

To ascertain the role and influence of 'Social Media Influencers' on the Buying Behaviour of Indian Cosmetic Women Customers

Annu Gupta* and Dr. Suchita Gera**

*Research Scholar, Department of Management
Himgiri Zee University, Dehradun

** Assistant Professor, Department of Management
Himgiri Zee University, Dehradun

Abstract

'Influence' means the power to have some sort of impact on people. The impact can be positive or negative, on anybody or anything, and in a direct or indirect manner. Selling strategies in business organisations have had influencer marketing as part since ages. Even though it might seem that it has gained popularity in recent times, it is the less sophisticated version of the word-of-mouth selling strategy that is being used since a long time. Influencer marketing might also be an extended version of the reference marketing strategy. Through this research the researcher examined the influence of social media influencers on the cosmetic buying behaviour among Indian consumers. The aim of the research is, "To ascertain the role and influence of 'social media influencers' on the buying behaviour of Indian cosmetic women customers". The purpose is to identify the impact of 'social media influencers' on buying behaviour. The buying behaviour will be assessed using three specific factors which will be identified from the survey. The research uses exploratory research approach and survey method using structured questionnaire to capture participant's opinion. The participants are selected using non-probability convenience sampling method. 170 responses are collected using this method in three weeks.

Keywords: Influence, social media, buying behaviour.

Introduction

Social media has become a very important part of all our lives. Even for businesses, social media plays a major role in marketing. Pretty much every business has a marked social media profile which was not the case until the recent years. There's no denying in the fact that during the initial days when social media was introduced, numerous advertisers viewed social media marketing as a method that will disappear with time. The introduction of social media was done with MySpace, as believed by the majority of people (Fuchs, 2021). But truly, it was the Bulletin Board System that marks as the origin of social media. After 16 years, the next big step was taken in the world of social media with the introduction of 'The Palace'. It happened in 1994 and is surprisingly used even today. Users of The Palace could interface on a server with a chat room. Each user had its own graphical avatar to begin

with. As per Hjorth and Hinton (2019), SixDegrees.com was introduced which happened 3 years after the last launch. On this platform, users were allowed to connect with people and upload pictures, which is why it is considered as the primary web-based media invention.

Lunar Storm marked the beginning for social media growth. It was the first site launched for social networking, financed by advertisement, as per Evans et al. (2021). In 2003, Flickr and Photobucket were launched. With that, began the photo sharing phase of social media. In 2005, YouTube came along. All the users could share a wide range of media with people worldwide, by this time. After YouTube, Reddit was also launched in 2005. The year 2006 is considered as the main appearance of social media by some people. 2006 made everybody aware of social media being a legit business, and is digging in for the long haul (Tuten, 2020). Google obtained

YouTube for a whopping amount of \$1.65 billion. Along with that, Facebook and Twitter joined the party, which changed the face of social media forever. As per Luttrell, 2018, Facebook immediately turned into the 3rd most visited website on the internet.

Social media marketing is believed to be valuable in the recent times. The digital marketing strategies used by businesses can be proved successful because of the number of potential customers that use social media. About 2.3 billion individuals use social media, and 97% of people falling under the age group of 16-64 will use it in a month or so (Evans et al., 2021). As per Evans et al. (2021), in a day, more than 1.6 billion users will sign into Facebook. Since, the aim of this research is to ascertain the role and influence of 'social media influencers' on the buying behaviour of Indian cosmetic customers therefore, it is important to develop the insight of Indian Cosmetic Industry. The following few paragraphs are written to explain the current state of affair of the cosmetic industry in India.

According to Keelery (2021), the value of Indian cosmetic industry is estimated to be around 20 billion US dollars in the year 2020. The everyday use of products related to bath and body, has added to a huge advancement in this industry. As per Business Wire, 2021, the cosmetics market in India is to develop at two-digits CAGR of 16.39% through FY2026 to arrive at approximately USD 290 billion. According to Sarkae, (2021), the recent focus of the people towards their grooming and skincare is one of the reasons why Indian cosmetic industry is flourishing. Sales of these products on online platforms also play a significant role. Along with that, as the disposable income of the people are increases, so does their purchasing power. People see visible results of using such beauty and skincare products which increases their demand for products in the cosmetic industry.

