The Impact of Storytelling Content on Audience Engagement through Trust and Relatability: A Survey Study on Instagram Fashion Influencers

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how storytelling in Instagram Stories influences audience engagement. Despite the platform's popularity, limited research has examined how storytelling affects engagement through trust and relatability. To address this gap, a survey of 67 Instagram users was conducted using Google Forms. The collected data were analyzed in SPSS using linear regression and mediation analysis based on the Baron and Kenny method. The results indicate that storytelling can increase audience engagement by strengthening trust and relatability between influencers and their audiences. Although the study is limited by its small sample size and focus solely on Instagram, it contributes useful insights to research on influencer marketing and digital storytelling.

Keywords: Instagram Stories, Digital Storytelling, Influencer Marketing, Audience Engagement, Trust, Relatability, Narrative Transportation Theory.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent times, People spend a greater amount of time on Instagram compared to other social media channels (Alhabash and Ma, 2017). As of February 2023, the United Kingdom (UK) had approximately 35 million users on the Instagram platform (Dixon, 2023). Some people spend hours every day on Instagram. Users of Instagram, which is one of the social networks that is increasing at the fastest rate, are able to share their memories through the use of videos and photographs (Lee and Kim, 2020). The "stories" feature, which was first released in 2016, has quickly become one of Instagram's most popular additions. It enables users and digital influencers to share photos and videos with their audience and have realtime interactions with them for a period of twenty-four hours (Bainotti et al., 2020). The substantial user base of Instagram in the UK, as illustrated in [Insert Figure 1]

The adoption of this novel form of storytelling by a large audience has resulted in a transformation of content creation and consumption in the digital era. Instagram stories have compelled marketers to modify their advertising strategies to keep pace with the swift evolution of marketing tools (Towner and Muñoz, 2022). However, there is a dearth of scholarly research in this domain, particularly in the field of digital storytelling (Atiq et al., 2022; Shareef et al., 2019). In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the practice of influencer marketing, which can be attributed to the impact of Instagram (Belanche, 2021). According to recent statistics, a significant majority of Instagram users, approximately 90%, follow at least one business account. Moreover, a substantial proportion of users, approximately 81%, utilize the platform as a means to gather information on various products (Zote, 2022).

According to Cui et al. (2019), empirical data indicates that Instagram has the potential to serve as a viable and efficient platform for online marketing. According to recent research, the return on investment in this field for companies is over fivefold, with a single dollar invested resulting in earnings exceeding USD 5 (Mechem,

2022). Additionally, a majority of marketers, specifically 59%, have indicated their intention to increase their expenditure on influencer marketing in the upcoming year (Lee and Kim, 2020). The field of influencer marketing has successfully adapted storytelling strategies to align with contemporary digital consumer behavior on platforms such as Instagram Stories (Kim et al., 2022). In contemporary times, digital influencers are perceived to possess greater credibility compared to traditional media channels (Chong and Gottipati, 2020). By employing the "stories" feature, social media influencers can engage with their audience by sharing concise clips of their professional endeavors and offering updates on their daily activities.

1.2 Research Problem

Despite the growing prevalence of Instagram and its "stories" functionality, there exists an absence of academic research devoted to digital storytelling and its effects on audience engagement, trustworthiness, and relatability. The utilization of Instagram as a platform for social media influencer marketing has gained significant prominence (Atiq et al., 2022). It is fundamental for businesses and marketers to understand the fundamental elements that contribute to highly effective content and audience engagement (Chong and Gottipati, 2020). Previous studies have indicated that social media video advertisements possess the ability to influence consumers' attitudes towards the advertisements. Additionally, it has been found that Instagram stories exhibit better advertising efficacy when compared to static pictures (Cooley and Parks-Yancy, 2019; Chong and Gottipati, 2020; Atiq et al., 2022). This study utilized the variables from previous studies that establish the relationship between storytelling content on Instagram and audience engagement, trust, and relatability, such as (Atiq et al., 2022; Bainotti et al., 2020; Chong and Gottipati, 2020; Ki et al., 2020). However, there were gaps in these studies in terms of generalizability, methodology, and other geographical factors.

1.3 Research Aim

The present study seeks to address the research gap and resolve the research problem by investigating the influence of storytelling content on audience engagement while considering the mediating effects of trust and relatability. This investigation will be conducted within the context of Instagram users in the United Kingdom.

1.4 Research Question(s)

Research Question 1: How does the incorporation of storytelling in content on Instagram influence audience engagement?

Research Question 2: What is the significance of trust in the connection between story content and audience engagement?

Research Question 3: How does relatability factor into the association between storytelling content and audience engagement?

1.5 Research Objective(s)

RO1: To examine the impact of Instagram storytelling content on audience engagement.

RO2: To examine the mediating role of trust in the relationship between Instagram storytelling content and audience engagement.

RO3: To examine the mediating role of relatability in the association between Instagram storytelling content and audience engagement.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research holds major implications for marketers who seek to expand their reach and engage consumer attention through the utilization of influencer marketing. This study provides helpful recommendations for ma-

rketers and content creators to improve their tactics for enhanced results by identifying the essential elements that support successful content and audience engagement on Instagram. A thorough awareness of the roles of trust and relatability in the interaction between storytelling content and audience engagement can help in the development of accurate and successful influencer marketing strategies, resulting in advantages for both businesses and consumers.

1.7 Structure of the Study [Insert Table 1]

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Recently, influencer marketing has emerged as a potent tool for enterprises to promote their products and services on the Instagram platform. Due to its substantial user base and high levels of engagement, Instagram has become a favored platform for influencer marketing initiatives. This strategy involves partnering with influential social media personalities who have many supporters to showcase a brand's offerings to their respective audiences. The primary objective of this literature review is to identify and analyze the research works pertaining to the fundamental concepts of the dissertation, namely, storytelling content, audience engagement, trust, and reliability. The literature also discussed the relevant theory related to the topic. The literature review in examining employs a thematic approach, whereby the focus is on identifying key concepts and their connections in order to formulate hypotheses and a research model.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Narrative Transportation Theory

In 1993, Richard Gerrig introduced the concept of narrative transportation. In 2000, a paper was published by Melanie Green and Timothy Brock regarding the impact of transport on the effectiveness of public narratives. The concept of narrative transportation has been identified as a fusion of attention, imagery, and emotions whereby an individual is completely immersed in a fictional realm (Green and Brock, 2000). According to Seyfi and Soydaş (2017), the narrative is comprised of two essential structures, namely content and conversation. The narrative's content is comprised of stories that encompass events, organizations, and norms of culture. The combination establishes both the form and essence of the content. With the advent of the digital age, narratives have gained increased prevalence and prevalence in human society. The utilization of narrative techniques as a means of fostering customer engagement has been increasingly observed across various sectors, encompassing the realm of brand management (Van Laer et al., 2019; Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). Instagram stories frequently trigger affective responses, such as amusement, compassion, or personal encounters (Kreling et al., 2022). According to the theory of narrative transportation, emotionally captivating stories have the potential to impact the views, attitudes, and emotions of a given audience (Irimiás et al., 2021). The above discussion stated that influencers on Instagram utilize narrative techniques to captivate their audience and foster engagement, ultimately impacting their beliefs, attitudes, and emotions towards the content and the brand being promoted.

2.3 Instagram Influencers

Instagram Influencers are people who have attracted significant attention within a particular niche on various social media platforms and have amassed a substantial following. According to Mundel et al. (2022), individuals possess the capacity to convince their adherents to have faith in their suggestions and impact their cognitive processes related to decision-making. Previously, Instagram influencers were differentiated from conventional celebrities who attained recognition through their performances or musical abilities (Khamis et al., 2017).

For instance, Kylie Jenner, a renowned American celebrity, has emerged as a popular Instagram influencer with an extensive following of millions (Statista Infographics, 2020). According to Gupta et al. (2021), individuals who utilize various social media platforms to disseminate information on various topics, such as

health, behaviours, services, and products, are now classified as Social Media Influencers (SMIs). Instagram Influencers are individuals who leverage their Instagram to promote brands and products to their followers (Lee et al., 2021). These individuals come from various backgrounds, including fashion and lifestyle enthusiasts who showcase their personal styles while endorsing beauty brands (Zhou et al., 2020), popular celebrities who share paid content on their social media accounts (Leite and Baptista, 2021), and vloggers who share product reviews and feedback on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube (Koay et al., 2021).

2.3.1 UK Instagram Fashion Influencers

In this technological environment, consumers and the fashion business in the UK are profoundly impacted by the actions of fashion influencers (Khamis et al., 2017). The UK ranks third on the list, indicating the significant impact and extent of influencer marketing in the country (Javed, 2023). A majority of millennial consumers in the UK, specifically 60%, have made purchases based on recommendations from influencers they follow (Milos Djordjevic, 2022).

