The Implications of Marketing Strategies in Promoting Sustainability in the Beauty Industry

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Abstract

Adopting sustainable marketing strategies in the beauty industry can bring significant benefits to brands and consumers, not only can it help protect the environment and promote social responsibility. Through consumer education and innovation, the beauty industry can play an important role in the transition to a more sustainable future. Promoting sustainability in the beauty industry through marketing strategies has significant implications for companies, consumers and the environment. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the influence of sustainable marketing strategies on purchasing behavior and brand image. In order to highlight the perception of influences, a qualitative research of social media messages was carried out with the help of the FSQCA software. Brands that promote sustainability are perceived as ethical and responsible, which can attract a wider and more dedicated audience, in a saturated market, sustainability can be an important differentiator, helping them stand out from the competition.

Key words: strategic marketing, sustainability, beauty industry, social media, influencers
J.E.L. classification: M31, M37, M21

1. Introduction

Traditional marketing tactics have undergone serious changes with the advent of the internet and social media. The need to communicate with consumers in a non-intrusive way has led companies to turn to opinion leaders. Although Influencer Marketing took off not so long ago, it was able to conquer specialists by its popularity and effectiveness. The Internet and e-commerce are exceptional opportunities that should be included in marketing strategies, because online presence allows direct contact with a huge number of new consumers and reduces the cost of promoting products (Arora & Sahu, 2014). In the 21st century, a firm that is not present online is practically non-existent.

With the emergence and development of the Internet and social networks so impressive, the biggest companies and brands in the beauty industry, such as *is Lauder, L'Oréal* and many others have integrated into the new media direction and created blogs and accounts on the most popular platforms to promote products and get feedback. Thus, social networks have become a vital component of the contemporary marketing mix, which provides the possibility of direct dialogue with existing and prospective customers through B2C and the opportunity to influence their purchasing decisions. Analytical tools such as *Google Adwords, Ahrefs* and others allow generating a measurable result of online campaigns, the possibility to evaluate and record their successes and take feedback.

Many of the studies demonstrate the importance of social networks in the decision to purchase, for example, the agency *ODM Group* published the results of its efforts in this area, claiming that 74% of consumers rely on social networks to make a purchase decision. People prefer to express

their opinion on Facebook - 86%, followed by Twitter - 65%, blogs and review sites - 55%, videos - 50%. Companies use consumer reviews in 80% of their sales and merchandising decisions.

2. Literature review

The term *Inbound Marketing* was coined by *Brian Halligan,* the founder and CEO *of HubSpot*, a sales and marketing application company. It represents a new branch of marketing, which assumes that consumers alone access the company's blogs or websites, due to their attractiveness. It involves creating easy-to-navigate pages with interesting and useful content, high-quality images and video, with the help of search engine optimization (SEO). Thus, consumers are no longer "bombarded" with a large amount of information and evaded from what is interesting to them. You no longer need to fight for every new customer, but just create interesting things that will bring them to you by themselves.

According to the model, Inbound Marketing includes three crucial elements, also representing three stages of consumer conquest: attract, engage and delight (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Once consumers are attracted to the content of the page or profile, the company must form that *consumer engagement*, i.e. captivate them through conversation and information tools, such as chats, bots, mail, etc., so that in the third stage it delights them with various offers, viral content, information transmitted at the right time to the right person, building a relationship based on credibility and trust. Satisfied consumers will return to buy again or spread positive messages through *word of mouth*, widening the consumer network by introducing other prospects.

Recent studies demonstrate the importance of Inbound Marketing as a contemporary concept and its success. According to *Demand Metric's 2018* study, *Inbound Marketing* costs 62% less than traditional marketing and generates 3x more leads. Research conducted by *HubSpot* revealed that 75% of companies using *inbound marketing* claim that their strategy is effective, 33% of inbound marketers and 31% of outbound marketers believe that outbound marketing is a waste of time and resources. The main indicators of this type of marketing, according to *Strauss J.* and *Frost R,* are the time spent on the site, the number of subscribers, fans, comments, likes and shares, rating and many others. All this, again, can be easily obtained through online analytical tools and based on the results, the future marketing strategy can be outlined. Creating engaging content, optimizing search engines, implementing promotional and information campaigns on social networks together form the recipe for 21st century marketing (Volberda et al., 2023).

Effective promotion of a product involves selecting the right influencer according to specific criteria. To find out these criteria, I analyzed part of the academic literature and I will present some models, which were created by specialists to describe the phenomenon of opinion leaders in promotion and integrated into a complex model (Veldhuis et al., 2024).

