



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### DIGITAL INFLUENCERS' PERSONAL BRANDS AND PROPRIETARY PRODUCT LINES IN THE BRAZILIAN BEAUTY MARKET

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#### ABSTRACT

In the digital era, personal branding has evolved from an individual communication strategy into a powerful economic and cultural force, particularly within the Brazilian beauty market. This study examines how digital influencers' personal brands, through proprietary product lines, shape consumer behaviour, market dynamics, and symbolic value. Employing qualitative case studies of prominent Brazilian influencers, data from market reports and social media metrics were analysed to assess brand construction, engagement, and commercial performance. Findings indicate that authenticity, audience proximity, and social media engagement convert symbolic capital into economic and cultural outcomes, positioning influencers as key mediators in consumption and trend diffusion. The study highlights the structural significance of influencer-led brands, demonstrating their capacity to coexist and compete with traditional market actors, offering insights into the interplay of identity, communication, and commercial strategy in contemporary beauty markets.

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of branding has evolved alongside human society, adapting to social, cultural, and economic transformations. Initially associated with authorship in Antiquity, when artists signed their works for recognition, it gradually became an instrument of differentiation and legitimacy, particularly after the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of trademark laws (Freire Castelo & Sousa Batista, 2005). Today, branding represents not merely a visual sign but a relational and symbolic system that conveys values, narratives, and expectations (Vásquez, 2007; Manning, 2010; Wijaya, 2013). Within this framework arises the guiding issue of this research: the shift of branding from corporations to individuals in the digital sphere. Personal branding has become a key phenomenon in hyperconnected societies. Peters (1997) argued that each person constitutes a brand and must deliberately manage their image and reputation. This idea has intensified with the rise of digital influencers, who combine authenticity, proximity, and engagement to act as mediators between brands and consumers (Prado & Frogeri, 2017; Karhawi, 2018). Studies such as those by Camargo, Estevanim, and Silveira (2017) highlight how participatory digital culture has enabled the emergence of these actors. In Brazil, scholars including Martins (2025) and Menin (2024) have examined the trajectories of figures like Mari Maria, Bruna Tavares, and Bianca Andrade (Boca Rosa), illustrating how symbolic digital capital is converted into profitable business ventures. Despite these advances, there remains a

research gap: few studies specifically address the influence of personal brands developed by digital influencers who have launched their own beauty product lines in Brazil. This investigation seeks to bridge that gap by examining the intersection between branding, symbolic consumption, and digital marketing strategies within the beauty sector, a field that, as the world's fourth largest, also conveys strong social and identity meanings beyond aesthetics (Aspers & Godart, 2013; Rodrigues, 2014). The overall aim is to examine how digital influencers' personal brands impact the Brazilian beauty market, with a focus on the creation, management, and performance of proprietary product lines. This research is situated within the field of Language and Communication Studies, particularly at its intersection with communication and consumption studies. It recognises that the construction of personal brands and the dynamics of digital influence are shaped by discursive practices, identity performances, and symbolic narratives. By examining these processes, the study advances a deeper understanding of how discourses of authenticity and belonging intertwine with market practices, generating both theoretical contributions for academic inquiry and practical insights for the beauty industry.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Brand and Branding:** The brand is a historical and evolving construct that reflects social, cultural, and economic transformations. In Antiquity, it bore an authorial character, with artists signing works

for recognition; during the Middle Ages, guilds institutionalised it to ensure quality and accountability; and with the Industrial Revolution, it became a tool for market differentiation, later formalised by national and international legislation (Freire Castelo & Sousa Batista, 2005). Beyond a visual sign, a brand embodies a system of values, promises, and meanings, representing attitudes, lifestyles, and worldviews that either reinforce consumers' existing values or project idealised identities (Vásquez, 2007; Kotler *et al.*, 2021). Brands operate in a hybrid discursive space between producers' intentions and consumers' perceptions, evolving from legal markers in the "product era" to intangible assets in the "brand equity" era (Manning, 2010). Effective branding requires strategic corporate investment, aligning visual and conceptual identity—logos, packaging, and labels—with purpose, values, and mission, thereby producing coherent symbolic meaning (Maurya & Mishra, 2012; Vásquez, 2007). By bridging material and immaterial dimensions, brands convey both what is consumed and what consumers aspire to be, fostering emotional bonds and enduring symbolic associations (Wijaya, 2013). Ultimately, successful brands create symbolic connections and align their personality with consumers' real or idealised identities, necessitating an interdisciplinary understanding that integrates legal, marketing, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives (Maurya & Mishra, 2012; Wijaya, 2013).

