



# Celebrities Used as a Social Media Marketing Strategy by Brands on Instagram

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## Abstract

The rise of New Media, particularly Digital Media, has transformed global connectivity, revolutionizing our social interactions. Instagram, a leading social media platform, embodies this shift with its dynamic features, including filters, 'Insta Reels,' and extensive connectivity. It has not only enthralled millennials but has also emerged as a key tool for multi-billion-dollar brand marketing, boasting over 1.15 billion monthly users. This study investigates the pivotal role of celebrities, notably Shraddha Kapoor, in brand marketing on Instagram. Kapoor's journey from a renowned celebrity to a Social Media Influencer, with nearly 82 million followers as of September 2023, exemplifies the fusion of physical and virtual celebrity status. Through a comprehensive methodology encompassing digital ethnography, timeline analysis (2013-2021), content analysis, and personal observation, the research explores how brands leverage celebrities on Instagram. It delves into their influence on audiences, considering platform features, audience engagement, and the challenges and opportunities of transitioning to social media influencers. In a world where millennials and Generation Z constitute a significant portion of the population and 4.48 billion people globally use social media, brands increasingly turn to celebrity endorsers to bridge the gap between products and consumers. This study sheds light on how Shraddha Kapoor's image, reputation, and values are utilized by fashion and lifestyle brands for Instagram promotions, solidifying her role as a pivotal figure in the advertising industry.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing, Instagram, Celebrities, Social Media Influencers, Brand Marketing, Digital Ethnography, Content Analysis, Consumer Behavior, Brand Perception.

## 1. Introduction

The coming up of New Media or Digital Media has opened a lot of options for people to connect, barring the option of connectivity, it is also important to note the level of accessibility with which Digital Media has made itself spread, is commendable and almost surreal. The way we interact today is self-evident of the fact, highlighting social media's vastness and interconnectedness.

Though it would not be too complex, to understand the rise of Social Media with the introduction of the internet., if social media is the platform through which people exchange their thoughts, comments, and share their ideas, then the Internet is the means through which it is achieved.

However, not speaking much on the advantages or benefits of the Internet, but it is still important to highlight the wide scope of possibilities that the Internet has provided us, especially the means to connect with the whole world, with a matter of click in the present scenario, is no less than a modern wonder for the world.

To understand social media more clearly, it's better to quote the words of Dewing (2012), According to him, social media are used as a reference for many services based on internet and cellular services that make the user participate in online exchange, contribute on content that created by the user, or joining into community online such as blog, wikis, social media sites or social media sharing sites.

Another dimension that can be added to Dewing explanation is the dimension of time and space, which no longer poses a hindrance to social media, as we all have experienced that a person sitting in India can easily be connected to a person who may be in Canada, or America, or Australia, or any other corner of the world. This dimension is integral to social media and could be the pivotal driving force that has kept social media up and running.

Moving forward, the study has been focused on the direction of understanding the Social Media Marketing Strategy.

It becomes essential to pick the vessel through which its significance will be carried forward. For this study, the ideal social media sharing site chosen is one of the most used social media applications 'Instagram'.

According to Wherry & Shor,2015; it defines Instagram is a location-based social network mobile application for sharing photos and videos. This service allows users to apply digital filters and share their photos and videos either on the same platform or any other social network and social media platforms.

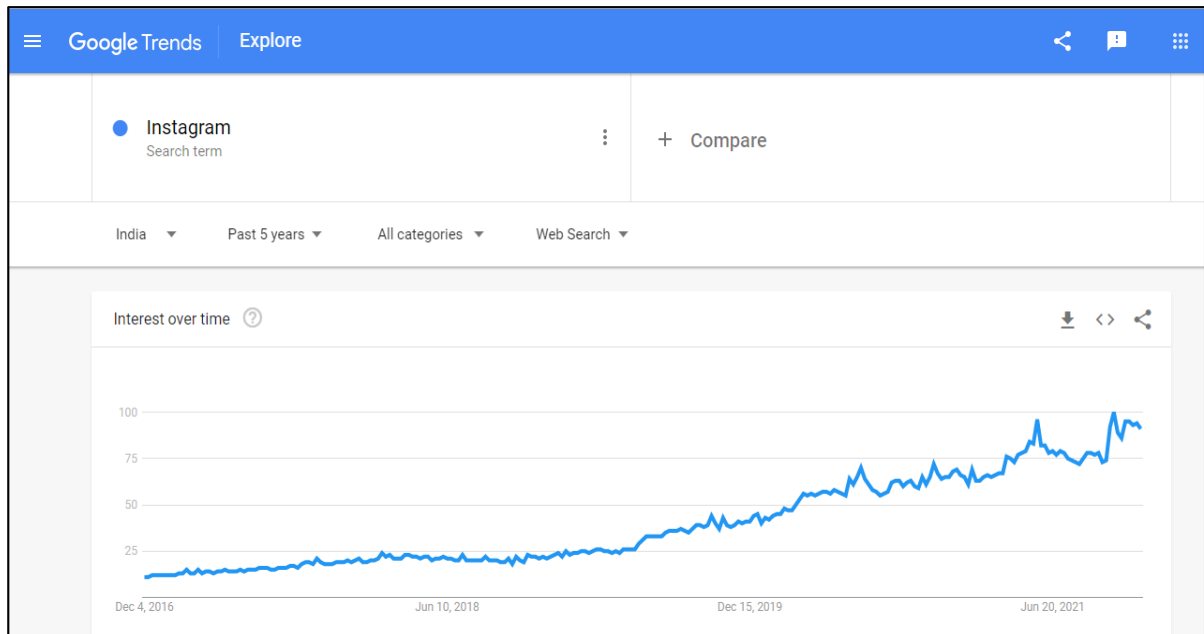
The striking feature of Instagram is the connectedness and a new trend it has created among the masses, especially the millennials, the features of adding more than 20 kinds of filters to your photos, with the independence of liking, following, and commenting on them, an embedded locational feature that allows the geo-tagging of your photos with your current location, and the most pivotal of them all is the option of Instagram Reels, infamously known as the 'Insta Reels', which allows users to upload a 15 seconds multi-clip video with the plethora of options to add audio or visual effects along with some creative filters and tools.

All features combined have provided Instagram an unparalleled edge over its competitors and not only millennials look up to it for their entertainment purposes but even the multi-billion-dollar brands also consider the promotion on the platform as the special marketing tool at their disposal.

According to Social Media Statistics, (Sharma, 2020) the following data-driven points are quoted in favor of Instagram, which further accentuates its worth –

- More than 1.15 billion people actively use Instagram every month.
- 90% of all users on Instagram follow at least one business account.
- 83% of Instagram users discover new products and services on the platform.
- 50% of Instagram users are more interested in a brand when they see ads on Instagram.
- 59% of micro-influencers believe that they get the best engagement on Instagram.

