The Impact of Instagram Influencers on Customer Purchases: Case of the Youth in Harare

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Abstract
Even in the world of purchasing, technological advancements have brought about several changes. The internet has begun to play a major role in assisting customers in finding the things they are seeking for online. With the rise of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, which has become a popular purchasing platform among the youth. Youths are attempting to establish and maintain strong presences on social media platforms, with Instagram being the go-to platform for keeping consumers aware of the latest trends, as more viewers turn to Instagram influencers, their associated trust, and their intention to purchase after being fascinated by them. Influencer marketing is a relatively new notion that is currently gaining traction in the marketing process, and it is linked to human purchasing intents. The current study aims to investigate the numerous marketing strategies used by youth Instagram influencers, as well as their impact on customer purchase. The study also examines the impact of using various users such as celebrities, bloggers, and others, as well as their reach. The current study examines the responses of 200 youths in Harare, Zimbabwe and their primary influencers on purchase decisions.

Key words: Instagram, online selling, Instagram marketing, consumer buying decision, influencer marketing

I. Introduction

The rapid proliferation of Instagram over the last five years has radically altered the traditional purchasing and selling procedure. Consumers can now share their experiences with numerous items on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, and they can also share reviews with their family and friends. As a result, organizations must focus on providing pleasant client experiences in order to capitalize and lead the market segment while avoiding unfavorable word of mouth (Negi and Pabalkar, 2020). Youth influencers can generate word of mouth through their messages and reviews, which are faithfully followed by their Instagram followers and can lead to new buyers.

Instagram has grown in popularity, and it has become a hotspot for fashionable ladies who solely use it to read fashion blogs. Fashion blogs have emerged as one of the most successful ways for influencers to connect with their audience by sharing their experiences and recommendations on the platform. This demonstrates that marketing has undergone a paradigm shift, with low-cost efforts focused directly at the target client group. The social media platform is not only a place for women to buy the things they want, but it also gives them access to a whole new world of products, where they can browse until they find something they want (Radwan, Mousa, Mohamed, et al., 2021).

This liberty of surfing has resulted in a considerable surge in internet sales. With the introduction of Instagram, the customer buying behavior model, which previously related to traditional forms of product purchase, has changed dramatically. Nowadays, youths are spending time establishing positive personas in order to influence customer perceptions, which are directed through Instagram influencers, who have in turn produced a marketing effect where the spread of word to thousands of users was done with just a click of a mouse.

II.   Literature review

Instagram marketing

Instagram, as the most popular social media platform in the world, has played a key role in bringing about change in the world of online commerce. Brand research and discovery are used by 44% of Instagram's active users (Aaron and Breuer, 2020). On Instagram, 53% of Instagram users follow their favorite companies (Aaron and Breuer, 2020). It is a novel way for businesses to interact with the proper customers and sell their products. Audiences may connect with them using stories, posts, and IGTV videos in this new kind of marketing. Brands can also raise knowledge about their products on a bigger scale, which benefits both the business and the customer by providing a greater selection of products.

According to Al-Dahrawi (2019), nearly 60% of 18-30 years old youths use Instagram to follow fashion labels, travel blogs, restaurants, and other businesses. Influencers play an important role on Instagram, where they have a large following and a large following. Youths are increasingly following the road of becoming influencers on many platforms, the most well-known of which is Instagram. Brand collaborations with influencers are becoming more profitable for marketers because audiences can connect with influencers more easily than celebrities. Influencer reviews are more honest than celebrity endorsements.

Influencer marketing

An influence promotion mechanism is a means of locating and engaging people who have an impact on a specific target demographic or channel. It is closely associated with the brand's strategy of obtaining more size, sales, or interaction. Barbu and Cmeciu (2019) noted that, influencer marketing is a more technical extension of the old meaning of word-of-mouth marketing. It is a method of forming partnerships that will allow businesses to expand their markets and convert them into loyal customers via trust and authenticity. Marketing with influence is usually divided into two sub-practices: first, influencer marketing. It is derived from unpaid or pre-existing connections.