The model of source attractiveness, introduced by *McGuire* in 1985, is based on 4 key factors, through which the influencer will be able to produce the desired effect of the campaign. These factors are familiarity, meaning the audience's knowledge of the source and the colloquial language used, sympathy, meaning affection for the source based on their behavior or appearance, similarity between the source and the audience, and finally attraction (Seiler & Kucza, 2017). Another model that is of particular importance in dealing with this topic is the Source Credibility Model, created and introduced by *Ohanian* in 1990. It indicates that the influencer's success depends on his credibility, which in turn is influenced by expertise factors (knowledge of the domain and product/service) and that the opinion is trustworthy (Bakhshi et al., 2014). The TEARS model, created by *Shimp* in 2003, also includes the factors of trust and attractiveness. Trust depends on how worthy the source is and what expertise it has, and the attractiveness factor includes physical attractiveness, similarity, and respect. The same author also creates the NO TEARS model, introducing, in addition to the two main factors, the factors of cost and how suitable the influencer is with the audience or the brand they are promoting. The FRED principle, introduced by *Dyson* and *Turco*, is based on the selection and evaluation of the influencer according to familiarity, relevance, esteem and differentiation, an element by which the influencer attracted the attention of hundreds of other influencers. *Till* and *Busler* also study celebrities in promotion and advertising, creating *the Match-Up Hypothesis*, arguing that the influencer and the product must complement

and match each other. The Q-Rating, a popular indicator in the USA, involves the calculation of a rating depending on the familiarity and popularity of the influencer (Solomon et al., 2022).

All these models were analyzed by *Gupta R., Kishor N.* and *Verma D.* and integrated into a complex model of analysis of the opinion leader, celebrity or influencer, called the Pater Model, represented in table 1.1. It was created so that the brand can choose the right influencer and is based on a multidimensional scale (et al., 2017) with which various attributes are analyzed to arrive at the decision to initiate a partnership with the influencer in question or not. As the main attributes and criteria were chosen: attractiveness, trust, expertise, popularity and relevance (Groesz et al., 2002). This will be the model used in the practical part of the work and based on it a case study of an influencer will be made.

3. Research methodology

For a broader analysis of the ambassadors of the L'Oréal Paris brand , we resorted to researching the analytical indicators of their Instagram profiles. Among the main indicators are:
-   mentions, i.e. how many times a username has been mentioned by other users;
-   interactions, the user's communication with his audience, similar to customer engagement;
-   feeling, meaning the emotion that the posted content arouses, being negative or positive and presented in the form of a report;
-   the number of subscribers (followers) proves the popularity of the profile, if they are obtained "organically", i.e. without investing in fake followers;
-   influence, or "reach" in English, means the sphere of action of the profile, the total number of people who saw the content on a profile, including through share and advertisement, the most important indicator in this analysis.

The hypothesis is that a large number of subscribers does not guarantee and is not enough for a large influence, sometimes niche influencers have a larger sphere of influence than top bloggers with millions of subscribers. In order to analyze the situation and create a formula of maximum influence, we resorted to a comparative-qualitative analysis using the fuzzy set method. Fuzzy logic is a superset of Boolean logic, which does not only provide answers such as "yes" or "no", "true" or "false", but allows the inclusion of an answer with values between "absolutely true" and "absolutely false", these values being part of the interval [0, 1]. Fuzzy logic was defined by *Lotfi Zadeh*, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley in 1965. Considering the small number of variables and that the concept of "influence" is not defined by a specific formula, but depends on several indicators and their degree, this analysis cannot be done through SPSS, but through a program intended for certain fuzzy sets that work with a small number of variables - FSQCA (Seraphin et al., 2016). Several indicators will be chosen as causal conditions, and one - as a result of the combination of conditions. After the formation and analysis of multiple causal configurations, i.e. the combination of causal conditions and the results of each combination (implying the rule that different combinations can generate the same result, and causal conditions can have different results depending on the context) an XY graph will be generated in which all cases will be presented, together with consistency and coverage indicators. After that, a truth table will be generated from which the program will show us all the solutions and the complex solution with the highest consistency will be chosen.

Data processing. To obtain the indicators for monitoring the activity on social networks, we used the Brand 24 platform by entering the Instagram username of each individual influencer in the search bar, thus generating the indicators for the last month, represented in table 1. In the case given, the variables mentions, interactions, sentiment, and subscribers will be causal conditions, and influence will be the result of combining the conditions. The research model can be written by a function: Influence = f (mentions, interactions, sentiment, subscribers).

