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trn:oid::1:3175726529

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IJAR-50539.docx

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EFFECTIVENESS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world, social media platforms are well-known to everyone, regardless of their educational background, age, or profession; almost everyone owns a smartphone. As humans, we often find ourselves influenced by those we admire. Every facet of their lives, including their fashion choices, eating habits, activities, and more, impacts the behaviour of others. As a result, companies are adopting influencer marketing as a contemporary method of advertising to reach a broader audience for their products and services. To enhance product sales or brand visibility, businesses are engaging with these influencers or bloggers to persuade their followers, compensating them for their influence. Influencer marketing can be categorized into various types, which include celebrities, mega influencers, macro influencers, micro-influencers, and nano-influencers. This paper intends to investigate how businesses leverage influencer marketing as a promotional strategy.

Keywords: social media platforms, influencer marketing, advertising, mega influencers, macro influencers, micro-influencers, nano-influencers

Introduction

The rise of the internet has changed the world dramatically. In the field of marketing, reaching out to existing and potential customers has become significantly easier thanks to the

14 internet. Various platforms allow for interaction between businesses and consumers, including social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, among others. Online connectivity offers more direct engagement opportunities with competitors, partners, decision-makers, and others. These social media platforms have opened new marketing channels for businesses, allowing them to increase brand visibility and advertise their products using tools like influencer marketing. An influencer is someone who can attract a large following on a platform like Instagram, and today, many companies are leveraging these individuals as marketing assets to connect effectively with their target audience. These influencers, also known as third-party endorsers or social media influencers, play an essential role in marketing. Influencer marketing can be divided into two categories: earned and paid. Earned influencer marketing generally uses established or unpaid relationships with influencers to enhance a company's brand visibility while also promoting the influencers' career development. Conversely, paid influencer marketing involves a business partnership with influencers. Sponsorship, often referred to as ambassadorship, happens when a company hires a person who is respected by consumers and designates them as the brand ambassador. Influencer marketing has evolved beyond conventional marketing strategies such as print ads, celebrity endorsements, and digital marketing.

Review of Literature

2 **Severina Cartwright, Hongfei Liu, Iain A. Davies [1]** – This study investigates the role of influencer marketing within B2B organizations. To achieve this, the researcher performed 15 twenty-two detailed semi-structured interviews with senior marketing professionals from various sectors. The study aimed to explore the increasing significance of influencer marketing in the B2B landscape, identify the key characteristics of influencers in B2B markets, and uncover the challenges that B2B marketers encounter when applying this communication strategy. Data was gathered using a theoretical sampling method. The study concluded by informing managers about the role of influencer marketing in nurturing and maintaining relationships beyond the immediate customer base. Additionally, B2B organizations should integrate their influencer marketing strategies with other marketing efforts and the overall organizational culture to effectively meet the marketing objectives of the organization.

6 **Preeti Sharma, Lalita Khanchandani [2]** – This article discusses the swift increase in the use of social media platforms and the rising marketing investments in digital and social media, prompting companies to embrace creative advertising strategies, particularly influencer marketing. The aim of this paper is to examine how brands leverage influencer marketing as a promotional mechanism. The information was gathered through exploratory research. The study's conclusion emphasized that choosing the right influencer to convey the brand message is critically important.

6 **Ifeanyi Okonkwo, Emmanuel Namkoisse [3]** – This research investigate the evolution of influencer marketing, addressing its ethical implications, the creation of effective campaigns, strategies for risk management, and anticipated future trends, highlighting its importance in the digital era. Secondary data was utilized to forecast the future landscape of collaborations

13 between influencers and brands. The researcher also aimed to describe different types of influencers, such as celebrities, micro-influencers, and nano-influencers. The study outlined that future trends are likely to feature virtual influencers and campaigns driven by artificial intelligence, as influencer marketing progresses towards authenticity and enduring partnerships.

José M. Álvarez-Monzoncillo [4] – This study examined influencer marketing through a multi-disciplinary and complementary lens, utilizing both structured and unstructured data with techniques that involved manual coding, statistical and computational methods, alongside sociological perspectives like Social Network Analysis (SNA). The research paper concluded with recommendations on implementing digital methods and highlighted some of the prospective advantages of doing so.

