Is FOMO the new promo?

FOMO or the "Fear of Missing Out" has always been prevalent, but ever since the introduction of social media, the constant influx of pictures and live updates of people having fun, going to events, and simply just *doing things* has made even the most introverted people susceptible to this phenomenon known as FOMO.

So what does this have to do with marketing in the modern age? Well that's easy: *everything*.

In the digital age, capturing and retaining audience attention is crucial for brands seeking to stand out in a crowded and oversaturated marketplace. Ephemeral content, characterized by its temporary nature, creates a sense of urgency and exclusivity, making it a valuable resource for brands looking to capture audience interest and drive engagement.

> *...this sense of urgency created by the ephemeral content prompts higher engagement rates as users are more likely to interact with content that feels immediate and limited.*

Ephemeral marketing as a whole involves creating short-lived content that is only available for a brief period (typically 24 hours). The most common examples of this type of content would be anything shared on Instagram stories, Snapchat campaigns, and limited deals and offerings.

What are the benefits of ephemeral marketing?

While there are many benefits to a business implementing ephemeral content into their marketing toolbox, the most important ones (the ones that will affect conversions - and revenue –

the most) are the authenticity of ephemeral content, the higher engagement rates, the FOMO effect mentioned earlier, and the increased brand awareness.

Authenticity. Ephemeral content is perceived as more authentic to consumers than other types of marketing. This is due to the spontaneity and unfiltered nature of the content. When a business posts authentic, unedited content that provides a glimpse into their daily operations or showcases customer testimonials, businesses can humanize their brand and establish a sense of trust with their audience.

Engagement. When users believe they may miss out on a deal or a sneak peek if they don't click on an Instagram or Snapchat story, they're going to be much more likely to stay engaged with that account and many may even turn post notifications on. If an organization frequently posts ephemeral content that maintains an equal ratio of both insider information and promotions, users are going to want to be in the know and, as a result, regularly engage with the posts. Additionally, organizations can take advantage of all the interactive features included on most social media platforms and create polls for their viewers to take part in or have a question box on the post for customers to respond to. These interactive features provide followers, customers, and potential customers with a direct avenue for engagement. Moreover, this sense of urgency created by the ephemeral content prompts higher engagement rates as users are more likely to interact with content that feels immediate and limited.

FOMO effect. This "Fear of Missing Out" is one of the biggest motivators for users to engage and keep up with ephemeral content. This is because frequent ephemeral content gives the impression that exclusive offers and deals could happen at any time, so audiences engage with the content in order to avoid missing out. Furthermore, by creating interactive and shareable content that

encourages users to tag their friends or participate in challenges, businesses can tap into this social pressure to boost brand awareness and engagement.

Increased brand awareness. By consistently posting and sharing content, brands can increase their visibility and awareness among their target audience. Unlike official/permanent posts that, when posted too frequently, run the risk of clogging up a user's feed and inciting brand wearout, ephemeral posts are much more palatable in large amounts, making them the perfect device for staying top-of mind in brands' target audiences. Moreover, across the studies, they find that making content ephemeral increases attention allocation, prolongs voluntary viewing time, and magnifies focus on relevant information.[1] Ephemeral content helps audiences focus on what an organization is trying to promote and keeps them coming back for more, heightening their awareness and retention with each view.

Who is the target audience for ephemeral marketing and content?

While ephemeral marketing is usually thought to be for younger, more digitally proficient people, older adults can still be a target audience for this type of marketing. Many older adults use social media and are comfortable with technology, so they can be reached through ephemeral content. Additionally, older adults often have more money to spend/disposable income and are willing to buy products and services that meet their needs and interests. By creating ephemeral content that older adults can relate to and enjoy, businesses can engage this group effectively, leading to more people knowing about their brand and buying their products.

How can ephemeral content be implemented?

