

The Influence of the Instability Factors of Influencer Marketing on Brand Marketing

– Based on the Analysis of Florasis's Influencer Marketing Event

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of the instability of influencer marketing on brand marketing in the context of China's mobile Internet boom. With over 1.08 billion mobile Internet users, social platforms like TikTok have emerged as significant e-commerce channels. Influencer marketing, driven by influencers, plays a crucial role in connecting with targeted consumers. The research focused on the theme "The Influence of the Instability of Influencer Marketing on Brand Marketing," utilizes qualitative methods, particularly the process tracking method in case studies. The chosen case for analysis is the Florasis influencer marketing event. The study combines relevant theories, agenda-setting, opinion leaders, and the SOR model of consumption to investigate instability factors and their impact on brand marketing. Instability factors are classified into subjective factors of the influencer, packaging by the influencer's team, and three characteristics of the influencer. The analysis identifies causes and influencing factors contributing to the instability of influencer marketing. The study concludes that the instability of these live streams poses risks and impacts on brand marketing, emphasizing the need for corresponding countermeasures in brand marketing strategies and collaborations with Key Opinion Leaders(KOLs).

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, KOL, Brand Marketing, Gen Z, Instability

1. Introduction

Influencer marketing, as a relatively new form of network marketing, operates through live broadcasting platforms. It leverages the fan base and influence of Internet celebrities to showcase products or services, aiming to capture consumers' attention through precise user group targeting, interactive communication, and measurable marketing effects. The primary objectives include enhancing consumer experience, increasing user engagement, and ultimately achieving sales and brand promotion [1,2]. A key aspect of influencer marketing involves conducting live broadcast marketing through collaborations between Internet influencers and brands. This strategy utilizes the popularity and reach of Internet celebrities to effectively promote and sell products or services to a wider audience.

These Internet celebrities typically serve as "good product recommendation officers," conducting functional analyses and product trials to capture consumers' attention and create a positive impression.

Consumers are often enticed to make purchases through discounts and gift benefits offered during live streams. Throughout this process, consumers place significant emphasis on their trust in the influencers, as well as the prices and quality of the products featured in their live streams. Consequently, brands frequently opt for well-known and well-received online influencers to conduct brand live stream activities.

The stability of influencers serves as a crucial factor, exerting a direct influence on the quality of live streams, shaping consumers' perceptions, and subsequently impacting brand marketing. A case in point is a recent incident involving a prominent Internet influencer who exhibited a lack of control and made inappropriate remarks during a live stream. This episode had detrimental repercussions on brand marketing within the live stream domain. Consequently, this paper aims to explore the implications of the instability inherent in the influencer marketing efforts of Internet celebrities on overall brand marketing strategies.

Therefore, this paper delves into a comprehensive analysis of the aforementioned case, employing qualitative research methods with a primary emphasis on the process tracking approach within case studies. The selected case for examination is the Florasis live stream events. By integrating pertinent theories, previous research findings, and the current developmental landscape, this study aims to draw well-founded research conclusions. Additionally, proactive countermeasures are proposed to mitigate the potential adverse and unstable effects arising from collaborations between brands and KOLs on brand marketing. Furthermore, this study serves as a resource offering guidance and recommendations for the collaboration between brands and KOLs, as well as crisis public relations management. Its positive impact extends to averting the detrimental effects arising from the inherent instability in the influencer marketing endeavors of Internet celebrities on brand marketing. Moreover, this research provides a broad framework for subsequent in-depth studies. Drawing comparisons between celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing, introduces a novel perspective for future investigations, presenting a new avenue of thought for enterprise brands engaging in Internet influencer marketing.

2. Florasis's Influencer Marketing Event

2.1. Case Review

On September 10, 2023, the credibility of a prominent Internet influencer came under scrutiny when they promoted a Florasis brand eyebrow pencil during a live stream. Some netizens expressed concern over the eyebrow pencil's price, which was set at 79 yuan. In response, the influencer dismissed the criticism, stating, "Do not say anything; the eyebrow pencil has always been priced at 79 yuan, and it is challenging for domestic products. Consider searching for the reasons within yourselves; wages have remained stagnant for many years, and there is a lack of hard work." This comment sparked strong dissatisfaction among netizens. As a reaction, some netizens conducted data analysis and discovered that the price per gram of the Florasis eyebrow pencil significantly exceeded that of other beauty brands. This revelation undermined Florasis's positioning as an affordable alternative to well-known beauty products. Consequently, netizens initiated a boycott of the domestic beauty makeup brand Florasis and took to the Internet to criticize the brand. This backlash resulted in substantial damage to the brand's reputation and a notable decline in sales. Furthermore, the controversy extended to suspicions of deceptive practices by emerging domestic cosmetics brands, alleging that they attract consumers through appealing packaging while selling products with significantly higher prices than their intrinsic value. This situation cast doubt on the integrity of other domestic cosmetics brands in the eyes of the public.

