

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND LOYALTY: A STUDY OF SELECTED HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

Customer is a king and plays vital role in determining the success of an organization. In order to survive and grow, it is important to boost the engagement of the customers by employing various marketing strategies with the latest trends and follow innovative methods in increasing their loyalty towards the organization. Many previous researches from around the world pointed out that enhancing customer engagement is one of the important goals and strategies of the success of the organization. Not only does customer engagement have the potential to significantly affect customer retention, it is also a key link to customer loyalty. The present study identifies and analyses the various Social Media Influencer (SMI) factors that affecting customer engagement and its impact on the level of customer engagement and customer loyalty towards Healthcare Products in Chennai. Based on a sample of 160 customers who are buying healthcare products with the influence of Social Media Influencers with respect to Healthcare Products in Chennai, descriptive and inferential analysis are carried out. Independent Sample “t” test, Correlation Analysis and Multiple Regression are used to test the hypotheses. The research reveals that there is a strong relationship between the SMI factors (Content Quality, Interaction, Attractiveness and Expertise) that affecting Customer Engagement and the level of Customer Engagement and Customer Engagement has strongly influenced the Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products. The study revealed that the female customers have more engagement with respect to healthcare products than the male customers. Out of five SMI factors that affecting the level of Customer Engagement, ‘Attractiveness’ is the strongest factor and ‘Trustworthiness’ is the weakest factor in determining the level of Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products. The study suggests that the management of Healthcare Products should design and implement effective customer engagement practices with the help of Social Media and take appropriate steps to improve the customer loyalty.

Keywords: *Content Quality, Interaction, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Customer Engagement, Customer Loyalty.*

INTRODUCTION

Customer is a king and plays vital role in determining the success of an organization. Any business organization knows that effectively engaging with customers is a vital factor when it comes to

the survival and success of the business. Without engagement of customers, businesses would have no purpose, and therefore, it is so important to value the customers through various marketing strategies and practices. Gone are the strategies focusing on traditional and print marketing, people are not going out enough to see them. Social media has been a core content marketing platform for most businesses, regardless of their size. And in the current environment, these channels are becoming even more necessary. From increasing website visits to building customer loyalty, social media offers a number of advantages when most marketing avenues are closed to businesses.

Social Media Influencers are people who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic by using social media applications. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred social media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views. Social media influencers are playing an important role in increasing customer engagement and loyalty.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Proper communication and engagement are must for any business, both large and small. Finding ways to communicate with customers on a personal level was very difficult in years gone by. However, technological advancements have made this far easier over recent years, enabling businesses to build a rapport with customers. A Social Media Influencer is a user on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry. A social media influencer has access to a large audience and can persuade others by virtue of their authenticity and reach. In today's digital world, social content creators (social media influencers) with niche audiences can often offer more value to brands of the products and services. These people have dedicated and engaged groups of followers on social media. The right influencer can reach the target audience, build trust, and drive engagement. They create original, engaging content.

Healthcare industry is one of the industries that are facing tough competition among the others and the companies in this industry, are implementing variety of customer-oriented practices. Social Media Marketing is one among important strategies nowadays for helping the organizations in increasing their engaged customers and loyalty. In order to survive and grow, it is important to boost the engagement of the customers by employing various marketing strategies with the latest trends and follow innovative methods in increasing their loyalty towards the organization. Many previous researches from around the world pointed out that enhancing customer engagement is one of the important goals and strategies of the success of the organization. Not only does customer engagement have the potential to significantly affect customer retention, it is also a key link to customer loyalty. When customer engagement is high, customer loyalty will also increase and ultimately the overall performance of the organization would increase. The present study identifies and analyses the various

Social Media Influencer (SMI) factors that affecting customer engagement and its impact on the level of customer engagement and customer loyalty towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The Objectives refer to the questions to be answered through the study and they indicate what researcher trying to get from the study. The objectives of this study are to identify and analyze the social media influencer factors that affecting the level of customer engagement with respect to healthcare products. The study is also conducted to assess the impact of customer engagement on customer loyalty towards healthcare products in Chennai.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the problem. The methodology followed for conducting the study includes the specification of research design, sample design, questionnaire design, data collection and statistical tools used for analyzing the collected data. The present research is combination of Descriptive and Cross-sectional nature of Exploratory Research. The researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches in this research.

