

THE IMPACT OF GLOCAL MICRO MARKETING STRATEGIES AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR POST –COVID – 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: *Influencer marketing is word-of-mouth marketing to popularize the product This marketing tool is becoming increasingly popular in digital marketing and the impact of influencers is not only seen on consumers but can also be seen on the companies. The influencers help the companies to create brand equity and in turn positioning. A micro-marketing model has been designed by the authors and the proposed model was tested by using regression analysis& Factor analysis in SPSS and collected a sample of 100 users via convenience sampling.*

Our study finds, (in the Indian context)that a weak brand can have a positive impact by a strong influencer while it can be weak if the influencer is not so strong. On the other hand, if the brand is strong like Colgate, it has minimal impact by the influencers, although the image of the influencers can be used to transfer their image to the product i.e., helpful in positioning. Therefore, it is crucial for the managers to carefully evaluate the influencers while associating them with their brand.

Keywords: *Micro-marketing, social media, influencer, consumer buying behavior, branding, pandemic, influencer marketing.*

1. Introduction

As the world is moving towards recovery and with incoming second wave of corona-19, the recovery is going to be unpredictable and uneven across different geography, nation. The need of having strong brand became more important and relevant today(Samir Kapur, 2020). According to Mckinsey report 20201, there is almost twice difference in stakeholder return by top 40 brands who outperform MSCI (Morgan Stanley Capital International) benchmark in last 20years. Therefore, the need of strong market presence became utmost important for the brands. One way to achieve that is through Influencer marketing.

Influencer marketing is word-of-mouth marketing to popularize the product. It is an important marketing strategy that builds upon relationships and recognition of leaders. Their opinion is highly recognized within their community, especially in social networks (Brown & Fiorella, 2013; Turban et al., 2016)

This marketing tool is becoming increasingly popular in digital marketing due to the rise of social media which has really shot up during pandemic and lockdown. Marketers aim to cooperate with influencers, who have a high reach on social media as well as many followers, who effectively engage with them (*Brown & Fiorella, 2013; Reckenthäler, 2015*).

The impact of Influencers can vary with different brands considering how unknown, weak, or strong brand it is. There are hence different considerations in terms of the strength of both the brand and the influencer in consideration (*Julia Pitz et al., 2018*).

The challenges like overflow of the information or the brand interchangeability (*Esch, 2018; Kroeber-Riel & Esch, 2015*), marketers try to overcome these challenges by influencer campaigns, they create self-brand related image and dissipated to large audience(*Brakus et al., 2009*).

Marketers aim to cooperate with influencers, who have a high reach on social media as well as many followers, who effectively engage with them(*Brown & Fiorella, 2013; Reckenthäler, 2015*)

Relationship marketing, another important tool for establishing brand, refers to activities for establishing and maintaining successful exchange in relationship. For the firms they try to establish relationship with customers, suppliers, employees, and other business unit. It is prerequisite for getting success in this competitive environment.(*Robert M. Morgan & Shelby D. Hunt, 1994*)

2. Literature review and Development of hypothesis

As described by *Sameer Kapur*, in “*The future of consumer behavior and brand strategy post covid 19*” published at *Review of Professional Management, Volume-18, Issue-1 (January-June 2020)*, the new age customers would look like the following:

- Changed purchase patterns: Online buying experience has increased to great bounds.
- Connected consumers: Because of internet, customers of today exactly know what they want, when they want it and where they want it.
- Experiential consumers: Modern Trade (MTs) are a big hit among consumers and in today’s time it really matters what special the buying channel has to offer.
- Healthy choices: More consumers are shifting towards natural, herbal, organic and even Ayurveda

Taking inspiration from the consumer buying behavior model of Engel-Kollat-Blackwell, we have devised a conceptual model for consumer buying behavior for micro-marketing. (*Mothersbaugh and Hawkins, 2016*)

The three major factors affecting the consumer buying behavior would be:

1. Advertisements
2. C2C Interactions
3. Environmental conditions

The details are explained below:

