

Role of Influencers in Online Shopping

Tasnimul Arefin¹, Umma Nusrat Urme^{2*}

¹Senior Lecturer, Department of Fashion Design & Technology, Uttara University, **BANGLADESH**

^{2*}Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, University of Scholars, **BANGLADESH**

*(ummanusraturme@yahoo.com)

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Abstract

This article explores the multifaceted role of influencers in the digital age, focusing on their impact on marketing, consumer behaviour, and content creation. The swift progress in internet technology has resulted in the rise of social media as a dynamic platform for communication, content creation, and marketing. The extensive reach and interactive capabilities of social media make it a great asset for businesses, especially in the field of marketing communication techniques. Influencers, utilizing their prominence, trustworthiness, appeal, and authority, have become crucial in shaping customer behavior and buying choices. Their services include offering suggestions for products, building trust and credibility, increasing brand recognition, demonstrating social proof, and producing captivating content. Influencers enhance consumer engagement and cultivate loyalty by incorporating items into genuine and engaging stories. They have a role that goes beyond simply endorsing to actively influencing e-commerce trends and consumer behavior in the digital era. Therefore, it is crucial for businesses to acknowledge and utilize the power of influencers in order to establish significant relationships with consumers and traverse the ever-changing realm of online commerce.

Keywords

Influencers, Social Media, Consumer Behavior, Online Shopping.

INTRODUCTION

The internet's quick technological advancements gave rise to a brand-new communication platform known as social media. Digital citizens frequently use it to engage, share, and produce material on many subjects. Social media serves as a platform for interpersonal communication as well as the distribution of a variety of information, such as that pertaining to politics, business, education, health, culture, and entertainment, as well as the marketing and promotion of products (Briandana et al., 2021a).

The growth of the internet has benefited those involved in the sector. Its broad readership makes it a useful tool for marketing. The sector faces a new difficulty in product marketing strategies due to the contemporary digital environment. In the digital age, marketing communication techniques are essential for bringing in new business and retaining existing clients (Marta et al., 2020). One tactic used by corporate actors to introduce products to customers is marketing communication.

One of the main reasons industry players embrace social media for marketing and promotion is that it can reduce promotional budgets. Through social media, people can establish virtual social relationships by interacting, sharing, cooperating, and presenting their identities to other digital citizens. Three forms—cognition, communication, and cooperation—are used to define social in social media (Septiarysa et al., 2021). Due to its accessibility, social media offers businesses a range of venues, including Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, Twitter, WhatsApp, and more, to market their goods. According to Harry et al. (2022), social media platforms offer entrepreneurs tools that facilitate the promotion of their products through the creation and uploading of specific content. This content can be produced in a way that allows it to function as a succession of marketing messages (Widaningsih et al., 2023).

Influencers, usually also dubbed celebrity endorsers, can influence consumers' purchasing decisions. They must have four characteristics known as VisCAP: **Visibility** (the degree to which an influencer is known and appreciated by the public), **Credibility** (the value of the ability or capacity of someone who shows excellent performance which includes the expertise and trustworthiness of the endorser), **Attractiveness** (has attractiveness on not only physical but also lifestyle, personality, skills, etc), and **Power** (the charm emitted from the content creator affects the attitudes, thoughts, and behaviour of the audience when introducing the product). An influencer must have the ability to convince the audience to use the promoted product (Chinmi et al., 2020).

Influencers are important players in the online retail space because they can influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions by using their fame, authority, or knowledge. Influencers have the following effects on internet shopping:

PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS

Influencers frequently use a variety of content types, including blog entries, social media postings, videos, and reviews, to suggest goods and services to their followers. Their recommendations may affect the purchasing decisions of their audience. Product recommendations from social networks influencers were viewed as more trustworthy than those from family or friends, with 40% of consumers purchasing the products used by social media influencers (Marjerison, 2020). Influencers that advocate or endorse things are seen by their followers as providing social evidence. Since people frequently imitate the behaviour of people they trust or look up to, influencers' positive endorsements of a product verify its worth and quality in the eyes of their audience. Influencers play a crucial role in product recommendations by utilising their trusted relationships with followers to influence purchasing decisions.

By creating genuine and relatable content that is customised for specific niches and demographics, these influencers are able to effectively promote things in a manner that deeply connects with their target audience. This customised method not only increases involvement but also establishes trust, making followers more inclined to attempt and buy the suggested things (Sudibya & Hidayat, 2024). Influencers also provide top-notch, aesthetically pleasing material that showcases the product's attributes and advantages, thereby captivating potential customers even more. Influencers serve as intermediaries between brands and consumers, enhancing brand exposure, increasing conversion rates, and offering vital market intelligence. Ultimately, they play a pivotal role in determining consumer behavior and trends.

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

Influencers that consistently produce worthwhile and genuine material get the followers' respect and confidence. The trust formed by social media influencers could increase a brand's usage (Pristianita et al., 2020). Their followers are more likely to believe their recommendations when they support brands or products, which boosts confidence when making purchases online. Influencers frequently establish solid bonds of trust and sincerity with their followers. When they endorse a product, their fans see it as a sincere recommendation instead of a conventional commercial. Buying decisions can be greatly

influenced by this trust. Followers believe the advice and endorsements of the influencers they follow. When influencers advocate a brand, their audience sees it as a genuine endorsement, which can improve their perception of the brand and boost trust. Followers trust influencers to provide unbiased reviews, making their viewpoints vital sources of information for prospective purchases.