Larger part of the Indian market was overwhelmed by the unorganised sector. It is very similar to India's FMCG and retail areas. As mentioned in the Consulate General of Israel (2018), offline sales happened to be more than online sales. However, online sales have seen growth in the recent years.

Homegrown partners in India are levelling up with more updated and natural brands entering the market. Online market has been able to fill the gaps in the retail market by introducing new businesses. Falguni Nayar set a great example for a success story, by starting her brand 'Nykaa' which has shown progress ever since it was started (Khusboo and Ho, 2019). Since, this research is aimed at examining the role of social media marketing in the cosmetic industry, hence it is required to determine and understand the relationship between the two. The following paragraphs are written to explain the same.

There is no denying the fact that social media has turned into an inexorably significant platform for brands to introduce their products. As per research scholars like, Hermanda et al. (2019) social media posts arrive a huge potential clientele especially in the beauty industry. As observed in Suresh et al. (2016), the rise of Instagram and YouTube, along with Facebook and Twitter, has changed the social media marketing scenario, for good. It was revealed in the 'Connected Beauty Consumer Report' that people are shifting more towards digital media platforms, and basing their product purchasing choices on videos like make-up tutorials on YouTube. Many surveys also indicate that the online shift has been proved useful for the growth of this industry. Customers were surveyed, outcome of which showed that, 81% people drew in because of videos on YouTube, with 26% buying an item as an immediate outcome, as noted by Google et al. (2020). It also mentioned that there was no such gender disparity, since everybody showed comparable interest in the industry, averaging to three cosmetic items each month.

This scenario implies that the companies in this industry should likewise adjust to the preferences of customers. An Instagram influencer based in Kochi, Kerala; explains the importance of gaining followers and getting viral on social media platforms like Instagram. Her name is Seba Sulthana and she makes reels showing various makeup looks. Getting a good viewer response is what draws in huge brands for collaboration to promote their products. Influencers can also get paid in the range of Rs.15k-25k per post, as mentioned by Suryani and Margery (2020).

This arrangement appears to be a mutually advantageous, since brands don't have to incur huge costs of celebrity collaborations, for achieving the same objective of alluring a huge clientele with loyalty to the brand. Through this research the researcher examined the influence of social media influencers on the cosmetic buying behaviour among Indian consumers.

Research Objective

The aim of the research is, "To ascertain the role and influence of 'social media influencers' on the buying behaviour of Indian cosmetic customers". The purpose of research is to identify the impact of 'social media influencers' on buying behaviour. The buying behaviour was assessed using three specific factors using the survey. These three factors were examined using the following three research objectives:

1. To study the association between 'social media influencers' and purchase decision for the beauty products.
2. To study the association between 'social media influencers' and searching (enquiring) pattern for beauty products recommended by them.
3. To study the association between 'social media influencers' and re-trial of the beauty products for second time even if the first experience is not good.

Research Hypothesis

Ho (1): There is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and purchase decision for the beauty products.

Ha (1): There is a significant association between 'social media influencers' and purchase decision for the beauty products.

Ho (2): There is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and searching (enquiring) pattern for beauty products recommended by them.

Ha (2): There is a significant association between 'social media influencers' and

searching (enquiring) pattern for beauty products recommended by them.

Ho (3): There is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and re-trial of the beauty products for second time even if the first experience is not good.

Ho (3): There is a significant association between 'social media influencers' and re-trial of the beauty products for second time even if the first experience is not good.

