



THE GROWING AND CONTINUING INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL INFLUENCERS

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We live in a society addicted to new mobile technology and social media where the dream of younger generations is to get the next model iPhone and be a famous digital influencer. Brands and digital marketers want to engage and relate with customers in a more personal, mobile and social way. Then, marketing budgets have to reflect on this changing consumer behavior. The critical question is what proportion of the budget should stay offline and how to best integrate the digital in an integrative marketing strategy to create a relevant buzz for a brand (both off and online) to provide the new customer an unforgettable experience and entertainment.

Digital marketers all over the world are increasingly explore social media, mobile, content and video prioritizing the quality of the fan/followers than quantity while focusing on targeted, passionate, and influential digital influencers and brand ambassadors. Therefore, brands rely more and more on digital influencers to continuously growing sales and conversion rates.

According to the Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report the value of influencer

marketing as an industry is projected to increase from USD 9.7 billion in 2020 and 13.8 billion in 2021 to USD



15 billion in 2022 (Business Insider Intelligence).

Digital influencers are everyday, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating “advertorials” into their blog or social media posts (Abidin, 2015).

Several categories of digital influencers can be identified by their range, which is connected with the number of people who follow them. In this context, several categories of influencers can be distinguished: celebrities (over 5 million), mega influencers

(1 million–5 million), top influencers (over 500 thousand), macro-influencers (100–500 thousand), middle level influencers (20 thousand–100 thousand), micro-influencers (less than 20 thousand) and nano-influencers (1 thousand–10 thousand) (Wielki, 2020). It is expected that nano and micro influencers will continue to rise due to better engagement rates in niche community brands. In fact, Later and Fohr Influencer Marketing Report revealed that nano influencers have 4% of average feed post engagement rate and micro 2%, while mega influencers have only 0.8% of engagement with the followers. Indeed, although nano and micro influencers may not have massive followings, still have significant social presence and their product recommendations seem to be more trusted as if they are coming from a friend or confidante. Therefore, it is expected that nano and micro influencers will continue to growth, specifically in Instagram and YouTube.

According to the magazine Forbes the content developed by digital influencers could be: inspirational when influencers tell a great story that instantly elevates brand image and fosters strong

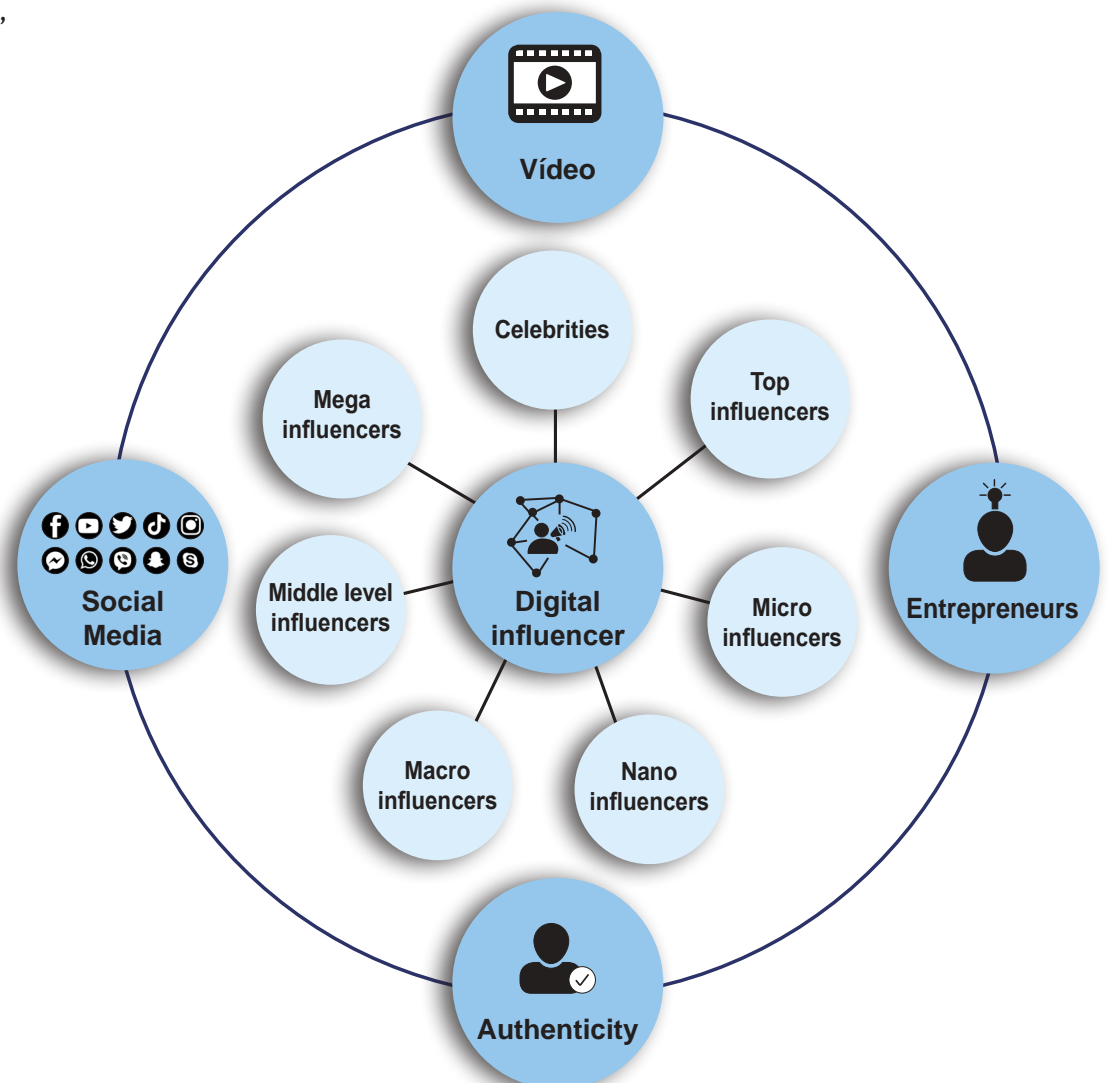
brand affinity among their fans; educational when influencers answer the most commonly asked questions or the features of the product that are unique; testimonial when influencers generate reviews and testimonials, showing their fans something that they have experienced and create a desire to purchase; promotional when influencers weave announcements about the sales events into nicely packaged posts that entice their fans to take actions through the offering of unique promo codes; delightful, when influencers are able to turn customer into advocates, thus engaging customers to actively spread the word as ambassadors who can continue the brand's sales cycle automatically.

