

## **Influencer Marketing an Emerging Marketing Trend: A Study of Consumers' Awareness and Attitude**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The most interesting consequence of the explosion of technology and its easy availability is the disruption of the market and marketing practices. When it comes to acquiring new clients online, influencer marketing is one of the strategies with the quickest growth. Influencers have emerged as a crucial business channel in India, helping brands establish genuine relationships with their audience. They have a significant impact on product research and consumer purchasing decisions. Internet users are growing so marketing based on Internet and technology is also becoming popular and successful. Influencer marketing helps marketers to find the right audience at the right time by using social media platforms. Many industries like- Food, Fashion, Healthcare, Hospitality, etc are using influencer marketing as promotional tool. It is important to understand consumers' views about this marketing style. The purpose of this research paper is to study the awareness level among consumer and the attitude of consumer towards influencer marketing. It will help to understand the effectiveness of influencer marketing for promoting products and services. The study is based on primary data which have been collected through a structured questionnaire using Google forms. Secondary data has also been used to study the concept and scope of influencer marketing. The study reveals that most of the consumers are aware about influencer marketing and the majority of consumers perceive this marketing approach favorably. They follow influencers for meaningful content and believe influencers provide quick, easy and updated information.*

**Keywords:** Influencer marketing, Social-media, Digital marketing, Consumer Attitude, Awareness

## **INRODUCTION**

We are living in an intriguing period, where everything is changing quickly in both personal and professional spheres of life. As lifestyles are being affected, these progressions have led to drastic changes in the marketing world. In the era of information technology and marketing mix, Marketing professionals are increasingly embracing the introduction and use of Internet marketing. India's trend towards digitalization is becoming more and more visible. Customers are increasingly turning to the internet in place of traditional methods to find the greatest deal from suppliers around India. Social media and social networks (SNS) have changed the way individuals get news and information today. Now many advertisements are coming from social media platforms. Social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) is a great platform for advertising and promoting products and services because customers search everything on the internet before making any purchase decision. The emergence of the internet is contributing to the growth of online or digital marketing. In the beginning of 2024, 5.35 billion people or 66.2 % of the world's population were using internet. Particularly in India, there were 751.5 million internet users, with a 52.4 percent internet penetration rate. Approx 462 million people were social media users in January 2024. (Source: datareportal.com)

The phrase "digital marketing" refers to the broad category of using digital technology, such as the internet, mobile devices, display advertising, and other digital media, to promote goods or services digitally. How brands and companies employ technology and marketing has changed dramatically as a result of the development of digital marketing during the 1990s and 2000s. Now consumer behaviour is shifting towards digital devices rather than physical stores and because of the incorporation of digital platforms into marketing tactics, digital marketing campaigns are becoming more and more common. Influencer marketing is a sub category of digital marketing that involves endorsements and product placement from influencers. In 20<sup>th</sup> century brands started to use celebrities for product promotion, Because of the success of this approach, it quickly became evident that customers preferred to hear from famous and trustworthy individuals. Blogging gained popularity in the early 2000s and attracted companies for product promotion; nevertheless, blogging was the only platform on which influencer marketing could be used. Influencers now have a platform and a growing following on social media due to the popularity of all these social media platforms, which has driven companies to collaborate with them to promote brands.

This paper explores the concept of a new marketing tool called influencer marketing and aims to study the awareness and attitude of consumers towards influencer marketing. In this digital era people are more available on online platforms so it is easy and cost-effective to reach them using social media platforms.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

M. Bala, & D. Verma (2018), in their study, talked about the role of digital marketing in this new era. According to the study, consumers prefer online marketing over traditional shops and this marketing is very economical and beneficial to the company's bottom line. In fact, small businesses may now compete with larger ones on an equal basis and access specific audiences at minimum cost. Search engine optimization, content marketing, influencer marketing, e-books, e-mail marketing, display advertising, etc. are very important for business. Facebook users are generally positive about advertising and social media.

V. S. Jadhav & R. M. Yallatti, (2018) in their research paper explored the components of digital marketing. The Internet population is growing so it is a good chance for marketers to promote their products and services through the Internet. Digital marketing is cost-effective and has a large audience base.

