Impact of Influencers' Behaviour on Their Personal Brand Image: A Qualitative Perspective

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Abstract

We live in an era where digital / social media influencers have become one of the significant players, influencing attitudes and actions on a variety of platforms. With a high engagement ratio of sharing different thoughts, beliefs and their unique content which build a trusting bond, these influencers have mastered the technique of winning people's heart and attention span. However, this influence does not limit just towards content they create but also shapes their identity which further becomes their brand and concludes their definition and status in the society. With a focus on crucial factors like ethics, reliability and the impact of cancel

culture, this paper explores the link between influencers activity and its impact on their brand image. It focuses on how an influencers' reputation, earnings and public image may be affected by both positive and negative actions. In an era, where one's private life is often examined and their public image may quickly change, the paper also discusses the challenges of managing a personal brand. The study concludes that, in order to maintain a favorable brand image in this constantly changing world the influencers must not just maintain authenticity, and ethical integrity, but also convey their perspectives in an appropriate manner to support their societal quo.

Keywords: Social Media, Influencer, Brand Image, Ethical Integrity.

Introduction:

For a few, social media is used as a tool to spend/burn their time. However, for a few, it is a good source of earning and creating your own identity, making space for their thoughts and beliefs, showcasing their talent, or just reaping the fruits of going viral. What starts as a small community takes no time to be converted into a billion dollar dream fulfilling source. And that is how influencers are born. India Today Magazine's November 2024 report states that around 398 million young individuals are constantly using social media in India and Hindustan Times in February 2024, which stated that 30% of rural individuals who don't even know to read, browse the internet. On the other hand, India's influencer count has grown from 9.6 lakhs in 2020 to 4.06 million in 2024, a report shared by The Qoruz; a staggering growth rate of 322 percent (Post)

Social media influencers have become an influential group that impacts consumer behavior, public opinion and cultural trends. As compared to traditional celebrities, Influencers often gain more publicity as they interact directly with their fans by providing personal content. They are quite successful in promoting and spreading messages on platforms like YouTube, Instagram and X, as they are more relevant and approachable. With the increasing popularity of Influencers, they are becoming more and more trusted voices and role models for millions of followers. This dual role of influencers are constantly evaluated by followers by what they promote and how they conduct themselves.

This paper with a qualitative research methodology aims to investigate how the followers

analyzes and perceives influencer behaviours, how this perception leads to the creation of the influencers' brand image, and analyzes the real-life instances where influencers actions are shaping their brand image in the society

Objectives:

- To explore the connection between influencer behaviour and their perceived brand image.

- To understand follower expectations regarding influencer conduct.

- To assess case examples where influencer behaviour impacted brand image.

Literature Review:

Influencers as Personal Brands-

In today's world, social media influencers are perfect examples of how branding works. They have identifiable images that are able to resonate with audiences which help them achieve success. (Labrecque et al. # 2021)

Behaviour and Brand Image -

For an audience, brand image is the way that audience views the certain brand. In the case of social media influences, taking actions that can be considered unethical or abnormal

decreases their image, whereas, behaving in a manner which is coherent with personal as well as social values enhances it. (Keller and L. # 1997)

Importance of Authenticity and Ethical Conduct -

An influencer's value is determined by how authentic they are with the content they share.

Trust is bestowed upon influencers who market products and causes that are within their

value systems. They are able to help foster trust but there is meaning there is no alignment. (Audrezet et al. # 2020)

Digital Repercussions -

Cancel Culture Withdrawal of support towards public figures for actions deemed controversial, is known as cancel culture. For influencers, this means losing followers and brand deals very rapidly. Their online behavior is under constant scrutiny; in other words, they have no freedom to behave how they choose. (Ng, 2020)

Research Gap:

A gap still remains in between multitude of studies which focus on practitioner influencer marketing and the qualitative analysis of behavior related brand image.

A key to that success — the idea of personal branding, where an influencers' personality and character forms a crucial aspect of their public image. Whether they do it on purpose or not, Influencers influence the perception of their audience. Unlawful acts or controversies can hurt their reputations, and affect their careers. On the flip side, good deeds like sharing authentic content and aiding noble endeavors may strengthen their brand image.

