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Sustainable influencer marketing

Abstract

Most of the time if we think about influencer marketing the first thing, we think of is consuming. How can something that supports purchasing be sustainable? In order to research the topic of sustainability in connection with influencer marketing, I conducted a questionnaire at the Faculty of Economics and some of its results were interesting. Women are more prone to the effect of influencer marketing, and that gender is also important when it comes to the products, they buy from them. The basis of this research was Nagy, Sz. (2012) publication with the title: "Drivers of environmentally conscious behaviour".

Keywords: sustainable influencer marketing, generational marketing, online marketing, Generation Z

Theoretical overview

As Nagy, Sz. (2012) said in his publication based on the motivations to be more environmentally conscious can be based on many values. He says that being green is mostly driven by emotions. In his publication, he explains the core LOV values of Hungarian people and concludes that the Hungarian people who tend to avoid uncertainty the most are also the most environmentally conscious.

The temporal delimitation of the Z generation is not an easy process, and several studies deal with it, in my present research the definition of my choice is Törőcsik (2014) to refer to.

As a theoretical model for my research, I selected four scales that deal with consumer behavior, the psychological causes of social media use, influencers, and online advertising.

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of my dissertation, I considered it necessary to present a scale on a psychological topic, which is interesting, but together with the scale related to influence, it provides a stable theoretical basis for my research.

Examining attitudes toward online shopping was interesting to me in terms of consumer behaviour, so I took that into account.

In the world of marketing 4.0, the attitude towards ads is also an important part, so I planned to present this last.

In her research, Gangadharbatla, H. (2008) writes about what elements she has for social media

to join. In your opinion, these are:

- Attitudes toward social media sites
- Intention to join
- Internet self-efficiency
- The need for cognition
- The need to belong somewhere
- Self-assessment
- Collective self-assessment

In his research, he chose the attitude towards social media sites and the intention to join as the two dependent variables.

The research shows that the intention to join is significantly influenced by the need to belong somewhere, which may be interesting in this regard, as it does not affect this decision.

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Attitudes towards social media sites are positively influenced by internet self-efficacy, the need to belong somewhere, and, surprisingly, collective self-esteem. More information on the psychological reasons for this can be found in the literature review. For the research, the author used a Likert scale.

The scale developed by Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel (1989) is the second theoretical model I would like to apply to influencing peers in our decisions. It connects the psychological perception and the basis of influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. The scale determines the extent to which a person can be influenced by their peers.

Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel (1989) refer to the scale as "consumers' willingness to interpersonal influence." and can be defined as "A willingness to conform to others in making a purchase decision."

The scale consists of 12 elements, which are as follows:

- I rarely buy clothes for which my friends have not yet given their blessings.
- It is important for me to buy products and brands that are accepted by others.
- When I shop, I pay attention to buying a product that others have they accept.
- I'm trying to buy a product that others find right for me.
- I like to impress those around me with my purchases.
- If I buy a particular brand, I feel like I belong somewhere.
- If I want to look like someone, I often buy from the brands he uses.
- I also identify myself based on the products I buy from others.
- In order to buy the right products, I often notice what others are buying.
- If I don't know that product group, I often ask for help
- from my friends.
- I often ask my peers for help when looking for alternatives in a particular product line.
- I often ask my family and friends before buying.

I would like to highlight some of the 12 elements, as I consider it important to link them to my research. A review of the literature revealed to me that young people in Generation Z view influencers much more than their friends as "stars". Consequently, I find this scale interesting, as we can find individuals who can be easily influenced by influencers.

There's also a point on the scale that reads, "If I buy a particular brand, I feel like I belong somewhere." With this, I would like to refer to the scale method mentioned earlier, which examined exactly how important it is to belong somewhere.

need to know whether someone is joining a particular social networking site or not. The presence of social media "celebrities" has come to the fore in the concept of influencer marketing. If someone joins a social media site, influencing by influencers can also begin. The main motivation I want to look at later is how much belonging to a person influences that person in their customer decision.

The method chosen to model my research is SEM or Structural Equation Modeling. The special feature of my SEM model is that I combine the latent variables of digital marketing with the latent variables of generation marketing, thus examining this regression model.

One of the articles I used was by Barkhi, Belanger, and Hicks (2008) in which I found some variables that were related to Generation Z e-commerce variables. I would like to use the following variables from this article.

Furthermore, I would like to incorporate elements of the scales presented above into the model.

