

Impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and brand perception

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Abstract: The availability and widespread use of social media has made it the preferred medium for companies wanting to spread product information, create public opinion and gain followers. To this end, social media influencers act as a dynamic third-party endorser to spread a brand's message to vast audience across the world. Consumers who exhibit a positive attitude towards the social media credibility are attracted through social media advertisements. The present study examines the perceptions of agencies for opting social media influencers and their role in customer engagement and brand awareness. For this purpose, the study also assesses different methods adopted by these influencers for influencing customers using a systematic review. The findings of the study indicate customer's perception and attitude are much influenced via these influencers since they are more capable of communicating to a niche segment. As compared to traditional advertising strategies, this new technological means of influencers pave way to new competitive strength to the agencies in engaging customers and creating brand awareness.

Keywords: social media influencers; customer engagement; brand awareness; advertising strategies; social media advertising.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Rise of social media influencers in different platforms

Technology has opened new doors for digital communication and has also paved the path for companies to connect with consumers. Historically, different companies have been using celebrities for building their brand perception. This is done with the help of athletes or other icons promoting products and services for the firm. With the rise of social media, consumers also made the shift to social media for integrated marketing experience. Social network sites apart from providing a communication platform for the companies also enhance visibility for the brand (Tegler, 2009). Further the digital influence brought the advent of social media influencers, i.e., people who can convey social proof and agencies that strategise and create a launch for successful influencer marketing campaigns for the companies. Agencies are marketing partners for firm design integrated channel for end-to-end customer experiences. Solis (2016) in a study explains the growth of social media influencers as a psychological phenomenon, in which an individual assumes the actions of influencers to reflect correct behaviour for a given situation or a brand.

Social media influencers are thus seen as sources by brands as an individual who has a loyal and sizeable network of people. Influencers engage with them using various social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and are able to make recommendations on behalf of the brands as third parties to build trust towards the brand. The loyalty of the audience is what provides the influencers with the ability to drive traffic to a company's website and increase its social media exposure to create the brand's perception. In a report published by Gallagher (2018), brand engagement as a result of social media influencers has increased from 81% in 2017 to 90% in 2018. Further, company spending on social media influencers is poised to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 38% amounting to more than USD7.5 billion by 2022.

1.1.1 Reasons behind the rising popularity of social media influencers

Among the reasons behind the rising popularity of social media are the influencers due to their ability to market the products through integrated efforts of lifestyle and public relations initiatives. This initiative has removal of communication barrier between the brand, the consumer, and followers of the influencer through social media. Before the rise of social media, customers' method of communication was one-sided through television

commercials, billboards, print advertisements, and radio ads. However, through social media, consumers can easily interact with the brand and influencers encourage their followers to be active consumer and not just passively watch the advertisement, but actively display social media engagement to drive new content. Influencers use the products and ensure that the consumers are making an informed decision when making a particular brand purchase (Glucksman, 2017).

Further, Solis (2016) highlights that rising popularity of the social media influencer comes from the consumers and the power they give to their influencers. That is the extent to which they are predisposed by their influencers' opinion about the brands. Abidin and Ots (2015) further argues the popularity of social media influencers is based on intimacy and trust between them and their followers. Influencers share their personal opinions making the products or services trustworthy and more relatable than brand ambassadors' one-way communication, contributing to the growth of the influencers. Furthermore, social media influencers' popularity rose as a result of topical search options that the consumers have. With the influencers, consumers can choose appropriate information according to their priority and even decide the flow of information they need. Lee and Ma (2012), suggest that consumer's information-seeking behaviour significantly affects their intention to share information and the direct user approach opened by social media influencers make them more relevant to the consumers than other mediums of communication.

The present study examines the perceptions of agencies for opting social media influencers and their role in customer engagement and brand awareness. Also, the study assesses different methods adopted by these influencers for influencing customers.

2 Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Customer engagement

Customer engagement in the marketing term has been defined by Palmatier et al. (2017, p.3) as an "engagement associated with the level of an active relationship that a customer shares with a firm." Further, Brodie et al. (2011, p.8) defined it as "a psychological state, which occurs by virtue of interactive customer experiences with a focal agent/object within specific service relationships." Thus, customer engagement forms a behavioural indicator that consumers have with a particular brand. This commitment goes beyond purchase decision and acts as resultant of motivational drivers from antecedents, such as word-of-mouth and co-creation (Kumar et al., 2010). Additionally, there are certain factors that affect customer engagement, particularly with respect to social media marketing. One of the factors is the scope of connections that social media allows. It provides the consumers with a ubiquitous network that is both open and cost-effective for professional interaction and sharing of ideas to influence consumers more easily (Trusov et al., 2009). Further, social media is not dependent on physical proximity as in the real world and allows free communication that does not limit the scope of dialogue between the firms and their customers (Sawhney et al., 2005).

Further, customer engagement has several impacts on the firms as consumer behaviours are used as tools by companies to make suggestions to improve their consumption experience. These also help and coach the service providers in process of creating better consumption offerings through co-creating. Co-creation ensures participation of consumers in conception of the products' core offering itself. Additionally, social media influencers can heighten digital engagement through the social network sites, depending on elements, such as content of the message, the format of posts. Interactivity and vividness drive customer engagement and influencer use their knowledge to acquire and share their social needs to create utility for customers (Khalid et al., 2018). Customer engagement additionally, leads to shared inventiveness between consumers and brands. It further forms the part of discretionary behaviour in consumers that allows a unique customer-to-brand experience that allows the consumers to go beyond their predetermined selected options of products (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

2.2 Brand perception

The brand perception as defined by Van Gelder (2005, p.90) is, "the total impression that consumers have of a brand, based on their exposure to the brand. This consists of both the image that consumers form the brand and their experience with the brand." Consumers' perception of a brand holds a specific and significant meaning for them and is the starting point for company's as a need to address and formulate their branding strategies. Brand perception frames consumer experiences that are accomplished through specific behaviour of consumers.

