Marketing in Social Media

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Abstract: *With the development of science and technology, people search and browse a large amount of information more autonomously through social media platforms. Marketers are taking various measures to ensure that brand messages reach consumer audiences in response to this change. This article reviews previous research conducted by researchers focusing on social media platforms and summarizes common research theories and influencing factors. Finally, the authors put forward questions that can be studied in the future, providing a reference scheme for scholars and practitioners.*

Keywords: *Social media, Social media influencer, Word-of-mouth marketing*

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of communication technology, the Internet has penetrated all aspects of people's lives. Mass communication channels, such as television, radio, and newspapers, are no longer the main sources of information for consumers. In addition, the negative attitude, towards traditional commercial advertising, is increasing day by day. More and more consumers are choosing to click the "skip" button when they open a web page in order to ignore commercials. Social media refers to Internet platforms where people can share opinions and experiences, such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, etc. On these platforms, the way consumers interact with each other and between consumers and enterprises has also changed (Hansen et al., 2011). Consumers often use social media channels or virtual communities to exchange information and build relationships (Hair et al., 2010). Social media allows users to generate content, which can be a consumer experience or a post-purchase review of a relevant product. By analyzing the generated content of consumers, enterprises can directly understand some suggestions of consumers on products or publicity content, so as to facilitate enterprises to improve their marketing strategies and achieve the purpose of improving marketing performance (Audrezet, de Kerviler, and Moulard, 2018)[1-3].

2. Common theories in social media marketing research

2.1. Halo Effect Theory

First impressions of a person affect people's overall perception of them (Coombs and Holladay, 2006). The halo effect theory states that target consumers tend to rate products based on what their endorsers say about them. This suggests that if a person has an attractive appearance and an attractive lifestyle, then people will perceive him as a better person (Coombs and Holladay, 2006). Companies often use the halo effect to their advantage, choosing influencers with positive reputations as endorsers.

2.2. Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation

FIRO theory holds that people need to be recognized, interacted with, and acknowledged by others for their participation in social activities (Schutz, 1958). At the same time, Schutz (1958) argues that integration into a group does not refer to the loss of an individual's recognizable characteristics, but to the need to be able to be distinguished within the group. Based on this, Ho and Dempsey (2010) divide Internet users' social motivation into two types—belonging and uniqueness. At the same time, they found that social media users engage in content distribution and communication using four main types of underlying motivations: group integration, unique seeking, altruism, and personal growth (Ho and Dempsey, 2010)[4-7].

2.3. Narrative Transportation Theory

Stories are a powerful tool for persuasion (Braddock and Dillard 2016) and capturing consumers' attention. In general, ads that use stories to convey information are more persuasive than ads that use non-story forms to convey information (Kim, Ratneshwar, and Thorson, 2017). Narrative transport describes an experience in which the receiver of a story is fully immersed in the story (Dessart, 2018). Transportation into narratives is designed to elicit a strong emotional response (van Laer et al., 2014) and a sense of identification with the characters in the story (Shen et al. 2017) to enhance the persuasiveness of the story. Three factors affect transportation, namely information, individual, and environmental factors (Zheng et al, 2019).

2.4. The Revised Communication Model for Advertising

In the context of influencer marketing, influencers are not just the face of the brand (persona) but are given the creative freedom to develop and publish advertising messages on their social media (Hudders et al., 2021). As a result, they are empowered to assume the role of author and even legally responsible for advertising messages (Hudders et al., 2021). Similar to Stern (1994), Hudders et al. (2021) distingu three sources in the influencer marketing communication framework: the sponsor, the intermediary (author and bridging partner), and influencer (authishor and persona). They also summarized three storytelling strategies, namely disclosure of personal information, simple storytelling, and drama. Among them, the character should match the message to ensure a good fit. In the context of influencer marketing, it is important to distinguish between an influencer's immediate followers and the wider dissemination of information (e.g., sharing information through brands and influencers' followers)[8-12].