Table no. 1. Indicators of Instagram profiles of L'Oréal Paris influencers for 21.03.2024 – 21.04.2024

Instagram username	Causal conditions				Result
	CLAIMS	Interactions	Feeling	Followers	Influence
Inthefrow	419	98 107	24:1	850 415	3 009 568
ling.kt	188	73 586	126:1	1 409 739	5 409 041
modelrecommends	106	506	23:1	173 998	263 751
thepatriciabright	67	4 904	22:0	1 020 112	114 761
lydiaemillen	248	16 862	13:1	759 269	3 063 555
emilycanham	246	85 986	12:1	639 987	3 762 020
kaushal	188	39 169	16:1	868 414	1 045 253
threat	46	760	22:0	628 492	88 036

Source: https://brand24.com/ , accessed on 22.04.2024

We can see that there is no correlation between the number of subscribers and influence, in the case of *thepatriciabright profile*, the number of subscribers (1,020,112) is much higher than the influence index (114,761). At the same time, mentions and interactions have low values compared to other influencers, which could also cause a low influence index value. FSQCA will help us determine the formula for maximum influence, which cannot be deduced by simple data analysis.

Once the values of the necessary indicators have been recorded, calibration of all variables can be done, a vital step for the program to understand and be able to analyze the information entered. According to the theory, the continuous fuzzy set involves entering values from 1 to 0, 1 meaning "completely included", 0.5 - "neither", and 0 - "completely excluded." That interval will be divided into 8 smaller, equal intervals, which will represent the influencer's score and his position from 1 to 8 according to the value of the indicators. Thus, the score 1 will mean " included ", from 0.875 to 0.625 "more included than excluded", 0.5 - "neither included nor excluded", 0.375 - 0.25 "more excluded than included", and 0.125 - "almost excluded".

Table no. 2 Calibration scale

The score	The position
1	1
0.875	2
0.75	3
0.625	4
0.5	5
0.375	6
0.25	7
0.125	8

Source: Authors' processing

Thus, the values of table 2 will be replaced by the score depending on the position. By arranging the value of an indicator in ascending order, we can determine the position from 1 to 8 of the influencers according to that indicator and we can replace the position with the score values (table 3).

Table no. 3 Positions of influencers according to the value of the indicators

Instagram username	Causal conditions				Result
	CLAIMS	Interactions	Feeling	Followers	Influence
Inthefrow	1	1	4	4	4
ling.kt	4/5	3	3	1	1
modelrecommends	6	7	5	8	6
thepatriciabright	7	6	1/2	2	7
lydiaemillen	2	5	7	5	3
emilycanham	3	2	8	6	2
kaushal	4/5	4	6	3	5
threat	8	8	1/2	7	8

Source: Authors' processing

If there are 2 equal indicator values, as in the case of the "mentions" column, these influencers share positions 4 and 5. To determine the score, we add 0.625 (position 4) to 0.5 (position 5) and divide by 2, resulting in 0.5625 (position between 4 and 5). The same is repeated for the "feeling" column, for positions between 1 and 2 the average score of 0.9375 will be given. We replace the score value in the table with positions, resulting in the variables and the index that we can enter in the program (table 4).

Table no. 4 Data calibration result

Instagram username	Causal conditions				Result
	CLAIMS	Interactions	Feeling	Followers	Influence
Inthefrow	1	1	0.625	0.625	0.625
ling.kt	0.5625	0.75	0.75	1	1
modelrecommends	0.375	0.25	0.5	0.125	0.375
thepatriciabright	0.25	0.375	0.9375	0.875	0.25
lydiaemillen	0.875	0.5	0.25	0.5	0.75
emilycanham	0.75	0.875	0.125	0.375	0.875
kaushal	0.5625	0.625	0.375	0.75	0.5
threat	0.125	0.125	0.9375	0.25	0.125

Source: Authors' processing

Data can be entered into FSQCA and a new variable can be generated by using the "fuzzyand" function, which will calculate a value of the sets of causal conditions embedded in the conceptual model. Thanks to the new variable, it will be possible to plot sets. Thus, the new variable **MISA = fuzzyand (mentions, interactions, feeling, subscribers)**, and the final result generated is represented in figure 1.
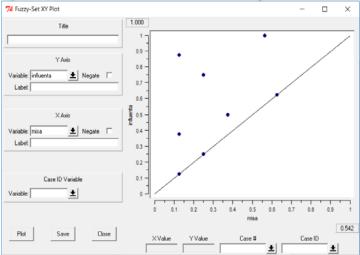
Figure no. 1 Variables and their values in FSQCA

