

Challenges of social media influencers as marketers



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Social Media Influencers as Marketers: The Pressures of it All

As society grows to be more and more dependent on technology, our attachment to social media has grown. From duck-faced selfies to long winded twitter rants, these social media platforms have become an essential part of day to day life. While the majority of people use their accounts to upload personal photos and communicate with their friends and family, there are people who have seen this dependence on technology as a possible source of income. These people are social media influencers. These influencers must market themselves in order to gain recognition, brand deals, and income. This new form of marketing that social media influencers partake in has been expanding the range of traditional marketing in many ways.

In order to develop an understanding of how the marketing that social media influencers participate in differs from traditional marketing, we must first develop a basic grasp on traditional marketing and how it is defined.

According to marketing-schools. org, “ Traditional marketing is a rather broad category that incorporates many forms of advertising and marketing. It’s the most recognizable types of marketing, encompassing the advertisements that we see and hear every day. Most traditional marketing strategies fall under one of four categories: print, broadcast, direct mail, and telephone” (Traditional Marketing, 2012). With print being the oldest form of traditional marketing, many people incorporate newspaper and magazine advertisements with marketing. However, traditional marketing has grown with the growth in technology. There is also direct mail marketing which involves using printed materials such as postcards, fliers and brochures as a

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form of marketing. With the invention of the radio, marketing jumped onto that platform with radio programs being supported by on-air advertisements. When televisions began to pop up in the homes of families worldwide, forms of marketing began to spread on that platform with commercials and sponsored messages. Traditional marketing has found a way to weave a way into the lives of society, and marketing has evolved with the new developments in technology.

Before it comes to understanding social media influencers as marketers, it is crucial to understand what it means to be a social media influencer. A social media Influencer is an online user on a social media platform who has established credibility in a specific industry. Social media influencers have access to large audiences and can persuade others by virtue of their authenticity and reach. Some examples of social media influencers include Jeffree Starr, Travis Bryant, Kylie Jenner, Natalia Taylor, James Charles, Bella Thorne, and Gabbie Hanna. All of these people have over 100, 000 followers on Instagram and have successfully marketed themselves. They make money from posting on social media. These influencers are not limited to one platform, and often have a presence on multiple social media sites. These people have effectively marketed themselves in order to generate a following and an income.

If an influencer has successfully marketed themselves enough to develop a following, they may be offered a brand deal. Brand deals usually show up on Instagram or on YouTube. It is when a brand pays an influencer to promote their product. In a Forbes article, entitled *Understanding Influencer*

Marketing and Why It Is So Effective, Joel Mathew states that “ influencers <https://assignbuster.com/challenges-of-social-media-influencers-as-marketers/>

operate independently, creating their own content and integrating a company's advertising specifications into it. The influencer is in control of the brand's message" (Mathew, 2018). While these social media influencers do get the opportunity to work with brands, the way that they market the product plays a large role in future brand deals. These influencers are constantly marketing themselves, in order to get their names out there, as well as marketing products in order to maximize their income.

Social media marketers often do not market to the broader public. According to another article by Forbes. com, Influencer marketing can be defined as a form of marketing in which focus is placed on specific key individuals rather than the target market as a whole (Forbes. com). Therefore, these influencers market to a specific target audience, which is called target marketing. This form of marketing involves breaking down the market into segments and proceeding to concentrate your marketing efforts specific key segments consisting of the consumers whose needs and desires most closely relate to the product or service that is being advertised. Successfully targeting your marketing strategies can lead to a successful company, bringing in the most profit, the most buyers, and the most future business deals.

Influencers tend to have a specific market reach. Whether they are lifestyle influencers, beauty gurus, food bloggers, etc., and that affects the brand deals that they will be offered. For example, Travis Bryant is an influencer who often discusses fitness and grooming, and therefore he often has brand deals with shaving companies, fitness brands or skin care lines. James

Charles, on the other hand, is a beauty influencer, and therefore has brand
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deals with make-up lines. You would not see Travis Bryant having a brand deal with a make-up company, and you would not see James Charles promoting fitness supplements. Because of the audience that each youtuber reaches, their marketing opportunities will be unique to them. Often times, businesses that reach out to social media influencers will take into account age, gender, and racial demographics of the influencer's audience.

