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FROM LIKES TO BUYS: THE ROLE OF INFLUENCERS IN SHAPING CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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Abstract

Although influencer marketing has grown to be a crucial part of modern marketing techniques, research on how it affects consumer purchasing decisions is still ongoing. With a focus on emotional appeal, social influence, and brand loyalty, this study attempts to investigate the fundamental processes by which influencer marketing affects consumer behavior. In order to determine the emotional resonance and perceived authenticity of influencer messages, this study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to examine consumer reactions to influencer endorsements across a range of product categories. Research indicates that when influencers are seen as relatable, genuine, and consistent with the brand's ideals, consumers are more likely to make a purchase. The study also looks at how customer trust and decision-making are influenced by influencer-brand congruence. By providing insights for marketers looking to leverage influencer relationships' potential to increase brand preference and customer loyalty, this article advances the theoretical knowledge of consumer engagement in the digital age.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, consumer, consumer behavior, brand, buying decision, digital age.

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media platforms in recent years has brought about a dramatic change in how companies communicate with their customers. One of the most impactful and swiftly expanding marketing approaches is influencer marketing, which utilizes the fame and trustworthiness of individuals on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter to endorse products and services. Influencers act as a bridge between brands and prospective consumers. They are people who have built a loyal following and cultivate trust in their online communities. Influencers now play a more significant role in influencing customer purchasing decisions than just producing content, as digital natives increasingly rely on social media for entertainment, lifestyle inspiration, and product suggestions. The core idea behind influencer marketing is that, in

contrast to traditional forms of promotion, customers are more likely to believe recommendations from people they perceive to be sincere, relevant, and reliable. Customers perceive influencer endorsements as sincere testimonies rather than marketing gimmicks since they seem more natural and intimate than traditional commercials. This change is especially noticeable among younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z, who are more likely to be influenced by the views and actions of online celebrities in addition to being more active on social media. Social influence is now more important than ever in the dynamics of consumer decision-making, which are changing as a result. Nevertheless, even with the extensive use of influencer marketing, little is known about the mechanisms by which influencers impact consumer purchasing decisions. Even though a number of studies have looked into how



influencer marketing generally affects brand awareness and engagement, there is a noticeable lack of research on how particular elements—like followers' emotional bonds, perceived authenticity of influencers, and brand congruence—affect actual purchase decisions. Furthermore, not enough research has been done on the connection between influencer traits like relatability, credibility, and trustworthiness and customer loyalty. By investigating the social and psychological elements that motivate customers to follow influencer recommendations, this study seeks to close this gap. It specifically aims to respond to the following research inquiries: **Which gender is more affected by influential marketing? Which kind of products or services are more likely to consider buying based on influencer recommendations? Who will influence customer most of the times? What types of content do you prefer from influencers? Which factors are important to purchase the products? What did you trust in case of influencer marketing?**

To answer these questions, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative surveys to assess consumer attitudes and qualitative interviews to gain deeper insights into the emotional and cognitive processes that underpin buying decisions. By examining the impact of influencer marketing across various consumer segments and product categories, this research aims to contribute to a deeper.

2. Literature Review

• What is influencer marketing?

Influence marketing involves creating and disseminating advertising messages via influential individuals and opinion leaders, rather than directly from the brand. These influencers lead by example, rather than solely relying on word of mouth to persuade potential customers to purchase the product. (Referral Rock Learn, 2020)

Influencer Marketing represents a blend of traditional and contemporary marketing

strategies. It incorporates the concept of celebrity endorsements within a modern, content-focused marketing initiative. The key distinction in influencer marketing lies in the collaborative nature of the campaigns, which involve partnerships between brands and influencers. (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019)

Influencer marketing is the process by which a company partners with an internet influencer to promote one of its goods or services. Some influencer marketing partnerships are less concrete than that; in these cases, brands only collaborate with influencers to increase brand awareness. (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019)

Brands are expected to invest billions of dollars in influencer marketing over the next several years. This marketing strategy, which is presently being used on YouTube and Instagram with remarkable effectiveness, is a tectonic change for digital advertising's future rather than a passing trend. It's the future, and company executives have an obligation to stay up to date. The obstacles faced by current marketing professionals who want to use influencer marketing for their brands are equally modern. such include identifying the best candidates, monitoring and evaluating outcomes, and calculating the degree to which this new marketing opportunity fits into the larger plan. The digital era's field guide is Influencer Marketing for Brands. (Levin, 2020)

According to Levin, the influencer marketing trend was already well-liked before a pandemic compelled more companies to use this marketing strategy. Although it already dominated YouTube and Instagram, this paper will concentrate on how it expanded to include Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and other sites. Influencers are essential to social media marketing because they serve as conduits for awareness, inspiration, and discovery. The notion of having distinct social, influencer, and content strategies is no longer relevant. Influencer marketing is an integral and essential component of a comprehensive marketing plan, not just a "fad."(Makropoulos, 2020)



