion influencers construct their personal brands and digital identities across social media platforms. The mixed-methods approach enabled the systematic quantification of recurring branding themes while providing an in-depth interpretation of the linguistic, visual, and interactional strategies used by influencers. Digital Discourse Analysis served as the primary analytical framework because it facilitates the examination of multimodal communication by considering the interaction between language, visual representation, platform affordances, and audience engagement (AlAfnan & dela Cruz-Rudio, 2023).

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to select influencers whose content aligned with the objectives of the study. To ensure that the selected accounts represented established digital influencers with measurable public influence, only creators with at least 100,000 followers on their primary social media platform were included. Additional selection criteria required influencers to publish content regularly related to beauty, fashion, skincare, cosmetics, self-care, and lifestyle, while maintaining active audience engagement through comments, likes, and content sharing.

The final sample consisted of 100 social media posts collected from 10 internationally recognized beauty and fashion influencers representing seven countries: The United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and Brazil (See Table 1). The sample was designed to provide geographical diversity while reflecting the global nature of influencer marketing.

Table 1. Distribution of Influencers by Country

Country	Number of Influencers	Percentage
United States	3	30%
United Kingdom	2	20%
Canada	1	10%
Australia	1	10%
South Korea	1	10%
United Arab Emirates	1	10%
Brazil	1	10%
Total	10	100%

To capture branding practices across different digital environments, the dataset included content from Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Instagram was selected because of its emphasis on visual identity and lifestyle branding, while YouTube and TikTok provided longer-form and short-form audiovisual discourse that allowed for richer analysis of identity construction (see Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of Posts by Social Media Platform

Platform	Content Type	Number of Posts	Percentage
Instagram	Feed posts and Stories	40	40%
YouTube	Videos	30	30%
TikTok	Short-form videos	30	30%
Total		100	100%

The dataset comprised publicly available content published between July 2024 and December 2024. This six-month period was selected to ensure sufficient temporal coverage for identifying recurring branding strategies while minimizing the influence of short-lived viral trends.

The collected data included visual, textual, and interactional elements. Visual data consisted of photographs, reels, short-form videos, and long-form videos that illustrated how influencers employed fashion, makeup, body language, settings, editing techniques, and visual aesthetics to communicate their identities. Textual data included captions, video descriptions, hashtags, and promotional disclosures, providing insights into the linguistic strategies used to construct authenticity, aspiration, empowerment, and commercial identity. Interactional data comprised audience comments, likes, and creator responses, allowing the study to examine how influencer identities were negotiated and reinforced through audience participation.

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis employs digital discourse analysis (DDA), which focuses on interpreting linguistic and visual elements in digital communication. DDA allows for examining how language and imagery function to create and reinforce particular identities, social roles, and relationships within online communities (AlAfnan & Dishari, 2024; Androutsopoulos, 2014). The analysis follows a multi-step process, as outlined below:

- **Visual Analysis:** Visual content, such as photographs and videos, is analyzed using semiotic analysis to decode the signs and symbols used by influencers to communicate specific identities. This includes examining the use of fashion choices, makeup styles, body language, settings, and other visual cues that convey meaning to the audience. Attention is paid to the aesthetic elements, such as color schemes, filters, and editing techniques, to understand how influencers curate their appearance to create an aspirational image.
- **Textual Analysis:** Captions, hashtags, and video descriptions are analyzed through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) lens to explore how language is used to construct influencer identities (AlAfnan & MohdZuki, 2024). CDA helps identify the ideological underpinnings and power dynamics of influencers' communication with their audience (Gee, 2014). Keywords related to beauty, fashion, self-care, and empowerment are analyzed to determine how influencers position themselves as experts, role models, or relatable individuals. The language of promotion, endorsement, and sponsorship is also examined to explore the tension between authenticity and commercialization.
- **Audience Interaction:** The comments section of influencer posts is analyzed to assess how followers engage with the influencer's content and their project identity. Interaction patterns, such as the types of feedback provided (e.g., supportive, critical, aspirational), are examined to explore how influencers maintain or adjust their identities in response to audience feedback. The study also considers the role of influencers in moderating and responding to comments, as this is a significant aspect of building and maintaining a relationship with followers.
- **Content Categorization:** The data is categorized based on recurring themes, such as authenticity, aspiration, empowerment, and commercialization. This thematic categorization allows for a deeper understanding of the

discursive strategies used by influencers to construct their identities and brand images. Content reflecting these themes is identified and analyzed to reveal the dominant narratives and ideologies in influencer branding.