1 **Ann-Sofie Gustavsson, Arij Suleman Nasir Sarvinoz Ishonova [5]** – The research investigates the strategies employed by Swedish SMEs in their efforts to build relationships with influencers. The findings indicated that various factors, including brand values, the duration of the collaboration, the nature of the product, both paid and earned collaboration types, and the nature of the relationships, played a significant role in the relationship-building practices of Swedish SMEs.

4 **Johan Grafström, Linnéa Jakobsson, Philip Wiede [6]** – The research examines the factors that influence Swedish Millennials' perceptions of influencer marketing on platforms like Instagram and blogs. The findings reveal various factors, including the coherence of promotions delivered by an influencer, the level of credibility and trustworthiness of the content, as well as changes in an influencer's style that impact the attitudes of Swedish millennials towards influencer marketing.

Ida Martikainen, Anttonina Pitkänen [7] – This research aims to explore and understand how consumers perceive authenticity in influencer marketing, particularly concerning Instagram posts. The investigation relied on qualitative exploratory research, which involved interviewing influencers. The findings of the study indicated that consumers' perceived authenticity is significantly associated with higher engagement in influencer marketing on Instagram.

Iman Veissi [8] – This study starts by exploring influencer marketing on a specific social media platform. The researcher collected secondary data through a quantitative survey conducted by Annalect and M3 research. Influencer marketing is characterized by the researcher as a concept that generates mixed emotions among the audience (users). Instagram has progressed from being solely a photo-sharing platform to one that serves multiple purposes and carries various implications; yet sharing continues to be a fundamental aspect. In terms of buying choices, posts from Instagram influencers are regarded as more trustworthy than conventional advertisements, even though audiences may question the sincerity of an influencer's endorsement of products they do not truly use or believe in.

Kousik Boro , Rajesh Deb Barman [9] – The study examines influencer campaigns across various platforms, assessing their advantages, disadvantages, and overall success. Beginning

with Facebook, influencers leverage its extensive audience and targeted advertising capabilities. This research relied on secondary data, concluding that effective influencer marketing requires a deep understanding of each platform and the behaviours of its users.

Ritesh Shrikant Sule, Shraddha Wani [10] – This study examines the evolution of influencer marketing, tracing its origins from early 20th-century celebrity endorsements to its current importance on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. It delves into the roles of social media algorithms, detailing how data gathering, content evaluation, and user interaction affect content exposure. Furthermore, it investigates the challenges of addressing negative comments. The researcher has collected data through primary sources by employing the functionalities of social media algorithms. The research concludes that influencer marketing will remain a vital element of digital marketing, driven by innovation and shifting consumer expectations.

Research Gap

The literature review indicates that the effects of influencer marketing on consumers have been thoroughly studied in organisations. Nonetheless, there is insufficient research evidence regarding the influence of influencer marketing on customer relationship building in India. Therefore, it is perceived that a research gap exists in this area, and the current study aims to address this gap.

Significance of The Study

Influencer marketing has emerged as a crucial factor in building customer relationships within the Indian business environment. Additionally, numerous businesses encounter difficulties in meeting their objectives promptly due to insufficient knowledge of influencer marketing methods, leading to customer dissatisfaction with their products and services. Moreover, only a small fraction of companies in India are implementing influencer marketing tactics. Therefore, it is vital to examine and understand influencer marketing to effectively nurture relationships. As a result, this research aims to identify the influencer marketing strategies that are vital for improving business performance and attracting a larger pool of potential customers.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the influencer marketing role in the effectiveness of building relationship with customers.
- To analyse and find out the different strategies using by businesses for increasing their profit: and growth.

Methodology

This study uses secondary data. to understand consumer behaviour, it analyses influencer marketing strategies, and for this purpose, information has been collected from published research journals, books, websites, and newspaper sources.

Major areas where influencer marketing is being used in India

In India, influencer marketing primarily thrives in the fashion, beauty, and lifestyle sectors due to high levels of engagement and the abundance of content on social media, with brands utilizing influencers to expand their reach and boost sales in these categories; other notable areas include food, fitness, travel, and technology, where influencers can present products and experiences to pertinent communities. Important aspects of influencer marketing in India include: fashion, beauty, and lifestyle being the leading sectors for influencer activity, and various social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram being used for marketing purposes, with Instagram emerging as the most favoured platform for influencer marketing. Micro-influencers and nano-influencers are becoming increasingly popular because of their strong engagement rates and perceived authenticity. In addition to traditional sponsored posts, brands are adopting more interactive and immersive forms of content, such as unboxing videos, live streams, and product reviews, to engage their audiences more effectively.