Z. Kadekova & M. Holienčinova (2018) concluded that Influencer marketing is one of the communication channels with the quickest rate of growth, and it also challenges several advertising-related myths. To draw in millennials, brand marketers are especially keen to collaborate with influencers. The study also explored the concept of virtual influencers they can provide power to brands. Positive aspect of using virtual influencers is to have complete control on content and negative aspects can be lack of authenticity, artificial reviews and recommendations etc. it is important to remove these negative points to use virtual influencers successfully.

C. Lou & S. Yuan (2019) in their research work explored how influencer marketing impacts consumers through social media. The findings indicate that influencers' trustworthiness, attraction, and similarity to their followers positively impacted their followers' confidence in their branded content.

Nidamarthy et al., (2020) talked about the importance of influencer marketing in their research titled, "Influencer Marketing: Reaching the Right Person at the Right Place." Youngsters aged between 22 to 25 are the most influenced group, different age groups have positive responses towards trusting opinions on social media, product reviews, etc. Firstly marketers have to choose their audience and the right platform to reach them at the right place.

A. Lavanya and M.Radhikamani, (2021) studied digital marketing and its importance for marketers and consumers. With the development of technology scope of digital marketing is also increasing. Companies need to switch from traditional to digital marketing strategies since consumers may use digital platforms at any time, from anywhere.

Kumbhojkar et al., (2021) in their scholarly work investigate the impact of influencer marketing techniques on hotels and cafes. The rapid growth of internet services and social media usage has led to a rise in influencer marketing and third-party hotel reviews, necessitating hotels to adapt to these trends. Influencer marketing involves using a pro-consumer figure to convey a message to their followers.

Liu, M. (2022) in his research paper concluded that celebrities endorsement can be used for influencing purchase intention. The combined talents of celebrities and brand marketing are valuable since they always manage to convince consumers to turn their thoughts into impulse purchases. In the past, customers were influenced by the charm, beauty, and physical attributes of celebrities; but, in the present day, consumers are more drawn to the knowledge, skill, and experience of celebrities.

L. Hudders & C. Lou, (2023) addressed the bright and dark sides of influencer marketing from influencers and audience perspective. Influencers can change the behaviour of people by promoting sustainable consumption, healthy lifestyles, food habits, and raising awareness towards social issues. On the other hand, influencers may harm followers' physical and mental health by promoting idealized images, flashy lifestyles, and, poor eating choices while also sacrificing privacy for commercial success.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To provide an understanding of the concept of influencer marketing
2. To find out the awareness level of consumers regarding influencer marketing
3. To study the attitude of consumers towards influencer marketing

### **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive research design has been used. The study is based on primary data and the data have been collected through structured questionnaire using Google forms. The sample size of the study is 63 due to the limitation of time factor. Convenience sampling technique was used for gathering data from respondents. The primary data have been presented through charts, tables, etc. Apart from the primary data, secondary data have been also used which were collected from previous studies, journals, internet, etc.

### **DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS**

## **INFLUENCER MARKETING**

Influencer marketing is an expansion of the original idea of word-of-mouth advertising, but it's used in a more formal and social context. It's a relationship builder that can be extremely useful for brands that want to grow their audience and convert them into loyal customers by building trust and authenticity. Because they are trusted their followers see their viewpoints as trustworthy and legitimate. (Freberg, K. 2010) According to Brown and Hayes (2008), "influence" is widely defined as the ability to influence someone, something, or the course of events.

Social media influencers are "ordinary people" who have become "online celebrities" by creating and posting content on social media, as opposed to "celebrities" or "public figures" which have become well-known through traditional media. They often possess some expertise about a variety of topics, including lifestyle, beauty, fashion, food, travel, and health. (Lou & Yuan, 2019) Influencers are a phenomena of the late modern era, and in recent years, their cooperation with marketing organisations has grown significantly. Most influencers fall into one of the following categories: thought leaders and industry experts, bloggers or content providers, celebrities, and micro-influencers. Usually, viewers adore them, respect their opinions, and somehow relate to influencers. An extension of word-of-mouth advertising, influencer marketing takes place in a more official, social setting. For brands which are looking to expand their audience and win over devoted followers through genuine and trustworthy communication, this relationship-builder may be quite helpful. (Sudha & Sheena, 2017) Social media influencers are becoming more and more popular on the Internet because of their amazing presence and effort. Influencer marketing is still a viable option for marketers who are prepared to think creatively and develop rapport with their target audience, even though the fact that it is a relatively new strategy.(Kadekova & Holienčinova, 2018)

