



**Impact of Influencer Marketing and its e-WOM in Digital Marketing
on Consumers' Motivations and Purchasing Process**

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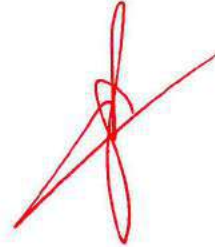
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Abstract

The mass adoption of internet into daily life is that the single biggest event that has affected marketing over past three decades. New mobile devices have been exploding in the last decade and marketing departments are still catching up. Information is everywhere that customers are now smarter and able to research products in seconds, easily comparing competitors and reviews and unearthing any myths along the way. Digital marketing has become an important matter for companies because of new generation customers and the new digital age. Digital marketing is the promoting of services or products by applying digital technologies, generally on the Internet, and includes using display advertising, mobile phones, and any other digital medium. Digital marketing is more affordable, flexible, and engaging than traditional marketing methods, thus it is crucial to businesses, no matter the size. This study centered in the segment of digital marketing which is called "Influencer marketing." A documentary research format had been applied for this study. This research focused to investigate the impact of influencer marketing on customers in the purchasing process and it analyzed the effects of influencer marketing and how the effects will change or affect consumers' motivations in the purchasing process. The nature of e-WOM, driven by influencers or influencer marketing and its impact on customers was also analyzed. By e-WOM and influencers, it was studied that how customers can tend to decide and purchase brands in their favor, either consciously or unconsciously. Businesses or individuals would be able to formulate effective influencer marketing from this established framework at the end

of study. Recommendations for implementation of this study on executive, managerial and operational levels had also been discussed along with practical and valuable suggestions for businesses, individuals and future further researches.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Influencer marketing, e-WOM, Consumers' motivations, Purchasing Process.



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Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The study about exchanging relationships and managing them is called marketing. In other words, it is the process of business creating satisfying customers and relationships with them. Marketing is one of the primary gears of business management because of its way of targeting the customer (*"Marketing", n.d.*). Nowadays, marketing can be divided into two strategies: Traditional and Modern (Digital). Marketing strategies were used by different companies to collaborate with their consumers. It was also used to aware the consumers about the features, specifications and benefits of company's products. It was essentially centered on encouraging target population to purchase those specific services and products. The marketing strategies might be totally new and innovative or they can be formerly applied or tested strategies. Effective marketing strategies facilitated to lead within the competition (*"8 Types of Marketing Strategies and Definition", 2016*). Marketing strategies can be used or focused on either business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) or business-to-government (B2G). This study focused on one of the modern, digital marketing strategies called "Influencer marketing."

There had been several statistics associated with this strategy that 70 percent of teenage YouTube subscribers trust influencer opinions over traditional celebrities. On average, businesses generated \$6.50 for every \$1 invested in influencer marketing. It is judged that to be effective by 81% of marketers who have used influencer marketing. 51% of marketers believed they get better customers from influencer marketing (*Haran, 2019*). Brands and social media influencers had been collaborated through channels to generate awareness over the last five years, and influencer marketing became from a supplementary marketing tactic to a \$5-10 billion dollar industry. It was suggested that brand investment in influencer marketing will increase dramatically in 2018, so that 39% of marketers planned to grow their influencer marketing budget. A number of marketers in an insignificant percentage (17%) tried to spend over half of the entire marketing budget of this year for influencer marketing. 89% of marketers (nearly 90%) said that ROI from influencer marketing was comparable to or better than other marketing channels. However, 61% of marketers agreed it's challenging to find the best influencers for a campaign, suggesting this problem is far from solved (*Bailis, 2019*).

There was something similar to KPI for measuring influencer marketing success and it is called Engagement Rate. Being used by 71% of marketers, engagement rate was by far

the most common metric used for influencer marketing. Influencer marketing was in 2016, a \$1.7 billion industry that became in 2017, increasing to \$3 billion. Growing continued in 2018, to \$4.6 billion and was expected to remain its rising course in 2019, to potentially become a \$6.5 billion industry. It had continued to become as an industry over the last few years. It is reported that a massive 325% grew in 2018 for the term “influencer marketing” of Google searches. These searches surged from 3,900 searches per month in 2015, 6,460 in 2016 and to 21,000 in 2017. In 2018, searches rose to the number of 61,000 that this rate of increase continued astoundingly. Just over three years, an incredible 1,500% rose in “influencer marketing” searches (*"The State of Influencer Marketing 2019: Benchmark Report [+Infographic]"*, 2019).

People almost certainly had a tendency to trust what other people have to say. This was the reason that influencer marketing had become such a strong and effective promoting strategy. As outbound marketing continued to decrease and inbound marketing rose in popularity, it had become one of the most in-effect techniques for attracting customers. Today-age consumers were not the same as consumers in past. They did not pay attention to everything they hear on TV or the radio. They did not carefully look at billboards and take the info to heart. But they took note to what other people have to say. Influencer marketing can make up a great helping to an inbound marketing campaign (*Haran, 2019*).