2.1 Micro & Macro-Influencers

Macro influencers are very well-known influencers who have a universal image to maintain and have the potential to influence large groups of people with different demographics, cultures, and even languages. Macro-influencers are perceived as more admirable, credible with the highly polished professional image while a Micro-influencer is friendly, natural with a slick image, and closer affinity with the customer. (*Carmen Berné-Manero and Mercedes Marzo-Navarro, 2020*)

The best way to motivate engagement is through the transfer of emotions. This should be the focus of influencers. Therefore, they face a complicated way forward and probably need to reinvent their roles as opinion leaders and prescribers in commercial or social media adverts. This results in the first hypothesis based on the influence of micro-marketers:

H1: The micro-marketers influence the consumer buying behavior

2.2 Customer-to-customer (C2C) Value creation

It has been found out by some authors that customers like to co-create value with another customer i.e., through C2C interaction which could increase in value to the customer. (*Helkkula and Kelleher, 2010; Schau et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2004*)

Customer interaction in the retail environment is common and influences the retail experience by the other customers or by the sales team. Nicholls, 2010: However, C2C interaction has also been seen in online retail environments, i.e., C2C virtual interaction. (*Harris and Baron, 2004; Martin, 1996; McGrath and Otnes, 1995*)

Fear of anxiety is one of the biggest fears among Indian consumers as a result people fail to collaborate in offline platforms and therefore, online interaction becomes prominent. However, many companies' websites lack proper guidelines for customer interaction. For Ex-companies could provide the customers to interact with fellow customers, by offering the choice with privacy desired. For example, the company in the US, Thread less a T-shirt online retailer offering a unique virtual store to its customer, a forum to talk about art, exchange tips.

2.3 Rise of 'We are shopping' importance

'S-commerce' or social commerce has significantly increased its importance. According to the McKinsey report, people's time on social media has increased. Pictures or videos shared by consumers on social media or blogs, or the shared story create a positive or negative impact. Recommended post online acts as user-generated advertising and word of mouth. (*Jia Wertz, 2019*)

S-commerce is not only social network sites but also peer-to-peer sales platforms (community-based marketplaces), user-created and customized product and participatory group (where consumers make decisions, vote, fund and collaborate to design) etc.

K&W In collaboration with WNS, Sep 28, 2016: Companies are leveraging this user-generated content, various advanced analytical tools are being used and analyzed the behavioral traits of the consumers and tweak their strategies accordingly.

Based on 2.2 and 2.3 we will have to understand the influencer and brand relationship based on their awareness and importance:

H2: Strong influencer impacts the buying behavior of weak brand positively

H3: Weak influencer impacts the buying behavior of strong brand negatively

2.4 Stockpiling because of lockdown

Social media sites have the potential to rapidly distribute information, including news content, videos, and embedded links, which has produced significant shifts in patterns of communication and usage of social media content. This caused an increase in the sharing of news and information which created a panic in the customers to stockpile the essentials and even the things they love, as they might not get them for a long time now.

The stockpiling in bulk also increased demand for the necessities of life and, as a result, many shelves were empty, and the websites of big retailers went down due to heavy online traffic and orders. The uncertainty and proof of uncertainty created a global social consensus for staying at home and stockpiling. (Muhammed Naeem, 2020). Taking this into consideration the following hypothesis is suggested:

H4: The pandemic had a drastic impact on consumer buying behavior

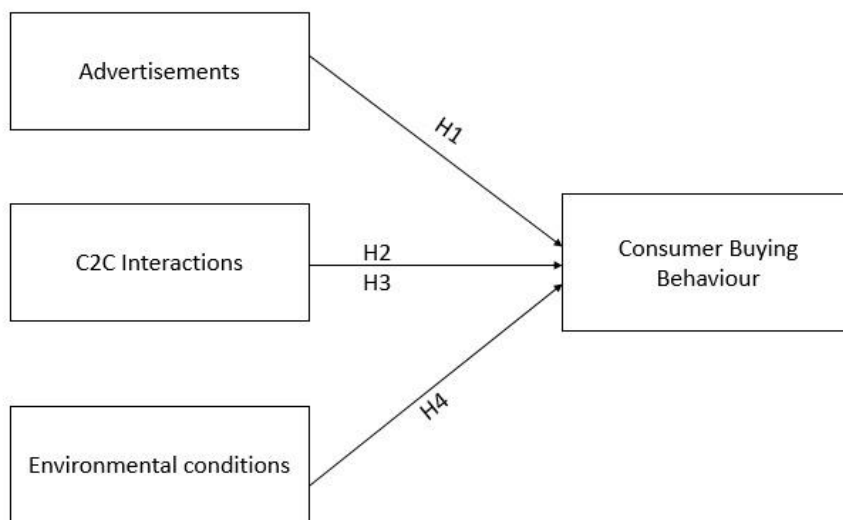


Fig 2.1 Conceptual Framework

This model explains the Consumer Buying Behavior which is the dependent variable based on three significant independent variables namely Advertisements, C2C Interactions & Environmental conditions.

The first hypothesis H1 has been derived from the independent variable Advertisements. Similarly, H2&H3 from C2C Interactions and H4 from Environmental conditions.

This model forms the basis for our study.

3. Research Methodology

This study was causal in nature and standardized questionnaire was adopted and modified as a tool for data collection. The sample size comprised of 300 respondents and the questionnaire was administered on google forms. The convenience sampling method was used for data collection. The proposed framework was tested using regression analysis in SPSS 23. In this study, we considered the following 5 constructs that have been derived out

of the literature review have been taken into consideration. The questionnaires were given to the users of social media. The measurement items of the selected variables were adopted from the previously validated studies. A five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “Strongly Disagree” to (5) “Strongly Agree” were selected to measure responses in the present study. Along with primary research, secondary research using peer to peer reviewed journals was conducted to validate the results.

Construct - 1	Consumer buying behavior
Construct - 2	Micro-marketers influence on buying behavior
Construct - 3	Influencer analysis
Construct - 4	Strong brand perception with influencer
Construct - 5	Weak brand perception with influencer

Fig 3.1 - Table with Constructs

We will be referring to the **strong brand** as **Brand 1** and **weak brand** as **Brand 2** throughout the paper.

4. Findings

The data was analyzed using SPSS software. The following tools were used – Factor Analysis, Average Variance expected Reliability test - Cronbach alpha and Regression Analysis.

The output obtained was reliable and less than 0.005 significance factor which means our data from the sample is good to use for the mass population. The SPSS outputs are given below:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.891	.892	27

Fig 4.1

Result– Cronbach is the measure of reliability of internal consistency. From Cronbach Alpha we get the value of 0.891 which means our survey was very much reliable and consistent.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.779
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1652.529
	df	276
	Sig.	.000

Fig 4.2

Result:–Bartlett's test check if there is any redundancy and check for homogeneity of variance i.e., variance is equal to samples. Bartlett's test significance was 0.00 which is less than 0.05 which means our data is significant enough to conclude and KMO test is used for sampling data adequacy that to be used in factor analysis. KMO test is close to 0.8 which signifies meritorious data.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.467	26.947	26.947	6.467	26.947	26.947	4.159	17.330	17.330
2	3.370	14.043	40.990	3.370	14.043	40.990	3.242	13.506	30.836
3	2.885	12.020	53.009	2.885	12.020	53.009	3.075	12.811	43.647
4	2.096	8.733	61.742	2.096	8.733	61.742	2.710	11.291	54.938
5	1.455	6.062	67.804	1.455	6.062	67.804	2.422	10.090	65.028
6	1.045	4.353	72.158	1.045	4.353	72.158	1.711	7.130	72.158
7	.974	4.057	76.214						
8	.860	3.583	79.797						
9	.727	3.028	82.825						
10	.649	2.705	85.529						
11	.531	2.212	87.742						
12	.469	1.954	89.695						
13	.400	1.669	91.364						
14	.339	1.413	92.777						
15	.292	1.218	93.995						
16	.267	1.112	95.107						
17	.219	.914	96.021						
18	.195	.814	96.835						
19	.180	.750	97.584						
20	.154	.641	98.226						
21	.133	.555	98.780						
22	.115	.478	99.258						
23	.107	.445	99.703						
24	.071	.297	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Fig 4.3

