

# The Effectiveness of Using Social Media Influencers in Raising Awareness and Combating Corruption



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### ■ Abstract:

The nature of media role models for youth has shifted in recent times, moving from admiration for celebrities in various fields (such as art and sports) to a focus on “Social Media Influencers,” as a result of the opportunity for “ordinary” individuals to gain prominence on these platforms.

A social media user becomes an influencer when they possess the ability to create content that generates massive and ongoing interactions between them and their followers. Due to their influential power, influencers are sought after by companies and organizations in numerous occasions to promote brands, services, and ideas. Over time, influencers have gained significant ground on social media platforms by sharing personal life details, thereby acquiring a large number of followers.

On the other hand, the Egyptian state has made significant progress in the field of preventing and combating corruption over the past eight years, which will continue through the third phase of the national anti-corruption strategy until 2030. This progress prompts the need to examine the potential contribution of “influencers” on social media platforms as new opinion leaders who shape public opinion on these platforms. They can direct the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of their followers, leveraging their influence to raise awareness about combating corruption.

This study aims to explore the possibility of utilizing and activating the role of these influencers through social media to achieve awareness-raising objectives, guide behavior modification, and deepen understanding to support the state’s efforts in combating corruption as a primary solid goal in society.



### Keywords

Influencers and corruption combat, The role of media in combating corruption, Social marketing and anti-corruption efforts, The role of social media in preventing and combating corruption

## Introduction:

There has been a rapid and significant shift in the nature of media role models among youth, moving from a focus on celebrities in the fields of arts, music, and football to an attachment to social media influencers. Social media platforms have allowed ordinary individuals to emerge within the crowd of users, gaining popularity and influence.

An influencer is a professional who becomes a trusted source, offering opinions and analyses to the public due to their knowledge and experience in a particular field. Their opinions are highly valued because of the credibility and trust they have built. With the expansion of internet usage and the growing number of social media users, influencers have emerged across these platforms. Their roles have grown significantly, and they now represent an independent entity that shapes how the public uses the communication channels provided by social media platforms.

A social media user becomes an influencer when they have the ability to produce content that generates substantial and continuous interactions between themselves and their followers. Due to their influential capabilities, companies and organizations seek them out on various occasions to promote their brands, services, and ideas. The content shared by influencers on social media contains diverse themes that vary depending on the environment and temporal framework, as well as the personal goals of the influencers and their sponsors.

In recent years, the discourse of these influencers on social media has come to be expected to engage users continuously, 24/7. This has resulted in a smooth and dynamic form of marketing, marked by an intelligent interaction with consumer responses and trending topics. This dynamic interaction has led to the rapid emergence of increasingly powerful groups of influencers, creating a notable transformation in their communicative activities across social media platforms.

Over time, influencers have gained a new foothold on social media by sharing the details of their lives, which has led to a large following. This has made them opinion leaders, with some considering influencers to be more effective than traditional celebrities in terms of influence. These influencers have become closer and more relatable to the audience, even being described as the “trusted voice” for the public.

On the other hand, Egypt has made significant strides in combating and preventing corruption over the past eight years. It launched its first strategy (2014–2018), followed by the second strategy (2019–2022), which outlined its vision, mission, and strategic goals aimed at combating corruption. Building on previous efforts, the government launched the third edition of the national anti-corruption strategy (2023–2030), emphasizing its sincere determination to create a clean national environment that fights corruption in all its forms, believing that corruption undermines sustainable



development efforts and erodes mutual trust between the citizens and the state<sup>(1)</sup>.

The danger of corruption lies in the problems and risks it poses to the stability and security of societies, weakening democratic institutions, ethical values, and justice, and threatening sustainable development and the rule of law. Media plays a crucial role in promoting values of integrity and transparency by raising public awareness of the importance of safeguarding public funds and rejecting all forms of corruption. Furthermore, it contributes to building a societal culture that is motivated to resist all forms of corruption and is aware of the importance of preserving public funds and property as a collective asset for citizens.

The media, in all its forms—visual, auditory, and written—bears significant responsibilities in exposing corruption and is used as a tool to raise awareness about the manifestations, causes, types, and methods of combating corruption. While social media platforms, the “new player,” have asserted themselves strongly in recent years, it is necessary to leverage these platforms and their influencers in this regard.

In light of the above, the importance of conducting a study becomes clear, focusing on the phenomenon of “influencers” on social media as new opinion leaders who shape public opinion on these platforms. They contribute to directing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of their followers, and examining how they can be utilized in raising awareness and combating corruption.

### **Research Problem:**

Given the increasing roles of influencers on social media and the variety of aspects related to them, which have become clearly evident in recent years, especially with the rise of these platforms and the growing number of users, the problem of this study is framed as: “The influence of social media influencers on their followers, particularly among youth, in the context of growing interest in combating corruption, and the emerging role of new media as a supporting force in this effort.”

### **Study Objectives:**

- 1– To analyze the phenomenon of “influencers” on social media and their influence on the audience, especially youth.
- 2– To identify the types of influencers, their characteristics, and their different classifications.
- 3– To uncover the factors that have contributed to the rise of social media influencers.

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(1) Administrative Control Authority, & National Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Corruption. (2023). National Strategy for Combating Corruption, 2023–2030, p. 7.

- 4– To explore the various roles that social media influencers play in social marketing campaigns.
- 5– To determine the key roles of traditional and modern media in combating corruption.
- 6– To propose a specific executive plan to effectively utilize influencers in the fight against corruption.

### Study Questions:

- 1– How did the phenomenon of “social media influencers” emerge, and what is their influence on the audience, particularly among youth?
- 2– What are the different types of influencers, their characteristics, and classifications?
- 3– What factors have contributed to the spread of social media influencers?
- 4– What are the key roles that social media influencers play in social marketing campaigns?
- 5– What are the key roles of traditional and modern media in combating corruption?
- 6– How can social media influencers be utilized in the fight against corruption?

### Research Methodology:

- **Descriptive Inductive Method:** This method reflects on the individual components of scientific accumulation, through which the researcher aims to provide a general description of the phenomenon under study.
- **Comparative Method:** This approach relies on comparison to highlight similarities and differences between two or more phenomena or topics. Through these comparisons, the researcher can better understand the ambiguities surrounding the research problem<sup>(1)</sup>.

Additionally, the study employed **Secondary Analysis**, which involves systematically reviewing and analyzing studies and research published within a specific field over an extended period from a variety of sources. The researcher used this tool to analyze data from research studies published in peer-reviewed Arab and international scientific journals, as well as master’s and doctoral theses, spanning from early 2020 to mid-2024. Priority was given to the most recent and relevant studies.

(1) Palys, T. ,Research decisions: Quantitative and qualitative perspectives,4th. Ed, (ON: Nelson, Toronto ,2017), p.34.



## Literature Review:

After reviewing the scientific studies related to the topic of this research, they have been categorized according to the following axes:

**First:** Studies addressing influencers and their use in social, commercial, and political marketing campaigns.

**Second:** Studies addressing the role of media in combating corruption.

Below is a focused presentation of these studies:

### **First: Studies Addressing Influencers and Their Use in Social, Commercial, and Political Marketing Campaigns:**

#### **Study by Limba & Juozėnaitė<sup>(1)</sup> (2024):**

This study explored the different types of influencers on social media, including (macro-influencers, micro-influencers, nano-influencers, and virtual influencers). It also discussed the types of content created by influencers, their contributions to brands, and employed literature review methods, systematic analysis, and generalization. The study examined strategies that enhance the efficiency of influencer marketing, such as “content strategy” and “community strategy,” and addressed the process of building a relationship between influencers and followers, as well as developing cognitive and emotional commitment of consumers toward influencers. It also discussed theories that help better understand the relationships between influencers and their followers, including theories of (social capital, social exchange, and relationship management).