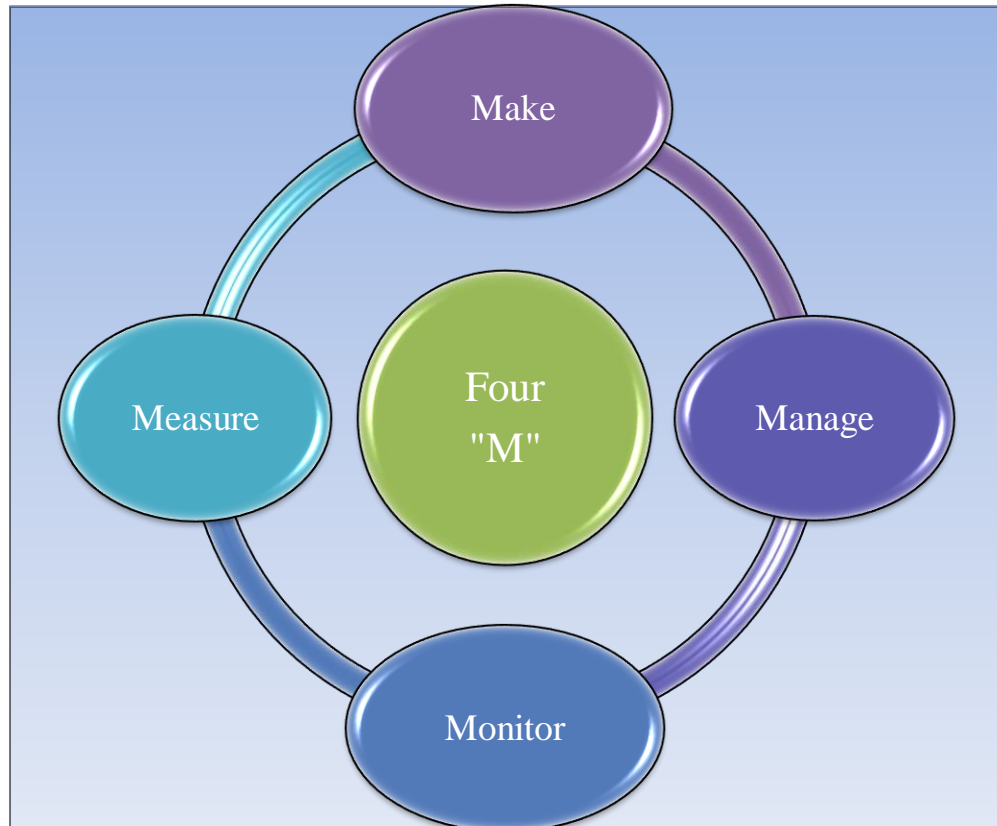
In this present time, Influencers work in diverse fields including fashion, food, health, lifestyle, etc. on various social media platforms. Brands work with different types of influencers including celebrities and non-celebrities.

Statista shows 58% of marketers use AI for sourcing influencers and 18.6% for content distribution, with increasing AI adoption expected to expand influencer marketing in the future. Over the last two years, the influencer marketing sector has grown rapidly. Valued at only \$1.7 billion in 2016, the business is expected to rise to \$24 billion by the end of 2024, according to Statista, as it becomes a more effective marketplace.