2.5. Consumer's doppelganger effect: Conscious mimicry

This theory describes the phenomenon in which individuals intentionally imitate the consumption behavior of others in order to satisfy their desire to look or behave like the object being mimicked (Ruvio et al, 2013). Imitation behavior can be unconscious or conscious, depending on the situation (Berger, 2016). Whether consciously or unconsciously, imitation plays an important role not only in influencing individual behavioral decisions, but also in imitating the social behavior of subjects and objects (Gueguen, Jacob, and Martin, 2009). It helps imitators and imitated people create harmonious interaction and empathy (Chartrand and Bargh, 1999), generate rapport (Berger, 2016), and express likes (Jacob et al., 2011)[13-24].

3. Business promotion model

3.1. Viral marketing

Viral marketing refers to the marketing mode in which marketers create certain forms of electronic content, such as web pages and video advertisements, for users to use and spread, so as to achieve the purpose of brand building (Ho and Dempsey, 2010). Viral marketing is to use the public's enthusiasm and interpersonal network so that marketing information spreads like a virus, and marketing information is quickly copied and transmitted to tens of thousands, millions of audiences. The vast majority of viral marketing happens unexpectedly. In an unpredictable external environment, viral marketing will be accidentally activated, fermented, and even rapidly outbreak in a viral distribution state. Therefore, the effect of viral marketing has a great relationship with the external environment.

3.2. Word-of-mouth marketing

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) found that active word-of-mouth marketing was twice as effective at acquiring new customers as radio advertising and seven times as effective at print advertising. Social media provides consumers with a platform to generate personalized content. E-word-of-mouth refers to what consumers say about goods or services they have purchased on the Internet (Abubakar et al., 2017). Electronic word-of-mouth can be accessed in any way on social media and has an important impact on consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions (Thompson and Malaviya, 2014). Word of mouth (WOM) refers to a company that offers discounts, giveaways, and payments to attract consumers to generate personal content that is beneficial to the brand. In word-of-mouth marketing strategies, the right influencer is key to word-of-mouth marketing performance (Araujo et al, 2020). Keller (2020) points out

that word-of-mouth marketing in the form of earned media can be one of the most powerful forms of brand communication.

3.3. Social media influencer marketing

Influencer marketing efforts demonstrate the importance of word-of-mouth (WOM) for advertisers and consumers in the decision-making process. Influencers are often considered cost-effective, convenient commercial content providers that target a brand's target audience directly. As a result, companies can benefit from the unique talent of influencers to create relevant branded content and build a large and dedicated follower base. Influencer marketing refers to the marketing model in which social media influencers with large followers sell products to users (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Campbells and Grimm 2019). Since influencers typically post personal content related to products as ordinary consumers, influencer content is perceived by consumers as more authentic and acceptable than traditional advertising (Kowalczyk and Pounders, 2016). Hearn and Schoenhoff (2016) argue that social media influencers are not only able to generate social media content to help businesses market, but also build and market personal brands to gain more celebrity capital. In general, social media influencers are a synthesis of producers and products.

In terms of corporate marketing, companies can use the influencer's homepage as a channel to communicate with consumers through long-term cooperation with influencers (Gannon and Prothero 2018). In this virtual brand community built around social media influencers, consumers will share their most authentic product opinions and participate in product design with influencers and companies to achieve the purpose of co-creation (Hong and Minor, 2014). Effective endorsers are often perceived as attractive, possess expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness, and exhibit some form of consistency between products and endorsers (Wilson and Sherrell 1993). Social media influencers increase credibility compared to traditional endorsers. Because they authentically talk about the brand in a real media environment, and the endorsers speak scripted lines.

When it comes to personal brand marketing, influencers not only need to consistently generate engaging, creative, and authentic personal content to attract social media users, but they also need to constantly engage with consumers in content and conversation. This requires social media influencers to be standing out and fit in. On the one hand, this requires influencers to be different and quickly recognizable by others (Parmentier, Fischer, and Reuber, 2013). On the other hand, this requires influencers to listen to consumers and continuously improve and publish content that meets consumer expectations. Interacting directly with consumers on a personal homepage can establish a more intimate connection with consumers and also help consumers further accumulate celebrity capital (Brooks et al. 2021). When it comes to interactions between influencers and followers, influencers not only engage with followers regularly and generate useful content that attracts followers, but also engage followers in the co-authoring of their content or strategy (Abidin, 2015). Through the process of cumulative interaction and/or content co-creation, followers often develop a lasting attachment to influencers (Lou and Yuan, 2019)[25-31].