#### **Study by Paul et al<sup>(2)</sup>. (2024):**

This study investigated the role of social media influencers as change agents in generating trust among their followers. It used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess measurement and structural models. The results reveal that the characteristics of influencers—interactivity and informativeness—significantly affect followers, and influencers need to engage in more consistent, meaningful, and authentic conversations with their followers to create an effective communication strategy.

#### **Study by Hurt et al<sup>(3)</sup>. (2024):**

This study provides insights into effective relationship-building strategies online with stakeholders and crisis management strategies for brand reputation using

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(1) Limba, T., & Juozėnaitė, E. (2024). INFLUENCER MARKETING AS THE MAIN TOOL IN ENCOURAGING USER-GENERATED CONTENT. In EDULEARN24 Proceedings (pp. 3148-3155). IATED.

(2) Paul, J., Jagani, K., & Yadav, N. (2024). “How I think, Who I am”—Role of social media influencers (SMIs) as change agents. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*.

(3) Hurt, J., Beadle, M. E., & Park, S. Social Media Management Strategies in Influencer Marketing: Lessons for Building Stakeholder Relations and Brand Crisis Management.



social media influencers, based on a two-step flow model. It explores how influencers manage brands through three aspects, including content, engagement, and interaction strategies. A content analysis was conducted to compare content marketing strategies, levels of engagement, and interaction between popular and less-popular content creators. The results show that popular content creators tend to post more promotional content and engage less, but receive more positive feedback from their followers, who are more engaged.

### **Study by Rajput & Gandhi<sup>(1)</sup> (2024):**

This study explored the impact of similarity, social presence, and physical attractiveness of influencers on affinity in the beauty and fashion industry through influencer marketing. The roles of mediation in trust and loyalty were explored in relation to customer purchase intent, with data collected from 408 individuals via a digital survey. The results revealed a positive impact of similarity, social presence, and physical attractiveness on consumers' purchase intentions, which was partially mediated by affinity, trust, and loyalty. The importance of affinity suggests that emotional attachment to influencers plays a crucial role in shaping purchase decisions.

### **Study by Lloyd, K<sup>(2)</sup>. (2024):**

In light of the growing online hatred toward social media influencers, this study focused on how fashion influencers deal with increasing online hatred and, more importantly, the self-management techniques they adopt to maintain their well-being. An extensive online survey was conducted for six months, complemented by semi-structured interviews with twenty-five influencers managing brands to understand their experiences with online hatred and their self-management techniques. The study also conducted content analysis on the material presented by these influencers on platforms (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Tattle Life) and tracked their behavior, including coping mechanisms for online hatred. Additionally, five interviews were held with the companies they work with to understand the protections they offer and their perspectives on online hatred. The study utilized the Theory of Emotional Labor.

### **Study by Goodwin et al<sup>(3)</sup>. (2023):**

This study discussed how influencers assist campaigns in reaching specific audiences and supporting issues or candidates in elections. The study highlighted political influencers who seek to legitimize and amplify political messages, particularly on

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(1) Rajput, A., & Gandhi, A. (2024). The branding power of social media influencers: an interactive marketing approach. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2380807.

(2) Lloyd, K. (2024, July). A study of social media influencers's self management techniques to cope with online hate. In *NETNOCON 2024 Conference Proceedings* (p. 98).

(3) Goodwin, A., Joseff, K., Riedl, M. J., Lukito, J., & Woolley, S. (2023). Political relational influencers: The mobilization of social media influencers in the political arena. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 21.



platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In-depth interviews were conducted with 18 “stakeholders in influence campaigns,” a term that includes influencer marketing officials, political organizers, strategists, influencers, journalists, academics, and regulatory bodies. The aim was to shed light on the complex and evolving ways in which influencers coordinate among themselves and with political campaigns, and the motivations of influencers to participate in political campaigns.

The study concluded several key findings, including:

- In the context of political and electoral campaigns, dealing with influencers as a campaign tool has become more important, with mediation companies linking political campaigns with more influencers.
- With the availability of easier influencer management tools, the relationships between political campaign managers and influencers are likely to become more professional and sophisticated.
- Regarding the strategies used by political campaigns to integrate influencers, it appeared that political campaign makers sometimes think hierarchically of influencers as a single element in top-down communication structures, while influencer companies and marketing executives recognize that communication with influencers requires campaigns to be on the same level as the influencers.

### **Study by Powell & Pring<sup>(1)</sup> (2023):**

This study focused on the potential role of social media influencers in disseminating health information and influencing health behaviors, applied to four issues: (children’s eating behavior, body image dissatisfaction, influenza and COVID-19, and social comparison and anxiety). The study concluded several key findings, including:

- When an influencer with an unhealthy appearance promotes unhealthy food, it leads to an increased preference for healthy snacks.
- Exposure to ideal body images from influencers had significant negative effects on the mood of followers and their satisfaction with their body image.
- Anxiety caused by viewing idealized motherhood images was the same whether the images were taken by an influencer or not.
- Public health campaigns that utilized influencers to promote hygiene habits in the context of COVID-19 and influenza showed some positive changes in health behaviors.

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(1) Powell, J., & Pring, T. (2023). The impact of social media influencers on health outcomes: Systematic review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 116472.

### **Study by Chee et al<sup>(1)</sup>. (2023):**

This study aimed to understand how following “influencers” and “bloggers” on social media affects the experiences of pregnant mothers and new parents in decision-making. It analyzed secondary data from studies published in CINAHL, World of Science, Medline, EMBASE, and Google Scholar in January 2023. The study found several key results:

- Social media influencers provide a peer network where supportive discussions and information exchanges take place. However, concerns arise about the potential for adversarial interactions, the spread of misinformation, and the impact of following influencers who are also qualified health professionals.
- Interacting with social media influencers can be both beneficial and harmful to pregnant and new parents, depending on the competence and specialization of the influencers.

### **Study by Borges et al<sup>(2)</sup>. (2023):**

This study sought to identify who promotes brands more effectively—mega influencers or macro-influencers. An online survey was conducted to determine the antecedents and consequences of influencers’ participation in marketing and communication strategies. The path analysis results showed that brand credibility and endorsement played an important role in determining customer engagement and brand value. The credibility of the endorsers supporting the brand’s value affected only in the case of mega influencers. Smaller influencers demonstrated higher skill in attracting customers than celebrities, suggesting that “less is more.”

### **Study by Albadri<sup>(3)</sup> (2023):**

This study explored the influence of digital influencers and their impact on society. The research included 375 participants intentionally selected from social media followers. The results revealed that TikTok is the most popular platform for influencers, followed by Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter. Influencers primarily create content related to entertainment and games, followed by art, skills, social issues, education, and religion. The study highlights that influencers are important in shaping communities by providing engaging, concise information and experiences, fostering development, and supporting their followers. The author suggested enhancing influencer skills through workshops and training programs, focusing on positive interactions and human aspects.

(1) Chee, R. M., Capper, T. S., & Muurlink, O. T. (2023). The impact of social media influencers on pregnancy, birth, and early parenting experiences: A systematic review. *Midwifery*, 120, 103623.

(2) Borges-Tiago, M. T., Santiago, J., & Tiago, F. (2023). Mega or macro social media influencers: Who endorses brands better?. *Journal of Business Research*, 157, 113606.

(3) Albadri, H. A. (2023). The role and impact of social media influencers. *Information Sciences Letters*, 12(8), 2685-2696.





