Ethics in Influencer marketing: Persuasion or Manipulation
(based on sponsored content) : A Review

[1]Tamanna Gothi, Research Scholar

[2]Dr. Divya Thakur, HOD Management

Department of Commerce and Management

IEC University, Baddi (HP), India

Abstract

The internet offers a wide range of tools for "word-of-mouth" marketing and publicity. Customers' ability to communicate with one another and share information about products has been revolutionized by the widespread use of "electronic commerce shopping communities." It has been noted that "e-commerce shopping communities" is a relatively uncharted territory in the world of academic studies. When consumers leave evaluations online, it has a significant impact on other customers' choices to make a purchase. The "idea of word of mouth" is strengthened by the feedback provided by these evaluations. YouTube stars have built up huge followings and are now among the most influential people online. With the rise of YouTube stars, businesses can reach a wider audience and raise their profile. Consumers' desire to buy is examined in relation to YouTube videos, and new YouTube criteria are also presented.

Keywords: YouTube, Purchase intention, consumer buying behaviour, traditional marketing, YouTubers

Introduction

As a result of the internet's proliferation of marketing channels, old methods of promotion are becoming more ineffective and new media technologies are being enlisted to better reach consumers. Companies are making more use of social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., and YouTube to publicize the launch of new goods. Internet-based resources include blogs, online rating sites, social media profiles, and other online survey platforms. ConsumerReview.com, Eopinion.com, Amazon.com, and YouTube.com are just a few examples of sites where you may read reviews, ratings, and opinions. Consumers' final decisions are heavily impacted by the availability of information provided by these online marketplaces.

You tube as marketing platform

YouTube is becoming into a "global video platform" for international advertising. As YouTube continues to expand, more and more advertisers are signing up to take advantage of it. YouTube is quite different from the standard TV advertising platform since it allows for new kinds of interactions and the development of communities. Unlike previous generations, today's have access to YouTube's video content marketing strategies. Since YouTube has billions of subscribers and online streaming is rapidly becoming the norm, it is crucial for marketers to have a deeper understanding of YouTube's features. YouTube has been around since 2005, and its popularity has only grown since then. Currently, YouTube has over 100 million daily video streams. Journalists, travelers, food bloggers, producers, filmmakers, and more all submit films on YouTube and get comments and likes from the community. YouTube allows users to share their experiences via video, which in turn makes that information accessible to anybody who is looking for it. Users are motivated to branch out and interact with others by use of social networking platforms. Communities' interactive features make it simple for members to gain adherents and establish credibility among their peers. Individuals and organizations alike may use YouTube to host their own channels. Users may get exposure for their work by creating and promoting channels, with the caveat that other users might choose to subscribe to or follow those channels. Users who have subscribed to a channel will get updates on the channel's activity. It might be a brand-new video, a remark from the channel owner, or some suggestions. Given that businesses can so easily be represented by their own brands, the channel structure on YouTube offers enormous opportunity for brands to explore. Brands may, however, create their own material and upload it on YouTube, where it can be seen by their target audience. For a brand to succeed, it must first make a good impression on the customer. Users need not register in order to see the videos, but they will need to do so in order to subscribe to any channel.

YouTube is a social networking platform where people publish and watch different genres of videos and can interact with others by commenting, liking, and sharing their videos. As well as Instagram, various marketing companies usually hire certain YouTube influencers or YouTubers to promote brands. Consolidated and unconsolidated influencers also use YouTube to interact with their subscribers, uploading videos in which they tell personal stories –

'storytelling' – with the aim of awakening certain emotions in those who are already subscribers and those who are not but who could become (subscribers) after watching the video. In doing so, these YouTubers tend to get more views19 and, subsequently, they generate and earn money, becoming of increasing interest for companies.

Impact over consumers' buying behaviour

Researchers use observations of consumer behavior to draw conclusions about such behaviors. The graphic below provides an overview of these factors, categorizing them into the four broad categories of "why?" (social, cultural, physiological, and individual). It's important for marketers to understand why consumers behave the way they do, and in this instance, it's because their customers' needs aren't being met. A marketer's attention is directed at the ideal clientele on the basis of their professional profiles. In addition, the marketer must assess his or her financial situation in relation to the customer's occupational profile. A customer's purchasing habit is the amount of money he or she carries about in preparation for making a purchase. Marketers are alert to shifts in the global and local economies, and they take the initiative to adjust product design, pricing, and positioning accordingly.

