



Influencers: Key To Effective Social Media Marketing

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Abstract

In the past, companies promoted their products through TV celebrities, athletes, actors, and actresses. But because of the significant changes in the modern environment, businesses today rely on social media influencers to market their goods. A person who influences the public through social media and has a large following is known as an influencer. Influencers might be public figures, brand ambassadors, or members of the public. Since consumers use social media extensively, they frequently base their purchasing decisions on the opinions of influencers they follow. Social media influencers were able to swiftly connect with the public as a result. They are able to interact with the general public on social media by publishing tweets, streams, feeds, and vlogs despite the fact that they are not media celebrities. They act as a link between the brand and the customers as a result. The goal of the current study is to shed light on customer perceptions of social media influencers and to examine how they affect consumer purchasing behaviour. A structured questionnaire is used in this study to collect data from customers using a descriptive methodology. After gathering the data, it will be analysed to determine the study's anticipated results.

Keywords: Consumer purchasing intention, Social Media Influencers, and Social Media Platforms

Introduction

Prior to the invention of the internet, companies advertised their goods and services through traditional marketing channels like radio, television, and newspapers. But as technology developed, this approach changed, and digitalization advanced. Businesses started using digital tools and methods for product promotion and advertising to keep up with technological innovation. Thus, digital marketing includes practises like search engine optimisation, affiliate marketing, content marketing, and social media marketing. As a result, social media marketing is often used by businesses on sites like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snap Chat, and YouTube. This study focuses on influencer marketing, a sort of social media promotion that makes use of websites like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

A person who has a sizable following on social media platforms and the power to persuade masses of people is an influencer. According to Duncan Brown and Nick Hayes (2008), an influencer is "A third party who significantly shapes the customer's purchasing decision but may ever be accountable for it." These influencers work with companies and are compensated financially or with free products or services. Two more marketing tactics that typically interact alongside influencer marketing are social media marketing and content marketing. According to Tap Influence, social media is a common component of influencer marketing, and influencers are expected to spread the word about the campaign on such channels. Based on the number of followers, there are many distinct categories of influencers, including Nano, Micro, Mid-Tier, Macro, and Mega influencers. Influencers are further divided into categories such as Fashion, Beauty, Travel, Education, Fitness, Lifestyle, and Food Influencers based on the sort of material they promote. As a result of their expertise in a certain industry, influencers are qualified to effectively sell certain products. According to Chen Lou and Shupeiyuan (2019), social media influencers create posts or videos that raise brand awareness among their followers and ultimately enhance purchase intent.

Literature Review

In 2021, Anjali Chopra et al in an experimental study looked at millennial consumer behaviour and influencer marketing. The target audience for the study consisted of tech-savvy millennials who check their social media accounts twice a week and follow at least three influencers. Some of the constructs employed in this study are attitude, perceived behavioural control, subjective norms, personal relevance, trust, inspiration, and perceived danger. According to the survey, respondents felt that influencers had a greater impact on them since they shared their preferences and points of view with their followers and provided them with real information, which inspired and built followers' trust.

A survey was conducted to determine whether YouTube advertisements have an impact on consumers' purchase decisions by Hafiz Ahmad Ashraf et al in 2021. 315 respondents helped with the study's execution. The value of commercials is also influenced by aspects like perceived entertainment value, perceived information quality, perceived agitation, and perceived personalization. According to the study's findings, brand awareness gained through YouTube advertising influences customers' tendency to purchase.

A survey was undertaken by Youssef Chetoui et al. in 2020 to determine whether fashion influencers had an impact on consumers' decisions to purchase products. The researcher used the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour model to achieve this goal. The independent variables used were perceived behaviour control, perceived congruence, perceived expertise, and subjective norms. The dependent variable is the customer's attitude towards making a purchase. The study demonstrates that the trustworthiness of an influencer has a considerable impact on customers' decisions to purchase fashion products.

Anupama Ray et al. (2019) conducted a survey to find out if customer decisions to purchase personal care goods from Instagram are influenced by celebrity and blogger endorsements. The survey also aimed to ascertain whether promotions and deals entice people to purchase goods on Instagram. Instagram users were enticed to celebrity endorsements but resisted supporting unproven brands. Because these products are used on the body, consumers are hesitant to purchase them. Discounts or other inducements are not used to get customers to purchase personal care products. As a result, the report urges companies using Instagram for marketing must be aware of the needs of their target market for personal care products.