### **Study by Sally Nassar<sup>(1)</sup> (2023):**

This study aimed to uncover the attitudes of the Egyptian public toward social media influencers, analyzing the motivations behind audience engagement with influencer content and the credibility of that content. Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Source Credibility Theory, a field study was conducted with a sample of 400 respondents with diverse demographic characteristics. The study found several key results, including:

- There was a high level of exposure to influencer pages on Facebook due to their interactive nature, freedom, and immediate feedback.
- The audience tends to prefer influencer content, which varies between written texts, images, and videos. This diversity ensures the highest level of interaction with the audience, regardless of their preferences and needs, thus increasing the number of followers affected by the content presented.
- Utilitarian motivations emerged as the most prominent reasons among influencer followers, both directly and indirectly. These motivations are related to the influencer's unique and intensive style, which allows youth to easily absorb information, thus enhancing their knowledge, life experiences, and skills.
- The greater the emotional relationship between influencers and their followers, the greater the impact of these influencers, leading to higher acceptance and satisfaction with the content they provide.

### **Study by Elham Sultan<sup>(2)</sup> (2023):**

This study aimed to explore the exposure of Egyptian youth to social media influencers' pages and to identify the reasons behind youth following influencers, as well as the interaction with the content they provide. The study used a sample survey method with an electronic questionnaire administered to 400 respondents who followed influencers. The study found several key results, including that the most prominent influencer followed by the respondents was Ahmed El-Ghandour "Al-Daheeh," and regarding the interaction with the content of influencer pages on social media, the most common form of engagement was liking the posts. The main reason for following influencers was the meaningful and impactful content they provide.

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(1) Nassar, S. M. (2023). Credibility of influencers' content on social media platforms and public attitudes toward it. *Egyptian Journal of Media Research*, 2023(83), 287–339.

(2) Sultan, E. A. (n.d.). Youth exposure to influencers' pages on social media: A field study. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Qena, South Valley University*, 32(59), 536–564.

### **Study by Ahmed Osman<sup>(1)</sup> (2022):**

This study aimed to track the development of cognitive, theoretical, and methodological frameworks in the analysis of influencer discourse on social media, to identify the dimensions related to this phenomenon, and to help establish an initial agenda for research interests in this field. The study concluded that Arab researchers should focus on studies related to the persuasion mechanisms used in influencer discourse, the credibility of this discourse, and studies that analyze influencers' characteristics and their discourse across various fields. Additionally, the study suggested conducting research that monitors and analyzes the social responsibility of influencer discourse.

### **Second: Studies Addressing the Role of Media in Combating Corruption:**

#### **Study by Marchetti & Stanziano<sup>(2)</sup> (2024):**

This study discussed the role of media as a news source for citizens regarding corruption issues. The results revealed that while social media can help raise awareness about and reduce corruption, it can also become ineffective in certain circumstances. The complexity of online discussions arises due to the numerous actors involved in corruption and the diverse interests shaping their actions, which makes online discussions complicated, especially with the abundance of details.

#### **Study by Marchetti et al<sup>(3)</sup>. (2024):**

This study aimed to understand how social media contributes to the public representation of corruption by analyzing the actors discussing it and the topics presented in these discussions. It involved analyzing the content of posts and the actors involved in social media discussions. The results showed that social media can diversify both the actors capable of engaging in public discussions and the subtopics addressed regarding corruption issues. The study also found gaps in the literature concerning certain aspects of this phenomenon, such as the potential of platforms to fuel polarization and the political exploitation of corruption phenomena.

#### **Study by Abdullah Faisal<sup>(4)</sup> (2022):**

This study focuses on evaluating the policies adopted since 2014 to prevent and combat corruption in Egypt, based on dominant theories explaining corruption

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(1) Osman, A. A. (2022). Discourse analysis of influencers on social media in new media research and studies. *Egyptian Journal of Media Research*, 2022(79), 297–368.

(2) Marchetti, R., & Stanziano, A. (2024). Politicizing corruption on social media. *European Journal of Communication*, 02673231241253942.

(3) Marchetti, R., Stanziano, A., Mincigrucchi, R., Del Sarto, S., & Pagiotti, S. (2024). It's Social Media, Stupid! Opportunities and Constraints in the Representation of Corruption in and Through Social Media. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 00027642241268530.

(4) Faisal, A. (2022). Evaluating anti-corruption policies in Egypt since 2014. *Journal of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science*, 23(3), 183–210.



(principal/agent theory, upward theory, governance theory) and various intervention approaches (legal, regulatory, economic, political, and moral) put in place to tackle the phenomenon. The study revolves around a main question: How much improvement has there been in the anti-corruption policies in Egypt since 2014, and how effective are the new public policies in confronting corruption in Egypt? The study aims to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of these newly adopted public policies.

The study revealed that some of the most prominent new policies addressed include the National Anti-Corruption Strategy launched in 2014 and the amendments made to the law governing the Administrative Control Authority in 2017, which granted it more powers in the fight against corruption. Additionally, the 2014 Constitution of Egypt addressed this matter. The study relied on three different indicators to assess the impact of these policies on the state of corruption in Egypt: the Corruption Perceptions Index issued by Transparency International, the Control of Corruption indicator, which is a sub-indicator of the World Bank's Governance Indicators, and the Administrative Corruption Perception and Combat Indicator, which is published by the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) of the Egyptian Cabinet.

### **Study by Dolzhenkova et al<sup>(1)</sup>. (2021):**

This study addressed the issue of “the impact of the media on its functions within various state institutions” in different countries. The study noted that in many countries, the media is state-owned and its subordinate status prevents it from covering issues that directly affect the well-being of the national community, such as corruption, especially when this information conflicts with the interests of certain social and political structures. The study emphasized that the media's connection with the ruling political elites is the determining factor for the positive or negative impact on political processes within society.

Using a regional approach, analytical and comparative methods in different countries, the study concluded that in entire regions of the world, low levels of press freedom are linked to high levels of corruption, which consequently leads to low living standards for the population. There is a direct relationship between the level of corruption and the status of the media. In regions without press freedom, the media is not used for public interests. Therefore, by improving the status of this tool, anti-corruption policies can be implemented more effectively. The status of the media within the political system as a social institution and a tool for influencing societies is determined by its level of independence from political elites. The state thus faces the challenge of ensuring true freedom of expression, which is, among other things, essential for fighting corruption at the national level.

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(1) Dolzhenkova, E., Mokhorova, A., Mokhorov, D., & Demidov, V. (2021, October). Social and Political Influence of the Media on Corruption. In International Conference on Topical Issues of International Political Geography (pp. 213-223). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

### **Study by Aminanto<sup>(1)</sup> (2021):**

This study aimed to determine the role of the media in anti-corruption policies and the disparity in judicial decisions. It used a qualitative approach with secondary data. The approach employed in this research was legal and normative. This approach was applied to cases that fall within the scope of legislation and court decisions. The results indicated that the partnership between the media and law enforcement institutions benefits both parties, and that judicial decisions regarding corruption cases are influenced by the media, particularly with the growing role of social media, the ease of public access to information, and increasing demands for transparency. Mass media—through its influence on public opinion—can serve as a key supporter of crime prevention policies and anti-corruption efforts.

### **Study by Somaya Abdel-Rady<sup>(2)</sup> (2021):**

This study aimed to monitor and describe the role of the Egyptian Administrative Control Authority in raising awareness about corruption issues and promoting the values of integrity and transparency through various communication activities on its website and its Facebook page. The study relied on a sample survey method by conducting qualitative content analysis of the Authority's communication activities related to raising awareness of corruption issues and enhancing values of integrity and transparency. The study's findings, based on analysis of the Authority's social media pages and its website, showed a focus on creating awareness about corruption and its risks, prevention, promoting values of integrity and transparency, as well as supporting continuous and effective interaction and communication through multiple channels with citizens. The Authority applies transparency in its work and follows a policy of disclosure and non-secrecy concerning anti-corruption efforts and the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

### **Study by Youssef Al-Rashed<sup>(3)</sup> (2021):**

This study aimed to explore the role of social media platforms as sources for shaping and developing public awareness of corruption issues in Kuwaiti society through a field study involving a sample of 400 Kuwaiti respondents using a questionnaire. The study found several key results, including that the study sample followed news about corruption through social media, with Twitter being the most followed social media platform (15%). 36.6% of the sample reported that their view of the Kuwaiti government had "somewhat changed" through social media. The most preferred topics for the respondents were political corruption issues, political and social

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(1) Aminanto, K. (2021). The Role of Mass Media in Corruption Prevention Policies and Disparities in the Judges' Decisions. *Ilkogretim Online*, 20 (2).

