

Empowering women in Kerala through influencer marketing: An analysis on the strategies using Instagram as a tool.

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Abstract

The changing demographics of India's population have had a significant impact on the opportunities available to women business owners, demonstrating the vital role they play in propelling the country's economy forward and highlighting the indispensability of their involvement in the sector's development. Today, social media plays a significant role in the empowerment of women. Its use has altered how women's entrepreneurial identities are formed. With regard to showcasing their goods and services, connecting with clients, and establishing a strong brand presence, Instagram in particular has emerged as a potential tool for female business owners.

In recent years, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for empowering women entrepreneurs in Kerala. Most influencers are collaborating with small businesses that are led by women entrepreneurs. In doing so, they are promoting women empowerment and assisting women in achieving their objectives. Influencers are able to reach a large audience and enhance the visibility of these small-scale enterprises by utilising social media platforms such as Instagram. Not only does this help women business owners increase their sales and bring in more income, but it also encourages and motivates other women to pursue their own ambitions of starting their own businesses. The establishment of a supportive environment that fosters women's economic independence and success in the business sector has been made possible as a result of collaboration between influencers and businesses managed by women. This study aims to investigate the effect of influencer collaborations with women entrepreneurs and business owners in Kerala on the promotion of their products or services. Furthermore, to investigate how influencer engagement aids Kerala's women business owners and entrepreneurs in reaching a larger market.

As a result, the purpose of this research is to investigate how women-owned businesses in Kerala might benefit from influencer collaborations through the use of social media. Case studies and content analysis are both used in the research methodology. The case studies will involve analysing successful collaborations between women entrepreneurs and influencers in Kerala,



examining the strategies and outcomes of these partnerships. Additionally, content analysis will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of social media content created by women-owned businesses in reaching a larger audience and increasing their customer base. Furthermore, the study will involve conducting in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs in order to gain a deeper understanding of the impacts resulting from collaborations with influencers.

Keywords: women empowerment, Instagram, influencer marketing, women's entrepreneurship, brand awareness

Introduction

In the last fifty years, the concept of women's empowerment has undergone a transformation from a welfare-focused perspective to one centred on achieving equity. This shift aims to enable marginalised individuals to have greater control and influence over their own lives (Nayak & Mahanta, 2008). In the realm of development economics, the concept of women's empowerment is defined as the progressive attainment of capacity by women, enabling them to exercise deliberate decision-making in circumstances where the ability to do so was previously restricted to them (Kabeer, 1999). The current trend towards attaining equal opportunities reflects the historical marginalisation and disempowerment of women in different cultures. This statement emphasises the significance of equipping women with the necessary resources, opportunities, and support to overcome these obstacles and take a leading role in decisionmaking initiatives. Engaging in entrepreneurship, or starting and running women-owned businesses, is one way that women are achieving empowerment. They not only contribute to the advancement of the economy but also play a crucial role in questioning and defying conventional gender norms and biases. In order for such businesses to succeed and expand their customer base, it is essential to implement successful marketing methods. One potential technique for supporting and expanding audience reach is through the use of influencers. Influencer marketing, particularly through the platform of Instagram, holds significant potential for reaching a broader audience. Businesses can effectively utilize the credibility and influence of influencers with substantial and actively engaged audiences to endorse and advertise their products or services. Instagram, because of its visually-oriented nature, provides influencers with the opportunity to exhibit products in a manner that is both innovative and real, thereby serving as an effective tool for enhancing brand exposure and attracting new customers. Furthermore, influencers often have a broad range of followers, enabling businesses to connect with viewers that may have been outside the reach of traditional marketing techniques.

The primary goal of this research is to

To examine the impact of influencer collaborations with Kerala women entrepreneurs and business owners in promoting their products or services.

To examine how influencer engagement helps Kerala women entrepreneurs and business owners reach a wider audience.

In this study, we want to examine the impact of influencer marketing on the efficiency of businesses managed by women. The impact of influencer collaborations on the empowerment and support of women entrepreneurs in their business activities and goal attainment. The impact of influencer collaborations on the visibility and brand awareness of businesses led by women.

