
Influencer Marketing as a Method of Solving the Crisis of Trust in Digital Content Marketing

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to present to what extent does influencer marketing solves the problems of modern content marketing. This consists of decreasing the credibility of published information on the web, which was in the first place, caused by the weak barrier of information entering into the internet, as well as the increase in the user competence in the implementation of, so called, active trust.

Design/Methodology/Approach: In order to verify the hypothesis, various studies from the areas of literature, as well as empirical methods based on survey, have been used.

Findings: The results of the study showcases that respondents tend to trust more the information published on the internet by the sources that they are somehow connected to.

Practical Implications: The results of the presented study can be used in building content marketing strategies that are based on categories related with trust, thus actions that will be more effective.

Originality/view: The new quality brought by this article is the empirical verification of the impact of persuasive tools such as influencer marketing, on consumer attitude within the internet.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, content marketing, pull type internet strategy, trust for the published content, trust to economy, marketing tools on the internet.

JEL classification: M31, M21, L22.

Paper Type: Research study.

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1. Introduction

The changes in the consumer behaviour can be connected to methods of communication that are digitally implemented. They are forcing certain organisations to broadening their activities when it comes to internet solutions within strategy communications. Furthermore, the generational evolution, in terms of the informational society, created a group of recipients that are resistant to contact with brands, unless it is conducted via new media (Gied, 2012.)

The widespread of portable devices resulted in the increased interactions with digital media. This is especially relevant when it comes to youth, as they tend to spend on average 8,5 hours using digital devices (Shermann, Michykyan, and Greenfeld, 2013). Its main purpose is to support the relationship with peers, and to engage in social activities. However, frequent use of media, which interface is a liquid-crystal display, can result in disorders of non-verbal nature, as well as troubles in understanding human behaviour (Gallagher, 2013).

Decades of research showcase the negative impact of digital devices on productivity, deep thinking, and ability to multitask. This trend is often captured in the term “mile wide, inch deep” (Ophir, Nass, and Wagner, 2009). Furthermore, with the changes in the behaviour of new media users, multitasking and its impact on cognitive systems can be applied not only to the youth, but to the society as a whole (Brandon, Thompson, Allan, and Smilek 2013).

The studies observed a positive correlation between media multitasking and re-occurring problems with attention span. There was no correlation observed between multitasking and memory errors (Brand, Leier, Kimberly, and Young 2014). The impact of multitasking specifically concerns the effectiveness of cognitive behaviours that are firstly raptured, to then be restored. This impact is the subject of a broad study under the notion called interruption (Dix, Ramduny-Ellis, and Wilkinson, 2004).

The development of internet society (Barney, 2008; Castellás, 1996) has not only negative consequences. The digital era has cultivated new skills, such as ability for critical assessment of data, distinguishing signal from noise, synthesis of content, and application of knowledge in order to solve real-life problems. Besides, internet users can come in contact with various ideas or lifestyles.

All of those changes resulted in the creation of the so-called active trust, whose author is Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 2002; Fukuyama, 1997; Wereda and Kowalska, 2021). The concept describes the expectations of internet users towards the quality of information.

2. Execution of Content Marketing

The mentioned above concept of multitasking, and the present cognitive and behavioural changes caused the internet users to prefer shorter, rather than longer means of content. This in turn has eventuated in the spread of microcontent, which relies on short, and quick passing on of content on the internet. According to the analysis conducted by Microsoft Corp. an average consumer of digital content loses its concentration, and with it, the interest in the given content after 8 seconds (McSpadden, 2015). This relates mainly to the increasing use of portable devices in scrolling through internet, as such devices force quick and decisive passing on of content.

The most suitable example that support this concept is the popularity of Tweeter (Visviza, Jussilab, Lytrasa, and Ijäs, 2020), where the posts can have no longer than 280 signs, which stands as a direct reflection of the need of consumers for short contents (Java, Song, Finin, and Tseng, 2007).

Other expression of this tendency is the inclination towards the usage of content in the graphic or video form that is so-called videostorytelling (Walter and Gioglio, 2014). This has resulted in the mass utilization of infographics in order to facilitate assimilation with content they contain (Tymchenko, Kunanets, Vasiuta, Sosnovska, and Khamula, 2021). Similarly increasing trend can be observed with publishing content contained within videos or podcasts that allows the consumers to absorb it while conducting day-to-day activities such as driving a car, etc.

