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Written By:

Sneha Panda

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Contents

1. Introduction:.....	3
1.1. What is an influencer?:	3
1.2. What is influencer Marketing?:.....	3
2. Why influencer Marketing?:	3
2.1. Most popular platforms for influencer Marketing:	5
3. Types of influencers (by follower count):	5
3.1. Influential collaborations:	6
4. Steps for Influencer Marketing campaign:.....	7
4.1. Goals and budget:	7
4.2. Researching about influencers:	7
4.2.1. Ways to manage influencers:.....	7
4.3. Building relationship with influencers:.....	8
4.3.1. Reaching out to influencers:	8
4.3.2. Establishing a mutually beneficial relationship:	9
4.3.3. Maintaining authenticity and transparency:	9
4.3.4. Cultivating trust and Brand loyalty:.....	9
4.4. Action Plan:.....	9
4.4.1. Collaborating with influencers:.....	10
4.4.2. Best practices to generate authentic content:	10
4.5. Measuring Success:.....	10
4.5.1 Key Performance Indicator (KPI):	10
4.5.2. Tracking Metrics:	11
4.5.3. Return of Investment (ROI) Calculations:	11
5. Preferred Influencers and Campaign Examples:.....	11
6. Future Trends and Opportunities:	13
6.1. Role of AI and ML in Influencer Marketing:	13
Bibliography:	14
Appendix:.....	17

1. Introduction:

“It's not what you sell that matters as much as how you sell it!” (nodate, cited in Baker 2023. a)

As stated in the above quote in this modern era, marketing goes beyond traditional approaches to build brand identity. The autocomplete feature from the most popular search engine, with its corporate mission “to organize the world’s information...” offers a fascinating glimpse into what questions the world is asking about any topic, at any given time. These search suggestions, made me think about the intricacies of the influencer marketing industry (Levin, 2019). Good brand communications are based on an orientation around a dominant, coherent ‘big brand idea’ as a platform for creating, involving, and sustaining customer engagement. It is about communicating with a single ‘voice’ where the strands of the communication message must be coordinated and consistent (Dahlen et al., 2010). The way we do marketing and reach customers is changing drastically with each day based on consumer behaviour. Influencer Marketing has become one of the most important aspects of marketing as it helps to create trust and awareness for a product.

1.1. What is an influencer?:

A creative person or group that can influence the behaviour or opinions of others: The influencer is the individual who may influence the purchase decision in some significant or authoritative way (Klose, 2024). Influencers are people with sizable social-media followings who can influence their followers’ behaviour as consumers (McKinsey, 2023). Nowadays, influencers represent an essential actor of the new interactive marketing era, characterized by the bi-directional value creation and active customer connection, engagement, participation, and interaction (Wang, 2021). Influencers act as a route to brand engagement for their followers and hold the potential to promote customer-brand relationships across different product categories (Delbaere et al., 2021). Influencers offers brands the ability to deliver the “right” communication and marketing message to a specific target audience (Costello and Yesiloglu, 2020).

1.2. What is influencer Marketing?:

The most glamorous and charismatic among us have always influenced how others aspire to live—including the products people buy to support their lifestyle dreams. But only recently, with the advent of social media, has influencing people become an actual job (McKinsey, 2023). Influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing that involves product placements and endorsements from online creators. In today’s competitive marketing landscape, brands are collaborating with influencers more firmly than ever, as partnerships with well-known creators can open the door to large potential audiences (Dencheva, 2024. b).

2. Why influencer Marketing?:

Influencers assist marketers in reaching a large audience through highly engaged channels while increasing the engagement and interactions. Influencers essentially target and communicate with people on behalf of brands (Sharma, 2024).

The global influencer marketing platform market size amounted to 15.2 billion dollars in 2022. Furthermore, value stood at 21.1 billion U.S. dollars as of 2023, having more than tripled since 2019. The same value stood at 1.6 billion dollars just seven years prior (Dencheva, 2023. a).

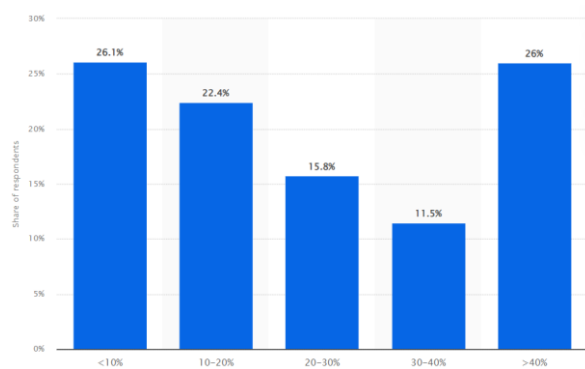


Fig 1: Share of marketing budgets spent on influencer marketing worldwide as of February 2024 (Dencheva, 2024. a)

