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Influencer Marketing as a Driver of Brand Appreciation and Online Purchase Intentions: A Study of India's Emerging Consumer Market

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Abstract

Influencer marketing is emerging as a major influencer of consumer behavior in India's burgeoning digital economy. The results of this study show that the positive effects of celebrity influencers and message participation on the association between brand attitude and online purchase intention suggest the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement as a marketing tool to influence consumer attitudes. Youngest consumers, who get much of their information from social media, are most enthusiastic, with higher brand favorability and stronger purchase intent after seeing influencer content. Influencers' reputations and relatability strengthen this, a clear departure from traditional advertising. The findings underscore the strategic importance for marketers to connect with the youth segment through tailor-made influencer programs that build trust and an emotional connection. In emerging market economies like India, influencer marketing is an important tool for increasing brand exposure, shifting perceptions, and encouraging online buying. These learnings could help brands to build more impactful digital strategies in parallel with developing regions.

Keywords

Brand Appreciation, Brand Attitude, Influencer Marketing, Message Involvement, Online Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

According to Kumar (2013) the Indian development narrative is spreading into the country's hinterland, where there is a rise in consumption and output in addition to an increase in income. In addition to economic growth and the thriving economy, there is a quick shift in attitudes, tastes, habits, and preferences. Because the rural consumer markets in India are likely to expand quicker than the urban ones due to the greater effect of the media on consumers' purchasing choices, companies in the nation are excited about this development (Gupta, 2017).

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2007), consumer purchasing behavior places a strong focus on understanding how each individual consumer makes decisions about what to buy and how they utilize their available resources—such as time, money, and effort—to make those decisions. As a result, advertising has shown to be an effective tool for inspiring consumers and influencing their purchasing decisions (Niazi et al., 2012; Gupta, et al. 2024). Advertising is a powerful technique for influencing viewers' thoughts and focusing their attention on a certain item or service (Katke, 2007; Shoeb, et al. 2020).

According to Niazi et al. (2012), advertising policies have a significant impact on how consumers behave

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while making purchases. Priorities are set for thorough research and analysis of the several elements influencing purchasing habits. Hence, brand cognition is exposed by marketers using the hierarchy of effects concept, where attitude drives actual purchase behavior. According to reports (Sannam S4, 2019), both urban and rural regions have seen a rise in the number of internet users over time. It is anticipated that by December 2020, this would surpass 639 million. As of 2019, there were 574 million active Internet users in India. After China, India is the second-biggest internet market. In India, there are expected to be 639 million active internet users by December 2020. With the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT), traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has shifted to electronic platforms such as blogs, newsgroups, online discussion forums, review sites and social networking sites (Li and Du, 2011). Everyone may converse with complete strangers who are spread out socially and geographically about their thoughts and experiences related to products and services (Duan et al., 2008).

Additionally, data shows that India's e-commerce sector is developing at the fastest pace in the world, with a 51 percent growth rate (IBEF, 2019). The millennial generation, which makes up the largest online consumer demographic, is actively driving the online retail revolution in India (Trivedi and Trivedi 2018). Therefore, this study compares the impact of a knowledgeable social media influencer with an alluring celebrity influencer on millennial consumers' brand attitudes, which in turn lead to brand adulation and, ultimately, intents to make online purchases.

Trivedi and Sama (2019) also highlighted brand attitude and brand appreciation as mediating factors between influencer endorsements and consumers' purchase intention. Because consumer fashion product marketers devote a large portion of their money to influencer marketing, this research focuses on this industry (Hallanan 2018). Furthermore, customers find it challenging to choose the ideal product for their requirements due to the abundance of the newest technology available in the consumer fashion market (Heitmann et al., 2007). Because of this challenge, they rely on social media influencers to provide them with personalized recommendations. This study examines how influencers' support affects consumers' attitudes about brands, which in turn fosters brand appreciation and online purchase intentions.

2. Literature Review

India has a huge Gen Y population – one of the biggest in the world. Generation Y, or Millennials, are people born after 1981. Now this lot of people has exploded as the largest power in the country's consumer market. Previous research by Kaur and Singh (2007) and Ahluwalia (2018) shows that the millennials spend a major part of their income per month on electronics, i.e. 11.2% which is higher than any other generation group. Young age women are an important customer sector with their aims and active roles in home decisions (Khare & Rakesh, 2011; Adnan et al., 2017). For this young generation of consumers, the internet has become a necessity, as social media influencers are now considered reliable sources of timely product information (Kumar et al., 2018). Over the last two decades, marketing has changed out of all recognition, with an increased emphasis on social rather than traditional strategies. Marketers can use social media and social networking sites to reach their target clients directly, opening new ways to engage and influence.

