

**IDENTIFY AND ANALYSE THE EFFECTS OF
SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON SHAPING
CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND ITS
CONSEQUENCES**

A Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of

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**in
Management**

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**LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY
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2021**

DECLARATION

I, Rahul Chander Jaitly, student of Ph.D. (Management) hereby declare that this thesis entitled 'IDENTIFY AND ANALYSE THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON SHAPING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCE' is an original work done by me and has not been published or submitted elsewhere for the requirement of the degree program. Any literature, data or work done by others and cited within this thesis has been given due acknowledgement and listed in the reference section.

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TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN

I, Dr. Pawan Kumar, do hereby certify that Rahul Chander Jaitly has prepared her thesis entitled 'IDENTIFY AND ANALYSE THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON SHAPING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCE' under my guidance and supervision. This thesis is being submitted by her in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy in Commerce from Lovely Professional University, Phagwara.

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of social media and the digitalization of the business market, there has been more and more increase in competition. The traditional marketing strategies have been updated and now brands are having more usage of social media as a tool of promotion. Among different marketing strategies, influencer marketing has emerged as a means of not just targeting the required audience but also working on their satisfaction, purchasing decision, and engagement. As across social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, or Twitter, there is a rise in social media users and influencers, brands are focusing on working with these influencers to spread the positive electronic word of mouth and with the usage of their influence target, the audience towards having favorable brand perception, increase their interaction with the brand, have more customer retention, increased contribution, and create more loyal customers. Thus, this study focuses on this marketing strategy work on examining the perception of customers to identify and analyze the social media influencers' effect on shaping customer engagement and its consequences.

For this, initially, a pilot study with 106 customers operating Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Twitter, or LinkedIn social media platform and purchasing products from industries such as food products, health and fitness; Clothing, Fashion, Beauty and Lifestyle; Customer electronics; Real-estate and Investment; and Travel, Hotel and Hospitality; was done. Validating the efficiency of the questionnaire in measuring customer perception, finally the analysis of 1013 customers who are mostly educated buying group with good income level and value the social media influencers opinion for making their decision i.e. follow more than 5 social media influencers revealed that social media influencers do have a role in impact customer engagement and its consequences. Building in the SEM model, the analysis stated that constructs of social media influencer impact on customer engagement i.e. constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention,

absorption, and interaction have a positive impact on the perceived brand value i.e. brand trust, perceived value, brand identity, and brand identification; brand satisfaction i.e. customer satisfaction and brand experience; and brand favorability i.e. brand loyalty and favorable brand perception. Though the popularity of social media influencers is an important aspect that tends to influence customer engagement, it does not moderate the linkage between social media influencers and customer engagement and its consequences. Thus, social media influencers have an important role in impacting customer engagement, and activities like establishing a trusted relationship, live broadcasting on social media, and organization of regular engagement events should be practices for deriving better influence.

Keywords: Social media influencer, customer engagement, brand perception, satisfaction, brand favorability

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Chapter: 1 INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, organizations are making attempts to understand how social media impacts their brands. This is specified with the corporate management facing the trends of a new level of activism from social media influencers (Chopra, Avhad, and Jaju, 2021). Social media influencers use the power of the internet to raise a large share of voice in the market. They shape the path in which the users interact with the organization and among themselves to shape customer engagement and brand perceptions (Goodman, Booth and Matic, 2011; Agostino, Arnaboldi and Calissano, 2019). In this light, this study seeks to identify and analyze the role of social media influencers in shaping customer engagement and its consequences. In this chapter, to understand different elements that would enable the researcher to lay the foundation of the study, the research background is presented. The section also presents the problem statement for the research along with the aims and objective of the study. The chapter also details the research question with the scope of the study. Also, to shed light on the purpose of the study, the significance and key definitions are presented in the following section.

1.1. Research Background

With the power of technology and the internet, people with common interests come together. Similarly, customers with common interests in a brand can interact on an enhanced scale. This has empowered customers to impact brand equity as never before. Furthermore, it has provided the firms with a challenge to shape customer engagement and brand perceptions in an environment that is increasingly out of their control. Several studies (Moreno *et al.*, 2015; Freberg, 2012; Ge and Gretzel, 2018; Li, 2016) have recognized the role of influencers in influencing the users' way of interacting on social media. Also, the need for

organizations to learn to leverage social media influencer groups as part of organizational communication plans and public relations. The study will firstly shed light on the advent of marketing by social media to identify the role of social media influencers in shaping customer engagement consequences.

1.1.1. Social media influencers in India

In India, there has been a rise in social media influencers in recent years with the development of fast-moving apps. Customers and influencers both have a plethora of choices, for their digital feast on the information including websites such as YouTube, ShareChat, and Instagram (Raghu, 2019). In India, brands are also increasing their advertising spending on influencers to capitalize on the trends and take advantage of converting customers (Bansal, 2021). Influencers in India are using various social media platform to interact with their followers regularly and is sponsoring big brands such as Charlotte Tilbury, Four Seasons, Tata Harper, and Uber. Influencers enhance user engagement and at the same time shape perception for the brands (Raghu, 2019).

Also, in research conducted 2018, it was found that 92 percent of marketers were expected to use a minimum of one influencer campaign for their products (Zefmo, 2018). The report revealed that influencer marketing in India has been able to drive brand awareness and build a reputation for firms. In addition, almost 62% of firms have realized the need to capitalize on this trend. These trends have made social media marketers mindful of the influencers in the Indian market (Zefmo, 2018). Social media influencers have mostly been used in three scenarios; product launches, content promotion, and event promotion. In addition, influencer marketing in India is being used for authentic storytelling, better reach, and connecting with user niches, such as millennials. Social media influencers are also

used for user engagement, the development of brand awareness, and the development of voice or earned media (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021).

One of the examples of usage of Influencers in India was conducted by Ford. The company campaigned with influencers for endorsement of one of the cars, the Ford Fiesta Powershift Automatic. The company invited influencers to an International Circuit in Greater Noida. The company devised routes to ensure that drivers explore all key product attributes (Events FAQs, 2012). Influencers from different sectors such as businessmen, bloggers, photographers, fashion designers, and writers were invited so that brand perception is built around to simulate buyer needs for day-to-day experiences. These influencers were able to pour all social media platforms with conversations about their positive experiences (Ranga and Sharma, 2014).

Further, in India, influencers have also been used by e-commerce firms as well. The influencers were able to create high engagement for the brands they were promoting. The popularity of social media influencers in India comes from authentic, faster, and easier content that influencers provide (Chaturvedi, 2019). This is also beneficial for firms that seek to benefit from the power of the omnipresent internet instead of relying on a single advertisement that is telecasted as a 45-second commercial. In India, social media marketing platforms like Twitter, Whatsapp, or Facebook are largely shaping influencer trends in India (Bansal, 2021). Also, the influencer trend in India is a part of the cultural shift in how people express themselves. With the increased number of brand collaborations, influencers are benefiting from combining content, creativity, and commerce to reach out to relevant audiences. This niche drives sales for the firms and also boosts the credibility of the brand among users (Chaturvedi, 2019). Also, the trends of social media influencers in India suggest that brands prefer collaboration to utilize influencer networks for the enhancement of their brand visibility. Influencer marketing helps firms to raise direct leads and engage

customers to create higher loyalty. Influencers also help firms' battle social media crises through constant communication and remaining in contact with the customers (Talwalkar, 2019).

With the understanding of background information of social media marketing, the role of influencers in identifying, analyzing, and leveraging people towards customer engagement and brand perceptions will be further analyzed.

1.2. Problem Statement

With the popularity of social media marketing, there is variation in the method of customers interaction with firms and brands. Now, the customers are further empowered by influencers to achieve credible and trustworthy sources of information. Also, influencers offer a high rate of visualizations, than traditional advertisement and marketing sources (Liu, Chen, and Zhou, 2010). In this light, the current study will identify and analyze the effect of social media influencers in shaping customer engagement and its consequences.

Brands also have a digital presence, however, having a great reach doesn't necessarily convert into great results for the company. Influencers specifically aim towards converting potential customers into customers by engaging them in a two-way conversation. Influencers can impact customers across industries (Deloitte, 2017; Glucksman, 2017a). In this respect, the current study sheds light on how influencers help brands carve a niche in the market. Apart from enhancing recognition for the brand, this study will analyze other qualities of influencers that help them enhance brand communication and management of social media marketing efforts on behalf of the brands.

Furthermore, influencers help the company to communicate the sentiment around the brand message. This enhances both user engagement and brand perception.

Influencers make use of different social media platforms that allow brands to identify areas that are favorable for targeting certain demography of customers and even mitigate crisis communication if needed (Noonan, 2018; Arora *et al.*, 2019). For understanding this mechanism, the study focuses on evaluating the social media influencers' role in influencing customer engagement and its consequences. It also explores social media influencers' popularity role in moderating the linkage between social media influencers and customer engagement, specifically in the Indian industries.

Influencers act as opinion leaders for the customers. They establish a personality with their audience through content that is created at regular intervals to accumulate and maintain a high number of followers (Lou and Yuan, 2018). Concerning the same, it is important to understand the companies method to use influencers in driving customer engagement. It is also important to note whether or not their popularity plays a role in the same.

1.3. Research Questions

For fulfilling the purpose of the study, the below stated questions will be answered:

- How do social media influencers affect customer engagement in chosen industries?
- What are the consequences of using social media influencers on customer engagement in chosen industries?
- Does influencers' popularity have a moderating role in customer engagement and its consequences?

1.4. Aim and Objectives

The central aim of the study is to analyze the effect of social media influencers on shaping customer engagement consequences. For addressing this aim, the following objectives are addressed:

- To analyze the effect of social media influencers on customer engagement in chosen industries
- To analyze the customer engagement consequences of using influencers in chosen industries
- To examine the moderating role of influencers popularity on customer engagement and its consequences

1.5. Scope of the study

Social media influencers have a wide network of followers that make them valuable for the firms. Influencers have indirect or extended connections that create wider audiences for people. The scope of this study is to determine the effect of social media influencers on different social media platforms. Herein, targeting some specific industries i.e. Food products, health and fitness; Clothing, Fashion, Beauty, and Lifestyle; Customer electronics; Real-estate and Investment; and Travel, Hotel, and Hospitality; the study is restricted to customers located in Delhi NCR region. Even the study just targets the customers of these brands and focus on their perception of the influence of their engagement and its consequences. Further, the study will focus on analyzing the effect of social media influencers on customer engagement in chosen industries. Concerning this, the study aims to understand the concepts of customer engagement will be examined to understand its role in organizational performance, factors affecting it. The objective of the study to analyze customer engagement as a consequence of using influencers in chosen industries will be obtained by analyzing their roles in

augmenting it. The scope of the study includes enquiring upon the role of social media influencers on brand perception impact and engagement of customers. Furthermore, the objective of the study includes examining the moderating role of influencers' popularity on customer engagement and its consequences will be researched through testing in the study.

1.6. Significance of the Study

With the increase in the integration of influencers by the companies, the study is significant for the practitioners to understand the customer decision-making process. The study is significant to contribute to the scholarly attention of how social media influencers give meaning to the brand they endorse and help firms drive positive behavior intentions among customers. The study will facilitate the marketers in the understanding of the causes and outcomes of engagement that they gain on behalf of the companies. These will help in designing marketing strategies and measuring the values of their brand.

The community of influencers in social media marketing wields significant power over customer engagement and perceptions of brands. Organizations can use influencers to rapidly drive their expansion plan on social media. The current study is significant as marketers are facing an ever-changing world of social media, and practitioners need to rely on transforming companies' communication with their target audiences. Although the firms have methods of traditional advertisements and public relations in place, influencers essentially develop social media relations to communicate and engage with influencers one on one.

The study is further significant for the practitioners in social media marketing to elaborate on strategies that can help in customer conversion. It will also provide an understanding of imperative tactics that can help in the development of long-term relations between the firms and influencers to design a vital part of social media campaigns. Also, this study is significant as it presents the linkage of social

media influencers with customer engagement to understand various practices common among influencers for promoting customer engagement. It will help practitioners and marketers to evaluate and analyze varying influence-based customer engagement and brand perceptions an influencer can create for any product or brand.

1.7. Chapterisation plan

Introduction: The chapter to identify and analyze the impact of social media influencers in shaping customer engagement and its consequences presents the background for the research. It will lay down the structure of the study that explains the advent of influencers in social media marketing and presents its advantages. The sections also present the aim, objective, and research questions central to the study. Finally, the scope, significance, and key definition central to the study are also presented.

Literature Review: The second chapter presents the literature review analysis of various academic literature and scholarly studies to present an understanding of the relevant terms. This section will further present an empirical review of studies analyzing the role of social media influencers on customer engagement and brand perception. The section also contains a conceptual framework and study hypothesis.

Research methodology: The section state the methodology that will be used by the researcher for understanding the impact, thus, herein research philosophy, its design, study hypothesis, data collection procedure, ethical considerations, data analysis procedure, data validity and reliability, and limitation of methodology.

Data analysis: The fourth chapter is based on the interpretation wherein pilot testing would be done initially to validate the data collection tool by having a Cronbach alpha test of all statements. Further, final testing would be done wherein demographical characteristics of respondents and knowledge on no. of

influencers they are following is examined. Lastly herein, presenting in the SEM model the role of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences would be determined.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendation: The last chapter is based on the conclusion wherein major findings of the study derived from theoretical review and the empirical analysis are discussed. Following it would be the statement of results concerning each objective for stating that each objective is fulfilled. Thus, presenting the strategies for promoting customer engagement by social media influencers, this chapter state the derivations of the study.

1.8. Chapter summary

The current chapter lays down the background for the study. Having presented an introduction to the advent of social media marketing, the chapter lays down the advantages of the tool. The role of influencers in social media marketing its significance and to form a necessary link between companies and their customers is examined in the study while identifying their role specifically in the Indian market. The section identifies the aim of the study to analyze the effect of social media influencers on shaping customer engagement consequences with the research objectives that will be attained. The current study firstly presents the background for the research. It explains the advent of influencers in social media marketing and presents its advantages. In addition, the section highlights the roles played by influencers in developing the perception of a brand. The section also presents research questions central to the study. Finally, the scope, significance, and key definition central to the study are also presented.

Chapter: 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction to the Chapter

The current chapter presents the review of the literature and academic studies that will be examined in the study to help formulate the background of the research. As the current study aims to analyze the effect of social media influencers on shaping customer engagement consequences, the understanding of various subjective imperatives to the study is discussed. The section presents the concepts of social media marketing, influencers, brand perception, and customer engagement. The current section also presents the empirical review of studies to guide the research. Finally, the section presents the conceptual framework and study hypothesis.

2.2. Social media marketing

In the analytical stage, this study will start with developing the systematic concept of social media marketing. Although social media marketing is defined in the previous studies, the current section seeks to systemize the knowledge and understand the transposition of the concepts of social media and marketing. Intending to analyze the effect of social media influencers on shaping customer engagement consequences, the current section focuses on introducing social media its advent, uses, and factors affecting customers' social media responses.

2.2.1. An introduction to the advent of social media marketing

Social media websites are platforms for businesses and people to network (Han and Kim, 2016). Firms use social media to build their social presence and exchange. They use Social networking platforms to raise the visibility of products and services on the internet. It helps build a connection between customers and brands (Dijck, 2012). With social media's advent, approaches and communication tools with customers have changed greatly. In this process, businesses have also harnessed the power of social media in consistency with their business plan and specifically their marketing plan. Social media marketing offers the brands a personal channel for developing a user-centered network and positively molding social interaction (Chi, 2011).

To understand the advent of social media marketing, it is imperative to differentiate between the terms social media marketing and social networking sites. Social media allows the participation of users by generating personal profiles and building information for creating access for others (Han and Kim, 2016). Social media thus is the environment in which social networking takes place. Social media marketing, on the other hand, requires firms to make use of social media sites to raise their visibility on the Internet. Social media marketing also comprises processes of promoting products and services by providing customers with an alternative way to gather information and formulate their buying decisions (Hutter *et al.*, 2013). Social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and similar websites are used by firms in their efforts of social media marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Rani, 2013).

The trend of usage of social media marketing by firms is still growing; however, its root can be traced to the establishment of the computer era. The development of Usenet was the first step towards the social media journey (Ortner, Sinner, and Tanja Jadin, 2019). Usenet was developed in 1979 and RSS feeds were the precursors for Bulletin Board System and forums that form the news sites and

blogs in the present day (Shrivastava, 2013). Further in the 1980s different technologies were developed. These include Whole Earth Lectronic Link, General Electric Network for Information Exchange, and Listserv. All these technologies set the precedence for the electronic mailing list. This allowed senders to send one email to several people (Edosomwan *et al.*, 2011). This enabled one-way communication from firms to customers. In addition, in the 1980s Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was designed to initiate group communication. IRC technology helped social media marketing through the expertise of real-time chat, also known as internet text messaging which is widely used in social media marketing (Taprial and Kanwar, 2017). Also, the technologies developed synchronous conferencing that has further developed group communication. It also established the foundation for private messages, data transfers, and chat between users (Edosomwan *et al.*, 2011; Kaur and Kaur, 2017)

Further, apart from the development in social media technologies, early social networking sites were also influential in laying the foundation for social media marketing. These include a social network of forums, six degrees, and live journals. Online forums led to the development of user-friendly interfaces and online culture (Gabbriellini, 2014). In addition, Six Degrees was one of the first web platforms launched in 1997 that allowed the creation of user-profiles and allowed other users to become friends virtually. In addition, the social network Live Journal built the platform for updated blogs and was the pioneer to the live update feature that social networks currently operate on (Shah and Khandelwal, 2016).

In addition to the above profile-based social networking sites, the development of social media marketing was also influenced by content-based platforms. In these sites, a user profile is secondary and contents shared by users include photo-sharing and video sharing, for example, sites of Flickr and YouTube (Shah and Khandelwal, 2016; Arora *et al.*, 2019). Also, the developments include Multi-

User Virtual Environments that help users create virtual life. Further, the enhancement of social media marketing leads to mobile social networking sites' growth (Tan *et al.*, 2018). These include platforms such as WhatsApp, which allow firms to reach out to users on mobile devices and provide a new dimension of marketing for the firms. Finally, micro-blogging networking sites have further created a new user class of influencers (Vergeer, Hermans, and Sams, 2011). Social media influencers are third-party celebrities that act as endorsers for different products and services. They leverage different social media platforms to publicize different products on behalf of the firm and share information on the latest promotions as well. They typically engage with their followers through posts, messaging, and video posts (Lim *et al.*, 2017). They use various networking platforms to broadcast posts publicly or within a group. These platforms help primary users to engage other users and shape opinions on behalf of the brands (Yazdanifard *et al.*, 2011).

Through different technologies and platforms, social media presents an evolved approach to marketing. Marketing requires the maximization of available resources for the firms to ensure the development of products and services for the satisfaction of the needs of customers (Kehinde *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, social media marketing has prompted firms to adopt a more participative approach to shape customer engagement and brand perceptions. These include the features of comments, feedback, and suggestions through which specific customers through pictures, blogs, and ratings improve their products and services (Nadaraja and Yazdanifard, 2013). Social media marketing allows firms to develop a proactive approach to gauge customer needs and adapt accordingly (Nadda, Dadwal, and Firdous, 2015). With the information provided by influencers, customers could select the appropriate information based on priority (Lim *et al.*, 2017). Lee & Ma (2012), in a study, suggested the influence of customers' information-seeking behavior on their intention of sharing information and using the direct user approach provided by influencers for making information more relevant in

comparison to other sources of communication. In light of different platforms and technologies, this study will further shed light on the advantages of social media marketing in the present time.

2.2.2. 21st-century internet and user-generated content

User-generated content is regarded as the content form which consists of videos, images, audio, or text which has been updated on different users on social media platforms. The term ‘user-generated content’ came into existence and gained popularity with the evolution of the 21st-century internet when it entered mainstream usage in web publishing and content production circles (O’Hern and Kahle, 2013). The main importance of UGC is that the users of social media can provide first-hand information to the general public quickly which was not possible before the invention of the internet. The advent of the internet has made new media and technology affordable including lowering the cost as well as barriers to entry and providing the users with a platform for producing and distributing UGC(Krumm, Davies and Narayanaswami, 2008). The internet also allows easy information circulation at a quick pace in event occurrence times.

It has been seen that internet technology is developing at a swift pace, especially since the late 20th century, owing to the development of technologies that provide internet users to add to the content on the website and join other users (Naab and Sehl, 2016). (Naab and Sehl, 2016) also found that this outline of growth had serious implications for platform operators as they are shifting into intermediate positions. The expansion of internet service technologies that encourage interactive capabilities is accepted with the current version, Web 2.0 (Croteau, Hoynes, and Milan, 2012). Instead of merely producing content, the operators are providing services that enable Internet users to themselves generate or join forces on creating shared content and play a major role in the distribution, customization, and development of user-generated content (Naab and Sehl, 2016).

UGC is applicable in different applications, consisting of predicament processing, leisure, promotion, rumor, news, or investigation. It helps in the democratization of the generation of content as well as the removal of hierarchies in traditional media (Borah, 2011). In the 1970s and 1980s, there were traditional "gatekeepers" including newspaper editors and publishers who were required to approve the content and information before airing or publishing it. The 1990s and 2000s have witnessed the increasing accessibility of media production through new technologies making it more user-friendly and affordable for the public. This has resulted in enabling a large number of people to post text, digital photos, and digital videos online, with fewer levels of filters, thereby creating user-generated content (Bruns and Schmidt, 2011). The initiation of UGC has seen up-gradation in media from the generation of online content to enabling amateurs in publishing their content. UGC can also be regarded as media focused on the citizen as it elicits feedback from the audience themselves as the public gives their opinions and shares stories by generating and uploading audio and video content (Bryant and Miron, 2014). The internet allows this process to be bilateral as opposed to it being unilateral in the past, which is a key characteristic of 21st-century internet which raises publishing of UGC along with commenting on the content of other people (O'Hern and Kahle, 2013). Thus, it has been seen that the passive audience role has changed since the evolution of the 21st-century internet as it is increasingly becoming more participatory as the users are utilizing the interactive opportunities to their advantage by using the Internet to create independent content (Jothi, M.Neelamalar, and R.Shakthi Prasad, 2011).

2.2.3. The advent of social media today

Social media is a regarded as communication form mediated by computers (Jokinen, 2016). Social networking websites are considered as common social

media tools that constitute a major part of social media(Baruah, 2012). These sites are defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2015, p.211). Such websites formulate modern social media form which is “structured as personal networks, with the individual at the center of their community” (Cross & Parker, 2014, p.219). CompuServe Information Service was the initial chief American Internet service provider, without any competitors when it first started. It was also the company that worked with the Associated Press and was making news reports available for home computers (Paulussen & Harder, 2014, p.111). In addition to this, CompuServe developers also formed email and public bulletin board systems which are regarded as the building blocks of today’s social networking. Another company called UseNet was launched in 1979 and is constituted of 1000 members in 1985 and by 1990 reached at a level of over a million users (Markoff, 1990). This was regarded as striking raise because people were not allowed to be a part of a group online, instead, they have to either write to the company or give a call to a toll-free number to request membership. Even though UseNet had the most conversation in the world but this platform was not the main and only discussion platform as there were 45,000 electronic bulletin boards in existence in US(Grimes, 1992). These platforms are regarded as modern day social networking root. After that, AOL emerged as the most popular online service provider which also bought CompuServe in 1998 and further increase in volume (Goldsborough, 2009). America Online was mainly responsible for social media services (Rosenwald, 2009). In current times, social networking sites has millions of people connecting online through them (Boyd and Ellison, 2015).

The main types of social media in the current times include social networking sites, microblogging, bookmarking, blog forums, media sharing, sharing economy networks, social news, or social review sites (Nations, 2012). Social networking

sites allow the users in building a connection with people having comparable backgrounds or interests and include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Selina and Milz, 2009). Bookmarking sites allow their members to save and systematize relations to a large number of online websites (Jothi, M.Neelamalar, and R.Shakthi Prasad, 2011). These sites allow the users to tag links enabling them to investigate, and perpetually, contribute to their followers, an example of which is Stumble Upon. Social news site helps in sending news links or additional details to articles. Viewers could vote on them and the ones with the most votes are most notably shown like the social news site, Reddit (Baruah, 2012). Media sharing sites help the users in sharing diverse forms of media along with sharing of images and hosting of videos. It has also been observed that a majority of these sites provide social features including the facility of profile creation or commenting on specific videos or images. Micro blogging refers to those sites which enable users to provide briefly written details and the links to specific service or product sites and other social media sites (Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks, 2015). Online forums help the users in engaging themselves in discussions by posting and then responding to community messages which is similar to a blog comment site except being more focused (Jothi, M.Neelamalar and R.Shakthi Prasad, 2011).

There are certain review sites as well including TripAdvisor and Foursquare which display reviews from their members' pool for the different locations as well as experiences (Baruah, 2012). This helps the people by informing them about the different places which let them make better decisions before selecting to dine at a particular restaurant. Shared blogging platforms provide people with a platform to convey views and voice like Medium and Tumblr whereas sharing economy networks help in bringing people together where one has got something the other wants to share including Airbnb, Pantheon (Fanion, 2011).

2.2.4. Uses of social media in marketing

Brand managers are increasingly using social media in their marketing mix for the promotion of their goods and services. They have found the following social media usage in the marketing field.

2.2.4.1. Provides an interface for interaction

The usage of social media has altered ways of managing the relationship between brands and their customers. Successful social media use is dependent on the aspect that it has provided the interface which makes it easy for people to interact with each other along with maintaining connections with one another (Trusov, Bucklin and PAuwels, 2012). By providing an interface, the brands increase their interaction with their target audience which helps them in understanding their latent needs and promote their products as an effort to meet those needs.

2.2.4.2. Provides brands with a tool for marketing

The marketers have started taking advantage of using the social media sites in fostering their brands as they use social media in understanding the expectations of their target customers followed by the formulation of suitable strategies concerning the promotion of their products as well as services for achieving the pre-defined marketing objectives (Coolicev, Malshe, and Pauwels, 2018).

2.2.4.3. Provides a medium for discussion

Social media evolved as a medium of discussion in which people generate info, bookmark it, share or build in-network at cosmic pace. Different types of social media provide a medium for their users to display their products to energetic

communities and interested people and hold discussions with them (Roberts and Kraynak, 2008).

2.2.4.4. Providing a source of information

The content created by social media can be regarded as a type of online information source which is formulated, used, or spread among customers to be aware of the various available products, brands, and services (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The various popular portals of social media are used by marketers (Baruah, 2012).

2.2.4.5. Effective promotion of goods and services

Social media marketing is considered as an online marketing activities subset that complements the traditional strategies (Barefoot and Szabo, 2010). Social media has led to an increase in its popularity as an aid to businesses to promote their products and services (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). It has led to tremendous growth in social media usage in marketing as marketers increasingly are becoming aware of social media's role in marketing strategies to reach out to their targeted customers. The various categories in which marketers have used social media in their marketing mix include sentiment research, promotion, marketing communication, or marketing intelligence (Tanuri, 2010). It forms an important role in the marketing mix as the social media platforms have been observed to have a significant impact on the marketing performance of brands which increases the importance of social media for the marketing managers (Stephen and Galak, 2009).

2.2.4.6. Obtain reviews about different products or services

Social media marketing has gained significance as it encourages users to disseminate positive messages about the products to their contacts which injects positive diffusion and feeling of trust to this marketing and communication (Hafele, 2011). The new marketing and outreach approach leads to the development of new marketing tools for the brands along with increasing their top line as well as margins. Thus, it can be seen that social media marketers have a higher rate of performance and are regarded as more effective owing to the introduction of analytic applications on their social network site platform (Palmer and Lewis, 2009).

2.2.5. Factors affecting Customer social media marketing response

Customers have responded well to social media marketing initiatives of the different brands. However, there are various aspects of customer response that need to be incorporated in social media marketing to increase their efficacy.

2.2.5.1. Credibility

Media credibility has been defined as “the degree to which the users of SNSs trust or believe in the advertising or media claim to influence the customer to respond toward advertising” (Adamantos, 2015, p.12). Similarly, (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2007, p.14) has defined customer responsiveness as “a function of content relevance and channel acceptance/disturbance”. It has been seen that the credibility of online advertisements and other promotional activities is of utmost importance for the effectiveness of social media marketing (Jothi, M.Neelamalar, and R.Shakthi Prasad, 2011). Credibility, therefore, needs to be regarded as the

most important component of an advertising campaign as it helps in improving the image of the brand and positively influences customers' purchase decisions. Previous studies have shown that the influence of credibility is directly proportional to customer responsiveness (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2007; Tom, 2013; Manninen, 2017). (Taylor and Okazaki, 2013) in their study have found that there is a positive relationship between the credibility of social media advertising and the responsiveness of their customers which means that if the customers believe that the brand is creditworthy, then it shall have a favorable image of it which shall lead to higher purchase behavior. Therefore, social media marketers need to ensure that the information which is delivered to their customers through this channel demonstrates qualitative features and characteristics including correctness, suitability, and support for the customer (Siau and Shen, 2013).

2.2.5.2. Efficiency

(Varshney, 2013) discovered that the efficiency of advertising includes obtaining hedonic advantage which helps them in obtaining positive responses from the targeted customers. Advertisements need to be portrayed as entertainment, which needs to be visually appealing or funny or spiritually uplifting in their music which helps them in bringing more desired results. Concerning social media marketing, (Ducoffe, 2015) found that the hedonic determinants were considered fundamental in creating positive customer responses concerning their social media marketing initiatives. This finding has been supported by (Al, 2009) depicting the strong influence of hedonic on customer responsiveness.

2.2.5.3. Price promotion

The price of the products or services is a key factor in determining the response of customers towards the marketing efforts of the brands as it influences their response towards the social media marketing along with their intention to buy. According to (Alwitt and Prabhaker, 2012) price promotion could be defined as “the value that one has to put on the utility that one receives for goods and services” (p.8). (Pollay and Mittal, 2013) had stated price promotion use in social media marketing helps in increasing customers’ responses towards social media usage in promotional activities. (Adamantos, 2015) study depicted the presence of negative linkage between customer responsiveness and price towards social media advertising.

2.3. Influencers

There has been an increase in the level of consumption of digital media and expenditure from the companies on online promotional activities. One of the important trends that the conditions have shaped includes the promotion of products and services using the influencer marketing concept (Wielki, 2020). To analyze the effect of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences, the current section will present the meaning and definition along with the types of influencers’ critical characteristics of social media influencers that make them relatable. In addition, to analyze their role, the marketing strategies used by the influencers and their critical characters are analyzed.

In this context, this article aims to analyze the role, place, and significance of digital influencers in the overall functioning of the online promotional system, and the impact of the influencer marketing concept on its sustainable development. To implement it, a literature analysis was carried out on the origins of this phenomenon, and its scale causes and impact on the functioning of the

digital promotion system. After the completion of this stage of the research, a questionnaire survey was conducted on a group of individual Internet users to obtain primary data.

2.3.1. Meaning and definition

The term ‘influencer’ was mainly used with social media. According to (Freberg *et al.*, 2011), the term refers to people who have a great impact on others owing to their attitude, manner of expressing their personal opinions and viewpoints. Social media influencers refer to novel third-party endorsers who help in shaping the attitudes of their targeted audience with the help of their blogs, tweets, and employing similar other social media channels (Freberg *et al.*, 2011). They consist of people who have created their reputation based on their knowledge and proficiency on different topics (Bokunewicz and Shulman, 2017). For this purpose, they are required to make regular posts on different topics of their area on their social media networks thereby generating a large following of excited affianced people who tend to pay attention to their opinions (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015). They make use of social media sites including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter to create content to promote various brands with the main objective of getting a major following and encouraging recognition of brands. Social media influencers can therefore be regarded as third parties who tend to influence the buying decisions of customers by making recommendations, posting images and other content on social media along with shaping their opinions, attitudes, and actions (Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014; Szmigin & Piacentini, 2015). An influencer can, therefore, be regarded as an individual who has a large number of people following him or her in a particular niche market in which they are actively engaged. It implies that influencers are individuals who have the

command to influence purchase decisions of buyers owing to their affiliation with their audience by using their authority.

The importance of social media has increased over the last decade which is supplemented by the statistics from various reports, which found that there were 3.028 billion people active users of social media which contributed to 40% of the world's total population (Deloitte, 2018). It implies that the users of social media tended to trust influencers in social media for guiding them in making their decision as compared to trusting other modes of advertisements (Lim et al, 2017). Common influencers include people like models, cricketers, rock stars, actors, politicians, or mentors but there have been studies that have found that any person could be regarded as an influencer under different situations (Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks, 2015; Agostino, Arnaboldi and Calissano, 2019). In their study, (Kin *et al.*, 2012) found that influencers had a huge impact on the growth of social media marketing as they do not promote the product directly but mention them in their posts on social media. The customers get influenced by the posts of the influencers as these influencers have a lot of control over their followers by how they express their views or communicate with others (Bjurling and Ekstam, 2018).