1.2. Problems to be investigated

Some firms succeeded in building successful online identities, to the point they became influencers themselves. For example, Red Bull had managed to scale the pinnacle of social media success. But to most firms that it was an elusive dream. It was usually much easier for a firm to find influencers and work with them and their audiences to spread the message than it was to build a substantial engaged audience itself (*"The Definitive Guide to Influencer Marketing - An In Depth Resource"*, 2018).

Although influencer marketing might appear easy, still, there were a lot of factors to be considered to create a prosperous marketing collaboration between the business and influencers. Some argued that an association between the influencer’s brand and the product was critical for a decent partnership or an influencer with a good relationship to its followers, led to an advanced authenticity. While, others claimed that it was vital to have the higher amount of followers, as an influencer to create a better response from its followers (*De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017*). Additionally, an influencer who had a great amount

of followers (macro-influencers) might be assumed as more reliable than influencers who had a lesser amount of followers (micro-influencers). Though, some marketers found that micro-influencers most likely had greater engagement rates because of the audiences who were interested in the topic or the product; the influencer is promoting rather than just being followers of the influencer (*Oktaviani, 2018*).

Oktaviani also mentioned that Influencer marketing became a strong marketing tool because of influencers who understand what today consumers want is. Most of the influencers were normal people who gained their followers by curating contents that resonate with several people; earning them the ability to influence their audiences' opinions and were tended to be trusted by consumers. She said that it is also good to know that influencers usually had followers that are interested in the same group which means their own niche, allowing brands to reach target customers effectively. According to AJ Agrawal from Forbes, social media influencers exist on all the main social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. The minor social platforms like TikTok and Musical.ly had even given birth to famous influencers and celebrities down in the single-digit age group on Internet. They were the young stars of the modern age, and they became savvy to appropriately collaborate with brands in their own creative campaigns (*Agrawal, 2016*).

Other frequent factors to be considered were the ways to maximize the impact of influencers for the brands and the ways to measure the success of an influencer marketing campaigns ("*Influencer marketing 3 questions to ask*", *n.d.*). It was certain that there are many welfares working with influencers and it is a tactic which brings main rewards to any brand, no matter the size or industry. Nonetheless, marketers should tread wisely while working with influencers to maximize the impact for brands, particularly if this was a new area of interest, and monitor key steps and best practices to make sure they were set up for success (*Llewellyn, 2018*). 84% of marketers tried to plan executing at least one influencer marketing campaign during the next 12 months (*Forbes, 2016*). It was argued that these influencers have no way to prove they influence neither in quantity nor in quality and brands have to be very realistic about what they stand to gain from such collaborations, if at all (*Cohen, 2018*). Lacking benchmarks is one of the major problems relating to data and metrics in the influencer marketing space. The change from an industry that grew as an alternative to paid media is one of the main reasons for this when the only KPIs were reach and engagement rate (*Samuel, 2018*).

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study purposed to deliver the findings which may be established as a guideline for businesses, research, social micro-influencers and community in further future studies and researches. The study encouraged the society to understand the characteristics of influencer marketing and how it affects in people's daily lifestyles. The main objectives of this research were stated as followings:

- To encourage micro-influencers and make them understand the nature of influencer marketing that it is now one of the most important digital marketing.
- To understand the way of collaboration between the influencers and businesses to promote the brand.
- To show the public about the impact of this kind of collaboration and e-WOM tactic.
- To be realized the impacts of the influencer marketing on organizations by society.
- To study how previous marketing campaigns of influencers can connect with their future potentials new campaigns.
- To understand the impacts of influencer marketing and its e-WOM in digital marketing on customers' motivation and decisions in purchasing process.

1.4. Scope of the Study

The study focused on digital marketing and especially and mainly on one of its strategies, influencers marketing. A consumer's psychology was studied to find the relationship with influencer and decision to make a purchase. The study yielded the impacts of influencer marketing on organizations and consumers' motivation. A documentary research format had been applied for this study.

For this study, I had mainly reviewed 8 previous papers which are similar to my topic. Amongst, some were for specific region, some were for specific industry and some were for specific age group. I had reviewed and referenced them for my paper to building up my research points, to support some of my discussion points, to establish my research framework, and lastly to critically think and suggest recommendation for practical implementation in the area of my kind of research paper. In addition, I was spread my learning coverage in other areas related to my topic. I had read and studied about 56 published studies, articles or news or blog posts or researches, 5 statistic reports to help me add nice discussion points, state wide range of related information and knowledge, suggest useful recommendations in my own ideas and make a neat wrap up for my research paper.

This documentary research was carried out on the processes that can lead to the further studies and future improvements in the areas of Digital Marketing, Influencer Marketing, to establish the influencer marketing for an organization, to become an influencer and knowing the consumers' psychology and understanding customers' motivation and decision in purchasing process.