Brands have certainly taken a gamble by moving away from traditional marketing methods to embrace influencer marketing. Over time, they have seen significant increases in sales, interest, visibility, feedback, and profits, which have led to the development of more robust influencer marketing strategies within the industry. The influence of influencer marketing on consumer behavior often revolves around the concept of trust. This is a recurring theme in discussions about influencer marketing, and for good reason. Consumers have become aware that advertisements can be misleading and that celebrities are often compensated to endorse products they may not genuinely support. In contrast, influencers tend to cultivate their followings based on their genuine passions and are more likely to promote products they have carefully evaluated, as losing their audience would be detrimental to their success. This authenticity is what fosters trust among their followers. (Cobain, 2020)

Ad blocking is another factor contributing to the rise in popularity of influencer marketing. People actually block advertisements because they prefer to hear from influencers. It is very clear from these patterns and data that user-generated content and influencer marketing mold consumer purchasing behavior and impact their purchases.

Micro influencers have power, but celebrities have reach. (Cobain, 2020)

Because influencer-generated marketing content is more genuine, trustworthy, well-presented, and appealing, it does have an impact on consumer behavior, as Cobain noted. In addition, influencers offer a shift in content that traditional marketing does not, which has an instantaneous effect on audiences and boosts their propensity to buy. Peer recommendations are often regarded as more reliable than claims made in brand advertisements, thus consumers are more likely to believe them. Social media influencers can have a significant impact in this regard. The greatest voices in any group have significant

influence over that first relationship, so if a product is approved within their circle, it instantly improves its reputation and associated link. (Barker, 2020)

Influencer marketing, a particular kind of social media marketing, has grown in popularity in recent years. Based on a comparison of information from the findings of international research studies and the quantitative online research study processed by authors, the scientific contribution aims to systematize knowledge regarding the position and roles of influencers as opinion leaders in the social media environment in order to identify their typology, influence factors, and the intensity of their impact on consumer decision making. The survey's results indicated that some products would benefit more from influencer marketing than others. Influencers will have the biggest influence on purchases of clothing, footwear, cosmetics, and—surprisingly—services. Although people mainly rely on other factors when purchasing electronics, jewelry, and food, influencer marketing may also have an impact on them. (Stefan Zak, 2020)

Influencers also provide fresh and innovative ways to spread a brand's message, and they may be amusing. They are consuming information on individuals, goods, application techniques, and tips & tricks. Additionally, they adore the influencers who are introducing them to these products and information. Those influencers seem to reciprocate their love for them. In contrast to the one-way sales channel that agencies and brands were used to in the past, this is a partnership. (Kramer, 2019)

- **Influencer marketing and various social media platforms.**

A lot of Instagram users who follow influencers don't mind being promoted or influenced. Every Instagram user has the freedom to follow and unfollow anybody they choose. Individuals are aware that sponsored posts are associated with certain individuals they wish to follow, as clicking the "follow" button is a personal



decision. A lot of individuals follow influencers because they find something appealing about them or their Instagram, or because they feel like they could relate to them. It is common for followers to enjoy the things being sold due to a shared identity. (Digg magazine, 2020)

Due to TikTok's long-standing, solid agreements with marketing agencies, which allowed brands nationwide to leverage TikTok influencer campaigns, the impact will also be felt by influencer marketing firms. With the rise of TikTok, marketers were switching from mega-influencers on YouTube and Instagram to micro-influencers on TikTok in both chartered and uncharted areas. (Mahal, 2020) Well-known micro-influencers, such as those on Instagram and Snapchat, are renowned for their high rates of engagement with niche audiences. On TikTok, influencers can leverage their following to incorporate branded messaging into popular issues and topics. (Working Influencer, 2019)

- **Impact of Influencer marketing on company sales.**

Twitter influencers increase the effectiveness of your current advertising campaigns. Our study found that participants who saw brand Tweets were 2.7 times more likely to make a purchase than those who did not. The increase in purchase intent more than doubled to 5.2x when participants were exposed to a campaign that included both brand and influencer Tweets. (Aka, 2016)

Influencer marketing, according to the majority of marketers, brings in higher-quality clients. This may be due to the fact that social media users are more likely to be wealthy and to suggest goods to friends and family. Facebook and blogs outperform YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter as the most successful platforms for influencer marketing. Facebook was cited by 25% as their most successful platform, while blogs were cited by 37%. (Foster, 2019)