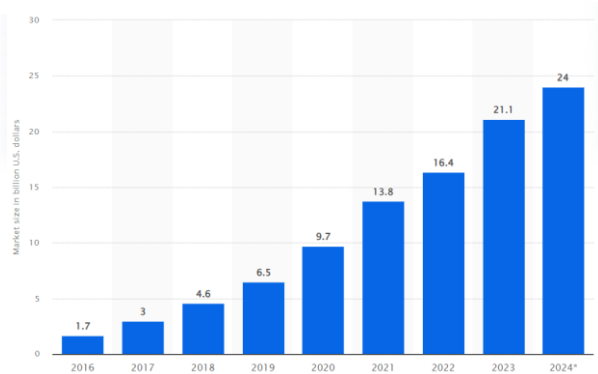


Fig 2: Global influencer marketing value 2016-2024 (Dencheva, 2024. b)

As per fig. 1 during a global 2024 survey among marketing agencies and brands, 22.4% stated that they invested 10 to 20 percent of their marketing budget into influencer marketing. Another 26% dedicated more than 40% to this type of digital marketing activity (Dencheva, 2024. a). As per fig. 2 in 2024, the market is estimated to reach a 24 billion U.S. dollars (Dencheva, 2024. b).

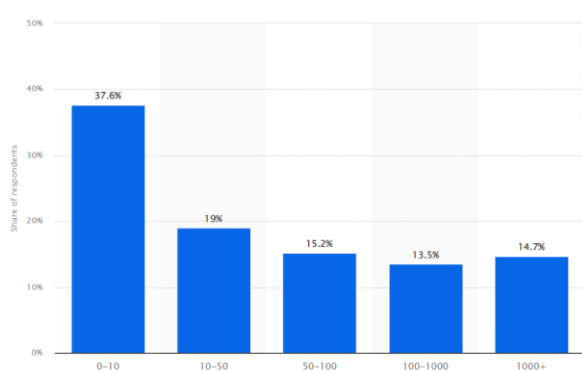


Fig 3: Number of influencers brands worked with worldwide 2024 (Dencheva, 2024. c)

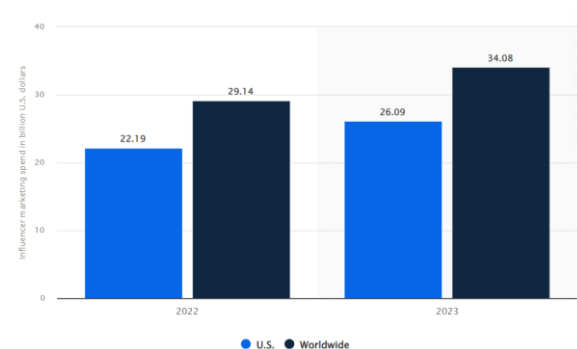


Fig. 4: Influencer marketing spending worldwide and in the United States in 2022 and 2023 (Dencheva, 2024. d)

As per fig. 3 a global 2024 survey among PR agencies, marketing agencies, brands, and other relevant professionals' states, 37.6 percent of them stated that their organizations worked with up to 10 influencers, whereas 14.7 percent said they worked with over a thousand influencers (Dencheva, 2023. c). As per fig. 4 in 2022, influencer marketing spending in the United States equalled 22.19 billion U.S. dollars, which was less than global spending by close to 7 billion, which stood at around 29.14 billion in the given year. During 2023, global influencer marketing spending reached 34.08 billion, while in the U.S. it amounted to 26.09 billion dollars (Dencheva, 2023. d).

2.1. Most popular platforms for influencer Marketing:

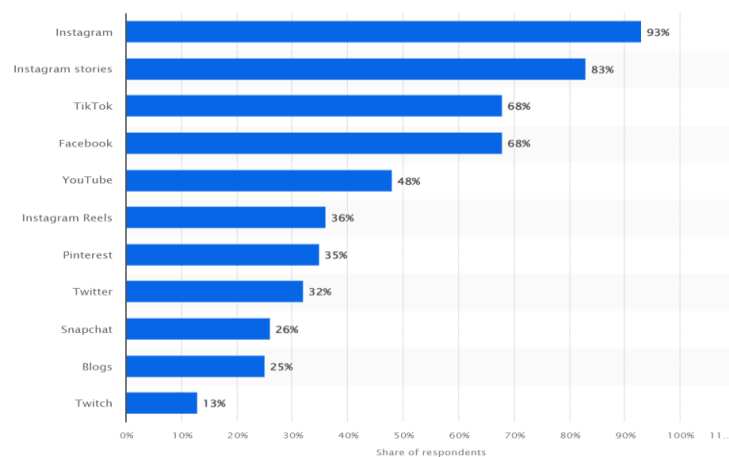


Fig 5: Share of marketers planning to use selected platforms for influencer marketing in the United States as of March 2021 (Dencheva, 2023. e)

Fig. 5 shows that during a 2021 survey, 93 percent of responding marketers and agency professionals from the United States stated that they were planning to use Instagram for influencer marketing. Instagram Stories was named by 83 percent and Instagram Reels by 36 percent of respondents. 68 percent of interviewees ranked TikTok second. (Dencheva, 2023. e).

