



Effect Of Online (Social) Media Influencers On Consumer Purchase Intent: A Young Generation Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The growing use of online (social) media and mobile technologies made it easy for people to generate content and share details about their personal lives online. This has created an environment that has contributed to the rise of online (social) media influencers, a community of operators who attained a level of notoriety similar to that of celebrities in the online world. With the decreasing efficacy of conventional advertising strategies, more professionals have realised in recent years the importance of online (social) media influencers in promoting awareness of brand and sparking buyer dialogues (Lou et. al.,2021). In recent times, a increasing number of professionals acknowledged the significance of online (social) media influencers in augmenting brand recognition and adopting consumer dialogues, mainly considering their diminished efficacy of conventional marketing strategies (Baker 2021)

Introduction

According to most marketers, Instagram is the utmost significant online (social) media platform around 89% for influencers & influencer marketing, with YouTube coming in second with 70% and Facebook in third place with 45%, with Twitter coming in around 33%. LinkedIn

nearby to 19% and Pinterest is 15% are examples (Bailis, 2021). On different digital platforms, online (social) media influencers can generate content in a variation of formats, like photographs, quick (reels/Short) videos, and vlogs. They can also confer a variety of themes, from day to day life to expert advice, and certainly include marketing content in the posts. (Lou et. al.,2021).

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In India, Instagram may be one of the maximum used online (social) media platform as per 2023 media statistics report, with around 74.70% of the nation's internet users using it. There are 516.92 million active users of Instagram in India. A significant portion of the user base of Instagram is made up of teenagers in particular. With 492.70 million active users, Facebook is the next greatest visited platform in the India, around 71.20% of online users are members on the online (social) media site. A few other well-known social media platforms in India are Moj (29.50% penetration), a community for short videos indigenous to the country, Pinterest (29% penetration), LinkedIn (35.7%), and Twitter (42.90% penetration). (Social Media Statistic, 2023)

Social Media

Online (Social) media platforms are amongst the greatest widespread data (information) sources in the world. Many people have registered accounts on the social networking sites as it is low-priced, ease to access, simpler and more effective to blowout information (data). A greater search for information (data) is naturally the overall response to important events, it may be natural calamities, viruses, celebs & sport events, etc. (González-Padilla et.al, 2020)

Around 70% of online grown-ups nearly use a social networking platform for many reasons, as the acceptance of online (social) media sites has been increasing for last few years. Users may have many accounts on multiple social networking platforms, and the check of these accounts on regular basis are done by the users throughout a day (Wang et.al, 2015).

Even though not every social media platform is made expressly to encourage user interaction, this is perhaps one of the most obvious things that all social media platforms have in general. These online (social) media platforms, also called as online communities, are important because people normally do not differentiate between actual and virtual friends as long as they get support and act as a part of a group of individuals who share their interests. By sharing significant life milestones via status updates, pictures, and other media, the SM fosters stronger ties while also enhancing their in-person interactions (Aichner et.al.,2021).

Young people have a difficult time presenting themselves in their peer groups. When they speak up for themselves and receive support from their peers, their self-esteem increases. Social media plays a crucial role in their ability to sustain relationships in their peer groups. Social media has become an important tool for maintaining personal networks, which is why the sociology of information has focused so much on social media. (Choi, 2015)

Influential Media

Mass media is considered to be an influential media among youngsters. The mass media is a distinctive aspect of contemporary society; as social interactions and actions have grown more complex and large-scale, technological advancements have kept pace, personal income and living standards have increased, and certain conventional forms of authority and control have begun to decrease, all of these trends have coincided with the growth of the mass media. It is a most basic & contentious form of the fact that everybody with all different kind of mass media networks can have an effect on a viewer's follower's attitude, views, perceptions of social communities. Leading theorists have frequently discussed the impact of the media on the public and its traditional framework. The mass media must have an effect; nevertheless it does so in a variation of elusive ways. (Deragon, 2008)

The media is a major player in the formation of public opinion. Mass media provide an interpretation of events rather than just facts and information, giving people a means of understanding their significance. Media determines the proportional priority assigned to different topics through its ability to portray reality from its own perspective—a process known as “agenda-setting. Usually summarised in the remark “Maybe the media doesn't tell you what to think, but what to think about,” is the agenda-setting theory. Opinions, attitudes, and behaviours of mass media users are considerably moulded by their coverage to and usage of the media. Mass media coverage is the regularity of communications or media content that public are open to and the range to which they recollect that knowledge. The mass media is a important source of data that blowouts knowledge and guide people, which affects

people's beliefs and actions. It helps public to communicate with each other and gives them vision into a variety of global, societal, and environmental matters. It is crucial for a check into the variables that affect how the public views news from the media and relationship of variables with outlooks towards news from the mass media and selfless behaviour. Attitudes and perceptions affect people's behaviour (Liao, 2023)

Social Influencer

Influencer celebrities are individuals who have built up a sizable fan base and are recognised as reliable tastemakers in one or more sectors. Customers tend to identify more with these famous people and emulate them more than old-fashioned celebs since they are observed as more approachable as well as honest. (Johnson et al., 2022)

Scholars have recently drawn attention to the importance of conducting more research in the field of influencers and influencer marketing (Taylor, 2020). Additionally, industry research indicates that influencer marketing is a significant and expanding phenomena.

