

Health and Fitness Affiliate Marketing in the Age of social media

By

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Abstract

Many individuals, particularly on Instagram, are trying to cash in on the recent explosion of interest in health and fitness by covering the issue in their feeds. As a result, it is crucial to understand how to acquire the follower's trust by being aware of the most influential component of faith. Overall, this circumstance might benefit all involved parties, including influencers, the firms, and the end customers. In contrast, despite several studies on online shoppers' faith in businesses, not a solitary one has examined the state of influencer marketing, much less Instagram fitness influencers. Three trust factors, including altruism, honesty, and competence, were looped in to help with this issue. Multiple regression analysis was performed by assigning three interrelated Likert-scale questions to each item in an online survey. It is clear that Instagram users value honesty and openness highly; thus, to gain the confidence of their followers, influencers and the brands that partner with them must be authentic, transparent, and unselfish in everything they do.

Keywords: health, fitness, influencer, trust, Instagram, regression

Introduction

There is much talk about fitness and health on social media. The trend of leading a healthier lifestyle has accelerated. The main focus will be on reliability and how reliable Instagram users discover influencers to follow. After the research, it will be evident how genuine the general public regards an influencer; as a result, it will be possible to determine whether influencer marketing is productive, whether to do a considerable number of sponsored content is perceived as unauthentic, and finally, whether followers must trust every endorser on social media sites.

Product Placement

Product placement initially gained popularity when one of the youngsters in the film E.T. spread Reese's Pieces in the middle of a forest. The primary goal of a corporation is to incorporate commercial material, such as brand names, items, logos, and other brand-specific attributes, into non-commercial content. YouTubers and influencers perform product placement on specific platforms.

Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is performance-based online marketing. Most of the time, all money generated by affiliate marketing programs is a pre-determined percentage of transactions. The affiliate marketing vendor is the company that desires to increase traffic and income via internet marketing.

Email Marketing

Email Marketing is a type of Digital Marketing in which firms use email to deliver offers, promotions, & other information to customers or potential consumers (Armstrong et al., 2013). Personalization, a well-defined target audience, and one-on-one contact are all possible with this marketing.

Consumer Trust

The concept "of trust" is critical when discussing dependence and suspicion. Offline, it represents reliability, taking care of one's responsibilities, and not being frightened of the repercussions. In the digital age, trust is dependent on another's willingness to be vulnerable to the acts of another individual or organization instead of sentiments and openness. It means the person who trusts somebody has no influence or control over the other party's activities. To compensate for the loss of human interaction in online commerce, many brands and enterprises use social media platforms to foster buyer-seller interaction (Dahlqvist & Preiksaite, 2018).

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a subcategory of word-of-mouth marketing that is gaining popularity due to the expanding number of online influencers. Social media influencers have a large following solely on a single or more social media sites, such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or others. According to Charlesworth (2018), influencers are "exactly like us," which is why many individuals, especially the younger generation, trust entirely their advice on a product or service. Although this marketing is less costly than many others, it is not free. How information is displayed varies substantially depending on social networking sites.

Regardless matter how closely a company collaborates with influencers, this kind of marketing would only work if the eventual consumer trusts the endorser and their point of view.

Background of the study

Individuals one knows and cares about are the most dependable knowledge. For example, ask colleagues whether they have visited or have any recommendations. Going on blogs or review websites is improved since the information acquired from known people is irrelevant, but from others who have previously had the experiences. Accurate descriptions provided directly to someone substantially impact consumer decisions, meaning that what the

connections say is more important than what somebody online says.

Likert Scale

It is the most often utilized psychometric question type in primary research. Whether a neutral statement makes sense depends on the sort of investigation.

Motivation

Customers' faith in a product or service directly correlates to brand equity. While familiarity with a company's name is a significant factor in brand equity, it is not the only one. Building a solid reputation requires gaining the target audience's trust, increasing the likelihood that they will become loyal customers (Pappas, 2016). Building trust with customers helps businesses gain their loyalty, increasing their profits. Customers' confidence in a company increases the likelihood that it will be forgiven for mistakes like service breakdowns or giving bad advice. The study aimed to determine

whether most internet purchases were completed with full conviction. Overall, trust in the company was responsible for 57.5 % of all online purchases.

Literature Review

The Fitness Trend

People have prioritized maintaining a good balance of the body, mind, and spirit since the end of the nineteenth century. Due to social media platforms, fitness has been a big topic for many decades. People are becoming more concerned not only about their well-being but also about their health (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). There has been a lot of talk on social media about health and fitness (Koch & Luu, 2015).

