

Exploring the Mechanism of Developing Sharing Intention on Snapchat: The Role of Social Media Influencers

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To exploit the enormous number of social media users, firms are using influencer marketing –the use of third-party influencers to promote their products and services on social media. Influencers can shape attitudes and behaviours by establishing intimate relationships with their followers and present themselves as authentic. One of the goals of influencer marketing is to create positive word of mouth and encourage the influencer’s followers to share their content. The shared content on social media is passed along through numerous connected users within and between social networks, eventually leading to critical mass. This generates brand awareness, free online exposure, and increase their endorsements effectiveness.

This study is focused on the Saudi Arabian context, which strongly relies on social media influencers to promote and disseminate brand and product information among consumers. One of the favoured social platforms used by influencers is Snapchat. As of January 2021, Saudi Arabia had the biggest Snapchat audience reach in the world, reaching 71.4% of the population (Statista, 2021). Despite this enormous percentage of reach, Snapchat’s implications for marketers remain unclear. Although Snapchat relies heavily on the concept of sharing content among its users, how to elicit consumers’ intentions to share influencers content has received limited attention. Marketers need to understand how to trigger sharing behaviours among influencers followers in order to benefit from this massive penetration.

The literature on influencer marketing has identified three focal factors for persuasive influencer campaigns to occur: personal attributes’ of influencers; content attributes; and audience personal attributes. Yet, they are usually studied in isolation. Based on the Communication-Persuasion Matrix (McGuire, 2001), we argue that the influencer, content, and audience factors are all equally important in affecting the effectiveness of influencer campaigns. In addition, previous research did not consider the role of consumers’ attempts to verify the factuality of what influencers claim and how it might possibly moderate their intention to share. Moreover, we argue that influencers’ authenticity and ability to form parasocial-relationships with their followers mediates the process of sharing behaviour. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the mechanism through which influencers promote sharing behaviour.

Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974), the constructs of the study are organized in a way that the influencer, content, and audience factors (stimulus) impact perceptions of authenticity, cultivating experiences of parasocial-relationships (organism) and eventually bring about changes in behavioural dispositions of the followers (response). Methodologically, this study adopts a pragmatic stance and an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design, including two stages of data collection and analysis. In the first stage, an exploratory study was conducted with 21 active followers of social media influencers. Thematic analysis was employed using NVivo 12. Based on the exploratory findings, the initial conceptual model has been updated and refined. In the second stage, utilising an online survey, structural equation modelling (SEM) via AMOS will be used to test the research hypotheses. Practical and theoretical implications will be provided.

Keywords: social media, influencers, snapchat

References

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