### **Four M's of influencer marketing**

According to Brown & Fiorella's book "Influence Marketing" (2013), there are four M's of influencer marketing-

**Figure 1: M's of influencer marketing**



**SOURCE:** Author's compilation

1. **Make-** Consumer goes through many stages before making a purchase, firstly marketers have to recognize the stage and “make” influencers who will help them in making purchase decisions. In this way, you can reach customers through the right influencer at the right time.
2. **Manage-** After finding influencer now marketers have to “manage” the impact that they have on the customers. Marketers have to check how brands are communicating by influencers whether in positive or negative way.
3. **Monitor-** To obtain insightful feedback, “monitor” the interactions and conversations that occur between influencers and potential customers.
4. **Measure-** The last M stands for the measure, marketers have to “measure” the results and develop future marketing initiatives.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

To study the awareness level and attitude of consumers towards influencer marketing, primary data was collected. Demographics characteristics of respondents are as follows:

**Table-1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

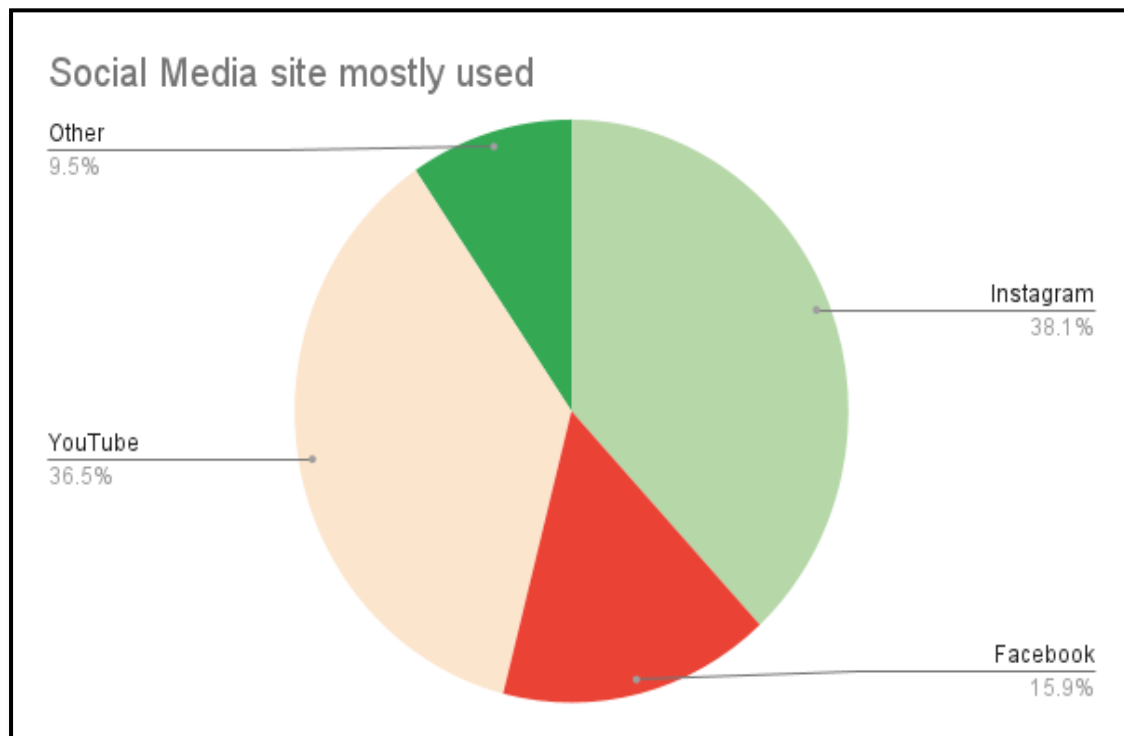
Demographic Characteristics		N	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	31	49.2%
	Female	32	50.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age</b>	15-20	13	20.6%
	21-26	14	22.2%
	27-32	18	28.6%
	33-40	16	25.4%
	40 & Above	02	3.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	22	34.9%
	Unmarried	41	65.1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Education Level</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> & 10+2 <sup>th</sup> Standard	12	19.0%
	Graduate	22	34.9%
	Post Graduate	26	41.3%
	Other	03	4.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Monthly Income</b>	0–20000	37	58.7%
	20000-40000	13	20.6%
	40000-60000	09	14.3%
	More than 60000	04	6.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	Government Employee	05	7.9%
	Private Employee	18	28.6%
	Student	25	39.7%
	Business	07	11.1%
	Other	08	12.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Primary Data

Table-1 gives explanation about demographic characteristics of respondents like Gender, Age, Marital Status, Education Level, Monthly Income and Occupation. Total number of respondents were 63 (100%) out of that 31 (49.2%) were male and 32 (50.9%) were female. The sample includes respondents from different age groups. 22 (34.9%) respondents were married while 41 (65.1%) respondents were unmarried. Approximately 76% of the entire sample size comprised 22 graduates and 26 postgraduate respondents out of 63 respondents in total. The remaining 24% were from different levels of education. About 58.7% respondents were having monthly income between 0-20000 and only 6.3% respondents' income was more than 60000. Highest composition in the population sample was of student category (39.7%). Private employee category was also significant in the sample with 28.6%.

