

ASSOCIATION OF 'SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' WITH BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF COSMETIC PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

By 'Influence' what we mean is leaving an impression on the mind of people. The effect could be on anyone, could be direct or indirect, could leave a favourable or unfavourable impact. It may appear that organisations have started using influencer as marketing strategy in recent past, but in reality, enterprises have been using 'influencer' as a selling strategy to market a product or a service for ages, as it is another form of selling strategy where one gets influenced by word of mouth. Marketing through influencer is nothing but extensive form of reference marketing strategy. The idea behind this survey is to study the impact of 'influencers' on the buying pattern of cosmetic goods by Indians. The objective of this study is "To determine how 'influencers' through social media impact the cosmetic buying decisions of customers in India." The objective of the study is to find the effect on buying pattern of people due to influence of social media. Three specific factors will be used from the study to appraise the buying pattern of people. In this research, structured questionnaire under survey method is used to collect information from the informants, as well as exploratory research approach has been used. A group of 170 people has been selected using non-probability convenience sampling method to do the research in time span of three weeks. The study showed that users of social media is increasing and digital media platforms help in swaying the bent of people in favour of the brands endorsed. Videos of influencers uploaded on you tube strongly impacts the people, but the impact is not that strong which motivates people to buy the products immediately. Study also disclosed that age is an important factor affecting the money spent on the beauty products and the number of times purchases are made.

Keywords: *Cosmetics, Beauty Products, Buying Behaviours, Influencers, Social Media Marketing.*

Introduction

One cannot deny that social media has become part and parcel of everyone's life, and in such a scenario no wonder business houses use social media extensively for marketing purpose. Earlier it was not like this, but now it has been observed that almost all corporations maintain a social media account. Early days when this concept of social media was introduced, people believed it's in market for a short span of time and in due course it will vanish. Bulletin Board System, was the initiator of social media, though, most of the people believe that it was Myspace that introduced it (Fuchs, 2021). Introduction of 'The Palace' was the next step taken in the arena of social media, after a gap of 16 years, in the year 1994, unexpectedly it is still in usage. Chat rooms are used to interact on server by the palace users, where everyone has their own graphical avatar. Three years later, sixdegrees.com was launched Hjorth and Hinton (2019), which is viewed as principal innovation in web-based media, as here people could connect with others and also upload their pictures.

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According to Evans et al. (2021), Lunar Storm was the first social networking site which was sponsored by advertisement and this initiated the growth of social media. Flickr and Photobucket was introduced in the year 2003, which started the period of phot sharing in social media. YouTube was launched in the year 2005 where the whole world was the platform to share variety of media across the globe. Reddit was introduced soon after, in the same year and it was the first established social media and extremely good business which is going to stay for long in the market and that is why some people believe that year 2006 is the time period where presence of social media could be felt strongly (Tuten, 2020). YouTube was taken over by Google at an exorbitant price of \$1.65billion. Facebook and Twitter came into picture and with such big players in the social media market, it changed forever. joined the party, which changed the face of social media forever. Facebook was an instant hit in the market and became the third most visited website on the internet (Luttrell, 2018).

No one can deny the importance and the role played by social media marketing in today's scenario. It is evident by the number of potential consumers using social media which also shows the success digital marketing strategies used by organisations. Statistics shows that approx. 2.3 billion people are already on social media, and in a month or so, 97% of the people coming under the age group of 16-64 will join the list of users (Evans et al., 2021). According to Evans et al. (2021), more than 1.6 billion people will sign into Facebook, in a day. It is eminent to understand the cosmetic industry in India, to do justice to this research as the objective of this study is to determine the impact of 'social media influencers' on the buying pattern of cosmetic by Indian consumers. The next section discusses the current scenario of cosmetic industry in India.

As per Keelery (2021), projected worth of cosmetic industry in the year 2020 in India is approx.20 billion US dollars. According to Business Wire (2021), this industry is expected to grow in two digits CAGR of 16.39 percent and to reach around an estimated 290 billion worth of industry by the financial year 2026. One of the factors responsible for this growth is products used for bath and body which are needed every day. Another reason behind this thriving industry is the shift in the mindset of Indians where personal grooming and skincare has become very important Sarkae (2021). The positive results of using skin care and beauty products, definitely increases their demand in the market. Another important factor in favour of cosmetic industry in India is increase income of the people, which definitely increases their purchasing power thereby increasing the demand for cosmetic products in India. Easy availability on online platforms makes the accessibility easier, an important factor in increasing the sale of cosmetic products.