Individuals who practise a "fitness lifestyle," which includes eating well, exercising often, and often also taking care of one's mental health, are increasingly posting vlogs or images about it on Instagram. While this knowledge may be immensely motivating for some people, it may be misinterpreted by others who compare themselves to others on the internet. Corporations may also utilize social media for marketing purposes.

Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing is marketing that uses social media technologies and platforms to provide value to customers' lives. Social media marketing serves the same objective as conventional marketing. Marketing is the process through which organizations provide value for customers and foster strong customer ties. It all boils down to analyzing client expectations, designing things that deliver value, choosing an acceptable pricing plan, and devising a marketing strategy.

Users may utilize social media to capture and chronicle events with films, make blogs, share infographics with friends, connect or reconnect with them, and perform a variety of other things. One of the main reasons firms embrace social media as a marketing strategy is that it is less expensive than conventional marketing strategies. Customers communicate, participate, and engage with the brand and corporate customers, fostering community. Social media marketing serves the same objective as conventional marketing mainly because it is carried out online, primarily via social media platforms. Consumers are drawn to the possibility of

exchanging expertise and know-how, as well as customers supporting other purchasers, such as via comments on Instagram and Facebook.

Trust in Influencer Marketing

Followers know that influencers are compensated for social media advertising; they often trust them and see them as accurate role models. Another critical factor is the relationship between the promoted company and the amount of sponsored uploads. Even if an influencer has won the trust of their followers, too many sponsored advertisements may swiftly undermine that trust. It is challenging to acquire the audience's confidence to this level. However, by regularly offering personal and trustworthy information, followers feel they know the influencer personally and trust them. Unlike social media personalities, celebrities are perceived as having a high-class lifestyle that is out of reach for most fans.

Research Gaps

The survey will ascertain which of the three trust factors contributes to respondents' confidence in the health and fitness influencer.

Hypothesis

Those tenets all contribute to a more trusting society. However, this article hopes to learn whether that same notion holds regarding trusting influencers on social media. Several scholars realized that

people who follow social media influencers have doubts whether the advice they provide is genuine or just pretence-based because of sponsorships or sponsored material. Because of this, the study's primary objective is to determine whether or not Instagram users with interest in fitness trust the accounts they follow and, if so, why.

The objective of the study

Exploring and comprehending phenomena, organizations, or people is the aim of qualitative research. The question about the trust in fitness and health influencers on Instagram is the outcome variable for this study. The term "total trust" is the relevant variable here. Instagram users' perceptions of the credibility of fitness influencers may be analyzed via a survey questionnaire.

Design of Experiments

Towards the review's last section, the concept of trust is examined in more detail. What follows is a brief description of the research design used in this work, the constructed measurement, a clarification of the data collected, and an examination of the results.

Research Design

Testing hypotheses by looking at how different factors interact is where quantitative research shines. The purpose of doing research using mixed techniques is to gather as much information as feasible. This research opted for a quantitative methodology to produce generalizable findings on whether or not fitness sector clients see fitness influencers as trustworthy. Information was collected using an online questionnaire that included questions on whether or not Instagram users trusted fitness product influencers. One of the most

economical and productive methods of surveying the populace, online questionnaires have several uses in social science.

Survey design

Integrity was assessed by surveying consumers on their confidence that influencers are morally upright. Given that a customer's impression of an influencer is often formed based on their reputation, we also asked them about it. In a series of polls, we asked people whether they thought influencers looked out for their followers' best interests or just their own. Truthfulness was also crucial, but this time it referred to the influencer's goodwill rather than the swayer's character. The third aspect of trust described was its relationship to knowledge or competence.

Methodology

Data Collection

In order to fill the gap in knowledge on how consumers feel about influencer marketing, especially in the fitness sector, this study uses an online survey questionnaire to collect primary data. People who are using Instagram and are enthusiastic about fitness may be reached directly — while maintaining their anonymity. However, there is a risk associated with judgement sampling: the researcher will make assumptions about the respondent's motivations and, by extension, the quality of their responses.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS once the data was collected. The factor analysis for accuracy validated multiple regression analysis findings. Factor analysis is frequently employed in the social sciences when studying inherently unquantifiable factors. The purpose of regression analysis is prediction, and it is related to correlation analysis.

