

Impact of Influencer Marketing on Brand Engagement in the Hotel Industry: A Consumer's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing has become an effective way for brands to establish a connection with consumers, notably in the hospitality industry, in the digital era. This study examines the consumer's perspective on the impact of influencer marketing, specifically influencer communication, credibility, and brand fit, on brand engagement within the hospitality industry. Data were collected from 200 participants using a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items, and a quantitative research design was implemented. The hypotheses were tested and the relationships between the variables were examined using regression analysis, while demographic characteristics were summarized using descriptive statistics. The results indicate that brand engagement is substantially influenced by all three independent variables. Influencer communication had the most significant impact, accounting for 41.4% of the variance in brand engagement. Influencer credibility and influencer-brand compatibility followed, accounting for 33.2% and 12.5% of the variance, respectively. These findings suggest that consumer engagement with the hotel brand is positively influenced by the influencer's perceived trustworthiness, straightforward and engaging communication, and alignment with the hotel brand. The research establishes that influencer marketing is essential for the hotel industry, as it contributes to the development of consumer perceptions and the improvement of brand engagement. It provides practical implications for hospitality marketers in the selection and collaboration with influencers to cultivate authentic and enduring relationships with consumers.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing, Brand Engagement, Hotel Industry, Influencer Communication, Credibility, Brand Fit, Tourism and Hospitality.*

Introduction

Marketing products or services using social media's most prominent creators, or "Influencers," is called influencer marketing. Based on their audience size and average interaction, influencers can be classified as Nano, Micro, Macro, or Mega. Since many people, especially young people, have come to rely on social media, many of its users have become influential because of the content they publish. Many people on social media think of influencers as "virtual pals" who will suggest goods and services to them through carefully selected posts. Beauty, food, fashion, tourism and lifestyle are just some of the categories and genres in which influencers work. By producing content in these areas, they attract a following interested in similar topics and can quickly rise to the status of influencer. To achieve influence, one must first build credibility as a reliable source for their audience who share their viewpoint. This is the main draw for businesses to employ influencers in their internet advertising. They network with the influencer's core audience in the hopes of generating sales and brand awareness, and they create carefully crafted marketing materials to help them do so(Gupta, 2021).

The modern marketing strategy revolves around the complex idea of consumer brand involvement. It's a measure of how closely associated an individual is with a particular brand. To achieve long-term success in today's cutthroat business climate, where consumers have so much options to choose from, it is crucial to foster genuine connections with product and brand. Brand involvement is

fundamentally different from conventional ideas of promotional advertising. It's a two-way street where customers have input into the brand's mission and products. This participation can come in a variety of forms, such as loyalty schemes, reviews, or even an immersive experience. Engaging consumers with your brand is an ongoing effort that goes well beyond the initial purchase. It includes everything a customer goes through, from learning about a product to their satisfaction derived after making a purchase. Successful brands in this area know the value of making an emotional connection, providing customers with unique and memorable experiences, and encouraging them to feel like they're part of a larger group (**Salimi & Khanlari, 2018**).

Brand engagement in today's digital age, when customers have more information and options than ever before, is not just about making a sale. It's also about establishing rapport, gaining trust, and being genuine. By interacting with their target audience, businesses can learn useful information, co-create goods, and tap into the advocacy of happy customers. Consumer brand engagement is a difficult and an opportunity in the modern era of social media. Brands who know how to operate in this environment may connect with their customers on a profound level, while those that don't run the risk of being left behind (**Risitano et al., 2017**).

Brand engagement is a novel term that describes how customers feel themselves in relation to a brand and how they express their identity through the brand(**France et al., 2016**). Self-congruity, brand personality, brand attachment, and brand loyalty are all elements that influence it. The self-concept of brand engagement can strengthen the customer's emotional tie with the brand, increasing their propensity to pay more, advocate the brand to others, and repurchase the brand. (**Toteva et al., 2023**).