Influencers will continue to integrate their social media activities with their own content and the content provided by the brands. However, in order to create more individual brand relationships, influencers will start to reduce cooperation with brands for content creation and increase in-house

content production engaging consumers in sharing ideas and co-creation. To increase content attractiveness it is expected that thanks to the younger target group preference for short viral videos, picture sharing and micro-video applications digital influencers will continue to innovate in new video formats.

Digital influencers will increasingly focus on giving a spark to brands via using multiple formats (video, micro video, live presentations, etc.) and multiple screens (tablet

vs. mobile), blending them with newer digital marketing channels. The priority will be given to Instagram, TikTok and Pinterest, in addition to Facebook. The growing popularity of TikTok and Instagram Reels, the vertical video is rapidly becoming the must-have format for influencer marketing. Social media strategist Christina Galbato recommends "focusing on your niche and creating related video content on Instagram Stories and Reels – it's a great way to engage your



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community on a deeper level and provide a ton of value”. Social media platforms are launching creator-focused marketplaces introducing new tools and features that help creators and brands connect and collaborate on TikTok and Instagram through brand partnerships, commerce and more.

The mobile usage trend will boom in the whole world with direct impact on the creation of content by digital influencers that is almost consumed entirely in a mobile environment. The route to success will lead via user-friendly responsive designs (both for content and product placement), via more actionable and shorter posts and location based content marketing, enabled by GPS technology.

Another trend that can be observed in the influencer marketing industry is the appearance of entrepreneurs that turned their influence into their own business. Some of them have launched their own products, while others

are open up opportunities for future partnerships with brands. Thus, rather than to do a one-off post or video, digital influencers will be looking to partner with brands on a more ongoing basis, as investing in a long-term relationship is a win-win for both parties. Not only does it build trust with the influencer’s community, but it adds a level of legitimacy.

Finally, another growing digital marketing influencer trend is authenticity over perfection on social media. One of the most effective ways to build a digital community is to be authentic and digital influencers are shifting away from the perfectly curated feed aesthetic, and choosing to share less filtered and more in-the-moment photos of their lives. Nichole Ciotti, co-founder of design app, Storyluxe, thinks this trend will continue evolving:

“In the beginning, everyone was forced to be super polished. Now, after some time has passed, people are finding their true voices on social”. In this context, brands should

partner with digital influencers who foster real relationships with their community and offer valuable authentic content.

As digitalization progress, social media and technological literacy will become a must-have skill for most jobs, not just in digital marketing. Professionals will be required to master content development and its management, information search, and aggregation of multiple data points for decision making in real time. The digital landscape will become an even more inseparable part of our professional and personal lives.

Major changes in the digital sphere are around the corner, and only those influencers and brands, which are able to find and build their unique digital “footprints” and “meaningfully different” brand experiences, that will be flexible and fast enough to adopt their business models, strategies and plans to these changes, will be the ones, who are able to remain relevant for the years to come.

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