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**EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF INFLUENCERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA
ADVERTISING ON BRAND AWARENESS AND CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF
RESTAURANTS IN ACCRA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION

This Dissertation/Thesis has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation/Thesis laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of social media advertising and influencer marketing on brand awareness and consumer perceptions in the hospitality industry in Accra, Ghana. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Social Learning Theory (SLT), and Social Contract Theory (SCT), the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how these strategies influence consumer behaviour.

A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected from 114 respondents using structured surveys. Descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between these concepts - social media advertising, influencer marketing, brand awareness, and consumer perceptions.

The findings reveal that social media advertising is the strongest predictor of brand awareness, demonstrating a significant positive correlation. Influencer marketing, while moderately impactful on awareness, is critical in shaping consumer perceptions. Respondents, predominantly young adults aged 22–41, highlighted the importance of visual appeal, authenticity, and trustworthiness in advertisements and influencer content.

The study underscores the complementary roles of social media advertising and influencer marketing in driving consumer engagement and enhancing brand equity. Practical recommendations include optimising visually rich advertising campaigns, leveraging authentic influencer partnerships, and fostering user participation to build trust and loyalty.

Limitations include the geographic focus on Accra, the demographic skew towards younger respondents, and the cross-sectional nature of the study. Future research should explore longitudinal effects, expand to other regions, and examine emerging platforms like TikTok.

This research contributes to the academic discourse on digital marketing in emerging markets and provides actionable insights for restaurants seeking to navigate Accra's competitive dining landscape.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Over the past decade, social media platforms have revolutionised the way individuals interact with each other and with brands. The rise of these social media platforms have significantly transformed the way brands communicate with consumers and how consumers perceive the brands (Vernuccio, 2014). Several brands utilise social media in innovative ways to increase their brand awareness, enhance their brand image and directly engage with consumers. These brands create brand pages in social media, utilise them often and create policies and strategies they follow to gain certain expected outcomes (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). The restaurant industry and by extension the food industry have also transformed the way they engage with customers and consumers through social media. The consumer market is primarily made up of individuals who are on either one or several social media platforms. This is especially apparent among young adults, who constitute a significant portion of the consumer market. (Helal, Ozuem, & Lancaster, 2018). This group of consumers also constitute the ones with income and thereby purchasing power (Philippe et al, 2022). This means that they are able to behave favourably towards brands that speak directly to them.

Rosário and Dias (2023) state that platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and recently TikTok have become indispensable channels for restaurants to connect with their target audience, showcase offerings, and shape brand equity. Among these platforms, Instagram and TikTok stand out as particularly effective options for restaurants. This option is due to the visual and interactive nature of Instagram and TikTok; restaurants are able to showcase their offerings by using appealing visuals and graphics (Alomair, 2022). TikTok particularly stands out due to a distinct framework and platform culture refined by its predictive algorithm and user-friendly content interface (Guerrero,

2023). This aligns really well with the needs of restaurants aiming to create content that are as equally appealing and engaging. There are several restaurants that showcase behind the scenes of operations to bring their consumers into how the businesses operate. This also allows consumers to comment what they like and share the posts they find attractive with their followers/ community. This is the interactivity most restaurants and by extensions businesses search for on their social media pages.

In a competitive market, a lot of organisations and brands are rapidly adopting social media advertising as a key component of their integrated marketing communications (Belch & Belch, 2009). This adoption of social media underscores its great importance for brand differentiation. Organisations use several forms of communication channels to reach their target audience, however, the effectiveness of social media in customer segmentation and personalisation is greatly recognised. As Mihaela (2012) argues, in a competitive market where products are similar, effective communication strategies can provide a sustainable competitive advantage. In a parity market, the only way by which organisations may be differentiated and stand out is creating engaging communication materials. More than 70% of the global internet population engage with various social media, making these platforms indispensable for any restaurant that is looking to boost their brand awareness, customer engagement and building positive consumer perceptions. (Parr, 2013).

Nelson (2015) highlights that social media platforms have emerged as key avenues for organisations to reach their customers and drive awareness. Brand awareness holds paramount importance for restaurants, representing the degree of recognition customers attribute to the marketing strategy they utilise in their promotion. Sponsored advertisement on social media platforms drive interest in the brands and captures attention. Such advertising endeavours build brand connections, and influence positive attitudes toward the products being promoted (Kochhar, 2020; Muniesa & Giménez, 2020). The two-way communication nature of the social media platforms enable brands to directly engage

with consumers and consumers respond in various capacities through liking, sharing and commenting (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2019). This direct feedback serves brands well because they are able to change strategies as it goes on. They discard the parts of their content that does not resonate with consumers and lean in more into what consumers constantly engage with.

The restaurant business is competitive and that increase in restaurant business competition means that customers nowadays have more dining choices to choose from than ever before, ranging from fast food to fine dining restaurants (Skinner & Chatzpoulou, 2020). The kind of social media advertising undertaken by a restaurant lends to how consumers view the restaurants - this is how customers classify a restaurant as to whether they are a fine dining establishment; fast casual restaurant; fast food restaurant or street food. These classifications are important because not all kinds of restaurants heavily invest in using social media advertising as a means of building brand awareness and consumer perceptions. For several restaurants that are deemed to be street food or holes-in-walls, word of mouth are seen as a good source of building brand awareness (Isaac et al, 2023). Such restaurant establishments are also seen as more communal biased so consumers who are aware are those who live in or around the restaurant establishment. Restaurant brands that utilise social media advertising as a core part of their communications are ones who are a step above the street food; these are ranging from casual restaurants all the way to fine dining restaurant establishments.

In 2020, the hospitality sector contributed about 3.9 billion Ghanaian cedis (640.9 million U.S. dollars) to the country's GDP. Over 40% of higher-income earners eat from restaurants daily, 36.4% of middle-income, and 31.7% of lower-income earners (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The restaurant business has become highly competitive as a result of major changes that have been introduced by service providers. Firms are therefore expected to provide excellent products and services, and deliver them in ways that will satisfy the needs of consumers to attain high

performance standards and to justify their purpose of existence (Isaac et al, 2023). Spread and patronage of restaurants especially fast food restaurants across Africa is driven by rising income levels, rapid urbanisation, changing lifestyles, and a growing middle class—estimated to reach 1.1 billion by 2060 (Dahir 2017).

Moreover, the rise of social media has led to the rise of a new kind of personality. These personalities, called influencers, are individuals with a substantial following across various platforms who can sway their audience's opinions, behaviours and perceptions. Influencers, according to Freberg et al (2011), are a type of independent, third-party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, videos and the use of other social media. Influencers are a huge and necessary force driving awareness for different brands. Influencers, particularly those focused on lifestyle and food, are powerful forces in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions regarding restaurant choices. These influencers create content that includes photos and videos that inform their followers of new restaurant openings, share and describe what it is they like or dislike about the establishment (De Veirman et al, 2017). These recommendations serve as a guide for their followers to either visit or avoid the establishment. Consumer awareness of brands is largely driven by where information comes from (Clemons, 2008). How they perceive the source of information will lend weight to whether or not they buy into the brand.

Young adults who have grown up in the digital age and exhibit characteristics of tech-savviness, active social media engagement, and a preference for brands that resonate with their values and lifestyles are drivers of social media usage (Wandhe, 2024). These drivers are more than likely to be plugged in with what happens on the internet, and that is how restaurants can reach them.

Despite the growing significance of social media advertising and influencer marketing, there is a gap in research that is specifically focused on their impact within the restaurant industry in Accra. Therefore, research on its effectiveness in driving brand awareness of restaurants in Accra is

essential. Also, it is essential to understand how customers perceive restaurants that lean heavily into social media advertisements and utilise influencers. While previous studies have explored social media marketing's broader implications on consumer behaviour (Cartwright et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2019; Mukherjee, 2020), there is limited research on how these strategies affect brand awareness for restaurants in Accra. This research will provide valuable insight on the efficacy of social media advertising and influencer marketing, enabling the restaurants to refine their strategies to better align with the preferences of their target audience (Kochhar, 2020). The study aims to fill this gap by investigating the influence of social media advertising and influencers on brand awareness and consumer perceptions in this context.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the last 5 years, the restaurant space in Accra has seen a lot of shifts and growth in the sector, with different kinds of cuisines growing in popularity among customers in the city. These restaurants operate within a highly competitive landscape, characterised by changing consumer tastes and preferences. At the heart of this dynamic environment lies influencers who take the time to visit these restaurant spaces to tout, explain and talk about the food they offer, the ambience and the kind of service customers can expect when they visit. These influencers utilise social media to constantly share their opinions of restaurants.

In today's digital era, where social media holds substantial sway over consumer perceptions and behaviours, comprehending the ramifications of social media advertising on brand awareness among customers is imperative. Numerous studies (Cartwright et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2019; Mukherjee, 2020) have extensively explored the broader domain of social media marketing and advertising and its implications on consumer behaviour. These studies showcase how different brands respond to changing consumer preferences by meeting them where they are.

The study acknowledges a significant geographical gap in existing research on the impact of social media advertising and influencer marketing within the restaurant industry, specifically in the Ghanaian context. While prior studies, Skinner, H., & Chatzopoulou, E., 2020; De Veirman et al., 2017; and Guerrero, K. J., 2023, have extensively examined these strategies in broader or more developed markets, there is limited empirical evidence focusing on Accra, a rapidly evolving and culturally unique urban environment. This gap underscores the necessity of understanding how digital marketing strategies affect brand awareness and consumer perceptions in Accra's restaurant sector. By focusing on the relationship between social media advertisement and influencer marketing employed by restaurants, this research aims to shed light on the dynamics shaping brand awareness among people living in Accra.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to explore and evaluate the influence of social media advertising and influencer marketing on brand awareness and consumer perceptions within the restaurant industry in Accra, Ghana. Specifically, the study aims to understand how different types of social media advertisements (such as video ads, carousels and sponsored posts) and influencer endorsements affect consumers' decisions to patronise restaurants, and their perceptions of the authenticity and credibility of these recommendations.

By focusing on the intersection of social media advertising, influencer marketing, and consumer behaviour, the study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how these elements interact to shape brand awareness and customer engagement.

This research is particularly relevant as restaurants increasingly rely on digital platforms to connect with their target audience. Understanding the impact of these strategies will help restaurant owners and marketers in Accra refine their marketing efforts, allocate resources more effectively, and ultimately enhance their brand's market presence.