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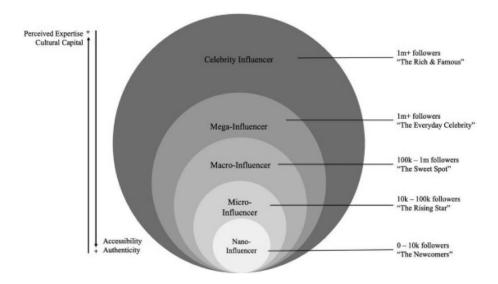
This research aims to investigate the effects of influencer collaborations on female entrepreneurs in Kerala, with a focus on examining their engagement techniques and assessing their relative efficacy. Both case studies and content analysis are commonly employed in research technique. The research will entail an examination of case studies that focus on the analysis of successful collaborations between women entrepreneurs and influencers in the state of Kerala. The primary objective is to scrutinize the techniques employed and the resulting results of these partnerships. Furthermore, a content analysis will be undertaken to evaluate the efficacy of social media material generated by businesses owned by women in terms of its ability to reach a broader audience and expand their client base. Additionally, the research will entail the implementation of comprehensive interviews with entrepreneurs to acquire a more profound comprehension of the consequences arising from collaborations with influencers.

Review of literature

Influencer Marketing as a Marketing Tool

The changing media consumption patterns among contemporary consumers have prompted brand managers to redirect their attention from conventional mass media to social media platforms (Campbell & Grimm, 2018). In recent times, there has been a noticeable surge in the adoption of influencer marketing as a prominent tactic by organisations seeking to augment their market presence, enhance brand recognition, and amplify conversion rates (The Evolution of Influencer Marketing — Past, Present, & Future | Aspire, n.d.). As said in the ("What Is Influencer Marketing?," 2023) by working together, influential people on social media and businesses promote each other's goods and services. Since the dawn of social media, these collaborations have existed on an informal basis. The rise of social media influencers has attracted significant attention due to their growing popularity and impact on consumers' attitudes, perceptions, preferences, choices, and decision-making processes. Social media influencers are those who have established a digital presence through their social media platforms or pages, gradually amassing a substantial following (Bastrygina & Lim, 2023). The diversity of qualities exhibited by the available talent is a particularly intriguing and dynamic aspect of influencer marketing. Influencers exhibit notable variations in terms of branding and focus, follower base, engagement rates, monetary demands for collaboration, and skill sets. These factors collectively constitute the whole value proposition that an influencer might present to a brand. The classification of these groups is determined not solely by the number of followers but also by factors such as perceived authenticity, accessibility, knowledge, and cultural capital. Influencers can be classified into five distinct categories, namely celebrity influencers, megainfluencers, macroinfluencers, microinfluencers, and nanoinfluencers (How ANA Members Are *Using Influencer Marketing*, 2018).





Source: (Campbell & Farrell, 2020)

Understanding the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship

The entrepreneur serves as a catalyst for driving change. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in facilitating and maintaining the progression of economic development. Every nation endeavours to attain economic development in order to enhance the prosperity and living standards of its citizens. Micro enterprises in India play a significant role, serving as an useful tool for fostering sustainable livelihoods, offering employment opportunities, and promoting women's empowerment. In contemporary India, an increasing number of women are engaging in entrepreneurial endeavours, particularly within the micro, small, and medium scale enterprises sector (Role of Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurship in India, n.d.). According to Neha (2017) the phenomenon of women entrepreneurship is intricately linked with significant societal and economic benefits. The involvement of women in the economic development of a nation is of significant importance as it contributes to the enhancement and expansion of a state's production capacity, according to its diverse nature. According to Hasanah and Sriminarti (2019), it is imperative for women to actively engage in entrepreneurship development as entrepreneurs. Globally, approximately one-third of entrepreneurial initiatives are led by female entrepreneurs. The rise of female entrepreneurship in India can be attributed to several factors, including economic advancements, improved educational opportunities, urbanization, the dissemination of liberal and democratic values, and increased societal acknowledgment. In India, various initiatives and programs have been established with the aim of promoting and enhancing the development of women entrepreneurs such as Start-up India. Stand-up also prioritize the promotion of entrepreneurial spirit among women (D, 2020). The Ministry of Statistics and Programmed Implementation (MoSPI) has recently published the sixth economic census, which reveals that women account for approximately 14% of the overall entrepreneurship in India. Today, female entrepreneurs are not only derived from established business lineages or the higherincome strata of society; rather, they emerge from diverse backgrounds and regions across the nation (Saraswat & Lathabhavan, 2020b).