Persuasion : As O'Keefe (2002: 5) states: "Persuasion is a successful intentional effort at influencing another's mental state through communication in a circumstance in which the persuade has some measure of freedom". Therefore, persuading involves convincing others about the importance of the goals we propose them to pursue (Vincze, 2009: 187).

Besides intention, in persuasion, it is fundamental to consider that an individual must have a "concern for public interest". Hence, the previous study of the interests of most public to whom the persuasive speech is addressed would imply a greater probability of its success. It would be necessary to follow the Waltonian model to know all those preferences of the public before persuading it. If the persuader studies previously the commitments of the addressee, and they "change their point of view or their stance towards the opponent's thesis at the end of the dialogue, then persuasion is evaluated as successful for the proponent" (Debowska-Kozlowska, 2014: 328). Otherwise, persuasion would be considered unsuccessful.

Persuasion techniques

In persuasive communication, various techniques and strategies are used to make the arguments effective and convincing. In other words, they are employed in persuasive discourse for the persuader and the persuaded to obtain benefits, and every individual must use them to get success in his or her persuasive discourse. "persuasion techniques are designed to "sell", product, idea, concept, suggests..

As by Aristotle's (2004) three technical means of persuasion – three different techniques which should be used to persuade –: technical means of persuasion in the character of the addresser (ethos), in the emotional state of the hearer (pathos) and in the argument (logos) itself.

Manipulation

As well as persuasion, the concept of manipulation has been defined in many ways by many different scholars. According to Philips (1997: 15-16), the term manipulation is defined as "a deliberate and successful attempt by one person to get another person by appeals to reason to freely accept beliefs, attitudes, values, intentions, or actions", or, in other words, "a devious way to control the others". (Fairclough, 1989:6). Hence, manipulation is a communicative and interactional practice, in which the manipulator is the person who handles other people and usually puts them against their will and their best interests, as Van Dijk (2006: 360) states. Besides, Karamova et al. (2019: 414) agree that, when a person manipulates another, they5 are influencing on the subconscious of the addressee to correct the current picture of the world, "the formation of motives beneficial to the addressee behavior".

All these definitions have in common that, in the manipulation process, the manipulated person ends up being controlled and forced, albeit unconsciously for them, to change their own interests from the beginning.

Manipulation techniques

According to Pesina et al. (2020: 333), there exist three groups of linguistic manipulation tools: lexical-syntactic, lexical-semantic and lexical-pragmatic tools. For manipulative speech to take place, it is essential that manipulators know how to use them properly. As Bogart (1972: 13) explains through a metaphor, "…persuasion techniques are like sharpened knives. They are tools and, of course, the person who deals with these tools should have honest principles". In other words, if a persuader uses these tools improperly, violating their honest principles, then they will become a manipulator. Regarding the lexical-syntactic tools, they include tools for linguistic manipulation, that is, changes in phraseological units; the lexical-semantic tools refer

to the relationship between a word and its subject-conceptual content expressed; and the lexical-pragmatic tools correspond to linguistic manipulation at the lexical level based on pragmatics aspects.

Ethics for Authenticity and credibility

Influencers can project authenticity and build credibility by disclosing when they are working with commercial brands. While influencers' partnerships with commercial brands take many forms – ranging from physical appearances at events to wearing specific products – one common arrangement is for influencers to create and distribute sponsored content or "paid content designed to mirror the format of non-paid content in the platform in which it is placed" (Amazeen & Wojdynski, 2018, p. 1). Sponsored content is clearly labeled advertising produced and distributed by a third party that denotes the publisher's relationship with the brand (Sonderman & Tran, 2013).

The relationship between influencers and brands brings to mind ethical concerns about conflicts of interest.

 The concept of authenticity has been a source of great interest and debate among philosophers, ethicists and critical scholars. Existentialists such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche believed that leading a meaningful life meant rejecting popular consensus in favor of finding truth in one's own beliefs and actions (Holt, 2012). Inspired by this philosophical approach, Merrill (1996) argued that journalists could rise above the news industry's ills by pursuing what he termed existential journalism. For Merrill, existential journalism is rooted in the pursuit of authenticity: "The existential journalist is ever in the state of becoming authentic. He is, in other words, constantly making himself more honest, more individualistic, more involved and committed, more active, more responsible, and more ethical". For these existentialists, authenticity represents a normative (and even religious) ideal. Yet critics such as Adorno (1973) argue that existentialism is rooted in the false idea that one can easily achieve individualistic freedom that exists independent of social and institutional influences. Similarly, Taylor, 1991, p. 14) argues that, in its desire to renounce conformity, the ideal of authenticity can lead to a malaise of moral subjectivism in which "life is narrowed or flattened." Further, Holt (2012) claims using authenticity as an ethical guide may actually lead journalists toward a narcissistic pursuit of individual achievement rather than serious self-reflection of one's conscience.

