**JETBIS**
Journal of Economics, Technology and Business

# Effectiveness of Micro-Influencer Collaboration on Engagement and Brand Awareness: A Case Study of the Instagram Account of LSPDitekindo (@ditekindo)

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**ABSTRACT**

Professional Certification Institutions (LSP) require effective digital communication strategies to reach their target audiences in the digital age. LSP Ditekindo's Instagram performance is not yet optimal, with low engagement rates and limited awareness conversion, thus requiring the right influencer collaboration strategy. This study aims to identify and describe the collaboration strategy between LSP Ditekindo and influencers in improving Instagram account performance, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative content in building engagement and brand awareness. The study uses a mixed-method approach, collecting quantitative data from Instagram Insights and qualitative data through interviews. The analysis was conducted using a descriptive comparative method, calculating the engagement rate using the formula (Total Interactions / Total Reach & Impressions) × 100%. The collaboration with influencer Lukman Acep Nul Hakim resulted in significant improvements: followers increased by 190 (0.81%), likes surged by 5,050%, reach and impressions rose by 277%, and the total engagement rate increased from 0.02% to 4.78%. LSP Ditekindo achieved an "Excellent" status across three industry benchmarking indicators in the B2B sector. The results validate the Trust Transfer Theory, Social Proof Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, with key success factors including the accuracy of influencer selection, the authenticity of message delivery, and strategic timing.

## INTRODUCTION

The digital era has fundamentally shifted the marketing paradigm, with influencer collaboration strategies becoming one of the most effective approaches to improving brand performance on social media (Rachmad, 2024). This transformation is particularly relevant for Professional Certification Institutions (LSPs) such as LSP Ditekindo, which operates in the digital technology sector and faces unique challenges in building brand awareness and credibility through the Instagram platform (Serbetcioglu & Göçer, 2020). In this context, engagement rate (measured through likes, comments, shares, and saves) serves as the primary dependent variable, while brand awareness (measured through reach, impressions, and profile visits) functions as a secondary dependent variable (Colicev et al., 2018). Meanwhile, the influencer collaboration strategy—encompassing influencer selection, collaboration format, and content type—constitutes the independent variable hypothesized to significantly impact both engagement and brand awareness metrics. The conversion rate from followers to certification participants, though not measured

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directly in this study due to data limitations, represents a potential mediating variable warranting future investigation (Mero et al., 2023; Setiawan & Asiyah, 2023; Thomas et al., 2024).

This transformation is driven by shifts in consumer behavior, which increasingly relies on recommendations from authority figures or micro-influencers in making purchasing decisions (Wies et al., 2023). The professional certification industry, particularly Professional Certification Institutions (LSPs) such as LSP Ditekindo—which operates in the digital technology sector—faces unique challenges in building brand awareness and credibility through Instagram, a platform dominated by visual and interactive content (Dida & Annabi, 2024).

This research specifically focuses on influencer collaboration within the professional Business-to-Business (B2B) sector, particularly for LSP Ditekindo, which operates in the digital technology certification field (Vivaldini, 2023). Understanding the B2B versus B2C distinction is crucial: B2C (Business-to-Consumer) influencer marketing typically emphasizes impulse buying, emotional appeals, and rapid conversion cycles, often leveraging macro-influencers with mass appeal (Malkoc, 2020). In contrast, B2B influencer marketing—as exemplified in this study—prioritizes building long-term credibility, establishing thought leadership, and fostering trust-based relationships with professional audiences (Cartwright et al., 2022). The target audience in B2B contexts consists of decision-makers seeking to validate competencies for career advancement rather than consumers making emotional purchases (Pandey & Mookerjee, 2018). Consequently, B2B influencer strategies require different success metrics: rather than immediate sales conversions, the focus shifts to engagement quality, professional interest (measured through profile visits), and establishing brand authority within specialized communities. This fundamental difference necessitates tailored approaches to influencer selection, content creation, and performance evaluation—areas still underexplored in existing literature and forming the core contribution of this research (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Influencer collaboration in the context of B2B professional services differs markedly from the conventional B2C industry, where the main focus lies in building credibility and trust rather than encouraging impulse buying(Mero et al., 2023) . LSP Ditekindo, as an institution providing competency certification in digital technology and the creative industry, requires the right communication strategy to reach a multi-sectoral target audience including IT professionals, digital marketers, content creators, graphic designers, and job seekers who need competency validation to increase competitiveness in the digital job market. The Instagram platform, with 2.35 billion monthly active users worldwide, offers significant opportunities to build engagement and increase brand visibility through relevant content and strategic collaboration with influencers in the technology and career fields (Anjos et al., 2022; Park & Namkung, 2022; Virtanen et al., 2017).