There is an astounding amount of pressure on media influencers, however, as brands often pressure them to maintain a certain image. This is touched upon in Crystal Abidin's writing, *#In\$tagLam: Instagram as a Repository of Taste, a Burgeoning Marketplace, a War of Eyeballs*, where she shares the story of an influencer being pressured to fit a certain mold. "However, what is excluded from bloggers' Instagram is as important as what is emphasized. For instance, Linda's managers advised her not to publish photographs of her clubbing escapades. This was to maintain her 'role model' image to her under-18 followers to whom she frequently markets clothing and affordable cosmetics" (Abidin, 2014). While this certainly is not an uncommon occurrence for many influencers, it can most definitely become overwhelming and overbearing.

Many social media influencers have used their platforms to discuss how they can sometimes experience anxiety and depression due to the tremendous amount of pressure they feel from not only their audience but the brands that they market for. In a video that Natalia Taylor posted on her YouTube channel, she discusses how almost every other influencer experiences some form of mental illness. Stating "they all [YouTubers] have done something one way or another to compromise who they are as a person for their

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YouTube channel” (Taylor, 2019). She then goes on to discuss how no one would ever suspect that these influencers are struggling, because it is not often talked about. This is a prime example to show how there is a remarkable amount of pressure being put on these influencers from companies.

According to a study by Variety Magazine (2014), six out of ten influencers for 13-18-year-olds are YouTubers. With that in mind, a good number of the products being marketed on YouTube are geared towards the younger generation. Marketing, however, is not the only reason that statistic is important to take note of. According to Wilma Westenberg, in her master thesis, *The influence of YouTubers on teenagers: A descriptive research about the role YouTubers play in the life of their teenage viewers*, she comments on the impact these social media influencers have on the lives of their viewers. She states, “ YouTubers do have influence on the behavior of teenagers, of which teenagers and their parents are unaware” (Westenberg, 2016). Not that this specific form of pressure is negative, as it is important for influencers to recognize the impact that they have, however.

In her book , *Digital Sociology*, Deborah Lupton talks about how technology has shaped the lives of people all around the world. Specifically, she discusses the digital body and the digital self in her 8th chapter, *The Digitised Body/Self*. Lupton states that “ digital software and hardware are becoming part of our identities as they store more data about our experiences, our social relationships and encounters and our bodily functioning” (Lupton, 2015). This is extremely relevant in the world of a

social media influencer, as they are producing so much data daily, as it is their career. Lupton also states that “ from before they are even born, children’s bodies are now frequently represented and monitored by digital technologies, including medical imaging and monitoring devices as well as social media sites, surveillance and self-tracking technologies” (Lupton, 2015). A prime example of this is the children of social media influencers. Kylie Jenner’s daughter, Stormi, was in the public eye from the minute she was born. While she does not yet have her own social media account, she definitely has an online footprint of her own. It most likely would not surprise anyone if in fifteen years Stormi is a social media influencer, participating in brand deals and marketing of her own.

It is a common situation now, where children are born into the world of a social media influencer. While Stormi is one of the most famous influencer babies, there are a dozen other influential children. There is Saint and North West, Max Zuckerberg, Blue Ivy, but those are just the babies. A prime example of a social media marketer who was born into the spotlight is Olivia Jade. She is the daughter of actress Lori Loughlin and fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli. While the family has been under a ton of scrutiny recently due to college admissions fraud, Olivia Jade is still an example of a child of an influencer who developed their own media following. She receives brand deals, and markets to her audience, just like other big-name social media influencers.

In 2019, there is a record of 2.77 billion users on social media, according to statista. com. With 7.7 billion people in the world, that means that there is approximately 36% of the population on social media. That number could be <https://assignbuster.com/challenges-of-social-media-influencers-as-marketers/>

skewed because of overlap, as many people have multiple social media accounts. With that in mind, there are so many people on social media, meaning that there are so many people consuming the information that these social media influencers are producing. These social media influencers play a critical role in forming and shaping the rhetoric regarding social issues in the beauty/lifestyle community such as race and inclusion. Because of this, many people look to social media influencers as role models. All in all, social media influencers can both help (and hurt) companies and consumers and create a genuine dialogue about issues that are relevant to their audience, as they have been gifted with an amazing amount of trust.

