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THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING AND LIVE STREAMING IN DRIVING ENHANCED BRAND CONNECTIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Sarvashri Gaonkar[1], Prof. Anitha BM D'Silva[2], Asst. Prof. Manjunath SK[3]
[1]*Student, RV Institute of Management, Bengaluru City University, India*
[2]*Faculty, RV Institute of Management, Bengaluru City University, India*
[3]*Faculty, RV Institute of Management, Bengaluru City University, India*

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ABSTRACT
This study explores the combined influence of influencer marketing and live streaming on consumer trust, emotional brand connection, and brand loyalty in the digital era. With the rise of social media platforms and real-time interactions, brands increasingly collaborate with influencers to reach and engage their target audience. The research focuses on how interactive live sessions by influencers affect brand transparency, authenticity, and consumer behaviour. Using a sample of 218 respondents and statistical tools such as Pearson correlation and regression analysis, the findings reveal that live streaming significantly enhances brand engagement and trust, especially when influencers are admired and offer real-time interaction. The study contributes to existing literature by highlighting the synergetic effect of influencer credibility and live streaming engagement in fostering deeper brand connections.
KEYWORDS: *Influencer Marketing, Live Streaming, Brand Connections, Digital Era*

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital-first economy, brands are increasingly relying on influencer marketing and live streaming to build stronger connections with consumers. In addition to expanding a brand's audience, influencers give it a more intimate and engaging experience, which humanizes it. Improved brand legitimacy, instant feedback, and real-time interaction are all made possible via live streaming. This research investigates how these two tools when used together impact consumer perception and foster trust, emotional connection, and purchase intent. The need to understand this dynamic has become more crucial in an era where consumers seek authentic and engaging digital experiences over traditional advertising.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Chee Wei Cheah, Kian Yeik Koay, and Weng Marc Lim (2024) claim that excessive endorsements by social media celebrities can harm consumers' intentions to buy by diminishing their credibility, particularly in cases where there is little interest in the goods. According to Jie Cai and Donghee Yvette Wohn (2019), customer behaviour in live streaming is driven by factors including enjoyment and trend-setting. Vasileios Stavropoulos, Frosso Motti-Stefanidi, and Mark D. Griffiths (2021) in order to gain a better understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of digital media for young people.

Peter Dahlström, Tjark Freundt, Peter S.H. Leeflang, and Peter C. Verhoef (2014), digital marketing faces issues like managing brand reputation and personnel shortages, while solutions centre on actionable analytics and consumer insight. Celebrity endorsements strengthen self-brand linkages, especially when customers want to be like the celebrity and the brand image fits with their self-concept, according to Jennifer Edson Escalas and James R. Bettman (2009). According to Zhiyuan Fang (2002), e-government models are revolutionizing public administration by improving the efficiency of business and citizen access while simultaneously drawing attention to the difficulties associated with digital administration. Social media influencers have a big impact on kids' consumption, but there are concerns due to their lack of disclosure and low level of advertising literacy, according to Marijke De Veirman, Liselot Hudders, and Michelle R. Nelsonet (2019).

Robert P. Merges (2008), intellectual property rights are essential for fostering innovation and creativity in the digital age while also refuting the idea of digital determinism.Fine F. Leung, Flora F. Gu, and Robert W. Palmatier

(2022) claim that although AI influencers are becoming more well-known, people trust them less than they do human influencers. They encourage word-of-mouth but may have trouble engaging customers since they lack agency. According to Xiaofei Liao, Hai Jin, Yunhao Liu, Lionel M. Ni, and Dafu Deng (2006), the P2P live streaming system performs better than others in terms of quality of service and resource usage, increasing the efficiency of streaming globally. According to Joyce Costello and Sevil Yesiloglu (2021), influencer marketing is essential for creating brand communities and increasing engagement, providing useful information for both academics and business professionals.

Fine F. Leung, Flora F. Gu, Yiwei Li, Jonathan Z. Zhang, and Robert W. Palmatier (2022), companies use incentive-based influencer partnerships to boost trust and innovation, although there are still issues like content control. AI influencers create a lot of word-of-mouth, but their lower trust levels—which are associated with social distance and a lack of agency—can hinder overall consumer engagement (Sands, Campbell, Plangger, & Ferraro, 2022). Customers with strong self-brand ties are more likely to view bad brand information as a personal danger, according to Cheng, Barnett White, and Chaplin (2012). Their assessments are further influenced by self-affirmation tasks.