LSP Ditekindo faces challenges in increasing brand awareness and engagement rates on Instagram, where the conversion from awareness to actual certification participation remains low compared to competitors within the same industry. This research is urgent due to the changing trend of searching for professional certification information, which increasingly occurs via social media, especially among millennials and Gen Z—the primary targets of technology certification programs (Rachmad, 2025). Without a deep understanding of effective influencer collaboration strategies, LSP Ditekindo risks losing market share and relevance in the increasingly competitive digital marketing era.

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The exponential growth of influencer marketing, expected to reach a global market value of $21.1 billion by 2023—a threefold increase since 2019—highlights the importance of this research in a rapidly evolving industry. Specifically, 83% of brand managers believe influencer marketing is effective, and 67% of those using it report a significant increase in ROI (Barta et al., 2023; Dimitrieska & Efremova, 2021; Hugh et al., 2022; Leung et al., 2022). This underscores the urgency of optimizing influencer collaboration strategies in the professional services sector.

Uses and Gratifications Theory forms the foundation of this research, explaining how audiences actively choose and use media to meet needs for information, entertainment, and social interaction. Social Proof Theory (Cialdini, 2018) is also relevant, where the credibility and recommendations of influencers influence the perceived value of professional certification services. Parasocial Relationship Theory explains how audiences develop one-way emotional relationships with influencers, transferring trust from the influencer to the collaborating brand (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Lim et al., 2020; Sherrick et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2021).

Engagement rate theory on Instagram shows that collaboration with micro-influencers (10K–100K followers) results in a 2.4% higher engagement rate compared to macro-influencers (Jayasingh, 2019; Nabhan & Munajat, 2023). Trust Transfer Theory explains the mechanism by which an influencer's credibility transfers to the collaborating brand—a crucial factor in the professional certification industry, which requires a high-trust environment (Bergkvist et al., 2016; Calvo-Porral et al., 2021; Jun et al., 2023; Knoll & Matthes, 2017). Content Relevance Theory emphasizes matching influencer content with brand values and goals to maximize collaboration effectiveness.

Research by Lou and Yuan (2019) analyzing factors influencing influencer marketing effectiveness found that credibility, attractiveness, and product match are major determinants of successful brand-influencer collaborations. Schouten et al. (2020), researching parasocial relationships' influence on purchase intention via influencer collaborations, identified that the quality of the emotional connection between audience and influencer significantly affects brand attitude and behavioral intention. Hughes et al. (2019) explored content co-creation strategies between brands and influencers, finding that authentic collaborations yielded a 23% higher engagement rate compared to conventional sponsored posts.

Jin et al. (2019) investigated influencer credibility's effect on brand trust in B2B services, identifying expertise and trustworthiness as critical factors in building brand credibility for professional services. De Veirman et al. (2017) analyzed follower count and perceived influence, finding that micro-influencers with 10,000–100,000 followers have higher perceived authenticity than macro-influencers. Kapitan and Silvera (2016) researched digital-era celebrity endorsement mechanisms, noting that source credibility and message credibility jointly influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

While there is extensive research on influencer marketing, a significant gap exists in analyzing the effectiveness of influencer collaboration strategies for the professional services sector, particularly professional certification bodies, which differ in audience characteristics and communication objectives from retail or lifestyle industries. Previous studies focused primarily on B2C industries characterized by impulse buying, while the professional certification industry requires a different approach emphasizing long-term trust and credibility. Furthermore, no research has specifically analyzed influencer collaboration strategies on Instagram for professional

certification bodies in Indonesia, especially those in the digital technology sector. This gap underscores the urgent need for research providing in-depth insights into effective influencer collaboration strategies to enhance LSP brand performance in the digital era.

This research offers novelty by developing an analytical framework for influencer collaboration strategies specifically for Professional Certification Institutions (LSPs) on Instagram—a sector still rarely explored in influencer marketing. It integrates mixed methods combining quantitative Instagram analytics data with interviews to provide a holistic understanding of influencer collaboration effectiveness within B2B professional services at LSP Ditekindo. The practical contribution is an optimal collaboration strategy to improve LSP Instagram account performance through comprehensive evaluation of engagement, brand awareness, and digital communication optimization.

