

Role of Social Media Influencers; A case study of UAE.

Tarfa Saeed Al Hosani Communication, University of Sharjah, UAE u19102390@sharjah.ac.ae	Thouraya Snoussi* College of Communication, University of Sharjah, UAE tsnoussi@sharjah.ac.ae
--	---

Submitted: 04/01/2022

Accepted: 28/09/2022

Abstract: This study examines the role that social media influencers in developing marketing strategies. Special focus will be placed on the United Arab Emirates. The researcher intends to learn about the strategies of employing influencers in the economic field and the extent of their contribution in reducing the economic problems in the country. In the meantime, it deals with the position of social media influencers in society nowadays as well as how they influence the behavior of individuals. The author noted the limited scientific contribution related to the topic, especially with regard to the culture of using influencers to economic entities, and the newly spread culture to make the public able to face economic problems by investing in influencers on social media in the UAE. The goal of this analysis was to track the marketing strategies adopted by influencers to helping to overcome the economic downturn. It was observed that there is a significant impact of social media influencers in developing customer buying trends and affecting their choices.

Keywords: Economic Recession, UAE, Consumer Buying Behavior, Social Media, Influencers, Digital Platforms.

1. Introduction

Social life has tremendously been revolutionized by the impressive impact of social media over the last two decades. Number of people joining these social media sites is increasing day by day. At present, social media is quite a popular term which everyone recognizes. Even in remote areas where there is less influence of online activities, people are familiar with the Facebook and twitter, Tik Tok and snapchat (Edosomwan et al., 2011). In present time, one cannot imagine to spend time with checking into their social media account. The evolution of social media has given rise to a new environment where communication has got new means which are more entertainment based. These social media sites offer opportunities for people across the globe to reach out a huge number of people (Voramontri and Klieb, 2018). There are many collaborative projects that social media host which include Wikipedia, blogs and vlogs, virtual social and gaming worlds etc.

A number of studies indicate the effectiveness of social media utilization as an efficient information source. The convenience and credibility of these networking sites enable users to get hold of information that they are looking for. Not only the life standard has been changed but consumer behavior and customer choices have also been influenced by the accessibility of social media (Paquette, 2013). Hence, social media is a powerful communication medium with outreaching affect across the globe. Digital transformation has made business evolved

* Corresponding author

and diversified in terms of consumer access and availability. Global data shows that approximately 42% of the entire world population is using social media in one or the other form (Radcliff, & Abuhmaid, 2019). E-marketers estimated an approximate 16.1 billion people logged on to any of these networking sites through electronic devices with an expected growth of more than 2.33 billion by the end of 2018 (MCMC, 2017). This anticipation has materialized with a number of social media users exceeding 2.3 billion in 2019 (Statista Surveys, 2019).

Traditional marketing has been the only leading network for marketers for decades. At present social media has made its special place in marketing world based upon its significance in people's life. Companies use social media to market their product or services. In relation to this marketing evolution, there is a persistent need to analyze the potential outcome of social media in marketing and advertising and the impact that it has on the buying and decision making of customers. The popularity of social media and their sites increased with the introduction of media influencers (Navarro et.al. 2020). Media influencers are people who display certain information for public in order to spread awareness and advertise any specific product or service. These media influencers are followed on various sites and they post relevant material according to the public demand or as per the requirement of the organization they are working for. For the last 10 years, different online sites and apps are being introduced for content advertisement and promotion. The education, businesses and brands all gathered on these platforms in order to reach out for their customers. To gain effective market response, brands started to hire social media influencers in order to attract customers. These influencers were paid for their part (Ashman et al., 2015).

Like all other countries, Arab countries are also undergoing this revolutionary change. Today major social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, snapchat, Tiktok, what's app and Instagram are quite famous and popular among a significant number of people from Arab countries. Media influencers utilize these sites to reach public through their content that could be in the form of either videos, vlogs, photoshoots etc. When it comes to Middle East, the penetration of mobile and mobile based apps has almost more than doubled to 44% in the past five years according to statistical data provided by GSMA. Every 9 out of 10 Arabs use at least one social media on daily basis. Facebook is holding approximately 187 million users in the region. Almost 50% of the Arabs get their daily news feed from Facebook which is considered ahead of some channels like newspaper (4%), tv (34%) and online portals (39%). Twitter usage in Middle East has fallen to half since 2013. Saudi Arabia and Turkey are simultaneously 5th and 6th largest Twitter users. 72% KSA and UAE users on twitter consider it one of their main sources of video content. Middle East host approximately 63 million users of Instagram. YouTube is another content site widely used for watching videos across the globe. It has been observed that almost Middle East and North Africa has more than 60% viewer ship at YouTube (Radcliff & Abuhmaid, 2019).