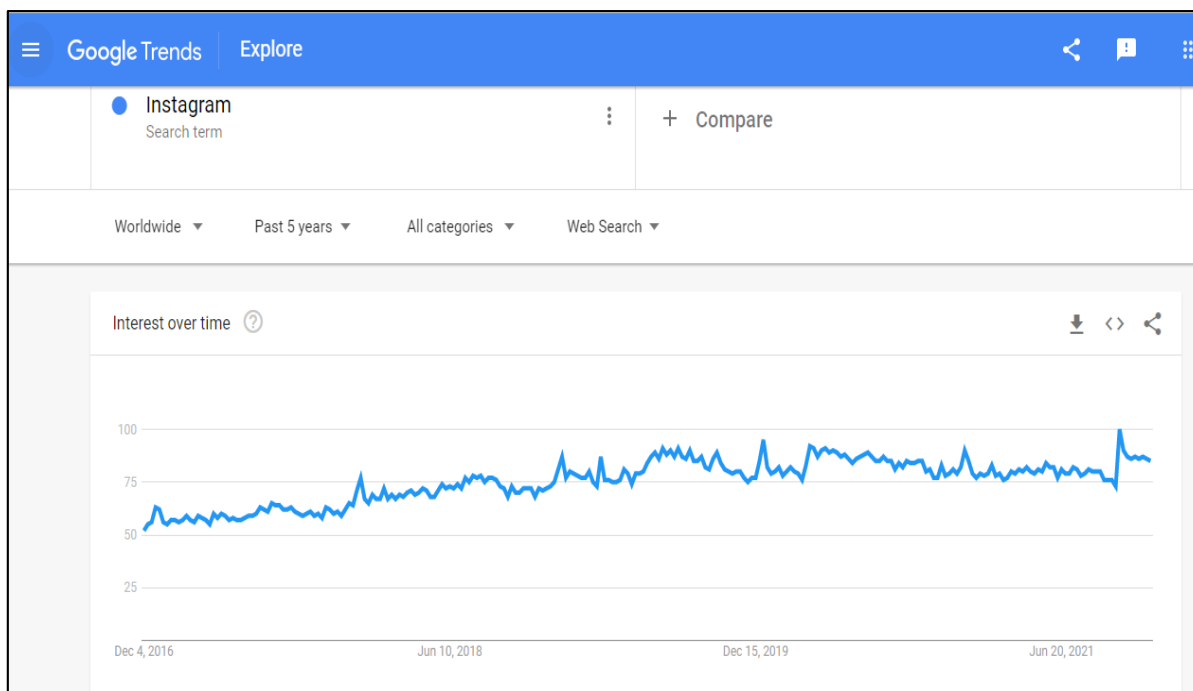




**Fig. 1.1 Instagram Popularity through Google Trends in India**

**Source: <https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=IN>**





**Fig. 1.2 Instagram Popularity through Google Trends in the World**

**Source:** <https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=IN>

Another aspect of the study is to understand the importance of Celebrity in influencing the consumers for a particular brand, It's better to first, understand who is a 'Celebrity', he or she is a person with immense popularity among the masses. In addition, celebrities are public figures, who through their works in entertainment, fashion, politics, sports, or any other recognizable industry get famous by the mass media and always have an extravagant value attached to them.

Their image in society is always been seen as the influencer, where they influence every decision of the people who follow them because the thing that works in their favor is the perception created in the minds of the people, who look up to them and consider that whatever the celebrity promote, advertise or wear if they also wear the same, they could also attain the similar status symbol as their cherished celebrity.

However, it can also be understood (Jenner, 2020) who considers a Celebrity is a unique persona made widely known to the public via media coverage, whose life is publicly consumed as dramatic entertainment, and whose commercial brand is made profitable for those who exploit their popularity, and perhaps also for themselves.

Moreover, the terminology or meaning of celebrity can be molded to the mode or context in which it's spoken, On social media celebrities are often referred to as 'Social Media Influencers' or 'Micro-Celebrities' though a celebrity of the outside or physical world not necessarily be recognized or met with same affection in the virtual world or the world of social media, for that he or she would be required to indulge with the audience at regular intervals and make them feel like he or she belongs to them, meaning they or required to build a relationship where their identity doesn't seem to be grandeur, luxurious, and lavish; instead, their fame and glory must be portrayed with utmost humility on a social media platform, if they have to gain the same number of followers, love, and respect, they usually receive in the physical world.

The things that should also be kept in mind are that most celebrities cannot make a smooth transition from their celebrity status to a widely followed social media influencer. However, the celebrity that we have chosen for this study; Shraddha Kapoor' doesn't fit under the same category rather, she is the perfect example of a popular celebrity and a renowned Social Media Influencer, with almost 82 million followers (as of September, 2023) on her Instagram profile; making her the 2<sup>nd</sup> Most Followed Indian Social Media Influencer.

## 2. Objectives

The primary objective of this research article is to assess the effectiveness and impact of celebrities, specifically focusing on Shraddha Kapoor, as social media influencers in brand marketing strategies on Instagram.

This study aims to comprehensively examine how celebrities are utilized in Instagram marketing by brands and their influence on consumer behavior and brand perception, taking into account factors such as platform features, audience engagement, and the challenges and opportunities for celebrities transitioning into the role of social media influencers. Through this analysis, the research aims to provide actionable insights and recommendations for optimizing celebrity-driven marketing strategies on Instagram in the digital age.

## 3. Methodology

This research employs a multi-faceted approach to investigate the utilization of celebrities, with a particular emphasis on Shraddha Kapoor, as social media influencers within brand marketing strategies on Instagram.

The timeline for this study spanned from January 27, 2013, marking the inception of Shraddha Kapoor's Instagram account, to December 31, 2021. This timeline was carefully chosen to ensure a comprehensive and extensive analysis of her Instagram activity, aligning with the objectives of the study.

The following methodologies were employed to comprehensively analyze the subject matter:

- **Digital Ethnography:** Digital ethnography was employed as a foundational method in this research. Extensive time was dedicated to conducting in-depth observations and analysis of Shraddha Kapoor's Instagram posts. This method involved immersing ourselves in the digital realm, where we explored, collected, and meticulously examined relevant posts on Shraddha Kapoor's Instagram profile.
- **Content Analysis:** This methodology was instrumental in extracting meaningful insights from Shraddha Kapoor's Instagram posts. Each post was critically examined to identify patterns, themes, and content strategies employed by the celebrity. The findings were subsequently used to create informative visual representations, including graphs, to encapsulate the essence of the study accurately.
- **Personal Observation:** In conjunction with the aforementioned methodologies, personal observation played a pivotal role in this research. Leveraging the collective experience of the research team in the field of digital marketing, we applied our industry insights and expertise to identify and analyze the nuances of "Influencer Marketing" as a digital and social media marketing strategy, as evident in Shraddha Kapoor's Instagram posts.

The combination of these methodologies allowed for a holistic examination of the interplay between celebrities, specifically Shraddha Kapoor, and their roles as influencers within brand marketing strategies on Instagram.

This comprehensive approach ensured the generation of valuable insights, enabling us to fulfill the research objective effectively and professionally.

The findings derived from this methodological framework provide a well-rounded understanding of the dynamic relationship between celebrities, social media influencers, and brand marketing strategies in the contemporary digital landscape.