One of the few challenges influencers face is to keep a consistent and realistic shine in a crowded environment where public attention is unpreventable. The cancel culture — a "Hey, we can't deal with that" action that has a huge impact on the way influencers going forward will conduct their actions. Balance is key, though, and influencers must carefully position themselves between acting ethically,being open and transparent with their audience, and sacrificing their own influence for the sake of their brand.

Studies are conducted to understand the complex relationship between brand image and influencers behaviour. The research aim to shed light on the elements that impact personal brands sustainability-success in social media era by reviewing how online conduct, genuineness, ethical behaviour, and cancel culture impact influencers perceptions. This highlights the importance for influencers to remain true to themselves while also keeping their public persona in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Research Methodology:

This research has followed a qualitative study approach in order to study and analyze the current influencers' behavior and how it is impacting their image and perception of their personality. The sources for the study are published articles, research paper, industry reports, and case studies.

Personal Brands: Social Media Influencers:

The digital and personal identities of an influencer are intertwined. They craft a personal brand, which is how one showcases themself on social media and what they do, feel, and love, to build a strong identity. Influencers turn to platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and X to craft a persona that resonates with their following and aligns their brand with certain concepts, choices, and lifestyles.

As the influencers can interact directly with their followers, they appear more approachable, authentic, and relatable than traditional celebrities. The foundation of an influencer's personal brand is their personality, authenticity, and the quality of

their content. Because people view the influencer as a reliable person who provides not just enjoyment but also provides guidance and knowledge on a variety of subjects, such as fitness, mental health, sports, beauty and fashion.

Constant creation of content, focus on audience requirements, following the trends and the presenting of a unique identity that attracts a target audience are necessary for an influencer brand to be successful. Efficient use of this strategy creates a strong and identifiable brand identity that may result in significant partnership, product line and even big collaborations. Deviation from this established persona, whether in terms of values or content, could mislead and damage the influencers brand image.

Table 01: List of Influencers in India

Influencer Name	Domain	Platform(s)	Estimated Followership (as of recent data)
Bhuvan Bam	Comedy, Content Creation	YouTube, Instagram	30M+ (YouTube), 17M+ (Instagram)
Virat Kohli	Sports (Cricket)	Instagram, Twitter	265M+ (Instagram), 60M+ (Twitter)
Anushka Sharma	Bollywood, Acting	Instagram, Twitter	70M+ (Instagram), 20M+ (Twitter)
Ranveer Allahbadia (BeerBiceps)	Fitness, Motivation	YouTube, Instagram	6M+ (YouTube), 2M+ (Instagram)
Faby (Indian Beauty Influencer)	Beauty, Skincare	Instagram, YouTube	500K+ (Instagram), 300K+ (YouTube)
Gaurav Taneja (Flying Beast)	Fitness, Vlogging, Aviation	YouTube, Instagram	8M+ (YouTube), 4M+ (Instagram)
Ashish Chanchlani	Comedy, Content Creation	YouTube, Instagram	30M+ (YouTube), 15M+ (Instagram)
Amit Bhadana	Comedy, Content Creation	YouTube, Instagram	24M+ (YouTube), 10M+ (Instagram)
CarryMinati (Ajey Nagar)	Roasting, Gaming	YouTube, Instagram	40M+ (YouTube), 19M+ (Instagram)
Prajakta Koli (MostlySane)	Comedy, Lifestyle	YouTube, Instagram	7M+ (YouTube), 5M+ (Instagram)
Dolly Singh	Fashion, Comedy, Social Issues	Instagram, YouTube	2M+ (Instagram), 600K+ (YouTube)
Kusha Kapila	Comedy, Fashion, Women's Issues	Instagram, YouTube	3M+ (Instagram), 700K+ (YouTube)
Komal Pandey	Fashion, Beauty	Instagram, YouTube	2M+ (Instagram), 1M+ (YouTube)
Siddharth Joshi (@sid_the_wanderer)	Travel, Photography	Instagram, YouTube	500K+ (Instagram), 100K+ (YouTube)
Nikhil Sharma (Mumbiker Nikhil)	Travel, Moto Vlogging	YouTube, Instagram	4M+ (YouTube), 2M+ (Instagram)
Tech Burner (Shlok	Tech, Gadgets Reviews		12M+ (YouTube), 2M+

Srivastava)		YouTube, Instagram	(Instagram)
Geeky Ranjit	Tech, Smartphones	YouTube	3.5M+ (YouTube)
Raj Shamani	Business, Motivation	Instagram, YouTube	2M+ (Instagram), 1M+ (YouTube)
Ankur Warikoo	Business, Finance, Productivity	YouTube, Instagram	3M+ (YouTube), 2M+ (Instagram)
Finance with Sharan	Finance, Investments	YouTube, Instagram	2M+ (YouTube), 1.5M+ (Instagram)
Rachana Ranade	Finance, Stock Market	YouTube	5M+ (YouTube)

How Influencers' Behaviour Shape Brand Image

An impressive brand image is greatly affected by their functions.

