

## Chapter 5

# Social Media Influencers as a Sales Tool and Medium for Online-to-Offline Sales

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### **ABSTRACT**

*According to statistics, customers at around 71% are willing to purchase products based on social media referrals. Also, by searching about products on social media such as Facebook, it shows that 71% of social media users have taken shopping actions because of seeing content posted by content creators. This chapter explores the evolution of influencer marketing as a concept, and discusses social media influencers role in the sales process online and offline as well as influencer marketing as an industry. With such growth of influencer marketing budgets and growth in industry size, and the transformation of influencers from Online third-party word of mouth tools to social commerce catalysts, the industry knows no limits and only knows innovation and finding more creative ways for integrating influencers with brands.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to statistics, particularly HubSpot's statistics, customers at around 71% are willing to purchase products based on social media referrals. Also, by searching about products on social media such as Facebook, it shows that 71% of social media users have taken shopping actions because of seeing content posted by content creators. This research also shows that customers made purchases either in the moment or after seeing a product or service on Instagram and these customers amount to 54% of the same survey conducted by Facebook.

In another report published by Deloitte that sheds light on consumer behaviour in the digital era, it states that, consumers influenced by social media are four times more likely to spend more on purchases. And one big factor that supports the that, is the constant evolution of user interfaces of social media

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platforms hence, new ways of influencer marketing strategies. It gives an opportunity for content creators to create content in different formats all the time, making them showcase products in constant innovative ways. For example, Instagram now allows its users to create and post creative reels & shop online from multiple categories and offers business accounts; this cross-features on one platform, allows consumers to easily watch content produced about products and then instantly buy it. Just Like Instagram, TikTok, has also had rolled out new features over time for pushing behaviors of content creators to ease product promotions. Features include adding “links” to post where they redirect audiences and adding locations as well. As influencer marketing is giving great results for the brands in their targeted markets through social media, the dependency on influencers for marketing strategies is on the rise. Since brands now allocate more money for digital marketing now more than anytime ever, it is also causing vital shifts in the planning of marketing campaigns and the allocation of budgets. Adding on the above, in today’s digital era, the practice of employing social media influencers to generate favourable consumer action is growing due to its perceived ability to return higher profits for retailers beyond other traditional marketing strategies. The objective of this chapter is to examine the role of Influencer Online-to-Offline marketing strategies for sales and examining the future of such an industry.

## **BACKGROUND**

Social media marketing (SMM) has gained much attention of scholars and many have defined the concept from different point of view. Yadav and Rahman (2017) defined SMM as a facilitator of connectivity and interaction with prospective customers with the intention of selling product and services. They further stated that SMM enhances the stakeholders’ value by facilitating interaction, sharing personalized recommendations and enabling electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Felix et al. (2017) examined the strategic level of social media marketing, which reviews an organization’s decisions about social media marketing scope, culture, structure, and governance. From marketing perspective, Dwivedi, Kapoor, & Chen, (2015, p.291) highlighted that SMM as an interactive dialogue around a marketing offering that facilitates social media users get to know about organisations’ promotional information or learn from other users about their experiences of the marketing offering. Vinerean (2017, p.31) highlighted that organisations employ SMM to gain insights of prospective customers, acquire and to increase lifetime value of customers by retention strategies. He further stated that strategic importance of SMM for an organisation; Firstly as an advertising potential to reach prospective customers, secondly to increase e-WOM of brand experience through loyal customers as well as related social influencers and eventually to building social relationships with customers as an effort of CRM activity.

## **MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER**

### **Celebrities as A Marketing Tool**

Marketing strategies are varied and plenty, but here we discuss the use of celebrity endorsement. This paper takes a further look so that we can understand why celebrity endorsements work. Celebrities play a bigger role in our lives than ever before, enhanced by the use of social media. Coupled with the rising use of social media accounts among a diverse demographic, this gives opportunities for marketers

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