Additionally, factors affecting brand perception, particularly with respect to social media marketing include level of engagement and interaction that consumers have with their brands. Social media enhance customer-brand interactions in a meaningful way affecting the bottom line profits for the brands in a positive way (Hudson et al., 2015). Additionally, brand perception is driven by 'value equity' of the brand, which is dependent on factors of price, quality, and convenience. Social media provides convenience of maintaining the relationship between the brand and its consumers (Kim and Ko, 2012).

One of the impacts of brand perception of consumers on the companies includes user interactions that in-turn influences their consumer's purchase decision. Additionally, social media is an influential communication channel that impacts the spread of positive word of mouth for the brands and prevents the companies from facing information overload leading to disturbance in the company's message or value proposition (Divol et al., 2012). Further, brand perception driven through social media campaigns contributes to value-enhancing perception of a brand creating a positive influence for brands and support consumers' management of the purchase process (Hutter et al., 2013).

2.3 Social media influencers

With the social media influencers creating brand proposition and enhancing brand offerings, the personality traits of these influencers play an important role. Wiedmann et al. (2010) in a study identified the traits of influential narrative expert, and people with invested involvement in a particular subject. Additionally, the author also highlights that

the influencers show traits of being innovative, risk-averse, and show signs of Machiavellianism, that is show manipulative personality for achievement of their goals. While for cashing their social capital, the influencers display personality strength gregariousness, takes into integrated behaviour and display empathy (Decety et al., 2016; Lam, 2012; Sanecka, 2017).

With the discussion on the personality traits, the methods of ranking of the influencers have also been discussed by academicians. Weng et al. (2010) suggested the method of PageRank-like and topic-sensitive PageRank measures to quantify ranks of influencers. Additionally, Cha et al. (2010) suggest the measure of node closeness by measuring relative influence rank. Where, the influence depends on in degree, reposting's, and mentions. Other ranking methods include star rank and ranking based on transfer of authority via fair-bets model (Budalakoti and Bekkerman, 2012; Khrabrov and Cybenko, 2010).

Additionally, with the ranks, social media influencers strategically use certain practices to increase customer engagement and influence brand perception. These include measures of enhancing relationships with a brand's key audiences to improve reputation of the brand. Influencers also drive customers brand perception by creating awareness about different products through their online activities, at the same time imploring comments and feedback of customers' as well (Booth and Matic, 2011).

Further, the role of social media influencers in driving brand perception is to ensure that the brand is able to gain an influential image in consumers' discernment (Khalid et al., 2018). Influencers help the brand build direct relationships with a focused group for consumers that in-turn makes way to encourage brand loyalty in them. Influencers also become, the direct voice on behalf of the brands that consumers can trust and also open a two-way conversation medium to drive brand loyalty further (Glucksman, 2017).

The social media influencers also create a competitive advantage for the firms by creating a thread of customer-generated content containing customer's insight for co-creation. Co-creation enhances the core offering for the products and also leads to shared insights. Companies can address these ideas to drive brand loyalty further (He et al., 2013; Kumar et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010). Additionally, the influencers also act as a lead acquisition medium for the firm that enables them to gain a competitive edge over the firms. Such that the users who show interest in the product offering of the firms are potential customers that companies can reach out to (Singla and Durga, 2015).

2.4 Empirical review

Hutter et al. (2013) conducted case study analysis for the car brand MINI Facebook brand page on all German-speaking respondents. With 311 respondents, the authors highlight that fan page engagement creates a positive effect on consumers' brand awareness. Findings further suggest that influencers use word of mouth and other activities that guide purchase intention of the consumers. The findings further indicate that social media favours influencers to form a relationship and have direct involvement with the daily life of consumers. Thus they have potential to increase marketing efforts for the brands. Findings further suggest that influencer's engagement has a positive impact on consumers' brand awareness that is further translated into purchase intention in consumers.

Lee and Watkins (2016), empirically examined video blogs influencers and their impact on consumer perceptions of luxury brands. Findings of the study indicate that social attractiveness and attitude of friendships between those who are alike in designated respect impact luxury brand perceptions among customers and their brand purchase intentions. Findings of the study further suggest that consumer perceptions are significantly affected by association with the video bloggers in comparison to respondents who did not watch the influencers.

Additionally, Forbes (2016), using case study analysis method, studied the impact of influencers in the beauty industry. Findings of the study suggest that influencers have a strong role in forming consumers' opinions on products and services. Influencers impact brand perception by using electronic word-of-mouth to guide consumer purchase behaviour. Additionally, the study also highlights that word-of-mouth of influencers have proven to be effective for the company to create consumer engagement. Findings of the study highlight that consumers hold influencer review accurate and stronger the belief of consumer's that product has the mentioned attributes more are the trust and credibility on the brand.