3. The Decreasing Trust of Media Published on the Internet

The effect of changes in cognitive systems of online media users became a large problem and challenge for the modern persuasive communication. One of the ways for solving such problem occurred after the year 2000 with the inbound marketing that creates tailored and quality content. This strategy is an opposite of the traditional push model that focuses mainly on an aggressive and offensive persuasiveness. Thanks to the inbound marketing a persuasive announcement occurs when the consumer actively looks for it on the internet, thereby informing it of its needs.

Brian Halligan and Dhamesh Shah were the first ones to use the inbound method (Halligan and Shah, 2009). At this moment, inbound marketing is the leading type of the pull model as it uses the digital means of persuasive communications to the most. The inbound marketing model has been implemented to use in the form of content marketing under the influence of changes in the Google algorithm in the years 2011-2013. This marketing strategy is based on creating and distributing content that proves itself to be useful and attractive for the potential recipient the moment that one actively looks for it on the internet.

Content marketing is an effective, and incredibly important part of the pull marketing strategy in the inbound model. Nevertheless, there are a few problems that accompany the implementation of content marketing strategies that are in major part related to showcased above changes in the modern cognitive systems of recipients.

One of the most important problems related to the production of content marketing is the lack of trust to the content published on the internet. This trust crisis resulted in the development of a certain trend that can be named the trust economy (Convett 2010). Its purpose is to find a solution that would eventuate in the increased credibility of the published in internet content in order to strengthen its persuasiveness.

Influencer marketing is precisely one of the tools used when it comes to dealing with trust economy. This method is superior to content marketing, due to the quality of content creator being accepted based on its resemblance to the recipient. Below the characteristics of content and influencer marketing have been compared (Table 1).

Table 1. *Influencer marketing and Content marketing*

	Influencer marketing	Content marketing
Owner of the content	Persuasive content is published by a person outside of organisation	Persuasive content is published by the organisation
Cost	Fee for influencer - paid media model	Self-developed of content - the owned media model
Control	Partial control of the content	Full control of the content
Reason	Indication of the content status - sponsored	No indication of content status
Expert	Influencer is accepted thanks to the principle of similarity - he/she is an average consumer	Content originates from the organisation - and therefore from an expert. No similarity. The principle of authority.

Source: Own study.

4. Influencer Marketing as the Solution for Problems of Content Marketing

Influencer marketing is mostly based on building the range of communication of a given organisation or brand with the cooperation of influencers – people actively working on the internet with the aim to spread knowledge, their lifestyle, and other values that are attractive to the recipients (Stopczyńska, 2021).

Through their presence on the social media and influencer blogs they gather a smaller or larger circle of recipients, for whom they become an authority and source of information. Youtubers, Instagramers, Streamers, or Bloggers all account as influencers. The devoted fans often rely on the opinions of their favourite creators which includes entering their recommended websites, or buying their preferred products. Brands try to indicate certain influencers that fit the best for their

communication goals. The most important characteristics that organisations look out for in the influencers are credibility, popularity, and the quality of their created content.

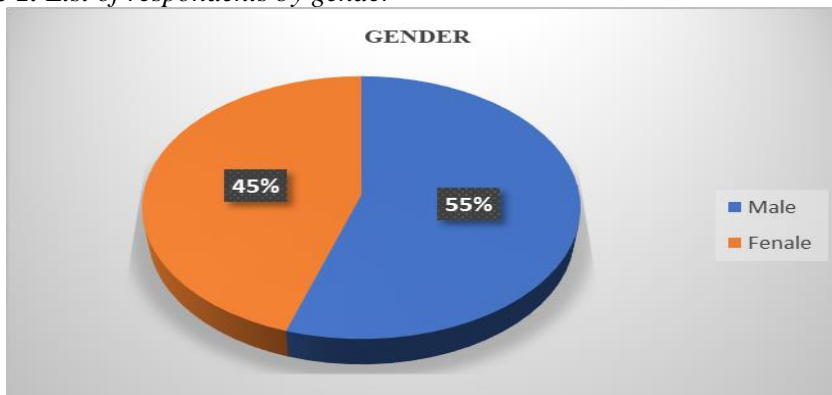
ABC Rynek, Opinia, and Dentsu Aegis Network Poland ran a series of studies, in relation to the House of Influence project, that compared the quality of internet creators to this of celebrities known from traditional medias (Stępnia, 2016). The studies showcased that people aged 15-25 are most fond of internet influencers as they tend to relate to them more. We have tried to confirm that hypothesis by conducting a survey that has been additionally modified, and detailed.

