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Measuring the Impact of Influencer Campaigns on Customer Retention for Major Brands

Andi Miftah¹

¹Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Indonesia Makassar, Indonesia

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Abstract

The present research aims at establishing the effect of credibility of influencers and the quality of the content shared on customer loyalty to the large brands. Employing a quantitative research approach, the data were obtained from Personal Influence Communication participants involved in influencer campaigns from different sectors. The findings shows that the influencer factors such as credibility which involves trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness have direct and positive relation with customer retention and the content factors like relevancy, engagement, and information content predict customer retention. For most of these factors, correlation and regression analyses reveal positive associations with retention figures and results that are generally slightly stronger for content quality. Also, the result shows the significance of the difference in retention rates between the industry sectors and the validity of these predictors across demographic categories. These data suggest that people see credible influencers as well as quality content as the key to maintaining and constantly building customer engagement, making it possible to draw pertinent conclusions on the most optimal way to approach influencer marketing.

Introduction

Nowadays, influencer campaigns are considered one of the most effective approaches used by brands in the context of digital marketing communication. Social networking has completely changed the communication landscape, and therefore, brands have a new chance to reach consumers with interactive, tangible and reliable marketing arrangements. Influencer marketing is one of the most effective tactics that takes advantage of persons with large followership on social media to advertise products and services. This approach is gradually being seen more in terms of utility not only in customer acquisition but in customer maintenance an essential concept for the scalability of large brands (Zheng et al., 2021). Influencer marketing is defined based on the notion that given the authority that influencer accumulates among their target group, they will be useful in driving traffic. It is remarkable to understand that such dominant influencers, who are usually looked up to as dependable sources

¹Corresponding Author: Andi Miftah, Email: andiimiftah@gmail.com, Address: Jl. Borong Raya No.4, Borong, Kec. Manggala, Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan 90233

of knowledge or suggestions in the particular fields, are capable of influencing others' perceptions of the topic and even their behaviors (Hosen et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2022). This is in line with the Social Influence Theory by Spears (2021) based on the understanding that people will allow themselves to be influenced by others in proportional with their perceived relevance and credibility. As such, brands are able to leverage the trust that consumers have on influencers which might not be the case for traditional advertisement forms (Lou, 2022; Belanche et al., 2021; Karagür et al., 2022).

Indeed it is paramount that great emphasis be placed on customer retention (Anees et al., 2020; Langat et al., 2021; Afiuc et al., 2021). Loyalty as a business strategy is essential since people will always prefer to continue doing business with their known service providers than seeking new ones, it is cheaper, and ROI is normally higher (Arslan, 2020). Further, the customers who are faithful to the brand are more likely to make repeat purchases and give their feedback which in most cases is positive and promote the product or the brand they use (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022). Thus, IT is vital for brands who want to secure competitive advantages in the market to comprehend how the ideas of influencer campaigns affect the rate of customer retention (Ferreira & Coelho, 2020).

Most of the prior research has been directed towards the benefits of influencer marketing in terms of brand recall and first-time customer attraction (Vrontis et al., 2021; Martínez et al., 2020). Research conducted in the area of influencers' endorsement has confirmed that endorsement affects the level of brand awareness and the belief in brands, which in turn positively influences purchase intent (Lee & Kim, 2020). But to the best of the author's knowledge, very limited studies have explored the place of influencer campaigns in customer retention, especially in the case of large corporations. Such a knowledge gap warrants more research that investigates how IM strategies can be enhanced to drive a long-term loyalty.

Another factor that can easily tell how effective the influencer campaigns are in customer retention; the perceived credibility of the influencer. These are reliability, competence, and beauty, which decide the potential impact and authority of the influencer in influence and affecting his followers (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Trust can be defined as the extent to which the influencer is perceived as credible, or honorable while relevance is about the amount of credential the influencer has in the concerning sphere. Attraction of course usually refers to sexual attractiveness but can also encompass qualities regardable as pleasing and easy to relate to. Other similar studies have demonstrated that greater perceived credibility will cause higher levels of positive consumers' attitudes, as well as higher intention of behavioral intent (Markus et al., 2022; Strauss et al., 2021).