1.5. Research Significance

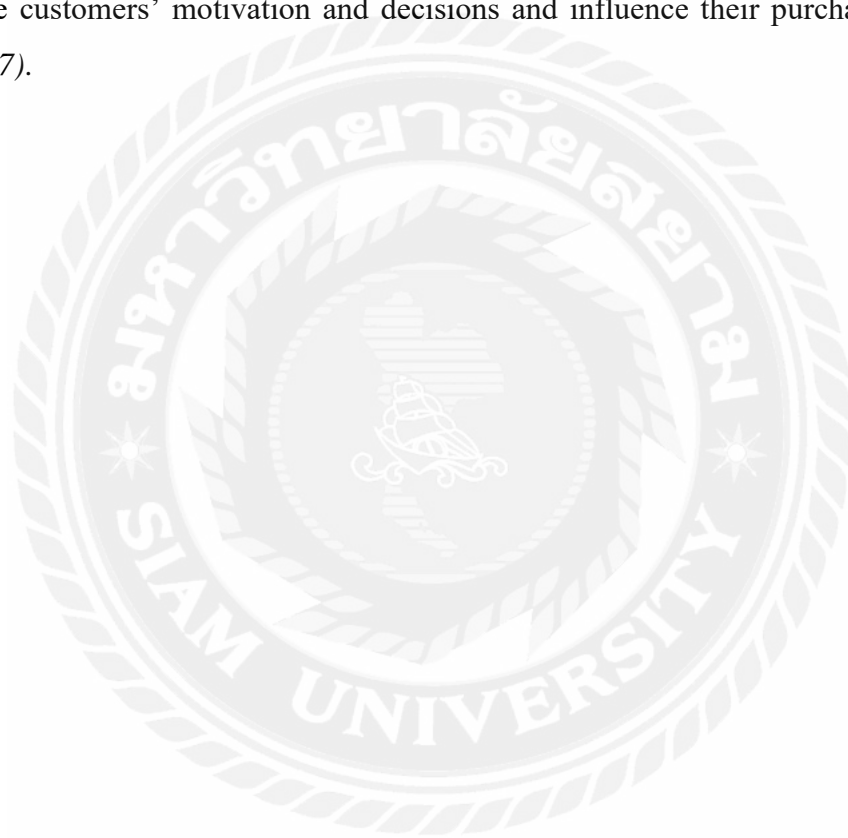
This study provided the guidelines for organizations by showing the way of collaboration between the influencers and businesses to promote the brand. Some past researches had shown that influencers are tended to be appreciated as trustworthy and reliable than a paid advertisement, as that it fits with the other content on the platform (*Abidin, 2016*). De Veirman et al. (2017) stated that one major challenge for brands still is to identify and choose the right influencers (*Grafström, Jakobsson & Wiede, 2018*).

Then, it highlighted the key factors of influence marketing that is the impact of this kind of collaboration and e-WOM tactic. In comparison to direct marketing, influencer marketing used the power of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) to market their products or services indirectly. Customers had continually attended to others' reviews more than an advertisement, thus it was reflected as one of the main point in influencer marketing (*De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017*). According to existing Goldsmith & Clark, 2008 literature, Electronic-Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) had greater effects on consumer decision-making compared to traditional advertising (*Goldsmith & Clark, 2008*).

Another highlighted key factor was to study how previous marketing campaigns of influencers can connect with their future potentials new campaigns. The fact that an influencer was more accessible and much easier to involve as the influencer often shares more of their personal life was the distinction between a celebrity and an influencer. This could be supposed as a personal association between the influencer and the follower and thus, the follower was tended to trust the influencer's opinions according to Abidin, 2016. It is presented that it is important for the brands to choose that the influencer is to be both well-known but also appreciated (like in previous campaigns) by the audiences in order to execute great (new) ones (*Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2015*).

Most of the past literatures focused on impact of influencer marketing on organizations and macro-influencers. It was shown that having more followers has a positive effect on the influencer (being macro-influencers), simply because in that case, they seemed

more popular (*De Veirman et al., 2017*). However, this study covered both micro and macro influencers since this was aimed to encourage micro-influencers and make them understand the nature of influencer marketing that it is now one of the most important digital marketing. The micro-influencers appeared more reliable and believable, more knowledgeable, as well as better at explaining how the product works, compared to general population (*Fay & Berger, 2016*). The paper covered impact of influencer marketing not only on organizations but also customers' behaviors by promoting research and community about the connection between the impacts of influencer marketing and customers' motivation and decisions in purchasing process. It became pretty obvious that influencer marketing and user generated content shape customers' motivation and decisions and influence their purchases processes (*Cobain, 2017*).