The study aims to identify and describe the collaboration strategy between LSP Ditekindo and influencers in improving its Instagram performance, with emphasis on translating findings into actionable digital marketing strategies. Research objectives are threefold: first, to systematically analyze quantitative changes in social media metrics (engagement rate, reach, impressions, profile visits, and follower growth) before and after influencer collaboration using Instagram's native analytics to establish clear cause-effect relationships; second, to evaluate collaborative content effectiveness in building audience engagement and brand awareness through comparison with B2B industry benchmarks and professional certification sector standards; third, to identify strategic mechanisms and contextual factors influencing collaboration success or failure, producing transferable insights applicable to similar professional service organizations.

From a practical perspective, this study is expected to provide LSP Ditekindo with a data-driven foundation to optimize future influencer partnerships, including criteria for influencer selection, content format recommendations, and performance benchmarks. More broadly, the findings will help allocate digital marketing budgets strategically by identifying collaboration types yielding the highest return on investment in engagement, brand awareness, and ultimately certification enrollment. The study also aims to establish a replicable evaluation framework for other professional certification bodies, contributing to the professionalization of digital marketing practices in the Indonesian LSP ecosystem. By bridging theoretical understanding and practical application, this research seeks to demonstrate how evidence-based influencer collaboration strategies can enhance LSP Ditekindo's competitive positioning, expand reach within professional communities, and support its mission to provide accessible, credible digital technology certification in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

## METHOD

This study used a mixed methods approach with an explanatory sequential design to evaluate the effectiveness of influencer collaboration strategies in improving the performance of LSP Ditekindo's Instagram account (@ditekindo). The mixed methods design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, where quantitative data provided a numerical overview of performance changes, and qualitative data offered context and deeper insights into the implemented strategies.

The study subjects were the managers of LSP Ditekindo's official Instagram account,

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responsible for executing the influencer collaboration strategy. The object was the Instagram account itself, which focuses on professional certification in digital technology. Data were collected in three phases: before, during, and after the collaboration, to capture the strategy's impact comprehensively.

Quantitative data were collected from Instagram Insights, covering engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and saves, reflecting audience interaction. Qualitative data came from interviews with the account managers to explore strategic aspects including influencer selection criteria, collaboration types, and content creation.

The research instruments included a performance analysis template with predefined metric categories, an engagement rate evaluation format based on industry standards, and a structured interview guide focused on collaboration strategies.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically by reviewing interview transcripts. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and comparatively by calculating averages, percentage changes, and performance trends across the three periods, including engagement rates computed with the following formula:

1. Based on the number of followers ( *Followers* )

   *Engagement rate* = (Total Interactions / Number of Followers) × 100%

2. Based on Reach

   *Engagement rate* = (Total Interactions / Reach) × 100%

3. Based on Impressions

   *Engagement rate* = (Total Interactions / Impressions) × 100%

Information:

Total Interactions = Number of Likes + Comments + Shares + Saves

The most commonly used follower based formula for overall account performance analysis

Reach-based formulas are more accurate for measuring the effectiveness of specific content.

**Table 1. General *Engagement Rate* Criteria**

| *Engagement rate* category | Percentage | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| **Very Low** | < 1% | Poor performance, requires strategy improvement |
| **Low** | 1% - 2% | Performance below industry average |
| **Good** | 2% - 3% | Performance according to industry standards |
| **Very good** | 3% - 6% | Performance above industry average |
| ***Excellent*** | > 6% | Excellent performance, high *engagement* |

*Source: Sprout Social (2023) and Hootsuite (2023)*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. LSP Ditekindo Profile

The Indonesian Digital Information Technology Professional Certification Institute, also known as LSP Ditekindo, is a certification body established on March 22, 2022, in Cirebon Regency. It was founded by the Association of Young Informatics Entrepreneurs and has obtained an official license from the National Professional Certification Agency (BNSP) under number KEP.1678/BNSP/VII/2023.

1. Vision and mission

   LSP Ditekindo's vision is to improve human resource competitiveness in the digital era, with

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the mission of providing competency certification that aligns with industry demands. Its primary goal is to produce superior human resources in the digital business and information technology sectors.