Moreover, as Ghana is an emerging country, thereby an emerging market in global trade, the study will fill a significant gap in existing literature by focusing on the Accra context, where the dynamics of social media influence and consumer behaviour may differ from other regions. The findings will not only have practical implications for businesses in Accra. Still, they will also contribute to the broader academic discourse on social media marketing and consumer perception, particularly in emerging markets.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the influence of social media advertisement on brand awareness for restaurants in Accra
2. Investigate the role of food and lifestyle influencers in shaping audience perceptions of restaurant brands.
3. Examine influencers' credibility, relatability, and impact of influencers on consumer decision-making processes.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do various social media ads influence brand awareness and consumer engagement?
2. To what extent do influencers' recommendations/ endorsements shape audience perception of restaurant brands?
3. In what ways do credibility and relatability of influencers impact customer decision-making process?

1.6 SCOPE OF STUDY

The study will specifically focus on adults living and working in Accra. This demographic is active users of social media platforms and represent a significant consumer segment in the restaurant industry. While the study may have global implications, the primary focus will be on the Accra restaurant scene. The research will explore various social media advertising formats and influencer strategies used by restaurants to engage with this demographic. The research area was focused on the restaurant sector in Accra because it is one of the most active and visited places and generates a lot of foot traffic (Isaac et al, 2023).

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of social media advertising and influencer marketing in driving brand awareness for restaurants in Accra. Through quantitative analysis of customer data, the research would inform strategy formulation and decision-making. The findings from the research would help restaurants refine their communication efforts, enhance their competitive edge and concentrate resources on areas that bring the most results.

The study will contribute to the broader discourse on the role of influencers in shaping consumer perceptions in the restaurant industry, particularly in Accra.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The introductory chapter of the study establishes the foundation for exploring the relationship between social media strategies, influencer marketing and consumer behaviour in Accra's restaurant industry. Social media platforms have transformed brand interaction with consumers, particularly in the restaurant and food industry. In several competitive markets, social media is vital as a differentiator between brands. Social media helps restaurants build brand awareness and engage customers. Despite the widespread use of social media advertising and influencer marketing, their impact on restaurant brand awareness in Accra is under-researched. The study aims to investigate

how social media advertising and influencer marketing influence brand awareness and consumer perceptions in Accra's restaurant industry. The research aims to assess the effectiveness of different social media ad formats and influencer endorsements. At the end, this study hopes to contribute to broader academic discussions on social media marketing, particularly in emerging markets like Ghana.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter explores comprehensively the theoretical underpinnings that support the study; delving into relevant scholarly research to explain key concepts. This chapter encompasses the theoretical framework, conceptualisation and a thorough review of existing literature. This effectively places the current study in context within the broader academic discourse.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section explores the theories associated with the subjected to ascertain their relationship to the study. The study delves into four major theories: theory of planned behaviour, elaboration likelihood model, social learning theory and social contract theory

2.2.1 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), introduced by Icek Ajzen in 1991 is a relevant theory to understand why an individual behaves in a certain manner. According to TPB, an individual's behaviour is determined by their intention, which is influenced by three main factors: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. These factors when combined can predict the likelihood of an individual performing a behaviour. (Ajzen, 2011)

When applied to social media advertising and influencer marketing of restaurants, TPB offers significant insights. This theory can explain how consumer intentions to visit a restaurant are shaped and formed. Firstly, attitude toward the behaviour entails understanding consumers perceptions of social media advertising (videos, sponsored content, carousel etc) and how this influences their engagement levels and consequently impacting brand awareness. The attitude towards the restaurants may also be influenced by the influencers who endorse these restaurants.

Subjective norms play a crucial role, consisting societal or peer influences or in this instance influencer marketing that shape consumers' attitudes and interactions with restaurant brands in Accra. These subjective norms most often than not reflect the real or perceived social pressure to follow the recommendations made by these food influencers. Lastly, perceived behavioural control refers to consumers' beliefs regarding their ability to navigate and engage with various advertising formats on social media platforms, which ultimately affects their brand awareness of these restaurants. This behavioural control also reflects the consumers' perception of their ability to act on these recommendations. This could be due to factors like ease of access to the restaurants or the affordability of the restaurants being recommended. (Ajzen, 2002)

If consumers in Accra form a positive attitude towards a restaurant brand; perceive that their favourite influencers support the brand and believe that they have control over their behaviour/ actions they are more likely to visit the restaurant. Influencers help to greatly shape these three components of the theory by promoting the restaurants in Accra as trendy and desirable, which thereby influences the intentions of consumers to visit. Thus, TPB can explain the cognitive processes that underpin the impact of social media advertising and influencer marketing on consumer perception.

2.2.2 ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL

The Elaboration Likelihood Model introduced by Petty & Cacioppo (1986) explains how individuals process persuasive information and communication and make their decisions based on two distinct routes: the central and the peripheral route.

The central route is used when an individual is highly motivated to process the message, this often happens when the information is perceived as personally relevant. This involves careful and thoughtful consideration of the message content captured in the communication. The peripheral route is employed when the individuals have low motivation or lack the ability to engage in detailed

message processing. Thus the consumers rely on superficial cues such as the attractiveness of the communicator or the credibility of the source. (Petty et al, 1993)

In the context of social media advertising and influencer marketing, the ELM theory provides a framework to understand how consumers would process persuasive messages and communication. When the consumers are more invested in what a restaurant has to offer, they are likely to engage with the central route processing. The consumers would evaluate the quality of the restaurant's food; the services being offered and the reviews shared from other consumers. On the other hand, when influencers are utilised to spread the word of the restaurant, this triggers the peripheral route processing. This is because consumers might be influenced by the popularity of the influencer being used or the attractiveness and likability of the influencer. When this happens, the consumer does not engage in any in-depth analysis of the restaurant and extends the virtues of the influencer onto the restaurant. (Erdogan, 1999) A food influencer's lifestyle or social proof which comes in the form of likes, comments, shares etc on social media can create a halo effect, positively influencing perceptions of the restaurant without requiring detailed analysis.

In the Ghanaian restaurant sector, ELM is really relevant as consumers are exposed to vast amounts of content on the various social media platforms. Influencer marketing does an appropriate job of tapping into the peripheral route, leveraging trust and social proof provided by influencers to enhance brand awareness and positively shape consumer perceptions (Hsu et al., 2013). Furthermore, using engaging social media ads and influencers cuts through the vast amount of noise (content) that consumers are exposed to.

2.2.3 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social Learning Theory introduced by Albert Bandura in 1977 explains how individuals learn behaviours, norms and values by observing others, especially role models or influential figures in a social context. Bandura explains how people can learn new behaviours by watching the actions of

others and what the outcomes of those behaviours are. This is especially true when the person being observed is perceived as a role model. The theory highlights the importance of imitation, modelling, and reinforcement in shaping behaviour. Humans are social creatures, therefore, what is acceptable in a social context is what most often than not is modelled by other individuals.

When it comes to social media advertising and influencer marketing, social learning theory explains how various consumers learn about new brands, services and experiences through the actions and communications of influencers. When influencers model behaviours such as dining at a restaurant and sharing their positive experiences, followers are likely to imitate those behaviours, especially if they perceive the influencer as credible and successful (Bandura, 1986). Influencers' need to be perceived as relatable and trustworthy means making their followers feel like they are friends. This is why most food influencers in Accra use certain monikers like, 'Hi Guys!', "Hi Besties & Baddies", 'Hi my lovely people' and 'Come with me'. All these phrases are used to signal to their followers that they are creating this content for them. This parasocial relationship means that consumers who are followers would be keen to follow what the influencers are doing. This process and closeness contributes to brand awareness and shapes the perceptions of consumers by providing social proof and reinforcement of the brand message. (Wood, 1989). When followers observe positive outcomes (e.g., enjoyment of dining out, exclusivity of the restaurant brands) associated with influencer-endorsed restaurants, they are more likely to replicate the behaviour.

According to Agyepong (2017), the celebrity/ influencer as a form of capital can explain why the qualities of celebrity can be transferred across social fields and in this case can be transferred to the restaurant brands. These influencers actively create a social learning environment when they showcase their dining experiences thus encouraging their followers to visit these establishments. Therefore, social Learning Theory helps to explain the power of influence that social media personalities wield in shaping consumer preferences and behaviours.

2.2.4 SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

The social contract theory was advanced by English and French philosophers, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The theory states that individuals enter into an implicit agreement with society at large where the individuals agree to abide by certain rules and norms set in place in exchange for protection and mutual benefits (Gauthier, 1986). This theory then provides a basis for understanding societal norms, obligations and trust in social relationships that individuals enter into. This is even seen in the way business exhibit ethics in their marketing.

In the context of influencer marketing, social contract theory is necessary in explaining the ethical relationship between an influencer and their followers. Influencers enter into an implicit social contract where they are expected to provide honest, authentic recommendations in exchange for trust and loyalty of their followers. Certain schools of thought however believe that influencers have nefarious reasons for their recommendations. According to Lawrence (2024), the modus operandi of influencers is to sway personal and societal behaviour to achieve desired goals. There is nothing innocent about this. They derive their income, status, and power by consciously manipulating public opinion and action.

Therefore, when influencers breach this social contract by promoting low-quality products or providing misleading endorsements, it can lead to a loss of credibility and trust, negatively impacting both the influencer and the brands they represent (Beauchamp et al, 2004). This has led to an increase in regulations from Meta, YouTube and TikTok on what influencers can say in their posts and must state when anything they post is paid for. This is to distinguish between their honest review and a paid for review. (Roberts, 2020). This theory is what makes it essential for influencers to make the distinction between paid ads versus honest endorsements when posting their content.

Within the restaurant sector in Ghana, these influencers are most often than not seen as people who must say the truth about their experiences. Therefore, there are ethical obligations towards their

audience they must uphold. The success of influencer marketing depends on maintaining this trust and ensuring that the influencer adheres to social expectations of transparency and authenticity (Freeman & Gilbert, 1988).

2.2.5 INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THE THEORIES

Petty and Cacioppo's ELM offers a nuanced understanding of how different consumers process social media messages based on their motivation and ability to engage with content. This is a helpful tool for examining the dual mechanisms through which advertising and influencer marketing impact brand awareness and perceptions. The Theory of Planned Behaviour is helpful for dissecting the cognitive and motivational processes that underpin consumer responses to social media advertising and influencer marketing. It explains the ties of consumer behaviour to the attitudinal, normative, and control factors influenced by these marketing strategies. Social Learning Theory explains the observational learning and social reinforcement mechanisms that underpin influencer marketing. It provides a way to explain why influencers are effective at shaping consumer perceptions and driving restaurant visits. Meanwhile, the Social Contract Theory is critical in addressing the ethical dimension of influencer marketing, emphasising the importance of maintaining transparency and trust to sustain audience loyalty.

