

**THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (SMIs) ON  
YOUNGSTERS' BUYING BEHAVIOUR: A CASE STUDY IN  
MAURITIUS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of the study are to analyse the effect of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on youngsters buying behaviour in Mauritius, especially to generate buzz and attention among individuals to be able to broaden social media coverage for businesses. SMIs seem to bring a positive effect on the sales of products and services when they are part of the endorsement, which eventually leads to a change in consumer buying behaviour, especially among youngsters. It is a noteworthy that there are no limitations in the ways through which SMIs influence youngsters. Since the latter spend more of their time on social media than people of other ages, the impact of SMIs on them is greater. Young consumers require information in order to make efficient and trustworthy purchasing decisions and social media have provided this information to them through SMIs. The effect of SMIs on youngsters is now a global issue. The world has moved online and people find ways to earn simply by creating content to influence the world. In this paper, the impact of SMIs on young consumer attitudes, roles and activeness, and how the SMIs influence the buying behaviour of youngsters in Mauritius have been considered. The primary research method has been used in order to collect data and to achieve these objectives. The findings from the study have helped to give a better view of how and to what extent these SMIs have an impact on consumer buying behaviour among youngsters in Mauritius.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The new type of independent third-party endorser, that is, Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are believed to influence audience attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media (Freberg, et al., 2011). The role of SMIs is to connect and communicate with their followers providing new content or new promotions on a regular basis (Liu, et al., 2012). As this form of marketing is perceived to be less time-consuming and less expensive, many businesses prefer to encourage SMIs to become their brand ambassadors with a massive

number of followers (Ki, et al., 2020). The use of social media has increased enormously in the last decade, with the rapid growth of mobile information technology and youngsters in particular who are among the most active users of social media. According to (Mason, 2017), the majority of internet users are under 44 years old, with usage being equally strong among 16 to 24 years old and 35 to 44 years old. This pattern is reflected in the majority of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 using social media and apps. Browsing via social media, especially for young people, has become part of daily routine today.

In this paper, the concept of social media influencers, by exploring the effects on the mindset and intention of customers to buy, is considered. Understanding the effectiveness of social media influencers on purchasing intentions through the attitude of consumers could potentially provide marketing practitioners with useful insights, whereby they can establish advertising strategies to shape the decision-making of positive and impactful customers towards their goods and services. The main aim is to analyse and understand the extent to which SMIs have an effect on the buying behaviour of youngsters in Mauritius.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media have been the big evolution platform for communication in recent years, giving us a loudspeaker to express our opinions and welcome others from all over the place. The connection with customers more directly and organically for a new channel of brands is due to the rise of social media. If a brand is not present on social media, companies should start evaluating their marketing strategies (Glucksman, 2017). Over the past decades, social media have achieved so much growth and fame around the world to a degree that many studies are focussed towards learning more about these social networks and their impacts on society. Given the fact that nearly everybody in the world is linked to at least one social media site, the leading and most fanatical users of these social networking sites are young people (Mageto, 2017). The use of social media, among youngsters, is the most common of practices today. Such platforms provide a forum for entertainment and interaction for young people, and these have evolved as expendable (Singh & Guruprasad, 2019).

Depending on the product, price, features, quality, packaging, purchasing behaviour, status, generation, and customer age among others, consumer behaviour varies. Interaction among youngsters is the most difficult category. Advertisers spend large amounts of money and spend much time on market research every year to recognize and forecast evolving youth actions. The buying habits and social behaviours of youngsters have a greater effect on purchase decisions (Kousalya & Vasantha Kumar, 2019).

### 2.1. Social Media Marketing (SMM)

SMM may be defined as the use of social media websites and social networks to advertise a company's goods and services. The aim of SMM is to communicate with an audience or customers and help them better understand a brand which may lead to the expansion of businesses. Unlike conventional advertising approaches, SMM is a two-way knowledge-sharing procedure. It helps companies understand the desires, habits, and attitudes of customers towards various products and services offered (Dwivedi, et al., 2015). Social Media Marketing is a vital aspect of doing business in the twenty-first century. The research on SMM is fragmented and based on isolated topics such as successful communication

strategies. The context of SMM includes supporters and explorers, conservatism and modernism in SMM history, hierarchies and networks in SMM systems (Felix, et al., 2017).