Research hypothesis

In order to evaluate the objectives, the subsequent research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- H(1)There exists a notable positive correlation between the aggregate engagement metrics and brand awareness and website traffic across all collaborations and influencers.
- H(0)There is no significant corelation between total engagement metrics and brand awareness and website traffic across all collaborations and influencers.
- (H2) Collaborations with influencers empower women entrepreneurs by providing them a platform to showcase their product and services
- H(3) Influencer collaborations positively affect the visibility of women-led business on social media platforms

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methods, that include content analysis, case study, and in-depth interviews, are used to analyse content. Quantitative methods encompass the examination of data derived from social media platforms, with the aim of quantifying the overall metrics of engagement and brand exposure resulting from collaborations with influencers. On the other hand, qualitative methodologies entail the utilization of in-depth interviews as a means to comprehend the experiences of women entrepreneurs who have engaged in these collaborative endeavours, as well as to assess the resultant effects on their respective businesses. Furthermore, the purpose of doing case studies is to offer practical evidence and valuable insights on the efficacy of influencer collaborations in strengthening businesses managed by women.

Content Analysis

This research evaluates the efficacy of influencer collaborative content, which includes diverse formats such as social media posts, IGTV videos, and reels. This study investigates the relationship between aggregate engagement indicators, including likes, comments, and shares, and awareness of a brand and website traffic in the context of collaborations and influencers. In this study, the dependent variable is brand awareness and website traffic, whereas the independent variable is total engagement metrics, which include likes, comments, and shares. For the purpose of this study, we have identified six influencers who belong to the macro and mega influencer categories. Subsequently, we have meticulously selected ten collaborations for each influencer, resulting in a total of 60 content pieces across the six influencers. These contents will be assessed as part of our analysis.

Case Study

The primary objective of conducting case studies is to provide empirical evidence and important insights regarding the effectiveness of influencer collaborations in enhancing the efficacy of women-led businesses. Through a comprehensive analysis of the results derived from these collaborative efforts, our objective is to ascertain the influence they have on the visibility and engagement of the brand. In this research, Instagram reels were chosen as a medium for assessing collaborations with influencers. Three influencers were chosen, and for each influencer, three women-owned businesses were selected. The influencers chosen for this study belong to the mega and macro influencer tiers. By analysing the engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares on the Instagram reels featuring these collaborations, we aim to measure the impact of influencer collaborations on brand exposure and audience interaction. For every reel we choose, we will calculate the overall engagement and engagement rate before conducting additional analysis.



Interviews

An interview was conducted with women entrepreneurs in order to collect their thoughts on collaborations and gain insight into their experiences. Using the technique of in-depth interviews serves as a helpful tool for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of women entrepreneurs who have participated in collaborative projects. Additionally, these interviews enable the evaluation of the subsequent impacts on their business. Five women-owned brands were selected for this research, and the individuals who owned them were interviewed perspectives. The inquiry encompassed many aspects, namely the objectives, criteria for selection, impacts of influencer collaborations on social media engagement, measurable results, and feedback rec eived from customers or followers. Also about the return on investment (ROI) calculation and whether it was a good business investment.

Theoretical framework Diffusion of innovation

Everett Rogers created the diffusion of innovation theory in 1962 (La Chantal, 2022). It examines how people interact with one another personally and through media to acquire and adopt new ideas within a social group. In this study, diffusion of innovation theory explains how new ideas, practices, or products spread within a population and how influencer collaborations can help women entrepreneurs' offerings reach a wider audience and encourage adoption. This theory posits that the diffusion process is subject to the effects of multiple elements, including the perceived advantages associated with the invention, the level of ease in its adoption, and the prevailing social norms within a given society. Through the strategic utilisation of influencer relationships, female entrepreneurs have the opportunity to access preestablished networks and utilise social proof as a means to accelerate the acceptance and adoption of their products or services within their intended target audience. This phenomenon has the potential to result in increased popularity, enhanced trustworthiness, and eventually, the growth of the business.

Brand equity theory

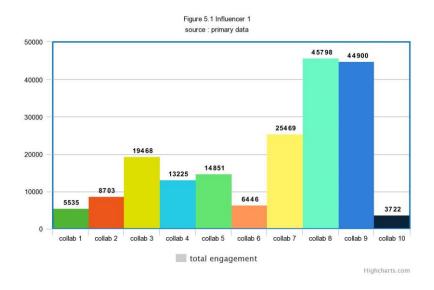
Brand equity is a concept that pertains to the enhanced value that is attributed to a product or service as a result of the associations and perceptions associated with the brand (Chaudhuri, 1995). The concept of brand equity encompasses four distinct dimensions, including brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand associations, and perceived quality. These dimensions contribute significant value to a business across various aspects. Once a brand has recognized the significance of brand equity, it can proceed to employ this strategic plan in order to construct and oversee the prospective value associated with it (Aaker, 2022). Collaborations with influencers have the potential to increase brand recognition, associations, and customer loyalty for female entrepreneurs, thus leading to an expansion of their consumer demographic. Furthermore, the utilization of influencer relationships can facilitate female entrepreneurs in reaching new markets and expanding their reach to a broader demographic. Through leveraging the impact and reach of these influencers, marketers can acquire access to their followers and potentially attract new clients who may have previously been unaware of the business. Ultimately, this can lead to a notable increase in sales and overall business expansion for female entrepreneurs.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

