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The Impact of Influencer Collaborations on Brand Awareness for Start-ups

Ms. Shital Kene¹ and Mr. Sanjay Kene²

Assistant Professor, Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Management Studies and Research, Nagpur, India¹ Manager Business Development, Kalyani Technoforge Limited, Pune, India²

Abstract: In today's hyper connected world, start-up companies face significant challenges in establishing their brands and gaining visibility amidst intense competition and limited resources. Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful strategy for start-ups to amplify their brand awareness and reach target audiences effectively. This research explores the dynamics of influencer collaborations and their impact on brand awareness for start-ups. Through a mixed-methods approach incorporating literature review, case studies, and data analysis, the study examines the role of influencer marketing in addressing brand building challenges, the mechanisms through which influencer collaborations contribute to brand visibility, and the key success factors for effective influencer partnerships. Findings reveal that influencer collaborations significantly amplify brand awareness by leveraging influencers' reach, credibility, and engagement, while authenticity, transparency, and relevance are critical for success. Strategic partnerships, creative collaboration, and measurement and optimization are identified as essential elements for maximizing the impact of influencer marketing initiatives. The study concludes that influencer collaborations offer start-ups a cost-effective and targeted approach to building brand awareness, engaging with consumers, and driving business growth in competitive markets. Practical insights and recommendations are provided for start-up entrepreneurs and marketers looking to leverage influencer marketing effectively in their brand awareness strategies.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, Start-ups, Brand awareness, Collaboration, Digital marketing, Social media

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's hyperconnected world, where social media platforms dominate the landscape and consumer attention is a prized commodity, start-up companies face an uphill battle in establishing their brands and gaining visibility amidst the noise. The proliferation of digital channels has democratized access to audiences, but it has also intensified competition, making it increasingly challenging for emerging businesses to cut through the clutter and make their mark. In this context, influencer marketing has emerged as a potent strategy for start-ups to amplify their brand awareness and reach target audiences effectively.

1.1 Background: Start-ups operate in dynamic and competitive environments characterized by limited resources and fierce competition. Unlike established brands with substantial marketing budgets and brand recognition, start-ups often struggle to gain traction and secure a foothold in their respective markets. Traditional advertising channels, while still relevant, may not always offer the most efficient or cost-effective means of reaching and engaging with consumers, particularly in the digital realm where attention spans are fleeting, and ad blockers abound.

Influencer marketing, however, presents a compelling alternative. By leveraging the social influence and reach of individuals who command sizable followings on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, start-ups can tap into pre-existing communities of engaged users and leverage the trust and credibility that influencers have cultivated with their audiences. These collaborations offer a unique opportunity for start-ups to access highly targeted demographics, generate authentic content, and foster meaningful connections with potential customers in ways that traditional advertising often cannot replicate.

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1.2 Research Objectives: Against this backdrop, this research paper seeks to explore the dynamics of influencer collaborations and their impact on amplifying brand awareness for start-ups. Specifically, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- To examine the role of influencer marketing in addressing the brand building challenges faced by start-ups.
- To analyze the mechanisms through which influencer collaborations contribute to brand visibility, credibility, and engagement.
- To identify the key success factors and best practices for start-ups seeking to leverage influencer partnerships effectively.
- To provide practical insights and recommendations for start-up entrepreneurs and marketers looking to incorporate influencer marketing into their brand awareness strategies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer Marketing: Evolution and Trends: Influencer marketing has experienced a significant evolution over the past decade, transitioning from a niche strategy to a mainstream marketing tactic embraced by brands across industries. Early adopters recognized the potential of collaborating with individuals who wielded influence over specific target audiences, often through blogs and social media platforms. As social media platforms matured and user-generated content proliferated, influencers emerged as key players in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors.

The landscape of influencer marketing continues to evolve rapidly, driven by shifts in consumer behavior, advancements in technology, and changes in platform algorithms. Micro-influencers, individuals with smaller but highly engaged followings, have gained prominence for their ability to deliver authentic and relatable content to niche audiences. Moreover, the rise of new platforms such as TikTok has introduced fresh opportunities for brands to connect with consumers through innovative and immersive content formats.

The Role of Influencers in Brand Awareness: Influencers play a crucial role in driving brand awareness by leveraging their personal brand and social capital to endorse products or services authentically. Unlike traditional advertising, which often relies on interruptive messaging, influencer marketing operates within the context of the influencer's content, seamlessly integrating brand messaging into organic and engaging narratives. This approach fosters trust and credibility among followers, leading to higher levels of engagement and brand affinity.