The population and sampling unit of the present research is Customers who are buying healthcare products from offline and online stores/shops with the influence of social media influencers in Chennai. The sampling area is Chennai city covering Northern, Central and Southern parts of Chennai. The combination of purposive and snow-ball sampling (types of Non-Probability Sampling) method is adopted in this research. The sample size is 160 customers of healthcare products with the help of social media influencers.

The majority of the data is primary data and the same is collected through structured questionnaire and all the questions except one are close-ended type. Five-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)) is employed in this research. The primary data was collected during the period of two months from January 2021 to February 2021. The major sources of Secondary Data include Online Journals, Websites, Reports, Newspapers, Thesis, Magazines, Books, Research articles, etc. MS Office (MS Word & Excel) 2016 is used for data feeding and interpretation of data and SPSS (Ver.20) is employed for data analysis. Uni-variate, Bi-variate and multi-variate statistical analysis are applied for data analysis in this research.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS

The data, after collection and processing, has been analyzed in accordance with the outline laid down for the purpose at the time of developing the research plan. Analysis has been done through various statistical tools to understand the outcomes with reference to the objectives and hypothesis. In

order to analyze and give the proper interpretation of data the various statistical tools like Percentage Analysis (descriptive) and Independent Sample ‘t’ test, Correlation and Multiple Regression (inferential) are used in this research.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE CUSTOMERS

Table 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE CUSTOMERS
(Sample Size = 160)

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	FREQUENCIES	(%)
Gender	Male	82	51.25
	Female	78	48.75
Marital Status	Married	71	44.40
	Unmarried	89	55.60
Age	21 – 40 Years	Open ended Question)	54.20
	41 - 66 Years		45.80
Qualification	School/Diploma	66	41.20
	UG/PG	75	46.90
	Professional	19	11.90
Occupation	Salaried	52	32.50
	Business/Professional	27	16.90
	Student	32	20.00
	Home maker/Retired	49	30.60
Monthly Family Income (INR)	Upto Rs.25,000	72	45.00
	Rs.25,001 – Rs.50,000	54	33.75
	Above Rs.50,000	34	21.25

Source: Primary Data

From the above table 1, it is inferred that Male respondents (82, 51.25%) are more than Female respondents (78, 48.75%). 44.40% (71) of the respondents are married and more than 55% of them are unmarried. 54.20% of the respondents belong to the age group of 21 - 40 Years. 46.90% (75) of the respondents are Under/Post Graduates and 41.20% (66) of them have school/diploma education.

32.50% (52) of the respondents are Salaried people followed by Homemaker/retired (49, 30.60%) and 16.90% (27) of them are Business/Professionals and rest of them are Students (32, 20%). In case of Monthly Family Income, 45% (72) of the respondents are earning income up-to Rs.25,000, 33.75% (54) of them getting Rs.25,001 – Rs.50,000 and 21.50% (34) of them earning more than Rs.50,000.