4. The important role in social media marketing -- social media influencer

Opinion leaders refer to individuals with extensive interpersonal relationships and high influence (Weimann, 1994). Although this concept does not come into being with the development of social media, opinion leaders play an increasingly important role in marketing people's purchase decisions. In the context of social media, opinion leaders with high influence are also known as social media influencers. Influencers focus on attracting attention in social media to build a virtual community with high loyalty and thereby build celebrity capital (Brooks et al. 2021). Berne-Manero and Marzo Navarro (2020) divided social media influencers into five levels according to the number of followers and emphasized that social media influencers refer to those social media users with at least 1000 followers. The more followers an influencer has, the more influence an influencer may have on online users.

The process of celebrities gaining influence is mainly divided into three stages: generative practices, collaborative practices, and evaluative practices (Brooks et al. 2021). In the generative practices stage, influencers attract the attention of users by generating content on social media and are subscribed to by users to accumulate influence. In the collaborative practices stage, influencers start collaborating with followers to produce more creative, engaging, and quality content. This kind of content is mined by advertising practitioners and has formed a new commercial promotion mode. Influencer content is becoming a three-way collaboration between influencers, followers, and advertisers. In the evaluative

practices stage, advertising practitioners and businesses evaluate influencers' marketing performance through the amount of money spent by online community members and the breadth of social media outreach.

Traditional celebrities are usually celebrities or public figures who have gained fame or popularity through traditional media. Social media influencers gain high visibility by creating engaging personalities on social media and creating viral content (Garcia 2017). Influencers are considered more credible than celebrities when it comes to influencing the buying behavior of their followers. Because the former defines themselves as ordinary people who are passionate about life, their product reviews are perceived by followers as more authentic and relatable (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017)[32-40].

5. Measurement of social media marketing performance

We divide the measurement of social media marketing performance into two main aspects: purchasing behavior and social media engagement behavior. The measurement method of purchasing behavior mainly includes consumers' willingness to purchase and actual consumption behavior. Spears and Singh (2004) define purchase intention as "a conscious plan by which individuals make an effort to purchase a brand." Advertisers and academics often use purchase intent to assess customer perception of a product (Spears and Singh 2004). Consumer attitudes towar advertising and branding, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and/or brand awareness influence their purchase intent (Alhabash et al, 2015). This is also the most direct measurement of social media marketing.

There are three levels of social media engagement: consumption, contribution, and creation (Muntinga, Moorman andd Smit, 2011). Consumption is the lowest level of social media participation behavior, which refers to watching or reading the content published by others. The specific measurement index is the number of times of playing or watching social media content. Contributions are when users post content or engage in interactions on social media platforms. Likes, which are somewhere between consuming and contributing, are a lower-level engagement behavior that indicates a positive attitude towards content. On social media, liking is a classic act of self-expression that helps consumers maintain and create online social capital (Ellison et al., 2007).

Comments are an emotional act of contribution, involving the interaction between users and users, users and enterprises. At the same time, based on the text content posted by the user, the user can be triggered to off-topic thinking, triggering the generation of more creative works. Sabate et al. (2014) looked at the drivers associated with advertising and found that the richness of content (images and videos) and the carefully chosen timing of posting increase the number of likes and comments. Creation is the highest level of social media behavior, and the primary measure is the number and frequency of content posted concerning the brand or individual influencer. The core of viral dissemination of social media content is the number of times posts are shared (Tellis et al., 2019). Positive self-presentation is an important driver of users' interactions with brands on social media (Marder et al 2016).

Therefore, the number of shares is also a crucial metric. The emotional aspect of content is a key driver of content sharing (Heath et al., 2001), and users on social networks are more likely to share emotional content because it deepens their social bonds (Kay, Mulcahy, and Parkinson, 2020). Advertising content related to brand personalities – such as humor and emotion – is associated with higher levels of consumer engagement (likes, comments, shares) than direct messaging content (Lee et al 2018). Nonprofit brands get more online brand endorsements (likes, comments, shares, creations) from consumers than for-profit brands because they help users present a warm self-image to their friends (Bernritter et al 2016)[41-50].