With the rapid development of modern communication technologies and the expansion of the circle of uses, social media has a strong impact on people; these networks are becoming strong enough to change the thinking of users (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). The continuous impact of these technologies has pushed those who invest to exploit digital spaces and attract customers, as social media marketing groups promote the brand by announcing the product's feature and specifications using different word phrases and contexts that attract the target audience. In addition to the promotional role that social media influencers play for the

benefit of investors, they use announcing events, spreading news, and can pose any problem in the digital market (De Veirman, et.al, 2019). This paper intends to explore the impact of social media influencers in developing people's choice and market trends in UAE.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media sites are the platforms where users interact with others through their personal login ids and receive desired information. This trend of rapid increase in the popularity of social media created the stipulation for the use of social media as an essential means of industry's advertisement and product sales. Social media has a tendency to divert and modify the market trends since brands/ businesses interact proximately with the consumer-user (Solomon et al, 2010). Social networking sites possess the tendency to lead the race among human communication and can develop certain patterns of human behavior that influence their choice making and buying behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2010). The industry titans have realized the importance of the social media and its high level of effectiveness in comparison to conventional ways of communication. Hence, they have ensured their presence on these sites. The advertisement on these sites is governed by the type of content provided and the mode of delivery of the content. For this, media influencers have been established. These are the people who persuade public and provide attractive content for general public (Berne-Manero, & Marzo-Navarro, 2020).

For years, researchers have been particularly interested in investigating how information is rapidly transmitted through online crowds to help build a general opinion or sentiment among the masses. The concept of influencers was then raised up; they are primarily designed to help disseminate information rapidly by considerably improving the cyclic flow of said information (through the "retweet" or share for example) (Lee et al., 2014).

Consequently, social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, build a deeply woven web of individuals following one another. In the meantime, the literature argues that the term 'influence' is a subjective as well as an ambiguous variable. It has to be alleged also that defining a social media user as 'influential' depends on the metrics employed and the context used. Some studies conducted empirical tests in order to measure the social media influence. They also considered authority as the singular determinant of social media reach; others researchers value the content of the messages that the influencers post to convince the users (Lee et al., 2021).

A significant amount of contemporary research is based on understanding the role of social media as well as digital influencers, microcelebrities, and opinion leaders, all of these having been referred to interchangeably (Abidin and Ots, 2015). Researchers agree that social media influencers (or SMI for short) are people who tend to influence the opinions or actions of members of a community i.e. their followers on a social media platform. This means that social media influencers thus typically engage in building social capital, through measures such as self-branding and self-presentation, to produce economic gains out of their social media activities. A study referred to social media influencers as a sort of an "independent third party" that endorses content as well as products and services among their followers through the use of social media (Freberg, et al., 2011). Enke and Borchers (2019) agreed to this, and added social media influencers (SMI) tend to influence the stakeholders of an organization through the creation and distribution of effective content. Their public presence across a social media platform enables them to frequently interact with their followers.

Earlier, Herzig, Mass, and Roitman (2014) stated in their study that social media influencers act to disseminate content, ideas, and even opinions within a community of potential readers. a recently published article classified social media influencers into three different categories: authorities, spreaders, and writers (Deborah, Michela, and Anna, 2019). These three categories were constituted as per the influence exerted by an influencer. On the other hand, Bullock (2018) classified social media influencers into three groups (mega influencers, macro influencers, and micro influencers), but on the number of their followers.

Hence, media influencers have become an integral part of the social media advertisement and marketing strategy for businesses to expand their customer linkage. According to Stever & Lawson, the viewer and followers are interacted by the behavior and personality of individual models, in which they come to know the individuals' mannerisms, face beauty, sense of humor, attitude and, personal morals(Stever & Lawson, 2013). Stevers also defines the fandom into different levels. In this, the highest level is the obsessive pathological status which means to follow attributes of work of someone with deep interest in his/ her life, work and, family, while the other is obsessive non-pathological which means to follow living a normal life. The medium levels of fandom follow only specific celebrities and role models. He also categorizes the fandom into three categories;

1. Work attraction (in this the followers follow the individuals because of the way of doing work).
2. Personal attraction (in this followers follow the individual due their attractive looks and their figures).
3. Social attraction (People follow them because they similarity with them; e.g.("I follow him because he is like me")) (Stever & Lawson, 2013).

