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## IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ONLINE COURSES.

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### ABSTRACT

Over the years due to the growth of social media, people are more influenced by what they see in social media platforms. Those who post their reviews and opinions about a product or service are the influencers. The popularity of influencers is continuous and does not have a limited window of influence. The paper emphasizes on the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior with special reference to online course platforms. The study is based on an exploratory study with the purpose of understanding how the factors of influencer's credibility-(trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness) create an impact on the purchase intention of the consumers in terms of online courses. The Ohanian model of source credibility model is used for this study. The main instrument for this study is a structured questionnaire for the primary data collection which was distributed among students of various age groups in the Chennai city. The sampling technique used for the study is convenience sampling technique. The analytical techniques were employed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26. In order to make certain conclusions regarding the hypothesis framed, certain statistical tool like correlation, Anova and Chi-square were employed. Through the use of different tools and testing, it is concluded that influencers play a great role in purchasing intention of the consumers with reference to online courses. The research findings confirm that the above stated factors play an important role in drawing attention, engaging and affecting a behavioral change in the minds of the customers in terms of online courses.

**Keywords:** Influencer marketing, social media influencers, influencer's credibility - trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and purchase intention.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Online learning also known as e-learning or electronic learning is a means of learning through the assistance of the computer and internet technology. The major components of online learning are internet and computer. Rapid growth and development in the technology and the advancement in the learning systems have provided a way for the online learning platforms. It facilitates the transfer of knowledge and skills through electronic networks to a large number of learners around the world at the same or different times. There are numerous online learning platforms in the market such as Udemy, Coursera, Lynda, Skillshare, Udacity that serve millions of people. The platforms are getting shaped by different user verticals as well. While Skillshare is mostly for creatives such as giving courses on animation, photography, lifestyle, Coursera is mostly academic with giving access to university courses. Top tier universities are also democratizing the learning by making courses accessible via online. Stanford University and Harvard University give access to online courses under categories of computer science, engineering, mathematics, business, art, and personal development. These all show one thing, there's a huge demand from people to learn online. The reason for this demand and rapid growth of the market with a wide variety of platform options for different groups of people may be the rapid change of the world. These online learning platforms are sometimes promoted by the influencers who have already been aware of the platform and had an online course purchase experience. These influencers through social media share their reviews and recommendations of the online courses platform to their followers. The consumers who want to do online courses in turn search for the reviews and opinions of the people whom they follow, they are the influencers for the online courses. Therefore the research deals with the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior with special reference to online courses. The research studies the factors of influencer's credibility such as trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness and its impact on the purchase intention of the consumers. The research analyzes how the consumer behavior is affected by the opinions and recommendations of the social media influencers for the online courses.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The present study aimed to find the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior with special reference to online courses. Therefore the research is based on an exploratory study with the purpose of understanding how the factors of influencer's credibility affects the consumer behavior to follow the influencers. Therefore the research design used for this study is exploratory research.

Data collection is done with the help of structured questionnaire on a 5-point scale that has questions related to the variables of the study. The questionnaire method is used to record consumer perception about influencers and their behavior. The data for this study is solely primary. The data is collected from a sample of 140 respondents who are active in social media and aware of the online courses. Students of different age group were chosen as the sample for this study. The analytical techniques were employed using statistical package SPSS version 26. Different statistical tools like Correlation, Anova and Chi- Square have been used for meeting the desired objectives.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

#### Primary objective:

To study the impact of influencer marketing on the consumer behavior towards online courses.

#### Secondary objectives:

To study customer behavior towards influencer's trustworthiness and its impact on purchase intention with reference to online courses.

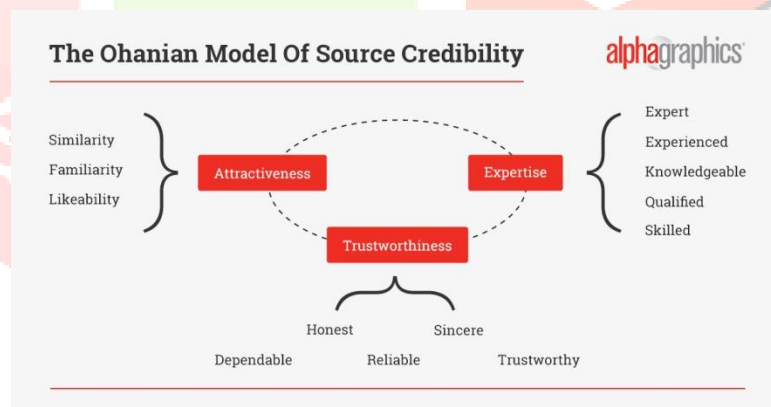
To study customer behavior towards influencer's expertise and its impact on purchase intention with reference to online courses.