Research Methodology

The research was conducted using the exploratory research approach. A structured questionnaire was prepared and pre-tested to check the problems in the questionnaire. Since, the questionnaire contained only close-ended questions, therefore, it was important to enquire from the participants whether it is capable of capturing their view point. The pre-test revealed that a few questions require more choices to be added. The wording of seven questions was changed as a result of pre-testing activity. After the pre-test changes, the final questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms and the link is shared with the participants using social media applications like, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. The participants were selected using non-probability convenience sampling method. The study was conducted on 170 responses in Gurgram (Haryana, India) in the duration of three weeks. Further data was analysed on SPSS Version 23.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire. Survey method was adopted to contact the participants. Google Form was used to collect data from the participants.

Hypotheses were also tested in this research to prove the impact of 'social media influencers' on people with different demographics (age groups, income, profession, and marital status). This is to check whether impact of social media influencer is

more on young people or people with high income or working women.

Findings and Discussion

Demographics

The maximum number of respondents belongs to 'Above 45 years' of age (36.5%) followed by 'Age between 22-35 years' (25.3%). 30% of the participants were professional and close to 63% of all the participants were working (Professionals, salaried and self-employed). More than 25% choose not to share their family income and out of the remaining 44.7% had family monthly income of more than Rs 50,000. 42.9% of the participants were married whereas 31.2% were single and remaining were wither divorced or 'Prefer not to say' about their marital status. Close to 40% of the participants had a family size of 'less than or equal to four'.

Cosmetic Buying Behaviour

The survey revealed that maximum number of participants buys cosmetics every month. Only 5% of the respondents were buying cosmetics every week. When asked how much they spend every month on cosmetics 37.6% of the

participants said they spend less than Rs 1,000 whereas 32.9% said that they spend between Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 per month on cosmetics.

Social Media Usage/Behaviour

More than three-fourth of the participants have social media account (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and alike) and close to 65% of the participants follow beauty influencers.

Role of Beauty Influencer

When asked why they follow beauty influencers the responses varied from they provide inspiration for beauty looks; they provide good makeup tutorials; their product reviews are very useful in taking purchase decision; and, some said that they like looking at their pictures/watching their videos. Close to 60% of the participants said that they purchased some of the products under the influence of social media influencers. The survey asked participants to rate three statements on a scale of 1 (Least likely) to 5 (Most likely). The responses of these statements were quite relevant for this research and are as follows:

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean Score
If you come across any promotional video or link on a cosmetic product from a social media influencer, how likely are you to look into it?	15	11	43	65	36	3.56
How likely are you to purchase from a brand you never heard of if your favourite beauty influencer has recommended it?	16	30	39	48	37	3.52
If you come across any promotional video or link on a cosmetic product from a social media influencer, how likely are you to share and forward that post to you friends?	10	30	48	43	39	3.42

The above three statements asked about the action that the participant would take regarding 'Looking into the product on influencer's recommendation'; 'Purchase a never heard product on influencer's recommendation' and 'share and forward that post of influencer'. The scores were towards the middle of the scale showing that the response is neither positive nor negative.

There were three major areas where the researcher would like to examine the impact of influencers on customers. There areas were, asking the customers for a second trail after

first trail failed; Trustworthiness of an influencer; and, viewers finding influencer's videos are more interesting. The following responses were received. Only 37% of the respondents agree that they might try for the second trail after the first trail failed on the influencer's recommendation. On a scale of 1 (Least strongly) to 5 (Most strongly) the participants trusted the information provided by an influencer, the survey revealed the mean score of 3.57 showing that the participants were not very much inclined towards the trustworthiness of the influencer. When asked regarding the videos of the influencers are

found more interesting the mean score was 3.24 showing that it is not.

Hypotheses Testing

Chi-square test was used to examine the hypotheses. According to Saunders et al. (2019), the chi-square test is used to determine if there is any association between the variables under study or not. Since, the hypotheses were to examine the association between the two variables; hence, chi-square test was used.

Factor	Chi-square value	Significant
Age with Frequency of buying cosmetics	36.656	Yes
Age with Monthly Spending	26.715	Yes
Age with social media account	0.403	No
Age with following of beauty influencer	2.529	No

When age was compared with social media account presence, the test revealed that there is no significant difference. Same is the case with following of beauty influencers.