Influencers or third parties promote content to encourage their personal social development. The second method is to pay for impact promotion: compensated promotion influencer programs can be advertised as a supporter, pre-release advertisement, or witness notice, and they can be incorporated in the material at any time. Chetiouri, Benlafqih and Lebdaouri (2020) is of the view that, budgets are rather common and largely based on viewer distribution. A huge number of places can have an effect. An influencer can be anyone, any party, any brand, or any position. Influencer marketing has a variety of applications. Some advertisers employ marketing methods to enhance online or offline purchases of their products, while others use marketing strategies to develop customer reputation.
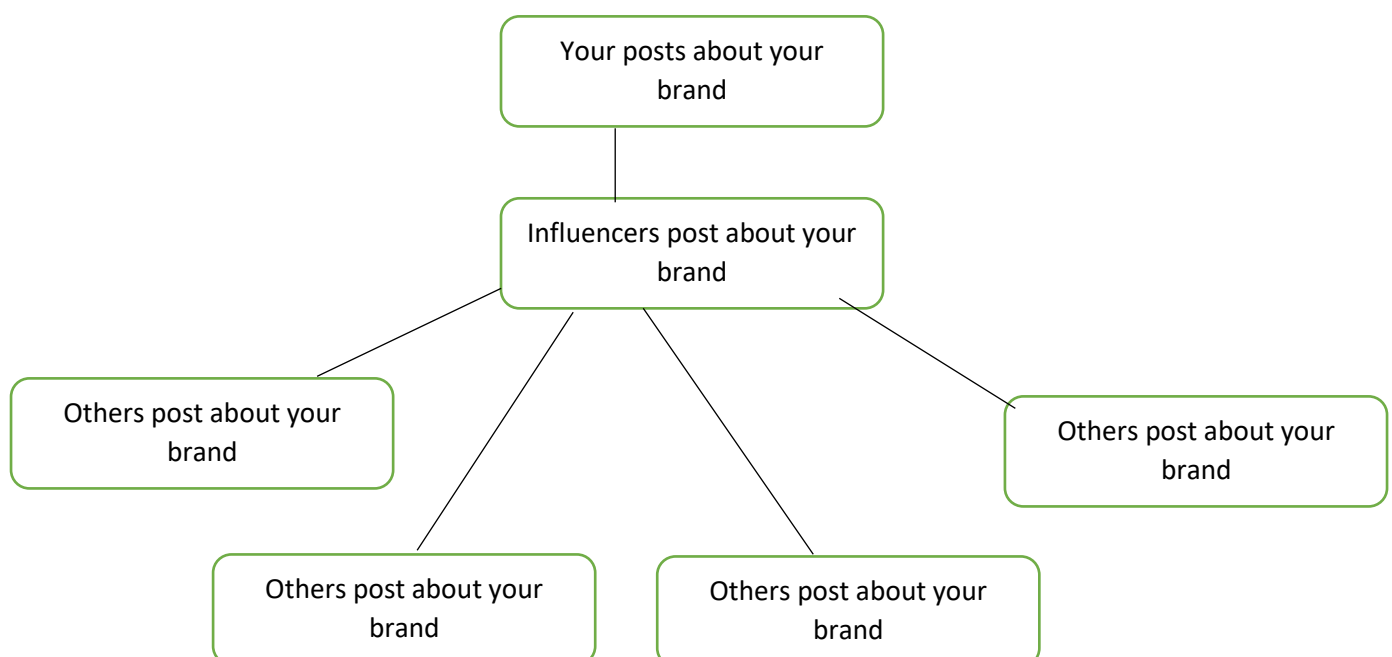

Figure 1: Brand Post Opinion

III. Three R of Instagram marketing: Reach, Relevance and Resonance

A measure of absolute audience size is known as reach. In addition to the potential to influence change, an individual who has an impact on a specific industry or area has a larger than average number of followers. Youth influencers are able to recruit millions of customers through social media and forums while keeping the user engaged. Youth Instagram influencers should praise a company's goods and services, regardless of how important they are (Wellman et al (2020). Fluctuators create unique marketing material that is always effective. The number of resonances is the number of occurrences caused by the publishing material. Someone who creates content will make a big splash with a blog post and gain a lot of traction. As the material resonates with followers and fans, says one tweet. Influencers maintain close relationships with their followers, who trust the influencer's opinions. Understanding the various styles of influencers is essential for understanding the role of influencers in any sector.

