YouTube Stars & Social Influencers

PERFORMANCE ART

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Influencer marketing (a.k.a. **influence marketing**) is a form of social media marketing involving endorsements from **influencers**, people and organizations who possess an expert level of knowledge and/or social influence in the respective field. In China, influencers are known as **key opinion leaders**.

Influencer content may be framed as testimonial advertising wherein they play the role of a potential buyer themselves, or they may be involved as third parties. These third parties can be spotted either within the supply chain (retailers, manufacturers, etc.) or probably among the so-called value-added influencers (such as journalists, academics, industry analysts, and professional advisers).

Social influence

Most of the discussion concerning the generic subject of social influence centers on compliance and persuasion in a social environment.[2] In the context of influencer marketing, influence is less about argument and coercion to a particular point of view and more about loose interactions between various parties in a community. Influence is often equated to advocacy, but may also be negative, relating to the concepts of promoters and detractors.

The idea revolving around the "two-step flow of communication" was introduced in "The People's Choice" (Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, a 1940 study on the decision making process of voters). This idea was further developed in "Personal Influence" (Lazarsfeld, Elihu Katz 1955) as well as "The Effects of Mass Communication" (Joseph Klapper 1960).

Influencers

There is lack of consensus on what an "influencer" is. One writer defines them as "a range of third parties who exercise influence over the organization and its potential customers". Another defines an influencer as a "third party which significantly shapes the customer's purchasing decision, but may never be accountable for it." Another says influencers are "activists, are well-connected, create an impact, have active minds, and are trendsetters", though this set of attributes is aligned specifically to consumer markets.

Sources of influencers can be varied. Marketers traditionally target influencers who are easy to identify, such as press, industry analysts and high-profile executives. For most B2C purchases, however, influencers might include people actually known to the purchaser and the retailer staff.

In high-value business-to-business (B2B) transactions the community of influencers may be wide and diverse, and might include consultants, government-backed regulators, financiers, and user communities.

Forrester analyst Michael Speyer notes that, in case of small and medium-size businesses, "IT sales are influenced by several parties, including peers, consultants, bloggers, and technology resellers". He advises that "Vendors need to identify and characterize influencers inside their market. This requires a comprehensive influencer identification program and the establishment of criteria for ranking influencer impact on the decision process."

Similar to a set of diverse influencer sources, influencers can play a variety of roles at different times in a decision process. This idea has been developed in influencer marketing by Brown and Hayes. They are capable of mapping out how and when particular types of influencers affect the decision process. This then enables marketers to selectively target influencers depending on their specific nature or domain of influence.

Identifying influencers

Market research techniques can be used to identify influencers, using pre-defined criteria to determine the extent and type of influence.

- Activists: Influencers get involved with their communities, political movements, charities and so on.
- Connected: Influencers have large social networks.
- Authoritative: Influencers are counted upon and are trusted by others.
- Active minds: Influencers have multiple and diverse range of interests.
- Trendsetters: Influencers tend to be the early adopters (or leavers) in markets.

Malcolm Gladwell notes that "the success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts", and he has identified three types of influencers, who are responsible for the "generation, communication and adoption" of messages.:

- Connectors network across a variety of people, and thus have a wider reach. They are essential for word-of-mouth communication.
- Mavens look to utilize information and share it with others, and are extremely insightful with regards to trends.
- Salesmen are "charismatic persuaders". Their source of influence leans toward the tendency of others to attempt to imitate their behavior.

Currently, most of the subject matter on influencers focuses on consumer markets, rather than business-to-business influencers. A key distinction is that most of the focus in consumer markets is on consumer influencers themselves, primarily because word-of-mouth communication is prevalent in consumer environments. In business marketing, influencers are people who affect a sale, but are typically eliminated from the actual purchase decision. Consultants, analysts,

journalists, academics, regulators, and standards bodies can be considered as few examples of business influencers.

Influencers can also be defined by the number of followers they have. Influencers with a large following mostly include celebrities with a strong reach and can command six- or seven-figure fees for a single post.

Businesses are striving to pursue people trying to watch and listen less to their messages, and pay them a higher amount. Targeting influencers is seen as a method of increasing the reach of marketing messages, in order to counteract the growing tendency of prospective customers to ignore marketing efforts.

Payment

Most influencers are paid upfront prior to the start of a marketing campaign while others are paid after the execution of the marketing campaign.

Social media

Online activity can be considered a core part of offline decision-making, as consumers research products and review websites.

