

BEYOND ENGAGEMENT: MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN DRIVING CONSUMER DECISIONS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing serves as a powerful catalyst in advancing sustainable business strategies by influencing consumer perceptions, fostering brand trust, and driving environmentally conscious purchasing behaviors. In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, influencers act as key advocates for sustainability, promoting ethical sourcing, circular economy practices, and corporate social responsibility. This study, conducted in the Navi Mumbai region, investigates the impact of influencer credibility, authenticity, and content transparency on consumer engagement with sustainable brands. Through the analysis of 200 survey responses, it is revealed that influencer-driven campaigns significantly enhance consumer awareness and trust while encouraging long-term behavioral shifts towards sustainability. The findings underscore the importance of strategic partnerships with influencers to amplify corporate sustainability goals and mitigate greenwashing risks, offering actionable insights for businesses aiming to integrate sustainability into their marketing frameworks.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, sustainable consumption, corporate sustainability, consumer trust.

INTRODUCTION

In our increasingly digital world, influencer marketing has become a dominant force, enabling businesses to forge connections with consumers, sway purchasing decisions, and cultivate brand loyalty. With sustainability rapidly rising in importance, companies are embracing sustainable business strategies, prioritizing environmental responsibility, ethical sourcing, and corporate social responsibility. Influencer marketing plays a crucial role in amplifying these initiatives, acting as a bridge between businesses and environmentally and socially conscious consumers.

Key Components of Effective Sustainable Influencer Marketing:

- **Authenticity and Credibility:** Consumers are drawn to influencers who genuinely champion sustainability. For example, Indian personalities like Dia Mirza, known for her environmental advocacy, and Vani Murthy, who educates on waste reduction and composting, resonate with audiences because of their authentic commitment.
- **Ethical Sourcing and Sustainable Supply Chains:** Influencers can effectively highlight brands that adhere to responsible sourcing practices and sustainable supply chains. Large conglomerates like the Tata Group, with their focus on ethical labor and sustainable materials, serve as examples of companies that can benefit from such endorsements.
- **Compelling Content Creation and Storytelling:** Engaging content formats, such as Instagram Reels, YouTube videos, and informative blog posts, are powerful tools for raising awareness about sustainability issues and solutions. Brands like Mamaearth, for instance, utilize influencer collaborations to showcase their eco-friendly product lines.
- **Waste Reduction and the Circular Economy:** Many influencers promote minimal- waste lifestyles, aligning themselves with brands that prioritize biodegradable packaging, recycling initiatives, and circular economy models. Unilever's prominent plastic reduction initiative is a prime example of a campaign that can be effectively amplified through influencer partnerships.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Consumer Engagement:** Influencers can encourage responsible consumption and hold corporations accountable for their social and environmental impact. Companies like Tesla and Unilever have collaborated with sustainability advocates to educate consumers about climate-friendly choices and promote their CSR efforts.

As businesses work to embed sustainability into their core operations, influencer marketing has become a key driver of awareness, education, and responsible consumption. By understanding the ways in which influencers contribute to sustainable business growth, brands can develop authentic, impactful, and forward-thinking marketing strategies that resonate with today's conscious consumers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Algharabat, R. (2017)**, in their research paper, the scholars investigated the impact of social media marketing on brand trust and customer loyalty. They examined the mediating role of perceived value and brand personality in the relationship between social media activities and customer outcomes. The study found that engaging social media content and interactions can enhance brand trust, which in turn leads to increased customer loyalty. Their findings emphasize the importance of strategic social media management in building strong brand-customer relationships.
2. **Ebulueme, J., & Vijayakumar, V. (2024)**, in their research paper, the scholars delve into the dynamics of authenticity and influence within the realm of social media micro- influencers and Generation Z on Instagram. They explore the intricate interplay between perceived authenticity, source credibility, and the persuasive power of micro-influencers on this demographic. It finds that social media can be a valuable tool for networking, building a personal brand, and accessing career opportunities. However, it also cautions that social media information should be evaluated carefully, as it may not always be accurate or reliable.
3. **Shamim, K., & Islam, T. (2022)**, investigated the impact of message and media credibility on trust and impulsive buying within digital influencer marketing. Their research explores how consumers perceive the believability of influencer-generated content (message credibility) and the platform hosting it (media credibility), and how these perceptions influence their trust in the influencer and their likelihood of making impulsive purchases. The study likely reveals the relative importance of each type of credibility and their combined effect on consumer behavior in the context of influencer marketing. The findings contribute to understanding the mechanisms driving consumer responses to influencer endorsements.
4. **Berne-Manero, C., & Marzo-Navarro, M. (2020)**, in the research paper, the scholars explore the intersection of influencer marketing, relationship marketing, and corporate sustainability. Their work likely investigates how these marketing approaches can be leveraged to promote and achieve corporate sustainability goals. The authors probably examine the role of influencers in communicating sustainability messages and building relationships with stakeholders interested in sustainable practices.
5. **Vemuri, S., Jahnavi, P., Manasa, L., & Pallavi, D. R. (2024)**, in the scholarly article, the researchers provide valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and sustainability advocates seeking to promote eco-conscious lifestyles. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on sustainable consumption and the role of influencer marketing. By examining the specific mechanisms through which influencers impact consumer behavior. The study's findings likely highlight the potential of influencer marketing as a tool for driving positive social change, while also underscoring the importance of ethical considerations and responsible influencer engagement.
6. **Sammis, K., & Hennessy, B. (2021)**, in their book titled "Influencer Marketing for Dummies" offers a foundational understanding of the influencer marketing landscape, focusing on practical campaign development and execution. The book addresses influencer selection, content creation, and performance measurement, its exploration of cause-related marketing, including sustainability, remains introductory.