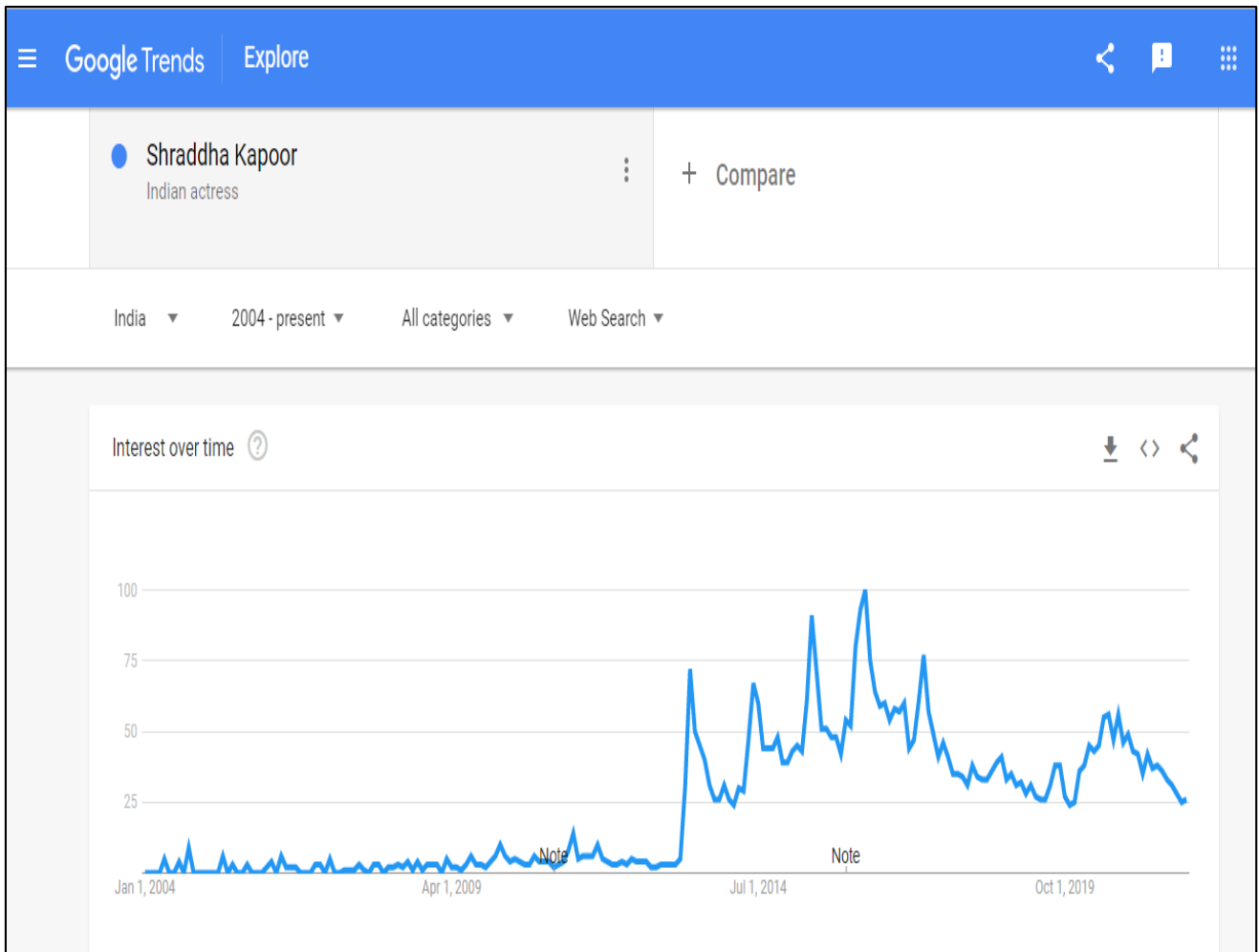
#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

##### 4.1 Social Media Marketing Strategy and Use of Shraddha Kapoor as a Tool to Promote Brand Growth

To further understand how social media marketing strategy works by using a celebrity, let's first understand the rise of Shraddha Kapoor as a Celebrity, and then as a Social Media Influencer.

- **Shraddha's Rise as a Star**

First, let's look at Shraddha Kapoor's Google Trends from the year 2004 to 2021, on the graph we can see the rise of Shraddha Kapoor as a star in the year 2013 when her movie Aashiqui 2 was released and a commercial success in the box-office, which consolidated her position in the Bollywood as the 'Rising Star', after the success she never had to look back in her life, and from there her popularity and interest over time on the Internet at regular interval kept on achieving new heights.



**Fig. 4.1 Shraddha Kapoor – Google Trends in All Categories (2004-2021)**

Source: <https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=IN>

The next graph mentioned below highlights the rise of Shraddha Kapoor in the field of Arts and Entertainment, from the year of 2004 to 2021.



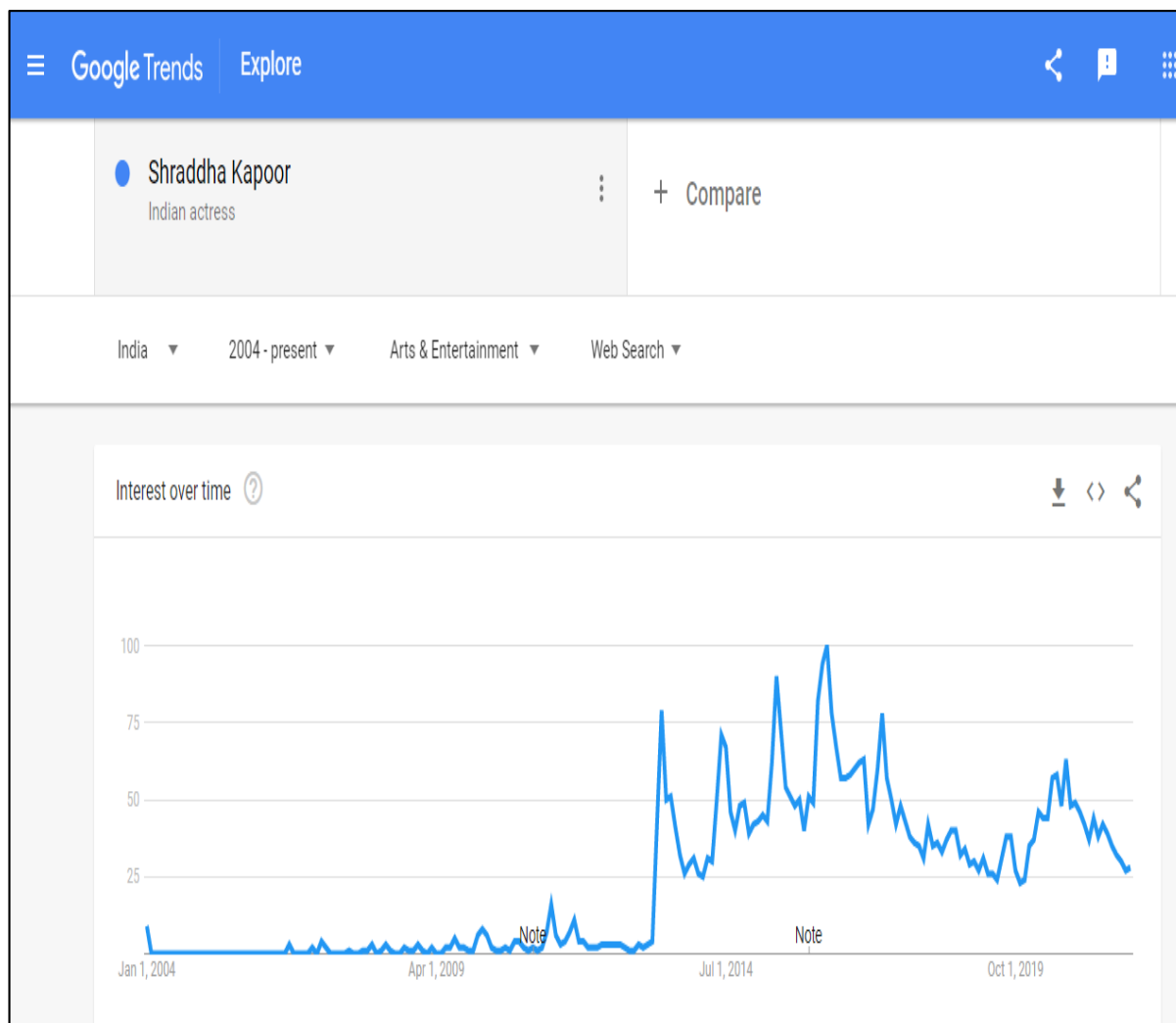


Fig. 4.2 Shraddha Kapoor – Google Trends in Arts and Entertainment (2004-2021)

Source: <https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=IN>

- **Shraddha Kapoor and Social Media Marketing Strategy on the Instagram**
- **Brand Equity**

According to (Aaker, 1991) it is a set of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand, its name, and its symbol, which add or subtract the value given by an item or service to the company or its customers. It represents the unique selling proposition of the brand and the value it provides through its products to the customers.

