



Role of social media influencers' in consumer buying behaviour: A study with reference to Kottayam town

Sarina Thomas

Assistant Professor, CMS College, Kottayam, Kerala, India

Abstract

Social media has become part and parcel of our life. Browsing between different apps has become a day to day routine, whether if we are aware of it or not. Traackr defines Influencer marketing as the process of identifying, researching, engaging and supporting the people who create high-impact conversations with customers about your brand, products or services. When people are continuously following posts of a person they love, automatically they notice or get interested in the stuff the influencer promotes. Even without them knowing the brand gets stuck in their minds. The present study is focused on the research gap of impact of Social media influencers towards consumers buying behaviour among consumers in Kottayam Town. The primary objective is i) To analyse the impact of social influencers on consumer purchase intentions objective is to ii) To identify the platforms that attract consumers about influencer marketing iii) To analyse the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing.

Keywords: influencer marketing, consumer buying behaviour, social media

Introduction

Influencer marketing is a type of marketing that focuses on using key leaders to drive the brand's message to the larger market. It means that by inspiring, hiring and paying influencers to get out the word for the marketer. According to Technorati Media's 2013 ^[5] Digital Influence report, 65 % of companies are participating in influencer-based marketing, and using bloggers for influencer marketing is a common and effective tool used by many. According to the same study 86 % of influencer's are bloggers (Technorati, 2013) ^[5]. Instagram is also one of the important place for the influencers to attract more followers. People, especially youth are so engaged in checking every day posts by their favourite influencers. It actually paved the way for many marketers to advertise and sell the products using this medium. More than blogs simple photos and videos are providing marketers with innumerable customers. Celebs/Mega-Influencers (those who have over 1M followers), Macro-Influencers (they have between 100k and a Million followers) and Micro-Influencers (with between 1k and 100k followers) and Nano (50-10k), it is how influencer marketing works.

Need for the study

The significance of influencer marketing is rising because influencers creates a world of enormous possibilities in area of marketing in this digital world. It creates a new opportunity for brands to connect with the target audience instantly and directly and at a large scale. The targeted consumers can be influenced in high degree compared to other mediums. As more and more youth are glued to their smartphones, they quickly reach out to their friends to inform them about the latest trend that informs their purchasing decision, which is an opportunity for every marketer. The present study is highlighted on the role of Social media influencers towards consumers buying among consumers in Kottayam Town.

Objectives

The primary objective is

1. To analyse the impact of social influencers on consumer purchase intentions
- The secondary objective is
2. To identify the platforms that attract consumers about influencer marketing
 3. To analyse the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing

Hypotheses of the study

1. **H0:** There is no significant difference in the platforms that attract consumers about influencer marketing based on their income.
2. **H0:** There is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their gender
3. **H0:** There is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their source of information

Research methodology

Research design

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive as well as exploratory in nature as it is a study of existing as well as changing state of affairs.

Data collection source

This study is done in two stages. The first stage includes collecting the secondary data from magazines, newspapers, websites etc. It helps to identify the major areas which were already studied and related details helps to move into the second stage. The area of research gap is identified, which is that there is lack of studies relating to role of influencer marketing on consumer buying behaviour in Kottayam Town. This is the reason for the second stage. Second stage is of data collection through primary source. The primary data is

collected through google forms and questionnaires specifically designed for this survey. Discussions with respondents helped to identify more information about their ideas and suggestions related to influencer marketing.

Sample design

Universe

The universe of study refers to followers of influencers from all spheres of life, age groups and education levels in Kottayam Town.

Sample Size

Out of the population, a sample of 75 consumers from Kottayam Town was selected.

Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques used in the study is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in study.

Tools for analysis

Primary data collected using structured unbiased questionnaire is analysed using the following tools:

- a. Percentage Analysis
- b. ANOVA
- c. Independent sample t test

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study are:

- a. Chance of sampling error due to limited sample size is one of the main limitations. It is due to the fact that in this study only 75 respondents were selected, which is a small part of the population. So that, what is being identified as the conclusion of this study may not be exactly equal to the actual conclusion when the whole population is taken into consideration.
- b. Influencer marketing is an evolving concept in India. So that there can be changes throughout the period of study. It indicates that, there can be changes in preferences and the ideas of the same respondents due to dynamic environment.

The study has tried to overcome these limitations with up to date information.

