The Characteristics of Instagram Influencers and the Effectiveness in Kuwait: A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract

This research is mainly conducted to better understand the effectiveness of marketing campaigns related to influencers' characteristics. The research adopted qualitative case study method. The studied case was a pharmaceutical company operating in Kuwait and sells several cosmetics brands. Two brands and fifteen different influencers were studied. The results showed that among gender, marital status, educational level, number of followers, and average number of comments, the significant influencing factors are educational level and number of followers. Therefore, within the studied company, an influencer with a lower level of education is more effective. Despite the determining criteria for choosing influencers being their number of followers, an influencer with a smaller number of followers is more effective. These results open the door for several recommended future work.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing; Characteristics of Influencers; Social Media Influencers; Celebrity Endorsement; Instagram, Kuwait*

1. Introduction

Over 5 billion people, or roughly 63.1% of the world's population, use the internet. Out of this total, 4.7 billion people, or 59% of the global population, used social media (Statista1, 2022). Because of the advent and popularity of social media and the marketing strategies that came with it, mass media marketing is no longer as dominant and successful as it once was since most of the people wants to communicate through this platform. It's crucial to stay on top of new marketing methods and the behavioral shifts they're producing. It is undeniable that communication has risen because of the simplicity and convenience that today's technology provides. As a result, individuals like keeping up with current events and international events. The internet has greatly aided individuals all around the world in

networking and communication. Texts, videos, images, documents, blogs, vlogs, and social networking sites such as Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook are all examples of this. Consumers all around the world now have greater platforms and possibilities to share their ideas and experiences with the rest of the world because of technology advancements. This isn't just restricted to voicing their opinions; consumers now have more platforms to investigate before making a purchase choice. Social media has become one of the most important channels to which a mass media audience of all ages is heading, and increasingly, which has attracted with it a new sector of those wishing to reach those audiences for different reasons and motives. Including: marketing, educational or developmental, and others, which made it an arena for exchanging information about general or specific interests, it is specially designed according to the cultures and perceptions of the masses and works to meet their expectations for this. Social media platforms have produced new forms of communication, whose owners have become influencers through their views on their followers at a constant pace that always carries the new and often dazzling. This leads users to follow and wait, and their abilities have grown to attract many audiences to follow what they offer, which has led to the formation of communities with interests on specific topics of interest to them such as fashion, hobbies, brands, and self-development. The increase in their number was linked to the increased desire to know more and follow up on new because of the space available to them to participate, interact and express their opinion.
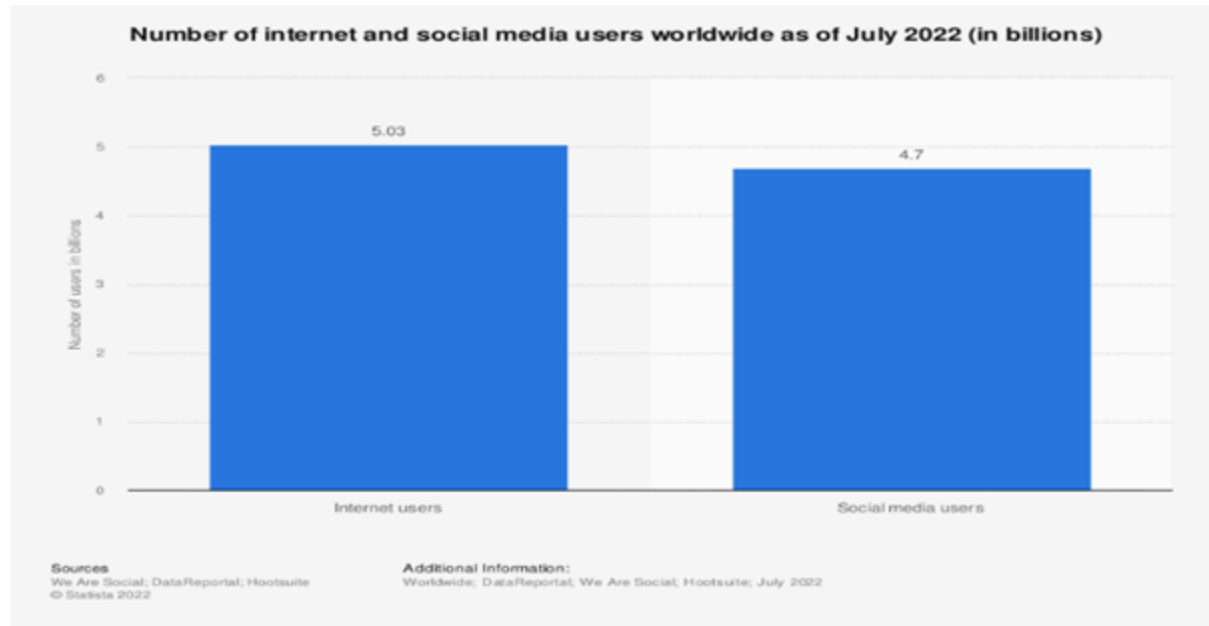