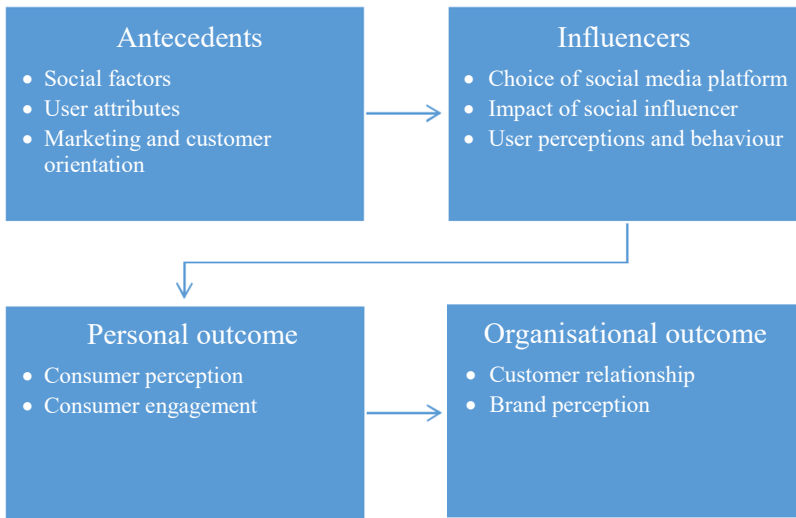
Further, Khalid et al. (2018) in a study analysed five top social media influencers on Instagram in Malaysia. The study highlighted that inputs of social media influencer, facilitate customer engagement and interaction on social media. The study also highlights that customer engagement is more responsive to posts that have more visual content than textual. Similarly, using the combination of both visual and textual content facilitate customer engagement further. Other parameters influencing customer engagement is the message's packaging that is interactivity and vividness of the post as well as posting time.

The results of Khalid et al. (2018) is also aligned with the findings of Nandagiri and Philip (2018). Authors analysed respondents of age group 18–21 years to suggest that influencer's contents are more preferred than advertisements. Influencer content is preferred to create customer engagement and brand perception as the respondents were of the opinion that this engagement is unbiased and elaborate in nature. Findings of the study further suggest that the product showcased by influencers receive positive consumer behaviour that further impacts consumers' purchases.

3 Conceptual framework of the qualitative study

The conceptual framework for the current study is a causal-chain framework developed using the antecedents-influencer – personal outcome – and organisation outcome model. The framework illustrates the causality between personal attributes of the consumers that lead them to follow a specific social media influencer. As social media is a widely researched topic, the perception of influencers acts on a niche of consumers that in-turn frames their perception about a brand and lead to engagement. The organisations benefit in the process by using the influencers to form brand perception and build customer relations that can later to target moulding consumer's buying behaviour.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework constructed by author on literature (see online version for colours)



4 Methodology

4.1 Study design

The goal of this section is to provide a critical review of previous studies highlighting the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and brand perception. For analysis of literary findings of previously conducted studies and presenting a systematic review, a meta-ethnography method for combining data from qualitative assessment and research is used in the current study. It allows translating concepts across studies and synthesises findings in stages-based reporting of the studies reviewed (France et al., 2016).

4.2 Inclusion criteria

The following criteria were used in this research for selecting studies:

- the studies need to be published between 2010 and 2019 in order to include recent studies
- the studies need to be an original study comprising of survey method, systematic review, meta analysis and empirical review only
- the studies need to include the search words which have been mentioned in Table 2
- the studies which were published in English only were included.

4.3 Exclusion criteria

The following criteria were used to exclude studies for the purpose of this research:

- editorial discussion was excluded in this study
- newspaper articles were excluded from this study
- those studies which lacked supporting evidence were excluded in this study
- studies on the topic of social media in marketing studies which did not involve influencers were excluded.

4.4 Systematic review

The review focused on academic databases to search for studies using the search terms: social media influencer, customer engagement, brand perception, described further in Table 2. These keywords or search terms are initially narrowed down from previous studies by author consensus. Additionally, these search terms are further extended through qualitative systematic review to terms related to social media influencers and mechanism of measuring their impact on customer engagement and brand perception.

4.5 Identification of studies

In process of identification of studies, an initial review of literature was conducted based on the title and abstract of the studies. In the initial screening the studies are classified into three primary categories of meeting criteria of the current study, may meet inclusion criteria, or do not meet the standards.

4.6 Data extraction and analysis

Only for the studies meeting the inclusion criteria, they were fully analysed whether the studies meet criteria for inclusion or not. Also, a database on selected studies meeting the criteria was extracted and databank on parameters of author, country, year of publication, impact of social influence on customer engagement, brand perception, and measurement mechanisms for evaluating impact of social media influencers, data analysis, and findings.

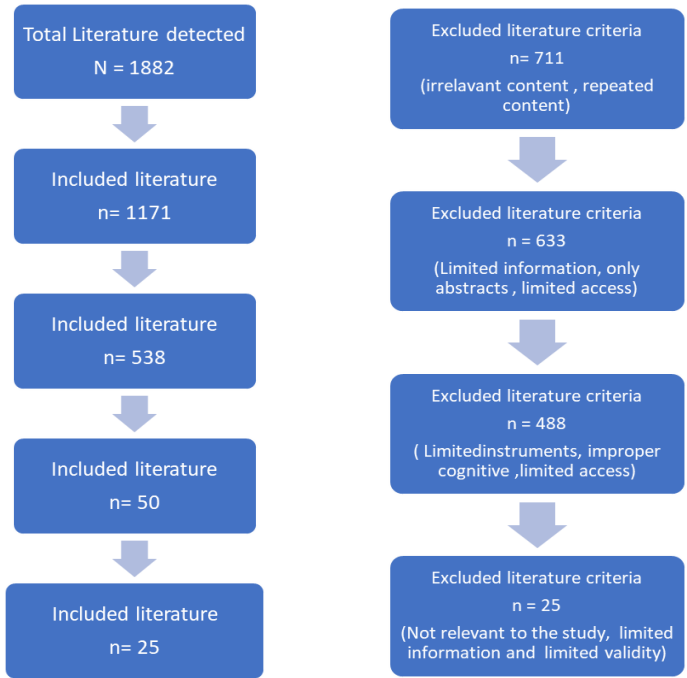
5 Result and discussion

5.1 Searches

The search yielded 1,882 citations, of which 50 were fully reviewed after applying criteria of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Of these studies, 25 met all inclusion criteria and were reviewed.