## 2.2 Social Presence

Social presence relates to the degree to which the mediated individuals are viewed as socially present and easily understood by media consumers. In SMM, this is an important factor, particularly in explaining how people trust and enjoy e-commerce platforms (Shen, 2012). Since social media marketing is focused on the concept of engaging with brands and peer customers, listening to real feedback and looking at the real experiences of peer users, it is critically important to understand how each online person makes these interactions look real (Tafesse, 2016). When people consider influencers to be genuine, they will develop a strong emotion of desire and a resulting desire to have what they have because the physical outlook depicted will seem more feasible and achievable (Weisberg, et al., 2011).

## 2.3 Product Placement

While product placement originated in conventional, mostly narrative, media such as books, movies, or television shows, it has recently spread into social media in the form of influencer marketing. Product placement enables products to be viewed in the consumption context as well as in the entertaining environment whereby the different audiences can project themselves (Russell & Stern, 2006). Customers can thus have an idea of how to use goods or services in real-life scenarios. The placement of branded products, like brand names, logos, signage and other trademarks, in the content of mass media and the global market for product placement has exploded (Homer, 2009).

## 2.4 Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

Contributors would evolve into SMIs as they gain more and more followers (Li & Du, 2017). Some of the celebrities who have become famous as a result of their roles in films, songs, or television shows are also SMIs. Another type of emerging celebrity, reality TV stars are also SMIs. Instagram influencers are considered to be more popular since they have a high number of followers. The Perceptions of popularity by the followers increase the perceived opinion leadership of the influencers but if an influencer follows very few accounts, this can have a negative impact on his/her popular likeability. Promoting divergent products with influencers with a high number of followers might not be the best marketing choice as the brand's perceived uniqueness and brand attitudes may decrease (Veirman, et al., 2017). Influencers are present on almost all social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube. It is important for these SMIs to understand why people follow them on social media and what knowledge and attributes they require in order to retain their personal human brands and online status (Taillon, et al., 2020).

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

In this paper, a quantitative method of research has been used to collect and analyse data. The objective of the study is to analyze the effect of SMIs on youngsters' buying behaviour in Mauritius. Questionnaires have been made available to participants through online surveys on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp.

With a 100% response rate, the overall level of response rate obtained from the targeted audiences was rather satisfactory.

## 4.0 DATA COLLECTION

Based on the literature review, a survey questionnaire has been designed to collect relevant information about the effect of SMIs on youngsters. The questionnaire is divided into four different sections, with a total of 25 questions.

### Section A: Demographic Profile

This section captured data such as gender and age.

### Section B: The importance of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) among youngsters in Mauritius

This section consists of questions that would help in the analysis of the importance of SMIs among youngsters in Mauritius.

### Section C: The relationship between Social Media Influencers (SMIs) and Youngsters

This section aims at investigating the relationship between SMIs and youngsters.

### Section D: How Do Social Media Influencers have an impact on consumer buying behaviour among youngsters

This section aims at investigating how do SMIs have an impact on consumer buying behaviour, mainly among youngsters.

## 4.1 Pilot Testing

A pilot test of the questionnaire has been conducted on 15 random youngsters. This pilot test has been carried out in order to know whether the respondents have been able to understand the questions. Further corrections have been made according to the questions that were perceived to be ambiguous.

## 4.2 Sample Size and Selection

According to Statistics Mauritius (2020), there are around 375,105 youngsters aged from 15 to 34 years old. The sample size has been determined using the Roasoft sample size calculator with a margin error of 5%, a confidence level of 95% and a population of 375,105 youngsters in Mauritius. The sample size taken, based on the calculation, is three hundred and eighty-four (384). Out of the 384 targeted audiences, 246 are female and 138 are male.

## 4.3 Reliability and Validity

The P-values which are less than 0.05 have been obtained, proving that the results are significant. The critical values for Pearson's Correlation Coefficient,  $r$ , are above 0.105 showing that the questions are all valid.

## 5.0 DATA ANALYSIS

Microsoft Excel and SPSS have been used to analyze the data collected. The rate of response is 100%. 64.1% of the respondents are female and 35.9% of them are male. 34.6% of the respondents are between 26 and 30 years old, 31.5% between 21 and 25 years old, 29.7% between 15 and 20 years old and 4.2% between 31 and 34 years old.