Literature Review

2.1. Digital Marketing

Activities carried out by a company to advocate the purchasing or sales of a good or service is called Marketing. It comprised advertising, selling, and delivering products to other businesses or consumers. Professionals who worked in a corporation's marketing and promotion departments seek to get the attention of key potential audiences through advertising (*Twin, 2019*). In other way, marketing sat at the joint between the business and the customer – the great negotiator between the business's self-interests and the buyer's needs (*Brenner, 2019*). When people began to use more than just print media to advertise a product, present-day marketing started in the 1950s. As TV and soon, the internet entered households, marketers could conduct entire campaigns across multiple platforms. Marketers had become gradually essential to fine-tuning how a business promotes a product to consumers to enhance success over the last 70 years (*Forsey, 2019*).

Even though this was an age that a large volume of people make online transactions, another portion of the population did not know how to apply internet (*Shiram, 2017*). This made very difficult for the entrepreneur, to determine which aspect of brand marketing to focus on; traditional marketing or digital marketing (*Sharma, 2018*). Traditional one referred to any type of promotion, advertising or campaign used by companies for years, and that had approved success rate. Traditional marketing was a rather broad category that incorporates many forms of advertising and marketing (*Rai, 2018*).

Digital Marketing uses social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter for promotions where Ad campaign scan be set by targeting the customers of different age groups, based on budget planned and also based on locations to be reached whereas it is not possible with Traditional Marketing methods (*Rajeswari & Nazimsha, 2017*). It was recognized that digital marketing such as search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), content marketing, influencer marketing, content automation, e-commerce marketing, campaign marketing, and social media marketing is an advantage for businesses (*Bala & Verma, 2018*). It can be applied with various business objectives. For specific objectives such as brand building or increasing sales, every digital marketing technique or channels can be easily applied (*Gudhka, 2019*).

2.2. Influencer marketing

The Internet had modified the standard ways that of conducting business and establishing consumer's relationships, the way firms and customers interact and also the transactions. Online shopping was gaining a massive popularity and is becoming generally accepted as a buying tool for services and products. According to Bourlakis, Papagiannidis & Fox, 2008, with the emergence of the e-commerce online buying emerged as a new development, changing the future of commerce within the digital world. Therefore in the study of Saxena & Khanna, 2013, social media had become a vital source for communicating marketing messages globally, creating the firms, researchers and marketers be more interested in the worth of advertising and also the chance to influence on the multiple platforms (*Lisichkova & Othman, 2017*).

Hence, influencer marketing was a practice that is much hyped recently, and can be outlined as a type of marketing that involves activities targeted identifying and building relationship with people who have the ability to influence over potential consumers (*Wong, 2014*). Influencer marketing was a kind of promoting that focuses on using key leaders to promote a brand's message to the larger market.

Leveraging on an excess of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube, social media influencers were apparently used to advertise product info and latest promotions to online audiences (*"Influencer Marketing Vs Word-of-Mouth Marketing - 7 Signals Marketing", 2016*). Article in Smart Insights, 2017 mentioned that influencer marketing highlights using influencers to drive a brand's message to target the right audience segment. According to Freberg et al. 2011, social media influencers had emerged as a dynamic third party endorser in the age of ubiquitous Internet. By Liu et al, 2012, social media influencers typically engaged with their followers by regularly updating them with the latest information (*Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017*).

Additionally, they also mentioned that social media influencers can also showcase compelling outcome in media coverage and consumer persuasion according to Booth and Matic, 2011. In marketing, endorsement played a big role in achieving a company's great reputation and business goals. Social media influencers had established in recent year themselves as potential endorsers by making a variety of buzzwords as compared to different marketing methods like celebrity endorsement and were deemed to be the most cost-effective and efficient promoting trends (*Harrison, 2017; Patel, 2016; Talavera, 2015*).

Influencers were people who are considered as Opinion Leaders on Social Media platforms in a particular area of interests. According to Freberg et al, 2011, they represented a new type of independent third party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of others (Bruns, 2018). Li & Du, 2011 also agreed that they were similar to an opinion leader, an influential person with a powerful personal brand (Grafström, Jakobsson & Wiede, 2018).

An association between the influencer's brand and the product was critical for a decent partnership or an influencer with a good relationship to its followers, led to an advanced authenticity. While, others claimed that it was vital to have the higher amount of followers, as an influencer to create a better response from its followers (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Additionally, an influencer who had a great amount of followers (macro-influencers) might be assumed as more reliable than influencers who had a lesser amount of followers (micro-influencers). Though, some marketers found that micro-influencers most likely had greater engagement rates because of the audiences who were interested in the topic or the product; the influencer is promoting rather than just being followers of the influencer (Oktaviani, 2018).

Micro-influencers realized themselves during a research gap, between influencer marketing, that had actually already become nearer to a celebrity endorsement; and peer endorsement. Celebrities and likewise the largest influencers were great at creating awareness. Though, micro-influencers were much advanced in the consideration and action part of the marketing funnel, especially consumers' motivations and decisions in buying process (Probstnerová, 2018).