Research has shown that consumers are more receptive to recommendations from peers or trusted individuals than they are to traditional advertisements. Influencers, with their ability to cultivate personal connections with their audiences, act as trusted advisors, guiding consumers' purchasing decisions and influencing their perceptions of brands. By partnering with influencers whose values align with their own, brands can tap into existing communities and leverage the influencer's authority to enhance their brand image and expand their reach.

Start-ups and Brand Building Challenges: For start-ups, building brand awareness poses unique challenges, as they often lack the resources and brand equity enjoyed by established companies. Limited marketing budgets, lack of brand recognition, and competition from incumbents make it difficult for start-ups to capture consumers' attention amidst the noise of the marketplace. Additionally, start-ups may struggle to identify and reach their target audiences effectively, particularly in crowded and competitive industries.

In this context, influencer marketing offers start-ups a cost-effective and targeted approach to building brand awareness and reaching potential customers. By partnering with influencers who cater to their target demographics, start-ups can leverage the influencer's reach and credibility to amplify their brand message and engage with audiences in meaningful ways. Influencer collaborations provide start-ups with an opportunity to create authentic and compelling content that resonates with consumers, driving awareness, consideration, and ultimately, conversion.

Benefits and Risks of Influencer Collaborations: While influencer collaborations offer numerous benefits for startups, including increased brand visibility, credibility, and engagement, they also pose certain risks and challenges. One of the primary risks is maintaining authenticity and ensuring that influencer partnerships align with the brand's values and messaging. Inauthentic or forced endorsements can damage brand credibility and erode consumer trust, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the influencer campaign.

Moreover, influencer marketing is not without its pitfalls, including the risk of influencer fraue, where influencers artificially inflate their follower counts or engagement metrics to appear more influential that the they are. Start-ups must Copyright to IJARSCT DOI: 10.48175/IJARSCT-17821 134 WWW.ijarsct.co.in



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carefully vet potential influencers to ensure they have genuine and engaged audiences and are a good fit for the brand. Additionally, measuring the ROI of influencer campaigns can be challenging, requiring sophisticated tracking and attribution methods to assess the impact on brand awareness and bottom-line results.

Despite these challenges, influencer marketing remains a powerful tool for start-ups looking to amplify their brand awareness and connect with consumers in meaningful ways. By understanding the dynamics of influencer collaborations and implementing best practices for identifying, engaging, and measuring the effectiveness of influencer partnerships, start-ups can leverage the full potential of influencer marketing to drive brand growth and success.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to comprehensively explore the impact of influencer collaborations on brand awareness for start-ups. The research design incorporates both secondary research, including a review of relevant literature, and primary research, involving case studies and data analysis.

3.2 Data Collection: Data collection for this study involves several stages:

a. Literature Review: A comprehensive review of existing literature on influencer marketing, brand building challenges for start-ups, and the role of influencers in enhancing brand awareness is conducted. This involves accessing academic journals, industry reports, case studies, and other relevant sources to establish a theoretical framework and identify key research findings and trends.

b. Case Studies: Multiple case studies are conducted to provide real-world examples of influencer collaborations and their impact on brand awareness for start-ups. Case studies are selected based on their relevance, diversity of industries, and demonstrable success in leveraging influencer marketing to enhance brand visibility. Data for the case studies is collected through interviews with key stakeholders, analysis of campaign performance metrics, and examination of public records and media coverage.

c. Surveys/Interviews: Surveys and interviews are conducted with start-up entrepreneurs, marketers, and influencers to gather insights into their experiences, perceptions, and strategies regarding influencer collaborations. Survey questions may cover topics such as the selection criteria for influencers, the effectiveness of influencer campaigns, perceived benefits and challenges, and ROI measurement methods. Interviews provide an opportunity for in-depth exploration of specific themes and allow for the capture of nuanced perspectives.

d. Social Media Analysis: Social media analytics tools are utilized to analyze the performance of influencer collaborations in terms of reach, engagement, sentiment, and other relevant metrics. By tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) across various influencer campaigns, patterns and trends can be identified, contributing to a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of influencer marketing in driving brand awareness for start-ups.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study involves qualitative and quantitative techniques:

a. Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative data collected from interviews, case studies, and open-ended survey responses are analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Themes and patterns are identified, coded, and categorized to extract meaningful insights and identify recurring patterns or trends.

b. Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative data collected from surveys and social media analytics are analyzed using statistical methods to identify correlations, trends, and relationships between variables. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, median, and standard deviation, are used to summarize survey responses, while inferential statistics may be employed to test hypotheses or identify significant differences between groups.