Figure 1. Number of internet and social media users worldwide as of July 2022 (in billions), (Statista1, 2022)

Influencer marketing through social media has become one of the most important modern tools that marketers have resorted to promote their brands, with the diminishing effectiveness of traditional tools, which have become less likely to attract customers. With the increasing rates of social media use, brands faced difficulty in trying to take advantage of social media in new ways to reach their target markets, and with the emergence of influencers through digital platforms, brands began to deal in this field and display their products in their publications through social media to achieve brand awareness, and prompt consumers to try and use it (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook, among other social media sites, have become an integral part of our everyday lives. Sharing, recording, archiving, and interacting via social media and other applications has become part of the routine to practically everyone, and it motivates firms to build their social media marketing tactics. People

spend a significant amount of time on social networking platforms. Social media's impact may be observed in a variety of industries, including business, entertainment, health, lifestyle, and welfare. Due to market developments brought on by the internet, traditional marketing such as television, periodicals, and radios were previously considered to be unstable and ineffective (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Furthermore, buyers were more trusting of product recommendations from social media influencers than product recommendations from family or friends, with 40% of customers purchasing the things used by social media influencers (Sekhon et al., 2016).

Social media influencers were those that utilized their social media accounts frequently and were frequently engaged in a certain problem, as well as providing new information (Loeper et al., 2014). According to Munukka et al. (2016), an influencer might evaluate a product that customers want and push them to purchase it. Users' views, behaviors, and attitudes about a product may be influenced by social media influencers who suggest and describe things via social media content (Uzunoglu & Klip, 2014). Consumers seeking product information saw social media influencers as a trustworthy source of information (Wang et. al., 2012). This encourages companies to use social media to inform customers about their products and generate interest in buying them (Grewal et. al., 2019). Because the benefits of using social media as a marketing tool are so significant, companies who don't use it are missing out on opportunities (Redjeki & Affandi, 2021).

Instagram, one of the most used social media for marketing, now has more than 1.21 billion monthly active users, making up over 28 percent of the world's internet users. By 2025, it has been forecast that there will be 1.44 billion monthly active users of the social media platform, which would account for 31.2 percent of global internet users (Statista2, 2022).
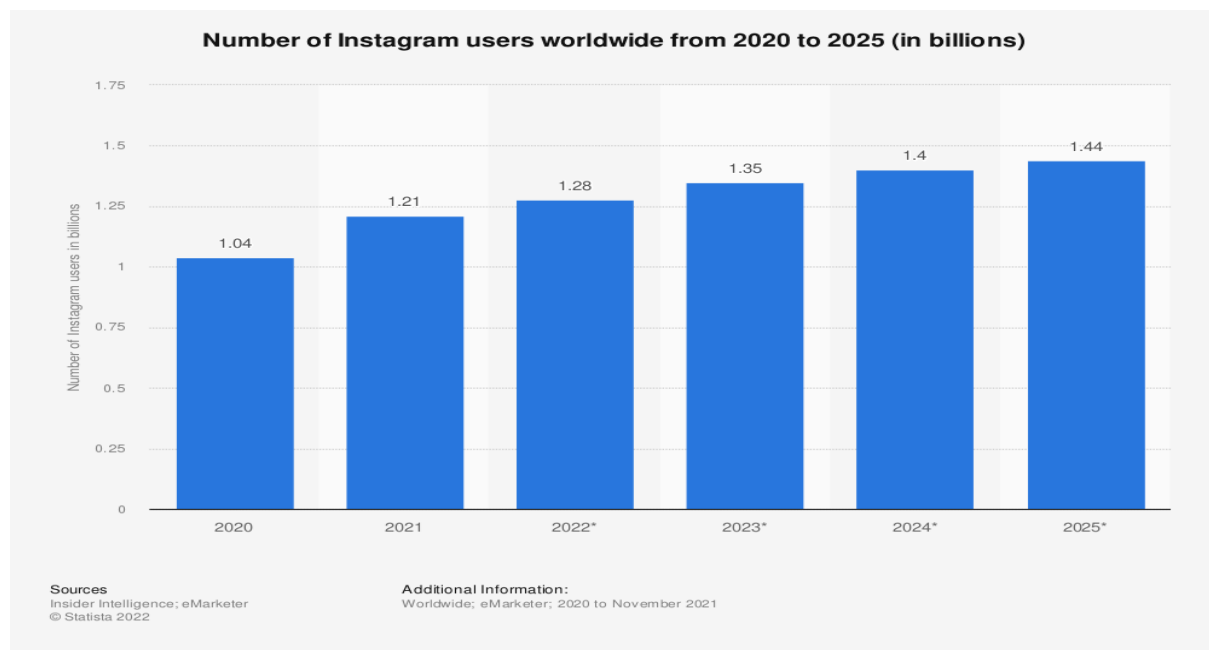