**Personal Branding and Digital Influence:** Personal branding has emerged as a strategic practice for differentiation in competitive, information-saturated environments, treating individuals as brands whose identity is intentionally communicated to highlight unique attributes (Peters, 1997; Pawar, 2016; Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). It involves three interrelated elements: identity (how one wishes to be perceived), positioning (how this identity is communicated), and image (how others perceive it). Maintaining consistency among these elements is challenging, particularly in digital contexts where multiple platforms and audiences generate divergent interpretations (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Zarkada, 2012). Social media amplifies both opportunities and complexities, as online self-presentation resembles a theatrical performance, with profiles, photos, and posts functioning as costumes and stage settings, potentially creating tension between the "real" and "projected" selves (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Pawar, 2016). Successful personal branding requires strategic communication, self-awareness, and adaptability to produce symbolic relevance, trust, and engagement (Pawar, 2016; Zarkada, 2012). Digital influencers exemplify this convergence, leveraging authenticity, niche engagement, and personality-driven credibility to shape consumer behaviour and consumption patterns (IBGE, 2024; Karhawi, 2018; Camargo, Estevanim, & Silveira, 2017; Martins, 2025). They operate as hybrid professionals, managing self-image strategically while influencing opinions, lifestyles, and market trends (Labrecque, 2010; Karhawi, 2018). Digital environments serve as both a platform and constraint, demanding intentional, consistent, and authentic self-presentation to achieve visibility, relevance, and influence in contemporary markets (Pawar, 2016; Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Zarkada, 2012).

**Fashion and Product:** The fashion market functions as a complex interplay of symbolic, cultural, and economic exchanges, where consumers pursue desires, identity signalling, and social belonging (Aspers & Godart, 2013; Rodrigues, 2014). Fashion is characterised by recurrent change within stable social orders, acting as a mediator of cultural norms and self-expression through products that embody both utilitarian and symbolic meanings (Cabigiosu, 2020; Aspers & Godart, 2013). Digital influencers reinforce this dynamic by mediating trends and guiding consumer choices through identity-driven communication (Prado & Frogeri, 2017; Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). The product extends beyond the physical good to encompass services, experiences, and the holistic consumer interaction, co-created with users to reflect aesthetic, cultural, and social values while facilitating brand differentiation (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Rodrigues, 2014; Cabigiosu, 2020). Contemporary consumers, particularly digital natives, demand authentic, personalised, and sustainable experiences, shifting marketing from mere functionality

to meaningful engagement (Kotler *et al.*, 2021; Rosa, Casagrande, & Spinelli, 2017). Thus, fashion products function as both commodities and cultural signs, articulating market strategies, brand identity, and consumer self-expression. Effective differentiation requires portfolio integration, technological innovation, and attention to personalisation and experience, creating symbolic value and reinforcing consumption patterns in digitally mediated markets (Aspers & Godart, 2013; Kumar Maurya & Mishra, 2012; Kotler *et al.*, 2021).