Cosmetic industry in India is very much like the FMCG and retail sector in India and is largely under unorganised sector. According to the Consulate General of Israel (2018), people prefer to buy offline rather than making their purchases online. But in recent years it has been observed that there is a bent of people towards online shopping. New businesses, new concepts, new ways are being introduced in online markets and this helps to fill the gaps in retail markets. Success story of the brand 'Nykaa' started by Falguni Nayar is a good example of the same (Khusboo and Ho, 2019). One can see many domestic producers making a breakthrough in the markets and updating and upgrading their products, producing eco-friendly natural products to give tough competition to other existing brands. As the main objective of this study is to find the impact of social media marketing on cosmetic industry, so it is important to understand the correlation between the two. The next section explains the relation between them.

One has to agree that social networking provides an important platform for businesses to launch their products. social media posts related to cosmetics attract huge number of people, which can be turned into future buyers, (Hermanda et al., 2019). As per 'Connected Beauty Consumer Report' the number of persons moving towards digital media is on rise, many of them get influenced and make their buying decisions on the basis of the posts for example people get influenced by make up tutorials uploaded on you tube and, on that basis, buy cosmetics. People shifting to online mode has increased business for many industries, as observed in many surveys. Users of social networking sites like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, you tube are continuously increasing and this has definitely changed the picture of marketing through social media (Suresh et al., 2016). According to various studies conducted on the buyers, 81 percent of the customers, made the purchases under the influence of videos uploaded on you tube,26 percent purchasing the good as instant outcome, according to (Google et al., 2020). Also, it was observed that buying decisions are independent of gender, as all the users irrespective of their sex were interested in the beauty products and on an average made a purchase of three products every month.

According to the given situation, brands need to modify and adapt according to the liking of buyers. An influencer on Instagram, named SebaSulthana, based in Kochi, Kerala; uploads videos of different make up looks. She emphasises on the significance of large number of followers on social networking sites, like Instagram. A favourable response on social media platforms which are accessible to other, attracts big businesses to team up with influencers for the promotion of their brands. Per post influencers can receive money in the range of fifteen to twenty thousand, cited by Suryani and Margery (2020). This is beneficial to both the parties, as businesses need not pay hefty amount of money to collaborate with high end celebrities, the objective of attracting large number of potential customers, influencers can be a comparatively cheap solution. By this study, researcher has tried to find the impact of influencers on the buying pattern of cosmetics by Indian buyers.

Aim of the Research

The objective of the study undertaken is, "To establish the relationship between the effect of 'influencers' on the buying pattern of cosmetics by Indian consumers". The rationale behind conducting this study is to relate the buying pattern with the social media influencers. This pattern is evaluated on the basis of three particular points under the study and they are researched using the following objectives:

- To ascertain the relation between 'influencers' and buying pattern of beauty products.
- To ascertain the relation between 'influencers and the way people make inquiries about the beauty products endorsed by influencers.
- To ascertain the relation between 'influencers' and trying the cosmetic goods again even though the first-time experience of the product was not satisfactory.

Methodology

The exploratory research approach was used to accomplish this study. A structured questionnaire was prepared with close end questions and trial run was done to see if there are any errors in the questionnaire and to know whether it can seize the perspective of the informant. Through pre-test it was discovered that in some questions choices given were not sufficient, so more choices need to be added. The language used was incorrect for seven questions, so these questions were amended. After making all these amendments in the questionnaire, it was uploaded through google forms and shared with informants on different networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. During a time period of three weeks the data was collected from 170 informants, selected by sampling method (non-probability convenience sampling).

- Data Collection Methods: First-hand information was collected from informants by using structured questionnaire. Survey method was used to get in touch with the respondents and google form was used to collect data from the respondents.
- Sampling Techniques: Investigator used Convenience sampling method to choose the samples.
- Sample Area: Gurugram (Haryana, India)
- Sample Size: 170
- Version of SPSS: Version 23

SPSS software was used to examine and evaluate the data. In this study three research hypotheses were tested, which were:

First Hypothesis established on the basis of first objective i.e., to ascertain the relation between 'influencers' and buying pattern of cosmetics.

H₀: There is no pertinent relation between 'influencers' and buying pattern of cosmetics.

H₁: There is pertinent relation between 'influencers' buying pattern of cosmetics.

Second Hypothesis established on the basis of second objective i.e., To ascertain the relation between 'influencers and the way people make inquiries about the beauty products endorsed by influencers.

H₀: There is no pertinent relation between 'influencers and the way people make inquiries about the beauty products endorsed by influencers.

H₁: There is pertinent relation between 'influencers and the way people make inquiries about the beauty products endorsed by influencers.