In fact, social media influencers are known to be an effective apparatus for sponsored content; they are constantly involved in advertisements that, in turn, influence brand preferences even for young children (De Veirman, et.al, 2019). The power that social media in swaying the masses' opinion and perception can be understood by examining how celebrities, public figures and digital influencers are often made the face of public campaigns. These digital influencers act as messengers who disseminate the message (or information) from the source to the receiver. Moreover, state owned enterprises are known to employ social media celebrities to shape a certain public perception in times of recession.

3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Currently, the marketing trends are mainly set by social media campaigns run by influencers. It has been observed that during recession, the buying power of people decreased as the prices fueled and people are struggling for making the ends meet. On the other hand, social media has become so much popular that people spend a significant time searching various news feeds that are available through their search history. Hence, social media has become an important tool in setting the customer buying behavior but as to what extent, this phenomena is still practically debatable.

4. RESEARCH AIM

The researcher intends to explore the influencers' strategies and their influencing pattern in establishing market trends in order to support economic field and the extent of their contribution to reducing the economic problems in the country. Additionally, author also intends to investigate the position of social media influencers in society nowadays as well as how they can influence individuals' behavior. The purpose of this study is to be a qualitative addition to the field of research; the chosen topic may also pave the way for the development of new Emirati policies that control the use of influencer marketing to change the buying and spending behavior of consumers in the UAE.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is designed to answer the following research questions;

RQ1): Why does social media users follow social media influencers?

RQ2): To what extent users trust and obey the social media influencers?

RQ3): Could influencer marketing become a dominant strategic communication tool in the economic field in the future?

6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are stated as follows:

1. Identifying the impacts of digital influencers on the economic recession in the UAE;
2. Building a strategy to control the buying behavior of products and services through influencers on social media.
3. Identify ways of developing sustainable economic strategies for economic growth.

7. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The researcher believes that this study is a qualitative addition in the field of research because it will undoubtedly help researchers understand the impact of digital influencers on the country's economy. The results obtained may also pave the way for the development of new Emirati policies governing the use of influencer marketing to change the buying and spending behavior of consumers in the UAE.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research for this paper was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the content of top 3 instagramers in UAE was analyzed for a period of one month. In the second phase, a survey was conducted to gather public opinion regarding the influencer following and their buying trends. The data gathered from both phases was recorded in tabular manner. Comparison was made between the type of content, public response and social media feedback for the posts.

9. DATA ANALYSIS

UAE is one of the countries in the world where per capita income is more than other countries of the region. Since after the influx of digital technology in the region and accessibility to mobile phones and smart phones, influencer media gained public acceptance and popularity. Public at large has been highly indulged in watching content shared by these influencers on various platforms. Following is a statistical data chart showing the social media usage trend in Middle East during the period of six years from 2013-2019.

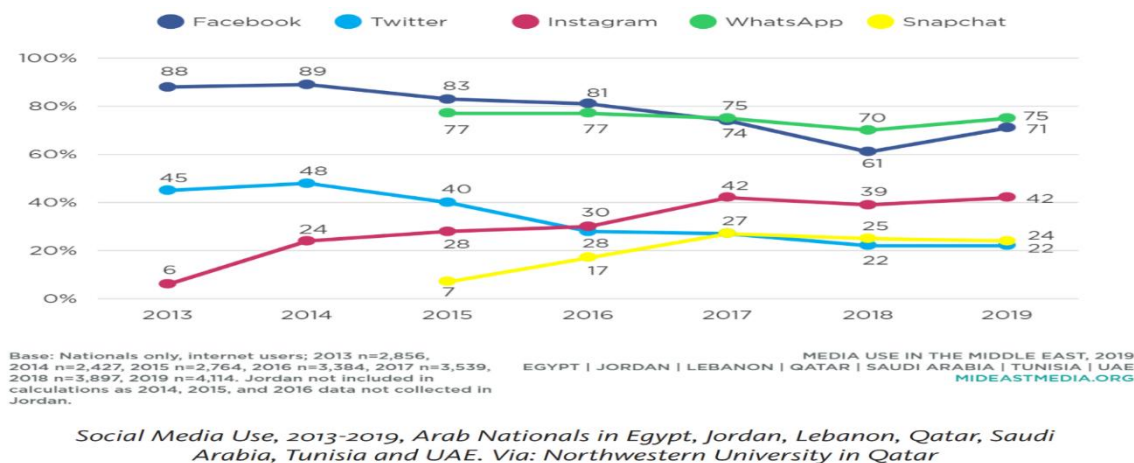


Figure 1 Social Media Usage Trends in Middle East and North Africa

Source: (Radcliff & Abuhmaid, 2019)

