



Understanding The Dynamics of Influencer Marketing

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“A brand is no longer what [brand owners] tell the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is”

- Scott Cook

In recent years, there has been a sea change in advertisement models. We have seen advertising methods evolve from traditional TV and print media ads to social media platforms where products of a brand get the attention of the right audience by the click of a button.

With several brands wrestling for the consumers attention, each brand has had to come up with a strategy that puts its product up front, or at least gets the necessary attention from the consuming public to keep it in business, hence the birth of “Brand Influencers”.

Who are Brand Influencers?

These are individuals with large followership or fan base on/off social media platforms, who have the capacity to make customers of their fan base (followership). In other words, these categories of persons utilize their influence on their followership to promote brands and products, and are capable of driving traffic towards a product page or purchase.

With this recent phenomenon, the recurring question amongst business owners and business development personnel is whether the use of brand influencers has had any significant impact on the business.



It will appear that brand influencers or ‘brand ambassadors’ as they are tagged on social media, have made a significant impact on the marketability and patronage of brand’s products. The reason is not far-fetched. Consumers are more likely to patronize or use a brand’s products when a prior user/customer confirms the efficacy or authenticity of the product. In the same manner, a person of repute in whatever strata of the society would easily influence consumers to use the products of a brand amongst others, as consumers have high degree of respect and faith in the choices made by such influencers. Little wonder brand influencers have become an integral part of the marketing budget of brands.

Be that as it may, a brand must take in consideration other factors, such as the type of Brand Influencer that suits the product? The options range from artistes

to actors, models, bloggers, thought leaders, motivational speakers or other kind of celebrities. Other areas of consideration are the marketing strategy, budget and expenditure. In no order, we would address these questions and provide our answers. The questions/concerns of Brand Managers would be discussed under four headings; **Trust, Influence, Image and Connection (TIIC)**.

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This connotes that a brand influencer must possess the capacity and ability to sway the minds of the consuming public in favour of your brand. Although, a brand has to be careful to avoid a mismatch between the product and influencer. For example, Cristiano Ronaldo might be a good pick for a hair care/grooming product or even a sports wear brand but would be a terrible choice for a brand that's trying to promote an Old people's retirement home.

Trust

Brand Influencers are people who are reputable for their knowledge and expertise on a subject matter. They churn out information and/ or graphics through posts on their preferred social

media channels and generate large followings of people who are enthusiastic about the subject matter.

The 'trust' factor works the same way as when a consumer seeks the opinion of a friend or acquaintance before choosing a particular product. Consumers trust third party reviews and are more inclined to try a product out after living vicariously through the influencers' experience. Influencer marketing started making waves when brands noticed that the influencer's effect on the marketability of the product went beyond the 10-15 minutes ads. In recent times, besides the inclusion of influencers in the advertisement of products on TV and print media, brand influencers now weave story line around or dedicate posts to products which they have been paid to advertise on social media.

Influence

The famous Chanel No. 5 perfume was made popular due to the great influence Marilyn Monroe had on members of the consuming public. The perfume became a popular gift item to loved ones amongst other products by Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel. A number of ladies were quick to buy the perfume because it made them 'smell and feel like Marilyn'. This connotes that a brand influencer must possess the capacity and ability to sway the minds of the consuming public in favour of the/a brand. However, a brand has to be careful to avoid



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Image

Brands are known by their goodwill, the perception the consuming public has of a brand goes a long way in affecting its marketability. Enlisting influencers to be part of your campaign means welcoming your brand to the criticism of their public persona. It also means that you are attaching your name to theirs, and vice versa. More often than not, any actions of the influencer that generates negative publicity impacts the brand by association.

In addition, each influencer has a

story of their own—they are real people, after all. When a brand employs a successful person or a well-known star, the brand inherits their story and all that comes with it.

Many brands have severed relationships with influencers in order to distance the brand from certain negative attributes. Sephora and TREsemme recently ended their partnership with Lori Loughlin's daughter, Olivia Jade amidst College Admissions Scandal. Also, several Brands pulled out of their contracts with Chris Brown after news of domestic violence allegations went viral.

Partnering with several influencers at once can save the brand from being defined by what one influencer says or does. With multiple partners, when one influencer darkens the reputation, others can brighten it. Also, if an influencer's actions result in a crisis, others can help

reverse the situation with shareable content to achieve damage control.

Connection

In view of the fact that the main aim of the brand Influencer is to create a connection between the brand and the consuming public, influencers must go the extra mile to connect brands to their relevant target audience. The first set of brand influencers were taken from the entertainment industry and they achieved great success for the brands. A good example is Beyoncé. Back then, if Beyoncé wore a certain brand of make-up or was always photographed drinking a certain brand of Champagne or carrying purses made by a fashion house.

The idea is that the interested consuming public will be swayed towards those brands; and reflect in the brands sales.

Just recently, the gaffe that was the placement of a 'Starbucks coffee cup' in an episode of the Game of Thrones, was reported to drive sales of the product. Although, there was no report on the actual sales, CNBC reported that Starbucks made \$2.3 billion (#1.7 billion) in free advertising. The financial analysis that resulted in this estimate cannot be divorced from the large followership of the Game of Thrones show worldwide. This is the effect of brand influencing on product sales.

Although there has been a decrease in the use of traditional influencers to boost the reputation of brands, owing to different factors, there is however a new trend, of high demand for people who are Micro and Macro-Influencers. Like regular users of brands, these set of influencers have mastered the art of speaking and advocating for brands. Whether it's a paid ad or they are doing it for free samples, these influencers churn out content that consumers can relate to and ultimately achieve the aim of the brand marketing.

Thus, when shopping for the right Brand Influencer, Brand must make sure they pick the one(s) that makes the brand "TIIC".

Protecting your Intellectual Property



The question then is: after all that successful ad campaign or viral video on social media that has got people buzzing about the brand/product, who gets to keep the IP rights in the Ad? We all know that some Ads are easily etched on the memories of the viewers/

consumers and the brand Marketing team might decide to replicate it for other products with entirely different characters or to appeal to a different culture, class or people but with the same concept, plot and even words just to create a sense of belonging.

Also, what happens if the published content is not the creation of the influencer? Brands may not always depend on their content creation team to put out something to influence how people feel towards the brand. Sometimes, the influencer especially bloggers and micro influencers create the content they use for a brand. In these circumstances, the rights in the works rests with the influencer.

It is important to note that IP pitfalls need to be addressed via written agreements, the brand can draw up an agreement to have the rights in the ad, video clip or even a picture vested in the brand solely in exchange for some sort of compensation. Companies need to provide for a clear demarcation of trademark rights which, unlike copyrights stem from use rather than creation. The company needs to take into consideration 3rd party IP rights that may be used in the ad to avoid possible infringement.

Whichever route the brand chooses should depend on how important the ad or campaign is to the promotion of the brand/product's name and goodwill. Also, considering the fact that copyright



laws vary in jurisdictions, both Brands and the Influencers should take into consideration the peculiar clauses in the written agreements that protects their respective rights.

Finally, brands must ensure that the communication in the ads is legal, decent, honest, truthful, respectful and mindful of Nigeria's culture, with a high sense of social responsibility. The ads should also avoid any iota of misinformation or exaggeration that attracts penalty under the relevant policies and guidelines.

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