RESEARCH GAP

While numerous studies have focused on influencer marketing and live streaming separately, limited research exists on how these two elements interact to shape brand relationships. Specifically:
Few studies examine the combined influence of influencer credibility and live session interaction on consumer trust and loyalty.
The role of real-time engagement in shaping emotional brand connections remains underexplored.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To understand how influencer marketing and live streaming together influence consumer trust, emotional brand connection, and loyalty
- To provide suggestions to media and markets professionals on optimizing influencer marketing and brand streaming strategies.
- To examine the factors that determine consumer purchase intentions after exposure to influencer live streaming sessions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was adopted using a structured questionnaire distributed to 218 participants. Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of influencer marketing and live streaming. Key constructs included enjoyment of live interaction, perceived brand trust and authenticity, emotional brand connection, and engagement levels. In order to investigate relationships and find determinants of brand engagement during live streaming, data were analysed using SPSS software utilizing multiple linear regression, descriptive statistics, and Pearson correlation.

HYPOTHESIS

H0: Brand engagement is not significantly impacted by influencer marketing or livestreaming.
H1: Brand engagement is significantly impacted by influencer marketing or livestreaming.

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Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
[I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions.]	218	4	1	5	2.98	.090	1.325	1.755	-.150	.165	-1.029	.328
[Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic.]	218	4	1	5	3.24	.076	1.120	1.254	-.413	.165	-.376	.328
I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content. [I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content.]	218	4	1	5	3.27	.077	1.133	1.284	-.385	.165	-.447	.328
[Live streaming by influencers builds my trust in the brand.]	218	4	1	5	3.24	.079	1.168	1.365	-.327	.165	-.629	.328
[Real-time interaction with influencers strengthens my emotional connection with the brand.]	218	4	1	5	3.25	.081	1.190	1.415	-.384	.165	-.499	.328
[I am more likely to remember a brand if I see it in a live stream by an influencer.]	218	4	1	5	3.37	.079	1.165	1.358	-.574	.165	-.245	.328
[I have purchased a product after watching an influencerâ€™s live stream.]	218	4	1	5	3.21	.083	1.229	1.510	-.310	.165	-.659	.328

The table presents descriptive statistics for responses (N = 218) to several statements regarding influencer live streaming and its impact on brand engagement, trust, and purchasing behavior. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Below is a summary of the key findings:

Sample Size and Scale

- All items have responses from 218 participants.
- The response range for all items is from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum), indicating full use of the Likert scale.

Central Tendency (Mean)

- The means for all items range from 2.98 to 3.37, suggesting a generally neutral to slightly positive attitude toward influencer live streaming.
- The highest mean (3.37) is for "I am more likely to remember a brand if I see it in a live stream by an influencer," indicating this is the most agreed-upon statement.
- The lowest mean (2.98) is for "I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions," suggesting relatively less enthusiasm for direct interaction.

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Dispersion (Standard Deviation and Variance)

- Standard deviations range from 1.120 to 1.325, showing moderate variability in responses.
- Variance values (1.254 to 1.755) further confirm this moderate spread.

Distribution Shape (Skewness and Kurtosis)

- Skewness values are all negative (from -0.150 to -0.574), indicating a slight tendency for responses to cluster toward the higher end of the scale (more agreement).
- Kurtosis values are all negative (from -0.245 to -1.029), suggesting the distributions are slightly flatter than a normal distribution (platykurtic).

Key Insights

- Participants generally show a positive attitude toward live streaming by influencers, particularly in terms of brand recall and engagement.
- The lowest enthusiasm is for direct interaction with influencers, as reflected in the lowest mean.
- The moderate standard deviations indicate that while there is some consensus, opinions are not highly polarized.
- Slight negative skewness and platykurtic distributions suggest a mild leaning toward agreement, but with a broad spread of opinions.

This descriptive analysis highlights that influencer live streaming is generally perceived positively, especially for brand recall and engagement, though direct interaction is less favored. The data distribution suggests moderate agreement with a wide range of opinions.

Pearson Correlations

		[I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions.]	[I recommend brands to others after seeing them in influencer live sessions.]	[Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic.]	I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content. [I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content.]
[I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions.]	Pearson Correlation	1	.521**	.560**	.594**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	218	218	218	218
[I recommend brands to others after seeing them in influencer live sessions.]	Pearson Correlation	.521**	1	.517**	.535**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	218	218	218	218
[Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic.]	Pearson Correlation	.560**	.517**	1	.610**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	218	218	218	218
I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content. [I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content.]	Pearson Correlation	.594**	.535**	.610**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	218	218	218	218

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Interpretation for Pearson Correlation

A Pearson correlation analysis assesses the linear relationship between two continuous variables. The correlation coefficient, *r*, ranges from -1 to 1, where:

- r = 1: perfect positive correlation
- r = -1: perfect negative correlation
- r = 0: no linear correlation

From the data provided:

- The correlation between "I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions" and "I recommend brands to others after seeing them in influencer live sessions" is 0.521, $p < 0.001$.
- The correlation between "I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions" and "Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic" is 0.560, $p < 0.001$.
- The correlation between "I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions" and "I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content" is 0.594, $p < 0.001$.
- The correlation between "I recommend brands to others after seeing them in influencer live sessions" and "Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic" is 0.517, $p < 0.001$.
- The correlation between "I recommend brands to others after seeing them in influencer live sessions" and "I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content" is 0.535, $p < 0.001$.
- The correlation between "Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic" and "I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content" is 0.610, $p < 0.001$.

All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Testing

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.685[a]	.470	.462	.831	.470	63.193	3	214	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), [I feel more connected to a brand when it is promoted by an influencer I admire.], [I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions.], [Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic.]

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	130.856	3	43.619	63.193	.000[b]
	Residual	147.713	214	.690		
	Total	278.569	217			

a. Dependent Variable: I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content. [I feel more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content.]

b. Predictors: (Constant), [I feel more connected to a brand when it is promoted by an influencer I admire.], [I enjoy interacting with influencers during their live sessions.], [Live streaming makes the brand feel more transparent and authentic.]

The analysis examines the influence of three predictor variables on brand engagement during live streams. These predictors are:

- Enjoyment of interacting with influencers during live sessions.
- Perception of brand transparency/authenticity via live streaming.
- Feeling connected to a brand when promoted by an admired influencer.

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Key Findings

1. **Model Summary**

- The multiple regression model significantly predicts brand engagement during live streams ($R = .685$, $R^2 = .470$, Adjusted $R^2 = .462$).
- This suggests that approximately 47% of the variance in brand engagement during live streams is explained by the model.

2. **ANOVA**

- The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(3, 214) = 63.193$, $p < .001$).
- This confirms that the set of predictors significantly influences the dependent variable (brand engagement).

Detailed Interpretation

- **R Value**: The R value of .685 indicates a strong positive correlation between the independent variables (Enjoyment of interacting with influencers during live sessions, Perception of brand transparency/authenticity via live streaming, and feeling connected to a brand when promoted by an admired influencer) and the dependent variable (Feeling more engaged with a brand during a live stream than through other types of content).
- **R-squared**: The R-squared value of .470 indicates that 47% of the variance in the dependent variable (brand engagement) is explained by the independent variables included in the model. This means that the model accounts for nearly half of the variability in how engaged individuals feel with a brand during a live stream.
- **Adjusted R-squared**: The Adjusted R-squared value of .462 offers a more conservative estimate of the model's explanatory power by adjusting for the number of predictors in the model. This suggests that the model's fit remains robust even when considering the complexity added by multiple predictors.
- **F-Statistic**: The F-statistic of 63.193 with (3, 214) degrees of freedom indicates the ratio of variance explained by the model to the unexplained variance. This high F-value, combined with a significance level of $p < .001$, demonstrates strong evidence that the model is a significant improvement over a null model with no predictors.

Based on the ANOVA results (Sig. = 0.000), reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that our model is statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

The convergence of influencer marketing and live streaming has significantly transformed brand-consumer interactions in the digital age. This synergy fosters authentic, real-time engagement, enhancing brand connections and influencing consumer behaviour.

Enhancing Brand Engagement through Live Streaming

Live streaming amplifies influencer marketing by providing real-time demonstrations and interactive sessions. Ashman and Haenlein (2024) highlight that live streaming enriches influencer marketing, particularly among Generation Z, by offering authentic and interactive experiences . This immediacy and transparency foster deeper consumer trust and engagement.

Emotional Attachment and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Emotional connections between influencers and audiences play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behaviour. A study published in MDPI (2023) reveals that live streamers can significantly influence purchase intentions by establishing trust and emotional bonds with viewers. This attachment mechanism underscores the importance of authentic interactions in driving consumer decisions.

Platform Dynamics and Influencer Effectiveness

The effectiveness of influencer marketing varies across platforms. Research indicates that influencers on platforms like TikTok can impact consumer purchasing decisions through live streaming and brand awareness strategies. Understanding platform-specific dynamics is crucial for optimizing influencer marketing strategies.

Strategic Implications for Brands

Integrating influencer marketing with live streaming offers brands a powerful tool to enhance consumer engagement and drive sales. However, it's essential to recognize potential challenges, such as viewer resistance to overt marketing tactics. Brands should focus on authentic storytelling and meaningful interactions to mitigate such risks.