2.3.2. Types of influencers on social media

Different types of influencers who are using social media are stated below.

2.3.2.1. Celebrities

Influencer marketing has evolved from celebrity endorsement over the years as brands think that their sales revenue tended to increase when they hired celebrities to promote or endorse their product (Erdogan, 2009). A plethora of businesses, especially high-end luxury brands exclusively use celebrities as influencers for the

promotion of their products or services as it increases the snob value of their products (Erdogan, 2009). Despite the advantage of the high increase in sales revenue, the main disadvantage of using celebrities as their influencer is that they are very expensive (Tanuri, 2010). Besides, the choice of celebrities as influencers varies according to the product they are promoting as the qualities of the celebrities need to match that of the brand.

2.3.2.2. Industry leaders and thought leaders

Though and industry leaders are also used as influencers by businesses for the promotion of their products as they have gained the respect of their followers owing to their credentials, or knowledge (Haferkamp and Kramer, 2011). Usually, this status is obtained due to the leader's reputation at their workplace. These experts include journalists, academics, industry experts, and professional advisors. The industry leaders are regarded as effective influencers as they understand the value and appreciate the brand and fall within the core demographic of the brand. These goals of these influencers are aligned with those of their audience which provides them with the ability to impact customers' purchasing decisions owing to relationship, authority, or knowledge (Farook and Abeysekera, 2016).

2.3.2.3. Bloggers and content creators

Bloggers and content creators also tend to be employed as influencers for different brands and their social media sites are used by brands for their social media marketing campaigns. The importance of bloggers and content creators is increasing as the gap between traditional media and social media is reducing (Jothi, M.Neelamalar, and R.Shakthi Prasad, 2011). Blogging has been linked to influencer marketing due to the increasing number of influential blogs on the

internet (O’Flynn, 2012). Businesses have found that the purchase intention of their buyers towards their products increases on positive mention of the same in the post of bloggers (Uribe-Saavedra, Llonch-Andreu, and Rialp-Criado, 2015). The key feature of bloggers is that they have built up considerable followings in their sectors and gained the respect of their readers. Due to this feature, brands tend to employ the services of bloggers to recommend their products on their social media sites to improve brand visibility. Additionally, if the size of a blog is large and has a high number of followers, the brands can also market their products by purchasing a sponsored post on the blog site.

2.3.2.4. Video influencer

Video influencers are those influencers who have an impact on their audience by creating videos by relying on channels like YouTube to publish their content instead of creating their site for increasing their customer reach. Video content is increasingly becoming a part of the social media marketing mix of brands as it is an opportunity for them to advertise innovatively. Video influencers have a dual advantage as brands get visibility on the video content of these influencers as well as their other social media pages which are used to promote their new videos (Glucksman, 2017b). Therefore, it can be seen that video influencers help the brands in effective marketing as they use a mix of text as well as video content to reach their audience and consequently, have a greater influence on their target audience as compared to other types of influencers.

2.3.2.5. Micro-influencers

Micro-influencers consist of people who are not celebrities but become well known in their industry due to their immense knowledge about their specialist

niche area. The followers of micro-influencers comprise people who share common interests with them and they are found to share a unique relationship based on trust and credibility. This unique relationship necessitates the micro-influencers to maintain their credibility while promoting a particular brand to preserve their integrity and position as a leader (Freberg *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, it can be seen that internet fragment media into small topics with the audience finding groups or discussion boards devoted to something relatively obscure. Also, social media is witnessing a change with a gradual increase in the number of social media influencers as generation Z trusts other people's opinions more than corporate messaging. Since the younger generation spends more time on the internet, social media influencers impact purchase decisions that are used by the brands to their advantage (Bokunewicz and Shulman, 2017). A rise in authentic and active relationships with the audience leads to a gradual decline in the importance of celebrities as influencers.

2.3.3. Advantages of social media marketing today

Social media marketing enabled organizations to meet the targeted customers easily, instantly, and effectively. This study will present the advantages of social media marketing in the present era.

2.3.3.1. Reduction of Cost

Social media marketing helps in the reduction of costs for the firms as it employs tools typically mobile or internet-based, combining social interactive technology along with words usage. Social media marketing is cost-effective as it allows organizations to use various platforms and reach targeted audiences at a much

lower cost as compared to conventional customer outreach programs (Oyza and Edwin, 2015). The costs of marketing through social media get reduced as the process of distribution that is central to mass media is eliminated. Organizations can reach their targeted audience with more accuracy than in the mass media method such as newspapers and TV advertisements (Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin, 2015). Also, social media marketing offers issue-by-issue advertising and promotion to be available at a lower cost. Issue-by-issue advertising allows reaching the target population easily in a cost-effective manner (Lee, 2010; Kirtiş and Karahan, 2011).

2.3.3.2. Generating exposure to businesses

Social media provides firms with a massive exposure because of its global access, enhanced capability of sharing, and a large amount of daily user traffic. Social media marketing also generates exposure for businesses by serving as a platform to deliver instant information (Oyza and Edwin, 2015). Digital marketplace gives organizations with enhanced ability and a greater audience. These platforms also serve as a tool for converting potential customers and in turn increasing sales for the firms. In addition, the utilization of social media marketing by organizations impacts both traditional and digital market space for its products and services (Singh and Sinha, 2017). Also, aspects of relationship building in social media marketing are not confined to the four walls of organizational premises. Rather, customers and audiences through social media ensure omnipresence for the businesses (Ciprian, 2015; Singh and Sinha, 2017). Social media marketing tools such as Pay-per-click advertisements and the geo-targeted approach of an advertisement on sites such as Facebook ensure that the correct audience is targeted by the firm (Nadaraja and Yazdanifard, 2013). Also, social media messages can become viral, which means that every individual who come across a brand communication has contribution in spreading those messages within their

network. Such that the details reaches to large group of people within some time(Weinberg, 2009; Arora *et al.*, 2019).

2.3.3.3. Plurality and Diversity

In addition to reducing cost and enhancing exposure for businesses, firms derive the benefit of social media marketing as it provides them with diversity and plurality of platforms and audiences. Different platforms enable organizations to post diverse content in form of photos, captions, and videos among others (Lee, 2010). Also, social media marketing offer diversity to firms in a range of people or audience that the platform caters to. It provides firms with distributed networks formed through voluntary connections. In offering diversity social media marketing ensures that the product and services of firms are turned into e-word of mouth (Lee, 2010).

2.3.3.4. Enhanced Effectiveness

Social media offer an advantage of effectiveness over other methods of marketing. This is because social media offer information to customers and audiences in the form that is most easy to process and comprehend. Social media marketing offers an advantage to firms over other forms of contact as it provides a platform where a larger amount of information can be provided to people. Through social media marketing firms' effectiveness can be increased through interaction with the customers (Farook and Abeysekera, 2016). Integrated communication with the customers helps firms attain customized information that allows them to design products and services to meet customer-specific requirements. Social media marketing also ensures that firms can gather such crucial information without any human contact (Szolnoki *et al.*, 2018).

2.3.3.5. Interactivity

Social media marketing also offers firms the feature of interactivity, which is unlike traditional media, for example, in an advertisement through TV and radio. In the traditional medium role of the customer is limited to that of being passive recipients of stimulation. While for social media marketing interactivity depends on the level of user participation (Paquette, 2013). In social media, marketing content can be modified in different forms in real-time. This makes the contents interactive for the customers. It also provides firms with increased control of users and positively influences their engagement with social media content (Hill and Moran, 2011; Knoll, 2016).

The feature of interactivity in social media marketing is triggered by the behavior of customers and their preferences. Unlike the traditional campaign-based marketing efforts, the interactive feature of social media marketing ensures a direct relation. Such that it is developed as a one-to-one marketing practice keeping in mind individual customers to prospect actions from them (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). In the online social marketing context, user-centered interaction can be gained through messaging and other aspects of the experiential networking process. Interactivity is also promoted in social media marketing through simple form filling and clicking embedded links on company websites. Customers can select timing, content, and communication to empower customers to take active control of two-way communications (Shoute, 2018).

2.3.3.6. Enhanced Brand Awareness and Organizational Visibility

Shoute (2018) in a study highlighted that almost 96% of marketers are participating in social media marketing. The study also highlighted the usage of

social media platforms by more than half of the population living across the globe. Registered users utilize different social media platforms and companies to effectively use social media for acquiring customers (Andresen, 2017). Social media marketing through webpage and platforms use an increased subscriber base to guide user perception, customer engagement, and brand perceptions (Holt, 2016). In addition, organizational visibility is increased by building new business partnerships (Markos-Kujbus and Gati, 2012). Organizations investing 6 hours on social media marketing have been reported to gain new partnerships to benefit the organization in the long term. Brand awareness and organizational visibility are further enhanced by enhancing improved search rankings (Shoute, 2018). Search engine rankings improve the chances of organizational products and services to appear in customer searches. Improved search rankings also allow firms to generate qualified leads. These leads can be converted into sales in the future by the companies (Ledford, 2015).

2.3.4. Role of influencers in the success of social media marketing

Apart from various direct advantages of social media marketing efforts, firms can benefit from the involvement of influencers. The role of influencers in social media marketing is crucial as they form a necessary link between companies and their customers. They help in the identification and engagement of customers that match with the product niche (Deloitte, 2017). Influencers help in lowering the barriers to entry in closed markets. Independent firms such as Charlotte Tilbury, NYX, and Glossier have used influencers to replace the strong brand presence of established companies. - Influencers support brands to create conversations with their customers as public relations initiatives. Influencers encourage customers to brand switching and use strategies such as free distribution of products (Deloitte, 2017).

Unlike traditional marketing media, they use their internet personality to market the ‘Feeling’ of the product to enhance user engagement (Hudson *et al.*, 2015). As in the case of the company Murad Skin-care. The company uses influencers to create a relatable impression to shape brand perception. Influencers' role in the success of social media marketing also includes their ability to enhance their relationships with followers (Adams, 2021). The influencer creates a two-way conversation opportunity between a specific brand and its followers. As in the case of this partnership, influencer personal recommendation of Murad products to her followers led to the advertisement of the products and helps the company gain new brand customers through her social media interactions (Glucksman, 2017a).

In addition, the role of influencers in the success of social media marketing also includes the creation of brand perception (Kwortnik, 2006). As in the case of the company Carnival Cruise Line. The partnership between the influencer and the company aimed towards the establishment of the brand as a vibrant, young, and friendly cruise line (Glucksman, 2017b). The company used video logs of social media influencers to develop a brand perception of the authentic and relatable experience of the cruise trip.-By highlighting the positive experiences of influencers the company aimed to use interactivity to highlight products and services of the cruise line in a positive light (Kwortnik, 2006; Fink, 2017; Glucksman, 2017a).

Further, popular social media influencers such as members of the Kardashian family through endorsements of their brand and other major fashion. They promote products along with promoting feelings of body positivity (Maloney, 2017). They engage people in a para-social relationship, which means that the customers are connected to influencers even when they are not on social media. The relationship is developed as an illusion and seemingly to develop face-to-face relationships (Maloney, 2017; Appel *et al.*, 2019). Electronic word of mouth, of

successful influencers, encourages others to interact with the brand further. In addition, these social media influencers play a vital role in activating need recognition among the customers (Dalstam, Holmgren, and Nordlöf, 2018). Watching products sponsored by these influencers triggers customers to try the products as well. Interactivity and authenticity of such influencers inspire confidence among other users to develop credible and trusted sources of brand perception. Followers of such influencers are more inclined to form brand perceptions based on these interactions. Thus the role of influencers in social media marketing is to attain brand partnership goals (Maloney, 2017; Appel *et al.*, 2019).

Influencers further help to build a lasting relationship with the customers. There are two well-known brands Marriott and Hilton Garden Inn, in the hospitality industry that have enrolled influencers in their marketing strategies. Hilton Garden inn is working towards enhancing its brand presence to include its fine dining options too (Nafi and Ahmed, 2019). Similarly, Marriot used influencers to target niches for customers attracted to the rockstar dream. As an ode to music and arts, the influencers created an online buzz about their private music studio (Burnham, 2018). The campaign illustrated shared human experience through influencers and creates a common universal language through art. In both cases, the brands used the power of the word of mouth was used mold brand perception (Burnham, 2018). Similarly, influencers can be reached out to a wider audience with diverse opinions. As in the case of Pepsi's 'Live Now' campaign with influencers was used to create a brand perception of unity and appeal to youth. The company selected influencers to match the personality of the firm (Taylor, 2017). The brand used the campaign to create user engagement based on the appeal of excitement. Different influencers prevent chances of alienation of the targeted audience and companies can engage customers from various walks of life through influencers (Taylor, 2017).

In addition, influencers are primarily important in guiding high-consideration purchases in customers. Nissan in a campaign used influencers to ensure that customers are more confident of their purchase decisions. The influencer played the role of advisor in the 'See, Think, Do, Care' framework (Tybout and Fahey, 2017). The leads generated from the influencers were used by the firm to promote customers to initiate buying actions. The influencers helped in buying aspects such as dealer searches, click-to-call, and test drive schedules. These enabled the prospective customer to get in touch with the company with enhanced ease and facilitate the purchase process (Tybout and Fahey, 2017).

Furthermore, the role of influencers in the success of social media marketing and their outcomes also include their role as trustworthy social figures that create a niche community (Glucksman, 2017a). Influencers in social media marketing have carved a niche for themselves. They bank on the support of their followers to promote user engagement and brand perception further (Bjurling and Ekstam, 2018). As in the case of popular fitness influencers, whose extensive knowledge of weight training and also promote products with proper nutrition. In addition, these fitness influencers are also associated with sportswear firms and supplement companies on occasions as well. The role of social media influencers is to drive trust and loyalty among their followers to promote user engagement (Noonan, 2018). In addition, this trust of the followers is not driven by the sponsorship of advertisements. Rather, influencer inspires confidence in audiences by regularly posting trustful and personal content. If the followers feel they can relate to influencers personally, it inspires trust among them (Dahlqvist, Preiksaite and Klasson, 2018). Apart from the role of influencers in the success of social media marketing, the study will further analyze their role in India.

2.3.5. Critical characteristics of social media influencers

A survey of related literature has attempted to identify the various characteristics of an influencer. They have been identified as:

2.3.5.1. Awareness and power of persuasion

Social media influencers need to be aware of the latest developments in their field of specialization along with being aware of current affairs. They need to be well versed with the new developments in their field since they are required to educate their followers with the new advancements along with responding to their messages and posts. Persuasion refers to the process of negotiating with others to arrive at a shared solution (Keller, Fray, and Berry, 2009). Social media influencers need to use their power of persuasion to initiate a change in the behavior as well as the mindset of their followers.

2.3.5.2. Communication skills

Influencers need to be able to communicate effectively as their success depends on their ability to communicate with others, virtually as well as in-person (Stephen and Galak, 2009). They need to be able to express their ideas and thoughts to inspire others to develop their plan of action. Communication is an all-encompassing activity that helps the influencers in creating their perception in the virtual space. Therefore, all successful influencers are required to have excellent communication skills which help them in building a large number of followers.

2.3.5.3. Age

(Aral, Brynjolfsson and Alstynne, 2012) tried to identify the degree of convincing power of social media influencers based on their age. It was found that it was important for social media influencers to be young since they were able to influence their followers due to their high appeal. The average age of social media influencers was found to be between 18 and 28 currently according to (Sjöberg, Rosenbröijer, and Oy, 2017).

2.3.5.4. Gender

It was found that the difference in the impact of influencers based on their gender was dependent on their area of specialization and in gender-neutral fields; it was not a significant factor for influencing their audience. The studies have suggested that women had a good influence on men, but not on other women. (Bhattacharyya and Ghosh, 2012) in their study used a questionnaire on Facebook to collect data concerning social media influencers' influence on the audience concerning their gender. An analysis of the data collected showed that younger women assumed more important positions and had a higher influential degree in the social network as compared to men.

2.3.5.5. Technical characteristics

Besides the demographic characteristics, various technical characteristics are required to be possessed by a social media influencer. These technical characteristics of social media influencers include a high number of daily hits on their social media page, a high sharing of posts, and a high number of followers. There are a few exceptions to this rule where the social media influencers are characterized by less number of influencers and hits but are characterized by their

unique relationship with their followers which helps them in influencing their purchasing power (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015; Kachru, 2017).

2.3.6. Marketing strategies applied by social media influencers

In fulfilling their intermediary role, the impact of influencers is increasing and they are progressively being used by brands for the promotion of products. A report on marketers' survey who are using different strategies stated that most or 75% of the marketers prefer to use influencers for marketing their products (Veirman et al., 2017; Augure, 2015). The more usage of influencer marketing has contributed to reducing the adoption of traditional marketing methodologies. This new marketing is contributing to changing marketing and communication fields. Social media influencers have developed appropriate marketing strategies to reach their target audiences (Taylor and Okazaki, 2013). Their working approach for audience-oriented communication has relied on influencer likeability (Veirman et al., 2017). The following strategies have been identified which are followed by social media influencers to promote the brands:

2.3.6.1. Becoming a brand spokesperson

(Jokinen, 2016), consider branding "in its contemporary use for marketing, a [signifier of] a certain quality or idea associated with a commodity which ostensibly simplifies the customer's decision-making" (p. 192). It means that to promote a particular brand, social influencers need to act as third parties which function as organizational spokespersons without being an integral part of the organization itself. Therefore, the influencers frame their posts to align their synergy with that of the brand. This positive image of the brand makes the organization appealing to individuals and the public (de Chernatony and McDonald, 2013).

2.3.6.2. Creating a positive image of the brand

The influencers write reviews about the product or show their usability on their social media pages to create a brand's positive image in followers' minds. This is done because a positive perceived notion of the brand in the minds of the customers tends to shift the decision-making process of the customers in the favor of the brands. The posts of the influencers are modified according to their usage of the product, and their unbiased reviews need to be linked with the advertisement of the brands (Clifton, Simmons, & Ahmad, 2013).

2.3.6.3. Creating a complete experience

Product reviews have become very common in the current times and the influencers need to create a complete experience of the product to register the same in their minds which is further shared with their networks. Creating an experience helps them in creating more interesting content which in turn, leads to increased customer engagement concerning the brand. This novel mode of marketing has evolved due to the research which suggests that millennials engage more on the internet and thus have most of their products purchased online and rely on the experience created by the influencers to make their decisions (Ordun, 2015).

2.3.6.4. Plan the correct type of content

Social media influencers ensure that they share high-quality content with their audience and avoid excessive promotional material. The content which they share is a mixture of informative as well as entertaining items and not a marketplace to

sell a particular type of product or service. The influencer plans the type of content which is shared by them on their social media platform and thus, agrees to promote those brands which are in line with their inherent attributes (Julia *et al.*, 2017).

2.3.6.5. Post things matching the tastes of the target audience

Influencers are required to post things that match the tastes of their target audience. For the successful promotion of the brands, the tastes of the target audience are of utmost importance for interesting, educating, and at the same time, entertaining them. The objective of the influencers is to post concerning their niche topics to maintain their followers (Hughes, Swaminathan, and Brooks, 2015).

2.3.7. Critical success factors: Effect of social media influencers on customers

The success factors of the impact of social media influencers on customers have relied on the endorsement principle which influencers use for promoting a product. The following factors have been identified:

2.3.7.1. Creating electronic word of mouth

(Phelps *et al.*, 2004) stated that influencer messages are credible “electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)” (p. 798). Further, they suggested that to increase the promotion value of brands, brands need to tie up with the most credible and liked influencers whose opinion is valued by their followers in their particular segment.

Also, brands need to avoid engagement with influencers just based on availability as in the domain of influencer marketing, the concept of one size fits all doesn't apply.

2.3.7.2. Style of message

It has been found that the style of the message posted by the social media influencers is based on the perspective that the brand wants to provide or build with customers. Therefore, the influencers need to build in the better sensibility of the brand along with having the establishment of understanding between brand and their audience to provide understanding regarding the activities of their organizations along with learning expectations of their clients (Bjurling and Ekstam, 2018). Hence, the inclusion of social media influencers as an important PR and marketing strategy could either create a positive outlook and benefits brand or with negative image could harm the brand as well as the purchase decisions of their prospective customers.

2.3.7.3. Use effective communication strategy

Communication is regarded as a vital piece in the entire promotional system and brands need to use it to remain close to their customers. In terms of interdependence, brands tend to use social media influencers for their promotional activities, and for this purpose, companies are required to lose control over the communication mechanism of the brand and rely on the external source for managing their communication strategy (Calder, Malthouse and Schadel, 2009). Employment of an effective y can

2.3.7.4. Credibility of source

With the discussion of credibility aspect, expertise and trustworthiness are the two key elements. Therefore, the credibility of the influencer can be regarded as a success factor that is widely being used to analyze the effectiveness of endorsement (Taghipoorreynh and de Run, 2016). Thus, with the inclusion of credible influencers or endorsers, there is the opportunity of creating a positive customer perception (Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell, 2010).

2.3.7.5. Physical attractiveness

Moreover, the advertising acceptance by the customer is dependent on the physical attractiveness of the selected influencer. With the presence of better attractiveness of the influencer, the response or physical attributes of the customer is affected. Existing researches discovered that there is an existence of positive linkage between the customer attitude or purchase intention with the source attractiveness (Erdogan, 2009). (McGuire, 2015) mentioned the direct influence of source attractiveness on the endorsement effectiveness. The existence of attractive social media influencers could affect the customer positively regarding purchasing intention (Till and Busler, 2009). Hence, the social media influencer who is more attractive tends to contribute more effectively in the success of influencer marketing and capturing the attention of the audience. “

2.3.7.6. Congruency between endorser and product

Moreover, congruency between product and endorser is regarded as a critical success factor for achieving excellent results. It is important to establish an appropriate fit between an endorser and the brand to have successful execution of marketing strategy (Till and Busler, 2009). An efficient match-up relation could

only be built by having the presence of a strong association between product and endorser(Misra and Beatty, 2010) i.e. as social media influencer is the spokesperson for the brand, thus, they should have an appropriate match with the features of the product. This match-up results in having a better and positive attitude towards the brand(Kamins and Gupta, 2014). (Shimp, 2010)mentioned the relevance of perfect match-up existence for targeting and achieving the desired customer purchase intention. Thus, the presence of a match-up between the product and endorser strengthens the effectiveness of the promotional campaign of brands by using social media.

2.4. Brand perception

There has been an increase in the customers relying on user-generated content than the traditional advertisement methods. In the conditions, the influencers humanize the brands and shape the brand perception (Wielki, 2020). To gain a broader perspective of the impact of perception of digital influencers, the study will shed light on the meaning and definition, and importance of brand perception. The section will also identify the role of brand perception for the company and how social media marketing shapes them.

2.4.1. Meaning and definition

A brand can be defined as “a manner in which products of a company are distinguished from those of its competitors” (Clifton et al., 2003, p.9). A brand needs to have value along with possessing various characteristics which have been identified by (Palmer, 2010) as constancy, reduction of risk along with other functional and emotional attributes. The perception of customers towards a particular brand is dependent on their knowledge about the brand and also influences their response in the situation of being confronted with stimuli related

to the brand. Therefore, companies need to manage their brand knowledge to have an impact on the purchase decisions of their customers (Aaker, 2007; Keller, Fray, and Berry, 2009). Branding can be regarded as the process of forming typical and sturdy perceptions in the minds of customers (Blythe, 2011; Ajagbe, Long and Solomon, 2014; Johnson and Russo, 2014).

Brand perception has been defined by (Keller, 2013) as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in customer memory” which can be accepted by the customers at a functional or symbolic level. Perception of the same brand differs amongst the customers as brand management strives to convey a precise and steady image to the marketplace and maintain a steady relationship with the brand, leading to the development of different perceptions of the brand by the customers. Therefore, for assessing brand perception, managers recognize the relationship between information, approach, and behavior (Wonglorsaichon and Sathainrapabayut, 2008). This opinion implies that brand managers regard brand perception as a collective phenomenon, where the various brands can be ranked based on different criteria (Koll and Wallpach, 2014). Due to different perceptions of a brand, there tend to be dissimilar expectations towards the brand and be evaluated to a diverse competitive set. In addition to segmentation of customers into different groups to enable effective marketing, brand perceptions also differ according to the different segments due to the various branding strategies of companies (Lim *et al.*, 2017).

It is important to create a strong brand perception in the minds of customers to reduce uncertainty regarding the evaluation of a product along with increasing the purchase intentions (Lim *et al.*, 2017). A popular brand name along with a positive brand perception leads to the creation of competitive advantages concerning increasing interests of the customers, awareness, and positive assessment of a product and leads to increased repeat purchases (Glucksman, 2017b). This is because customers tend to assign more awareness towards a

familiar brand and tend to put in more effort in dispensing information regarding a particular product having a well-known brand name. Also, in situations when customers do not possess knowledge regarding the product attributes and are sceptical regarding the product, brand names and its perception play an important role in decreasing perceived risk as well as assessment of product quality. (Feldwick, 2006; de Chernatony and McDonald, 2013) categorized brand attributes into perceived quality, image, awareness, organizational associations, personality, and perceived value.

(Adeleye, 2013) has described the name of the brand which is related to the quality of service or product. It has also been found on scrutiny that any specific brand is the representation of different intangible facets about services or products along with invoking a variety of feelings and perceptions among customers concerning the quality, reflection, lifestyle, and position. Other studies have argued that a brand needs to create such thoughts in the mind of customers along with forming such a perception that no other product or service exists in the market which can match it (Keller, 2011; Solomon *et al.*, 2012; Ajagbe, Long and Solomon, 2014). Briefly, it can be said that brands offer a guarantee to the customers as well as delivering on it. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006) has strained that branding depicts and encompasses more than being a business jargon which was supplemented by a study done by (Keller, 2013) which found that the brand perception is the core for having a promotion of any organization or brand in the current economy.

2.4.2. Importance of brand perception

The studies done in the past 20 years on this topic have emphasized the brand perception relevance and its different parts i.e. brand associations and image (Simms and Trott, 2006). (Aaker, 2007) mentioned that the cognitive or

conceptual variables i.e. brand association, perceived quality, or brand awareness can be identified as the main determinants of brand perception. It has been seen the brand perception of customers is formed by brand image and awareness(Kotler and Keller, 2012). The importance of brand perception has been described in the following paragraphs.

2.4.2.1. Provide value to their customers

Successful brands need to provide value to their customers and distinguish themselves from their competitor's which is mainly achieved by building a positive brand image. The products which are purchased based on functions meet practical and immediate requirements or needs of the customers and therefore, the decision of purchasing them is relied on the criteria and attributes of objective, while the brand's symbolic components fulfill emotional or symbolic needs and want, including their self-expression needs along with social identification and thus, their decision relies on the subjective aspects i.e. attributes or feelings (Julia *et al.*, 2017). The functional, as well as symbolic elements of brands, help the brand managers in providing a lot of functions to the customer along with creating a positive brand perception (Keller, 2013).

2.4.2.2. Provide a sense of quality

At a practical level, the brand name can promise a guarantee of quality, whereas the attributes of products promise benefits including comfort, safety, and duration (De Chernatony, McDonald and Wallace, 2011). Positive brand perceptions help the brands in serving different functions in personal and social identification at the emotional level, as well as depicting social status or power symbol, exclusivity, social approval refusal, and technical superiority or emotional experience

contribution which is supplemented by the product aesthetics (Wonglorsaichon and Sathainrapabayut, 2008).

2.4.2.3. Effective marketing tool

Brand perception is used as a very important and effective marketing tool influencing the purchase intention because famous brands lead to a reduction in the purchase risk and increase the certainty of the quality of goods along with offering the long durability of famous brands which in turn, increases the people's propensity to purchase (Sadeghi, Ghaemmaghami and Noroozi, 2011).

2.4.3. Role of brand perception in organizational performance

The findings of previous studies have shown that brand perception has a significant impact on the sales volume of a particular product or service. Therefore, it is implied that brand perception is a key determinant of the performance of the company concerning its sales revenues, market share as well as profitability.

2.4.3.1. Increase in sales revenue

It has been seen that a positive brand perception leads to an overall rise in company product total sales. (Ajagbe, Long and Solomon, 2014) found that maintaining large sales volume in the market leads the company to be regarded as the market leader which enables the customers to opt for the product against competitors. This implies that effective brand perception is a key factor in capturing a relatively large market share in their industry.

2.4.3.2. Improvement in brand positioning

Effective brand positioning in the minds of the customers includes the details on the brand name and its personality competitiveness mix, place, product, promotion strategies, and price (Verhoef, Reinartz, and Krafft, 2010). Therefore, it can be said that forming positive brand perceptions by using these marketing components tends to sway buyers in brand positioning.

2.4.3.3. Increased patronage of the customers

Effective product brand perception leads to an increase in the patronage of the customer which is a key instrument required for enhancing organizational performance. Previous researches examined the product brand's influence on company performance. (Simms and Trott, 2006; O'Flynn, 2012; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015; Sjöberg, Rosenbröijer and Oy, 2017) found that the presence of more awareness about the brand could lead to having favorable perception among customers leading to customers patronage increase. Therefore, to improve sales volume, market share as well as customer patronage, the companies need to pay more attention to improving brand perception in the minds of the customers along with improving their competitiveness and brand name to increase their influence in the market.

2.4.3.4. Identification of distinguishing features of the brand

It has also been found that the success of a product is dependent on the possession of certain distinguishing characteristics and features by the product or service (Jamila El Azhari and Dag Bennett, 2015). Possessing various distinguishing

features helps in reduction in marketing costs in making the customer aware regarding their brand. These distinguishing features help the customers in creating a favorable brand perception in their minds as they feel that the brand meets their needs more favorably than others. Also, in the case of some products, a favorable review or report in the sector magazine can prove very beneficial in improving organizational performance.

2.4.3.5. Impact on image, lifestyle, and status of customers

Forming a positive brand perception has an important role in an organization for having a compilation of perception and feelings regarding status, lifestyle, or image of customer. It leads to inducing the customers to purchase products of value by buying them based on different attributes as well as the consequential advantages of the attributes (De Chernatony, McDonald and Wallace, 2011). Positive branding of a product helps the product to develop a positive personality; which leads the customers with similar to buy the brand of similar personality. As an individual become more reliant on the requirement of branded product to fulfill his needs, the relevance of that particular brand for the customer increases (Sandström, Magnusson and Jörnmark, 2009). It has been recommended that brand perception is an important mechanism to influence customer patron (Koll and Wallpach, 2014). It's due to the relevance of this marketing strategy in meeting the organization's need of attaining a competitive edge over the existing competitors or rivals. “

2.4.4. Role of social media marketing in creating brand perception today

The exceptional expansion of the Internet along with its far-reaching social disruptions in the form of new developments as well as advancements has

changed the world radically. Social media is regarded as a development of the internet, which has altered the lifestyle of people by introducing blogging forums, chat-based applications as well as social gaming networks, communication networks, social networks, and websites. It has been seen that social media is used for various purposes including entertainment, doing socializing as well as professional networking. Along with it, social media also provides brand managers with an effective tool for the promotion of their business along with interaction with their customers (Fio, Lock, and Karg, 2015).

It has been found that information communicated through social media has a significant impact on awareness, searching of information as well as decision-making (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Previous studies have shown that it is important for brands to have influencers to discuss their brand experience as 88% of the buyers considered online reviews to play a very significant role in their purchase decision (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2012). Millennials represent a huge percentage of the purchasing population in the current times and this particular segment requires a different type of marketing as this segment does not rely on advertisements before making their purchase. Influencer marketing goes beyond traditional advertising and concentrates on developing influencer personas to foster stronger relationships with their network and help the brands in creating a positive perception about themselves (Julia *et al.*, 2017).

Among the different brand constructs, brand perception is one of the important ones as it consists of outlook, sensations, behavioral responses, and cognitions affected by brand stimuli (Thakor and Chiranjeev, 2016). To create a favorable brand perception, brand managers need to go beyond traditional marketing using advertising and focus on creating brand experiences for their customers at every interaction. Social media marketing makes use of different social media websites to promote a particular product, service, organization, idea, and in the process, create a favorable brand perception in the minds of the customers.