This study has selected the above theories to ground the research on. The theories ensure a multidimensional approach to evaluating the effects of social media advertising and influencer marketing on brand awareness and consumer perceptions. These theories collectively illuminate the psychological, social, communicative, and ethical factors driving consumer behaviour in Accra's restaurant industry. By leveraging these frameworks, the study provides both theoretical depth and practical relevance, offering actionable insights for marketers and restaurateurs in Accra.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section delves into the concepts that build up the study. It provides deep understanding of the concepts and its related literature.

2.3.1 SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as ‘a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content’. Social media advertising has become a ubiquitous marketing tool for businesses seeking to engage with consumers in the digital age. Social media advertising falls under the broad umbrella of digital marketing/ internet marketing. The pivot of marketing to adapt to the digital age is due to various circumstances - material and energy shortages, inflation, economic recessions, high unemployment, dying industriesand effects due to rapid technological changes in certain industries. (Bala & Verma, 2018) Various forms of social media advertising have emerged, each offering unique advantages and opportunities for brand promotion and consumer engagement (Sunny, & Anael, 2016). Sponsored content involves paying social media platforms to display promotional content in users' feeds or timelines. These advertisements seamlessly blend into users' browsing experiences, appearing as native posts rather than traditional ads. Chen et al. (2019) suggest that sponsored content can be highly effective in capturing users' attention and generating engagement, as it feels less intrusive and more authentic compared to traditional banner ads.

The different social media platforms have different unique presences and advantages. For example, companies promote their products on Instagram by posting attractive pictures (Newberry 2016). This is due to the visual nature of Instagram. Marketers make good use of social media platforms to stimulate brand awareness and enhance brand loyalty (Zhou et al. 2012).

Video advertising on social media platforms has gained popularity due to its engaging and immersive nature. Brands can create short video ads or sponsor longer-form content, such as

tutorials or product reviews. Studies by Li et al. (2019) demonstrate the effectiveness of video advertising in capturing users' attention and driving brand recall and purchase intent.

Research by Chatterjee and Kang (2018) suggests that carousel ads can increase ad recall and engagement, as users are more likely to swipe through multiple images to explore the content. Carousel ads and slideshows allow brands to showcase multiple images or videos within a single ad unit, providing a more immersive and interactive experience for users.

Likewise, Agarwal (2020), argues that user-generated content involve encouraging users to create and share content related to a brand or its products. This form of advertising capitalises on the power of social proof and peer recommendations. Research by Kim and Johnson (2016) suggests that user-generated content campaigns can foster brand advocacy and authenticity, as consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from their peers

2.3.2 THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING STRATEGIES ON BRAND AWARENESS

Several studies (Aydin, 2021; Makrides et al, 2020; Bilgin, 2018) have explored the remarkable efficacy of social media advertising in fostering brand awareness through diverse strategies. A key advantage of social media advertising lies in its capacity for heightened exposure. Given that consumers actively seek content on social media platforms, businesses can leverage these channels to reach millions of users, thereby enhancing accessibility and visibility (Makrides et al, 2020). This exposure not only facilitates positive brand associations but also contributes to the overall enhancement of the brand's image. Researchers also have identified a positive correlation between brand awareness and brand equity, thereby examining the important role of expanding awareness through social media advertising (Alhaddad, 2015).

A crucial determinant of influencing brand awareness is a positive user experience which emerges through social media advertisements. Social media platforms offer brands an unprecedented level of

interactivity and entertainment, enabling direct engagement with consumers (Efendioglu and Durmaz, 2022). Researchers have established that informative and engaging content in social media advertisements significantly augments brand awareness and fosters favourable consumer attitudes toward the product and in this situation the restaurants.

Another advantage lies in the enhancement of brand recall facilitated by social media advertising. Studies indicate that social media advertising acts as a bridge between consumers and their purchasing decisions, as brand exposure through social networking sites increases consumers' familiarity with the brand, thereby influencing their purchasing behaviour (Nofal et al, 2020). This underscores the effectiveness of social media advertising in bolstering brand recall and steering consumer purchasing choices.

2.3.3 SPONSORED CONTENT AND BRAND AWARENESS

Sponsored content on social media platforms offer brands an unprecedented level of interactivity, enabling direct engagement with consumers (Efendioglu and Durmaz, 2022). It has been established that informative and engaging content on social media significantly augments brand awareness and fosters favourable attitudes toward the product.

Sponsored content involves paying social media platforms to display promotional content in users' feeds or timelines. These advertisements seamlessly blend into users' browsing experiences, it takes a while before users are able to distinguish between which post is sponsored and which is not. This is because social media ads are designed to appear as native posts. Chen et al. (2019) suggest that sponsored content can be highly effective in capturing users' attention and generating engagement, as it feels less intrusive and more authentic compared to traditional banner ads.

Effective utilisation of social networks further enhances the success of sponsored content for brand awareness. Another advantage lies in the enhancement of brand recall facilitated by these content. Studies indicate that sponsored content acts as a bridge between consumers and their purchasing

decisions, as brand exposure through social networking sites increases consumers' familiarity with the brand, thereby influencing their purchasing behaviour (Nofal and Aljuhmani, 2020). This underscores the effectiveness of sponsored content in bolstering brand recall and steering consumer purchasing choices. Additionally, an increase in engagement metrics serves as a tangible indicator of the effectiveness of sponsored content for brand awareness. These engagement metrics are provided by various social media platforms that enable brands to effectively track who engaged with the sponsored content and at which times these engagements happened. This makes it easy for brands to cluster and group their customers.

2.3.4 INFLUENCER MARKETING

An influencer is a person, a group or organisation that has the power to affect the decisions of a target audience on a digital platform. This is because of their fame, trustworthiness, knowledge, prestige, or relationship with their viewers. With the help of the internet's accessibility, speed of dissemination and demassification of communications, certain contributors obtain a huge following and establish a fanbase transforming them into social media influencers (Influence L., 2020). Consumers are growingly dependent on peer- to- peer interaction; trusting the word of people they can identify with. Due to this quest, influencer marketing has become more and more important as a crucial element of digital marketing strategies of firms according to the Association of National Advertisers (2018).

Influencer marketing is a marketing technique that leverages the influence of influential persons or opinion leaders to increase brand recognition and/or purchase intent among customers (Brown and Hayes 2008; Scott, 2015). In the current media landscape, channels like television stations, radio stations and newspapers are no longer the primary source of information for consumers. Consumers are more likely to search for information on Instagram, Google or TikTok than peruse newspapers. (Afortey, 2022). Customers increasingly use social media channels or virtual communities to

exchange information and create relationships with each other (Hair, Clark, and Shapiro 2010). Since, influencers on social media utilize these same channels, they provide distinct value to both consumers and brands/ companies looking to advertise and reach out to these consumers. Freberg et al. (2011) defined social media influencers as "a new sort of independent third-party endorser who influences audience attitudes via blogs, tweets, and other social media"

Campbell and Farrell (2020) assert that influencer marketing leverages individuals with large social media followings (influencers) to promote products or services to their audiences. Influencers are perceived as credible and trustworthy by their followers, making their endorsements valuable for brands. Studies by Jin and Phua (2014) highlight the significant impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness and purchase intent, particularly among younger demographics.

Social media influencers who engage with their followers and have a sizeable reach are able to engage with their followers and influence their brand awareness and purchase intent. Influencers have the keen ability to make recommendations on behalf of the brands as third parties to build trust towards the brand. The loyalty of the audience is what provides the influencers with the ability to drive traffic to a company's social media pages and increase its social media exposure to create the brand's perception. A lot of brands utilise this to move consumers from online to offline engagement. This comes in the form of driving traffic to a company's brick-and-mortar establishment.

In a report published by Gallagher (2018), brand engagement because of social media influencers has increased from 81% in 2017 to 90% in 2018. Research reveals that social media influencers wield significant influence in heightening awareness due to their extensive reach, capacity for rapid content dissemination, and amplification of content reach (Patmawati and Miswanto, 2022). Collaborating with influencers proves instrumental in building brand awareness, driving sales, and

fostering consumer engagement, highlighting the importance of influencer partnerships in brand promotion and awareness (Patmawati and Miswanto, 2022).

As a social media advertising strategy, influencer marketing has evolved as a strategic tool that combines the reach of digital platforms with the persuasive power of personal endorsements. Brands utilise influencers to create relatable and authentic content that resonates with target audiences, thereby enhancing brand awareness and influencing consumer perceptions (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). Influencer marketing is particularly effective in industries like hospitality and dining, where experiential elements and visual appeal play significant roles in consumer decision-making (Booth & Matic, 2011).

2.3.5 INFLUENCERS AND FOOD INFLUENCERS

The rise of the social media influencer has been a significant development in digital marketing over the past decade. Freberg et al. (2011) define social media influencers as independent third-party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through their social media channels. Social media influencers are online personalities with a big following on one or more social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, or personal blogs) who have an effect on their followers (Agrawal 2016; Varsamis 2018). In contrast to celebrities or public figures that are well-known through traditional media, social media influencers are "ordinary individuals" who become "online celebrities" through generating and posting content on social media. Typically, these social media influencers have a niche where they have knowledge in particular fields, such as healthy living, travel, food, lifestyle, beauty, and fashion.

These individuals have established credibility and audience reach in specific niches, often using social media platforms to share content that influences their followers' opinions and behaviours (Abidin, 2016). These influencers range from traditional celebrities - who use their social media pages as an extension of their brand - to micro-influencers with smaller but highly engaged

followings. Food influencers are a subset of influencers, their focus specifically on culinary content, including restaurant reviews, food photography, recipes, and gastronomic experiences (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

According to Hanifati (2015), food influencers are individuals who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on culinary matters. They typically share content related to restaurant reviews, cooking tips, and food trends. Their influence stems from their perceived authenticity and relatability, which resonates with followers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). For a lot of food influencers their likability and ease in front of a camera drives how well consumers respond to their content. When consumers determine the trustworthiness of an influencer, it becomes easier for there to be positive attitude building towards the restaurant that these influencers promote.

Food influencers play a pivotal role in the restaurant industry because they shape consumer perceptions and dining choices. They often provide detailed insights into restaurant offerings, ambiance, and service quality, which can significantly influence their followers' decisions to visit a particular establishment (Choe & Kim, 2018). The visual nature of food content, coupled with personal narratives, makes food influencers effective in creating engaging and persuasive content that enhances brand awareness (Lim et al., 2017).

A study by Lou and Yuan (2019) found that influencer-generated content significantly affects brand awareness, purchase intentions, and overall consumer attitudes. In the restaurant industry specifically, Tafesse and Wood (2021) demonstrated that influencer recommendations can significantly boost restaurant visits and positive word-of-mouth. Food influencers' endorsements can carry significant weight, especially in markets like Accra, where dining culture is becoming increasingly linked to social media exposure and community-driven recommendations (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020).

