

Chapter 13

Influencer Marketing: Way to a Sustainable Marketing Approach

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ABSTRACT

The millennial focus has shifted from mere consumption to sustainable consumption. Responsible and ethical buying is the primary focus. Millennial consumers are highly concerned about issues like environmental degradation and climatic changes and are ready to contribute to good causes. They are becoming more risk-averse and prefer to support businesses that emphasize pro-social messaging, environmentally friendly production, and moral business practices. The target consumer's perception of influencer marketing buzzwords like authenticity, credibility, and consumer involvement can be perceived as evolving. Influencers also power their voices to promote changes for good environmental causes. The study enlightens the development of the urge for ethical/sustainable buying to adopt moral influencer content as a basis to follow them and facilitate the consumer buying process. The people associated with the domain as influencers or aspiring to be one should focus on ethical influencing. The growing ethical consumerism is playing a vital role in behavioral adoption of ethical influencers.

INTRODUCTION

Influencers have the power of their voices, and many prefer to use their voices to urge people to learn more about a worthwhile cause or advocate for change (Fuxman et al., 2022). The study aims to understand millennial consumers' preference in adopting ethical influencers and the role of authenticity,

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credibility, social impact, and consumer engagements of the brands led by the urge for ethical buying. E-influencers are persons who have developed a reputation for their subject-matter expertise (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). They frequently post about that subject on their preferred social media platforms, where they amass sizable fan bases of enthused, active individuals who pay close attention to their opinions. They have potential to start trends and persuade their followers to purchase the things they advocate, social media influencers are adored by brands (Atiq et al., 2022).

As brands continue to allocate more in influencer marketing, they must carefully consider whether their approach meets the industry's ethical and equality-driven expectations (Marín-García et al., 2022). Failure to develop an ethical strategy can damage your brand's reputation, cost you money, and prevent you from building a strong community of advocates. When it comes to maintaining brand loyalty, a brand's ethics and core values are now more important than ever, and prioritizing an ethical influencer marketing strategy is non-negotiable (Risitano et al., 2022). The need for ethical influencers in the domain has enhanced immensely. Instead of pressuring others into doing something, ethical influence involves winning their approval and making the decision to do it. The ultimate goal of the ethical influencer is to make people truly "desire" to do something, which is obviously the most powerful form of persuasion (Haider et al., 2022).

People are paying more attention to the products being sold, how they are getting produced and proper communication about ethical production is helping the brands to connect the target consumers and in turn people help them grow by associating (Sahadev et al., 2022). Consumers, especially millennials, are paying more attention to where they spend their money. The customers intend to place a greater emphasis on social and environmental issues while making purchasing decisions (Risitano et al., 2022).

Influencer marketing is becoming more powerful in the ever-changing world of digital marketing, with the potential to influence customer behavior towards more sustainable and ethical choices (Rathore, 2018). Brands may lead the way in sustainable marketing by carefully associating with influencers that demonstrate and promote ethical principles (Rathore, 2018). Through their carefully selected material and genuine interactions, ethical influencers can impact consumer mindsets and encourage conscientious buying practices. A change in consumer behavior is accelerated when these influencers promote companies who are serious about doing the right thing for the environment and their followers (Topalova, 2021). Their support encourages people to think about the impact of their purchasing decisions and highlights the value of products made in an ethical manner. Inspiring a societal embrace of responsible consumerism, the ripple impact of ethical influencers goes beyond conventional product promotion. A more positive and responsible consumer culture can be fostered through the use of influencer marketing, which in turn promotes the broad adoption of ethical and sustainable principles (Mutum & Ghazali, 2023). Thus, the first research objective is:

RO₁: The influence of ethical purchase intention of consumers on behavioral adoption of ethical influencers

The mediating roles of social responsibility, authenticity, and credibility in influencer marketing create an attractive pathway for the promotion of sustainable practices. Ethical influencers provide a mediating role between consumers' intentions to buy and their actual conduct in an ethical manner (Kushwah et al., 2019). By projecting an authenticity that is based on true belief and congruence with ethical principles, these influencers help link customers with sustainable brands. An essential component of influencer marketing, credibility increases the persuasive power of an ethical message by demonstrating its reliability. At the same time, when influential people promote eco-friendly goods, it gives the impression that everyone is trying to do their part to support ethical consumerism. A healthy synergy between

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