(2) Ahmed, S. A. (2021). The role of the Administrative Control Authority in promoting integrity, transparency, and awareness of corruption risks. *Scientific Journal of Public Relations and Advertising Research, Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University*, 22(July/December), 247-304.

(3) Al-Rashed, Y. K. (n.d.). The role of social media in shaping public attitudes toward corruption issues in Kuwait. *Journal of Specific Education Research and Studies, Zagazig University*, 7(1), 452-496.



freedoms, human rights, freedom of expression, media freedom, and more, with political corruption being the most preferred (22.7%).

### **Study by Mona Al-Amiri<sup>(1)</sup> (2021):**

This study was motivated by the spread of corruption within Algerian local administration, attributed to the lack of strategic planning addressing all causes and factors leading to corruption, despite existing laws and regulations against it. The study attempted to employ social media as a new tool in combating administrative corruption and proposed solutions for combating corruption in local administration through these platforms. The study suggested a new method to combat corruption in Algerian local administrations using social media, by creating an online portal for citizens to submit complaints at the local level, in an organized and regulated manner, inspired by the experience of Algeria's Ministry of Justice. This approach aims to further develop local governance in Algeria.

### **Study by Asomah<sup>(2)</sup> (2020):**

This study aimed to investigate the role of private media in exposing political corruption and demanding accountability in Ghana, based on the “media as a watchdog” theory. The study found that private media plays a significant role in combating political corruption through investigative reporting, agenda-setting, providing a forum for anti-corruption discussions, acting as a pressure group for institutional and legal reforms, and political accountability. The results also challenge the common claim that private media in Africa cannot contribute effectively to fighting corruption involving influential political actors.

### **Notes and Insights from Previous Studies:**

- Foreign studies have made significant progress in studying influencers, while Arab studies are still exploring the phenomenon.
- Studies, regardless of their field, agree on the powerful impact social media influencers have, with their growing role among followers.
- Studies focusing on the use of influencers in commercial, social, and political marketing campaigns concentrated on how influencers impact the audience.
- Studies agree that social media has become a key player in shaping public opinion through influencers, contributing to the polarization of opinions, after traditional media merely regulated public opinion.

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(1) Al-Amiri, M. (2020). The role of social media networks in combating corruption in local administration in Algeria. [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Constantine, Algeria.

(2) Asomah, J. Y. (2020). Can private media contribute to fighting political corruption in sub-Saharan Africa? Lessons from Ghana. *Third World Quarterly*, 41(12), 2011-2029.



- The field of studies on influencers and social media still requires further exploration in the coming years, especially with the ongoing transformations in new media, including platforms, applications, devices, and technologies.
- Studies addressing media and corruption have shown a scarcity of applying theoretical models. They focused on examining the extent to which social media is used as a news source and its role in political and civil participation, without highlighting models that explain media coverage of corruption in terms of professional aspects, journalism ethics, its impact on fighting corruption, and how information is monitored, shared, and its effect on individuals.
- The researcher benefited from most of the previous studies, both theoretically and methodologically, to deepen the current study and adopt the appropriate theoretical frameworks and methodology for this study, as follows:
- The cognitive additions provided by previous studies regarding media agendas on corruption issues in the Arab world and globally.
- The theoretical foundation of administrative corruption in terms of concept, dimensions, and definition trends.
- These studies contributed to building scientific background on corruption issues in general, and administrative corruption in particular, which can be used in the current study.
- A comparison between the findings of the current study and the results of previous studies within their respective contexts.

## **Theoretical Framework of the Study:**

### **1. Social Marketing Model:**

The Social Marketing Model is one of the models primarily aimed at contributing to the creation of messages that can induce positive changes in attitudes and behaviors by understanding the cultural beliefs and practices of the audience<sup>(1)</sup>. It particularly focuses on how individuals perceive themselves as accepted in their surrounding environment. People are more likely to adopt new behaviors if they believe that doing so will make them more socially acceptable<sup>(2)</sup>.

Although this model emphasizes the need to segment the audience into different groups to address each group with tailored messages, the theoretical contributions

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(1) Carol A. Porter, A Descriptive Content Analysis of HIV /AIDS Prevention Campaign Messages in Selected Print Media in Zambia, Phd. thesis, Howard University, Ann Arbor, 2002. P. 124.

(2) Haleh Raissadat, Effects of an Asynchronous Online Course on Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Safer Sex Practices for University-Age Young Adults, MD thesis, Concordia University (Canada), Ann Arbor, 2007.



in the field of social marketing highlight that, regardless of the target audience, the messages within social marketing efforts must be framed positively, as they are more effective than negative messages. The model also emphasizes the importance of highlighting the benefits of the new behavior being adopted, as there is significant evidence showing that focusing on the benefits attracts more attention and has a stronger impact on beliefs and behaviors<sup>(1)</sup>.

The Social Marketing Model refers to the use of marketing principles and techniques to design, implement, and evaluate programs that aim to increase the acceptance of new behaviors<sup>(2)</sup>. Social marketers, following in the footsteps of their commercial counterparts, seek to persuade the public with their ideas by capturing their attention, sparking their interest, and stimulating their desires to ultimately encourage the desired action<sup>(3)</sup>.

## 2. Source Credibility Theory:

Hovland, Janis, and Kelley introduced the concept of Source Credibility to emphasize the need for communicators to ensure that their messages are credible in order to achieve persuasive effects on the audience. The Source Credibility Theory asserts that when the source is perceived as credible, it is likely that the message will be accepted by the audience. Due to the connection of Source Credibility Theory with various research fields, it has been the subject of ongoing research and development over the years<sup>(4)</sup>.

It can be stated that Hovland and his colleagues established the main pillars of Source Credibility Theory, which are based on two key elements:

- **Trustworthiness:**

- Trustworthiness refers to the credibility of the source in terms of its words and actions, and it is closely tied to the communicator being honest, sincere, and reliable.

- **Expertness:**

- Expertness refers to the perceived competence of the source based on the audience's previous interactions with the source, their knowledge about the source, and their ability to evaluate the information provided. This element relates to how the communicator can present logical arguments

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(1) John C. Spence, Tanya R. Berry and Amy E. Latimer-Cheung, Social Marketing and Message Framing. Encyclopedia of Sport and Exercise Psychology. Eds. Robert C. Eklund and Gershon Tenenbaum. )Thousand Oaks,; SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014(, p.696.

(2) Snehen du B. Kar, Rina Alcalay, and Shana Alex, Health Communication: A Multicultural Perspective, Eds. Snehen du B. Kar Rina Alcalay and Shana Alex, )Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2001(, p. 122.

(3) R. Heath, Seducing the subconscious: The psychology of emotional influence in advertising. (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2012), p. 15.

(4) Hearn, A., & Schoenhoff, S., From celebrity to influencer: Tracing the diffusion of celebrity value across the data stream, (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2016). pp. 194–212.

through the use of specialized experts<sup>(1)</sup>.

Additionally, Ohanian introduced a third dimension to the Source Credibility Theory to work alongside trustworthiness and expertness: **Attractiveness**.