2. Certification program

The certification schemes offered cover a wide range of areas, including:

a. Digital Marketing
b. IT Service Operations Staff
c. *Content Creator*
d. Video Editing
e. Web Developer
f. Data Analyst
g. Social Media Marketing
h. Digital Marketing
i. Multimedia Design
j. Practical Office Advance

3. The advantages of LSP Ditekindo

Some of the advantages of LSP Ditekindo include:

a. Have professional assessors certified by BNSP
b. Curriculum that is constantly updated according to the latest industry trends
c. Establish partnerships with various educational and training institutions

4. Legality and Service Innovation

As a form of adaptation to the need for technology-based certification, LSP Ditekindo has obtained a permit to organize Distance Certification (SJJ) since May 13, 2024. This demonstrates LSP Ditekindo's commitment to providing flexible, inclusive, and high-quality certification services, especially for participants who are outside the coverage area.

## B. *Influencer* Collaboration Strategy

*Influencer* collaboration strategies are an increasingly vital digital marketing approach in the social media era, particularly for professional certification bodies targeting digital native audiences. LSP Ditekindo adopted this strategy to expand *brand awareness and enhance the credibility of the certification program in the eyes of its target audience. Implementing this influencer* collaboration strategy encompasses three fundamental, interrelated aspects:

1. Selected *Influencers*

LSP Ditekindo selected Lukman Acep Nul Hakim as a collaboration partner based on established strategic criteria. The *influencer selection* was based on internal research, which considered a *follower count* of over 2,000 and a high level of content production activity. The selected *influencers were relevant to LSP Ditekindo's target audience, particularly in the content creator* and digital creative professional segments .

2. Forms of Collaboration

The collaboration took the form of *an endorsement* , focusing on the *Content Creator Certification program* . The *endorsement model* was chosen because it was considered the most effective way to build *brand awareness* by leveraging the credibility and reach *of influencers* already

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established within their communities. This collaboration enabled the transfer of trust from *the influencers* to the LSP Ditekindo brand, in accordance with *the Trust Transfer Theory,* which serves as the theoretical foundation of the research.

3. Types of Content Created

During the collaboration period, one piece of promotional content was produced specifically promoting the LSP Ditekindo *Content Creator Certification program. This content was designed with a testimonial and recommendation approach, where influencers* shared their experiences and *endorsed* the certification program's credibility. This type of promotional content was chosen to achieve the primary goals of *brand awareness* and provide *social proof* to *potential participants* .

**C. Performance Data Analysis Before and After Collaboration**

**Table 2. Absolute Performance Data and Percentage Change**

| No | Indicator | Before Collaboration (A) | During Collaboration (B) | After Collaboration (C) | Change A→B | Change A→C | Change B→C |
|----|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Number of *Followers* | 23,421 | 23,543 | 23,611 | +122 (0.52%) | +190 (0.81%) | +68 (0.29%) |
| 2 | *Like* | 2 | 52 | 103 | +50 (2,500%) | +101 (5.050%) | +51 (98%) |
| 3 | *Comment* | 0 | 5 | 5 | +5 | +5 | (0%) |
| 4 | *Share* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | (0%) |
| 5 | *Save* | 2 | 5 | 5 | +3 (150%) | +3 (150%) | (0%) |
| 6 | *Reach & Impression* | 30 | 59 | 113 | +29 (96.67%) | +83 (277%) | +54 (92%) |
| 7 | Content Display | 45 | 70 | 5,305 | +25 (56%) | +5,260 (11,689%) | +5.235 (7.479%) |
| 8 | Profile Visits | 2 | 15 | 34 | +13 (650%) | +32 (1,600%) | +19 (125%) |

Source: Instagram @ditekindo

Table 2 shows the changes to LSP Ditekindo's Instagram account after collaborating with *influencers* . In terms of follower count, the account grew from 23,421 to 23,611 , meaning 190 new followers were added, a growth rate of 0.81 percent. The largest growth occurred during the collaboration period, with 122 new followers, indicating that the collaborative content successfully attracted a new audience. Most striking was the increase in audience interaction with the content. The number of *likes* experienced a remarkable jump from just 2 to 103, representing a 5,050 percent increase. This indicates that the collaborative content was much more liked and appreciated by the audience than the previous content. Comments also increased from zero to 5 comments, indicating the emergence of active discussion and interaction between LSP Ditekindo and its audience. Although the share feature *remained* unchanged, the number of saves *increased* from 2 to 5, indicating that the audience found the content useful and worth saving for future reference. In terms of reach and visibility, there was a very significant increase. Reach and impressions increased from 30 to 113, a 277 percent increase, indicating the content successfully reached a wider audience. Most

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surprising was the jump in content views from 45 to 5,305, a 11,689 percent increase. Profile visits also increased dramatically from 2 to 34, a 1,600 percent increase, indicating that many people were interested in learning more about LSP Ditekindo after seeing the collaborative content.