The above figure shows that facebook at large is one of the most widely used social media plat form in the region. However, when it comes to UAE alone, Instagram is more popular in the country. Influencers have extremely high fan following on their social media site. They keep on posting new content and gain viewership in terms of comments and likes to their content. It has been seen that these influencers have an extended audience based upon their social media engagement rate. Millions of people follow these instagramers or youtubers.

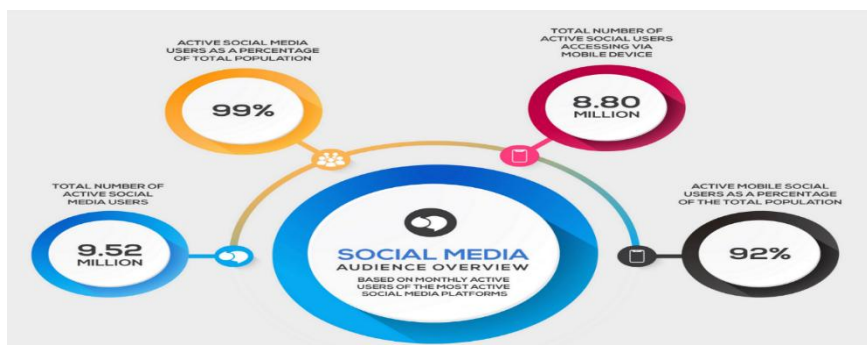
10. IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE UAE ECONOMY

Although UAE is a country that mainly relies upon oil for its economic stability. However, during the recession, the demand for crude oil fell drastically down. While the global efforts were being made to revive the entire economy from the depression, social media was effectively used to induce online buying culture among the public. People starting developing buying behaviors based upon the product/ service reviews available on social media. Brands started to invest heavily into creating media content. A part from oil, fashion, health and food industry received a major boom during the recession and provided a new trend to online buying and businesses. Only Instagram has accounts with millions of followers. These followers like and comment upon their posts. For every like or comment the media content creator is paid a certain amount.

However, during recession, the payment has been delayed by the brands who hired the content developers/ media influencers. Businesses cut their marketing budgets and people restricted their extra spending. This resulted in reduction of revenue generation in every sector. Establishing social media trend gave a new life to online business and e-commerce

started to revive. During 2020, a significant percentage of public turned up for e-commerce (GMI Blogger, 2021).

Figure 2 Social Media overview

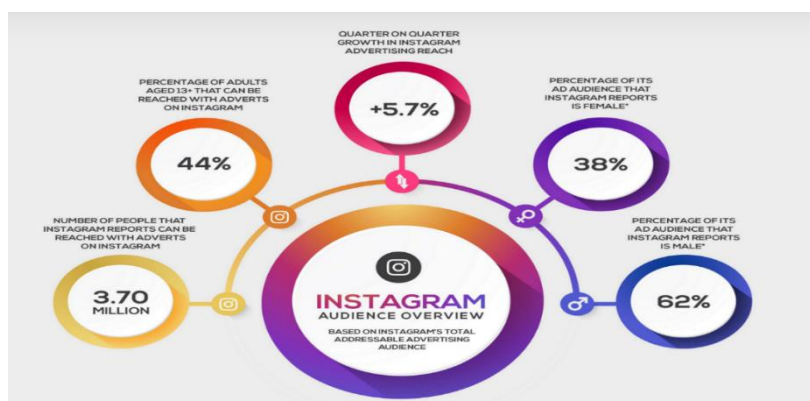


Source: ("UAE Social Media Statistics 2019 (INFOGRAPHICS)", 2019)

Table 1: Various social media Platforms used in UAE

Social media Platforms	User Percentage
Facebook	82 %
What's app	82%
You Tube	82%
FB Messenger	63%
Instagram	61%
Twitter	48%
LinkedIn	43%
Snapchat	32%

Figure 3. Instagram Usage Overview in UAE.