The fact that an influencer was more accessible and much easier to involve as the influencer often shares more of their personal life was the distinction between a celebrity and an influencer. This could be supposed as a personal association between the influencer and the follower and thus, the follower was tended to trust the influencer's opinions (Abidin, 2016). It is presented that it is important for the brands to choose that the influencer is to be both well-known but also appreciated (like in previous ones) by the audiences in order to execute great (new) campaigns (Amos, Holmes & Stratton, 2015).

2.3.e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth)

Dichter first time agreed the idea of word of mouth (WOM) and recommended customers applied it in two ways; to rationalize a buying already done or to help determine on

a potential future purchase (Baker, 2018). Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) was the digital equivalent of word-of-mouth (WOM) strategy in marketing (Byrne, Kearney & MacEvilly, 2017). Consumers found user-generated electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) to be more reliable and trustworthy than any interaction from brands' side as already proven by many studies. (Jeong & Koo, 2015). Complementary to their study, a research on e-WOM via social medias and its effects on customers' motivation and decisions in purchase process of brands had been conducted (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).

Shah et al., 2012 have found a direct and positive relationship between social e-WOM and consumers' motivations. Consumers' motivations, described as a cognitive behavior and intention to buy a particular brand, is therefore closely related to WOM. According to WOMMA (2010), e-WOM transmitted through social media has become a determining factor that drives return on investment, ROI (Probstnerová, 2018). According to Goldsmith & Clark, 2008's existing literature, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has greater effects on customers' motivation and decision-making in purchasing process compared to traditional advertising (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). Customers had continually attended to others' reviews more than an advertisement, thus it was reflected as one of the main point in influencer marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017).

In Dichter and MacKinnon opinions, social word-of-mouth performed as a tool for promoting product info, but also as a suggestion and a review provided by experienced consumers, and is thus seen as an essential part of the marketing mix. The progression of the social media and Internet had initiated an extraordinary amount of e-WOM. One of the key sources of e-WOM was social media influencers. Earlier, customers relied on WOM of friends and family to help make buying decisions according to Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988 (Probstnerová, 2018). E-WOM was a critical part of influencer marketing because it is solely dependent on the passing of information online to other users (Yusuf, Hussin & Busalim, 2018). Through social media, individuals had access to 3.196 billion other users to source reviews and opinion (Kemp, 2018).

2.4. Consumers' motivations

An internal state which drives people to figure and purchase products or services to satisfy conscious and unconscious needs or desires was consumer motivation. The satisfaction of those needs would drive and motivate them to make a repeat buying or to find alternatives for better fulfillment of those needs. Marketers and companies used numerous

different tools to help them understand consumers' motivations relating to their brands. Marketers used one-to-one interviews, focus groups and online or postal surveys for pre-purchase and post-purchase to develop understanding of consumers' motivational drives (*Bown-Wilson, 2019*).

Marketers can agree that understanding consumers' motivations which are internal drivers to fulfill their physiological and psychological needs and wants, were serious. That's why motivations were the major drives of decisions in the purchase process. Marketers needed to understand consumers' motivations and their purchasing process in order to champion relevant products, feature innovation and create effective marketing communications (*Duggal, 2018*).

According to Heijden, Verhagen & Creemers, 2003, the Internet advancement and the rise of technology had led to the growth of different companies and business online, making some studies to take a closer look at the consumer's motivations when customers plan to search, select and purchase brands online, specifically on social medias. Hence, Meskaran, Ismail & Shanmugam, 2013 said that the Internet affects the customers' decision-making behavior in all stages of their purchase processes; the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase (*Lisichkova & Othman, 2017*).

Moreover, Ting and de Run, 2015; Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005 mentioned that consumers' attitudes and motivations exhibit a parallel relationship in consumer studies. Relatively, Chen, 2007 proposed that favorable attitude towards a specific product is a dominant factor that can lead to consumers' motivation. Similarly, a favorable attitude towards product endorsed by social media influencers will impact on higher chance of motivation (*Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017*). According to Cheung and Thadani, 2017; Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991 and Brown et al., 2003, the overall aim of influencer marketing was that it affects consumers' motivations in purchase process positively (*Bruns, 2018*).

2.5. Purchasing Process

The consumers' purchasing process (also called a buying process) described the journey of customers going through before buying the product, while buying the product and after buying the product (*Johnston, 2016*).

The purchasing process began long before the purchase and lasts long after it. Some products were instantly consumed and others are used in the longer term. The process started the instant consumers start planning. Sometimes, they considered so many products before

selecting the best one from among them. There were numerous considerations like price, quality and other features to be kept in mind before making the final decision. The instant customers had recognized the need, the process has begun. From recognition of the need to the after using, there were five stages in the purchasing process. The stages were need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior. The buying process began at need recognition (*Pratap, 2017*).

In this stage, consumers must recognize or become aware of a need or a desire to purchase something (*Middlebrook, 2015*). Without need recognition, there is no buying, there were two kinds of stimuli: internal (such as hunger or thirst) or external (such as advertising or word of mouth) that can trigger need. In search for information stage, a consumer may search for information online to figure what brand is the best and the most suitable (*Johnston, 2016*). In this stage, consumers engaged in both internal and external information search. The consumer identifying different brands from his or her memory specifically for certain low involvement products was called internal search. But, consumers were tended to use an external search for high involvement products (*Perner, 2018*).