• Chiara Ferragni

Chiara Ferragni, [Insert Figure 2] an Italian fashion influencer, has achieved global fashion icon status with her millions of Instagram followers. She has effectively utilized storytelling to augment her personal brand by frequently sharing personal anecdotes and experiences associated with the fashion items she endorses (Carbone, 2019). The aforementioned has augmented both the user's audience engagement and trust among her followers

Victoria Magrath [Insert Figure 3] Interrow, who possesses a PhD in fashion, showcases a unique fashion sense that combines high-end and affordable fashion. Her fashion education and expertise, along with her adept storytelling, have facilitated the development of a robust and engaged audience (Leaper, 2018). Victoria's sharing of personal stories related to her clothing choices enhances relatability and fosters trust among her followers.

Sophie Shohe [Insert Figure 4] Sophie Shohet specializes in luxury fashion and lifestyle. She offers valuable insights to her followers regarding the luxury fashion industry, including unboxing high-end products, providing detailed reviews, and offering style tips (Shohet, 2022). The user's authentic and detailed storytelling about these brands fosters a high level of trust among her followers.

2.4 Storytelling Content

According to Woodside et al. (2008), the utilisation of storytelling as a means of communication has been widely recognised as an effective instrument, enabling individuals to convey information and personal experiences in a captivating and enduring manner. In contemporary times, the utilisation of storytelling has become a crucial component of marketing strategies (Zhou et al., 2020). Numerous organisations such as Nike (Grawe, 2021), GoPro (All Good Tales, 2019), Patagonia (Silva, 2021) and many others have incorporated storytelling content into their marketing endeavours to establish a rapport with their intended audience and enhance brand recognition (Hattar, 2022). Storytelling has held a crucial significance in various human societies over time, serving as a means of transmitting cultural norms and principles (Bietti et al., 2018).

The emergence of modern communication technologies has given rise to novel forms of storytelling, which have effectively transformed individuals into digital tribes. Instagram, a widely-used visual communication platform, has transformed the manner in which individuals narrate their experiences (Atiq et al., 2022). According to data, Instagram has emerged as a potent platform for digital storytelling, with a staggering 40 million images uploaded daily and 1000 comments generated every second (Kemp, 2022). In 2013, Instagram augmented its reach by enabling users to upload videos, thereby establishing a novel mode of visual storytelling that surpasses cultural barriers (Ong and Toh, 2023). According to Vial (2019), Instagram has provided a platform for storytellers to expand their reach through the use of user-friendly language that enables individuals to share their personal narratives or comprehend the narratives of others. Instagram has emerged as

a significant medium for disseminating and exchanging narratives in the contemporary era of digital communication (Van Laer et al., 2019) as exemplified by the fashion storytelling content shown in [Insert Figure 5]

2.5 Audience engagement

The concept of audience engagement pertains to the various emotional, cognitive, and affective reactions that an audience may exhibit in response to media content, as proposed by Natarajan et al. (2018). According to De Veirman et al. (2017), active engagement has the potential to result in greater content interaction and increased content consumption. According to Lin et al. (2018), social media influencers function as opinion leaders who utilise social networks to communicate with their intended audience. Their primary objective is to expand their follower base by generating engaging content. According to Conde and Casais (2023), empirical evidence suggests that micro-influencers, who have less than ten thousand fans on Instagram, exhibit greater engagement levels compared to macro-influencers. This is attributed to the fact that a smaller number of followers and higher interaction rates lead to increased conversion rates (Coss, 2023). The degree of involvement with the content can vary among individuals in the audience (Panagiotopoulos, 2012), with some exhibiting a passive inclination towards absorbing the information, while others may actively engage with it, and a few could even take part in the content (Khan, 2017). Previous studies suggest that visual communication is becoming increasingly common as a means of conveying information (Ki et al., 2020) and increasing the engagement of people (Atiq et al., 2022). In light of the preceding points, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H1: The use of storytelling content by social media influencers on Instagram impacts audience engagement.

2.6 Trust

According to Bilisbekov et al. (2021), Trust is a cognitive and affective state characterized by the anticipation and conviction of the benevolent motives and dependability of others. It holds considerable influence over a range of prosocial behaviors, including but not limited to civic participation, cooperative endeavors, and charitable activities (Yang et al., 2019). The establishment of trust between influencers and their followers is a critical aspect of influencer marketing (Kim and Kim, 2021). According to Belanche et al. (2021), communication delivered by an influencer is frequently more impactful than that which originates directly from the brand. Research has demonstrated that brand equity is significantly affected by the level of trustworthiness exhibited by a brand (Seo and Park, 2018). As per prior by Mundel et al. (2022), the view of an individual towards content is impacted by the degree of dependence they place on the source. Moreover, research has indicated that an influencer's reputation can be impacted by their perceived level of knowledge and trustworthiness (Leite and Baptista, 2021). According to the theory presented by Morgan and Hunt (1994), the interaction between a vendor and a purchaser has an impact on the level of trust established between them, which can be attributed to the shared values they hold. Previous research has suggested that utilizing stories as a means of communication can enhance customer engagement and foster a sense of connection between the customer and a salesperson (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

H2: The storytelling content by social media influencers on Instagram impacts trust.

According to research by Atiq et al. (2022), it has been suggested that trust may serve as a precursor to consumer (or audience) engagement. According to the social exchange theory, the development of a trust relationship between two parties is a result of the exchange of favourable experiences over a period of time (Ahmad et al., 2023). Previous research has indicated that trust plays a crucial role as a mediator in the relationship between customer loyalty and engagement in the hospitality industry (Admin et al., 2013). Previous research has demonstrated that trust has played a pivotal role in representing consumer engagement across various domains (Agyei et al., 2020). In light of the preceding points, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H3: Trust has a significant impact on Audience Engagement.

2.7 Mediating role of Trust between Storytelling Content and Audience Engagement

According to Dwivedi et al. (2021), the evolution of storytelling has led to the incorporation of novel techniques that encompass diverse formats, platforms, and perspectives. Prior research by Singh et al. (2023) has indicated that the majority of visual stimuli that individuals perceive are retained in memory, mostly in the form of brief stories. Verbal descriptions generate activation of an individual's emotional, bodily indicators (Wallentin et al., 2011). On the contrary, visual stimuli tend to attract a greater degree of attention (Elías Zambrano, 2018). Regarding consumer behaviour, individuals anticipate that a company or entity will provide concise and clear data pertaining to a brand (Polyorat et al., 2007). Moreover, it is expected by the audience that the information presented is accurate (So et al., 2014). Previous research has demonstrated the significant effectiveness of storytelling, as evidenced by the positive impact of storytelling advertising on various outcomes, including elevated levels of awareness (Van Laer et al., 2019), increased engagement (Atiq et al., 2022) with the content, and higher purchase intention (Joshi et al., 2022). According to a study by Atiq et al. (2022), it was suggested that in the process of creating the storytelling process of trust, it is important for the storyteller to represent the stakeholders involved genuinely. The notion of the loop of trust in the context of digital storytelling was proposed by Lambert and Hessler (2018), highlighting the captivating quality of storytelling that offers a direct encounter to its audience. He added that a story circle gives people a safe space to be themselves. According to Hugander (2022), the idea of trust in a relationship is defined by the collective feelings, viewpoints, and evaluations of all parties. As per prior research by Rather (2018), the engagement of customers holds significant importance in growing a reliable and dedicated association between a seller and a buyer. The study by Atiq et al. (2022) shows that the storytelling content by Instagram influencers increased trust and audience engagement. The trust that develops between an influencer and their audience is thought to play a role in the correlation between the two variables (storytelling content and audience engagement). According to the commitment trust model (Brown et al., 2019), it serves as the theoretical basis for the current partnership; mutual trust between the "influencer" and the "Instagram user" fosters an atmosphere conducive to long-term relationship maintenance by encouraging mutually beneficial interactions. Consequently, a hypothesis is formulated in the following manner. In light of the preceding points, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H4: Trust mediates the relationship between Instagram influencers' story content and audience engagement.

2.8 Relatability

According to Abidin (2016), the concept of relatability is non-verbal in nature. The theory of self-determination states that a person has three ubiquitous and fundamental psychological needs such as autonomy, competence and relatedness (known as relatability). There need to perform a key role in human optimal performance and growth (Ki et al., 2020). Instagram users are more likely to interact with posts that they can relate to, which is why authenticity is so important. As per the findings by Chahal (2016), digital celebrity collectives, comprising of vloggers, bloggers, and individuals who have gained fame through Instagram, have a strong appeal among shared reference groups. According to Knoll et al. (2015), a reference group is a collection of individuals that influences the principles and views of an individual, serving as a point of reference and supporting consumers in their purchasing decisions. According to a report published in Forbes, the attribute of relatability has emerged as an essential component of an influencer's success (Bringé, 2020). In the realm of social media, Instagram serves as a platform for influencers to disclose details of their personal lives and express their subjective viewpoints (Lee, 2021; Saleem, 2023). This form of communication fosters more openness among audiences towards influencers. According to research findings, social media users tend to favour the content produced by influencers over their advertisements due to its impartial nature (Saleem, 2023). According to Singh et al. (2023), content is deemed relatable when it is devoid of technical language and can be comprehended with ease. According to So et al. (2014), a connection between a source provider and a viewer persists as long as the content remains pertinent. In light of the preceding points, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H5: The storytelling content by Instagram influencers increase relatability.