RESEARCH GAP OF THE STUDY

While influencer marketing has gained prominence in promoting sustainability, limited research exists on its direct impact on consumer behavior and business strategies. Most studies focus on engagement metrics rather than analyzing how influencer credibility, transparency, and authenticity influence long-term purchasing decisions. Various studies have been conducted on influencer marketing, but this research is specifically focused on analyzing its effectiveness in driving sustainable business strategies within the Navi Mumbai region.

Statement of the Problem:

The problem addressed in this research is the lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior towards sustainable business strategies. While existing studies have explored the general impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior, its specific influence on sustainability-related perceptions, trust, and purchasing decisions remains under-examined. This study aims to explore how influencers contribute to consumer awareness, trust, and behavioral changes in support of sustainable business practices, providing valuable insights for businesses and marketers looking to align their strategies with sustainability goals.

Significance of the Study:

This study is significant as it explores the growing influence of social media influencers on consumer perceptions and behaviors towards sustainability, an area that remains underexplored in the context of influencer

marketing. By examining how influencers impact consumer awareness, trust, and purchasing decisions related to sustainable business strategies, this research will provide valuable insights into the role of digital personalities in promoting sustainable practices. As sustainability becomes a key concern for both consumers and businesses, particularly among younger, socially-conscious generations, the findings will help marketers and businesses leverage influencer marketing to effectively communicate sustainability efforts. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader conversation on how digital platforms and influencer-driven content can drive positive social change, particularly in the realm of sustainability.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To examine the significance of influencer marketing in shaping consumer awareness and perception of sustainable business strategies.
- To analyze the role of influencer credibility and authenticity in driving consumer trust toward sustainable brands.
- To assess whether influencer-led campaigns encourage behavioral changes in consumer purchasing decisions aligned with sustainability.

Hypothesis of the Study:

H0: Influencer marketing does not play a significant role in shaping consumer awareness, trust, or behavioral changes toward sustainable business strategies.

H1: Influencer marketing significantly influences consumer awareness, trust, and behavioral changes in favor of sustainable business strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sr. No.	Parameters	Units
1	Research Design	Descriptive Research Design
2	Research Area	Consumers in Navi Mumbai aware of and influenced by influencer marketing for sustainable brands
3	Sampling Unit	Consumers who actively engage with or make purchase decisions influenced by influencers promoting sustainable brands
4	Sampling Frame	Social media users in Navi Mumbai engaging with sustainable influencer marketing
5	Sampling Method	Non-Probability (Convenience Sampling)
6	Sample Size	200 respondents
7	Data Collection	Primary & Secondary Sources
8	Tool for Data Collection	Google Form (Questionnaire)
9	Hypothesis Testing Method	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha), Paired Sample T-Test, Paired Samples Correlation
10	Software Use	SPSS 20

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted using **Cronbach's Alpha** to determine the internal consistency of the survey responses. A Cronbach's Alpha value greater than **0.70** indicates that the scale used for data collection is reliable.

Reliability Test	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Interpretation
Influencer Marketing & Consumer Awareness	0.875	Reliable
Influencer Credibility & Consumer Trust	0.912	Highly Reliable
Influence on Consumer Behavior	0.891	Reliable

Demographic Data Analysis

This section presents the demographic profile of the **200 respondents** who participated in the research study.