Social media marketing is usually done through the usage of different social networking sites which helps in connecting dissimilar users with comparable interests and backgrounds. Social media sites provide interactive platforms supporting information free flow among marketers and customers (Dunay, Krueger, and Elad, 2010). It helps the users to find their favorite brands and celebrities online along with pursuing their other areas of interest online. (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). Therefore, these sites help the brand managers in posting text, photos, videos, and other favorable information concerning the brand to create a favorable brand perception in the minds of the followers of their brands. In current times, brand managers are increasingly using social media communication to interact with their loyal customers and influence the perception of their customers concerning their products and services, obtain viewers' feedback, and distribute relevant information (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Brand pages need to be treated as brand communities that help their customers in brand interaction by using features like comments, like on any posting of their favorite brands (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2012).

2.5. Customer engagement

The engagement of customers is their commitment to an organization or brand (Steinporsson, 2018). This engagement proposal could be company or customer-led while the medium used could be offline or online. Customer engagement is regarded as the expressive association or attachment which a customer develops with the brand during the frequent and continuing interactions (Bowden, 2009). For the attainment of the aim of the study, examining the effect of social media influencers on shaping customer engagement consequences, this section will analyze the meaning and definition of customer engagement. The section identifies the importance, role of customer engagement, factors affecting it, and the role of social media marketing in boosting customer engagement.

2.5.1. Meaning and definition

It has been seen that brands that engage their customers excessively tend to move to behavioral changes by creating opportunities for emotional connections by employing recurring and consistently positive experiences (Rose *et al.*, 2012). By increasing the engagement of the customers with the brands, the customers tend to get emotionally connected, be increasingly passionate concerning its products and services, along with being in alignment with the purpose and course of the organization (Gambetti and Guendalina, 2010). With an increase in the access to information towards the customers, increasing sensitivity to price, and reduced sensitivity to advertising, it is difficult in current times to win and retain the customers.

(Meyer and Schwager, 2007) mentioned customer engagement consisting of all the aspects of the specific brand services and products. Brands conventionally incarcerate the customer's experience via satisfaction, which is regarded as fundamentally the conclusion of a series of customer net experiences. The state customer engagement is "... the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with the customer" (Meyer & Schwager, 2007, p.2). In brief, the researchers distinguished the customer experience management from the concept of customer relationship management based on time, subject matter, customer experience measurement, purpose, and viewers; and have argued about methodically customer experience monitoring tend to allow improvement of the experience, which is positively correlated with the profitability of the brand.

(Gambetti and Guendalina, 2010) have identified the concept of engagement as a way to confine customer experiences by having use of a marketing approach that

is customer-centric. With the usage of systematic content and exploratory analysis, previous studies determined engagement five dimensions i.e. customer, customer, advertising, media, and brand, however, it was found that among these brand engagement of customer was the only relevant factor (Verhoef, Reinartz and Krafft, 2010; So, King and Sparks, 2012). Additionally, they have stressed the significance of the behavioral commencement constituent of engagement consisting of social sharing, co-creational, participative, joint, and interactive scope leading to holistic views of the brand (Bowden, 2009) discuss customer engagement conceptual structure wherein this concept is identified as a complete process. Herein, the process readdresses research satisfaction in direction of method including acceptance of promise function, faith, and participation in the creation of faithful and engaged customers. Therefore, customer engagement and loyalty can be regarded as distinct but related concepts.

2.5.2. Importance of customer engagement

2.5.2.1. High brand affinity

Brands need to form positive customer engagement as engaged customers tend to possess positive feelings regarding the brand including brand affinity to fervent fondness. Engaged customers intermingle with their favorite brands regularly thereby increasing their affinity towards the brand with each positive interaction which increases the probability of those customers having more probability of extending the contract or revisiting for repurchase (Verhoef, Reinartz and Krafft, 2010).

2.5.2.2. Increased interaction with the brand

Engaged customers along with feeling strongly regarding a brand, also act on those feelings by physically visiting their stores or websites to find out their new collection and talking about the same with their family, friends, and colleagues (Chu and Kim, 2011). They also tend to view online forums to provide feedback and seek the opinion of professionals for making their services and products better along with contributing content to induce other people to purchase, try, or utilize the product of the company more effectively.

2.5.2.3. Higher customer retention

The importance of improved customer engagement is ensuring that the brands retain them longer along with encouraging them to be engaged with the brand or product as well as ensuring that the customer spends more on the brand offerings. Customer engagement contributes by placing more emphasis on the importance of understanding the interactions as well as connections of the individuals with the brand or product and also with each other concerning the brand, irrespective of the fact whether they are buying or even considering buying the brand (Calder, Malthouse and Schadel, 2009).

2.5.2.4. Increased contribution

The cognitive, as well as intangible element of customer engagement, incorporates feelings as well as experiences of the customers; and the behavioral and communal rudiments incarcerate the contribution by customers with the brand (So, King and Sparks, 2012). This is essential as it helps in the evolution of the marketing paradigm, the relationships between buyers and sellers, along with the

interrelationships between prospective buyers, potentials, society, buyers, as well as sellers.

2.5.2.5. Increase in sales and reduction in costs

It has been found that improved customer engagement leads to a reduction in costs as well as an increase in the sales volume of the organization. According to (Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014), it was found that the acquisition costs of the customers are 5 times higher than customers' retention. The likelihood of retaining current customers and selling to them is 60%-70%, whereas the probability of attracting new customers and selling to them is 5%-20%. Also, it has been found that the retained customers have a 50% more probability of trying new products and spend more money by 31% against the new customers (Rose *et al.*, 2012). Increasing the retention rates of customers by 5% led to an increase in profits by 25 to 95%. Therefore, it can be said that loyal customers were more likely to purchase more if he or she is in a positive relationship with a brand as compared to a new, indecisive customer.

2.5.2.6. Lowering entry barriers

It has been seen that brands are required to adopt a favorable customer engagement strategy owing to the product proliferation as it has been seen that the entry barriers have been lowered which makes it easier to form and maintain a company. It is a known fact that the marketplace has expanded due to the Internet which makes it easier for customers to evaluate prices and other attributes for the same product (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie, 2014). It can be said that competitors are proliferating which is regarded as a threat for every organization.

Therefore, lowering entry barriers increases the ability of the brands to maintain loyal customers.

2.5.2.7. Creation of loyal customers

Engaged customers tend to stay longer in a relationship with an engaged brand instead of creating a new relationship with a new brand whereas unengaged customers tend to try new brands since they are not attached to any particular brand (Franzak, Makarem, and Jaw, 2014). Also, it has been found that loyal customers tend to advocate the brand and prospective customers are more likely to trust the recommendations of other customers as compared to that of a brand. Advocate customers tend to do positive word-of-mouth which is regarded as being very vital for brands as it fuels growth (Kotler & Keller, 2009). It is also regarded as the most important and effective communications channel since other customers are more likely to trust their friends or family as compared to the brand itself. Brand advocates are regarded as the ambassadors of a brand, as they tend to advise other customers and incite them in purchasing the products of that brand.

2.5.3. Role of customer engagement in organizational performance

(Brodie *et al.*, 2013) have defined customer engagement as “a customer’s positively balanced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal customer/brand interactions” (p. 154). Improved customer engagement leads to a reduction in the cost of the organization as by gaining the trust of its customers, the brands generate partiality for their services and products. With the availability of similar products in a wide range, the customer has more probability of selecting the product or service which is offered by an organization that they recognize and possess a history of constructive and

pleasing interactions (Solomon *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, customer engagement has a significant impact on the long-term profitability of organizations by increasing customer on-boarding, increasing their online usage along improving customer retention. Improving customer engagement leads to a reduction in marketing costs as the marketing team needs to put in less effort in attracting new customers as well as retaining the existing customers.

Besides these, it has been seen that increased customer engagement leads to improved customer acquisition and retention. It also improves the profitability of the organization by increasing its sales revenues and reducing costs by improving its process efficiencies and increasing the productivity of indirect channels by decreasing the switching costs for the customers (McKinsey & Co., 2017). Also, it has been seen that customers who are highly engaged tend to spend more with each purchase and have a tendency of making recurrent purchases, which increases over the customer lifetime values leading to decrease customer acquisition costs (Verhoef, Reinartz and Krafft, 2010). They also tend to provide brands with valuable feedback for making improvements in the quality of their products and services (van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Highly engaged customers are also not inclined to complain openly about unsatisfactory shopping experiences and instead choose to deal directly with the company.

A study done by (Barger, Peltier, and Schultz, 2016) shows that customer engagement should be regarded as an elusive construct, and brand managers describe and conceptualize this measure of the strength of the relationship. Also, they contended that engagement needs to be employed for different aspects like relationship, concentric marketing, brand loyalty, customer relationship management, social networks management, and marketing orientation.

2.5.4. Factors affecting customer engagement

Customer Engagement is important in the retail sector as it is regarded as the main platform for the buyers to interact with other brands and make purchases as well as providing a medium of promotion to the brands. Consequently, the brands which provide greater levels of engagement can promote themselves better using different media of advertising as it helps in inducing higher impulse buying.

Previous studies (Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell, 2010; De Chernatony, McDonald and Wallace, 2011; Brodie *et al.*, 2013) have identified the different factors that serve as tools of customer engagement for brands, and the identified factors were analyzed using regression analysis and it was found that the factors which had an impact on customer engagement included a display of products, availability of a variety of products, provision of additional facilities and high recall value of the brands. These factors are significant as customers are regarded as highly pricing sensitive and require extra benefits from the brands to engage them. Besides these, the other factors which were found to have an impact on customer engagement included customer involvement, interaction as well as intimacy.

(Fulgoni, 2015) discovered that the major factors that were found to influence customer engagement included an attractive display of products, price displays, ambiance, price discount, music, odor, acceptance of credit or debit cards, availability of sitting, and relaxing facilities. On the other hand, (Berger, 2014) has identified three main factors affecting customer engagement as customer-to-customer interactions, customer co-creation, and active customer feedback. customer-to-customer interaction is the communication between customers concerning a company or brand. New product development customer co-creation is joint product development action wherein customers aggressively choose or add an assortment of elements for new products offering. This customer feedback

derived actively is customers voice having impact on customer engagement (O'Hern and Kahle, 2013).

A study by (Cummins *et al.*, 2014) conducted regression analysis to find out the impact of the different factors on customer engagement and its major dimensions. It was found that the major factors that influence customer engagement included the variety of the product, facilities, price offerings and discounts, displays of the product, and other intangible factors including music played inside the retail stores.

With the factors affecting customer engagement identified, the current study based on the findings of So et al., (2012) of the conceptual constructs impacting the level of engagement among customers is examined. The study using a 25-item scale to measure customer engagement, identified the five factors of identification, absorption, attention, enthusiasm, and interaction. These factors symbolize the affective, cognitive, and behavioral activities of the customers. Here identification component signifies the degree to which the customers feel belongingness with the brand. Absorption elements present the engrossment, level of concentration, and immersion of the customers. Attention is represented the degree of focus that the customers can maintain with the brand in form of connection. The enthusiasm component of customer engagement represents the interest and excitement of the customers with the brand. Lastly, the component of interaction represents the degree of participation the customers feel with the brands. Thus, in the current study, social media engagement is studied using the five impact variables.

2.5.5. Role of social media marketing in boosting customer engagement

Customer engagement is not a new concept for brand managers but the dynamic nature of it is in the different ways in which the brands can engage with their customers. Over the past few years, it has been seen that customers have been gradually shifting to social media as their primary means of engaging with brands. The brand managers are also offering direct messaging services to provide customer support as well as answer queries regarding their products and services (Lim *et al.*, 2017). The increase in the use of social media is supplemented by the fact that more than 400 million tweets and 3.2 billion Facebook likes are reported to be done daily offering brand managers with a traditionally unparalleled opportunity to obtain feedback from customers on a worldwide scale (Homburg, Ehm and Artz, 2015). Smartphones contribute to more than fifty percent of the mobile phones sold across the globe and the sales of tablet computers have surpassed that of laptops and are bound to surpass that of desktops as well (Marketo Inc., 2015). The increasing use of advancement in technology has led to an increase in the information available to the customers who are more connected in the current times as compared to the past (Chui, Manyika, and Woetzel, 2015). Customer engagement cannot be depicted by unilateral merchant-initiated communication as it has evolved into a more dynamic, multi-channel, bilateral communication stream, as the customers have increased their engagement with the merchants and other customers by using blogs, product reviews, customer service, community product forums, as well as social media networking sites (FEng and Papatla, 2011). The brands have also increasingly started to recognize that to have effective competition, customer engagement is essential for going beyond channels and devices and extending beyond the transition phase.

The evolution of techniques and technologies within social media has enabled brands to increase engagement with their customers and obtain a more thorough vision of their customers so that they can better achieve their communications.

Also, the brands need to identify various rules and tools to help them in forming, updating, and implementing successful strategies related to customer engagement (Feng and Papatla, 2012). For this purpose, brands need to create a community on social media to increase the participation of customers in activities including launching a new social campaign or hashtag or arranging a question and answer session with their leaders to foster a direct connection of the customers with the brands. The brands need to be available online for their customers and reply to their queries as soon as possible to drive online interaction which leads to higher customer satisfaction.

2.6. Empirical review

2.6.1. Review of empirical papers on social media influencers on brand perception impact

(Julia *et al.*, 2017) examined the role of influencers by brands to focus on the targeted potential markets effectively. On systematic analysis of their previous research, there was a paucity of studies identified regarding the impact of influencers on brand perception and personality. Consequently, this study had a special emphasis on influencer marketing and its effect on brand perception and personality. This study made use of focus groups to identify the linkage between influencer personality and brand along with influencer perception and brand. The focused group for the study was Calvin Klein and Nelly.com brands to verify if they leveraged influencers differently. The authors created a Pyramid of Influencers to identify influencers levels in the fashion industry and results were compared with those of the previous research. It was found that customer engagement was greater with influencers as compared to brands; the relevance of idle customer self-image to brand. It was also found that the brand, as well as influencer personality, was required to be aligned properly for creating brand

personification to customers along with the result that brand, as well as influencer perception, were required to be matched for creating brand association positive image. Influencer marketing assists the brand in remaining pertinent and linked to customers; even brands or organizations could influence dissimilar influencers based on their geographical location.

(Lim *et al.*, 2017) explored social media influencers in the field of advertising to create a buzz in the youth market and have social media advance greater coverage in businesses. The study aimed to explore the social media influencers' efficiency, emphasizing on credibility and attractiveness of the source, meaning transfer, and matchup of the product. The customer approach mediates between endogenous and exogenous relationships. The data of 200 respondents were derived using the purposive sampling method and analyzed using the PLS-SEM method. The proposed hypotheses were supported apart from source credibility along with determining the mediating impacts of customer attitude. This study also studied the implications, restrictions, and propositions for suggested future research. This study used structural equation modeling (SEM) software for data analysis. The finding showed that source credibility of social media influencers had an insignificant association with outlook and purchase intention and that attractiveness of source of social media influencers botched to manipulate the customer purchase intention. The social media influencers' product matchup was noteworthy with their purchase intention and customer attitude along with approving the hypothesis that there is a presence of positive linkage between purchase intention and customer attitude. Also, the attitude of the customers was seen to considerably arbitrate the relationship between attractiveness of the source, product match-up, and meaning transfer.

(Bjurling and Ekstam, 2018) aimed to augment the understanding of the perception of various groups of customers regarding their exposure to influencer marketing or paid social media marketing. The results of this study showed brand

perceptions were greater when experiencing influencer marketing. Also, with the involvement of high-ranking profiles in influencer marketing, brand perceptions were elevated against low-ranking profiles. Even with influencer marketing, the linkage between brand attitude and brand personality is greater.

2.6.2. Review of empirical papers on social media influencers impact on customer engagement

(Steinporsson, 2018) studied the usage of social media of amputees based on collected data from the Amputee Coalition of America social media platform. The study focuses on scrutinizing the usage pattern of amputees of social media and investigating if social media usage has a significant impact on prosthetic selection and prosthetic manufacturers' engagement stage. For it, a questionnaire was posted on the Twitter and Facebook page of Amputee Coalition with 4 main sections i.e. social media content, social media usage, customer engagement in social media, and social media influencers. Herein, for recording social media path and social media followers current number of foremost prosthetic manufacturers, contender social media analysis was done. The study showed amputees were social media active users irrespective of their age and herein majority of users were using 3 social media platforms daily and were active for 2 hours or more per day on social media. Most of them followed amputee influencers and despite not affecting prosthetic choice, influencers impacted brand awareness. Furthermore, study participants with browsing or information search experience on social media platforms have more influence on prosthetic choices against the ones not engaged.

(Farook and Abeysekera, 2016) studied the social media marketing impact on customer engagement as it was found that the study was conducted to investigate the fact that the expenditure of organizations on social media continued to rise but

measuring its contact remains a dispute for most brands. On the whole, social networking sites facilitated lively communication between organizations and users and encourage interactions among users. The study identified the various factors influencing customer engagement along with exploring the type of content which was enjoyed the most on their Facebook brand page which entices them to re-visit. For this study, data was collected using questionnaires sent to fans of a particular Facebook brand page. The results showed that media and the type of content of posts influence customer online engagement. It was also found that the greater the social media marketing influence is present, the greater would be the customer engagement. The findings of this study showed the five factors that had an important contact on customer engagement as social networking sites were an additional medium for dissemination of information as they encouraged bilateral communication between customers and their brands. Thus, brands are required to be more cautious about their online posts as it is more likely to influence customers. The study also found that self-disclosure needs to be regarded as an important factor to cherish relationships among people, as a strengthened relationship between brands and customers online will eventually have an impact on their actual purchase behavior.

(Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks, 2015) found in their study that sponsored blogging had a significant impact on online engagement which included posting comments, like a brand, and was affected by blogger characteristics as well as blog posts content, which is moderated additionally social media platform types as well as the intent of campaign advertising. It has been found that on the occurrence of a sponsored post on a blog, high blogger expertise is more effectual when advertising intends to increase awareness as opposed to increasing trial. However, source expertise does not lead to an increase in drive engagement on the occurrence of sponsored posts on Facebook. It has also been seen that under these circumstances, posts that are high in hedonic content are considered as being more effective when the intent of advertising is increasing trial as compared

to raising awareness. It was also found on analyzing the data that the effectiveness of incentives of the campaign was dependent on the type of platform to help them in affecting the engagement on blogs. The experiential evidence for these results comes from actual in-market data of customer response and is supplemented with data from an experiment. A combined analysis of the findings shows the grave interaction of type of platform, the intent of the campaign, source, incentives of campaign incentives, and content has a significant impact in driving engagement.

(Khan, 2019) sought to examine the social media marketing activities effect based on Saudi social media customers. This study developed an approach to examining the relationships. The research using the quantitative methodology used simple random sampling, probability sampling technique, for data collection which was done through a questionnaire which was filled by 241 Saudi social media users. The collected data was fed into SPSS 22.0 and SEM with PLS 3 was employed to have empirical examination using overall model fit indices and chi-square for confirming model fitness. The analysis depicted that social marketing activities had a significant impact on purchase intention, brand loyalty, brand consciousness, and value consciousness. Also, it was found that brand loyalty had a significant impact on electronic – word of mouth where it, in turn, had a great influence on purchase intention. Further, it can be seen that brand consciousness does not arbitrate the linkage between brand loyalty and social media marketing. However, value consciousness helps in mediating the linkage between the variables. The research was restricted to Saudi social media users and the results from this study cannot be generalized which necessitates conducting future research in other countries as well. Moreover, it was found that inadequate research was conducted with these variables previously.

2.6.3. Review of empirical papers on influencer

(Agostino, Arnaboldi and Calissano, 2019) studied the importance for brands to be able to spot and evaluate social media influencers based on their important relevance in touching interaction and conversations of social media. This study showed that influencers formed a major chunk of users of social media, but very few studies had been conducted regarding the level to which they can apply their authority. This study has addressed the classification and quantification of social media influencers by stating a superior working method based on K-shell decomposition, the social media analysis, along with discussing social media influencers' different categories relationships and the impact of each type of influencer on the community relation activity of a business. The methodology employed was tested using Teatro Alla Scala-based action research project, and the results of the project were discussed with opera house management. This study mainly found that social media influencers could be divided into authorities, spreaders, or writers based on the type of pressure they exerted, which led to the delivery of an accurately focused typology of SMIs. These findings have helped in increasing the knowledge on analytics applied to social media,

(Bokunewicz and Shulman, 2017) investigated the use of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) of Twitter to promote events and attractions in building brand awareness. It was found that the DMO tweets extended linked account multifaceted network. Among them, some were regarded as being more powerful as compared to others owing to network position. The study employed 14 DMOs network analysis for purpose of identifying the different influencers categories which had the highest reach. NodeXL employed for downloading and analyzing data collected from DMOs in the US based on the Twitter network. The different networks accounts were ranked by employing various comparative influence measures including times the accounts were stated or were mentioned or retweeted about DMO in posts. With the identification of influential accounts,

coding was done by category. It was found that promotional accounts or media of individuals are determined as influential as per metric. Stakeholders like restaurants or hotels occupy low importance positions in the network and do not capitalize DMO provided opportunities. It has been implied that DMOs search partnerships with influencers to have the maximization of their effectiveness. Even by having interaction with DMO or another influential account, a stakeholder could improve their Twitter presence.

2.7. Conceptual framework

Brand building is an important aspect of business management and therefore organizations concentrate rigorously to drive the customers towards their brand and keep them engaged. Customers perceived brand value is dependent on identifying, analyzing and leveraging influencers in social media to shape a firm's connection with the community. Further, the customer's perceived satisfaction and brand experience are also influenced by social media influencers. Further, social media influencers have a mediating role in making a trusted relationship with the community (Julia *et al.*, 2017). They create brand awareness and assist the brands in making the larger scale of customers in the market. Also, social media influencers create a favourability for the brand by promoting, posting, and encouraging the followers toward the brand. These small influences create greater differences wherein customers get engaged, related and connected with the brands. A diagrammatic representation to simplify the overall dynamics and reveal the customer engagement attributes have been laid down below.

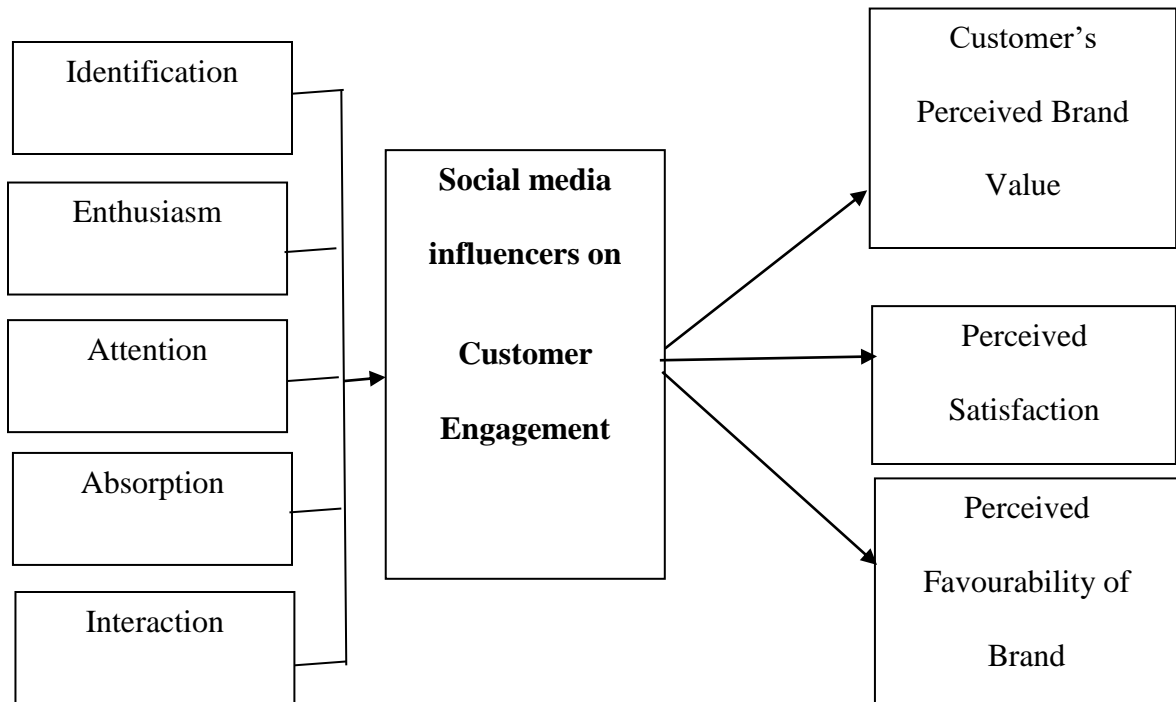


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

2.7.1. Effect of social media influencers on perceived brand value

Customer engagement is an inseparable segment of business and therefore organizations take all the possible steps to identify, analyze and shape their strengths to gain the loyalty of customers. The study analyses the effect of social media influencers on customer engagement and their influence creates an indelible impact on customers in the present time as people value the word of mouth of their influencers and it provides the brand with an identification. When the interaction of the brand with their community is involved, it makes the brand understand the latent needs of the customers and perform accordingly. Their communication and style make the customers attentive to the brand (Roberts and Kraynak, 2008). This helps the marketers foster their brands with a competitive advantage. The perceived brand value is highlighted in the market due to the social media influencers and their credibility that brings trustworthiness thereby

having a significant influence on value building. The perceived brand value is built when the company can engage in a discussion with the community through its influencers and display its products and services. Social media influencers and their impact is measured by 5 elements i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction and marketers study the contribution of social media influencers on customer engagement. While any marketer applies marketing techniques, the analysis of perceived brand value and the contribution towards building of brand name is done by analyzing the brand trust, perceived value, brand identity, brand identification. The trust and an attitude towards the brand identity is highly influenced by the personality and the relationship of the influencer with his or her community. When the belief and vision are congruent of the customer with their influencer, the brand value proposition increases. Therefore, the popularity and reach of influencers acts as a mediating factor between community and the brand that helps to built-in network with the interested and energetic communities helps in the enhancement of the popularity of the brand. Thus, the brand name and its value are built in the community and the average customer's willingness to buy the product increases (Igau *et al.*, 2013; Sritharan and Sivarajah, 2013).

Summing up, social media marketing is a commonly used effective tool in modern times to connect with the community and built a sense of belongingness towards the brand. It increases the brand's visibility and credibility among the users and makes extended connections. The trustworthiness of the representative of the brand adds to the value of the brand giving the ability of self-connection of the users with the brand. Therefore, social media influencers have a greater impact on the perceived brand value.

2.7.2. Social media influencers and their influence on customer's perceived satisfaction

There are several strategic usefulness of having social media influencers that help businesses to gain competitive edge over others. These are measured by majorly 5 elements i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction wherein the influencers and their role in creating perceived customer satisfaction is analyzed. Marketers consider it highly important to understand the major contributions of social media influencers toward business profitability i.e. customer satisfaction and brand experience. Further, reduced cost is an added advantage with satisfaction of customers as socially interactive platforms are abundant without heavy investments giving pleasurable experience to the customers (Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin, 2015). It also provides an easy-to-reach passage for the brands to increase their intimacy with the users. When customers' perceived satisfaction is high, it increases the connection of the brand with the community. Such experiences stay in the mind of the people thereby increasing the profitability of the firm in long run. Further, massive exposure is another consequence of having influencers for the brand image as it enhances global access, enhances the capability of sharing, and a large amount of daily user traffic. Another important aspect is community connection and diverse reach as this form of marketing triggers interactivity in the community with the brand and influences the behavior of customers and their preferences. It also increases plurality to a range of indigenous or international audiences that the platform caters to. Thus, summing up it can be said that influencers have a greater impact on perceived customer satisfaction. When customers have enhanced brand connections due to their influencers, it triggers a sense of satisfaction in the mind of the users. Also, at a reduced cost, the experience of users towards the brand becomes pleasurable. It also increases intimacy with the users and the organization can build customer loyalty derived due to perceived customer satisfaction.

2.7.3. Social media influencers and their mediating role on customer engagement and brand favourability

Social media influencers have a mediating role towards building a favorability for the brand. It is possible due to the relationship with the customers and their social media influencers. These relationships and intensity of the impact is measured by majorly 5 elements i.e. enthusiasm, identification, attention, absorption, and interaction wherein the influencers and their role in generating favorability for the brand is tested. Further, customers perceived favorability is measured by elements of brand loyalty, favorable brand perception. When customers follow influencers posts, encouragements, and marketing attempts, it creates customers loyalty and retention as users can relate to their role models and in an attempt to imitate them, they develop a favorable brand perception (Hudson *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, influencers add to the recognition of the brand through personal recommendations. An important effect is the trial effect that is triggered due to influencers' recommendations. For closed markets specifically, influencer marketing works as a catalyst. The influencers act as a spokesperson that aligns their actions with the brand to synergize the followers towards the brand. Further, social media influencers also act responsibly by placing the right content about the brand so that the basic and unique attributes of the brand can be publicized. By helping the community connect with the brand due to influencers it becomes a complete experience for the customers wherein they register the review and feedback of their influencers and due to this engagement, they become repeat purchasers of the brand (Misra and Beatty, 2010). Due to niche topics related to the brand, the connection with the followers increase and these followers in an attempt to be congruent with their influencers do trials of the brand endorsed by them. Summing up, it can be said that customer engagement through social media helps to create a complete favorable brand perception and retained and loyal customer base. There is a high level of interaction and enthusiasm created by influencers' participation. When influencers trigger trail impacts and encourage

the right content and niche topics related to the brand and its usage, it helps the users to develop a long term favorability towards the brand.

2.8. Key Definitions

Social media – Social media comprises platforms, applications, and websites that empowers user to create content and participate in various social networking activities.

- **Social media Influencer** – These are social media users having credibility establishment in the industry. They have a large audience and their opinions are persuasive in terms of their authenticity and reach (Raghu, 2019).
- **Customer engagement** – It is the process through which a brand or a firm build their relationship with customers. It comprises interactions on one or more channels to gain a loyal customer and attain their loyalty (So, King and Sparks, 2012).
- **Brand Perception** – The perception of a brand is representative of the qualities that customer believes the product contains. It is the total of customer experience, use of the product, word of mouth, and overall product experience (Igau *et al.*, 2013; Sritharan and Sivarajah, 2013).

Identification: The identification is the customer engagement component measuring individual belongingness or the perceived oneness with the organization. Identification dimension of customer engagement (Ahmad, Menon and Mason, 2020)

Attention: The attention component of customer engagement represents the attention of customers on the brand. Describing the focus duration of the customer on brand, aspect helps in measuring the concern of customer for the provider of service or product (Tonder and Petzer, 2018).

Interaction: The interaction is online or offline engagement between the brand and customers for discussing the thoughts, experience feelings, or sharing ideas (Zainol *et al.*, 2016).

Absorption: Absorption defines the situations or circumstances wherein customer enjoyment or devotion towards brand is stated wherein customer even forget about the time passage (So, King and Sparks, 2012).

Enthusiasm: The enthusiasm aspect of customer engagement represents the excitement that customer has for association with brand. It represents the interest in the involvement process like towards offers provided by brand or services (Vinerean, 2021).

Customer's Perceived Brand Value: Considered in the marketing, as the contribution of brand name and associations towards influencing a user in believing if his needs and wants can be satisfied by the brand or not.

- **Brand Trust:** It can be stated as the average customer willingness of relying on the brand ability to fulfil any stated function. Being a key aspect defining long term relationship of customer with brand, it depicts customer willingness of relying on any brand (Igau *et al.*, 2013; Sritharan and Sivarajah, 2013).
- **Perceived Value:** Perceived value is defined as the value that customers have received or experienced from the usage of any product or service (Igau *et al.*, 2013; Sritharan and Sivarajah, 2013).
- **Brand Identity:** Brand identity is the image created by brand through its features like positioning, culture, personality, relationships, vision, beliefs, or presentations which enables its differentiation from other organizations (Mindrut, Manolica and Roman, 2017).
- **Brand Identification:** It is stated as the extent to which customers are able to see their beliefs and image overlapping with the features or brand image

of the company. Thus, it's the ability of drawing self-connection with brand (Sallam, 2019).

Customer's Perceived Satisfaction: Considered in the marketing, is derived after a user becomes a paying customer.

- **Customer Satisfaction:** It is defined as emotional response of customer derived post consumption which can be derived by having comparison between the actual and expected performance. Thus, satisfaction is positive confirmation derived wherein experience of customer is more than the expectations (Igau *et al.*, 2013; Sritharan and Sivarajah, 2013).
- **Brand Experience:** Brand experience is the behavioural, internal customer or the subjective response of customer due to brand related aspects i.e. its packaging, identity or design, environment or communication (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009).

