12

A New Era of D2c Marketing: Influencer Marketing

Dr. Ankita Jain
Associate Professor, IIS (Deemed to be) University, Jaipur
Sonal Sharma
Research Scholar, IIS (Deemed to be) University, Jaipur
Email: sonalsharma31805@iisuniv.ac.in

Abstract

Gone are those days when traditional marketing used to fascinate people of all age groups. Now with transformation of technology and mobile dependency, people are well equipped with great internet through mobile phones, tabs, and laptops. Even businesses whether small/ medium/large have realized the key to survive in this digital friendly world environment is through social media. It is crucial for all types of businesses to accept the online market and work for their brands' growth accordingly by creating awareness about their product and services through more interactive channel of media i.e. Influencer Marketing. Purpose: To examine the literature related to influencer marketing and different ways associated with Social Media Marketing on businesses. Further primary study has been conducted to study the detailed information about influencer marketing. The research is exploratory and descriptive in nature where a number of research papers, articles, magazines, newspaper editorials; books etc. have been reviewed in order to understand how influencer marketing works. The research paper has also studied different case studies of brands that got successful though influencer marketing on different social media platforms. Research Methodology: the data has been collected through structured questionnaires from respondents of Jaipur city. SPSS tools and techniques have been used to analyze the data.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Digital Marketing, Word of Mouth Marketing, Facebook Influencers

Introduction

Influencer Marketing is the preferred type of marketing accepted widely by the online users through all age groups. It is a type of marketing that uses influencers from social media to foster a brand to a larger market and help brands reach to its target audiences by getting recognition. Influencers are basically users on social media platforms who create a self concept for endorsing a particular product or service or an idea. Influencers are most popular on Instagram followed by YouTube and Facebook. They work on storytelling approach to make connections rather than the age old scripted Ad approach. They connect with people though various modes on social media like IGTV'S, reviews, live sessions, reels, pictures, and posts. This Word of Mouth marketing strategy of connecting with more than 200 million general users of India is the most creative and eye catching form of digital marketing. By being the most loved influencer on internet, they gain popularity by gaining the followers. The more people love the content created by influencer, the more they follow them. There are various agencies that help businesses connect with its best matched required influencer according to the need of the brand. Some agencies to name are Ainfluencer, Plixxo, OPA, Influencer.in, Pulpkey, Winkl.

There are five types of influencers on Instagram (Information Marketing Hub):

1. Nano influencers: They are genuine and have good engagement rates with their followers. They have 1000-10,000 followers and are budget friendly to small and medium scale businesses to promote their products.

2. Micro Influencers: These types of influencers have great number of followers and are specialized in their particular field of marketing and with their follower engagement too. They have 10k-100k followers.

3.   Macro Influencers: These types of influencers are more professional and drive 5% to 20% engagement per post, they can help a brand reach a greater audience and boost brand recognition. They are termed as Social Media Stars who have gained popularity through their hard work and became popular by being the best bloggers in their specialized area. They have 100k-1M followers.

4.   Mega Influencers: these are basically celebrity influencers, politicians, Sportsmen, famous artists. The brands having big budget can surely connect with them. They have more than 1million followers. They are already successful brand names in their own self and have highest reach among followers due to their fan following.

"Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another." ~ George Eliot

This phrase rightly describes how a true influencer can impact millions of people worldwide. According to Influencing Socially article (TOI March 2022) ,a research has proven that women are little more active and alert on social media platforms than men. Social media has opened many doors with not just connecting with family or friends but also gathering knowledge, reaching to a greater audience and influencing people through different parts of the world. In the beginning of digitalization, YouTube was the only platform where one could watch or listen to music, movies, trailers, documentaries, biographies etc., but now it is a way of creating content through videos. Micro influencers are leading out of all the other influencers by making relevance with the user's thoughts (Chopra A et al. 2020). People all around the world have also left their full-time jobs and became full time You Tubers/Instagram/Facebook content creators by sharing their particular real life experiences and knowledge.

