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Social Media Influencers: Key to Influence Consumer's Intention to Purchase Fitness Products

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Abstract---According to Nielsen research, homebound clients have resulted in a 60% increase in global video content consumption. The frequency with which content creators did live video sessions on social media platforms rose as well in 2020. According to research, 54% of shoppers do a search on social media for product reviews posted by influencers before making a buy. Social media influencers (abbreviated as SMIs) now play a key role in marketing for a wide variety of firms. The goal of this study was to ascertain the importance of similarity and activity of social media influencers (SMI) on customer purchasing decisions about fitness and health products. A structured questionnaire was used to survey 90 respondents from Delhi/NCR. Multiple Regression analysis was used to analyze the data in SPSS. The data reveal that the attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of branded material associated with fitness products shared by SMIs has a significant impact on followers' purchase intentions for such products.

Keywords---Social Media, Social Media Influencers, Intentions, Purchase Decisions, Fitness products.

Introduction

While influencer marketing is a relatively new idea in its current, digital evolution, as is the case with all consumer marketing processes, the underlying motivations are fundamental human motives. Fitness and a healthy lifestyle SMI divides her time between idea generation, content creation, fan engagement, and brand negotiations. They are the new age's leading lights. These twenty-something SMIs are snatching up some of the industry's largest companies, from Pizza Hut and Dairy Milk to BMW and Myntra. For Shivesh Bhatia, 23, who has 1.8 lakh

Instagram followers, and Ranveer Allahbadia, 26, who has 2.2 million YouTube subscribers, their very first job was as a 'influencer.' They remain unconcerned about the fast changing landscape of social media — from blogs to Facebook to YouTube to Instagram to TikTok to ShareChat. SMIs stay up by merely compressing their material. Marketers refer to SMIs as opinion leaders. According to marketing experts, this is a developmental stage, and brand managers account for 'discrepancies' while negotiating transactions. SMIs are classified by brands as Superstars, Super Bloggers, Bloggers, and Campus Ambassadors, with other sub-categories based on platform. This enables marketers to select the influencers they desire. There is also the 'accessibility' element to consider. When Shah Rukh Khan endorses an i10, we know he is not driving it, but a SMI may very well be. The same holds true for any other products they endorse. While it may appear as though everyone is aware of what they are getting themselves into, the true underbelly of social media influence may be just beginning to emerge. Nutritionists and health gurus, for example, are jumping on board with sizable fan bases. While the ordinary SMI is pretty blatant in its commercial promotion, it's far more difficult to discern whether health experts are merely offering polite advice or are endorsing a 'friendly' company. Everyone witnessed how these new generation SMIs aided people during pandemics. A new generation of medical professionals is using social media to combat disinformation about covid-19 and to share personal stories about their experiences working in intensive care units to advise people to be safe. Hashtags such as #Lockdownwithdocs were used to promote awareness of the covid-19.

These healthcare social media influencers share knowledge about various fields, including psychiatry, gynecology, general medicine, sexual and reproductive health, and dermatology. While healthcare is a serious subject, the content does not have to be dull. Indeed, communicating and comprehending your health feels like a tremendous undertaking due to the inherent complexity. These influencers, through well-researched, high-quality posts, films, and stories, demystify complex topics and address concerns that may be taboo or disregarded for the same reason. They are cautious, conscientious folks who recognize the responsibility that comes with internet communication of sensitive material. None of these doctors provide individual medical consultations via their handles, but they all profess a passion for healthcare and the importance of debunking myths and clearing the information congestion.

Influencers' followings have grown exponentially throughout the pandemic, with a high interaction rate as individuals submit their inquiries and seek valuable solutions. There are also micro influencers with a growing following but enormous potential due to their specific target, and these influencers will assist brands in establishing a presence among people who share their brand goals. Due to the high degree of trust and authority these influencers have developed over time, they ventured into the domain of healthcare marketing, suggesting chosen brands for menstruation cups, mental health books, and lubricants, among other things.

