



## **IMPACT OF INFLUENCERS FROM INSTAGRAM AND YOUTUBE ON THEIR FOLLOWERS**

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**Cite This Article:** Vaibhavi Nandagiri & Leena Philip, “Impact of Influencers from Instagram and Youtube on their Followers”, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education, Volume 4, Issue 1, Page

Number 61-65, 2018.

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### **Abstract:**

This study looks into the work of popular social media influencers and the impact they have on their followers. The social media influencer forums chosen are specific to YouTube and Instagram. The researcher seeks to understand if the work of an influencer while endorsing or reviewing a product has a positive effect on their followers. Sample size of minimum 100 were chosen and given a survey. A sample size of 10 between the age group of 18 – 21 years was selected for the experiment in which they were shown images and videos of the influencers from Instagram and YouTube. These videos and images shows the influencers reviewing and endorsing the products respectively. The sample was then interviewed. The researcher also interviewed 3 influencers to understand their work. With the help of all the methods, it was concluded that the work of an influencer is positive and that they do have an impact on the followers, as the followers sees that the influencer is a credible source and thus are willing to try out the products reviewed and endorsed. The influencer also observes positive response from both the brands they endorse and from their followers.

**Key Words:** Impact, Social Media Influencers, Instagram, Youtube, Product Endorsements & Product Reviews

### **Introduction:**

On popular social media platforms, many users often follow popular social media accounts, these accounts are called social media influencers. Due to their popularity, many brands approach these influencers and use influencers to endorse or review their products. On a visually appealing platform such as Instagram and YouTube, the work of the influencers are more commonly observed. The work of the influencers is to endorse or review products of several brands. Influencers are there on almost all social media platforms, and different types of types such as fitness, fashion, beauty, books, Do It Yourself (DIYs) and many more (Belagatti, 2017).

Many times, the influencers are often unnoticed for the work they do. Although with the rise of social media, there is a growth in the influencer as a profession, many companies are now realising the potential they possess. The brands approach the influencers and are in a contact with them so that the influencer endorses their brands. On a photography platform such as Instagram, the fashion influencers mostly endorse a product by wearing it and then tagging the picture with the name of the brand (Izea, 2017). On a video forum such as YouTube, influencers have the liberty and the time to properly explain the features of a product as well as express their opinions of the same (Media Kix, 2016).

This research paper looks into the work of the influencer on these two visually appealing platforms both Instagram and YouTube. This paper sees to answer the following research paper: How often are social media users exposed to influencer marketing? If the content is more preferable to advertisements? Should the product endorsed be in sync with the influencer’s job/ profile to impact an audience? What brands are more likely to impact the audience? Are followers willing to try or purchase the products showcased by the influencer?

### **Theoretical Framework:**

The theory that has been adopted in this research paper, is Framing theory by Goffman. Framing theory suggests that the media presents audience a particular information in a frame, thus making the audience think and influence their choices based on how they shall process the information. The frames are abstract ways in which the media communicate their message (Davie, 2014). By this, we can imply that the work of the influencer through product reviews, and product endorsements, are presented in a frame to their followers. The frame (endorsing a product) is analysed to see how well the idea (being a desirable product) is presented by the social media influencer. This is then also observed to see if it has the desired effect on the audience (motivated enough to purchase the product).

### **Review of Literature:**

The earliest research in this topic was conducted in New Jersey, USA in the year 2010. The research mainly focused on creating an algorithm, which helps identify the most suitable influencer for the company. Based on the results from the algorithm, the influencers can be divided into 3 tiers. Tier A is group of influencers with the most number of followers, and they are more current news oriented. Tier B is the group that has reasonable followers however, they have a team which helps them create their content. Tier C is has least

number of followers and are very influential as they dig deep into their topics. Most brands preferred Tier C. The main purpose of this paper was to identify the groups of influencers and help the brands choose influencers wisely (Booth & Matic, 2010).

The next research was conducted in United States, in the year 2011. This research focused upon what were the main characteristics of the influencers. The method used was a California Q-sort. This was given to 32 college students to attribute the characters of the influencers. The results showed that the influencers were perceived to be smart, ambitious, productive, poised and social. The same characteristics were attributed to that of a CEO (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg., 2011).

The following research was conducted in Australia, in the year 2015. This paper focused on how influencers manage to create content without it seeming to be an advertisement. The researcher conducted interviews with 120 personal interviews with 25 influencers. The personal interviews also included their family, friends, advertisers, brand and many more. The results found that there is a responsibility towards the brand that an influencer is endorsing and must showcase the most authentic behaviour. They should also be very flexible to the needs of the brands (Abidin & Ots, 2015).

The following research was conducted in Sweden, May 2016. The paper mainly focuses on the work of Instagram influencers on the gymming and fitness industry. The method was a process of interviews and an experiment. The results suggested that the attitude of consumer's can be classified into 3. The positive attitude included genuinely, interests, reginal, and positive content. The negative content included the content being too forceful, selfish. The last form of content included maybe this meant them either felt positive or let down (Jargalsaikhan & Korotina, 2016).

