

Social Influencers as Catalysts for Digital Marketing Success: Engagement, Persuasion and Conversion

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of social influencers as catalysts for digital marketing success among selected respondents from the College of Business and Public Administration of Eulogio “Amang” Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST). Specifically, it assessed influencer attributes in terms of credibility and authenticity, attractiveness and personality appeal, content quality and consistency, audience interaction and responsiveness, and relevance to the target market. It also determined digital marketing success through engagement, persuasion, and conversion, identified challenges encountered in influencer marketing, and examined the relationship between influencer attributes and digital marketing success. A descriptive survey research design with a cross-sectional approach was employed. Data were collected through a validated survey questionnaire administered to 140 respondents, comprising 20 professors and 120 third-year Marketing Management students selected using purposive sampling. Weighted mean and percentage distribution were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that respondents perceived social influencer attributes as effective across all measured dimensions and considered digital marketing success evident in terms of engagement, persuasion, and conversion. The study also identified personal, behavioral, strategic, and environmental challenges associated with influencer marketing. Furthermore, a significant relationship was found between social influencer attributes and digital marketing success, indicating that credibility, authenticity, content quality, audience interaction, and relevance positively influence consumer engagement, persuasion, and conversion. The study concludes that authentic communication, relevant and high-quality content, meaningful audience interaction, and transparency are essential to effective influencer marketing. It recommends maintaining influencer credibility, strengthening audience engagement, promoting digital literacy, and conducting further studies on additional factors influencing digital marketing success and the long-term effects of influencer marketing. The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, contributing to responsible digital marketing practices and innovation. Its findings also support socio-economic and digital sustainability by promoting consumer trust and effective marketing strategies.

Keywords: Audience Interaction, Content Quality, Digital Marketing, Engagement, Influencer Credibility, Social Influencers, Target Market, Transparency

1. Introduction

Social influencers have emerged as key drivers of digital marketing by shaping consumer behavior through authentic engagement and relatable content across social media platforms. As businesses increasingly utilize influencer marketing to promote products and services, influencers contribute to enhancing customer engagement, persuasion, and conversion. This study examines the influence of social influencers as catalysts for digital marketing success among selected respondents from the College of Business and Public Administration of Eulogio “Amang” Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST), focusing on factors that affect marketing effectiveness and consumer relationships.

1.1 Background of Social Influencers as Catalysts for Digital Marketing Success

The rapid growth of digital marketing has transformed traditional advertising into interactive and consumer-centered strategies through the use of social influencers. Businesses leverage platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube to promote products and services, recognizing influencers' ability to shape consumer behavior and strengthen customer engagement, persuasion, and conversion. This study investigates the influence of social influencers as catalysts for digital marketing success in terms of engagement, persuasion, and conversion among selected respondents from the College of Business and Public Administration of Eulogio “Amang” Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST).

1.2 Themes and Insights on Social Influencer Characteristics and Digital Marketing Success

Influencer marketing emphasizes the importance of influencer credibility, attractiveness, content quality, audience interaction, and relevance to the target market in influencing consumer responses and marketing effectiveness. These factors collectively contribute to stronger customer engagement, persuasive communication, and conversion outcomes while supporting long-term consumer relationships.

1.3 Global, National, and Local Context of Social Influencer Marketing

Globally, influencer marketing continues to expand as organizations invest in influencer partnerships to improve customer engagement and marketing performance. In the Philippines, where social media usage remains among the highest in the world, influencer marketing has become an effective strategy for increasing brand awareness, influencing purchasing decisions, and encouraging online interaction. However, challenges such as misleading promotions, excessive sponsored content, limited authenticity, and weak audience engagement may reduce consumer trust and overall marketing effectiveness.