Aaker also mentioned the dimensions associated with Brand Equity which is crucial for a Brand to follow, to earn a profit, build a psychological place in the consumer's minds, and consolidate its position in the international market. Thus, the dimensions are –

- **Brand Awareness**
- **Brand Loyalty**
- **Perceived Value**
- **Brand Association**

Rather than, understanding these dimensions in their capacity, it's best to follow the current trend and highlight the Social Media Marketing Strategy that is most commonly preferred by the brands nowadays, to meet all the aforementioned dimensions. And, the most common tool used is none other than 'Celebrity Endorsements' or what millennials call the 'Social Media Influencers'.

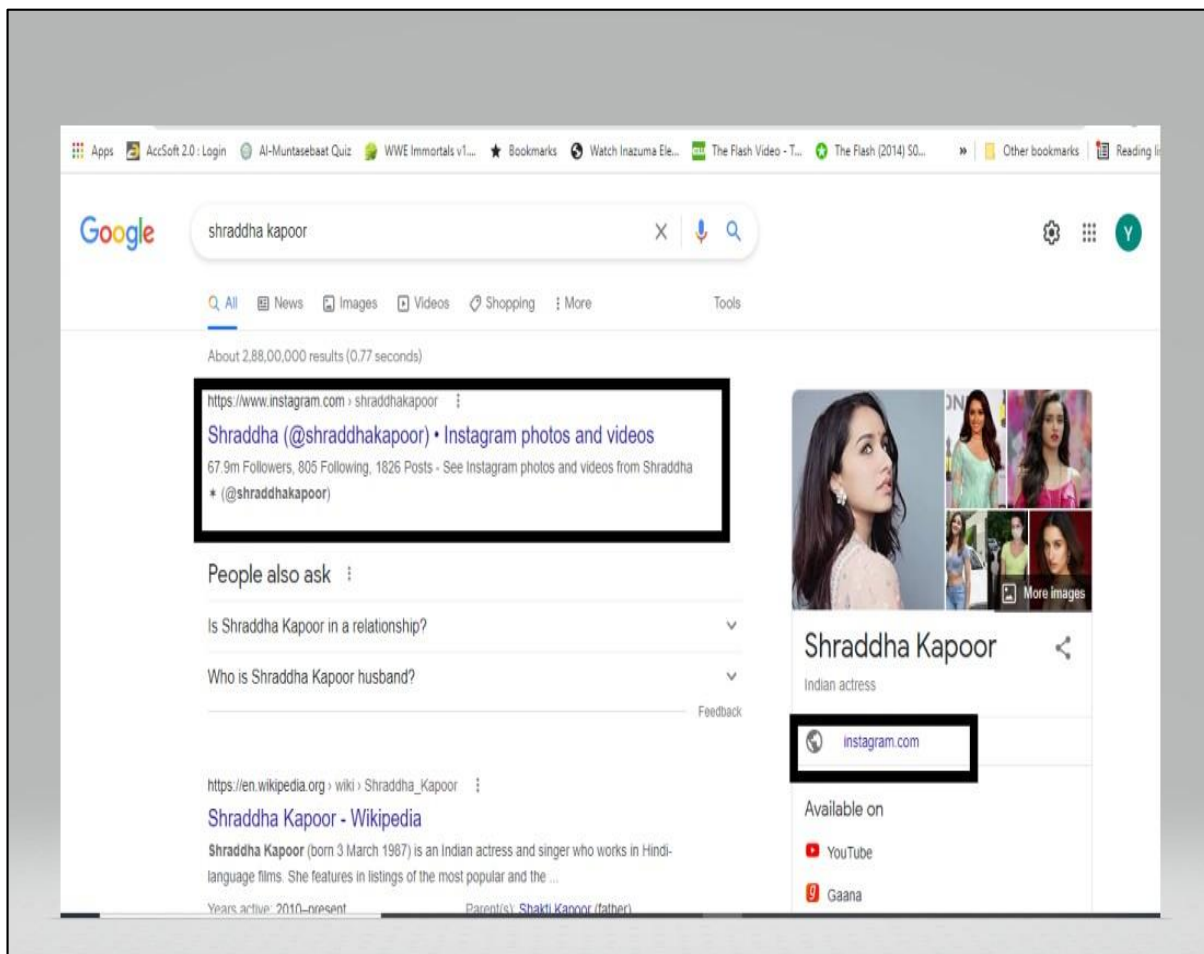
Similarly, I have also tried to trace one such Social Media Marketing Strategy on Instagram, where Shraddha Kapoor's image and popularity are utilized by the brand to establish its goodwill, and reputation, and achieve its desired business goals.

#### A. Identification

For brands, it becomes essential to conduct a detailed search operation so that it can pick the right celebrity for its endorsement. The three steps that must be followed in this regard are: -

- I. To select a fresh face alongside tremendous potential in the celebrity that in the coming years, would attain new heights of prominence on social media.
- II. To keep in mind that the celebrity chosen must fit the mold of the brand value and ideas they intend to propagate through their products.
- III. Most importantly, the celebrity must have a good public image with a knack to form an instant connection between the brand and consumers, so that consumers can feel distant and can aspire to see themselves in the shoes of the celebrity. Thus, the celebrity's image must also be attainable for the consumers.

Now, considering Shraddha Kapoor, I can validate all the aforementioned points that brands like *Myntra*, *Baggit*, and *Body Shop*, saw in her stardom and chose her to promote their products through the medium of Instagram.