PURCHASING PATTERN OF HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS

Table 2
PURCHASING PATTERN OF HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS
 (Sample Size = 160)

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	FREQUENCIES	(%)
Type of Healthcare product purchased recently through SMI	Skincare Products	54	33.75
	Haircare Products	45	28.10
	Health drinks	61	38.15
Frequency of purchase of Healthcare Products generally	Monthly once	74	46.25
	More than once in a month	53	33.10
	Once in three months	33	20.65
Where do you buy the Healthcare Products mostly	Offline Stores/Shops	93	58.10
	Online Stores/Shops	67	41.90
Average Amount of purchase of Healthcare Products per month	Less than Rs.1,000	71	44.40
	Rs.1,000 – Rs.3,000	58	36.20
	Above Rs.3,000	31	19.40

Source: Primary Data

The above table 2 provides information relating to the purchasing pattern of respondents with respect to Healthcare Products. From the above table 2, it is inferred that 38.15% (61) of the respondents (here customers) purchased Health drinks followed by Skincare Products (54, 33.75%) and Haircare Products (45, 28.10%). 46.25% (74) of the respondents purchase the Healthcare Products monthly once, 33.10% of them purchase the same more than once in a month and 20.65% of them buy once in three months.

58.10% (93) of the respondents buy the Healthcare Products from offline shops/stores and rest of them (41.90%) purchase the same from online stores/shops. 44.40% (71) of them spend less than Rs.1,000 for healthcare product purchases and 19.40% of them spend above Rs.3,000 for purchase of healthcare products per month in Chennai.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE & SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER DATA

Table 3
SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE & SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER DATA
 (Sample Size = 160)

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	FREQUENCIES	(%)
Years of usage of Social Media Applications actively	Less than 3 years	85	53.10
	3 - 5 Years	44	27.50
	Above 5 Years	31	19.40
Social Media Application using for searching information for healthcare products mostly	Instagram	52	32.50
	Facebook	55	34.40
	Twitter	18	11.20
	YouTube	25	15.65
	Others	10	06.25
No. of Friends / Followers in your mostly used Social Media Network	Up-to 250	62	38.75
	251 – 500	46	28.75
	501 – 1,000	30	18.75
	Above 1,000	22	13.75
Time spending to see the posts of Social Media Influencers in a day	Less than an hour	65	40.65
	1 – 2 hours	74	46.25
	More than 2 hours	21	13.10
No. of Social Media Influencers following normally for Healthcare products	1 – 3	88	55.00
	4 – 6	44	27.50
	More than 6	28	17.50
Preferred type of review / information given by the Social Media Influencers to follow mostly	Plain Text	22	13.75
	Pictures & Text	48	30.00
	Video	69	43.15
	Audio	21	13.10

Source: Primary Data

From the above table 3, it is inferred that 53.10% (85) of the respondents are using Social Media Applications less than 3 years and 19.40% of them using the same for more than 5 years actively. Facebook (34.40%), Instagram (32.50%) and YouTube (15.65%) are the top three mostly used social media applications for searching information for healthcare products. With respect to Number of friends/followers in the mostly used social media network, 38.75% (62) of the respondents have up-to 250 friends/followers and 13.75% (22) of them have more than 1000 friends/followers.

46.25% (74) of the respondents spending 1 – 2 hours for seeing the posts of social media influencers in a day. 55% (88) of the respondents are following 1 – 3 social medial influencers for healthcare products. As far as the ‘Preferred type of review / information given by the Social Media Influencers (SMI) to follow mostly’ is concerned, 43.15% of the respondents preferred Videos followed by Pictures & Text (30%), Plain Text (13.75%) and Audio (13.10%).

SMI FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT – MEAN ANALYSIS

TABLE 4
SMI FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT
Descriptive Statistics

S. No.	SMI FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT	N	Mean	SD
1.	Content Quality	160	11.30	1.564
2.	Interaction	160	10.82	1.911
3.	Trustworthiness	160	10.13	2.740
4.	Attractiveness	160	12.42	1.025
5.	Expertise	160	11.02	1.743
	SMI FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT	160	55.69	2.121

Source: Primary Data
(SMI means ‘Social Media Influencer’)

The above table 4 provides the information relating to the Social Media Influencers’ (SMI) factors affecting Customer Engagement with respect to Healthcare Products in Chennai. In order to identify and analyse the customers’ perception on the Social Media Influencers’ factors that affecting Customer Engagement, 15 Questions relating to the five SMI factors i.e., Content Quality, Interaction, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and Expertise (3 Questions/variables for each factor) are asked from the respondents (here customers) through the structured questionnaire.