**Digital Influencers in the Beauty Market:** Influence is a relational process through which individuals shape others' behaviours, attitudes, and decisions via symbolic mechanisms embedded in social networks and cultural contexts (Parsons, 1963; Prado & Frogeri, 2017). The digital era transformed this phenomenon, creating communities based on trust, shared experiences, and peer evaluations, giving rise to influencer marketing as a segmented, personalised, and interactive strategy (Rosa, Casagrande, & Spinelli, 2017; Bakker, 2018). Influencers operate as credible authorities within niches, cultivating personal brands through regular content that blends expertise, lifestyle, and identity-defining attributes (Vaidya & Karnawat, 2023; Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). In the beauty sector, they function as symbolic mediators between brands and consumers, fostering trust, identification, and engagement, often outperforming traditional marketing approaches (Prado & Frogeri, 2017; Martins, 2025). Their content establishes proximity and belonging, influencing purchasing decisions and shaping long-term brand perception, particularly among Generation Z, who value authenticity, transparency, and relatable narratives (Menin, 2024). In Brazil, influencers such as Mari Maria, Bruna Tavares, and Bianca Andrade illustrate the materialisation of digital symbolic capital, transforming online visibility into entrepreneurial ventures while reinforcing loyalty through transparent, identity-driven communication (Martins, 2025). Overall, digital influencers integrate personal branding, content creation, and community engagement to co-construct brand meaning, highlighting trust, authenticity, and relational influence as central drivers of contemporary beauty marketing (Bakker, 2018; Prado & Frogeri, 2017; Vaidya & Karnawat, 2023; Menin, 2024).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative multiple case study design to investigate how digital influencers' personal brands impact the Brazilian beauty market through proprietary product lines. Cases were purposefully selected, focusing on prominent Brazilian influencers—Bianca Andrade (Boca Rosa), Bruna Tavares, Mari Maria, Franciny Ehlke, and Karen Bachini—whose brands demonstrate distinct strategies for converting symbolic capital into commercial success. Data collection combined primary and secondary sources, including social media metrics, market reports, sales data, media coverage, and academic literature, enabling a triangulated approach to validate the findings (Yin, 2018; Stake, 1995). Content analysis was employed to examine discursive strategies, narrative construction, and engagement patterns on digital platforms, while thematic coding identified recurrent mechanisms linking personal branding, consumer behaviour, and market performance (Krippendorff, 2018; Silverman, 2020). Critical evaluation considered the broader social, cultural, and economic contexts of the Brazilian beauty sector, highlighting generational differences, consumption trends, and the interplay between authenticity and commercialisation. Reflexivity was maintained throughout, recognising potential biases arising from media and self-reported data (Creswell, 2014). Although the study focuses on a limited number of cases, the approach enables an in-depth understanding of complex, context-dependent phenomena, balancing descriptive richness with analytical rigour. By integrating communicational, identity, and market dimensions, the methodology ensures that theoretical insights are grounded in empirical evidence, supporting robust conclusions regarding the strategic role of personal branding in contemporary influencer-led markets.

## RESULTS

**Boca Rosa Beauty:** Bianca Andrade, known as Boca Rosa, exemplifies the transformation of digital influence into economic and symbolic capital. Originating from Rio de Janeiro's periphery, she began in 2011 with her blog, evolving into Boca Rosa, distinguished by accessible and creative makeup tutorials that fostered audience identification through authentic narratives (Moura, 2023). In 2018, the launch of Boca Rosa Beauty in partnership with Payot marked her professionalisation, with the first-year sales reaching 1.5 million units and cumulative revenue surpassing R\$120 million within three years (Fenili, 2022; Moura, 2023). This success demonstrates perceived value, combining quality and affordability (Rodrigues, 2014). The end of her five-year partnership in 2023 enabled full control over production, innovation, and supplier selection, reflecting strategic personal brand expansion (Brazil Journal, 2023). Key milestones include her participation in *Big Brother Brasil 20*, which broadened her audience beyond digital followers, translating media exposure into sales growth (Moura, 2023). Her Instagram following expanded from 6 to 19 million, illustrating audience consolidation and brand loyalty (Brazil Journal, 2023). Boca Rosa Beauty integrates aesthetics, narrative, and cultural symbolism, highlighting accessibility, empowerment, and identity alignment. Bianca's trajectory exemplifies the conversion of trust in her personal brand into consumption, positioning her as both influencer and cultural entrepreneur, where continuous personal branding drives market influence and commercial success (Pawar, 2016; Bakker, 2018).

