



CONSUMER RELIANCE IN INFLUENCER MARKETING

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Abstract: *In the traditional marketing world, the word-of-mouth marketing has proven to be a tremendously powerful tool in persuading and influencing the buyer's decision. It is because in the word-of-mouth marketing the recommendations or referrals made by the buyer's close associates such as family members, friends, colleagues or neighbors are greatly valued and relied upon. In the modern marketing world, there is an upsurge in the growth of number of internet and social media users and with the infiltration of social media into the lives of the internet users there is a major opportunity for social media marketing for the businesses worldwide. Thereby, the Influencer marketing has gained momentum and many companies and big brands have started adopting Influencer marketing as their major marketing strategy. The purpose of the study is to find whether or not do the consumers rely on the Influencer's recommendations in Influencer marketing and whether it influence their purchase decision or not. This is figured out by collecting primary data from 86 respondents through a survey containing structured questionnaire which were then analysed and concluded that a vast majority of the respondents believed that the Influencer marketing to be effective and that they are influenced by their product/service recommendation which ultimately assist them in making their purchase decision.*

Key Words: *Influencer marketing – rely – Influencers – Recommendation – purchase decision.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

An Influencer marketing is one where a company or brand choose a representative to promote their product or service through recommendations. These representatives are often persons who does not have a big reach in the traditional media channels such as television, radio or magazines, but has a large base of people following them on social media. Such representatives are called as Influencers as they can impact the frame of reference of their followers within their niche. In the digital era of marketing, many business houses are using Influencer marketing as their key marketing strategy for better market penetration.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the word reliance is defined as, “the state of depending on or trusting in something or someone”. Consumer reliance in Influencer marketing is anchoring the trust of the consumers on the referrals and recommendations of the influencer. With companies allocating more of their budget on influencer marketing by lowering the budget on traditional marketing featuring celebrities, it becomes vital to understand the consumer's perspective towards the Influencer marketing strategy adopted by the companies and its influence on their buying behavior. This study examines whether the consumers rely on the influencer's recommendations and does it influence their purchase decision.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

- Işoraitè M, *et al.* (2020) *Impact of influencers on purchasing decision.* The study has reported that people tend to trust the recommendations of those influencers who has more followers on their social media platform and it has also presented cases on how the opinions of the influencers be organised on their social networks and ways of being more influential.
- Gayathri AS, *et al.* (2019) *Consumers' Perception of the Credibility of Social Media Influencers and Its Impact on Purchase Intention.* It is revealed from the findings of the study that as the influencer marketing is rapidly growing, the businesses must increasingly collaborate with the influencers as they have evolved to be the brand ambassadors and are a principal factor in influencing the purchase intentions of the consumers.
- Lim XJ, *et al.* (2017) *The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude.* The study points out that there exists an insignificant relationship of source credibility with attitude and purchase intention of the social media influencers. It further states that the influencers because of their lack of expert knowledge on the product that they endorse, the actual product does not meet their claims and so their credibility in the product recommendation is hampered.



3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

This study aims to better understand the perspective of consumers on the Influencer marketing by understanding the consumer’s reliance on the Influencer marketing and its influence on the Purchase decision of intended buyers.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To know whether consumers rely on Influencer’s recommendations or not
- To identify whether influencer recommendation is useful and effective to consumers
- To understand to what extent do the consumer’s purchase decision is influenced by their recommendations
- To identify how (through what platform) do the consumers access their influencers
- To identify for which industry do the consumers seek their recommendations often

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

To attain the objective of the study, Primary data was collected from 86 respondents through structured survey questionnaire and were analysed, among them 14 participants responded that they do not follow any Influencer on social media and so their indicators has not been used for further analysis. Therefore, the research is carried out by utilising the response of 72 participants. The questionnaire contained two parts, the first part was to collect the respondent’s demographic factors and the second part was to meet the objectives of the study which contained a total of 7 questions. The first 5 questions were framed in the pattern of dichotomous question and the last 2 questions were framed in the pattern of multiple-choice question.

Table: 1 - Demographic Profile of Respondents

Attribute	Variance	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	30	41.67%
	Female	42	58.33%
Age	18 - 25	16	22.22%
	26 - 35	28	38.89%
	36 - 45	21	29.17%
	46 - 55	5	6.94%
	56 and above	2	2.78%
Marital status	Unmarried	29	40.28%
	Married	43	59.72%
Occupation	Student	18	25.00%
	Employed	36	50.00%
	Self - Employed	3	4.17%
	Professional	5	6.94%
	Home - Maker	10	13.89%

Source: Prepared by author

INTERPRETATION:

The above table depicts the demographic profile of the respondents; 58.33% were females and 41.67% were males; The majority of the respondents belonged to the young and middle – aged group with 38.89% between the age group of 26 years to 35 years and 29.17% between the age group of 36 to 45 years; 59.72 % of the respondents were married and 40.28% were unmarried; and with regard to their occupation 50% of the participants were employed.