Few researchers have actively examined how influencer marketing shapes many aspects of consumers' actions (Godey et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Khan et al., 2025). From a theoretical point of view, there is a lack of comparison studies on the impact of different sorts of endorsers, which provides a potential path for future research (Schouten et al., 2019).

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Moreover, the literature has not developed a theory on the function of social media-generated endorsements in the relationship between consumers and brands. The line of inquiry is growing in importance as brands seek to build emotional connections with consumers in a more crowded online space. As the success of an endorser is usually product-dependent, the choice of proper influencer became a tactical challenge for the marketers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Brand image is one of the key factors of firm's performance in the long term. It impacts future revenues, cash flow volatility, customer willingness to pay, strategic decisions, stock market performance and the length of time over which a competitive advantage lasts. Brand attitude, as defined by Kotler and Armstrong (1996), is an individual's positive or negative feeling towards a brand or a product. Advertising stimuli influence the most critical marketing outcomes, such as purchase intention, through the mediating function of attitude toward the brand (Gresham and Shimp 1985; Trivedi 2018). Therefore, prediction of consumer behaviour is especially relevant to the understanding of brand attitude (Evans and Bang 2019) in the context of advertisement and digital marketing environment. Purchase intention, the probability that a consumer will purchase a specific brand in the near future (Yoo et al., 2000), has been well established as an outcome of brand attitude (Bennett and Harrell 1975; Flaherty and Pappas 2000).

Opinions are generally based on past experiences and thus consumers do not generally change their opinions rapidly (Boone and Kurtz 2002). There has been some research about the effect of influencer marketing on brand attitude and consumers' purchase intention. To enhance the relationship between the consumer and the brand, marketers usually use popular celebrities or experts in the particular field (Lim et al. 2017; Trivedi 2018). Both source credibility model (Hovland and Weiss 1951) and source attractiveness model (McGuire 1985) state that the credibility and attractiveness of an endorser are the important factors in determining the consumer attitude towards the (Rashid, Nallamuthu, and Sidin 2002) product. Many scholars have recognised the effect of expert endorsers on consumer behaviour (Ohanian 1990; Biswas et al., 2006; Tzoumaka et al., 2016). Other studies, however, found that attractive celebrities are more persuasive to the consumers (McGuire 1985; Trivedi 2018; Asif et al., 2026).

However, the general literature on the impact of endorsement probably does not cover the specific qualities of social media influencers (Lim et al. 2017; Trivedi 2018; Karn et al. 2025). Activities of social networking sites provide a significant additional generation of eWOM credibility, which effects brand image and intention to purchase (Siddiqui et al. 2021). Freberg et al. (2011) call social media influencers a unique type of third-party endorser that affects the public via digital platforms. However, limited research exists to study the effect of social media influencers on the consumer-brand connection despite the increasing power of social media influencers (Lou and Yuan, 2019).As with other elements in social media marketing (e.g. Duffett, 2015), the effect of social media marketing on customer attitudes and buying behaviour has been significant and thus, brands have needed to understand how influencer-centric content yields such results.

3. Methodology

This study focused on fashion products. For this study, a quantitative exploration technique is utilized to get customer bits of information. To gather valuable information a structured

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questionnaire in Google form sent to the respondents of different 5 cities of India via social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook. The first section was containing the questions to collect demographic information like name, age, gender, monthly income, education level, and type of family. The next section was related to celebrity influencers, brand attitude, brand appreciation, and online purchase intention of consumers who are using social media networks. 388 responses were collected in which 29 were found inappropriate due to missing responses to the questions. Therefore, only 359 responses were used to analyze and test the proposed hypothesis by the using tool ANOVA and chi-square ($\chi 2$). Answers of the respondents were locked for the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire and the results were generated through SPSS 12. Of the 359 respondents, 81.3 per cent were male and the rest 18.7 per cent were female. Most of the youth respondents (60.7%) are less than 25 Years who are using social media as a tool of information sharing and gathering knowledge and follow celebrities‟ lifestyles. So, in this study, we have analyzed data of different age groups to find out the impact of influencer marketing on consumer's brand appreciation and online purchase intention.