Critics of this online-intensive approach argue that researching around just the online sources misses critical influential individuals and inputs. They note that much influential exchange of information occurs in the offline world, and is not captured in online media. Indeed, the majority of consumer exchanges occur face-to-face rather than, in an online environment, as proven by Carl.He notes that "an overwhelming majority of word-of-mouth (WOM) episodes (nearly 80%) ... occur in face-to-face interpersonal settings, while online WOM accounted for just around seven to ten percent of the reported (WOM) episodes."

Carl concludes that "The majority of the WOM action still seems to be happening in the offline world. These findings are especially provocative since they appear at a time when more and more organizations are paying attention to how their brands are discussed online; and recent academic research has focused on online WOM. Thus it is important for organizations to keep online as well as offline conversations on their radar screen."

Keller Fay announced in 2007 that "While experts have previously estimated that 80% of marketing-relevant word-of-mouth takes place 'offline' (i.e., face-to-face or via telephone), the latest results indicate that this figure could be even higher – 92%."

More recently, Nate Elliott from Forrester observed that "the huge majority of users influence each other face to face rather than through social online channels like blogs and social networks."

With any marketing strategy, risks are involved; and there have been reports of brands dropping their influencers because of the controversies that surround them. One such influencer is

YouTuber PewDiePie, whose use of antisemitic and racist comments led to canceled deals from Disney and a widespread backlash.

Applications

Few of the marketers use influencer marketing to establish credibility in the market, while others use the same to create social conversations around their brand, and there are still others who attempt to drive online or in-store sales of their products. The influencer marketer can also switch to marketing diversified products and services, leveraging upon the credibility earned over time. The value which influencer marketing creates can be measured in several ways. Some marketers measure earned media value, others track impressions, while there are few others who track cost per action.

Regulation

In the United States, influencer marketing is treated by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) as a form of paid endorsement, governed under the rules for native advertising; the advertising agency complies with the established truth-in-advertising standards to such advertising and fulfills requirements for disclosure on the part of endorsers (influencers). In 2017, the FTC sent out more than 90 letters to influencers (namely celebrities and athletes) reminding them their obligation to clearly disclose sponsored posts. One practical impact of the FTC's action was Instagram's 2017 feature which inserts a "paid partnership" mention at the very top of an Instagram post by an influencer.

Media-regulating bodies in other countries, such as in Australia, have created guidelines around influencer marketing following the decision of the FTC. In the United Kingdom a voluntary agreement was announced in January 2019 between the country's Competition and Markets Authority and high-profile social media influencers to ensure that all of them comply with the consumer law.

Fake influencers

Fake influencers have been around for as long as their real counterparts. All criteria used to determine the veracity of an influencer account can be fabricated. Instagram has shut down third-party sites and apps which provide paid services to individual accounts for buying followers, likes, comments and more.

A marketing agency conducted research to test whether fake influencer accounts can profit. The company created two fictitious accounts - with their presence built up through paid followers and engagement (likes and comments) - and applied to campaigns on popular influencer marketing websites. They published their results with a step-by-step explanation of how the false accounts were created, and the brands which had sponsored them.

An analysis involving over 7,000 influencers across the UK revealed about half of their followers, in turn having up to 20,000 followers, are "low-quality"; on account of inclusion of

mass followers, internet bots, and other-accounts that seem suspicious. As such, more than 4 of 10 engagements with this group of influencers are "non-authentic".

A study of UK influencers which looked at almost 700,000 posts from the first half of 2018 found that 12% of UK influencers had bought fake followers.

Virtual influencers

Virtual influencers are sometimes considered fake influencers too, given their profiles do not correspond to real individuals. It can be argued, however, their presence and role on the platform are different, in the sense they are not automated (bots) nor implemented with the purpose of generating fake likes, fake comments, fake followers or in any way tampering with the platforms where they are created. Simply put, virtual influencers are virtual characters purposefully designed by 3D artists to look like real-life people attending real-life events or situations. Most of these characters' publications are easily distinguished as computer graphics, but some users may be caught off-guard by better polished images.

These characters are usually portrayed as models, singers or other celebrities, and their creators write their lives narratives, answer interviews on their behalf, and interact as if they were the characters themselves.

(from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influencer_marketing)

"What Are Social Media Influencers and How Do I Find Them?"
https://www.boostability.com/what-are-social-media-influencers-and-how-do-i-find-them/