



## SMALL BUSINESSES AND MARKETING ON INSTAGRAM

**Vidisha Chopra**

Research Student, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, JAIN (deemed-to-be University), India.

**Prof. Neerej Dev\***

Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, JAIN (deemed-to-be University), India. \*Corresponding Author

**ABSTRACT**

With the onset of Covid-19 pandemic the idea of socializing has shifted to interaction and networking through internet media. Similarly, the notion of shopping isn't restricted to shopping out in malls but also impulsive shopping on online stores. Marketers may connect and engage with prospective consumers on social media, including LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, or Pinterest. The study reveals that with millions of unique users each month, marketing on Instagram is worthwhile. Not only does this provide your company with another medium to connect with your audience, but many have also found success with direct purchases. Planning an Instagram marketing plan can be extremely beneficial for brands to earn a full-time income with proper consistency. The study also reveals the importance of reputation and influencer marketing, and how they can help small businesses whip up more leads and sales through the platform.

**KEYWORDS** : Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Instagram Marketing, Small Businesses, Impulsive Buying**I. INTRODUCTION**

Instagram marketing is the method used by companies on Instagram to reach their target audience to raise brand visibility and brand awareness. Instagram marketing can involve several different strategies and tactics, used to accomplish all kinds of goals a business might have' - Neil Patel.

Five million images are shared on Instagram daily and 50% of the top brands currently use Instagram as a marketing medium. Even though the application was created specifically for mobile phones, photographs on Instagram last longer than those on any other social networking platform and is considerably easier to use in terms of followers' expectations, as Instagram users are OK with just sharing a few photographs every day with minimum commentary, compared to Facebook followers who require more active participation (Miles, 2013). Instagram has over the years grown to become a marketplace where brands and small businesses promote their products and make sales via the platform. This study attempts to have a closer look at Instagram and the way they promote small businesses through their platform. The study will also focus on 'Why some small businesses choose Instagram over other social media applications.'

**Instagram from 2010 and 2021**

Instagram is a photo-sharing application released on October 6, 2010, created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. The application is often defined as a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of photos and videos. The app initially launched in 2010 for IOS, was later launched for Android users in 2012. The company made several changes in the last decade, such as updating the algorithm that controls the images you get on your feed rather than presenting them in chronological order.

Over the last decade, Instagram has changed from a photo-sharing app to a photo-video-sharing app. Instagram started testing ads on TikTok clones to test the latest feature that they were bringing in - Instagram reels. Ever since reels came into the picture, Instagram's marketing strategies changed drastically. Instagram realised that attention span of their target audience is extremely low, leading to the relatively higher receptivity for reels. Instagram combined its IGTV (which would have videos till up to 1 hour) section and the grid videos (which would have videos ranging from 3 seconds to 60

seconds) section into one section and calls it 'Videos'. With all of this, Instagram has features like DMs (Direct Messages), stories (which would last for 24 hours), the search tab where you could search for a keyword and it would show you the top accounts, trending audios, top hashtags, and places according to the keyword you put in, followed by activity section, and the profile grid. Along with the changes in its owners and logo, Instagram has had a long journey and continues to grow with the changing times.

**Instagram Marketing for Brands**

On the surface, it might seem like little more than a place for snapshots and selfies. The reality, though? Instagram is an absolute goldmine for businesses of all shapes and sizes. From social selling to community-building and beyond, there's a reason why Instagram is booming right now among businesses and consumers alike (Brent Barnhart, 2020). 90% of Instagram users follow companies and brands, with non-followers accounting for two out of every three company profile views (Neil Patel & Christiana Newberry, 2021)

Social media marketing (SMM) can be defined as a form of internet marketing that utilizes social networking websites as a marketing tool (Rouse, 2011). The goal of SMM is to produce content that users will share on their social networks to help a company increase brand exposure and broaden their customer reach. This type of marketing is done through various social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc to promote website traffic and engage users. This process of sharing content with others is called Electric Word of Mouth (eWoM).

Instagram marketing is a part of social media marketing with a major focus on how to increase reach on the platform. It offers everything from current to evergreen content, including blogs, carousel posts, static posts, stories, reels, guides, and more, offering you limitless opportunities to brand like never before.

Instagram now has more than 2 billion monthly active users worldwide (Rodriguez, 2021). More than half of the global Instagram user population is younger than 34 years old. The 18-24-year-old age group is the largest of their demographics with 51% female and 49% male audiences in their entire user's pool. The highest number of users are from the U.S. with over 140 million and India comes to a close second with over 120 million users. From these statistics it's no surprise that some of

the world's most well-known companies prefer Instagram to other social media platforms for promoting their goods and services. It's now easier to reach out to new consumers to establish a large following with strong and impactful marketing.

For a basic idea of marketing on Instagram, there are a few things to keep in mind and one can be good to go.