For the celebrity influencer and brand mindset, we predict the following hypothesis altogether:

H1- Celebrity influencers have a significant and positive impact on brand attitude across different age groups

H2- Message involvement has a significant and positive impact on brand attitude across different age groups

As per the study (Eisingerich, 2016), Brand attitude is an important measure of consumer brand appreciation and established brand love and brand trust, hence we hypothesized:

H3- Brand Attitude has a significant and positive impact on brand appreciation across different age groups.

To test the impact of brand appreciation and influencer marketing we hypothesized following:

H4- Brand appreciation has a positive significant influence on online purchase intention for different age groups.

H5- The positive effect of influencer marketing on the online purchase intention of consumers is present in all age groups.

Figure 1 presents the research conceptual model based on the hypothesized relationships among the variables.

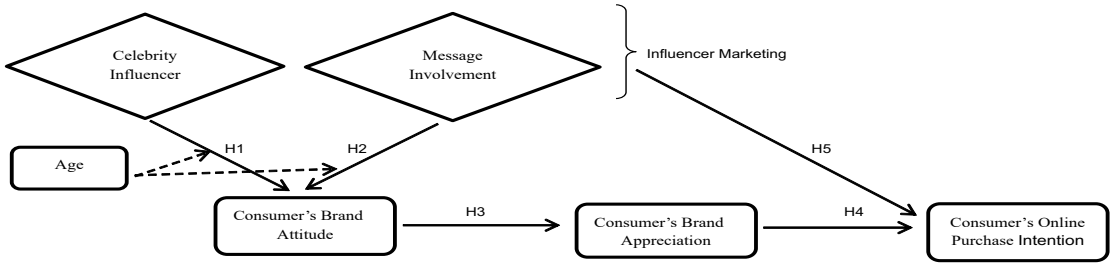

Figure1 Conceptual Structure of Study

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3. Results

From the after effect of information of Table 1 (below), the chi-square statistics ($\chi2$=36.265, p=0.000) indicates that there is a significant difference of Celebrity influencers impact on Brand Attitude across the age. Hence the null hypothesis (H1), "Celebrity influencers have a significant and positive impact on brand attitude" is accepted.

	Response	**< 25 years**	**26 – 40 years**	**41- 60 years**		
Always	N	215	126	11	$\chi2$	36.265*
	%	98.6	97.7	91.7	df	6
Often	N	0	3	0	P-value	0.000
	%	0	2.3	0		
Sometimes	N	3	0	0		
	%	1.4	0	0		
Not at all	N	0	0	1		
	%	0	0	8.3		
Total	N	218	129	12		
	%	100	100	100		

Table 1: Celebrity influencers impact on Brand Attitude across the age

(Source- Self-administered questionnaire) *significant at the 0.01 level

The output ($\chi2$=28.305, p=0.000) of the data in Table 2 reveals that the null hypothesis (H2), "Message involvement has a significant and positive impact on brand attitude" is accepted across the age. The result also indicated that message involvement always makes a brand attitude among the respondents of age group less than 25 years and between 26 to 40 years.

	Response	**< 25 years**	**26 – 40years**	**41- 60 years**		
Always	N	199	105	6	$\chi2$	28.305*
	%	91.3	81.4	50	df	6
Often	N	2	5	0	P-value	0.000
	%	0.9	3.9	0		
Sometimes	N	8	14	4		
	%	3.7	10.9	33.3		
Not at all	N	9	5	2		
	%	4.1	3.9	16.7		
Total	N	218	129	12		
	%	100	100	100		

Table 2: Message involvement impact on brand attitude across the age

(Source- Self-administered questionnaire) *significant at the 0.01 level

The output of the data, based on brand attitude impact on brand appreciation across the age groups in Table 3 stated that, brand attitude has a significant and positive impact on brand appreciation as compared to other variables hence, the hypothesis (H3), "Brand Attitude has a

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significant and positive impact on brand appreciation" is accepted at 0.01 level of significance.