The notion of relatability has generated significant interest in contemporary times, specifically in relation to the engagement of the audience with social media material (Atiq et al., 2022). The concept of relatability posits that content or influencers that resonate with an audience are more likely to generate engagement, resulting in a stronger connection and increased levels of interaction (Zhou et al., 2020). In addition, there exists a correlation between relatability and heightened production of user-generated content, as individuals are more prone to disseminate and plan content that resonates with them (Voorveld et al., 2018). Consequently, this results in increased levels of audience engagement as users are transformed into active participants in the discourse surrounding the content or influencer (Voorveld et al., 2018). In light of the preceding points, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H6: Reliability has an impact on audience engagement.

2.9 Mediating role of Relatability between Storytelling Content and Audience Engagement

According to past literature, humans are often referred to as "storytelling animals" (Condis, 2020). According to scholarly discourse, the human experience acquires significance (Richards, 1989). According to previous research by Green and Clark (2012), the narrative content disseminated on Instagram primarily comprises brief stories or images. According to prior research by SEYFİ and SOYDAŞ (2017), the act of sharing experiences has an impact on individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour. The linkage between narratives and persuasion has been established by researchers (Muniz et al., 2015).

The narratives that are commonly exchanged regarding specific objects or occurrences serve as a communal repository of knowledge and data (SEYFİ and SOYDAŞ, 2017). Narratives, or content conveyed through storytelling, have the potential to establish a network for sharing among individuals. The utilisation of storytelling content by a brand has been found to be effective in facilitating the development of awareness, empathy, comprehension, recall, and recognition while also imbuing meaning into the brand's message (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). Comprehending the mechanics of storytelling in the realm of marketing is crucial in comprehending the cognitive processes employed by the audience when presented with information in a narrative structure (So et al., 2014).

Previous research indicates that viewers tend to process information in a narrative framework rather than an argumentative one (Woodside, 2010). Based on prior research, it can be contended that presenting content in the form of a narrative executed in a particular style may elicit more positive alterations in the audience's attitude. Using the same reasoning as the setting, it can be asserted that narrative content establishes a connection between its creator and the target audience. Research by SEYF and SOYDA (2017) indicates that Instagram stories have a lasting impression on viewers. The term "memorable" here means capable of being stored in long-term memory and retrieved when needed. According to the study's author, this information is subsequently shared with third parties. So, it's safe to say that using a narrative to provide material makes it easier for followers to relate to the influencer. In light of the preceding points, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H7: Reliability plays a mediating role among storytelling content by Instagram influencers and audience engagement.

2.10 Research Model [Insert Figure 6]

2.11 CHAPTER 3 – METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology used in the dissertation. The term "research methods" is used to describe the approach an individual takes when conducting an inquiry. This is a practical, logical, and reasonable approach to the complex problem under consideration (Saunders et al., 2016). The scientific approach will encompass various elements such as techniques, methods, objectives, alternatives, temporal framework, procedures, and methodologies. The researcher will adhere to the investigative framework known

as the "research onion" and provide a rationale for each stage of the process by utilising the method as illustrated in [Insert Figure 7]

3.2 Research philosophy

The uppermost layer of the onion symbolizes the study's overall approach. The research onion identifies four distinct approaches to inquiry: positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism, and realism. The author supports his claim using positivist arguments. Bodig (2007) argues that the positivist method is appropriate since it considers empirical evidence. In this approach, facts and information are gathered through surveys and then analyzed statistically, limiting the researcher's freedom of action. This philosophical framework holds that investigators must be objective at all times (Saunders et al., 2016) as illustrated in [Insert Figure 8].

3.2 Research Approach

The next layer of the study onion describes the methods used. You may roughly divide research strategies into two broad camps: inductive and deductive. Inductive and deductive reasoning are the two primary research strategies. According to Sprenger (2011), the deductive method gets progressively more particular as it moves from a more generic starting point. The research project began with an evaluation of the existing perspectives, which served as the foundation for the development of a hypothesis that could be confirmed by the collected data. In contrast, with an inductive strategy, researchers began with restricted hypotheses and expanded them as they gathered data. In general, it might be applied in a field with scant previous research, where the formulation of a hypothesis is required (Mertens and Recker, 2020). The researcher adopted a deductive approach, drawing on pre-existing knowledge to generate the results. The deductive method is not only more precise but also simpler to grasp when conducting research. In this case, the deductive method was used because it was better suited to the chosen research philosophy. Sprenger (2011) states that the first step in the deductive method is to examine and critically evaluate the preexisting theoretical framework and scholarly literature. Ultimately, it is employed to verify the outcomes' hypotheses as illustrated in [Insert Figure 9].

3.3 Research Strategy

The choice of research strategy is primarily contingent upon the nature of the research question. Henceforth, the present investigation centred on the survey methodology. The study employed positivism and deductive reasoning, indicating a requirement for quantitative data. This refers to a research methodology that is specifically geared towards the gathering and examination of data. This method is employed when the researcher utilizes a closed-ended questionnaire as a means of collecting data (Savela, 2018). Furthermore, this particular design offered enhanced dependability and precision in its outcomes while also being userfriendly for novice researchers (Saunders et al., 2016). To gather data, the investigator disseminated an online survey via Microsoft Forms to individuals who used Instagram. The survey instrument was designed as a structured, closedended questionnaire, utilizing the 5-point Likert scale for measurement. The targeted demographic for fashion-related merchandise on Instagram comprised customers, while the United Kingdom was the intended target nation.

3.4 Research Choices

The fourth layer of the research onion describes the decisions made while doing the study. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches might be used. There are three types of choices usually research taken in research such as mixed, mono or multi-method. The classification of research strategies can be based on the extent of their usage. Specifically, mono-strategy pertains to the employment of a single strategy; mixed strategy involves the utilisation of both qualitative and quantitative strategies, while multi-strategy refers to the use of multiple qualitative or quantitative strategies (Saunders et al., 2016). However, in this study, the researcher decided to use the mono-method based on the quantitative design. The information and findings are presented numerically using a standard statistical format. The data was collected through a survey and scored on a 5point Likert scale for representation in numbers.

3.5 Sample size and Sampling Technique

Initially, a sample size of 30 was deemed sufficient for this study. However, it is recommended to use a larger sample size for conducting SPSS tests. Consequently, the ultimate sample size was increased to 67. The present study utilised convenience sampling as the sampling method. The utilisation of a nonprobability sampling technique facilitated the researcher's ability to choose participants who were readily available and open to taking part in the investigation. The researcher employed diverse channels, including social media groups and university groups on WhatsApp, to disseminate the questionnaire and gather data. Through the utilisation of various platforms, the researcher was able to expand the reach of the questionnaire, resulting in a more diverse and extensive sample. This approach enhanced the representativeness of the sample and ultimately strengthened the reliability of the research findings (Hair et al., 2019).

3.7 Data Collection

The primary data in this study was collected from the participants through the use of an online questionnaire. The survey instrument was constructed with a structured and closed-ended format, employing a 5-point Likert scale for the purpose of quantification. The utilisation of this particular format facilitated a more streamlined examination of the participants' input, in addition to enabling the quantification of the information for statistical evaluation. The target population was Instagram users within the United Kingdom, both male and female, more than 18 years old. Section A of the questionnaire was designed to elicit demographic information from the participants, whereas Section B was intended to collect data pertaining to the research variables (questionnaire attached in the appendix). The implementation of a standardised questionnaire facilitated the acquisition of uniform and commensurable answers from the subjects, consequently guaranteeing the dependability and accuracy of the results (Hair et al., 2019) [Insert Table 2]

The questionnaire comprised 16 measurement items assessed using a five-point Likert scale. The storytelling content construct was measured through five items adapted from Eck (2006), trust through four items informed by Almahdi et al. (2022), relatability through four items adapted from Atiq et al. (2022), and audience engagement through three items based on Rather and Sharma (2017). The use of previously published measurement scales provided an established basis for operationalising the study constructs.

3.8 Time horizons

The fifth tier denotes the period dedicated to scholarly investigation. There are two distinct frameworks: cross-sectional and longitudinal. Cross-sectional data refers to information that is collected at a single point in time and is representative of a specific population or sample. In contrast, a longitudinal framework involves the analysis of data over a period of time to gain an understanding of events and behaviours (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Given that the duration of this project spans a period of four months, the nature of this study is cross-sectional. Thus, the collection of data through a cross-sectional approach appears to be more pertinent and feasible.