5. Structure of the Group and Applied Research Methodology

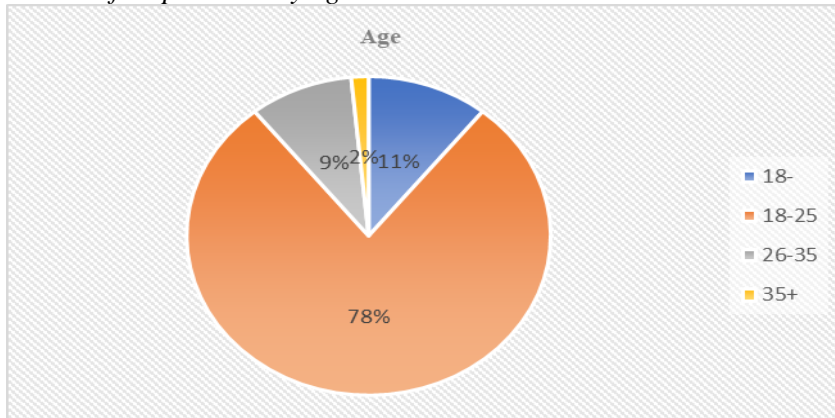
The online survey has been conducted with the aim of confirming or overthrowing the hypothesis related to the question of, does a marketing influencer has a bigger impact on potential clients than the traditional content marketing. The answers of the respondents were obtained from 10.05.2022 up to 25.05.2022 with the help of the student working on his bachelor degree – Kamil Domański.

The survey has been of a one-time nature, and the answers were both of a single and multiple choice. 69 answers have been obtained, however 5 of them have been excluded as the polled did not manage to answer all of the questions. Among the respondents 38 were men, and 31 women (Figure 1), from which 78% were between the ages of 18-25 (Figure 2). Those are mostly young people that inhabit areas that have above 500 K residents. 20 people from the group have been living in the areas below the number of 500 K inhabitants, 7 in areas with the number of residents between 100 and 500 K, 8 live in areas below 100 K residents, while 5 live in the countryside. 64% of polled completed secondary education, 26% had higher education, and 10% of all respondents had completed either primary education or vocational school.

Figure 1. List of respondents by gender



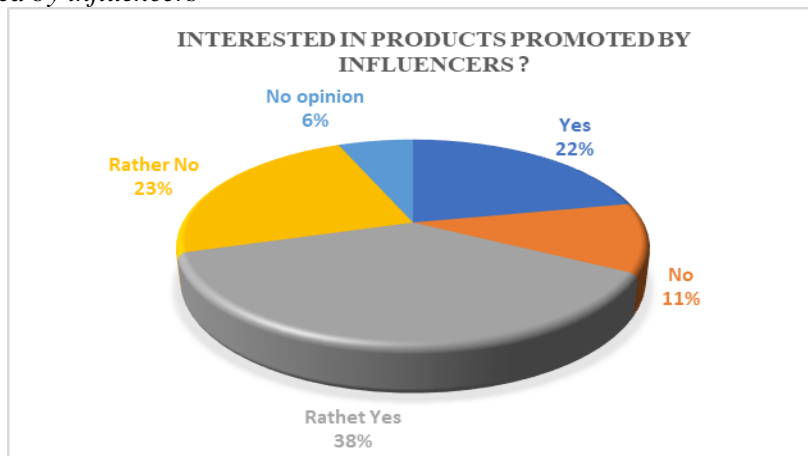
Source: Own study.

Figure 2. List of respondents by age

Source: Own study.

6. Results of the Survey

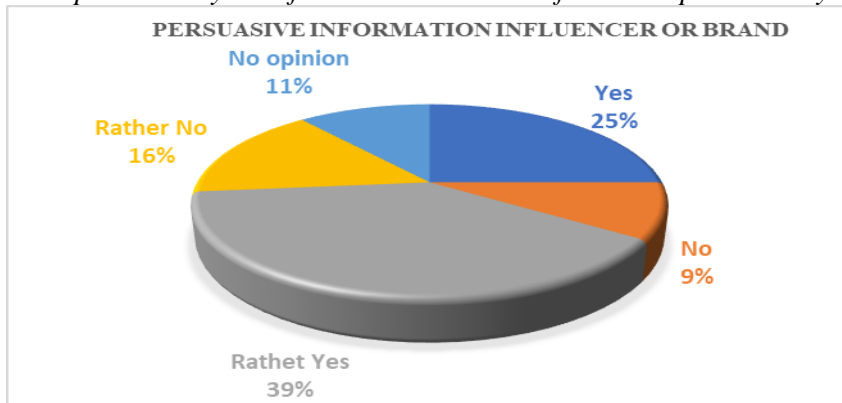
The first question in the survey was related to the issue of whether media posts featured on influencer profiles concerning certain brands and products are of interest to the receivers (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Answers to the question whether polled are interested in the products promoted by influencers

Source: Own study.

