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Role of social media influencers on brand promotions towards college students in Tenkasi District

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Abstract
The present study examines the role of social media influencers in brand promotion among college students in Tenkasi District. The study reveals that social media influencers have become an important part of modern marketing, particularly in reaching college students. Influencer-based promotions help create brand awareness, increase product reach and positively influence student's interest towards brands and their purchase decisions. The findings indicate that social media platforms provide an effective and attractive medium for marketers to communicate with the younger generation. The study also highlights the importance of considering gender-wise differences, while designing promotional strategies. In the future, influencers can provide more educational, career-oriented and creative product-related content that would be useful and informative for students. Overall, social media influencer marketing can be considered an effective modern marketing strategy for improving brand visibility and reaching college students.

Keywords: Social media, influencers, product promotion, college students

Introduction

The marketing environment has evolved from traditional barter and conventional markets to digital and online marketing. The growth of smart phones, internet services and social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook has transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers. Among digital marketing strategies, social media influencer marketing has become an effective promotional tool. Influencers can affect consumers' attitudes, brand perceptions and purchasing decisions through product reviews, recommendations and demonstrations.

College students are an important target group because of their frequent use of social media. Influencer credibility, expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, online recommendations and promotional offers can significantly influence their brand awareness, preferences and purchase decisions. This creates an appropriate setting for examining how influencer-based promotional activities affect college students' perceptions and preferences towards brands. Although social media influencer marketing has received increasing attention, the influence of such promotional activities specifically on college students in Tenkasi District requires further empirical investigation. The study particularly examines the influence of social media usage, influencer credibility, online recommendations, peer opinions, brand preference, promotional offers and other influencer-related factors on student's responses towards promoted brands.

Statement of The Problem

The rapid growth of social media has significantly changed the way consumers obtain information about products, services and brands. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and other digital platforms have become important channels for marketing communication. In this changing environment, social media influencers have emerged as an important source of product information and recommendations, particularly among young consumers and college students. Although influencer marketing is increasingly adopted by businesses, limited attention has been given to understanding its specific impact on college students in Tenkasi District. Therefore, there is a need to examine how students perceive social media influencers, the factors that make influencer recommendations effective, and the extent to which influencer promotions influence brand awareness, brand preference, purchase intention and buying behaviour. Hence, the present study entitled "Role of Social Media Influencers on Brand Promotions Towards College Students in Tenkasi District" attempts to examine the role and effectiveness of social media influencers in promoting brands among college students and to identify the factors influencing students' responses towards influencer-based brand promotions.

Objectives of The Study

- To study the social media usage patterns and identify the major platforms used by college students in Tenkasi District.
- To examine the influence of social media influencer's credibility, attractiveness, content quality on brand awareness and student's purchase intention.
- To analyse the factors influencing student's responses towards influencer – promoted brands and offer suggestions for effective and ethical influencer – based brand promotion.

Review of Literature

De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) [1]: Investigated Instagram influencer characteristics and brand attitudes. Their findings highlighted the importance of follower count and product-influencer fit and showed that popularity does not automatically produce more favourable brand responses.

Sokolova and Kefi (2020): Examined the relationship between influencer credibility, parasocial interaction and purchase intention. The study suggested that both credibility and perceived relationship with influencers can help explain purchase intentions.

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) [2]: Explored Instagram and celebrity-related influence among young female users. The findings indicated that online personalities could shape purchase decisions when followers perceive them as relatable and trustworthy.

Childers, Lemon, and Hoy (2019): Discussed the strategic role of social-media influencers and highlighted the need to understand influencer selection, content creation and relationship management from a managerial perspective.

Evans *et al.* (2017): Examined disclosure language in Instagram influencer advertising and found that clear advertising disclosures can affect recognition of the commercial nature of posts, with implications for ethical influencer marketing.