Audiences' opinions and emotions about a specific brand are referred to for its image. The opinion, behavior and even interactions with their followers have a significant impact on how their brand is seen and perceived.

An influential brand is strengthened by positive tasks which build a positive impact in society, fulfills a societal cause, or makes a set of individuals feel better about themselves. It strengthens the reputation of the person who affects a person who shares his values by allowing followers to join them outside the screen.

Table 02: Case Study - How Influencer Behavior Shapes their Personal Brand Image ("India's Got Latent Row: Bhuvan Bam's Old Viral Video On 'Jokes Ban' Resurfaces; Desis Take Sides")

Journey of Bhuvan Bam: From Apologizing to Growing
Background:
Bhuvan Bam is one of the leading YouTubers in India with 30+ Million folllowers. He is one of the successful digital creators and a budding actor. His fame arose through his YouTube channel BB ki Wine, also known as one of the most reliable and comic content page. Over the years, these videos and his behaviour has created a lot of important role has shaped his personal brand
Issue:
Unlike many influencers, who focus on entertainment completely, Bhuvan has used his platform for social reasons.
He actively supports charity initiatives, engages in meaningful interaction, and maintains a scam -free public image.
His decision to diversify music, acting and entrepreneurship has further strengthened his brand as a multi-talented producer.
Outcome:
His philanthropic efforts, such as raising money during the Kovid -19 epidemic, gave him great respect.
He expanded his brand beyond comedy, proving that multidimensional multidimensions that affected could develop in public figures.
His real, humble and dispute-free approach helped him to secure long-term brand deals with reputed companies.
Key takeaway:
An impressive behavior, both online and offline, directly affects their brand image. Consistency, positive engagement and moral conduct help to build a strong, permanent personal brand.

Cancel Culture and Online Behaviour

The canceled culture has become a clear feature of the digital age, where public figures, including influential people, face

investigation for their actions or statements. An incident arises when the whole community withdraws support from someone who has done immoral work. Cancelled culture can destroy an impressive image overnight, with rapid spread of information on various platforms. Cancelled culture has an uncertain nature as previous events can be investigated and severe damage. Once the effects enjoy a large amount of support can find themselves under the radar within a few hours, as followers and other brands take a side step to protect their goods.

Despite its ability to justify people, cancellation of culture can sometimes be rigid and incompetent. Those affected are facing cancellations, offering public forgiveness and negotiating carefully. Influencers should take time out of social media and try to reflect and reconstruct from past mistakes and grow again with the help of any guidance, but the recovery process is challenging and unpredictable.

Table 03: Case Study - Cancel Culture and Online Behavior: The case study of Carry Minati ("Why did YouTube delete Carry Minati's Latest Video?")

The Journey of Cancel Culture and Online Behavior: The Case Study of Carry Minati
Background:
Ajey Nagar, known as Carry Minati, is a famous Indian YouTuber who is famous for its roasted video. In 2020, he released a video called YouTube vs Tiktok - The End, criticizing some Tiktok creators. The video received large - scale traction, but was taken down by YouTube to violate its harassment and bullying policies.
Issue:
The video gave rise to a large -scale online debate, leading to a rapid response from various communities.
The decision to remove YouTube's video from fuel canceled culture, where fans felt that their favorite creator was being wrongly silenced.
Many ticket creators also faced backlash from the followers of Carrry Minati, which was increasing online toxicity.
Outcome:
Carrry Minati addressed the controversy, stating that her content was for entertainment purposes and was not to harm anyone.
Despite the video takedown, his subscriber touched the sky, proving that the dispute can sometimes increase popularity.
However, this phenomenon highlighted how culture can cancel and how to affect influential people and online behavior needs to be managed carefully.
Key takeaway:
The canceled culture can increase the reach of an impressive, but it also investigates. Those who are affected should balance humor, criticism and responsible material construction to maintain reliability.
Ajey Nagar, known as Carry Minati, is a famous Indian YouTuber who is famous for its roasted videos. In 2020, he released a video called YouTube vs Tiktok - The End, criticizing some Tiktok creators. The video received large -scale traction, but was taken down by YouTube to violate its harassment and bullying policies.
Issue:
The video gave rise to a large -scale online debate, leading to a rapid response from various communities.
Decision to remove fuel of YouTube video canceled culture, where fans felt their favorite creator was being unfairly silenced.