The vast majority of polled, almost 60%, when presented with a media post sponsored by their favourite influencer is interested in it to the point of entering the product website. Around 34% of respondents replied that advertisements of influencers would not spark their interest in the post. This suggests that influencers create desires for a purchase of certain product. Usually, the influencer must be an idol or a person one models oneself on.

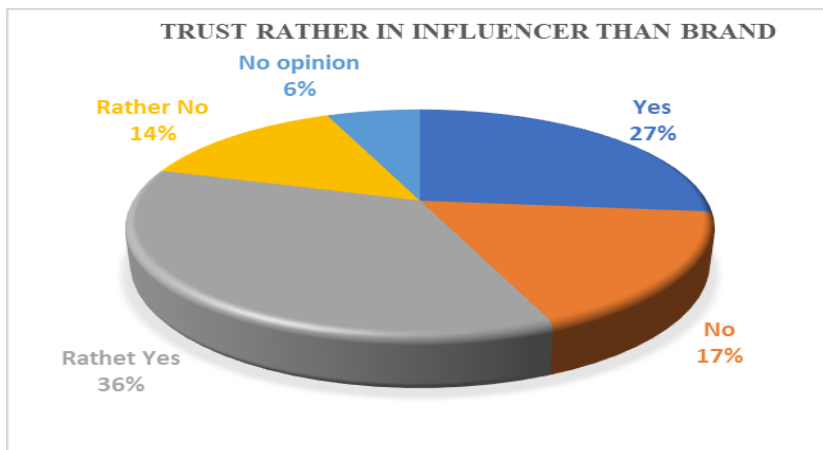
Figure 4. The answers to the question of whether the polled prefer a persuasive information presented by an influencer rather than information presented by a brand



Source: Own study.

The answers to the question of whether the respondents would be more likely to purchase a product promoted by a followed influencer rather than a product they would come across with the normal advertisement on brands websites have been diverse (Figure 5). However, a dominant group of 39% of respondents have agreed with this statement by ticking the box with the answer “rather yes”. On the other hand, every fourth person answered with a firm “yes”. 25% answered with a “no”, and 11% stayed undecided. Therefore, the majority of polled would rather buy a product promoted by a person they follow online. This, however, showcases that influencers play a significant role in the process of encouraging a potential client to purchase a certain product.

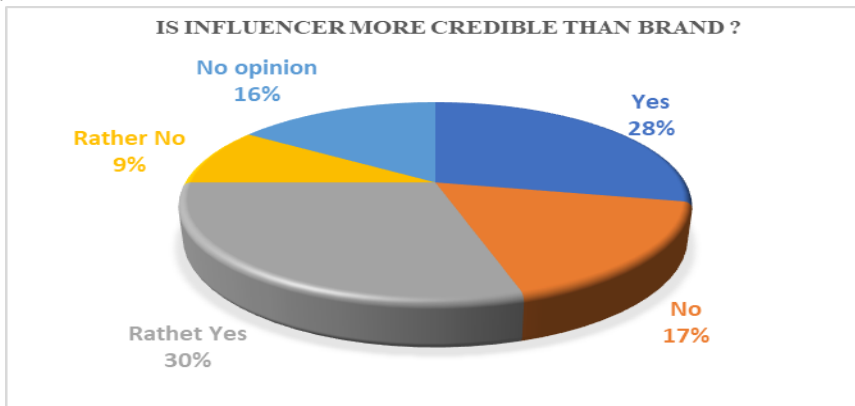
Figure 5. Answers to the question whether the respondents trust the influencers more than they trust the brands.



Source: Own study.