Third Hypothesis established on the basis of third objective i.e., To ascertain the relation between 'influencers' and trying the cosmetic goods again even though the first-time experience of the product was not satisfactory.

H₀: There is no pertinent relation between 'influencers' and trying the cosmetic goods again even though the first-time experience of the product was not satisfactory.

H₁: There is pertinent relation between 'influencers' and trying the cosmetic goods again even though the first-time experience of the product was not satisfactory.

The study tested this hypothesis to find how the effect of influencers changes with change in demographics i.e., people with different age group, different income, different marital status and different occupation are impacted differently by influencers. This is to see whether influencers effect married women more or unmarried, whether bearing is more for young generation or for more matured people.

Findings and Discussion

- **Demographics**

42.9 percent of informants were married, 31.2 percent of them were unmarried and rest of them either did not disclose their marital status or were divorced. 36.5 percent of participants belong to the category of 'Above 45 years', 25.3 percent of participants belonged to the category of 'Age between 22-35 years'. 63 percent of the respondents were employed either as professional or salaried or self-employed and among them 30 percent were professionals. 44.7 percent of informants disclosed their monthly income to be more than Rs. 50,000 and more than 25 percent did not disclose their family income. Approximately 40 percent of the respondents had a family size of 'less than or equal to four'.

- **Cosmetic Buying Behaviour**

The survey revealed that maximum number of participants buy cosmetics every month. As per the data collected just 5 percent of the participants were purchasing beauty products every week. 37.6 percent of the respondents claimed to shell out less than thousand rupees per month and 32.9 percent of the respondents claimed to splurge between thousand to two thousand rupees on beauty products every month.

- **Social Media Usage/Behaviour**

More than 75 percent of the respondents were active on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram etc. and of them 65 percent were following some or the other influencer of cosmetics.

- **Role of Beauty Influencer**

Respondents gave different reasons for following social media influencers of beauty products. Some followed influencers for their useful makeup classes, some said that beauty product appraisal made by them helps in taking decisions to buy or not to buy the product, some followed them as they work as good motivators to maintain their looks and some preferred their pictures so they followed the influencers. Approximately 60 percent of the respondents agreed that some of their buying decisions were swayed by influencers. Respondents were asked to respond to three statements vital for the investigation, where they need to be rated on a 5-pointer scale, 1 for least likely and 5 for most likely. The responses received were as follows:

Table 1: Impact of Social Media Influencers on Cosmetic Purchase Decision

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean Score
If you come across any promotional video or link on a cosmetic product from a social media influencer, how likely are you to look into it?	15	11	43	65	36	3.56
How likely are you to purchase from a brand you never heard of if your favourite beauty influencer has recommended it?	16	30	39	48	37	3.52
If you come across any promotional video or link on a cosmetic product from a social media influencer, how likely are you to share and forward that post to you friends?	10	30	48	43	39	3.42

The given questions asked from the respondents were to find out the behaviour of the respondent for three aspects: 'will the respondent search for the cosmetic as suggested and propagated by the influencer', 'will the respondent try a product he has not aware of only on the suggestion of influencer', 'will the respondent forward and share the social media post of the influencer'. The result was somewhat in the centre of the scale which shows the result is neither in favour nor against.

Three main areas were selected where the investigator wanted to study the influence of 'social media influencer' on the buyers. These three aspects were reliability of the influencer, asking buyers to try the product again even though the first experience was not satisfactory, and to find out whether the influencer's video could grab the attention of the watchers. The result received stated that only 37 percent of the participants were ready to try the product again on the suggestion of the influencer even when they were not satisfied with first experience. On a 5-pointer scale where 1 presents least strongly and 5 presents most strongly, the research showed an average score of 3.57 which means respondents were not relying much on the influencer and when respondents were enquired about how much appealing were the videos of influencers, the average score was 3.24 which shows that videos were not that attractive.

Hypotheses Testing

Chi-square test is used to find out if there is any relation between the variables under discussion (Saunders et al. 2019). The hypothesis was to establish relation between the two variables, so to assess and evaluate the hypothesis Chi-square test was used

Firstly, to check if a specific segment of the society is purchasing more cosmetics than other, demographic variables are checked with number of times the good is purchased by customer. The first test was of age group with number of times beauty product is purchased by the customer. As the p-value was below 0.05, it clearly points out that there is substantial difference between age group and the regularity with which cosmetics are purchased. Noteworthy difference can be seen when age group is linked with per month spending on cosmetics

Table 2: Chi-Square Test for Hypotheses Testing

Factor	Chi-square value	Significant
Age with Frequency of buying cosmetics	36.656	Yes
Age with Monthly Spending	26.715	Yes
Age with social media account	0.403	No
Age with following of beauty influencer	2.529	No

In case of comparison made between age group and account on social media, it was found that there is no pertinent difference. In case of age compared to following influencer, no pertinent difference was found.