S. Venus Jin et al. (2018) conducted research on two categories of influencers: traditional celebrities and social media celebrities. 104 female respondents that use Instagram were used to aid with the research. This study reveals how social presence mediates the impact of celebrity types on perceived reliability and brand attitude. The study discovered that Instagram celebrities had higher levels of credibility than traditional celebrities, and that by posting on Instagram, these celebrities helped high-end firms develop more enduring relationships with their customers.

Objectives

1. To determine the respondents' demographic profile.
2. To examine how consumers view social media influencers.
3. To assess how social media influencers affect consumers' plans to buy.

Research Methodology

Data sources: For this investigation, primary and secondary data were gathered and utilised. 100 respondents' primary data have been gathered using a standardised questionnaire. Secondary has been gathered with the aid of research publications, periodicals, and reference books.

Research approach: A descriptive research approach was employed in this study.

The convenience sampling method is used for this study's sampling.

Research Subject: Information from Jaipur, India, has been gathered.

Interpretation

Profile		Percentage of Frequency
Gender	Male	38
	Female	62
Age	17-24 years	42
	25-32 years	23
	33-40 years	25
	Above 41 years	10
Occupational status	Working	54
	Non-working	46
Educational Qualification	School Level	22
	Under Graduate	50
	Post Graduate	17
	Ph. D/Professional	8
Family's Monthly Income	Others	3
	Below 25,000	40
	25,001 - 50,000	26
	50,001 - 70,000	26
	Above 70,001	8

Table 1 Demographic profile of respondents

The above Table 1 shows a clear understanding of demographic profile of the respondents. It encloses the descriptive statistics of the Gender, Age, Educational Qualification, Occupational status, and Monthly Income. We found that most of the respondents are female. Majority of them are 17 – 24 years of age. Regarding occupational status 54% respondents are working and they possess Undergraduate degree. Majority of the respondent's monthly income are below Rs.25,000.

Social Media Platforms	Frequency	Percent
Instagram	40	40
You tube	33	33
Facebook	27	27
Total	100	100

Table 2 Frequently used social media platforms.

The above table shows that people utilize Instagram frequently because they receive instant post, stories or IGTV notifications from the influencers they follow, therefore it intends the Instagram users to view them. The previous study found that Genuineness, Consumerism, Creative Inspiration, and Envy were the four driving forces for people following Instagram influencers, (Jung Ah Lee et.al,2022).

Type of Influencers	Frequency	Percent
Fashion	32	32
Beauty	23	23
Travel	15	15
Education related	08	8
Fitness	07	7
Lifestyle	08	8
Food	07	7
Total	100	100

Table 3 Type of Influencers

The above table shows the type of influencers followed by the respondents. Nearly 32% respondents follow fashion category influencers, 23% follow beauty, 15% follow travel, 8% follow Education another 8% follow lifestyle influencers and the least respondents follow fitness and food. Since majority of the respondents in our study are females, they prefer to follow Fashion and Beauty influencers.

Types of Influencers	Frequency	Percent
Nano (1000 -10,000)	40	40
Micro (10,001-50,000)	21	21
Mid-Tier (50,001- 5,00,000)	29	29
Macro (5 Lakhs – 10 lakhs)	05	5
Mega (More than 10 lakhs)	05	5
Total	100	100

Table 4 Types of social media influencers based on followers

Respondents in our study mostly follow Nano influencers (less than 10,000 followers). Nano influencers are those who have minimal number of followers in the social media platforms. Businesses that are still in the early stages of their marketing efforts and wish to promote their goods in certain geographic areas might utilize Nano Influencer as one of their marketing tools. Customers believe that the closeness and interaction nature by these influencers can have an impact on the consumer purchasing decisions, (Rafki Chandra Wibawa et.al 2022).

Factor Analysis

The influence of social media influencers on consumer purchase intent was evaluated using factor analysis. 0.863 was Cronbach Alpha. The Bartlett's test resulted in a significance level of 0.000, while the KMO measure of sample adequacy was 0.645. As a result, five factors—brand promotion, brand awareness, purchase intention, building trust and credibility, and sharing personal experience—were extracted from the 20 variables measuring the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchase intent.