Research Objectives

- To evaluate impact of influencer communicationon brand engagement.
- To evaluate impact of influencer credibility on brand engagement.
- To evaluate impact of influencer brand fit on brand engagement.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant impact of influencer communicationon brand engagement.

H₁: There is significant impact of influencer communicationon brand engagement.

H₀: There is no significant impact of influencer credibility on brand engagement.

H₂: There is significant impact of influencer credibility on brand engagement.

H₀: There is no significant impact of influencer brand fit on brand engagement.

H₃: There is significant impact of influencer brand fit on brand engagement.

Literature Review

(Yong et al., 2024) This research examines the effects of influencer marketing methods in Malaysia in light of the growing popularity of this phenomenon. This descriptive study set out to answer the question, "How can businesses across industries make the most of the influencer marketing strategy?" by offering concrete, sector-specific recommendations. Businesses may expand their market share by using the study's insights to enhance their marketing strategies and boost consumer engagement.

(Mohammad et al., 2024) This study investigates the ever-changing field of influencer marketing and its effect on how Jordanian customers perceive brands through social media platforms. The study determined that influencer marketing had a substantial and favourable effect on brand perception, particularly in terms of trustworthiness, which was found to have the most significant impact. Hence, when choosing influencers, it is crucial to give priority to those who have genuine ties to Jordanian culture. This approach ensures a more accurate portrayal, as it strategically aligns the brand's values with those of the local audience. Moreover, it encourages influencers to produce content that is specific to the local context, thereby fostering a stronger relationship.

(Akhtar et al., 2024) The investigation is conducted through three experimental experiments. This study utilised IBM SPSS 28.0 for data analysis, specifically employing independent sample t-test and One-way ANOVA. In addition, moderation analysis was performed using the PROCESS macro model. The results of the two-way between-subjects analysis indicate that when influencers possess a high level of audiovisual competence compared to a low level, and customers have positive interactions rather than negative ones, it leads to a greater impact on customer behavioural engagement. The results

contribute to the existing body of research on consumer interaction on booking platforms and emphasise the effectiveness of audiovisual appeal in attracting and engaging customers. In addition, study recognise the limitations and offer suggestions for future research.

(Hornig et al., 2024) The findings of this study, using structural equation modelling, demonstrate that pleasure enhances consumer community commitment to Instagram through perceived social influence. Furthermore, PSIs have a favourable impact on customer behaviours, including their intention to book, their word-of-mouth recommendations, and their electronic word of mouth recommendations, all of which are influenced by their commitment to the Instagram community. Ultimately, the knowledge and skills possessed by social media influencers enhance the loyalty of consumers towards the Instagram community. Social media influencers' credibility also enhances consumers' inclinations to make bookings.

(Conti & D'Amario, 2024) The investigation uncovers different goals, strategies, and evaluations of the efficacy of the partnership between travel influencers and hospitality businesses, as well as the formation of various methods of compensation. Due to the exploratory character of the study and the specific geographic origins of the influencers and entrepreneurs engaged, the findings have limited applicability to a broader context. The study's uniqueness stems from its examination of the correlation between companies and travel influencers, an area that has been minimally explored through empirical research. The marketing literature uncovers various innovative aspects, namely in the way influencers and entrepreneurs handle this association.

(Pradhan et al., 2023) The purpose of this research was to analyze the relationship between social media influencers and consumer engagement. Study survey the many research that have looked at the relationship between social media influencers and consumer engagement. This research looked at articles published in journals that were indexed by Scopus, Web of Science, and the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) up to June 5, 2021. The study set out to identify and examine the causes and effects of consumers' interactions with SMIs. It also discusses the parasocial connection between social media influencers and their followers. Future studies examining the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer engagement could benefit from the research's proposed cohesive theoretical framework.