A regression analysis was performed instead of a basic linear regression, which would only analyze two variables since there are several predictor variables. Having this information will make doing the

regression analysis much less complicated. A minimum of 10 answers or data points is suggested for every predictor variable in a regression analysis. There must be a minimum of 10 pieces of evidence to answer each of the nine questions on the trust dimensions (each of which includes three sub questions). With a total of 136 participants, the sample size was large enough to ensure statistical significance.

When collecting data, it is often easiest for the researcher to adhere to the minimum sample size criterion. It is multicollinearity when two or more predictor variables are highly correlated. Since there are endless choices about which coefficients perform best, it is hard to find a clear result using regression analysis.

Results

Demographics

Research participants need to be evaluated in more depth before we can make any firm conclusions about the generalizability of the study's findings.

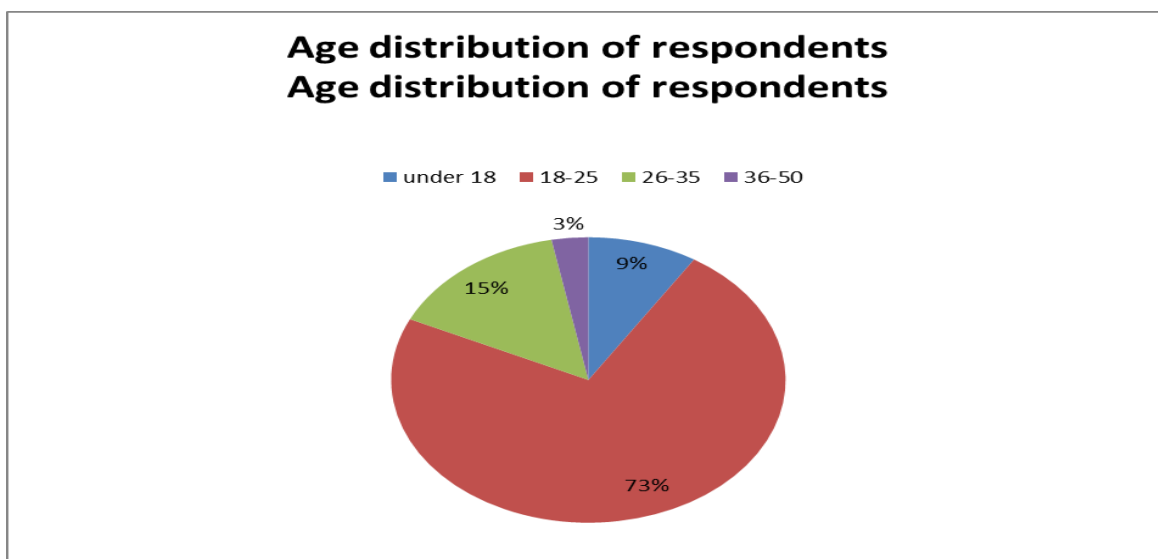


Figure 1 As seen in Figure 1, most respondents (73%) were between 18–25. Adults aged 26–35 accounted for 15% of replies, while those below 18 contributed 9%. Only 3% were older than 50 years of age.

