

Influencer Marketing: Effect on Consumer Sentiments

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Abstract: Social media has evolved from our typical medium for posting pictures and random thoughts to a marketing environment dominated by influencers. Influencers, or those who have the power to persuade others, have a strong hold on users throughout social media thanks to their content, opinions, and other distinctive qualities. People, especially the younger generations, are known to be impacted by these influencers. They can be classified as an innovative form of marketing that goes beyond conventional advertising, expands beyond the simple act of selling a product, and fosters a relationship of trust between the audience, the company, and the influencer. The number of influencers and businesses also increases in tandem with the number of individuals using social media.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Digital marketing, Emotional connection, virtual reality, Consumer Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing! Marketing! The phrase that everyone is familiar with. Without it, customers won't form an image of the product in their thoughts. Marketing comprises all of the things a business undertakes to advertise its goods and services. It encourages them to buy and sell more. The activities include marketing, customer service, and product delivery.

“Marketing is the fuel for a company”

The world has evolved and vast development have taken place. Marketing is now a prerequisite for any organization to survive in the competitive and dynamic world of business.

Listening, watching and looking at branded content and advertisements may have a certain reach but nothing can compare to the practice of using an individual who viewers look up to and wish to be like when it comes to the art of marketing.

EVERYTHING DIGITAL, MARKETING TOO

Technology has taken over numerous aspects when it comes to business functioning and marketing is no different. The process of reaching out to potential

customers and possibly convincing them to become an actual customer for your product or service has also digitalized.

Any actions a business makes to communicate with customers through electronic technology are collectively referred to as "digital marketing." Through online channels including social media, mobile marketing, online customer communities, webinars, and other video-based content, digital marketing advertises and offers goods and services to potential customers.



Due to the global reach of the internet, digital marketing enables a company to appeal to a considerably bigger audience than it could through conventional marketing strategies. Additionally, using this marketing strategy enables businesses to focus on potential customers who are most likely to purchase their goods or services. For instance, a business can promote holiday specials by emailing previous clients or by posting information about the deals on social media.

POWER TO MOVE MINDS – Influencer Marketing:

Influencer marketing involves marketing products and services on social platforms through influential people on the platform, popularly known as Influencers. Influencers can be Nano, Micro, Macro, and Mega depending on the number of their followers and average engagement on their pages. Since social

media is widely popular among individuals of all ages especially youngsters, a lot of these users grew on to become influencers mainly because of their content and what they post.

Influencers are, as a lot of social media users have defined, your virtual friends who recommend you products and services through well-curated content. Influencers also work in niches and genres like beauty, food, fashion, lifestyle and create content on their forte genres and hence start building a following and soon achieve the influencer status. Becoming an influencer is directly related to them becoming a trustworthy source for their followers and an opinionated who has thousands of people agreeing with them. This is the key thing that attracts companies to use influencers to market themselves online. They try to get along with an influencer's key audience through the influencer and with the help of some smartly made marketing material, they try to drive sales and attention towards their brand.

A brand works with an online influencer to promote one of its goods or services through influencer marketing. Some partnerships between brands and influencers in influencer marketing are less concrete than that; they merely aim to raise brand recognition. This form of marketing is termed as influencer marketing and has gained popularity in recent times especially after the advent Covid19.

Influencer marketing combines both traditional and modern marketing strategies. It transforms the concept of celebrity endorsement into a content-driven marketing campaign for the modern era. Because companies and influencers work together to create the campaign's results, that is influencer marketing's key differentiation.

Influencer marketing, however, doesn't just involve famous people. Instead, it centres on influencers, many of whom do not view themselves as famous in a traditional sense.

Who is an influencer?

An influencer is simply someone who has the power to influence others. Influencer marketing is a type of social media promotion where brands pay individuals to spread the word about their goods or services to their followers.

Influencer marketing first appeared in the form of celebrity endorsements. However, in the modern digital era, specialist social content producers can

frequently provide brands with additional value. On social media, these smaller accounts frequently have very active followers. "A person who uses social media to influence others is known as a social media influencer." Influencer marketing is when you employ an influencer to market your goods or services.