3. Types of influencers (by follower count):

There is no one-size-fits-all approach in influencer marketing. There are majorly 3 categories of influencers nano, micro and major, the major influencers are again divided into 2 categories i.e. macro and mega influencers (Sharma, 2023).

Nano Influencers:

They have 100 -10K followers (Santora, 2024. a). They generate a higher engagement rate and are very cost-effective while the recommendations are more trustworthy and personalized. They often focus on one specific niche which creates a sense of trust and reliability among consumers in compared to any other influencers. Small to medium sized businesses with a limited budget can benefit more from these influencers (Sharma, 2024; Worb, 2023).

Micro Influencers:

They have 10K-100K followers (Santora, 2024. a). Any brand can collaborate with prefer micro influencer, however; brands prefer them especially when they want to reach a new engaged audience. Like Nano influencers, Micro influencers are also cost-effective and often have authority in their niche. The campaign briefs and expectations become very easy as they have a deep and clear understanding of their audiences and their needs. Brand awareness is one of the best suited options for these influencers (Sharma, 2024; Worb, 2023).

Macro Influencers:

They have 100K-1M followers (Santora, 2024. a). Macro influencers have the potential to generate significant exposure and conversions for their products or services, hence they are the best for brands and businesses looking to reach large audience. They often have engaged audiences on more than one social media platform and seen as a trusted, authoritative voice within their community for sharing high quality content while understanding what works well for their audience. They are also a good option for driving clicks and conversions as typically have a website, email list, or podcast to leverage (Sharma, 2024; Worb, 2023).

Mega Influencers:

They have 1M+ followers (Santora, 2024. a). The goal of working with Mega influencers is typically tied to both awareness and sales. They are best used for campaigns with big budgets. Unlike working with Nano or Micro influencers, brands likely only work with one or two Mega influencers as opposed to a handful or more. Brands get an opportunity to reach large audiences via mega influencers. As they typically have well-established credibility and often create professional high-quality content, they are great for major product launches or seasonal campaigns like Black Friday, Boxing Day, etc. (Sharma, 2024; Worb, 2023).

3.1. Influential collaborations:

In the multifaceted realm of influencer marketing, brands often grapple with a critical decision: opting for paid influencer campaigns or delving into barter collaborations (LetsInfluence, nodate). Brands decide to go with paid or barter collaboration based on the budget and objective of influencer marketing.

Paid Collaboration:

Paid campaigns often foster stronger commitments and dedicated efforts toward campaign success as they involve monetary compensation for influencers. This helps brands to ensure content quality and message alignment while having greater control over content, audience targeting, and broader influencer reach. Paid collaborations allow brands to keep a track of accurate Return of Investment (ROI), providing data-driven insights into campaign success and enables future optimization (LetsInfluence, nodate). Brands can target all types of influencers by followers count based on their budget and objective.

Barter collaboration:

Friends are trusted more than strangers or salespeople, and people who are not paid to endorse a product are viewed as more trustworthy than people who are paid. Likability describes the source's attractiveness, measured in terms of candor, humor, and naturalness (Kotler, Keller and Chernev, 2022). Barter collaborations involve exchanging products, services, or exposure instead of direct monetary compensation, enabling brands to save on upfront costs. It can foster long-term relationships between brands and influencers, evolving into paid partnerships as the brand-influencer relationship strengthens (LetsInfluence, nodate). Brands mostly target nano and micro influencers for to fulfil their objective of influencer marketing.

4. Steps for Influencer Marketing campaign:

Brands follow various steps to identify the right influencer for a campaign. The potential of influencer marketing in creating a brand value lies in unveiling the art of creating compelling pitches, understanding the significance of personal branding, and navigating the negotiations for fair compensation (Voss, 2024). Identifying the right influencers' is the biggest challenge for 75% of marketers (Barker, 2023. c).