Leading social media platforms for influencer marketing across India in 2021
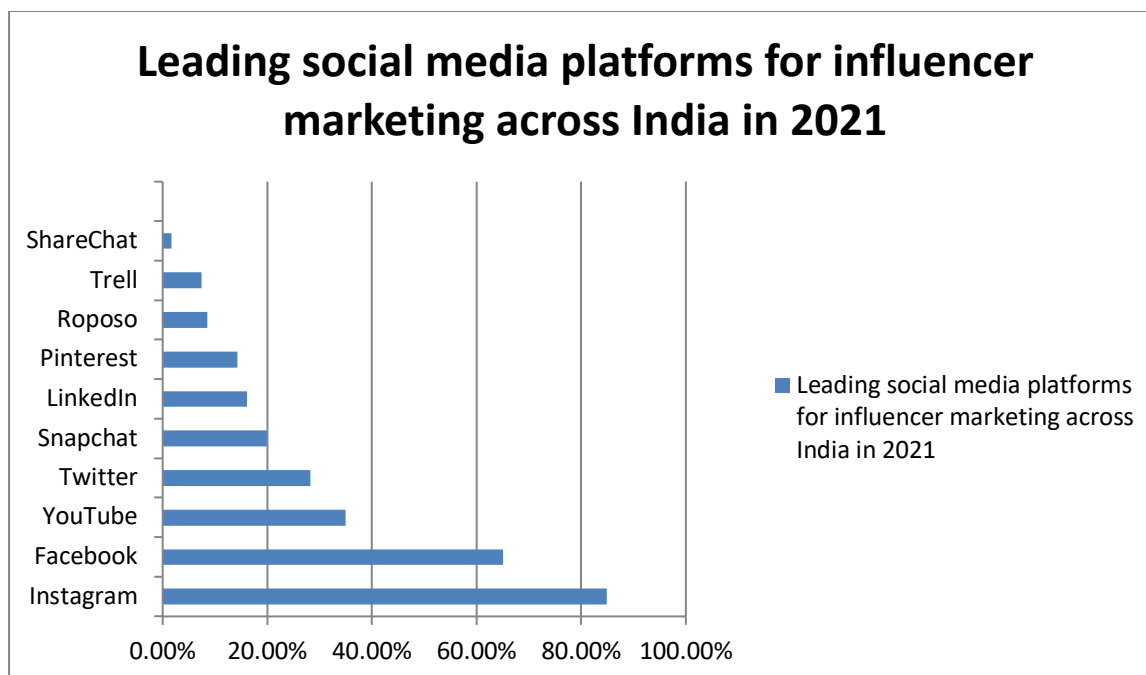
(Source: Statista.com)

This statistic clearly shows how Instagram is ruling the platform among for marketing product and services followed by Facebook and YouTube. It can be noted that with the growth in digitalization, businesses have an easy way of understanding and engaging with the online customer group. Instagram provides more opportunities for male as well as female influencers which help to increase the businesses ROI(return on investment), sales, brand recall, brand recognition and many more. Facebook has the second highest vote for influencer marketing, it allows businesses to sell products in bulk, sell and resell options are available too. Shopping and payments made easy through these social media platforms. YouTube gave rise to n number of small entrepreneurs who wanted to be bloggers and worked for themselves. Recipes, unboxing products, travel tips, learning /education, car reviews, beauty /fashion tips etc. were some of the leading areas where bloggers worked. Long lost recipes could even be found on YouTube, people made videos on everything and anything by sharing their knowledge.

D2C Marketing: D2C Marketing is the new hub where there are no middlemen in the process of making and selling of products. It's a business to consumer marketing wherein a seller collaborated with an influencer' in order to sell its products to the users; it directly connects users with the company website where a person can purchase products through them. Consumer Engagement plays an important parameter towards getting maximum views on the posts on social media platform (Leung F et al2022). It's a boost for small or medium scale enterprises to sell through D2C marketing by deducting the hustle of selling through middlemen. Influencer marketing helps D2C marketing by building its brand. Businesses should study various factors before indulging in D2c marketing:

1. Choosing the right social media platforms

2. Deciding the budget

3. Analysing various influencers and reaching out to the best suitable

4. Choosing the right influencer campaigns

"A trusted referral is the holy grail of advertising "~ Mark Zuckerberg

Literature Review:

Qutteina Y et al(2021) explained social media has positive association of online food exposure with eating behaviours, attitude and perception, food health choices among adolescents in Flanders, Belgium. Food marketing on various social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram induces and persuades unhealthy eating habits among adolescents due to their perceived notions. This study also revealed that adolescent consumption behavior pattern is clearly affected by the credence of what others eat through social media. Social media has the power to persuade others by showcasing the glamorous lifestyle of other users/celebrities.