Source: ("UAE Social Media Statistics 2019 (INFOGRAPHICS)", 2019)

In UAE, Instagram has an audience of 3.7 million with a 44% of adult aged above 13 years that can be reached with adverts on the platform. Quarter on Quarter growth in Instagram advertising is +5.7%. 38% of the active users are females while 62% Influencer marketing has become a dominant strategic communication tool in the economic field for future. With the transformation of technology, brands and businesses have accessed a new channel to communicate more effectively and persuade the customers in a more reliable and convenient manner. Virtual integration has become much more effective and profit generating than any other method of marketing and promotion.

Instagram is becoming very popular in UAE in addition to Face book. The popularity of Instagram influencers is based upon public appreciation and demand as people like to explore different places, products and services through these bloggers and content creators. The author did an investigation about the Top 3 most followed Instagram influencers based on the mentioned criteria; the results are as follows;

Table 2: Famous UAE Instagram Influencers.

@Instagram	Posts	Followers	Following	Content
bin_baz	568	5 million	123	Entertainment/family
Taimalfalasi	5672	3.2 million	3,822	Travel/food/lifestyle
Fex	3691	777 K	94	Vlog/travel

Source: Author analysis of Instagram accounts

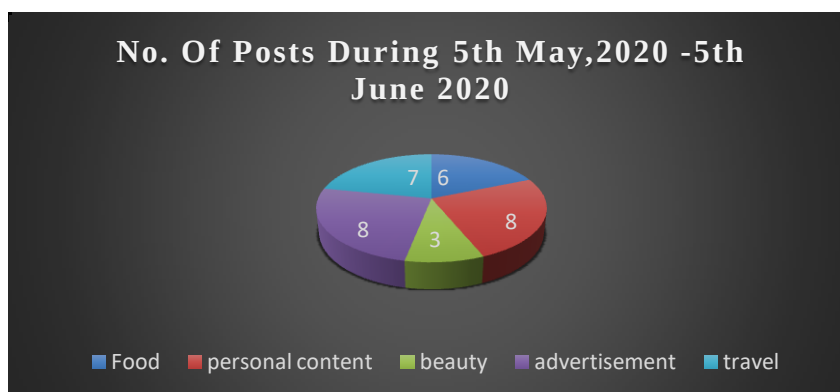
Bin_baz is a UAE based entertainment content creator; he is Top1 most followed Instagram influencer with 5 million followers. Public is interested in his videos related to everyday life, his content for “stay safe” campaign during the pandemic was viewed by an estimated 2 million followers and public admired his content for originality. On average his content receives 5K views, comments and rating. The content is paid for every like/comment. His content posted on Instagram has a fan following of 5 million based upon likeness of the content that he makes and shares on his account. However, his posts are less in number as there are only three posts during the period selected for rest of the instagramers. The author noted that the posts during this time period are related to travel and tour guide for fans who are following him on social media platform. The content is dedicated to influence the viewer’s choice for life style and attire selection. More over the content is also influencing the selection of destination for travel and tour during summers.

Similarly, taimalfalasi, the Top2 Instagram influencer with 3.2 million followers, dedicates the content of her pages to food (31%), travel (42%), and lifestyle (12% personal and beauty). Her viewership is more than bin_baz. The author set out to calculate the average views that Taimalfalasi provided through her Instagram posts and found that the top 2 Instagram influencer gets an average of 1 million views per post. The analysis showed that the Instagram account is updated frequently and a new content is available for followers on a daily basis.

Table 3: Percentage Analysis of the Content @Taimalfalasi

Content Topic	Number Of Posts	Content %age	Likes
Food	6	18.75%	65,942
Travel Blog	7	21.8%	72,578
Brand advertisement	8	25.0%	83,593
Personal blogs	8	25.0%	68,901
Beauty /lifestyle	3	9.4%	34,561
Total	32	100%	325,575

Figure 4. Graphic presentation of the content @Taimalfalasi



A total of 31 posts were made during the period of one month. These posts included food and travel blogs, food recipe reviews/ guides, cosmetic brand promotions, advertisement content and personal content. Primary medium of content was either pictures or videos. A significant number of viewers are following the Instagram account at present. The viewer ship of Taimalfalasi is based upon the frequency of updates and attractiveness of the content. Majority of the followers use the travel blogs and food reviews provided by the instagramers. The brand advertisements are another essential part of the Instagram account. The influencer is paid for developing content that advertise their products/services or locations (hotels, restaurants, salons etc.).

