


Chapter 84

Social Media Influencers' Effect on Chinese Gen Z Consumers: Management and Use of Video Content Platforms

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to explore the relationships between different types of Chinese social media influences and their use of short videos, and how that content is managed influence Chinese Generation Z consumers. Effective use of social media is a way for SMEs and new ventures to level the playing field and compete with established enterprises; it is cost effective and can target a very specific consumer demographic. Data was collected by online surveys of Gen Z Chinese self-described heavy social media users. The results of this study may be of particular interest to entrepreneurs who tend to be early adopters and who can most benefit from strategic use of social media advertising to locate and reach their target customers more efficiently and more effectively.

INTRODUCTION

Short videos are a rapidly growing phenomenon on the Internet, and specifically on Social Media. Sharing of video content was pioneered by YouTube, (Cheng et al., 2008). The ensuing adoption of smart phones, used to easily create and upload video content, combined with the increased availability of connectivity and greater bandwidth throughput contributed to the growth of video content sharing (Hossain, 2019a; Sonnenberg, 2020a). These events, combined with the explosive growth of social media

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6287-4.ch084

have resulted in an immense amount of customer created content, Romero (2011) as well as shared and reposted content (Huang et al., 2012).

Parallel to the proliferation of personal video content created by individuals for social purposes is a category of content uploaded by Key Opinion Leaders with the intent to influence consumer behavior. Key opinion leaders (KOLs) or influencers are people with a large online following, or significant credibility within a given field. They are frequently online celebrities or traditional style media or sports celebrities. The reason KOLs and influencers are so critical is the credibility they have and the significant number of followers they are able to influence (Chen et al., 2018, 2018; Conick, 2018).

The combination of the size of the market, the ease of access, the extent of KOL influence and the trending use of video content of all kinds on social media make this topic well worthy of further exploration.

LITERATURE REVIEW - BACKGROUND

There appears to be limited existing research focusing specifically on the impact of short video applications in online marketing in Chinese social media. The Chinese short video application industry is a relatively new, very large, and rapidly growing market with more than 820 million monthly active users and 22 hours monthly usage time per capita (QuestMobile, 2019). This large demographic offers marketing managers a powerful tool with which to reach their target customers. Key opinion leaders play an essential role in Chinese social media and Chinese Online Marketing (Quadrella, 2018; Yu et al., 2011).

Key Opinion Leaders

Key opinion leaders are people that have a certain extent of influence or reputation in some fields and usually believed and respected by others (NASDAQ OMX's News Release Distribution Channel, 2017). Also, KOLs can educate or induce people in many ways. KOLs have developed as a new-style business function that is close to customer relationship management. KOLs now are significant components in marketing (Gan & Wang, 2015; X. Yang & Wang, 2015).

In the Chinese network and social media, even though there are various of governing laws, some "demotic" people are becoming online celebrities now. They usually mask themselves with celebrity culture. The attraction of being famous and the demand for outside approval applied by accumulated likes and followers on social media has popularized the pursuit of online celebrity (Sullivan & Kehoe, 2019).

The influencer, who possesses high credibility in some fields and has a huge number of followers on social media, is usually believed by his followers concerning his suggestions in those fields. However, the information or suggestions provided by influencers often have connections with misleading or even false information, which means the information is camouflaged (Nieto, 2018).

Doyle (2007) found that more than 75 percent of customers have experienced consulting their relatives or friends regarding online shopping. While corporations are well aware of the importance of word-of-mouth marketing as well as influencer marketing, many companies still cannot effectively utilize this information resource as there is insufficient understanding of the phenomenon, and specifically how to exploit it.

Key opinion leaders' effects can be classified into categories (Flynn et al., 1996). First, with the function of the content output of key opinion leaders, more customers are attracted through the suggesting or advertising behavior of influencers as that suggested content is directly pushed to the customers

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