Bend D et al (2022) research was done to collect expertise reviews on adolescent dietary habits of food products through social media. There is a positive relationship between SMFM (social media food marketing) and adolescents eating habits. Due to this there is more healthy food marketing rather than junk food marketing. Adolescents at that age are connected emotionally and elicit high positive emotions and wants towards particular brands/products and thus increase in consumption. This age group is highly active on social media and with lack of knowledge; they get highly motivated by other influential factors through online users. This even leads to obesity and non-communicable diseases which affects in the overall psychological and physiological problems in a child's life. The adolescents of this age might think that they are tech savvy but they lack the cognitive skills required to differentiate between a true influencer and a money making influencer. Thus, they lack the experience required to judge a particular life situation and, in the end, taking wrong paths by getting persuaded by others.

F Acikgoz, S Burnaz (2021) research was conducted in order to get a clear understanding of attitude of influencer marketing through various influencers on YouTube. Sponsored content of influencers was the most influential way of you tubers after getting successful in their particular field. The three most important factors associated with sponsored content were entertainment, in formativeness and advertising celebrities. The research laid emphasis on investing a business's money in sponsored content on you tube as it brings a positive attitude among You Tubers for making collaborations. Businesses can use video on their marketing strategy to gain popularity and attention. AVM (advertising value model) is studied in this paper for understanding the actual worth of advertising on users on online platforms.

 Khan M et al(2021) explains how various Influencer marketing strategies affects the purchase behaviour of consumers through pilot study of 20 respondents questionnaire. It even discussed the positive as well as negative effect of influencers on buying behaviour.

Thakker S,Pabalkar V (2021) have stated in their research that influencer marketing gives maximum returns on investment getting 11 times more returns than investment. The buying behaviour of baby boomers and millennial through influencer marketing is collected through questionnaire survey. The influencers have strong bond with their followers who follow them on social media platforms which in return increase the chances of buying more through social media.

According to this research DK Thilina 2021 has used two theories namely theory of reasoned action and Information of Adoption Model Consumer Behaviour. The study observed a correlation between social media influencer's credibility and purchase behaviour. The research was subjected to Columbia district which can vary if the area of the population changes.

"The best marketers are always creating relationships with Customers, brands, and other marketers" ~ Kurt Uhlir

A success story of SUGAR Cosmetics has greatly emphasized on influencers of Instagram and YouTube in its beginning days of launch. It created Social media as its first priority marketing campaigns has a net worth of $8 million at present. During the years when big cosmetic brands like Lakme', L'Oreal and Mac were the king in the Indian luxury cosmetic brand market, SUGAR came up with the idea proving cosmetic at affordable and budget friendly prices. The company also aims at working on making products which will be suitable most on Indian skin. Social media marketing strategies and e commerce were beneficial in increasing sales of SUGAR. Though Covid took an ugly turn in the survival of Sugar but it soon came up with more ideas of engaging itself on the social media platforms. The CEO of SUGAR cosmetics (Vineeta Singh) and is also among the top 100 influential women in the world. The company even has 75% of the staff as women.

A case study on Zomato (Prismetric) showcased the encouraging posts on Social media memes created by them which got successful over the years. Food bloggers and micro influencers are gaining popularity in this field as people love the kind of geniuses they show while making a video for a particular food/restaurant. They share live experiences which builds trust among followers for trying or not that food. Food is something which loves word of mouth marketing because people get influenced the most when they particular believe and trust an influencer for their reviews.

Tata power's marketing strategy (SocialSamosa) is a well-known example of how you got to engage with users on social media. It used platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram for creating a marketing buzz for its various power products which were not only smart but also green and sustainable solutions for the global economy." I have the power "was the powerful campaign used in contests, hash tags, quizzes, reels by influencers to choose sustainable products by Tata and save the economy globally.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the role of influencer marketing as a new way of D2C marketing.
- To identify the perception of customers towards influencers of Facebook.
- To identify the purchase intentions affected by influencers of Facebook.