5.2 Criteria for including studies

Figure 2 Process of article selection (see online version for colours)



5.2.1 Study characteristic

Of the previous studies analysed, five were an overview, ten studies reported original research, and seven were reviews of social media applications. All studies reviewed were between 2010 and 2019.

5.2.2 Search term

Table 1 Search terms for inclusion of studies

<i>Social media influencers</i>
Using any of the following terms: Brand loyalty, brand image, brand relationship, brand association, customer satisfaction, Brand orientation, and perceived quality.
<i>Social media influencer AND</i>
Using any of the following terms: Social media, twitter, Facebook, influencer intended associations, consumer realised associations.

Table 2 Journals and number of papers from each journal scanned and selected

<i>Sr. no.</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Studies</i>
1	<i>International Journal of Management and Business Studies</i>	Chinakidzwa et al. (2016)
2	<i>Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications</i>	Glucksman (2017)
3	<i>International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education</i>	Nandagiri and Philip (2018)
4	<i>Journal of Media Business Studies</i>	Xiao et al. (2018)
5	Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences	Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014)
6	Proc. of Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences	Jaakonmaki et al. (2017)
7	<i>Journal of Interactive Advertising</i>	Daniel et al. (2018)
8		Lou and Yuan (2019)
9		Evans et al. (2017)
10	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	Maslowska et al. (2016)
11		Ge and Gretzel (2018)
12	<i>Corporate Communications: An International Journal</i>	Booth and Matic (2011)
13	<i>The Review of Marketing Communications</i>	De Veirman et al. (2017)
14	Alexander Technological Institute of Thessaloniki	Chatzigeorgiou (2017)
15	<i>Asian Journal of Business Research</i>	Lim et al. (2017)
16	<i>Marketing Intelligence and Planning</i>	Jin et al. (2019)
17	<i>Journal of Internet Commerce</i>	Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019)
18	<i>Journal of Advertising</i>	Wojdyski and Evans (2016)
19	<i>Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising</i>	Childers et al. (2019)
20	Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence	Cha et al. (2010)
21	<i>Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network</i>	Yang and Tang (2012)
22	Proc. of International Conference on Computational Science and Computational Intelligence	Reilly et al. (2014)
23	Proc. of the 41st International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research & Development in Information Retrieval	Segev et al. (2018)
24	Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Knowledge Management and Knowledge Technologies	Anger and Kittl (2011)
25	International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining	Li and Gillet (2013)

5.2.3 Exclusion and inclusion of studies

Studies were excluded because they did not involve any social media or focus on consumer engagement and brand perception ($n = 25$). With a balance specificity and sensitivity, the searches are aimed at identifying relevant papers, comprehensive in terms of studies related to social media influencer, customer engagement, and brand perception. For current review, studies published between 2010 and 2019 are considered, based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Lastly, in the systematic review, the bibliographies of studies selected are further reviewed to recognise relevant references and help to analyse measurement of stimulus, social media influencers have on customer engagement and brand perception.

6 Critical appraisal

6.1 Impact of social media influencers on customer engagement

Chinakidzwa et al. (2016), in a study, suggested brand preference is a potential that forms the basis for competitive advantage and getting brand engagement right is imperative to the process of getting social media working for the company. The author also highlights that companies that are looking to become market winner use customer engagement via social media influencers to provide them with a more rich feedback tool than traditional media. Additionally, Glucksman (2017) highlighted that influencers can benefit the overall image of the brand. While the influencers help in building direct relationships, social media engagement with a brand's key consumers encourages brand loyalty. In this study, the author highlight that a brand has little control over conversations that takes place online. Whereas, influencer act as a direct voice that customers and brands can trust to build a two-way conversation. Influencers on Instagram use quick and easy authentic content to streamline brand conversation by method of tagging, which ensures interested consumers go directly to the brand and engagement among the customer are higher (Nandagiri and Philip, 2018). While on YouTube influencers' through shared videos develop customer engagement by methods of advice and how-to videos. Viewers value influencer opinions and then get engaged by watching these videos (Xiao et al., 2018).

Further, Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014), are suggestive that influencers have the capacity to bring together people who share the same interests, lifestyles opinions, and activities. Influencers act as active respondent developing a voice for the brand on social media. This enables brands to keep in touch with target customer pool and also reach them at correct time and place. Authors in the study also highlight that, social media influencers cater to motivational needs of consumers of joining a brand community for self-related social motivation. Additionally, Jaakonmaki et al. (2017) highlight that a company has to choose the right influencer, who is able to affect the level of user engagement. There are creator related factors such as usage of content and context, number of followers, creator's age, and gender that are imperative to the role of an influencer in driving user engagement. Also, influencers can increase user engagement through content-creation strategies on social media. Such that influencers using pictures of people, emojis, and sceneries increase consumer engagement through positive emotions of relief, joy, and love. However, timing of such posts is also of essence here, if every brand posts pictures with positive emotions on Fridays at 8:00 PM in evening,

it would set off a fatigue effect in users. Social influencers place in augmenting customer perception becomes the key here. They understand the predictors of engagement for different customers and even use varied context in brands, products, or industries to reach consumers at minimal costs and monitor their development in near real-time (Daniel et al., 2018; Maslowska et al., 2016).

