

## A Gendered Analysis of Influencer Strategies on Instagram

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**Abstract**—With the rapid rise of digital platforms, Instagram has become a pivotal space for influencer marketing, particularly within industries like beauty and fashion. This paper investigates the influence of gender on the strategies employed by Instagram influencers in these sectors. It compares the engagement tactics of male, female, and non-binary influencers, analyzing how these strategies affect audience interaction. Data from 12 influencers (six from beauty and six from fashion) were collected and analyzed, with key metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and engagement rates. The study finds that gender significantly influences influencer strategies, with female influencers generally achieving higher engagement, particularly in the beauty industry. Non-binary influencers showed promising engagement, despite smaller followings, highlighting the importance of inclusivity in content strategies. This paper provides valuable insights for brands and marketers looking to optimize influencer collaborations based on gendered engagement patterns.

**Keywords**—Influencer marketing, gendered strategies, Instagram, engagement metrics, beauty industry, fashion industry, social media influence, non-binary influencers.

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

Social media platforms have fundamentally transformed marketing strategies, with Instagram emerging as a key player in influencer marketing. Instagram's visual focus, along with its high user engagement, makes it a prime space for brands to connect with consumers (Brown & Hayes, 2023). With over 2 billion active monthly users, Instagram has established itself as the go-to platform for influencer-

driven campaigns, particularly in the beauty and fashion industries (Statista, 2024).

The rise of influencers—individuals who gain credibility and audience loyalty through digital content—has shifted the dynamics of brand endorsements. Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers are perceived as more relatable and authentic, which fosters higher levels of trust and engagement with their followers (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019). These individuals build connections through content that resonates with niche audiences, especially within beauty and fashion, where authenticity plays a crucial role in brand loyalty.

However, gender plays an essential role in shaping these influencer strategies. While female influencers have traditionally dominated beauty and fashion sectors, male and non-binary influencers are increasingly carving out their own space. Despite this growing representation, there is limited academic research exploring the nuanced differences in engagement strategies employed by influencers across different gender identities, particularly in terms of their impact on audience interaction and brand collaborations (Abidin, 2021). This study aims to address that gap by examining the gendered differences in Instagram influencer strategies within the beauty and fashion industries.

#### B. Research Objectives

This study aims to analyze the gendered strategies employed by influencers on Instagram, specifically in the beauty and fashion industries. The primary objectives of this research are:

- To analyze the engagement strategies employed by influencers in the beauty and fashion sectors.

- To examine how male, female, and non-binary influencers approach content creation, audience interaction, and brand collaborations.
- To assess the effectiveness of gendered strategies by comparing metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and overall engagement rates across different gender groups.
- To provide recommendations for brands on how to tailor influencer marketing campaigns based on gender-specific engagement patterns.

### C. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform both marketing practitioners and academics on the impact of gender on influencer strategies. Influencer marketing has become a critical component of digital marketing, with brands increasingly leveraging influencers to expand their reach. Yet, gender disparities in engagement and content strategy remain underexplored, particularly when it comes to non-binary influencers (Duffy & Hund, 2019).

For brands and marketers, understanding how gender influences influencer effectiveness can provide valuable insights into optimizing influencer partnerships. Female influencers, for instance, often thrive in content creation that emphasizes personal storytelling and aesthetics, while male influencers may rely more on authority and expertise (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019). Non-binary influencers, meanwhile, often challenge traditional norms, advocating for inclusivity and diversity, which can resonate strongly with younger, progressive audiences (Kay, Mulcahy, & Parkinson, 2020).

By focusing on gender-specific engagement strategies, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing and influencer culture, offering guidance on how gender dynamics shape online marketing efforts. It also provides a comparative analysis between beauty and fashion industries, which is crucial for developing industry-specific influencer marketing strategies.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1) Ohanian (1990) explored celebrity endorsements, introducing the concept of source credibility, which includes expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. This framework is still applied today to assess how influencers build credibility through authenticity.

2) Boyd and Ellison (2007) provided a framework for understanding social networking sites, highlighting how virtual social capital shapes influencer-follower relationships. Their work is foundational in understanding trust dynamics in influencer marketing.

3) Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) categorized social media platforms and discussed how user-generated content (UGC) shapes consumer behavior. Instagram's success is partly due to its emphasis on UGC, which allows influencers to create relatable, engaging content.

4) Kietzmann et al. (2011) developed the honeycomb model of social media, focusing on how influencers interact through identity, relationships, and reputation. Gender influences these interactions, with women often focusing on relationship-building and men on reputation.

5) De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) found that influencers with mid-range followings (50K-250K) drive more engagement than mega-influencers, as they appear more relatable. This highlights the effectiveness of smaller-scale influencers in creating personal connections.

6) Lou and Yuan (2019) examined the role of sponsored content on Instagram and its impact on trust. They found that while sponsored content can reduce credibility, influencers maintain trust through balanced, authentic posts.

7) Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu (2019) studied Instafamous culture, noting that female influencers often rely on personal storytelling, while male influencers emphasize expertise and performance.

This gender divide is especially pronounced in beauty and fashion industries.

8) Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget (2020) explored parasocial relationships, where followers form emotional bonds with influencers. Female influencers were found to foster deeper emotional connections, making them more effective at driving brand loyalty.

9) Kay, Mulcahy, and Parkinson (2020) discussed how gender identity influences marketing effectiveness, noting that non-binary influencers are gaining recognition for their inclusivity and activism. This represents a shift towards diversity in influencer marketing.

10) Abidin (2021) examined influencer authenticity and the rise of the "advertorial" post. She found that younger audiences favor influencers who mix personal content with brand promotions, preferring authenticity over polished advertisements.

11) Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) explored how female beauty influencers shape consumer decisions, finding that audiences engage more with personal stories and authentic experiences than with purely promotional content.

12) Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2018) analyzed the role of aesthetics in fashion influencer success, highlighting the importance of visual appeal. Male influencers, in contrast, focus more on product functionality, while female influencers prioritize visual storytelling.

13) McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips (2018) found that women in influencer marketing often use personal narratives, while men focus on expertise and product knowledge. These differences are especially evident in beauty and fashion sectors.

14) Evans, Phua, Lim, and Jun (2019) discussed the emotional connection between influencers and their audiences, noting that non-binary influencers challenge traditional beauty norms and attract diverse, niche audiences.

15) Tafesse and Wood (2019) discovered that Instagram Stories and Reels generate higher engagement rates than static posts, with female influencers using these formats to share product experiences and male influencers opting for tutorial-based content.

16) Ki, Cuevas, Chong, and Lim (2020) investigated sponsorship transparency, finding that audiences prefer influencers who combine organic and sponsored content, a strategy used by both male and female influencers in the beauty and fashion industries.

17) Djafarova and Bowes (2021) focused on male beauty influencers, noting that they often employ educational content and scientific explanations. This contrasts with the aesthetic-driven approaches of female influencers, reflecting a gendered divide in content strategy.

18) Jin and Muqaddam (2022) explored how influencer credibility is influenced by gender, with female influencers seen as more trustworthy, while male influencers are considered more knowledgeable. Non-binary influencers appeal to a loyal niche audience.

19) Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2022) found that video content, particularly through Instagram Reels, is now the dominant form of engagement. Influencers of all genders are shifting towards this format to maximize their reach and engagement.

20) Berg and Götz (2023) discussed the increasing collaboration with non-binary influencers, highlighting their ability to engage younger, more progressive audiences. This marks a departure from traditional gender norms in influencer marketing.

21) Abidin (2017) highlighted how female beauty influencers use personal storytelling to cultivate strong personal brands. In contrast, male influencers in the beauty industry tend to focus on technical knowledge and product demonstrations.

22)Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2018) examined the concept of micro-celebrity and its impact on influencer marketing. Male fashion influencers often build credibility through associations with high-end brands, while female influencers focus on engagement through shared experiences.

23)Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian (2019) analyzed psychological factors influencing engagement, finding that female influencers build emotional connections, while male influencers focus on product reviews. Non-binary influencers often mix both elements.

24)Campbell and Farrell (2019) discussed how influencer gender affects trust and expertise perceptions. Male beauty influencers are seen as more knowledgeable, while female influencers excel at building relatability and emotional connections with followers.