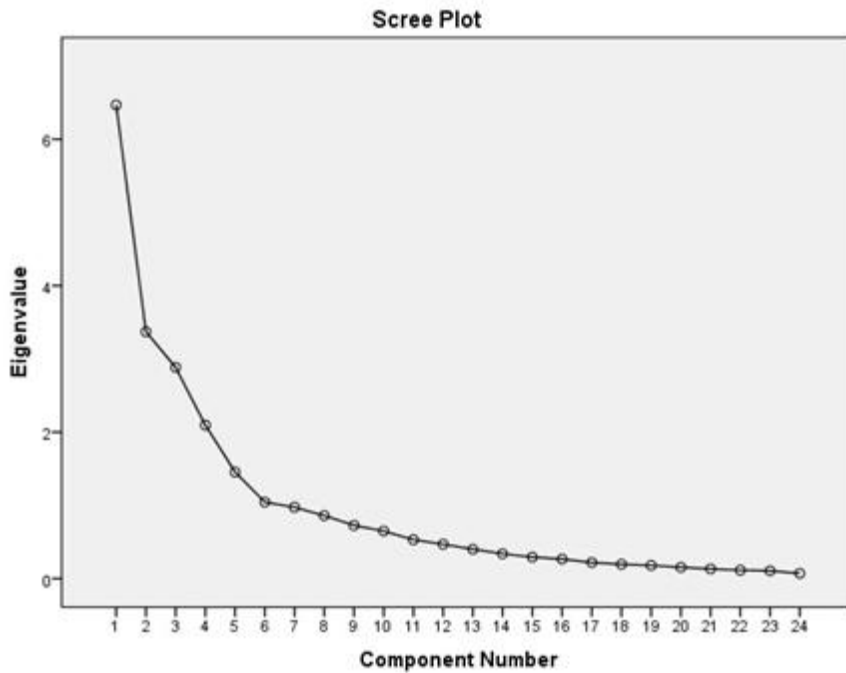


Fig 4.4

Result: From the fig 4.3 and fig 4.4, Total Variance comes out to be 72.158 from the 6 factors which means these 6 factors can explain 72.158% of the variance in the output and total 24 factors explained 100% of data. Since these 6 factors have cumulative variance of more than 70%, and hence we can use these for further investigation to the analysis like Regression

Rotated Component Matrix ^a						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Likeness_Influencer	.915					
Expertise_Influencer	.913					
Trust_Influencer	.910					
Recognise_Influencer	.867					
Convince_by_Influencer	.798					
Recognise_Aquafresh		.888				
Trust_Aquafresh		.887				
Quality_Aquafresh		.858				
Attractiveness_Aquafresh		.847				
Trust_Colgate			.891			
Attractiveness_Colgate			.887			
Quality_Colgate			.821			
Recognise_Colgate			.730			
Reliable_source				.910		
Product_Influencer				.885		
Awareness_Influencer				.718	.402	
Brand_Face				.473		
TOMind					.802	
Recall					.775	
Another_Shop					.550	.393
Stock					.501	
Need					.449	.417
Research						.771
Read						.696

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Fig 4.5

With the help of Factor Analysis, the researchers have reduced 24 factors to 6 factors:

1. **Buying Pattern**
2. **Product Research**
3. **Awareness & Trust on Influencers**
4. **Influencer Impact on buying Pattern**
5. **Buying Pattern in Aqua fresh Toothpaste**
6. **Buying Pattern in Colgate**

Regression Analysis:

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.571	.061		41.889	.000
	REGR factor score 1 for analysis 2	.230	.062	.200	3.727	.000
	REGR factor score 2 for analysis 2	.152	.062	.132	2.460	.016
	REGR factor score 3 for analysis 2	.199	.062	.173	3.226	.002
	REGR factor score 4 for analysis 2	.886	.062	.770	14.356	.000
	REGR factor score 5 for analysis 2	.198	.062	.172	3.210	.002
	REGR factor score 6 for analysis 2	.112	.062	.097	1.812	.073