6.2 Impact of social media influencers on brand perception

Booth and Matic (2011) is suggestive of impact of social media influencers on brand perception. Authentic relationship between the influencer and his followers allows them to utilise marketing, public relations, advertising, and social media consistently and in balance to reinforce a brand to create a particular perception. Authors are suggestive that influencers through engaging conversations are capable of diagnosing expectations, bringing clarity to the dialogue and thereby alter brand perception in consumers. Conversely, De Veirman et al. (2017) in a study are suggestive that influencers who have a large number of followers diverge the positive effect of perceived uniqueness of the product the minds of the consumer. To build brand perception, size of the audience reach of an influencer is a secondary criterion. This, in turn, decreases customer perception of exclusivity or perceived uniqueness towards the brand. Thus instead of focusing on influencer's number of followers authors are suggestive that influencers' audience reach in terms of activities and interests and activities is more important to take into account to create positive brand perception.

Also, the impact of negative reviews by influencers on social media has a damaging effect on brand perception. On the other hand, if an influencer highlights the positive side of a brand, the perception of service quality from the company goes up, thereby, creating a positive impact on customer loyalty and repurchases intentions. Social media influencers further have the ability to mediate customer attitude. They use tools of social media posts, pictures, and videos to develop a positive association with the brand. These tools attract customer and shape their buying decisions (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). Additionally, Lou and Yuan (2019) highlights in a study that impact of social media influencers on brand perception are created through perceived value of information by the users and entertainment value of generated content by influencers. Influencer's impacts on brand perception are capable of generating credibility through unique content. This credibility is derived from four dimensions of peer endorsement including trustworthiness, expertise, perceived likeness, and attractiveness.

These findings are in line with another study conducted by Lim et al. (2017) where, the authors reveal that influencers who lack expertise to advocate a particular product, impair brand perception for the consumers, which then translates into negative purchase intentions. Findings in the study further highlight that impact of social media influencers on brand perception includes their power to stimulate positive attitude and brand perception. Also, a high positive impact customer's brand perception and purchase intention can be brought by the firms by using congruency between the image of social media influencer and their brand. That is, brand perception in customers is more impacted by influencers they admire or with whom they perceived resemblance.

Further, Jin et al. (2019) suggest that impact of influencers on brand perception are brought through building of brand image beliefs and culture association. Authors highlight that in transfer model of information between consumers and a brand, symbolic

value of the influencer creates credibility. Influencers positively impact product placement that in turn influences consumer's buying behaviour as well as referral buying (Cooley and Parks-Yancy, 2019).

6.3 Strategies used by social media influencers to increase customer engagement and brand perception

Among various strategies used by social media influencers, De Veirman et al. (2017) highlights the process of material connection to between brand and the messages. This can be created by using e-word of mouth on social media. Through social media, influencers, recommend brands through their social media profiles. This helps shape opinions of the followers and create a particular perception for the brand. The authors also highlight the strategy of using sponsored posts by the firms to build consumer engagement and positively influence brand perception. Sponsored posts are a form of advertisement that is paid for and is dedicated a specific form in editorial content with an appearance from the influencer. On social media platforms such as Instagram, influencers use the strategy of not displaying their commercial relationship with brands they are sponsoring. This helps the user associated with an influencer to reduce resistance on part of the consumers and influencers create increase/persuasion translating to customer engagement and brand perception (Wojdyski and Evans, 2016).

Additionally, Childers et al. (2019) highlight that influencers use the strategy of amplifying their brand message using social media. They use natural content to heighten authenticity of content created. This unlike traditional advertising creates a snowball effect. The effect is explained by an influencer, who can get the ball rolling in terms of enhancing message reach to members of social media at large. Influencers use engaged audience, to create and circulate post advertising the product. Consumer engagement and brand perception can further be enhanced by an influencer as they have captivated followers and extended reach. The follower base views their influencer as someone who has specialised knowledge of a product, and someone they already trust and follow. Since the consumer has made a conscious decision to follow the influencer, to drive customer engagement and develop brand perception, the influencer strategises to highlight the use of products or services in real-time. The strategy to build consumer engagement is to keep the message authentic and build brand perception with their credibility.

Further, Evans et al. (2017) suggested persuasion knowledge strategy that influencers use to create customer engagement and brand perception. Authors highlight that influencers spend time with the followers are aware of various persuasive messages they can use to develop an awareness and understanding of the product. Persuasion knowledge is awareness and familiarity that allows influencer to select and execute tactics of coping used by consumer in the buying process. Authors highlight that influencers' usage strategies such as heightened scepticism, counter-argument, and resistance communication have a negative effect on consumer engagement. These negative communication techniques adversely impact the behavioural intent of consumers also leading to a detrimental effect on brand perception the influencer markets.

Additionally, Ge and Gretzel (2018) indicate that influencers have the capability to use rhetoric to effectively create and translate marketing messages of the firm and broadcast it to required audience. They successfully use speech making power and proficient social media language skills to assert and persuade their followers and positively impact consumer engagement as well as brand perception. The rhetoric

strategy works for influencers as it allows not only for them to understand needs and wants of consumers, but also resonate with customers by speaking their language. These languages include the use of emojis, animated stickers, emoticons, and graphics interchange format (GIF), among others.

