



Are We Missing an Opportunity? Willingness of Regular Social Media Users to Become Health Promotion Influencers

Ayokunle Olagoke, PhD, MPH*,1,2 Comfort Adebayo, PhD,3 Opeyemi Oladunni, PhD, MPH,4 Olamide Popoola, MSc,5 Mercy Folayan, MPH.6

Affiliations

1. School of Health and Kinesiology, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, NE, United States of America
2. Better Health Connect, St. Louis, MO, United States of America
3. Department of Communication Studies, Towson University, Towson Maryland, USA
4. Department of Public Health, Adeleke University, Ede Osun State, Nigeria
5. Culture Expose, Whitby, Ontario, Canada.
6. Department of Health Promotion and Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the role of everyday social media users in health advocacy. An online cross-sectional survey (n=203) assessed their willingness to advocate for health, interest in influencer training, and preference for a health-focused influencer platform. Results showed that users with 500+ followers and those open to financial compensation were significantly more likely to engage in health advocacy. Compensation preference was the strongest predictor of participation. These findings suggest that structured engagement platforms and financial incentives can enhance health communication efforts by mobilizing everyday social media users, expanding reach, and ensuring sustained participation in public health messaging.

Introduction

While social media influencers (SMI) have broad reach, everyday users possess smaller but more trusted networks, potentially bolstering credibility in health information dissemination. SMIs have been instrumental in promoting messages related to positive health behaviors (Powell & Pring, 2024), with healthcare-related content shared by social media influencers demonstrating a 45% higher engagement rate compared to content disseminated directly by healthcare organizations (Deb, 2024). However, despite their effectiveness, several challenges exist, including:

- Low engagement rates
- SMIs lack basic health knowledge
- Insufficient platforms connecting health influencers with community organizations

Objectives

Our research seeks to investigate:

1. The willingness of everyday social media users to utilize their platforms for health advocacy.
2. Their enthusiasm for participating in health influencer training programs.
3. Their interest in joining a health-specific influencer marketing platform.

Methods

We conducted an online cross-sectional study of 203 U.S. adults who do not identify as social media influencers.

Eligibility criteria:

1. Residing in the United States
2. Being 19 years or older, and
3. Answering "No" to the question: "Social media influencers are 'average' people who inspire and influence others, consciously or unconsciously, through online creations perceived as authentic by a close audience. By this definition, do you consider yourself to be a social media influencer?"

Outcome variable:

The study focused on three outcomes:

1. Interest in Social Media Health Advocacy: Assessed with the question, "Would you be interested in working with community organizations and health organizations by using your social media platform to promote health and social issues?" (Tian, 2024).
2. Interest in Participating in Health Organization-Influencer Platforms: Assessed with the question "If there was a platform that connects social media influencers with health organizations, where influencers get paid for their collaboration in promoting health, would you be interested in joining such platform as an influencer?" (Palazon et al., 2015).
3. Interest in Health Influencer Training: Assessed with the question, "Would you be interested in taking a 1- to 2-hour micro-course on how to become a social media health influencer?"

Independent variable:

1. Top Social Media Platform.
2. Follower Count: Participants reported the number of followers on their top platform.
3. Compensation Influence: Participants indicated if receiving compensation would increase their likelihood of promoting health issues.

Data Analyssis

- Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics, with frequencies and percentages reported for categorical variables.
- Logistic regression models were employed to examine the associations between independent variables and the study outcomes.
- Two models were tested for each of the three study outcomes. Model 1 assessed the crude associations. Model 2 included all independent variables and covariates in a single model to adjust for potential confounding factors.

Results

The characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1. The majority of respondents were under 40 years old (69%), female (60%), White (70%), and not healthcare professionals (86%).

Interest in social media health advocacy was evenly split (50%) among respondents, with most (67%) expressing interest in joining a health organization-influencer platform and 49% showing interest in participating in health influencer training.