To study customer behavior towards influencer's attractiveness and its impact on purchase intention with reference to online courses.

## III. MODELLING AND ANALYSIS

### CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY:

Three main factors of source credibility based on the research by Ohanian (1990).



### ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY:

#### 1. Correlation

Correlation analysis was performed to determine the direction of the relationship between each independent variable to the dependent variable. A correlation provides a table giving Pearson correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) between the variables. The size of the Pearson correlation varies from  $-1.00$  to  $+1.00$ . This indicates the strength of the relationship between the two variables, therefore a  $-1.00$  means a perfect negative correlation, a  $+1.00$  means a perfect positive correlation while  $0$  indicates no relationship.

#### Hypothesis

The research is carried out to study how the factors of source credibility in influencers has an impact on purchase intention of the online courses therefore the research hypothesis would be,

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no positive relationship between trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and purchasing intention.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and purchasing intention.

**Table1 Showing Spearman correlation coefficient of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and purchasing intention**

			Correlations			
			Trustworthin ess	Expertise	Attractivenes s	PurchaseInte ntion
Spearman's rho	Trustworthiness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.635**	.579**	.559**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	140	140	140	140
Expertise	Expertise	Correlation Coefficient	.635**	1.000	.619**	.590**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	140	140	140	140
Attractiveness	Attractiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.579**	.619**	1.000	.682**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	140	140	140	140
PurchaseIntention	PurchaseIntention	Correlation Coefficient	.559**	.590**	.682**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	140	140	140	140

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Inference

The correlation coefficient between trustworthiness and Purchasing Intention is 0.559. This means that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. While on the other hand, the correlation coefficient between expertise and Purchasing Intention is 0.590, which is greater than the trustworthiness and has a positive relationship between the two variables. And lastly the correlation coefficient between attractiveness and Purchasing Intention is 0.682, which also means that there is a positive relationship between the two variables.

This also means that when the trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of the influencers increases in the view of consumers, the purchase intention also increases. Spearman's correlation coefficient shows us that the Attractiveness has the highest connection to Purchasing Intention more than trustworthiness and expertise regarding online course platforms.

On the other hand, when the p-value is less than 0.01, there is a very strong significant correlation between the variables. Meaning if the p-value is less than 0.01 then the null hypothesis is rejected. In the case of this study, all three correlations resulted in a p-value of  $p < 0.001$  or 0.000 at 1% level of significance, it indicates that there is very strong evidence against the null hypothesis (H0). Therefore, there is a very strong positive relationship between trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and Purchasing intention.

## 2. ANOVA

### Hypothesis :

H0 : Age of the respondents is not influenced by influencer's credibility and purchase intention.

H1 : Age of the respondents is influenced by influencer's credibility and purchase intention.

**Table 2 Showing one way anova of respondents age with trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and purchasing intention.**

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Trustworthiness	Between Groups	3.921	3	1.307	1.772	.156
	Within Groups	100.335	136	.738		
	Total	104.257	139			
Expertise	Between Groups	1.186	3	.395	.455	.714
	Within Groups	118.246	136	.869		
	Total	119.432	139			
Attractiveness	Between Groups	2.036	3	.679	.767	.515
	Within Groups	120.370	136	.885		
	Total	122.406	139			
PurchaseIntention	Between Groups	6.327	3	2.109	2.193	.092
	Within Groups	130.771	136	.962		
	Total	137.098	139			

**Inference**

In the above table the p value of variables namely trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and purchase intention are more than 0.05 at 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis for these variables are accepted. It concludes that the age of the respondents is not influenced by influencer's credibility and purchase intention.

**3. Chi Square****Hypothesis 1**

H0 : There is no relationship between trustworthiness created by influencers and gender

H1 : There is relationship between trustworthiness created by influencers and gender

**Table3.1 Showing chi- square of gender and influencer's trustworthiness.**

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.522 <sup>a</sup>	21	.427
Likelihood Ratio	26.247	21	.197
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.306	1	.253
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 37 cells (84.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .47.