(Liu, 2022) Influencer marketing has caught the eye of marketing managers as a new and successful way to promote businesses, thanks to the rise of social media. This study builds on prior research by using a dual-route effect research methodology to examine the effects of influencer marketing on consumer engagement with brands. Parasocial connections between influencers and their audiences boost the credibility of both parties when they engage in content interaction, which in turn boosts the credibility of the brand, as the theory goes. In addition, being fully immersed in the experience heightens the value of brand content. Ultimately, the level of credibility of the brand and the enjoyment of its content would determine the level of brand engagement. In addition to future paradigms for assessing influencer marketing, this paper presents managerial implications.

(Trivedi et al., 2022) The study employed a factorial design with two independent variables: influencer type (celebrity and expert influencer) and video advertising duration (long-duration and short-duration bumper commercials). Two separate experiments were conducted to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The findings indicate that the presence of celebrity influencers in long-length video commercials has a significant impact on brand attitude, brand love, and behavioural intention compared to ads that feature expert influencers, regardless of their duration (long or short). This study highlights the significance of celebrity influencers and extended video advertisements in the field of tourism marketing.

Research Gap

Influencer marketing has surged in prominence as a strategic instrument for businesses to engage with digitally active customers. An increasing volume of research has examined the impact of influencer marketing on customer behavior, trust, purchase intention, and brand perception in diverse industries like fashion, cosmetics, and e-commerce. Moreover, research that investigates the hospitality or tourism industry predominantly emphasizes macro-level effects, such as destination marketing or booking intentions, neglecting the influence of individual influencer characteristics, including communication style, perceived credibility, and brand alignment, on brand engagement. Moreover, limited research has synthesized these three dimensions: communication, credibility, and brand-influencer alignment, into a unified analytical framework to assess their combined and individual effects on brand engagement.

This study seeks to address these gaps by analyzing the impact of influencer communication, credibility, and brand fit on brand engagement within the hotel sector, employing a consumer-centric quantitative methodology. The results seek to enhance both theoretical comprehension and management applications in influencer-driven hotel marketing.

Scope of the Study

This study investigates the influence of influencer marketing on brand engagement within the hotel sector from the consumer's viewpoint. This study examines the impact of influencer communication, credibility, and brand fit on customer engagement with hotel brands. The scope is confined to social media users who have engaged with influencer material pertaining to hospitality. The findings are relevant to the hotel business, especially in urban Indian contexts, and may also offer insights for wider applicability in digital marketing and influencer partnerships among analogous service industries.

Research Methodology

The research method functions as the framework for executing the investigation and attaining the research objectives. The document encompasses the research design, population, sampling methodology, data collection techniques, analytical tools employed, and ethical issues. This chapter delineates the methodology employed to assess the influence of communicator credibility, influencer engagement, and brand fit on consumer brand engagement within the hotel sector.

Research Design

The present study implemented a quantitative research design that employed both descriptive and inferential methodologies. The research utilizes a quantitative methodology with structured questionnaires distributed to 200 participants. Descriptive research was conducted to summarize and comprehend the demographic profile and consumer behavior patterns, while inferential research was conducted to investigate the relationships between the independent variables (influencer communication, influencer credibility, and influencer-brand fit) and the dependent variable (brand engagement).

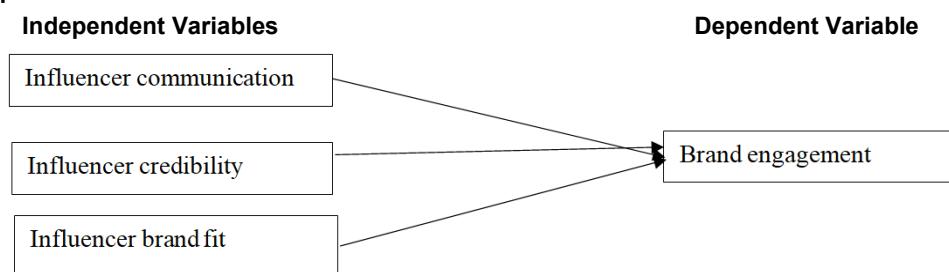
Sampling Technique

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was implemented to identify participants who are social media users and have engaged with influencer marketing in the hospitality industry to a certain extent. Purposive sampling was the most appropriate method for guaranteeing relevance, as the investigation necessitated participants who were acquainted with influencer content and the hotel industry.