List of Top Influencers in India (2024)

Name	Category	Instagram	You Tube
Sarah Hussain	Food	547 K	151 K
Amar Sirohi	Food	1.4 M	3.7 M
Neha Shah	Food	357.5 K	36.5 K
Abinas Nayak	Food	179 K	414 K
Kunal Kapoor	Food	1.7 M	4.9 M
Kirti Bhoutika	Food	276 K	55.5 K
Ranveer Brar	Food	1.9 M	5.4 M
Kabita Singh	Food	1 M	12.6 M
Meghana	Food	1.7 M	4.2 M
Shivesh Bhatia	Food	875 K	687 K
Santoshi Shetty	Fashion/Lifestyle	751.6 K	34 K
Karron Dhingra	Fashion/lifestyle	678 K	4.1 M
Ayush Mehra	Fashion/lifestyle	1.2 M	118 K
Siddharth Batra	Fashion/lifestyle	256 K	139 K
Sakshi Sindwani	Fashion/lifestyle	518 K	94.7 K
Kritika Khurana	Fashion/Beauty	1.7 M	760 K
Aashna Shroff	Fashion/lifestyle	967 K	185 K
Komal Pamdey	Fashion/lifestyle	1.8 M	1.3 M
Sejal Kumar	Fashion/lifestyle	837 K	823 K
Masoom Minawala	Fashion/lifestyle	1.3 M	55.2 K
Soumya Gupta	Beauty	871 K	478 K
Juhi Godambe	Beauty	523 K	54.6 K
Malvika Sitlani	Beauty	567 K	758 K
Mrunal Panchal	Beauty	4.2 M	781 K
Shreya Jain	Beauty	458 K	748 K

Swati Verma	Beauty	1.4 M	30 K
Debasree Banerjee	Beauty	305 K	265 K
Shriti Arjun Anand	Beauty	567.7	9.9 M

Sources: <https://www.influencer.in/top-creator-in-india/food-influencers/>, <https://buzzfame.in/fashion-lifestyle-influencers-india/>, <https://www.influencer.in/top-creator-in-india/fashionlifestyle-influencers/>

Role of Influencers

Influencers play a crucial role in marketing as they leverage their established follower base and credibility to promote brands and products, cultivating a sense of authenticity and trust among consumers, which enhances brand visibility and engagement, ultimately driving sales by connecting with targeted audiences through their social media platforms and content creation. The advantages include increased brand visibility, improved credibility and authenticity, better audience interaction, and more.

Food influencers: Food influencers: Studies show that psychological factors significantly affect food selections, relating to both short-term and long-term emotional conditions. It is widely recognized that certain nutrients can influence the biological mechanisms that govern thoughts, feelings, and actions. Food influencers support brands in multiple ways, such as reaching particular demographic groups, boosting credibility, shaping consumer actions, and creating enthusiasm.

Fashion influencers: They play a key role in marketing by endorsing brands, establishing fashion trends, and influencing consumer purchases. Fashion influencers add value to brands in several important areas such as boosting brand visibility, creating trends, swaying buying decisions, launching new products, providing styling advice, and forming exclusive partnerships.

Beauty influencers: They are pivotal in marketing as they act as trusted authorities and trendsetters, promoting beauty products to a broad audience through authentic reviews, tutorials, and recommendations, which significantly shape consumer behaviour and influence beauty trends, often increasing sales for brands by building trust and credibility with their followers. Key elements of a beauty influencer's marketing function include showcasing products, setting trends, authenticity and trust, engaging with audiences and expanding reach, raising brand awareness and consideration, and educating consumers.

Conclusion

5 The research offers an in-depth insight into influencer marketing. In general, the findings indicate that influencer marketing plays a crucial role in fostering connections with customers. The research underscores the necessity of focusing on relationship-building with customers through influencer marketing tactics. Achieving this could involve on-going research and development initiatives and addressing customer feedback and recommendations. Additionally, data can be gathered through surveys conducted on social media platforms.

Limitations of the study

3 The research did not include other areas of influencer marketing like education and health, so the findings of this study should be interpreted specifically within the realms of beauty, lifestyle, and fashion. This study is based entirely on secondary data. Information was collected from multiple sources, including research papers, websites, journals, and magazines. There is a lack of available data on this topic.

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