A Conceptual Procedure-Based Study on Influencer Marketing Trend Forecasting

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Abstract. As the digital era develops further, digital marketing is more desirable than traditional marketing. Influencer marketing is now an essential component of brand marketing, and it is evolving into a marketing technique. However, for now, it appears many people do not have a clear idea of what this model consists of and how it is implemented. The paper begins by describing the present context and the definition of influencer marketing according to academic overviews. By analysing the content of influencer marketing and combining the top-notch samples, this research suggests a range of ways to optimise this marketing model so that more people can understand and incorporate this promising trend. Thus, it might encourage the development of influencer marketing hypothesis. Finally, this paper comes up with an implementation approach for the effective management of influencer marketing for brands, and puts forward further research approaches in view of the effectiveness and limitations of marketing models.

Keywords: Digital marketing; Influencer marketing; strategy; brand; consumer.

1. Introduction

The government encouraged people to move less during the COVID-19 pandemic, which drove people to spend more time at home and on social media than usual. This has greatly facilitated the development of social media platforms. Nowadays, using digital entertainment or social media to watch videos, read posts or chat with someone online is the best option for most people to spend their time. YouTube, in particular, is now an alternative to traditional television (TV) content. For marketers, social media has opened up fresh possibilities for extending their tactics outside of conventional mass media platforms.

Because of the rapid development of digitisation, traditional marketing methods are finding it difficult to meet the needs of today's times. Traditional marketing has become more difficult to catch the attention of today's users due to changes in people's lifestyles. Many businesses are making the switch to digital marketing, promoting their products on social media (YouTube, TikTok, etc.). This has resulted in a considerable surge in the use of influencer marketing. [1].

Influencer marketing is a strategy in which brand screens and deals with influencers for interacting with their followers on social media in an effort to use their unique resources to promote the brand's products with the ultimate goal of improving brand image. [1]. As more and more brands are willing to give authorization to influencers, for example, Marques Brownlee - a tech YouTube influencer from the US, Kellie Atkinson-a ASMR TikTok influencer from the US and Kayla Itsines-a workout Instagram influencer from Austria, they showcase and promote their products through social media platforms. Influencer marketing has become part of global brand marketing. Because influencer marketing has the potential to reach a larger audience and introduce items to customers all over the world through vivid, engaging videos/images generated by influencers, it is commonly regarded as a top choice for product promotion by companies. Even the internet behemoth Amazon is seeking influencers to join its freshly introduced "social influencer" programme [2].

Diederich attempted to conceptualise influencer marketing in 2018 and created a marketing flowchart [3]. Figure 1 depicts his proposed influencer marketing conceptualisation.

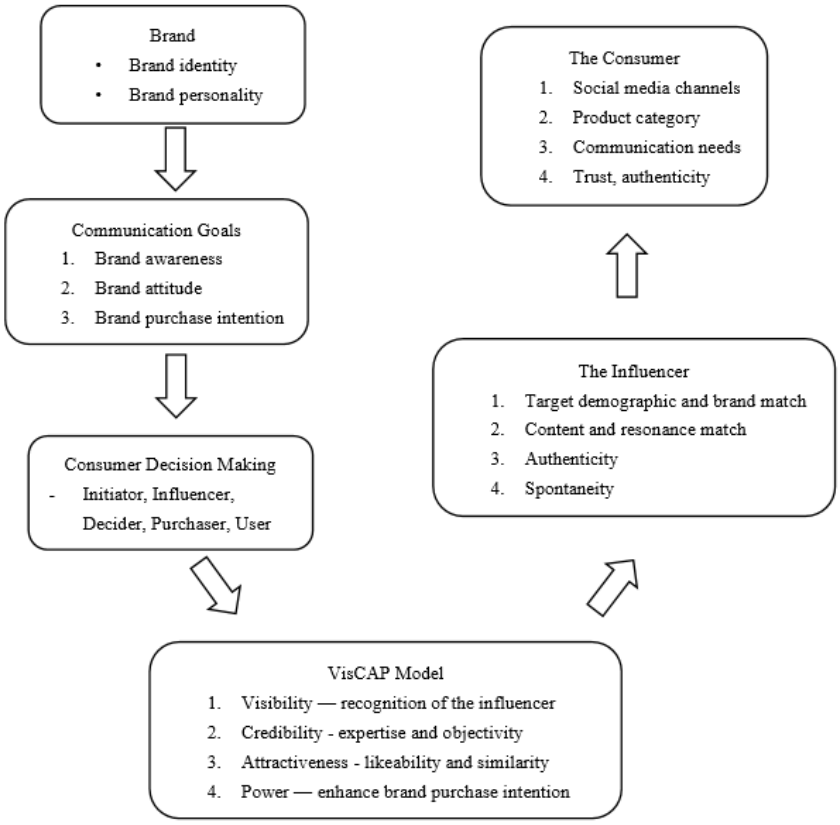


Fig. 1 Conceptualisation of Influencer Marketing [3]

This flowchart clearly shows the concept of the VisCAP model. This will be the result every brand wants to achieve through influencer marketing.