**Usage of Social Media**

**Figure 2: Mostly used Social Media site**

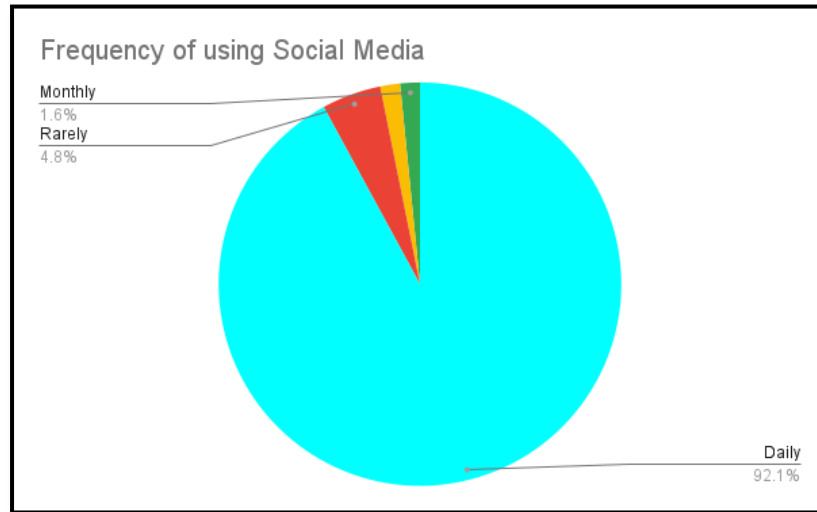


Source: Primary Data

38.1% respondents out of the total population responded that they mostly use Instagram while 36.5% respondents prefer YouTube. Remaining 25.4% (approx) respondents use other social media sites.



Figure 3: Frequency of using Social Media



Source: Primary Data

92.1% of the total population responded that they use social media daily means they are frequently active on social media platforms while 4.8% respondents are rarely using social media.