1.4 Conceptual Basis of Social Influencer Characteristics and Digital Marketing Success

The study is conceptually anchored on the relationship between influencer characteristics—including credibility, attractiveness, content quality, audience interaction, and relevance to the target market—and digital marketing success, as measured through engagement, persuasion, and conversion. It also considers the challenges encountered in influencer marketing that may affect consumer confidence and campaign effectiveness.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale on Social Influencer Marketing Effectiveness

Despite the growing popularity of influencer marketing, concerns regarding authenticity, credibility, audience trust, and promotional practices continue to affect its effectiveness. This study addresses these concerns by examining how influencer characteristics and marketing challenges influence digital marketing success among selected respondents from the College of Business and Public Administration of Eulogio “Amang” Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST). The findings are expected to support businesses and marketers in improving influencer marketing strategies and strengthening consumer relationships.

1.6 Alignment of the Study with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth by contributing to more effective and responsible digital marketing practices that support business growth and consumer engagement. It also aligns with SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure through its focus on digital marketing innovation and the strategic use of social media platforms to enhance marketing performance.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability in Digital Marketing

The study contributes to socio-economic sustainability by providing insights that can help businesses strengthen customer relationships and improve marketing effectiveness. It also supports innovation and digital sustainability by promoting responsible and effective influencer marketing practices that enhance consumer trust and encourage sustainable digital engagement.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design with a cross-sectional survey approach. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive survey research systematically describes and interprets the characteristics of a population without manipulating variables. This design was used to examine the influence of social influencers on engagement, persuasion, and conversion among the respondents.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at the College of Business and Public Administration (CBPA) of Eulogio “Amang” Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST).

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 140 participants, including 20 professors and 120 third-year Marketing Management students from the College of Business and Public Administration (CBPA) of EARIST.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents who were directly involved in marketing practices and social media usage, ensuring their relevance to the objectives of the study.

2.5 Research Instrument

A validated survey questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered by administering the validated survey questionnaire to the selected respondents from the College of Business and Public Administration (CBPA) of EARIST.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed and interpreted using weighted mean and percentage distribution.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Social Influencer Attributes

3.1.1 Credibility and Authenticity

The findings revealed that respondents generally perceived social influencers as Effective in terms of credibility and authenticity, with an overall weighted mean of 3.81. The highest-rated indicator was providing trustworthy recommendations, followed by having a lifestyle that aligns with endorsements and avoiding misleading or exaggerated claims. Consistency in values and messaging and appearing genuine in promoting products also received effective ratings, although they ranked lower. These findings indicate that respondents value influencers who demonstrate honesty, reliability, and consistency in their endorsements, as these qualities strengthen credibility and consumer confidence. This supports the study of Liu and Zheng (2024), which revealed that influencer authenticity and credibility positively affect consumer trust and purchase intention, making influencers more persuasive in digital marketing.

3.1.2 Attractiveness and Personality Appeal

Respondents also rated social influencers as Effective in terms of attractiveness and personality appeal, with an overall weighted mean of 4.06. Humor and creativity received the highest rating, followed by relatable and engaging personalities, attractive appearance and style, persona that motivates interaction, and charisma that encourages audience loyalty. All indicators were considered effective. The results suggest that creativity, relatability, and appealing personality traits enhance the effectiveness of social influencers by attracting and maintaining audience interest. These findings are consistent with the study of Lou and Yuan (2019), which revealed that influencer attractiveness and personality positively affect audience engagement and consumer trust in digital marketing.

3.1.3 Content Quality and Consistency

The respondents perceived social influencers as Effective regarding content quality and consistency, obtaining an overall weighted mean of 3.99. Regularly updated and consistent content ranked highest, followed by visually appealing and well-produced posts, content aligned with current trends and audience interests, professional standards in posts, and clear and understandable information. All indicators received effective ratings. These findings indicate that consistent, visually appealing, relevant, and professionally presented content strengthens audience interest and positive perceptions of influencer marketing. This supports the study of De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), which stated that high-quality and engaging influencer content positively affects consumer attitudes and brand perception.

3.1.4 Audience Interaction and Responsiveness

The findings showed that respondents perceived social influencers as Effective in terms of audience interaction and responsiveness, with an overall weighted mean of 3.85. Building a sense of community among followers received the highest rating, followed by replying to comments and messages, creating interactive polls and quizzes, acknowledging audience feedback, and engaging in live sessions or question-and-answer activities. Although ranked lowest, live interactions were still considered effective. The results indicate that active communication and meaningful interaction strengthen audience engagement and foster stronger relationships between influencers and their followers. These findings are supported by the study of Sokolova and Kefi (2020), which revealed that influencer interaction and responsiveness strengthen audience trust, engagement, and online relationships.