4.1. Goals and budget:

Brands consider various factors before choosing the right influencer. Nonetheless, all these factors revolve around major goals and the budget for the influencer marketing. Some of the major objectives that brands keep in mind while choosing the right influencers is what kind of brand message they want to convey to the audience or consumers i.e. brand awareness, or brand repositioning, or product launch, or market entry (Klose, 2024). Criteria brands follow to set a target includes:

- Number of followers
- Engagement Rate = Number Interactions/Number of followers
- Credibility and trustworthiness
- Interactivity and format
- Type of content based on content quality and core value
- Preferred social network of consumers
- Audience demographics and age groups

(Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024; Sharma, 2024; Sicilia and López, 2023)

4.2. Researching about influencers:

Researching about influencers is one of the most crucial parts of influencer marketing. Brands outsource the first part of segregating influencers to various influencer marketing agencies such as Creator IQ, Viral Nation, Goat Agency, Audiencly (Geyser, 2024; Sharma, 2024). The agencies help and assists the brands to find a list of suitable influencers. Since this is just a part of marketing technique brands generally do not wish to invest heavily on expensive influencer marketing software Furthermore, on the second phase brands themselves do manual research on selected influencers (Sharma, 2024).

4.2.1. Ways to manage influencers:

The two ways to manage influencers are relationship based and transactional based. However; organizations find relationship-based approach gives better results (Audrezet and Kerviler, 2019). Finding the right engagement tactics is a challenge for 69% of marketers (Barker. 2023. c).

Transactional Approach:

Transactional influencer marketing aims to maximize the number of sales by consistently attracting new customers, rather than encouraging repeat purchases with the buyer, like relationship marketing. It focuses on the number of sales transactions registered, the profit per sale, and the cost of each purchase while leveraging point-of-sale promotion which is a key element of 4P's (Product, Price, Promotion and Place) of Marketing mix. Here influencer is a product endorser who just executes the brand strategy. Some major drawbacks are it lacks consumer loyalty and has a short-term focus with high acquisition cost (Smith, 2023).

Relationship Approach:

Relationship influencer marketing focuses on building a long-term relation with influencers. Here influencer is an expert and brand ambassador who shapes and tailors the brand strategy as per the requirement. It is a time-consuming process, however; it gives an annual Return of Investment (ROI) in brand image and community engagement. The influencers fit to the brand image and have a direct relationship with the management with a comparatively high switching cost (Smith, 2023).

4.3. Building relationship with influencers:

Marketers often treat social media as a low-cost advertising channel. Consumers these days are reluctant to trust online brand messaging or ads, hence, brands turn to social media influencers who distinguish themselves through their personal style and their ability to attract a large audience. Almost all influencers have their own way of dealing with brands for example, some prefer personalized emails. Marketers are gradually recognizing that influencers must be treated as brand ambassadors instead of advertising outlet to build a relationship with them which is a very important factor for influencer marketing (Audrezet, 2019).

4.3.1. Reaching out to influencers:

Influencers have their own dos and don'ts. It is not only about reaching out to an influencer it is also about how brands reach out to them is what matters. For example, Marion, a lifestyle influencer with 129,000 followers on Instagram, mentioned when a brand contacts her, she first looks at how the email or message starts. If it says only 'Hello' or 'Dear Blogger,' she just deletes the mail or message directly as she considers the email should be personalized if it is not then she is one among the large amount of people. If the mail or message attracts her then she looks at whether the brand has collected information about her and her blog (Audrezet, 2019). This incident clearly depicts that deciding a strategy before reaching out an influencer helps the brand to stand out and build a long-term relationship with the influencer.

Brands also must have a plan ready on how to engage influencers by preparing their campaign invitation message well. The aim of the first email must be to introduce the brand, product, and campaign while making an attractive value proposition for the influencer by making an upfront offer of compensation and defined call to action (CTA) (Upfluence, 2023).

4.3.2. Establishing a mutually beneficial relationship:

To build a long-term relationship with influencers marketers these days have become smart to set clear expectations for the outcome of any campaign. Influencers know their niche and audience better than the brands, hence, the freedom of producing content allows them to be creative as per their audience's needs. Rewarding the influencers based on engagement rates, conversions, or sales has become more popular these days to maintain the trust between brands and influencers gradually resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship (Sharma, 2024).

4.3.3. Maintaining authenticity and transparency:

Consumers get more well verse with ads by real people like influencers which become less disruptive and blend in more seamlessly with the audience's feeds, compared to ads generated by brands. However, it can be a bit misleading if there is no proper disclosure or discussion of terms and conditions about the partnership between brands and influencers, thus affecting transparency. Thus, explaining the importance of authenticity of content to the influencers is always the utmost priority for influencers (Barker, 2019. b).