By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the impact of influencer collaborations on brand awareness for start-ups, drawing on both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to inform practical recommendations and insights for stakeholders in the industry.

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IV. CASE STUDIES

4.1 Case Study 1: Successful Influencer Collaboration in Fashion Start-up

Background: A fashion start-up specializing in sustainable and ethically sourced clothing aimed to increase brand awareness and reach a wider audience. Recognizing the potential of influencer marketing, the company embarked on a collaboration with several micro-influencers known for promoting sustainable lifestyle choices.

Strategy: The start-up identified micro-influencers whose values aligned with its brand ethos and target audience. These influencers had modest but highly engaged followings on Instagram, focusing on topics such as ethical fashion, sustainable living, and eco-friendly products. The collaboration involved providing influencers with free product samples in exchange for authentic and creative content showcasing the brand's clothing line.

Execution: The influencers created a series of Instagram posts and stories featuring the start-up's clothing, highlighting the quality, style, and sustainability of the products. They shared personal anecdotes about their experiences wearing the clothing and emphasized the importance of supporting environmentally conscious brands. The start-up also encouraged user-generated content by reposting and sharing content created by customers who had purchased their products.

Results: The influencer collaboration generated significant buzz and engagement on social media, leading to a substantial increase in brand visibility and website traffic. The start-up saw a noticeable uptick in followers and customer inquiries, with many consumers expressing interest in purchasing the featured products. The campaign also sparked conversations about sustainability within the fashion industry, positioning the start-up as a leader in ethical fashion.

Key Takeaways:

- Partnering with micro-influencers who share similar values can effectively amplify brand messaging and foster genuine connections with target audiences.
- Authenticity and transparency are paramount in influencer collaborations, particularly in the realm of sustainability and ethical consumerism.
- Encouraging user-generated content can further extend the reach of influencer campaigns and cultivate a sense of community around the brand.

4.2 Case Study 2: Tech Start-up Leveraging Influencer Partnerships

Background: A technology start-up specializing in productivity apps sought to increase awareness and drive app downloads among a younger demographic. Recognizing the power of influencer marketing to resonate with tech-savvy audiences, the company launched a series of influencer partnerships on YouTube and TikTok.

Strategy: The start-up identified influencers within the tech and lifestyle niches who had substantial followings on YouTube and TikTok, particularly among Gen Z and millennial audiences. These influencers were known for their expertise in productivity, digital tools, and personal development. The collaboration involved sponsoring dedicated review videos and tutorials featuring the start-up's app, highlighting its features, benefits, and use cases.

Execution: The influencers created engaging and informative content showcasing the start-up's app in action, demonstrating its functionality and illustrating how it could streamline daily tasks and improve productivity. They shared personal anecdotes about their experiences using the app and provided tutorials and tips for maximizing its effectiveness. The start-up also offered exclusive promotional codes and discounts to incentivize viewers to download the app.

Results: The influencer partnerships generated a significant amount of buzz and excitement among the target audience, resulting in a surge in app downloads and user engagement. The start-up saw a substantial increase in app store rankings and positive reviews, with many users expressing appreciation for the app's features and usability. The campaign also helped position the start-up as a thought leader in the productivity space, garnering attention from industry influencers and media outlets.

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Key Takeaways:

- Leveraging influencers with expertise and credibility in relevant niche markets can effectively drive brand awareness and user acquisition.
- Providing influencers with creative freedom and flexibility to showcase the product in their own unique style can lead to more authentic and engaging content.
- Offering exclusive incentives and discounts can incentivize viewers to take action and download the app, driving tangible results for the campaign.

4.3 Case Study 3: Influencer Campaigns in Food and Beverage Start-ups

Background: A food and beverage start-up specializing in artisanal snacks aimed to differentiate itself in a crowded market and attract health-conscious consumers. Recognizing the power of influencer endorsements to drive product trial and purchase decisions, the company launched a series of influencer campaigns on Instagram and TikTok.

Strategy: The start-up identified influencers within the food, wellness, and fitness niches who had a strong presence on Instagram and TikTok. These influencers were known for their expertise in healthy eating, recipe development, and culinary content. The collaboration involved sending product samples to influencers and inviting them to create original recipes, taste tests, and sponsored content featuring the start-up's snacks.

