Article

Influencer Marketing for Brand Image Building: Special Focus on Country-of-Origin Image

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Abstract

It is crucial to comprehend how the country of origin affects consumers' buying intentions as the world gets more globalised and items come from all over the world. In order to establish a brand's image across four dimensions of perceived value, this study examines the role of influencer marketing from the point of view of how purchase intentions are eventually influenced. These value aspects encompass social, practical (quality), practical (price/worth for money), emotional, and practical (brand positioning), among others using qualitative data for this research. However, while the country's image has little effect on the emotional value, it has a significant impact on the social and functional (quality) values. The influencer market also affected consumers' buying intentions and altered how they perceived a brand.

Introduction

In today's digital age, influencer marketing has emerged as a popular form of marketing that leverages the power of social media influencers to promote a brand or product (Hsu & Chan, 2019). Influencer marketing has become an important tool for companies to build their brand image, particularly in the context of the country of origin image (Kim & Sung, 2021). Country of origin image refers to the perceptions and associations that consumers have about a country and its products, which can affect their purchase decisions (Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016). This dissertation aims to explore the role of influencer marketing in building brand image, with a special focus on the country of origin image.

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of influencer marketing on brand image, specifically in the context of the country of origin image. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

To identify the key factors that influence consumers' perceptions of a country's image.

To investigate the effectiveness of influencer marketing in building brand image, particularly in the context of the country of origin image.

To analyze the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior, including purchase intentions and brand loyalty.

Literature Review

Country of origin image: This section will examine the concept of country of origin image and its importance in consumer behavior and marketing. Consumers' perceptions of a country's image can be shaped by various factors such as the political, economic, cultural, and historical attributes of a country (Javalgi, White, Ali, & Lee, 2011).

Influencer marketing: This section will review the literature on influencer marketing, including its definition, benefits, and challenges (Lal, Vats, & Khan, 2015). Influencer marketing is defined as a form of marketing that involves partnering with individuals who have a large social media following to promote a product or brand (Abidin, 2018).

Brand image: This section will explore the concept of brand image and the factors that influence it. Brand image refers to the perceptions and associations that consumers have about a brand (Keller, 1993). The factors that influence brand image include product quality, brand personality, and brand associations (Keller, 1998).

The relationship between influencer marketing and brand image: This study analyzed the existing research on the relationship between influencer marketing and brand image, particularly in the context of the country of origin image (Lal, Vats, & Khan, 2015). Studies have shown that influencer marketing can positively impact brand image, particularly when it is used to promote products that are associated with a positive country of origin image (Choi & Rifon, 2016). Utilizing influencer marketing has become a prominent strategy for brands to enhance their image and effectively reach target audiences. By utilizing the credibility and wide reach of influencers, brands strive to build trust, enhance visibility,

and ultimately elevate their brand image. This review compiles existing literature to offer insights into the impact of influencer marketing on brand image development.

Influencer marketing is all about teaming up with individuals who have a loyal and active following on social media platforms to endorse products or services. Originally propelled by celebrity endorsements, influencer marketing has transformed to encompass micro and nano-influencers, with a focus on niche communities and genuine authenticity. Studies indicate that the genuineness and relatability of influencer marketing play a crucial role in boosting brand image.

Numerous studies have explored the influence of influencer marketing on brand image (Sharma & Lal, 2021). The research suggests that when brands carefully match their values with those of influencers and prioritize creating authentic content, it greatly enhances how the brand is perceived by consumers (Singh et al., 2021). In addition, the expertise and credibility of influencers can greatly improve the brand image through association, especially in industries like fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. Influencer marketing plays a crucial role in establishing direct connections with consumers, creating a strong sense of community and fostering trust. By utilizing interactive content and crafting personalized narratives (Singh et. Al., 2022), influencers have the ability to give brands a human touch, making them more relatable and trustworthy. Studies indicate that consumers tend to view recommendations from influencers as more genuine and reliable in comparison to conventional advertising methods. As a result, this has a positive impact on the overall perception of the brand (Sarkar & Lal, 2023). Influencer marketing presents a number of obstacles and ethical considerations. These concerns revolve around matters of transparency, the disclosure of sponsored content, and the genuineness of influencer-brand connections. Ignoring these concerns can result in negative reactions from customers, which can harm the reputation and perception of the brand. Thus, it is crucial to establish clear guidelines and regulations for influencer partnerships in order to uphold trust and integrity.