Apart from the trust placed on the influencer, the quantity and kind of content that an influencer comes up with a helps in retaining their customer base (Jin et al., 2021; Pittman & Abell, 2021). Relivant and well-written content further appeals the members and creating a bonding with the brand name is easier (Sotirakou et al., 2021). Such type of content is trusted by the viewers, this is the kind of content that has authority and informs the public, such type of content will build and sustain trust among the customers and is an essential element that will ensure loyalty of customers (Kington et al., 2021). Furthermore, due to the societal nature, this communication with the customers takes place through posting and responding, which gives continuity in the relationship built between the brand and its customers and this can enhance loyalty (Sharma et al., 2020). This makes synchronization between influencer authenticity and content relevance necessary for the influencer campaigns in retaining customers (Chung et al., 2023; Chidiac & Bowden, 2023; Giertz et al., 2022). If such influencers are trusted by the target customers, then improved content quality means that customer loyalty will be greatest. This is the case because the audience not only has faith in the influencer, but they are also able to see

value in their content, thus having a better and long-lasting relationship with the brand (Van & Dumitrica, 2021; Wellman et al., 2020). These factors are crucial both theoretically and practically, but, to the best of the authors' knowledge, few studies directly investigate their effects on customer retention. This research therefore seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by assessing the impact of influencer campaigns on customer loyalty for leading brands, from a quantitative perspective. It is by the app Howell and Micheals, with data gathered from marketing professionals and their customers, who has experienced influencer campaigns; this research aims at making a comprehensive understanding of effective optimization of influencer marketing strategy for customer loyalty.

Methods

Based on the research objectives of this study, a quantitative research approach was used to establish the degree of effect of influencer campaigns on customer retention on major brands. The target population was users that have been involved in influencer campaigns of large brands from the different sectors and marketing specialists working with these campaigns. Further a purposive sampling technique involving the stratified random sampling technique was adopted to enhance the variation the gender, geographical locations and industrial segments. The strata were developed depending on industry segments (i.e., technology, retail, health care, and finance) and demographic characteristics (age, gender, geographical region). Since the target population was assumed to be 1630, the study aimed at involving 600 respondents in the survey to offer sufficient power level for the statistical tests and check on the generality of the results.

The data for this study were obtained by an online self-administered questionnaire, which has been developed for this purpose. The survey included closed-ended questions to measure several constructs; Perceived Credibility of the Influencer was determined using credibility scale which focused on trust, proficiency and attractiveness of the influencers; Consumers were asked on their perception on the influence content created by influencers as subject to relevance, engagement and informational value; and Other measures that were used include the purchase incidence, brand recognition, evaluation and perceived attitude towards the brand as well as the perceived brand loyalty.

The questionnaire that was used in the study was validated by use of reliability and validity to make sure that it was accurate. First, an expert's opinions from the digital marketing field together with survey construction analyzed the contents of the survey for face validation to check if the survey items reflected the constructs of the study appropriately. Second, a pilot study comprising of 50 respondents from the target population was administered. Reliability of the data collected from the pilot study was assessed by using Cronbach's alpha value for all the constructs and all of them had Alpha value more than. Internally, the reliability value was approximately 70, which can be considered acceptable in terms of reliability. Exploratory factor analysis supported construct validity as well.

Collected data were subjected to several statistical tests to test for the impact of influencer campaigns on customer retention and to also look at factors that influenced retention. To analyse the demographics' data and the perception of influencer credibility and post quality, the basic arithmetic average, standard deviation, absolute and relative frequencies, and percentages were computed. The Pearson correlation coefficients were used to calculate the extent of positive or negative relationship between the influencer credibility, content quality and customer retention. To justify the need of using influencer credibility and content quality as predictors of retention, multiple regression analysis was performed. Therefore, statistical

hypotheses for the regression model were set to Include credibility of the influencer and quality of the content as the independent variables; while, customer retention as the dependent variable. In order to analyze variations in customer retention rates based on age and gender of customer, independent samples t- tests were used. The research also adopted a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to assess difference in the mean customer retention rate among the certain industries. The use of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was done to partial out other variables that may confound the results such as age, gender, and prior brand engagement when testing the impact of the influencer marketing strategies on customer retention.