Table: 2 - Survey Indicators

Questions	Yes	No
1. Do you follow any influencer in social media	72	14



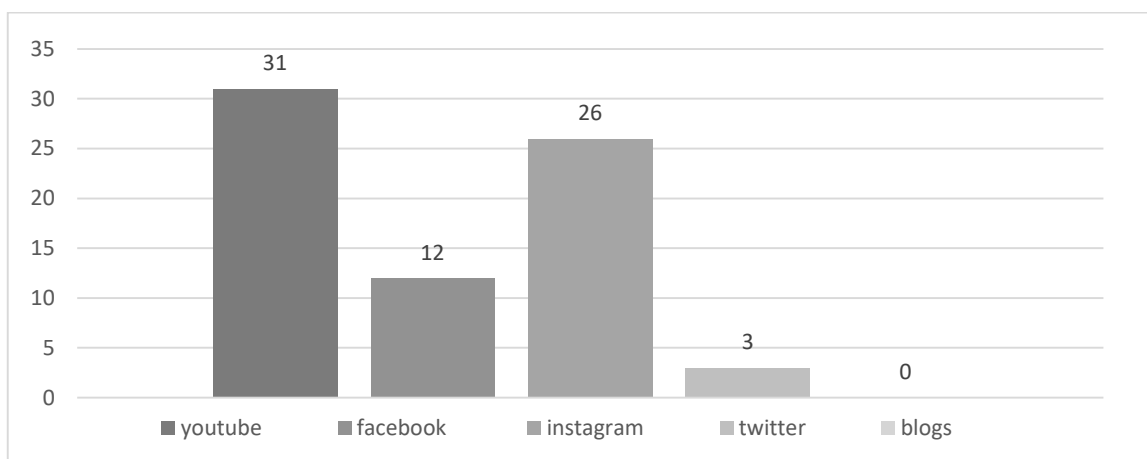
2. Does the influencer’s Recommendations/ Explanations satisfy your expectations?	53	19
3. Do the products that they recommend live unto their claims?	45	27
4. Do you rely/ trust the Influencer’s product recommendations?	41	31
5. Have you purchased any product recommended by the influencer?	37	35

Source: Prepared by author

INTERPRETATION:

The survey from the 72 respondents who follows an influencer by way of social media revealed that the Influencer’s recommendation fulfilled the expectations of 73.61% of the participants and 62.5% of the respondents believe that the products recommended by the influencers live unto their claims. 56.94% of the respondents trust the influencers product recommendations and 51.38% of the respondents were influenced by their recommendations and have purchased a product based on the influencer recommendations.

Picture:1 - Platform through which the influencer is accessed

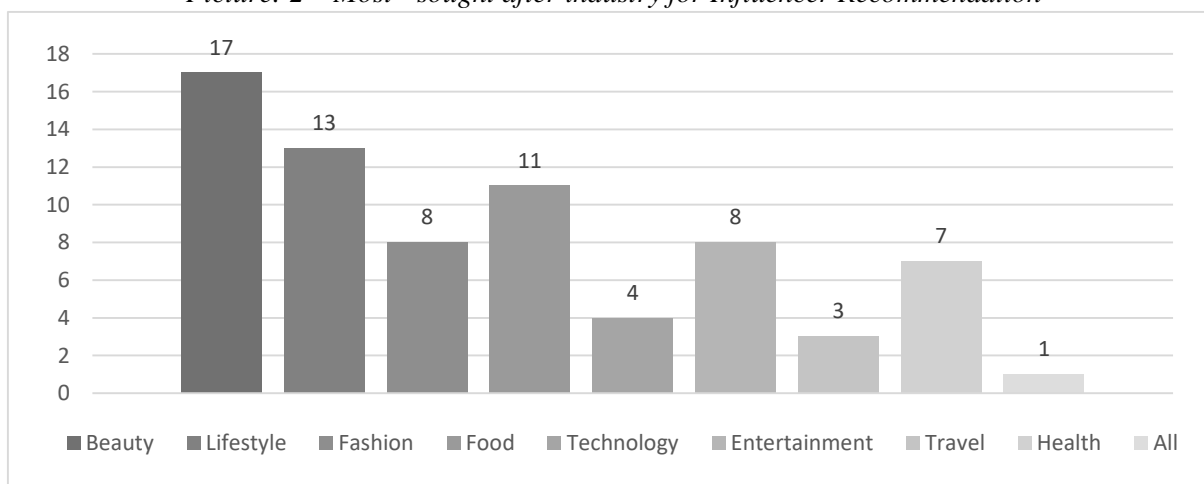


Source: Prepared by author

INTERPRETATION:

A majority of 43.05% of the respondents have accessed the influencers through YouTube, the second largest platform through which they have accessed the influencers is through Instagram with 36.11% and through Facebook, Twitter and blogs with 16.67%, 4.17% and 0% respectively.

Picture: 2 – Most - sought after industry for Influencer Recommendation



Source: Prepared by author

**INTERPRETATION:**

The above picture depicts the industry for which the consumers often seek the recommendations of the influencer, it indicates that 23.61% of the respondents seeks the recommendations from the influencer of the Beauty industry; 18.05% and 15.27% for Lifestyle and Food industry influencers; 11.11% of Fashion and Entertainment industry; 9.72%, 5.55%, 4.16%, 1.38% of Health, Technology, Travel and all other industries respectively.

6. FINDINGS:

- A major 73.61% of the respondent's expectations are satisfied by the Influencer recommendation.
- 62.5% of the respondents believe that the recommended products live up to their claims and that the Influencer recommendations to be effective.
- 56.94% of the respondents rely on the Influencer's product recommendations.
- 51.39% of the respondents have indicated that they are influenced by the recommendations and that their purchase decisions are based on such recommendations.
- The two major social media platforms through which the Influencers are accessed are YouTube and Instagram with 43.05% and 36.11% respectively.
- The industry for which the respondents often seek Influencer recommendations are Beauty, Lifestyle and Food industries.

7. CONCLUSION:

As the marketing strategy of the businesses are shifting from celebrity marketing in the traditional media platforms to the Influencer marketing in social media platforms, it is pivotal to understand the consumer's perspective on the recommendations made by the influencers in Influencer marketing which is the main aim of the study. This study clearly points out that the recommendations of the influencers to be satisfactory, effective, reliable and has influenced the consumers in making their purchase decisions. As the recommendations of the influencers have a positive impact in the minds of the consumers, marketing the products through Influencer marketing is a win-win situation for both the business houses and the consumers.

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