There are users who are mainstream advertising companies, as well as regional actors. These are the most common influencers. These are (i) citizens (ii) emerging (internet) influencers - these poster development blogs and emerging media influencers discover and accelerate creative leadership in a specific industry. Blogs have the potential to be new media influencers, (iii) connection-influencers – those who have hundreds of Facebook and Twitter relationships.

The rise of youth influencer marketing has made marketers realize that they need to shift their focus. Because individuals rather than corporations govern a company, direct marketing has witnessed a drop in recent years and is no longer as effective as it once was, emphasizing the need for a personalized advertising approach to be monitored. When you're trying to reach out to a younger market, it's even more difficult when millennials prefer sponsored content. Non-celebrities are currently picked for product advertisements by 70% of them, and they are not even swayed by historically famous celebrities (veirman, Veroline and Liselot, 2017). A corporation that begins with influent marketing will evaluate its audience in order to gain the benefits of an efficient approach with an influencer.

Within the fashion and design industry, influencer marketing is mostly a directing force. Today's design industry is far more prone to use influencers, but it is also lot more inclusive. Fashion is one of the most accessible areas of influencer marketing, with several options for bloggers and marketers to collaborate (Taillon et al., 2020). Not just blog and Instagram updates are possible, but also Instagram takeovers, event organizing, modeling, and even product production. Bloggers should get involved in the design phase early on since they recognize their audience and can offer thoughts and solutions that appeal to them.

This study examines the impact of Instagram influencers marketing strategy on customer purchase in Harare, Zimbabwe. It also explores the factors that influence the youth in their response to the influencers' promotional activities on social media. For this study, the researcher set the following objectives and research questions.

IV. Research objectives
- To identify the impact of Instagram influencers in order to promote their brands
- To study the impact of Instagram influencers on the consumers purchasing decision process
- To find out the Instagram influencer marketing techniques used by the youths

V. Hypothesis
H1: There is a significant difference in the influencers, viz, brand, celebrity and bloggers across age.

VI. Research methodology
Since no predetermined issue develops, exploratory work was carried out to gain important insight into a given scenario. A formal survey has been set up. Responses from 200 youths in Harare were obtained through online and offline methods for this study. A sample size of 30 to 500 at a confidence level of 5% is often sufficient for many researchers (Altunşk et al., 2004). All population regions employ the judgments and snowballing procedures. The study's goal is not to provide definitive proof, but to assist researchers in better analyzing and correcting the problem. For further study, the emphasis is on observations and familiarity.

## VII. Data collection techniques

Both primary and secondary data processing are carried out. Questionnaires are used to collect primary data (both online and offline). For the analysis, primary data was acquired from blogs and other past studies. Twenty people participated in the study pilot. The purpose of the pilot test was to see if the questionnaire was accurate. The key survey instrument was created by changing the questionnaire following the pilot study.

VIII. Data analysis tools

Statistical tools for analysis were employed in this study and these included chi square test, cross tabs and one-way ANOVA. These were done using software such as SPSS and MS Excel.

IX. Results and analysis of major findings

From figure 3 (above), 32.5% of the total responses are between the ages of 20 and 25, with 55% of them being single. For the same statistic, 48% of them were students, and 40% of them purchased things almost 1-5 times every month, with about 57.5% of them spending between 1000 and 5000 dollars on a single buy. 58% of respondents buy things when they are on sale, and 77% of the respondents follow current fashion trends.
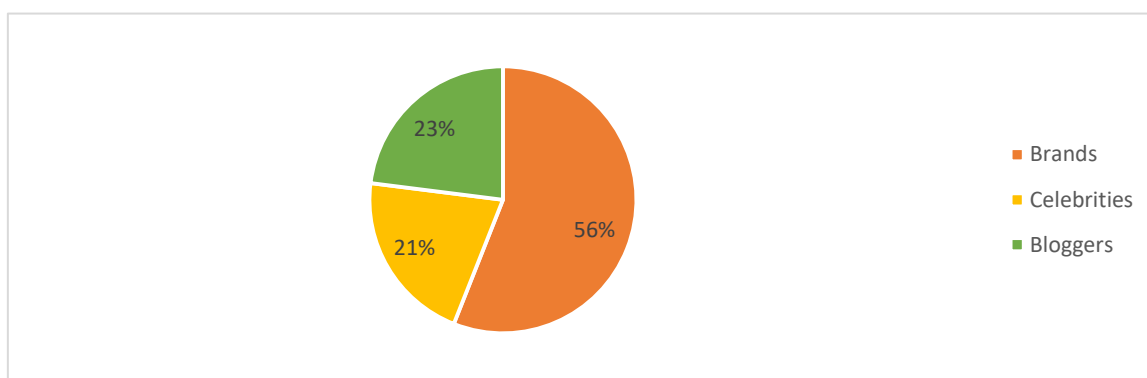