Customer's Perceived Favorability of Brand: Inclination of a User towards a particular brand in Question

- **Brand Loyalty:** It is the commitment of customers towards brand of repatronizing or rebuying the product consistently in near future. As brand loyalty results in repurchasing of the product, thus, it is essential for any brand to strengthen brand loyalty of customers (Igau *et al.*, 2013; Sritharan and Sivarajah, 2013).
- **Favorable Brand Perception:** Brand perception is all the interactions within customer mind about the product or brand. The presence of positive perception on the brand represents the favourable brand perception (Aiswarya and Krishnan, 2019).

2.9. Study hypotheses

A systematic review of the previous studies done on this topic was done to arrive at the hypotheses which shall be approved or refuted in this study. It has been seen that three hypotheses sets can be generated for this study:

- 1: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived brand value
- 2: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived satisfaction
- 3: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived favorability of brand

2.10. Chapter Summary

The chapter above for the attainment of the objective of the study is to analyze the effect of social media influencers on customer engagement, its consequences, and the moderating role of influencers' popularity. The findings of the review indicate that the influencers play a role as a medium between the companies and the customer. The section through the empirical reviews also establishes that brand, as well as influencer personality, aligned properly create brand personification and customer engagement.

Chapter: 3 METHODOLOGY

The present chapter deals with providing the details regarding the research methodology that have been used in the study to fulfill its aim i.e. to identify and analyze the effect of social media influencer on shaping customer engagement and its consequences. Research methodology typically includes a theoretical and systematic analysis of different techniques that have been employed in the study (Igwenagu, 2016). As the study requires understanding the role of social media influencers across different industries, incorporate brand communication and management and the role of influencers in determining the attitudes, perception, and social media behavior of audiences. Thus, the primary research has been done to derive the people's perception regarding the social media influencers' role on their brand perception and customer engagement.

The study in this respect will mainly include concepts such as research paradigm, research philosophy, research design, study hypotheses, data collection, and the analysis procedure. Even the chapter focuses on providing information about the validity and reliability of collected data along with stating limitations of the methodology employed in the study and offering the theoretical underpinning to understand the different methods or the best practices that have been applied to a specific case.

3.1. Research philosophy

The research philosophy can be defined as how the world is described by the author based on certain philosophical assumptions which are made regarding the nature of social reality, ways of knowing, ethics, and the value system. Thus, the specification of research philosophy forms the first step towards deciding the appropriate approach while carrying out the systematic inquiry. The main types of research paradigms include positivism or post-positivism, constructivism,

transformative and post-colonial indigenous research philosophy (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016).

For this study, positivism research philosophy was used because this philosophy adheres to factual knowledge that is gained by observation and the research findings are usually observable and quantifiable. And this approach has been used in the present study as information is collected based on the perception of the sample population, and the information so derived from the sample helps in the identification of social media influencers' role in impacting customer engagement and its consequences. Moreover, this paradigm is based on precise observation along with the verifiable measurement of the independent variables which has been identified in the present study based on observation and literature review. Further, it helped the researcher to discover the universal laws that can be generalized. Interpretative, transformative, or post-colonial paradigms could not be applied as they are used for other purposes like describing human nature, bringing a change in society, or reconstructing a body of knowledge for promoting transformation and social knowledge.

3.2. Research design

The research design is used to determine the study structure. It consists of strategy, plans, or structure that helps in starting the data collection, compilation, and analysis procedure to accomplish the aim of the study and fulfill the stated objectives by answering study research questions. The design consists of the framework with details on the study and sub-study type, research questions, hypothesis, dependent or independent variables, data collection procedure, design, and data analysis. Herein, the research design presents the study's blueprint (Akhtar, 2016). Though there are different types of research design i.e. Descriptive, Exploratory, or explanatory, the choice of optimal design is based on

study purpose. For this explanatory research, design has been used. It has been taken since it helped the researchers in the process of investigating the impact of social media influencers by hypothesis testing. As per existing literature, the researcher has been able to identify the dependent and independent variables. And following that the present research design served as the basic tool in providing the hypothetical and theoretical ideas for the present research problem. Since by using the explanatory approach researcher was able to gain familiarity with the role of the social media influencers and was able to develop new insights on it to form more precise research statements or hypotheses.

Further research approaches mainly consist of deductive and inductive approaches wherein deductive follows the top-down methodology i.e. begin with hypothesis statement based on theory and end towards its verification by hypothetical statements (Burney, 2008). This study uses a deductive approach for having a statement of hypothesis which was based on the dependent and independent variables that have been identified based on a thorough literature review. Moreover, the following study has adopted the positivism research philosophy, and studies based on this philosophy mainly used the deductive approach.

3.3. Study hypothesis

A hypothesis refers to a provisional solution in respect of a particular problem. The research activities of a study are aimed towards verifying the hypothesis and not towards identifying a solution to the problem or seeking answers to the research questions. For a study, it is essential to have a comprehension of the hypothesis environment and connotation. As hypotheses are framed before beginning the analysis to have a clear idea about the working and manner of study, thus, based on the objectives, the hypothesis of this study is framed.

For each of the hypothesis set, 6 sub-hypotheses are framed wherein, the impact of identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction is assessed along with determining the moderating role of popularity between the relationship of the variables i.e.

For Hypothesis 1: Social media influencers does not have a significant influence on customer's perceived brand value

- a) H_0 : Identification has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.
 H_A : Identification has an impact on customer's perceived brand value
- b) H_0 : Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.
 H_A : Enthusiasm have an impact on customer's perceived brand value
- c) H_0 : Attention has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.
 H_A : Attention has an impact on customer's perceived brand value
- d) H_0 : Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.
 H_A : Absorption have an impact on customer's perceived brand value
- e) H_0 : Interaction has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.
 H_A : Interaction has an impact on customer's perceived brand value
- f) H_0 : Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value.
- g) H_A : Popularity has moderating impact between social media influencers and customer's perceived brand value

For Hypothesis, 2: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived satisfaction

- a) H_0 : Identification has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.
 H_A : Identification has an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand

- b) H_0 : Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.
 H_A : Enthusiasm have an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand
- c) H_0 : Attention has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.
 H_A : Attention has an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand
- d) H_0 : Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.
 H_A : Absorption have an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand
- e) H_0 : Interaction has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.
 H_A : Interaction has an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand
- f) H_0 : Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.
- g) H_A : Popularity has moderating impact between social media influencers and customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand

For Hypothesis, 3: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived favorability of brand

- a) H_0 : Identification has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.
 H_A : Identification has an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand
- b) H_0 : Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Enthusiasm have an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

- c) H₀: Attention has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Attention has an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

- d) H₀: Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Absorption have an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

- e) H₀: Interaction has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Interaction has an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

- f) H₀: Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

- g) H_A: Popularity has moderating impact between social media influencers and customer's perceived favorability of the brand

3.4. Data collection procedure

The section discusses the methodology used for data collection with a statement of the sampling plan, sample size, and questionnaire design.

3.4.1. Sampling plan

Sampling is defined as the process of sample selection as per population characteristics (Kabir, 2016). However, the sampling plan specifies the information or features that are required in the sample for fulfilling the study's purpose. This helps in stating eligibility conditions of the respondent by describing respondent category considered in the study i.e. sampling unit, along

with a statement about the procedure of respondent selection from population i.e. sampling procedure. Thus, herein the study would use the purposive sampling method for sample selection. This non-probability sampling method is the one in which respondents are selected based on the judgment of the researcher. Since the present study tends to understand social media influencers' influencer role across different industries, incorporate brand communication and management, and the role of influencers in determining the attitudes, perception, and social media behavior of audiences. Hence researcher based on his judgment selected the customers from 5 different industries in which social media influencers are most active i.e. Food products, health and fitness; Clothing, Fashion, Beauty, and Lifestyle; Customer electronics; Real-estate and Investment; and Travel, Hotel, and Hospitality. This method helped the researcher in saving time as well as money since he believed that he can obtain a sample that represents the characteristics of the entire population using his sound judgment.

3.4.2. Sample size

The sample size is the statement of respondents included in the study from the targeted population for fulfilling the study purpose. It is the desired size derived as per theoretical considerations or the resources available with the researcher. As the sample size is representative of the targeted population and the optimal sample would help in saving resources, thus, it is essential to select an appropriate sample size. The sample size for the study is determined using Cochran's formula i.e.

$$n = \frac{z^2 * p * (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96 * 1.96 * 0.612 * 0.388}{0.03 * 0.03} = 1013.57 \approx 1013$$

Wherein,

N = sample size

Z = confidence level z score value (i.e. 1.96 at 95% confidence level)

P = proportion of the population participating in the study (61.2% or 0.612)

E = desired level of precision or margin of error (i.e. 0.03)

By applying this formula, the value of N or the number of respondents came out to be 1013 which has been used in or present study.

3.4.3. Questionnaire design and administration

The questionnaire is stated as a question set used for accomplishing the goal of the study. As the entire data collection procedure completely relies on the questionnaire prepared for study, thus, it is essential to have a creation of an effective questionnaire. A well-designed questionnaire helps in providing only useful and relevant information, is short and simple, and could be easily understood by both interviewee and interviewer. Thus, a questionnaire prepared for study should have only important questions included with the elimination of all extra and non-relevant questions (Roopa and Rani, 2012). For the questionnaire, the scales are developed using pre-testing the question during the pilot study. The questions are administered to a small section of the survey population. The statements for the inquiry of identification, brand trust, perceived value, brand identification, favorable brand perception variables in the questionnaire are based on previous studies (Kadekova and Holienčinová, 2018; Lou and Yuan, 2018). Similarly to understand the impact of influencers on generating interest and attention of the customers and customer satisfaction, studies by Schivinski and Dabrowski, (2015), McGuire, (2015), and Till and Busler, (2009) are reviewed. The statements to understand the absorption component of social media marketing are attained from studies by Bokunewicz and Shulman, (2017) and Woods, (2016). Further, the questionnaire is directed to

understand the impact of influencers on creating interaction effects with the customers and the studies are by Glucksman, (2017a), Maloney, (2017), Appel *et al.*, (2019), and (Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu, 2019). The questions on analyzing the aspects of popularity, brand identity, and brand experience in the effect of high popularity of influencers on customers are also incorporated (Tabellion and Esch, 2019). After the questionnaires are formulated based on the studies, the questionnaire is administered to the selected participants to help reduce the unimportant questions and number of items, number of factors to scale.

For data collection, questionnaires were administered online to the respondents using Google forms. The forms were submitted to a respondent and were asked to forward the same to their acquaintances to increase the number of respondents being surveyed. The measuring instrument used in this study included structured close-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire has three sub-sections i.e. demographics, general background, and inferential analysis. The demographic section consisted of questions related to age, gender, level of education, employment status, and monthly income. The general background consisted of questions related to the number of influencers followed by the customer. The last section of the questionnaire consisted of questions that focused on inferential analysis. Herein, the inferential sector is using a 5-point Likert scale of respondent's perception collection wherein 1 is for strongly disagree while 5 is for strongly agree. The questions were framed to understand whether social media influencers have an impact on brand perception, satisfaction and favorability by including parameters like identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction, customer satisfaction, brand identification, perceived value, brand trust, brand loyalty, brand identity, favorable brand perception, brand experience, and popularity.

3.5. Ethical considerations

It is a given fact that people are affected when data is collected from them for research purposes and therefore, the author must have an ethical framework in place to minimize the impacts on the respondents (Shukla, 2008). It can be said that ethical issues were adhered to during the conduct of this research. Also, the collection of data in this research has been done along with being presented in a sincere and translucent way by making sure that the respondents are informed regarding the reason for the collection of data from them. The research must upkeep its ethical considerations concerning the practices conducted to meet the research objectives. Hence, the information's about the personal details of the respondent is kept confidential and even coding of the responses is done to maintain authenticity along with privacy. It was ensured that information collected from the respondent is included in the study without any tampering and even the used literature from other sources or researchers are kept credited by having in-text citation and adding details in the bibliography.

3.6. Data analysis procedure

This section of the chapter deals with the procedure of analyzing the data collected for the study and further determining the validity and reliability of the data set and study. This helps in providing information about the methods that have been followed in the study to fulfill the aim and objectives of the study.

3.6.1. Tools for analysis

The study focuses on exploring the social media influencers' role, thus, SPSS Amos is used as the tool of analysis for having SEM-based analysis. Herein, the data collected in raw form is imported in SPSS and based on the sections i.e.

demographic, background, and inferential; the analysis was done using SPSS Amos software.

3.6.2. Analysis method/approach

According to (McMahon, 2014), data analysis is the process of deriving relevant information with the examination of the perceptions collected from different respondents. As SPSS Amos is a tool of analysis, thus final inferential analysis was done by it. But initially, SPSS is used to have the demographic and background data examination in form of frequency analysis i.e. graphical analysis. The SEM analysis is done in four steps of model specification, identification, estimation, and fit. The methods are employed to predict the correlation or covariance to examine the relationship between the variables under study. If the model derived is unfit remodeling is done (Rahman, Shah, and Rasli, 2015). Herein, the SEM model was built to determine the efficiency of the model and depict the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences.

Table 3.1: Methodology applied for addressing the research gap and attainment of the objective.

Research Gaps	Research Objective	Tools and Techniques Employed
Influencers' role as trustworthy sources of information in impacting customer engagement.	To know social media influencers' effect on Customer engagement.	Responses obtained from 1013 respondents are analyzed using SEM for establishing a relation between the factors impacting brand trust,

		perceived value, brand identity, and brand identification based on identification, enthusiasm, popularity, attention, absorption, and interaction between customers and influencers. With the analysis of the moderation impact of the popularity of the influencers.
The digital presence of brands have a great reach, however, it doesn't convert into great result for the company. Influencers in the digital marketing aspects, aim towards converting potential customers into customers by engaging them in a two-way conversation. However, there is a gap in understanding the consequences.	To understand the impact of social media influencers impact the customer engagement consequences	Responses obtained from 1013 respondents are analyzed using SEM for establishing a relation between influencers impacting the verticals of customer satisfaction and brand experiences based on identification, enthusiasm, popularity, attention, absorption, and interaction between customers and influencers. With the analysis of the moderation impact of the popularity of the influencers.
The popularity of the social media influencer is an important component in	Influencers' popularity play a moderating role in customer engagement and	Responses obtained from 1013 respondents are analyzed using SEM for

<p>influencing the choice of respective influencers and their role in manipulating customers' perceptions.</p>	<p>its consequences</p>	<p>establishing a relation between influencers impacting the verticals of brand loyalty and favorable brand perception based on identification, enthusiasm, popularity, attention, absorption, and interaction between customers and influencers. With the analysis of the moderation impact of the popularity of the influencers.</p>
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3.7. Data validity and reliability

The validity of data is the data collection extent of precision in measuring respective variables and yielding respective conclusions for fulfilling the purpose of the study. Validity helps in having a clear statement of method and planning of study in the right direction to have meaningful data collection and provide the relevant insights for which the methodology is proposed. To check the questionnaire validity, it was administered to different people, and based on the responses, the relevant questions were included or eliminated from the study. Peer review of the questionnaire was also done for adequate and relevant questions inclusion. For validating and checking the reliability of the questionnaire and the analysis, initially, pilot testing with 106 respondents was done wherein using Cronbach alpha test efficiency of the model was determined. Further, the reliability testing of final constructs was done using Cronbach's alpha test, based on the results, the value was compared against the ideal value of 0.7, and if the

value is derived then internal consistency is derived with the inclusion of those statements in questionnaire.

3.8. Limitations of methodology

The study targeted population was restricted to 5 industries of India, thereby limiting the geographical area covered, and hence the sample size of the respondents. The alone utilization of quantitative survey as an instrument of measurement constrained the depth of insight into the issue. Moreover, since the whole of India has been selected for study thus the survey was conducted with the help of the administration of Google forms, thus there was a lack of personal interaction with the respondents. Further, the study has used the close-ended questionnaire wherein the researcher has given possible statements for the questions based on his knowledge and judgment which means there is the possibility that some aspects have been missed. To overcome this questionnaire could have included open-ended questions as well where the respondents could have presented their insights on the present topic.

3.9. Summary

The study employed a positivist research paradigm and subjectivist research philosophies to fulfill its research objectives. Further, with a statement of data collection procedure, the chapter describes the quantitative analysis method with the deductive approach used in the study, and the formulation of a close-ended questionnaire for collection of respondent's perception was done. A survey method strategy was employed to obtain pertinent data from the selected respondents. The research methodology selected for the study would help in fulfilling the purpose of the study i.e. SEM model will derive the most relevant and fitted model to assess social media influencers impact and as responses are kept confidential and even questionnaire is examined by peer review and Cronbach alpha test, thus study results would be ethical, reliable, and valid.

Chapter: 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

The chapter aimed at the accomplishment of the study aim by having the examination of the perception of social media influencers on various social platforms i.e. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. As in the modern world wherein, the entire marketing methodology is based on having more customization of products and attracting more customers to sustain in a competitive environment, thus, the chapter works on having the quantitative assessment of the desired participant's perception. Herein, data for the analysis was collected using the close-ended questionnaire wherein the perception assessment is divided into three categories i.e. the examination of demographic characteristics of respondents – Demographic analysis, basic knowledge level assessment -background analysis, and the collection of the researcher's perception about social media influencer impact on customer engagement and their consequences -Inferential analysis. Herein, initially, the pilot testing analysis would be done to determine the efficiency of the questionnaire in measuring the perception of selected respondents followed by an examination of 1013 customer perceptions using SEM analysis. For this formulating, the model and assessing the model accuracy, lastly the deductions would be made to determine the impact of social media influencers impact on customer engagement and its consequences like brand values, satisfaction, and favorability along with determining the role of popularity in influencing these linkages.

4.2. Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis refers to the procedure of having the statistical analysis of the numerical data for building in the linkage between the variables, assessing the perception of the researcher, or determining the contribution of a certain variable

to make relevant predictions. Herein, below sub-sections as focuses on determining the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences, thus, initial pilot testing would be done of 106 respondents to examine demographical and background characteristics along with statements reliability in measuring each variable i.e. social media influence, brand value, favorability, and satisfaction. The further analysis consists of a detailed examination of the final responses by i.e. of 1013 respondents by demographical and background knowledge assessment by frequency analysis followed by the formulation of SEM model to test the model accuracy and the hypothesis for fulfilling the objectives of the study. Hence, the below sub-section contributes towards the study aim by having a statistical examination of the collected dataset.

4.1.1 Pilot testing

Pilot testing allows us to test our research technique with a small group of test respondents before conducting our main study. It is frequently used to determine the feasibility of methods, tools, questionnaires, and interviews, as well as how they interact in a certain environment; it can also disclose ethical and practical difficulties that could obstruct the main study. Herein, a small sample size of 106 respondents is considered for this study. In this study, pilot testing is done on demographical and background characteristics along with statements reliability in measuring each variable i.e. social media influence, brand value, favorability, and satisfaction.

4.1.1.1 Demographic and Background Analysis:

Demographic analysis is a strategy used to build up an understanding of the age, gender, educational level, or income level of the selected respondents. Herein, consisting of a graphical examination of demographic characteristics and basic perception about the social media influencers below figure presents the frequency-based analysis of 106 customer responses included for pilot testing.

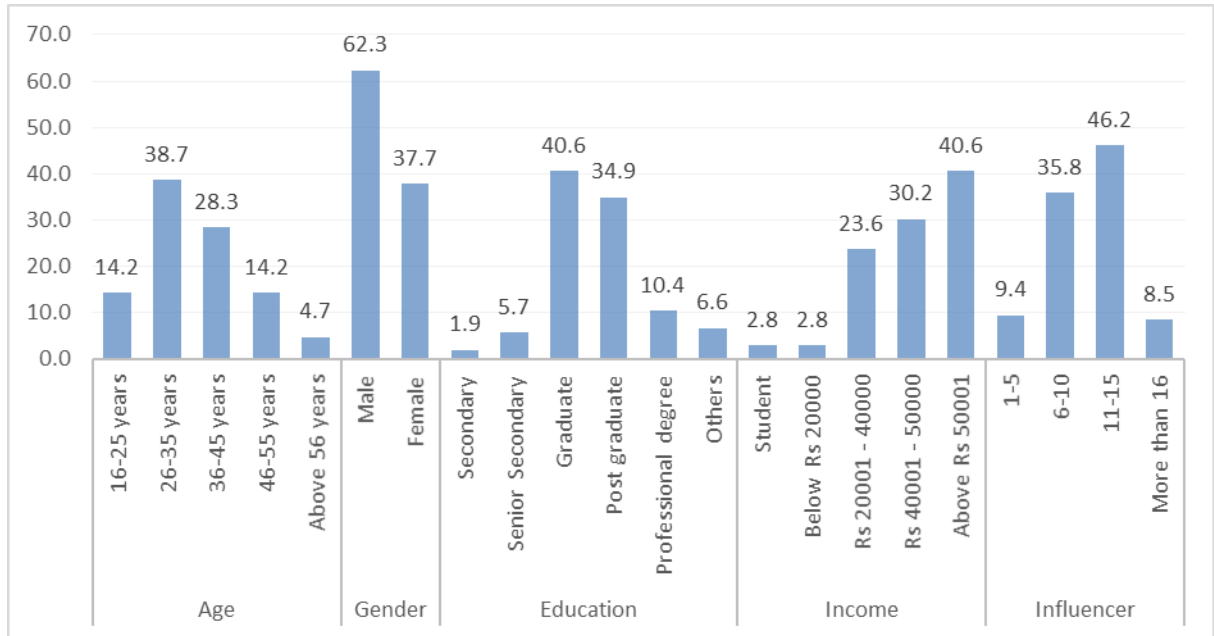


Figure 4.1: Demographic analysis for pilot testing

The above figure focuses on exploring the demographic and background characteristics in detail via frequency analysis. Herein, the above graph reveals that among the surveyed population of 106 customers considered for the study, about 38.7% of the respondent have aged between 26-35 years, 28.3% of them are from the age group 36-45 years, 14.2% of the participants have age between 16-25 years and also 14.2% of them are from age group 46-55 years and the remaining 4.7% of them are above 56 years of age. Thus, the age aspect reveals that most of the customers included in the study are from the young and middle age groups. Gender-based characteristics of respondents reveal that 62.3% of them are males while the remaining 37.7% of them are females depicting dominance of male customers in the pilot study. Further, the education level of respondents depicts that among the surveyed population, 40.6% of respondents are at the graduate level, 34.9% of them are at postgraduate level, 10.4% of them hold a professional degree, 5.7% of them are at the senior secondary level, 1.9%

of respondent are at secondary level and the remaining 6.6% of them are under the category of others. Thus, the majority of the customers included in the study consist of educated people who have at least completed senior secondary level of education. Income-based characteristics of respondents reveal that 40.6% of the respondent have income above Rs. 50001, 30.2% of them are from income level 40001-50000, 23.6% of the participants have income between 20001-40000, 2.8% of them are a student and also the remaining 2.8% of them have income below 20000. Thus, income level depicts that majority of the sample included in pilot testing are middle to elite class people. Lastly, the influencer of the respondents shows that 46.2% of participants follow 11-15 number of influencers, 35.8% of them follow 6-10 number of influencers, 9.4% of respondents follow 1-5 number of influencers and the remaining 8.5% of them follow more than 16 influencers. Thus, stating that the majority of respondents included in pilot testing are people who are following more than 5 social media influencers and consider their reviews or suggestions. Hence, the pilot testing describes that the respondents included in the study are the ones who are mostly the educated buying group i.e. the young and middle-aged people with good income level, i.e. middle class to elite group people, and value the social media influencers opinion for making their decisions.

4.1.1.2 Inferential analysis

The inferential analysis refers to the procedure of having the statistical computation of the dataset for deriving relevant information concerning fulfilling the purpose and objectives of the study. Herein, though the focus of the study is to understand the role of social media influencers in influencing customer engagement and their consequences before having the impact examination, it is essential to derive the effectiveness of the data collection tool. Thus, using the pilot testing, an examination of 106 respondents' perceptions is done to assess the reliability of respective statements used in the analysis for measuring the social media influencers' role i.e. concerning the variables like Identification,

Enthusiasm, Attention, Absorption, and Interaction. Further, the examination of all the dependent variables efficiency would be done i.e. the brand value which consists of brand identity, brand trust, perceived value, and brand identification. Following it would be an examination of brand favorability with assessment of brand loyalty and favorable brand perception efficiency analysis and the satisfaction level examination by analyzing the efficiency of brand experience and customer satisfaction. Lastly, as a theoretical review of the concepts revealed that the popularity of the social media influencer is an important component in influencing the choice of respective influencers and their role in manipulating customers perception or engagement with the brand, thus, the moderating effect of popularity concerning each dependent variable would be assessed hence creating the need of examining its statements efficiency too. Hence, the below-stated sub-sections works on the in-detailed analysis of the reliability for each of the respective variable perception using the Cronbach alpha test.

Herein, pilot testing is done to determine the efficiency of the questionnaire in measuring the perception of 106 respondents. As a 5-point Likert scale with a value of 1 to 5 wherein 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 indicating strong agree was used to collect the perception of customers, thus, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated using the data from the questionnaire, which was tabulated in SPSS. Cronbach's Alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. Hence, herein presence of stability in the dataset to measure the respective variable is measured.

Reliability analysis of Identification variable

Identification means how people see the influencer they follow i.e., whether they feel their influencer is different or similar to celebrities. Based on this, the respondents were asked questions on how they feel when they see a post or video by an influencer, whether they feel that a trustworthy person or friend is sharing his experience, feels the influencers which they follow have similar lifestyles like

me, influencers are different from Celebrities or similar to them, whether they find it easy to relate to social media influencers, become a part of the online community created by the influencer or trust social media influencers more than celebrities. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The below table shows the coding of the sub-statements of the identification variable.

Table 4.1: Coding for social media influencers on identification variable

Statements	Code
Identification	
When I see a Post/Video/Product Demo by an influencer, I feel that a trustworthy person or friend is sharing his experience	I1
I have become a part of the online community created by the Influencer	I2
I feel the influencers which I follow have similar lifestyles to mine.	I3
I feel influencers are different from Celebrities	I4
I feel influencers are similar to me	I5
I find it easy to relate to social media influencers.	I6

I trust social media influencers more than celebrities.	I7
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As coding enables the better presentation of results, thus, above table consist of details on identification variable. Herein, 7 statements are used to define identification variable wherein the coding is stated from I1 to I7. With this, as pilot testing mainly focuses on assessing the efficiency of variable thus, herein reliability analysis would be done for determining statements suitable for measuring identification variable.

Table 4.2: Reliability statistics of the statements on identification variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
I1	0.83	0.85
I2	0.83	
I3	0.82	
I4	0.81	
I5	0.82	
I6	0.83	
I7	0.82	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is $0.85 > 0.7$, thus, the identification variable is effective enough to measure respondent's perception. As the value of Cronbach alpha for each of these items i.e.; I1(0.83), I2 (0.83), I3 (0.82), I4 (0.81), I5 (0.82), I6 (0.83), and I7 (0.82) which is less than total

Cronbach alpha value as indicated in the table and even more than 0.7, there exists reliability of all the statements in measuring the identification variable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. This shows that all the statements of identification variables would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Enthusiasm variable

Enthusiasm means how people feel about the post or video shared by their favorite influencer. The respondents were asked questions about the feeling of their favorite influencers on posts or videos shared by the influencers i.e. whether they feel proud or excited to watch/follow the Post/Videos content created by influencers, they wait for the next Post/Video of influencers, respondents follow, appreciate, and respect the effort and hard work put in by the influencers, believe influencers are trendsetters or they feel passionate about the style and creativity of the influencers and participants also feel proud of being part of the online community created by influencers. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the enthusiasm variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.3: Coding for social media influencers on enthusiasm variable

Enthusiasm	
I am proud of my favorite influencers	E1
I feel excited to watch/follow the Post/Videos content created	E2

by influencers	
I wait for the next Post/Video of influencers, I follow	E3
I appreciate and respect the effort and hard work put in by the influencers	E4
I feel passionate about the style and creativity of the influencers	E5
I believe influencers are trendsetters	E6
I am proud of being part of the online community created by influencers	E7

The above table defines the enthusiasm variables considered. Herein, as the statements are lengthy thus coding has been done for simplifying the analysis procedure. Having about 7 statements representing enthusiasm variable, the coding is stated as E1 TO E7. Based on these coded values, as the pilot testing enables the efficiency determination thus reliability examination has been done understanding suitability of statements in measuring enthusiasm variable. Results of the analysis are shown below

Table 4.4: Reliability statistics of enthusiasm variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
E1	0.83	0.86
E2	0.84	

E3	0.85	
E4	0.84	
E5	0.87	
E6	0.83	
E7	0.84	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is $0.86 > 0.7$, thus, the statements are effective in measuring the enthusiasm-based perception of respondents. Further, for item-wise effectiveness examination, each statement Cronbach alpha is assessed i.e.; E1(0.83), E2 (0.84), E3 (0.85), E4 (0.84), E6 (0.83) and E7 (0.84) which is less than total Cronbach alpha value. As even for statement E5 (0.87) the value is more than 0.7, thus, all the statements of enthusiasm variable are effective enough to measure respondent's perception hence they would be included in the final analysis.

Reliability analysis of Attention variable

Attention means how the influencers post or video grab the attention of the people. The respondents were asked about the post from their favorite influencer grabbing the respondent's attention. They were also asked whether they like to learn about product features and product use cases in detail from Influencer's posts, pay attention when influencers explain product features and follow posts from influencers regularly and wait for the next post from influencers. . To measure the statements reliability, Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is

usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the attention variable are shown in the table below

Table 4.5: Coding for social media influencers on attention variable

Attention	
I like to learn about product features and product use cases in detail from Influencer's post	A1
I pay attention when influencers explain product features	A2
A post from my favorite influencer grabs my attention	A3
I follow posts from influencers regularly and wait for the next post from influencers	A4

The attention variable is being represented by 4 different statements but as the length of statements often make the representation of model complicated. Thus, for better presentation, the statements are coded as A1 to A4. Based on the coding shown in above table, the efficiency of statements in measuring attention variable is determined results of which are shown below.

Table 4.6: Reliability statistics of attention variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
A1	0.72	0.75
A2	0.65	
A3	0.68	
A4	0.71	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is 0.75 which is more than the required value of 0.7, thus, the selected statements are effective in measuring attention. Herein, item wise analysis is presented for examining the efficiency of each statement via Cronbach alpha for each i.e.; A1(0.72), A2 (0.65), A3(0.68), and A4 (0.71) value is less than the total Cronbach alpha value of 0.75, thus, exclusion of these statements would reduce the reliability. This shows that all the statements of attention variables would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Absorption variable

Absorption means the time spent by the people watching the post shared by their influencer. Herein, the respondents were asked about their spending time watching posts or videos of influencers. They were also asked whether they watch less TV and use the same time to watch Post/Videos of influencers on social

media, when the respondents watch posts/videos of influencers time just flies, they get carried away with the content created by influencers on Social Media, when they are watching a video by influencers it's difficult to detach themselves from it, watches a full video or most of the video, influencers have created a series of videos, they watch all or most videos in the series and when they see a post from their favorite influencer whether they feel happy and excited. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7. The below table shows the reliability analysis of the absorption variable

The coding for the statements of the absorption variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.7: Coding for social media influencers on absorption variable

Absorption	
I spent a lot of time watching Post/Videos of influencers	Ab1
I now watch less TV and use the same time to watch Post/Videos of influencers on social media	Ab2
Time just flies by when I watch posts/videos of influencers	Ab3
I get carried away with the content created by influencers on Social Media	Ab4
When I am watching a video by influencers it's difficult to	Ab5

detach myself from it	
I normally watch full video or most of video	Ab6
If influencers have created a series of videos, I watch all or most videos in the series	Ab7
When I see a post from my favorite influencer I feel happy and excited	Ab8

The coding of any variable enables the simplification, thus, for having a better representation all the absorption variables, i.e. 8 statements are coded as Ab1 to Ab8. Above table based coded statements would be further considered for efficiency examination as it enables determination of statement suitability in measuring absorption variable. Thus, reliability analysis of coded variables is presented below

Table 4.8: Reliability statistics of absorption variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
Ab1	0.85	0.87
Ab2	0.86	
Ab3	0.84	
Ab4	0.86	
Ab5	0.84	
Ab6	0.85	

Ab7	0.85	
Ab8	0.85	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is 0.87 which is more than 0.7, thus, the statements are effective in measuring respondents' perception. Further, item wise analysis of statements depicted by Cronbach alpha i.e.; Ab1(0.85), Ab2 (0.86), Ab3 (0.84), Ab4 (0.86), Ab5 (0.84), Ab6 (0.85), Ab7 (0.85), and Ab8 (0.85) are less than total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the table, there exists reliability of all the statements in measuring the absorption variable. This shows that all the statements of absorption variables would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Interaction variable

Interaction means whether the people like, comment, or give feedback to the post shared by their influencer. The respondents were asked about their opinion or feedback on influencers' posts/videos. Whether they like to comment, ask questions, give my opinion or feedback on influencer's post/videos, ask influencers to review a particular product, put questions to influencers about products or brands, enjoy the exchange of ideas in the online community created by the influencers, participate in any activity and challenges conducted by influencers, like to interact with other followers in the comment section, by replying to comments posted by other followers on the post of influencers and go to Meetups, Huddles and Fan Fest to meet influencers. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the

Cronbach's alpha above 0.7. The below table shows the reliability analysis of the interaction variable

The coding for the statements of the interaction variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.9: Coding for social media influencers on interaction variable

Interaction	
I like to comment, ask questions, give my opinion or feedback on influencer's posts/videos	In1
I normally ask influencers to review a particular product	In2
I normally put questions to influencers about products or brands	In3
I normally ask influencers solutions to any problem I face	In4
I enjoy the exchange of ideas in the online community created by the influencers	In5
I participate in any activity and challenges conducted by influencers	In6
I like to interact with other followers in the comment section, by replying to comments posted by other followers on the post of influencers	In7

I go to Meetups, Huddles, and Fan Fest to meet influencers	In8
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Above table for having the simplification of the length interaction variable presents the coding. With inclusion of 8 statements, the coding has been de as In1 to In8. Further, as before building in model it is essential to understand the efficiency of each statement in measuring interaction variable, thus, reliability analysis is shown below

Table 4.10: Reliability statistics of the statements on interaction

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
In1	0.84	0.85
In2	0.83	
In3	0.86	
In4	0.83	
In5	0.83	
In6	0.83	
In7	0.84	
In8	0.82	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is 0.85 which is more than 0.7, thus, the statements are effective in measuring respondents' perceptions.