**Inference**

According to chi square test .427 (P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, H0 is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between trustworthiness created by influencers and gender . This result clearly states that gender does not play a role when it comes to trustworthiness created by influencers.

**Hypothesis 2**

H0 : There is no relationship between expertise created by influencers and gender.

H1: There is relationship between expertise created by influencer and gender.

Table 3.2 Showing chi- square of gender and influencer's expertise.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.321 <sup>a</sup>	18	.009
Likelihood Ratio	44.840	18	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.822	1	.365
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 34 cells (89.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .47.

### Inference

According to chi square test .009 (P value is lesser than 0.05). Hence, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between expertise created by influencers and gender . This result clearly states that gender play a role when it comes to expertise created by influencers.

### Hypothesis 3

H<sub>0</sub> : There is no relationship between attractiveness created by influencers and gender

H<sub>1</sub>: There is relationship between attractiveness created by influencers and gender

Table 3.3 Showing chi- square of gender and influencer's attractiveness.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.284 <sup>a</sup>	21	.107
Likelihood Ratio	36.613	21	.019
Linear-by-Linear Association	.004	1	.947
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 38 cells (86.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .47.

### Inference

According to chi square test .107 (P value is greater than 0.05). Hence, H<sub>0</sub> is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between attractiveness created by influencers and gender . This result clearly states that gender does not play a role when it comes to attractiveness created by influencers.

### Hypothesis 4

H<sub>0</sub> : There is no relationship between purchase intention and gender

H<sub>1</sub> : There is relationship purchase intention and gender

Table 4.4 Showing chi- square of gender and purchase intention.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.213 <sup>a</sup>	9	.815
Likelihood Ratio	6.015	9	.738
Linear-by-Linear Association	.144	1	.704
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 12 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .47.

### Inference

According to chi square test .815(P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, H<sub>0</sub> is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between purchase intention and gender . This result clearly states that gender does not play a role when it comes to purchase intention of the consumers.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- The total variation in the dependent variable that is 'Customer Purchase Intent' can be explained by the independent variables namely 'Trustworthiness', 'Expertise' and 'Attractiveness' (Ohanian model 1990).
- Consumers follow the influencers in various social media like Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Quora etc. A higher preference was against Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.
- An influencers regarding online courses are extremely popular among the age group 20-25.
- More than 50% of respondents agree that influencers in social media are trustworthy and they make use of the review and recommendation from the influencer whenever they are in need of information about the online courses.
- Majority of the population feels that influencers provide a reliable source information and have the best interest at their heart so they can follow their opinion.
- Influencers expertise and experience contributes to their credibility where people believe that who are experts in the field of education can give them right and useful information about the online courses.
- Majority of the people follow the opinions of the influencers who are familiar, similar and whom they like in person. Where they feel that such influencers can provide them useful and right information.
- It is found that the more the trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of the influencers increases the purchase intention of the online courses also increases.
- It is found that among the variables of influencer credibility, attractiveness of the influencer has the highest correlation with the purchase intent.

## V.CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this study is to understand the role of Influencer credibility, trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness and its impact on online courses platform. The results were expectedly positive with considerable impact of these variables on purchase intent. This study also analysed if there exist any relationship between gender and influencer's credibility variables and also with purchase intent. Again there wasn't any significant difference in the behaviour of males and females with respect to trustworthiness, attractiveness and purchase intent but there exists a significance difference in case of expertise of the influencers. The influencer's credibility and purchase intent were also tested with the age of the consumers. The study implies that age of the consumers is not influenced by other all variables. This research explains the results of the survey with the help of Ohanian influencer credibility model. Influencer marketing is most effecting in the need recognition and information search as it creates awareness and positions the brand in the minds of consumers. It also helps in evaluating alternatives and is effective in purchase decision. The research finds that most of the consumers follow Instagram for getting information related to online courses. This study has found that there is a very strong relationship between the factors of influencer's credibility – trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness and purchasing intention. This means that the more a person feels that the influencer is trustworthy and feels that they are experts in giving opinion about the online courses platform and also feels that they are attractive in terms of likability and familiarity, the more they that influencers are credible and follow their recommendation. However, it is important to note that this study did not take into account other factors such as influencers' point of view, integration etc. Therefore, further studies could investigate them with an expansion of the theoretical model and a larger respondent sample. Also, further studies could investigate how influencers deal with sponsored ads and how they reach out to their followers as being credible.

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