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**Table 3. *Engagement rate* analysis**

| *Engagement* Metrics | *Engagement rate* (%) | | | Changes in *engagement rate* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Before Collaboration (A)** | **During Collaboration (B)** | **After Collaboration (C)** | **A→B** | **A→C** | **B→C** |
| *Like Rate* | 0.01% | 2.21% | 4.36% | 2.20% | 4.35% | 2.15% |
| *Comment Rate* | 0% | 0.21% | 0.21% | 0.21% | 0.21% | 0% |
| *Share Rate* | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| *Save Rate* | 0.01% | 0.21% | 0.21% | 0.20% | 0.20% | 0% |
| Total *Engagement Rate* | 0.02% | 2.63% | 4.78% | 2.61% | 4.76% | 2.15% |

Table 2 analyzes audience engagement rates by converting absolute data from Table 1 into percentage engagement rates using the formula (Total Interactions / Total Reach & Impressions ) × 100% for each engagement type. This analysis shows a very significant transformation in engagement performance during the collaboration period. The Like Rate experienced the most dramatic increase from 0.01% to 4.35%, contributing a dominant 91.2% of the total engagement rate with an overall increase of 4.35%. The Comment Rate showed a positive development from 0% to 0.21% and remained stable at that level, indicating the establishment of two-way communication, albeit on a small scale. The Share Rate remained at 0% throughout all phases of the collaboration, indicating an area that requires special attention because the content has not yet reached a level that motivates the audience to share. The Save Rate followed a similar pattern to the Comment Rate, increasing from 0.01% to 0.21% and remaining stable, indicating that the audience is starting to find the content worth saving.

Engagement changes show a sustained positive trend across each phase. Phases A→B (before to during collaboration) recorded a 2.61% increase in total engagement rate, demonstrating the immediate impact of collaboration on capturing audience attention. Phases A→C (before to after collaboration) recorded a 4.76% increase in total engagement, demonstrating the highly positive long-term impact and the ongoing effects of collaboration. Phases B→C (during to after collaboration) showed an additional 2.15% increase, indicating sustained momentum without a decline after the collaboration period ended.

Strategic implications demonstrate strengths in the form of a very significant increase in engagement rates, consistent growth across all phases, and good reach effectiveness. Areas of development include the Share Rate which is still 0% and requires a special strategy, the Comment Rate which can be increased with more interactive content, and diversifying engagement types to reduce reliance on likes. Strategic recommendations include maintaining proven collaboration formats, developing strategies to increase Shares through viral content and calls-to-action, increasing interaction through questions and polls, and monitoring the consistency of engagement rates to ensure sustainability. This table provides strong evidence that the collaboration strategy has succeeded in increasing audience engagement significantly and sustainably.

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### D. Comprehensive Effectiveness Test Results

1. Significance Increase Test Results

**Table 4. Significance Test of Performance Improvement**

| Indicator | Absolute Improvement | Relative Increase | Significance Level | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total *Engagement* | 4.76% | 23.70% | Very Significant | Fundamental transformation |
| *Brand awareness (Reach)* | 83 | 277% | Very Significant | Optimal range expansion |
| *Brand Interest (Profile Visit)* | 1600% | 1600% | Very Significant | High *awareness* conversion |
| *Content Virality* | +5,260 views | 11689% | Very Significant | Viral level achievement |
| *Follower Growth* | 190 | 0.81% | Moderate | Steady organic growth |

Based on the analysis of the table above, there was a very significant increase in four of the five main indicators. The 23,700% increase in engagement rate indicates a fundamental transformation in audience interaction with LSP Ditekindo content. Although the absolute number is still relatively small (0.46%), the magnitude of the increase indicates the extraordinary effectiveness of the collaboration strategy. The increase in awareness, measured by reach, experienced a growth of 277%, exceeding the significance threshold at the B2B industry level, which is generally around 50-200%. This confirms that the collaboration succeeded in substantially expanding brand visibility. The interest level, represented by profile visits, showed the most dramatic increase at 1,600%, indicating a highly effective conversion from awareness to genuine interest.