Social media platforms have made easier for brands to amplify the content through paid ads without accessing the influencer's account so the influencer does not sacrifice their account security. It depicts a win/win situation for both the parties. In turn this allows the influencers to keep a track of brand's actions with their content. Thus, in the long run this promotes transparency between both the parties and establishes trust (Barker, 2019. b).

4.3.4. Cultivating trust and Brand loyalty:

Building trust and brand loyalty depends on how is the campaign perceived by consumers. Brands must prioritize fostering genuine connections with influencers, recognizing the significance of them in shaping brand's image and encourage them to engage with audience. By establishing authentic relationships brands can resonate well with their target audience via influencers. By acknowledging influencers impact and value towards the brand, brands can express appreciation of their contribution for amplifying brand message and engagement with target audience (Sharma, 2024; Solutions, 2023).

Encouraging influencers to connect with followers to gain valuable insights into their preferences, concerns and feedback, brands can foster a two-way communication to build a sense of community and authenticity. This in turn will enhance the credibility of both brands and influencers while also solidifying influencer's position as trusted voices, thereby strengthening the brand's connection with its target audience (Sharma, 2024; Solutions, 2023).

4.4. Action Plan:

A plan in motion is the phase where brands put in all the efforts for collaborating with influencers to generate best and authentic content to convey their brand message.

4.4.1. Collaborating with influencers:

A key aspect of action plan is to co-create content alongside influencers, this gives influencers immense opportunity to leverage their creativity and unique perspectives to produce engaging and authentic content. Brands can align the content seamlessly with brand values, messaging and overarching objective can be achieved by closing working with influencers. Furthermore, to ensure a cohesive and impactful campaign brands must provide influencers with a clear and comprehensive outline of the campaign. This should encompass all the requirements by brand like vision, target audience, desired tone and specific goals which will allow the influencers to craft content that resonates with audience while staying true to the brand identity (Sharma, 2024).

4.4.2. Best practices to generate authentic content:

There are multiple ways to generate authentic content out of which some of the best practices to achieve this is through storytelling, originality, and reliable content. Storytelling serves as a powerful tool for connecting with audience to a deeper level. By conveying brand messages using compelling stories, influencers can create content that feels organic and relatable. Influencers should use these stories to evoke emotions, share personal experiences, and impart valuable insights, thereby engaging audience (Sharma, 2024).

Additionally, originality is essential in ensuring that the content stands out from the crowd amidst the saturated digital landscape. Brands align with influencers to create unique and innovative content reflecting their personal style and creativity to capture attention of their audience and differentiate themselves from competitors (Sharma, 2024).

Furthermore, reliable content is essential and crucial for brand identity. Hence, brands align with influencers to prioritize accuracy, transparency, and fact-checking to ensure that the information shared to audience is valuable and trustworthy. Reliable content will establish influencers as credible sources, enhancing the authenticity of their brand partnerships (Sharma, 2024).

4.5. Measuring Success:

To track customer journey properly using influencer marketing, marketers follow S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Based) principle for goal-setting (Klose, 2024). By measuring influencer campaign success, marketers can derive customer content preferences, enabling them to refine future campaigns for greater impact. 53% marketers say measuring the performance of a campaign is their biggest challenge (Barker, 2023. c).

4.5.1 Key Performance Indicator (KPI):

Marketers are always on the edge to measure the success rate of a campaign hence they follow certain methods. Some of the most important methods are measuring the reach using influencer content by tracking engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares and saves; monitoring conversion rate of customers with influencer content. Additionally, marketers also utilize sentiment analysis tools like sproutsocial, monkey learn, etc. to gauge brand sentiment and perception withing

the target audience after the campaign. Furthermore, a well-crafted campaign brief and sharing relevant KPIs to the influencers help them to understand the objective and expectations more effectively (Grin, 2024).

4.5.2. Tracking Metrics:

The social media analytics play a vital role in tracking metrics, these analytics helps marketer not only to gauge the direct outcomes but also to understand user behaviour and engagement in more effective way, thereby giving a holistic approach to improve future campaigns. Reach, impressions, audience engagement, audience growth rate, brand mentions are some of the first metrics to review (Foy, 2023). The Urchin Tracking Module (UTM) parameter such as trackable URLs by adding identifiers, affiliate links and promo codes can also be used to track the traffic and conversions (Patel, 2021). It can be gauged using google analytics or any other third-party analytics tool such as AspireIQ, HootSuite, Socialbakers.

4.5.3. Return of Investment (ROI) Calculations:

In influencer marketing, ROI is the profit earned from every penny of business spend in marketing effort. A positive ROI is always the best and sweet spot for brands. ROI is generally calculated by determining the significance of both direct and indirect revenue associated with cost. It plays a crucial role in identifying the strategies that works best and empowers to optimize budget accordingly.