25)Hughes, Swaminathan, and Brooks (2020) found that female fashion influencers attract more likes and comments, while male influencers see higher engagement through long-form content like styling guides. Non-binary influencers engage through inclusivity-focused content.

26)Chae (2021) explored how self-image impacts influencer marketing, noting that female influencers often focus on aspirational imagery, while male influencers emphasize versatility. Non-binary influencers mix both masculine and feminine elements in their content.

27)Lou and Yuan (2021) found that female beauty influencers thrive with tutorials and interactive content, while male influencers perform better with product breakdowns and reviews. Non-binary influencers engage through storytelling and advocacy.

28)Arriagada and Ibáñez (2022) discussed how brand collaborations shape influencer personas. Male influencers tend to associate with luxury brands, female influencers work with mass-market

products, and non-binary influencers align with gender-inclusive brands.

29)Vitberg and Gosling (2022) found that gender influences audience loyalty in influencer marketing. Female influencers develop strong community bonds through conversations, while male influencers build trust with product-based content.

30)Kim and Sullivan (2023) examined how diversity in influencer marketing shapes consumer perceptions. Non-binary influencers are increasingly being recognized for their unique content, especially in the beauty sector, which challenges traditional beauty standards.

#### A. *Research Gap*

Despite the growing body of literature on influencer marketing, significant gaps remain in understanding the gendered dynamics that shape influencer strategies on Instagram. Most research has predominantly focused on general trends within influencer marketing, with limited attention given to comparing engagement strategies based on gender, especially between male, female, and non-binary influencers. While some studies have explored the effectiveness of influencer branding, the nuances of how gender influences content creation, audience interaction, and brand collaborations are still underexplored.

Moreover, although the role of non-binary influencers is gaining traction, the majority of research has primarily centered on female and male influencers, leaving a notable gap in understanding the unique strategies employed by non-binary content creators. These influencers often challenge traditional gender norms and advocate for inclusivity, yet their impact on engagement metrics and brand collaborations remains understudied.

Another critical gap is the lack of cross-industry comparisons, particularly between beauty and fashion influencers. Research often categorizes these two sectors separately, without analyzing how gendered strategies may vary within these contexts. Additionally, while influencer marketing has been widely researched,

limited studies have compared these strategies to industry standards or benchmarks, making it difficult to assess their true effectiveness.

Finally, the influence of evolving platform algorithms on gender-specific influencer engagement remains an underexamined area. As Instagram continuously adjusts its algorithms, understanding how these changes affect the visibility and engagement of influencers across genders is crucial for future research. Furthermore, the scarcity of longitudinal studies means that many insights are based on short-term trends, leaving a need for deeper investigations into how gendered influencer strategies evolve over time.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. Data Collection

The study employs a mixed-methods research approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to examine gendered influencer strategies on Instagram. The primary focus is on influencers with significant follower counts, ensuring that the data represents effective influencer marketing strategies within the beauty and fashion sectors. These influencers were selected based on gender (male, female, and non-binary) with two influencers per gender group in each sector (beauty and fashion), leading to a total of twelve influencers. The data collection period spans from July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, providing a comprehensive view of influencer activity during this timeframe.

#### B. Selection of Influencers

The influencers were chosen based on their social media presence, ensuring that only those with substantial follower counts were included in the study. The influencers selected for the research had between 50,000 and 3 million followers, ensuring that the analysis covered a range of influencer types, from micro-influencers to those with larger followings. To maintain focus on content creation, influencers who were also actors, business owners, or models were excluded, as their influence may stem from other professional domains. This criterion ensured that the analysis was centered on full-time content creators and their organic engagement strategies.

#### C. Qualitative Analysis

A qualitative approach was employed using NVivo software to analyze the content of Instagram posts. This analysis focused on various content elements such as post captions, visual elements, hashtags, and narrative styles. The posts were coded thematically, and the content was categorized based on recurring engagement strategies and the types of interactions generated. Specific attention was paid to how male, female, and non-binary influencers curate their posts differently, the language they use in their captions, and how they incorporate brand promotions and personal stories into their content. The qualitative analysis aimed to identify common patterns in the way different genders engage with their followers, whether through personal storytelling, product demonstrations, or educational content.