Figure 2: Influencers among the respondents

Customers are more likely to be influenced by brands than by celebrities or writers. Figure 2 illustrates that brands have a 56% (112) following, celebrities have a 21% (42) following, and bloggers have a 46% (46) following. Customers are being impacted by brands using Facebook. According to Figure 3, 11.5% of Facebook users support items, while 45% support brand applications. Bloggers utilize Instagram to recruit and influence their followers, as shown in Figure 4.
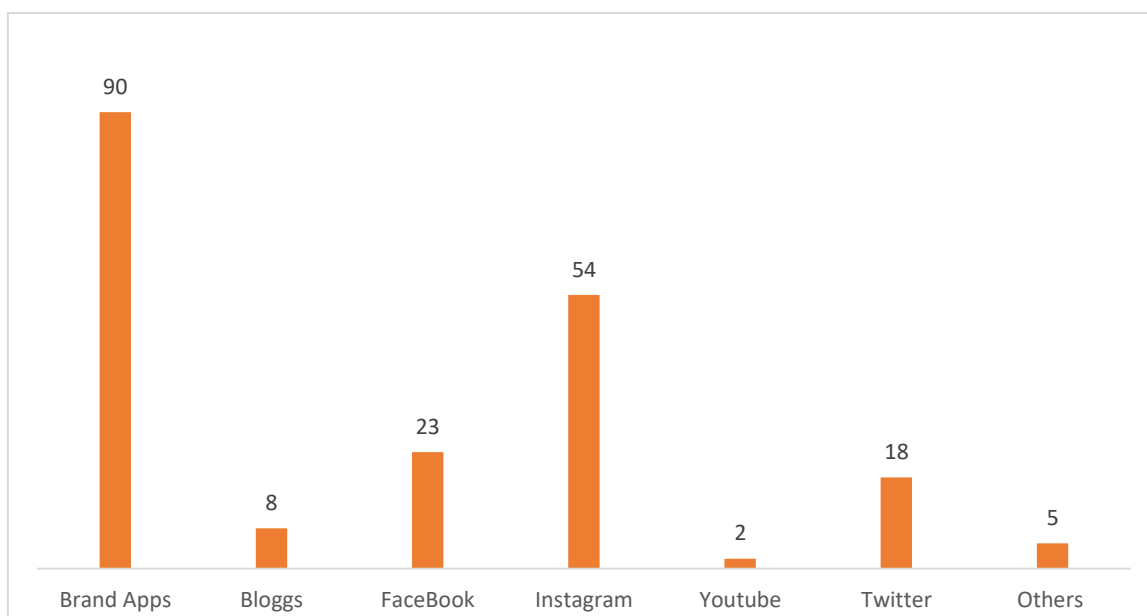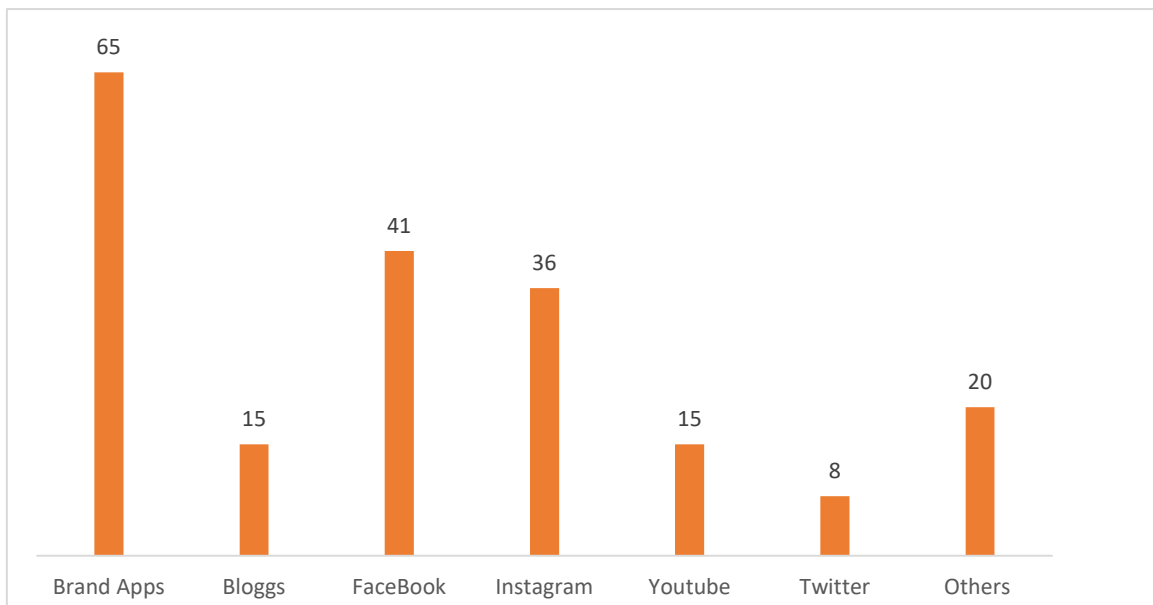