Attractiveness can be viewed as being associated with how likable the source is, the familiarity of the source with the audience, and the similarity of the source's communication messages. These elements influence the behavior, attitudes, and knowledge of the target audience and can be clarified as follows:

### **Likability:**

Likability refers to behavioral traits on one hand and appearance on the other. The more refined the communicator's behavioral traits and the more elegant their appearance, the more positively it will impact the audience.

### **Familiarity:**

Familiarity refers to the level of knowledge the source has about its target audience, their characteristics, and classifications. It also concerns whether the source is known or unknown to the recipients, and whether there is a relationship of connection and loyalty.

### **Similarity:**

Similarity relates to ideological and demographic aspects. In this context, studies have shown that the target audience tends to prefer influencers whom they perceive as similar to themselves, compared to other celebrities or influencers who are different from them or whom they feel do not represent or relate to them<sup>(2)</sup>.

## **Media and Anti-Corruption: Traditional vs. Modern Media and the Emerging Role of Influencers:**

Corruption, particularly administrative corruption, is a widespread global phenomenon with deep roots. It takes on broad dimensions and involves various factors that are difficult to distinguish from one another, with varying degrees of prevalence across different societies. Recently, the phenomenon of corruption has gained significant attention from researchers in various fields (media, economics, law, political science, sociology, etc.). It has been defined by international organizations as a global phenomenon affecting nearly every society or political system. Administrative corruption, in particular, has existed since the emergence of human societies and the political systems governing these societies throughout history. It is a negative phenomenon that reflects society's drift away from upholding religious values and public morality, signaling a failure in state governance. It results from the exploitation

(1) Brown, D., & Hayes, N. Influencer marketing: Who really influences your customers? (Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 2015), p.98.

(2) Sammis, K., Lincoln, C., & Pomponi, S., Influencer marketing for dummies, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. 2015), pp.47-49.



of power, authority, or position for personal and illicit gain, often at the expense of the public interest.

In the present day, the phenomenon has expanded, taking on various forms and levels. It has become deeply entrenched and is influenced by factors that are difficult to separate, leading to numerous social, political, economic, security, and cultural problems and obstacles.

With the technological advancements in communication media and the changes in societies, traditional media has declined in the public sphere as a means of obtaining information through its conventional tools—newspapers, magazines, radio, and television—which rely on a one-sided presentation in fixed formats that require time to update and cover events as they occur. Traditional media has limited sources and methods of consumption and presentation, with limited opportunities for audience interaction with the content.

In contrast, a new wave of media has emerged: social media. Social media platforms offer individuals and communities the chance to participate freely and interactively with information and news. Once news happens, these platforms provide multiple ways and tools for individuals to create and share news content easily and simply, without the complexities of traditional media. Consequently, the traditional model of individuals as mere receivers of information has ended<sup>(1)</sup>.

Along with this change in media nature came a change in its impact on societies and individuals, leading to a shift in its role. Social media has facilitated communication and connection between individuals and groups, allowing for greater participation in the virtual public sphere. This shift also supports accountability, transparency, and the flow of information. Civil society organizations can now use social media platforms to hold all levels of authority accountable, exert pressure to achieve their goals, and influence policies, legislation, and plans for reform.

For accountability to be achieved, there must be freedom in the availability and circulation of information, as well as transparency in the data and information that citizens can access. This allows for a true understanding of the situation and the monitoring of the actions of government, sectors, and various authorities, making them accountable. As communication technologies and information technology evolve, driven by the development of the internet and smart devices, individuals can now access information available online easily and effectively. Thus, the task of achieving monitoring and accountability via social media networks becomes easier, especially with the support of government shifts towards e-government and digitization, which primarily rely on transparency, the availability of information, and empowering citizens to participate and ensure accountability through creating

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(1) Abdel Salam, A. B. (2018). The role of social media in combating corruption. *Observatory of Transparency and Integrity Policies*, 3.



new communication channels with citizens and a strong presence on social media platforms<sup>(1)</sup>.

Thus, media, in general, and social media in particular, play a crucial role in achieving good governance by ensuring participation, accountability, transparency, and the circulation of information, as mentioned earlier. As a result, citizens, both individually and collectively, can monitor and hold officials accountable, exert pressure on them to change policies and agendas, and voice their opinions to decision-makers to correct the course of governance and achieve participatory democracy. As social media evolves, it has provided individuals with spaces to communicate with each other, express their demands and opinions, and form a pressure force on decision-makers, who have become increasingly aware of what social media says and the significant events dominating public opinion through trends like hashtags. Social media plays the role of a virtual or alternative public sphere, through which citizens express their demands and opinions, enabling them to exert pressure, drive change, and confront decision-makers—especially in situations where public spaces on the ground are shrinking and citizens face challenges preventing them from participating and expressing themselves and their needs.

### **The Role of Social Media in Anti-Corruption through the Watchdog Function:**

Through the **Watchdog** role, which can be achieved through social media, social media contributes significantly to combating corruption. When information is easily accessible, citizens' awareness and understanding of what is happening around them increases. This facilitates the identification and tracking of corruption incidents, which spread across various social circles, making it difficult for the government to hide or prevent the dissemination of what is happening against it. This stands in stark contrast to traditional media, where it is easier to control and manipulate the media content by allowing or blocking certain corruption-related news. Traditional media may even promote a false image when they are themselves corrupted or involved with corrupt governments and institutions, benefiting from them. However, with social media, it is challenging to fully control the massive amount of media sources and platforms, as social media enjoys a degree of freedom, even amidst repression and censorship by authoritarian regimes<sup>(2)</sup>.

Social media also plays a role in altering the value system and cultural frameworks within society, making it more aware and, consequently, more resistant to corruption. This is due to the considerable influence and high followership rates across all

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(1) UNDP research staff, reflections on social accountability catalyzing democratic governance to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, UNDP, 2013.

(2) Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, *Liberation Technology Social Media and the struggle for democracy*, 2012, The John Hopkins University Press and The National Endowment for democracy, Baltimore, United States of America Robin Effing, Jos van Hillegersberg and others, *Social Media and Political Participation: Are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube Democratizing Our Political Systems?*, Conference Paper · August 2011, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands.





demographics, contributing to the promotion of values such as participation, transparency, and accountability. For media, including social media platforms, to perform their roles in combating corruption, they must enjoy a level of freedom free from control by authorities and institutions to avoid corruption of the media and its functions.

It is assumed that audiences rely on media information to achieve goals that combine understanding, guidance, and entertainment, which can lead to the formation of attitudes and behaviors. Media, including the internet, are considered trusted news sources for following corruption-related events. Although social media slightly increases people's awareness of corruption, it can negatively affect knowledge about it, as it is often used for entertainment purposes. Many users treat corruption as a form of humor and respond differently to corruption incidents<sup>(1)</sup>.

As the volume of information citizens receive through journalism increases, their reactions to those involved in corruption also intensify. When the information includes evidence, its impact on public opinion grows<sup>(2)</sup>. On the other hand, social media plays a significant role in exposing corruption, spreading information and news, and expressing opinions, despite the fear of facing government censorship or avoiding online conflicts<sup>(3)</sup>.

Some studies suggest that social media platforms and online newspapers address corruption issues and support accountability. They allow individuals to create content; however, the quality of this coverage is often poor and concerning, lacking professional ethics. In contrast, newspapers only convey raw data, and their coverage is often hindered by security, legal arguments, and defamation<sup>(4)</sup>. Although these media encourage political participation, corruption-related issues have contributed to public mistrust in politicians and the media. Reports on corruption have led to increased dissatisfaction among some people and affected their behavior. Additionally, digital media coverage does not present positive perspectives and results in varying responses. Negative posts on social media cultivate negative attitudes. It has been shown that individuals' reliance on social media information has increased their perception of corruption, and their attitudes toward it have

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(1) Ma, L. (2017). Government website, social media, and citizens' perceptions of corruption: Evidence from Chinese cities. In K. Demirhan & D. Çakir-Demirhan (Eds.), *Political scandal, corruption, and legitimacy in the age of social media* (pp.185-204). IGI Global.