Figure 1. Number of Instagram users worldwide from 2020 to 2025 (in billions). (Statista2, 2022)

In terms of purchase decisions, Instagram has the most effect on the millennial generation. 72 percent of millennials, according to Huang & Copeland (2020) use Instagram for a variety of objectives, including product information. Celebrities have been proven to have a beneficial impact on advertisement efficacy in several scientific research (Zhou et al., 2019).

This research is mainly conducted with an objective to reach a better understanding of the effectiveness of marketing campaigns related to influencers characteristics, such as: Gender, Age, product type, Marital Status, Educational level, Number of followers, Average comments, etc. What are the characteristics of an effective influencer?

2.Literature Review

2.1.Influencer Marketing

Everywhere you go, whether you are shopping, driving, surfing the web, or using your own social media account, you can find advertising and marketing. Due to increased social media use, new marketing tactics have emerged, such as influencer marketing (Jin et al., 2021). As the number of social media users grows, this feature increases the opportunity for people to share their suggestions and experiences with each other. Marketers have created a more natural way of interacting with their target demographics through influencer marketing because of its popularity. Firms that don't use influencer marketing should reconsider their marketing strategies considering its increasing popularity. It has become the most popular marketing and public relations trend to use social media influencers, especially Instagram influencers.

Marketers have greater control and visibility over advertising results with influencer marketing compared to conventional word-of-mouth marketing. Marketers may track in real-time how many people are like, viewing, and commenting on influencers' posts promoting their goods or services (Veirman et al., 2017). When compared to traditional marketing strategies, influencer marketing is 11 times more effective (Irfan Ahmad, 2018).

There is no one, precise definition of social media influencers since they might include anybody from singers to fitness instructors to fashion enthusiasts to friends of celebrities (Dhanesh & Duthler 2019). However, social media influencers have one thing in common: they use personal branding to establish and sustain relationships with their followers while also exerting influence on them. A sort of third-party endorser known as a social media influencer is one who builds a following through social media activity such as blogging, tweeting, and other forms of communication (Freberg et. Al., 2011). Despite this, an influencer is someone who, through their social media platforms, has the power to influence others or the audience that they may be following. Influencers are also people who have a strong reputation for being knowledgeable and skilled in a certain field. On their preferred social media platforms, they frequently post on the issue, which draws a sizable following of loyal supporters who actively follow their ideas (Jin et. Al., 2019). It is clear why this new generation of opinion leaders has been referred to as social media influencers based on Vaibhavi and Leena (2018) findings that many social media users follow popular social media accounts on popular social media platforms. The traits of an influencer, on the other hand, also include someone who is capable of influencing others' purchasing decisions because of their influence through knowledge sharing and relationships with their audiences or followers. This situation arises because of the recent social media influencer endorsement trends, in which such influencers are approached by businesses or other groups that want them to recommend or evaluate their products. As a result, social media influencers would evaluate and recommend goods and services via their personal websites, tweets, and postings on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and others.

Social media and blogging were not initially intended to be platforms for marketing, but rather a space for bloggers to express their opinions on various subjects, offer information that someone might require while visiting their page, and serve as a source of fun (Brorsson & Plotnikova, 2017). However, the current trends indicate that a page with a sizable number of followers may eventually have an influence on viewers. Because they think social media influencers enhance brand emotion and offer real

storytelling, marketers are now turning to influencers on social media to promote their goods and services. As a result, on photo-sharing platforms like Instagram, fashion influencers typically recommend a product by wearing it and then tagging the image with the brand name (Vaibhavi & Leena, 2018). The same approach is used when cosmetic or beauty influencers promote a product on their social media pages by using it themselves.