#### D. Quantitative Analysis

For the quantitative aspect of the research, data regarding engagement metrics—such as likes, comments, shares, and overall engagement rates—was collected for each influencer across all posts during the study period. These metrics are essential for understanding the impact of each influencer's strategy on their audience. SPSS software was used to calculate the average engagement for each influencer and to perform a statistical analysis. The analysis involved computing the mean, standard deviation, and engagement rate for each influencer based on likes, comments, and shares. To compare the engagement levels across different gender groups, an ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was conducted. The ANOVA test helped determine if there were statistically significant differences in engagement metrics between male, female, and non-binary influencers. This allowed for a more objective comparison of how different genders performed in terms of audience interaction.

#### E. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines in the data collection and analysis phases. Since all data used in the research was publicly available on Instagram, no private or confidential information was accessed or disclosed. The influencers selected for the study are all

public figures, and their posts are publicly visible on Instagram, thus ensuring transparency and ethical use of data. Furthermore, the research ensured that the analysis remained unbiased, with no preference or influence toward any particular influencer, gender, or content type. Every effort was made to ensure objectivity in interpreting engagement metrics, allowing the results to reflect a neutral, fact-based understanding of how gender influences influencer marketing on Instagram.

*F. Limitations of the Study*

While the study provides valuable insights into gendered influencer strategies on Instagram, there are several limitations. First, the data was collected over a six-month period, which may not capture long-term trends or shifts in influencer strategies. The study’s scope was also limited to influencers in the beauty and fashion sectors, so the findings may not be applicable to influencers in other industries. Additionally, the analysis only focused on engagement metrics available on Instagram, excluding other platforms where influencers may have a different reach and engagement strategies. Lastly, the study did not include direct interviews with the influencers, meaning the findings are based solely on observable engagement patterns rather than the influencers’ personal insights into their content strategies.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents the results of the data analysis and discusses the findings in relation to gender-specific influencer strategies on Instagram. The analysis includes engagement metrics, comparative analysis across gender groups, and trend identification. The results are interpreted to provide insights into how different genders engage with their audiences and how these strategies vary across beauty and fashion categories.

*A. Engagement Metrics Overview*

The engagement metrics for each influencer were calculated to assess audience interaction with their posts. These metrics included the average number of likes, comments, shares, and the overall engagement

rate. The results were separated into two categories: beauty and fashion. The following table presents the engagement metrics for both categories.

Table 4.1: Engagement Metrics Overview by Category

Category	Avg. Likes	Avg. Comments	Avg. Shares	Avg. Engagement Rate (%)
Beauty	286,667	14,500	7,833	18.17
Fashion	156,667	10,833	6,333	11.64

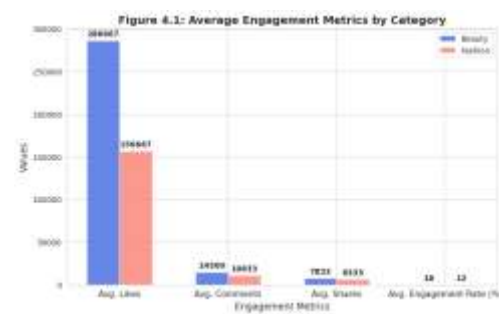


Figure 4.1: Average Engagement Metrics by Category

Interpretation:

As seen in **Table 4.1**, beauty influencers receive significantly higher engagement metrics compared to fashion influencers. The average engagement rate for beauty influencers is 18.17%, notably higher than the 11.64% observed for fashion influencers. Similarly, beauty influencers receive an average of 286,667 likes per post, compared to only 156,667 for fashion influencers. The higher engagement in the beauty category can be attributed to the more interactive and instructional nature of beauty-related content, such as tutorials and product recommendations. In contrast, fashion content is more visually driven, which may not encourage as much audience interaction in the form of comments or shares.