Consumer purchase intention was the dependent variable, while the independent variables employed in the study were influencers raising brand awareness, brand promotion, building trust & credibility, and sharing personal experience. We attempt to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables by applying regression analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis of Consumer Purchase Intention

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention (Y)

Independent Variable: 1. Brand Awareness (X1)
 2. Brand Promotion (X2)
 3. Building Trust & Credibility (X3)
 4. Share Personal Experience (X4)

Multiple R value 0.717

R square value 0.515

F value 25.180

P value < 0.001**

Variables	Unstandardized Co-efficient (B)	SE of B	Standardized Co-efficient (Beta)	t value	P value
Constant	-0.771	1.172	-	-0.606	0.546
X1	0.336	0.110	0.226	3.061	0.003**
X2	0.227	.078	0.270	2.910	0.005**
X3	0.003	0.108	0.004	0.032	0.975
X4	0.293	0.066	0.449	4.427	0.000**

Table 5 Variables in the Multiple Regression Analysis

Note: ** Denotes significant at 1%

In the above table, the multiple correlation coefficient R is 0.717, which indicates a fairly strong linear relationship between the predictors Brand Awareness (X1), Brand Promotion (X2), Building Trust & Credibility (X3) and Share Personal Experience (X4) and the response variable Purchase Intention (Y).

The Coefficient of Determination R-square is 0.515, meaning that the independent variables of Brand Awareness, Brand Promotion, Building Trust & Credibility, and Share Personal Experience can account for 51.5% of the variance in the consumer's purchase intention. R square value is significant at the 1% level.

The multiple regression equation is.

$$Y = -0.771 + 0.336 X1 + 0.227 X2 + 0.003 X3 + 0.293 X4.$$

Keeping the other variables constant, the coefficient of X1 in this case is 0.336, which shows the partial effect of influencers in generating brand awareness and resulting in customer purchase intention. If influencers improve brand awareness among consumers and the projected positive sign indicates that the effect is positive, then consumer purchase intent will rise. This coefficient value is significant at the 1% level.

Holding the other factors constant, the coefficient of X2 is 0.227, which shows the partial effect of influencers' brand promotion on customer purchase intention. If influencers promote brands more frequently on social media platforms, the predicted positive sign suggests that the effect would be favourable and customer purchase intent would rise. This coefficient value is significant at the 1% level.

Keeping the other factors constant, the coefficient of X3 is 0.003 and shows the partial effect of influencers building brand trust and credibility on customer purchase intention. At the 1% level, this coefficient value is not significant. This means that until people buy and utilise the goods, trust cannot be built among them.

Assuming the other factors constant, the coefficient of X4 is 0.293, which shows the partial effect of the influencer's sharing their personal experience on customer purchase intention. The projected positive sign suggests that this effect is beneficial and that influencers' sharing of their personal experiences on social media platforms would lead to an increase in consumer purchase intentions. This coefficient value is significant at the 1% level.

Findings

Most respondents were female, between the ages of 17 and 24, and they expressed interest in following Instagram influencers who deal with fashion and beauty content. Many consumers preferred to follow nano influencers because they felt that since they were new to the industry, their work would be authentic and real.

The study's other findings suggest that social media influencers have a modestly favourable impact on consumers' willingness to make purchases. Influencers that use posts, feeds, stories, or vlogs to convey their personal brand or product experiences are quite effective at convincing viewers to make a purchase. The consumer is also influenced by other variables, such as raising brand recognition and product advertising. However, customers are not being persuaded to buy because of the trust and credibility factors because they cannot have any faith in the influencers until they have purchased and used the product.

Conclusion

Technology has enabled a fresh idea called influencer marketing. Before, influencers were regarded to be just celebrities who promoted businesses, but nowadays, anyone with a user account on a social networking website may do so by utilising their abilities and knowledge. Even people are willing to accept other people's ideas and thoughts and recognise them as influences. Therefore, influencers are individuals who spread knowledge about a good or service, promote it through referral codes, coupons, and promotion codes, and share their own personal experiences. Each of these factors so impacts the buyer to purchase it. As a result, social media influencers have changed the game for the sustainable marketing sector.

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