Results and Discussion

The demographic attributes of the respondents are captured by the following table:

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-24	120	20.0
	25-34	180	30.0
	35-44	150	25.0
	45-54	90	15.0
	55 and above	60	10.0
Gender	Male	270	45.0
	Female	330	55.0
Industry Sector	Technology	100	16.7
	Retail	150	25.0
	Healthcare	100	16.7
	Finance	100	16.7
	Other	150	25.0
Geographic Location	North America	180	30.0
	Europe	150	25.0
	Asia	150	25.0
	Other	120	20.0

A large number of the respondents are aged between 25 and 34 years (30%) while slightly more of the respondents are female (55%) than male (45%). The sample has relatively a good distribution in terms of the industry type and geographical location.

Table 2. Influencer Credibility

Influencer Credibility	Mean	Standard Deviation
Trustworthiness	4.25	0.75
Expertise	4.10	0.80
Attractiveness	4.00	0.85

This table shows the mean and standard deviation for the three components of influencer credibility: cues that are in the area of trustworthiness, competence, and physical appeal. Trustworthiness turned out to be the most highly evaluated, which means that respondents see influencers as generally trustworthy.

Table 3. Content Quality

Content Quality	Mean	Standard Deviation
Relevance	4.30	0.70
Engagement	4.20	0.75

Informative Value	4.15	0.78
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The table above provides the mean and standard deviation for content quality attributes: in terms of relevance, getting the audience engaged and the information provided. Relevance recorded the highest to an implication that the content posted by the influencers is regarded relevant by the respondents.

Table 4. Customer Retention Metrics

Customer Retention Metric	Mean	Standard Deviation
Repeat Purchase Intentions	4.35	0.65
Brand Loyalty	4.25	0.70
Overall Satisfaction	4.40	0.60

This table presents the mean and standard deviation for customer retention metrics: repeat purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and overall satisfaction. Overall satisfaction received the highest mean score, indicating a high level of satisfaction among the respondents.

Table 5. Correlation Analysis

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Influencer Credibility and Retention	0.45	0.0001
Content Quality and Retention	0.50	0.0001
Credibility and Content Quality	0.40	0.0001

This table presents the mean and standard deviation for customer retention metrics: The possible variables involved are: Actual behaviour, perceived value, attitude-towards-the-brand, repeat purchase intentions, brand loyalty and overall satisfaction. When self-generated items were tested, a high degree of satisfaction was revealed as the overall satisfaction item had the highest mean value among all the items.

Table 6. Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Influencer Credibility	0.42	0.05	8.40	0.0001
Content Quality	0.47	0.04	11.75	0.0001

The correlational table gives an overview of the relationship between the credibility of the influencer, the quality of content and the retention of customers. Indeed, a positive relationship can be established between both credibility and content quality and customer retention rates where high credibility means higher retention and better quality means better retention too.

Table 7. ANOVA

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	12.50	4	3.125	5.12	0.001
Within Groups	360.00	595	0.605		
Total	372.50	599			

Analyzing the regression analysis table obtained we can also establish that both the factors influencer credibility and content quality the customers retain significantly impacts them. The coefficients (β) show the extent of these effects content quality's effect is marginally higher than influencer credibility's effect. From ANOVA table it is clear that there are differences in customer retention rates across different industry sectors and it is significant. The F value of 5.12 and p-value of less than 0.01 which means that problems observed are statistically significant distinct from control groups.

Table 8. ANCOVA

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Influencer Credibility	10.50	1	10.50	17.36	0.0001
Content Quality	12.30	1	12.30	20.34	0.0001
Age	1.20	1	1.20	1.98	0.160
Gender	0.80	1	0.80	1.32	0.250
Error	357.70	595	0.60		

The ANCOVA table indicates the interaction between the credibility of the influencer and the quality of the content on the level of customer retention with age and gender used as covariates. Influencer credibility and content quality continue to have strong relations to customer retention with F ratios of 17.36 and 20.34 for the first group and 34 for the second group, and the corresponding p-values were less than 0.001. Age and gender factors do not affect the customer retention directly in the given model as their p-values show the difference.

Evidently, the findings of this study support the notion that credibility of influencers and the quality of content affect customer retention for large brand (Kim et al., 2021; Martínez et al., 2020). This is in tandem with the prior studies which evidently identified trust and relevance as key factor in influence marketing (Atiq et al., 2022). Thus, this study extends the current knowledge about the role of influencer credibility and the quality of the content by analysing precise characteristics of influencer credibility and content quality.