Further, item wise analysis depicts that the value of Cronbach alpha for each of these items i.e.; In1(0.84), In2 (0.83), In3 (0.86), In4 (0.83), In5 (0.83), In6 (0.83), In7 (0.84), In8(0.82) which is less than total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the table, thus their exclusion will reduce reliability. Hence, there exists reliability of all the statements in measuring the interaction variable and all statements of interaction variable would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Customer satisfaction variable

Customer satisfaction means people's satisfaction with content for brands shared by their influence. The respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the content created by influencers for various products and brands, with the product information and other information provided by influencers, with the Craft/Style of presenting the content of influencers, with the product demos given by influencers, they follow, generally satisfied and keen to be a follower of Influencers, going to continue following influencers, share with other people how interesting Post / Videos of influencers are, whether the participants are satisfied by the quality of a product recommended by an influencer and they also find the quality of the product to be similar to what was described by the influencer. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the customer satisfaction variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.11: Coding for customer satisfaction statements

Customer Satisfaction	
I am generally satisfied and keen to be a follower of Influencers	CS1
I am going to continue following influencers	CS2
I share with other people how interesting Posts / Videos of influencers are.	CS3
I am satisfied with the product information and other information provided by influencers	CS4
I am satisfied with the content created by influencers for various products and brands	CS5
I am satisfied with the Craft/Style of presenting the content of influencers	CS6
I am satisfied with the product demos given by influencers, I follow	CS7
When I use a product recommended by an influencer, I am satisfied by the quality	CS8
When I use such products, I find the quality of the product to be similar to what was described by the influencer	CS9

The above table represents that customer satisfaction is measured by 9 statements. As the length of statements is more, thus for better representation, the coding has been done as CS1 to CS9. With the above table-based coded statements to understand the efficiency of statements in measuring variables, reliability analysis has been done results of which are shown below.

Table 4.12: Reliability statistics of the statements on customer satisfaction

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
CS1	0.85	0.87
CS2	0.86	
CS3	0.86	
CS4	0.84	
CS5	0.85	
CS6	0.85	
CS7	0.84	
CS8	0.86	
CS9	0.87	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is 0.87 which is more than 0.7, thus, the statements are effective in measuring respondents' perception. Further, item wise analysis by the value of Cronbach alpha for each of this item i.e.; CS1(0.85), CS2 (0.86), CS3 (0.86), CS4 (0.84), CS5 (0.85), CS6 (0.85) , CS7 (0.84), CS8 (0.86) and CS9 (0.87) are less than total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the table. As the exclusion of these statements would reduce reliability thus, there exists reliability of all the statements in measuring the customer satisfaction variable and all the statements of customer satisfaction variable would be considered.

Reliability analysis of brand trust variable

Brand trust means people's trust in the brand or product shared by their influencers on the post.

The respondents were asked whether they able to trust more on a brand or product after a positive review from influencers, prefer and devote time to look for the reviews from influencers before purchasing the product, able to get access to honest and reliable information and product description before actual purchase and have never been disappointed with the products recommended by influencers. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the brand trust variable is shown in the below table.

Table 4.13: Coding for social media influencers on brand trust variable

Statements	Code
Brand Trust	
I can trust more on a brand or product after a positive review from influencers	BT1
I prefer and devote time to look for reviews from influencers before purchasing the product	BT2
I can get access to honest and reliable information and product description before an actual purchase	BT3

I have never been disappointed with the products recommended by influencers	BT4
I have confidence and faith in the products and brands recommended by the influencers	BT5
Recommendation by influencers is a key factor in me maintaining brand loyalty	BT6

The above table represents that having 6 statements included for measuring brand trust, herein for better presentation of the analysis the coding for statements has been done. Considering BT1 to BT6 as the new codes for brand trust variables, further the reliability examination has been done to understand the efficiency of statements in measuring variable. Results for the analysis has been shown below

Table 4.14: Reliability analysis of brand trust variable

	Cronbach alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha
BT1	0.83	0.85
BT2	0.82	
BT3	0.81	
BT4	0.83	
BT5	0.83	
BT6	0.82	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is 0.85 which is more than 0.7, thus, the statements are effective in measuring the respondent's perception. Further, item wise analysis by the value of Cronbach alpha for each of these items i.e.; BT1(0.83), BT2 (0.82), BT3 (0.81), BT4 (0.83), BT5 (0.83), and BT6 (0.82) is less than total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the table, there exist reliability of all the statements in measuring the brand trust variable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. This shows that all the statements of the brand trust variable would be considered.

Reliability analysis of perceived value variable

Perceived value means the value that people acquire by the following influencers. The respondents were asked about value that they acquire by following influencers is greater than the time and effort they contribute in the process of following influencers, participants believe following influencers will be of a specific value to them in the future and also believe that influencers add value by reviewing a product, Influencers product review generates a feeling of safety, security, and sense of belonging in them, Many times, they get promotional discounts through influencers, Recommendation from influencers help them purchase decision and can connect with a product/brand by having detailed information provided by the influencers. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding of the statements of the perceived value variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.15: Coding for social media influencers on perceived value variable

Perceived Value	
The value that I acquire by following influencers is greater than the time and effort I contribute in the process of following influencers	PV1
I believe following influencers will be of specific value to me in the future	PV2
I believe influencers add value by reviewing a product	PV3
Influencers product review generates a feeling of safety, security, and sense of belonging in me	PV4
Many times, I look for and get promotional discounts through influencers	PV5
Recommendations from influencers help me purchase decision	PV6
I can connect with a product/brand by having detailed information provided by the influencers	PV7

For the perceived value, 7 statements were considered for measuring the value. As the statements are lengthy thus for simplification coding for them has been done i.e. PV1 to PV7. With this the efficiency of statements is examined using reliability analysis for understanding their contribution in measuring the variable effectively. Results of the analysis is shown below

Table 4.16: Reliability statistics of perceived value variable

	Cronbach alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha
PV1	0.86	0.87
PV2	0.87	
PV3	0.85	
PV4	0.86	
PV5	0.85	
PV6	0.84	
PV7	0.86	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is 0.87 which is more than 0.7, thus, the statements are efficient in measuring respondents' perceptions. Further, item wise analysis depicts that the value of Cronbach alpha for each of these items i.e.; PV1(0.86), PV2 (0.87), PV3 (0.85), PV4 (0.86), PV5 (0.85), PV6 (0.84), and PV7(0.86) which is greater than 0.7, as indicated in the table, there exist reliability of all the statements in measuring the perceived value variable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. This shows that all the statements of the perceived value variable would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Brand Identity variable

Brand identity means that influencers create a distinct identity for smaller and lesser-known brands. The respondents were asked questions about detailed review and recommendation creates a distinct identity for a product or a brand, Recommendation from influencers increase the reputation of a brand/product, Recommendation from influencers assures the quality of the product, and Influencers creates a distinct identity for smaller and lesser-known brands. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the brand identity variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.17: Coding for social media influencers on brand identity variable

Brand Identity	
Detailed review and recommendation creates a distinct identity for a product or a brand	BI1
Influencers help in creating a distinct identity for smaller and lesser-known brands	BI2
Recommendations from influencers increase the reputation of a brand/product	BI3
Recommendation from influencers assures the quality of the	BI4

product	
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For the brand identity, 4 statements were considered for measuring it. As the statements are lengthy and complicate the representation of analysis, thus, coding for them has been done i.e. BI1 to BI4. With this the efficiency of statements is examined using reliability analysis, results of which are shown below, for understanding the suitable of statements in measuring the brand identity variable.

Table 4.18: Reliability statistics of brand identity variable

	Cronbach alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha
BI1	0.78	0.81
BI2	0.76	
BI3	0.73	
BI4	0.77	

The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is $0.81 > 0.7$, thus statements are effective in measuring respondents perception. Further, the item-wise analysis by the value of Cronbach alpha for each of these items i.e.; BI1(0.78), BI2 (0.76), BI3 (0.73), and BI4 (0.77) is less than the total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the table, there exist reliability of all the statements in measuring the brand identity variable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. This shows that all the statements of brand identity variables would be considered.

Reliability analysis of brand Identification variable

Brand identification means how other people think or comment about the product recommended by the respondent's favorite influencers. The respondents were asked whether they are interested to know about what other people think about the products recommended by the respondent's favorite influencers, interested to know about what other people think about my favorite influencers, someone criticizes their favorite influencers, whether they consider it a personal insult or When someone criticizes products recommended by their favorite influencers, they consider it a personal insult, considering the success of their favorite influencer as a success of mine and also considering the success of product recommended by their favorite influencer as the success of mine. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the brand identification variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.19: Coding for social media influencers on brand identification variable

Brand Identification	
I am very interested to know what other people think about my favorite influencers	BId1
I am very interested to know what other people think about the products recommended by my favorite influencers	BId2

When someone criticizes my favorite influencers, I consider it a personal insult	BId3
When someone criticizes products recommended by my favorite influencers, I consider it a personal insult	BId4
I do consider the success of my favorite influencer as a success of mine	BId5
I consider the success of product recommended by my favorite influencer as a success of mine	BId6

For the brand identification, 6 statements has been considered for measuring it. As the length of variables is more thus the presentation of analysis is complicated. For better presentation, the coding for statements has been done i.e. BId1 to BId6. With these coded statements, the efficiency need to be identified for understanding the suitability of statements in measuring brand identification. Thus, based on above table codes, the reliability analysis results has been shown below

Table 4.20: Reliability statistics of brand identification variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
BId1	0.83	0.84
BId2	0.82	
BId3	0.82	
BId4	0.80	
BId5	0.81	

BI _{d6}	0.82	
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The above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is $0.84 > 0.7$, thus, all statements are effective in measuring respondents perception. Further, item wise analysis by the value of Cronbach alpha for each of these items i.e.; BI_d(0.83), BI_{d2} (0.82), BI_{d3} (0.82), BI_{d4} (0.80), BI_{d5} (0.81), and BI_{d6} (0.82) is less than total Cronbach alpha value, as shown in the above table, there exist reliability of all the statements in measuring the brand identification variable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. This shows that all the statements of brand identification variables would be considered.

Reliability analysis of brand loyalty variable

Brand loyalty means people’s attitude or feedback for the products recommended by influencers. The respondents were asked about the Quality of products recommended by influencers are well by what they like, having any negative attitude towards influencers they follow, having any negative feedback for the products recommended by influencers they follow, having a positive attitude towards influencers they follow, have positive attitude towards products recommended by influencers they follow , like features and performance of products recommended by influencers they follow, regularly uses products recommended by the influencers, repeat purchase products recommended by influencers and also recommend other people to use products recommended by influencers. For measuring the statements reliability, Cronbach alpha test is conducted. Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group in order to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding's for the statements of the brand loyalty variable are shown in the table below.

Table 4.21: Coding for social media influencers on brand loyalty variable

Brand Loyalty	
Quality of products recommended by influencers are well by what I like	BL1
I have no negative attitude towards influencers I follow	BL2
I have no negative feedback for the products recommended by influencers I follow	BL3
I have positive attitude towards influencers I follow	BL4
I have positive attitude towards products recommended by influencers I follow	BL5
I like features and performance of products recommended by influencers I follow	BL6
I regularly use products recommended by the influencers	BL7
I often repeat purchase products recommended by influencers	BL8
I recommend other people to use products recommended by influencers	BL9

Above table represents that 9 statements were considered for measuring brand loyalty. As simplification of statements is required for better presentation, thus, coding has been done i.e. BL1 to BL9. Further, based on the coded statements the efficiency need to be examined for understanding the capability of statements in measuring brand loyalty variable. Thus, results of reliability analysis is shown below.

Table 4.22: Reliability statistics of brand loyalty variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
BL1	0.90	0.91
BL2	0.90	
BL3	0.90	
BL4	0.90	
BL5	0.90	
BL6	0.90	
BL7	0.90	
BL8	0.90	
BL9	0.90	

Above table shows that total Cronbach alpha value is 0.91 which is less than 0.7, thus statements are effective in measuring respondents perception. Further, item wise analysis by the value of Cronbach alpha for each of this item is 0.90, which is less than total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the table, there exist a reliability of all the statements in measuring the brand loyalty variable , with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.91. This shows that all the statements of brand loyalty variable would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Favorable brand perception variable

Favorable brand perception means how people presume when the influencer they follow recommends a product, i.e.; they like purchase it or not. The respondents were asked if their favorite influencer recommends a product, they are more likely to try or purchase it, able to trust more on the quality of the product after viewing reviews, number of followers of the social influencer states their trustworthiness, Frequent posting by the influencer keep them updated about latest product launches, prefer to look at reviews from a social influencer before buying the product, able to get access to honest and reliable description about the product and brand before the actual purchase, Recommendations by an influencer help them in purchase decision and their favorite influencer recommends a product, they are more likely to try/purchase it. For measuring the statements reliability, Cronbach alpha test is conducted Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group in order to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the favorable brand perception variable are shown in the table below.

Table 4.23: Coding for social media influencers on favorable brand perception variable

Favorable Brand Perception	
If my favorite influencer recommends a product, I am more likely to try/purchase it	FBP1
I am able to trust more on the quality of the product after viewing reviews	FBP2
The number of followers of the social influencer states their trustworthiness	FBP3
Frequent posting by the influencer keep me update about latest product launches	FBP4
I prefer to look at reviews from a social influencer before buying the product	FBP5
I am able to get access to honest and reliable description about the product and brand before the actual purchase	FBP6
Recommendations by an influencer help me in purchase decision	FBP7
If my favorite influencer recommends a product, I am more likely to try/purchase it	FBP8

For the favorable brand perception 8 statements has been considered in the study. Herein as each of the statement is lengthy and complicates the presentation of analysis thus coding has been done i.e. FBP1 to FBP8. Using the above table coded statements the reliability analysis is done further for understanding the

capability of each statement in measuring the variable. Thus, results of analysis is shown below

Table 4.24: Reliability statistics of brand perception variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
FBP1	0.60	0.65
FBP2	0.58	
FBP3	0.57	
FBP4	0.59	
FBP5	0.60	
FBP6	0.60	
FBP7	0.59	
FBP8	0.89	

Above table shows that total Cronbach alpha value is 0.65 which though is less than 0.7 but is approximately close to it, thus, it would be considered for further analysis. Item wise analysis depict that the value of Cronbach alpha for each of this item i.e.; FBP1(0.60), FBP2 (0.58), FBP3 (0.57), FBP4 (0.59), FBP5 (0.60), FBP6 (0.60), FBP7 (0.59) and FBP8 (0.89) is less than total Cronbach alpha value thus, its exclusion will reduce reliability. This shows that all the statements of brand perception variable would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Brand experience variable

Brand experience means how people feel about the brand content created by influencers that is whether it is interesting or they want to purchase. The respondents were asked question whether they are able to get access to up-to-date trends of the product brand by following a social influencer, Frequent posting by the influencer explains awareness of the influencer about latest trends, social media influencer provides them with inspiration about the new products and brands, by following the page of a social media influencer, they can actually compare different brands for the product they intends to buy, able to connect with the brand by having detailed information about how to use the product, etc and also find the content created by influencers interesting and it makes me curious. For measuring the statements reliability, Cronbach alpha test is conducted Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than 0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group in order to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding's for the statements of the brand experience variable are shown in the table below.

Table 4.25: Coding for social media influencers on brand experiences variable

Brand Experience	
I am able to get access to up-to-date trends by following a social influencer	BE1
Frequent posting by the influencer explains awareness of the influencer about latest trends	BE2

Social media influencer provides me with inspiration about the new products and brands	BE3
By following the page of a social media influencer, I can actually compare different brands for the product I intends to buy	BE4
I am able to connect with the brand by having detailed information about how to use the product, etc.	BE5
I find the content created by influencers interesting and it makes me curious	BE6

For the brand experience 6 statements has been included in the study. With this, the coding has been done i.e. BE1 to BE6 for better presentation of brand experience statements. Herein, using the coded statements the reliability analysis would be done in pilot testing for understanding the capability of each statement in measuring the brand experience. Thus, results of the reliability based on above table codes is shown below

Table 4.26: Reliability statistics of the statements on brand experience variable

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
BE1	0.84	0.86
BE2	0.82	
BE3	0.84	
BE4	0.83	

BE5	0.82	
BE6	0.82	

Above table shows that total Cronbach alpha value is 0.86 which is more than 0.7, thus, the statements would be considered for further analysis. Further, item wise analysis by the value of Cronbach alpha for each of this item i.e.; BE1(0.84), BE2 (0.82), BE3 (0.84), BE4 (0.83), BE5 (0.82) and BE6 (0.82) is less than total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the above table, there exist a reliability of all the statements in measuring the brand experience variable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86. This shows that all the statements of the brand experience variable would be considered.

Reliability analysis of Popularity variable

Popular influencers mean a massive fan base, a high-profile position on a well-known platform, and access to tens of thousands, if not millions, of potential customers. The respondents were asked about the popularity of influencers having an impact on customer engagement with the brand. Whether the popularity of influencer help to increase the trust of respondents on information provided by the influencer, having more Positive attitude towards content, more positive attitude towards the brand, more likely they will follow the Influencer and if a lot of people refer to me an influencer they are more likely to follow the influencer. For measuring the reliability of the statements, the Cronbach alpha test is conducted Cronbach alpha is a scale reliability measure used to examine the consistency in relatedness of a group of items. If the Cronbach's alpha for some items is less than

0.7, it is usually decided to remove the relevant question from the group to raise the Cronbach's alpha above 0.7.

The coding for the statements of the popularity variable is shown in the table below.

Table 4.27: Coding for social media influencers on popularity variable

Popularity	
The more the popularity of influencers, My trust in information increases	P1
The more the popularity of influencers, the more Positive attitude towards content	P2
The more the popularity of influencer, the more positive attitude towards the brand	P3
The more the followers of the Influencer, the more likely I am to follow the Influencer	P4
If a lot of people refer to me as an Influencer, I am more likely to follow the Influencer	P5

For representing the popularity variable, 5 statements have been included in the study. As the statements are lengthy thus for better presentation coding for them has been done i.e. P1 to P5. With this, based on the above table codes, the reliability analysis needs to be done for determining the effectiveness of each statement in measuring the popularity variable. Thus, the results of the reliability analysis are shown below.

Table 4.28: Reliability statistics of the statements on popularity

Item	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach alpha value
P1	0.80	0.84
P2	0.81	
P3	0.80	
P4	0.80	
P5	0.81	

Herein, the above table shows that the total Cronbach alpha value is $0.84 > 0.7$, thus, statements are effective in measuring respondents perception. Further, item wise analysis by the value of Cronbach alpha for each of these items i.e.; P1(0.80), P2 (0.81), P3 (0.80), P4 (0.80), and P5 (0.81) is less than the total Cronbach alpha value, as indicated in the table, there exist reliability of all the statements in measuring the popularity variable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. This shows that all the statements of popularity variables would be considered.

Pilot testing enables the determination of the efficiency of considered statements, thus, reliability analysis for each of the variable definitions that all the statements for the respective variables could be considered for final analysis. Hence, considering the stated sample size of 1013 respondents final analysis could be done for testing the hypothesis and fulfilling the objective of this study.

4.1.2 Final testing

Final testing is the main analysis with the focus on fulfilling the objectives and aim of the study. It consists of a detailed examination of the final responses. Herein, the purpose of the study is to determine the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences. A sample size of 1013 respondents is considered for this study. In this study, final testing is done on demographical and background characteristics of the respondents by frequency analysis followed by the formulation of an SEM model to test the model accuracy and the hypothesis for fulfilling the objectives of the study.

4.1.2.1 Demographic and Background analysis

Demographic analysis is the procedure of examining the demographical characteristics of study participants i.e. age, education, gender, experience, income, and the influencer of the respondents. Herein, having the assessment of the basic characteristics of the respondents, the information about the study participants is derived. As the efficiency of statements is stated, thus herein the demographic characteristics of selected 1013 customers would be assessed graphically. Below shown is the frequency-based analysis of the respondents.

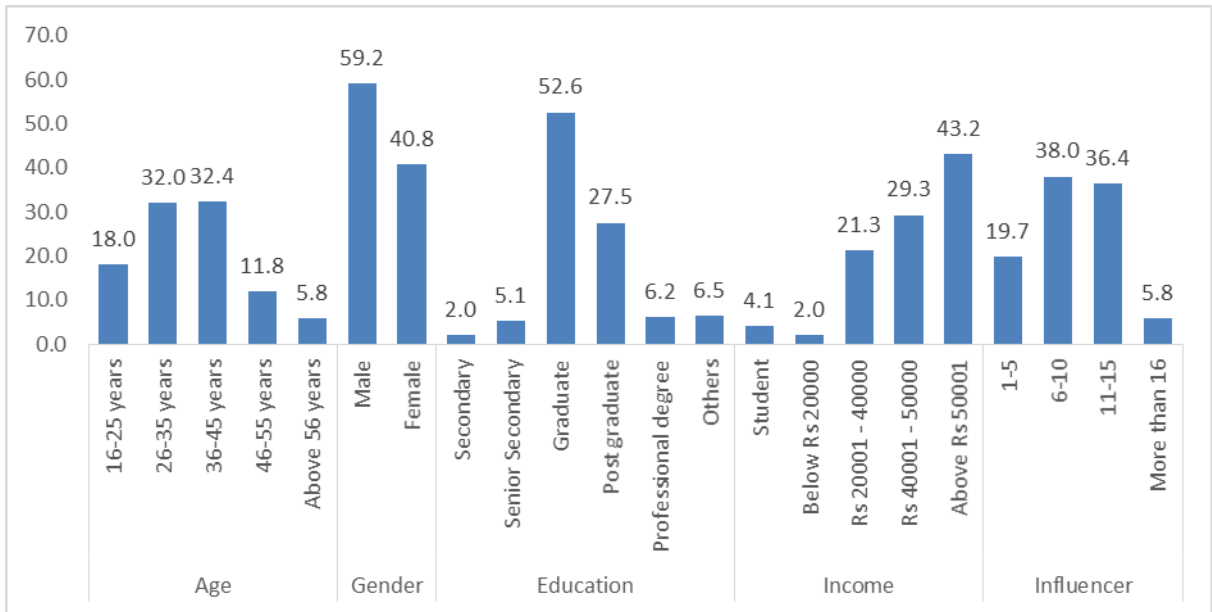


Figure 4.2: Demographics analysis for final testing

The above figure focuses on exploring the demographic and background characteristics in detail via frequency analysis. Herein, the above graph reveals that among the surveyed population of 1013 customers considered for the study, about 32.4% of the respondent have aged between 36-45 years, 32% of them are from the age group 26-35 years, 18% of the participants have age between 16-25 years, 11.8% of them are from age group 46-55 years and the remaining 5.8% of them are above 56 years of age. Thus, the age aspect reveals that most of the respondents are from the young and middle age groups. Gender-based characteristics of respondents reveal that 59.2% of them are males while the remaining 40.8% of them are females. Thus, gender-based characteristics depict the dominance of male customers in the study. Further, the education level of respondents depicts that among the surveyed population, 52.6% of respondents are at the graduate level, 27.5% of them are at postgraduate level, 6.2% of them hold a professional degree level, 5.1% of them are at senior level, 2% of respondent are at secondary level and the remaining 6.5% of them are under the

category of others. Thus, the maximum number of customers included in the study consists of educated people who have completed graduate level of education. Income-based characteristics of respondents reveal that 43.2% of the respondent have income above 5001, 29.3% of them are from income level 40001-50000, 21.3% of the participants have income between 20001-40000, 4.1% of them are a student and the remaining 2% of them have income below 20000. Thus, income level depicts that majority of customers included in the study are middle to elite class people. Lastly, the influencer of the respondents shows that 38% of participants follow 6-10 number of influencers, 36.4% of them follow 11-15 number of influencers, 19.7% of respondents follow 1-5 number of influencers and the remaining 5.8% of them follow more than 16 influencers. Thus, stating that a maximum number of respondents included in final testing are people who are following more than 5 social media influencers. Hence, the final testing describes that the participants included in the study are those who are mostly educated buying groups i.e. young and middle-aged people with good income levels and value the social media influencers' opinion for making their decision.

4.1.2.2 Inferential analysis

The inferential analysis helps in having a statistical examination of the dataset for fulfilling the objectives of the study. With the aim of the study to understand the role of social media influencers in the new age marketing and understand their role for different brands, the analysis work on having the SEM-based statistical analysis wherein using the model's linkage between the variables is built and based on the path analysis, model adequacy, and estimation results; relevant information's about the linkage is derived. As the pilot testing has provided us with the information on the efficiency of statements in measuring the perception of customers, thus, a model for each of the hypotheses would be built by using the aggregate value derived from the examination of sub-statements under each variable.

Herein as the need is to determine the influence of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences, thus, there are 5 constructs i.e. Identification, Enthusiasm, Attention, Absorption, and Interaction are used for measuring social media influences. Further, the influence of social media influencers and their role in manipulating the customer's perception is based on their popularity, thus, popularity is regarded as the moderating variable in the analysis.

As the pilot testing suggested the inclusion of all statements, the aggregate value for the social media influencer impact measuring variables i.e., identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction would be computed. Further, the moderating variable popularity value would also be computed by having the aggregate of each of its sub-statements. With derivation of values, initially, it is required to have the examination of the efficiency of aggregated variable, thus, Cronbach alpha analysis would be done. Cronbach alpha test examines the consistency and reliability of the dataset to present whether it is effective in measuring the respective variable or not. The results of the Cronbach alpha test are shown in below table:

Table 4.29: Reliability results for social media influencers impact measurement

Social Media Influencer	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Total Cronbach Alpha value
Identification	0.90	0.92
Enthusiasm	0.90	

Attention	0.90	
Absorption	0.90	
Interaction	0.90	
Popularity	0.92	

As the value of Cronbach alpha for each of the social media influencer impact measuring variables i.e. identification (0.90), enthusiasm (0.90), attention (0.90), absorption (0.90), interaction (0.90), Popularity(0.92) are greater than 0.7, indicating that all the variables have an effective measurement of impact, it is essential to include all these constructs for measuring social media influencers impact.

Table 4.30: Convergent Validity results for social media influencers impact measurement

Social Media Influencer	AVE	CR	SQRT(AVE)
Identification	0.53	0.81	0.73
Enthusiasm	0.56	0.83	0.75
Attention	0.56	0.73	0.75
Absorption	0.60	0.89	0.77

Interaction	0.58	0.88	0.76
Brand Trust	0.62	0.87	0.79
Perceived Value	0.61	0.88	0.78
Brand Identity	0.56	0.76	0.75
Brand Identification	0.53	0.83	0.73
Customer Satisfaction	0.62	0.91	0.79
Brand Experience	0.65	0.88	0.81
Brand Loyalty	0.64	0.91	0.80
Favorable brand perception	0.63	0.89	0.79
Popularity	0.55	0.75	0.74

For each of the variables initially, the convergent validity is assessed. Herein, the above table defines that as the AVE for all the variables is above 0.5 and CR is above 0.7 which is above the acceptable level, thus, the model could be built considering identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction, brand trust, perceived value, brand identity, brand identification, customer satisfaction, brand experience, brand loyalty, favorable brand perception, and popularity as the dependent and independent variables. Further, for understanding the efficiency of variables in model building, discriminant validity would be examined.

Table 4.31: Discriminant Validity results for social media influencers impact measurement

(P.T.O)

	Identification	Enthusiasm	Attention	Absorption	Interaction	BrandTrust	PerceivedValue	BrandIdentity	BrandIdentification	CustomerSatisfaction	BrandExperience	BrandLoyalty	Favorablebrandperception	Popularity
Identification	0.73													
Enthusiasm	0.70	0.75												
Attention	0.66	0.72	0.75											
Absorption	0.65	0.69	0.70	0.77										
Interaction	0.70	0.65	0.69	0.69	0.76									
BrandTrust	0.63	0.60	0.57	0.57	0.56	0.79								
PerceivedValue	0.68	0.67	0.61	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.78							
BrandIdentity	0.69	0.65	0.66	0.63	0.63	0.66	0.66	0.75						
BrandIdentification	0.61	0.64	0.60	0.64	0.62	0.57	0.60	0.63	0.73					
CustomerSatisfaction	0.70	0.70	0.66	0.67	0.68	0.65	0.70	0.71	0.62	0.79				
BrandExperience	0.63	0.64	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.68	0.64	0.68	0.67	0.67	0.81			

Brand Loyalty	0.63	0.62	0.66	0.61	0.64	0.56	0.63	0.66	0.62	0.65	0.64	0.80		
Favorable brand perception	0.68	0.72	0.72	0.71	0.71	0.60	0.66	0.64	0.70	0.69	0.71	0.66	0.79	
Popularity	0.62	0.62	0.59	0.58	0.60	0.63	0.60	0.61	0.65	0.62	0.68	0.62	0.66	0.74

The covariance table for all the variables as shown in the above table represents that the value of AVE square root is more than covariance like for popularity AVE square root is 0.74 which is more than the covariance value of popularity with all variables i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction, brand trust, perceived value, brand identity, brand identification, customer satisfaction, brand experience, brand loyalty, and favorable brand perception. Thus, the variable is valid and could be considered for examination of social media influencers on customers' perceived value, customers' perceived Satisfaction with the brand and customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

To fulfill the objectives of understanding the social media influencers impact on customer engagement and its consequences, there is a need to assess majorly three hypotheses set i.e.

Set 1: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived brand value

Set 2: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived satisfaction

Set 3: Social media influencers do not have a significant influence on customer's perceived favorability of brand

For each of these main hypotheses set, there are 6 sub-hypotheses stating the impact of each sub-component of social media influencers on customers' perceived brand value followed by computing the moderating impact of popularity. Thus, the below sub-sections would work on having a detailed explanation of this hypothesis.

Impact of social media influencers on customers' perceived brand value

Social media influencers tend to influence the perceived brand value of the customers by affecting customer engagement. Social media is regarded as one of the innovations of the Internet, which has altered the lifestyle of people by the introduction of chat-based

applications, blogging forums as well as websites, communication networks, social gaming networks along social networks. Social media marketing makes use of different social media websites to promote a particular product, service, organization, idea, and in the process, create a favorable brand perception in the minds of the customers. Therefore, these sites help the brand managers in posting text, photos, videos, and other favorable information concerning the brand to create a favorable brand perception in the minds of the followers of their brands.

As pilot testing of the variables suggested inclusion of all statements, thus, 5 components of impact i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction are considered for social media influencers impact while 4 constructs of brand value i.e. brand trust, perceived value, brand identity, and brand identification are considered to represent the dependent variable. Further, popularity would be included in the model and its interaction effect concerning each sub-component of social media influencers' impact to measure the moderating impact. Thus, based on this description of respective variables, the model for assessing the linkage would be built.