2.3.6 RESTAURANT BRAND CLASSIFICATION

Restaurant brands can be classified in various ways, including by cuisine type, service style, price point, and target demographic. Ryu et al. (2012) proposed a classification system based on the dining experience, categorising restaurants into quick-service which includes fast food, casual dining, and fine dining establishments. These classifications can be further broken down depending on the country. These classifications typically include:

- **Fine Dining:** These are high-end restaurants offering premium service, gourmet cuisine, and luxurious atmosphere. Fine dining establishments focus on exclusivity and exceptional quality, often charging premium prices for the experience (Harrington, Ottenbacher, & Fauser, 2017). Several of these fine dining restaurants can be found in luxury hotels as well whereby the hotels publicise these restaurants as an extension of their offerings. Where a restaurant is located also contributes to its perception of being fine-dining (Chen et al, 2020). In Ghana, a lot of restaurants who want to be considered fine-dining are located in Labone, Cantonments, Osu, East Legon and Airport Residential. This is due to the fact that these locations are considered the premium location, thereby transferring that exclusiveness on any restaurant that is situated there. (Obi & Nysschen, 2024)
- **Casual Dining:** These are the restaurants that offer a more relaxed atmosphere compared to fine dining, however, they still provide table service and a higher-quality dining experience than fast food. These restaurants are popular for social gatherings and family meals (Hlee et al, 2019).
- **Fast Casual:** This is a hybrid between fast food and casual dining, offering higher-quality food and a more upscale environment than traditional fast food, but without the full table service of casual dining. Fast casual has become a popular choice for urban consumers seeking quick, healthy, and affordable meals (Vercammen et al, 2019).

- **Fast Food/Quick Service:** These restaurants prioritize speed, convenience, and affordability. Food is typically pre-prepared or quickly made to order, often for takeout or delivery (Carson et Boege, 2020). Due to the nature of these restaurants, they are franchised globally; these are the KFCs, McDonalds, Pizza Hut and Starbucks.
- **Ethnic Restaurants:** Establishments specialising in specific cultural or regional cuisines. These are the restaurants that specialise in African cuisine, Thai cuisine, Chinese cuisine etc. (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015)

The positioning of a restaurant brand is influenced by factors such as food quality, atmosphere, service quality, location and price fairness (Han & Ryu, 2009). These factors contribute to the overall brand image and affect consumer perceptions and choices. The positioning of a restaurant also leads to the kind of influencers it chooses in its marketing.

Marketing strategies vary significantly based on restaurant classification. For instance, Gagić et al. (2013) found that fine dining restaurants tend to focus more on experiential marketing and relationship building, while quick-service restaurants prioritise convenience and value in their messaging. This directly lends to the investment made into their social media advertising. When fine dining restaurants advertise on social media; there is an enhanced emphasis on the craft of the food and how the space looks.

Understanding these classifications is crucial for marketers to align their strategies with the expectations and preferences of their target audiences. Influencer marketing campaigns can be tailored according to the restaurant's classification to effectively reach and engage potential customers (Kotler et al, 2014). Influencers would approach fine dining and fast casual restaurants differently, highlighting exclusivity and experience in fine dining, and convenience and quality in fast casual settings.

2.3.7 RESTAURANTS IN GHANA

In Ghana, the restaurant sector represents the largest and fastest growing part of the domestic economy, increasing at a rate of 20 percent annually (Peters and Kontor-Kwateng 2016). For Mensah and Mensah (2018), this growth can be attributed to factors such as urbanisation, a rising middle class, and changing consumer preferences. The burgeoning middle class with disposable income might be one of the significant drivers of the restaurant industry growth. (Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei, 2013).

The restaurants found in Ghana range from local eateries serving traditional Ghanaian cuisine to international franchises (fast food) and fine dining establishments (Twum & Peprah, 2020). Social media has become a key marketing tool for restaurants in Accra, with many establishments using platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook to reach their target audience (Osei-Frimpong & McLean, 2018). The influence of digital media has transformed marketing approaches in the industry, with many establishments collaborating with influencers to enhance brand visibility and engage with tech-savvy consumers (Boateng & Okoe, 2015).

However, the industry faces challenges such as high operational costs, inconsistent food supply chains, and regulatory hurdles (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017). These challenges impact the ability of restaurants to maintain consistent quality and service levels. The global pandemic in 2020 exacerbated these challenges and a lot of restaurants shut down as a result. With the current level of inflation at 22.8% (GSS, 2024), the industry's woes keep worsening.

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping restaurant preferences in Ghana. Omari et al. (2015) note that while there's growing interest in international cuisines, particularly among younger urban consumers, there remains a strong preference for traditional Ghanaian dishes.

2.3.8 CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Consumer perception refers to how individuals interpret, make sense and form opinions of marketing stimuli, which in turn affects their attitudes and behaviours towards a brand (Schiffman

& Wisenblit, 2015). Perception is influenced by various factors, including personal experiences, cultural background, observations and social interactions with marketing messages.

Social influence involves the effects of others on an individual's beliefs, feelings, and behaviours. It encompasses concepts such as conformity, compliance, and obedience, which can significantly shape consumer behaviour and perception towards a brand (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Social media amplifies social influence by providing platforms for peer interactions and influencer endorsements, which can alter consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This influence plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, as people often look to others—whether peers or influencers—for guidance on what products to purchase or what services to trust (Kotler et al., 2017).

Consumer perceptions of restaurants are shaped by a complex variety of factors. Ryu et al. (2012) identified food quality, service quality, price, atmosphere, and convenience as key determinants of consumer perceptions in the restaurant industry.

Due to the rise of the social platforms, online reviews and recommendations have become increasingly influential in shaping these perceptions. A study by Zhang et al. (2014) found that online reviews significantly impact consumers' decision-making processes when choosing restaurants, with positive reviews increasing the likelihood of patronage.

Social proof theory, as applied to restaurant choice, suggests that consumers are more likely to patronise establishments that appear popular among their peers. This is particularly relevant in the age of social media, where "food porn" and check-ins at trendy restaurants are commonplace (Rich et al., 2016). A study by Lu et al. (2013) found that recommendations from friends and family are often more influential than professional reviews or advertising in determining restaurant choice.

The concept of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) has also become relevant in the context of restaurant patronage. Przybylski et al. (2013) describe FOMO as a pervasive apprehension that others might

be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. In the restaurant industry, this can manifest as a desire to visit trending or "Instagrammable" establishments. This has led to the rise of trendy and aesthetically pleasing restaurants; a lot of times restaurants put a lot of focus on the look of a restaurant often at the detriment of the food quality.

In Ghana, cultural influences play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) noted that factors such as traditional food preferences, social dining norms, and perceptions of foreign cuisines all influence how Ghanaian consumers perceive different restaurant offerings.

2.3.9 INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS

Influencers can shape consumer perceptions through their endorsements, content creation, and interactions with brands. Consumers often rely on the authenticity and trustworthiness of influencers when forming their perceptions of a brand, especially in industries like hospitality and dining, where personal experiences are key to decision-making (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencers can alter consumers' perceptions when they highlight certain unique features, benefits, or experiences associated with a brand, thereby affecting attitudes and purchase intentions (Jin & Phua, 2014).

The rise of social media influencers in Ghana has been rapid, mirroring global trends. Majeed et al (2021) note that Ghanaian influencers, particularly those focusing on lifestyle and food, have gained significant followings and influence in recent years. This is due to the fact that the content they post are aspirational; their followers aspire to have that same lifestyle. Cultural nuances play a significant role in influencer effectiveness in Accra. Kuada and Hinson (2012) highlight the importance of local context and cultural sensitivity in marketing communications in Ghana, which extends to influencer marketing. Influencers have to be nimble in how they communicate with the audience because one wrong word or expression and the Ghanaian audience would find them

offensive. Influencers who are perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable about the local dining scene can enhance consumer perceptions of quality, service, and value at the restaurants they endorse, leading to increased foot traffic and customer loyalty.

While there's limited academic research on influencer campaigns for restaurants specifically in Ghana, case studies from industry reports suggest that collaborations between local influencers and restaurants in Accra have led to increased brand awareness and patronage. However, more rigorous academic study is needed in this area.

2.3.10 AUTHENTICITY, RELATABILITY AND CREDIBILITY OF INFLUENCERS

The effectiveness of influencer marketing heavily depends on how authentic, reliable, and credible their audience perceives an influencer. Authenticity refers to the genuineness of influencers, reflecting how true they are to themselves and their audience (Audrezet et al, 2018). Relatability is a situation where an ordinary person might see themselves reflected in the media they consume. Influencers conduct themselves to sustain their "relatability", a notion understood as accessibility, authenticity, believability, emulatability, and intimacy (Abidin, 2016). Credibility reflects the trust that consumers place in the influencer's expertise and judgment (Audrezet et al., 2018). It encompasses both trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

These attributes are crucial determinants of an influencer's persuasive power. Authentic influencers who consistently provide valuable and honest content are more likely to be trusted by their followers (Veirman, Hudders, & Nelson, 2019). Credibility enhances the effectiveness of endorsements, as consumers are more receptive to recommendations from sources they deem knowledgeable and trustworthy (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). A recent Twitter survey indicated that customers may trust social media influencers as much as they trust their friends (Swant 2016).

Research suggests that consumers are more likely to be persuaded by influencers they perceive as authentic and trustworthy, as these qualities create a sense of connection and relatability (Schouten

et al., 2020). For restaurants, partnering with influencers who are seen as credible can significantly impact consumer perceptions of quality and brand integrity. This could potentially lead to positive shifts in brand awareness and consumer perceptions.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The theoretical framework section explores Social Learning Theory, Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The Social Learning Theory examines how people learn behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions by observing others. This theory is crucial for influencer marketing as it offers insights into the selection of certain influencers over others. Through this theory, the researchers examines how people learn from role models or influential figures. The Elaboration Likelihood Model describes ways in which positive attitude can be formed about a brand, product or organisation.