Figure 3: Platforms where the respondents are influenced by the brands
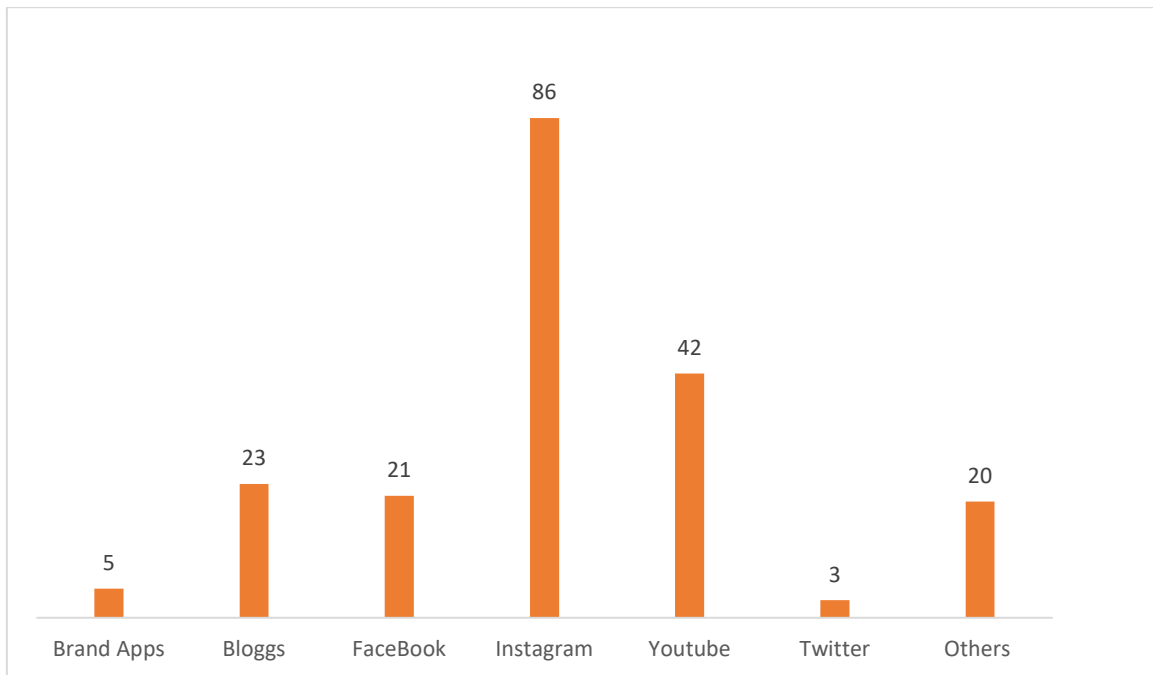
Figure 4: Platforms where the respondents are influenced by the bloggers

Brand applications are being used by celebrities as a marketing tool. Figure 6 illustrates that images play a key influence in encouraging people to purchase garments, according to the research. Photographs draw 59% of responders, whereas text draws 14.5% and videos pull 26.5%.