3.9 Ethical Concerns

In the course of conducting research, it is increasingly imperative to consider ethical considerations. Therefore, it is essential to comprehend the fundamental principles of ethical review and its potential impact on the research. The study participants have been granted complete authorization, and the researcher takes measures to ensure the confidentiality and non-disclosure of the collected data (Kemp, 2022). The study ensured that no participant experienced any physical, social, financial, or psychological harm, and all data collected was treated with confidentiality. Furthermore, the research adhered to the participants' responses without any modification and refrained from drawing inaccurate inferences or results. Additionally, the LSBU Harvard citation format was followed to ensure proper credit of any externally sourced data. Moreover, the work exhibited a lack of plagiarism and errors.

3.10 Data Analysis Techniques and Tools

In this study, the IBM SPSSv22 was used to analyse and present the results in the form of tables and graphs. The IBM SPSS is a user-friendly and convenient software to analyse the result obtained from the primary research data. Initially, frequency, descriptive statistics, skewness, kurtosis, and Cronbach alpha were used to check the normality and reliability. To check the fitness of the model, the ANOVAa was used. The Pearson correlation was used to check the direction and correlation between all variables. Lastly, linear regression was used to check the relationship between direct and indirect variables and baron and Kenny's mediation method to check the mediators in the model.

CHAPTER 4 - ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the data analysis and results, assess the results, and make a logical progression of points, with each point supported by specific data and relevant literature. The results will be presented in charts and table form, along with the interpretations.

4.2 Data Collection Period and Response Rate

The data collection period began on April 20 and ended on April 30. The total number of questionnaires distributed to individuals was eighty. However, 67 individuals respond to the questionnaires. Consequently, the response rate was 83.75

4.2 Data Cleaning

There were absent values in the SPSS dataset, causing the issue. Because of this, the mean imputation procedure was utilised to replace the missing values. Imputation by the mean is a technique that is frequently used when the absent values are quantitative, and the dispersion of the variable is nearly normal (Tamboli, 2021).

4.3 Demographic Statistics

This section presents the findings from the analysis of the participants' demographic data. In this study, the following demographic statistics were collected such as age, gender, education, income, time spent on Instagram and favourite Instagram influencers. According to Rusmanica (2023), understanding the sample's demographics helped analyse the research findings and discover any trends or correlations between demographics and study factors [Insert Table 3]. According to the table, 24 of the 67 respondents were male, and 43 were female. There were 35.8% males and 64.2% females.

[Insert Table 4] indicates that of the 67 respondents, six were aged 18 to 24, 36 were aged 25 to 31, 23 were aged 32 to 38, and 2 were aged 39 to 45. The percentages of respondents in each age bracket are, respectively, 9%, 53.7%, 34.3%, and 3%.

According to [Insert Table 5], out of the total number of participants, 67, 7.5% had at least an A-Levels degree, 43.3% had a Bachelor's, 47.8% had a Master's, and 1.5% had some other type of education. The majority of respondents (about 98.5%) had a Master's degree or above, while just 50.7% held a Bachelor's degree or below, according to the findings.

[Insert Table 6] provides data regarding the monthly income of 67 respondents. 34.3% of them earned between £501 and £1000 per month, while 20.9% earned less than £500. Around 34.3% of those surveyed earned between £1001 and £1500 per month, while 9% earned between £1501 and £2000, and only 1.5% earned more than £2000.

[Insert Table 7] includes information on how much time 67 respondents spend on Instagram. The bulk of resp-

ondents (44.8%) used the platform for 1-2 hours a day, while 28.4% used it for 30 minutes to an hour a day. 14.9% of those surveyed used Instagram for less than 30 minutes daily, while 9% used it for two to three hours daily. Only 3% of those surveyed used Instagram for more than three hours every day.

[Insert Table 8] displays 67 respondents' preferred Instagram fashion influencers. With 41.8% of the valid responses, Aimee Song (@aimeesong) was the most popular fashion influencer, followed by Negin Mirsalehi (@negin_mirsalehi) with 22.4% and Chiara Ferragni (@chiaraferragni) with 10.4%. Other well-known fashion influencers include Danielle Bernstein (@weworewhat) with 7.5% and Camila Coelho (@camilacoelho) with 6.0%, while 11.9% of respondents favoured other fashion influencers.

Furthermore, the table displays 67 respondents' preferred Instagram fashion influencers. With 41.8% of the valid responses, Aimee Song (@aimeesong) was the most popular fashion influencer, followed by Negin Mirsalehi (@negin_mirsalehi) with 22.4% and Chiara Ferragni (@chiaraferragni) with 10.4%. Other well-known fashion influencers include Danielle Bernstein (@weworewhat) with 7.5% and Camila Coelho (@camilacoelho) with 6.0%, while 11.9% of respondents favoured other fashion influencers.

The demographic statistics indicate that the majority of respondents were female, with an age range of 25 to 31 years. Additionally, most respondents held either a Bachelor's or Master's degree and earned a monthly income between £501 and £1500. The majority of participants reported dedicating 1-2 hours per day to Instagram usage. Notably, Aimee Song (@aimeesong) was identified as the most prominent fashion influencer among the respondents.

4.4 Frequency of the Statement

[Insert Table 9] The replies of the 67 participants, which are represented by the data, indicate whether or not they agree with the statement, "The storytelling content of fashion influencers catches my attention." 7.5% of participants took the stance that they strongly disagreed with the statement, whereas 22.4% took a neutral stance, 50.7% agreed, and 19.4% strongly agreed.

[Insert Table 10] This statement relates to the participants' confidence in their ability to remember some Instagram content. 58.2% of 67 respondents agreed that they would remember some of the stuff, while 25.4% strongly agreed, 13.4% were ambivalent, and only 3% disagreed.

[Insert Table 11] The following table presents the answers of 67 participants to a survey question about the uniqueness and originality of the narrative material that fashion influencers post on Instagram. 10.4 % of respondents disagreed with the statement, 11.9% were neutral, 52.2% agreed with the statement, and 25.4% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

[Insert Table 12] The story-based material produced by the fashion influencer is interesting. The results showed that 6% of respondents disagreed with the statement, 13.4% were indifferent, 58.2% agreed, and 22.4% strongly agreed. 77.6% of the total respondents regarded the material to be interesting.

[Insert Table 13] From a total of 67 responses from people, 25.4% are in complete agreement that the fashion influencer's story material provided them with new ideas, while 58.2% agree with this statement, and 7.5% are neutral. Only 1.5% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement, while 7.5% disagree with it.

[Insert Table 14] A majority of the respondents, 32.8 %, strongly agree that it is essential for fashion influencers to interact with people who follow them. Another 50.7% of respondents agree with the statement, while 10.4% of respondents maintain a neutral stance, and just 6% of respondents disagree.

[Insert Table 15] There is an agreement among the respondents that the thoughts of the fashion influencer are comparable to their own, with 47.8% of them agreeing and 19.4% of them strongly agreeing with this statement. On the other hand, 11.9% of those surveyed disagree with it, 19.4% are neutral, and just 1.5% strongly disagree with it.

[Insert Table 16] This survey's data reveals the participants' responses to the statement, "The fashion influencer shares content that resonates with me." 52.2% of the 67 participants agreed that the influencer's content resonates with them, and 19.4% strongly agreed. Only 11.9% and 1.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed, respectively. 14.9% of the participants selected the neutral option. The majority of respondents felt that the influencer's content resonated with them in some way.

[Insert Table 17] Participants were given the statement "I feel like I know the influencer well" and asked to rate how much they agreed with it on a scale from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." A total of 67 people responded to the question, with 1.5% strongly disagreeing, 19.4% disagreeing, 20.9% neutral, 40.3% agreeing, and 17.9% strongly agreeing. This indicates that the majority of participants (58.2%) believed the influencer.

[Insert Table 18] According to the results, 46.3% of the total number of respondents (67 in total) agreed, and 20.9% strongly agreed that they trust the opinion of the fashion influencer. On the other hand, 10.4% of respondents disagreed, and 3.0% strongly disagreed, while 19.4% maintained a neutral stance. This suggests that a sizeable section of the audience places their trust in the opinion and judgement of the influencer.

[Insert Table 19] A total of 67 respondents gave their feedback on the statement, "I believe the influencer shares his or her honest opinion." With 37.3% of respondents agreeing and 28.4% of respondents strongly agreeing with this statement; on the other hand, only a very tiny fraction of respondents (1,5%) strongly disagreed with the statement, whereas 20.9% of respondents disagreed with it, and 11.9% remain neutral. In general, it would suggest that a sizeable majority of the audience views the influencer as providing an honest perspective, which is a positive perception.

[Insert Table 20] One of the questions in the survey was about the amount of confidence that respondents had in the influencer's ability to provide accurate information on the product or service that they endorse. According to the findings, the vast majority of respondents (37.3%) agree, and 31.3% strongly agree that they put their confidence in the information that the influencer has. Despite this, there are still 14.9% of people who disagree, and 4.5% strongly disagree with the statement. The remaining responders are neutral (11.9%).