2.2. Types of Social Media Influencers

The fact that not all influencers are viewed in the same manner is a distinctive aspect of social media influencer marketing. Five different categories of social media influencers have recently been identified by Campbell and Farrell (2020), who have created a helpful categorization. According to the size of their followings, these categories are arranged as follows: celebrity influencers and mega-influencers have the largest followers (over 1 million followers), followed by macro-influencers (between 100,000 and one million followers), micro-influencers (between 10,000 and 100,000 followers), and nano-influencers (under 10,000). The remaining four social media influencer types, aside from traditional celebrities who became famous independently before engaging in social media, exert their influence mostly through the contents they provide and the interactions they have with their followers on social media. Actors or musicians are examples of people who have attained celebrity status outside of social media. Mega influencers are often people whose use of social media has been the main factor in expanding their audience (Nouri, 2018). The distinction between these categories seems to represent a compromise between closeness and well-known. Although mega-influencers (and macro-influencers) have a bigger following and are more well-known, micro-influencers (and nano-influencers) prefer to express a more closeness message (Britt et al., 2020).

Given these variations in social media influencer types, it is interesting to think about how these variations may be used to improve the efficacy of social media influencer marketing. To do this, we concentrate on the differences between mega- and micro-influencers. There are two primary factors that make these two types of social media influencers interesting. First, despite the size of their followings and a few other distinguishing qualities that differentiate mega-influencers from macro-influencers, they have a lot in common in terms of how customers view them. Particularly, both macro- and mega-influencers enjoy great numbers of followers, and their followers want to be just like them (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). These two categories of social media influencers are therefore likely to be motivated by similar processes from the view of their effects on persuasion. In fact, several recent studies grouped these two types of social media influencers into a single category, influencers with huge followings, to better understand how these influencers differ from the category of micro-influencers, which is made up of individuals with lower followings (Britt et al. 2020; Kay et. al., 2020). Second, because micro-influencers have closer relationships with their followers than mega-influencers do, there has been an increase in theoretical and practical interest in their use in social media influencer advertising (Britt et. al., 2020).

Previous research on influencer marketing on social media revealed that influencers with more (vs lesser) popularity (e.g., more followers or likes) were more convincing (De Veirman et. al., 2017; Jin and Phua, 2014; Kusumasondjaja and Tjiptono 2019). However, some investigations have offered a different viewpoint. For instance, Marques et. al. (2021) demonstrate that micro-influencers produce greater levels of consumer-brand interaction, while Barrett Wissman (2018) argues that firms could collaborate with micro-influencers to maximize their return on investment. Furthermore, it is suggested by Kay et. al. (2020) that micro-influencers are more persuasive than macro-influencers, even when they acknowledge that their post is sponsored by a brand; however, it is also suggested by Boerman (2020) that advertising disclosures increase levels of advertisement recognition, brand recall, and post engagement intentions, irrespective of the type of social media influencer. Therefore, further research is needed to determine the situations in which endorsements from micro-influencers (as opposed to mega-influencers) are more beneficial.

2.3. Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is when companies pay well-known celebrities to be spokespersons for their products. It has been increasingly popular among businesses in recent years as a means of generating sales and maybe expanding market share. When a corporation hires a celebrity to endorse their product, the main goal is to get their brand in front of as many people as possible (Kang et. al., 2019). To build an effective campaign, a company must choose an endorser who is appropriate for several channels and media, including source, message, and recipient (Till and Shimp, 1998). The company's brand may be thought of as the message it wants to communicate to its target market. Furthermore, in an endorsement approach, the celebrity is the intended sender of the message, while the consumer is the intended recipient. Companies desire to boost celebrity endorsement for several reasons (Erdogan et al., 2001). Marketers aim to modernize the brand's image, raise awareness, and draw attention to it while also including new features. Finding the proper celebrity to promote a brand, according to Zipporah & Mberia (2014), is one of the most crucial aspects in deciding how purchasers will perceive the company. The brand's name, the locations where it is viewed and sold, and the type of advertising campaign it conducts are all less essential than the celebrity it chooses. Many organizations are willing to pay a significant sum of money to identify and deploy a celebrity whose image is compatible with their brand.