Influencer marketing was identified by marketers as their fastest-growing online customer acquisition channel. Email and

organic search are too developed to offer the same yearly increase that influencer marketing currently does. Display advertising and affiliate marketing did not do well, receiving scores below 10%. One of the most significant online marketing platforms is rapidly emerging: influencer marketing. Marketers are getting high returns, and budgets are expanding quickly. Influencer marketing is bringing in actual money for the great majority of businesses. Budgets will continue to rise for the foreseeable future with results like these. (Foster, 2019)

It's crucial to remember that those "influenced consumers" come from a variety of age groups, and on average, 55% of consumers who found new brands, products, and services through vloggers, social media influencers, niche bloggers, and celebrity endorsers posted a product review within the previous month. These figures are significant for firms looking for evaluations that provide legitimacy to their items and encourage purchases, and they are greater than the typical digital consumer behavior. (Kramer, 2019)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to analyze the efficacy of influencer marketing among students using research technique and methodical study in a field of knowledge that investigates facts and principles.

- **Research Design:** The study will examine how well-liked influencer marketing is among people and how effective it is. It will also cover the process for collecting the required data and how the data will be analyzed.
- **Area of Study:** The research is being conducted in Kangra.
- **Sample size:** Sample size quantifies the number of distinct samples used in a survey. A sample size of 100 respondents was employed to conduct the study.
- **Data Collection:** A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from 100 respondents. Secondary material for this research

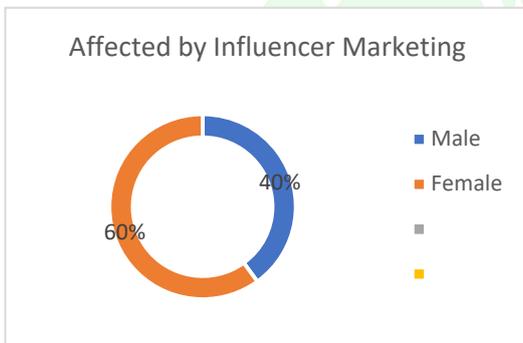


was also gathered from journals and the internet on similar subjects.

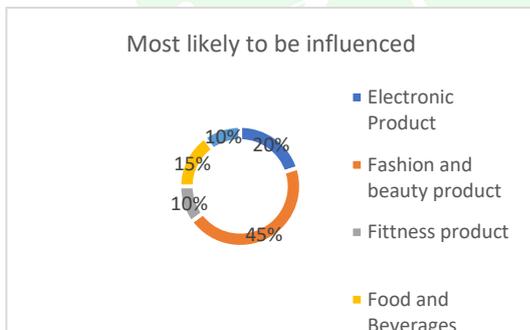
- **Sampling Technique:** The convenience sampling approach is the sampling strategy employed for this project. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that allows data to be collected from study participants who are available.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

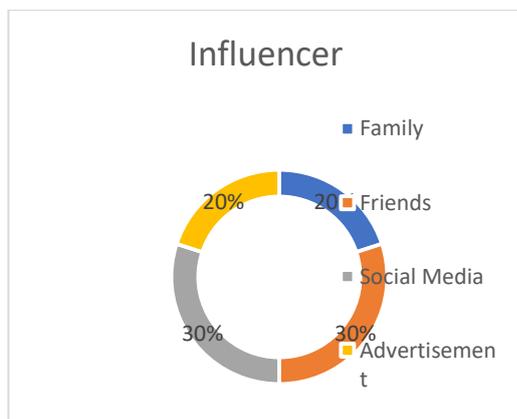
1. Which gender is more affected by influential marketing?



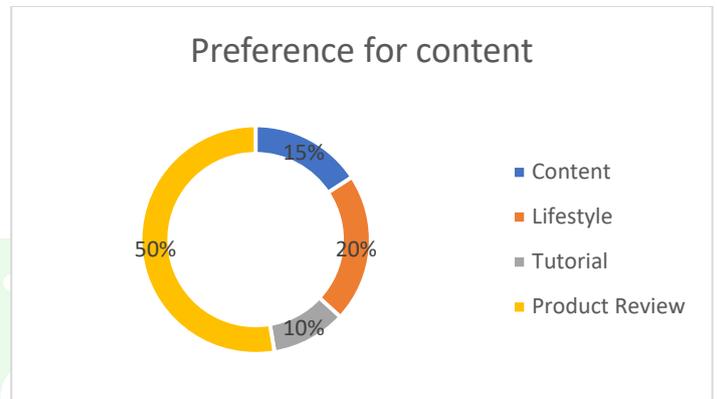
2. Which kind of products or services are more likely to consider buying based on influencer recommendations?