**Analysis of Consumer Awareness regarding Influencer Marketing**

Figure 4: Awareness about Influencer Marketing

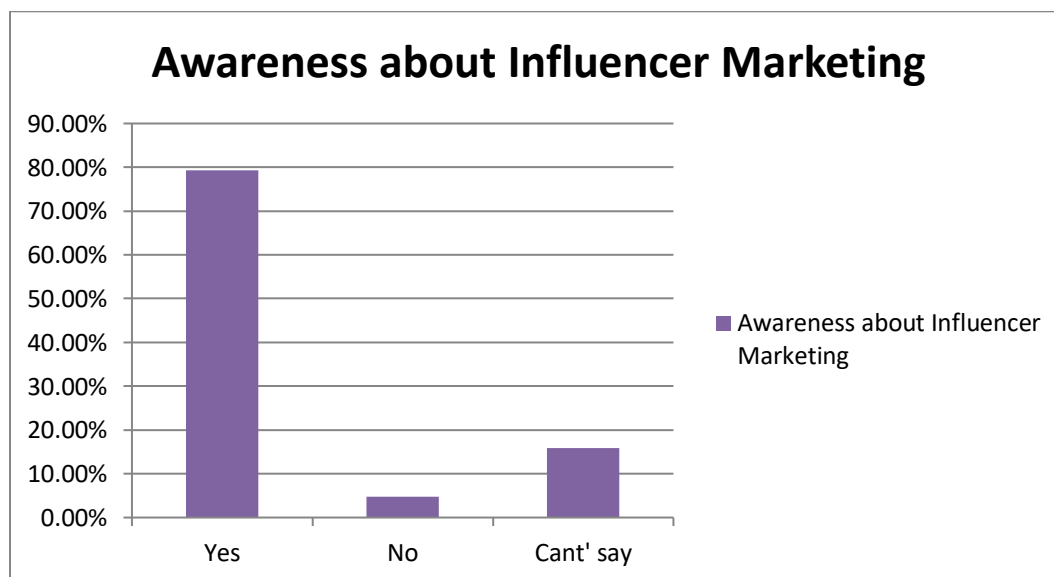
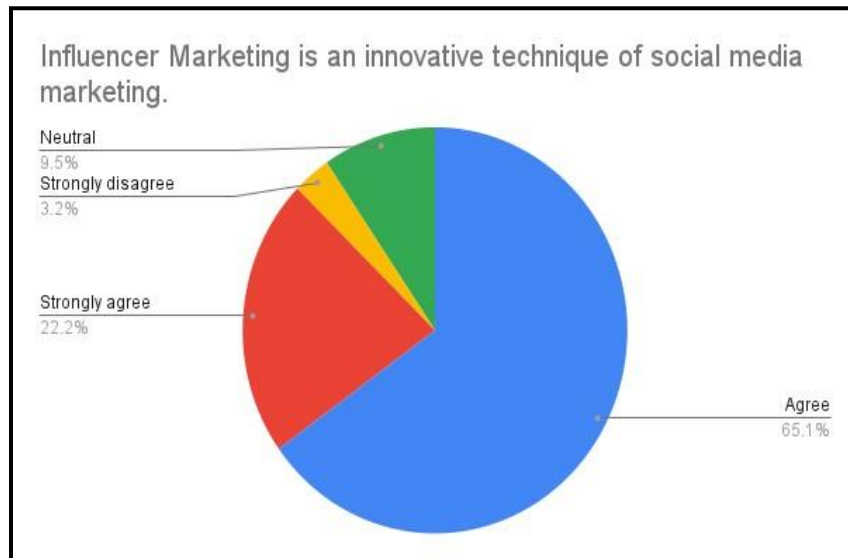


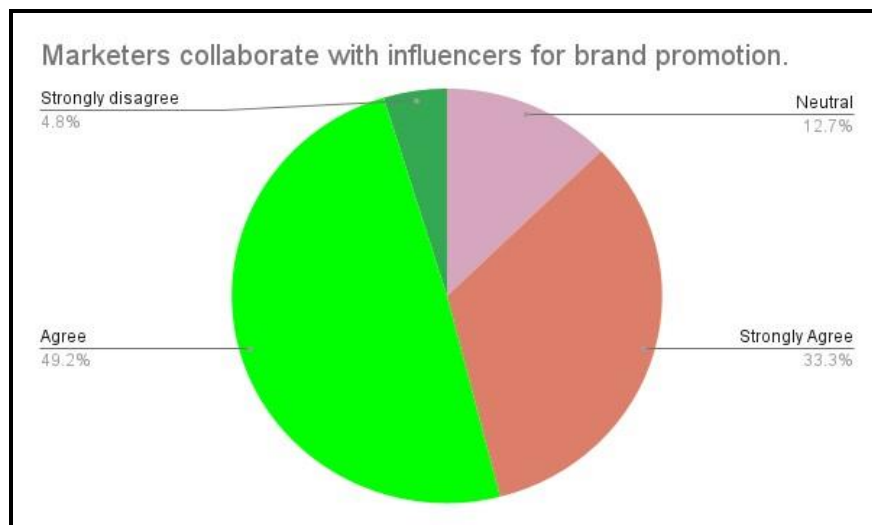
Figure 4 demonstrates that 79.3% respondents said “Yes”, that they are aware about this concept it means there is adequate awareness about Influencer marketing while 4.8% said “No”. 15.9% are still undecided about this concept.

**Figure 2: Influencer marketing as a technique of social media marketing**



The above figure shows that nearly 87.3% population agreed that influencer marketing is an innovative part of social media marketing. The rest comprises of 9.5% and 3.2% comprising of Neutral and Strongly Disagree respectively.