The Top 3rd Instagram influencer is Fex, with 777 K followers. Like, Taimalfalasi, Fex also posts content on daily basis. Most of his content is for entertainment purpose. Along with boomrangers, the content includes tiktok videos, sale announcements, product reviews etc.

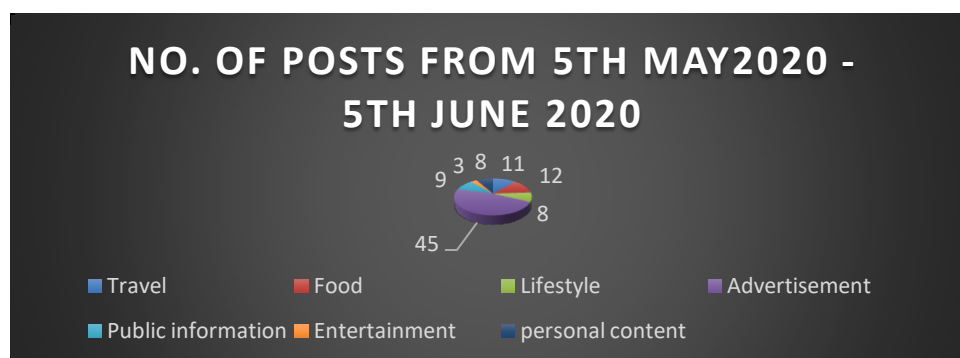
Table 4: Percentage Analysis of the Content @Fex.

Content Category	No. Of Posts	Content %Age
Travel	11	11.5%

Food	12	12.5%
Lifestyle	8	8.3%
Advertisement/promotional content	45	49%
Public information/announcement	9	9.3%
Personal content	8	8.3%
Entertainment	3	3.4 %
Total	96	100%

Data showed that Fex's main concern is to provide reviews regarding lifestyle (9%), travel guide (12.5), and promotional contents made for various 5 star hotels, franchises and other products accounts for (51%) of the total content made by the influencers. Total 96 posts were made and uploaded on the Instagram page.

Figure 5: Graphic Presentation of the Content @Fex



The above figure shows that 46.87% (45/96) posts were related to advertisement of various brands, hotels and lifestyle accessories. The main medium of content for Fex is video blog or live stream. Food and travel account for 12.5% (12/96) and 11.45% (11/96) posts during the selected period. It was observed that Fex also contributes to public information / announcement pertaining to various governmental notifications related to travel/food or fashion. The posts uploaded on Instagram also include entertainment content however, the frequency is very low (i.e., 3.12%, 3/96). Personal content includes influencer's own experience related to various issues or blogs. Fex tends to address a larger public ranging from youth to adults, male female audience irrespective of their gender as the life commodities advertised by him are for general public like home décor, personal accessories, fashion etc.

Table 5: Percentage Analysis of the Content@ Fex

Content Topic	No. Of Posts	Content %age	Likes
Food	12	12.5%	123,252

Travel Blog	11	11.5%	214,645
Brand advertisement	45	49.0%	835,927
Personal blogs	8	8.3%	68,789
Lifestyle	8	8.3%	167,424
Entertainment	3	3.1%	123,536
Public information	9	9.3%	194,147
Total	96	100%	1,727,720

Content uploaded by Fex is mainly related to reviews, advertisement and public announcements.

Table 6: Comparison between Content Strategies of Instagram Influencers.

Content Topic	Influencers	Number	%	Likes
Food	bin_baz	0	0	0
	Taimalfalasi	6	18.75%	65,942
	Fex	12	12.5%	123,252
Total		18	31.25%	189,194
Travel Blog/	bin_baz	1	33.3%	35,198
	Taimalfalasi	7	21.8%	72,578
	Fex	11	11.5%	214,645
Total		19	66.63%	322,421
brand advertisement	bin_baz	0	0	0
	Taimalfalasi	8	25.0%	83,593
	Fex	45	49.0%	835,927
Total		53	74%	919,520
Beauty/Lifestyle	bin_baz	0	0	0
	Taimalfalasi	3	9.4%	34,561
	Fex	8	8.3%	167,424
Total		11	17.7%	201,985