[Insert Table 21] The degree of respondents' confidence in influencer messages as opposed to messages from brands is the subject of this research. The findings indicate that 38.8% of respondents agree, 23.9% strongly agree, and 23.9% are neutral when asked whether they trust influencer messages more than those from brands. 11.9% disagree, whereas just 1.5% strongly disagree, in contrast. This shows that the reputation and personal brand of the influencer have a big effect on how trustworthy their words are.

[Insert Table 22] According to the findings, the majority of respondents (49.3%) agree that any storytelling material captures their attention, with 26.9% indicating that they strongly agree with this statement. Only 10.4% of respondents disagree, and 1.5% strongly disagree, while 11.9% are neutral. This lends credence to the idea that telling stories is an effective tool that may be used in order to attract the attention of the audience successfully.

[Insert Table 23] According to the findings, the vast majority of respondents (47.8%) agree that they take great pleasure in sharing ideas with other users, and 25.4% of them are in strongly agree with this statement. In addition, 14.9% of people were neutral, while just 11.9% disagreed. This shows that the respondents feel it valuable to engage in conversations with other people and maybe discover fresh points of view.

[Insert Table 24] According to the findings, the majority of respondents (46.3%) and 28.4%, respectively, Agreed and strongly agreed that it is hard for them to separate themselves from the material. Only 16.4% of people disagreed with this statement, 1.5% strongly disagreed, and 7.5% were neutral. This shows that the information is interesting and has a significant impact on the responders, which may have an effect on how they behave and make decisions.

4.5 Descriptive Statistics

[Insert Table 25] outlines that the descriptive statistics show the participants' opinions were mostly positive or neutral across the board. Based on a 5-point Likert scale, the average response for all variables (ST1 to ST5, R1 to R4, T1 to T4, and AE1 to AE3) was between 3.5373 (R4) and 4.1045 (R1). For each variable, the range of the standard deviations (which measure the dispersion of participant responses) was from 0.71522 (ST2) to 1.18180 (T3). Even while the replies tended to be positive as a whole, this implies that individuals had distinct perspectives and experiences.

4.6 Data Normality

[Insert Table 26] showcases that, after conducting an analysis of the skewness statistics, it is apparent that all of the values fall within the acceptable range of 2. This suggests that the probability distributions for every variable exhibit a degree of symmetry. The kurtosis statistics exhibit values within the acceptable range of ±5 (Enomoto et al., 2012), indicating that the distributions of each variable do not display excessive peakiness or flatness in comparison to a normal distribution. The data can be determined to be approximately normal based on the skewness and kurtosis values that have been presented.

4.7 Reliability Analysis

[Insert Table 27] showcase that the reliability of the scales employed in the study was evaluated by examining the Cronbach Alpha results for each construct. According to Hair et al. (2019) guidelines, a commonly accepted threshold value for Cronbach Alpha is 0.70. This indicates that values equal to or exceeding 0.70 are deemed satisfactory and indicative of strong internal consistency among items within a given construct. The results of Cronbach's Alpha analysis indicate that all constructs have achieved the threshold value. The findings suggest that the scales employed to assess every construct in the investigation demonstrate favourable internal consistency, thereby guaranteeing the dependability of the metrics (Hair et al., 2010).

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Storytelling Content	5	0.822
Trust	4	0.931
Relatability	4	0.778
Audience Engagement	3	0.905

4.8 Pearson Correlation Analysis

[Insert Table 28] displays the Pearson correlation coefficients among the four constructs, namely Storytelling Content, Relatability, Trust, and Audience Engagement. All correlations exhibit statistical significance at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), thus suggesting robust associations among all pairs of constructs.

The results indicate a significant and positive correlation between the content of storytelling and the degree of relatability, with a correlation coefficient of 0.736. This implies a positive correlation between the calibre of the narrative content and the influencer's relatability. The findings suggest a significant and positive association ($r = 0.671$) between the quality of storytelling content and trust, implying that an increase in the former leads to a corresponding increase in the latter among the audience towards the influencer.

Furthermore, the findings indicate a robust and affirmative association between Relatability and Trust ($r = 0.782$). This implies that when an influencer enhances their relatability, it leads to a corresponding increase in trust towards the influencer. The study findings indicate a significant positive correlation between Audience Engagement and Storytelling Content ($r = 0.591$), Relatability ($r = 0.729$), and Trust ($r = 0.793$). This suggests that these three factors play a crucial role in enhancing audience engagement.

The measurement items were drawn from previously published studies, providing an established theoretical basis for the operationalization of the four constructs. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's

Alpha. However, the study did not report a separate exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis; consequently, the findings should be interpreted with this limitation in mind. Future research should undertake more comprehensive construct validation using factor analysis and additional convergent and discriminant validity assessments.

4.9 Linear Regression Analysis

[Insert Table 29] presents the model summary, which reveals an R square value of 0.660. This value suggests that the combination of Trust, Storytelling Content, and Relatability can account for 66% of the variance in Audience Engagement. Additionally, the adjusted R square value of 0.644 indicates that this model is a good fit for the data. [Insert Table 30] displays the outcomes of the ANOVA, which demonstrate a statistically significant model with $F(3, 63) = 40.792$, $p < .000$. These results suggest that the amalgamation of Trust, Storytelling Content, and Relatability is a significant predictor of Audience Engagement.

4.9.1 Hypotheses Results

[Insert Table 31] of the hypotheses testing are presented results. All of the relationships were determined to be statistically significant, as indicated by p-values less than .000. Consequently, all of the hypotheses were accepted. The findings suggest that the utilization of Storytelling Content has a positive impact on Audience Engagement, Trust, and Relatability. Moreover, Trust has a positive influence on Audience Engagement, while both Trust and Relatability serve as mediators in the association between Storytelling Content and Audience Engagement.

The multiple regression model demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables and Audience Engagement, $F(3, 63) = 40.792$, $p < .001$. The model produced an R^2 value of 0.660 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.644, indicating that Storytelling Content, Trust and Relatability collectively accounted for 66% of the variance in Audience Engagement.

The hypothesis testing results indicated positive and statistically significant relationships across the proposed research model. Storytelling Content was positively associated with Audience Engagement ($\beta = 0.591$, $p < .001$), Trust ($\beta = 0.671$, $p < .001$) and Relatability ($\beta = 0.736$, $p < .001$). Trust ($\beta = 0.793$, $p < .001$) and Relatability ($\beta = 0.729$, $p < .001$) were also positively associated with Audience Engagement. The findings therefore provide support for the proposed direct relationships among the study constructs.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter covers the research questions and their answers. Literature review and primary data analysis should inform answers. The chapter will address how the study answers the problem indicated in the Introduction, how the findings relate to past knowledge or practise, and the research lessons learnt. It will also discuss practise implications and suggest ways to improve practises connected to the study question. Finally, the study's shortcomings and recommendations will be noted.

5.2 Discussion and Findings

H1: Storytelling Content □ Audience Engagement

In H1, the statistical results through linear regression show that the predictor variable (Storytelling content) positively influenced the dependent variable (Audience engagement). The results show that storytelling has a significant impact with a 0.591 beta value and p. value = .000, which means a positive relationship and is statistically significant. The outcomes of Hypothesis 1 provide strong empirical support for the notion that storytelling-based content significantly enhances audience engagement. Influencers who utilize effective storytelling techniques might improve audience engagement, as already proved in a past study by Atiq et al. (2022). The study has also linked with the literature review discussed in Chapter 2 that Storytelling Human

beings engage in content creation as a means of enhancing their memory and imagination (D'Arrigo et al., 2017). Narratives have the ability to reduce the intricacy of information, leading to increased audience engagement (Pera and Viglia, 2016).

H2: Storytelling Content Trust

In H2, the statistical results through linear regression show that the predictor variable (Storytelling content) positively influenced the dependent variable (Trust). The results shows that storytelling has a significant impact with 0.671 beta value and p. value = .000, which mean positive relationship and statistically significant. The outcomes of Hypothesis 2 provide strong empirical support for the notion that storytelling-based content significantly enhances trust of the consumers toward the influencers. This demonstrates the efficacy of storytelling plays a key role to increase the level of the trust on the Instagram influencers. The hypothesis is linked with the past study by Rather and Sharma (2017). As discussed in the literature, it is proved that the followers of an influencer tend to develop a sense of personal connection with her through engagement with her personal narratives. The bond created through common experiences and values fosters greater trust.

H3: Trust Audience Engagement

In H3, the statistical results through linear regression shows that the predictor variable (Trust) positively influenced dependent variable (Audience engagement). The results shows that Trust has a significant impact with 0.793 beta value and p. value = .000, which mean positive relationship and statistically significant. The outcomes of Hypothesis 3 provide strong empirical support for the notion that Trust significantly enhances audience engagement. The finding of the study is linked with the past researches such as (Kim and Kim, 2021; Atiq et al., 2022). The findings linked with the literature discussed in the chapter 2, which stated that trust is of the utmost importance for any influencer campaign to drive engagement. Without trust, the intended engagement-inducing content may not feel real, thereby failing to interact with the intended audience (Almahdi et al., 2022).