With this trust in influence, and with what we know as far as social media influencers as marketers, it may cause people to worry about being manipulated by influencers. Nevertheless, there is a certain layer of professionalism that comes with the profession. While the majority of social media influencers are trustworthy, there are certain instances in which this trust can be broken. It is not always the fault of the influencer, however, and may actually be the fault of the brand that they are trying to market for. There is one particular incident that occurred on YouTube that truly caused a rift in the credibility of influencer as marketers. A company called Kenza Cosmetics hired a group of well known, credible YouTube influencers, and scammed them into participating in a whole other scam of their own.

What had occurred was that this cosmetic brand reached out to influencers, asking them to promote their products, which was a make-up brush set.

Kenza Cosmetics claimed to be having an amazing sale, where all their brush sets were being given out for free, but the customer was expected to pay for <https://assignbuster.com/challenges-of-social-media-influencers-as-marketers/>

shipping. The website stated that these \$60 brush sets were on sale for free, but that there was a one to three-month delivery period. While this may seem too good to be true, which ended up being correct, many big-name influencers fell for this scam. Two of the most influential social media influencers who fell victim to this cosmetics scam were Tana Mongeau and Gabbie Hanna. While Tana was able to get her name disassociated from the situation somehow, Gabbie was not so lucky. If you type “Kenza Cosmetics scam” into the google search bar, the first three video results feature Gabbie Hanna in the thumbnail. With titles like “Gabbie Hanna Blames Her Fans For Kenza Cosmetic Scam!”, her credibility as a social media marketer has suffered greatly.

With having the responsibility of being a credible marketer, comes taking responsibility for participating in fraudulent promotions. Unfortunately, influencer Gabbie Hanna was not so savvy in doing damage control. Gabbie states that because people ended up getting their brushes, even though they were extremely low quality and came three months later, that this was not a scam. According to her, the company was simply using a marketing tactic, in stating that the brushes were free, as the shipping cost is what they are truly worth. However, there is an issue with this reasoning, as the website clearly states that these brushes are supposedly worth over \$50.00. Even if this was just a marketing tactic gone wrong, as a social media influencer, Gabbie Hanna should have done more research beforehand, and then worked harder on damage control after the fact. Social media influencers are business people in a way, and this was an extremely poor business/marketing move on Gabbie’s part. Since then, more and more

people have been criticizing her for various things. It seems as though her followers have realized that she is not necessarily the more reliable influencer when it comes to marketing reliable brands.

A more well-known incident of social media influencers making marketing mistakes is the infamous Fyre Festival. This was a failed concert / party event that was supposed to be similar to Coachella. Founded by Billy McFarland, CEO of Fyre Media Inc, and rapper Ja Rule, the Fyre Festival's main intention was to promote the company's Fyre app for booking music talent. While this was a colossal fail, and a huge scam, many A-list influencers partook in the marketing for this event by posting an orange square on their social media accounts. Influencers who were involved in this event were Bella Hadid, Kendall Jenner, Emily Ratajkowski, Hailey Baldwin, Alessandra Ambrosio, and more.

Social media influencers have truly changed the game of marketing. While they do still follow some of the more traditional guidelines, they have brought their marketing tactics to new platforms. These influencers are expected to embody their brand at all time, and if they fail to market a product well, it can negatively impact the way that their brand is perceived. While some influencers are born into the public eye, many of them are required to work very hard to get their names out. In terms of the requirements of being a successful social media influencer/marketer, it is crucial that you are a good business person. Not only are you selling your name, but you are also selling the name of other brands. While this can sometimes lead to immense pressure, many influencers love what they do and would not trade it for anything. Practically everyone is exposed to social

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media platforms in today's day and age, so it is not surprising to see that marketing has become incorporated into the world of social media, as marketers are seeking out the most revenue and business opportunities.

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