Hypothesis of the study:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in perception of customers towards Facebook Influencers on the basis of gender.

Ha_1: There is a significant difference in perception of customers towards Facebook Influencers on the basis of gender.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in purchase intention through Facebook Influencers.

Ha_2: There is a significant difference in purchase intention through Facebook Influencers.

Research Methodology:

The research conducted is descriptive and exploratory in nature. Primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire from a sample of 104 respondents belonging to the age group 18years-29years residing in Jaipur city. Data is collected from various secondary sources like research papers, articles, magazines, newspaper's editorial, case studies and books. Sampling technique used in this study is convenience sampling method. The sample collection was done on Facebook users as Facebook came into existence in 2004 and is still the second most popular preferred social media application. SPSS tools and techniques have been used to analyze the data for evaluating our findings of primary data. There are 35% males and 69% female respondents out of 104 respondents.

Result and Analysis:

Cronbach's alpha has been used to measure the internal consistency of the variables. The analysis of the reliability of data proved satisfactory and Cronbach alpha values achieved between 0.62-0.81 across all variables. The first objective is to identify the perception of customers towards Facebook Influencers and to attain this objective the respondents were asked to answer on three parameters i.e Physically Attractive (Farraj O et al 2021), Informative and Trending (Kadam N et al 2021). Independent Sample T test has been conducted to analyse the data as shown in Table 1. Out of the three parameters we can conclude that perception in association with physically attractiveness of Facebook Influencer, the null hypothesis is rejected. The Levene's test for equal variances, tests the homogeneity assumption shows the significance value < 0.05 and the p is $.043 < 0.05$, so null hypothesis is rejected and we can conclude that there is a significant difference in male and female perception with context to

Facebook influencers found physically attractive. The level of significance for the rest two parameters is greater than .05 hence, we fail to reject the null hypotheses.

Table 1: Independent samples T-Test output for perception towards Influencers of Facebook among male and female respondents

Independent Sample Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
Physically Attractive	Equal variances assumed	4.180	.043	2.069	102	.041	.55238	.26702	.02275	1.08201
	Equal variances not assumed			2.153	76.28	.034	.55238	.25654	.04147	1.06329
Informative	Equal variances assumed	.879	.351	.170	102	.865	.04389	.25796	-.46777	.55555

		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			.165	63.27	.869	.04389	.26567	-.48695	.57474
Trending	Equal variances assumed	3.101	.081	.774	102	.441	.21077	.27220	-.32915	.75068
	Equal variances not assumed			.732	58.97	.467	.21077	.28808	-.36569	.78723

(Source: Primary data analysis through Spss)

Table 2: Independent samples T-Test output for Facebook Influencers affecting intention to purchase products

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper

Affects intention to purchase	Equal variances assumed	.112	.738	1.385	102	.169	.40414	.29185	-.17477	.98302
	Equal variances not assumed			1.404	71.047	.165	.40414	.28784	-.16979	.97807

(Source: Primary data analysis through SPSS)

The second objective which is Facebook Influencers affecting the purchase intentions is tested by checking statistically with independent sample t test. The Levene's test for equal variance, tests the homogeneity assumption shows the significance value >0.05. Hence, we failed to reject the null hypothesis, and we can conclude that there is no significant difference in the purchase intention through Facebook Influencers on the basis of male and female.

Conclusion: Influencer marketing in a digital world has become an effective way of direct to consumer marketing in which online users get an access to variety of options like customer participation, expressing interest, giving feedback. Though our research proves no significant association of male and female respondents towards purchases made through influencers of Facebook but the growing market of influencers allows more research on how businesses can benefit from them and get higher return on investments. As influencer marketing targets all age groups, but future research can be conducted on middle age group as this age group spends most of their time on social media platforms and have the power to persuade each other through it. This research also allows future research to be conducted on the challenges faced by influencers on social media platforms because no matter how beautiful content influencers

create, even they share thorns in the making. In this global world, influencers put their private lives in public which puts a threat to their living in long run. Overall this research paper proves that influencer marketing can be a new and effective tool for every business by having a positive impact on affecting the intention to make purchases through them.