Review of Literature

Influencer marketing is a new marketing strategy, and social media influencers (SMIs) are the new brand ambassadors. Influencer marketing, according to Sudha

et al (2017), is the "process of identifying and activating individuals who have influence over a specific target audience or medium in order to be part of a brand's campaign toward increased reach, sales, or engagement." According to the authors of this study, influencer marketing can be viewed as a larger-scale version of word-of-mouth marketing with a focus on a social context. Because influencers maintain a strong relationship with their audience, this is also a way for companies to expand their audience and eventually turn them loyal through trust and authenticity. This relationship develops as a result of the influencer producing content that people want and to which the influencer's audience can relate, resulting in the audience having "a certain level of trust in the influencer's opinion." Furthermore, in order for influencers to be more persuasive, they must regularly post social media updates in their specialty areas (Chen Lou and Shupe Yuan, 2019). According to the authors, this occurs when an influencer posts "information about product alternatives or other informative content" to their followers. Influencers frequently add a personal touch to their content in order to provide their followers with an enjoyable experience. As a result of globalization and technological advancements, a new market place has emerged online, and consumers now have the option and opportunity to purchase online (Rushworth et al., 2017). According to Freberg et al. (2011), online purchase intention is defined as "the consumer's proclivity to buy online." They explain that the internet has changed consumer purchasing behavior as a result of online transactions, and that the way of purchasing online differs from the traditional way because consumers are more concerned with the online store and its various elements. Despite the fact that internet usage has increased dramatically, consumers face a certain level of risk when shopping online. According to Dada (2017), social media influencers are "people who have the ability to influence the perception of others or persuade them to do something different." Dada goes on to say that influencers do not need a large following to fit the definition, but rather a combination of three factors. They must exhibit "reach, contextual credibility, and salesmanship."

Research Methodology

The main objective of the study was to find out the role of social media influencers in influencing the consumers' intentions to purchase fitness products. SMIs three characteristics (attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness) and scale items were taken from the literature (Ohanian, 1991, Jarvenpaa 1999). Hypothesis was formulated as follows:

H0: Characteristics of SMIs negatively influences the consumer's intentions to purchase fitness products.

H1: Characteristics of SMIs positively influences the consumer's intentions to purchase fitness products.

A quantitative study with 90 respondents was conducted in Dehli/NCR to test the hypothesis. Purposive sampling techniques were used because each respondent was required to follow at least one social media influencer. People who have a social media presence and follow social media influencers are one unit of the study. In order to analyze the results, SPSS was used to create a demographic profile of the respondents. The hypothesis is then tested using the regression analysis technique. The following technique was used on the three identified

variables: a) attractiveness, b) expertise, and c) trustworthiness. Each of these variables was explained by five items/statements.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

SPSS version 21 was used to analyze the data collected from the structured questionnaire.

Demographic Profiles of the respondents:

Table 4a data shows that respondents were more in the age category of 18 to 25 years. There were 56 females and 34 male respondents. Undergraduate respondents dominated (52) the study followed by 38 postgraduates. Out of 90 respondents, all were using social media. Most respondents (48) spend 1 to 4 hours daily on social media platforms followed by those who spend more than 4 hours (23). Only 19 were found to be those who spent only 1 hour on social media. All the respondents were avid followers of social media influencers and liked to take their recommendations seriously.

Table 1 A: Demographic Profile of Respondents

<i>Demographic Details</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Age of Respondent	18 years to 25 years	52	57.8
	26 years to 35 years	26	28.9
	above 36 years	12	13.3
	<i>Total</i>	90	100.0
Gender	Female	56	62.2
	Male	34	37.8
	<i>Total</i>	90	100.0
Qualification	Undergraduate	52	57.8
	Postgraduate	38	42.2
	<i>Total</i>	90	100.0
Social Media User	Yes	90	100.0
	No	0	0
	<i>Total</i>	90	100.0
Time Spent on Social Media	Less than 1 hour daily	19	21.1
	1 hour to 4 hours daily	48	53.3
	More than 4 hours daily	23	25.6
	<i>Total</i>	90	100.0

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

The analysis was performed to know that to what degree of extent the intentions to purchase (dependent variable) the fitness products of consumers are influenced by the social media influencers' activities and their characteristics like (independent variable) attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness. It means that whether the consumers trust the influencers, they consider them genuine or not and whether they want to be like them by getting influenced by their fitness and beauty and what actions to be taken based on the results obtained with using SPSS. The results are represented in 4 parts a) Descriptive Statistics, b)

Regression Model Summary, c) Variation Analysis (ANOVA) and d) Regression Coefficients.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Purchase Intention	3.32	1.289	90
Att1	3.67	1.136	90
Att2	3.53	1.196	90
Att3	3.53	1.196	90
Att4	3.45	1.294	90
Att5	3.77	.930	90
Ex1	3.72	.988	90
Ex2	3.72	1.043	90
Ex3	3.69	1.017	90
Ex4	3.31	1.117	90
Ex5	3.40	.964	90
Trust1	3.31	1.294	90
Trust2	3.28	1.256	90
Trust3	3.20	1.221	90
Trust4	3.22	1.021	90
Trust5	3.29	1.092	90