As the path-based analysis helps in linking the elements representing social media influencers with customers' perceived brand value, thus, below figure depicts the model built to represent the linkage between the selected constructs of social media influencers' impact and customer engagement perceived brand value consequence. And to find out the moderating effect of popularity with brand value, the linkages are constructed of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction.

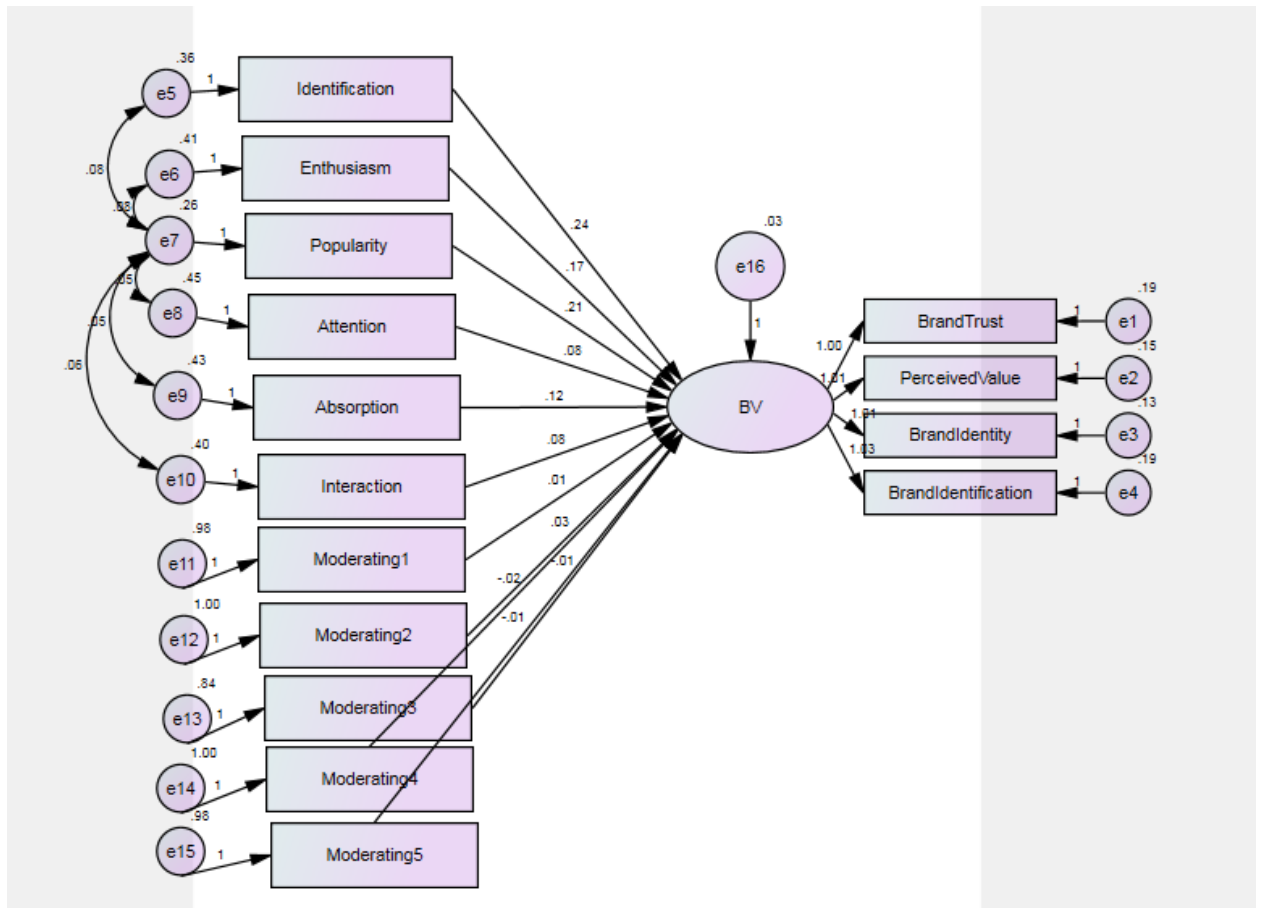


Figure 4.3: Path diagram for linking social media influencers with customers' perceived brand value

The above figure shows the factor loadings for each variable and e1 to e16 represents the error in the computation of linkage. Herein, 4 constructs are used to measure the perceived brand value that is brand trust, perceived value, brand identity, and brand identification. Thus, before studying their relationship it is essential to examine the reliability of the construct. Thus, Cronbach alpha test is done results of which are shown in below table

Table 4.32: Reliability results for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand value

Perceived Brand Value	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Total Cronbach Alpha value
Brand Trust	0.83	0.87
Perceived Value	0.83	
Brand Identity	0.82	
Brand Identification	0.85	

As the value of Cronbach alpha for measuring the constructs of the perceived brand value that is brand trust (0.83), perceived value (0.83), brand identity (0.82), and brand identification (0.85) which is greater than 0.7 indicate that there exists reliability of all the constructs i.e., brand trust, perceived value, brand identity and brand identification for measuring the perceived brand value. Further, it states that there is a presence of linkages between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value and can be considered for further analysis.

The linkage between the constructs and their contribution in measuring a respective variable is represented by factor loadings. Results of it are shown in below table:

Table 4.33: Factor loading Results for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand value

	Factor Loadings
Customer engagement through social media influencers	
Identification	0.24
Enthusiasm	0.17
Popularity	0.21
Attention	0.08
Absorption	0.12
Interaction	0.08
Moderating 1	0.01
Moderating 2	0.03
Moderating 3	-0.01
Moderating 4	-0.02
Moderating 5	-0.01
Brand Value	
Brand Trust	1.00
Perceived Value	1.01
Brand Identity	1.01
Brand Identification	1.03

The above table represents the impact of social media influencers on the customer's perceived brand value. It shows that the value of the variables of social media influencers that are Identification (0.24), Enthusiasm (0.17), Popularity (0.21), Attention (0.08), Absorption (0.12), and Interaction (0.08) are less than 0.5, and the values of the moderating impact of popularity that is Moderating1 (0.01), Moderating 2 (0.03), Moderating 3 (-0.01), Moderating 4 (-0.02) and Moderating 5 (-0.01) are less than 0.5 whereas the brand value that is Brand trust (1.00), Perceived value (1.01), Brand identity (1.01) and Brand identification (1.03) which are all greater than the required value of 0.5. Thus, the analysis indicates that most of the variable has less contribution in affecting customers' perceived brand value.

Herein, before building in the relationship and making relevant deductions, the examination of model efficiency would be done by using different absolute fitness, incremental fitness, and parsimonious fitness measures:

Table 4.34: Model fitness values for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand value

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	76.62	Less than 5
GFI	0.42	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.18	Greater than 0.90
RMSEA	0.27	Less than 0.10

NFI	0.39	Greater than 0.90
CFI	0.39	Greater than 0.90
TLI	0.24	Greater than 0.90
IFI	0.39	Greater than 0.90

Above table shows that the absolute and incremental fitness measure value for each index i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $76.62 > 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $0.42 < 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.18 < 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.27 > 0.10$. Thus, the absolute fitness measure value for each index indicates that it does not satisfy the required criteria. Incremental fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.39 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $0.39 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $0.24 > 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $0.39 > 0.9$. The incremental fitness measure value indicates that it does not satisfy the required criteria. As the model is not fit, thus, the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value could not be referred to fit. So, further modification of the model needs to be done by building in covariance.

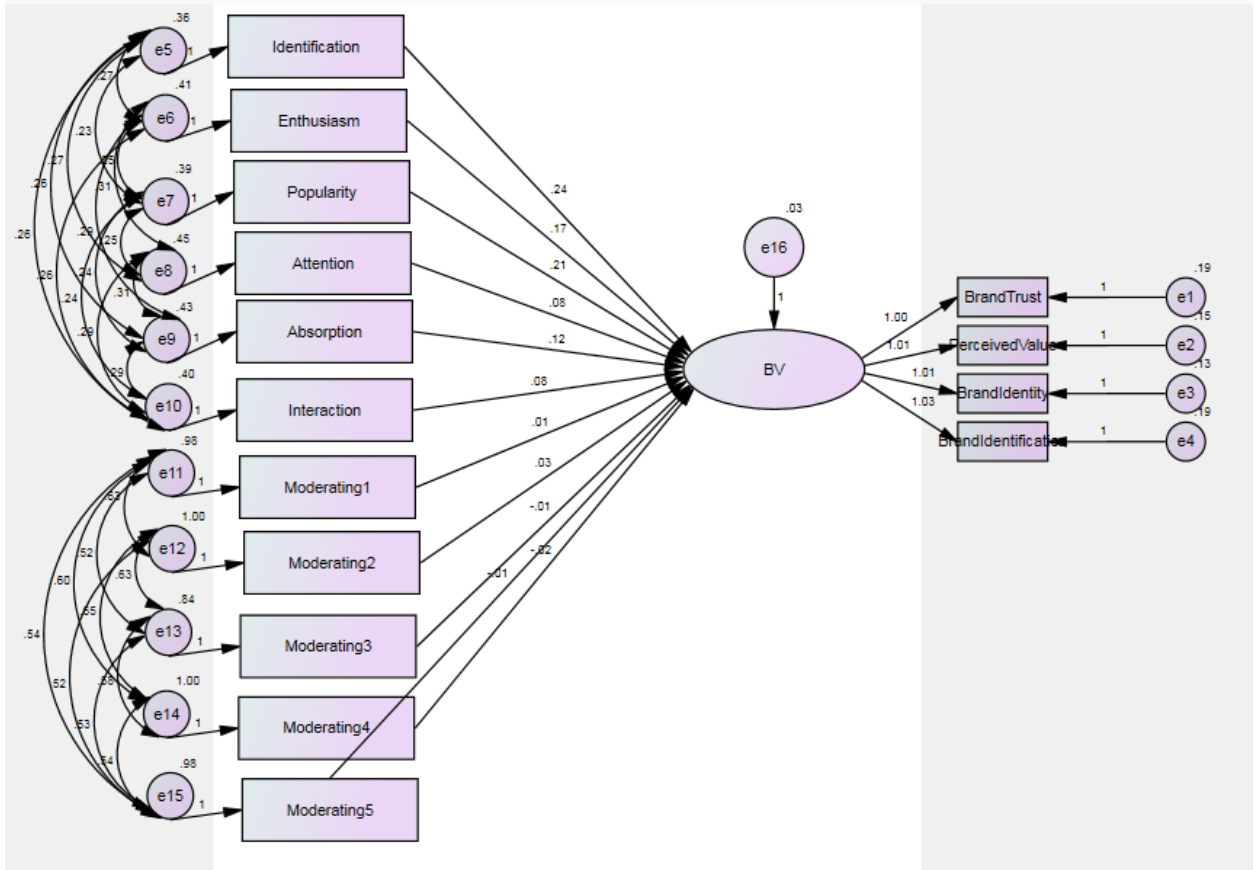


Figure 4.4: Modified Path diagram for linking social media influencer with customers' perceived brand value

After modification, the final model is shown in the above figure. Based on it, the assessment of the independent variables linkage is depicted below

Table 4.35: Interlinkage between independent variables

		Estimate
e9	e10	0.69
e8	e10	0.69
e8	e9	0.70

e5	e6	0.70
e5	e8	0.66
e5	e9	0.65
e5	e10	0.70
e6	e8	0.72
e6	e9	0.69
e6	e10	0.65

The above table shows that the value of correlation between independent variables error term is more than 0.5, showing that there exists at least moderate linkage between the different statements i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction.

As the previous model was not absolutely and incrementally fit to build linkage between social media influencer and customers perceived brand value, modification of the model was done by building in covariances. The below table represents the value of absolute fitness and incremental fitness measures of the modified model.

Table 4.36: Model fitness values for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand value

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	8.57	Less than 5
GFI	0.94	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.88	Greater than 0.90

RMSEA	0.09	Less than 0.10
NFI	0.95	Greater than 0.90
CFI	0.95	Greater than 0.90
TLI	0.92	Greater than 0.90
IFI	0.95	Greater than 0.90

Above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $8.57 > 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $0.94 > 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.88 < 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.09 < 0.10$. Incremental fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.95 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $0.95 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $0.92 > 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $0.95 > 0.9$. As all the indexes don't satisfy the requirement criteria, thus, the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value could not be referred to as absolutely, incrementally fit. Thus we do one more modification, this time we remove the Moderating variable.

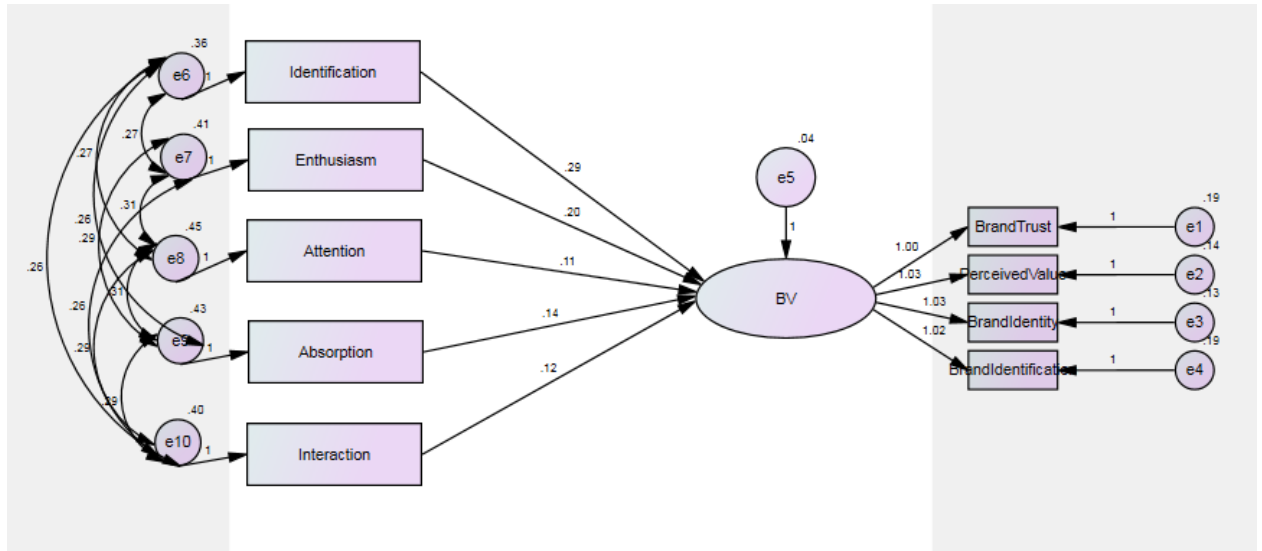


Figure 4.5: Modified Path diagram for linking social media influencer with customers' perceived brand value

After modification, the final model is shown in the above figure. Based on it, the assessment of the independent variables linkage is depicted below

Table 4.37: Model fitness values for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand value

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	3.40	Less than 5
GFI	0.99	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.97	Greater than 0.90

RMSEA	0.05	Less than 0.10
NFI	0.99	Greater than 0.90
CFI	0.99	Greater than 0.90
TLI	0.99	Greater than 0.90
IFI	0.99	Greater than 0.90

Above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $3.40 < 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $0.99 > 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.97 > 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.05 < 0.10$. Incremental fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.99 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $0.99 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $0.99 > 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $0.99 > 0.9$. As all the indexes satisfy the requirement criteria, thus, the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value can be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit.

As the model built to study impact is efficient and reliable, thus the assessment of the hypothesis could be done at a 5% level of significance.

Set 1: Social media influencers have no impact on customers' perceived brand value.

For making deductions about this hypothesis sub-hypothesis for it would be assessed

a) Identification impact on the Perceived brand value.

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of identification on the customer's perceived brand value. For this below-stated hypothesis is tested

H₀: Identification has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.

H_A: Identification has an impact on customer's perceived brand value

The analysis results for the stated hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.38: Regression results of identification impact on customers' perceived brand value

Brand Value	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Identification	0.29	0.03	11.75	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Identification (0.03) is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that the identification value is $0.00 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for identification is 11.75 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no impact of identification on customers' perceived brand value is rejected depicting the presence of identification impact.

b) Enthusiasm impact on the perceived brand value

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of enthusiasm on the customer's perceived brand value. For this below-stated hypothesis is assessed

H₀: Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.

H_A: Enthusiasm have an impact on customer's perceived brand value

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.39: Regression results of enthusiasm impact on customers' perceived brand value

Brand Value	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Enthusiasm	0.20	0.02	8.69	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Enthusiasm that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that enthusiasm value is $0.00 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for enthusiasm is 8.69 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no impact of enthusiasm on customers' perceived brand value is rejected.

c) Attention impact on the perceived brand value

The regression analysis for determining the impact of attention on customer perceived brand value is presented by testing below stated hypothesis

H₀: Attention has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.

H_A: Attention has an impact on customer's perceived brand value

The analysis results for the stated hypothesis are shown in the below table.

Table 4.40: Regression results of attention impact on customers' perceived brand value

Brand Value	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Attention	0.11	0.02	4.91	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Attention that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that attention value is $0.00 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for attention is 4.91 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null hypothesis of having no impact of attention on customers' perceived brand value is rejected.

d) Absorption impact on the perceived brand value

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of absorption on the customer's perceived brand value.

H₀: Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.

H_A: Absorption have an impact on customer's perceived brand value

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.41: Regression results of absorption impact on customers' perceived brand value

Brand Value	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Absorption	0.14	0.02	6.50	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for absorption that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that absorption value is $0.00 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for absorption is 6.50 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no impact of absorption on customers' perceived brand value is rejected.

e) Interaction impact on the perceived brand value

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of interaction on the customer's perceived brand value.

H₀: Interaction has no impact on customers' perceived brand value.

H_A: Interaction has an impact on customer's perceived brand value

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.42: Regression results of interaction impact on customers' perceived brand value

Brand Value	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Interaction	0.12	0.02	5.31	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for interaction that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that interaction value is $0.00 < 0.05$ and even the z-value for interaction is 5.31 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no impact of interaction on customers' perceived brand value is rejected.

f) Popularity has moderating role between social media influencers and perceived brand value

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of popularity on the customer's perceived brand value.

H₀: Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value.

H_A: Popularity has moderating impact between social media influencers and customer's perceived brand value

The analysis results for the stated hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.43 *Regression results of popularity impact on customers' perceived brand value (Based On figure 4-4)*

Brand Value	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Popularity	0.21	0.018	11.528	0.000
Moderating1	0.01	0.012	0.808	0.419
Moderating2	0.029	0.013	2.158	0.031
Moderating3	-0.009	0.014	-0.667	0.505
Moderating4	-0.012	0.013	-0.875	0.382
Moderating5	-0.014	0.013	-1.069	0.285

The above table shows that the p-value of popularity is $0.000 < 0.05$, but for the interaction effect, only one variable i.e. moderating 2 (the interaction of popularity and enthusiasm) is less than 0.05. Thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no moderating impact of popularity between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value is not rejected.

Social media influencer and customer engagement and its consequence brand perception

Overtime as the need for business to adopt more innovative marketing techniques has increased, influencer marketing has been identified as the most cost-effective and large customer targeted strategy. Unlike the traditional means of marketing, social media influencers as have more dedicated and loyal followers, thus, these people value the opinion of influencers and have high regard towards recommendations mentioned by influencers. Even many a times, as customers have the issue that they are not able to have any medium of conversing openly and publically about brand wherein they can get assurance about the brand and even knowledge on other people's experience with the brand. Influencers serves as medium of connection between brand and customers and not just they clear the queries and provide information about the products but also share their experience of brand with customers. This helps in having acknowledgement of brand as trustworthy and accomodating and attracting more customers towards trying the product. This explains the significance of the social media influencers and customer engagement relationship.

Even customers have more trust on brand, its credibility, have better availability to information about brand, is able to connect with brand and its values, could distinct its identity and have assurance of quality. Thus, social media infleuncers influence one of major consequence of customer engagement i.e. perceived brand value by working on creating more brand trust, have positive perceived value, creation of brand identity, and having easy brand identification. This contribution is validated with the hypothesis assessment wherein each of the social media influencer components i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction have presence of impact on perceived brand value.

Though social media influencers have majorly positive contribution in infleuncing customer perception but one of the key element which defines how much the influencer will contribute for the brand is based on popularity. A more popular influencer as not only have wider base of followers but also has more scope of attracting new customers

for the brand thus, businesses though aims to associate with popular social media influencers which makes the marketing little costly for them. However, the examination of the influence of popularity on the social media influencer and customer engagement in this study revealed thus, though enthusiasm of influencer could result in changing brand perceived value for customers, but not other aspects like identification, attention, absorption, or interaction component is influenced. Thus, primary focus of business should majorly be on the influencers having followers similar to their target audience and not on their popularity.

With this linkage presence, companies have the opportunity of associating with the influencers whose followers are similar to the target audience of the brand. Providing in various discount or promotional offers and have open discussion sessions, not just the doubts of the customers about brand would be cleared but also a positive image of the brand is spread which enables retention of existing customers and connecting new customers with brand. Thus, social media influencers marketing is an effective business strategy for creating a purchase intention among customers.

Impact of social media influencers on customers' perceived Satisfaction with the brand

The use of social media has altered the ways of managing the relationship between brands and their customers. The successful use of social media is dependent on the fact that it has provided an interface that makes it easy for people to interact with each other along with maintaining connections with one another. By providing an interface, the brands increase their interaction with their target audience which helps them in understanding their latent needs and promote their products as an effort to meet those needs.

As pilot testing of the variables suggested inclusion of all statements, thus, 5 components of impact i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction are considered for social media influencers impact while 2 constructs of satisfaction with the brand i.e. customer satisfaction and brand experiences are considered to represent the

dependent variable. Further, popularity would be included in the model and its interaction effect concerning each sub-component of social media influencers' impact to measure the moderating impact. Thus, based on this description of respective variables, the model for assessing the linkage would be built.

As the path-based analysis helps in linking the elements representing social media influencers with customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand, thus, below figure depicts the model build to represent the linkage between the selected constructs of social media influencers' impact and customer engagement perceived satisfaction with the brand consequence. And to find out the moderating effect of popularity with brand satisfaction, the linkages are constructed of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction.

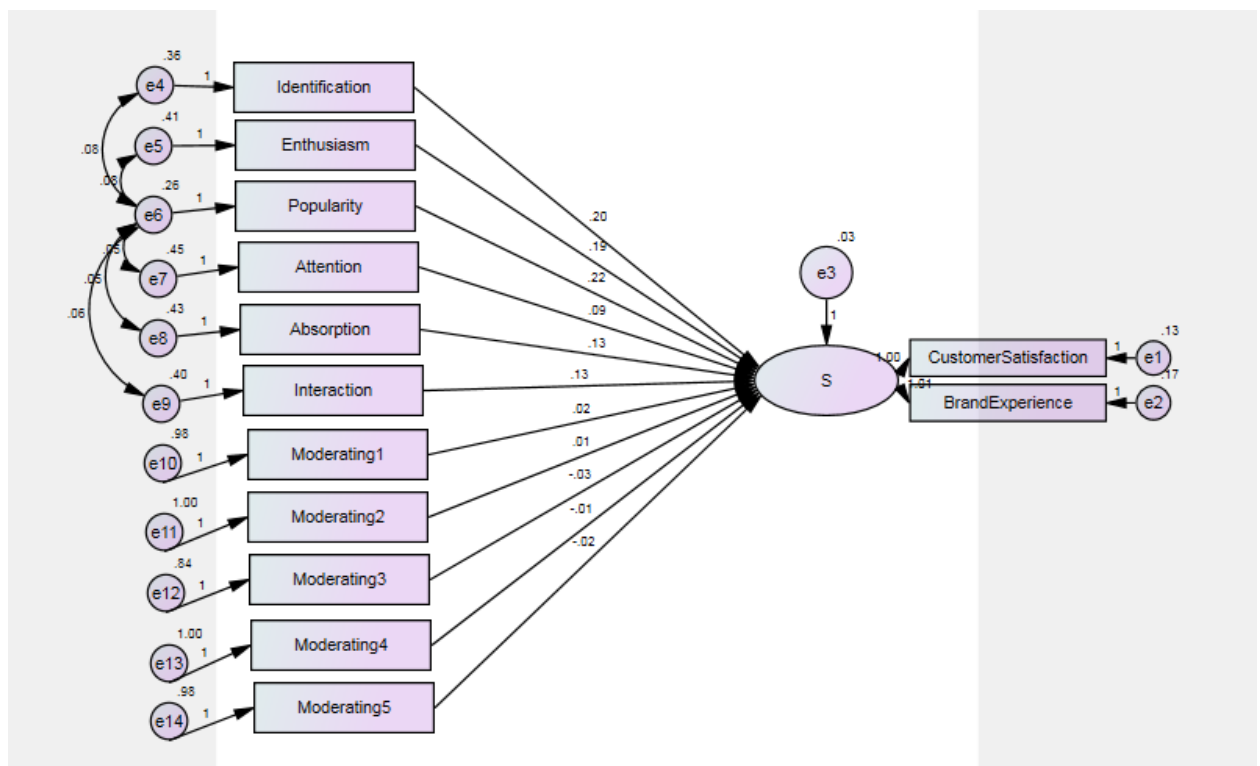


Figure 4.6: Path diagram for linking social media influencers with customers' perceived brand Satisfaction

The above figure shows the factor loadings for each variable and e1 to e14 represents the error in the computation of linkage. Herein, 2 constructs are used to measure perceived satisfaction with the brand that is customer satisfaction and brand experience. Thus, before studying their relationship it is essential to examine the reliability of the construct. Thus, Cronbach alpha test is done results of which are shown in below table

Table 4.44: Reliability results for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Satisfaction	Total Cronbach Alpha value
Customer Satisfaction	0.80
Brand Experience	

As the value of Cronbach alpha for measuring the constructs of the perceived brand satisfaction that is customer satisfaction and brand experience is 0.80 which is greater than 0.7, which indicates that there exist reliability of all the constructs i.e., customer satisfaction and brand experience for measuring the perceived satisfaction with the brand. Further, it states that there is a presence of linkages between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction and can be considered for further analysis.

The linkage between the constructs and their contribution in measuring a respective variable is represented by factor loadings. Results of it are shown in below table

Table 4.45: Factor loading Results for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand satisfaction

	Factor Loadings
Customer engagement through social media influencers	
Identification	0.20
Enthusiasm	0.19
Popularity	0.22
Attention	0.09
Absorption	0.13
Interaction	0.13
Moderating 1	0.02
Moderating 2	0.01
Moderating 3	-0.03
Moderating 4	-0.01
Moderating 5	-0.02
Satisfaction	
Customer Satisfaction	1.00
Brand Experience	1.01

The above table represents the impact of social media influencers on the customer's perceived brand satisfaction. It shows that the value of the variables of social media influencers that are Identification (0.20), Enthusiasm (0.19), Popularity (0.22), Attention (0.09), Absorption (0.13), and Interaction (0.13) are less than 0.5, and the values of the moderating impact of popularity that is Moderating1 (0.02), Moderating 2 (0.01), Moderating 3 (-0.03), Moderating 4 (-0.01) and Moderating 5 (-0.02) are less than 0.5 whereas the brand satisfaction that is customer satisfaction (1.00) and brand experience (1.01) which are all greater than the required value of 0.5. Thus, the analysis indicates that most of the variable has less contribution in affecting customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.

With the assessment of factor loading, it is essential to examine the efficiency of the model in depicting the relationship thus, the below table represents efficiency results.

Table 4.46: Model fitness values for social media influencers and customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	107.10	Less than 5
GFI	0.39	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.07	Greater than 0.90
RMSEA	0.32	Less than 0.10
NFI	0.29	Greater than 0.90

CFI	0.29	Greater than 0.90
TLI	0.08	Greater than 0.90
IFI	0.29	Greater than 0.90

The above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $107.10 > 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $0.39 < 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.07 < 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.32 < 0.10$. Thus, the absolute fitness measure value for each index indicates that it does not satisfy the required criteria. Incremental fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.29 < 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $0.29 < 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $0.08 < 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $0.29 < 0.9$. The incremental fitness measure value indicates that it does not satisfy the required criteria. As the model is not absolutely and incrementally fit, thus, the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction could not be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit. So, further modification of the model needs to be done by building in covariance.

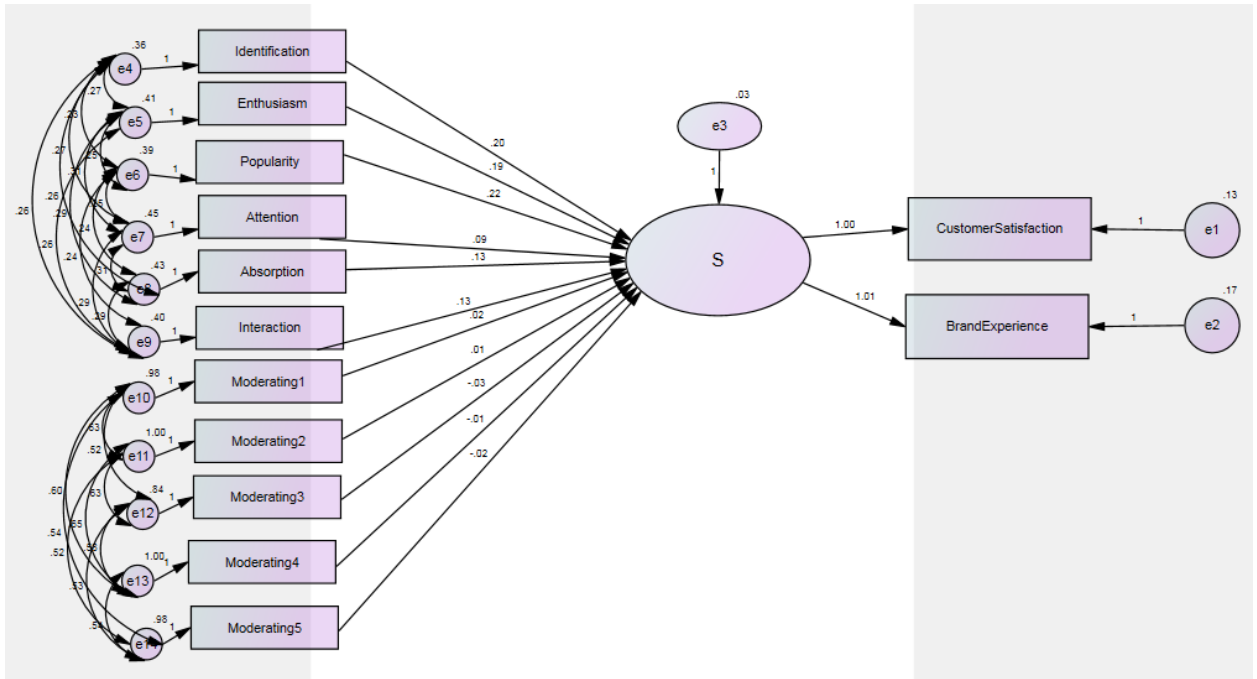


Figure 4.7: Modified Path diagram for linking social media influencer with customers' perceived brand satisfaction

After modification, the final model is shown in the above figure. Based on it, the assessment of the independent variables linkage is depicted below

Table 4.47: Correlation analysis

		Estimate
e8	e9	0.69
e7	e9	0.69
e8	e7	0.70
e9	e5	0.65
e8	e5	0.69
e7	e5	0.72
e8	e4	0.65
e4	e9	0.70

e4	e7	0.66
e4	e5	0.70

The above table shows that the value of correlation between independent variables error term is more than 0.5, showing that there exists at least moderate linkage between the different statements i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction.

As the previous model was not incrementally fit to build linkage between social media influencer and customers perceived brand satisfaction, modification of the model was done by building in covariances. The below table represents the value of absolute fitness and incremental fitness measures of the modified model.