3.Research Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative case study method. The studied case is a company operating in Kuwait and depends mainly on influencers' campaigns to market their products. Two lines were studied one is skincare line, and the other is hair products line. The company works with several influencers. The company marketing team looks for influential influencers and signs contracts to promote and advertise a product within their social media accounts.

The research collected data from the marketing teams and central sales department. The adopted data covers four months, starting from August 2021 till the end of Nov. 2021. The company has several lines and works with a changing number of influencers. The researchers chose two product lines and explored all influencers with contracts for the past four months. The number of influencers is four for skincare and eleven for hair products.

First, the researchers collected data about influencers the company has contracted with within the mentioned period of time. Then these influencers' characteristics were defined. After that, the researchers collected data about the dates of each advertisement done by each of these influencers. After that, the researchers prepared a calendar specifying the dates of the advertisements for each influencer. Then the sales data for the mentioned period was collected. After that, the researchers calculated the effectiveness of the conducted campaigns by calculating the sales increase for the next three days. It was calculated by subtracting sales of the day before the campaign from the average sales in the next three days and dividing it by the sales of the previous day.

$$\frac{[(\text{average sales of campaign day and the next two days}) - \text{sales of the day before}]}{\text{sales of the day before}}$$

Then in order to compare different influencers among each other, another calculation has been made. To calculate the total change of sales after all the campaigns for each influencer, the average of all the campaigns for each influencer has been calculated. Then a comparison between influencers considering their characteristic was made.

4. Findings

This case study is about a company operating in Kuwait in the pharmaceutical sector. One of the main activities of the company is being a cosmetics retailer. Recently the company changed its marketing strategies, adopting influencers endorsements'. The company has several direct online and physical selling points. Recently the company had contracts with over seventy different influencers working on seven different product lines.

According to the company's marketing manager, they usually choose influencers based on several aspects. The first and most dominant criteria are the number of followers. The second criteria are interactions on posts like views, comments, and likes. Then they try to find a match between the product and influencers' physical characteristics or education field or field of expertise.

The researchers tried to find out if the product line could affect the effectiveness of the advertisements conducted by influencers for the two product lines. The first product line is referred to as P, with four influencers advertising it. And the second hair product line is referred to as C, with 11 different influencers promoting it. When studying the difference between the two product lines, there was no difference between the means of effectiveness (Average of all influencers average campaigns effectiveness) among two product lines. Moreover, the absolute correlation between product line and effectiveness of each influencer is 4% which means there is no significant correlation between product line and influencer's average campaigns' effectiveness. Therefore, the fifteen influencers characteristics' will be studied together even though 11 of them are advertising C hair products, and 4 are advertising P skincare products.

Figure 4. The average of campaign effectiveness to product line

4.1. Influencer's Characteristics

Table1: Influencers' Characteristics

Gender	
Female	13
Male	2
Age Group	
20-29	4
30-35	5
36-40	5
More than 40	1
Educational level	

High School	5
Bachelor	8
Doctor	2
Marital Status	
Single	4
Married	11
Number of followers	
Less than 100k	2
100k - 500k	3
500k – 1M	4
1M – 2M	2
More than 2M	4

The characteristic of influencers advertising the two chosen product lines varies. There are two males and thirteen females. 4 influencers are in the late twentieth age group, five are between 30-35, five are between 36 and 40 and one is over 40. Educational level: five have a high school, eight hold bachelor's degrees, and two are doctors. For the marital status 11 of the studied influencers are married and 4 are single. Finally, the number of each follower varies, 2 influencers has less than 100,000 followers (micro-influencers), 3 has from 100,000 to 500,000 followers (macro-influencers), 4 have from 500,00 to 1,000,000 followers (macro-influencers), 2 have from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 followers (mega-influencers) and finally 4 have more than 2,000,000 followers (mega-influencers).