**Fig. 4.3 Shraddha Kapoor Google Search – First Listing - Instagram**

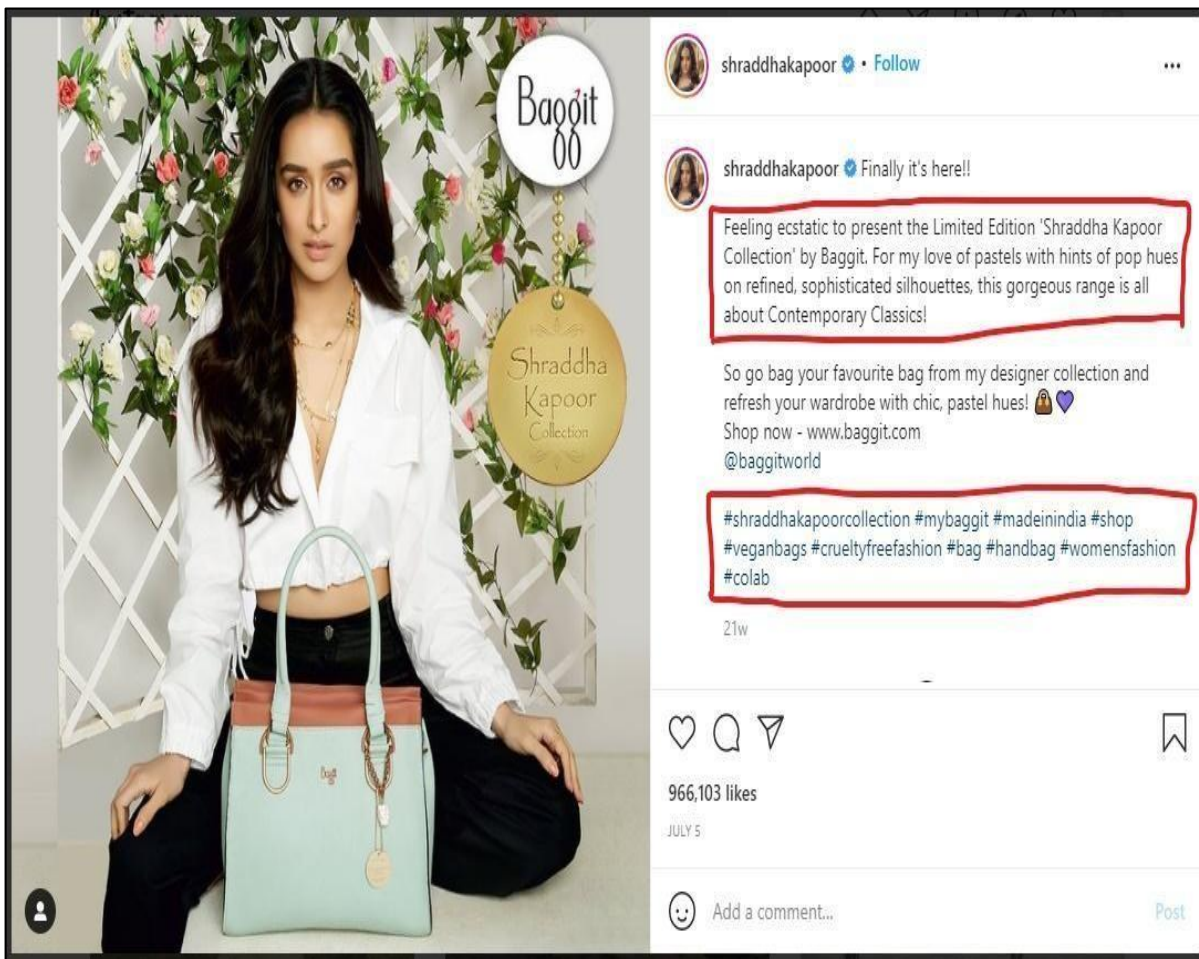
**Source:** <https://www.google.co.in/>

From the image itself, it is visible that whoever looks for Shraddha Kapoor, her Instagram handle is the first thing they will land upon. Moreover, the probability of an individual who wants to know about her, indirectly landing on Instagram is much higher, and brands are very well aware of this fact and know the visibility of their product increases ten-fold when they opt for Instagram as their social media means of promotion., they also know, that Instagram's popularity has always kept its website on the top of any celebrity search.

However, it may lead to another question if any celebrity search leads to their Instagram handle being at the numero uno position in Google results, why did these brands go for Shraddha Kapoor only, when they had a plethora of other celebrities' options at their avail.

Well, it brings us to the second point, where the values and ideas of the brands must go hand in hand with the celebrity, in this chase which is Shraddha Kapoor, If we try to look at her profile, as in the figure given below, one can clearly understand that brands she promotes resonates with her personal beliefs, values, and opinions.





**Fig. 4.4 Shraddha Kapoor's Views Portrayed through Her Endorsement on Instagram**

**Source: Instagram**

It can be seen that Shraddha is always vocal about her views on animal cruelty, which is also evident from the brand she endorsed which is Baggit, and the bags they produce are not made from animal skin, as mentioned in one of her hashtags, which is #veganbags.

It also highlights the extraordinary feature of hashtags provided by Instagram, though it's not a specialty of this application because nowadays every social media platform uses it. The noteworthy thing about Instagram is the hashtag feature helps its users to search for relevant topics and find the content on the same, works as an archiving function, works for topical research, helps in gaining followers, and works as a reference keyword for the future.

Coming on to the third point of good public image it is already clear from the awards like the Youth Icon Award by the International Film Festival of India, Most Desirable Women by The Times of India, and Hindustan Times' Most Stylish Youth Icon all in a cumulative attempt has established Shraddha not only as the Youth Icon of the

country but also as a Leading Trendsetter, where her choices, preferences, and especially the brands she promotes inspire her followers to be like her, and in that hope they readily accept the products she promotes because they know Shraddha's credibility and influence; a dream which is shown to them by the brands in the form of Shraddha seems attainable or tangible to the consumers.

Thus, this particular tangibility of the aspirations and dreams that people believe can be fulfilled by following the celebrity's acts and style quotient seems only possible by the way Instagram projects it. The visual effect or vibe it adds to the celebrity's posts or pictures, makes the followers pretty much attracted or hooked to it.

This particular point can also be understood better by the 'Parasocial Interaction Theory' which is defined as an illusionary experience, such that consumers interact with personas (i.e., mediated representations of presenters, celebrities, or characters) as if they are present and engage in a reciprocal relationship (Labrecque 2014).

The theory focuses on the perception between the celebrity and the users of Instagram or any social media platform that follows them and creates such a level of interaction in which the users feel motivated by the celeb's posts, and this interaction in a short period takes a form of a 'virtual relationships' which constantly intensifies with every post of the celebrity.

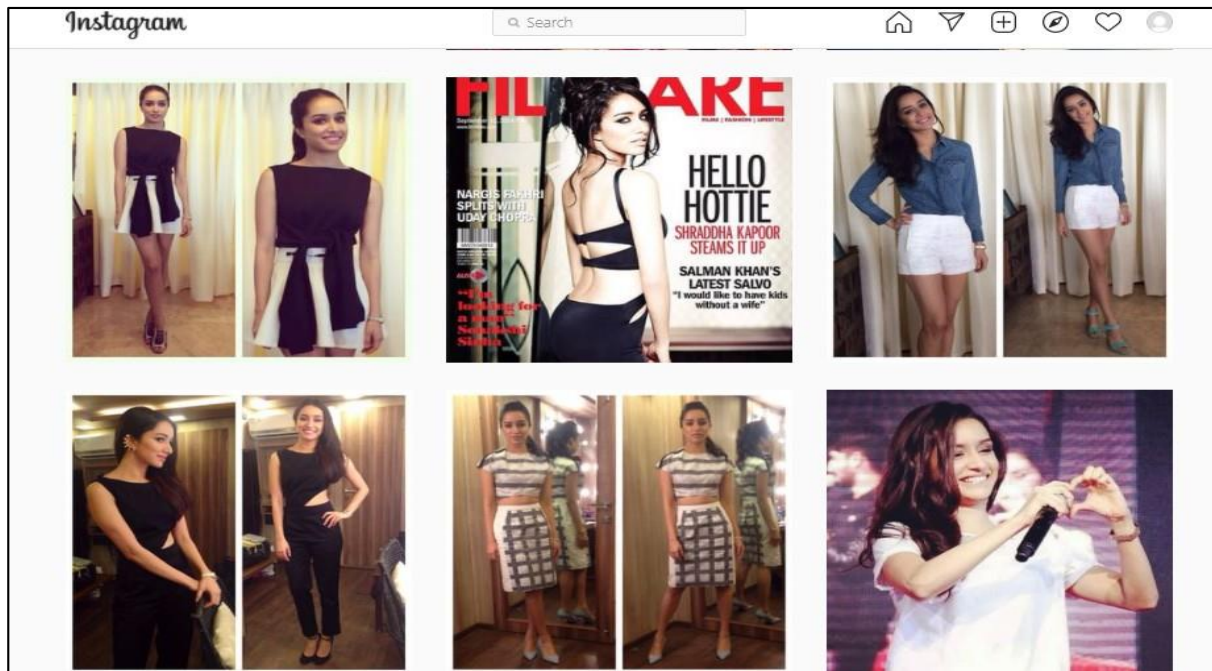


Fig. 4.5 Shraddha Kapoor's Instagram Posts Grid Which Hints Toward Her Personality