From the above table 4 relating to descriptive analysis of the SMI factors that affecting Customer Engagement with respect to Healthcare Products, it is inferred that ‘Attractiveness’ (M = 12.42) and ‘Content Quality’ (M = 11.30) are the top two SMI factors that affecting Customer Engagement when compared with others. It is inferred that ‘Trustworthiness’ (M = 10.13) is the least SMI factor that affecting Customer Engagement with respect to Healthcare Products when compared with others.

From the above table 4, it is also inferred that the customers’ perception on the various SMI factors that affecting Customer Engagement with respect to Healthcare Products are above the average

level since all Mean values of the variables are above 10 (two-third or 66.67%) out of 15. The mean value of the Overall SMI factors that affecting Customer Engagement with respect to Healthcare Products is 55.69 which is 74.25% ($55.69/75 \times 100$). It is also inferred that the SMI factors that affecting Customer Engagement with respect to Healthcare Products is above the average level (more than 74%).

INDEPENDENT-SAMPLES T-TEST

H₀: There is no significant difference between the Male and Female customers with respect to the level of Customer Engagement towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the difference between the Male and Female customers with respect to the level of Customer Engagement due to Social Media Influencers (SMI) towards Healthcare Products in Chennai. Since the P value (0.005) is lesser than Sig. Value at 0.01 in the Level of Customer Engagement due to SMI, the Null Hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 5
GENDER AND LEVEL OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT DUE TO SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

VARIABLE	GENDER OF CUSTOMER						t - value	p - value
	MALE			FEMALE				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT DUE TO SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS	82	17.55	2.527	78	19.21	1.941	3.498	0.005**

Source: Primary Data
(** 1% level of significance)

Based on the mean score of the level of Customer Engagement due to SMI towards Healthcare Products, we can say that the mean value of the Female customers (M = 19.21) is more than the Male customers (M = 17.55). This indicates that the Female customers have more engagement towards healthcare products due to Social Media Influencers (SMI) than the Male customers. Hence, there is a significant difference between the Male and Female customers with respect to the level of Customer Engagement due to Social Media Influencers (SMI) towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the Social Media Influencers' factors that affecting Customer Engagement and the level of Customer Engagement towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between the Social Media Influencers' factors that affecting Customer Engagement and the level of Customer Engagement towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

TABLE 6
SMI FACTORS THAT AFFECTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT –
LEVEL OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

VARIABLES	N	'r' VALUE	P - VALUE	RELATI ONSHIP	REMARKS	
					SIGNIFICANT	RESULT
Content Quality – Customer Engagement	160	0.542**	0.000	Positive	Significant	REJECTED
Interaction – Customer Engagement	160	0.345**	0.000	Positive	Significant	REJECTED
Trustworthiness – Customer Engagement	160	0.312**	0.000	Positive	Significant	REJECTED
Attractiveness – Customer Engagement	160	0.741**	0.000	Positive	Significant	REJECTED
Expertise – Customer Engagement	160	0.502**	0.000	Positive	Significant	REJECTED

Source: Primary Data

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As the P values are lesser than Sig. Value (0.01) in all the relationship between the Social Media Influencers' (SMI) factors that affecting Customer Engagement and the level of Customer Engagement, the Null Hypotheses are rejected. There are moderate to high positive correlations between the SMI factors that affecting Customer Engagement and the level of Customer Engagement towards Healthcare Products in Chennai. The relationships between them are also highly significant.