4.1.1. Age

Figure 5 presents the correlation between influencers' age and the average campaign's effectiveness. The correlation between them is -23%. This shows a weak correlation between influencer's age and the average campaign's effectiveness. However, the result indicates that a weak correlation could demonstrate that younger influencers could be more effective.
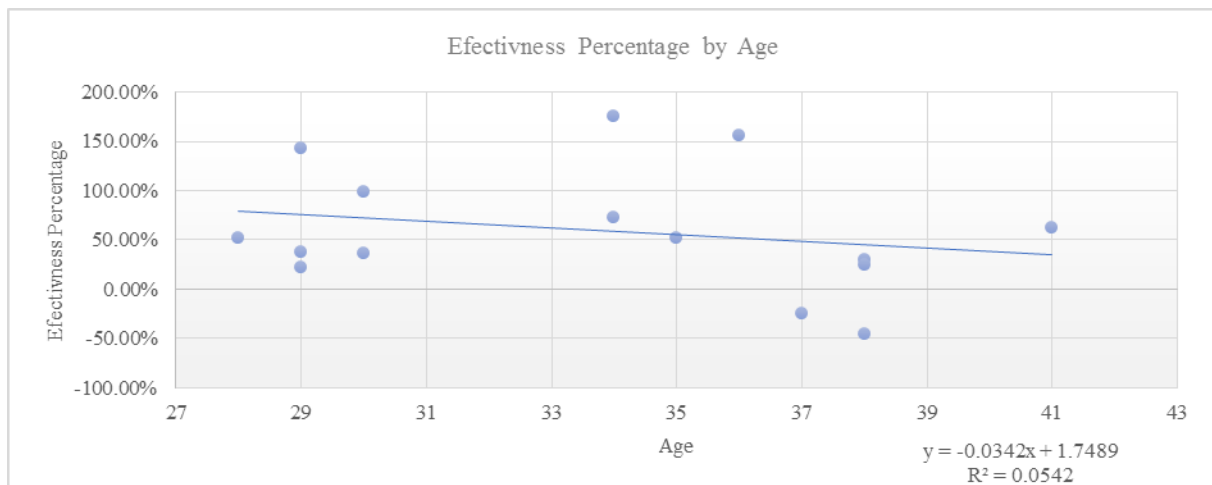

Figure 5. Average campaign effectiveness to influencer's age

4.1.2. Gender

Even though the majority of two lines consumers are females, the company had contracts with two male influencers. Therefore, the need to compare between gender groups is highlighted. As presented in figure 6 the mean of change of sales after campaigns for the two males is 60.31%, while the average

change in sales for the thirteen females is 55.05%. The correlation value between change in sales and gender is 1%, which shows no significant difference between males and females.
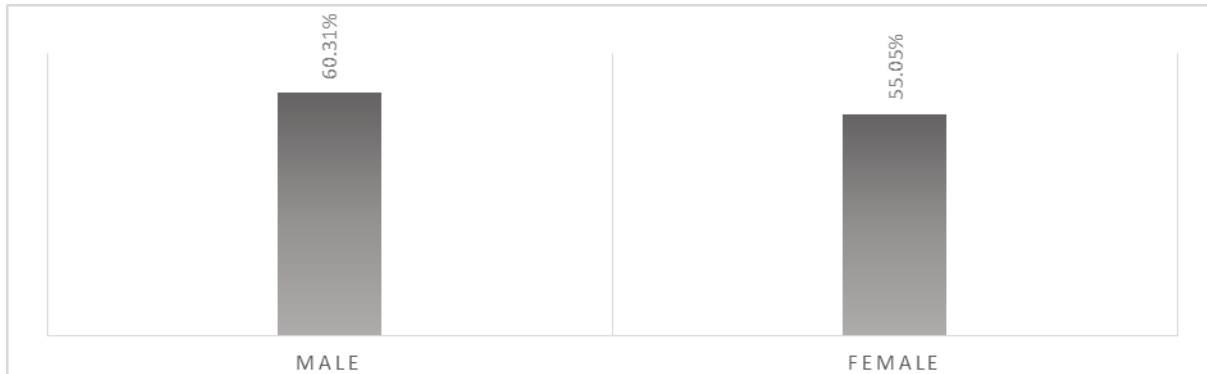