First Hypothesis

Ho (1): There is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and purchase decision for the beauty products.

First of all, demographic variables are checked with frequency of buying to identify if a particular segment is buying more than the other. The first test was with age segment and frequency of buying cosmetics. The p-value was less than 0.05 which indicated that there is a significant difference between the buying frequency and age group. Age compared with monthly spending was also significantly different.

Ha (1): There is a significant association between 'social media influencers' and purchase decision for the beauty products.

This hypothesis is tested using chi-square test with cross tabulation of two questions. The first parameter is whether the respondents follow any influencer and the second parameter is a question where the participants were asked whether their purchase is inspired by the beauty influencer.

Follow beauty influencers * Purchased inspired by influences Crosstabulation

Count

	Purchased inspired by influences		Total
	No	Yes	
Follow beauty influencers No	34	26	60
Yes	36	74	110
Total	70	100	170

The chi-square value was 9.186 which is significant. The null hypothesis is rejected i.e., there is a significant difference in the significant impact of 'social media influencers' on purchase decision. It can be seen from the table above that 67% of the participants who follow beauty influencers purchased under their influence as against 43% among the non-followers.

Second Hypothesis

Ho (2): There is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and

searching (enquiring) pattern for beauty products recommended by them.

Ha (2): There is a significant association between 'social media influencers' and searching (enquiring) pattern for beauty products recommended by them.

This hypothesis is tested using chi-square test with cross tabulation of two question. The first parameter is whether the respondents follow any beauty influencer and the second parameter is a question where the participants were asked whether they initiated any search

for the product inspired by the beauty influencer.

Follow beauty influencers * Purchase because of influencer's recommendation Cross tabulation Count

			Purchase because of influencer's recommendation					Total
			1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	
Follow beauty influencers	No		5	16	17	14	8	60
	Yes		11	14	22	34	29	110
Total			16	30	39	48	37	170

The chi-square value for this table was 9.382 which is not significant. This shows that the null hypothesis is accepted i.e., there is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and searching (enquiring) pattern for beauty products recommended by them.

Third Hypothesis

Ho (3): There is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and retrieval of the beauty products for second time even if the first experience is not good.

Ho (3): There is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and retrieval of the beauty products for second time even if the first experience is not good.

This hypothesis is tested using chi-square test with cross tabulation of two question. The first parameter is whether the respondents follow any beauty influencer and the second parameter is a question where the participants were asked whether they would try a beauty product for a second time (even when the first trail is not good) inspired by the beauty influencer.

Follow beauty influencers * Influencer's recommendation useful for 2nd trail Cross tabulation Count

			Influencer's recommendation useful for 2nd trail			Total
			May be	No	Yes	
Follow beauty influencers	No		19	17	24	60
	Yes		46	25	39	110
Total			65	42	63	170

The chi-square value was 1.757 which is not significant. The null hypothesis is accepted i.e., there is no significant association between 'social media influencers' and retrieval of the beauty products for second time even if the first experience is not good.

Conclusion

Social media marketing is believed to be valuable in the recent times. The digital marketing strategies used by businesses can be proved successful because of the number of potential customers that use social media. There is no denying the fact that social media has turned into an inexorably significant platform for brands to introduce their products. The rise of Instagram and YouTube, along

with Facebook and Twitter, has changed the social media marketing scenario, for good. The research revealed that people are shifting more towards digital media platforms, and basing their product purchasing choices on videos like make-up tutorials on YouTube. Survey of the customers showed that people drew in because of videos by the influencers but the influence is not strong enough to force the customers into buying an item as an immediate outcome. The survey revealed that age is making impact of buying frequency and amount spent on cosmetics. Overall, it could be concluded that the customers get interested in a product after recommendations from the influencers but this interest is not translated into immediate purchasing. The companies have to explore

ways to convert this interest into action

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