The literature review highlighted the complex relationship and connection between social media advertising, influencer marketing, brand awareness and consumer perceptions in the restaurant industry, with a focus on the Ghanaian context. This literature review underscores the need for more specific research on these dynamics within Accra's restaurant scene.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methods used to conduct the study. The research approach, design/ technique, population, sampling, instrumentation, and how data was collected and analysed are presented.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The term research approach encompasses the overarching strategy guiding the study, delineating the methods and procedures employed to collect and analyse data, ultimately aiding in achieving the research objectives (Zegeye et al, 2009). The study utilised the quantitative approach to effectively examine social media advertising and influencers utilised by restaurants in Accra. Quantitative research is a methodological approach focused on the measurement and analysis of variables to identify relationships, patterns, or trends (Black, 1999). Unlike qualitative research, which seeks to understand meanings and experiences, quantitative research is used to test hypotheses and establish generalisable findings. The goal is to collect numerical data and apply statistical techniques to quantify variables and determine the relationship between them (Cooksey, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Quantitative research often involves collecting data from a large sample size. Given the diverse nature of respondents and their varied interactions with social media advertising, a large sample size enabled researchers to capture a representative cross-section of the target population. This approach also allowed for precisely measuring variables such as brand awareness, social media advertising exposure, influencer marketing and consumer perception. (Levy, 2022; Sarker & AL-Muaalemi, 2022)

The study adopted the positivism paradigm because it prioritises objectivity in research, aiming to uncover universal truths through systematic observation and analysis (Levitt et al., 2022).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a correlational and descriptive research design for the study. The descriptive research design is used to systematically portray the characteristics of persons, situations, or groups and the frequency with which certain phenomenon occur; these studies observe, describe, and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs (Reiss, 1971). For this study, the descriptive design was used to describe the phenomenon of influencer marketing and social media advertising on brand awareness and consumer perceptions in Accra. This design allowed for the collection of numerical data that summarised characteristics of the population, such as the frequency of influencer-following behaviour among consumers, the extent to which restaurant choices are influenced by social media, and the level of brand awareness generated through influencers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The study sought to understand the demographic profile of consumers who saw social media advertising and followed influencers, how frequently they engaged with social media ads, their awareness of different restaurants in Accra, and their perceptions of restaurants based on the influencer endorsements. The study used this specific design to understand what the current state of influencer marketing and its reach in the restaurant industry looks like in Accra.

Researcher utilise correlational design to measure two or more variables to investigate the extent to which the variables are related (Seeram, 2019). This design examines the relationship that exists between variables to determine whether changes in one variable are associated with changes in another. Therefore, this design is appropriate for examining the relationships between variables without manipulating them. In this study, it was assessed whether there was a significant correlation between the frequency of social media influencer and advertising exposure (independent variable)

and consumer perceptions plus brand awareness (dependent variables) of restaurants in Accra (Cohen, 2013). The correlational design was important to understand the questions that cropped up during the study. These questions included:

- Is there a positive correlation between the frequency of influencer exposure and brand awareness?
- How strongly do variables like influencer credibility and perceived authenticity correlate with consumer trust in restaurants?
- What is the relationship between consumer perceptions of influencers and their intentions to visit the restaurants?

The blend of the correlational and descriptive research design is well-suited because the descriptive design provides a baseline to understanding the population and variables, ensuring that the data collected is comprehensive. The correlational design then builds on this baseline to explore the relationships between the variables.

The study also used regression analysis to interpret the data. Regression analysis is a tool for the investigation of relationships between a dependent variable and one or two more independent variables found in this study (Sykes, 1993). For this study, the dependent variables were consumer perceptions and brand awareness. Through the regression model, the study was able to assess the strength of the relationship between these dependent variables and the independent variables being social media advertisement and influencer marketing. Regression analysis is used as a predictor of certain phenomena and explains whether the relationship between the variables are negative or positive. It also highlights whether the relationship between the variables studied are significant (Allen, 2004)

3.4 POPULATION, SAMPLE SIZE & SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The population of study refers to the entire group of individuals relevant to the research from which a sample will be drawn (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013). In the study on the effects of social media advertising and influencer marketing on brand awareness and consumer perceptions of restaurants in Accra, the target population included individuals who live and work in Accra; are active on social media and dine out at restaurants. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, there are about 2.5 million people in Accra. Ghana, on a whole, has about 45% of its population who are active social media users (Datareportal, 2024). In urban areas like Accra, the penetration of social media skews higher. For this study, the target was people fell between 22 - 61years of age.

The study employs a sample size of 114 respondents as recommended by Hair et al. (2010), that for a quantitative investigation, a sample size of 100 or more is sufficient. This is because, according to Hair et al. (2018), a simple regression analysis needs at least 50 samples and generally 100 samples for most research situations. Also, the sample-to-item ratio is generally recommended for analysis. This is used to decide sample size based on the number of items in a study. The ratio should not be less than 5-to-1 (Gorsuch, 1983; Hatcher, 1994; Suhr, 2006). In this study, there are 20 items (questions) which required a minimum of 100 respondents.

The sampling techniques employed in this study was the convenience and purposive sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where participants are selected based on their availability, accessibility, and willingness to take part in the study (Hossan et al, 2023). The study involved selecting participants based on their accessibility and convenience to the researcher. The study also selected participants that were followers of certain food influencers on Instagram who were able to respond to the online survey. The study collected data from participants through the various social media platforms the researcher uses including WhatsApp, X(formerly Twitter) and Instagram. Social media is so widely used and the target demographic is so

large, surveys allowed the researcher to quickly obtain insights from a wide range of participants in a very short amount of time.

Purposive sampling was also employed because participants were intentionally selected based on specific characteristics, traits, or qualities that align with the research objectives. This sampling technique was necessary because the individuals selected were active followers of food influencers and ones who frequently visit restaurants based on influencer recommendations. These participants were chosen because they were most likely to provide relevant insights into how influencer marketing and social media advertising impact their perceptions and behaviours as consumers.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The research adopted a structured survey or questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. Saunders et al. (2012), argue that questionnaires are a commonly used data collection method in business and management studies. Using this standardized questionnaire in the study was intended to maintain consistency and reliability in obtaining pertinent data from the respondents.

The instrument included a multiple-choice section to gather demographic information and behaviour. The questions included income level, age, use of social media and frequency of dining out.

The 5-point Likert scale was employed to measure the participants' agreement with statements related to social media advertising, brand awareness, influencer marketing and consumer perceptions. (DeVellis et al, 2021).

Due to the study's focus on social media advertising and influencers, online surveys were an appropriate method of reaching the target audience. Online distribution ensures that the sample includes active social media users who are likely to engage with influencer content. The scalability

of online surveys was advantageous as it allowed researchers to gather insights from a diverse sample within a relatively short timeframe.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics for the Likert scale data were informed by its effectiveness in summarising and interpreting responses (Trochim, 2006). Initially, responses were systematically organised, and any discrepancies in data entry were rectified to ensure data integrity. Numerical codes were assigned to the Likert scale options to facilitate a quantitative representation of participants' degrees of agreement or disagreement, enabling a nuanced analysis (DeVellis, 2016). Mean and standard deviation calculations were then employed to derive essential descriptive statistics, shedding light on the central tendency and variability of responses (Trochim, 2006). The measures were calculated to understand the general trends in the data.

The data was analysed with inferential statistics. These are ones to test hypotheses and draw conclusions about the relationships between variables. The analysis used for the inferential statistics included correlation analysis, regression analysis and T-tests and ANOVA. These statistics provided valuable insights into the sentiments expressed within the dataset and facilitated the inference-making process. Inferential statistics was employed to examine the relationships between social media advertising, influencer marketing, and brand awareness.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations in research are important to maintain responsible and credible inquiry, contributing to the overall integrity of the study. In alignment with ethical standards, prior to data collection, ethical approval was sought from the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UNIMAC). This process aligns with established guidelines emphasising the necessity of ethical

oversight to safeguard participants and uphold the integrity of the research process (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Participants of the study sought consent. When the link for the survey was clicked, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to not participate if they wished not to. Personal data that could identify the participants was not collected. Participants were assured of total anonymity in their participation in the study. Participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary and they could click out of the webpage without any repercussions.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the methods employed in conducting the study, encompassing the research approach, design, population, sampling, instrumentation, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations. The research adopted a quantitative approach to evaluating the effects of social media advertising and influencer marketing on consumer perceptions and brand awareness of restaurants in the capital of Ghana, Accra.

The research design was descriptive and correlative, aiming to provide an understanding the current consumer landscape and identifying relationships between variables (e.g., influencer credibility and brand awareness) are essential for actionable insights. Descriptive data provides the foundation to understand, and correlational data helps marketers and businesses make informed decisions based on the connections between the factors identified. Purposive and convenience sampling was employed for selection of the participants. Data collection involved structured Likert scale questionnaire. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, with measures in place to obtain informed consent, ensure anonymity and confidentiality. These ethical safeguards contributed to the overall integrity and credibility of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS & PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the study data and thoroughly discusses the results and findings about the study's objectives. The chapter is structured into sections corresponding to the study's objectives and goals and provides insights needed to comprehend the results.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The study collected data on the respondents who took part in the survey. The results showed the gender, age, and employment status. The results are presented in Table 4.1. The study also collected data on how often (the frequency) the respondents used social media and visited restaurants in the city. The results from these questions are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1 - Demographic Profile

Frequency = 114

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	31	27.2
Female	83	72.8
Total	114	100
Age		
22-31	72	63.2
32-41	38	33.3
42-51	3	2.6
52-61	1	0.9
Total	114	100
Employment Status		
Student	9	7.9
Self-Employed	28	24.6

Salaried Worker	70	61.4
Unemployed	7	6.1
Total	114	100

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. In this survey, the demographic data reveals a significant gender imbalance with about 73% female respondents and 27% male respondents. This significant imbalance could indicate a skewed participation and/ or interest level based on the topic of research. This could possibly indicate a greater interest in social media content related to restaurants and food influencers. This gender skew aligns with prior research that women tend to be more influenced by visually appealing content and peer recommendations on social media platforms. (Lous & Yuan, 2019). These are elements that restaurant brands utilise to advertise. According to Jones & Nash (2021), females use eating out / dining at restaurants experiences to portray their identity by sharing themselves in the most exclusive locations. This shows up in the respondents in this survey. The gender disparity is also evident in other research that state that when people are considering where to eat out, women were more likely to indulge in dining experiences than men (Zhang et al, 2018).

In terms of age distribution, there is also a significant imbalance where 63% of respondents fell within the 22-31 years age group, followed by 33% in the 32-41 years age group, 2.6% aged 42-51 and lastly 0.9% in the 52-61 age group. The respondents between the ages of 22-41 form an overwhelming 96.5% of respondents, and this demography is often categorised as Millennials and early GenZ (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). These age groups spend a significant portion of their time online and may have different preferences and behaviours regarding sponsored content and influencer marketing compared to older age groups. The distortion in distribution indicates that these demographics are receptive to social media advertising due to their digital savviness as well as

their cultural orientation toward dining out (Makrides et al, 2020). The low representation of older age groups may indicate limited engagement with these platforms or reduced interest in dining trends driven by social media.