2. Comparison with B2B Industry Standards

**Table 5. *Benchmarking* with the Professional Certification Industry**

| Performance Metrics | LSP Ditekindo | Industry Average | Standard | Achievement Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Engagement rate* | 0.46% | 0.5-1.5% | >2% | Approaching the average |
| *Reach Growth Rate* | 277% | 50-150% | >200% | *Excellent* |
| *Conversion to Interest* | 1600% | 100-300% | >500% | *Excellent* |
| *Follower Growth* | 0.81% | 1-3% | >5% | Below average |
| *Content Viral Coefficient* | 11689% | 100-500% | >1000% | *Excellent* |

*Benchmarking* results showed mixed performance with a positive trend. LSP Ditekindo

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achieved " *Excellent* " status in three of the five key indicators, specifically in reach *growth* , conversion to interest, and content virality. This achievement demonstrates that the *influencer collaboration strategy* is highly effective in building *awareness* and converting *awareness* into interest. However, *the engagement rate* , which remains below the industry average (0.46% vs. 0.5- 1.5%), indicates the need for optimization in creating deeper interactions with the audience . *The growth* rate, which is below the industry standard, indicates that despite high *awareness* , conversion into committed *followers* still requires strategic improvement.

3. **Brand** *awareness* evaluation *Engagement*

**Table 6: Multi-dimensional *Brand awareness* Analysis**

| *Awareness* Dimension | Indicator | Baseline | Post- Collaboration | *Growth* | Effectiveness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Cognitive Awareness* | *Reach & Impressions* | 30 | 113 | 277% | Very Effective |
| *Affective Awareness* | *Like & Save* | 4 | 108 | 2600% | Very Effective |
| *Behavioral Awareness* | *Profile Visits* | 2 | 34 | 1600% | Very Effective |
| *Brand Recall* | *Comments & Engagement* | 0 | 5 | +% | Effective |
| *Brand Recognition* | *Follower Growth* | 23,421 | 23,601 | 0.81% | Moderate |

Multidimensional analysis showed a comprehensive increase in awareness across all cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels. Cognitive awareness, represented by reach and impressions, increased by 277%, confirming that the LSP Ditekindo brand successfully entered the awareness set of a broader target audience.

Affective awareness showed the most dramatic increase of 2,600%, indicating that the audience not only knew the brand but also developed positive sentiments towards LSP Ditekindo. Behavioral awareness , reflected through profile visits, showed a highly effective conversion of 1,600%, proving that awareness successfully triggered action-oriented behavior.

Based on the research results, these findings provide strong validation of the Trust Transfer Theory in the context of professional certification services. A 1,600% increase in profile visits and 5,050% increase in likes indicates that Lukman Acep Nul Hakim's credibility as a Content Creator was successfully transferred to LSP Ditekindo. This trust transfer process occurs through authentic endorsements , where audiences who have built trust with influencers then transfer that trust to the recommended brand. In the context of professional certification that requires high trust, these findings are highly significant because they prove that influencer marketing can be an effective strategy for building initial trust with potential participants.

Implementation of Social Proof Theory is seen through endorsement Influencers serve as social validation for the quality of the LSP Ditekindo program. The 23,700% increase in engagement indicates that social proof provided through endorsements effectively creates a bandwagon effect,

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where audiences are more likely to follow actions recommended by figures they trust. From a behavioral economics perspective, these results confirm that decision-making for professional services is heavily influenced by social signals and peer recommendations. The emergence of five new comments suggests that social proof influences not only passive consumption but also active engagement behavior.

The 150% increase in content retention and the emergence of active comments validates Uses and Gratifications Theory , which suggests that audiences actively select and utilize content to meet their professional development information needs. Audiences are not merely passive recipients, but active seekers who evaluate the value and relevance of the content to their professional goals. Informational gratification is evident through the behavior of saving content for future reference, indicating that the content is considered valuable for professional growth. Social gratification is reflected in active comments and discussions, indicating that the content successfully creates community engagement.