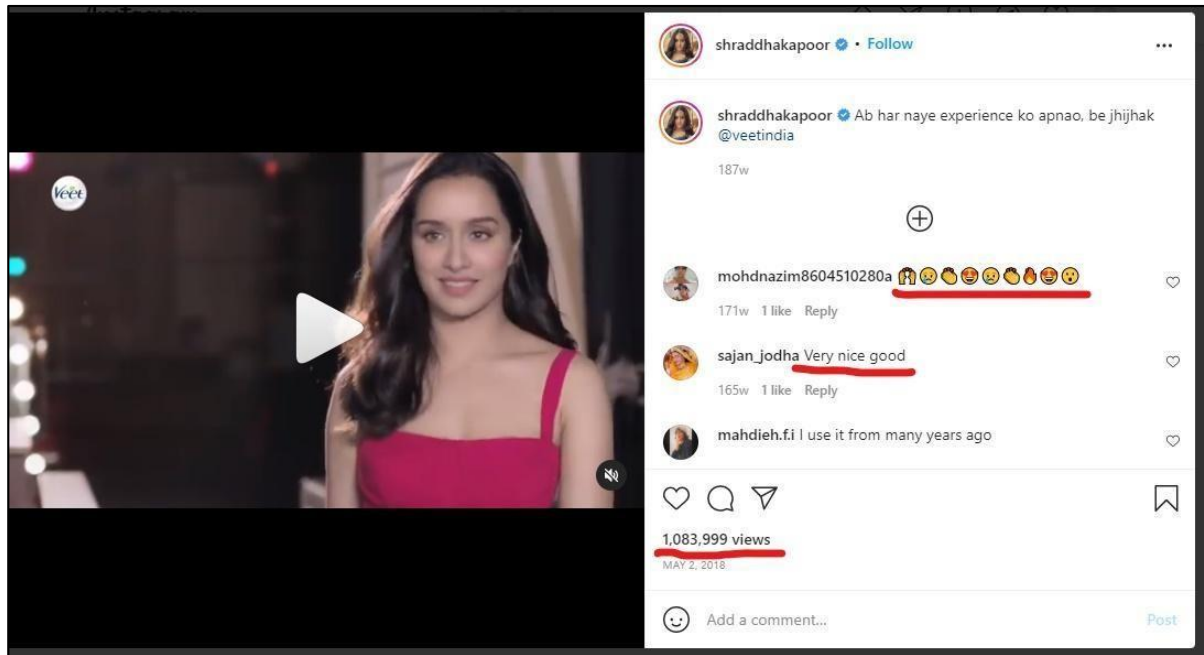
Source: Instagram



● **E-WOM (Electronic Word of Mouth)**

It is the most recent term which has found its place with the advent of social media. Electronic word of mouth is an essential feature, especially for brands because with this feature they can keep an eye on their consumers very easily. In Instagram, the features of ‘Likes’, ‘Comments’, and ‘Double tap on post leading to a red heart have kept the users pretty much engaged with the app, and these all features are the reason why Instagram provides the highest engagement ratio for its users with their followers because the whole process of liking and commenting is a two-way thing as well as a transparent process, where the celebrity or influencers are also aware what the users have to say as if there is a high intimacy level produced by Instagram itself.

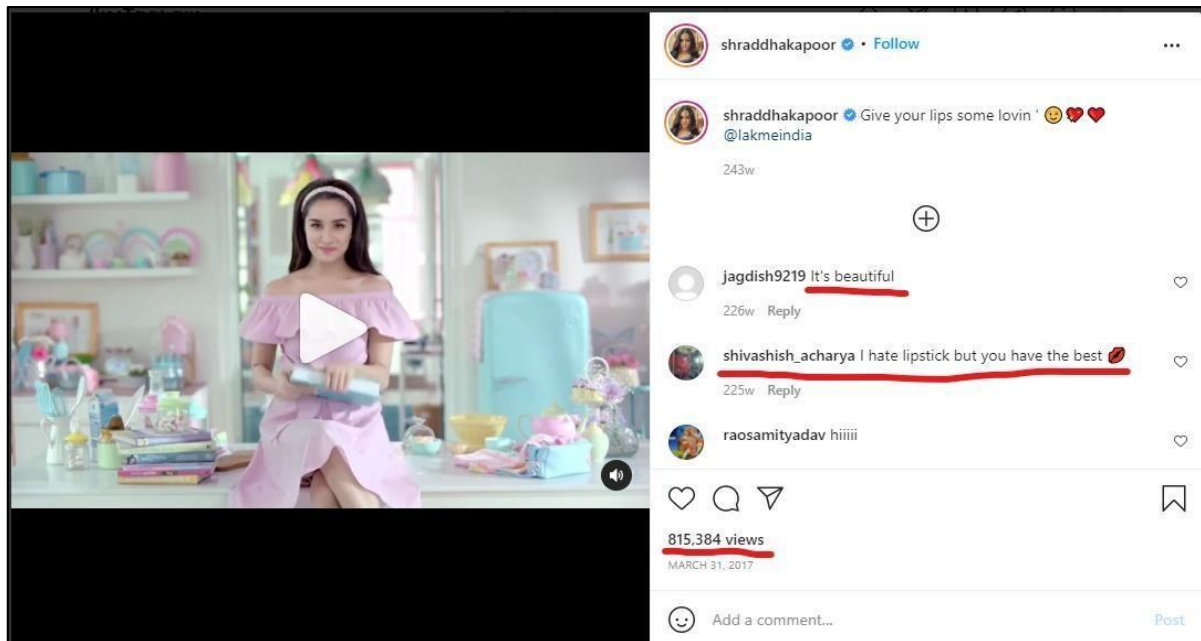
In the case of Shraddha Kapoor and her Instagram handle, electronic word of mouth happens through a positive chain of communication where the public image and popularity of Shraddha Kapoor mostly influence her followers to publish positive comments concerning brands she endorses.



**Fig. 4.6 Comments and Likes on Shraddha Kapoor’s Post - I**

Source: Instagram





**Fig. 4.8 Comments and Likes on Shradha Kapoor's Post-II**

**Source: Instagram**

- **Physical Attractiveness and Credibility**

- I. Physical Attractiveness**

Physical attractiveness on Instagram is one of the most important attributes that is especially taken into consideration by the brands, especially if they belong to the category of fashion and lifestyle. Similarly, brands like Myntra, Baggit, Lakme, Veet, Body Shop, and Myglamm, which have made Shradha their celebrity endorser explicitly know how fashionista and voguish Shradha is in her personal life.

Therefore, her unparalleled beauty and charming personality make her perfectly pleasing to the eyes of her followers on Instagram, who most often get mesmerized and captivated by her appearance and posts. Thus, the saying first impression is the last impression, works very strongly for the brands, because on Instagram itself there are numerous other competitors with their promotional strategy as well, so it becomes necessary for a brand to build the much-needed appeal through the physical attractiveness of its celebrity, which further helps in forming the positive attitude towards their product endorsed.