The following research was conducted in North Carolina, America in 2016. This research paper studies the brand Maybelline and sees how Maybelline's communication strategies through social influencers and social media are used to get to the audience. The results found that the content was relatable, transparency amongst brand and purchaser, and lastly forms a connection between the shopper and brand that eases the worry of applying items (Forbes, 2016).

The following research was conducted in Belgium, in August 2016. The paper focuses on if the number of followers determines the popularity of the person and based on this if they agree to actually choose to believe their opinion from the marketer's point of view. The results found that with high number of followers, the idea is triggered that the product may not be exclusive after all, as many are interested in it. Hence marketers must choose the quality of content presented by the influencer than the number of followers as this is more important (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2016).

The following research was conducted in Texas, America in November 2016. This research paper looks into how the brand is choosing upcoming social media celebrities as their brand endorses in the field of fashion. It was found that the collaborations with the brand was inquired by the influencers themselves. There was a spike on engagement rate when the products were endorsed close to New York Fashion Week (Thornton, 2016).

The next research was conducted in Sweden, May 2017. The paper's main focus was on how the audience perceives the fitness sponsored video on YouTube. The method was done by analysing data from popular videos and the YouTube channel. The results found that the product is usually marketed through discount coupons or giveaways, however, the success rate of people actually buying it is very rare. If the audience is aware that the brand is shown with a motive the vlogger is most likely to receive a negative feedback. However, if they show it subtly and naturally as if it were a part of a conversation, then, the audience is more likely to perceive it naturally and positively (Kauppinen & Pavlova, 2017).

The next research was conducted in Virginia, America in May 2017. The paper mainly focused how the brands are turning towards social media influencers to endorse their products. The method used was a questionnaire. The results indicated that perception of the product was in relation to what the influencer says about the product (Burke, 2017).

The next research was conducted in Netherlands, in May 2017. This research explores the impacts of message sidedness and item delineation in limited time posts on Instagram on customer reactions. The method, was done with 266 college students and was an online study. The results found that when the influencer uses a message which conveys the features as well as the reasons to use the product, the followers believed that more than just features of the product. The attention was given more to the product endorsements of the influencers who had effective reviews, although the endorsement may seem that their aim is to sell (Braatz, 2017).

#### **Method:**

The researcher aims to collect data through two methods as qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection has been used.

For the experiment a sample of 10 people from the age group of 18-21 will be chosen. They will be shown content from YouTube and Instagram in which, the social media influencers endorse a particular product. Before viewing the content they will be briefed about the YouTube and Instagram influencer, the work they do, the product they are reviewing, so that they can answer the interview questions smoothly.

From YouTube, beauty and technology genres are chosen. Both these genres include viewing the product review first, and then followed by the advertisement. From Instagram, the work of four influencers has been chosen. After viewing the videos, the sample will then be shown images from popular Instagram accounts. These accounts include models, sportspersons and beauty bloggers. These images will be shown to the sample before and an image where they have tagged a particular brand of clothing they are wearing. The researcher has selected these images on the basis of the profile's popularity, their work and the kind of images and brands that the Instagram celebrity is endorsing.

After showing 4 videos (2 product reviews and 2 advertisements) from YouTube, and viewing the work of 4 influencers from Instagram, the sample will then answer the in a one-on-one interview. Since interviews are also qualitative method, the interview shall be done immediately after the viewing of the above mentioned videos and images. This is because it will be easy for the sample to explain whether they prefer influencers giving product reviews to advertisements. The interview will mainly focus on the questions if the content is more preferable to advertisements? What brands are more likely to impact the audience? The interview between the researcher and the sample was voice recorded on phone for further analysis.

After collecting the data from the sample, the researcher then interviewed three influencers to understand their perspective on how brands approach them, if they have to adhere to certain styles of marketing? How they come up with content? This is done in order to achieve the objective nature of the research.

The second method of data collection is the questionnaire method. The questionnaire had 20 questions in it. These questions dealt with such as how often are social media users exposed to certain influencer marketing? If they find it necessary for the marketing to be in sync with their job profile? And how likely are they motivated to try or purchase the product endorsed by the social media influencer? The questions shall revolve around these main above mentioned questions. The answers was then statistically analysed to see if sample are influenced by the endorsement done by the social media influencer.

#### **Findings and Discussions:**

The survey of 20 questions was answered and filled online by 111 respondents. The majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18-21 years, and most of them were women. Majority of the respondents follow popular influencers on Instagram and YouTube. The questions were asked if they have ever viewed product endorsements and the majority answered yes. When asked if they had viewed the advertisement of the products reviewed, the majority said yes. However, when it came to remembering the product reviews, the majority answered sometimes as this maybe because they may have viewed various product reviews at once, this was the same with remembering the advertisements.