6. Factors affecting the performance of social media marketing

Researchers divide content features into objective features and subjective features (Han, Lappas, and Sabnis, 2020). Objective features refer to easily identifiable features that are immediately measured, including hashtags, hyperlinks, text, images, videos, etc. (Suh et al., 2010; Berger and Milkman, 2012). Subjective features that require users to understand by reading or watching, such as emotions, opinions, facts, humor, etc. (Hansen et al., 2011; Molyneux, 2015).

Title. In the process of audience search, the title is an important factor for the audience's initial evaluation of social media content. At present, titles that engage audiences have two main aspects: on the one hand, the title can truthfully confess social media content, and on the other hand, the title can be

sufficiently engaging (Hung et al., 2009).

Role identification and role types. In media, people are more likely to empathize with characters who are similar to their own identities and swap identities with story characters to fit into the story (Vorderer and Klimmt, 2004). Animal and human characters are the two main categories of characters in social media content. Animal characters are not conducive to people's sense of identity with the characters, but they are easier to narrate because animal characters are more likely to stimulate consumers' heuristic thinking than to get lost in the story (Dessart, 2016). Therefore, when the presence of animals reduces the identification of the character, consumers will have a negative opinion of the brand (Dessart, 2016).

The number and characteristics of followers. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) examined the impact of Instagram influencers' follower count and product differences on brand attitudes. They concluded that the number of followers, the influencer's "followers/followees ratio," and product type should be considered when developing an influencer marketing strategy. Influencers are content creators who have amassed a large following. The number of followers is the most direct measure of an influencer's influence (Jin and Phua, 2014). The larger the number of followers a social media influencer has, the wider the reach of the influencer's content, and the greater the social impact it creates (Romero et al., 2011). Meanwhile, followers of social media influencers share the same hobbies such as beauty, fitness, and more. Marketers can select social media influencers to assist enterprises in marketing according to their target consumer groups. This can not only improve marketing efficiency but also save marketing costs.

Consistency (Product-Influencers). While highly popular influencers can reach a wider audience, they are not the only factor. A good match between influencers and brands can not only improve the image of influencers but also improve the brand attitude and purchase intention of consumers (Breves et al., 2019; Kim and Kim, 2021). The characteristics of the target audience and the image of the influencer are two important factors. First of all, the influencer's followers are the same group as the brand's target consumer group. Such influencers can have a certain voice in the target consumer group and influence consumers' brand attitudes and purchasing decisions (Lee and Eastin, 2020). Second, influencers should be consistent with the brand in terms of image, values, etc. As the endorser of the brand, such influencers are less likely to be mistaken by consumers as influencers who participate in brand promotion in order to get paid (Kim and Kim 2020). At the same time, Breves et al. (2019) also proved that fit influencers, as brand endorsers, can better initiate positive consumer reactions.

Influencer Credibility. The credibility of the communicator or source of information is an important factor in its persuasiveness. Giffin and Kim (1967) use the credibility of information sources to measure the impact of information sources on the effectiveness of persuasive information. Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) propose two determinants of the credibility of information sources: expertise and trustworthiness. Source expertise is the ability or qualification of the disseminator to master the source, including the knowledge or skills of the source (McCroskey 1966). The credibility of a source of information is related to the recipient's opinion of whether the source is honest, sincere, or true (Giffin and Kim, 1967).

Personal pronouns. In advertising discourse, the use of personal pronouns to narrate advertising helps build images and relationships (Fairclough, 2001). In particular, the use of the first person not only contributes to a vivid and vivid image of the product but also contributes to the construction of a clear consumer image (Cook, 2001). The second person refers to consumers who actively pull other consumers into the advertising conversation, thereby helping to create a simulated communication environment that facilitates direct relationships (Fairclough, 1989). Third-person storytelling may grab consumers' attention and achieve unexpected substantive effects (Chang et al., 2018).