**Figure 3: Marketers collaborate with influencers for brand promotion**



According to the above figure, 33.3% respondents said they strongly agree and 49.2% respondents said they agree that marketers collaborate with influencers on social media for promoting their brands. 12.7% respondents were neutral about the statement. Out of the total 4.8% strongly disagreed with this remark.

**Figure 4: Influencers use social media platforms for promoting products and services**

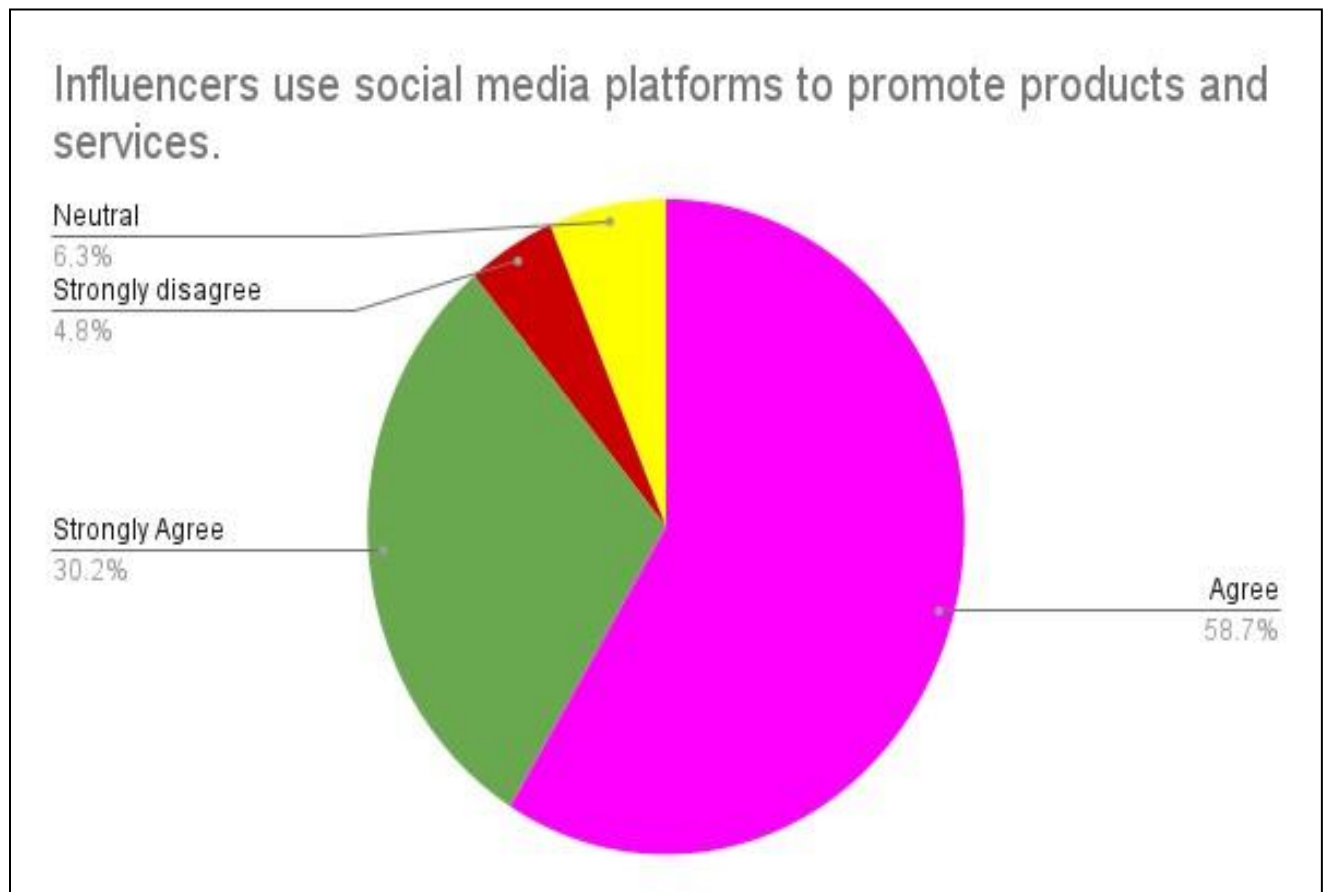


Figure 4 shows that 58.7% respondents agree that influencers use various social media platforms for promoting products and services, as compared to 30.2% who strongly agree with the statement. It concludes that majority of respondents are aware of how influencers spread marketing messages to their audience. 6.3% respondents were neither in agreement nor in disagreement with the statement and 4.8% strongly disagreed with it.