**Bruna Tavares Line:** Bruna Tavares' trajectory demonstrates the centrality of credibility, inclusive innovation, and strategic market positioning in the beauty sector. Beginning with her blog *Pausa para Feminices* in 2009, she transitioned from cultural journalism to makeup content, rapidly establishing influence in Brazil (Fenili, 2022). In 2010, her first lipstick with Tracta's support achieved immediate success, paving the way for full cosmetic lines spanning makeup, nail polish, and brushes. Her Instagram and YouTube reach—4 million and over 1 million followers, respectively—ensures continuous audience engagement and brand visibility (Fenili, 2022). Notable innovations include the BT Skin foundation, launched with 30 shades to reinforce diversity and inclusivity, selling 200,000 units in three days at R\$69.90, with potential for one million units monthly (Fenili, 2022). By 2019, the brand recorded 113% growth, expanding distribution to major retail chains, pharmacies, and perfumeries, consolidating national presence (Forbes, 2020). Bruna combines personal authenticity, consistent communication, and inclusive innovation to generate trust and consumer loyalty, aligning product attributes with social representation (Bakker, 2018; Aspers & Godart, 2013). Her brand embodies functional quality, identity, and cultural values, positioning her as a cultural entrepreneur. This trajectory illustrates the capacity of personal branding to transform digital influence into enduring economic and symbolic capital, integrating identity, market strategy, and consumer engagement into a cohesive business model (Vásquez, 2007).

**Mari Maria Makeup:** Mari Maria's trajectory highlights the conversion of digital influence into entrepreneurial success within the Brazilian cosmetics market. Beginning with amateur self-makeup videos on YouTube, she rapidly gained visibility, attracting advertising and building a large audience exceeding 75 million followers across platforms (Menin, 2024; Estadão, 2024). In 2017, the launch of Mari Maria Makeup with a patented triangular brush demonstrated strategic innovation and market differentiation (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The brand expanded to approximately 100 SKUs, encompassing makeup, skincare, hair products, and accessories, distributed in over 5,000 physical points of sale and via e-commerce, which accounts for 30% of total sales (Estadão, 2024). In 2023, the brand grew 400%, with projections of 200% growth in 2024 and an estimated R\$50 million in online revenue, highlighting operational scalability and market reach (Estadão, 2024). Mari Maria's personal brand, grounded in authenticity, proximity, and trust, reinforces symbolic capital, where consumers associate products with her

identity and credibility (Wijaya, 2013; Pawar, 2016). Beyond aesthetics, the brand functions as a mediator between influencer narrative and consumer identity, integrating innovation, accessibility, and authenticity. Mari Maria exemplifies how personal branding precedes and legitimises commercial enterprise, demonstrating the potential of digital influence to generate sustainable economic and cultural value.

**Franciny Ehlke and Karen Bachini:** Franciny Ehlke (Fran) and Karen Bachini illustrate diverse strategies for converting digital influence into commercial success. Fran, with over 34 million followers, launched her cosmetics line in 2021 in partnership with MBOOM, achieving R\$130 million in revenue and selling over 3 million products in just over a year, including limited editions like Chocochilli lip gloss, which sold R\$1.5 million in seconds (Forbes, 2023). Her strategy relies on massive reach, virality, and community engagement, leveraging identification and proximity to accelerate consumption (Rosa, Casagrande, & Spinelli, 2017). Conversely, Karen Bachini, leveraging expertise as a professional makeup artist, launched Karen Bachini Beauty with a focus on transparency, technical credibility, and product quality, prioritising authentic guidance over traditional marketing (Forbes, 2023; Prado & Frogeri, 2017). While Fran emphasises audience and engagement, Karen prioritises trust and expertise, demonstrating that influencer marketing can succeed through both popularity-driven and knowledge-based authenticity (Bakker, 2018). Both cases reveal that digital influence, whether through reach or credibility, can be strategically transformed into economic and symbolic capital. They highlight the flexibility of personal branding in the beauty sector, where authenticity—social or technical—remains the core driver of trust, consumption, and long-term brand consolidation.