Source: Authors' processing

4. Findings

The first analysis aims to generate consistency and coverage scores by placing the cases on the axis. The program does it automatically through the command Graphs - > Fuzzy -> XY Plot. As a result, we observe from figure 2. that the causal conditions are sufficient for the result, 5 out of 8 cases being positioned above the right of the graph, and 3 representing an exception and being positioned right on the right. The lower right box represents the degree of consistency of $Y \leq X$ which proves that Y is a subset of X, and the upper left value represents the consistency of $X \leq Y$, which is the degree that X is a subset of Y. Analyzing the generated results of the program, we deduce that consistency = 1.000, and coverage = 0.542. High consistency proves that causal combinations lead to the chosen outcome and model e validated, and 54.2% represents the percentage of cases in which the causal conditions lead to a defined result.

Figure no. 2 Distribution of the 8 cases on the XY graph

Source: Authors' processing

We can continue its analysis by generating the truth table, which helps to examine separately the combinations of causal conditions and the results obtained by them (figure 3).

Figure no. 3 The truth table related to the research model

mentiuni	interactiuni	sentiment	abonati	number	influenta	raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist
1	1	0	0	1	1	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000
1	1	1	1	2	1	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000
1	1	0	1	1	1	0.972973	0.923077	1.000000
0	0	1	1	1	0	0.733333	0.333333	0.333333
0	0	1	0	1	0	0.600000	0.000000	0.000000

Source: Authors' processing

The program deleted all but possible cases, and the influence value 1 occurs in 3 cases. Among the 5 combinations, the one with the highest consistency and the result score higher than the causal conditions must be chosen. For this, we access the standard analyzes and obtain the complex solutions proposed by the program, represented in figure 4.

Figure no. 4 Complex solution of the research model

```
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey
     True: 1

--- COMPLEX SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1.000000
consistency cutoff: 0.972973

                                raw         unique
                              coverage     coverage     consistency
                              ----------   ----------   ----------
mentiuni*interactiuni*~sentiment  0.611111    0.111111     0.977778
mentiuni*interactiuni*abonati     0.680556    0.180556     0.980000
solution coverage: 0.791667
solution consistency: 0.982759
```

Source: Authors' processing

The solution with the maximum likelihood (0.9800) is: mentions*interactions*subscribers, where * indicates "and".

In conclusion, the model in which the indicators mention, interaction, sentiment and subscribers are the causal conditions of influence has been validated by the program. The consistency and coverage values are greater than 0.5, representing good results, and most cases are located above the XY line, proving that these 4 causal conditions are sufficient to generate the influence result. The truth table discovered 5 possible combinations of the 4 causal conditions and the result, and the complex solution with the highest consistency turned out to be: mentions*interactions*subscribers. By this, we mean that the sentiment variable in combination with the other 3 causal variables has no significant influence on the result, and the influence of the analyzed Instagram profiles depends on the number of mentions, interactions and subscribers. This validates the hypothesis that not only the number of subscribers matters, but also the influencer's interaction with them, as well as how often the user's name is mentioned in other people's posts. Thus, in order to have a larger sphere of influence, the influencer must not only count on a large number of followers, but also engage in direct dialogues with them in the comments, arouse interest in being mentioned by other users. The practice of increasing the number of subscribers by investing in fake profiles or automatically subscribing other people has proven to be ineffective in influencer marketing and can easily be seen in the number of likes and comments. If out of 1,000,000 subscribers, not even 10% see the posts and do not react, then investing in such profiles to promote products is not profitable.

5. Conclusions

The opinion of influencers has been shown to be useful in the stages of information and analysis of alternatives, especially to decide which brand and which product will be bought. The main characteristics of influencers for the audience turned out to be the expertise, trust and relevance of the products to the influencer's field of activity, taken from the Pater Model. Between the message and the presentation, most chose the message as more important, although the percentage difference was not large. This proves that message processing takes place consciously and relies more on the central route, described in elaboration likelihood theory. The post of a brand proved to be more influential than the post of an unknown influencer, but the difference in votes is not large. Respondents' self-confidence is average and not strongly influenced by the amount of time spent online. The hypothesis that the concern for one's own body resulting from following influencers depends on the gender of the respondent was validated. Older age also means more self-confidence, the tendency to copy and change one's ideals of beauty being weaker than in youth. This study could provide a lot of important information to companies and influencers so that they know how to make a successful campaign or find explanations for failures and to young people, who should understand the negative influence of media and the Internet and carefully choose the models on which follows them. Influencer referrals derived from the study can help increase audience interest and increase credibility.

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