Formula: $ROI = (Revenue\ Generated - Campaign\ Cost) / Campaign\ Cost * 100\%$
(Adobe Experience Cloud Team, 2022).

5. Preferred Influencers and Campaign Examples:

Brands generally opt to build a relationship with existing influencers and collaborate with them rather than seeking out new ones entirely. Brands often favour smaller influencers over prominent ones due to the authenticity and engagement levels of their audience towards the content (Gyser, 2024).

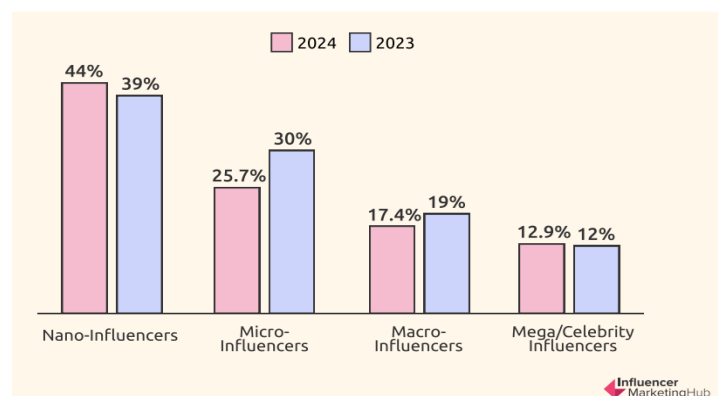


Fig 6: Types of influencers brands prefer (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024).

A social media campaign can always go either way, it never has a predictable outcome.

Successful Campaign: (67 shades of Dior)

In 2021, DIOR launched an exceptional influencer marketing campaign, “67 shades of DIOR”. This campaign was meant to have 67 influencers for each unique foundation shade in the Forever range over 67 days. In addition to featuring influencers in the campaign, DIOR also created multiple social media assets that could be shared on their channels. This included behind-the-scenes footage, interviews with the models and photographers, and exclusive content that was only available on social media (Creators United Team, 2023). By creating this additional content, the brand was able to keep the conversation going and maintain engagement with their audience long after the campaign had ended. This campaign resulted in great geographic reach which later was also featured on paid ads and in PR releases (Hello Partner, 2023).

- 67 influencers 2.66M Audience Reach (+33%)
- 1.85m Impressions (+85%) 290 Content Created (+44%)
- 591k Engagements (+269%) 6.6%
- Engagement Rate (120%) 72% content was repurposed on owned channels and used as shoppable assets (Hello Partner, 2023).

Unsuccessful Campaign: (Adidas x Naomi Champell)

The failed social media marketing campaign always teaches the marketers the importance of selecting suitable influencer and tactics to make the campaign look more realistic. One of the best examples of failed social media influencer marketing even with a right influencer is collaboration of Adidas with Naomi for 350 SPZL kicks. The campaign clearly did not work as expected as Naomi included the promotional instructions by Adidas team in the post. It was a sheer negligence which led to unreliable content and reduced the authenticity of post (Sid, 2024).



Fig 7: Adidas x Naomi Champell (Sid, 2022).

6. Future Trends and Opportunities:

The influencer marketing industry is growing very fast with increase in popularity, demand, and marketing spending. Some of the interesting future trends in this industry would be to see how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) integrate, influencers will become key to many affiliate programs, domination of short video over long, paid advertising will be the key (Santora, 2024. b).

6.1. Role of AI and ML in Influencer Marketing:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) has been disrupting the way marketers do marketing these days and it is going to make a distinctive impact in future of influencer marketing. Brands are following advances messaging feature to reach out to influencers while they are also using various AI models like ChatGPT to curate content. The virtual or AI influencers are also increasing contributing towards the growth of influencer marketing (Santora, 2024. b).

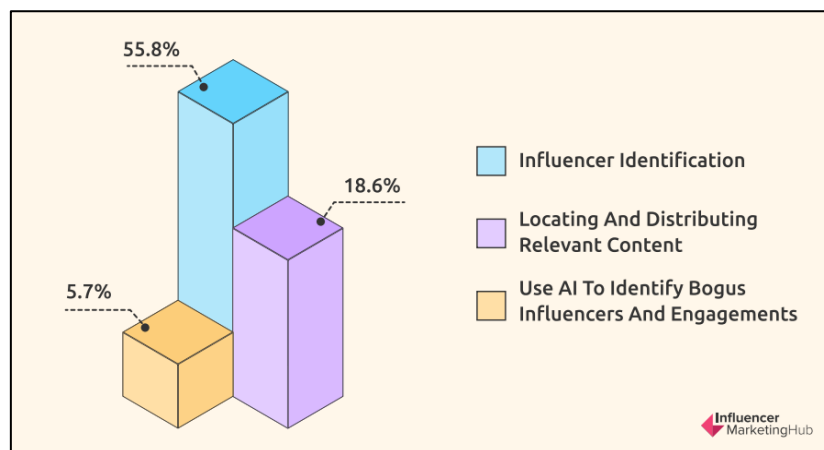


Fig 7: Role of AI and ML in Influencer Marketing (Gyeser, 2024).