3.1.5 Relevance to the Target Market

Respondents likewise assessed social influencers as Effective in terms of relevance to the target market, obtaining an overall weighted mean of 3.96. The highest-rated indicator was that endorsements influence purchase decisions, followed by adapting content to audience demographics, promoting products and services suitable for followers, matching content to audience needs, and ensuring campaigns resonate with the cultural and social context. All indicators were rated effective. These findings suggest that influencer marketing becomes more effective when endorsements and content are aligned with the interests, characteristics, and preferences of the target audience. This supports the study of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), which found that relevant influencer content positively affects consumer trust and purchase intention.

3.2 Digital Marketing Success Influenced by Social Influencers

3.2.1 Engagement

The respondents rated digital marketing success influenced by social influencers as Evident in terms of engagement, with an overall weighted mean of 3.72. Frequently liking, commenting on, and sharing influencer posts ranked highest, followed by regularly interacting with influencer content. Mentioning or tagging brands and participating in influencer campaigns received similar ratings, while emotional connection to influencer content ranked lowest but remained evident. These findings indicate that active audience participation through online interactions contributes significantly to digital marketing success by increasing engagement and brand visibility. This is supported by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who emphasized that social media marketing depends on user engagement and interaction to strengthen audience participation and overall marketing effectiveness.

3.2.2 Persuasion

The findings revealed that digital marketing success influenced by social influencers was Evident in terms of persuasion, with an overall weighted mean of 3.60. Trust in influencer recommendations ranked highest, followed by speaking positively about endorsed brands, improving attitudes toward brands after viewing influencer content, and feeling motivated to purchase products. Perceiving value in promoted products received the lowest rating, although it was still considered evident. The results imply that influencer marketing effectively builds consumer trust, enhances brand perception, encourages positive word-of-mouth, and motivates purchase intentions. These findings support the study of De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), which emphasized that social media influencers significantly affect consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions through perceived credibility and persuasive communication.

3.2.3 Conversion

The respondents also rated digital marketing success as Evident in terms of conversion, with an overall weighted mean of 3.69. Satisfaction with purchased products and providing feedback ranked highest, followed by purchasing influencer-promoted products, making repeat purchases or continuing to support promoted brands, and visiting brand websites or links shared by influencers. Responding by subscribing or registering after influencer promotions received the lowest rating but remained evident. These findings indicate that influencer marketing successfully converts audience engagement into consumer actions such as purchasing, repeat buying, brand interaction, and post-purchase feedback. This finding is supported by Lou and Yuan (2019), which found that influencer credibility and perceived authenticity significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions and behavioral responses, resulting in higher conversion rates.

3.3 Challenges in Digital Marketing Influence

3.3.1 Personal and Behavioral Challenges

The findings revealed that respondents encountered personal and behavioral challenges in digital marketing influence, with an overall weighted mean of 3.81. The most common challenge was distinguishing authentic content from sponsored promotions, followed by encountering misleading or exaggerated influencer promotions, maintaining trust in influencer recommendations, experiencing peer pressure that affects purchasing decisions, and sustaining long-term loyalty to influencer-promoted brands. Although ranked lowest, brand loyalty remained a commonly encountered challenge. These findings indicate that authenticity, credibility, and trust remain critical concerns in influencer marketing and directly affect consumer decisions and long-term brand relationships. This supports the study of Lou and Yuan (2019), which revealed that the credibility and authenticity of social media influencers significantly affect consumer trust and purchase intentions. Their study emphasized that consumers become skeptical when influencer promotions appear overly sponsored or exaggerated, making it difficult to distinguish authentic recommendations from paid endorsements and weakening trust and long-term brand loyalty.

