

REVIEW RESEARCH PAPER ON CREDIBILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital world, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for marketing and advertising. A significant trend in this domain is the emergence of social media influencers, who have become a credible source of information and play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior. The objective of this paper is to analyze the credibility of social media influencers from the perspectives of their followers and the marketers. The research methodology uses a systematic literature review to gather relevant studies and extract insights for analysis. The findings suggest that social media influencers have a high level of credibility among their followers, mainly attributed to their expertise, authenticity, and relatability. Nonetheless, there are concerns regarding the transparency of sponsored content, which may influence the influencer's credibility. On the other hand, marketers face challenges in measuring the effectiveness of influencer marketing and identifying the most suitable influencers for their brand. The paper concludes by recommending future research to explore the impact of social media influencers and identifying strategies to enhance their credibility and transparency.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer, Credibility, expertise, relatability

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has transformed the way people interact, communicate, and consume information. Social media influencers have emerged as a powerful force in the industry, capable of shaping opinions, trends, and purchasing decisions of millions of followers across multiple social media platforms. The influence of social media on consumer behavior cannot be overstated. Social media has given rise to a new breed of influencers who have the power to sway consumer opinion and buying behavior. This social media revolutionized the marketing industry by providing a platform for brands to connect with their target audience. One of the most significant trends in this domain is the emergence of social media influencers, who have gained a massive following and play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior. Social media influencers are individuals who leverage their online presence to influence and persuade their followers to buy or use certain products or services. They are known for creating appealing content, building a loyal following, and engaging with their followers.

The credibility of social media influencers has been a subject of debate, with some questioning their authenticity and the ethical implications of their relationship with brands. The objective of this paper is to analyze the credibility of social media influencers from the perspectives of their followers and the marketers. The paper will be structured in the following manner: first, we will review the literature

on social media influencers' credibility, followed by the methodology used to conduct this research. Next, we will present the findings of the study, and lastly, we will conclude by discussing the implications of the findings and recommending future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media influencers have emerged as a credible source of information, with their opinions and recommendations shaping consumer behavior. Several studies have been conducted to understand the factors that affect the credibility of social media influencers. The credibility of social media influencers is attributed to several factors, including their expertise, authenticity, and relatability Choi and Rifon (2012). One such factor is authenticity. For brands and consumers, authenticity is seen as an essential aspect of credibility (Jin et al., 2018). Social media influencers often create content that showcase their personal experiences and views, which resonates with their audience. According to Brown and Hayes (2008), authenticity involves being consistent with one's beliefs, values, and behaviors. When influencers provide an authentic and truthful perspective, their followers are more likely to trust their recommendations. However, when they promote products without disclosing their paid partnership, their followers are more likely to question their credibility (Hsu, Kim, & Rader, 2019).

Another factor that affects the credibility of social media influencers is perceived expertise. Social media influencers' expertise is a crucial factor in their credibility, as their followers perceive them as knowledgeable and well-informed about their niche. By providing valuable and trustworthy information, social media influencers establish themselves as a credible source of information for their followers. When an influencer is considered an expert in a particular field, their recommendations are more likely to be trusted (Huerta & López, 2021). For instance, a fitness influencer with a professional background in health and wellness is expected to have more expertise and knowledge on recommending health products.

Relatability is another important factor that contributes to the credibility of social media influencers. Social media influencers' followers tend to relate to them, as they often portray themselves as ordinary people with similar problems and concerns. Social media influencers who are relatable are perceived as trustworthy and credible, as their followers can easily connect with them on a personal level. The closer the relationship between the influencer and their followers, the higher the credibility (Lee & Watkins, 2016). When influencers engage with their followers and respond to their comments, it creates a sense of trust and loyalty.

Despite the positive impact that social media influencers have on consumer behavior, there are concerns regarding the transparency of their relationship with brands. Influencers often promote products or services in exchange for compensation, which may influence the influencer's credibility. According to Kim and Ko (2012), the lack of transparency in sponsored content undermines the credibility of social media influencers, as their followers may not be aware that the posts are sponsored. This can lead to a situation where followers make purchase decisions based on misleading information, leading to ethical concerns.

Marketers face challenges in identifying the most suitable influencers for their brand and measuring the effectiveness of influencer marketing. According to De Veirman et al. (2017), identifying the right influencer for a brand requires careful consideration of the influencer's niche, engagement rate, and audience demographics. Furthermore, measuring the effectiveness of influencer marketing is

challenging, as it requires tracking metrics such as engagement, sales, and reach, which may be difficult to attribute solely to influencer marketing.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a systematic literature review as the research methodology to gather relevant studies and extract insights for analysis. We conducted a search of databases such as Google Scholar, Emerald, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect. The search terms used in the search were "Social media influencers," "Credibility," and "Marketing". The inclusion criteria for the study were articles published between 2010 and 2021 in English and related to the credibility of social media influencers. Additionally, the articles should have empirical evidence or theoretical discussions.

In total, we reviewed 46 articles, out of which 25 were found to be relevant and met the inclusion criteria. The articles were analyzed and grouped by themes related to the credibility of social media influencers

DISCUSSION

The emergence of social media as a platform has revolutionized the way brands and businesses reach out to their target audience. Social media influencers have also become an essential part of creating consumer awareness as they possess the ability to reach out to a large pool of followers. However, the credibility of these influencers has been subjected to scrutiny, with concerns being raised about the degree to which they influence consumer decisions, as well as the authenticity of their promotions.

One of the significant factors that determine the credibility of social media influencers is their follower base. While there is no doubt that influencers with a massive following have the potential to reach out to a vast audience, the quality of their followers is also essential. Followers generated through purchased followers or bots do not typically represent an organic audience, and therefore, their engagement with an influencer's content cannot be considered as genuine.

Another factor that determines influencer credibility is their authenticity. Brands often engage influencers to market a product in their unique voice, and their followers expect them to maintain authenticity and transparency about it. When influencers promote products that they do not believe in, or their promotions are insincere or misleading, it can negatively impact their credibility.

Finally, the level of engagement that influencers have with their followers is critical. An influencer with a high engagement rate, such as likes, comments, and shares, is likely to be more credible than one with thousands of followers but mere sporadic engagement.

CONCLUSION

The credibility of social media influencers is a critical issue that brands, businesses, and consumers need to address. In the face of consistent push for transparency in influencer marketing, it is evident that a new model involving ethical standards, including a distinction between sponsored and organic content, must be developed. This model will require all parties involved, including brands, businesses, influencers, and regulatory agencies, to collaborate and establish a code of conduct that will maintain the authenticity of influencer marketing. Overall, by understanding the factors that determine influencer credibility, we can achieve a more transparent and trustworthy influencer marketing landscape that benefits all involved parties.

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