2.2. Reasons for Case Selection

In this study, the focus of analysis is the live stream event featuring Florasis that transpired on September 10, 2023. The case is notably recent, and the abundance of well-preserved evidence makes it particularly suitable for thorough examination. The timeline is comprehensive, rendering the event easily demonstrable.

This case stands out as typical due to the significant brand image damage caused by the inappropriate remarks of the Internet influencer. Moreover, the online influencer marketing involved in this case is a prominent figure in the realm of online live broadcasting, wielding substantial influence. The adverse impact of his inappropriate remarks during the live broadcast is particularly strong. Florasis, the direct broadcast brand at the center of this case, represents an emerging domestic beauty brand relying on influencer marketing. The brand suffered considerable repercussions on its brand marketing when the influencer made improper remarks in the live stream. Given these circumstances, the analysis of this case holds significance in establishing its typicality and representativeness. It offers valuable insights for similar cases in the future and provides actionable countermeasures for enhancing collaborations between brands and KOLs. The study's findings are of high research value, contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics at play in such scenarios.

3. Analysis of the Case

3.1. Impact of Events

The incident dealt a severe blow to the brand reputation of Florasis, a prominent player among domestic cosmetics brands, causing a rapid and substantial decline overnight. The well-known Internet influencer, who had a long-standing collaboration with Florasis, faced scrutiny regarding the perceived "profit on goods" and the perceived excessive profits derived from the partnership [3]. Simultaneously, netizens began to voice criticisms over the seemingly exorbitant pricing of Florasis beauty products, notably the eyebrow pencil involved in the incident, priced at 985.71 yuan per gram, and the ace powder, priced at 19.88 yuan per gram. These prices surpassed even those of similar products from the luxury brand Chanel, priced at 19.67 yuan per gram. This development significantly tarnished the brand image of Florasis, originally positioned as an affordable alternative to big-name beauty products, leading to a substantial deterioration in consumer perception. The brand's once favorable impression in the minds of consumers suffered considerable damage, resulting in a pronounced decline in overall brand reputation.

The damage to brand marketing is further evident in the shift in sales volume for Florasis sub-brand products following the incident. Notably, on the Tmall website, the Florasis brand dropped out of the top 20 in the 2023 Tmall makeup Singles' Day pre-sale list, a significant contrast to its fourth-place ranking in the 2022 list. As Florasis heavily relies on online celebrity broadcast rooms for sales, its absence during the "prime time" of this year's Singles' Day pre-sale event, owing to the incident, contributed to a notable decline in sales. This decline in sales underscores the tangible impact of the incident on the brand's market performance and consumer trust, further emphasizing the lasting consequences of the controversy.

3.2. Problem Raising and Analysis

Primarily, Internet influencers wield significant influence over products and brands within the broadcast room, and their behaviors and comments, including evaluations, are inherently subjective. The Florasis live stream incident serves as an illustration of the impact that inappropriate speech and the emotional loss of control by Internet influencers can have. This incident underscores the inherent instability of influencer marketing, with the key destabilizing factors often rooted in the human

elements of these influencers. Common triggers for instability include improper speech, uncontrollable behavior, and engagement with sensitive issues. For instance, in the aforementioned incident, the well-known Internet celebrity, acting as the host of the broadcast, launched a personal attack on consumers, eliciting strong dissatisfaction from the majority of netizens. This, in turn, had a negative cascading effect on the perception of the brand and its products.

Additionally, the brand marketing strategy employed by Florasis in this case heavily relies on online channels, particularly influencer marketing [4]. The majority of consumers initially discover and engage with the brand's products through online live broadcasting platforms, forming the basis for subsequent consumption. Essentially, Florasis places significant dependence on the Internet influencer's live stream for its marketing initiatives [4]. Moreover, the brand's word-of-mouth evaluations are predominantly derived from the live stream [5]. As a result, when issues arise with the Internet influencer's word-of-mouth, it profoundly erodes consumers' trust both in the broadcast room and in the brand itself, exerting a considerable negative impact on brand marketing.

3.3. Reason Analysis

In brand influencer marketing, the carrier broadcast can be likened to the brand's image spokesperson, establishing a relationship characterized by "one glory, one loss." Drawing from the communication agenda-setting theory, mass media plays a crucial role in shaping the images of stars, including Internet celebrities, effectively "creating" them [6]. These images, although not necessarily reflective of the real person, become the only perceivable representation for consumers. Under the powerful influence of the media "setting," a positive image successfully established in the minds of consumers transforms the well-known Internet influencer into a public "opinion leader" [6]. Consumers place trust in the broadcast room led by this opinion leader, believing in their product recommendations and assertions about having the "lowest prices on the whole network." The credibility of the image constructed in the broadcast room becomes a focal point of consumer trust. Consequently, consumers look up to these opinion leaders to guide their consumption decisions. Renowned online influencers, due to their ability to capture consumer attention swiftly and precisely, facilitate more effective marketing outcomes.