11. SURVEY RESULTS

In the second phase, a public survey was conducted through online survey tools on social media. A questionnaire comprising of 10 questions was given on social media with free access to the survey. A total of 58 responses were complete and were included in the survey analysis. 44.8% (26 /58) participants agreed to be influenced by Instagram influencers. Out of these, 65% (17/26) followed Taimalfalasi on Instagram. 19% (11/58) participants had gone for vocational trips according to the reviews given by Fex and taimalfalasi on Instagram. A considerable number of participants 38% (22/58) agreed to utilize discount vouchers for various brands as advertised by Taimalfalasi and Fex. These vouchers were for beauty products, men attire, and grooming accessories. 57% (33/58) of the participants followed taimalfalasi for her food and restaurant reviews. 36% (21/58) of the participants followed Facebook and had created an online buying pattern based upon the advertisement on the site. Rest 19% (11/58) participants used other social media sites. None of the participant showed ignorance in relation to the social networking sites, social media platforms. 71% (41/58) participants used social media sites on regular daily basis and spent an average of 3hrs a day/week on these sites. 100% (58/58) participants agreed to use social media sites at different platforms. Out of these participants, a considerable number of female participants (55%, 32/58) used social media site Instagram for shopping and selling purpose. All the participants agreed for building an impulse buying behavior related to social media advertisement and brand marketing. 72% (42/58) participants think that the credibility of the influencers affect the sales of a brand.

12. DISCUSSIONS

Digital marketing has established itself as an integral component which is essential for the future survival and performance of organizations. People are greatly influenced by the social media trends. Present day marketing strategies relay upon their social media trend setting image for better revenue generation. The marketing budget for the brands that these bloggers work for is high. They set a social trend and help maintain a specific image for a certain service or product that they are making content for. Fex in comparison to Bin_baz and Taimalfalasi is comparatively a primitive blogger whose content is related to vlogs on travel and automobiles. Majority of the male audience is attracted to his content. He has small audience as compared to other two influencers but his viewer ship is regular and instant.

The above-mentioned figures suggest that a considerable number of public uses social media apps and websites. Majority of the audience is adult and above 13 years of age. The advertisers and content creators/ media influencers have a large number of public at their own dispense. The economic recession affected the entire world yet alone UAE. Media influencers paved a successful way to divert physical market into digitally driven market. The reviews and public feedback established reputé for the brands. Media influencers revitalized the e-commerce industry and open new ventures for economic stability.

To answer the first research question, psychological influence based upon visual appeal is very powerful. Media influencers tend to create vibrant content or provide reviews based upon the liking of the public that they get from the feedback in the form of likes/ comments or emojis. These reviews build a product reputation. The credibility of any influencer is based upon nature of content and feedback given by the public. Majority of the businesses used this visual content media to attract customers. Depression and frustration that people endured

during pandemic made life very difficult. These media influencers and content creators create content that entertain the audience. Survey also indicates that public like this aspect of social media the most.

The second research question is related to the credibility of the social media influencers. Their credibility is established through the feedback provided by the followers in the form of comments, likes, dislikes etc. However, it has been seen that people greatly rely upon the reviews given by these influencers and this greatly impact the buying behavior. This part may be added to the findings after proceeding with the analysis not here.

The third research question is based upon the futuristic demand of influencer market as a dominant communication tool. The answer to this is yes, it has become one of the most dependable and reliable method of communication for business to earn economic stability. From the above gathered data and analysis, it can easily be concluded that social media has effectively played its part in attracting a huge audience in terms of clientage to various industries including travel, food and fashion. People were attracted by the content posted by the influencers and they gave spontaneous response to posts made by these instagramers. Bin-Baz remains limited to everyday content and family-based videos along with his interaction with elite class of the country. In comparison, Taimalfalasi tends to explore much of the food and travel world. She has been advertising for various fashion brands and has been an active part of advertisement market in UAE. Fex in contrast to the above two instagramers remains in touch with general public which ranges from elite to middle and lower class through his content. It has been often seen that his videos promote sale discounts, educational wave offs, travel packages and other social messages that he shares through his Instagram account.

13. CONCLUSION

Digital marketing has become an essential tool in virtual communication in the present time. People have a psychological attribute of accepting trend that has gained fame and popularity. The lust of becoming famous and recognizable has invaded the social setup around the globe. This trend has become a key success tool in reviving the economic dip. Organizations, brands and firms are hiring social media influencers to attract audience and increase their customer range. With the availability of internet through mobile phones and android devices, the access to lifestyle trends, fashion, travel and food has become a norm and a status symbol. Influencers convey messages to general public for which they are paid for. Influencers like Fex provide everyday content for various issues, discounts and packages for people who follow him on Instagram.