## DISCUSSION

The contemporary Brazilian beauty market demonstrates the coexistence of two competitive models: traditional brands, grounded in decades of operation and technical credibility, and influencer-led brands, emerging from social media with authenticity and direct consumer engagement. Contemporary studies indicate the growing impact of the latter: 80% of consumers report having purchased products recommended by digital influencers, with 52% more likely to trust profiles considered authorities in their niche. Notably, 45% of these consumers had their expectations exceeded, underscoring the mediating role of influencer credibility in purchasing decisions (Exame, 2025). Influencer brands exhibit markedly higher growth than conventional counterparts. Survey data show an annual expansion of 32.8% for influencer-driven lines, compared with 5.9% for traditional brands (Estado de Minas, 2025). Cases such as Bianca Andrade's Boca Rosa Beauty, with revenue exceeding R\$190 million, and Bruna Tavares' line, consolidated in Sephora and Renner, exemplify this dynamic. For consumers, purchasing from influencers represents not merely aesthetic satisfaction but participation in shared lifestyles and identity alignment. Traditional brands, however, maintain relevance through distribution capillarity, technical legitimacy, and adaptation to a democratized market: classes C, D, and E constitute 76% of the population, with 56% increasing hygiene and beauty consumption in the last decade, and 41% planning further growth (Valor Econômico, 2025). These consumers seek not only affordable products but also cultural resonance, social responsibility, and inclusivity—qualities increasingly integrated into influencer brand narratives. Generational differences persist, with older consumers tending to rely on specialist recommendations, while younger audiences aged 16–24 are primarily guided by influencers (Consumidor Moderno, 2023). Success in the contemporary beauty market depends less on functional attributes or pricing alone and more on a brand's ability to convey authenticity, build trust, and embed cultural values into its products. Traditional brands must increasingly foster proximity and relevance with consumers, whereas digital-native brands need strategic approaches to sustain growth amid the volatility of trends. Ultimately, symbolic identification, meaningful engagement, and values-driven narratives

have become decisive factors in achieving market leadership (Spark & Instituto QualiBest, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The research provided an in-depth examination of the relevance of digital influencers' personal brands within Brazil's contemporary beauty market, revealing that their actions extend beyond content creation into structured business strategies that compete effectively with traditional brands. Case analyses demonstrated that the primary competitive advantage of these brands lies in social media engagement, which converts symbolic capital into significant economic outcomes. Proximity to audiences and perceived authenticity function as high-value intangible assets, fostering trust and consumption relationships rooted in belonging and cultural identification. Consequently, the influence economy encompasses the construction of symbolic universes capable of transforming followers into loyal consumers. Consumption associated with influencer-linked fashion and beauty products extends beyond functional criteria, such as price or quality, to include emotional and identity dimensions. In this context, consumption operates as a social language, through which individuals communicate values, lifestyles, and group affiliation, positioning digital influencers as key cultural and market mediators in trend diffusion and consumption redefinition. The case study method proved appropriate, enabling the exploration of complex phenomena embedded in real contexts and integrating communicational, identity, economic, and market dimensions. Triangulation of evidence—including market data, reports, and sector analyses—strengthened the validity of the investigation. Although the focus on a limited number of Brazilian influencers limits generalisation, the findings provide analytical insights, contributing to the theoretical understanding of personal branding, symbolic consumption, and market strategies. Despite the sector's volatility, the results indicate that digital influencers represent a structural phenomenon, extending their personal branding into competitive, recognisable brands. Future research should examine performance in other segments, the sustainability of these business models, and consumer perceptions of credibility and symbolic value relative to traditional brands, reinforcing the evolving coexistence and complementarity between digital-native and conventional brands in the beauty and fashion market.

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