This paper will analyse three perspectives: Firstly, the objective of this article is to provide a broader understanding of what influencer marketing is. The article provides a clear understanding of what an influencer is by combining definitions from various academic articles. Secondly, the article discusses how consumers are influenced by reviewing a few good examples of influencer marketing. Thirdly, it contains research analysis as well as trends that could aid in the growth of influencer marketing. In this case, articles can help brands and people better understand influencer marketing and drive people to join the trend.

2. Definition of Influencers

Influencers in social media, such as YouTube video bloggers, who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise in a particular subject, have emerged to be significant players in influencing viewers' purchasing decisions. They inform their followers about the products they enjoy or use frequently and even actively counsel to their followers on whether they should use such brands [1]. The statements made by the influencers themselves as users, with authentic emotions and attitudes, influence viewers and lead the viewers to believe them. Several businesses are using these influencers in their marketing tactics because of their influence and the authority they emanate [4]. Because they can create conversation and thus promote the brand's products. It is important to note that businesses may use these individuals as social connection assets to further their marketing goals rather than merely as marketing tools. Nowadays, becoming an influencer is a good career choice.

Influencer Marketing Hub distinguishes influencers by grouping them according to two methods: the number of followers, types of content and level of influence [5]. This research has optimised the interpretation employing practice experiences and knowledges. The following tables depict the grouping of influencers.

Table 1. Four Types of Influencers by Follower Numbers [5]

Number	Types of Influencers By Follower Numbers	Number of Followers
1	Mega-Influencers	More than 1 million
2	Macro-Influencers	40,000 and 100,000
3	Micro-Influencers	1,000 and 40,000
4	Nano-Influencers	fewer than 1,000

Table 2. Four Types of Influencers by Types of Content [5]

Number	Types of Influencers By Level of Influence	Explanation
1	Celebrities	i.e. stars who are still active, such as Justin Bieber in the USA
2	Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)	KOLs are respected for their expertise, position or experience, e.g. academics, journalists, etc.
3	Key Opinion Consumers (KOCs)	KOCs are members of the consumer community, perhaps experts in a particular field. They usually acquire their reputation informally, and being good at communicating and interacting with their audience is their hallmark.

Table 3. Three Types of Influencers by Level of Influence [5]

Number	Types of Influencers By Types of Content	Explanation
1	Bloggers	Some influencers post on specific social platforms (such as Weibo) that contain branded products. These influencers are more authentic and positive towards their followers
2	YouTubers	Video is another popular form of content. In this instance, not all video producers have their own websites, but the majority set up a YouTube account.
3	Podcasters	Podcasting is a relatively new form of online content, currently best represented by Entrepreneurs on Fire's John Lee Dumas
4	Social Posts Only	They frequently advertise numerous new social media posts or videos. Given this, the majority of these content producers are micro-influencers.

Above Table 1,2 and 3 clearly illustrate how the influencers are categorised. The most common way of evaluating influencers is by the number of followers they have, as the higher the number of followers, the larger the stable audience and the better the promotion campaign can be. However, the influencers are not restricted to a single adult. The influencer can be a child, an avatar, or even a dog.

With 9.7 million followers on Instagram, Jiff the Pomeranian is a famous dog influencer. This puppy has multiple branding possibilities such as iHeart Radio, while he also has his own line of merchandise at Walmart's [6]. Furthermore, Ryan enjoys posting videos to his channel to share his passion for toys, Legos, and vehicles with his viewers. The promotional videos he posted in 2018 contributed to his $22 million earnings [4]. This is due to the fact that influencers might receive complimentary products or payments in return for sharing content that promotes brands' products. The increase in views generates advertising income for their social platforms in turn. This is an influencer marketing phenomenon.

3. Ways of Consumers Being Influenced

Marketing is one sort of social influence, but there are many other aspects of life that affect how people interact with their surroundings, both consciously and unconsciously. In a nutshell, social

influence is the process through which people alter their opinions, even if it's just by imagining or suggesting something that can cause them to alter their behaviour, feelings, or ways of thinking [7].