To remain "authentic" while working within commercial spaces, influencers seek to develop credibility with both audiences and commercial brands, a potentially difficult task as these stakeholders have different expectations about their relationships with influencers (Abidin & Ots, 2016 define brand credibility as "the believability of the product information contained in a brand, which requires that consumers perceive that the brands have the ability (i.e., expertise) and willingness (i.e., trustworthiness) to continuously deliver what has been promised"

Review of literature

(Mathur, 2017) studied "effect of celebrity endorsement on consumers : a study of selected fmcg products Faculty of Commerce and Management Department of Commerce and Management" discovered, and The world is changing rapidly, and most businesses are expanding internationally. Advertisers need to put more effort into their marketing tactics if they want to keep up with the increasing velocity of modern competition. Advertising and manufacturing utilise this theory because of its strong relationship to marketing and promotional operations. The primary purpose of this thesis is to investigate the influence of celebrity endorsements on the buying decisions of customers. It's common knowledge that famous people often feature in commercials.

(Singh, 2018) studied "Marketing Management" found that together they provided a work that was unparalleled in its coverage, depth, and applicability to first-year students of Marketing Management. The topical chapter openers, in-text boxes highlighting notable companies or issues, and the Marketing Insight and Marketing Memo boxes that provide in-depth conceptual and practical commentary have all been carried over from the previous editions, as has the successful across-chapter reorganization into eight parts that began with the 12th edition of Marketing Management.

(Mengli, 2006) studied "A Study on Factors Affecting Consumers' Attitude Towards Online Shopping and Online Shopping Intention" discovered, and The goal of this research is to uncover what variables influence Bangkok residents' perceptions about, and decisions about, purchasing online. The assumptions were tested using many statistical methods, including multiple linear regression, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, one-way analysis of variance, and the independent sample t-test.

(Narİn et al., 2017) studied "Consumers' Perceptions of YouTubers" discovered, and YouTubers, who have attracted the attention of businesses owing to the enormous impact they have over millions of followers, are one example of the new uses in marketing activities made possible by the development of information and communication technology.

(Shetty & Sarkar, 2021) studied "Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention: A Study on The Impact of Social Media Influencer Variables on The Purchase Intention of Buyers" discovered, and Social networking sites are more widely used than ever because of the proliferation of contemporary technologies. People's daily routines hardly include anything other than checking their social media accounts and reading material shared by others. Due to the growing importance of social media, there is now a larger pool of people producing material for such networks. These bloggers or social media stars have built a substantial following and a revenue stream from their work.

(Talih Akkaya et al., 2018) studied "the effect of consumer perceptions on their attitude, behavior and purchase intention in social media advertising" discovered that and Social media is described as an online community where users may exchange and gain insight from each other's expertise and experience; more lately, social media has taken on a whole new dimension thanks to technological advancements. With consumers spending more time indoors at work and at home, there has been an uptick in the usage of social media, and as a result, customers have gained a thorough understanding of the goods and services available to them.

(Kadam et al., 2021) studied "A Study on Impactof Social Media Influencers' Endorsements on The Buying Behaviour of Gen Z, for Lifestyle and Electronics Product Category wth Special Reference to Pune City" discovered, and Companies now focus on their customers and use digital and social media marketing to reach them. Influencers are a prime illustration of the subtle, almost unnoticeable kind of advertising that is common on social media. There is little chance that this kind of advertising will stick with viewers. Interactive, engaging, and connecting if done well, rather than only appealing to the consumer's logical side.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the work of influencers is highly demanded for being considered a pleasant and current job: they can telecommute, have a good salary, and, also, enjoy the thousands of

opportunities offered to them as influencers. However, as argued in Section 5, it is not easy to become an influencer since they are required to have some skills to promote brand products.

To enjoy all the advantages of being an influencer on social networks, the discourse used in the networks must be carefully planned before communicating it to the public because of the impact it can cause on them. We already know that the main objective of an influencer is to persuade the public to buy a certain product as a marketing strategy. However, many of them resort to the use of manipulation strategies to have a greater impact on the public.

Brands are looking for methods to differentiate themselves from the competition and connect with their audiences as competition increases. YouTube stars, who are also known as social media superstars, are seen as viable options for satisfying the demands of marketers in this context. In an effort to reach a wider audience, several companies are partnering with YouTube stars. Unfortunately, no scales have been devised to gauge how customers feel about this novel advertising approach.