Variables	**<25 years**	**26 – 40years**	**41- 60 years**		
	Mean	Mean	Mean	F	Sig.
Brand Attitude	3.49	3.70	2.67	2.856**	0.059
Availability	2.43	2.34	2.82	0.877	0.417
Price	2.52	2.58	1.91	1.754	0.175

Table 3: ANOVA on Brand Attitude impact on brand appreciation across the age

(Source- Self-administered questionnaire) **significant at the 0.05 level

Further Table 4 (below) reflects analysis of the data on the basis brand appreciation of impact on online purchase intention across the age groups that, the null hypothesis(H4) is accepted for the table value $\chi 2=6.516$, $p=0.038$. It indicated that brand appreciation has a positive impact on online purchase intention.

Does Brand appreciation influences to online purchase intention		**< 25 years**	**26 – 40 years**	**41- 60 years**		
Yes	N	149	97	5	$\chi 2$	6.516**
	%	68.3	75.2	41.7	df	2
No	N	69	32	7	P-value	0.038
	%	31.7	24.8	58.3		

Table 4: Brand Appreciation impact on online purchase intention across the age

(Source- Self-administered questionnaire) **significant at the 0.05 level

To evaluate the impact of influencer marketing on online purchase intention across the different age groups, from (Table 5) Chi-square statistics ($\chi 2=5.532$, $p=0.063$) found that there are a significance and positive impact on online purchase intention. Hence, null hypothesis (H5), "Influencer marketing has a significant and positive impact on online purchase intention across the age" is accepted at the 0.05 level of significance.

Does Influencer Marketing influences on online purchase intention		**< 25 years**	**26 – 40 years**	**41- 60 years**		
Yes	N	203	115	9	$\chi 2$	5.532***
	%	93.1	89.1	75	df	2
No	N	15	14	3	P-value	0.063
	%	6.9	10.9	15		

Table 5: Influencer marketing has a positive and significant impact on online purchase intention

(Source- Self-administered questionnaire) ***significant at the 0.10 level

4. Discussion

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of Influencer marketing (celebrity influencer and message engagement) on brand attitude and intent to buy on the web, from the manager's point of view. The results obtained here indicated that celebrity influencer always

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influence the consumers who are under the age 25 years and between 26 to 40 years, at the same time is also reflected through the table value ($\chi 2=36.25$) that celebrity influencer has a positive impact on brand attitude in the mind that consumers.

Further, message involvement also has a significant and positive impact and changes the brand attitude of consumers, but it is also identified that celebrity influencer is more effective than message involvement on changing brand attitude.

However, with respect to the study of brand attitude impact on brand appreciation, it has been observed that the consumers of age group between 26-40 years can change their brand appreciation after the effect of brand attitude. Also, it is explored that brand attitude is the only cause which has remarkable and positive effect on brand equity among the other constructs. Effects of Brand Equity and Influencer Marketing on Online Purchase Intention Both are found to favorably influence towards online purchase intention for a different age group of consumers.

5. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

On the basis of different results and analysis is has been concluded that Celebrity influencer and message involvement as tool of Influencer marketing changes brand attitude of a consumer and this brand attitude leading towards brand appreciation and finally onlinepurchase intention of consumers. This study adds to the growing literature on consumer perceptions of influencer marketing in a developing country like India. The study determined that influencer marketing plays a pivotal role in setting a brand attitude, brand appreciation which leads online purchase intention for various age groups especially for the age group of less than 25 years and between 26-40 years consumers. Thus, further one's product marketers must change their strategies such that young age group of less than 25 years and between 26-40 years through celebrity influencer and message involvement while other age groups must be targeted through different tools of social media marketing. The Celebrity influencer and message involvement will help marketers to create a strong consumer-brand relationship, which may give brands, sustainable competitive advantage in highly competitive emerging markets.

6. Limitations and Proposed Future Research

The purpose of this research was to determine how influencer marketing affected various age groups. Therefore, it does not accurately reflect all Indian consumer demographics. Thus, variables including gender and higher-income groups, family structure, and employment will be studied in future study. But the influence of influencers on product category would be under influence. Further research can be done to evolve the categories such as wearables, online furniture, laptops, mobiles, electronics and jewelry etc. in the e-commerce market. The study is confined to five cities of Uttar Pradesh, India. Therefore, this study should be conducted on larger geographical areas and cities to know the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' brand love and online purchase intentions on the country level. The study also reveals that quantitative information may be strengthened by using research instruments like experimental design and continuous data, and quantitative results can be strengthened by using regression analysis and other techniques as well.

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