In essence, when a brand opts for an online influencer in influencer marketing, it is akin to selecting a brand image spokesperson. Consequently, any issues with the spokesperson's image directly impact the brand image.

Furthermore, drawing on the Stimuli-Organism-Response Model (SOR model) and insights from previous studies, various influencer characteristics, particularly interactivity, popularity and attractiveness contribute to shaping consumers' trust in live stream settings [7-10]. This trust, in turn, extends to both the products being showcased and the influencers themselves, influencing the ultimate participation behavior of consumers. The identified characteristics of influencers serve to deepen the connection between them and consumers, fostering psychological arousal that leads to a sense of identity. As a result, consumers are more inclined to trust the influencers and exhibit a willingness to purchase the products recommended by them. This effect is particularly pronounced for experiential products, which rely heavily on subjective attributes [11]. In such cases, the attributes of influencers, including interactivity, popularity, and attractiveness, assume a heightened significance, playing a pivotal role in influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors [11]. For the Florasis live event, the characteristics that make network influencers appealing to consumers in the broadcast room are as follows:

Firstly, their popularity is remarkably high. As the leading figures among Internet influencers, they enjoy a commendable reputation within the influencer marketing circle. This means that they play a significant role as public "opinion leaders" and hold considerable influence.

Secondly, their live streams are highly interactive and captivating. In the broadcast room, these influencers possess an impressive ability to engage with viewers, particularly young female consumers. Their approach often involves recommendations from the consumers' perspective, resembling a talk show format infused with humor and frequent memorable phrases. Collaborations with celebrities during entertainment marketing activities in the broadcast room further contribute to their strong appeal. Additionally, the presence of untidy background cabinets, "little assistants," and pets frequently appearing on camera helps to create an authentic atmosphere, increasing consumers' trust in both the products being promoted and the influencers themselves [12].

From the aforementioned points, it is evident that the Internet influencer enjoys high credibility among consumers in the live stream. However, when the influencer loses composure in the Florasis studio and directs criticism toward consumers, it undermines the authenticity that originally endeared the audience. Consumers perceive the influencer's once-humorous live stream style and the lifelike atmosphere as disingenuous. The empathetic understanding previously attributed to the host is now perceived as insincere, leading to a substantial reduction in consumers' trust. This erosion of trust holds significant consequences. Without trust, the brand marketing effectiveness within the live stream is severely compromised.

3.4. Summary

In summary, the primary factors influencing a brand's influencer marketing within the broadcast room are the subjective elements of the lead broadcaster, encompassing behaviors, speech (including comments), value orientation, and more.

Internet influencers undergo a process of "packaging" by Multi-Channel Network(MCN)or brokerage companies before being introduced into the online sphere [3]. Subsequently, under the pervasive influence of network media's "strong setting," these incers emerge as influential "opinion leaders" within the public domain. Essentially, consumers, to a significant extent, engage in live stream consumption because they place trust in these influencers, influenced by media dynamics. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the marketing activities of well-known Internet influencers, where trust is established through influencer characteristics such as popularity, interactivity, attractiveness, etc. This trust is particularly evident in the marketing of experiential products, where subjective attributes play a more significant role.

Overall, the key influencing factors in influencer marketing within the broadcast room can be outlined as follows:

(1) Subjective Factors of Influencers: Elements such as speech, behavior, and values exhibited by the influencer play a significant role in shaping the overall impact of influencer marketing on brand marketing.

(2) Disparity between the Influencer and Packaging: The extent of dissimilarity between the influencer's real persona and the image presented through packaging is crucial. A greater difference increases the susceptibility to instability during live stream.

(3) Influencer Visibility: The visibility of the influencer, or the level of recognition and prominence they hold, correlates with the potential impact of instability in influencer marketing on brand marketing. Higher visibility amplifies the repercussions.

(4) Influencer Characteristics (Interactivity and Attraction): Unique features such as high interactivity and attraction contribute to influencers becoming influential "opinion leaders" within the public sphere. The more pronounced these characteristics, the greater the impact of influencer marketing instability on brand marketing.

(5) Product/Brand Attributes: The nature of the products/brands involved in live stream is a significant factor. If the products/brands are experiential, relying heavily on subjective factors for

word-of-mouth evaluation, the impact of influencer marketing instability on these products/brands is more substantial.

4. Brand Countermeasures

Based on the above analysis, this paper can provide the following suggestions for the brand.