H4: Mediating role of trust between Storytelling content and Audience Engagement

In H4, the statistical results through baron and Kenny mediation method shows that the predictor variable (Storytelling content) positively influenced dependent variable (Audience engagement) through (Trust) mediator variable. The results shows that storytelling has a significant indirect impact through trust on audience engagement with 0.723 beta value and p. value = .000, which mean positive relationship and statistically significant. The outcomes of Hypothesis 4 provide strong empirical support for the trust as a mediator between storytelling content and audience engagement. According to the commitment-trust theory, brands can increase customer engagement and loyalty by employing influencers to advertise their products (Ahmad et al., 2023). In addition, content presented as a tale makes customers feel good (Admin et al., 2013). As a result, trust can be seen as a medium between the two independent and dependent variables.

H5: Storytelling Content Relatability

In H5, the statistical results through linear regression shows that the predictor variable (Storytelling content) positively influenced dependent variable (Relatability). The results shows that storytelling has a significant impact on the Relatability with 0.736 beta value and p. value = .000, which mean positive relationship and statistically significant. The outcomes of Hypothesis 5 provide strong empirical support for the notion that storytelling-based content significantly enhances audience relatability. This confirms the findings of previous studies that found that using digital storytelling to make information more personal and engaging can lead to deeper connections with consumers (Pera and Viglia, 2016). The time span of the users decreased to 8 second (Schenk and Tucker, 2015) which mean that so content must be highly relatable for them to have a positive effect.

H6: Relatability Audience Engagement

In H6, the statistical results through linear regression shows that the predictor variable (Relatability) positively

influenced dependent variable (Audience Engagement). The results shows that relatability has a significant impact on the aaudience eengagement with 0.729 beta value and p. value = .000, which mean positive relationship and statistically significant. The outcomes of Hypothesis 6 provide strong empirical support for the notion that relatability significantly enhances audience engagement. This is consistent with previous research by Seidel et al. (2023), which has highlighted the importance of relatability in enhancing audience engagement. Influencers who are able to create content that connects on an individual basis with their audience foster greater engagement as consumers see their own lives and views reflected in the content.

H7: Mediating role of Relatability between Storytelling content and Audience Engagement

In H7, the statistical results through baron and Kenny mediation method shows that the predictor variable (Storytelling content) positively influenced dependent variable (Audience engagement) through (Relatability) mediator variable. The results shows that storytelling has a significant indirect impact through relatability on audience engagement with 0.643 beta value and p. value = .000, which mean positive relationship and statistically significant. The outcomes of Hypothesis 7 provide strong empirical support for the relatability as a mediating variable between storytelling content and audience engagement. By supporting H7, the findings shows that content is relatable if it can be understood by a wide audience (Muniz et al., 2015). There is a connection between a source provider (Influencer) and a viewer when the source of information is relevant (Pera and Viglia, 2016).

5.3 Practical Implications

Digital marketing has come a long way since the first internet ad appeared, becoming more dynamic and individual with each passing year. As print, radio, and television advertisements have declined in popularity, social media sites have filled the void as dynamic new locations for advertising and consumer interaction. As a result of these changes, the present research can provide helpful information for companies, advertisers, social media influencers, and social media managers interested in making the most of Instagram.

According to the results of the study, using Instagram to tell stories is an effective strategy for attracting and retaining followers. Experts should remember that audiences respond favourably to information when it is delivered in a narrative style. Instagram's fleeting, interactive, and dynamic narrative content may be very useful for generating leads, closing deals, or fixing problems. According to research, influencers may help themselves and the companies they promote by creating engaging content telling stories. Previous studies have found that stories on Instagram are more prominent than Facebook wall postings (Belanche et al., 2019). Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with those studies.

Content from influencer is typically more trusted by viewers than traditional TV advertising and celebrity promotions, therefore professionals should take this into account when planning for advertising their products or services. The findings of this research highlight the significance of influencer marketing as a stimulating and informative tool for creating marketing plans. Digital influencers could have to invest more resources into producing high-quality narrative material if they want to attract the attention of the younger audiences who favour interacting with brands on Instagram rather than celebrity endorsements.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

This study's findings provide important new information to the existing literature in a number of important ways. Initially, the results provide substantial factual support to the idea that Instagram digital influencers can be studied by employing Narrative Transportation Theory. This study demonstrates the power of narrative transportation in the digital realm by showing a positive association between story content and audience engagement, trust, and relatability. The findings support the idea that stories with strong visuals and emotional resonance are more likely to hold the attention of their viewers. Ultimately, they provide empirical support for the mediating function of trust and relatability in the connection between story content and audience engagement. This demonstrates the complex mechanics of audience engagement through online influencer marketing and underlines the significance of establishing credibility and producing content that resonates with the target demographic.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite the contributions it makes, the study has limitations that must be considered when evaluating its findings. Firstly, this study relies on a small sample size of 67 people, which is obviously not representative of Instagram's enormous user base as a whole. This sample size is too small to draw conclusions about the overall Instagram community from these findings. In addition, Facebook and video-sharing sites like YouTube have been eliminated from consideration in favor of Instagram in this research. Secondly, although the survey-based methodology is effective, it does not allow for the identification of trends over time and can have concerns with the reliability of the data. Also, it is based on the conveniences sampling which may be impact the representation of the population.

Second, the research relied on self-reported questionnaire responses. Participants' perceptions of storytelling content, trust, relatability and engagement may have been influenced by individual interpretations, memory limitations or social desirability bias. As the variables were measured using the same survey instrument, the possibility of common method bias should also be considered.

Third, the cross-sectional research design captured participants' responses at a single point in time. Although statistically significant associations were identified among the research constructs, the design does not establish causal relationships or demonstrate how audience perceptions may change over time. Future studies could address these limitations through larger and more diverse samples, probability-based sampling where feasible, longitudinal research designs and qualitative interviews. Such approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how storytelling content influences audience perceptions and engagement with fashion influencers.

5.6 Future Studies

This study made use of a convenient sampling method first. However, a better sampling strategy could be used in future investigations. Secondly, include more social media sites in the research, such Facebook and YouTube, could offer a more all-encompassing picture of the influence of storytelling content. Thirdly, to capture patterns over time and lessen the potential for common technique bias associated with cross-sectional studies, longitudinal research may be conducted. Lastly, qualitative research methods such as interviews or focus groups could be incorporated to the methodology in order to gain a more thorough comprehension of the audience's experiences and perceptions.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the objective of this research was to examine how storytelling content affects audience engagement, trust, and relatability in the realm of Instagram fashion influencers. The results of the study hold great importance for both theoretical and practical applications. They provide valuable knowledge on how storytelling can be utilised to enhance audience engagement and establish trust effectively. In addition, the findings of this study suggest that utilising Instagram's "stories" feature to create content in the form of a narrative, such as an advertisement, self-promotion, or paid promotion, can increase engagement. The research provides evidence for the Narrative Transportation Theory, which suggests that effectively constructed and captivating narratives have the ability to impact the opinions, sentiments, and feelings of the audience, ultimately leading to increased involvement with the material and the brand being advertised. The study was conducted with a limited sample size and solely focused on Instagram, which restricts its generalizability. However, it still offers a valuable contribution to the current literature on influencer marketing and the significance of storytelling in engaging audiences.

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APPENDIX C – FIGURES &TABLES

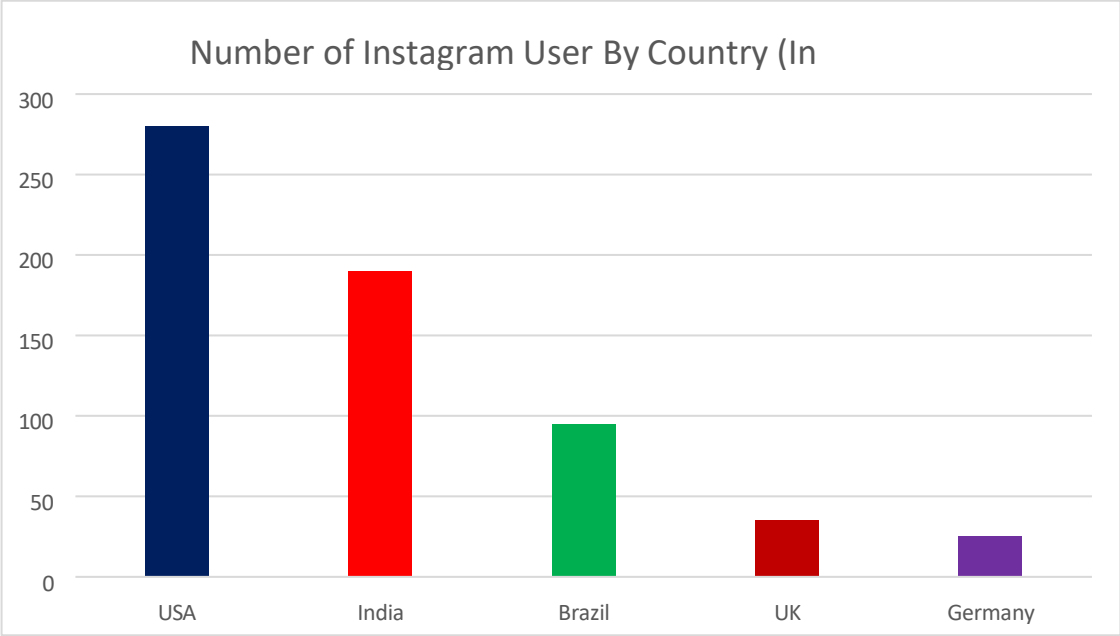


Figure 1 Number of Instagram Users (Source: Kemp, 2022)