Figure 5: Platforms where the respondents are influenced by the celebrities
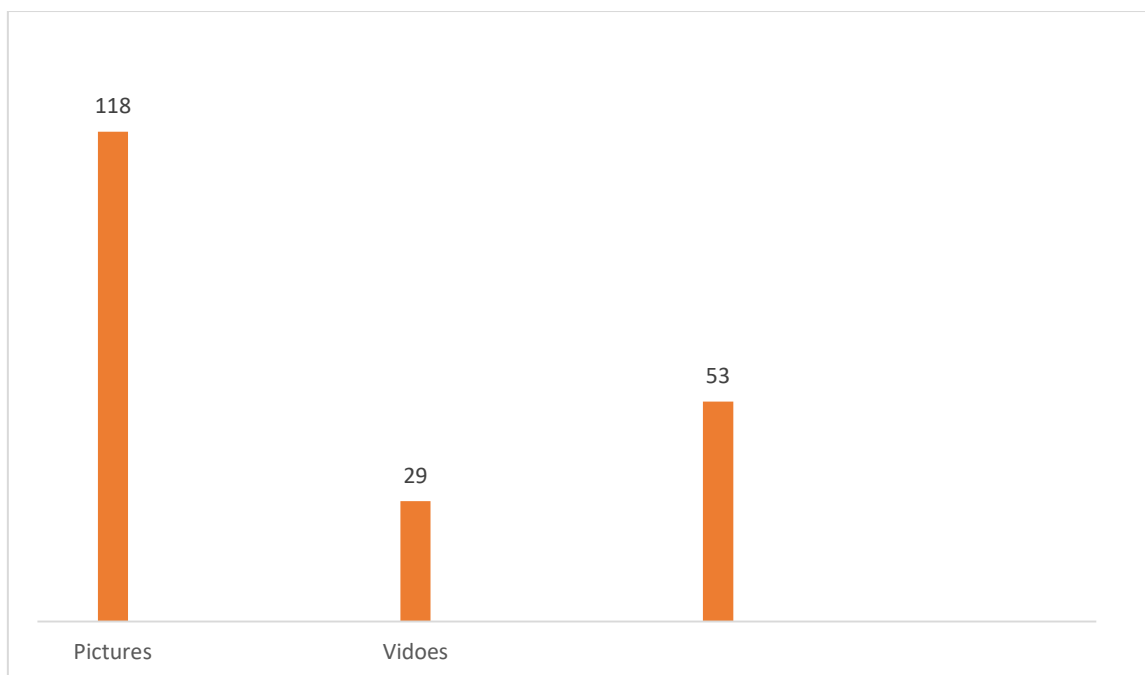
Figure 6: Motivation for the respondents

	Brands	Bloggers	Celebrities
Need recognition	8.29	8.22	8.30
Info search	8.47	8.76	8.24
Choosing alternatives	8.78	7.50	8.22
Purchase decision	7.35	8.33	7.98
Purchase decision	7.32	7.89	6.87

Table 1: Impact of influencers in various decision-making stages

The goal of the current study is to provide potential readers with an example of how they might use influencers to tap into decision-making and explore how modern consumer behavior patterns may be influenced by others' viewpoints. I proposed a theory to this end because the analysis' principal goals rely on altering pattern searchers' decision-making mechanisms.

X.   Results of statistical test
H1: There is a significant difference in the influencers, viz, brand, celebrity and bloggers across "age".

The CROSS TAB depicts the distribution of respondents based on their age and level of influence. According to the data, respondents between the ages of 15 and 30 had a stronger preference for brands than for bloggers and celebrities.