References

Acikgoz F.,Burnaz S., (2021) The influence of 'influencer marketing' on YouTube influencers. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising* 15(2):201-219 DOI:10.1504/IJIMA.2021.114331

Chopra, A., Avhad V., Jaju, S., (2020) Influencer Marketing: An Exploratory Study to Identify Antecedents of Consumer Behavior of Millennial. *Business Perspectives and Research* 9(1), 1-15: DOI: 10.1177/2278533720923486

D. L. M. van der Bend, Jakstas T., Kleef E V., Shrewsbury A. V., and Bucher T., (2022) Adolescents' exposure to and evaluation of food promotions on social media: a multi-method approach. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 19(1), 19-74, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-022-01310-3

Farraj O., Alalwan, A., Obeidat Z., Baabdullah A., Aldmour, Haddad S.,(2021) Examining the impact of influencers' credibility dimensions: attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on the purchase intention in the aesthetic dermatology industry. *Review of International Business and Strategy* DOI:10.1108/RIBS-07-2020-0089

Kadam, N., Deshmukh, A., Kadam R.,(2021) A STUDY ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' ENDORSEMENTS ON THE BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF GEN Z, FOR LIFESTYLE AND ELECTRONICS PRODUCT CATEGORY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PUNE CITY. *Parikalpana - KIIT Journal of Management*, 17(1),218-227; DoI: 10.23862/kiit-parikalpana/2021/v17/i1/209032

Khan, R.M.,Iqbal, M.,Lodhi A.,(2021). Influencer Marketing on Instagram: Effects of Promotional Posts on Purchasing Behavior of Consumers. *Journal of Political Studies* 28(1);119–132 . http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/pols/pdf-files/10-v28_1_2021.pdf

Leung, F., Gu,F.,Flora, Zhang,Z.,J, Palmatier,R.,(2022). Influencer Marketing Effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing*,86(5), 1-23, DOI:10.1177/00222429221102889

Thakker, S.,Pabalkar, V., (2021). A study on the impact of Influencer Marketing on the buying behavior of consumers across different generations. *International Journal of Modern Agriculture,*10(2), 453-464, http://www.modern-journals.com/index.php/ijma/article/view/767/663

Thilina D.K.,(2021) Conceptual Review of Social Influencer Marketing on Purchase Intention; Dynamics in Fashion Retail Industry. *Sri Lanka Journal of Marketing*, 25-52 DOI: 10.4038/sljmuok.v7i0.48

 Qutteina Y.,, Hallez L., Mennes n., Backer de c., Smits T (2019). What Do Adolescents See on Social Media? A Diary Study of Food Marketing Images on Social Media. *Frontiers in Psychology*, (10) DOI:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02637 df

Weblinks:

https://www.statista.com/statistics/1241426/india-social-media-influencer-market-by-most-active-platform/

https://theceostory.in/success-story/success-story-of-sugar-cosmetics/

https://www.prismetric.com/zomato-digital-marketing-strategy/

https://www.socialsamosa.com/2020/03/inside-tata-power-social-media-strategy-i-have-the-power-campaign/

https://www.influglue.com/blog/adidass-success-story-of-influencer-marketing-its-time-for-other-brands-to-learn

https://www.scoopwhoop.com/entertainment/rich-indian-instagram-influencers/

https://starngage.com/influencer-marketing-india/

https://www.indiatoday.in/amp/technology/news/story/indian-social-media-influencers-saw-46-percent-spike-in-advertising-during-covid-1922405-2022-03-09

https://retail.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/over-90-consumers-are-looking-to-digitally-enhance-their-shopping-survey/88165991

https://shanebarker.com/blog/influencer-marketing-future-marketing/

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/public-health-nutrition/article/food-for-teens-how-social-media-is-associated-with-adolescent-eating-outcomes/A345D436515DB1588F596358ECF890F1

https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0195666321005985?token=BC988BC64ED215CE829BF4607003DDD26D72182880B3E7A29630A28743D5EE9F7FACD3473AF272DECD7D768386C23579&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20220430044116