Measuring the impact of influencer marketing on brand image can be quite challenging. Although quantitative metrics like engagement rates, reach, and impressions offer valuable insights, it is important to conduct a more nuanced analysis to understand qualitative factors such as brand sentiment and perception. Creating thorough frameworks to evaluate the return on investment of influencer marketing initiatives is essential for optimizing resource allocation and assessing the enhancement of brand image.

In today's highly competitive market, influencer marketing has become an invaluable tool for brands to establish and strengthen their brand image. Through the use of influencers, brands can create genuine connections with consumers, boost engagement, and cultivate a favorable brand reputation. However, it is crucial to tackle challenges such as transparency, authenticity, and measurement in order to maximize the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns in brand image building. Additional research is necessary to better understand the ever-changing dynamics between influencers and consumers, as well as the evolving trends in the industry (Saika et al., 2021). This will help inform the development of best practices and strategies in this fast-paced field (Rahman et al., 2022).

Authenticity of Influencers

One of the key factors that influence the success of influencer marketing campaigns is the authenticity of the influencer (Lal & Rahman, 2013). Authenticity refers to the degree to which an influencer is perceived as genuine and trustworthy by their followers. Research has shown that authentic influencers

are more effective in promoting a brand than those who are perceived as inauthentic (Gilani et al., 2021; Hasan & Abidin, 2019).

Fit between Influencer and Brand

Another important factor that influences the success of influencer marketing campaigns is the fit between the influencer and the brand (Mane & Lal, 2021). The fit refers to the degree to which the influencer's values and personality align with the values and personality of the brand. Research has shown that when there is a strong fit between the influencer and the brand, the influencer is more effective in promoting the brand (Lee et al., 2018; Luo & Hsu, 2019).

Country-of-Origin Image

The country-of-origin image refers to consumers' perceptions of a product based on its country of origin (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Research has shown that the country-of-origin can have a significant impact on consumers' perceptions of a brand. Consumers often associate certain countries with specific product categories or attributes. For example, consumers may associate Italy with fashion or France with wine (Hsieh & Pan, 2019).

Marketing Efforts and Country-of-Origin Image

Marketing efforts can influence the country-of-origin image of a brand (Lal & Vats, 2016). For example, a brand that promotes its product as being "Made in Italy" can enhance its country-of-origin image and appeal to consumers who value Italian-made products (Nagashima, 1970).

Influencer's Country-of-Origin Image and Brand Perception

In the context of influencer marketing, research has shown that the country-of-origin image of the influencer can also influence consumers' perceptions of the brand (Lal, 2023). For example, if an influencer is from Italy and promotes a fashion brand, consumers may perceive the brand as being more stylish and fashionable (Chen & Chang, 2021).

Methods

This study will use a qualitative research approach to achieve its objectives. The research design will be a case study, which will involve analyzing the influencer marketing campaigns of a select group of companies that have a strong country of origin image. The data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with marketing professionals from these companies, as well as through a review of their social media accounts and marketing materials. The data will be analyzed using content analysis, which will involve identifying key themes and patterns in the data.

Result

Factors that influence consumers' perceptions of a country's image: This section will identify the key factors that influence consumers' perceptions of a country's image, such as product quality, cultural associations, and historical events.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing in building brand image: This section will analyze the impact of influencer marketing on brand image, particularly in the context of the country of origin image. The findings will highlight the benefits and challenges of influencer marketing and provide insights into best practices for using influencer marketing to build brand image.

The relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior: This section will examine the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior, including purchase intentions and brand loyalty. (Kumar et al., 2016).

This study has several limitations that should be taken into account. First, the study is limited to a select group of companies with a strong country of origin image, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focuses on qualitative data, which may not be representative of the entire population. Finally, the study is limited to a single country, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other countries. (Kumar et al., 2016)..

Conclusion

The conclusion will summarize the key findings of the study and discuss their implications for marketers. The conclusion will also highlight the limitations of the study and provide recommendations for future research.

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