1. Defining your goals and purpose
2. Optimizing your profile
3. Create content worth liking and sharing, content that one can relate to.
4. Using all features of Instagram to get maximum engagement and reach.

### **Instagram for Small Businesses and Impulsive Buying**

Instagram is one of the most versatile social media platforms, from sharing photos and videos like a personal blog, it has proved to be an immensely useful tool for businesses. It allows businesses of any size to reach out to the millions of users on the app. A lot of businesses flocked here to utilize their services and reach out to the user base of millions. From big brand names to small closet shops, you can find the whole lot amongst the thousands of user-profiles that use Instagram for business (Holmes, 2015).

"Instagram made me buy it" is a vicious cycle that a lot of people are a part of, and many uses have developed the impulsive habit of buying things when they are feeling sad. They call it their coping mechanism. People tend to spend money and feel good for a brief period. One may argue that online buying behaviour is rather rational, as the consumer tends to search for information and make comparisons before making the final decision (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). Several factors both internal (related to personal characteristics) and external (related to situational – store and product – characteristics) affect impulse buying (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2014).

According to Daniel Forman, few tips for small businesses on Instagram include,

1. Open a business account
2. Fill your bio strategically
3. Use hashtags in your feeds
4. Implement Instagram stories
5. Consider suitable metrics
6. Upload high-quality videos and pictures
7. Post consistently

Even though the above tips have been tried and tested, the catch with Instagram is that it keeps changing its algorithm. So, what might work for one post, might not work for the other. So, when it comes to this platform, a trial-and-error method is the best way to go. If people keep experimenting with Instagram, they will eventually find out what works best for them and what are the things that they might need to avoid. For that to work out perfectly, people need to keep a check on what different are they doing with each post. When kept a proper track, they can implement those strategies on their upcoming posts and will see immense growth in their followers which will, in turn, lead to great leads and eventually, sales.

Instagram provides a perfect visual platform for small companies to interact with their clients. Furthermore, it comes with several advantages that attract more customers and lead to a profitable business at a minimal cost. However, to build their small business one needs to discover useful methods and recommendations.

### **Influencers and Small Business Collaborations**

Small businesses, to increase their reach, increase brand

visibility and brand name, often start reaching out to influencers who are a part of their niche/target market. By doing so, all the influencers who have a good number of followers will post about their products while unboxing, in use, and post-use results. Influencers are called so because they influence a lot of people with what they do, what they wear, what they eat, what they use in their daily life because these influencers try to keep up with the aesthetic that's been going on lately and people romanticize a Pinterest-life.

Now, to get more sales, these small businesses start sending PR packages to the influencers that they then use and put up in their stories. Influencers have a media kits that can be afforded by big brands but it can be a lot for small businesses. These small businesses usually do not have large budgets and hence it can be difficult for them to collaborate with them and hence they send out those PR packages. This is called Influencer Marketing. Influencer marketing works because of the high amount of trust that social influencers have built up with their following, and recommendations from them serve as a form of social proof to your brand's potential customers (Chen, 2020).

### **Reputation Building**

Building a reputation, maintaining and managing it is a tough task. A new term has been brewing lately, called reputation marketing. Reputation marketing is the promotion, monitoring, and acquisition of positive brand content, such as reviews, social media comments, online forums, and traditional press. It is a strategy used to better understand what is being said about you or your company online and to use that understanding to improve your brand and overall online reputation (Schaer, 2022).

### **Many forms of content can be constituted as reputation marketing strategies, including-**

1. Customer Reviews and posts with comments given by your customer about your product/service.
2. Google Reviews - People, when googling about your brand, can find google reviews which is also a big part of reputation management.

90% of consumers say that their buying decisions are influenced by online reviews. And 94% of consumers said a negative review convinced them to avoid a business (Bassig, 2022). By being transparent about your brand people who don't know you personally can also ace orders freely. With the introduction of reels on Instagram, small businesses have started making reels about their packaging of an order, what they are going through, how customers treat them, and more. This way, people know the face behind the businesses, which also brings a sense of trust and credibility to your business.

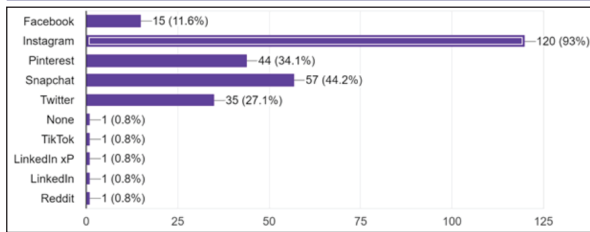
### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The researcher has adopted a descriptive research design by applying non-probability convenience sampling technique. The sample size is 126 respondents between the age group of 16-34-year from Bengaluru. A structured questionnaire was used that contained both open-ended and close-ended questions. The online questionnaire was designed with the help of Google Forms and was sent to the respondents via WhatsApp. The questionnaire comprising of 15 questions was used to collect data from the respondents and was statistically analysed, using Google Sheets. Tables and charts were used to ensure that data could be interpreted quickly and easily and was expressed in percentages.