Over 60% of brands intend to integrate AI and ML technologies in the coming years for influencer identification and campaign optimization. Nonetheless, without direct investment in these tools, much of the implementation is expected to remain within influencer marketing agencies (Gyeser, 2024).

To conclude, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in digital marketing landscape. This paper delved with the operational aspect of running an influencer marketing campaign, including selecting influencers, measuring campaign success, and navigating the challenges of authenticity and influencer alignment with brand values (Klose, 2024).

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Appendix:

Q1. Could you share your views on Influencers and Influencer Marketing?

A1. Let us start from top. In terms of marketing, it has changed the way we do press-based marketing. In mean, these influencers are divided into three categories, i.e. major, micro, and nano. Now, people depending on brands or organizations further divide the major ones into A-listers with a 1M+ or 2M+ and B-listers with 0.5-0.8M+. So, every organization has a different way of calling them. Now, to go a bit more in depth if I follow any influencer's page, I look forward to a content piece from them. When they post it, I love it, I like it, and I share it. Now, what I am doing is I am an engaged follower, I pay attention to every action of the influencers I like. A very important part of influencer marketing is who are engaging. So, what influencers do for us, if I am a brand is that they give us reach which is highly engaged. When the influencers put a content, example YouTube, I am targeting a bunch of people and talking to them via the influencers. When I say this, I mean, people follow what an influencer does and probably they will engage with their content up to some extent. This means that these influencers provide an engaged audience and amplify the reach for brands.

Q2. How do you see the influencers buying followers and when is it more likely to happen?

A2: I would not deny the fact that it does happen, so there are a lot of tools available nowadays with agencies etc. which can detect fake followers, so it has decreased quite a lot due in compared to how it was couple of years back. Since, these influencers also want to get work so try to avoid buying followers which are bots.

Q3. With the increasing influencer marketing brands are preferring more micro and nano influencers, what are your views on it and why?

A3. When the influencers become famous and have many followers, they start collaborating with a lot of brands. So, there was an influencer who used to many endorsements pre-COVID and now she has retired. She used to share 10-15 different brands ad in a day in her stories which exactly means what you mentioned earlier the engagement drops in such scenarios. People now follow her, but do not engage with her content. This is about the A-listers influencers. It is absolutely true that the micro and nano influencers are doing even better. Now, the reason why they are doing far better is that they are kind of hyper-local i.e. a person based in a particular area will can use relatable content for that area while having a diverse content from comedy to hair to makeup, etc. Consumers relate to it and enjoy their content since they feel validated. After this the engagement rate increase up to 20-25%. So, the purpose is if a certain number of people are following them, then, each post will have such engagement rate combined with likes, shares, saves, comments, etc.

Q4. How do you select the influencers for your company, do you face any challenges?

A4. Based on the engagement rate, now, let us take an example of clothing brand which is also a mass brand. So, they will go for micro or nano influencers. I was personally associated with a retail brand, so now if Louis Vuitton wants to go for influencer marketing, they will still try to select a major A-listers influencer because they are a luxury brand. Let us take Zara, even they would not go for very big like A-listers influencer as they are a mass brand they would like to go for influencers who give them better reach and engagement for product. This is one of the most important reasons why categories are important to decide which influencer to pick and why. Marketers like us need to understand that where our brand is positioned and are we reaching and talking to sophisticated or mid or mass kind customer. So, accordingly we would pick our influencers.

Q5. How do you filter the influencers?

A5. When we talk about filtering influencers the very basic and important factor is demographics. So, for example, I was working for a mass retail brand into fashion. That's where we realized we had to promote a specific type of women clothing. I could have asked anyone to promote, but I would follow the other way round like an influencer who got immense number of follower and we should as her. However, did a bit deeper research and realized that 80% of her followers are guys. Now, do you think it would have been ideal to promote women clothing with her, the answer would be no. So, this means we need to study these factors too before deciding on the influencer marketing strategy.

Q6. Do you have any KPI that you follow for influencer marketing strategy?