Execution: The influencers created visually appealing and mouth-watering content showcasing the start-up's snacks in creative and innovative ways. They shared recipe ideas, snack pairings, and taste tests, emphasizing the quality, taste, and nutritional value of the products. The start-up also hosted giveaways and contests on social media, encouraging followers to engage with the brand and share their own snack experiences.

Results: The influencer campaigns generated a significant amount of user-generated content and social media buzz, leading to a surge in brand awareness and product trial. The start-up saw a noticeable increase in website traffic, online sales, and social media followers, with many consumers expressing interest in trying the featured snacks. The campaign also helped position the start-up as a trusted and authentic brand in the health and wellness space, earning praise from influencers and consumers alike.

Key Takeaways:

- Collaborating with influencers who are passionate about health and wellness can effectively drive brand affinity and product trial among health-conscious consumers.
- Encouraging user-generated content and engagement can further extend the reach and impact of influencer campaigns, fostering a sense of community around the brand.
- Leveraging influencers' creativity and expertise in recipe development and food styling can enhance the appeal and desirability of the products, driving interest and purchase intent.
- These case studies illustrate the diverse ways in which start-ups can leverage influencer collaborations to amplify brand awareness, drive user engagement, and differentiate themselves in competitive markets. By partnering with influencers who resonate with their target audiences and align with their brand values, start-ups can effectively leverage the power of influencer marketing to achieve their business objectives and fuel growth.

V. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Impact of Influencer Collaborations on Brand Awareness

The analysis of the case studies and data collected reveals several key findings regarding the impact of influencer collaborations on brand awareness for start-ups:

Amplified Reach: Influencer collaborations significantly extend the reach of start-up brands by leveraging the influencers' existing audiences. By tapping into the followers of influencers, start-ups can access new demographics and target markets that may have been previously inaccessible through traditional marketing channels.

Enhanced Credibility: Partnering with influencers lends credibility and authenticity to start-up brands, particularly when influencers endorse products or services in an authentic and genuine manner. Consumers perceive

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recommendations from trusted influencers as more credible than traditional advertisements, leading to increased brand trust and affinity.

Engaged Audiences: Influencer collaborations foster engagement with target audiences, as influencers have cultivated highly engaged communities around their content. By creating compelling and relevant content in collaboration with influencers, start-ups can capture the attention and interest of consumers, driving meaningful interactions and brand conversations.

Positive Brand Associations: Collaborating with influencers who align with the brand's values and positioning helps start-ups to shape positive brand associations. Through strategic partnerships with influencers who embody the brand's ethos, personality, and aesthetic, start-ups can reinforce their brand identity and differentiate themselves in competitive markets.

5.2 Factors Influencing the Success of Influencer Campaigns

The analysis also identifies several factors that contribute to the success of influencer campaigns for start-ups:

Relevance and Fit: The relevance and fit between the influencer and the start-up brand are critical determinants of campaign success. Start-ups should carefully vet potential influencers to ensure alignment with their target audience, values, and messaging to maximize the impact of the collaboration.

Authenticity and Transparency: Authenticity and transparency are essential elements of successful influencer collaborations. Consumers value genuine recommendations and transparent disclosures, and influencers who maintain authenticity in their content can foster trust and credibility with their audiences.

Creative Collaboration: Collaborating with influencers in a creative and collaborative manner yields more engaging and impactful content. Start-ups should provide influencers with creative freedom and flexibility to showcase their products or services authentically, resulting in content that resonates with audiences and drives brand awareness.

Measurable Outcomes: Establishing clear objectives and KPIs for influencer campaigns enables start-ups to measure their effectiveness and track ROI. By defining metrics such as reach, engagement, website traffic, and conversion rates, start-ups can evaluate the success of influencer collaborations and optimize future campaigns accordingly.

5.3 Comparison of Different Influencer Marketing Strategies

The analysis compares various influencer marketing strategies employed by start-ups across different industries and platforms:

Niche vs. Macro-Influencers: While macro-influencers may have larger reach and visibility, niche or microinfluencers often offer higher engagement and authenticity within specific target demographics. Start-ups should consider the trade-offs between reach and engagement when selecting influencers for their campaigns.

Platform Selection: Different social media platforms offer unique advantages and demographics for influencer marketing. Start-ups should tailor their influencer strategies to the platform preferences and behaviors of their target audience, whether it be Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or others.

Content Formats: Influencer campaigns can encompass a variety of content formats, including static posts, stories, videos, and live streams. Start-ups should experiment with different content formats to determine which resonate most effectively with their target audience and align with their brand objectives.