The reason influencers are perceived as so attractive in the first place is because they look like their audiences. They're usually perceived as "the boy or girl next door," which makes it easy to relate to them. But when it comes to the appeal of influencers, there are undoubtedly other elements at effect. Youngster may be affected by social media influencers in both positive and harmful ways. Influencers who smoke, drink, or even commit crimes can be a bad example for young people, but they can also inspire them to live healthier, more moral lives. Influencer content might also affect the materialism, mental health, and physical fulfilment of youngsters.

Because social media influencers are thought to have an effect on their audiences, third parties also use them for their own commercial ends. Take an example; influencers get paid from the brands for promoting their products in the content generated. Likewise, governments or non-governmental institutes look for the influencers to help promote socially or ecologically conscientious behaviour in youth. Despite the growing popularity of influencer marketing, little is known about the psychological mechanisms at play and the

reasons behind influencers' persuasiveness when it comes to minors, either theoretically or empirically.

Some social media stars belong to Generation Z and are themselves underage. As more large companies engage in sponsored partnerships, an increasing number of teenage and child influencers—along with their parents—are trying to make a profit. Important philosophical, ethical, and legal questions are brought up by this.

Consumer Behaviour

In their capacity as consumers of goods and services, the majority of people heavily utilise online (social) media and digital marketing to share experiences with others & to find out more information about the products they have used. As a result, this adapts to the marketers' basic shift by utilising digital marketing platforms more frequently. Approximately two thirds of global spending was predicted to go towards digital channel streaming of commercials. As a result, a lot more consumer marketing will be done in digital spaces in the prospect, mainly on online (social) media and mobile devices (Alghizzawi, 2019).

The rise of online (social) media has generated fresh avenues for searching and acquiring facts about the wide range of goods and services presented on the market. Customers may now swiftly and easily communicate with each other and debate brands thanks to it. Visitors are gradually in control and influence of consumer outlooks in digital settings, and it has an effect on offline belief also. Because marketers have slight control over the content, scheduling, or frequency of consumer virtual chats, online (social) media has empowered consumers (Voramontri et.al.,2019).

Purchase Intention

The potential to purchase a product combined with consumer interest is known as purchase intention (Doh et.al.,2009). These days, prospective customers are becoming wiser when it comes to constructing the decisions for their online reading. It is less important to know where the consumer is living or what they do;

everybody has access to the internet might reach over digital marketing. Social media platforms are among the many online tools used in marketing. Social media represents a shift in the media landscape, offering and distributing information to users (Erlangga,2021)

Young Generations Perspective

Young people utilise social media platforms in part to obtain social support from their peer groups. Since their profile pages define the user's appearance, they take a lot of effort to create. Extremely vulnerable to outside observers, the younger generation places a great importance on what other people think of their social media images. They consider themselves to be an object of admiration and a source of attention for others, hence this can be regarded as an imaginary audience behaviour. (Choi,2015)

Gen Z, or the generation born between 1997 and 2012, is a young age group that was raised up in an era when online (social) media, new generation phones, and the internet were ordinary. In addition, Gen Z—the largest generation in history—is rapidly establishing itself as a major force in the global economy. Millennials and Generation Z are not the same consumers that our parents and grandparents were. Millennials in particular are 25% more likely than any other generation to interact with brands through internet content. They want a relationship, and for this generation, that relationship is mainly virtual, with the businesses they trade with.

Not only is Gen Z distinct from previous contemporary generations due to the social system in which they were raised, but they also have different spending habits than other generations. Gen Z's views on consumption are frequently significantly different from other generations because of their experiences growing up primarily online and maturing distant during a pandemic. To a Morning Consult survey from 2022, around 38% of Gen Zers indicated they devote added time on online (social) media than that, with another 54% of them says their usage is at least four hours every day. Some social media applications are used extensively by users such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube. (Alves, 2023)

Objective RQ1

To find out young generations' interpretation of social media content

The most significant relationship for the younger generation is with their peer group; in this case, the collective soul—which has a tendency to take over the individual mind—matters. The younger generation uses social media to communicate more and more in an attempt to stay in touch with their peer groups after high school or college, which satisfies their need to blend in with the crowd. Due to institutional limitations present in universities and colleges, this social power could react differently (Choi,2015).