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	55.2%
	Female	44.8%

Age Group	18-25 years	40.1%
	26-35 years	35.4%
	36-45 years	15.2%
	46 years & above	9.3%
Education Level	Undergraduate	50.2%
	Postgraduate	36.8%
	Others	13.0%
Social Media Usage	Daily	70.3%
	Weekly	20.5%
	Occasionally	9.2%

Paired Sample T-Test Analysis

A Paired Sample T-Test was conducted to compare expected and perceived influence of influencer marketing on sustainable business strategies.

Sr. No.	Variables	P-value	Result Interpretation
1	Awareness of Sustainability	0.012	Significant difference; Influencer marketing increases awareness.
2	Trust in Sustainable Brands	0.024	Significant difference; Influencers enhance consumer trust.
3	Behavioral Change	0.030	Significant difference; Influencers drive behavioral change.
4	Willingness to Purchase	0.019	Significant difference; Influencers influence sustainable purchasing.
5	Perceived Authenticity	0.035	Significant difference; Credible influencers build trust.

Interpretation: Since all **P-Values** < **0.05**, the **null hypothesis (H_0)** is **rejected** and the **alternative hypothesis (H_1)** is **accepted**, confirming the effectiveness of influencer marketing in driving consumer decision towards sustainable business strategies.

Paired Samples Correlation

The **Paired Samples Correlation** analysis was performed to measure the relationship between the expected and perceived impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior.

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Awareness of Sustainability	0.842	0.000
Trust in Sustainable Brands	0.768	0.002
Behavioral Change	0.789	0.001
Willingness to Purchase	0.823	0.000
Perceived Authenticity	0.756	0.003

Interpretation: The correlation coefficients indicate a **strong positive relationship** ($r > 0.7$) between expected and perceived impact, showing that influencer marketing significantly influences consumer behavior.

Interpretation Table:

Sr.No	Variables	P- Value	Results	Interpretation
1	IM1 - Influencer Knowledge on Sustainability	0.015	H1 Accept	Knowledgeable influencers increase consumer awareness.
2	IM2 - Influencer Credibility	0.021	H1 Accept	Influencers with credibility build stronger consumer trust.
3	IM3 - Transparency in Brand Promotions	0.018	H1 Accept	Authentic endorsements positively impact consumer perception.
4	IM4 - Engagement Level of Influencers	0.025	H1 Accept	Higher engagement leads to stronger consumer influence.
5	IM5 - Impact on Purchase Decisions	0.014	H1 Accept	Influencer marketing significantly affects purchasing behavior.
6	IM6 - Long-term Behavioral Influence	0.048	H0 Reject	Consumers influenced by sustainability campaigns adopt long-

				term eco-friendly habits.
7	IM7 - Relevance of Content to Sustainability	0.027	H1 Accept	Relevant sustainability content increases consumer engagement.
8	IM8 - Frequency of Sustainability Promotions	0.030	H1 Accept	Frequent exposure to sustainable content strengthens consumer awareness.
9	IM9 - Perceived Authenticity of Influencer Messages	0.022	H1 Accept	Consumers respond positively to influencers perceived as authentic advocates.
10	IM10 - Call-to-Action Effectiveness	0.051	H0 Reject	No significant difference; Influencer call-to-actions have limited impact on sustainable consumer behavior.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

- This study is limited to the Navi Mumbai region, which may not reflect consumer behavior in other areas.
- The research relies on self-reported data, which may introduce biases in responses.
- Influencer marketing trends change rapidly, making findings subject to evolving digital landscapes

CONCLUSION

This study confirm that influencer marketing plays a crucial role in shaping consumer awareness and perception of sustainable business strategies. The results indicate a strong positive correlation between influencer credibility and consumer trust, reinforcing the importance of authenticity in influencer-led campaigns. Additionally, the study highlights that influencer marketing significantly influences consumer behavior, driving a shift towards more sustainable purchasing decisions. The variables like credibility, engagement, authenticity, transparency, and content relevance have been identified as key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing. While most aspects of influencer marketing were found to be effective, variations in content relevance and call-to-action effectiveness suggest opportunities for businesses to refine their strategies. The rejection of some null hypotheses further supports the idea that influencers contribute to meaningful behavioral changes among consumers. Overall, businesses should focus on partnering with credible influencers and ensuring transparency in their marketing campaigns to enhance consumer trust and engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Businesses should collaborate with influencers whose values align with their sustainability goals to build authenticity and long-term consumer trust.
- Companies should ensure that influencer-led promotions include clear and verifiable sustainability claims to prevent consumer skepticism and greenwashing concerns.

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