A6. Yes, A couple of things like KPIs, brand positioning should be considered to understand where we need to pick from like top, mid or bottom layer of influencers. Depending on how luxurious to massy the brand is we pick influencers. After this comes the demographics which plays an important role to focus on engagement rate. Example, we need to define that we want a reach of 100 million, engagement of at least 5%, and probably a sale of 1%.

Q7. Could you please elaborate a bit more on backend process before the marketing campaign? Up to what extend do you use tools to figure out the influencers?

A7. Generally, the tools are with agencies. We as brands do not prefer to invest in those tools as there is a cost involved and putting some money on influencer marketing tool is not worth for us but rather, we involve agencies because their primary job is to plan influencer marketing campaigns.

For example, if you have heard about GroupM, they are a group of agencies who have these tools. So, we brief the agencies with our requirement and they give us a list of filtered influencers and make a plan for it.

Q8. What kind of brief do you give to the agencies?

A8. We give a detailed brief like demographics; how much reach does our brand need, business, cities that we want to target based on big or small cities the influencers will be selected. For example, for a big city we would go for A-listers including some micro and nano influencers versus small cities we would go for micro and nano. Another important factor is which background or what kind of content creator it must be. Now, as a business, it will also depend on how much we are willing to spend so the bifurcation of budget will depend of what kind of business is being generated in which cities. These kinds of strategies are put together based upon the business goal and objective, then it is shared with agencies.

Q9. Do you personally verify and double check the list of influencers shared by Agencies?

A9. Yes, we do, because agency's job is to just give us a dump of influencers then we as a brand check manually to filter out of the provided influencers because we know our brand fit better. To do this our team check each influencer's page and authenticity. The market has become so competitive that there are influencers who gain followers by doing flashy content which have a lot of engagement. So, having a lot of engagement and followers is not always the best thing.

Q10. Does buyer persona play a role before you set the requirements or have a meeting with agencies and how does it help you in influencer marketing?

A10. Absolutely, every brand has a buyer persona like who is your customer. This we try to know before hand, even if I try to start a new business the first thing after deciding the product is who am I selling

the product to. For example, if I am selling drinking water, my buyer persona would be IT professionals or working people, young bachelors. So, the age group I am selling to would be around 20 to 35. As a business it is very important to establish a brief accordingly and share it to even to the agencies.

Q11. How do you decide on budget?

A11. The major challenge is mostly not about the money because just like when we buy something in market, we have a budget same here we have a budget and we know certain influencers fit to that budget. Coming to the relationship management that you talked about so when we are working with an agency for a long time, they also have certain influencer for multiple years and they keep giving them regular work and hence the pricing would be decided. On the other hand, if let us say influencer A and B just started and become a popular face with huge demand in past few years then they will have a higher price point. Generally, this is how pricing works. Additionally, it is our responsibility as a brand to choose the agency with better pricing. Example, bigger agencies have better pricing for bigger influencers while smaller agencies have better pricing for micro and nano influencers.

Q12. Would you like to discuss about some challenges while negotiating or selecting an influencer you have come across till date?

A12. When it comes to conflict it also depends upon brands. So, conflicts are always mostly around the content like this should have been done, this should have been worn, swirl was not okay, it should have been three times before the reel ended, logo was not in the right place, all these things. In my opinion, when we do influencer marketing, we must take care and make sure to follow few things, such as associating the brand with influencer or the content type that they are making is resonating with their followers or not. So, a brand should never dictate on how they should make content. That is where a brand fails because it will look fake. If consumers are following and resonating with an influencer, it is because the way and type of content they create in their own style. This clearly means that a brand must only provide guardrails of how the brand should be put in light, they should never tell the influencers to do things their way. The basic concept is that it is not an ad film, basically brands piggyback on influencers reach.

Q13. The thin line of difference between actor and influencer and the type of influencers is vanishing, what is your take on it? Do you as a brand feel it is better for influencers to focus only on one niche?

A13. The real factor that matters at the end of the day is the engagement rate and if audience can resonate with content well or not. For example, if today an influencer is talking about car and tomorrow about a pair of denim, it will not matter till it is adding value to their followers. So basically, it is kind of more dependent on engagement.

Q14. Is it always about driving the sales or at times about creating brand identity or awareness too?

A14. Yes, absolutely. According to me we should always use a funnel approach. I mean, when we start with if we are an established brand, probably focusing on sales would be a great idea, but it should be used across the funnel. But at the same time a brand should do awareness and consideration also. For example, couple code of some percentage discount would be very subtle manner of creating awareness. Influencer marketing, in my opinion, and what I have seen so far is that it is a good awareness tool which also helps in bringing customers to the brand. It should always be a continuous activity and on strategy to generate good number of sales and for influencer marketing to work.