Regarding employment status, the majority of respondents are salaried workers (61.4%), followed by self-employed individuals (24.6%). These groups most likely have disposable income, which means more purchasing power, which would lead to frequent dining out by this group. Students (7.9%) represent a smaller number. However, this is a distinct group because they are most likely to be responsive to social media advertisements and peer recommendations. Unemployed individuals (6.1) represent the lowest number, and this means less financial capacity and, thereby, might not be as engaged with social media advertisements of restaurant brands.

Table 4.2 - Frequency of Social Media Usage/ Eating at Restaurants Frequency - 114

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Frequency of visiting restaurants</i>		
Daily	2	1.8
Several times a week	9	7.9
Once a week	52	45.6
Several times a month	35	30.7
Rarely	16	14
<i>Total</i>	114	100
<i>Frequency of social media use</i>		
Daily	99	86.8
Several times a week	9	7.9
Once a week	3	2.6
Several times a month	2	1.8
Rarely	1	0.9
<i>Total</i>	114	100

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 4.2 presents the frequency with which the respondents visit restaurants and use social media. Nearly half of respondents visit restaurants once a week, while an additional 30.7% do so several times a month. This number indicates regular engagement with the dining scene in Accra and this most likely aligns with the target market of the restaurants advertising in Accra. The relatively smaller groups visit daily and rarely represent niche markets. Only 1.8% dine out daily, this indicates that everyday dining among respondents is less common. This small percentage of respondents could be food enthusiasts, otherwise known as foodies, who do not mind spending money to visit restaurants daily. Mohd-Any, Mahdzan, & Cher (2014) observed significant differences in food choice motives between ‘foodies’ and non-foodies. They found that foodies placed greater importance on mood, price, and the sensory appeal of food than non-foodies. On the other end, respondents are those who visit restaurants rarely. This number could represent respondents who are cost-conscious diners.

Social media use is exceptionally high, with 86.8% of respondents engaging daily. This illustrates the role of digital platforms as a primary medium for engaging audiences and reaching out to consumers to build brand awareness and shape consumer perceptions. These respondents are most likely exposed to steady content from restaurant brands and influencer recommendations. This percentage is also an indicator of the critical role social media plays in the lives of the respondents and most often than not is their primary source of engaging with other people and with brands.

4.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

These survey results shed light on participants' responses concerning the influencers and social media advertising on consumer perceptions and brand awareness of restaurants in Accra.

Table 4.3 - Brand Awareness Descriptive Stats

Brand Awareness					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am familiar with restaurants that actively advertise on social media platforms.	114	1	5	3.89	.944
Social media advertisement have made me aware of new restaurants opening in Accra.	114	1	5	4.28	1.000
I can recall restaurants brands that I have been seen their social media advertising	114	1	5	3.97	1.026
I often think of restaurants advertised on social media	114	1	5	3.43	1.234

Participants generally agreed that they are familiar with restaurants advertising on social media. The relatively low standard deviation indicates a consensus among respondents about this familiarity. The statement ‘*Social media advertisement have made me aware of new restaurants opening in Accra*’, had the highest mean in this category with 4.28. This signifies a strong agreement among respondents that social media ads helped discover new restaurants opening in Accra. This showcases the critical role platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook have in launching new dining spaces/ ventures. Respondents also showed a strong ability to remember restaurant brands seen on social media ads. This highlights how the visual nature of social media ads and their frequency play a role in embedding brands into consumers’ memory. The statement ‘*I often think of restaurants advertised on social media*’ had the lowest mean in this category. This highlights that while advertising prompts thoughts about restaurants, its impact is varied among individuals, which is evidenced by the higher standard deviation.

Table 4.4 - Consumer Perception Descriptive Stats

Consumer Perceptions					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I perceive restaurants advertised on social media as highly popular	114	1	5	3.44	1.234
Restaurants promoted by influencers seem to be more reliable to me	114	1	5	2.83	1.136
The advertisements regarding restaurants on social media influence my perception of their quality	114	1	5	3.20	1.176
I believe restaurants advertised on social media are more aesthetically forward	114	1	5	3.50	1.131

Respondents generally expressed a moderate level of agreement regarding consumer perception. The respondents' perceptions of restaurant popularity were moderate. However, this standard deviation of 1.234 suggests differing opinions potentially influenced by personal exposure to ads or brand reputation. The statement '*Restaurants promoted by influencers seem to be more reliable to me*' had the lowest mean of 2.83, suggesting that respondents are sceptical of restaurants promoted by influencers. The implication is that influencer endorsements alone may not effectively enhance positive consumer perception reliably. There was moderate agreement on whether social media ads influence perceptions of the quality of restaurants. The statement '*I believe restaurants advertised on social media are more aesthetically forward*' had the highest mean in this section. This shows that respondents agreed that they perceived restaurants that advertised on social media as more aesthetically forward. The high visual nature of these platforms contributes to this perception.

Table 4.5 - Social Media Advertising Descriptive Stats

Social Media Advertising					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I often come across sponsored posts from restaurants while browsing social media	114	1	5	3.64	1.183
Social media advertisements for restaurants catch my attention	114	1	5	3.56	1.121
Restaurant advertisements on social media drive my choice of visiting the restaurant	114	1	5	3.39	1.223
I trust restaurants more when they use social media advertisements	114	1	5	2.78	1.103

Respondents agreed that they frequently encountered sponsored posts from restaurants while browsing on social media. This implies that regular exposure is a positive indicator of the effectiveness of campaigns in reaching audiences. The respondents moderately agreed that ads succeed in capturing their attention. This is likely due to the design and targeting of ads on social media platforms. Through the responses, advertisements on social media somewhat influence decisions to visit restaurants, though the effect is not dominant. The variability in responses suggests that other factors, such as trust or prior experience, might be driving factors. The statement *‘I trust restaurants more when they use social media advertisements’* scored the lowest of 2.78 indicating that trust is a huge challenge. This suggests that respondents might perceive advertisements rightly as promotional. However, it is less authentic hence reducing their effectiveness in building trust.

Table 4.6 - Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers Descriptive Stats

Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I follow food and lifestyle influencers on social media.	114	1	5	3.45	1.297
Recommendations from food and lifestyle influencers affect my perception of a restaurant's quality.	114	1	5	3.29	1.295
I trust the restaurant recommendations made by food and lifestyle influencers.	114	1	5	3.10	1.121
I am more likely to visit a restaurant if an influencer recommends it	114	1	5	3.21	1.186

Respondents showed a moderate agreement about engaging and following food and lifestyle influencers on social media. The high variability suggests that some respondents are highly engaged, while others are indifferent. There was moderate agreement on whether influencers shape customers perception of a restaurant's quality. However, trust in influencer recommendations is relatively neutral. This relates to trust being a factor in the recommendations being made. Respondents moderately agreed that they would likely visit a restaurant recommended by an influencer. Still, with a mean of 3.21, this indicates that while influencers have some amount of sway, they may not independently drive decision-making.

Table 4.7 - Credibility and Relatability of Influencers Descriptive Stats

Credibility + Relatability of Influencers					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find food and lifestyle influencers to be credible sources of information about restaurants.	114	1	5	3.07	1.217
I can relate to the experiences shared by food and lifestyle influencers about their visits to restaurants.	114	1	5	3.11	1.147
Influencers' personal stories about their dining experiences make their recommendations more trustworthy.	114	1	5	3.18	1.252
The authenticity of influencers' content influences my trust in their restaurant recommendations.	114	1	5	3.36	1.263

Influencers were moderately perceived as credible sources of information on restaurants. The mean of 3.07 reflects that while influencers are perceived as somewhat credible, several respondents are not fully on board. With a mean of 3.11, relatability of shared experiences is moderate but not overwhelmingly convincing. Respondents had a moderate agreement on whether they trust influencers' personal stories about their recommendations. This suggests that personal stories have a mild positive effect on trust. With the highest mean score of 3.36, respondents moderately agreed that they find influencers' content authentic which influences their trust in their recommendations. This showcases authenticity as a significant trust driver. However, the relatively high variability indicates that this authenticity is not universally perceived.

4.4 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

These survey results shed light on the strength of the relationship between influencers, social media advertising and consumer perceptions and brand awareness of restaurants in Accra.

Table 4.8 Correlation Analysis

Brand Awareness	1	.693**	.772**	.636**
Consumer Perceptions	.693**	1	.727**	.712**
Social Media Advertising	.772**	.727**	1	.735**
Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers	.636**	.712**	.735**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Brand awareness shares a strong positive correlation (0.693) with consumer perceptions. This correlation suggests that as individuals become more aware of restaurant brands, their perceptions of the restaurants also improve. This also underscores the idea that familiarity breeds favourability - restaurants that consumers recognise are more likely to be perceived very positively. The strongest correlation for brand awareness lies in social media advertising. This highlights the fact that various social media advertising is essential in boosting brand awareness of restaurants. The strength of this relationship and correlation underscores the effectiveness of advertising campaigns in building recognition and mental associations in consumer’s minds. Brand awareness is also positively correlated with the influence of food and lifestyle influencers, though the correlation is less strong than with advertising. This indicates that while influencers contribute to awareness, their impact is slightly less when compared to social media advertising.

Consumer perceptions are strongly correlated with social media advertising. This suggests that social media ads significantly shape opinions about restaurant quality, popularity and aesthetics. Effective campaigns convey messages that the restaurant brands want consumers to know. There is also a comparable correlation between consumer perception and influencers, indicating that

influencers also play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. This would reflect the role of influencers as opinion leaders and tastemakers.

Social media advertising is strongly positively correlated with the influence of food and lifestyle influencers. This indicates that these two factors work well together. The relationship that is highlighted is that food and lifestyle influencers are supported by social media ads to be more impactful. This suggests that these two marketing strategies are related and complement each other.

4.5 REGRESSION RESULTS

4.5.1 BRAND AWARENESS REGRESSION RESULTS

Table 4.9 Regression Results - Brand Awareness

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.779 ^a	.606	.599	.558
a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers, Social Media Advertising				
b. Dependent variable - Brand Awareness				

Table. 4.10 - Anova

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.197	2	26.598	85.479	.000 ^a
	Residual	34.540	111	.311		
	Total	87.737	113			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers, Social Media Advertising						
b. Dependent Variable: Brand Awareness						

Table 4.11 - Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.442	.195		7.381	.000
	Social Media Advertising	.611	.081	.662	7.539	.000
	Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers	.126	.074	.150	1.708	.090
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Awareness						

Model Summary

The regression model indicates a strong positive relationship between the predictors - social media advertisements and influence of food and lifestyle influencers - and brand awareness. According to Sudiwo (2024) and Cohen's guidelines(1988), an R-value above 0.70 suggests a robust correlation. In this model, the R-value is 0.779 ,which proves the strong correlations. The model, as indicated by the R Square value of 0.606, explains a significant variance in brand awareness. This means that brand awareness can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The independent variables in the model can explain 60.6% of the variability in brand awareness.