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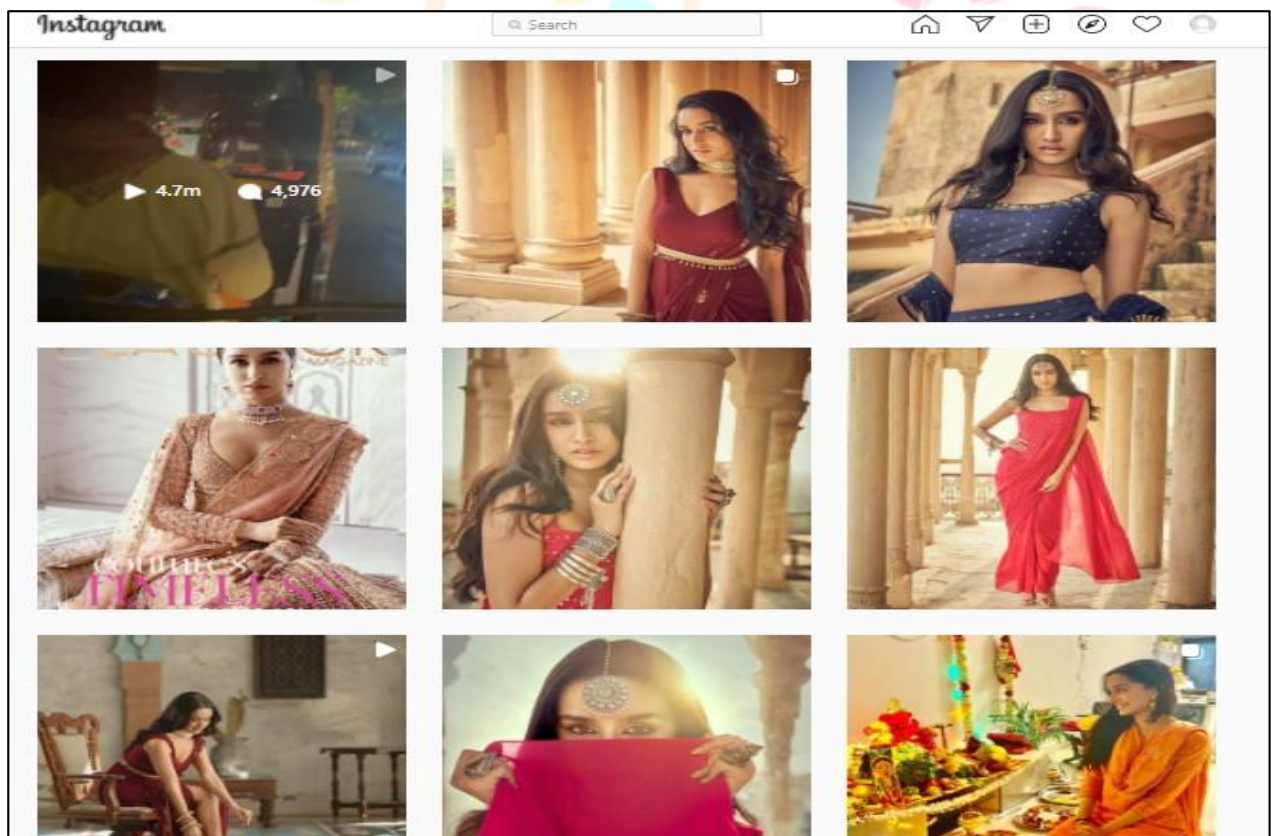


Fig. 4.9 Shraddha Kapoor Showcasing her Physical Attractiveness through Her Instagram Posts

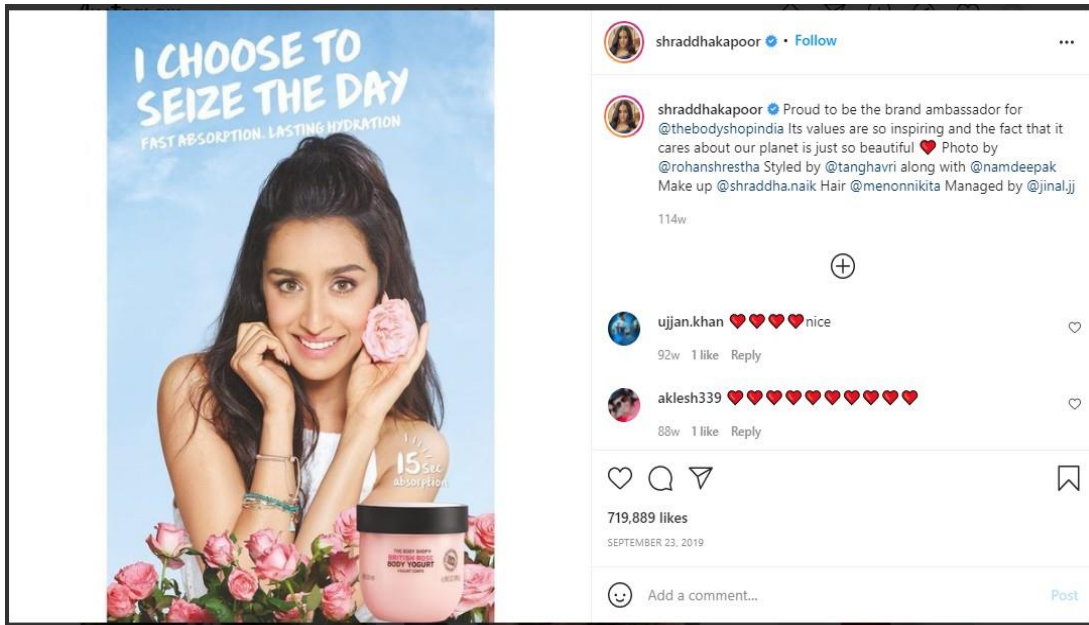
Source: Instagram

## II. Celebrity Credibility

, Another important factor is celebrity credibility where the celebrity's trustworthiness, reliability, and non-controversiality are often checked by brands as well as by the followers, so that they can have a clear conscious before following a celebrity, on the lines of trust and loyalty, because these values are not only meaningful between the brands and celebrity, but also between the celebrity and the followers, as it is one of the way which speaks volume about the celebrity's character.



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**Fig. 4.10** Shraddha Kapoor’s Loyalty Towards Brands – Veet, Myntra, and Body Shop

Source: Instagram

## 2. Engagement Ratio and Brand Value

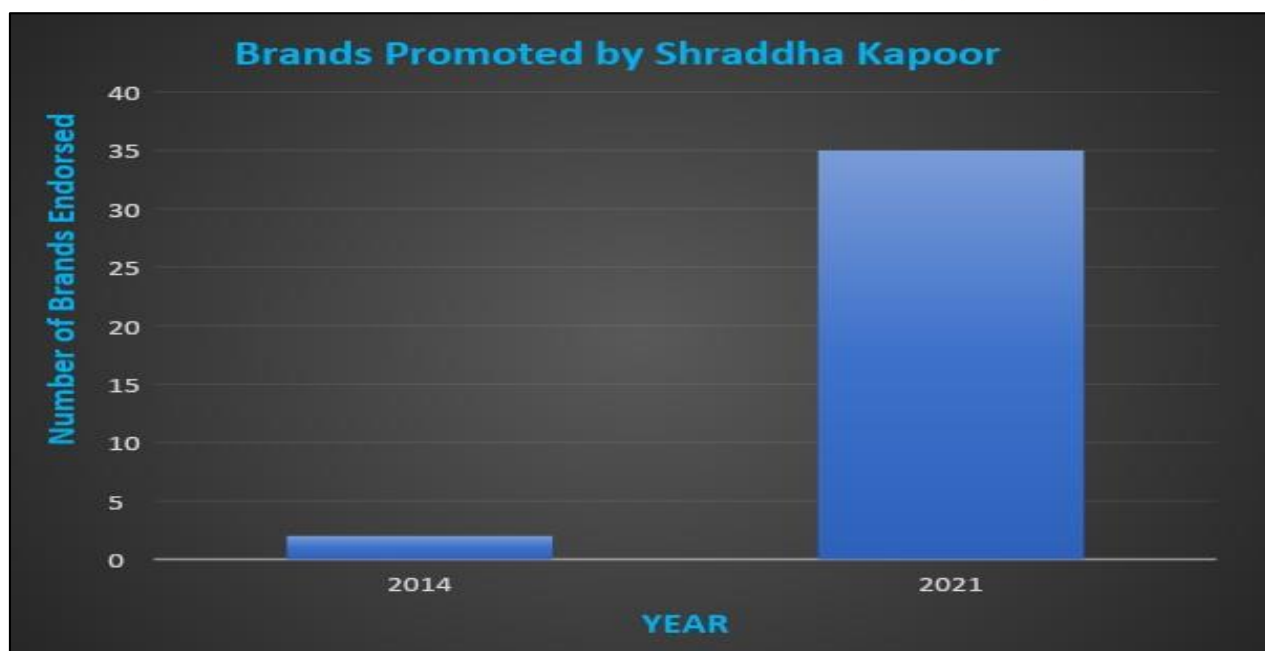
The popularity of Shraddha Kapoor concerning her brand value can be simply understood through her ‘Engagement Ratio’, The ratio is nothing but a method used by brands to choose the celebrity endorser on Instagram or any social media platform, the formula of the ratio is dividing the amount of ‘likes; a celebrity gets on a post by the total number of followers for that celebrity.