Table 1 Structure of the Dissertation (Source: Self-created)

No.	Description
Chapter 1 - Introduction	This chapter introduced the research context by defining the significance of Instagram story content. The research background identifies the gaps mentioned in the research problem in order to establish the aims, queries, and objectives of the research. Finally, the significance of the study is discussed.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	This chapter will conduct a comprehensive review of the current academic literature pertinent to the research objectives. It will discuss what has been previously written about the primary situation, assess prior work, and show the development of hypotheses.
Chapter 3 - Research Methods	This chapter will justify the research approach and design, collecting information, and analysis techniques. In addition, it will address how ethical issues highlighted by the research have been addressed, including access and consent issues.
Chapter 4 - Analysis and Interpretation of Research Results	This chapter will discuss the data analysis and results, assess the results, and make a logical progression of points, with each point supported by specific data and relevant literature. The results will be presented in charts and table form, along with the interpretations.
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations	This final chapter covers the research questions and their answers. Literature review and primary data analysis should inform answers. The chapter will address how the study answers the problem indicated in the Introduction, how the findings relate to past knowledge or practise, and the research lessons learnt. It will also discuss practise implications and suggest ways to improve practises connected to the study question. Finally, the study's shortcomings and recommendations will be noted.

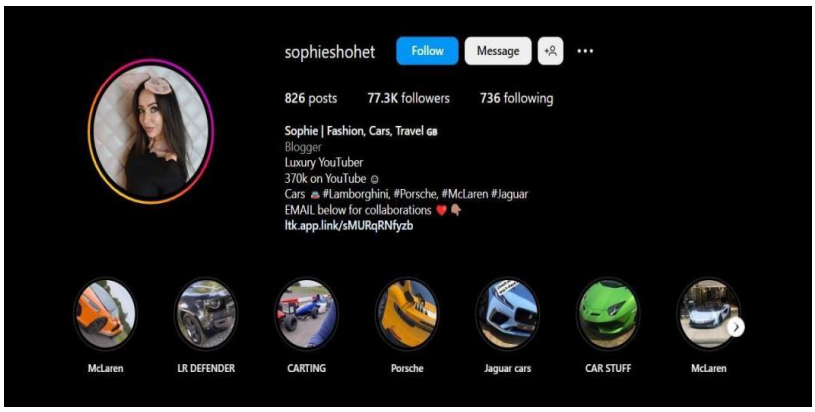


Figure 2 Chiara Ferragni, Instagram Fashion Influencer UK (Instagram.com, 2018)

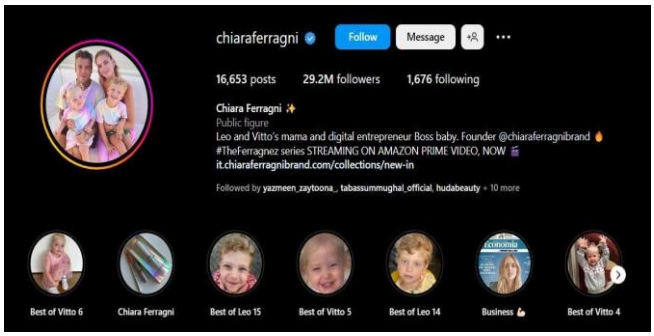


Figure 3 Victoria Magrath, Instagram Fashion Influencer UK (Source:Instagram.com, 2023)

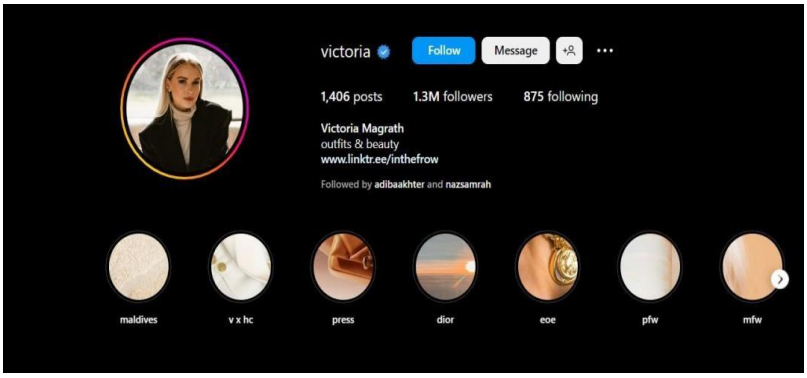


Figure 4 Sophie Shohet, Instagram Fashion Influencer UK (Instagram.com, 2023)

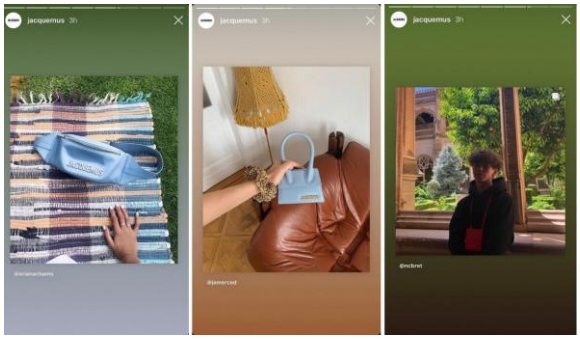


Figure 5 Instagram Fashion Storytelling Content (Source: Carbone, 2019)

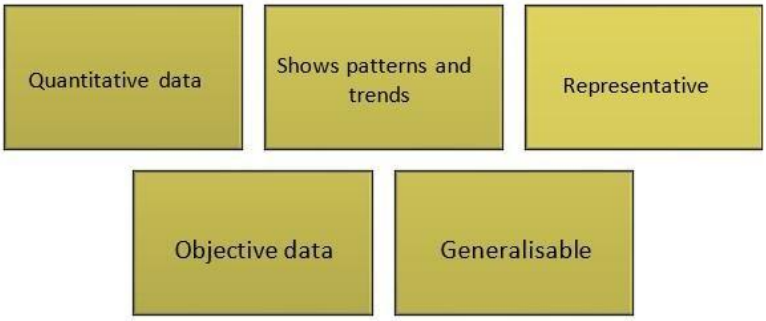


Figure 6 Research Model (Self-created)

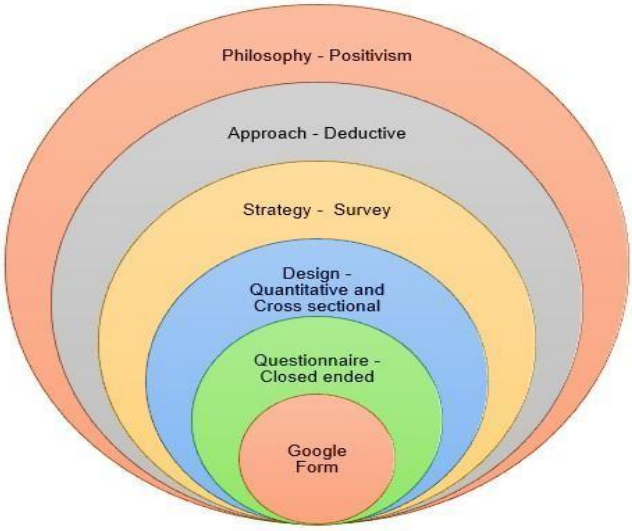


Figure 7 Research Onion for this Study (Source:Self-created)

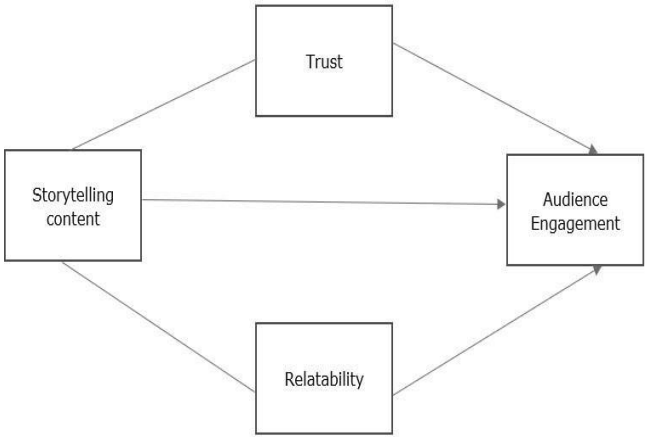


Figure 8 Pros of Positivism philosophy Source:Self-created)