Advertising disclosure. Ad disclosure does not always trigger negative consumer sentiment (Van Dam and Van Reijmersdal, 2019; Hwang and Jeong 2016). When an intimate connection has been established between followers and influencers, influencers disclosing ads in generated content can have a positive impact on brands. In particular, followers perceive influencers and brands as trustworthy (De Veirman and Hudders, 2020).

Interpersonal closeness. Consumers tend to take into account the views of those with whom they have a close relationship when making decisions (Brown and Reingen, 1987). Interpersonal Closeness (IC) refers to the sense of connectedness resulting from the perceived emotion, cognition, and behavioral overlap between two people (Dibble, Levine, and Park, 2012). Low IC activates the motivation for self-improvement. In this relationship, people are more inclined to convey positive messages. What high IC activates is the motivation to protect others. In this context, people are more inclined to convey negative

messages (Dubois, Bonezzi, and De Angelis, 2016)[51-64].

7. Future research

7.1. Measurement Methods - Computer Science

With the development of computer technology, the tiny details in the text, video, and audio can be more easily detected by researchers, such as the development of storylines in video files, changes in characters' expressions, and fluctuations in characters' emotions. And, combined with advanced computer hardware equipment, we can monitor consumers' physiological changes in real-time, such as heart rate, EEG, eye tracking, etc. These physiological characteristics can truly reflect the automatic consumer response to advertising or social media content. This measurement model can more directly help researchers find clues between video elements and consumer responses. This not only improves the efficiency of commercial research but also enriches the relevant variables of video research.

7.2. To explore the optimal influencer marketing scheme in different life cycles of enterprises

Existing research is based on the number of followers, dividing influencers into five types, which are also five stages of growth. Among them, the higher the number of followers, the more likes or comments the influencer gets (Freberg et al 2011; Kusumasondjaja and Tjiptono 2019). However, branded content presented by micro-influencers is considered more authentic and credible than influencers with large followings. In future research, we can integrate the enterprise life cycle and influencer types into the same research framework to explore the optimal influencer marketing strategy of the enterprise in different life cycles.

7.3. Discuss followers' attitudes toward social media marketing from different cultural backgrounds

Existing research mainly focuses on a single cultural context, such as the American market, the European market, the Asian market, etc. We believe that social media is a widely disseminated and multicultural communication platform. Studying the habits of social media users in different cultural contexts is essential for cross-cultural social media marketing. Only by studying the consumption habits of social media users in different cultural contexts can multinational brands adopt targeted social media marketing strategies. In addition, influencers can have a wider range of celebrity capital, such as followers spread across the globe.

7.4. The effect of the language style of commercially sponsored posts on the attitude of followers

When a commercial brand sponsors an influencer to publish content, the language style of the influencer's content can be controlled by the brand or influencer. Followers are very sensitive to changes in the language style of influencer content. Future research could attempt to address the impact of different language styles (brand vs influencer) on influencer attitudes (attitude to brand vs. attitude to influencers).

7.5. The effect of mutual imitation between SMIs on the attitude of followers

Imitation occurs not only between followers and influencers, followers and followers but also among influencers. When an influencer's generated content doesn't have the desired marketing effect, the influencer may choose to imitate other influencer styles to boost their celebrity capital. This imitation can lead to the negative effect of the influencer's loss of uniqueness and may also help to discover shortcuts in content creation. Future research could focus on finding a balance between this contradiction to guide influencers' brand influence strategies. At the same time, influencers can have SMIs with different expertise (i.e. beauty influencers, fashion influencers, etc.) depending on the interest groups they focus on. In the future, we can also explore which types of influencers are most sensitive to influencer imitation behavior. When this type of influencer produces negative news because of imitating others, what remedial measures should the influencer take?[65-74]

8. Conclusion

We already need to pay attention to the fact that social media is just a tool, disrupting the way we

used to send information. Although the focus of researchers has now shifted to the field of social media, there are still many interesting research questions that we have not explored. In the field of marketing, how social media leads to better marketing performance is already where energy needs to be invested in the future. Finally, marketing practitioners and experts should still be wary of the development of science and technology that will bring more surprises in the future.

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