This article adheres to ethical guidelines for online research, ensuring that the privacy and rights of influencers and their followers are respected. No personal or confidential data is accessed since the content analyzed is publicly available on social media. The research focuses on publicly posted content and interactions, and all influencers involved in the study are not identified by name to maintain confidentiality. Given the sensitive nature of online identity and branding, particular attention is paid to the ethical implications of analyzing personal content. Informed consent is not required as the data is publicly available, but care is taken to ensure that the analysis remains respectful and avoids misrepresentations of the influencers' brands.

While this study offers valuable insights into influencer branding and identity construction, some limitations exist. First, the analysis is based on publicly available content, meaning private interactions or behind-the-scenes processes in influencer branding are not captured. Second, the sample is limited to influencers with a substantial online following, which may exclude smaller influencers who engage in different forms of branding. Additionally, the article focuses on influencers from specific beauty and fashion sectors, meaning that the findings may not be generalizable to influencers in other industries.

Based on digital discourse analysis, this methodology provides a robust framework for understanding how beauty and fashion influencers construct and communicate their identities through visual and textual content. By analyzing the content posted by influencers and their interactions with their audiences, this article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital platforms mediate the identity construction and branding process in the context of influencer culture (AlAfnan, 2021).

5. Findings

The findings section presents the results of the digital discourse analysis conducted on the social media content of beauty and fashion influencers. This section summarizes key patterns in influencer branding, identity construction, and audience engagement. Analyzing visual content, textual elements, and audience interactions has uncovered several recurring trends and strategies influencers use in the beauty and fashion sectors. These findings are presented in numerical and qualitative terms.

A key aspect of this study is the identification of recurring themes in the content posted by beauty and fashion influencers. Through a thematic analysis of posts, captions, hashtags, and interactions, the five main themes in influencer branding are *authenticity*, *aspiration*, *empowerment*, *commercialization*, and *self-expression*. The frequency with which these themes appeared across influencer posts and the results are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 3. Frequency of Identified Themes in Influencer Content

Theme	Frequency (Out of 100 Posts)	Percentage (%)
Authenticity	72	72%
Aspiration	56	56%
Empowerment	48	48%
Commercialization	34	34%
Self-expression	29	29%

As shown in Table 3, the most dominant theme across influencer posts was *authenticity*, which appeared in 72% of the analyzed posts. Influencers often emphasized personal experiences, genuine product reviews, and relatable narratives. *Aspiration* followed closely with 56% of posts, where influencers presented idealized lifestyles, often through curated visuals. The themes of *empowerment* (48%) and *commercialization* (34%) were also common, reflecting the intersection between personal empowerment and brand partnerships. Lastly, *self-expression* was found in 29% of posts, where influencers focused on creativity, individuality, and style.

The visual presentation of influencers was analyzed based on the aesthetic choices made in photos and videos, including the use of filters, settings, and clothing choices. A total of 100 posts were reviewed to understand the role of visual content in influencer identity construction. The findings show that most influencers employ aesthetic strategies to enhance their brands. Figure 1 below illustrates the breakdown of visual techniques used in the posts.

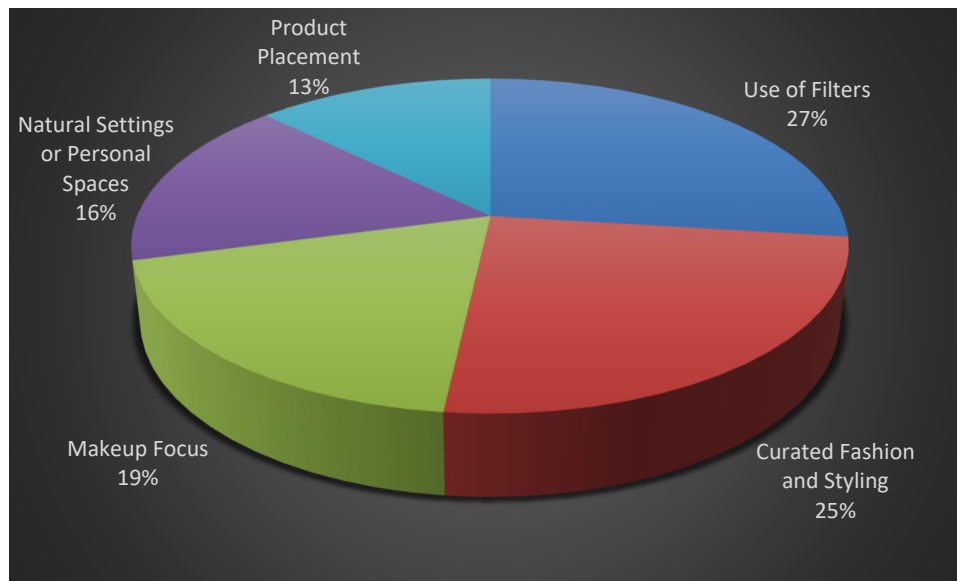


Figure 1. Visual Strategies Employed by Influencers in Posts

As demonstrated in Figure 1, most influencers (85%) used filters to enhance their images, often to create a polished and aspirational look. Fashion and styling were also prominent, with 78% of influencers curating their outfits to reflect current trends or to project a specific lifestyle. Makeup and beauty-related content was another key feature in 60% of the posts. A more personal touch was added by using natural settings or personal spaces (52%), which helped influencers build a connection with their audience. Product placement, representing a commercial aspect, appeared in 40% of posts, often alongside lifestyle content.