Overall most of the respondents are familiar with influencer marketing whereas some respondents are unaware about the concept. Marketers need to promote this marketing style at large level so that they can effectively use this concept for brand promotions.

**Analysis of Consumers’ Attitude towards Influencer Marketing**

**Table: 2**

	<b>Strongly Disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Neutral %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly Agree %</b>
Adopting Influencer marketing is a good idea for promoting products and services.	3.2%	3.2%	14.3%	58.7%	20.6%
I follow influencers for meaningful content.	3.2%	6.3%	20.6%	52.4%	17.5%
The content shared by influencers is always relevant to my interest.	1.6%	25.4%	42.9%	20.6%	9.5%
Influencers are the quick source of information.	6.3%	6.3%	28.6%	46.0%	12.7%
Influencers communicate in an easy way.	1.6%	4.8%	20.6%	60.3%	12.7%
Influencers are well-informed and provide up-to-date information.	3.2%	4.8%	36.5%	49.2%	6.3%

**Source:** Primary Data

The above table shows the responses of consumers towards various factors highlighting the attitude of consumers regarding influencer marketing. Most of the respondents are showing positive attitude towards influencer marketing. From the collected data, it is found that approximately 79.3% respondents believed that influencer marketing is a good idea for promoting brands. It means most of the participants think marketers should use this technique for communicating their brand message. Around 70% respondents follow influencers on social media for meaningful content on the other hand 20.6% participants were ‘Neutral’ about this statement. It indicates that the majority of participants are following influencers, which is beneficial for this research as well because they were able to provide appropriate answers to the remaining questions. Regarding the statement that "The Content shared by influencers is always relevant to my interest," 42.9% of total respondents were neutral while 25.4% respondents disagreed with it. Some respondents around 30.1% believed that influencers’ content is always according to their interest. Majority of the respondents agreed that influencers are the quick source of information which means they depends on influencers for information search. 28.6%,

6.3%, and 6.3% respondents were Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively. Approx 73% respondents think that influencers are easy way to obtain information. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement that “Influencers are well-informed and provide up-to date information.” It shows that influencers help consumers for information search and for making purchase decision. Overall from the collected data it can be conclude that consumers have a favorable attitude towards influencers marketing as majority of them think it is good idea for promotion, they follow influencers, they found them easy and quick source of information and well-informed.

## **CONCLUSION**

There has been a significant shift towards digitalization in the whole world. As opposed to old or conventional techniques, consumers are exploring and searching more on the internet for finding best deals. Influencer marketing is a new approach of digital marketing where marketers promote their brands through influencers. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and YouTube are frequently used for influence. Because of their status, expertise, authority, or connection to their audience, influencers may influence other people's purchasing decisions. Today everyone is on social media platform, so it is easy to communicate with them on internet. People always look for recommendation and influencers can help them in making purchase decision.

The main purpose of the research is to study consumer’s awareness and attitude towards influencer marketing. For this purpose primary data was collected from 63 individuals who use various social media platforms. The study reveals that respondents have a considerable awareness about influencer marketing and they know marketers collaborate with influencers for delivering brand message. The study also shows that on the most of the factors, consumers are showing favorable attitude towards influencer marketing. Most of the respondents follow influencers, they believe influencers provide quick information in an easy way and influencers are updated. However there are some participants who are not aware about this concept so it is important for marketers to promote this marketing style effectively so that they can reach to potential customers. By implementing the right strategy, marketers can influence consumers’ purchasing decision.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study was successful in gathering primary data in order to arrive at a reliable and effective solution. However the study has some limitations:-

- Due to the lack of time, only 63 participants were selected for collecting data therefore, it is not possible to generalize the findings of the study.

- The research presents only consumer's attitude towards influencer marketing, it is important to understand the opinions of marketers and influencers as well.
- The convenience sampling method was used to collect the data, which is also a constraint of the research.

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