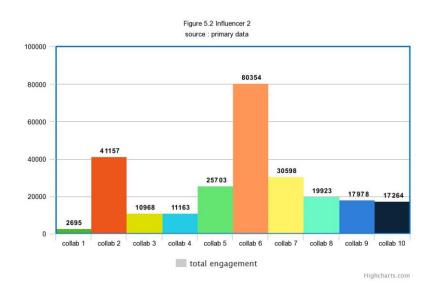
As part of the content analysis, we conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of influencer collaborative content. This material encompasses several formats, including social media posts, IGTV videos, and reels. In this study researcher investigated the relationship between aggregate engagement



indicators, including likes, comments, and shares, and business success metrics, which includes brand awareness and website traffic, in the context of collaborations and influencers.

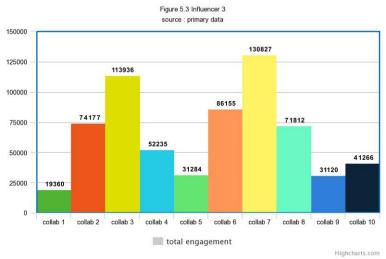


The initial influencer chosen had a following of 102,000 individuals on the social media platform Instagram. We have chosen ten distinct collaborations that occurred within a specific time frame, all of which are businesses led by female entrepreneurs. The data obtained from the collaborations with influencers exhibits a spectrum of overall engagement, ranging from a minimum of 3,722 to a maximum of 45,798. This observation suggests that the degree of involvement differs considerably among various collaborative endeavours. The aggregate level of engagement was determined by the cumulative count of likes, comments, and shares garnered in each collaboration. The mentioned collaborations have demonstrated themselves as a significant strategic approach for female entrepreneurs to enhance their brand visibility and expand their target audience. The success of collaborations is contingent upon several aspects, including the composition of the influencer's audience, the pertinence of the product or service being promoted, and the efficacy of the marketing campaign.

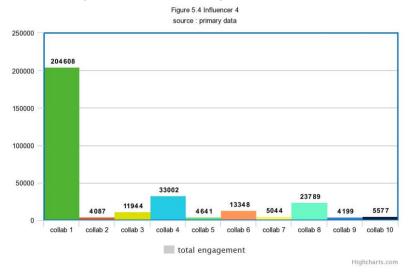




The second influencer was categorised as a macro influencer, as evidenced by their substantial following of 230,000 individuals. A total of ten collaborations were observed during a given time period. The levels of engagement in these collaborations ranged from 1,2695 to 80,354. The usage of macro influencers has demonstrated enhanced levels of engagement, implying that collaborating with influencers possessing a substantial follower base may prove more efficacious in attaining a broader audience and cultivating brand recognition for home brands managed by women.

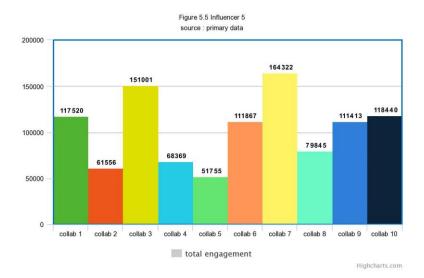


The third influencer possessed a substantial Instagram following of 742,000 people. This implies that using macro influencers who own a substantial number of followers might substantially enhance the amount of interaction for female-managed businesses. Furthermore, the substantial figures connected to overall engagement serve as evidence that partnering with these influencers can effectively expand the reach of these brands and foster a more powerful brand identity.