Sample Size

A total of 200 respondents were selected as the final sample size.

Conceptual Model



Data Collection Method

Primary data was obtained by means of a structured questionnaire that was administered using Google Forms and offline distribution methods, such as printed surveys. To assess perceptions of influencer communication, credibility, brand fit, and brand engagement, the questionnaire was developed using five-point Likert scale items (ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Participation was voluntary, and respondents were apprised of the research's objectives. Before the data was collected, consent was obtained.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data was coded and entered into IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 22.0 for analysis.

Analysis of Data and Interpretation

The results section presents the empirical findings derived from the analysis of data collected from 200 participants.

Table 1: Age wise Distribution of Participants

	Age	
	Frequency	Percent
18 - 24 years	51	25.5
25-34 years	68	34.0
35-44 years	24	12.0
45 - 54 years	35	17.5
55 years and above	22	11.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the 200 participants in the research. The leading age group among responders is 25-34 years at 34.0%, succeeded by the 18-24 years group at 25.5%. Individuals aged 45-54 years represent 17.5% of the sample, whilst 12.0% fall within the 35-44 years category. The demographic aged 55 years and older has the least significant share at 11.0%. This distribution reveals that a substantial segment of the participants comprises young individuals, specifically aged 18 to 34 years, a crucial group for social media utilization and influencer interaction.

Table 2: Gender wise Distribution of Participants

	Gender	
	Frequency	Percent
Male	122	61.0
Female	78	39.0
Total	200	100.0

Gender wise distribution is discussed in the table above. There are 122 males and 78 females are included in this study, whose percentage are 61% and 39% respectively.

Table 3: Frequency of Hotel Stays (per year)

	Frequency of Hotel Stays (per year)	
	Frequency	Percent
Rarely (0-1 times)	49	24.5
Occasionally (2-3 times)	53	26.5
Frequently (4-6 times)	45	22.5
Very Frequently (7+ times)	53	26.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 3 shows the frequency of staying in hotels among the 200 participants. The largest percentage of responses belongs to the Occasionally (2-3 times) and Very Frequently (7+ times) groups, with each representing 26.5% of the total. Participants who seldom visit (0-1 times) constitute 24.5%, whilst 22.5% indicated frequent stays (4-6 times) annually. This distribution suggests a balanced mix of consumer experience with hotel services.

Table 4: Have you ever Booked a Hotel based on an Influencer's Recommendation?

	Have you ever booked a hotel based on an influencer's recommendation?	
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	175	87.5
No	25	12.5
Total	200	100.0

The table shows participants' replies about whether they have ever reserved a hotel using an influencer's advice. A significant majority of 175 individuals (87.5%) affirmed "Yes," signifying that they had made a hotel reservation influenced by social media influencers. On the contrary, just 25 people (12.5%) indicated "No."

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant impact of influencer communication on brand engagement.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.643 ^a	.414	.411	3.45628
a. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Communication				

ANOVA ^a					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1	Regression	1668.868	1	1668.868	139.702
	Residual	2365.287	198	11.946	
	Total	4034.155	199		
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Communication					

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	3.372	.865		3.896
	Influencer Communication	.642	.054	.643	11.820
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement					

The regression analysis findings demonstrate a substantial effect of influencer communication on brand engagement. The Model Summary indicates a robust positive correlation ($R = 0.643$) between the two variables, with a R Square value of 0.414, implying that influencer communication accounts for 41.4% of the variance in brand engagement. This suggests that the influencers' communication style affect customer engagement with the hotel brand. The ANOVA table corroborates this conclusion, presenting an F -value of 139.702 and a significance level (p -value) of 0.000, signifying that the regression model is statistically significant. The power of influencer communication on brand engagement is not attributable to randomness. The Coefficients table indicates that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for influencer communication is 0.642, accompanied by a t -value of 11.820 and a p -value of 0.000, so affirming the variable's substantial impact on the model.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact of influencer credibility on brand engagement.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.576 ^a	.332	.329	3.68917
a. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Credibility				