Figure 6. Effectiveness by gender

4.1.3. Marital Status

The third studied characteristic is marital status. Again, when comparing the means of average effectiveness according to the marital status, we find a small difference between them. The absolute correlation between marital status and average campaign effectiveness is 10%.
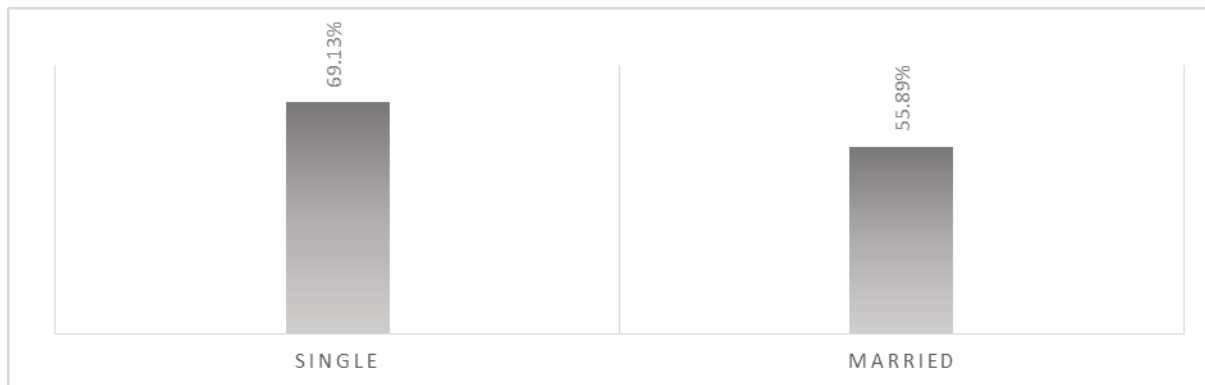

Figure 7. Average campaign effectiveness to influencer's marital status

4.1.4. Educational Level

Surprisingly, as indicated in figure 8 there is a significant difference between the means of effectiveness for influencers according to their educational level. Influencers with high school as the higher level of education present effectiveness higher than bachelor's degree holders. As well influencers who work as doctors and are the least effective ones. The correlation value between change in sales and educational level is (-33%) which indicates that influencers with lower education level are more effective on sales.

Figure 8. Average campaign effectiveness to influencer's higher educational level

4.1.5. Number of Followers

One of the most dominant factors when choosing influencers is the number of followers. Another surprising result within the studied company that the correlation between average campaign effectiveness and number of followers is (-54%). This surprising result is presented in figure 9. This result means that influencers with lower number of followers present higher average effectiveness. This result is only related to this case study and the chosen sample of influencers in Kuwait. At the mentioned period there were several legal issues related to influencers activities, especially influencers with large numbers of followers.
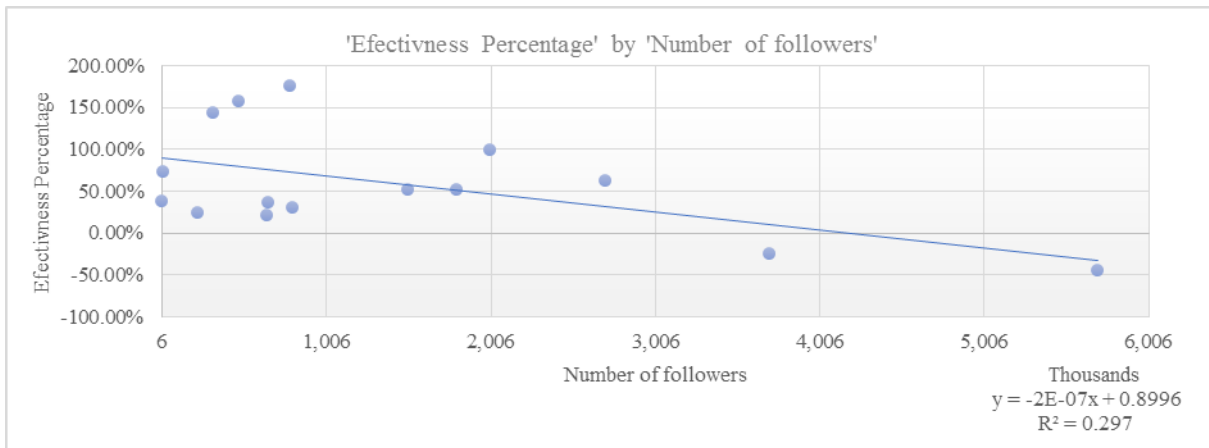