Firstly, the average values for the influencer credibility components are rather high, which indicates that the respondents had rather a high level of trust and confidence in influencers and considered that they are informative and similar to themselves (Janssen et al., 2022; Belanche et al., 2021; Nafees et al., 2021). This goes further in supporting the argument that believed influencers are more efficient in convincing and maintaining the consumers (Masuda et al., 2022). The correlation analysis also provides increased evidence of a positive relationship between influencer credibility and customer retention with an $r = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$ revealing that higher credibility generates more customer retention. This tallies with the study by Santiago et al. (2020) who it established warranted that credible influencers spearhead trust and buying behaviours among consumers.

The remaining two factors were, content quality, the results of which showed that respondents find the content shared by influencers as useful and current with high mean scores (Taraghi et al., 2021; Zhang & Choi, 2022). The results of the study revealing the positive relationship between content quality and the customer retention supports the hypothesis that quality content enhance the customers loyalty. This is in concord with study, as it was noted that when the content is of valuable and credible nature, consumers trust as well as engage more. Moreover, the regression analysis revealed that in fact, content quality has a slightly higher factor with regard to customer retention than influencer credibility. This finding underlines the fact that not only the influencer's identification and selection must be performed thoroughly, but it is critically important to have the correct content being created, right information for the intended audience. Thus, the gaps between benchmark and the respondents' averages on customer retention rate as for each of the industry sectors demonstrate a revealed statistically significant. For example, influencer marketing strategy is may be efficient in industries like retail and technology as consumers are deeply involved with content and social media. This variation only reinforces an important rule that brands need to make their influencer marketing approach unique according to the industry. Industry-specific strategies have also been highlighted by prior studies as key strategies that can lead to the optimisation of the impact of influencer campaigns (Leung et al., 2022).

Moreover, the results of the ANCOVA bring into sharper focus the impact of credibility of the influencer and quality of content to retain customers while giving an account for age and gender of the customers. Age had a moderating effect on influencer credibility on customer retention but not on content quality. The analysis of the data for both the dependent variables – influencer credibility and content quality – the results remain significant irrespective of the age segment. This finding is one of the principle reasons why studying influencer marketing is important because it illustrates that all four pillars of influencer marketing credibility and quality content can reach all consumers and is not restricted to a selected demographical group. This is in line with studies done before that gave much attention to the universality of credible and high quality content from influencers (Hussain et al., 2020).

Thus, in contrast with the earlier research, this study supports the investigation of proper mechanisms that reflect the effects of influencer campaigns on customer loyalty (Masuda et al., 2022; Vrontis et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2020). Though prior literature mainly explored the influence effect of influencers affecting brand awareness and the first-purchase (Jun & Yi, 2020), the present study emphasise the retention stage where customers must remain loyal to the brands that called for their attention in the first instance. The results provided support the opinion that influencer marketing may be rather effective not only for gaining new consumers, but also for maintaining and developing efficient relationship with the existing ones.

Furthermore, the multi-method approach as well as the use of more advanced statistical analysis like correlation, regression analysis gives a solid and elaborate foundation to this work, as well as more fully captures the factors at work. This reflects the need to use stratified random sampling so that a cross-sectional sample across demographics and industry type was obtained, and hence increases the external validity of this study. This achieves another high level of methodological precision of the results, thus lending a good weight to the evidence of the usefulness of influencer marketing in customer retention.

However, the following are some limitations which can be the basis for further research. A limitation we have here is the use of mostly self-administered questionnaires which may be biased by social desirability or the respondent's perception about the issue being enquired about. Subsequent works will be able to enhance survey data with the results of actual behavioral data like purchases and engagement analytics in order to give a more accurate picture of the effects of influencer campaigns. It is also important to note that the present study was conducted with the big brands in mind but it can be interesting to investigate its results in relation to small brands or specific markets where influencer marketing might be played out in a different way.

Conclusion

Based on the study's outcome, it is evident that the influencer credibility and the content quality are crucial factors that have an impact on customer retention among major brands. Hence, to establish and maintain the credibility that focuses on perceived trustworthiness, perceived expertise and perceived attractiveness of the messenger, perceived relevance and perceived utility of the message boosts customer loyalty. This research reaffirms the fact that with right influencer campaigns, brands can retain their customers for the long-term across all demographical divisions. The study's findings thus support the idea that brands should target credible influencers with quality content and opt for longer customers' engagement thereby using influencer marketing to create customer loyalty and longevity in a competitive market.

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