PR and Social Media Individual Assignment

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**Using online “Influencers” is key to the success of new product or brand launches.**

An influencer is a person who has an audience in which he/she has the power to manipulate their decision in purchasing a product or service the influencer is advertising. The influencer has a dedicated following in a certain specialty with whom they interact frequently. The size of their niche's topic determines the extent of their following i.e. the bigger the following, the bigger the brand deal. They're social connection assets that brands may work with to reach their marketing goals. Social media influencers work hard on their preferred social media channels building relationships with their followers. They establish a trust with their followers as they demonstrate their knowledge and experience with a specific product or service. Most brands collaborate with influencers because they have the ability to start trends and persuade their followers to purchase the things they advertise (Geyser, 2021). Influencers have the tools and authority to continuously draw visitors and they may inspire others to grow their social reach. They could be anyone from a blogger to a celebrity to an online entrepreneur, and they use a niche to get global recognition (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021). Social media has become so powerful over the last 10 years and it is constantly growing. In 2019, We Are Social reported that 3.484 billion people (45% of the world’s population) are daily social media users (Geyser, 2021).

What qualifies you as an influencer? How many followers do I need to become an influencer? Well, there’s no real answer to that as there are different levels of influencers, from ‘macro-influencers’ and ‘micro-influencers’. ‘Macro-influencers’ are the best of the best influencers. The ones with millions of followers. Most ‘macro-influencers’ are celebrities who haven’t gained their following solely on social media but there are a selected few ‘macro-influencers’ who have gained their following on social media by posting content that appeals to millions of people. And these are the influencers that companies wish to work with as they are posting on social media in the attempt to influence as many people as possible. However, on the other hand, some micro-influencers can have a huge impact on their particular niche's following. They might be extremely beneficial to a company providing a product aimed towards that market (Geyser, 2021). Micro influencers have fewer followers, but they interact with them and push businesses that are relevant to their personal interests. They are usually subject matter experts who create high-quality content that reach the suitable target audience. As a result, they are regarded as more trustworthy and credible (Hand, 2020).

Without a doubt, Instagram is the leading social media platform for influencers to advertise products. Most top brands collaborate with Instagram influencers to advertise a new product or service. It is important for brands to choose the suitable influencer to market for them. The three R’s is an important strategy for brands to follow before choosing an influencer to advertise for them. These three R’s are: Relevance, Reach, and Resonance. Relevance refers to choosing a suitable influencer that has built a relationship with an audience relevant to the business and industry. The influencer must appeal to the buyer persona the organisation has created for their new product/service and must actively be posting content related to the business industry i.e. a fashion blogger is relevant to clothing brands. The business must take into consideration demographic characteristics such as age and gender. Reach relates to the number of people the company wants to reach. So, it is important for the company to choose an influencer with a similar number of followers to the number of target audience in mind by the business. Resonance refers to the level of engagement that an influencer may generate with a target audience that is comparable to the business. An influencer with 1000 followers could be more beneficial to work with than an influencer with 50,000 followers. This is because some influencers with big following have a lot of inactive social media users. ‘Micro-influencers’ are usually more passionate about the products, services, and companies they advertise, they appear to be more credible and have more devoted fans who engage more (ImarComms, 2021).

It is important for companies to measure the success of their influencer marketing campaign. It is quite difficult to measure influencer marketing. Unlike other marketing approaches, there is no easy way to determine whether this marketing strategy is successful or not. Many firms are still unsure about the metrics involved in this new sort of advertising. The business must analyse each post the influencer has uploaded to whatever social media platform they operate on. The statistics that should be analysed are likes, comments, shares, clicks, etc. Instagram provide ‘post insights’ for influencers to get a breakdown of the interaction of their followers with their post. Businesses can also analyse how many people were trying to access their website over a certain period after the post was uploaded by the influencer (Forbes, 2020).

A recent successful influencer marketing campaign was by British online fashion and cosmetic retailer, ASOS. ASOS did a campaign with 29 ‘micro-influencers’ in 2018 and name it #AsSeenOnMe, a clever twist to their brand name ‘As Seen On Screen’. Each of the 29 influencers have a unique look that helps them to stand out, meaning they reach a wider audience of different interests. There are so many distinct styles to pick from among the influencers giving every ASOS customer the perfect opportunity to find a style that suits them. This campaign works because customers trust the material as it comes from actual, stylish individuals, rather than the brand itself (Keyhole, 2020). This campaign proved successful with every Instagram post tagged #AsSeenOnMe averaged 10,000 likes. Sales for the company also grew 28% in 2018 from 2017 (SMG, 2018).