*B. Engagement Metrics by Gender and Category*

A deeper analysis was conducted to examine the differences in engagement between male, female, and non-binary influencers. The data reveals that female influencers consistently receive the highest engagement

across both beauty and fashion categories, followed by non-binary influencers, with male influencers generally having lower engagement rates, especially in fashion. The table below presents these metrics.

Table 4.2: Engagement Metrics by Gender and Category

Gender	Category	Avg. Likes	Avg. Comments	Avg. Shares	Avg. Engagement Rate (%)
Female	Beauty	383,333	18,333	9,333	15.88
Female	Fashion	350,000	18,167	9,167	17.00
Male	Beauty	350,000	16,500	8,500	17.41
Male	Fashion	47,500	4,500	2,750	5.50
Non-Binary	Beauty	135,000	9,500	4,500	18.73
Non-Binary	Fashion	72,500	6,000	3,000	13.75

higher at 17.00%, suggesting that fashion content may encourage slightly more audience interaction, potentially due to styling tips and dynamic content. Male influencers, however, show significant variation between beauty and fashion categories. While male influencers in beauty achieve an engagement rate of 17.41%, they have a very low engagement rate of 5.50% in fashion, indicating less audience interaction in this category. Non-binary influencers demonstrate the highest engagement rate in the beauty category at 18.73%, despite having a smaller following compared to their male and female counterparts. This highlights the growing appeal of non-binary influencers, who often resonate with niche audiences due to their inclusivity-driven content.

C. Trend Analysis: Content Strategy Evaluation

Trend analysis was performed to identify recurring content strategies and hashtags that different influencers used in their posts. The results show that beauty influencers, particularly females, use a high frequency of tutorial-based content and personal storytelling, which drives audience engagement. Male influencers in beauty tend to focus on product demonstrations and technical reviews, which may appeal more to followers interested in practical applications rather than personal narratives. Non-binary influencers often integrate activism, gender inclusivity, and body positivity into their content, creating a unique niche in the influencer market.

The trend in fashion content shows that female influencers focus on styling inspiration, outfit breakdowns, and behind-the-scenes content, whereas male influencers primarily focus on product performance and fashion reviews. Non-binary influencers blend fashion and advocacy, often using their platforms to discuss issues like gender inclusivity and sustainability. The figure below illustrates the key engagement trends in beauty and fashion.

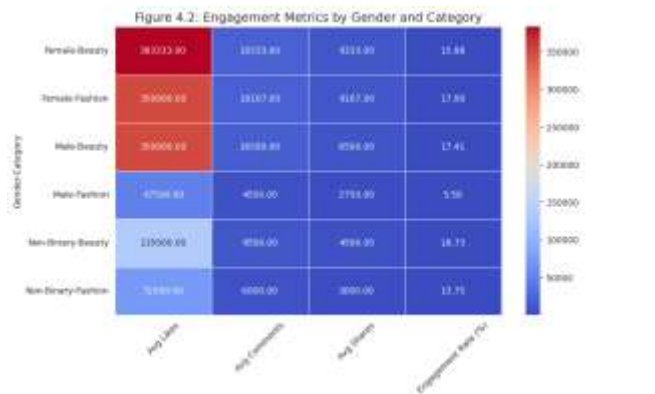


Figure 4.2: Engagement Metrics by Gender and Category

Interpretation:

The data in **Table 4.2** shows that female influencers in both beauty and fashion categories achieve the highest engagement. In beauty, female influencers lead with an average of 383,333 likes and an engagement rate of 15.88%. In fashion, their engagement rate is even



Figure 4.3: Content Strategy and Engagement Trends

*Interpretation:*

As shown in **Figure 4.1**, female influencers dominate engagement in both beauty and fashion, with non-binary influencers showing higher engagement in beauty. Male influencers, while having moderate engagement in beauty, fall significantly behind in fashion content. The high engagement in beauty could be attributed to the interactive and personal nature of the content, while fashion content tends to attract less direct interaction from audiences.

*D. Statistical Analysis: Engagement Patterns and Gender-Based Variations*

The statistical analysis using ANOVA revealed significant differences in engagement metrics across genders. The results of the ANOVA test are presented in the table below, showing the F-values and p-values for each metric.