3.3.2 Strategic and Environmental Challenges

The respondents also encountered strategic and environmental challenges related to digital marketing influence, with an overall weighted mean of 3.73. Feeling overwhelmed by excessive influencer content and having limited budgets for purchasing promoted products were the highest-rated challenges. These were followed by concerns regarding transparency in influencer-brand partnerships, difficulty evaluating the actual value of promoted products, and confusion caused by conflicting influencer opinions or endorsements. The findings suggest that excessive promotional content, financial limitations, lack of transparency, and conflicting endorsements reduce consumer confidence and influence purchasing behavior. These results are supported by the study of Evans, Phua, Lim, and Jun (2017), which found that excessive promotional content and unclear sponsored endorsements in social media marketing can negatively affect consumer trust, create confusion, and influence purchasing behavior. The study further emphasized that transparency and authenticity are essential for maintaining positive consumer perceptions and effective digital marketing communication.

3.4 Relationship Between Social Influencer Attributes and Digital Marketing Success

3.4.1 Relationship Between Social Influencer Attributes and Digital Marketing Success

The findings revealed a significant relationship between social influencer attributes and digital marketing success in terms of engagement, persuasion, and conversion. Influencer characteristics, including credibility, authenticity, content quality, audience interaction, and transparency, positively influenced audience engagement, responses to marketing messages, and purchasing decisions. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between influencer attributes and digital marketing success was rejected. These results indicate that positive influencer attributes strengthen consumer trust and audience relationships, making influencer marketing an effective strategy for achieving digital marketing objectives. The findings further demonstrate that credibility, authenticity, quality content, and meaningful audience interaction contribute substantially to engagement, persuasion, and conversion.

3.5 Proposed Digital Marketing Strategies

3.5.1 Strategies for Enhancing Customer Engagement, Persuasion, and Conversion

Based on the findings, effective digital marketing strategies include collaborating with credible and authentic influencers whose values align with the brand, producing engaging and relatable content, encouraging audience interaction through comments, polls, and live sessions, maintaining transparency in sponsored content, tailoring campaigns to audience demographics and interests, monitoring engagement metrics, and partnering with influencers who consistently create high-quality and trend-relevant content. These strategies emphasize the importance of authenticity, transparency, audience engagement, and relevant content in strengthening consumer relationships and improving digital marketing outcomes. Implementing these practices can enhance customer engagement, increase persuasion, and improve conversion, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The findings indicate that social influencers significantly contribute to digital marketing success through their credibility, authenticity, engaging and relevant content, audience interaction, and transparency. These attributes strengthen consumer trust, engagement, persuasion, and conversion, while personalized and culturally relevant marketing strategies enhance campaign effectiveness. The study also highlights the importance of digital literacy in helping consumers critically evaluate influencer content and recognizes that other factors, such as consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and emerging social media platforms, may influence digital marketing outcomes. Furthermore, the long-term effects of influencer marketing on consumer trust, purchasing behavior, and brand relationships remain important areas for future investigation.

Social influencers, marketers, and businesses should maintain credibility, authenticity, and transparency by providing honest recommendations, producing engaging and high-quality content, strengthening audience interaction, and developing marketing campaigns that align with audience demographics, interests, and cultural contexts. Educational institutions are encouraged to promote digital literacy through seminars and workshops to help students critically assess influencer content and online promotions. Businesses should also balance promotional and informative content to sustain audience trust and engagement, while future researchers are encouraged to investigate additional factors affecting digital marketing success and examine the long-term effects of influencer marketing across different industries and demographic groups.

This study was limited to selected respondents from the College of Business and Public Administration of Eulogio “Amang” Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology (EARIST), focusing on the influence of social influencers on digital marketing success in terms of engagement, persuasion, and conversion. It examined selected influencer attributes and identified challenges in influencer marketing but did not include other factors, such as consumer behavior, brand loyalty, emerging social media platforms, or the long-term effects of influencer marketing, which may also influence digital marketing outcomes.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors conducted this study in accordance with accepted academic research practices. Data were collected through a validated survey questionnaire from the selected respondents to address the objectives of the study. Throughout the research process, the authors maintained the integrity of the study and exercised due diligence in the collection, handling, and reporting of the research data.

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