First Hypothesis

H₀: There is no pertinent relation between 'influencers' and buying pattern of beauty products.

Chi square test is used with the data collected for two questions to test this hypothesis. The first question enquires whether the participant is a follower of any influencer and the second question is where the respondent was enquired whether he was motivated to purchase the product by the influencer on social media.

Table 3: Cross Tabulation between Beauty Influencer Following and Purchase Inspired by the Influencer

		Purchased inspired by influences		Total
		No	Yes	
Follow beauty influencers	No	34	26	60
	Yes	36	74	110
Total		70	100	170

The noteworthy value of chi-square test was calculated to be 9.186. With this significant value null hypothesis is completely discarded i.e., there is pertinent relation between 'influencers' and buying pattern of beauty products by women consumers in India. As the given table shows, 67 percent of the respondents who persuaded by the influencers on social media to buy cosmetics were following them as compared to 43 percent who were not following these influencers on social media.

Second Hypothesis

H₀: There is no pertinent relation between 'influencers and the way people make inquiries about the beauty products endorsed by influencers

Chi square test is used with data collected for two questions to test this hypothesis. The first question enquires whether the participant is a follower of any influencer of any cosmetic product and the second question pertains to whether they researched or looked for a product on the recommendation of social media influencer.

Table 4: Cross Tabulation between Beauty Influencer Following and Influencer Recommendation

		Purchase because of influencer's recommendation					Total
		1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	
Follow beauty influencers	No	5	16	17	14	8	60
	Yes	11	14	22	34	29	110
Total		16	30	39	48	37	170

For the given table, value of chi-square was 9.382 which is insignificant. This means the given hypothesis is null i.e., there is no pertinent relation between 'influencers and the way people make inquiries about the beauty products endorsed by influencers.

Third Hypothesis

H₀: There is no pertinent relation between 'influencers' and trying the cosmetic goods again even though the first-time experience of the product was not satisfactory.

Chi square test is used with data collected for two questions to test this hypothesis. The first question enquires whether the participant is a follower of any influencer of any cosmetic product and the second question pertains to whether they will try the cosmetic goods again even though the first-time experience of the product was not satisfactory, on the recommendation of influencer.

Table 5: Cross Tabulation between Beauty Influencer Following and Influencer Recommendation for 2nd Trail

SS		Influencer's recommendation useful for 2nd trail			Total
		May be	No	Yes	
Follow beauty influencers	No	19	17	24	60
	Yes	46	25	39	110
Total		65	42	63	170

The value of chi-square was insignificant to be 1.757. The hypothesis is acknowledged as null i.e., there is no considerable relation between 'social media influencers' and second time users of the beauty products in the case their first experience was not satisfactory.

Conclusion

In present scenario one cannot deny the fact that social networking plays significant role in marketing. It provides an important platform for business houses to launch their products. The large number of social media users who can be converted into potential clients in future, is the reason why digital marketing became such a huge success. The phenomenon growth of social networking sites like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, has revolutionised the picture of marketing through social media. The study showed that users of social media is increasing and digital media platforms help in swaying the bent of people in favour of the brands endorsed. Videos of influencers uploaded on you tube strongly impacts the people, but the impact is not that strong which motivates people to buy the products

immediately. Study also disclosed that age is an important factor affecting the money spent on the beauty products and the number of times purchases are made. From this one can infer that product promotion by a social media influencer attracts customer, but is not able to convert them into buyers, for that businesses have to find some other alternate which can convert interested buyers into actual customers.

Suggestions

The objective of this study was to establish a relation between 'influencers' on social media and their impact on the buying pattern of beauty products by Indian women. On testing this hypothesis, it became evident that there is pertinent relation between influencer and buying decision of the customer. It also became clear that influencers cannot influence the search pattern of the customer neither influence them to retry the product in case they were not satisfied with first trial of the cosmetic.

Recommendations

The suggestions given on the basis of results drawn from the study will be beneficial in apportioning the budgets by the marketer/ promoter. On the basis of the conclusions drawn, it is advised that promoters of the product can use 'influencers' to sway the buying pattern of the customers in their favour, but it is not suggested for encouraging buyers to try the product again in case they were unsatisfied with the first trial and it is not advisable to use influencers for fostering the search of their cosmetic products.

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