Out of five Social Media Influencers' (SMI) that affecting Customer Engagement, 'Attractiveness' ($r = 0.741$) has more relationship with Customer Engagement and 'Trustworthiness' ($r = 0.312$) has less relationship with Customer Engagement than others. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the Social Media Influencers' factors that affecting Customer Engagement and the level of Customer Engagement towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

LEVEL OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT – CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARDS HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the level of Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty (due to social media influencers) towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between the level of Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty (due to social media influencers) towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

As the P value is lesser than Sig. Value (0.01) in the above relationship between Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty due to SMI, the Null Hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 7
LEVEL OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT – CUSTOMER LOYALTY
TOWARDS HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS

VARIABLE	N	'r' VALUE	P - VALUE	RELATI ONSHIP	REMARKS	
					SIGNIFICANT	RESULT
Level of Customer Engagement – Customer Loyalty	160	0.816**	0.000	Positive	Significant	REJECTED

Source: Primary Data

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a high positive correlation ($r = 0.816$) between the level of Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty (due to social media influencers) towards Healthcare Products in Chennai. The relationship between Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty due to SMI is also highly significant. Hence, it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the level of Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty (due to social media influencers) towards Healthcare Products in Chennai.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

SMI FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT – CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARDS HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS

Regression is the determination of statistical relationship between two or more variables. In this Multiple Regression analysis, the dependent variable is Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products and the Independent variables are the Social Media Influencers' Factors that affecting Customer Engagement namely, Content Quality, Interaction, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and Expertise. This combination of four out five independent variables (SMI factors) predict the dependent variable i.e., Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products, $p = .000$ which is lesser than .001 and 0.05 (Sig. Value 2-tailed) and the Adjusted R squared value was 0.768.

TABLE 8
SMI FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT –
CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARDS HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14.217	1.652		11.548	.000
	Content Quality	.235	.054	.305	4.532	.000
	Interaction	.102	.062	.146	1.985	.043
	Trustworthiness	.087	.067	.090	0.652	.541
	Attractiveness	.402	.043	.425	8.522	.000
	Expertise	.213	.058	.284	3.335	.007

Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARDS HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS

Out of five Social Media Influencers' factors, 'Attractiveness' (0.425) is the strongest influencing factors in predicting dependent variable i.e., Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products. From the unstandardized regression coefficient, it is found that the one-unit increase in the 'Attractiveness' would increase the Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products by 0.402 units. Content Quality (0.305), Interaction (0.146) and Expertise (0.284) also significantly predict the Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products but lesser than 'Attractiveness' factor. However, 'Trustworthiness' does not influence the Customer Loyalty towards Healthcare Products (0.090) significantly.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Engaging customers on social media is not an easy task. It requires the right strategy, a deep understanding of your audience, and content output that aligns with this understanding. The results of the study pointed out that the 'Attractiveness' is the most influencing factor and the 'Trustworthiness' is the least influencing factor in determining the Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty with respect to Healthcare Products. The study also indicated that the female customers have more engagement and loyalty towards healthcare products due to social media influencers than their counterpart. Therefore, the management of healthcare organisations should make steps to increase the credibility of the contents delivered through social media influencers and boost the attractiveness of the contents of the social media influencers.

The healthcare organisations must focus their attention more on the male customers by improving the quality of contents and interaction among the users and social media influencers. One way to improve customer engagement on social media is by making content more accessible and easier to consume. The two primary ways to do this are by adding captions to video-based content and descriptions to image-based content. The marketers of healthcare products can increase the customer

engagement and loyalty by way of learning about their target customers/users of social media, replying to their messages, and showing the brand personality.

CONCLUSION

Technology has changed how consumers search and buy, but traditional marketing has not caught up. Consumers are tired of intrusive advertisements with marketer-centric communication messages. They want helpful, attractive and customer-centric communication messages instead. With the development of social media, there has been exponential growth in the number of consumers whose shopping patterns have been influenced by social media Influencers. Social media platforms allow consumers to have a public voice, potentially reaching an audience of millions. These platforms, as well as increased access to product information influences purchase decisions, their engagement and loyalty.

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