Figure 9. Average campaign effectiveness to influencer's number of followers

4.1.6. Number of Comments

The last studied Characteristic is the average between the largest and smallest number of comments to study the interaction within influencers page as it forms one of the adopted criteria the company depends on in choosing influencers. The correlation between average campaign's effectiveness and average comments is (-12%), which do not present a significant value.
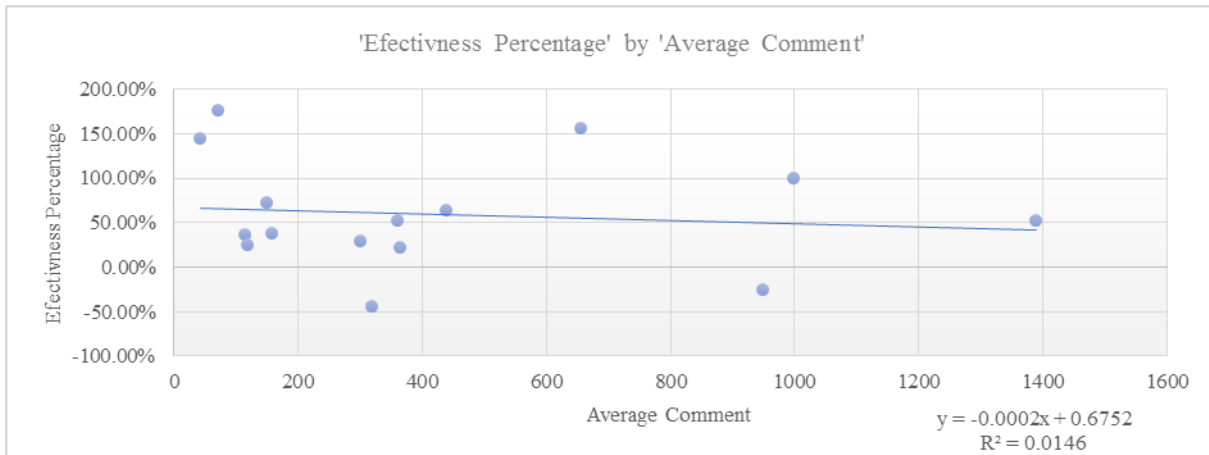
Figure 10. Influencer's average campaign effectiveness to Average Comment

The below table shows correlation among characteristics and average campaign effectiveness among the 15 influencers.

Table 2. Correlation

	Gender	Age	Product Type	Marital Status	Educational level	Number of followers	Average comments	Effectiveness Percentage
Gender	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Age	-0.40	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
product type	-0.21	0.14	1.00	-	-	-	-	-
Marital Status	-0.21	-0.04	0.32	1.00	-	-	-	-
Educational level	0.42	-0.19	-0.18	-0.42	1.00	-	-	-
Number of followers	-0.03	0.43	0.28	0.12	0.31	1.00	-	-
Average comments	0.26	0.16	0.08	0.05	0.62	0.38	1.00	-
Effectiveness Percentage	0.01	-0.23	-0.04	-0.10	-0.33	-0.54	-0.12	1.00

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

As illustrated in the results some of the influencer's characteristics deemed to be affecting the change of sales after campaigns. These characteristics are age, gender, marital status, educational level, number of comments and number of followers. The results show a week correlation between influencer's age and the average campaigns effectiveness. However, the result shows that within a week correlation but still that could point somehow that younger influencers could be more effective. Also, the change of sales after campaigns was for the two males is 60.31% while the average change in sales for the thirteen females is 55.05% and that shows there is no significant difference between males and females. This result is consistent with the study conducted by Hudders & De Jans (2022) and shows that there are no main effects of an influencer's gender. Furthermore, when the authors compared the means of average effectiveness according to marital status, they found small difference between them. But the surprising

result was that when the influencers level of education increase, the effectiveness decrease. This surprising result means that within the studied company an influencer with a lower level of education is more effective. Another surprising result the despite one of the determining criteria of choosing influencers is their number of followers, influencer with smaller number of followers is more effective. This is in line with previous studies that concluded mega-influencers who have more than one million followers has the lowest engagement (Dangl, 2017). The last studied characteristic is the average between the largest and smallest number of comments to study the interaction within influencers page. The correlation between average campaign's effectiveness and average comments is (-12%) which do not present a significant value.

Adopting a qualitative case study method, this research defined the affecting characteristics that cause a direct increase in sales after advertising campaigns conducted by influencers in a company operating in Kuwait. The results showed that the most influential characteristics are number of followers and educational level. Both are negatively related to the increase of sales after campaigns. These results, despite their limitations, could contribute to the existing literature and open the door for several future research.

There are certain limitations to this study that might lead to the establishment of new research lines in the future. This research has been done in 15 weeks by studying the characteristics of 15 influencers in total. One of the main research limitations that the results cannot be generalized since results are limited to the studied company in a defined period of time. Another limitation that the study is limited to the mentioned characteristics while other characteristics could affect the effectiveness of the campaign like influencers' personality.

To overcome the first research limitation future studies are recommended to expand the study for other companies and different times to reach generable conclusions. Also, future studies are recommended to consider other characteristics of influencers like influencers' personalities.

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