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase_Inspiration

Fig 4.6

Regression on Purchase Inspiration:

1.	Buying Pattern	Significant
2.	Product Research	Insignificant
3.	Awareness & Trust on Influencers	Significant
4.	Influencer Impact on buying Pattern	Significant
5.	Buying Pattern in Brand 2	Significant
6.	Buying Pattern in Brand 1	Significant

Regression on Buying Brand 1:

1.	Buying Pattern	Significant
2.	Product Research	Insignificant
3.	Awareness & Trust on Influencers	Insignificant
4.	Influencer Impact on buying Pattern	Insignificant
5.	Buying Pattern in Brand 2	Insignificant
6.	Buying Pattern in Brand 1	Significant

Regression on Buying Brand 2:

1.	Buying Pattern	Significant
2.	Product Research	Insignificant
3.	Awareness & Trust on Influencers	Significant
4.	Influencer Impact on buying Pattern	Significant
5.	Buying Pattern in Brand 2	Significant
6.	Buying Pattern in Brand 1	Significant

Result- From our analysis it has been found out that the impact of influencers can be seen on the buying pattern of consumer behavior, the stronger the influencer the more impact can be seen especially when brand is weak. In other words, we can say, the weak brands are more intensively affected by influencers as compared to strong brands. Therefore, as a manager of the weak brand can collaborate with influencers to improve brand perception among consumers.

5. Findings, Discussion & Implications

Validation of Hypothesis:

H1 - The micro-marketers influence the consumer buying behavior

An Instagram micro-influencer was chosen, and the questions related to her influence on sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experience of consumers clearly indicates the significant impact of influencers on buying behavior.

H2 - Strong influencer impacts the buying behavior of a weak brand positively

Case I: Weak Brand, Strong Influencer

This is the case where the strong influencer impacts the most in creating a good value creation for the brand. The strong influencer makes the brand recognizable to many people and makes them trust the brand the way they trust the influencer.

Case II: Weak Brand, Weak Influencer

This is the worst-case scenario. Here, chances of consumers buying the brand are the lowest. It may be the case that if a consumer wants to try a new product they may go for these types of products.

H3 - Weak influencer impacts the buying behavior of a strong brand negatively

Case III: Strong Brand, Weak Influencer

In this case the influencer doesn't really add any additional value to the brand. A strong brand remains a preferred choice for the consumers, and it doesn't really matter who the influencer is. On the other hand, the influencer gets an increased sense of pride and respect associated with the brand.

Case IV: Strong Brand, Strong Influencer

In this case, it's like the best of both worlds. The brand is well established and preferred choice of many consumers and additionally the influencer's impact creates a good synergy.

H4 - The pandemic had a drastic impact on consumer buying behavior

The responses taken during pandemic for questions related to bulking and need based buying clearly indicates that consumers have become quite sensitive towards essentials, and this will change the long-term behavior.

6. Future Scope and Limitations of the Study

Not much research is conducted in the Indian context for micro-marketers and their influence hence, more researchers can help signify the exact and precise impact and the ways to even boost it further. This study includes one product category & one influencer only, the future research can explore different brand and more level of micro as well as macro level of influencer.

Time constraint was major concern as many individuals were working from home hence one to one interaction was not possible for the study. The research sample mainly consists of students aged between 18-27 years hence some of the responses may be biased. Gender variation could not be recorded in this study.

Conclusion:

Micro marketing will play the role of a game changer

Micro-moment marketing plays the role of a game changer for marketers and customers. The current marketing process floods customers with unwanted advertisements, tweets, and push notifications. The concept of micro-moment marketing aims at providing customers with relevant value-based data, which will prove to be advantageous to customers while researching and buying a product of their interest. Examples of micro-moments could be when you use your phone to examine calories in your food while waiting for the food to arrive at a restaurant. Another example could be scanning news on Twitter. These small moments help improve consumer interaction with brands and offer enormous opportunities for marketers.

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