Authenticity is non-parasical:

One of the affected is the most important and valuable authenticity. Viewers connect to the effectives who present themselves honestly, as it creates confidence and reliability. When the affecting authenticity depicts, followers emotionally connect with them, which creates loyalty and engagement. Furthermore, when the affected are caught by hate or immorality, it causes them serious damage. For example, promoting products that they do not use, can ruin the trust of the followers, leading to allegations of "selling".

In addition, authenticity also includes taking responsibility and accountability when something wrong is wrong. The cause of errors and the desire to learn and change shows maturity and reliability, helps build confidence and helps the followers to achieve after disputes. Therefore, being authentic, not only helps a positive brand image, but also supports the crisis more effectively to navigate.

Ethical Behaviour Matters:

In the era, where social responsibility is regarded, influencers are expected to follow moral and ethical guidelines. Promoting principles which are connected with social standards, treating each person fairly and respectfully and being honest and transparent in the content which is paid and promoted are all examples of ethical behaviour. If the standards are not met one has to face the consequences such as criticism and loss of credibility. Those influencers who do not disclose paid promotion or mislead the followers about the product information carry the risk of breaking both law as well as ethical standards. Moreover, treating followers with respect shows integrity and uplifts one's persona. Making apologies and taking responsibility for the previous mistakes are also components of ethical behaviour. Influencers who stick with morality and good deeds often build good trust and loyalty among the followers and are able to regain the collaboration with brands.

Table 04: Case study: Ethical boundaries in digital content - Ranveer Allabia dispute ("India's Got Latent row: Supreme Court protects YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia from arrest, bars new FIRs")

Case study: Ethical boundaries in digital content - Ranveer Allabia dispute
Background
Ranveer Allahbadia, known as beerbiseps, is a major Indian YouTuber, entrepreneur and podcaster. His podcast, "India's Got latent," gained immense popularity for his practical conversation with industry leaders, celebrities and ideas leaders. However, a special episode gave rise to controversy due to inappropriate and aggressive comments, which led to a broad backlash and legal investigation.
Important issues
Speech vs. freedom of responsibility - while digital creators have the right to express opinions, they should consider the social influence of their words.
Audience Sensitivity - Given the number of diverse audiences of podcast, some comments were considered aggressive, underlining the need for arbitrary communication.
Public Bachalash and Legal Investigation - dispute led to widespread criticism, inspiring the intervention of the Supreme Court to ensure obeying moral standards.
The role and result of the Supreme Court
The court insisted on maintaining "known moral standards" and "decency" in digital content.
This allowed Allahbadia to resume its podcast as part of compliance with moral guidelines.
Key takeaways
The affected should balance creative freedom with moral responsibility.
Public assumption directly affects an impressive brand image.
Regulatory investigation on digital content is increasing, making self-regulations necessary.

Conclusion:

An impressive behavior is the foundation of their individual brand and it is important how they are considered by their audience. Each action, which material they make for their support and personal conduct, contribute to shaping their digital reputation. It is important for moral decision making, authenticity and validity in values to maintain reliability and trust among followers.

In the era of social media investigation, those who affect their actions fail to align their tasks with the expectations of the audience, which are facing backlash, loss of sponsorship, and damage to their reputation. However, missessteps do not always cause permanent decline.

Those who take honest accountability, they accept their mistakes, and make visible efforts to change, rebuild trust and regain their audience's confidence.

As the impressive marketing industry continues to develop, moral branding will remain a major determinant of long-term success. Consumers today expect transparency, integrity and responsible behavior from digital personality. Brands and advertisers are also becoming more alert to select the affected people whose values align with themselves.

Moving forward, the intersection of impressive behavior and brand perception will remain a dynamic area of study. Future research can find out that the expectations of the audience differ in various social media platforms, the role of cultural effects in shaping digital personalities, and emerging technologies such as AI-borne influential affect brand authenticity.

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