In the domain of product recommendations, influencers play a vital role in generating trust and credibility. Their fans frequently regard them as genuine and relatable, which cultivates a feeling of trust that traditional advertising finds difficult to attain (Rizzo et al., 2024). Trust is established through a gradual process of regular and authentic contacts, as well as by exchanging personal experiences and expressing honest viewpoints. When influencers support a product, their audience is more inclined to have faith in its quality and efficacy due to the endorsement coming from someone they like and trust. The influencer's credibility is strengthened by their honesty and integrity, which includes openly revealing sponsorships and offering neutral reviews. As a result, marketers use this trust to establish stronger connections with customers, as influencer endorsements typically hold more power than traditional marketing.

BRAND AWARENESS

Influencer marketing refers to the use of social media influencers to promote products or services, either directly or indirectly, to motivate purchases and enhance the brand image (Scott, 2015). Brands can expand their reach and exposure within their target audience by working with influencers. Influencers possess the capacity to introduce products to a broader demographic and create consciousness via sponsored content or collaborations. Influencers are essential for increasing brand recognition in the world of online buying. Influencers assist organizations in being more visible, drawing in new clients, and fortifying their position in the online market by utilizing their reach, credibility, writing talents, storytelling prowess, and cooperative relationships. They have the ability to change opinions, to raise brand awareness or ruin it, and they are able to achieve such outreach or status by constantly showing they attempt to stay true to their culture (Safari, n.d.) Influencers frequently share their opinions and reviews of things they've used, which helps firms understand the tastes and perspectives of their audience. Influencers who post positive reviews can increase a product's visibility and persuade others to purchase it.

Influencers play a crucial role in generating brand awareness by utilising their wide audience reach and actively engaged group of followers. They expose new products and businesses to a large audience by creating fascinating and genuine content that feels natural and reliable. Influencers effectively raise awareness of a brand's presence and products by seamlessly incorporating brand messages into their posts, stories, and videos (Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022). Their capacity to create excitement and stimulate discussions about a brand greatly enhances its presence in the digital realm. Influencers employ a range of platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and blogs, to effectively spread brand messaging through various channels, thereby reaching diverse populations. Having a presence on many platforms not only enhances immediate brand recognition but also cultivates lasting brand loyalty and engagement.

SOCIAL PROOF

Rimé (2009) argues that sharing emotions helps with coping while enhancing the social integration and the ties to others. People share with others, thus generating social support (Buechel & Berger, 2012), as they want to be accepted by the society and looking for social proof. According to Baer and Naslund (2011) social proof is what makes one legitimate in the world of social media, it is the indicator showing a behaviour that is easy to identify and beneficial. Online social proof is manifested by usually the number of likes, comments, shares, or retweets one's post generates. People tend to follow the crowd, and influencers frequently build social proof by sharing their personal experiences with items or brands. When followers see influencers using or endorsing specific items, they may be compelled to try them for themselves. Influencers frequently use social proof to their advantage by displaying their alliances,

teamwork, and client endorsements. Their followers are convinced to believe their recommendations based on the experiences of others by this social validation, which strengthens their credibility.

Influencers have a substantial impact on establishing social proof by utilizing their trustworthiness, wide audience reach, and active involvement with their followers. Social proof is a psychological phenomenon in which individuals imitate the activities of others in order to conform to social standards. This effect is intensified by the endorsements and behaviors of influencers. When influencers divulge their experiences, viewpoints, or endorsements, their followers consider these activities as reliable and are more inclined to emulate similar behaviors or engage in purchases (Shamim et al., 2024). The impact is increased by the perceived genuineness and relatability of influencers, who frequently foster a feeling of community and personal rapport with their followers. Consequently, organizations and marketers are increasingly partnering with influencers to use their capacity to create social proof and influence consumer behavior.

CONTENT CREATION

Content creators themselves must create content that attracts viewers and matches the identity and branding that is created to fulfil the purpose of content creation such as for promotion, learning, entertainment, or providing information. They also can create works for multi-platform and evaluate content that is already live. With significant followers, product promotion content certainly influences its followers. Therefore, this promotional content is created to increase sales (Widaningsih et al., 2023). Promotion will affect consumptive behaviour because sometimes the purchase of goods is not to fulfil needs, but to follow trends, increase prestige, and for various other less important reasons (Sari et al., 2021).

Influencers create innovative and captivating content that presents items in a genuine and approachable manner. Customers can be inspired and educated by this content, which gives them useful knowledge to consider before making a purchase. Through their promotional efforts, influencers can increase traffic to certain product pages or online retailers. Influencers facilitate the process of product access and purchase for their followers by incorporating links or promotional codes into their material. Influencers have a crucial role in content development since they provide captivating, genuine, and relatable information that deeply connects with their audience. By possessing a profound comprehension of their followers' tastes and interests, they are able to create information that is not only pertinent but also captivating. Influencers frequently engage in the exploration of many formats, including videos, blogs, podcasts, and social media posts, in order to maintain the novelty and attractiveness of their content.

Their ingenuity and capacity to narrate can greatly augment a brand's storyline, rendering it more relatable and credible. Influencers can successfully promote companies while preserving authenticity by seamlessly incorporating items or services into their content. Influencers are highly important partners in content development due to their unique combination of originality, authenticity, and strategic promotion. They play a crucial role in boosting engagement and cultivating devoted communities.

In conclusion, influencers are now essential actors in e-commerce trends and customer behaviour shaping. Influencers have completely changed how consumers find, assess, and buy things in the digital age. They have the capacity to foster trust, filter options, encourage interaction, and maintain authenticity. It is imperative for businesses and marketers to acknowledge the significant impact influencers have on online shopping and to seize the chances they offer for deep connections and well-informed decision-making. Influencers are more than just endorsers; they are the architects of a new era of commerce, one marked by authenticity, trust, and meaningful relationships. As consumers, let us traverse this brave new world with caution and curiosity, aided by the voices and insights of individuals who encourage us to discover, explore, and enjoy the limitless possibilities of online buying.

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