To optimize influencer marketing efforts, brands should prioritize a comprehensive understanding of platform users and cultural dynamics, particularly when selecting network influencers. In the process of choosing a influencer marketing platform, meticulous analysis of the platform's user demographics and cultural context is crucial. By aligning the brand's identity with the platform's characteristics, considering the brand's unique situation, and choosing a media platform that complements the brand's style and tone, brands can strategically engage in influencer marketing. The key lies in crafting a reasonable guidance layout that not only attracts the target audience but also resonates with the overall theme and culture of the chosen platform. It is essential to tailor the influencer marketing strategy to fit seamlessly into the platform's ecological culture. By doing so, brands can enhance authenticity, foster stronger connections with the audience, and ultimately achieve more impactful marketing results.

When selecting online influencers, brands should conduct thorough background investigations to ensure compatibility with their own brand identity. This involves analyzing the influencer's style and tone, evaluating the presence of any inappropriate comments, and assessing the influencer's emotional stability during live stream. For brands marketing experience products through live streams, particular attention should be paid to the influencer's language expression and descriptive capabilities. It is crucial to assess whether the influencer can effectively communicate and elucidate the product attributes in a manner suitable for real-life applications. Clear and compelling explanations are essential to prevent any ambiguity that may negatively impact brand marketing. By prioritizing influencers with the ability to articulate the features and benefits of experience products clearly, brands can enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing and positively influence consumer perceptions.

To ensure successful influencer marketing, it is crucial for brands to engage in detailed early communication and coordination with selected network influencers, striving for long-term cooperation. Following the influencer selection, the brand should provide a comprehensive overview of its brand, clarifying brand positioning and tonality. Through effective communication and coordination, the live stream plan can be outlined, and the brand can exert reasonable control over the content shared by the influencer. It is essential to establish emergency plans in advance and maintain open communication channels with the influencer. Furthermore, the brand should invest effort in understanding the personal aspects of the influencer, including differences in personal style, daily behavior, and values expression. In the pursuit of stable and effective influencer marketing, brands are encouraged to seek out trustworthy Internet influencers who resonate with their brand style. By establishing long-term cooperation, brands can cultivate a more enduring and mutually beneficial partnership, contributing to a consistently stable and positive impact on influencer marketing outcomes.

The brands should develop emergency public relations plans and implement timely measures. Before live streams, the brand must establish dedicated emergency public relations plans, tailored to address various potential crises. In the event of an issue arising during a live stream, swift execution of the corresponding public relations strategy is crucial. This proactive approach aims to prevent the escalation of incidents, manage public opinion promptly, and curtail the adverse impact on brand marketing within a short timeframe. The objective is to minimize consumer dissatisfaction with the brand and swiftly regain control over the narrative. By having well-thought-out and specialized

emergency public relations plans, brands can effectively navigate unforeseen challenges and safeguard their reputation in the dynamic landscape of influencer marketing.

The brands should establish a Brand Exclusive Broadcast Room Brands, especially those in the business of experience products such as beauty, clothing, and food, with a significant influence, can consider creating their own brand exclusive broadcast room. This entails devising a tailored influencer marketing plan exclusive to the brand, including the training of specialized influencers aligned with the brand's positioning and style. The key advantage lies in maintaining absolute management control over the live content, style, and characteristics of the influencer within the brand's exclusive broadcast room. By leveraging its own brand influence for live streams, the brand gains a higher degree of control, thereby substantially reducing the inherent instability associated with influencer marketing through Internet celebrities.

5. Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive analysis, it is evident that the stability of Internet influencers during influencer marketing significantly impacts brand marketing. A stable and positive performance by the influencer can enhance brand image, positively influencing marketing outcomes and driving sales. Conversely, an unstable or negative performance can lead to substantial damage to the brand's image, adversely affecting marketing efforts. Key influencing factors include the subjective elements of Internet influencers, differences between influencers and their public personas, and the distinctive characteristics of the influencers.

This study brings innovation to the realms of influencer marketing impact mechanisms and brand KOL cooperative marketing. Through the exploration of novel and illustrative cases, the paper delves into the influence of instability resulting from the subjective factors of Internet influencers on brand marketing. This breaks away from the previous focus primarily on brand and celebrity spokesperson cooperative marketing, shedding light on the repercussions of celebrity effect collapse on brand marketing. The research holds significant implications in addressing the contemporary trend where live-streaming e-commerce has emerged as a pivotal aspect of e-commerce marketing. By offering a more focused research direction for the evolving landscape of brand marketing means, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing. Furthermore, the study's selection of the Florasis Live stream event as a representative case provides valuable theoretical references and strategic countermeasures for subsequent brand influencer marketing endeavors and collaborations with KOLs.

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