6.4 Measurement mechanisms for evaluating impact of social media influencers

Directed links or number of followers for influencers on social media could represent intimate friendships or even shared common interests between influencers and their followers. However, what is required to measure the impact of social media influencers. Li and Gillet (2013) highlight that there are some seed user attributes that can be used to measure impact of influencers. These include a number of followers, friends, tweets, and date of joining. As well as past influence of seed users that is average, minimum, and maximum of total and local impact of influencers. Cha et al. (2012) in a study suggests that for social media platforms such as Twitter, there are three measures for evaluating their impact. These include the parameters of, mentions or name value of a user, in degree or popularity of influencer, and retweets based on the content value of tweets. A high in degree between users and influencers do not necessarily convert into mentions or retweets. In degree requires more than spontaneity or accident, influencers rather have to develop concerted efforts to enhance their impact. Also, Reilly et al. (2014) add to the findings, highlighting that influencers are more probable to create higher influence on their followers if they have a high ratio of forwarded messages to the total number of messages posted.

Additionally, Segev et al. (2018) suggested that visual content sharing online social network (OSN) such as Instagram, influence ranking can be measured by an algorithm that is based on intuitive score resultant of network-oblivious statistics. These include regression analysis based on views by followers, views per follower, and views per like. Authors in the study highlight that customer engagement is measured in terms of comments per like and test variance focus that is the ratio and difference between most and least engaging posts of the influencer.

Conversely, Li and Gillet (2013) highlight that measures of influence on academic social media platforms are different than those of social media. On academic platforms, impact of influencer is measured in terms of total number of readers, maximum number of readers per paper, and R-index. It measures a number of published papers that has an equal number of readers to shed a light on both productivity and impact of a scholar. While, on social media, Anger and Kittl (2011) point at Klout measure to identify the impact of influencers. It measures the online influence of a user based on 1 to 100 scale. Klout analyses are based on more than 25 variables, those based on complex algorithm are used to calculate influencers' impact and their ability to drive customers to action. The author also highlights the tool of Twitter grader that scores influencers out of 100 and is based on an algorithm designed to consider factors of followers, update recency, engagement in mention and retweet rate and follower/following ratio.

Other measures of gauging impact of influencers include their message propagation speed, coverage of a marketing message, lead management, and rate of dynamic diffusion. Dynamic diffusion assesses the impact of each influencer on the growth of a particular conversation within a stipulated time frame. Furthermore, Yang and Tang (2012) suggests the impact measure based on replying relationship of the influencer in

form of forum threads that each influencer is able to generate. The next step is to measure response immediacy with which the information is posted, with similar content the influencer is considered more impactful. The authors also suggest the weighted in-degree measure of influencer's impact. In this method, each head of the node is assigned a weight based on degree to which the influencers impact the decision of their followers and influencers score is the sum of weights of all in-link edges of the network.

7 Conclusions

With the new technology opening new avenues for digital communication, social media influencers are now a significant voice for the brands. They connect the consumers to their audience and form brand perception. With the rise of social media, influencers are a part of integrated marketing experience using the sites as a communication platform to build visibility for the brand profiles. Impact of the social influencers has increased due to their intimacy with their followers and trust between them. The rise in influencers can also be added to the guided topic search option provided by them. Consumers can choose needful information based on their priority making the flow of information need-based and relatable. Conclusively, the study will highlight the impact of consumer engagement and brand perception as a result of influencer engaging with them on social media.

The literature review in the study highlight that consumer engagement is driven by commitments that allow users to get impacted by influencers. The factors affecting consumer engagement include the scope of connections allowed by social media as both open and cost-effective option for sharing ideas and influence consumers more easily. Further, with social media overcoming physical proximity influencers positively impact the scope of dialogue between the firms and their customers. The impact of social media influencer on customer engagement includes coaching the users and elaborating the use of product.

Additionally, influencers impact brand perception with enhanced customer-brand interactions impacting the bottom line profits for the brands in a positive way. With the ubiquitous presence of social media, influencers spread positive word of mouth for the brands and prevent the companies from facing information overload.

Empirical analysis of the studies conducted in the past has also been highlighted to suggest the relationship between impact of influencers on consumer engagement and brand perception, further to develop a conceptual framework for the study. The framework highlight a causal-chain framework developed using the antecedents – influencer – personal outcome and organisation outcome model. Through critical analysis of previous studies highlight the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and brand perception. By analysing 25 studies that meet inclusion criteria of original studies, research, survey, review, and systematic review, findings of the study highlight impact of social media influencers on customer engagement. These include a source of rich feedback medium, two-way conversation tool, and engagement of customers through video tools among others. Additionally, impact of influencer on brand perception includes their ability to diagnose user expectation and alter customer perception through dialogue. By enhancing brand perception for a firm, social media influencers impact customer loyalty and repurchase intentions.

8 Future scope of work

Additionally, the critical analysis also points the strategies used by social media influencers, including the practices of e-word of mouth, sponsored posts, real-time messaging, and snowballing effects. These enable the influencers to keep the message authentic and build brand perception with their credibility among followers. Finally, critical analysis highlights some measurement mechanism to calculate the impact that influencers have. These include the parameters of mentions, in degree, and reposting's. Analysis also revealed measurement ratios such as ratio of forwarded messages to the total number of messages posted, ratio and difference between most and least engaging posts of the influencer, and retweet ratio, and follower/following ratio. These concepts would facilitate social media agencies in order to enhance the reach and coverage among users. Moreover, Industry could harness all of these discussed pivotal ratios for maintain the demand of the mavens (users). There are also other dedicated indicators that can point a firm towards impact of influencers including Klout measure, Twitter grader, and weight-in degree. The future study will, further analyse the model based on responses gathered from one to one interview of 15 agency representatives and 15 influencers as well. Conclusively, the study will attempt to highlight why agencies opt for social media influencers and how they help to drive brand perception and customer engagement.