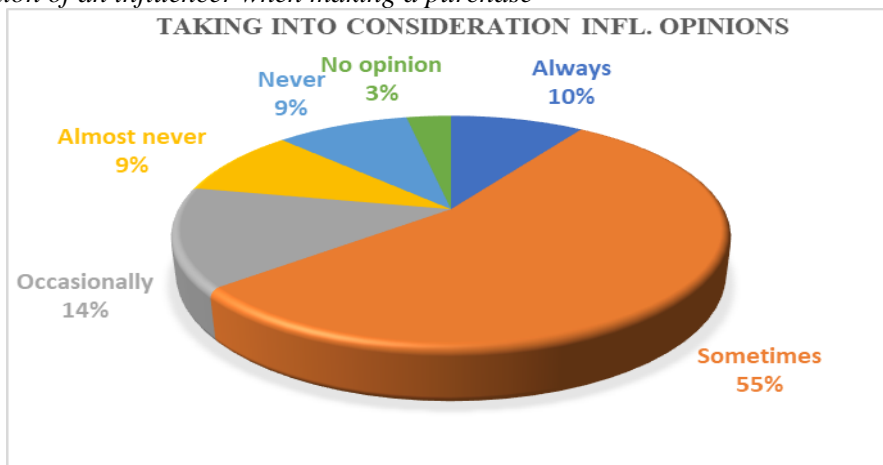
63% of the respondents answered that they trust influencers more than they trust the brands (Figure 6). Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the polled answered negatively placing their trust with the brand. 14% of the respondents stay undecided. The question has revealed that customers tend to trust influencers more than they trust the brand, which means that they would purchase the product more likely from the influencer than the brand.

Figure 6. Answers to the question of whether an influencer is more credible than a brand



Source: Own study.

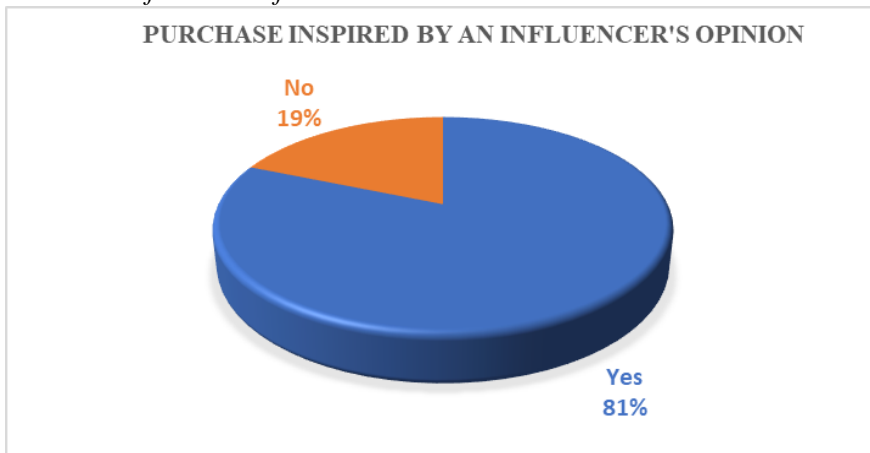
Figure 7. Answers to the question of whether the respondent is inspired by the opinion of an influencer when making a purchase



Source: Own study.

More than half of the respondents, 65%, answered that sometimes or always they are influenced by the opinions of their chosen influencers (Figure 7). 10% replied that they are always influenced by them, while 18% does not pay attention to the opinions of the influencers. The question revealed that influencers play a significant role in the choices of the respondents.

Figure 8. Answers to the question of whether one purchased a product after a recommendation from the influencer



Source: Own study.

The answers to the polled concerning the purchase of a product after the recommendation of an influencer were mostly clear-cut. 81% of the respondents answered that at least once in their lifetime they have purchased a product after the previous recommendation, and 19% have never done such thing (Figure 8). Concluding that influencer marketing has a big impact on the behaviour of the polled.

7. Conclusion

The drawn hypothesis has been verified positively – the polled have clearly declared themselves to be influenced by the presence of internet personalities to which they feel an emotional connection, or to which they can relate when it comes to consumer choices. The polls have revealed that those influencer personalities tend to be more credible than the brands themselves.

In relation, the persuasive manner in which influencer work presents to be more effective and can be received as a natural motivation by the consumer. It is clear that it also touches the declared behaviour dependant on action based on the information given by the influencer – the majority of the respondents declared that they can act on impulse from the recommendation of their favoured internet profiles.

A certain limitation for generalization of this conclusion comes from the limited amount of respondents and their age status – majority of them are in the ages between 18-25, hence they represent the so-called “digital natives”, Generation Z, that prefers online contact (Kowalska, Wereda 2021).

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