Table 4.48: Model fitness values for social media influencers and customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	11.77	Less than 5
GFI	0.94	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.86	Greater than 0.90
RMSEA	0.10	Less than 0.10
NFI	0.95	Greater than 0.90
CFI	0.95	Greater than 0.90

TLI	0.91	Greater than 0.90
IFI	0.95	Greater than 0.90

Above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $11.77 > 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $0.94 > 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.86 < 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.10 = 0.10$. Incremental fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.95 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $0.95 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $0.91 > 0.9$, Thus the Model could not be referred as absolutely, incrementally fit. Thus, we do one more modification, this time we remove the Moderating variable

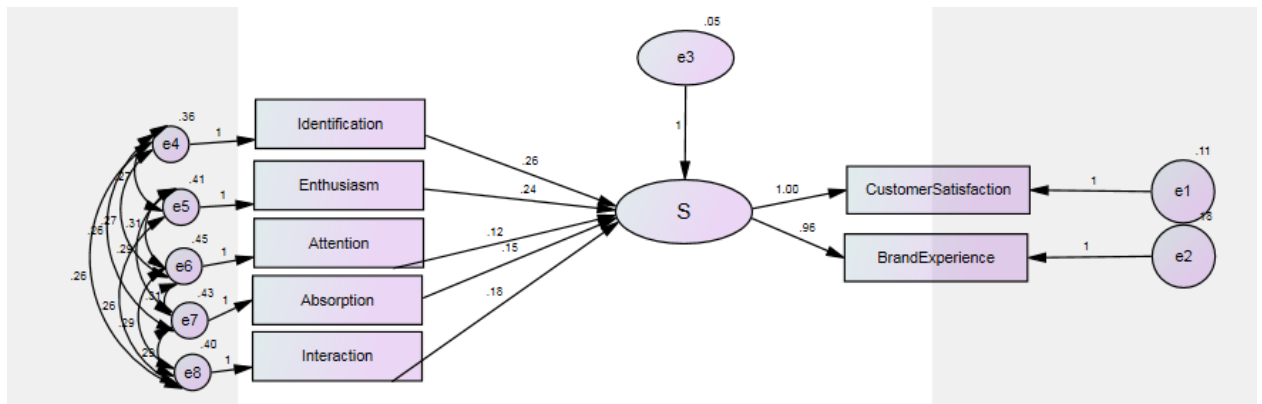


Figure 4.8: Modified Path diagram for linking social media influencer with customers' perceived brand satisfaction

After modification, the final model is shown in the above figure. Based on it, the assessment of the independent variables linkage is depicted below

Table 4.49: Model fitness values for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	0.63	Less than 5
GFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
RMSEA	0.00	Less than 0.10
NFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
CFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
TLI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
IFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90

Above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $0.63 < 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $1 > 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $1 > 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.00 < 0.10$. Incremental fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.1 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $1 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $1 > 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $1 > 0.9$. As all the indexes satisfy the requirement criteria, thus, the linkage between social media influencers and

customers' perceived brand satisfaction can be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit.

As the model built to study impact is efficient and reliable, thus the assessment of the hypothesis could be done at a 5% level of significance.

Set 2: Social media influencers have no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.

For making deductions about this hypothesis sub-hypothesis for it would be assessed

a) Identification impact on the Perceived satisfaction with the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of identification on the customer's perceived brand satisfaction.

H₀: Identification has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.

H_A: Identification has an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.50: Regression results of identification impact on customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Satisfaction	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Identification	0.26	0.03	8.88	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Identification (0.03) is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that the identification value is $0.00 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for identification is 8.88 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null hypothesis of having no impact of identification on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand is rejected. (Wang, Huang, and Davison, 2020).

b) Enthusiasm impact the perceived satisfaction with the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of enthusiasm on the customer's perceived brand satisfaction.

H₀: Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.

H_A: Enthusiasm have an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.51: Regression results of enthusiasm impact on customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Satisfaction	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Enthusiasm	0.24	0.03	8.51	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Enthusiasm that is 0.03 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that enthusiasm value is $0.00 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for enthusiasm is 8.51 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null

hypothesis of having no impact of enthusiasm on customers' perceived brand satisfaction is rejected.

c) Attention impact on the perceived satisfaction with the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of attention on the customer's perceived brand satisfaction.

H₀: Attention has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.

H_A: Attention has an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.52: Regression results of attention impact on customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Satisfaction	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p value (sig)
Attention	0.12	0.03	4.41	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Attention that is 0.03 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that attention value is $0.004 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for attention is 4.41 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null hypothesis of having no impact of attention on customers' perceived brand satisfaction is rejected.

d) Absorption impact on the perceived satisfaction with the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of absorption on the customer's perceived brand satisfaction.

H₀: Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.

H_A: Absorption have an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.53: Regression results of absorption impact on customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Satisfaction	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Absorption	0.15	0.03	5.78	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for absorption that is 0.03 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that absorption value is $0.00 < 0.05$ and even the z-value for absorption is 5.78 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null hypothesis of having no impact of absorption on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand is rejected.

e) Interaction impact on the perceived satisfaction with the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of interaction on the customer's perceived brand satisfaction.

H₀: Interaction has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.

H_A: Interaction has an impact on customer's perceived satisfaction with the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.54: Regression results of interaction impact on customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Satisfaction	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Interaction	0.18	0.03	6.57	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for interaction that is 0.03 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that interaction value is $0.00 < 0.05$ and even the z-value for interaction is 6.57 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no impact of interaction on customers' perceived brand satisfaction is rejected.

f) Popularity has no moderating role between social media influencers and perceived satisfaction with the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of popularity on the customer's perceived brand satisfaction.

H₀: Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction.

H_A: Popularity has moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction.

The analysis results for the stated hypothesis are shown in the below table.

Table 4.55: Regression results of popularity impact on customers' perceived brand satisfaction (Based On figure 4-7)

Satisfaction	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Popularity	0.166	0.022	7.705	0.000
Moderating1	0.004	0.014	0.301	0.764
Moderating2	0.004	0.016	0.243	0.808
Moderating5	0.001	0.016	0.062	0.951
Moderating3	-0.036	0.017	-2.172	0.03
Moderating4	-0.006	0.016	-0.403	0.687

The above table shows that the p-value of popularity is $0.000 < 0.05$, but for the interaction effect, only one variable i.e. moderating 3 (the interaction of popularity and attention) is less than 0.05. Thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no moderating impact of popularity between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction is not rejected.

Social media influencer and customer engagement and its consequence of customer satisfaction

Influencer marketing is not only the medium of attracting more customers by generating awareness. Instead of in the existing digitalized environment, influencer marketing also serves as a medium of communication. As the market is becoming more competitive, there is the availability of a wider range of products which not only adds confusion among customers but also create a sense of doubt while selecting good quality products. Influencers serve as a mediator between brand and customers wherein customers are able

to communicate and interact with an experienced person, get more clarity about the products quality and its benefits, and even availability of many promotional and discount offers. These pleasant interactions helps in raising customer willingness to try the products of the brand and thus, increase customer engagement. This contribution of social media influencers towards customer enagement is also identified with statistical exploration of linakge wherein, components of social media infleuncers have presence of relationship with customer engagement.

Further, social media influencers as already have a trust based relationship with their followers, thus, customers who value influencers' opinion generally are more satisfied with their followers recommendations, focus on spreading posts or videos with other people, more willingness is there to try the recommended products, get more information about quality of product, have easy way of choosing among the wide range of products, get access to updates and latest trends, and have more awareness about the modern styles. This results in deriving more satisfaction and having positive and motivating brand experience creation.

Though customers try products recommended by different influencers, for the same fields like cosmetics majorly, the higher preference is towards the products suggested by more popular influencers. As popularity results in adding more credibility and value to the opinion of social media influencers, thus, companies often target the popular social media influencers for their brand marketing. However, as this process often results in making the strategy more complicated and expensive for the company and even sometimes witness delays due to the busy schedule of popular influencers, thus, the impactful experience of the brand could not be created. This results in sometimes omission of popularity aspect of influencers by brand. This study however, support the belief that popularity of influencers should not be a key priority for brands as though popularity helps in drawing more attention of customers when satisfaction is targetted but overall not much influence is present of popularity between social media influencers and customer satisfaction linkage.

Hence, brands need to strategize their functioning for providing more demos and promotional or discount offers. Even regular sessions for experience discussion and query handling could be organized wherein, influencers interact with the targetted audience and provide them a wider viewpoint about brand policies, their products quality, and brand experience. This results in the derivation of more customer satisfaction and hence earning a wider customer base for the company.

Impact of social media influencers on customers' perceived favorability of the brand

The impact of influencers is increasing on social media and they are progressively being used by brands to promote their products. A popular brand name along with a positive brand perception leads to the creation of competitive advantages concerning increasing interests of the customers, awareness, and positive assessment of a product and leads to increased repeat purchases. Social media marketing makes use of different social media websites to promote a particular product, service, organization, idea, and in the process, create a favorable brand perception in the minds of the customers.

As pilot testing suggested inclusion of all statements, thus, 5 components of impact i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction are considered for social media influencers impact while 2 constructs of favorability of the brand i.e. brand loyalty and favorable brand perception are considered to represent the dependent variable. Further, popularity would be included in the model and its interaction effect concerning each sub-component of social media influencers' impact to measure the moderating impact. Thus, based on this description of respective variables, the model for assessing the linkage would be built.

As the path-based analysis helps in linking the elements representing social media influencers with customers' perceived favorability of the brand, thus, below figure depicts the model built to represent the linkage between the selected constructs of social media influencers' impact and customer engagement perceived brand favorability

consequence. And to find out the moderating effect of popularity with the favorability of the brand, the linkages are constructed of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction.

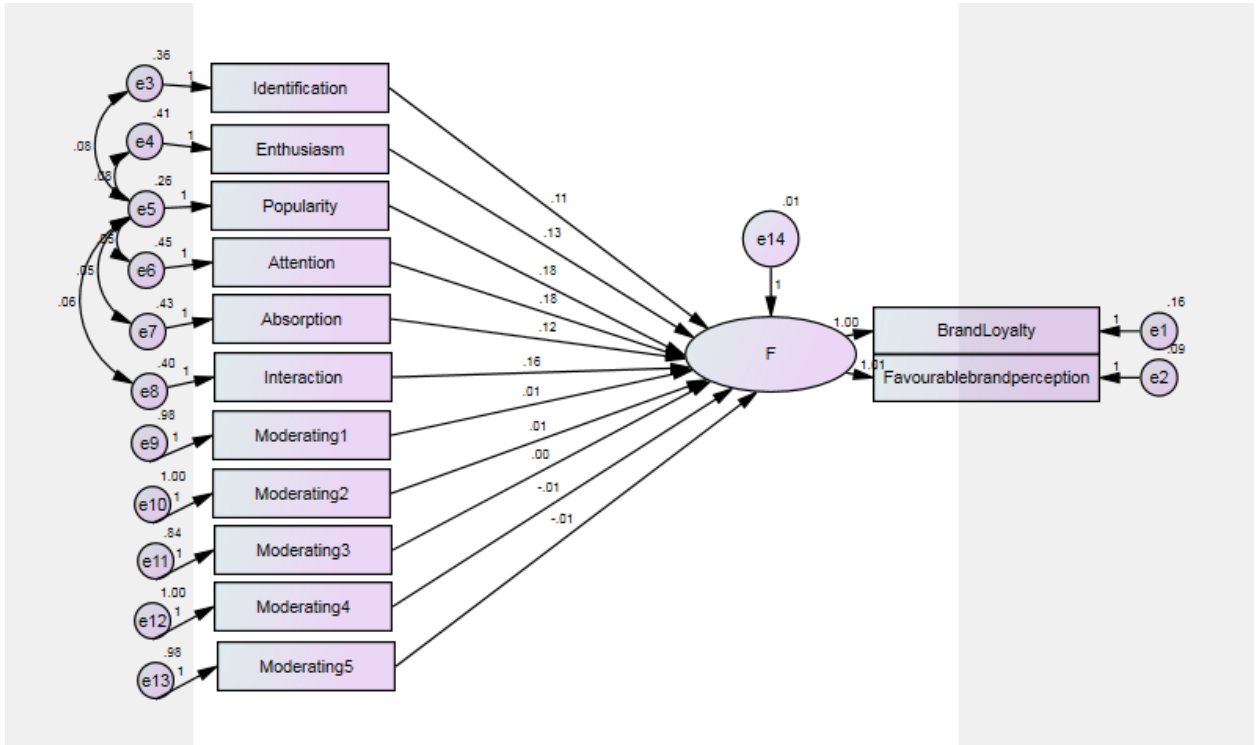


Figure 4.9: Path diagram for linking social media influencers with customers' perceived brand favorability

The above figure shows the factor loadings for each variable and e1 to e14 represents the error in the computation of linkage. Herein, 2 constructs are used to measure the perceived favorability of the brand that is brand loyalty and favorable brand perception. Thus, before studying their relationship it is essential to examine the reliability of the construct. Thus, Cronbach alpha test is done results of which are shown in below table

Table 4.56: Reliability results for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand favorability

Favorability	Total Cronbach Alpha value
Favorable brand perception	0.79
Brand loyalty	

As the value of Cronbach alpha for measuring the constructs of the perceived favorability of the brand that is brand loyalty and favorable brand perception is 0.79 which is greater than 0.7, indicates that there exist reliability of all the constructs i.e., brand loyalty and favorable brand perception for measuring the perceived favorability of the brand. Further, it states that there is a presence of linkages between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand favorability and can be considered for further analysis.

The linkage between the constructs and their contribution in measuring a respective variable is represented by factor loadings. Results of it are shown in below table

Table 4.57: Factor loading Results for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand favorability

	Factor Loadings
Customer engagement through social media influencers	
Identification	0.11
Enthusiasm	0.13
Popularity	0.18

Attention	0.18
Absorption	0.12
Interaction	0.16
Moderating 1	0.01
Moderating 2	0.01
Moderating 3	0.00
Moderating 4	-0.01
Moderating 5	-0.01
Favorability	
Brand Loyalty	1.00
Favorable brand perception	1.01

The above table represents the impact of social media influencers on the customer's perceived brand favorability. It shows that the value of the variables of social media influencers that are Identification (0.11), Enthusiasm (0.13), Popularity (0.18), Attention (0.18), Absorption (0.12), and Interaction (0.16) are less than 0.5, and the values of the moderating impact of popularity that is Moderating1 (0.01), Moderating 2 (0.01), Moderating 3 (0.00), Moderating 4 (-0.01) and Moderating 5 (-0.01) are less than 0.5 whereas the brand favorability that is brand loyalty (1.00) and favorable perception (1.01) which are all greater than the required value of 0.5, thus indicating that most of the variable has less contribution in affecting customers' perceived brand favorability.

The examination of model efficiency is presented in the below table before assessing the relationship between variables.

Table 4.58: Model fitness values for social media influencers and customers' perceived favorability of the brand

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	106.60	Less than 5
GFI	0.39	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.08	Greater than 0.90
RMSEA	0.32	Less than 0.10
NFI	0.30	Greater than 0.90
CFI	0.30	Greater than 0.90
TLI	0.09	Greater than 0.90
IFI	0.30	Greater than 0.90

The above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $106.60 > 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $0.39 > 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.08 < 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.32 < 0.10$. Thus, the absolute fitness measure value for each index indicates that it does not satisfy the required criteria. Incremental

fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.30 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $0.30 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $0.09 > 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $0.30 > 0.9$. Thus, the incremental fitness measure value indicates that it does not satisfy the required criteria. As the model is not absolutely and incrementally fit, thus, the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction could not be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit. So, further modification of the model needs to be done by building in covariance.

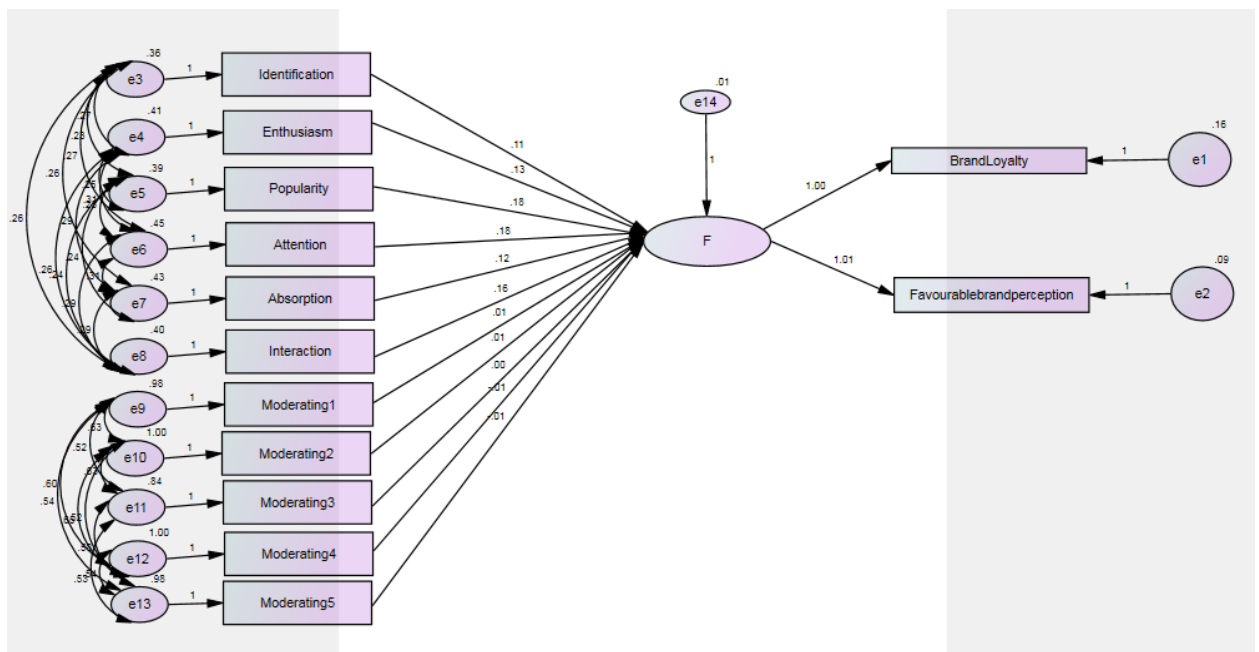


Figure 4.10: Modified Path diagram for linking social media influencers with customers' perceived brand favorability

After modification, the final model is shown in the above figure. Based on it, the assessment of the independent variables linkage is depicted below

Table 4.59: Interlinkage between independent variables

		Estimate
e7	e8	0.69
e6	e8	0.69
e6	e7	0.70
e5	e7	0.58
e3	e8	0.70
e3	e7	0.65
e3	e6	0.66
e4	e8	0.65
e4	e6	0.72
e3	e4	0.70

The above table shows that the value of correlation between independent variables error term is more than 0.5, showing that there exists at least moderate linkage between the different statements i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction.

As the previous model was not absolutely and incrementally fit to build linkage between social media influencer and customers perceived brand favorability, modification of the

model was done by building in covariances. The below table represents the value of absolute fitness and incremental fitness measures of the modified model.

Table 4.60: Model fitness values for social media influencers and customers' perceived favorability of the brand

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	11.01	Less than 5
GFI	0.94	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.87	Greater than 0.90
RMSEA	0.10	Less than 0.10
NFI	0.95	Greater than 0.90
CFI	0.96	Greater than 0.90
TLI	0.91	Greater than 0.90
IFI	0.96	Greater than 0.90

Above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $11.01 > 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $0.94 > 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.87 < 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.10 = 0.10$. Incremental fitness depicts that the

value of NFI (normal fit index) is $0.95 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $0.96 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $0.91 > 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $0.96 > 0.9$. The model is not fit thus we shall do further changes in the model by removing the moderator.

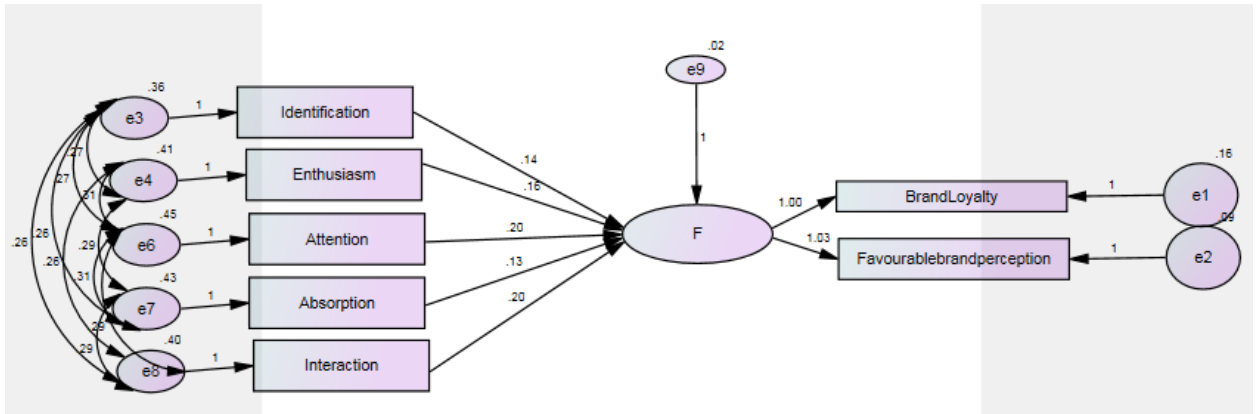


Figure 4.11: Modified Path diagram for linking social media influencers with customers' perceived brand favorability

After modification, the final model is shown in the above figure. Based on it, the assessment of the independent variables linkage is depicted below

Table 4.61: Model fitness values for social media influencer and customers' perceived brand satisfaction

Name of index	Index value	Adequate fit
CMIN/Df	2.28	Less than 5
GFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
AGFI	0.98	Greater than 0.90

RMSEA	0.04	Less than 0.10
NFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
CFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
TLI	1.00	Greater than 0.90
IFI	1.00	Greater than 0.90

Above table shows that the absolute fitness measure value for each index satisfy the requirement criteria i.e., CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) is $2.28 < 5$, GFI (Goodness of fit) is $1 > 0.9$, AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) is $0.98 > 0.9$ and RMSEA (root mean square of approximation) is $0.04 < 0.10$. Incremental fitness depicts that the value of NFI (normal fit index) is $1 > 0.9$, CFI (comparative fit index) is $1 > 0.9$, TLI (Tucker Lewis index) is $1 > 0.9$, and IFI (Incremental fit index) is $1 > 0.9$. As all the indexes satisfy the requirement criteria, thus, the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction can be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit.

As the model built to study impact is efficient and reliable, thus the assessment of the hypothesis could be done at a 5% level of significance.

H₀₁: Social media influencers have no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_{A1}: Social media influencers have an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

For making deductions about this hypothesis sub-hypothesis for it would be assessed

a) Identification impact on the Perceived favorability of the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of identification on the customer's perceived brand favorability.

H₀: Identification has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Identification has an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4-62

Table 4.62: Regression results of identification impact on customers' perceived brand favorability

Favorability	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Identification	0.16	0.02	7.08	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Identification (0.02) is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that the identification value is $0.00 < 0.05$ and even the z-value for identification is 7.08 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null hypothesis of having no impact of identification on customers' perceived brand favorability is rejected.

b) Enthusiasm impact the perceived favorability of the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of enthusiasm on the customer's perceived brand favorability.

H₀: Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Enthusiasm have an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.63: Regression results of enthusiasm impact on customers' perceived brand favorability

Favorability	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Enthusiasm	0.14	0.02	6.00	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Enthusiasm that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that enthusiasm value is $0.00 < 0.05$ and even the z-value for enthusiasm is 6.00 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null hypothesis of having no impact of enthusiasm on customers' perceived favorability of the brand is rejected.

c) Attention impact on the perceived favorability of the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of attention on the customer's perceived brand favorability.

H₀: Attention has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Attention has an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.64: Regression results of attention impact on customers' perceived brand favorability

Favorability	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p value (sig)
Attention	0.20	0.02	9.11	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for Attention that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that attention value is $0.00 < 0.05$ and even the z-value for attention is 9.11 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that null hypothesis of having no impact of attention 'on customers' perceived favorability of the brand is rejected.

d) Absorption impact on the perceived favorability of the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of absorption on the customer's perceived brand favorability.

H₀: Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A: Absorption have an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.65: Regression results of absorption impact on customers' perceived brand favorability

Favorability	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Absorption	0.13	0.02	6.24	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for absorption that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that absorption value is $0.00 < 0.05$, and even the z-value for absorption is 6.24 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no impact of absorption on customers' perceived brand favorability is rejected.

e) Interaction impact on the perceived favorability of the brand

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of interaction on the customer's perceived brand favorability.

H_0 : Interaction has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.

H_A : Interaction has an impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.66: Regression results of interaction impact on customers' perceived brand favorability

Favorability	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Interaction	0.20	0.02	8.58	0.00

The table represents that the value of standard error for interaction that is 0.02 is low showing less biasness presence in results computation. Further, testing of the hypothesis by p-value shows that the interaction value is $0.00 < 0.05$ and even the z-value for interaction is 8.58 that is more than 1.96, thus, the analysis represent that null hypothesis of having no impact of interaction on customers' perceived favorability of the brand is rejected.

f) Popularity has moderating role between social media influencers and the perceived favorability of the brand.

The regression analysis was done to determine the impact of popularity on the customer's perceived brand favorability.

H₀: Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand favorability.

H_A: Popularity has moderating impact between social media influencers and customer's perceived brand favorability

The analysis results for the hypothesis are shown in the below table

Table 4.67: Regression results of social media influencer on customers' brand perceived favorability (Based On figure 4-10)

Favorability	Estimate	S.E.	C.R. (z-value)	p (sig) value
Popularity	0.192	0.017	11.079	0.000
Moderating1	0.018	0.011	1.572	0.116
Moderating2	0.004	0.013	0.291	0.771
Moderating4	-0.01	0.013	-0.776	0.438
Moderating3	-0.011	0.013	-0.843	0.399
Moderating5	-0.014	0.013	-1.065	0.287

The above table shows that the p-value of popularity is $0.000 < 0.05$, but for the interaction effect, all values are more than 0.05. Thus, the analysis represents that the null hypothesis of having no moderating impact of popularity between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand favorability is not rejected.

Social media influencer and customer engagement and its consequence of brand favorability

In the existing noisy media, the need of standing out among the crowd has become more difficult to attain. For building in strong brand, there is a need that a friendly relationship need to be present with customers wherein audience has trust on the brands and should accept that brand is continuously present around them to fulfill their needs to best of their ability. Collaboration with social media influencers enable brands to create more positive image for the brand for a longer period. As audience generally connect better with influencers, their perception, and recommendations; thus, influencer marketing enable

brands to build indirect linkage with customers and over a time develop brand love among customers towards brand. This results in creating better brand awareness and having more connections of customers with brands. Thus, social media influencers contributes towards deriving better customer engagement.

As in cases when brand interact with customers, there is a feeling of doubt that whether the brand is revealing true information about the products or not. But with influencer marketing as customers focuses on the perception of their trusted influencers, thus, herein recommendations made by social media influencers assures customers about the quality of products, have development of positive attitude towards the product, more acceptance towards the performance of brands, usage of the products, repeat purchase, spreading positive word of mouth, and having trustworthiness on brand. Thus, creating in favorable brand perception and sense of brand loyalty among customers, social media influencers helps in deriving customer engagement and another consequence i.e. brand favorability.

Though brands understand that social media influencers have presence of linkage with brand favorability but still to target more audience and have brand loyalty derivation in bulk, often brands aims to associate with popular influencers as they not only have more followers but also higher value. This results in raising the scope of sale for the brand but as the process often turns out to be expensive for the company and even sometimes does not yield adequate result, thus, some of the medium level business does not consider popularity as relevant component of influencer marketing. The statistical analysis in this study validates that popularity does not have contribution in affecting brand favorability as it does not affect the relationship between social media influencers and brand favorability.

Hence, brands need to strategise their functioning based on the targetted audience and the aspects that could yield more brand favorability like referral programs, discounts on repurchase or membership, or giveaways with influencers. These strategies would help in building better connection of customers with brand and hence motivate them not just to repurchase but also spread positive words about their experience with brand.

4.3. Discussion

The study to determine the perception of social media influencers on various social platforms. Herein, for data analysis, the perception assessment is divided into three categories i.e. Demographic analysis, background analysis, and inferential analysis that is the collection of the researcher's perception about social media influencer impact on customer engagement and their consequences. For fulfilling the aim and objectives of this study, two tests that are pilot and final testing were conducted. Initially, pilot testing was done of 106 respondents to examine demographical and background characteristics along with statements reliability in measuring each variable i.e. social media influence, brand value, favorability, and satisfaction. Further, the examination of all the dependent variables efficiency was done that is the brand value which consists of brand identity, brand trust, perceived value, and brand identification. Following the examination of brand favorability with assessment of brand loyalty and favorable brand perception efficiency analysis and the satisfaction level examination by analyzing the efficiency of brand experience and customer satisfaction. Having the examination of 106 customers for pilot testing, demographic analysis shows that the majority of respondents included in pilot testing are people who are following more than 5 social media influencers and consider their reviews or suggestions. Hence, the pilot testing describes that the respondents included in the study are the ones who are mostly the educated buying group i.e. the young and middle-aged people with good income level, i.e. middle class to elite group people, and value the social media influencers opinion for making their decisions. Using the Cronbach alpha test, reliability of statements in measuring the respective variable that is Identification, Enthusiasm, Attention, Absorption, Interaction, brand trust, perceived value, brand identification, brand loyalty and favorable brand, brand experience and customer satisfaction, popularity favorability, and satisfaction was done. Having the examination of determining the efficiency of the questionnaire in measuring the perception of 106 respondents, reliability analysis of each of the variable that is Identification, Enthusiasm, Attention, Absorption, Interaction, brand trust, perceived value, brand identification, brand loyalty, and favorable brand perception,

brand experience, and customer satisfaction, popularity favorability, and satisfaction shows that there is a presence of reliability of statements in measuring each variable. Thus, all the statements for each variable were considered for further analysis.

Final testing is the main analysis with the focus on fulfilling the objectives and aim of the study. It consists of a detailed examination of the final responses. Herein, the purpose of the study is to determine the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences. A sample size of 1013 respondents is considered for final testing. Initially, final testing was done on demographical and background characteristics of the respondents by frequency analysis. Having the examination of 1013 respondents for final testing, demographic analysis shows that the majority of respondents included in final testing are people who are following more than 5 social media influencers and consider their reviews or suggestions. Thus, the final testing describes that the participants included in the study are those who are mostly educated buying groups i.e. young and middle-aged people with good income levels and value the social media influencers' opinion for making their decision. Further, with the aim of the study to understand the role of social media influencers in the new age marketing and understand their role for different brands, the analysis was done on having the SEM-based statistical analysis wherein using the model's linkage between the variables is built and based on the path analysis, model adequacy, and estimation results; relevant information's about the linkage is derived. Initially, aggregate value for the social media influencer impact measuring variables i.e., identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction was done using the Cronbach alpha test. The analysis shows that all the variables that are identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction have an effective measurement of social media influencers' impact. Further, to fulfill the objectives of understanding the social media influencers' impact on customer engagement and its consequences, three majorly hypotheses was constructed that is social media influencers' impact on customers' perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability.

A model was constructed to represent the linkage between the selected constructs of social media influencers' impact and customer engagement perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability consequence. And to find out the moderating effect of popularity with brand value, the linkages are constructed of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction. The analysis of the modified model indicates that the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability was referred to as absolutely, incrementally, and parsimoniously fit. As the model built to study impact is efficient and reliable, so finally, the regression analysis was done to determine the impact of each variable that is identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction, and popularity on the customers perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability. The result showed that each of the variables has an impact on the customer's perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability but popularity does not have a moderating impact.

The summary table for hypothesis testing is presented as follows

Null Hypothesis	Findings	Supported
Identification has no impact on customer's perceived brand value	Rejected	(Hajli and Shirazi, 2021)
Enthusiasm has no impact on customer's perceived brand value	Rejected	(Almakbuli, Khan, and Ahmed, 2021)
Attention has no impact on customer's perceived brand value	Rejected	(Grondman, 2019)
Absorption have no impact on customer's perceived brand value	Rejected	(Muñoz-Expósito, Oviedo-García and Castellanos-Verdugo, 2017)

Interaction has no impact on customer's perceived brand value	Rejected	(Sokolova and Kefi, 2020)
Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customer's perceived brand value	Accepted	(Vrontis et al., 2021)
Identification has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.	Rejected	(Gulamali and Persson, 2016)
Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.	Rejected	(Wang, Huang, and Davison, 2020)
Attention has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.	Rejected	(Wang, Huang, and Davison, 2020)
Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.	Rejected	(Kim, 2022)
Interaction has no impact on customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand.	Rejected	(Negi and Pabalkar, 2020)
Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction.	Accepted	(Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020)
Identification has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.	Rejected	(Yang, 2021)
Enthusiasm has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.	Rejected	(Kim, Shin, and Koo, 2018)
Attention has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.	Rejected	(Yang, 2021)
Absorption has no impact on customers' perceived favorability of the brand.	Rejected	(Noor and Alifah, 2021)

Interaction has no impact on customer's perceived favorability of the brand	Rejected	(Jun and Yi, 2020)
Popularity has no moderating impact between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand favorability.	Accepted	(Nafees <i>et al.</i> , 2021)

Table 4.68 Summary of the sub-hypothesis tested

Social media influencers serves as a means of creating a talk about the brand. As commercial value about the brand could be created, thus, perception of customers about brand could be impacted and purchase intention is created (Hajli and Shirazi, 2021). This contribution is further depicted by (Almakbuli, Khan, and Ahmed, 2021) who mentioned that social media influencers helps in deriving better brand equity by working on creating more brand loyalty, having generation of brand love, and even raising purchase intention among customers. (Grondman, 2019) even highlighted that influencers in the existing market wherein online marketing technique is key component of targetting customers, serves as an important means of deriving customer engagement. Though in case of endorsement of competitive brands, trustworthiness is low and even negative but for congruent brands, higher trustworthiness of customers could be derived hence leading to affecting brand perception and satisfaction of customers towards brands. (Muñoz-Expósito, Oviedo-García and Castellanos-Verdugo, 2017) also supports the findings by mentioning that influencer marketing serves as a communication channel between customers and brands and not only help in delivering informations but also resolve the queries of customers. Thus, social media infleuncers in existing digitalized enviroment helps in deriving better customer engagement and attaining positive percieved brand value.