In 2015, Middlebrook mentioned that there was a need to form evaluation criteria since the customer prepared to assume or to compare alternatives. She also said that keeping their evaluation criteria (requirements) in mind, the consumers were able to determine alternatives, or the search for acceptable alternatives needed to continue. Price, utility and other criteria of customers were main factors being considered in evaluation of alternatives search (*Pratap, 2017*). The stage of purchase decision was where the purchase takes place. Philip Kotler, 2009 stated that the final purchase decision can be disturbed by two issues: negative feedbacks from other customers and the level of motivation accepting the feedback.

As the post-purchase behavior was the last stage, consumers assess their feeling for the purchased product. In other words, customers will compare products with their previous expectations and decide it make them either satisfied or dissatisfied. Therefore, this stage was critical in retaining customers. This can greatly affect consumers' future purchasing process of the same product (*Johnston, 2016*). From the start to the end of purchasing process, the number of stages consumers gone through was usually determined by the degree of their level of involvement. A high level of interest in a product/service usually meant the consumer will be highly involved, and will spend more time, while making a decision in purchasing process. The more the consumer involving within the purchase or the more complicated the decision and the more steps had to be utilized in the purchasing process (*Middlebrook, 2015*).

2.6. Past Researches

In this section, I presented some previous paperwork which I mainly referenced for this study that their topics are very similar to the area of my research. Indeed, the following stated studies were not the only ones that there are more published articles, news, blog posts, research papers and studies I referenced. The followings were the most similar to my study and their purposes, discussions, limitations, suggestions are very helpful for my study. As they were stated in their papers, these following papers were indeed useful for future researches and further studies, like mine.

➤ **“The impact of influencer marketing on consumers’ attitudes”**

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate; what reasons affect Swedish millennials’ attitudes by influencer marketing on Instagram and blogs. Millennials attitudes affected by influencer marketing because of several reasons as the arrangement of promotions offered by an influencer, the level of reliability and trustworthiness of the messages, plus, an influencer’s change in style were the overall findings of this research (*Grafström, Jakobsson & Wiede, 2018*).

➤ **“The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention and the Mediation Effect of Customer Attitude”**

The researcher used the social learning theory from marketing area to support the understanding of connection between effectiveness of online influencers towards consumers’ motivation in the scope of theoretical implication of this study. In the scope of managerial implication of this study, it provided marketers numerous practical considerations in choosing a social media influencer, customized for an advertisement to get competitive advantages in the market (*Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017*).

➤ **“The Impact of Influencers on Online Purchase Intent”**

To discover the structures that an influencer owns or should own and their influence on online purchasing intent for customers was the aim of this thesis. It was revealed that apparent authenticity, together with reliability, trustworthiness, the expertise of the influencers and their morality were the major structures that influence consumers and their online purchase intent (*Lisichkova & Othman, 2017*).

Findings

1.6. Findings and Discussions

Influencer marketing was a kind of promoting that focuses on using key leaders (influencers) to promote a brand's message to the larger market. Article in Smart Insights, 2017 mentioned that influencer marketing highlights using influencers to drive a brand's message to target the right audience segment (*Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017*). In marketing, endorsement played a big role in achieving a company's great reputation and business goals.

Since this is the part of my own ideas and opinions presented, I would like to mention about main key players in marketing which are **Influence, Buying and Response (IBR)**. It is also recognized as **Stimulus-Response Model** in marketing. **Stimulus** means **influencing** consumers' motivations in many different ways. There can be many factors which can influence consumers' motivations such as cultural, social, environmental and medias. In my case, the topic I chose "Influencer Marketing" is part of the media factor, especially social medias.

Influencer marketing uses influencers and e-WOM on social media to drive stimuli of consumers, in other words; influencing their motivations. Social media influencers had established themselves in recent year as potential endorsers by making a variety of buzzwords as compared to different marketing methods like celebrity endorsement and were deemed to be the most cost-effective and efficient promoting trends (*Harrison, 2017; Patel, 2016; Talavera, 2015*). According to Freberg et al. 2011, social media influencers had emerged as a dynamic third party endorser in the age of ubiquitous Internet. Additionally, Booth and Matic, 2011 showed that social media influencers can also showcase compelling outcome in both media coverage and consumer persuasion (*Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017*).

Consumers found user-generated electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) to be more reliable and trustworthy than any interaction from brands' side as already proven by many studies (*Jeong & Koo, 2015*). Complementary to their study, a research on e-WOM via social medias and its effects on customers' motivation and decisions in purchase process of brands had been conducted (*Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017*). Shah et al., 2012 have found a direct and positive relationship between social e-WOM and consumers' motivations.