Audience engagement is crucial in constructing influencer identities and influencing how influencers adjust their self-presentation. An analysis of comments, likes, and shares on 100 posts revealed interesting patterns regarding the types of feedback received by influencers. The following table summarizes the kinds of audience interactions identified.

Table 4. Types of Audience Engagement

Engagement Type	Frequency (Out of 100 Posts)	Percentage (%)
Positive Feedback	81	81%
Questions about Products	65	65%
Aspirational Comments	55	55%
Criticism or Negative Feedback	24	24%
Engagement with Sponsored Content	38	38%

As shown in Table 4, most audience interactions were positive, with 81% of posts receiving favorable comments or expressions of admiration. Followers often praised influencers for their fashion choices, beauty tips, or lifestyle content. A significant portion of the comments (65%) included questions about the products used or featured in posts, highlighting the importance of product recommendations in influencer branding. Aspiration was also evident, with 55% of comments expressing admiration and a desire to emulate the influencer's lifestyle or appearance. Although most interactions were positive, 24% of posts received some form of criticism or negative feedback, often related to the commercial aspects of the content. Engagement with sponsored content occurred in 38% of posts, with followers acknowledging the product placement while still engaging with the content.

The commercialization of influencer branding was analyzed by reviewing sponsored content and product endorsements. Of 100 posts, 40% included sponsored content or explicit product placements. The frequency of these commercial posts varied depending on the influencers' engagement with brand partnerships. Figure 2 below illustrates the breakdown of the types of products promoted by influencers in the beauty and fashion sectors.

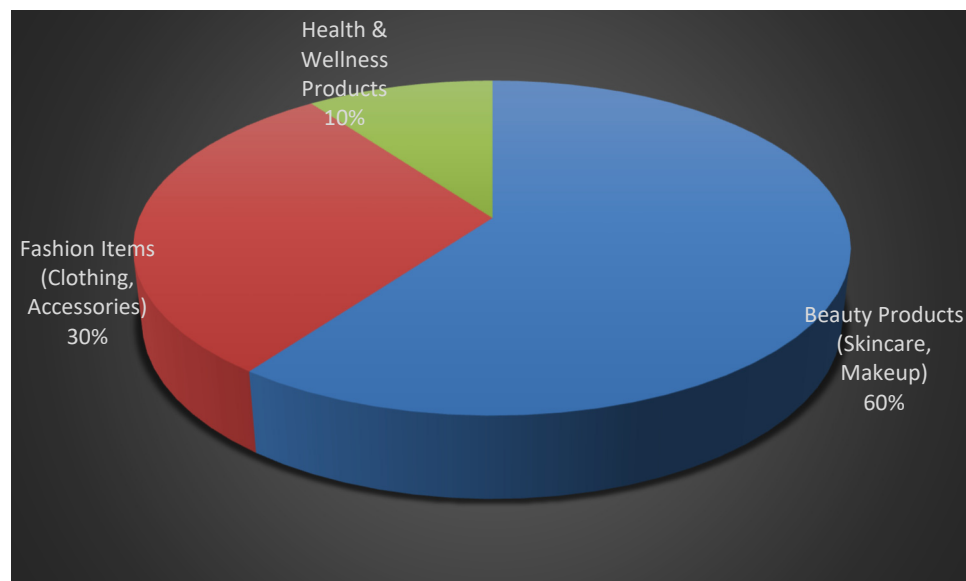


Figure 2. Types of Products Promoted by Influencers

As illustrated in Figure 2, beauty products such as skincare and makeup were the most common products promoted by influencers, accounting for 60% of sponsored posts. Fashion items, including clothing and accessories, were the second most common category (30%), while health and wellness products appeared in 10% of sponsored posts. This reflects the dominant focus on beauty and fashion in influencer branding, mainly in lifestyle and personal care.

This study's findings reveal key strategies that beauty and fashion influencers employ to construct their identities and engage with their audiences. The emphasis on authenticity, aspiration, and empowerment reflects the core values influencers aim to project, while curated visual content helps reinforce these identities. Audience engagement further highlights the dynamic relationship between influencers and their followers, where feedback shapes influencers' self-presentation. Commercialization is evident in the frequent use of sponsored content, particularly in the beauty and fashion sectors. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the practices and challenges of influencer branding in the digital age.