Figure 9 Deductive approach (Source:Self-created)

Table 2 Measurement and scale(Source: Compiled from Eck, 2006; Almahdi et al., 2022; Atiq et al., 2022; Rather and Sharma, 2017)

Construct	Items	Reference
Storytelling Content	5	(Eck, 2006)
Trust	4	(Almahdi *et al.*, 2022)
Relatability	4	(Atiq *et al.*, 2022)
Audience Engagement	3	(Rather and Sharma, 2017)

Table 3 Distribution of population by Gender(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

1. Gender			
		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	Male	24	35.8
	Female	43	64.2
	Total	67	100

Table 4 Distribution of population by Age(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

2. Age			
		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	18-24	6	9.0
	25-31	36	53.7
	32-38	23	34.3
	39-45	2	3.0
	Total	67	100.0

Table 5 Distribution of population by Education(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

3. Education			
		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	A-levels	5	7.5
	Bachelor	29	43.3
	Master	32	47.8
	Other	1	1.5
	Total	67	100.0

Table 6 Distribution of population by Income(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

4. Income (£ Month)			
		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	Up to £500	14	20.9
	£501-£1000	23	34.3
	£1001- £1500	23	34.3
	£1501-£2000	6	9.0
	Above £2000	1	1.5
	Total	67	100.0

Table 7 Time spent on Instagram(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

5. Time spent on Instagram			
		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	Less than 30 minutes per day	10	14.9
	30 minutes to 1 hour per day	19	28.4
	1-2 hours per day	30	44.8
	2-3 hours per day	6	9.0
	More than 3 hours per day	2	3.0
	Total	67	100.0

Table 8 Favorite fashion influencer Instagram(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

6. Favorite fashion influencer Instagram			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Chiara Ferragni (@chiaraferragni)	7	10.4
	Aimee Song (@aimeesong)	28	41.8
	Negin Mirsalehi (@negin_mirsalehi)	15	22.4
	Camila Coelho (@camilacoelho)	4	6.0
	Danielle Bernstein (@weworewhat)	5	7.5
	Others	8	11.9
	Total	67	100.0

Table 9 STI1 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

ST1 - The fashion influencer's Storytelling content catches my attention.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	7.5
	Neutral	15	22.4
	Agree	34	50.7
	Strongly Agree	13	19.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 10 STI2 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

ST2 - I believe I will remember some of these contents.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	3.0
	Neutral	9	13.4
	Agree	39	58.2
	Strongly Agree	17	25.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 11 STI3 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

ST3 - The fashion influencer's storytelling content is unique and original.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	7	10.4
	Neutral	8	11.9
	Agree	35	52.2
	Strongly Agree	17	25.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 12 STI4 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

ST4 - The fashion influencer's storytelling content is engaging.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	6.0
	Neutral	9	13.4
	Agree	39	58.2
	Strongly Agree	15	22.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 13 STI5 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

ST5 - The storytelling content created new ideas for me.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	5	7.5
	Neutral	5	7.5
	Agree	39	58.2
	Strongly Agree	17	25.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 14 R1 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

R1 - I think it is important that the influencer interacts with their followers.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	6.0
	Neutral	7	10.4
	Agree	34	50.7
	Strongly Agree	22	32.8
	Total	67	100.0

Table 15 R2 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

R2 - I think the influencer's opinions are similar to mine.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	8	11.9
	Neutral	13	19.4
	Agree	32	47.8
	Strongly Agree	13	19.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 16 R3 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

R3 - The fashion influencer shares content that resonates with me.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	8	11.9
	Neutral	10	14.9
	Agree	35	52.2
	Strongly Agree	13	19.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 17 R4 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

R4 - I feel like I know the influencer well.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	8	11.9
	Neutral	10	14.9
	Agree	35	52.2
	Strongly Agree	13	19.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 18 T1 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

T1 - I trust the influencer's opinion			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	3.0
	Disagree	7	10.4
	Neutral	13	19.4
	Agree	31	46.3
	Strongly Agree	14	20.9
	Total	67	100.0

Table 19 T2 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

T2 - I think the influencer shares his/her honest opinion			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	14	20.9
	Neutral	8	11.9
	Agree	25	37.3
	Strongly Agree	19	28.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 20 T3 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

T3 - I trust the influencer's knowledge about the product/service he/she endorses.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	4.5
	Disagree	10	14.9
	Neutral	8	11.9
	Agree	25	37.3
	Strongly Agree	21	31.3
	Total	67	100.0

Table 21 T4 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

T4 - I trust the influencer's messages more than one coming from a brand.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	4.5
	Disagree	10	14.9
	Neutral	8	11.9
	Agree	25	37.3
	Strongly Agree	21	31.3
	Total	67	100.0

Table 22 AE1 Statement (Source: Primary Data, 2023)

AE1 - Any storytelling content grabs my attention			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	7	10.4
	Neutral	8	11.9
	Agree	33	49.3
	Strongly Agree	18	26.9
	Total	67	100.0

Table 23 AE2 Statement (Source: Primary Data, 2023)

AE2 - In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other users.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	8	11.9
	Neutral	10	14.9
	Agree	32	47.8
	Strongly Agree	17	25.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 24 AE3 Statement(Source: Primary Data, 2023)

AE3 - When interacting with the content, it is difficult for me to detach myself.			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.5
	Disagree	11	16.4
	Neutral	5	7.5
	Agree	31	46.3
	Strongly Agree	19	28.4
	Total	67	100.0

Table 25 Descriptive statistics (Source: SPSS Output, 2023)

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
ST1	67	3.8209	.83349
ST2	67	4.0597	.71522
ST3	67	3.9254	.89296
ST4	67	3.9701	.77792
ST5	67	3.9851	.87892
R1	67	4.1045	.81899
R2	67	3.7164	.96619
R3	67	3.7612	.95488
R4	67	3.5373	1.04922
T1	67	3.7164	1.01214
T2	67	3.7015	1.14170
T3	67	3.7612	1.18180
T4	67	3.7164	1.01214
AE1	67	3.8955	.97132
AE2	67	3.8657	.93575
AE3	67	3.8358	1.06738
Valid N (listwise)	67		

Table 26 Skewness and Kurtoses Results (Source: SPSS Output, 2023)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ST1	67	-.458	.293	-.152	.578
ST2	67	-.600	.293	.704	.578
ST3	67	-.772	.293	.114	.578
ST4	67	-.744	.293	.715	.578
ST5	67	-1.213	.293	1.858	.578
R1	67	-.880	.293	.659	.578
R2	67	-.642	.293	-.041	.578
R3	67	-.789	.293	.235	.578
R4	67	-.345	.293	-.795	.578
T1	67	-.752	.293	.199	.578
T2	67	-.516	.293	-.927	.578
T3	67	-.767	.293	-.395	.578
T4	67	-.481	.293	-.426	.578
AE1	67	-.910	.293	.449	.578
AE2	67	-.639	.293	-.313	.578
AE3	67	-.818	.293	-.240	.578
Valid N (listwise)	67				

Table 27 Cronbach Alpha Results (Source: SPSS Output, 2023)

Construct	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Storytelling Content	5	0.822

Trust	4	0.931
Relatability	4	0.778
Audience Engagement	3	0.905

Table 28 Results of Correlation (Source: SPSS Output, 2023)

Correlations					
		Storytelling Content	Relatability	Trust	Audience Engagement
Storytelling Content	Pearson Correlation	1	.736**	.671**	.591**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	67	67	67	67
Relatability	Pearson Correlation	.736**	1	.782**	.729**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	67	67	67	67
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.671**	.782**	1	.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	67	67	67	67
Audience Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.591**	.729**	.793**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	67	67	67	67
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 29 Model Summary (Source: SPSS Output, 2023)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.812[a]	0.66	0.644	0.54311
a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Storytelling Content, Relatability				

Table 30 ANOVA results (Source: SPSS Output, 2023)

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.097	3	12.032	40.792	.000b
	Residual	18.583	63	0.295		
	Total	54.68	66			
a. Dependent Variable: Audience Engagement						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Storytelling Content, Relatability						

Table 31 Hypotheses Testing Results (Source: SPSS Output, 2023)

S/N	Relationship	Beta	P. value	Results
H1	Storytelling Content ’ Audience Engagement	0.591	0	Accepted
H2	Storytelling Content ’ Trust	0.671	0	Accepted
H3	Trust ’ Audience Engagement	0.793	0	Accepted
H4	The mediating role of trust between Storytelling content and Audience Engagement	0.723	0	Accepted
H5	Storytelling Content ’ Relatability	0.736	0	Accepted
H6	Relatability ’ Audience Engagement	0.729	0	Accepted
H7	The mediating role of Relatability Between Storytelling Content and Audience Engagement	0.643	0	Accepted