Government should focus upon utilizing this platform to address various other public issues that are not approachable in any other format. Security policies must be formulized in order to secure the cyber confidentiality of the users. Ethically influencers should also keep in mind that whatever they convey is for general public at large and their content should not hurt sentiments of a specific group or generate racism.

14. REFERENCES

- Abidin, C., & Ots, M. (2015). The Influencer's dilemma : The shaping of new brand professions between credibility and commerce. Presented at the AEJMC 2015, Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA, Retrieved from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hj:diva-27812>.
- Ashman, R., Solomon, M.R. and Wolny, J. (2 015) 'An old model for a new age: consumer Decision-making in participatory digital culture', Journal of Customer Behavior, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp.127–146.
- Berne-Manero, C., & Marzo-Navarro, M. (2020). Exploring how influencer and relationship marketing serve corporate sustainability. Sustainability (Switzerland), 12(11). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114392>
- Bullock, L. (2018). How to evaluate and partner with social media influencers (online) Social Media Examiner. Retrieved, from <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/partnersocial-media-influencers>.
- Cheung, M.K., Chiu P., & Lee M., (2010). Online social networks: Why do students use Facebook? Computers in Human Behavior 27, 2011, pp. 1337–1343
- Deborah, A., Michela, A., & Anna, C. (2019). How to quantify social media influencers: An Empirical application at the Teatro alla Scala. Heliyon, 5(5), e01677. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e01677>
- De Veirman, M., Hudders, L., & Nelson, M. (2019). What Is Influencer Marketing and How Does It Target Children? A Review and Direction for Future Research. Frontiers in Psychology, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02685>
- Edosomwan, S., Prakasan, S.K., Kouame, D., Watson, J. and Seymour, T. (2011) 'The history of social media and its impact on business', Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp.79–91.
- Enke, N., & Borchers, N. S. (2019). Social media influencers in strategic communication: A conceptual framework for strategic social media influencer communication. International Journal of Strategic Communication, 13(4), 261–277. DOI: 10.1080/1553118X.2019.1620234
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. (2011). Who are the social media Influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. Public Relations Review, 37(1), 90-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001>.
- Gilbert, E. and Karahalios, K. (2009) 'Predicting tie strength with social media', in Proceedings Of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, pp.211–220
- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2017) Internet Users Survey 2017.
- Lee, E., Kim, J.D. and Baik, D.K., (2014). Method for measuring Twitter content influence. In 26th International Conference on Software Engineering and Knowledge Engineering, SEKE 2014 (pp. 659-664). Knowledge Systems Institute Graduate School.

- Lee ,Jung Ah, Sudarshan S, Sussman K. L., Bright, Laura F. & Eastin , Matthew S. (2021). Why are consumers following social media influencers on Instagram? Exploration of consumers' motives for following influencers and the role of materialism, International Journal of Advertising, DOI: 10.1080/02650487.2021.1964226
- Navarro, C., Moreno, A., Molleda, J. C., Khalil, N., & Verhoeven, P. (2020). The challenge of new gatekeepers for public relations. A comparative analysis of the role of social media influencers for European and Latin American professionals. Public Relations Review, 46(2), 101881
- Paquette, H. (2013). Social Media as a Marketing Tool: A Literature Review (Masters of Science). University of Rhode Island.
- Radcliff, D., & Abuhmaid, H. (2019). Social Media in the Middle East: 2019 in Review. SSRN Ectronic Journal. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3517916>
- Solomon, Michael R., Bamossy, Gary, Askegaard, Sören, Hogg, & Margaret K. 2010. Consumer Behaviour, a European perspective. Financial Times/ Prentice Hall, UK
- Statista Surveys (2019) Statista [online] <https://www.statista.com/topics/3320/statista-surveys>.
- Stever, G., & Lawson, K. (2013). Twitter as a Way for Celebrities to Communicate with Fans: Implications for the Study of Parasocial Interaction. North American Journal of Psychology, 15(2), 339-354.
- UAE Social Media Statistics 2019 (INFOGRAPHICS). The Media Lab. (2019). Retrieved 27 July 2021, from <https://www.themedialab.me/uae-social-media-statistics-2019/>.
- Voramontri, D., & Klieb, L. (2019). Impact of Social Media on Consumer Behavior. International Journal of Information and Decision Sciences, 11(3), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijids.2019.10014191>
- Wielki, J. (2020). Analysis of the role of digital influencers and their impact on the functioning of the contemporary on-line promotional system and its sustainable development. Sustainability (Switzerland), 12(17). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12177138>