Hypotheses

- There is no significant association between gender and awareness of influencer-based brand promotions.
- There is no significant association between daily social-media usage and purchase influenced by social media influencers.
- There is no significant relationship between perceived influencer credibility and brand awareness.
- There is no significant relationship between perceived influencer credibility and purchase intention.

Data Collection and Sampling Size

The study is based on Primary Data collected directly from college students using a **structured questionnaire.** The respondents were specifically Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) college students in Tenkasi District who use at least one social media platform. A total of 140 students were selected for the study.

Sampling Method

The study adopted the Convenience Sampling Method to select the respondents. Students who were easily accessible and willing to participate in the study were selected from among UG and PG college students in Tenkasi District who use social media platforms.

Influencer content

In this study, the factors which seeking the researcher have been analyzed Garret's Ranking technique. In this analysis, the respondents were asked to rank the factors which mainly preferring social media to the respondent. The rank assigned to each factor by the sample respondents has been converted into per cent position by using the following formula. Per cent position = 100(Rij-0.5)/Nij

Rij- rank given by the j^{th} respondent for the i^{th} factor and
Nj –number of factors ranked by the j^{th} sample respondent.

S. No	Influencer Content	Garret score	Mean score	Rank
1	Fashion & Beauty	7515	53.67	2
2	Entertainment	7697	54.97	1
3	Food & Lifestyle	6948	49.62	4
4	Education & Career	6894	49.24	5
5	Technology	7020	50.14	3

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that Entertainment content ranks first with the highest mean score of 54.97, followed by Fashion & Beauty (53.67). Technology (50.14) ranks third, while Food & Lifestyle (49.62) ranks fourth. Education & Career has the lowest mean score of 49.24 and ranks fifth. Thus, college students show the greatest preference for Entertainment and Fashion & Beauty influencer content.

Level of study and level of awareness related to social media influencer

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant association between the level of studies and awareness level under study.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.507[a]	2	.776
Likelihood Ratio	.522	2	.770
Linear-by-Linear Association	.436	1	.509
N of Valid Cases	140		

The Pearson Chi-Square value is 0.507 with 2 degrees of freedom, and the significance value is 0.776. Since the p-value (0.776) is greater than 0.05, the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant association between the level of studies and product awareness level in the study.

Gender difference in product promotion:

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant difference between the observed mean of gender and the test value.

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Gender	33.692	139	**.000**	1.400	1.32	1.48

The One-Sample Test shows that the t-value is 33.692 with 139 degrees of freedom and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the result is statistically significant. The mean difference is 1.40, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 1.32 to 1.48. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that the mean gender code is significantly different from the test value of 0.

Findings of the Study

- The study found that Entertainment is the most preferred influencer content among college students,

with the highest Garrett mean score of 54.97, followed by Fashion & Beauty (53.67).

- The Chi-Square analysis revealed that there is no significant association between level of study and awareness of social media influencer-based brand promotions ($\chi^2 = 0.507$, $p = 0.776$). The findings indicate that the level of study, whether UG or PG, does not significantly influence students' awareness of influencer-based brand promotions.
- The study indicates that social media influencers have an important role in reaching college students, particularly through entertainment-oriented and visually attractive content, there is no difference between the gender difference.

Suggestion of the Study

- Brands should focus on entertainment-based content, as it received the highest preference among college students. Influencers should create engaging, creative and visually appealing content to attract students and improve brand awareness.
- Influencer content should be designed according to the interests of different student groups, particularly Entertainment, Fashion & Beauty and Technology.
- Brands should regularly analyse students' social media preferences and changing online behaviour to improve influencer-based promotional strategies.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media influencers play an important role in promoting brands among college students in Tenkasi District. Students mainly prefer Entertainment and Fashion & Beauty influencer content. Influencer credibility, attractive content, recommendations and promotional offers can influence students' brand awareness and purchase decisions. The study also found that there is no significant association between level of study and awareness of influencer-based brand promotions. Overall, effective, trustworthy and engaging influencer marketing can help businesses reach college students and improve brand promotion.

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