### **Iv. Data Analysis**

#### **Instagram as a Marketing Platform**

When asked about their go-to platform 93.7% of the respondents preferred Instagram (IMG. 1) while the rest chose platforms like LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.



IMG. 1 - Go-To Social Media Platform

When asked, why was Instagram their most preferred platform and most responded that - "It has a lot of great content" and "Great place to learn and connect." People also said that they have been using the platform because they have their small business on the platform and think of Instagram as a great place to kill time, as they have developed the habit of going to Instagram every now and then. Also, Instagram marketing is a term that is familiar to 91.3% of the respondents.

### Instagram Made Me Buy It

Instagram is a place where people browse through the lives of their friends, family members, influencers, and also check out what is new with the latest brands that they prefer.

Impulsive buying is something that people do when they instantly like something online/offline. About 26.2% of the respondents have agreed to the fact that they are a part of that vicious cycle and have been caught impulsively shopping multiple times. Whereas 28.6% of them deny it. These are the people who browse through brands and business pages, enquire about the products they like, end up putting things they like in their cart, but never purchase them unless they absolutely need those things. An interesting fact here is that the people who have accepted that they have a habit of impulsive shopping are mostly women. The study also identified that Instagram is very influential when it comes to influencing the people into buying different products. People have purchased many products only because they have seen influencers receiving packages from them which gives them a sense of assurity as to why they should purchase from them. This is specifically related to small businesses. Influencers when they post about a product tend to make an impact so strong that it makes people want to buy those products. It also assures them that the business that the influencers just received the package from/just purchased from is not fraud/fake.

41.3% of the respondents agree that Instagram have the potential to influence them into buying many products even though they would just be casually browsing for the product. This is especially when it exposed to more of targeted and sponsored ads.

### Small Businesses on Instagram

Majority of the respondents identified themselves to be really glad to see others pursuing their dreams and earning money from Instagram and 67.5% of the respondents of the study said that they would purchase from those brands. But some people have a hard time trusting the small businesses on Instagram because of lack of guarantee to buy the product, quality, return policy, lacking cash on delivery option or doesn't have websites.

### Targeted Ads for Small Businesses and Reputation Marketing

There are sponsored ads that brands, and small businesses pay to Instagram to show their content to people who might resonate with it or might want to purchase in the future. The business owners carefully choose their niche by adding keywords very specific to their niche because they know that

people outside of their niche would rarely view their promoted ad. People are also annoyed that Instagram promotes a lot of ads that hampers their feed continuity.

65.1% of the respondents have identified that they will be open to look through those profiles as long as they are of a small business. Interestingly, 40% of the respondents wouldn't purchase from those brands. This is because people do not trust them, but they will give them a follow and support their business by interacting with their content. People consider reputation marketing important because it can authenticate the credibility of a product. 89.9% of the respondents think that reputation marketing is important because they can know who they are buying from.

### V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, Instagram has had a journey with many changes aimed at improving the of their users. Through this study, we have understood why it can be extremely beneficial for brands to go online and how people can pursue their passion for a full-time income with proper consistency. The study also reveals the importance of reputation marketing and influencer marketing and how they can help small businesses whip up more leads and sales. But the Instagram algorithm is designed in such a way that people need to keep experimenting and continue using all the features that the platform provides and it will automatically get pushed in the right direction towards your niche and your main target market.

### REFERENCES

1. Aragoncillo, L., & Orus, C. (2018). Impulse buying behaviour: an online-offline comparative and the impact of social media. *Spanish Journal of Marketing*.
2. Badgaiyan, A., & Verma, A. (2014). Intrinsic factors affecting impulsive buying behaviour—Evidence from India. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(4), 537–549.
3. Bassig, M. (2022). How to Create and Share a Google Reviews Link. Retrieved from ReviewTrackers: <https://www.reviewtrackers.com/blog/google-review-link/>
4. Chen, J. (2020). What is influencer marketing: How to develop your strategy. Retrieved from Sprout Social: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/influencer-marketing/>
5. Miles, J. (2013). *Instagram Power, Second Edition: Build Your Brand and Reach More Customers with Visual Influence*. McGraw Hill.
6. Rodriguez, S. (2021). Instagram surpasses 2 billion monthly users while powering through a year of turmoil. Retrieved from CNBC: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/12/14/instagram-surpasses-2-billion-monthly-users.html>
7. Schaefer, B. (2022). What is Personal Branding? Retrieved from Reputation X: <https://blog.reputationx.com/whats-personal-branding>