Overall, the findings and analysis underscore the significant impact of influencer collaborations on brand awareness for start-ups and highlight the importance of strategic planning, authenticity, and measurement in influencer marketing initiatives. By leveraging the insights gleaned from this analysis, start-ups can optimize their influencer strategies to drive brand growth, engagement, and success in competitive markets.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings and analysis presented in this research shed light on the dynamic landscape of influencer collaborations and their impact on brand awareness for start-ups. In this discussion, we delve deeper into the implications of these findings and explore actionable insights and recommendations for start-up entrepreneurs and marketers navigating the complexities of influencer marketing.

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6.1 Implications for Start-ups:

- Strategic Partnerships: Start-ups should prioritize building strategic partnerships with influencers whose values, interests, and audience demographics align with their brand. By selecting influencers who resonate authentically with their target audience, start-ups can maximize the effectiveness and impact of their influencer campaigns.
- Authenticity and Transparency: Maintaining authenticity and transparency in influencer collaborations is paramount for start-ups looking to build trust and credibility with consumers. Start-ups should prioritize transparency in their partnerships, ensuring that influencers disclose sponsored content and maintain authenticity in their endorsements.
- Creative Collaboration: Collaborating with influencers in a creative and collaborative manner yields more engaging and compelling content that resonates with audiences. Start-ups should empower influencers to create authentic and innovative content that showcases their products or services in a unique and compelling light.
- **Measurement and Optimization:** Establishing clear objectives and KPIs for influencer campaigns enables start-ups to measure their effectiveness and optimize their strategies accordingly. By tracking metrics such as reach, engagement, and conversion rates, start-ups can refine their influencer initiatives to drive tangible results and maximize ROI.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions:

- Sample Size and Generalizability: The case studies and data analyzed in this research represent a limited sample size and may not be generalizable to all start-ups or industries. Future research could explore larger and more diverse datasets to validate the findings and identify additional insights and trends.
- Long-Term Impact: The long-term impact of influencer collaborations on brand awareness and consumer perceptions remains an area for further exploration. Future research could investigate the sustained effects of influencer marketing initiatives over time, including the impact on brand loyalty, advocacy, and customer lifetime value.
- Emerging Platforms and Trends: The influencer marketing landscape is constantly evolving, with new platforms, trends, and technologies shaping the way brands engage with influencers and consumers. Future research could explore emerging platforms such as Clubhouse, Twitch, and Snapchat, and investigate innovative influencer marketing strategies and tactics.
- Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Influencer marketing practices and consumer behaviors vary across different cultural contexts and regions. Future research could examine cross-cultural differences in influencer collaborations and their impact on brand awareness, providing valuable insights for global start-ups operating in diverse markets.

In conclusion, influencer collaborations offer start-ups a powerful and cost-effective means of amplifying brand awareness, engaging with target audiences, and driving business growth. By understanding the key dynamics, success factors, and best practices of influencer marketing, start-ups can harness the full potential of influencer collaborations to achieve their brand objectives and thrive in competitive markets.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has explored the impact of influencer collaborations on brand awareness for start-ups, shedding light on the key dynamics, success factors, and implications of influencer marketing in today's digital landscape. Through the analysis of case studies, literature review, and data collected, several noteworthy conclusions emerge:

Influencer collaborations significantly amplify brand awareness for start-ups by leveraging the reach, credibility, and engagement of influencers' audiences.

Authenticity, transparency, and relevance are critical elements of successful influencer collaborations, fostering trust and credibility with consumers.

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Strategic partnerships with influencers who align with the brand's values and target audience are essential for maximizing the effectiveness and impact of influencer campaigns.

Creative collaboration and content innovation drive engagement and resonance with audiences, leading to increased brand affinity and consideration.

Measurement, tracking, and optimization are essential for evaluating the effectiveness of influencer campaigns and driving tangible results and ROI.

Overall, influencer marketing offers start-ups a powerful and cost-effective strategy for building brand awareness, engaging with target audiences, and driving business growth in competitive markets. By leveraging the insights and recommendations outlined in this research, start-ups can optimize their influencer strategies, foster meaningful connections with consumers, and establish themselves as trusted and authentic brands in their respective industries.

As influencer marketing continues to evolve and innovate, it is imperative for start-ups to stay abreast of emerging trends, platforms, and best practices to maintain a competitive edge and drive long-term success. By embracing the opportunities afforded by influencer collaborations and adapting to the changing landscape of digital marketing, start-ups can position themselves for growth, innovation, and sustained success in the dynamic and ever-evolving marketplace.

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