Literature Review

According to Brown and Hayes an Influencer is an “A third party who significantly shapes the customer’s purchasing decision, but may ever be accountable for it.” (Brown & Hayes, 2008, p. 50) [2]. Due to the digitalization consumers are becoming more educated as media users and more critical of commercial messages (Perrey *et al*, 2013). It is

getting nearly impossible for brands to stand out among the crowd of advertisers, why many turn into influencers (Newman, 2015). According to the editor Brannigan at Fashionista.com ‘you do not need a blog anymore to be a successful Influencer, but instead a substantial Instagram presence’. Today there is less of a need for bloggers to have a blog than ever before, from a marketers perspective, but more important to have a smart, well-executed presence on Instagram that rules out the need for a blog (Brannigan, 2016) [1].

Analysis of data

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic factors	Groups	Frequency	Per cent
Age	18-25	37	49.3
	26-35	19	25.3
	36-45	10	13.3
	46 and Above	9	12
Gender	Male	33	44
	Female	42	56
Education level	S.S.L.C	2	2.7
	Plus Two	6	8
	Graduate	42	56
	Post graduate	25	33.3
Income	Others	0	0
	Less than 2.5 lakh	26	34.7
	2.5 lakh to 5 lakh	23	30.7
	5 lakh to 7.5 lakh	13	17.3
	7.5 lakh to 10 lakh	13	17.3

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: Source of information

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Social media platform recommendations	20	26.7
Friends/ Family	12	16
Contests/ Giveaways	14	18.7
Website of brand	14	18.7
Magazines	7	9.3
Work	8	10.7

Source: Primary data

It is clear from the Table, highest percent i.e. 26.7 source of information is from social media platform recommendations followed by contests/giveaways and a brand website. 16 percent from friends and family followed by work colleagues and magazines.

Testing of hypotheses

- 1. **H0:** There is no significant difference in the platforms that attract consumers about influencer marketing based on their income.

Table 3: Platforms

Statements	Weighted average values
I prefer Instagram for getting recommendations from my influencers	4.95
I love to buy products recommended by influencers in YouTube	3.44
I believe that Facebook influencers helps me in getting information’s about products that I buy.	3.70
I trust Pinterest influencers for purchasing products.	3.50
I love to purchase products suggested by influencers while reading Blogs	3.00
I get influenced to buy products recommended by influencers in Twitter	2.30
I trust influencers from Vine, TikTok etc to buy products	2.00

Source: Primary data

Table 4: Income and perception- ANOVA

	Particulars	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Platforms	Between groups	2.577	3	.859	6.113	.001
	Within groups	9.977	71	.141		
	Total	12.554	74			

Source: Table 3

Since from the table it is clear that significance value is less than 0.05, therefore null hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is significant difference in the platforms that attract consumers about influencer marketing based on their source of information.

2. H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their gender

Table 5: Perception

Statements	Weighted average values
I have become aware about many new products from my influencers	3.73
I believe more followers an influencer has, more authentic is his/her recommendations	3.53
I believe that my influencers have enough knowledge about the products they endorse	3.71
I trust and have confidence in the recommendations of influencers, having huge number of followers	3.87
If my idol influencer is recommending a product, I will obviously get excited to purchase the product	3.92

Source: Primary data

Table 6: Gender wise

Statements	Gender	Mean	SD
Perception	Male	33	3.6970 .68213
	Female	42	3.7952 .68927

Source: Primary data

Table 7: Independent Sample T Test

Statements	Particulars	t	df	sig
Perception	Equal variances assumed	-.616	73	0.540
	Equal variances not assumed	-.616	69.186	0.540

Source: Table 5

Since from the table it is clear that significance value is more than 0.05, therefore null hypothesis is fail to reject. It means that there is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their gender.

3. H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their source of information

Table 8: Source of information and perception- ANOVA

	Particulars	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Perception	Between groups	6.614	5	1.323	3.267	.010
	Within groups	27.934	69	.405		
	Total	34.547	74			

Source: Table 5

Since from the table it is clear that significance value is less than 0.05, therefore null hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their source of information.

Table 9: Challenges

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Loss interest over time when it is repetitive	24	32
Influencers doesn't align with core values	17	22.7
Influencers post too much sponsored content	8	10.7
Expensive Products	19	25.3
Irrelevant products for daily life, are promoted	7	9.3

Source: Primary data

Since from the table it is clear that the challenges faced by consumers regarding influencer marketing is 'loss of interest due to repetitive recommendations' followed by lack of alignment by influencers to core values, expensive products, too much sponsored content and irrelevant products for daily life.

