Influencer Marketing: How Generation Z is Sparking a Fashion Marketing Revolution Kelsy Letko University of South Florida April 2019

Introduction

Influencer marketing in the fashion industry, especially for Generation Z consumers (born 1996 and later)

to the more traditional, print methods of advertising that were commonly used by brands in previous years, social media marketing allows for constant change, updates, and trends in fashion, a shift discussed by Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) in their research.

Marketing within fashion is a very creative and fast-paced activity,

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offer contracts/agreements to the influencer that include payment details and posting guidelines. Influencers can be very effective at winning over consumers due to their large followings in a niche market. Influencers are typically paid an average of \$1,000 per every 100,000 followers. Compared to a traditional marketing budget or campaign, employing influencers per post is very affordable for fashion brands. Along with a lower price tag for marketing, influencers typically have the ability to reach a large number of consumers on just one post alone. This is due to the fact that one Instagram post can be seen by many users, regardless of whether or not the user follows the account that initially posted the photo.

A higher sense of authenticity and credibility regarding the products/services being promoted are two more reasons why influencers have become so popular in fashion as well as a variety of other industries such as fitness. In the researchers explain that messages delivered by influencers come across as more authentic and credible, since they come from a fellow consumer rather than an advertiser or business (De Veirman et al., 2017, p. 800). Although consumers are aware that the influencer is being employed by the brand, the fact that one of their role models/icons uses that product or service creates somewhat of a "stamp of approval" in the mind of the consumer.

Influencers have many different focuses and audiences. Micro-influencers have more of a niche market and a smaller audience (about 10,000-100,000 followers) and work especially well for marketing because they have both industry experience and a loyal following. The Instagram user @mikaela.wightman is a great example of a fashion micro-influencer, with 22.3 thousand followers and a history of collaborations with fashion brands like Macy's and H&M. Mikaela developed a following in fashion industry by posting high-quality fashion content, attracting more and more new followers. On the other hand, celebrity influencers are influencers that are

feel strongly about acting as the face of change for issues such as gun control and gender						

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disclosing if a brand is paying them to post or if the post is an ad for the company. Recently, I have noticed that popular influencers are using phrases such as "#ad," "paid partnership," or are including information on whether or not they are partnering with the company which they are posting about. In recent times, many famous celebrity influencers such as Rita Ora have not adhered to these standards, which Bridge details in this article. This poses a legal issue, as consumers need to be fully aware of whether or not an influencer is being paid to promote a product when they go to purchase that product. Companies do not want to be accused of "blindsiding" consumers in this way by getting influencers to give off the image that they are voluntarily promoting the product just because they really like it or the brand.



Figure 1: Example of a paid partnership disclosure from an Instagram fashion influencer

Problem

As influencer marketing continues to grow and evolve with the expansion of social media, it is necessary for fashion brands to grow and adjust with these changes. Fashion companies need to develop strong influencer marketing plans in order to successfully target new and infrequent consumers and gain the highest return on their investment. Along with issues such as Generation Z's connection to social activism and ethical dilemmas present in the "fast

fashion"

 responses, providing me with a valuable basis for analyzing data on influencer marketing from the eyes of Generation Z itself.

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40 and up follow any influencers. Of those that follow fashion influencers, 65% of my

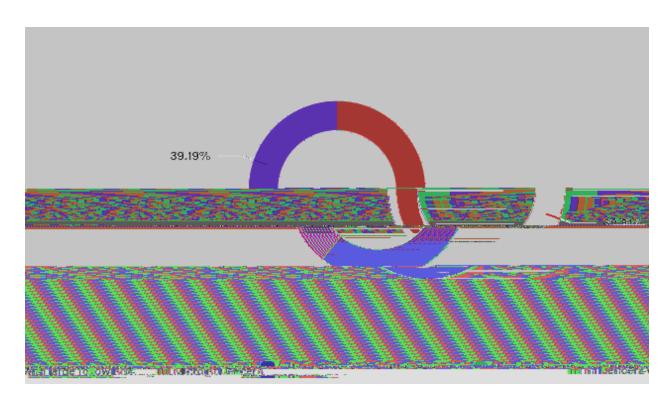


Table 2: A social media influencer is defined as a user on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry. Do you follow any fashion influencers on social media sites?

Large department stores are shown to be favorite places to shop for fashion, as well as online boutiques and retailers. About 15% of respondents listed Macy's as one of their top places to shop for fashion and 12% of respondents shop frequently at Forever 21. Fashion Nova and Pretty Little Thing are two online boutiques that I examined closely in my research that are listed as favorite places to shop, which was exciting for me to see. Other brands geared towards younger consumers such as Urban Outfitters and Charlotte Russe are also listed by respondents as go-to stores for fashion needs.

Siempre Golden

Siempre Golden is an online swimwear and fashion boutique based out of Los Angeles,
California and founded by a young, female entrepreneur named Sophia. The brand is most
popular on Instagram, with a following of 108,000 users. Sophia started designing swimwear at a

young age and successfully built an online following for her brand, attributing much of her success to Instagram influencers who helped her promote her bikinis and brand image to girls all around the world. I interviewed Sophia to hear her story and ask for her opinions on influencer marketing, as she has been in the field for multiple years now. A huge portion of Siempre Golden's success points to influencer marketing: the number one way that the boutique markets

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Figure 2: Siempre Golden's brand ambassador application

By utilizing these marketing programs, Sophia has managed to lift her brand to new heights, landing recent exposure from famous celebrities such as Gigi Hadid, Shay Mitchell, and Jen Selter. These celebrities model Siempre Golden's bikini and festival tops at major events such as Coachella. Siempre Golden has also been featured in magazines such as Vogue, Cosmopolitan, and Seventeen. Most impressively, models in the 2018 Sports Illustrated Swim magazine were wearing Siempre Golden bikinis. Sophia states that "working wiJET Q (a) 4 (j) -2 (or) -7 () -10

boutique, VITAE APPAREL is also a healthy lifestyle brand, promoting fitness and wellness to girls around the globe. VITAE APPAREL is very similar to Siempre Golden in that both brands utilize an influencer marketing program and a brand ambassador program. The brand employs famous Instagram influencers such as Lulu Salvadori (@lululus) and Alexis Bumgarner (@alexisbumgarner) in order to model bikini and workout sets to their huge online followings. VITAE APPAREL's brand ambassador program provides benefits to ambassadors similar to those of Siempre Golden's and is one reason why the brand has grown in both exposure and reach in the past year. To recruit new ambassadors and influencers, the brand utilizes the Instagram "Explore" page to identify users who fit their target profile and direct message these users to inquire about partnering together.

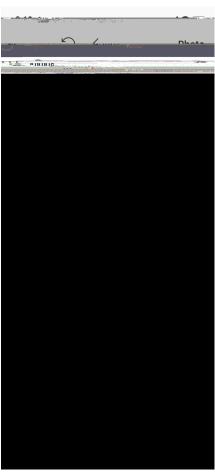


Figure 3: Lulu Salvadori's paid post for VITAE APPAREL

By interviewing the owner of VITAE APPAREL, I found similar trends to Siempre Golden's approach, in that both brands find that their follower count and engagement goes up dramatically within the short period of time after just one single influencer post regarding the brand. The owners of VITAE APPAREL also shared with me that they use influencer marketing because it is a much cheaper and viable option for marketing and "h

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same agreement

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