All the respondents use the existing social media platforms. 89.1% of the respondents are members of 1 to 5 social media platforms. 8.9% of them are members of 6 to 10 social media platforms. Only 2.1% of them are members of more than 10 social media platforms. 96.6% of the respondents are members of Facebook, 77.9% of them are members on YouTube, 73.2% of them are on Instagram, 32.3% of them on Snapchat, 23.4% of them on Pinterest, 16.9% of them on LinkedIn, 12.8% of them on Twitter and 3.9% of them on Tumblr. Others, 18.8% of the respondents, also prefer to use Whatsapp, WeChat and TikTok. It can be deduced that Facebook is the mostly used social media platform while Tumblr is the least used social media platform in Mauritius. 75%, 20.6% and 4.4% of the respondents make use of a social media platform every day, every week and once in a while respectively. 65.4% of the respondents follow influencers on social media platforms.

77.0% of the respondents claim that they follow influencers in order to get inspiration, 76.2% of them in order to follow new trends, 34.1% of them in order to learn about new brands/products/services, 21.4% of them in order to enjoy content on the profile and 1.6% of them for other reasons such as for lifestyle and hacks. Very few of the respondents have not answered the question as they do not follow any influencers.

80.7% of the respondents, state that they do search about a product or service before buying it. 52.9% of the respondents claim that they do trust the influencer's recommendation about a product/service. 56% of the respondent, agree that they will try a new brand or product because SMIs Influencers recommend it. 60.7% of the respondents, state that they have followed a recommendation of trying a brand, product, or service from an influencer before.

38.5% of the respondents, trust the influencer's recommendation because they believe that the influencers have more knowledge of the industry than they do. 29.6% of them, trust the influencer's recommendation because they believe that an influencer is a person of excellent character. 0.5% of the respondents have selected other reasons such as the influencers showing usage of the products virtually or that they do not follow any SMI. 0.3% of them, do not give any response.

71.1% of the respondents, do not believe the content if it is a sponsored post on social media. 91.9% of the respondent, agree that they notice advertisements on social media platforms. 99.0% of the respondents claim that quality is an important factor when making purchasing decisions, 89.6% of them claim that price is an important factor, 38.8% of them claim that the brand image is an important factor, 25.8% of them claim that sustainability is an important factor, 12.2% claim that popularity is an important factor and 0.5% of them choose other factors that are important for them, such as the current trend of a certain product or service. Another factor which is important for them is whether they need the product or not.

48.9% of the respondents take inspiration from SMIs. 50.3% of the respondents are in favour that SMIs helping in changing youngsters' views towards new trends, products, and services. 48.2% of the respondents agree fact that youngsters in Mauritius tend to get influenced by SMIs more than the brand, product or service. 81% of the respondents agree to the statement that youngsters in Mauritius believe that SMIs have an impact on youngsters more than any other age group.

Only 20.3% of the respondents believe that SMIs use social media platforms to bring awareness of certain brands and products to them rather than just create followers. The rest of the respondents are either neutral or just disagree. 52.3% of the respondents agree that their buying behaviour has changed because of SMIs. 47.9% of the respondents agree to the statement that they start purchasing brands/products/services according to what SMIs post on their page or channel. 47.2% of the respondents agree that brands and products being promoted by SMIs make them more confident to purchase.

32.3% of the respondents agree with the statement that youngsters in Mauritius believe that brands and products being promoted by SMIs are more worth buying than what celebrities promote. The rest of them are either neutral or just disagree.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

The aim of the paper has been to investigate and analyse the effect of influencers on social media and to gain a deeper understanding of how these influencers affect the buying decisions of youngsters on social media in Mauritius. The objective has been to see whether there are relationships between SMIs, their role as influencers, and youngsters' buying behaviour in Mauritius. Furthermore, figures show that 65.4% of the targeted population state that they do follow influencers on social media platforms. However, 47.1% of the targeted population do not trust an influencer's recommendation about a product or service. In addition, 49.2% of the targeted population agree that there has been a change in their buying behaviour because of SMIs. This could mean that in Mauritius, SMIs do have a role to play in the buying behaviour of youngsters but they still have more to work on in order to influence more youngsters.

In future works, the sample could also include people above 34 years old and future researchers may focus their effort on getting a larger number of participants to better analyse how these SMIs affect not only youngsters but also older people that were not targeted in this study. Moreover, future data can be collected to determine exactly how age affects attitudes towards SMIs and buying behaviour.

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