6. Discussion

The findings from this study underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of influencer branding and identity construction in the beauty and fashion sectors, mainly through English. As the primary language analyzed in this research, English is pivotal in shaping influencers' communication strategies and extending their global reach. This specificity highlights the relevance of the findings to English language studies, offering insights into the use of English in digital branding and the construction of personal and professional identities.

A critical aspect of the findings is the prominence of authenticity in influencer branding. Influencers often rely on personal stories and relatable narratives to establish trust with their audience. This aligns with prior research suggesting that followers value authenticity and transparency in online personas (Freberg et al., 2011). However, the careful curation of content to maintain a polished persona raises questions about the true nature of authenticity in a highly commercialized environment. While influencers may appear genuine, their posts often serve dual purposes: building trust and promoting commercial products.

In addition to authenticity, aspiration emerged as a dominant theme, reflecting influencers' reliance on visual and linguistic elements to craft idealized lifestyles. The findings showed that 56% of posts emphasized aspirational content, showcasing luxury, success, and beauty standards. These practices reinforce Manovich's (2001) argument that visual media significantly shapes social values and individual desires. English captions and hashtags, paired with curated imagery, enhance the aspirational quality of influencer content, further engaging audiences seeking to emulate such lifestyles.

Empowerment was another recurring theme, with 48% of posts promoting body positivity, self-care, and individuality. Influencers often use English to frame these messages, blending motivational language with subtle endorsements of products that align with these values. While these empowerment narratives foster community and relatability, they are also intertwined with commercialization, raising concerns about the authenticity of such messages when framed as part of marketing strategies.

From a corpus linguistics perspective, this study's mixed-methods approach offers valuable contributions. Analyzing a substantial English-language content dataset provides a quantitative overview of recurring themes and qualitative insights into linguistic and visual strategies. This approach demonstrates how data-driven analysis can uncover patterns in digital texts, shedding light on broader societal and marketing trends.

Audience engagement emerged as a critical factor in constructing influencer identities-positive interactions, comprising 81% of comments, reinforced influencers' authenticity and aspirational qualities. However, criticism, often targeting commercial content, highlighted followers' growing discernment regarding the authenticity of influencer branding. These findings underscore the interactive nature of digital branding, where followers actively shape influencers' personas through feedback and engagement.

Lastly, the role of commercialization in influencer branding cannot be overlooked. Sponsored content was present in 40% of the analyzed posts, often seamlessly integrated into narratives of authenticity and empowerment. This duality reflects the increasing commodification of personal identities within digital spaces. While influencers strive to balance authenticity with commercial interests, this tension raises ethical concerns regarding transparency and audience manipulation.

This study contributes to understanding influencer branding and identity construction through English-language digital discourse. The research highlights the intricate dynamics of authenticity, aspiration, empowerment, and commercialization by examining the interplay between language, imagery, and audience engagement. Future studies should explore the ethical implications of commercialization and the evolving expectations of transparency in influencer culture as digital branding expands.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored the intricate process of influencer branding and identity construction within the beauty and fashion sectors, highlighting how influencers use social media (AlAfnan, 2025b, 2025b) platforms to create and communicate their brands. Digital discourse analysis attained valuable insights into influencers' strategies to construct authentic, aspirational, and empowering identities while navigating the commercial pressures of brand partnerships and product promotion. The findings underscore the importance of authenticity as a foundational element in influencer branding, with influencers frequently emphasizing personal experiences and relatable content. However, the presence of aspirational and commercial content illustrates the tension between maintaining an authentic persona and engaging in marketing activities.

Empowerment was also crucial in shaping influencer identities, as many influencers used their platforms to promote self-care, body positivity, and individual expression. However, the commercialization of such messages calls attention to the complexities of the influencer culture, where empowerment is often intertwined with product endorsements. Also, audience engagement emerged as a significant factor in the co-construction of influencer identities. Positive feedback from followers reinforces influencers' authenticity and aspirational qualities, while negative feedback challenges the integrity of their brands, especially when linked to commercial content.

This article contributes to the growing body of literature on influencer marketing by emphasizing the complex interplay between personal identity, audience interaction, and commercialization. Influencers are not just passive content creators; they shape their online personas and continuously negotiate with followers. As influencer marketing continues to grow, the challenges surrounding authenticity, transparency, and the ethical considerations of promoting commercial products will remain central to discussions of digital branding. Future research should explore how influencers navigate these challenges and how audience dynamics evolve in response to changing expectations of authenticity and transparency in the digital age.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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