Compared to previous generations, Gen Z is significantly less brand loyal. Frequently the Content from online (social) media home pages assisted to Gen Z, for example Instagram has discover tab, YouTube has recommended page. A more accurate measure of success may be the visibility and interaction of individual posts rather than the total number of followers on a certain profile (Alves, 2023).

Younger readers will be drawn to postings and conversations that focus on people rather than goods and profits. firms who utilise social media marketing and video marketing to promote their products have a 30% higher chance of attracting the interest of Millennials and other younger generations. They also have distinct tastes in audiovisual content. They frequently have a preference for videos that highlight community service projects and events that they themselves can take part in. Put differently, people are searching social media for engagement and integrity.

Rather than only sharing material that promotes goods or services, consider making videos that showcase Matters' core beliefs and carefully choosing content from other influencers and artists that also reflects these values. These are the same kinds of articles that foster connections between Millennials and Generation Z, and they can facilitate connections between marketers and them as well (Fletcher,2022).

Objective RQ2

To examine effect of online (social) media influencers on purchase decision.

Emphasise users and influencers who have already posted about a product or service. Reshare their posts on the company’s social media accounts. This is similar to a contemporary testimonial, and younger buyers are likely to find authenticity and trustworthiness to this kind of content than in traditional marketing.

Research indicates that younger consumers have high standards for the social media presence of the brands they choose. They seek for pertinent information, a sense of being acknowledged, and significant interaction, support, and communication. But it will take constant work and unwavering dedication to live up to their expectations. Young audiences are dynamic and constantly changing. And in order to do that, marketers will need to continuously monitor their changing demands, especially through the

collection, evaluation, and application of data analytics (Fletcher,2022).

Today’s consumers have short attention spans, and an increasing number of screens and devices compete for their attention. As a result, marketers must work hard to stand out from the crowd. Since marketers now know that an emotional connection has a considerably higher likelihood of generating customer engagement, brand tales are growing in popularity. However many organizations have their own Insta webpage, sellers are learning that pleasing the influencers can conclude in customers feeling attached (associated) with the brand. The brands are now leveraging influencer well-defined as “everyday people” who control a significant follower base on online (social) media to communicate with audiences (Chopra et.al.,2020)

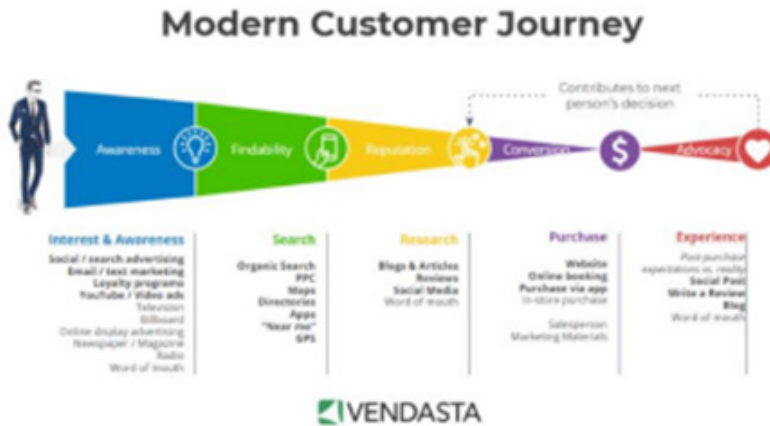


Fig. 1. Source: Search Engine Watch



Fig. 2. Source: Search Engine Watch

Customers on social media. In the past, after learning about a product and seeing several TV advertisements, consumers may go shopping the following week and ultimately purchase the item. This procedure now has a minute time limit (Barysevich,2020)

Online (Social) media operators who have good-sized, dedicated followers that have similar interests are popular as influencers. Followers are trusted and interested in influencer's opinion for them. Subject specialist are Micro-Influencers, they are specific to their content they want to deliver and are operational in convincing the targets. Organization who sells customised or specialised product for them it is a best way to reach out to their audience by taking help of influencers. It is more likely that Gen Z and Millennials will be impacted; nearly 84% of millennials, user created content from unknown content creators influences their purchasing intentions somewhat. (Barysevich, 2020)

Conclusion

Due to the rising significance of influencers and the widespread appeal of online (social) media influencers, a variety of well-known products and services (brands) have begun using these influencers to promote their products in an effort to persuade customers to act in certain behaviour. (e.g., establishing constructive brand outlooks and boosting buying a brand).

It is difficult to understand consumers mind set, cause of unpredictability in use of online (Social) media. It is complicated to know the component that helps consumers while making a purchase decision for a brand to which online (social) media influencers promotes. The reason for inconsistency in decision making of consumers over online (social) media is unsolved puzzle for many marketers. (Joshi et.al.,2023)

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