The findings of this study are consistent with those obtained by Hughes et al. (2019), who identified that authentic collaborations resulted in 23% higher engagement rates compared to conventional sponsored posts. LSP Ditekindo's 23,700% increase in engagement rates far exceeds these findings, indicating that authenticity in messaging was a key factor in the significant increase. This difference in percentage improvement can be explained by the different industry contexts; while Hughes et al. (2019)focusing on consumer products with established engagement rates, LSP Ditekindo started from a very low base (0.02%), making the improvements appear more dramatic.

influencer expertise and trustworthiness in B2B professional services. The alignment between Lukman Acep Nul Hakim's background and the promoted Content Creator Certification program creates a natural credibility that resonates with the target audience. This credibility is reflected in the absence of negative feedback and the positive sentiment in the comments received. The audience perceives this endorsement as credible because the influencer possesses relevant experience and competency.

However, the findings differ from Lou & Yuan's (2019) study, which identified product fit as a key determinant of collaboration success. In the context of LSP Ditekindo, despite excellent product fit, trust and authenticity factors appeared to be more dominant in explaining the improvements achieved. This suggests that in the professional services sector, the personal credibility of influencers is more critical than the fit between endorser and product.

This study extends the findings of Schouten et al. (2020) by demonstrating that parasocial relationships influence not only purchase intentions but also information-seeking behavior in the context of professional services. A 1,600% increase in profile visits indicates that emotional connections with influencers encourage audiences to actively explore recommended services. In the context of B2B services, parasocial relationships create curiosity that can develop into actual engagement. However, converting from interest to signup requires additional persuasive elements that cannot be met through a single influencer collaboration.

The success of LSP Ditekindo's strategy relies heavily on the accuracy of influencer selection . The selection of Lukman Acep Nul Hakim, based on criteria of relevance to the target audience within the Content Creator community, created an authentic and credible alignment. Strict selection criteria, including follower count, engagement quality, and content consistency, proved effective in

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identifying influencers with an engaged audience base. The excellence of this selection was reflected in the positive audience response without negative feedback. Furthermore, the strategic selection took into account timing and context, as the collaboration occurred at a time of increased demand for digital skills certification.

Timing the collaboration during a time of heightened awareness about digital skills certification offers significant strategic advantages. The post-pandemic era has heightened awareness of the need for digital competencies and certification for career advancement. Collaboration in this context has gained greater acceptance because audiences are already receptive to information about professional development opportunities. Furthermore, strategic timing also takes into account audience behavior patterns, with endorsements delivered during peak engagement hours for maximum visibility.

However, there are strategic barriers and limitations that need to be considered. Scale limitations are a significant constraint that limits the potential impact of collaborative strategies. Collaborating with a single influencer and a single piece of content creates limitations in terms of reach diversity and audience segmentation. Reliance on the performance of a single individual reduces risk mitigation and flexibility in strategic execution. Scale limitations also mean missing opportunities for the interplay effects that can be achieved through multi- influencer collaborations , which can reach a broader audience segment.

Challenges in measuring and attributing results are also a concern. The lack of sophisticated tracking mechanisms makes it difficult to accurately measure and attribute results. The lack of unique identifiers like promo codes makes it difficult to distinguish between organic growth and results driven by collaborations. This hinders accurate ROI calculations and optimization opportunities for future campaigns. Without clear attribution, it's difficult to optimize the conversion funnel and identify bottlenecks in the transition from awareness to enrollment.

The sustainability of the results achieved is also a concern, as too short an evaluation period creates uncertainty about the sustainability of improvements. Rapid improvements may be temporary spikes, not sustained performance gains. Without a longer observation period, it's difficult to distinguish between temporary effects and true strategic impact. Concerns about sustainability also relate to the reliance on external influencers to maintain engagement levels. Without internal capacity to create engaging content, performance improvements may not be sustainable after the collaboration ends.

## CONCLUSION

The empirical investigation into micro-influencer collaboration for LSP Ditekindo's Instagram demonstrated that partnering with Lukman Acep Nul Hakim significantly improved key metrics, with engagement rates rising from 0.02% to 4.78%, reach increasing by 277%, and profile visits surging by 1,600%. This success validated theories of Trust Transfer, Social Proof, and Uses and Gratifications, highlighting that authentic endorsements from well-aligned micro-influencers can effectively build trust, social validation, and audience engagement for B2B professional certification institutions. Future research should adopt a longitudinal design over 6 to 12 months to evaluate the sustainability of these improvements and track conversions to certification enrollment. Additionally, exploring multi-tier influencer collaborations across various platforms such as LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube, combined with advanced social listening and demographic profiling alongside

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conversion tracking, would offer more comprehensive insights into influencer marketing's ROI and audience motivations in this sector.

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