The results of the social media influencers and customer engagement and its consequence perceived customer satisfaction is similar to Hill, Troshani and Chandrasekar, (2017). The authors found that popular social media influencers develop a perception of

credibility among their followers. Hence, companies may be able to harness their potential in creating positive brand experiences that influence the search versus purchase intentions of the customers. Similarly, the current study establishes the impact of five components i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction on creating customer satisfaction. The findings of Wang, Huang, and Davison, (2020) also suggest that influencers have expert and referent power over customers that impact satisfaction from the consumption of the goods as well as their intention to socially share their experiences. Concerning the impact of the popularity of influencers on customers' perceived brand satisfaction, the current study has found a direct impact of influencers. These findings are similar to those in a study by Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, (2020). The results of the study indicate that influencers on social media with high perceived trustworthiness and attractiveness generate higher brand satisfaction.

There is presence of positive relationship of five impact components i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction on brand loyalty and favorable perception of the brand among the customers. These findings are similar to those reported in a study by Jun and Yi, (2020). The results indicated that the authentic perception of the influencers on customers helps them to build emotional attachment, which in return generates brand loyalty and a favorable brand image in form of trust. The findings derived in the present study suggest that instead of the moderation impact of the popularity of influencers on customers' perceived favorability of the brand, there exists a direct relationship. These results are similar to those found by (Nafees *et al.*, 2021). The study confirms the favorability of the brand based on customer perception by impacting the product acceptance among the customers. The relationship mediation between the customers and the company helps to create customer favorability towards a particular brand.

Thus, the findings imply that customers are influenced by social media influencers based on the 5 components of impact i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction cultivate their perceived brand value. The information gained by the contents

of the influencers is used to create value of the product, generate brand identity, relate with the help of identification with the brand, and transform into brand trust. Similarly, the findings also imply that the components of impact help the influencers create social power over their followers and hence can impact their target's perception. In this, they impact the brand experience and satisfaction among the customers through their referent power. Also, the engagement of customers by the social media influencers based on components of impact has a positive effect on the brand among the customers. The findings of the study imply that influencers can create a favorable perception of the brand in the minds of customers and hence lead to enhancement in their loyalty. The presence of direct impact of the popularity of social media influencers on customers' perceived brand value, customers' perceived satisfaction with the brand, and customers' perceived favorability of the brand imply that the moderation impact is not present.

4.4. Summary

The chapter with pilot testing determined the efficiency of all statements in measuring the respective variables and finally the examination of the hypothesis by building in SEM model stated that social media influencers have a significant impact on customer engagement and its consequences i.e. perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability but popularity is not a moderating variable role between these variables relationship.

Chapter: 5 FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The study to determine the role of social media influencers in influencing customer engagement and its consequences. As in the recent competitive business environment wherein social media has been identified as a major source of attracting customers, thus, herein, using a close-ended questionnaire, the perception of customers was examined for determining the influence of social media influencers on customer engagement. Initially for this study, pilot testing was done for determining the efficiency of the questionnaire in measuring the perception of the customers. A sample size of 106 respondents was considered for this study. With the examination of statements' reliability in measuring each variable i.e.; social media influence, brand value, satisfaction and favorability, and identification of efficient statements, final testing was done on 1013 respondents. The formulation of the SEM model helped in fulfilling the objectives of the study and determining the role of social media influencers in influencing brand value, satisfaction, and favorability. Thus, this chapter works on summarizing the major findings of the study and providing relevant information concerning the objectives. Initially starting the secondary and primary findings based on the review of existing researches and analysis of customers perception, the major derivations of the study are discussed. Further, having the aim to fulfill the desired objectives of the study, the chapter would state the conclusions using the results derived from the quantitative and qualitative analysis. Lastly, stating the strategies for deriving better customer engagement by social media influencers, the study would highlight the possible shortcoming of the study and identify the area which could further be explored.

5.2. Key Findings

The findings of the study show the results derived by having the examination of the customer's perception quantitatively and qualitatively. Initially having the theoretical review of existing researches, the quantitative analysis was done to add more validity to the results. For quantitative analysis, both pilot and final testing were considered. Herein, 5 constructs i.e., identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction are used for measuring the social media influencers' impact on customer engagement followed by constructs to measure brand value, satisfaction, and favorability. Thus, the below section would work on stating the outcomes derived from reviewing the existing literature and having the examination of the dataset collected from customers.

5.2.1. Findings from secondary study

In the modern competitive and digitalized world, the entire marketing methodology is based on having customization of products and attracting more customers to sustain in a competitive environment. The growth in usage of social media has changed the marketing strategy by bringing in the opportunity to strengthen the relationship between customers and brands. Social media plays a crucial position in the marketing mix since social media platforms have been shown to have a major impact on brand marketing performance (Gordon, R., 2012), making it even more necessary for marketing managers to use it. As a result of the introduction of analytic tools on their social network site platform, social media marketers have a greater rate of performance and are viewed as more effective (Misirlis, N. and Vlachopoulou, M., 2018). It was found that new social media tools and approaches have helped brands to enhance customer engagement and gain a more comprehensive view of their customers, allowing them to better fulfill their communications goals. On the other hand, customers' perceptions of a brand are influenced by their knowledge about the brand, which also determines their response when confronted with brand-related stimuli. As a result, it was critical for businesses to manage their brand knowledge to influence their customers' purchasing decisions. So, it was found that to build a direct connection between customers and businesses, brands

must develop a community on social media to promote customer participation in activities such as launching a new social campaign or hashtag or arranging a question and answer session with their leaders (Daniel Jr, E.S., Crawford Jackson, E.C. and Westerman, D.K., 2018).

Among the different social media platforms and the strategies to engage with customers or attract them, influencer marketing has evolved as the market strategy which not only works on attracting customers but also with building trust-based relationships with them. Social media influencers are third parties who affect customers' purchasing decisions by making suggestions (Lim, X.J., Radzol, A.M., Cheah, J. and Wong, M.W., 2017.), publishing photographs, and other information on social media, and molding their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. There are different types of influencers like celebrities, bloggers and content creators, industry leaders, video influencers, or micro-influencers (Kay, S., Mulcahy, R. and Parkinson, J., 2020). As social media marketing in the existing digitalized world has been identified as most effective marketing technique thus the study aims to **analyze the effect of social media influencers, have on customer engagement in chosen industries**. For fulfilling this initially a theoretical examination of existing researches has been undertaken for formulating the base of study. Herein, the analysis revealed that these influencers in today's marketing scenario, the strategies like making then brand spokesperson, creating a positive image about the brand, creating a complete experience, planning the correct content type, and posting things matching targeted audience taste are implemented. The success of this influencer marketing depends on the spread of electronic word of mouth, style of message, effective communication strategy, source credibility, physical attractiveness, and congruency between product and endorser.

Due to the existence of a competitive market environment, the brand is focused on creating a positive brand perception among customers as it helps in providing value to customers, and providing a sense of quality which in turn results in generating more sales revenue, improvement in brand positioning, increased patronage of customers, identification of distinguishing features of the brand, and have the impact of lifestyle and

status of customers. As focus of organizations are to derive better customer engagement, thus,. Study aims to **analyse the customer engagement consequences of using influencers in chosen industries**. With the assessment of existing researches by having qualitative analysis, the analysis revealed that social media provide an interactive platform for the free flow of information between marketers and customers resulting in creating favorable brand perceptions (Gräve, J.F., 2017). Even social media influencers posting photos, videos, or text provide favorable information to customers resulting in making customers more aware of the brand and influencing the perception of customers positively. Further, brands also work on increasing customer engagement as it helps in high brand affinity, increased interaction with the brand, higher customer retention, increased contribution, increased sales and cost reduction, lowering entry barriers, and creation of loyal customers. Thus, more and more brands are involving social media influencers to improve customer engagement with their brand.

However, it is considered that the success of influencer marketing is dependent on the popularity of social media influencers (Messiaen, J., 2017). Thus, the study aims to **examine the moderating role of influencer's popularity on customer engagement and its consequences**. With the assessment of existing researches qualitatively, the analysis revealed that as more popularity of social media influencers increases the reach of brand-related information among audiences thus raising customer engagement. Hence it is considered as an important aspect in influencing customer engagement.

5.2.2. Findings from the Primary study

The study focuses on determining the role of social media influencers in influencing the customer perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability of the brand. For fulfilling the aim and objectives of this study, two tests that are pilot and final testing were conducted. Initially, pilot testing was done of 106 respondents to examine demographical and background characteristics along with statements reliability in measuring each variable i.e. social media influence, brand value, favorability, and satisfaction. Further, the examination of all the dependent variables efficiency was done

that is the brand value which consists of brand identity, brand trust, perceived value, and brand identification. Following it is the examination of brand favorability with assessment of brand loyalty and favorable brand perception efficiency and the satisfaction level examination by analyzing the efficiency of brand experience and customer satisfaction. Having the examination of 106 customers for pilot testing, demographic analysis shows that the majority of respondents included in pilot testing are people who are following more than 5 social media influencers and consider their reviews or suggestions. Hence, the pilot testing describes that the respondents included in the study are the ones who are mostly the educated buying group i.e. the young and middle-aged people with good income level, i.e. middle class to elite group people, and value the social media influencers opinion for making their decisions. Using the Cronbach alpha test, it is derived that all statements used for measuring variables like Identification, Enthusiasm, Attention, Absorption, Interaction, brand trust, perceived value, brand identification, brand loyalty and favorable brand, brand experience, and customer satisfaction, popularity favorability, and satisfaction could be used in the final analysis.

With the derivation of efficient variables, final testing could be done to fulfill the purpose of the study and determine the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences. Herein, a sample size of 1013 respondents is considered data of which was collected using a close-ended questionnaire. Demographic analysis of 1013 customers showed that the majority of respondents included in the final testing are people who are following more than 5 social media influencers and consider their reviews or suggestions. Thus, the final testing describes that the participants included in the study are those who are mostly educated buying groups i.e. young and middle-aged people with good income levels and value the social media influencers' opinion for making their decision.

With the aim of the study to **analyze the effect of social media influencers, have on customer engagement in chosen industries**, the analysis was done using SEM models. Firstly, a model was constructed to represent the linkage between the selected constructs

of social media influencers' impact and customer engagement perceived brand value consequence. And to find out the moderating effect of popularity with brand value, the linkages are constructed of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction. Cronbach alpha test was done to examine the reliability of the construct. The result showed that there is a presence of linkages between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value and can be considered for further analysis. Further, the examination of model efficiency was done by using different absolute fitness and incremental fitness measures. The result of model fitness showed that the model is not fit, indicating that the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value could not be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit. So, further modification of the model was done by building covariances and the following model by removing the moderating variable. As the model was modified by building covariance, the linkages between correlation value for social media influencer sub-variables that is identification linkage with enthusiasm, attention, absorption and interaction a, enthusiasm linkage with attention, absorption, and interaction, attention linkage with absorption, interaction and the linkage between absorption and interaction and the following model where moderating variable was removed. The correlation values of all these linkage variables are greater than 0.5 indicates that there is a presence of linkage for social media influencers with sub-variables. The analysis of the modified model indicates that the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value was referred to as absolutely and increasingly fit. As the model built to study impact is efficient and reliable, so finally, the regression analysis was done to find the impact of each variable that is identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction, and popularity on the customers perceived brand value. The result showed that social media influencers constructs have an impact on the customer's perceived brand value but popularity in this relationship is not the moderating variable as it has a direct impact but not moderating impact.

Secondly, with aim to **analyse the customer engagement consequences of using influencers in chosen industries** also Cronbach alpha test showed that there is a

presence of linkages between social media influencer and customers perceived satisfaction with the brand and can be considered for further analysis. Further, the result of model fitness showed that the model is not fit, indicating that the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand satisfaction could not be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit. So, further modification of the model was and finally absolutely and incrementally fit model was derived. The examination of the relationship derived from the model shows that each of the constructs i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction has a significant and positive influence on perceived brand satisfaction but concerning the moderating influence of popularity, the linkage is not significant. Though the popularity of social media influencers has a direct impact on customer engagement, it does not moderate the relationship between social media influencers and customer engagement or its consequences.

Thirdly, to **examine the moderating role of influencer's popularity on customer engagement and its consequences**, the Cronbach alpha stated efficiency of statements in measuring respective construct. Further, the examination of model efficiency was done by using different absolute fitness and incremental fitness measures. The result of model fitness showed that the model is not fit, indicating that the linkage between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand favorability could not be referred to as absolutely and incrementally fit. So, further modification of the model was done by building covariances, and following a model where the moderating variable was removed and finally the linkage developed from absolutely and incrementally fit model stated that there is the presence of significant impact of social media influencers constructs on the customer engagement perceived brand favorability consequence. Each of the constructs i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction is positively associated with customer engagement favorability consequence. However, popularity in this linkage is not a moderating variable. Though there is an existence of a direct relationship between popularity and brand favorability it does not have any contribution in influencing the relationship between social media influencers and brand favorability. Hence, the analysis stated that social media influencers have a significant

role in influencing customers engagement by working on brand value, satisfaction, and favorability but this linkage is not influenced by the popularity of that social media influencer.

5.3. Objective wise Conclusions

With the advent of social media, the approaches and the tools for communicating with customers have changed greatly. The development of social media marketing was influenced by content-based platforms. These include platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter which allow firms to reach out to users on mobile devices and provide a new dimension of marketing for the firms. Marketing requires the maximization of available resources for the firms to ensure the development of products and services for the satisfaction of the needs of customers. Social media marketing has enabled firms to adopt a more participative approach to shape customer engagement and brand perceptions. Thus, focusing on this aspect the study works on having an examination of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences across various industries in India (Delbaere, M., Michael, B., and Phillips, B.J., 2021). The below section presents the objective-wise findings for the objectives to analyze the effect of social media influencers on customer engagement in chosen industries, to analyze the customer engagement consequences of using influencers in chosen industries, to examine the moderating role of influencers' popularity on customer engagement and its consequences. The responses are derived using the SEM analysis tool of responses gathered from 1013 survey respondents.

Objective 1: To analyze the effect social media influencers, have on customer engagement in chosen industries

Brands that want customers to trust their marketing can no longer reach out to them through traditional media. Influencer marketing is quickly becoming one of the most effective techniques to improve the results of your social media marketing operations (Kapitan, S. and Silvera, D.H., 2016.). Influencers have a huge number of devoted and

committed social media followers by nature (Lim, X.J., Radzol, A.M., Cheah, J. and Wong, M.W., 2017). These followers see them as experts in their fields, and they value their advice. And the goal of brands and influencers is to reach their target audiences through various platforms that WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. It is seen that brands of all sizes, big and small, are increasingly getting into the influencer market. Whereas influencer marketing has snatched a big portion of business and power from traditional marketing by forming actual connections, which the latter could not. As the influencers essentially behave as trusted friends to their followers, they are more inclined to purchase anything the influencer suggests. Even the analysis of 1013 customers from 5 different industries in which social media influencers are most active i.e. Food products, health and fitness; Clothing, Fashion, Beauty, and Lifestyle; Customer electronics; Real-estate and Investment; and Travel, Hotel, and Hospitality perceptions by SEM analysis suggested that customers tend to witness more customer engagement due to social media influencers as these influencers contribute to creating a positive image about the brand. Hence, influencer marketing now provides a higher return on investment for those who use it (Kumar, V. and Mirchandani, R., 2012), as well as relevant product and service suggestions for those who benefit from it.

To further appreciate the work done by social media influencers it is important to look at the role of influencers on constructs of customer engagement individually:

1. Identification: Social media Influencers can help customers identify with the brand (Vander Shee, B.A., Peltier, J. and Dahl, A.J., 2020). This allows brands to establish a sense of oneness between customers and the Brand.
2. Attention: Social media influencers help the brand achieve the focused and uninterrupted attention of the customer. This allows a brand to deliver marketing communication in its truest sense without error or dilution (Chekima, B., Chekima, F.Z. and Adis, A.A.A., 2020).

3. Absorption: The community and two-way communication ensure a customer can process the marketing communication fully (Singh, J., Crisafulli, B., and Xue, M.T., 2020).
4. Enthusiasm: Social media influencers create vigor and excitement among the customers (Fuggetta, R., 2012).
5. Interaction: Social media influencers have created online communities which facilitate promote discussions and sharing of information among current and prospective customers (Daniel Jr, E.S., Crawford Jackson, E.C. and Westerman, D.K., 2018.).

Objective 2: To analyze the customer engagement consequences of using influencers in chosen industries

Social media influencers as through their posts, videos, or images engage customers and even motivate their targeted audience in purchasing a specific brand by making them more aware of the brand, creating its positive image, supporting brand loyalty, ensuring a satisfaction-based experience, and enabling brand identification. These aspects depict that social media influencers have a positive contribution to customer engagement consequences. Even empirical analysis consisting of mostly educated buying groups i.e. young and middle-aged people with good income levels who follow at least 5 social media influencers supported these results. With the inclusion of major three consequences i.e. brand perception, satisfaction, and favorability; the impact analysis using the SEM model and the perception of 1013 customers from 5 different industries collected using close-ended questionnaire depicted that social media influencers have a positive influence on each of these customer engagement consequences. The case of linkage between social media influencers constructs i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction; and brand value perception i.e. brand trust, perceived value, brand identity, and brand identification are positively linked. Further, for the case of social media influencer and brand satisfaction i.e. customer satisfaction and brand experience also each construct of social media influencer has a positive association

with brand satisfaction (Hamilton, M., Kaltcheva, V.D. and Rohm, A.J., 2016). Lastly, similar is the case for linkage between social media influencer and brand favorability i.e. brand loyalty and favorable brand perception wherein each constructs positively influencer customer favorable perception towards brand (Choi, Y., Thoeni, A. and Kroff, M.W., 2018). Hence, social media influencers for chosen industries have a positive influence on the respective consequences of customer engagement.

Objective 3: To examine the moderating role of influencer's popularity on customer engagement and its consequences

As the influence of social media influencers and their role in manipulating the customer's perception is based on their popularity, thus, popularity is regarded as the moderating variable in the analysis. So, to find out the moderating effect of popularity with brand value, satisfaction, and favorability with the brand, the linkages were constructed of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction. For this 1013 customers from 5 different industries were collected using close ended questionnaire. The analysis of the linkages of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction showed that there is a presence of a direct relationship between popularity and brand value but it does not moderate the relationship between social media influencers and brand value. Further, the analysis of the linkages of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction on customers engagement brand satisfaction showed that there is an existence of direct impact of popularity on brand satisfaction, but does not have any contribution in influencing the relationship between social media influencers and brand satisfactions. And the analysis of the linkages of popularity with each of the constructs i.e.; identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction on customers engagement brand favorability showed that the popularity of social media influencers has a direct impact on customer brand favorability, but it does not moderate the relationship

between social media influencers and brand favorability. Thus, it can be concluded that popularity does not moderate the relationship between social media influencers and customer engagement and its consequences but it does have a direct impact on customer engagement and its consequences.

5.4. Recommendations

Social media marketing makes use of different social media websites to promote a particular product, service, organization, idea, and in the process, create a favorable brand perception in the minds of the customers. To create a favorable brand perception, brand managers need to go beyond traditional marketing using advertising and focus on creating brand experiences for their customers at every interaction.

- Establishing a trusted relationship with a relevant influencer, one who is in sync with our audience's wants and goals and whom our audience will look to when making purchasing decisions, is a vital component of an effective influencer marketing strategy.
- Live broadcasting on social media is one of the most effective ways to increase engagement and obtain fast reactions/feedback. Live broadcasts, for example, can be used to cover events in real-time or generate excitement around a product during its launch phase.
- One thing we should keep an eye on is the social media sites where our target demographic spends the most time. Attracting a new target market entails everything that goes into raising brand awareness but in a whole other space or product line. We'll need influencers who can generate buzz and deliver targeted traffic for this.
- While it's important to target influencers' audience with our material, don't forget about the "little people": our dedicated blog readers who subscribe to our newsletter, share our tweets and make enthusiastic comments on our posts.

- People's online interactions have changed as a result of social media. This means that, erroneously or not, individuals expect to be able to contact the people they follow and admire personally. It doesn't mean to answer every single tweet or personally respond, but we still regular engagement events in form of contest or fan questions should be organized for clearing queries.

5.5. Theoretical Implications

The current study explores the effect of social media influencers on shaping customer engagement consequences. Earlier studies have found that the engagement of customers by the influencers is related to several factors related to them as well as the platforms they use (Bentley *et al.*, 2021). The current study adds to the theoretical knowledge of the factors like identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction contributing towards impacting the social media influencers on customer engagement. Based on the 5 impact factors, the firms using influencers are rewarded in form of alignment of customers' perceived brand value, perceived satisfaction, and perceived favorability of the brand.

5.6. Practical or Managerial Implications

The important implications for the managers derived from this study include highlighting the augmented role that social media influencers play in the marketing and advertising industry. With the roles of the influencers getting more and more diverse, the current paper aims to detail the five impact components i.e. identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction based on which the managers can select their influencers. The managers should allocate marketing budgets on influencers based on the understanding of the customer behavior swayed by social media influencers in shaping their engagement with companies and its consequence. The results in the study indicate the presence of linkages between social media influencers and customers' perceived brand value, satisfaction, and favorability. For the same, managers need to ensure that they do not select the influencers based solely on their number of followers. Rather the decision

should be based on the expertise of the influencers to generate brand trust, perceived value, brand identification, brand loyalty and favorable brand, brand experience, customer satisfaction, popularity favorability, and satisfaction. These will help shape purchase intentions among the buyers (Koay *et al.*, 2021). Thus, a proper alignment of the influencers with the objective of the company must be obtained by the managers.

5.7. Limitations of the study

Though the study with an examination of customer perception has contributed to fulfilling the objectives by determining the impact of social media influencers on customer engagements and its consequences but still due to limited time and resources, there are certain shortcomings in the study.

- The targeted sample has been geographically restricted to customers living in the Delhi NCR region. This study focuses on studying the role of social media influencers and their impact on customer engagement across industries in India but the scope of the study is restricted with area hence showing limited applicability of results. This poses a limitation as the samples are not randomly distributed globally.
- The sample size of followers is 1013. The limitation in the sample size reflects that there is a small selection of influencers that are not spread across all fields or industries as well as the customers are taken from only 5 industries i.e. food products, health and fitness; clothing, fashion, beauty, and lifestyle; customer electronics; real estate and investment; and travel, hotel, and hospitality.
- Concerning the platforms of populous markets like India, there are other social media platforms like Snapchat or TakaTak are also popular among customers. But the dataset used in the current study is novelly obtained only for social media influencers from 5 platforms i.e. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

- Many areas of social media influencers impact like variation in customer engagement with the social media tool used or behavioural intention of industries are not explored with limited resources availability.

5.8. Scope of future research

As the study due to limited time and resources has narrowed to only five specific platforms and five chosen industries and a limited number of customers perception examination, thus, future studies could be directed towards widening the study scope.

- Endeavors can be taken to increase the number of influencers and customers influenced to expand the sample size. This will increase the robustness of the findings of the study in other languages as well as across other social media platforms.
- Four separate influencer types i.e. nano, micro, macro, and celebrity influencers have emerged. The scope of future research could be expanded by increasing the influencer universe by exploring the impact of social media influencers on customer engagement specifically on followers base
- The analysis in this study is restricted to the customer perspective. Further, the brand-based study could be formulated wherein interviewing top-level managers of different brands, social media influencers roles could be determined.
- As with the adaption to advanced technologies, the medium used by influencer has a major role in marketing. Thus, further studies could be undertaken for understanding how social media technologies variation could influence customer engagement.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire 1

Dear Participant,

This survey is a part of my ongoing research on the effect of social media influencers on customer engagement and its consequences. If you are someone who follows social media influencers on social media platforms (listed below) operating in the chosen industries listed below you are requested to spare a few minutes in answering the questions. The answers will be used solely for the purpose of my research.

Please note the scope of this study is limited to the following platforms and specific industries:

Specific Social Media Platforms:

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. YouTube
4. Twitter
5. LinkedIn

Chosen Industries

1. Food products, health and fitness
2. Clothing, Fashion, Beauty and Lifestyle
3. Customer electronics
4. Real-estate and Investment
5. Travel, Hotel and Hospitality

I. Demographic profile of Respondent

1. What is your Age?
 - a. 16-25 years
 - b. 26-35 years
 - c. 36-45 years
 - d. 46-55 years
 - e. Above 56 years
2. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Third Gender

<p>3. What is your highest level of Education?</p> <p>a. Secondary</p> <p>b. Senior Secondary</p> <p>c. Graduate</p> <p>d. Post Graduate</p> <p>e. Professional Degree</p> <p>f. Others</p>
<p>4. What is your Monthly Income?</p> <p>a. Student</p> <p>b. Below Rs 20,000</p> <p>c. Rs. 20,001-40,000</p> <p>d. Rs. 40,001-50,000</p> <p>e. Above Rs. 50,001</p>
<p>5. How many influencers do you follow?</p> <p>a. 1-5</p> <p>b. 6-10</p> <p>c. 11-15</p> <p>d. More than 16</p>

II. For each of the following statements, kindly indicate your answer by putting (√) on right option ranging between 5-Strongly Agree, 4- Agree, 3 Neutral, 2- Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree.

- Identification

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	When I see a Post/Video/Product Demo by an influencer, I feel that a trustworthy person or friend is sharing his experience					
2.	I have become a part of the online community created by the Influencer					
3.	I feel the influencers which I follow have similar lifestyles like me.					
4.	I feel influencers are different from Celebrities					

5.	I feel influencers are similar to me					
6.	I find it easy to relate to social media influencers.					
7.	I trust social media influencers more than celebrities.					

- Enthusiasm

S.No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am proud of my favorite influencers					
2.	I feel excited to watch/follow the Post/Videos content created by influencers					
3.	I wait for the next Post/Video of influencers, I follow					
4.	I appreciate and respect the effort and hard work put in by the influencers					
5.	I feel passionate about the style and creativity of the influencers					
6.	I believe influencers are trend setters					
7.	I am proud of being part of the online community created by influencers					

- Attention

S.No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

1.	I like to learn about product features and product use cases in detail from Influencer's post					
2.	I pay attention when influencers explain product features					
3.	A post from my favorite influencer grabs my attention					
4.	I follow post from influencers regularly and wait for the next post from influencers					

- Absorption

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I spent a lot of time watching Post/Videos of influencers					
2.	I now watch less TV and use the same time to watch Post/Videos of influencers on social media					
3.	Time just flies by when I watch post/video of influencers					
4.	I get carried away with the content created by influencers on Social Media					
5.	When I am watch a video by influencers it's difficult to detach myself from it					
6.	I normally watch full video or most part of video					
7.	If influencers have created a series of videos, I watch all or most videos in the series					

8.	When I see a post from my favorite influencer I feel happy and excited					
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● Interaction

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I like to comment, ask questions, give my opinion or feedback on influencer's post/videos					
2.	I normally ask influencers to review a particular product					
3.	I normally put questions to influencers about products or brands					
4.	I normally ask influencers solutions to any the problem I face					
5.	I enjoy exchange of ideas in the online community created by the influencers					
6.	I participate in any activity and challenges conducted by influencers					
7.	I like to interact with other followers in the comment section, by replying to comments posted by other followers on post of influencers					
8.	I go to Meetups, Huddles and Fan Fest to meet influencers					

- Customer satisfaction

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am generally satisfied and keen to be a follower of Influencers					
2.	I am going to continue following influencers					
3.	I share with other people how interesting Post / Videos of influencers are.					
4.	I am satisfied with the product information and other information provided by influencers					
5.	I am satisfied with the content created by influencers for various products and brands					
6.	I am satisfied with the Craft/Style of presenting content of influencers					
7.	I am satisfied with the product demos given by influencers, I follow					
8.	When I use a product recommended by an influencer, I am satisfied by the quality					
9.	When I use such products, I find the quality of the product to be similar to what was described by the influencer					

- Brand Trust

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am able to trust more on a brand or product after a positive review from influencers					
2.	I prefer and devote time to look for the reviews of from influencers before purchasing the product					
3.	I am able to get access to honest and reliable information and product description before actual purchase					
4.	I have never been disappointed with the products recommended by influencers					
5.	I have confidence and faith in the products and brand recommended by the influencers					
6.	Recommendation by influencers is a key factor in me maintain brand loyalty					

- Perceived value

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The value that I acquire by following influencers is greater than the time and effort I contribute in the process of following influencers					
2.	I believe following influencers will be					

	of a specific value to me in the future					
3.	I believe influencers add value by reviewing a product					
4.	Influencers product review generates a feeling of safety, security and sense of belonging in me					
5.	Many times, I look for and get promotional discounts through influencers					
6.	Recommendation from influencers help me purchase decision					
7.	I am able to connect with a product/brand by having detailed information provided by the influencers					

- Brand Identity

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Detailed review and recommendation creates a distinct identity for a product or a brand					
2.	Influencers help in creating distinct identity for smaller and lesser known brands					
3.	Recommendation from influencers increase reputation of a brand/product					
4.	Recommendation from influencers assures quality of the product					

- Brand Identification

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am very interested to know about what other people think about my favorite influencers					
2.	I am very interested to know about what other people think about the products recommended by my favorite influencers					
3.	When someone criticizes my favorite influencers, I consider it a personal insult					
4.	When someone criticizes products recommended by my favorite influencers, I consider it a personal insult					
5.	I do consider the success of my favorite influencer as a success of mine					
6.	I consider success of product recommended by my favorite influencer as success of mine					

- Brand Loyalty

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Quality of products recommended by influencers are well by what I like					

2.	I have no negative attitude towards influencers I follow					
3.	I have no negative feedback for the products recommended by influencers I follow					
4.	I have positive attitude towards influencers I follow					
5.	I have positive attitude towards products recommended by influencers I follow					
6.	I like features and performance of products recommended by influencers I follow					
7.	I regularly use products recommended by the influencers					
8.	I often repeat purchase products recommended by influencers					
9.	I recommend other people to use products recommended by influencers					

- Favorable Brand Perception

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	If my favorite influencer recommends a product, I am more likely to try/purchase it					
2.	I am able to trust more on the quality of the product after viewing reviews					
3.	The number of followers of the social					

	influencer states their trustworthiness					
4.	Frequent posting by the influencer keep me update about latest product launches					
5.	I prefer to look at reviews from a social influencer before buying the product					
6.	I am able to get access to honest and reliable description about the product and brand before the actual purchase					
7.	Recommendations by an influencer help me in purchase decision					
8.	If my favorite influencer recommends a product, I am more likely to try/purchase it					

- Brand Experience

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am able to get access to up-to-date trends by following a social influencer					
2.	Frequent posting by the influencer explains awareness of the influencer about latest trends					
3.	Social media influencer provides me with inspiration about the new products and brands					
4.	By following the page of a social media influencer, I can actually compare different brands for the product I intends to buy					

5.	I am able to connect with the brand by having detailed information about how to use the product, etc					
6.	I find the content created by influencers interesting and it makes me curious					

Popularity as moderating variable

Do you think popularity of social media influencer have impact on customer engagement with brand?

If you see a particular influencer is very popular, please answer the following statements in light of the effect of high popularity of influencer on you.

S.No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The more the popularity of influencer, My trust on information increases					
2.	The more the popularity of influencer, the more Positive attitude towards content					
3.	The more the popularity of influencer, the more positive attitude towards the brand					
4.	The more the followers of the Influencer, the more likely I am to follow the Influencer					
5.	If a lot of people refer to me an Influencer I am more likely to follow the Influencer					

Thanks and Regards