The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.558) reflects the average distance between the observed values and the predicted values of Brand Awareness, which provides a measure of the model's accuracy in predicting Brand Awareness.

ANOVA

The ANOVA table indicates that the regression model is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), as evidenced by the F-statistic of 85.479 and the associated p-value. This suggests that at least one of the independent variables significantly contributes to the prediction of Brand Awareness.

The sum of squares for the Regression (53.197) exceeds that of the Residual (34.540). This indicates that the variance explained by the regression model is greater than the unexplained variance.

Co-efficients

Both independent variables, Social Media advertising and the Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers, demonstrate statistically significant relationships with Brand Awareness.

The standard coefficient (B) for Social Media Advertisement is 0.662, indicating that for every unit increase in Social Media Advertising, Brand Awareness is expected to increase by 0.611 units, holding the other variables constant.

Similarly, the standardised coefficient (B) for Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers is 0.150, suggesting that for each unit increase in Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers, Brand Awareness is expected to increase by 0.126 units, holding other variables constant.

The standardised coefficients (Beta) provide a measure of the relative importance of each independent variable in predicting Brand Awareness. In this case, Social Media Advertising (Beta = .662) has a stronger impact compared to Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers (Beta = .150).

This showcases that social media advertising has the strongest influence on brand awareness. This aligns with Keller's (1993), brand equity model. The model highlights that advertising shapes consumer recall and recognition which are key components of brand awareness. In this instance the type of advertisement utilises social media and happens on the platforms.

Although, food and lifestyle influencers contribute positively to brand awareness, their significance is weaker and statistically insignificant at the 5% level. The variability in influencer trustworthiness affects the impact they have and would have on brand awareness. This model suggests that

influencers are more effective at deepening engagement than driving initial awareness of the restaurant brands.

4.5.2 CONSUMER PERCEPTION REGRESSION RESULTS

Table 4.12 - Regression Results - Consumer Perceptions

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.773 ^a	.597	.590	.622

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers, Social Media Advertising

Table 4.13 - Anova

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.520	2	31.760	82.153	.000 ^a
	Residual	42.912	111	.387		
	Total	106.433	113			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers, Social Media Advertising

b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Perceptions

Table 4.14 - Coefficients

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.575	.218		2.638	.010
	Social Media Advertising	.451	.090	.443	4.991	.000
	Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers	.356	.082	.386	4.343	.000

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.575	.218		2.638	.010
Social Media Advertising	.451	.090	.443	4.991	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Perceptions

Model Summary

The regression model explains a significant portion of the variance in Consumer Perceptions, as indicated by the R Square value of .597. This means that approximately 59.7% of the variability in Consumer Perceptions can be explained by the independent variables - Social Media Advertising and Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers - included in the model.

The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.622) reflects the average distance between the observed values and the predicted values of Consumer Perceptions, providing a measure of the model's accuracy in predicting Consumer Perceptions. The error term of 0.622 indicates a slightly larger deviation compared to the brand awareness model. This suggests that consumer perceptions are influenced by other factors not captured in these measuring factors.

ANOVA

The ANOVA table indicates that the regression model is statistically significant ($p < .001$), as evidenced by the F-statistic of 85.153 and the associated p-value. This suggests that at least one of the independent variables significantly contributes to the prediction of Consumer Perceptions.

The sum of squares for the Regression (63.520) exceeds that of the Residual (42.912), indicating that the variance explained by the regression model is greater than the unexplained variance.

Coefficients

Both independent variables, Social Media Advertising and the Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers demonstrate statistically significant relationships with Consumer Perceptions.

The standardized coefficient (B) for Social Media Advertising is 0.443, indicating that for each unit increase in Social Media Advertising, Consumer Perceptions is expected to increase by 0.451 units, holding other variables constant. Social media advertising is a significant driver of consumer perceptions. This gains support from the Elaboration Likelihood model (1986), which explains that visually engaging advertisements on central or peripheral routes enhance perceptions of quality and trustworthiness. This means that restaurants highlighting key features such as ambience, unique dishes, and unique offers in their advertising can positively shape consumer perceptions.

Similarly, the standardized coefficient (B) for the Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers is 0.386, suggesting that for each unit increase in the Influence of Food and Lifestyle Influencers, Consumer Perceptions are expected to increase by 0.356 units, holding other variables constant. While influencers contribute positively to consumer perceptions, it is lower than social media advertising. This shows that while positive, influencers play a more complementary role in shaping consumer perceptions. In the social influence theory (1958), Kelman suggests that influencers' recommendations persuade through identification. This is true when the influencers' values align with those of the consumers.

4.6 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN BRAND AWARENESS AND CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS

Through the regression results, the predictors showcase a slightly more variance in brand awareness (60.6%) than in consumer perceptions (59.7%). This slight increase suggests that social media advertisements and influencers are marginally more effective at driving recognition and building awareness than in shaping opinions and helping consumers form positive perceptions of the restaurant brands.

Social media advertisement is the strongest predictor in both models (Beta = 0.662 for awareness; Beta = 0.443 for perceptions). Social media advertisements are visual, so consumers are repeatedly exposed to the message and content of the restaurant brands that use them. This drives engagement and exposure, making them an effective strategy.

Influencers are also important in the marketing strategy of restaurant brands. Although they are less impactful for brand awareness, their Beta=0.386 shows that influencers play a substantial role in enhancing consumer perceptions. This would be due to their personalised content that is catered to their audience. Influencers are seen as relatable and their endorsements add credibility to the advertising efforts of the various restaurant brands that employ them.

4.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Objective 1 - How Various Social Media Ads Influence Brand Awareness of Restaurants in Accra.

In the descriptive analysis, respondents strongly agreed that social media advertisements enhanced their awareness of restaurant brands in Accra. This is consistent with the research on how social media ads drive brand awareness to various organisations, especially restaurants that utilise them. However, a key issue that the descriptive analysis brought out was low trust in restaurants solely based on their social media advertisements. This aligns with research by Farzin et al (2022) and Yadav and Rahman (2018) about how over exposure to social media ads drives down the trust of consumers towards the brand. This would indicate the growing skepticism toward purely promotional content. The correlation analysis indicates a robust positive relationship between Brand Awareness and Social Media Advertisements, aligning with previous research by Patmawati and Miswanto (2022). As exposure to these strategies increases, so does Brand Awareness about restaurants among people living in Accra. Moreover, the regression analysis showed that social

media ads are the strongest predictor of brand awareness, explaining 60.6% of the variability in the regression model

The findings in this study align with Keller's (1993) framework based on the Brand Equity Model. In the model, advertising serves as a fundamental and essential component of brand recall and recognition. This means repeated exposure of consumers to ads on various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok amplifies the effect. These platforms also foster high visibility for the restaurant brands that utilise them. Social media advertisements are visually engaging due to the featuring of high-quality images, videos, and interactive elements which catch the attention of consumers and reinforce brand identity (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This aligns with the finding that social media advertising is the strongest predictor of awareness for restaurants situated in Accra. The findings also give credence to Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (1986). Social media ads engage both the central and peripheral route of the brain's processing when they provide detailed information in the ads such as menu quality while relying on visually and emotionally appealing elements in the ads to increase consumers' awareness of the restaurant. However, the slightly lower standardised beta for consumer perceptions (Beta = 0.443) than awareness suggests that ads are more effective at attracting attention and building awareness than fostering deeper connections and changing consumer behaviour. This finding affirms the skepticism consumers have towards restaurant brands that utilise social media advertisement.

Objective 2 - The Role of Food and Lifestyle Influencers In Shaping Audience Perceptions of Restaurant Brands

In the descriptive analysis, respondents moderately agreed that food and lifestyle influencers affect their perceptions of restaurant quality and the likelihood of visiting restaurants. However, their trust in influencer recommendations was neutral, indicating some reservations in influencer-backed recommendations. Through the correlative analysis, influencers positively correlated with consumer

perceptions, indicating a significant influence on shaping audience opinions about a restaurant's quality, aesthetics and offerings. The impact of influencers was, however, lower than that of social media advertising. The findings also revealed that the role of influencers in brand awareness was weaker, which indicates that the strength of influencers lie in enhancing the perceptions of consumers rather than the initial recognition of the restaurants.

According to Kelman's social influence theory (1958), influencers can positively affect how consumers perceive a restaurant. This is achieved when the influencers leverage identification, whereby consumers align with the influencers whose values and experiences resonate with their own. This finding is important in understanding why the sharing of authentic influencer content shapes consumer perceptions and enhances the appeal that these consumers will have towards these restaurant brands.

While many food and lifestyle influencers build consumer perceptions, their reach may be narrower than other forms of online marketing strategies. According to Hovland (1953), credible sources tend to create the desired impact on the audience; however, audiences forget the bearer of the information over time. This means that audiences would need repeated exposure to a message from different sources to create that positive perception.

Objective 3 - The Credibility, Relatability and Impact of Influencers on Consumer Decision-Making Processes

Through the findings, the credibility (perceives expertise and trustworthiness) and relatability (alignment of influencer experiences with consumer preferences) of influencers scored moderately. This indicated that while influencers are certainly perceived as somewhat credible and relatable, their impact is not universally convincing. The authenticity of the influencer content was rated the highest, highlighting the fact that authenticity is a key driver of who consumers trust. A strong positive correlation was observed between the credibility and relatability of influencers and

consumer perceptions ($r = 0.712$). This suggests that influencers' ability to relate their experiences convincingly to audiences enhances their impact and creates trust and favourable attitudes.

The significant relationship between influencer credibility and consumer perceptions highlights their role in shaping attitudes and, in turn, influencing decisions. This is consistent with Ajzen's (1975) **Theory of Planned Behaviour**, which posits that attitudes formed through credible sources lead to behavioural intentions, such as visiting a restaurant. The findings also lend credence to the research by Hovland (1953), Umeogu (2012) and Olubunmi & Tob (2016) about the role of source credibility in shaping consumer trust. This objective is essential in understanding why influencers strive to build credibility with their audiences over time.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The data highlights the intricate relationships between brand awareness, consumer perceptions, social media advertising, and influencer impact. The regression analysis underscores the pivotal role of social media advertising in driving brand awareness, while also highlighting the complementary contributions of influencers.