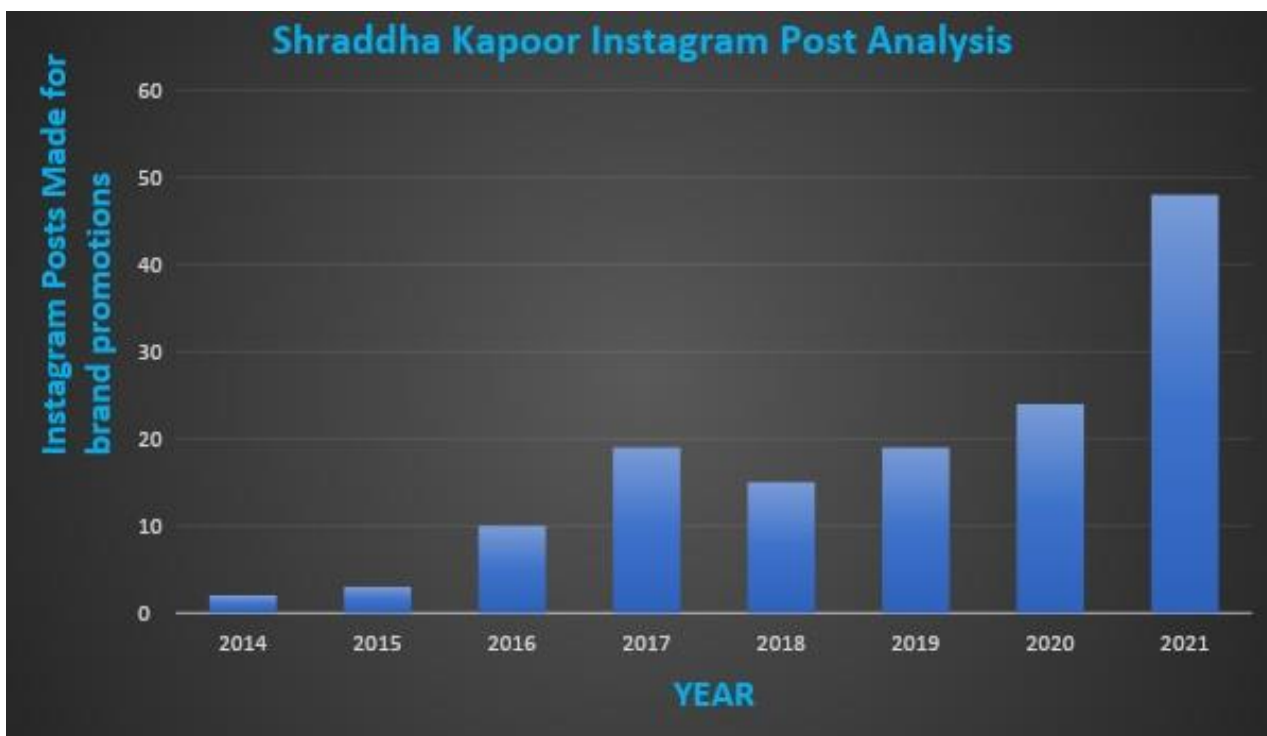
This is important for a company to look at as it helps to measure the number of genuine followers of a celebrity or influencer. For Shraddha Kapoor, her EngagementRatio was 1.09, and the engagement ratio which generally benefits the brands must either be equal to 0.5 or more than 0.5.

Another, way we can understand the worth of a celebrity is through her brand value which helps the new or forthcoming brands to pick the correct celebrity endorser on the social media platforms. We can understand the brand worth or value of Shraddha Kapoor with the figure mentioned below –

**Fig. 4.11.** Number of Brands Promoted by Shraddha Kapoor - Comparison in 2014 and 2021

Source: Compiled by Author





**Fig. 4.12 Number of Posts made by Shraddha Kapoor from 2014-2021 regarding BrandPromotion**

Source: Compile by the Author

- **Brand's Growth**

One of the simplest ways to understand a Brand's Growth is to know its engagement with its customers and the way it creates affiliation with them. To further talk on the same, the advent of celebrity endorsers like Shraddha Kapoor who according to Bollywood Hungama is one of the most wanted names in the advertising industry shows that her inclusion or her name attached will definitely boost the sales for the brands and will also improve their goodwill and reputation in the market as well as among the customers.

As, the brands promoted by Shraddha Kapoor on her Instagram consist of *Myntra, Hair and Care, Vogues Eyewear, Skechers India, Fitbit, Veet, Fruit for Hair, Lakme India, Sweetish House Mafia, Lean Kitchen, Flipkart Fashion, Zimmermann, Body Shop India, Hershey's, Bella Casa*, and many more, the names of brands mentioned earlier that Shraddha's image or niche audience she has created for herself belongs in the categories of fashion, lifestyle, and beverages. So, the brands that approached her, were on similar lines. Thus, the rise in the brand's name, sales, profits, and intellectual properties have skyrocketed, when they have used celebrity endorsers like Shraddha Kapoor to promote their products and brand name on Instagram or any other social media platform.

It can be further substantiated by the reference of Myntra, which was the pioneer e-commerce brand that decided to use platforms like Instagram to promote its



name and products through celebrity endorsers, and now every social media user knows the name of Myntra and the profits it has accumulated through promoting itself by the aforementioned.

## 5. Conclusion

This tech-savvy world, where millennials and Generation – Z constitute more than 24% of the population in the world (EY Analysis), pretty explicitly showcases the trend and rise of social media, because a handsome amount of people; almost 4.48 billion use social media worldwide (Dean, 2021) and in India alone 518 million people (Keelery, 2021) have access to it.

Therefore, in this rapidly evolving phenomenon where the virtual world in the form of ‘New Media’ is taking over the spaces with robustness and leading to time and space convergence, which acts as an area of opportunity especially for the brands, as they have an uncharted territory to conquer, it may seem to be a tedious task as brands have to keep up with the dynamic set of customers, whose preferences change in second, in such scenarios to create an undivided interest with loyal customer base is the most difficult task for the recognized brands.

So, brands need to opt for a celebrity endorser. They need to increase their social media presence because these celebrity endorsers bring out the desires and aspirations of the people and make a bridge to connect the brand with the people.

In the current scenario, a brand needs to create a conscious decision in the minds of the customers that they can buy the product irrespective of the price tag attached to it, and this responsibility is very well fulfilled by the celebrity endorsers as they make the customers and their fans familiar and comfortable enough through their charismatic persona, that the intended buyer is ready to extend their pocket just to have the feel of the brand that their favorite celebrity is wearing, this feeling or vibe is similar to have a taste of the nectar from the chalice of the gods itself.

In this study, the way Shraddha Kapoor’s image, goodwill, and values are used by the brands to promote their products through Instagram, highlights the same.

The niche created by Shraddha Kapoor of a trendsetter, youth icon, and fashion icon through her Instagram profiles, led the brands dealing with fashion and lifestyle attracted towards her, which worked as a two-way process, as it gave the brand the much-needed reach and loyal customer base and for Shraddha, it established her as the ‘Most Wanted Personality in the Advertising Industry’ and increased her brand value to the next level.

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