FAMOUS INFLUENCERS TODAY

Selena Gomez, American actor/musician, 499 million followers – This former Disney star is all grown up, but she still wields a ton of influence.

Kylie Jenner, American influencer/reality TV star, 450 million followers – Not many social media personalities can keep up with the reach of this businesswoman and socialite.

Rosanna Pansino lifestyle influencer, American, 4.5 million followers.

Jennifer Tuffen, travel influencer, English, 2.8 million followers.

Alexa Chung, fashion influencer, British, 5.7 million followers.

Jeffree Star, beauty influencer, American, 13.8 million followers.

Eva Andressa, fitness influencer, Brazilian, 6.2 million followers.

Zendaya, entertainment influencer, American actor/musician, 163 million followers.

Virat Kohli, sports influencer, Indian cricketer, 231 million followers.

THE EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

The way a company makes its marketing strategy has changed overtime. Today the most vital and effective way to attract an individual and grab their attention by building awareness about your brand is by forming an emotional connection. Humans do make rational decisions when it comes to making a purchase, however it's their emotions and sentiments that are easy to influence. Influencer marketing does exactly this. This form of marketing digs deep and tends to have an impact on an individual's emotions and thoughts. Convincing becomes easy in this form of digital marketing.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The influencer serves as an active link between a business selling its products and services and the potential customer who vigilantly follows and looks up to the life of that particular influencer. An

influencer has the power to make a change. One can relate to an influencer way more than they can to a celebrity. This is the power the concept holds. The gap between what the marketer wishes to convey and what the potential lead receives is filled by the mutual understanding and feeling of relatability that the lead feels with respect to the influencer.

THE THEME OF TRUST

Individuals who follow a certain person who is an influencer tend to hold that person in high regard. They believe what they say and there exists a sense of trust towards them. They are influenced from what the influencer does and often wish to do the same. An individual follows someone with the intention of becoming like them. The lifestyle of the influencer has an impact on the decisions and the buying behaviour of the person who follows them on multiple social media platforms. The followers follow an influencer because they trust in the decisions made by him/her. Hence, there undoubtedly exists a feeling of dependence and trust between the two.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INFLUENCING

Influence and persuasion are two aspects of the marketing strategies. These aspects are then used in influencer marketing. Cialdini (2007) developed six principles which help to understand how engaged people are. These six principles are the following:

Reciprocity: This aspect corresponds to the feeling of being indebted to someone when we receive for example a gift or something for free. Here, if the influencer allows followers to win gifts or provides them with a service, the followers will feel indebted and will want to return the Favor to the influencer.

Consistency: this one comes with engagement. Individuals want to remain consistent and true to their word. Commitment is therefore greater if they have actively participated in the decision.

Social proof: this one mean that there is a real need of knowing what everyone else around is doing. This gives people a feeling of security and allows them to confirm their actions.

Authority: this one mean that people are more likely to trust experts and authorities than themselves no matter they are legitimate or not.

Scarcity: this one refers to our need for freedom. For a purchase decision, a product takes value when we know that it will not be available indefinitely, which leads to a decrease in our freedom of decision.

Liking: this one refers to the fact that people are more likely to favour others if they are similar, or if they find them attractive (Cialdini, 1998).

THE FUTURE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

The phenomenon of influencer marketing as a marketing strategy is ever growing. Every day there are opportunities for advancement and innovation. One specific aspect that is gaining popularity is the use of virtual reality. The world of social media holds ‘VIRTUAL

INFLUENCERS’ who are an outcome of the usage of virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Digital marketing methods will likely change as VR continues to take off. Virtual influencers driven by AI are already on the increase and may be found on a variety of social media sites as digital avatars or 3D models. Creators created these digital influencers, who behave like their real-life counterparts.

CONCLUSION

Digital marketing has an immense scope to excel in the near future. Influencer marketing as a means pf promotion is definitively proving to be a powerful tool. Humans have the tendency to form emotional connections and it is in their nature to trust someone they look up to. This very psychological reason is why influencer marketing is bound to dominate the marketing strategies of brands to come. Social media no longer remains a platform just for networking and communicating, it is rather a vast ocean for business to build brand awareness and harness potential customers. With the booming technology and excessive use of social media, influencer marketing has a long way to go.

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