Although there are many successful influencer marketing campaigns, there are also many unsuccessful campaigns. Influencer marketing is relatively new to us all and there is a lot of uncertainty around it. Taking part in an influencer marketing campaign by no means doesn’t come without risks. One influencer marketing campaign that failed miserably was Pepsi’s collaboration with Kendall Jenner in 2017. In this campaign they attempted to end police brutality. Pepsi created a commercial to highlight the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement. In the ad there is a protest for ‘BLM’ while Jenner is taking part in a photoshoot unrelated to the movement. She proceeds to leave her photoshoot and approach the police officers who are patrolling the crowd. Jenner then hands a can of Pepsi to one police officer. The can of Pepsi symbolises peace and ends police brutality. This campaign failed badly making Pepsi to cancel the ad. One tweet from Martin Luther King Jr’s daughter, Bernice King, stood out from all the backlash of the ad. King tweeted a photo of her father at an American Civil Rights movement approaching a police officer with a sarcastic caption, ‘If only Daddy would have known about the power of #Pepsi.’ This failed campaign shows the importance for companies to choose the most suitable influencer for their campaign. One who can send out the intended message in a professional way (Kubbernus, 2020).

There are many pros for companies to take part in an influencer marketing campaign and now I am going to analyse them. An advantage of influencer marketing is that it helps the company reach a relevant audience. I have already discussed this above relating to the three R’s. Another advantage is that it helps the business build brand loyalty and trust among consumers. Building trust is difficult and takes some time. By working with an influencer who promotes brands for the company to their audience who trust them will help quicken the process. The influencer’s followers are going to trust them and may opt in to purchasing the product/service. It is important to get an influencer who already has built their own reputation in the company’s industry. Another advantage, which is a major one, is that the costs are significantly less than traditional methods of marketing. ‘Micro-influencers’ don’t cost much to collaborate with as they also want to get their name out. There may even be some influencers that don’t have a significant number of followers and agree to work for no charge (Barker, 2021). Prices of an influencer can vary drastically starting at a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands. But the way the company must look at it is that the bigger the price, the bigger the profit (Pfund, 2019). Collaborating with an influencer saves time for the company’s current marketing team as the influencer can create their own content. This gives the marketing team more tome to concentrate on other projects the business might have in the future (Barker, 2021).

Although collaborating with influencers has proven to be successful up to this point of the assignment, there are also disadvantages to it. One of the main disadvantages is that many influencers have fake followers who have no engagement whatsoever with the content they post. It is very important for companies to look out for this and analyse the influencer’s follower-to-engagement ratio. If this ratio doesn’t look right comparing to the number of followers they have, they could easily be a fake influencer. This means it would be useless to collaborate with them as the business wouldn’t be returning the results and profits, they wished for. Another disadvantage is that there is slowly but surely becoming an overload of influencers on social media. This will quickly make people to become less interested in the content that they are posting as they will be fed up of the amount of advertisement on their feed. It is important for companies to assess this and make sure that they don’t choose an influencer who is constantly posting promotional content (Pfund, 2019).

After analysing the pros and cons of businesses collaborating with influencers to promote new products/services, I have concluded that influencers are a key to success of new products or brand launches. Over 71% of companies who have collaborated with influencers have claimed that they have impacted their company in a positive manner. Most of these businesses would also collaborate with another influencer in another campaign after already experiencing success. 86% of marketers have collaborated with influencers to promote a new product or service within the last year (2019) (Pfund, 2019). Influencer marketing is a two-way street and it is very beneficial for both parties. It benefits the business by generating more sales and profits and reaching a wider audience. It benefits the influencer by getting their name out there and putting them in the running for collaborating with even bigger brands than the precious one. Social media is so powerful, and things can change overnight, whether it is good or bad. The sky is the limit for influencers and their dream collaboration is literally just a click away. Whether a business collaborates with a ‘micro’ or ‘macro-influencer’, I feel it is a marketing strategy that they should experience at least once. It has proven that it works for most organisations and it is the modern way to advertise.

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