The majority of the respondents answered that they could remember the product review they viewed mainly based on the content and the way it was presented. When asked what kind of products were more likely to grab their attention and buy it, the respondents answered for fashion. Majority also answered that they mostly viewed product reviews on YouTube and Instagram. Majority also answered that they would prefer product reviews to advertisements. When asked what made the influencer's work more credible, the majority answered that it was their content and not their popularity factor. It was also clear that the majority of the respondents would buy a product post its endorsement.

After the experiment with the 10members in the focus group and interviewing them, the researcher then derived 14 themes from the interview. The themes include: Relatable Content, Time, Impact, Personal interests, Intention, Self-representation, Reviews, Content presentation, Credibility, Emotions, Engagement, Expense, Market, and Loyal. Each theme has been discussed individually.

Relatable content generally talks about how the content put out by the influencer needs to be easily understandable and jargon free. Content is about how the content needs to focus on both the positives and the negatives of the product. Time is about how it is beneficial if the video is short in nature. Impact focuses on how the sample did feel motivated to purchase the products which were endorsed. Personal interests are the intrinsic motivational factor that determine the action of a person after they view a product review. Intention is about if the viewers perceives that the influencer's main intention is to sell the product or not. Self-representation, focuses on how one sees themselves in the place of an influencer while viewing their work. Reviews are about how well the influencer reviews the product.

Content presentation is about how well the videography or the photography was involves, as it shows professionalism. Credibility, is the factor which determined if the source is credible enough or not. Emotions, is the factor that is found in advertisement and not in product reviews, this making it more objective. Engagement is about how the influencer comes up with different styles of content to keep the audience engaged. Expense is the main pricing of a product. Market is the specific target audience that both the influencer and the advertisers aim for. Loyal is a factor which is about how a few of them are loyal to certain products, while the others are loyal to certain influencers.

The interviews were then conducted with 3 influencers, and the researcher narrowed down up to 13 themes form the interviews. Medium, Business profile, Barrier, Presentation, Deliverables, Visibility,

Teamwork, Content, Trials, Conflict of interests, Promotions, Interaction, Prospects. Each theme has been discussed individually.

Medium was derived after interviewing the influencers about why they choose the medium of either YouTube or Instagram. Business profile was derived from interviewing the influencers about why they choose the Instagram as a platform, to begin with. Barriers were derived from interviewing the influencers about what was their toughest part of their job. Presentation has been derived from interviewing the influencers about how the presentation of their work should be. Deliverables is derived from interviewing the influencers about how they need to meet the requirements given by the brands. Visibility is derived from interviewing the influencers and about how they keep themselves visible amongst the brands and the companies. Teamwork is derived from interviewing the influencers when they were asked about if they have a team that helps them out in their work.

Content is derived from interviewing the influencers when they were asked about how they come up with content for their posts. Trials is derived from interviewing the influencers when they were asked about what makes their content so authentic in nature. Conflict of interests is derived from interviewing the influencers when they were asked about how they deal when they face a conflict of interests between the PR of the brand and their own style of presenting the content. Promotions is derived from interviewing the influencers when they were asked about how coupon codes worked. Interactions is derived from interviewing the influencers when they were asked about if the brands get back to the influencer after they endorse a product and the reaction of the followers after they see a brand endorsement. Prospects is derived from interviewing the influencers when they were asked about how influencer is as a profession.

#### **Conclusion:**

From analysing the survey results it was observed that the sample prefers product reviews to advertisement and hence it is more effective in nature. The sample remembered the product reviews better due to their content and presentation. From the interviews it was derived that the influencers do have a great level of influence on their viewers which is usually observed that the viewer is more likely to associate and comprehend the product the same way as the influencer presents it. From the interviews with the influencers it was derived that authenticity of their content is critical to keep the audience engaged despite having conflicts with the brands.

The main reason the viewer is prone to buy the product is that the review is either positive or negative – which is provided by the influencer. Hence the audience is motivated and unknowingly made to think in the same frame as presented by the influencer. Hence the framing theory is proved through this research paper.

As a conclusion, social media users are very often exposed to marketing by social media influencers. The content presented by the influencer is definitely more preferred than advertisements as it is more elaborate and unbiased in nature. The product endorsed should be in sync with the influencer's job/ profile to make an impact on an audience this is because the review presented by the influencer is perceived to be more knowledgeable as they are professionals in their field. The brands that are more likely to influence the audience is fashion, beauty and fitness products. Most of the times the product that is showcased in the work of an influencer is often received with a positive impact and the audience are willing to purchase the products showcased by the influencer. Through this, all the research questions have been answered.

#### **Limitations:**

The limitations to this study include, that the study is specific to the region and hence cannot be applied worldwide. The interviews conducted with the influencer sample is small and could be bettered. The results of the research paper were derived from studying both qualitative and quantitative methods from a particular age group of 18-21 year old college students. The research paper focuses only on the influencers from a visual social media platform and the same may not be applicable with other platforms.

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