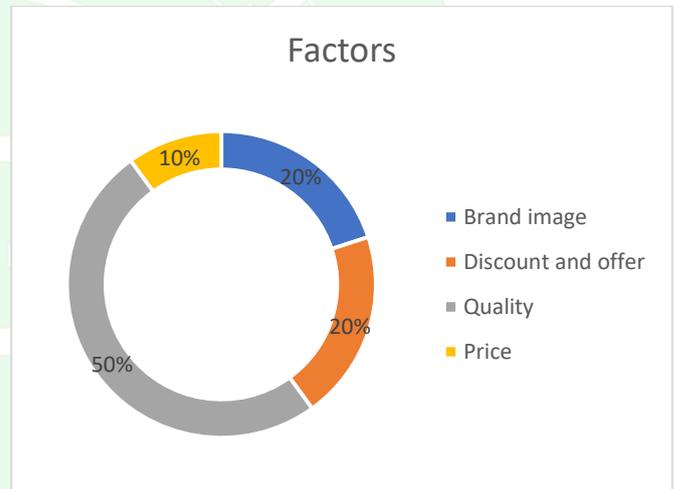
3. Who will influence you most of the times?



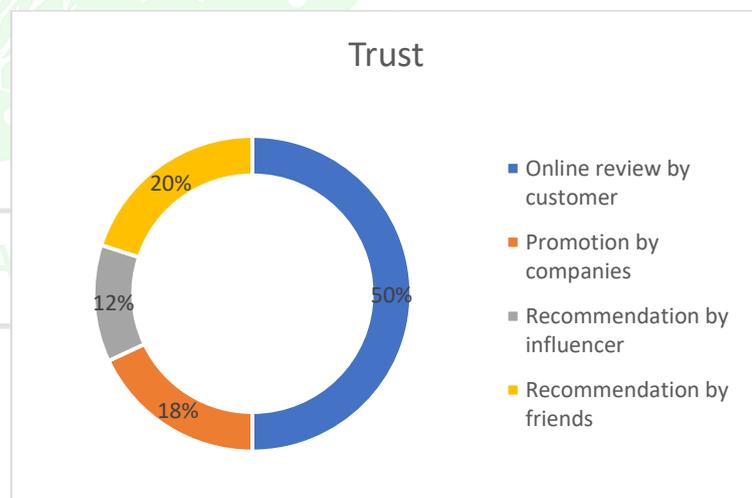
4. What types of content do you prefer from influencers?



5. Which factors are important to purchase the products?



6. What did you trust in case of influencer marketing?



5. Discussion and Recommendations

- The respondents to the survey are between the ages of 18 and 25. Because they frequently engage with influencers



within their buyer ecosystem, the majority of female respondents possess extensive knowledge about influencer marketing. As a result, corporate entities will concentrate on using influencer marketing to advertise goods that are especially meant for women.

- ii. Customers frequently buy cosmetics and fashion items. They thoroughly considered the suggestions and viewpoints expressed by others inside during the purchasing process. Their powerful network. In order to convince consumers to buy their items, businesses must produce and market high-quality goods.
- iii. Teenagers' connections with their peers and social media have a big impact on the decisions they make about what to buy. The contemporary generations are judging their transactions in a rapid decision. Young people are sharing information every day and minute of every minute due to social media's explosive growth. As a result, companies must use social media platforms to their advantage by regularly updating their customers about the goods and services they offer.
- iv. The lives of the influencers and the product reviews they offer have a significant impact on young people's purchasing decisions. Teenagers have access to a significant amount of information thanks to social media.
- v. When making their purchasing decisions, the teenagers gave considerable weight to the product's quality in addition to the benefits of influencer marketing. Because social networking and e-commerce websites are now available, they will look at the authority figures' recommendations as well as the caliber of the content connected to the website. As a result, companies must place equal emphasis

on expertise and the delivery of high-quality products.

- vi. Adolescents are being greatly influenced by recommendations from peers and internet reviews. For this reason, companies encourage their clients to review and tweet about the goods they have bought.

6. Conclusion

Examining the impact of influencer marketing on youth is the aim of this study. The study was conducted with the specific goal of examining and evaluating the influence that social media influencers have on young people's purchasing behavior in Hyderabad city. The study's conclusions indicate that social media influencers have a big impact on how consumers behave in the online world, especially when they are about to make a purchase. Advertising to consumers was a one-sided affair before social media influencers emerged. Advertisements in print, on billboards, on radio, and on television were the only ways for consumers to get familiar with a product before social media. Social media has made it possible for customers to interact with products. When a trusted source, like a favorite influencer, uses a product, consumers can feel as though they are making a better-informed choice when they are making a buy. The study's conclusions make it abundantly evident that social media influencer marketing has improved how companies interact with their clientele. As anticipated, the ability of social media influencer marketing to facilitate bidirectional contact between influencers and customers is a key factor in its success.

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