According Sammis, Lincoln and Pomponi [8], influencer marketing is defined as having online influencers to share the brand's message and their own thoughts with their audience by offering the influencers sponsored content. Influencer marketing is thus a strategy that uses social media as a medium, with influencers (KOLs & KOCs) and micro-celebrities as the main actors, to promote services and products. An "influencer" or Social Media Influencer (SMI) is a content producer who has gained a substantial follower base by producing valuable and original content on social media platforms that may be helpful to the marketer [1]. The research discovered parallels between SMIs and celebrities. SMIs may resonate more than celebrities since they frequently disclose personal details and communicate directly with followers on social media networks. These social connections offer a sense of relevance to consumers, enhancing their receptivity to the content that social media influencers share [9].

People currently listen to well-known influencers significantly more than they listen to family and friends. As a result, influencer marketing has subtly changed people's behaviours and thoughts. For instance, James is a tech junkie who loves outdoor travel. During his nighttime break, he just so occurred to see a YouTuber review Anker PowerHouse [10]. It was an intriguing thing that he could utilise. He then looked up evaluations of the device from other influencers and saw them use it; he was so moved by their engaging and inventive films and their in-person remarks that he decided to get one. This example shows how the influencer applies the product in real life through a variety of scenario layouts, naturally incorporating the product promotion in a lighthearted manner that is joyfully relevant to the lives of the general public, inadvertently highlighting the utility of the product and thereby increasing the audience's interest in the product. In order to accomplish marketing goals, the influencer also assesses the product from a technical standpoint through usage reviews, offering a more qualified explanation that appeals to the audience's unconscious and subconscious. This leaves a significant impression on the audience and serves as a reference for the consumer's final purchase decision.

4. Trends in Influencer Marketing

Due to the constant progress of science and technology, the development of social media and the Internet has helped people to create a networked society. The power of social media rests in its capacity to simultaneously connect and share information with a huge number of people around the globe [11].

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, the government has advised people to stay in their houses and have less contact with others, people often get bored, leading to a huge rise in the use of social media. Many people choose to work as influencers during this time. Using SMIs for marketing objectives is increasingly common today. since the year of the pandemic outbreak, the influencer marketing industry has grown by $3.2 billion, and more than 50 new influencer marketing agencies have entered the market in less than a year. The average earned media value per $1 invested has risen to $5.78, and return-on-investment (ROI) metrics will transfer earned media value to conversions/sales by 2020 [12]. Influencer marketing as a new industry has enormous potential.

Based on the author's practical experience as well as knowledge, influencers with smaller followers' bases (Micro-influencers or Nano-influencers or KOCs) will be the backbone of developing influencer marketing. This is because influencers no longer require as many followers as they formerly did. These days, the importance of authenticity, innovation, and trustworthiness cannot be overstated. At the same time, the online world is a huge platform as most of the consumers' opinions are on it. Even though brands can be brought into the limelight through marketing, it is difficult for consumers to remember brands when they cannot be presented in full through a simple video or post. Key opinion consumers (KOCs), as part of the consumer, use their excellent communication and

interaction skills to convey more effective messages to consumers, create empathy and ultimately achieve marketing objectives.

The most straightforward way to do this is live-streaming, which can help increase the sense of intimacy and trust. Advances in technology have enabled influencers in social media to interact with their followers instantly, making it easier for them to understand their audience's concerns and answer them, and authentic interactions go a long way to increasing the credibility of the influencer [13].

5. Suggestion: To Be Integrated with Trends

Based on the three analyses appealed, it is seen that the future of influencer marketing is bright. Three perspectives on how people can fit into the trend of influencer marketing and keep up with the times will be suggested: consumers, influencers and brands.

First of all, every consumer will have different thoughts and opinions after purchasing a product. It is suggested that people apply their knowledge to express their own unique opinions about the product, which can be good or bad. Being articulate is the foundation of being an influencer. One study found that a mix of positive and negative content can have the greatest effect. It is the diversity of reviews that highlights the authenticity of the influencers [14]. Therefore, the influencer should be encouraged to review brands and products from a neutral perspective, rather than just extolling them. Influencers should also have the courage to speak up and say what brands are afraid to say. When an influencer's thoughts, words or actions resonate with consumers, their philosophy is aligned and thus the credibility of the influencer will rise dramatically. Increasing influence requires gaining trustworthiness [15].