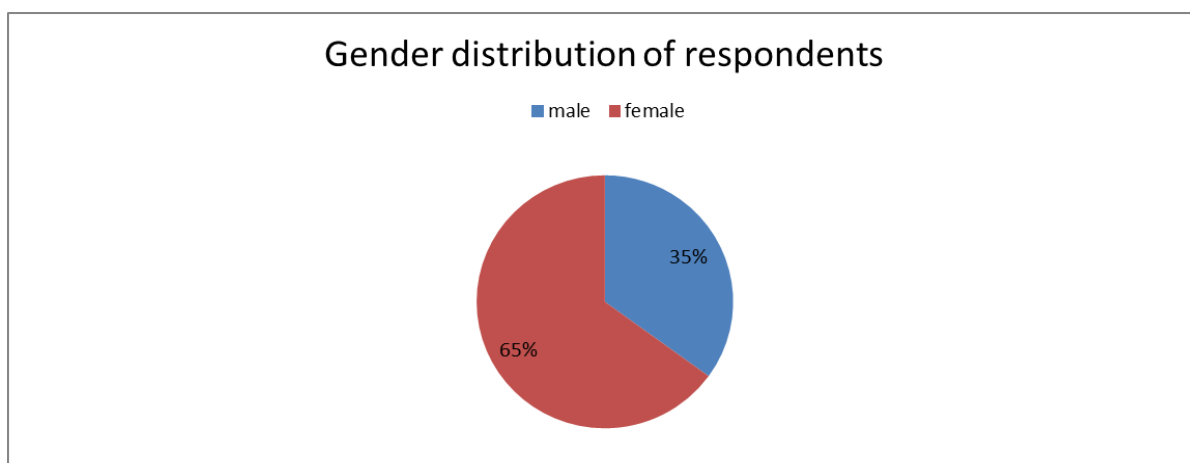
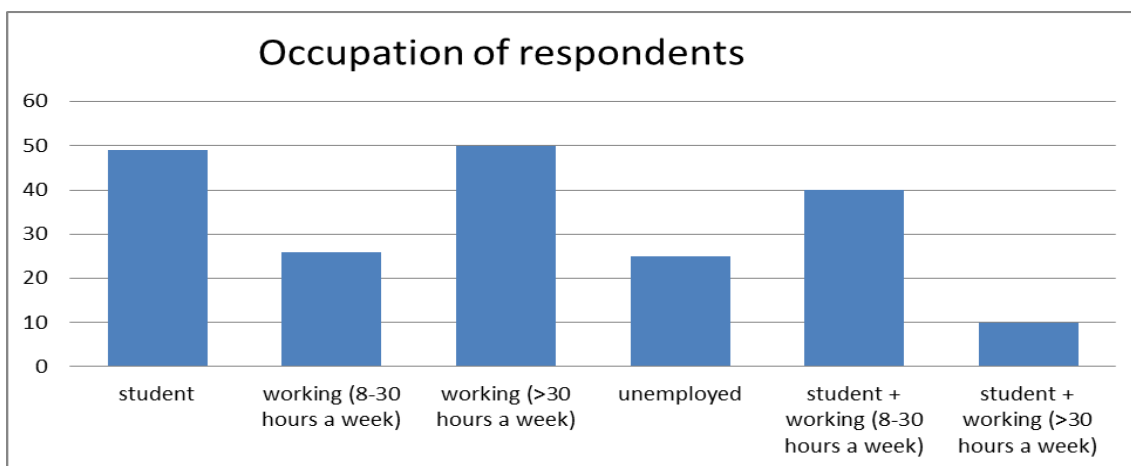


Figure 2 It is clear from Figure 2 that the researcher used a biased sampling method since the vast majority of respondents were women. Also, this study mainly included women and young girls since most Instagram users who commented on fitness influencers' postings were women.

Those findings are hardly surprising, given Instagram's user base composition in general. Instagram's core demographic consists primarily of users between 18 and 34, the same age range that dominates this survey's respondent pool. The gender distribution of respondents is also extremely unrepresentative, with men being the more common gender among those aged 18 to 34. Unfortunately, it is impossible to provide an accurate assessment of the gender makeup of the fitness influencer audience without first collecting additional data.



Because of the demographic breakdown of the sample, the profession's findings were anticipated. Most of the population comprises young adults (18–25), and most are either full- or part-time students. Only approximately a third of the participants work full time (more than 30 hours per week), while the rest are either students or have other less than full-time commitments. It is estimated that six employees will be out of work for the time being.

Analysis

Table 1

	Parameter Matrix		
	Parameter 1	Parameter 2	Parameter 3
A1	0.661		
A2	0.556		
A3	0.524		
A4		0.736	
A5		0.795	
A6		0.648	
A7			0.831
A8			0.768
A9			0.79

Table 1 shows that the matrix has three parameters corresponding to the three aspects of trust measured by the survey questions. The software SPSS also categorized the questions into three groups to produce three theories for each integrity, compassion, and competence. In other words, the majority of people who answered a set of questions inside a specific category gave answers that were quite similar to one another. SPSS analyzed the obtained data by looking for patterns of correlation and similarity in the replies. The findings only demonstrated that the questionnaire's assessment questions were well-designed to probe the targeted component. The preliminary test, a multivariate regression analysis, was carried out after ensuring that the questions were suitable.

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics based on the Likert scale items included in the survey. The questions about competence appear to have had the highest agreement after recoding the response alternatives (1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree"), with an average of 3.82. With a mean

value of 0.52, integrity is the second most common virtue, while kindness is the least common. However, this is merely a synopsis of the data, which is needed to determine which

component has the most excellent effect on confidence.