References

1. Ahmad Wani, T., & Wajid Ali, S. (2016). Determinants of Online Purchase Intentions: A Study of Indian Buyers. *Amity Journal of Management Research AJMR Amity Journal of Management Research*, *1*(1), 94–109.

2. Al-shaaban, S., & Nguyen, T. B. (2014). Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention towards Organic Food A quantitative study of China Linnæus University. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *6*(2C), 1–67.

3. Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., Stephen, A. T., Stephen, A. T., & Appel, G. (2020). *The future of social media in marketing*. 79–95.

4. Astuti, W. D., & Risqiani, R. (2020). *Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing on the Intention to Buy Online Through Attitude on Advertising and Brands*. *151*(Icmae), 221–225. https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.200915.051

5. *Attitude Towards Sponsored Posts and Purchase Intentions in*. (n.d.).

6. BOF & McKingsley & Company. (2021). The State of Fashion 2021: In Search of Promise in Perilous Times. *The Business of Fashion McKinsey & Company*, 8–118. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/state-of-fashion

7. Botelho, M. F. M. (2018). *THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCERS IN THE C ONSUMER ' S PURCHASE INTENTION : THE COSMETIC INDUSTRY Márcia Filipa Martins Botelho*

Dissertation submitted as partial requirement for the conferral of Master ' s in marketing.

8. Carvalho, C. A. (2008). Impact of Consumer Attitude in Predicting Purchasing Behaviour. *Vasa*, *2005*, 1–12. http://medcontent.metapress.com/index/A65RM03P4874243N.pdf

9. Castillo, R. A., Jaramillo, C. Z., & Sy, L. (2022). The Effectiveness of Social Media Influencers in the Cosmetic and Skincare Industry to the Purchase Intention of the Generation Z Filipinos. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, *4*(2), 180–191. https://doi.org/10.32996/jbms.2022.4.2.14

10. Černikovaitė, M. (2019). *The impact of Influencer marketing on consumer buying behavior in social networks*. *May*. https://doi.org/10.3846/cibmee.2019.082

11. Chapple, C., & Cownie, F. (2020). View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk. *Pengaruh Penggunaan Pasta Labu Kuning (Cucurbita Moschata) Untuk Substitusi Tepung Terigu Dengan Penambahan Tepung Angkak Dalam Pembuatan Mie Kering*, *1*(2), 274–282.

12. Vincze, L. (2009). Gesture and Gaze in Persuasive Political Discourse. Springer, 187-196.

13. Debowska-Kozlowska, K. (2014). Processing Topics from the Beneficial Cognitive Model in Partially and Over-Successful Persuasion Dialogues. Argumentation, 28, 325-339.

14. Aristotle, W. R. R. (2004). Rhetoric. Kessinger Publishing.

15. Philips, M.J. (1997). Ethics and manipulation in advertising: Answering a Flawed Indictment. Greenwood publishing group.

16. Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and Power. Longman.

17. Van Dijk. T. A. (2006). Discourse and manipulation. Sage Publications, 17(3), 359- 383.

18. Karamova et al. (2019). Speech manipulation as one of the properties of modern political discourse. Astra Salvensis, 13, 413-423.

19. Pesina et al. (2020). Linguo-Cognitive aspects of manipulation in political discourse. Laplage em revista, 6, 330-337.

20. Bogart, L. (1973). Estrategia publicitaria. Deusto

21. Amazeen, M. A., & Wojdynski, B. W. (2018). The effects of disclosure format on native advertising recognition and audience perceptions of legacy and online news publishers. Journalism, 146488491875482. doi:10.1177/1464884918754829

22. Sonderman, J., & Tran, M. (2013). Understanding the rise of sponsored content. American Press Institute.

23. Holt, K. (2012). Authentic journalism? A critical discussion about existential authenticity in journalism ethics. Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 27(1), 2–14. doi:10.1080/08900523.2012.636244

24. Merrill, J. C. (1996). Existential journalism. Ames: Iowa State University Press.

25. Adorno, T. (1973). The jargon of authenticity. (K. Tarnowski & F. Will, Trans.). Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.

26. Taylor, C. (1991). The ethics of authenticity. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

27. Abidin, C., & Ots, M. (2016). Authenticity and credibility in brand scandal. In M. Edström & A. T. Kenyon (Eds.),

28. Blurring the lines: Market-driven and democracy-driven freedom of expression (pp. 153–161). Gothenburg, Sweden: Nordicom.