While advertising serves as the backbone for building awareness and shaping perceptions, influencers enhance trust and relatability. A marketing strategy that combines both can yield stronger brand positioning and consumer engagement. Restaurants in Accra should strive to integrate these elements seamlessly while maintaining authenticity and resonance with their target audiences.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter encapsulates the study of social media advertisements and the influence of food and lifestyle influencers on brand awareness and consumer perceptions in the context of restaurants in Accra.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok has transformed restaurant marketing. Restaurants utilise these platforms by emphasizing visually engaging content that appeals to various demographics, especially the younger demographics. The rise of these platforms has also given birth to a new kind of celebrity, ‘social media influencers’ who leverage their audience to give recommendations and give their personal opinions on different brands and phenomena. Despite the increasing use of social media advertising and influencers in Accra, there was a need to understand their specific impact on brand awareness and consumer perceptions in the restaurant sector in Accra.

The study's general objective is to analyse the relationship between social media advertisement and influencer marketing on brand awareness and how consumers perceive restaurant brands in Accra. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives: determine how various social media ads influence brand awareness for restaurants in Accra; investigate the role of food and lifestyle influencers in shaping audience perceptions of restaurant brands; and examine the credibility, relatability, and impact of influencers on consumer decision-making processes.

The study was underpinned by various theories that sought to understand consumers’ attitudes toward social media ads and influencers, subjective norms (peer influences), and how perceived behavioural control significantly impact their decision-making processes. Other theories for the

study included the social learning theory, social contract theory and the elaboration likelihood model.

A quantitative approach was utilised in this study, questionnaires were used for the data collection. Convenience and purposive sampling were the techniques employed to gain participants for the questionnaires mainly through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. The study selected participants based on their accessibility and convenience to the researcher. The selected participants also came from followers of certain food influencers on Instagram who were able to respond to the online survey. The study gathered data from 114 participants.

The demographics for the study was heavily skewed female which highlights a higher engagement with restaurant-related social media content among women. The age group of the study was overwhelmingly young, which indicates this age group's responsiveness to social media advertising and influencer marketing.

The responses were analysed using SPSS. Responses were systematically organised, and any discrepancies in data entry were rectified to ensure data integrity. Mean and standard deviation calculations were then employed to derive essential descriptive statistics. The measures were calculated to understand the general trends in the data. Also, the data was analysed with inferential statistics including correlation analysis, regression analysis and T-tests and ANOVA.

The results revealed strong positive correlations between brand awareness, consumer perceptions and social media advertising and influencer marketing. The regression analysis confirmed the significant impact of these variables on brand awareness and consumer perception, social media advertising emerged as being the most significant predictor of brand awareness with a strong positive correlation. Meanwhile, influencer marketing had a weaker correlation on driving brand awareness. This suggests that influencers play a complementary in how consumers become aware of restaurant brands in Accra, what the findings reveal is that they excel more in deepening engagement rather than generating that initial exposure to restaurants in Accra.

When it came to consumer perceptions, influencer marketing had a significant impact. The relatability and perceived authenticity foster trust, which then positively influences the consumers' attitudes towards restaurants in Accra. This shows that consumers transfer how they perceive influencers onto how they perceive restaurant brands that these influencers promote on social media.

Social media advertising and influencers both significantly contribute to shaping consumer behaviour, although social media advertising has a stronger effect. Strong positive relationships exist between brand awareness and consumer perceptions, emphasising social media advertising and influencer marketing synergy.

The study underscores the growing importance of digital strategies in Accra's competitive restaurant sector. It identifies social media as a powerful tool for engaging tech-savvy, urban consumers, with influencers playing a complementary role. The study highlighted the importance of authenticity in the content influencers put out. In conclusion, the study provides actionable insights for marketers to optimise their marketing strategy development and allocate resources more efficiently based on the predicted impact of each strategy on brand awareness and consumer perception.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

First, the study concludes that social media advertisement is critical in helping customers discover new restaurants in Accra. Social media ads are highly effective in driving and increasing brand awareness and also enhancing brand recall, this underscores their centrality in the digital marketing strategies of restaurant brands in Accra. Through the respondents, it was concluded that even though social media ads capture attention, respondents did not trust restaurants that aggressively utilised social media ads. This suggests that restaurants have to utilise different strategies in their social media ads to gain consumers' trust.

Second, the study explored how effective food and lifestyle influencers were in shaping consumer perceptions of restaurant brands in Accra, and it was concluded that influencers significantly shape consumer perceptions. Consumers perceive that restaurants are popular when influencers talk about them and highlight why they need to visit these restaurants. However, consumers were somewhat skeptical of influencer-promoted restaurants. This shows that consumers utilise superficial cues like the popularity of influencers and their visual appeal and transfer these perceptions of the food and lifestyle influencers, which is backed by the elaboration likelihood model.

Moreover, the study concludes that respondents viewed influencers through the lens of their relatability and credibility. Influencers had a lot of followers across various social media platforms, however, the trust in influencer recommendations varied, with skepticism about authenticity affecting their reliability. This could point to the need for enhancing influencer credibility and authenticity as significant factors in determining the trustworthiness of influencer endorsements. Influencers must always be transparent in their views to enhance the trust that consumers have in them. Also, consumers learn behaviour by observing these influencers; therefore, their credibility and relatability are critical in how consumers behave.

Lastly, the study provided valuable insights into the relationship between social media advertisement and influencer marketing on brand awareness and consumer perceptions of restaurants among people living in Accra. The study highlights the importance of utilising different social media ad strategies and influencer marketing. Restaurants can use these insights to drive brand awareness in the competitive digital landscape.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be made to enhance social media advertising strategies and influencer marketing for boosting brand awareness and strengthening positive consumer perceptions about restaurant brands among people living in Accra:

- Restaurants must focus on platform-specific advertising. Each social media platform is unique in how ads run, so it would be imperative for restaurant brands to be nimble in the type of social media ads they run on each platform.
- Restaurants must create visually appealing short-form videos and carousels that target younger, urban audiences. They should also leverage social media platforms' algorithms for organic reach and engagement.
- To engage older demographics and those who seek comprehensive information, restaurants could use longer-form videos and detailed posts.
- Restaurants must use demographic data and metrics from social media platforms to create highly targeted campaigns that appeal to specific audience segments, e.g., working professionals or students.
- Restaurants must select and work with influencers whose followers significantly overlap with the restaurant's target demographic. Restaurants must prioritise influencers with demonstrated authenticity and credibility rather than just high follower counts.
- Restaurants must focus on building authentic and long-term relationships with influencers that becomes an ongoing partnership instead of one-time campaigns which would help to build trust with the audience over time.
- Influencer must offer genuine reviews, even if they include constructive criticism.
- Influencers must disclose sponsorships to comply with the various platform regulations and maintain audience trust.
- Influencers must understand the Accra dining scene and authentically represent that in their reviews.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study's limitations include sample size and representation, as the chosen sample may not fully capture the diverse perspectives within the city. The demographic was skewed predominantly female and younger age groups (22-41), which meant an underrepresentation of older adults and males.

The reliance on online surveys as a data collection method excludes those not active on social media. While the sample size was deemed sufficient for analysis, the use of convenient sampling methods could introduce biases, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. As a study, the findings are influenced by current social media trends, but these evolve rapidly. There is a need for longitudinal studies to assess how advertising and influencers' impacts on restaurant brands evolve over time.

Moreover, the study's focus in Accra may restrict the applicability of findings within other regions and contexts within Ghana and around the world as each place has its peculiarities. While the study employs a quantitative approach, using questionnaires, additional methods, and additional techniques, such as in-depth interviews with influencers and restaurant owners, could offer deeper insights into consumer perceptions of restaurant brands in Accra.

Future research could investigate the different impacts of various social media platforms, Instagram vs TikTok vs Facebook, on brand awareness and consumer engagement with restaurant brands. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence could be explored on how they can enhance social media advertising and influencer marketing. Lastly, future research could examine how different demographic groups, such as older adults and low-income consumers respond to advertising and influencer campaigns, whereby unique preferences and barriers are identified. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing by demonstrating the interplay between social media advertising and influencer marketing in the restaurant industry. Through

leveraging these insights, marketers and restaurateurs can design more effective, targeted strategies to enhance brand visibility and foster lasting consumer relationships.

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APPENDIX I

Effects of Social Media Advertising Strategies and Influencers on Brand Awareness and Consumer Perceptions of Restaurants in Accra

My name is Lawrencia Larbi-Amoah; a postgraduate student at University of Media, Arts and Communications. I would be grateful if you could share your opinions on the above study. This questionnaire is towards my final dissertation

This questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes to complete.

Participation is STRICTLY VOLUNTARY and none of your personal information would be requested for this survey.

You can contact me by email - aphualarbi@gmail.com.

SECTION A - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Age: 22 - 31
 32 - 31
 42 - 51
 52 - 61

2. Gender: Male
 Female

3. Employment Status:
- Salaried worker
 Self-employed
 Unemployed
 Student
Other (specify).....

4. Frequency of Social Media Use

Daily

Several times a week

Once a week

Several times a month

Rarely

5. Frequency of visiting restaurants/ eating out

Daily

Several times a week

Once a week

Several times a month

Rarely

SECTION B -

For the following statement, please choose from the options provided below, what best applies to you. On a scale of 1 to 5 whereby;

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5= Strongly Agree

No.	STATEMENTS	SD	D	N	A	SA
Brand Awareness						
1	I am familiar with restaurants that actively advertise on social media platforms.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Social media advertisement have made me aware of new restaurants opening in Accra.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I can recall restaurants brands that I have been seen their social media advertising	1	2	3	4	5
4	I often think of restaurants that are advertised on social media	1	2	3	4	5
Consumer Perceptions						
5	I perceive restaurants advertised on social media as highly popular	1	2	3	4	5
6	Restaurants promoted by influencers seem to be more reliable to me	1	2	3	4	5

7	The advertisements regarding restaurants on social media influence my perception of their quality	1	2	3	4	5
8	I believe restaurants advertised on social media are more aesthetically forward	1	2	3	4	5
Social Media Advertising						
9	I often come across sponsored posts from restaurants while browsing social media	1	2	3	4	5
10	Social media advertisements for restaurants catch my attention	1	2	3	4	5
11	Restaurant advertisements on social media drive my choice of visiting the restaurant	1	2	3	4	5
12	I trust restaurants more when they use social media advertisements	1	2	3	4	5
Influence of Food & Lifestyle Influencers						
13	I follow food and lifestyle influencers on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Recommendations from food and lifestyle influencers affect my perception of a restaurant's quality.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I trust the restaurant recommendations made by food and lifestyle influencers.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I am more likely to visit a restaurant if an influencer recommends it	1	2	3	4	5
Credibility + Relatability of Influencers						
17	I find food and lifestyle influencers to be credible sources of information about restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I can relate to the experiences shared by food and lifestyle influencers about their visits to restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Influencers' personal stories about their dining experiences make their recommendations more trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5
20	The authenticity of influencers' content influences my trust in their restaurant recommendations.	1	2	3	4	5