Fashion Brand Sponsored Instagram Posts: Mediated by Trust

Lindsey Tanoff, Kiseol Yang, HaeJung Maria Kim, University of North Texas, U.S.

Keywords: Instagram, Brand, Sponsored, Trust

Fashion brands have been utilizing the Instagram platform not just for showcasing their merchandise, but also for generating brand awareness, crowdsourcing product ideas, and connecting with prospective customers through visual contents (Arnaboldi & Coget, 2016). With the recent addition of Instagram ad labels for sponsored post, customers are aware of the Instagram account sponsored by a brand. Customers may not fully trust the posts since they believe that marketing efforts are made behind the user-generated contents and message threads. However, followers may take the quality of posts and other followers' responses to the post as a collective review for the product, which can leverage consumer trust on the brand sponsored content. Consequently, this can affect consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions of the brand. With that premise, this study aims to identify the characteristics of Instagram posts that construct trust on the brand sponsored posts and positive responses towards the sponsored brand.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Consumers are unlikely to patronize online stores when they don't find a sense of trust (Jarvenpaa & Tractinsky, 1999). Trust is a factor of purchasing and simple information sharing behavior online (McKnight & Chervany, 2001). Trust online can be called 'impersonal trust' Shapiro, 1987b) because it often involves trusting the words and images on a screen rather than direct contact with an identifiable person (Boyd, 2002). Trust on Instagram platform can be built based on interactions and experiences with the quality of Instagram posts. This increases consumer participation online and eventually more online transactions (Boyd, 2003). The quality and persuasiveness of posts on Instagram can be determined with the following three characteristics: post attractiveness, post popularity, and the argument quality of a post (Chang et al., 2015). Post attractiveness can be defined as the quality of the post that aesthetically appeals to users through its visual cues. Post popularity can be determined by the number of followers who press like, share the photo content, or respond to the original post. The post popularity makes the content trustworthy, reliable, and believable to Instagram shoppers. Argument quality of the post refers to the persuasive strength of arguments in the posting (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006). This can get user attention to the arguments and generate cognitive responses for the posts (Coulter & Punj, 2004). These characteristics of the posts can develop the trust on the brand sponsored post, generating positive attitude toward the sponsored brand and increasing purchase intention from the sponsored brands. The following hypotheses were examined:

H1-3: Post attractiveness (H1), post popularity (H2), argument quality (H3) of Instagram posts will have a positive effect on trust on the brand sponsored posts.

H4: Trust on the brand sponsored posts will have a positive effect on attitude towards the sponsored brand.

H5: Attitude towards the sponsored brand will have a positive effect on purchase intention of the sponsored brand.

H6a-c: The effects of post attractiveness (H6a), post popularity (H6b), argument quality (H6c) on attitude and purchase intention are mediated by trust on the brand sponsored posts.

METHOD

This study used multi-item scales that were adapted from existing scales with good internal consistency. Three items measuring post attractiveness (Verhagen et al., 2012), 3 items measuring post popularity (He, Qiao, & Wei, 2009), 3 items measuring argument quality of reviews (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006), 3 items measuring trust of the post (Appleman& Sundar, 2016), 5 items measuring attitude (Crespo et al., 2009), 3 items measuring purchase intention (Kim & Lennon, 2013) were adapted from previous studies. A 5-point Likert scales were used to measure the constructs. Data was collected via online survey. A total of 263 responses were determined to be usable in this study. The sample consisted of college students who are Instagram users and shop on the social media platform, comprised of females (86.3%), and males (13.8%), with a majority of them ranging from 18 to 23 years of age. In considering young generations between the ages of 18 and 34 use social media consistently in browsing or shopping for all kinds of merchandise (Chahal, 2016), this sample represents the study.

RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with the data using AMOS version 24. The measurement model showed a good model fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 248.138$ with 150 df at p-value = .000, CFI of .977, and RMSEA of .050). All the scales showed good internal consistency and met the requirements for testing the structural model. The model fit of the structural model confirmed an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 414.612$ with 157 df at p-value = .000, CFI of .940, and RMSEA of .080). The results of hypothesis testing showed that post attractive was negatively related with trust on the posts (H1: Γ =-.153, t = -2.056, p-value = .040), not supporting H1. Posting popularity (H2: Γ = .234, t = 2.383, p-value = .017) and argument quality of post (H: Γ = .445, t = 4.471, p-value < .001) were positively related with trust on the posts, supporting H2 & H3. Trust on the posts was positively related with attitude toward the sponsored brand of the Instagram (H4: β= .484, t = 7.529, p-value < .001). The attitude toward the sponsored brand was positively related with consumer purchase intention toward the sponsored brand (H5: β= .914, t = 14.700, p-value < .001). The results supported hypotheses H 4 and H 5. The result of mediating effect of trust in the relationships showed that the effect of argument quality on attitude (β = .216, p-value =0.10) and intention (β = .197, p-value =0.10) was mediated by trust on the post, supporting H6c.

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Supported by the study results, this study suggests that retailers should pay particular attention on the argument quality of a post and post popularity. These characteristics are influential factors constructing persuasive posts in the sponsored Instagram posts, further leveraging trust on the post and yielding positive responses towards the fashion brand. Fashion brands need to collaborate with influencers to post quality information and persuasive arguments that can be used as trusted sources by Instagram users. Future studies needs to identify elements that develop the quality of argument of the post and post popularity in the different product categories.

REFERENCE

Appelman, A. & Sundar, S. (2015). Measuring Message Credibility. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, (93)*1, 59 –79.

Arnaboldi, M., and Coget, J.F. (2016). Social media and business: We've been asking the wrong question. *Organizational Dynamics, (45)*1, 47-54.

Bhattacherjee, A. and Sanford, C. (2006). Influence processes for information technology acceptance: An elaboration likelihood model. *MIS Quarterly, 30*(4), 805–825.

Boyd, J. (2003). The rhetorical construct of trust online. *Communication Online, 13*(4), 392-410.

Chahal, M. (2016). Social commerce: How willing are consumers to buy through social media? *Marketing Week*.

Chang, Y-T., Yu, H., Lu, H-P. (2015). Persuasive messages, popularity cohesion and message diffusion in social media marketing. *Journal of Business Research, 68*(4), 777-782.

Coulter, K.S., & Punj, G.N. (2004). The effects of cognitive resource requirements, availability, and argument quality on brand attitudes: A melding of elaboration likelihood and cognitive resource matching theories. *Journal of Advertising, 33*(4), 53-64.

Crespo, A. H., Bosque, R.I., & Garcia de los Salmones Sanches, M. M. (2009). The influence of perceived risk on Internet shopping behavior: A multidimensional perspective. *Journal of Risk Research, 12*(2), 259-277.

He, Q., Qiao, K., & Wei, K. (2009). Social relationship and its role in knowledge management systems usage. *Information & Management, 46*(3), 175–180.

Jarvenpaa, S. L., & Tractinsky, N. (1999). Consumer trust in an Internet store: A cross-cultural validation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 5*(2), 1-31

Kim, J., & Lennon, S. J. (2013). Effects of reputation and website quality on online consumers' emotion, perceived risk and purchase intention. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 7*(1), 33-56.

McKnight, D. H., & Chervany, N. L. (2001). Conceptualizing trust: A typology and e-commerce customer relationships model. *Proceedings of the 34th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*.

Verhagen, T., Feldberg, F., vanden Hooff, B., Meents, S.,& Merikivi, J. (2012). Understanding users 'motivations to engage in virtual worlds: A multi purpose model and empirical testing. *Computers in Human Behavior, 28*(2), 484–495.