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Appendix

Table A1 Aims and conclusive outcomes

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Aims/objectives of the study</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Results and conclusions</i>
Chinakidzwa et al. (2016)	This article aimed to found tools of social media and platforms which are being used customer and organisational behaviour and understand level of customer engagement.	Survey method was used, alienated into two groups: survey for firms and survey for users. Response was received from 43 firms and 103 consumers.	This study found that most of the companies were active on at least one social media platform with the most popular platform being Facebook. The companies were found to be attempting to push their posts and not generating customer engagement and struggled to generate sufficient online traffic.
Glucksman (2017)	This study analysed the perceptions of emerging adults in the different between style of social media influencers between male and female for brand promotion.	A pentadic analysis was done of posts by social media influencers to examine their strategies. Also, content analysis of YouTube videos to understand consumer engagement.	The study found that female participants were influenced mainly by those who promoted beauty products while male respondents are drawn more towards technology and gaming products. The significant factors regarding the effect of the posts of social media influencers are performing factor along with the level of informativeness.
Nandagiri and Philip (2018)	To understand the role of social media influencers as a voice of brand in order to build two way communication.	Analysis of responses obtained from respondents of age group 18–21 years. The influencers were also interviewed also to understand their work.	The study found that influencers using Instagram made use of authentic content for streamlining brand conversation by using different methods in order to increase the level of customer engagement with the brand.
Xiao et al. (2018)	To understand the role of video influencers in building consumer engagement.	An online survey was done using Amazon's mechanical Turk platform. Consumers who had watched Youtube videos posted by influencer at least once a week in the past were chosen for the survey.	The study showed that YouTube influencers' helped in developing customer engagement by sharing videos of different content. It was also found that viewers valued the opinions of the influencers and therefore were impacted by watching these videos.
Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014)	The aim of this study is to investigate consumer motivations and attitudes of brand pages in social media.	Four unstructured depth interviews and two semi-structured focus groups were conducted to analyse consumer inspirations and attitudes of brand pages.	The study found that influencers had the ability to increase communication between people who had similar interests, lifestyles opinions, as well as actions. Influencers helped in developing a voice using social media for the brand enabling them to interact with their target audience and help in reaching them.
Jaakonmaki et al. (2017)	To understand the matching of the influencer with the level of consumer engagement.	Quantitative approach was used by exploiting an Instagram dataset from an unknown German marketing and advertising firm.	The study found that the company had to choose the correct influencer in order to be able to have an impact on customer engagement. The factors included usage of content and context, number of followers, age of influencer, and gender. Also, they are able to increase customer engagement by deploying content-creation strategies on social media.

Table A1 Aims and conclusive outcomes (continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Aims/objectives of the study</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Results and conclusions</i>
Daniél et al. (2018)	The aim of this investigation is to understand Taylor's six-segment strategy wheel (SSSW) by understanding how message strategy is successful for social media influencers by making commenter's parasocial interactions (PSIs).	Systematic analysis of 360 studies was done related to interactions of consumers with social media influencers.	The study concluded that younger viewers developed PSIs/para-social relationships (PSRs) for the purpose of being similar to their social interactions/relationships.
Masłowska et al. (2016)	This study seeks to suggest a new theoretical model of consumer engagement, recognising role of consumer in non-purchase engagement and rationalising and categorising non-purchase behaviours.	Extensive literature review was done of 23 studies to understand consumer engagement.	The pivotal customer ecosystem being studied to propagate a theoretical model that comprehends brand actions, customer brand experience, spending behaviours, brand consumption and brand-dialog behaviours. Further, it postulates that interfaces between these elements are nonlinear and reactive; implicating that every action originates a reaction of not only the envisioned recipient of the message, but the entire ecosystem.
Booth and Matic (2011)	The purpose of this paper is to present a means of identifying a segment of customers called 'somebodies' which seek continuous engagement with the customers.	A customisable valuation algorithm was created and used to measure a cross-section of variables.	This study helps the brands in understanding the influence of 'somebodies' in target audiences and helping the communication professionals in establishing effective outreach strategies.
De Veirman et al. (2017)	This study aimed to study perceptions of popularity of influencers measured by the number of followers.	Extensive literature review of 26 studies and comparison of two experimental studies were used.	The study highlights the process of material connection to between brand and the messages which can be created by using e-word of mouth on social media. Through social media, influencers, recommend brands through their social media profiles.
Chatzigeorgiou (2017)	This study sought to understand the impact of reviews by social media influencers on brand perception.	A sample of 36 Facebook users was selected from Thessaloniki in Greece who use social media for the purposes of travel.	The study found that social media influencers had the ability to mediate customer attitude by using social media posts, pictures, and videos to develop a positive association with the brand as these tools helped in attracting customer and shaping their buying decisions.
Lou and Yuan (2019)	To study the impact of influencers on brand perception in generating credibility through generating unique content.	Preliminary research was done to understand the mechanism of impact of influencer marketing on consumers through social media.	The impact of social media influencers on brand perception are created through perceived value of information by the users and entertainment value of generated content by influencers. Influencer's impacts on brand perception are capable of generating credibility through unique content. This credibility is derived from four dimensions of peer endorsement including trustworthiness, expertise, perceived likeness, and attractiveness. The study found that impact of social media influencers on brand perception can be created by studying the perceived value of information by the users and entertainment factor of generated content by influencers and the impact is affected by trustworthiness, expertise, perceived likeness, and attractiveness.