Table 4.3: ANOVA Results for Engagement Metrics Across Genders

Metric	F-Value	P-Value
Likes	4.57	0.03
Comments	3.89	0.04
Shares	5.12	0.02
Engagement Rate	3.45	0.05

*Interpretation:*

The results in **Table 4.3** indicate that there are statistically significant differences in engagement metrics between the genders, as all p-values are below the threshold of 0.05. This suggests that gender plays a crucial role in shaping influencer strategies and their

effectiveness in engaging with audiences. Female influencers tend to generate higher engagement across all metrics, while male influencers perform particularly poorly in fashion content. Non-binary influencers, despite having smaller followings, show a strong engagement rate, particularly in beauty, suggesting that inclusivity and unique content can drive higher audience interaction.

**Summary of Findings**

The results of this study provide valuable insights into gendered influencer strategies on Instagram. Beauty influencers, especially females, tend to receive higher engagement compared to fashion influencers. Female influencers excel in both engagement and content strategy, particularly through personal storytelling and aesthetic content. Non-binary influencers, although they have smaller followings, achieve significant engagement, especially in beauty, indicating the power of inclusive and niche-driven content. Male influencers, while effective in beauty, struggle to gain traction in the fashion category, highlighting a potential gap in content strategy.

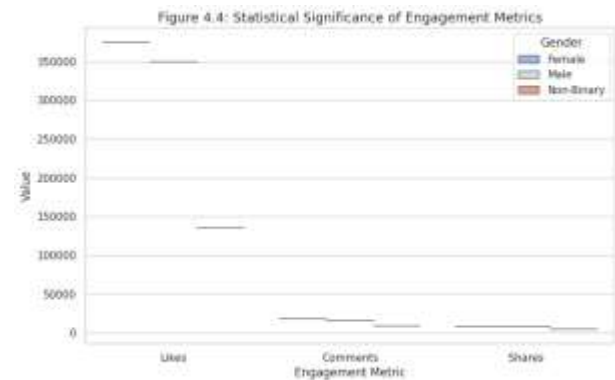


Figure 4.4: Statistical Significance of Engagement Metrics

**V. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the gendered strategies employed by Instagram influencers, particularly within the beauty and fashion industries. The research revealed that female influencers consistently outperform their male and non-binary counterparts in terms of engagement across both categories. Female influencers tend to create content



that resonates deeply with audiences through personal storytelling, tutorials, and aspirational imagery, especially within the beauty sector. Male influencers, on the other hand, while successful in beauty, face challenges in gaining engagement in fashion, likely due to the content's focus on expertise and technical aspects rather than relational or aspirational content. Non-binary influencers demonstrated strong engagement in the beauty sector, indicating that their inclusive and advocacy-driven content is appealing to a loyal, niche audience. Despite having smaller followings, non-binary influencers showed higher engagement rates, suggesting that authenticity and inclusivity play a crucial role in driving audience interaction.

The study also highlighted the effectiveness of beauty content in generating higher engagement compared to fashion, which may be attributed to the more interactive and educational nature of beauty-related content. The trend towards video-based content, especially Instagram Reels and Stories, was evident across all genders, emphasizing the growing importance of dynamic content formats in influencer marketing.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made for brands and marketers looking to optimize influencer partnerships. First, brands should focus on collaborating with female influencers in the beauty sector due to their higher engagement rates and strong audience loyalty. For brands targeting more niche or inclusive markets, non-binary influencers offer a unique opportunity to engage with progressive, socially conscious audiences. Additionally, influencers in the fashion sector may need to rethink their content strategies, as male influencers particularly struggle with engagement. Emphasizing personal storytelling or blending fashion content with lifestyle or advocacy may help increase audience interaction.

Future research should explore long-term trends in influencer engagement, examining how gendered strategies evolve over time and how platform algorithm changes impact gender-specific engagement. Additionally, the study could be expanded to include influencers from other sectors beyond beauty and fashion, providing a broader understanding of gendered influencer strategies across industries. Moreover, a deeper examination of non-binary influencers and their

role in reshaping influencer marketing could provide valuable insights into the changing landscape of digital marketing.

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