Findings

- Respondents mostly read information regarding influencer marketing through from social media platform recommendations followed by contests/giveaways and a brand website. 16 percent from friends and family followed by work colleagues and magazines.
- For testing hypothesis, H0: There is no significant difference in the platforms that attract consumers about influencer marketing based on their income. ANOVA is used. Since the significance value is less than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is significant difference in the platforms that attract consumers about influencer marketing based on their income.
- For testing hypothesis, H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their gender. Independent sample t test is used. Since the significance value is more than 0.05 therefore null hypothesis is fail to reject. It means that there is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their gender.
- For testing hypothesis, H0: There is no significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their source of information. ANOVA is used. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, therefore null hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is significant difference in the perception of consumers towards influencer marketing based on their source of information
- The challenges faced by respondents regarding influencer marketing is 'loss of interest due to repetitive recommendations' followed by lack of alignment by influencers to core values, expensive products, too much sponsored content and irrelevant products for daily life.

Conclusion

From the analysis and interpretation, it can be concluded that consumers in Kottayam Town are having intentions and are actually purchasing product which are being recommended by influencers in various social media platforms. Respondents get information about influencers mainly from social media platform recommendations. Instagram influencers are the favourites of consumers and followers, followed by Facebook influencers. Based on income, their use of social media platforms and influencers are significantly different. But gender is not having any significance in their perception towards influencer marketing. While source of information actually makes a significant difference in respondents' perception. In short it can be said that influencers have major role in life of its followers regarding their consumer buying behaviour in Kottayam Town. So in order to attract more consumers towards the products, brands need to find suitable influencers for their survival in this digital economy.

Suggestions

- Relationship creation with followers helps in trust and loyalty building towards influencers and brands
- Variety endorsements by influencers can attract more and more customers towards brand they are recommending.
- Influencers should try to provide true information towards its followers, brands should ensure it.
- Proper rules should be provided by Government so that fraud and cheating activities by influencers and brands can be reduced.

References

1. Brannigan Maura. You don't need a blog anymore to be a successful 'influencer' Published 21.3.2016 Available from: <http://fashionista.com/2016/03/influencer-marketing>
2. Brown, Duncan, Hayes Nick. Influencer Marketing, Who really influences your customers? UK: Elsevier Ltd, 2008, 235.
3. Perrey Jesko, Spillecke Dennis. Retail Marketing and Branding: A Definite guide to Maximizing ROI. 2013, 399.
4. Sudha M, Sheena K. Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: the Fashion Industry, SCMS Journal of Indian Management, 2017.
5. Technorati. Digital Influence Report, 2013. Available from: <http://technorati.com/wpcontent/uploads/2013/06/tm2013DIR1.pdf>
6. Biaudet Sofie. Influencer Marketing as a Marketing Tool: The process of creating an Influencer Marketing Campaign on Instagram, 2017. retrieved from https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/134139/Biaudet_Sofie.pdf?
7. Type of Influencers: Nano, Micro, Macro and ...? Retrieved from <https://www.dearmishudad.com/type-of-influencers-nano-micro-macro-and/>
8. 2019 Influencer Marketing Consumer survey. Retrieved from <https://www.Rakuten-2019-Influencer-Marketing-Report-Rakuten-Marketing.pdf>
9. Influencer Marketing. Retrieved from <https://www.traackr.com/resources/influencer-marketing>
10. Influencer Marketing. Retrieved from <https://www.tapinfluence.com/blog-what-is-influencer-marketing/>
11. Hsu H, Tsou T. Understanding Customer Experiences in Online Blog Environments. International Journal of Information Management, 2011;31:510-523.
12. Hwang Y. The impact of uncertainty avoidance, social norms and innovativeness on trust and ease of use in electronic customer relationship. Electronic Markets, 2009;19:89-98.
13. Mendoza M. I Blog. You Buy. How bloggers are creating a new generation of product endorsers. Digital Research & Publishing, 2010, 114.
14. Meskaran F, Ismail Z, Shanmugam B. Online Purchase Intention: Effects of Trust and Security Perception. Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 2013;7(6):307-315