(2) Avenburg, A. (2019). Public costs versus private gain: Assessing the effect of different types of information about corruption incidents on electoral accountability. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 11(1), 71-108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X19840457>

(3) Suwana, F. (2018). *Digital media and Indonesian young people: Building sustainable democratic institutions and practices* PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology.

(4) Abdelali, A. (2019). Traditional and online journalism and corruption investigation issues: The case of Algeria. In B. I. Hamada & S. Wok (Eds.), *Off and online journalism and corruption: International comparative analysis*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.85925>

shifted based on the reports they encountered. Meanwhile, the impact and reliability of social media have decreased<sup>(1)</sup>.

Some Arab studies emphasize the importance of using digital media, including online newspapers and social media platforms, to find information and news about corruption, understand positions on it, express opinions, uncover violations, and mobilize public opinion<sup>(2)</sup>. There is some dissatisfaction with the role of traditional media in covering certain difficult issues like corruption. The public is instead provided with news and investigative reports through multiple sources on social media, particularly through platforms like X (formerly Twitter).

Some studies have affirmed that new media allows bloggers and influencers to act as opinion leaders and creators of public discourse on many issues, independent of traditional media. Bloggers are considered “gateways” that stimulate news coverage and facilitate reforms. They help digital channels cover corruption issues, report on them, mobilize supporters or detractors, raise voices critical of the abuse of power, and expand the boundaries of the public sphere and freedom<sup>(3)</sup>.

### **The Emergence of Influencers in the Age of Social Media:**

At the beginning of the 2000s, with the rise of the internet and the increasing influence of social media platforms, the phenomenon of **social media influencers**, YouTubers, bloggers, and other similar figures emerged. These influencers spread information via social media networks and forums, etc.

The question arises: Who are these influencers, and what is their nature?

Social media platforms have had a powerful impact on a large segment of people. One of the consequences is the influence on how some individuals make decisions. A large portion of people now cannot make decisions entirely on their own, and instead, they often turn to the internet to gather information on various matters. For example, they look for the latest devices, choose the best school, or even find a new address using internet applications. As a result, individuals no longer rely solely on their perceptions and emotions, but instead depend on the facts they gather from the internet and social media applications. Social media platforms have thus become a tool for reorganizing society into smaller groups (followers), resembling a brand, without the need for human intervention.

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(1) Park, H., & Lee, J. (2017). The influence of media, positive perception, and identification on survey based measures of corruption. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 26(3), 312-320.

(2) Studies like: Obeidat, M. Z. (2017). The role of electronic journalism in shaping Jordanian public attitudes toward corruption issues. *Scientific Journal of Journalism Research*, Cairo University, 9, 361-397.

Ali, M. M., & Ali, H. D. (2015). The importance of social media as a source of information regarding political corruption issues. *Journal of the Faculty of Law for Legal and Political Sciences*, University of Kirkuk, 4(15), 690-746.

Al-Gharaba, H. H. (2013). Motivations for university youth exposure to investigative reports in electronic newspapers and their relationship to attitudes toward corruption issues. [Unpublished master's thesis]. Ain Shams University.

(3) Degarr, H., Bo, D. I., & Tine, V. A. (2020). Online readers' comments on corruption stories and hate speech in Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 25(3), 49-59.



## The Emergence of Influencers:

This shift has given rise to the phenomenon of **online influencers**, individuals who have large audiences and followers on social media platforms and possess the ability to leverage their popularity to persuade others to adopt an idea or purchase a product. In other words, they can channel their popularity for promotional purposes or to achieve specific goals, whether these are related to promoting an idea, a specific product, or even social and political causes<sup>(1)</sup>.

The concept of influencers also refers to a group of celebrities who have gained a significant number of followers on social media. They often use their virtual social capital (their network of followers) to access financial resources, symbolic capital (fame), and influence. In this sense, an influencer is someone who has the ability to impact others, employing persuasive techniques that allow them to influence a large number of individuals, guiding them toward a specific behavior.

Influencers on social media are individuals who have built a good reputation through their knowledge, experiences, and skills in a specific topic. They regularly share content related to this topic on their preferred online platforms and channels, attracting thousands or even millions of followers who closely follow their opinions.

## Types and Classifications of Influencers:

Several categories of digital influencers can be distinguished based on various criteria:

### 1. According to the Social Media Platform:

Influencers can be classified based on their primary platform, such as YouTube, Facebook (and its apps, such as Instagram), Snapchat, and TikTok, where younger influencers often rely on platforms like TikTok.

### 2. According to the Number of Followers:

Influencers can also be classified based on the number of their followers and the engagement rate of their posts. Based on this classification, influencers are divided into several categories as follows:

- **Celebrities:** These are influencers with over 5 million followers.
- **Major Influencers:** These are individuals with between 1 million and 5 million followers.
- **Micro-Influencers:** These influencers have between 100,000 and 1 million followers. This group includes two subcategories: first, second-tier

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(1) Kazim, K. (2022). The phenomenon of influencers: Causes, impacts, and future prospects. Social Horizons Magazine, Information Center of the Council of Ministers, 3, 26.

celebrities who have not yet reached the threshold needed to build a larger following, and second, successful online experts who have a significant following but are more accessible than the other two categories.

- **Medium-Range Influencers:** These individuals have a partial influence and typically consist of regular people who have gained recognition in specialized fields, earning between 20,000 and 100,000 followers. The distinguishing feature of this group is that these influencers interact more with their followers, which contributes to their moderate influence.
- **Nano-Influencers:** This is the most recent category recognized, consisting of individuals with a small number of followers—typically fewer than 100,000. They are often experts in niche or highly specialized fields. Nano-influencers can be thought of as a big fish in a small pond, possessing a small but highly engaged and enthusiastic following. These followers are willing to interact with and adopt the opinions of the nano-influencers, adjusting their attitudes and behaviors accordingly.

### 3. According to the Level of Influence:

This method of classification distinguishes influencers based on their level of influence, as follows:

- **Celebrities:** These are the original influencers (in the real world) who have managed to translate their fame and influence to social media platforms. This category includes artists and athletes. Although these celebrities may have a large number of followers and fans, the actual influence they exert on their followers is debatable due to their limited interaction with them. As a result, they are sometimes referred to as “idols.”
- **Opinion Leaders and Experts:** This category includes individuals recognized as authorities in specific fields due to their knowledge or skills. It includes industry experts, thought leaders, such as journalists, intellectuals, and esteemed academics.
- **Medium-Impact Influencers:** These are individuals who gain fame in a specific area, especially those related to lifestyle issues such as fashion, health, dieting, sports, and interior design. This group also includes activists involved in specific causes, such as environmental protection or minority rights (e.g., women’s and children’s rights). These influencers are similar to opinion leaders but build their reputation in a less formal way, often through their online presence and the overall quality of their posts.



## Influencers and Their Role on Social Media:

### According to the Content Presented by Influencers<sup>(1)</sup>:

- **Bloggers:** The idea of influencing an audience through the internet began with blogs that produce impactful content, helping people make purchasing decisions and providing them with product reviews and preferences to assist in making sound decisions.
- **Vloggers:** These are individuals who create videos and visual content to share details about their daily lives, travels, and more. They provide various reviews that help their followers make better purchasing decisions.
- **Reality TV Stars:** These are celebrities who have risen through reality television and gained millions of followers on social media platforms. They often collaborate with fashion and beauty brands.
- **Journalists/Editors:** Journalists are powerful media figures who can change the way people view brands today. Most journalists also have an active presence on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram.
- **Photographers:** Creative individuals who provide high-quality visual content. Many of them regularly share their work on their personal accounts across social media platforms. Their accounts are highly valuable for travel, fashion, and lifestyle advertising. Additionally, large brands like Canon and Nikon collaborate with famous photographers to promote their products.
- **Social Media Stars:** Unlike bloggers, social media stars do not rely on blogs or videos to engage their audience. Instead, they share glimpses of their everyday life and maintain a strong relationship with their followers. These individuals have gained popularity solely through their social media accounts.