While many marketing tactics are good in theory, actually implementing them is a whole other beast. Fortunately, ephemeral marketing is one of the easiest strategies for a brand to implement. Compared to traditional marketing

Figure 1: Ephemeral content increases attention allocation[1]
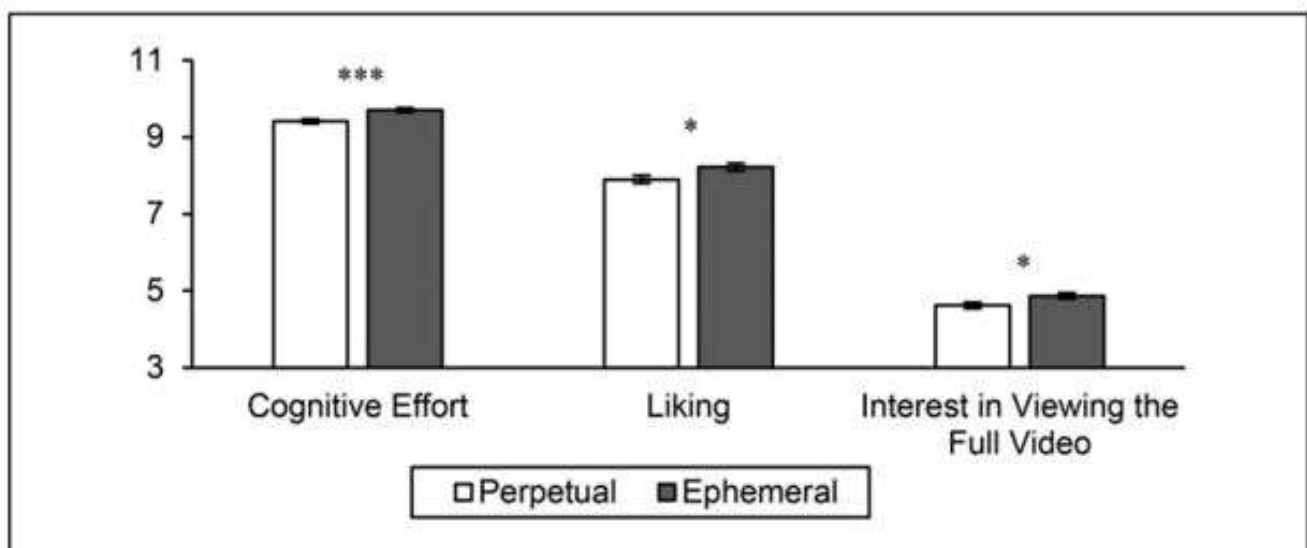
[1] Uri Barnea, Robert J. Meyer, and Gideon Nave. "The Effects of Content Ephemerality on Information Processing." Journal of Marketing Research (JMR) 60, no. 4 (August 2023): 750–66. doi:10.1177/00222437221131047.

strategies, ephemeral marketing requires less investment in terms of production and distribution, allowing brands to quickly create and share content in real-time. This agility enables brands to capitalize on emerging trends and engage with their audience in a more immediate and relevant manner, setting them apart from competitors who may be slower to adapt. Therefore, in order to implement this strategy, the two most important resources needed by an organization are simply: agility and a little creativity.

As for actionable examples, there are a couple guidelines companies should use when executing ephemeral marketing. Building off of the creativity aspect of the strategy, when creating ephemeral content, brands need to **ensure their content is compelling enough to warrant users' attention**. The content should not only be visually appealing, but also relevant to the brand image and to the target audience. If too much irrelevant/trite content is being frequently posted on an organization's Instagram story, their followers are eventually going to stop watching them at all. Even though the viewing time can be as short as ten seconds, marketers need to make sure they make those ten seconds count. On the same coin, organizations need to make sure they are catering to consumers' diminishing attention span. With ever-shortening social media video run-times, television commercials, and songs, brands must ensure that they get as much information as possible into as short of a time period as possible in order to ensure that users aren't skipping past their content before they've heard, seen, or read what the organization is trying to convey. While this may sound like a negative, this is actually quite beneficial for companies. By creating shorter videos or simpler ephemeral content, brands are able to spend less time and resources on their advertisements and still receive the same attention. Short and sweet is the key to consumers' hearts in the modern world and ephemeral content capitalizes on that more than any other marketing strategy.

