

Chapter 7

Examining the Effects of Blogger Type (Influencers vs. Celebrities) and Post Format in Instagram Marketing

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ABSTRACT

In the era where credibility of advertisements is decreasing and people are spending more time in social media compared to traditional channels, it is no surprise that marketing professionals employ social media as a new channel for communication. In this new media for communication, the conventional advertising techniques are also coupled with alternating methods such as product placements. In the light of these relatively new applications, the purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of marketing communications in social media under different message sources (celebrities vs. influencers) and with different message presentations. In order to serve that purpose, a 2X2 between subjects experiment is modelled with 399 respondents. The results show that a product is better advertised by an influencer rather than a celebrity and type of the blog post had no significant impact on the purchase intention.

INTRODUCTION

For a brand to be successful, it has to communicate and engage with its target market. For years, advertisements have carried that burden to create a connection between customers and brands, however, it is well known now that the popularity and impact of traditional advertising is decreasing and other methods have emerged as an alternative to advertisements. Placing the brand in TV shows, in movies and lately in social media posts are the common examples for these methods. For instance, when someone, who does

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sports, comes across a web banner with Cristiano Ronaldo advertising a sugar free peanut butter, the brand of the peanut butter may not be kept in his mind. However, when that person goes to the gym and his personal trainer gives him a diet program with 30 grams sugar free peanut butter in every morning meal, also suggests for a particular brand of peanut butter, most probably he would keep that particular brand's name in his mind and buy it at the first chance. Similarly, if that person comes across a post of an ordinary sportsman in his social media account, he would be more easily convinced to go to a market and buy the same peanut butter which was shared by the sportsman's Instagram post. As seen in this scenario, the source of the post in social media might be perceived as "experts" while their opinions are treated as expert opinions. Therefore, it can be understood that, the perception of the audience and the impact of a message can vary according to the source it is given by.

In addition to the source, the medium is also important in marketing communication. In the new world, internet which enables people to connect from all around the world, plays a very significant role in the daily life as well as in business life (Holtz, 2002). People use internet for almost everything - such as networking, online shopping and to access information (Starkov, 2003). Recent statistics from Statista (2018) showing that the number of internet users worldwide was 3.9 billion in 2018, up from 3.65 billion in the previous year, signaling for a massive increase in only 1 year. Evidently people use internet more frequently since it is easier to access internet in comparison with the past. Today, almost everyone has a smartphone which is no less than a personal computer and therefore internet is available in full function 7/24. In addition to that, the peer pressure with modernization of countries pushes people to get used to get connected indefinitely (Statista, 2019). With all these factors, the popularity of some of the social network platforms got popular day by day (like Facebook got a big hit in 2004), and it is seen that this new phenomenon called as "Social Media" settled in the center of life, as if it would never leave (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Among the social media platforms, Instagram, which allows the users to share their photos and videos, became one of the most successful application by outstripping the other competitors (Djafarova, & Rushworth, 2017). Statistics showed that, Instagram had more than 1 billion monthly active users as of April 2019, is the sixed-ranked successful social network (Statista, 2019). The rapid rise of Instagram has also attracted companies and brands to be active and visible in this social media network. A research by Forrester in 2017 shows that, about 58% of the brands post 5.6 times on Instagram per week on average. That means, there is a chance that the brand will face the customer once every day. Additionally, it has been reported that the engagement of the brands in Instagram, is 10 times higher than Facebook, 54 times higher than Pinterest and 84 times higher than Twitter (Statista, 2019) whereas, the engagement with customers per post is observed to rise 416% in two years. These data regarding Instagram have set forth how social media has become a trend for advertisers in order to reach effectively to their audiences (Rebelo, 2017). This trend has affected the world without doubt. With such a popularity, a large number of brands and industries have accompanied this trend and have increased their marketing activities on Instagram (Renga, 2017). Consequently, marketers are challenging to find the best way of advertisement and improve their marketing techniques in order to influence their consumers. Influencer marketing, content marketing and product placement are some of the strategies that marketers try in order to influence customers without direct advertisement (Johansen & Guldvik, 2017).

According to Abidin (2016), "Social media influencers are the ones who have a significant network of followers and who are seen as trusted tastemakers in one or several fields". Consumers will more likely frame a purchase intention, if they believe the content posted by the influencers (Sertoglu et al, 2014). In addition, the influencer's reputation and trustworthiness is crucial and effective. In the light

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