A good influencer marketing campaign usually starts with an evaluation. To achieve this, companies usually need to do targeting and obtain information about the targeting of competing brands. It can be market targeting or audience targeting, but the most important thing in influencer marketing is influencer targeting. Influencer targeting is designed to help brands find influencers with similar ideas, purposes and personalities. One study revealed that, particularly for followers with poor social connections, influencer-brand fit can have a favourable effect on influencer reputation and advertising effectiveness [1].

Besides, the case review is also crucial to the future development of the brand's influencer marketing. Brands need to examine influencer content and comments from consumers and potential consumers after the campaign, to understand consumer opinions and suggestions. This results in a direct dialogue between the brand and the consumer. If there are positive aspects, brands need to keep enhancing them; however, with negative aspects, brands need to learn from them and improve the weaknesses of their products. Case reviews allow the brand to develop a more detailed understanding of complex situations so that brands can adopt better solutions to meet the challenge.

This research has optimised the process based on practical experience; the following flowchart shows how brands can use influencer marketing. The author's suggested influencer marketing workflow is shown in Figure 2.

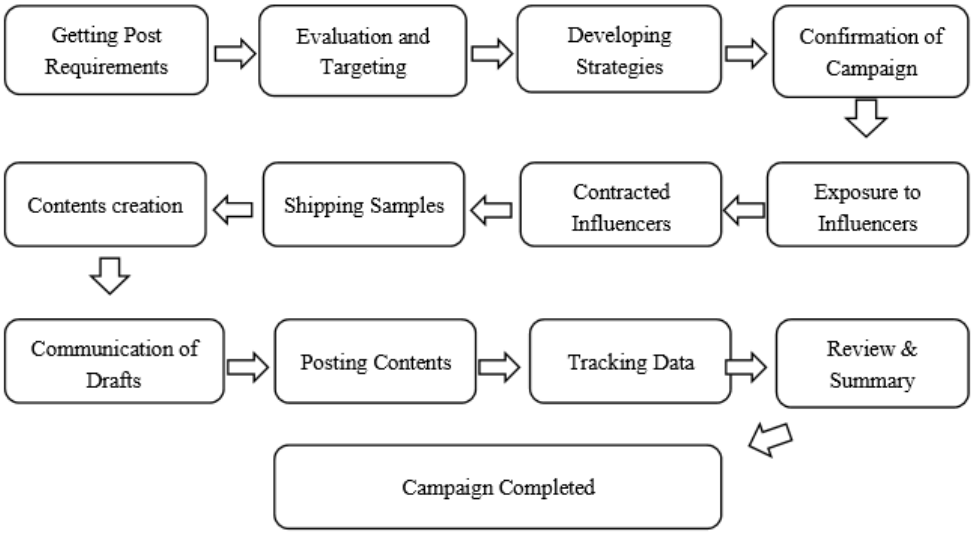


Fig. 2 Brands' process for using Influencer Marketing

6. Conclusion

To sum up, in order to offer guidance to brands and consumers on incorporating trends, the work of influencer marketing is characterized in this piece by combining insights from scholarly research, trend business practice, practitioner and consumer expertise.

In outlining the basics of influencer marketing, practitioner and consumer insights are summarised to suggest that influencer marketing can be used to significantly improve the effectiveness of brand and product promotion. Compared to traditional marketing models, social media platforms are used as a medium. Influencer marketing makes brands and products accessible to people all over the world and is not limited by geography.

But compared to conventional digital marketing, influencer marketing has an additional communication component with the influencer. This randomness can be a threat. If brands want to meet different requirements and pursue different goals, they need to work with various influencers. Thus, it is required to collect and use the resources of each influencer, such as their personal positioning, the content of their communication and the trust of their followers. Brands may be able to reach a wider target audience, create positioning that is more accepted by the market, and produce more creative and reliable content in this situation than they otherwise could. The benefits of these communications may result in favourable customer attitudes and behaviours, which can affect business performance.

This research provides an overall implementation framework. Particularly, the distinctive strengths of influencers—their strengths in targeting, placing, innovating, and trust—help to explain their superior effectiveness. As this is still a developing marketing strategy, taking stock and analyzing is essential, learning from experience is one of the effective ways to drive development. This enables the proposed advantages to be realised and reduces the disadvantages caused by influencer marketing. All in all, influencing marketing is on an upward trend and brands and people can fit into this general trend for economic development. It is worth mentioning that this research aims to discover the positive side of influencer marketing, and the limitations, effectiveness and potential risks are suggested to be investigated in future research.

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