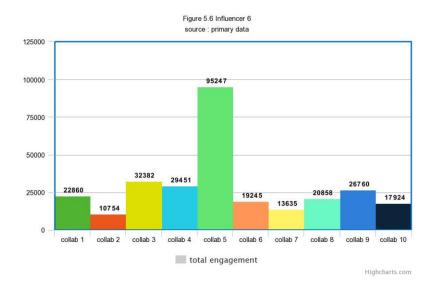


The subsequent influencer belonged to the macro tier category and had a following of 119,000 users on Instagram. The collaboration with this influencer yielded a notable increase in overall engagement, representing a substantial improvement in comparison to prior collaborative efforts. This shows the potential influence that influencers from various tiers have in terms of boosting brand reach and enhancing overall engagement.





The fifth influencer belonged to the category of mega influencers, having a substantial following of 1.1 million people. The significant amount of audience engagement generated by the fifth influencer, although their substantial number of followers, underscores the efficacy of mega influencers in fostering audience connection and brand engagement. This implies that collaborating with influential individuals with a large following might be beneficial for businesses aiming to optimise their outreach and influence.



The last influencer chosen had a large following of 738,000 people on the social media platform Instagram. Furthermore, when considering engagement data, it becomes evident that the brand is successfully generating sufficient brand awareness among both its followers and its intended target demographic. Although it is evident from the engagement metrics that these collaborations have led to sufficient brand awareness, we have also conducted statistical tests to examine the correlation.

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T-Test

Group Statistics

bussiness success metrics		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Engagment matrix	brandawarness	52	39787.69	39814.256	5521.244
	website traffic	8	83226.00	66367.052	23464.296

NPar Tests

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

bussiness success metrics		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Engagment matrix	brandawarness	52	29.06	1511.00
	website traffic	8	39.88	319.00
	Total	60		

Test Statistics^a

	Engagment matrix
Mann-Whitney U	133.000
Wilcoxon W	1511.000
Z	-1.631
p value	.103

a. Grouping Variable: bussiness success metrics

The study employed the Mann-Whitney test to assess the statistical significance of the differences in mean ranks across engagement metrics, specifically brand awareness and website traffic, as indicators of business success. The findings indicated that there was no statistically significant distinction observed between the two measurements (U = 133.000, p = .103).

Thus, it is required to accept the null hypothesis H (0), which claims that there is no statistically significant correlation between total engagement metrics and business success variables across all collaborations and influencers.

Case studies were also included in our methodology. The main purpose of conducting case studies was to offer empirical data and valuable insights into the efficacy of influencer collaborations in boosting the effectiveness of enterprises managed by women. In order to conduct the study, Instagram reels were utilised as a means of evaluating partnerships with influencers. Three influencers were selected, and for



each influencer, three businesses owned by women were chosen. The individuals selected for this study belong to the mega and macro influencer tiers.

The first influencer chosen possessed a substantial following of 2.8 million people on the social media platform Instagram. The second influencer possessed a comparatively lesser audience of 1.1 million individuals, and the third influencer commanded a substantial following of 339,000 users.

Influencer	Brand Collaboration	Total engagement	View count	Engagement rate
Influencer 1	A	114204	1296989	8.80
	В	53386	1446896	3.68
	С	96479	1188505	8.11
Influencer 2	Α	116512	1500000	7.76
	В	119658	2000000	5.9
	С	61606	1200000	5.13
Influencer 3	А	35498	300221	11.8
	В	87596	562526	15.57
	С	196029	1708555	11.47

Source: primary data

The overall level of interaction was determined by summing up the number of likes, comments, and shares.

i.e., total engagement = likes + comments + shares per post.

Based on the data presented above, the overall engagement for Influencer 1 is 114204 + 53386 + 96479 = 264069. The overall engagement for Influencer 2 is 116512 + 119658 + 61606 = 297776. Finally, the overall engagement for Influencer 3 is 35498 + 87596 + 196029 = 319123. This data may easily be used to determine likability by comparing overall engagement numbers for each influencer. Furthermore, examining total engagement levels might reveal information about the efficiency of each influencer's material in promoting brand engagement. In addition, evaluating the view count can provide insights into the reach and potential audience size of each influencer.