Table 2

Terms	Statistics	
	Mean Value	Standard deviation
Trust Overall	3.01	0.747
Integrity	3.34	0.9
Benevolence	2.9	0.8
Competence	3.85	0.955

Table 3

	Correlations			
	Trust	Integrity	Benevolence	Competence
Trust	0.99	0.226	0.278	0.125
Integrity	0.226	0.99	0.32	0.54
Benevolence	0.278	0.32	0.99	0.3
Competence	0.125	0.54	0.3	0.99

The values of Pearson's correlation coefficients between each variable are shown in table 3 above. Data points demonstrating statistical significance ($p < .01$) are denoted in blue across the table. Initially, there is a significant positive correlation ($r = .54$) between competence and kindness, indicating a significant role for both in successful social interaction. It is not a perfect correlation, but it is not above. Eight either. Thus, the numbers are not multicollinear and are instead measuring specific things. When examining the relationships between "overall trust" and the other characteristics, it is clear that generosity has the strongest association. Therefore, kindness is likely to be the strongest predictor of general trust of the three characteristics.

Table 4

Modal Summarization			
R	R ²	Average R ²	Standard Error of estimation
0.312	0.097344	0.79	0.69

The model summary shows that the independent factors can account for a fraction of the variation in the dependent. In this scenario, the independent variables (integrity, generosity, and competence) account for 8% of the total variance in trust. It is a surprisingly low number, given the available evidence. This number may have been higher if the sample size had been more significant and other sorts of questions had been used. When comparing accurate data to the line of best fit, the Standard Error of the estimate reveals how much of a discrepancy there is. The model accurately predicts the dependent factors when the number is close to 0.71.

Table 5

NULL HYPOTHESIS					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.2	4	2.5	4.8	0.04

To accept or reject the null hypothesis, use the NULL HYPOTHESIS table. When adopted as a general rule, the null hypothesis states that the model cannot be used to explain anything and is thus useless. However, if this were true, all of the independent variables' coefficients would be zero. The table's F-value is less than 5, making it statistically significant ($p = 0.004$). Thus, the predictors may explain a significant portion of the observed variation in

confidence. In other words, the regression model is statistically significant, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6

Parameters	Coefficients		Standardized Beta	t	Sig
	Unstandardised B	Error			
Trust Overall	2.054	0.32		7.8	0
Integrity	0.14	0.83	0.17	1.7	0.095
Benevolence	0.22	0.82	0.23	2.7	0.01
Competence	-0.03	0.08	-0.04	-0	0.72

Upon first looking at the table of coefficients, it is clear that kindness is the only variable with a p-value < 0.05 and, therefore, statistical significance. Because of this, we may conclude that the trait of kindness is responsible for a significant portion of the independent variables measuring trust. Thus, kindness explains a facet of credibility that honesty and expertise alone cannot. Table 6 shows that a rise of one unit in generosity (a figurative explanation, of course) results in a rise of 0.22 units in trust. Simply put, this demonstrates the relationship between the two factors. When we examine the remaining two variables, we find that they contribute nothing to the model. Competence has the lowest association to trust, which is notable given that this article aims to determine which factor of trust most strongly affects trust.

Discussion

Through multiple regression on SPSS, several surprising discoveries were made. Competence appeared to have the highest mean on the Likert scale. Regarding the trust of those who follow influencers on Instagram, it proved to be the least influential aspect.

Managerial implications

Consumers, fitness influencers, and brands that pay for endorsements are significant players in influencer marketing. For an influencer to acquire their audience's confidence, the very least they can declare that the information they provide is authentic and unfiltered. Instagram influencers and their followers benefit greatly from complete openness. It would be preferable if sponsored content were kept to a minimum. If an influencer uses sponsorships and sponsored material, their audience will become suspicious. Users on Instagram will see this as more evidence that the influencer is just interested in making as much money as possible, regardless of how disheartened they may make their audience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper included written materials discussing the numerous social media marketing tactics, primarily focusing on influencer marketing. The primary research topic was Instagram users' confidence in health and fitness-related influencers.

These findings, taken as a whole, highlighted the significant impact influencers' generosity has on followers' confidence in their advice regarding fitness on Instagram. Integrity was shown to be a significant predictor of trust in affiliate marketers. The value of competence was discovered, but not all followers believe they are getting it. The reasoning might be that competency needs more of a connection to trust in this setting.

Limitations

There were 200 participants, which is a fair number for this study. R 10 responses per question is a good target for the sample size for multiple regression. Only 32% of Instagram users are in the 18-25age range.

Future Work

While the data above may aid fitness-related Instagram influencers and the industry at large, there is much need for more study. More variables affecting influencers' trust may be sought in future studies. Many other dimensions may be investigated, such as responsiveness, morality, and predictability. The results may be drastically altered, and fresh insights into how influencers and businesses should behave to win over customers' confidence would be provided if more of these factors were considered.

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