From the above descriptive statistics table 4B, it can be inferred that all the items of independent variables that most of the respondents prefer that attractiveness of the influencers, expertise and knowledge of SMIs and their trustworthiness is actually genuine. From the standard deviation results it can be inferred that data was normally distributed.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.917 ^a	.840	.818	.550	1.039
a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust5, Att5, Att2, Ex5, Ex3, Trust2, Ex2, Att4, Att1, Att3, Ex4, Trust4, Ex1, Trust1, Trust3					
b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention					

From the value of correlation coefficient ($R = 0.917$) in table 4C can be inferred that there is a strong linear relationship between the SMIs characteristics and consumers intention to purchase the fitness related products. The value of R^2 (coefficients of determination) is 0.840 which signifies that 84% of variance in the consumers purchase intentions can be explained by the SMIs characteristics taken as Attractiveness, Expertise and Trustworthiness. The value of adjusted R^2 is less the value R^2 i.e. 0.818 which is a good indicator in regression model fitness. The standard error of estimate is 0.550 which means that the model will give more clear predictions about the research problem as the observations will fall more closely around the regression line. The value of DW test falls within the limits i.e. 0 to 2 which means there is positive autocorrelation exists in the data.

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	170.303	15	11.354	25.982	.001 ^b
	Residual	32.331	74	.437		
	Total	202.634	89			
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust5, Att5, Att2, Ex5, Ex3, Trust2, Ex2, Att4, Att1, Att3, Ex4, Trust4, Ex1, Trust1, Trust3						

For the testing the overall significance of the regression model, variation analysis (ANOVA) was performed. The value of sum of squares is significant as it signifies the dispersion of data points away from the mean value. Regression degree of freedom is 15 which is no. of regression coefficients (16=one response variable and 15 predictors items) – 1. Total degree of freedom is 89 which is number of observations – 1. Residual df is total df – regression df. The mean squares for regression is calculated by regression sum of squares / regression df which is 11.354 and residual are calculated by residual sum of squares divided by residual df which is .437. The F statistic is obtained by dividing regression mean square with residual mean square which is 25.982, this value is significant to know the overall significance of the regression model in the current dataset. P value is .001 which is less than the significance level of .05. Based on this result, it can concluded that null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. It can be inferred that characteristics of SMIs positively influences the consumer's intentions to purchase fitness products and these characteristics are highly significant in influencing the consumers purchase intentions.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
1	(Constant)	.895	.554		1.616	.009
	Att1	.048	.047	.041	.985	.027
	Att2	.046	.023	.021	.504	.015
	Att3	.045	.026	.024	.571	.069
	Att4	.041	.004	.004	.102	.019
	Att5	.085	.060	.062	1.429	.056
	Ex1	.058	.042	.032	.719	.073
	Ex2	.054	.04	.035	.801	.025
	Ex3	.059	.026	.021	.440	.061
	Ex4	.049	.040	.034	.803	.024
	Ex5	.096	.056	.072	1.721	.088
	Trust1	.214	.046	.218	1.897	.001
	Trust2	.043	.041	.040	.970	.034
	Trust3	.114	.053	.108	1.154	.034
	Trust4	.056	.023	.018	.409	.083
Trust5	.056	.002	.002	.038	.070	
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention (intentions of consumers to buy fitness products)						

From the above table of coefficients, it can be inferred that there is significant relationship between SMIs characteristics and consumers purchase intention related to fitness products as the beta coefficients values are positive. The t-values are far from 0 so null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis that characteristics of SMIs positively influences the consumer's intentions to purchase fitness products is accepted.

Discussion and Conclusion

Social media Influencers are said to be the very influential in the lives of their followers specially related to the fitness products. As this has also been proved in the present study. Off late social media influencers have been taking the center stage of any discussion in the media and the reason is simple that they are the one who are driving the consumption patterns. In the present study, the characteristics of SMIs are the very important for the consumers and they gets the recommendations and suggestions very seriously of the influencers. Very few studies have been done the given subject. So more research should be undertaken to see the significant impacts on the larger samples and with widely classified demographic profiles. As it was the limitation of the study that the maximum no. of respondents belonged to the similar backgrounds and similar characteristics. So it will be wise to say that it is very early to say that the SMIs impacts the behaviors and purchase intentions of their followers in a big way but it does impacts. Companies can also take the ques from the study that they can use more SMIs if they want to make their prospective consumers aware about their products. So more SMIs should be bring on board to spread the awareness about fitness products and bring more significant lifestyle changes in th consumers about their health and fitness.

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