Between stimulus and response, there is **purchasing process** as I mentioned earlier "**Buying**." There are five stages in consumers' purchasing process: need recognition, search

for information, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior. The purchasing process can be emotional (desire) or rational (need) and it can be decided in the first stage, need recognition. In my opinion, the purchasing process can be divided into three levels: **pre-purchase level, purchase level and post-purchase level.**

The consumers' **purchasing process** (also called a buying process) described the journey of customers going through before buying the product, while buying the product and after buying the product (*Johnston, 2016*). There were five stages in the consumers' purchasing process. The purchasing process began long before the purchase and lasts long after it. The stages were need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior (*Pratap, 2017*).

The first three stages: need recognition, search for information and evaluation of alternatives, can be considered as pre-purchase level. In this level, different kinds of influences to drive consumers' motivation are critical, in my case: influencers and e-WOM. **Consumers' motivations**, described as a cognitive behavior and intention to buy a particular brand, is therefore closely related to WOM. Through social media, individuals had access to 3.196 billion other users to source reviews and opinion (*Kemp, 2018*). One of the key sources of e-WOM was social media influencers (*Probstnerová, 2018*). According to Cheung and Thadani, 2017, the overall aim of influencer marketing was that it affects consumers' motivations in purchase process positively (*Bruns, 2018*).

The final decision for the product to be purchased is also done in this level. The purchase decision stage is in the purchase level that it carries the decided optional product from pre-purchase level and makes the actual purchase in this level. The final stage, post-purchase behavior is of the post-purchase level. In this level, marketers can get reviews, opinions, suggestions and feedbacks from customers. In stimulus-response model, this level is associated with the last key player called "**Response.**"

Marketers can agreed that understanding consumers' motivations which are internal drivers to fulfill their physiological and psychological needs and wants, were serious. That's why motivations were the major drives of decisions in the purchase process. Marketers needed to understand consumers' motivations and their purchasing process in order to champion relevant products, feature innovation and create effective marketing communications (*Duggal, 2018*).

According to the model, the post-purchase level means watching responses like **satisfaction or dissatisfaction** given back from consumers. Satisfaction from the post-purchase level can be led to consumers' re-purchase, loyalty and spreading **positive word-of-**

mouth. These positive WOM can be also used as drivers in other consumers' motivations; as in “**Influence**” of IBR in Stimulus-Response model. However, dissatisfaction from post-purchase level can be led to two options: **Complaints and Non-complaints**. If there is complaint, marketers can be managed the complaint and there will be problem-solving preferences. If there is no complaint, it will lead to **negative WOM** which results in losing current and potential customers.