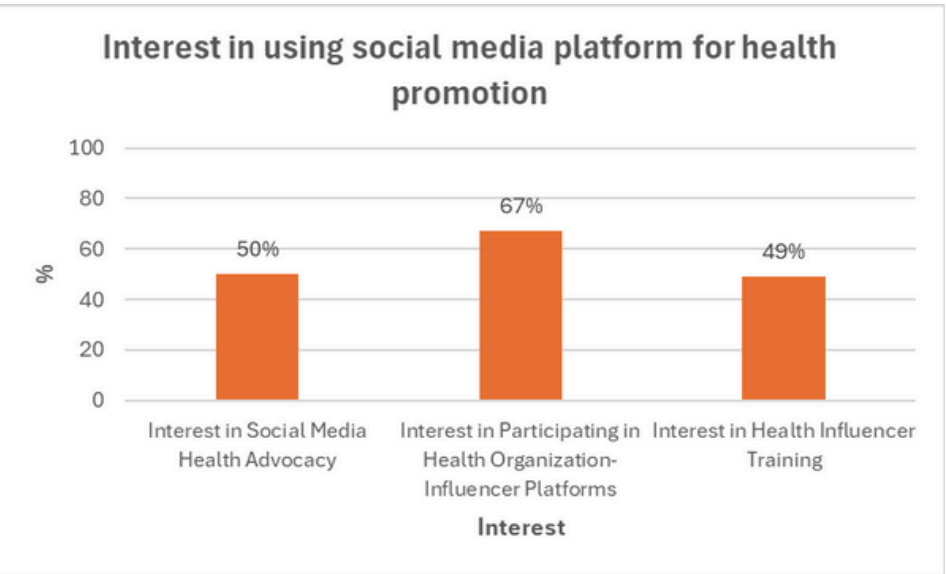
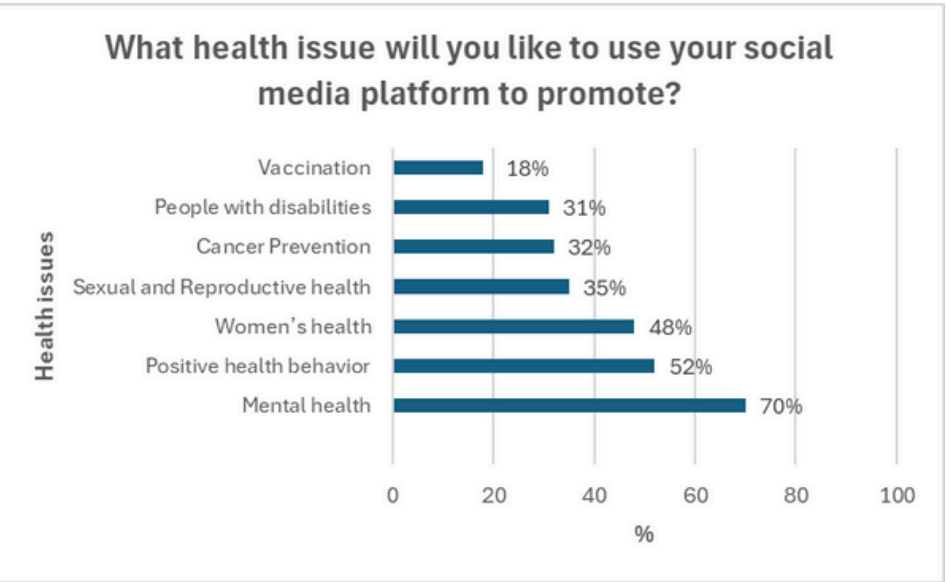


Table 1: Unadjusted Odds ratios for factors associated with social media health promotion preferences

Exposure variables	Study outcomes: Interest in...		
	Social Media Health Advocacy OR (95% CI)	Health Organization-Influencer platform OR (95% CI)	Health Influencer Training OR (95% CI)
Follower count			
500 or more vs <500	3.73 (1.99 – 6.97)	2.69 (1.35 – 5.36)	2.45 (1.35 – 4.47)
Top Social Media Platform			
Facebook/TikTok/Instagram vs others	2.35 (1.25 – 4.45)	1.82 (0.96 – 3.45)	1.82 (0.98 – 3.41)
Compensation Influence			
Yes vs Maybe/No	7.01 (3.06 – 16.01)	13.46 (4.29 – 42.18)	7 (3.07 – 16)

Table 2: Adjusted Odds ratios for factors associated with social media health promotion preferences

Exposure variables	Study outcomes: Interest in...		
	Social Media Health Advocacy OR (95% CI)	Health Organization-Influencer platform OR (95% CI)	Health Influencer Training OR (95% CI)
Follower count			
500 or more vs. <500	3.82 (1.38 – 10.59)	3.42 (0.94 – 12.48)	1.68 (0.64 – 4.44)
Top Social Media Platform			
Facebook/TikTok/Instagram vs others	1.44 (0.49 – 4.13)	1.31 (0.44 – 3.92)	0.95 (0.33 – 2.74)
Compensation Influence			
Yes vs Maybe/No	7.05 (2.74 – 18.12)	12.27 (3.69 – 40.87)	8.58 (3.34 – 22.08)

Note: Model adjusted for covariates including time of data collection, age, race, and sex.

Key finding

- Preference for compensation was strongly associated with interest in all three outcomes, with the highest odds for joining a health organization-influencer platform.

Implication

The implications of these findings are significant for public health organizations and policymakers.

- Specialized platforms can connect health groups with everyday health advocates for better content sharing.
- Tailored health literacy training can build stronger, more effective communicators.
- With fair compensation, these efforts can grow a diverse and engaged network of social media health advocates.

Conclusion

Everyday social media users, particularly those with 500+ followers and those motivated by compensation, show significant interest in health communication activities. Developing targeted training programs and compensation strategies may effectively engage everyday users in health communication efforts, potentially enhancing the credibility and reach of health information.

Reference

- Deb, T. (2024, April 10). Social Media in Healthcare Statistics 2024 By Data, Insights. Market.U.S Media. <https://media.market.us/social-media-in-healthcare-statistics/>
- Palazon, M., Sicilia, M., & Lopez, M. (2015). The influence of "Facebook friends" on the intention to join brand pages. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 24(6), 580–595.
- Powell, J., & Pring, T. (2024). The impact of social media influencers on health outcomes: Systematic review. Social Science & Medicine, 340, 116472. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116472>
- Tian, X. (2024). How Government Actions Influence People's Intentions to Share on Social Media During Shanghai's Lockdown for COVID-19: A Third-Person Effect Perspective. SAGE Open, 14(3), 21582440241275958.