Influencers

		Brand	Celebrity	Bloggers	Total
Age	Count	23	5	2	30
15-20	% within age	76.6%	16.6%	6.6%	100.0%
	% within influencers	20.5%	10.4%	4.8%	35.7%
	% of Total	11.5%	2.5%	1%	15%
20-25	Count	54	9	2	65

	% within age	83%	13.8%	3.07%	100.0%
	% within influencers	48.6%	18.7%	4.8%	72.1%
	% of Total	27%	4.5%	1%	32.5%
25-30	Count	22	12	9	43
	% within age	55.1%	27.9%	20.9%	100.0%
	% within influencers	19.8%	25%	21.9%	66.7%
	% of Total	11%	6%	4.5%	21.5%

Cross Tab 1: Distribution of Age Respondents

	Value	Asymp	Sig. (2-sided)
Person Chi-Square	38.17	8.000	0a
Likelihood Ratio	37.76	8.000	
Linear-by-Linear Association	23.78	1.000	
N of Valid Cases	200		

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests

1 cell (6.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.83.

Chi-square is a mathematical method for determining the performance of rationally predicted and found values. The value point is thought to be 0.05. Table 3 shows that the Pearson chi-square value implies a value of less than 0.05. As the P value = 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, various age groups have varied perspectives on influencers. The association between a customer's age and the opinions of influencers, such as labels, celebrities, and bloggers, is seen in the idea above. This is the source of our concern. The findings will be used in another study to look at the important factors that drive consumers' desire for power; these factors may also influence customers' purchasing decisions. This theory is then developed to assess the effect of affecting circumstances.

XI. Findings

According to the present study's findings, posts and blogs have a significant impact on the behaviors of young people, which is both a positive and negative development in the industry. When a user is satisfied with a product, forums will be utilized by customers to share their positive experience with an unlimited number of individuals. Consumers could discuss the product with friends rather than on forums, limiting the number of potential buyers to a small percentage. And businesses will get an understanding about what they have learned and what they need to change through blogging about feedback on forums, to get the customer's point of view. It is important to note that a number of businesses recognize and understand how blogs can influence their target clients, as well as see blogs as a viable means of selling their products. By participating in collaboration with a blogger and indirectly involving the target community of customers in the business, the product's confidence and consumer satisfaction can be increased.

XII. Discussion

The research looked at the impact of social media marketing, specifically the presence of influencers on Instagram, on customer connections and purchase intent. To satisfy the purpose of the study and the data obtained, research objectives and hypotheses were devised. The findings show that social media marketing for luxury products is a highly effective marketing tool. The five properties of social media marketing success are entertainment, customisation, interaction, word of mouth, and trend. The findings demonstrate that it is easier for the youth to engage on social media platforms such as Instagram. This is mostly due to the entertainment value as well as the chance for interaction that few other platforms provide.

As a result, the platform is more suited to influencing purchase intent and customer relationships. These findings support a DEI Worldwide report that claims that customers make purchasing decisions based on information shared on social media sites, and that users of those sites pass information on to others (DEI Worldwide, 2008). Another fascinating pattern was discovered. Different types of media appeal to people depending on their age and maturity level. The study found that the youth were the most interested in Instagram marketing. Pictures of clothing piqued the interest of the youths between 15-20 years, while texts piqued the interest of the youths of 20-25 years. Understanding the psychology of a company's major client base is critical in order to capitalize on the opportunity.

Finally, and maybe most crucially, one show does not fit all. Influencers aren't for everyone, and reaching out to them on other media would provide better results. Youths aged 15-20 look up to brand influencers, according to the report. The same is true for people between the ages of 20 and 25. Generation Z, who grew up in a technologically advanced society, prefers social media platforms. However, millennials between the ages of 25 and 30 favor celebrity influencers because they grew up watching performers on the big screen. Bloggers are the most influential youths aged 25-30.

XIII. Future scope

Further research could look into the role of influencers in building brand loyalty among viewers. In light of the fact that Instagram's audience reach is now far more B2C than B2B, as well as the role that current users can play as influencers and the impact that this has on individual businesses.

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