Likewise, brands need to ensure they are **getting the most out of their use of stories and utilizing all of the available features**. Almost every social media platform is now geared towards businesses and have many features made specifically to facilitate business operations. If an organization wants to increase brand awareness and engagement, then using the polls or question feature on Instagram stories is an incredibly easy way to encourage action and involvement. If an organization is wanting to incite excitement, then they can post short teasers on their stories with a link attached to raise engagement on both their social media account and their website. If an organization wants to strengthen their relationship with their viewers then they can show behind-the-scenes pictures and videos that can make the brand seem more transparent and trustworthy. Having said that, Instagram stories are merely one way an organization can carry out ephemeral marketing. Another option is for brands to create Snapchat filters that can not only promote the brand, but also engage audiences in a fun and interactive way. Technology has come a long way and is improving each and every day, being at the forefront of advancement is the best way to ensure one's organization will prosper.

Another way brands can take advantage of ephemeral marketing is by **partnering with influencers and/or celebrities and offering exclusive deals**. A significant benefit to implementing ephemeral content is the perceived authenticity it fosters for a brand. Influencers also amass a notable amount of authenticity, so when a brand combines these two strategies, they are able to not only cultivate trust in their product or service, but also create a sense of excitement that prompts engagement, shares, likes, and overall increased brand awareness. Additionally, promotions and offerings that only last a short period are almost guaranteed to create buzz that keeps people talking about a brand and, more importantly, keeps them coming back to make sure they aren't missing out on any deals or special

promotions. However, organizations must be aware of the potential pitfalls that come with any influencer or celebrity endorsements. While partnering with a popular figure for ephemeral marketing is less permanent than other endorsements, there is still always a risk of the celebrity or influencer doing something in their personal life that could generate bad publicity and tarnish any brand currently being endorsed by that person. This, however, can be rectified with the administration of good (and quick) public relations.

How measurable is ephemeral marketing?

Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of social media and online marketing in general is the ease with which marketers are able to collect data and, fortunately, ephemeral content is not exempt from this. Being able to home in on analytics and track how much engagement different types of story posts and limited time offers accumulate is a great way to decipher what kind of content connects the most with an organization's target audience. Furthermore, if an organization is using the poll and question features or even doing a livestream Q&A session, they are able to get real-time answers and feedback that can be used to improve and optimize their business/marketing tactics almost immediately.

How to know if ephemeral marketing is the right fit?

Ephemeral content's fleeting nature creates a sense of urgency and exclusivity, driving immediate action from viewers. This urgency, coupled with the fear of missing out (FOMO), motivates users to engage with the content and take desired actions, such as visiting a website, attending an event, or making a purchase. Additionally, the temporary nature of ephemeral content encourages authenticity and spontaneity, which compels brands to feel less pressure to create polished, highly produced content. This authenticity fosters a deeper connection with the audience, as viewers perceive the content as more genuine and relatable. By leveraging ephemeral content, brands can not only increase engagement and brand awareness but also build a loyal and engaged customer base and community.

Incorporating ephemeral content into one's marketing/social media strategy can be a formidable tool for engaging with audiences in an authentic and meaningful way. Not only is it one of the simpler marketing strategies out there, but it is also effective and a great way to foster meaningful relationships with a target audience and potential target audience. Social media marketing is incredibly cluttered in today's world and organizations have to make sure they are making every effort to stand out and market in ways that make them unique and remain in the minds of users. While ephemeral content may be fleeting in terms of duration, it is lasting in terms of impact.

Key author Information:

Isabella Little

Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing

Analytics and Consulting Track

Texas A&M University | Class of 2024

Email: *isabellalittle@tamu.edu*

LinkedIn: *https://www.linkedin.com/in/isabella-little-842bb2260/*

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