1.7. Established Framework

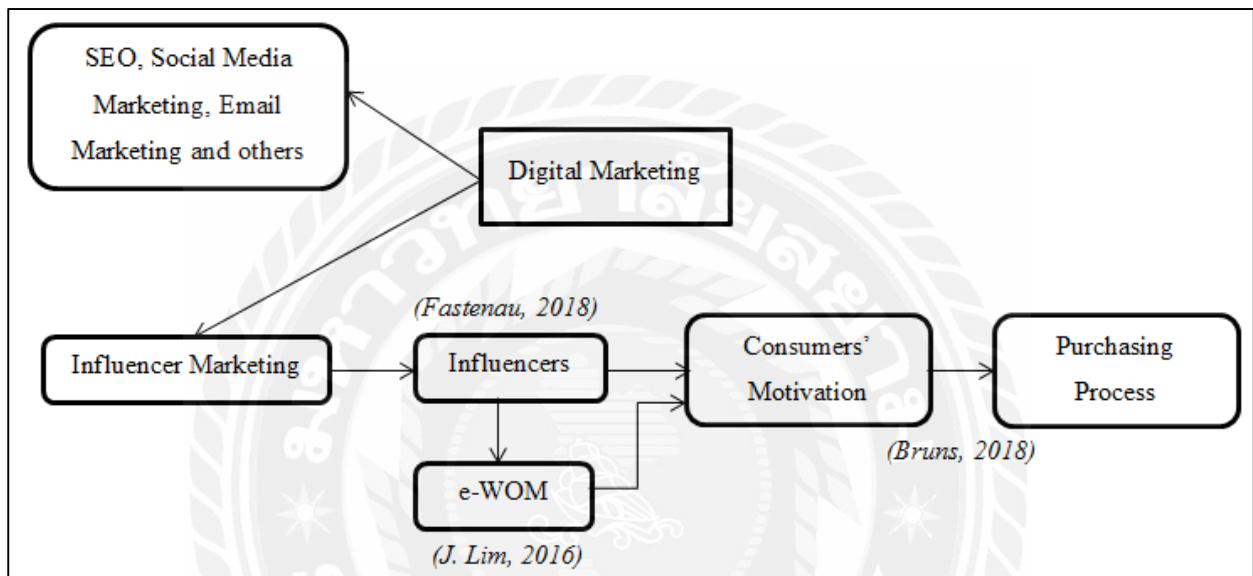


Figure: Established Framework based on Literature Reviews and Findings

Conclusion

1.8. Recommendation for Executive Level

- **Setting goals and KPIs:** As the executive level was the level for setting criteria and making decision for the business, building a successful influencer strategy was all about being goal-oriented for this level. If there was no clear destination, there was no way to know which way is least risky or cost-efficient or most suitable or best for the business. To do this and to keep positive impact on business by understanding the influencer landscape, the executive level must strategically plan and set goals and KPIs. Thus, the management can follow the steps and make a conscious effort to make up goals and KPIs set. For the first time, investing in influencer marketing can feel like a gamble that a campaign may or may not make any ROI. It was because not only the business was not investing the essential resources to appropriately try it out but also the executive level did not take time for setting clear goals and key metrics to track those goals. I could suggest some examples of goals around influencer marketing: building brand awareness, attracting a new target market and facilitating lead generation and sales (*Patel, 2019*).
- **Working with absolute trust:** The key to success between influencers and the business was trust. A vital factor of an efficient campaign in influencer marketing was establishing a rock-solid relationship with a proper influencer, who was adjusted with the target customers' desires and needs and even whom the target audiences would look up and listen to while making decisions in their purchase process. The executive level members had to understand that they need to leave room for influencers to be the mastermind creators and ensure they are at their core while working on cultivating a trusted association with them. The reason was they can shine their true capacities out and influence their followers then and only then. As a result, it would allow the business to embrace the target customers in a credible voice which trigger emotion and most essentially action (*Payne, 2018*).
- **Be ready to give fair deal:** Influencers were not getting a proper compensation recently. It was needed to be fair or it will lead the biggest mistake of the business. A proper deal could vary according to the partnership terms or influencers' engagement rates or so on. While some influencers were fine receiving free or exclusive items, some preferred a professional payment like commission. It was expected that influencers with higher reach to be paid higher. But micro-influencers had more adjustable payment terms. The point

was to decide which type of deal would suit the business best and fit to goals set, still bearing the influencers' needs in mind, too (*Johnson, 2019*).

1.9. Recommendation for Managerial Level

- **Measuring ROI:** After the goals and KPIs were set by the top level, figuring the way to measure ROI of influencer marketing campaign was the one of key job for the middle level. The managerial level must know which partnership was working and which were not (*Patel, 2019*). Then, they needed compare the outcome of influencer marketing to other marketing channels and report back to the top level. Deciding a ROI of influencer marketing worth ongoing or not was the job for the executive level. I could suggest an example to track ROI for influencer marketing which is using engagement rate and engagement cost (*Csutoras, 2019*).
- **Using macro-influencers' landscape:** The major objective here was exploring influencers based on influencing themes and their followers' demographics; who can drive the entire critical brand's message to target market. The middle level members needed to understand that the social landscape was quickly moving, thus new chances were popping up on almost every social media platform. They needed to try using their macro-influencers not only on single platform and branching out, taking advantage of them through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Pinterest and other platforms (*Schreiber, 2018*).
- **Understanding the rise of micro-influencers:** As the rapid rising range of influencers, we could now see influencers at all ranks, ranging from high-followed tops to low-followed starters. For business that wanted to specify the target market, micro-influencers with specific market segments and own niches would be the best option. It was also important to monitor the quality relationship, types of followers and overall engagement associated with influencers. Higher reach was not always better that having a huge amount of followers is nothing if those followers did not pay attention in the offers of the business. Having a less amount of followers could be competitive advantage if the business was going for niche areas. Niche influencers could have very devoted audiences and great engagement rate (*Anderson, 2019*).

1.10. Recommendation for Operational Level

- **Approaching influencers:** Before approaching influencers for influencer marketing, operational level members must know where they can find their contacts. To overcome reaching out to influencers issue, they just need to know the right tools to leverage themselves. There was a website called “Buzzsumo” where they can check and find relevant influencers by topic, follower count and engagement rate. After creating a list of influencers to reach out to, employees can search contacts of influencers using a tool as “Voila Norbert.” Once getting the contacts, operational employees can start reaching out to them. Although it might take time to write a personal message to them, it would be best not to send a mass direct message and generic emails. It would make the business look more professional and serious about a future partnership. Influencers also wanted to know the business they were collaborating with was well-intentioned and authentic (*Patel, 2019*).
- **Try collaborating with influencers who use videos:** Advertisers should create amazing videos since that channel is the latest trend. 72% of today’s young customers would search for video content while making a decision in purchasing process. The business can collaborate with influencers by putting them in the video content and talk about the products and also in many other creative ways (*Harvey, 2018*).
- **Boosting authenticity:** The business can share or cross-post the posts, content and videos of influencers on the business’s own channels such as the business’s Facebook Page, Instagram Profile, Twitter Page and others. By this way, it would highlight the collaboration and pose advantages for both the business and influencers (*Newberry, 2019*).

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