ANOVA ^a					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
		1339.386	1	1339.386	98.412
1	Regression	1339.386	1	1339.386	98.412
	Residual	2694.769	198	13.610	
	Total	4034.155	199		
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Credibility					

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	5.217	.845		6.177
	Influencer Credibility	.548	.055	.576	9.920
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement					

A regression analysis was performed to assess the influence of influencer credibility on brand engagement within the hotel sector. The Model Summary reveals a positive correlation between the two variables, evidenced by a R value of 0.576 and a R Square of 0.332, indicating that 33.2% of the variance in brand engagement is accounted for by influencer credibility. This indicates that an influencer's perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity significantly affect customer engagement with hotel brands. The ANOVA table demonstrates the importance of this association, with an F-value of 98.412 and a p-value of 0.000, therefore confirming that the regression model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Consequently, the identified correlation is not attributable to random chance. The Coefficients table indicates that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for influencer credibility is 0.548, accompanied by a t-value of 9.920 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that influencer credibility is a crucial determinant of brand engagement.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant impact of influencer brand fit on brand engagement.

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.353 ^a	.125	.120	4.22306	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer-Brand Fit					

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1	502.971	28.202	.000 ^b
	Residual	198	17.834		
	Total	199			
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer-Brand Fit					

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.324	.963		8.646
	Influencer-Brand Fit	.369	.070	.353	5.311
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Engagement					

A regression analysis was performed to evaluate the effect of influencer-brand alignment on brand engagement in the hotel sector. The Model Summary indicates a moderate positive correlation, with a R value of 0.353 and a R Square of 0.125, signifying that 12.5% of the variance in brand engagement is accounted for by the influencer's brand fit. Although this is a lesser fraction relative to other predictors, it nevertheless signifies a substantial association. The ANOVA table validates the statistical significance of this model, exhibiting an F-value of 28.202 and a p-value of 0.000, much lower than the 0.05 criterion. The approach substantially forecasts brand engagement based on the alignment between influencer and brand. The Coefficients table indicates that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for influencer-brand fit is 0.369, accompanied by a t-value of 5.311 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding demonstrates that influencer-brand fit is a statistically significant predictor of brand engagement.

Conclusion

This study looked into the impact of influencer marketing—particularly influencer communication, credibility, and brand fit—on brand engagement in the hotel sector from the consumer viewpoint. Analysis of responses from 200 participants, utilizing comprehensive regression techniques, reveals substantial evidence that all three characteristics of influencer marketing markedly affect brand engagement. Initially, influencer communication surfaced as a significant predictor, accounting for 41.4% of the variance in brand engagement. This suggests that the way influencers provide hotel-related content—its clarity, relatability, and engagement—significantly influences customer interaction with the brand. Moreover, influencer credibility demonstrated a substantial effect, representing 33.2% of the variance in brand engagement. Consumers are more inclined to interact with hotel companies when the endorsing influencer is regarded as trustworthy, competent, and sincere. At last, influencer-brand fit had a moderate yet meaningful impact, accounting for 12.5% of the variation. Although its influence was

somewhat less relative to other factors, it underscores that congruence between the influencer's profile and the hotel brand's identity amplifies customer engagement. The study conclusively rejects all three null hypotheses, affirming that influencer communication, credibility, and brand fit each exert a statistically significant and beneficial influence on brand engagement within the hotel sector. These findings highlight the strategic importance of meticulously choosing and maintaining influencer collaborations to create significant customer relationships and brand loyalty. This research adds to the expanding literature on influencer marketing and provides practical insights for hotel marketers seeking to improve brand engagement via digital channels.

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