There are also various tools that analyze and measure the degree of influence social media users have, the quality of content they provide, and its impact on their followers. Based on this, influencers are classified into four main types<sup>(2)</sup>:

- **Teachers:** Influencers who educate others and share their expertise.
- **Trainers:** Influencers who teach and train others, typically relying on experimentation and participation.
- **Entertainers:** Influencers who provide light entertainment and rely on humor and fun.

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(1) <https://www.arabyads.com>, 2021, p.11.

(2) Rifat, M. M. (2018). Public opinion in the virtual reality and the power of virtual mobilization (1st ed.). Cairo: Al-Arabi for Publishing and Distribution, pp. 218–219.



- **Charismatic Influencers:** Influencers with a likable personality who are able to generate positive energy, inspiration, and creativity.
- **Characteristics of Influencers:**
  - **Attractiveness:** Influencers tend to be appealing to their audience, especially when there are common interests and similarities.
  - **Trustworthiness:** Refers to the honesty and integrity of the influencer, which helps build trust with the audience. The level of credibility depends on how the audience perceives the intentions of the source of information.
  - **Expertise:** Relates to the skills and knowledge of the influencer. Public figures with more experience are generally more capable of influencing the audience compared to those with less expertise.
- **Characteristics of the Majority of Followers of Celebrities on Social Media:**
  - **School Students and Teenagers:** This group has a high usage rate of the internet and social media, and they are the fastest to be influenced by others.
  - **People Who Feel They Lack a Personal Identity:** These individuals are often lost and seek role models and inspiring figures in their real life.
  - **Individuals Who Lack Happiness:** They find it through following celebrities on social media.

### Factors Contributing to the Spread of Social Media Stars:

Influencers are not influential by themselves; societal conditions and surrounding factors have contributed to their emergence and influence. Some of the key factors include:

- **Increased Leisure Time Among Youth:** The lack of mechanisms for utilizing free time.
- **Lack of Role Models:** Media and families neglect the interests of youth in their real lives.
- **Positive, Happy Images of Social Media Celebrities:** The image of a happy life, traveling and visiting entertainment spots, attracts people.
- **Continuous Communication with Followers:** Their regular presence in the daily lives of their followers makes them familiar and often a part of their routine.



- **Emotional Connection:** A psychological bond develops between followers and influencers, where followers become emotionally attached to them, feel important, and gain a sense of achievement and self-esteem by following their updates and videos.

### Political, Social, and Technological Dimensions Leading to the Emergence of Digital Opinion Leaders:

One study outlines several political, social, and technological dimensions that led to the rise of online public opinion leaders, including<sup>(1)</sup>:

**Institutional Dimension:** The weak role of political parties, civil society, and legislative representatives as intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled, and their inability to carry the demands of public opinion, led to these institutions' disconnection from the social and political reality. This pushed public opinion to resort to the digital sphere to build parallel institutions and amplify opposition voices.

- **Technological Dimension:** The increasing reliance on communication and information technology has provided opportunities for users, especially with the availability of the internet as an easy, affordable, and rapidly spreading medium. Moreover, services have become more integrated, as the internet offers both communication and internet services through mobile phones, as well as free messaging between them. Additionally, the high level of freedom provided by the internet has encouraged users to turn to these online forums to freely express their opinions.
- **Developmental Dimension:** Societies undergoing democratic transitions experience increasing political movement. Egypt, in particular, witnessed various political changes after the 25th of January and 30th of June revolutions. The Egyptian society has witnessed political mobility among those interested in public affairs. Furthermore, citizens' exposure to the outside world has led to greater ambitions and aspirations, which may pressure decision-makers and not align with social and economic realities. The popular aspirations for development also necessitate the creation of a virtual movement of new activists and influencers aiming to achieve better outcomes for society.
- **Age Dimension:** Given that Arab societies, especially Egypt, have a large youth demographic, constituting nearly 60% of the population, they have new visions for change and possess sufficient knowledge of communication and information technology and its interaction compared to other age groups. Consequently, the youth are more likely to use these networks and electronic platforms than any other age group to express their voices and opinions.

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(1) Abdel Sadiq, A. (2013). New media and the emergence of new actors in the public sphere: The case of electronic usage. Strategic Issues Series, Arab Center for Cyberspace Research, 3.

### **Mechanism for Identifying Influencers:**

1. Number of followers per month, number of visits to blogs, and other metrics.
2. Engagement and accessibility of content.
3. Frequency of posts.
4. Media mentions and references to the post.
5. Level of activity on social media platforms.
6. Number of followers and likes.
7. Discussion rate on topics posted.
8. Ranking of their pages.
9. Interaction rate (such as resharing content, discussions, preferences<sup>(1)</sup>).

### **Utilizing Social Media Influencers in Commercial and Social Marketing Campaigns:**

Influencer marketing has emerged as a significant force in the ever-evolving marketing landscape. Social media platforms have created a vast digital world where individuals can create content and engage with large audiences, turning passive consumers into active content creators and distributors. This shift has led to the rise of influencer marketing, which is a powerful channel leveraging the digital audience's engagement<sup>(2)</sup>. Social Media Influencers (SMIs) have become opinion leaders with significant influence over their followers. Ninety percent of marketers believe that influencers are highly effective in engaging consumers, which is why companies have integrated influencer marketing into their communication strategies<sup>(3)</sup>. Prominent influencers often start as ordinary people producing content on social media. Influencers must start from scratch, dedicating time and effort to building their personal brand<sup>(4)</sup>.

### **Recent Global Statistics on Social Media Influencers and Their Audiences<sup>(5)</sup>:**

If these statistics relate to the marketing and advertising sector, they clearly reflect the significant influence that influencers have on their followers:

- 70% of teenagers trust influencers more than traditional celebrities.

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(1) Keen, A., *Digital vertigo: How today's online social revolution is dividing, diminishing, and disorienting us.* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2015), p.86.

(2) Tafesse, W., & Wood, B. P. (2021). Followers' engagement with instagram influencers: The role of influencers' content and engagement strategy. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 58(1), 102303. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102303>

(3) Geyser, W. (2021, February 9). The state of influencer marketing 2021: Benchmark Report. Influencer Marketing Hub. <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report-2021>.

(4) Ouvrein, G., Pabian, S., Giles, D., Hudders, L., & De Backer, C. (2021). The web of influencers. A marketing-audience classification of (potential) social media influencers. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 37(13-14), 1313-1342.

(5) Influencer Marketing Benchmarks in 2024, <https://later.com/blog/influencer-benchmarks>



■The Effectiveness of Using Social Media Influencers in Raising Awareness and Combating Corruption

- 86% of women use social media to consult about purchases.
- 49% of consumers rely on recommendations from influencers.
- 6 out of 10 teenagers follow influencer advice instead of celebrities.
- Influencer marketing campaigns earn \$6.5 for every \$1 spent.
- 57% of fashion and beauty companies engage in influencer marketing.
- The influencer marketing market is expected to reach nearly \$21 billion in 2023.
- 40% of “X” platform users make purchases based on tweets from influencers.
- 67% of marketers promote content with the help of influencers.
- The desire to purchase increases by 5.2 times through influencers on “X” platform.
- 71% of marketers believe that partnerships with influencers are excellent for business.