Table A1 Aims and conclusive outcomes (continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Aims/objectives of the study</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Results and conclusions</i>
Lim et al. (2017)	The aim of this study is to understand the impact of social media influencers on customer attitude and perception towards the brand.	Data was collected using purposive sampling method using a dataset of 200 respondents and analysed using PLS-SEM technique.	Influencers, who lack expertise to advocate a particular product, impair brand perception for the consumers, which then translates into negative purchase intentions. Findings in the study further highlight that impact of social media influencers on brand perception includes their power to stimulate positive attitude and brand perception. The study found that influencers were required to have expertise in advocating a particular product to improve brand perception for the consumers leading to positive purchase intentions. It was also found that social media influencers have a positive impact on brand perception including their power to stimulate positive attitude and brand perception.
Jim et al. (2019)	Authors highlight that in transfer model of information between consumers and a brand, symbolic value of the influencer creates credibility.	A randomised two group comparison was done between 104 studies on the topic Instagram celebrity vs. traditional celebrity.	That impact of influencers on brand perception is brought through building of brand image beliefs and culture association. The study found that impact of influencers on brand perception are brought through building of brand image beliefs and culture association.
Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019)	This study examined the perspectives from the point of view of employers of applicants' employability with respect to traditional methods and untraditional methods including social media.	Data was collected from 109 junior and senior college students at a US university.	It was found that social media influencers have a positive impact on product placement which influences the purchase behaviour of consumers along with referral buying.
Wojdyski and Evans (2016)	This study aimed to examine the effects of language and positioning with recognition of the content with respect to brand and publisher evaluations, and whether disclosure position affects visual attention.	242 participants were chosen using Amazon Mechanical Turk between 19 and 73 years to collect data using seven-point Likert scale.	Social media influencers used the different strategies on social media platforms such as Instagram, these strategies help the user associated with them to decrease resistance on part of the consumers and influencers.
Childers et al. (2019)	This study aimed to understand the impact of influencers on their follower base.	Systematic review was done in which finally, 213 studies were selected out of a search result of 2,613 words.	This study found that influencers use the strategy of amplifying their brand message by making use of social media. They use natural content to improve authenticity of content created.
Evans et al. (2017)	This study analysed persuasion knowledge strategy which influencers employ to generate customer engagement and brand perception.	A sample of 237 students were examined to collect data regarding their purchase intention.	This study found that influencers spend time with the followers are conscious of a variety of persuasive messages they can use to expand responsiveness and understanding of the product. It was found that influencers help in selecting and executing tactics of coping used by consumer in their buying process.

Table A1 Aims and conclusive outcomes (continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Aims/objectives of the study</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Results and conclusions</i>
Ce and Gretzel (2018)	To employ rhetoric for effectively creating and translating marketing messages of the company as well as broadcasting it to required audience.	A total 56 studies were reviewed to understand the impact of social media on tourism.	The study found that speech making power and proficient social media language skills can be used effectively to assert and persuade their followers and positively impact consumer engagement as well as brand perception.
Li and Gillet (2013)	This study aimed to identify the metrics required to measure the impact of social media influencers on their followers.	A survey was conducted of 28 undergraduate students and word clouds were formed to analyse their responses.	The study found that there are various seed user attributes that can be used to measure impact of influencers including number of followers, friends, tweets, and date of joining.
Cha et al. (2010)	The aim of this study is to investigate the dynamics of user influence across topics and time.	Twitter API was used to collect information regarding social links and tweets about the users investigation on dynamics of users elements.	This study found that along with number of followers, friends, tweets, the other metrics include past influence of seed users involving average, minimum, and maximum of total and local impact of influencers.
Reilly et al. (2014)	This paper aims to do preliminary work in order to rank users in a directional social network by their influence during a particular time period.	Users were ranked by influence using Twitter API to gather information about Twitter activity and analysed.	This study found that influencers were more probable to create higher influence on their followers if they had a high ratio of forwarded messages as compared to the total number of messages posted.
Segev et al. (2018)	This paper aims to explore the problem of scoring and ranking influential users of Instagram which is a visual content sharing online social network (OSN).	A set of Instagram data was prepared in April 2017, including posts published during 2015–2016 but prior to September 2016.	This paper suggested that in visual content sharing online social network such as Instagram, in fluence ranking is measured by using an algorithm which is based on intuitive score resultant of network-oblivious statistics including regression analysis based on views by followers, views per follower, and views per like.
Anger and Kittl (2011)	This study evaluates Klout measure to identify the impact of influencers on a scale of 1 to 100.	A list of top 10 twitters in Austria ranked by the number of their Austrian followers were collected and analysed.	The author evaluated Twitter grader which scores influencers out of 100 and is based on an algorithm made to consider factors of followers, update recency, engagement in mention and retweet ratio and follower/following ratio.
Yang and Tang (2012)	This study aims to measure response immediacy with which the information is posted, with similar content as the influencer is considered as impactful.	A self-made questionnaire was administered to a sample of 100 under graduate 2nd year students pursuing BA degree with honours in English in Howrah and Kolkata using purposive sampling method.	This study found that the impact measure based on replying relationship of the influencer in form of forum threads which each influencer is able to create.