Chapter 13

Changing Consumer Buyer Decision Process in the Context of Instamoms

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ABSTRACT

As an effective digital strategy, influencer marketing uses "influencers" on social media with their potential to deliver ideas to the masses. These people on social media are very attractive to consumers when making decisions. This research makes its theoretical contribution by combining marketing motherhood as a social construct as an instinctive process in social media. Within this context, mother influencers, called Instamoms, impact their followers by affecting their buyer decision process. This chapter aims to understand the impact of Instamoms on the buyer decision of their followers. The research concentrates on factors in how decisions in the process of mother followers can be shaped, affected, and harmonized toward the content of the Instamoms' posts, in terms the of influence that constitute the reference power, motherhood concept, and all other remaining factors that determine the buyer decision process.

BACKGROUND

Due to the widespread network of the internet and the evolution of social media, the new generation of women born in the post-1990s increasingly become socialized more through digital environments. In the case of the Instagram page of Instamoms, usually, a new mom starts launching an Instagram page to get over the isolation of new motherhood (Pembecioğlu, 2016). Concerning the content and posts of the page, personal posts of the daily life of that mother become subject to followers. The followers highly intensified digital interaction by connecting Instamoms to distant geographies through Instagram.

From the marketing point of view, consumers' engagement with brands and companies is changing because of technological developments. While marketing mix elements are evolving, promotion tools are changing as well. With the proliferation of social media, these tools and strategies for interacting with consumers have shifted significantly to this platform (Blackshaw& Nazzaro, 2004). Social media is a widely used tool to engage consumers in digital conversations. More than 72% of people in the United States use some form of social media, sharing text, images, and video (Pew Research Center, 2021). A well-designed social media presence is valuable to different groups of users with different motivations. For example, companies may use social media to enhance brand equity and social media influencers benefit financially from high follower counts and engagement (Khamis, Ang &Welling 2016; Zollo et al. 2020).

Furthermore, the promotion-related role of social media is very powerful. This causes also the evolution of traditional word-of-mouth communication, the more digitalized technology brings more usage of social media and actors of social media as an element of the promotional mix (Mangold& Fauld, 2009).

Using influencers on social media is one of the effective digitalized strategies (Lyons & Henderson, 2005). Brands have turned their attention to influencer marketing as consumers spend more time on SNS (Koay et al., 2022). Recently, Ye et al. (2021) conducted a bibliometric and thematic content analysis to identify the evolution of influencer marketing research. They found a rapid increase in the number of publications between 2003 and 2019, indicating that an increasing number of academics have begun to pay attention to this new field of study. Through thematic content analysis, five main themes were identified: theme 1: the persuasiveness of influencer marketing; theme 2: stakeholder perspectives on influencer marketing; theme 3: influencer marketing for specific product categories and sectors; theme 4: influencer identification, selection, and activation; and theme 5: ethical issues and disclosure effects in influencer marketing. The present study rightly focuses on the first, third, and fourth themes, focusing on various influencer characteristics that are critical to the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

In this chapter, popular and influential mothers on Instagram, frequently referred to as "Instamoms", are used as a context, since; they become persuasive and effective on Instagram. Instagram becomes a platform for consumption due to promoted posts that appear in users' timelines either directly by brands or through influencers. Followers as customers become a subject of Instagram consumption in both material consumption and the image of consumption. This operation is explained as documenting the self to be consumed by others (Schwarz, 2010). This consumption is a desired situation for an Instagram, which in return gives fame and possible income to her. An Instamom, represents a kind of self-brand that is responsive to the needs and interests of target audiences. These self-brands have an impact on their followers, women consumers' decision-making process. In normal conditions, the literature states that the buyer decision process starts with the "Need Recognition" step, however, this step looks transformed in the context of Instamoms. How this transformation is realized with the effects of Instamoms is not investigated before. Therefore, this chapter has investigated this topic.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RISE OF INSTAGRAM

The introduction of social media and engagement can be discovered at the beginning of 2007. According to Tapscott and Williams (2008), social media is involved sharing something, socializing, collaborating, and composing new things very connect people. Marketing and consumer behavior research will be highly influenced by the interactions reflected in digital platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Mangold

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