Furthermore, the calculation of the engagement rate involved dividing the aggregate number of engagements by the overall view count, and then multiplying the result by 100.

i.e., engagement rate = total engagement / number of views * 100

The findings indicated that Influencer 1 exhibited an average engagement rate of 8.80%, whereas Influencer 2 had a marginally lower rate of 7.76%. However, it is worth noting that Influencer 3 exhibited the most substantial engagement rate, reaching an impressive 11.8%. Through a comprehensive analysis of the engagement rates exhibited by three distinct influencers, valuable insights were obtained regarding the efficacy of influencer collaborations in augmenting brand visibility and fostering audience engagement. The case studies provided unequivocal evidence that the support of women-led businesses by influencers resulted in enhanced brand exposure and expanded audience reach. The results mentioned above highlight the capacity of influencer collaborations to have a substantial effect on brand expansion and customer involvement. The efficacy of these relationships showcases the potential of utilising the

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influence of influential people to advocate for women-led enterprises and enhance their prominence within the marketplace. Through the strategic utilisation of influencers, there is an opportunity to sustain positive changes and promote the empowerment of women across diverse sectors. Thus, we are able to show that H(3) collaborators have a favourable impact on women-owned businesses visibility on social media.

As a part of our research methodology, we conducted interviews with five female entrepreneurs who engaged in collaborations with influencers. We inquired about the exact goals or aims that were envisioned while engaging with influencers. The process of selecting the influencers to collaborate with was determined by a systematic approach. What parameters were taken into consideration? Did the partnerships with influencers have an impact on the size of their social media following or the level of engagement they received? Did these collaborative efforts provide any quantifiable outcomes, such as increased website traffic, enhanced sales figures, or heightened brand awareness among a larger audience? Has there been any feedback or communication from customers or followers regarding the influencer collaborations that they have engaged in? The methodology employed for determining the return on investment (ROI) associated with collaborating with influencers is of interest. Has the investment yielded positive returns for their business?

The initial interviewee chosen for the study was a professional baker. In response to the question regarding her marketing strategies, she mentioned engaging in collaborations to enhance the visibility and market reach of her products. The criteria she employed for selecting influencers were mostly based on the number of followers and the extent of audience reach they possessed. The person had a sense of contentment upon acquiring additional followers and receiving an increased number of orders. The baker expressed certainty over the attainment of measurable outcomes, and a significant number of her supporters responded positively to her collaborative efforts with influencers. Additionally, she remarked that influencer marketing has proven to be quite beneficial for her, and she intends to persist with this strategy. The second interviewee selected for the study was an owner of a clothing boutique who frequently engages in collaborations with influencers. She also confirmed that she engages in these collaborations with the aim of achieving maximum reach and primarily enhancing brand awareness. The selection of the influencer was based on the material they produce and the specific target population they cater to. There was a strong conviction regarding the increase of followers and engagement on the page as a result of collaborations. The individual stated that they have not engaged in any promotional endeavours aside from collaborating with influencers. This particular strategy has yielded substantial increases in both follower count and sales. Many of her customers expressed excellent feedback regarding the collaborations.

Once again, the third interviewee belonged to the same category. Initially, they lacked knowledge on collaborations, but they engaged in networking activities with individuals who shared similar interests. Through these interactions, they sought information about the collaborations they had undertaken with influencers. The company currently engages in collaborations with influencers to promote their newly launched items. Additionally, they collaborate with influencers to share information about discount sales and during periods of low foot traffic in their physical stores. During the first stages, there was a lack of established criteria. To address this, the individual engaged in a comparative analysis of collaborations with other women entrepreneurs. They sought input from these entrepreneurs to understand the efficacy of their respective collaborations. Based on this feedback, they made a selection of the influencer. The number of followers and the rate of engagement also experienced an increase. Customers specifically request collaborative products and patterns. The sole medium utilized for promotional purposes is social



media, which has yielded a favourable return on investment. Therefore, there is a lack of interest in investing money towards print or other mediums. Instead, there is a preference for increasing investments in influencer marketing. The fourth and fifth interviewees represented the beauty and clothing sectors, respectively. Both individuals expressed a common viewpoint on the importance of investing further in influencer collaborations. They emphasized that engaging with influencers had significantly contributed to their business success, resulting in increased brand awareness, sales, and website traffic. Therefore, based on the data gathered, it can be demonstrated that collaborations with influencers have a favourable impact on the exposure of businesses managed by women on social media platforms.

Conclusion

Based on the available evidence, it can be inferred that influencer collaborations have a significant influence on the promotion of products or services among Kerala women entrepreneurs and business owners. Through this research, we have gained an understanding of the ways in which influencer involvement facilitates the expansion of reach for women entrepreneurs and business owners in Kerala. This study emphasizes the significance of collaborations with influencer in increasing the prominence and brand recognition of businesses managed by women on social media platforms. Through the strategic utilization of influencers, female entrepreneurs in Kerala have the ability to establish meaningful connections with their intended demographic, hence helping the expansion and success of their businesses.

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