In this rapidly evolving marketing scene, understanding how influencers leverage their status to influence their followers has become essential. Many companies now use social media platforms for marketing purposes, including leveraging influencers through social media. Influencers, especially those who are celebrities, have become increasingly dominant in the marketing environment. This shift has occurred because consumers tend to trust influencers’ opinions more than traditional advertisements<sup>(1)</sup>. Influencers are often seen as more authentic than traditional celebrity endorsements because they are ordinary people sharing their experiences and opinions on social media. Their followers view them as a trusted source of information and advice<sup>(2)</sup>.

It is also evident that social media influencers tend to build expertise in specific areas. For example, Kritika Khurana, a fashion and entertainment influencer known as the “Boho Girl,” has gained 1.8 million followers on Instagram. Khurana has built a unique brand identity centered around her style, which reflects in her blog and fashion videos where she shares makeup tips and design ideas. In addition, she runs a growing company called Dee Clothing and has received sponsorship from reputable brands such as L’Oréal, Myntra, Knorr, and Pure Sense. Similarly, Parul Gulati, an Indian actress and model, has a massive following of over 1.6 million on

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(1) Berne-Manero, C., & Marzo-Navarro, M. (2020). Exploring how influencer and relationship marketing serve corporate sustainability. *Sustainability*, 12(11), 4392.

(2) Rao Hill, S., & Qesja, B. (2023). Social media influencer popularity and authenticity perception in the travel industry. *The Service Industries Journal*, 43(5-6), 289-311.

Instagram. Gulati's venture, Nish Hair, a ₹50 million hair extension brand, adds to her diverse professional pursuits<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is important to understand the motivations of consumers who follow a particular influencer on social media, even if the influencer has a large number of followers and brand endorsements. For instance, do people follow "Kritika" solely because of her role as a lifestyle and fashion content creator? Perhaps they seek design advice from her, or there may be other factors influencing their decision to follow her.

However, with the widespread use of social media, recent research shows that nearly 50% of internet users follow influencers on social media platforms, and 40% of YouTube users trust influencer recommendations<sup>(2)</sup>. As a result, brands are increasingly prioritizing collaborations with social media influencers, recognizing their ability to engage consumers effectively in the digital space. This trend is evident in the significant integration of influencer marketing into overall strategies by marketers, with expectations for its continued growth in the foreseeable future<sup>(3)</sup>.

Marketers' sense of influencer marketing lies in engaging followers, enhancing feelings of Harmonic (H), and directing Purchase Intention (PI) through the influencer's Social Presence (ISP<sup>(4)</sup>). Central to this dynamic is forming connections between followers and influencers, a subject of utmost importance in contemporary marketing. Influencer marketing has evolved towards long-term strategies focusing on reliable partnerships and deeper engagement. The intensity of the relationship between the influencer and their audience has become a decisive factor in planning influencer marketing campaigns<sup>(5)</sup>.

In social marketing, tools and techniques similar to commercial marketing are used. Just as commercial marketers create value for customers through branding, social marketers create value by combining positive associations with social behaviors<sup>(6)</sup>. In fact, the most successful social marketing campaigns are those that closely resemble commercial marketing campaigns<sup>(7)</sup>.

Social marketing aims to influence behaviors and attitudes to contribute to the

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(1) Shandy, V. M., Mulyana, A., & Harsanto, B. (2023). Social media richness, brand equity, and business performance: An empirical analysis of food and beverage SMEs. *Cogent Business & Management*, 10(2), 2244211.

(2) Digital Marketing Institute. (2024, April 14). 20 influencer marketing statistics that will surprise you. Digital Marketing Institute. <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/20-influencer-marketing-statistics-that-will-surprise-you>

(3) Celestino, P. (2023, March 10). Influencer marketing in 2023: Benefits and best practices. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2023/03/10/influencer-marketing-in-2023-benefits-and-best-practices/?sh=42eb55b59b63>

(4) Carmona, M. (2022). The existential crisis of traditional shopping streets: The sun model and the place attraction paradigm. *Journal of Urban Design*, 27(1), 1-35.

(5) Geyser, W. (2021, February 9). The state of influencer marketing 2021: Benchmark Report. Influencer Marketing Hub. <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report-2021/>

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welfare of the community. Therefore, “social marketing can be applied in any situation where socially critical individual behavior needs to be addressed for a target audience,” and it challenges barriers that prevent society from acting according to desired behaviors. Social marketing creates awareness of behavioral opportunities and their benefits, provides communication tools for awareness, and encourages stakeholders to motivate others and support change. As a result, social marketing goes beyond mere education and differs from educational and media campaigns<sup>(1)</sup>.

**In this context, influencers on social media can be utilized in social marketing campaigns. As mentioned in the second section of the previous studies, there are various models and examples in different communities regarding this matter.**

### **Focused Vision and Specific Executive Proposal for Leveraging Influencers in the Fight Against Corruption:**

- **Careful selection of a specific sample of influencers** to form electronic teams that support the state’s direction in combating corruption.
- **Organizing training and qualification courses** for selected influencers on the topics of corruption and methods for detecting corruption crimes, with the aim of enhancing their capabilities and enriching their knowledge so they can present topics to their audience effectively.
- **Utilizing influencers to implement a national awareness campaign** about the risks, dimensions, and effects of corruption, identifying government activities most vulnerable to corruption, and escalating the fight against it, so it becomes a top priority for political parties and civil society institutions. It is essential to rely on specialists for planning and implementing these campaigns.
- **Holding a media conference** where influencers present their opinions and suggestions to establish a comprehensive framework for creating an anti-corruption media campaign in partnership with academics, sociologists, religious leaders, politicians, economists, and media figures.
- **Encouraging influencers to share experiences from other nations** that have successfully reduced corruption, in an effort to learn from them.
- **Through the content shared by influencers regarding corruption issues**, striving to reshape societal values and behaviors by creating new norms, reinforcing desired social behaviors, and exposing unacceptable and deviant phenomena.

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(1) Madill, J., & Abele, F. (2007). From public education to social marketing: The evolution of the Canadian heritage anti-racism social marketing program. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 17(1-2), 27-53.

- **Influencers spotlighting the role of the Administrative Control Authority** and state institutions in uncovering and confronting corruption.
- **Documenting cooperation between influencers and media outlets** to follow up on corruption cases, creating audio and written media campaigns to inform citizens of their right to access information as a way to establish transparency, raise awareness of harmful practices, encourage beneficial behaviors, and instill civic values.
- **Focusing on the state's institutions** to create effective channels for receiving information and complaints from the public, as well as issues related to corruption raised by influencers.
- **Researching and discussing how to ensure legal protection** for selected influencers while working to expose corruption cases.

### **Conclusion and Takeaways:**

This study has observed and analyzed the phenomenon of “influencers” on social media as new opinion leaders shaping public opinion on these platforms. They contribute with their content to directing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of their followers. Additionally, the study has proposed an executive vision to leverage these influencers in combating corruption, which is a primary focus of the state.

There is no doubt that understanding the phenomenon of “social media influencers” in its various dimensions is an essential and required step, as engaging these influencers ensures efficient two-way communication with the public, whether in the fight against corruption or other areas. This is particularly important in light of what new media has enabled, including its interactivity and the difficulty of controlling media as was possible in the past. Moreover, it opens new horizons for dealing with the modern age and its tools, addressing young people in their language and through figures they prefer and trust. This approach aligns with the remarkable developments in communication methods.

If we accept that the media plays a crucial role in reducing corruption by raising public awareness and exposing areas of corruption, then fighting corruption can only succeed with free media capable of actively participating in accountability, transparency, and the dissemination of information. Today, influencers on social media are one of the key pillars in this regard.



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