Psychological variables:

- Peer pressure
- Influencing influencers
- Behaviour control
- The need to belong somewhere
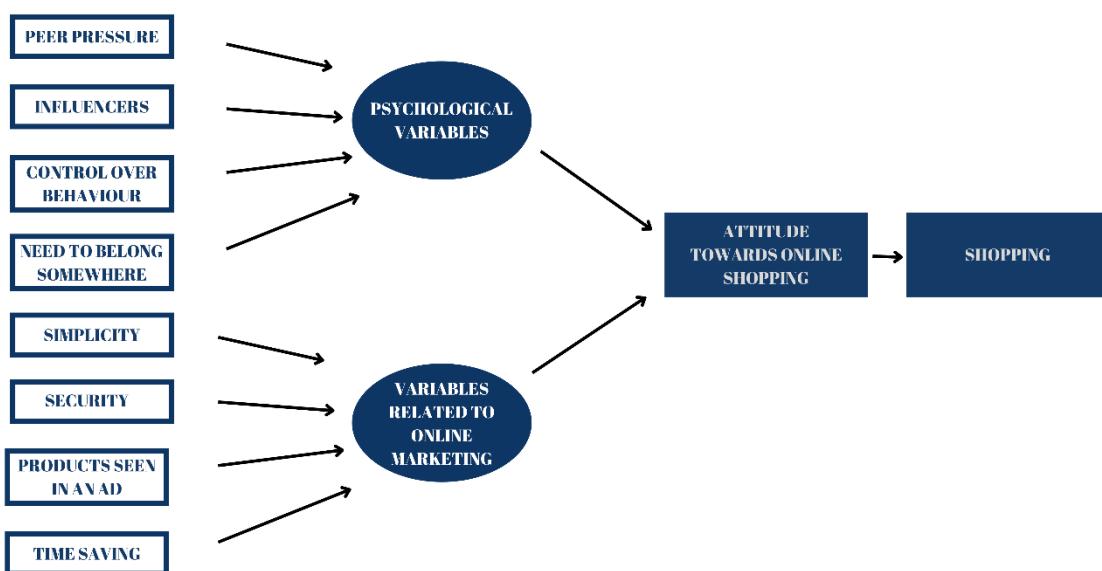- Variables related to online marketing:
- Simplicity

- Safety
- Products have seen in the ad
- Times saving

Previous research

Based on the model presented in the theoretical review, the SEM model was set up, which is the basis of the current research.

The SEM model can be seen below.

Table 1: SEM model of my research

Based on the SEM model, I conducted a focus group interview in which I examined the basis of all variables. In the present case, it is necessary to focus primarily on psychological factors.

One element of the model is the influence of influencers. In my previous research, I asked 10 young people between the ages of 18 and 26 about the factors seen above. It turned out that the younger age group listens much more to influencers, and my female participants prefer to shop based on the suggestions of influencers.

Primary research

Hypotheses

To analyse my research, I put forward the following hypotheses:

H1: Women are more prone to influencer marketing than men.

H2: Younger people are more prone to influencer marketing than older.

H3: Sustainability is more important for the older part of Gen Z.

Research methodology

During the primary research, I conducted a questionnaire survey among the students of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Miskolc. A total of 125 responses to the questionnaire were received, of which 123 were left after purification. 100% of the students were between 18-26 years old. The two age groups I examined were between 18-22 and 23-26 years old. The questionnaire contained a total of 12 questions. I used SPSS software to analyse the answers to the questionnaire, including the Crosstabs / Chi-square test and the Mann-Whitney test.

3.3. Results

As I analyzed the connection with a hypothesis, I found out some interesting things about the Gen Z-ers of the Faculty of Economics.

The first major finding was that there is a significant association between gender and influences by influencers. This was also the result of my previous research in connection with influencer marketing. The results can be seen below, on the Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of the connection between gender and influence

NEM * INFL Crosstabulation

Count

		INFL		Total
		Nem	Igen	
NEM	Nő	4	89	93
	Férfi	7	22	29
Total		11	111	122

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10,604[a]	1	,001		
Continuity Correction[b]	8,324	1	,004		
Likelihood Ratio	8,861	1	,003		
Fisher's Exact Test				,004	,004
Linear-by-Linear Association	10,517	1	,001		
N of Valid Cases	122				

The second thing that was quite interesting for me is that there is no association between age and the ability to be influenced by influencers. For this, I must say that unlike my previous research the older age group was underrepresented in this questionnaire.

Table 3. Analysis of the connection between age and influence

KOR * INFL Crosstabulation

Count

		INFL		Total
		Nem	Igen	
KOR	23-26	1	14	15
	18-22	9	97	106
	Na	1	0	1
Total		11	111	122

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10,228ª	2	,006
Likelihood Ratio	4,959	2	,084
Linear-by-Linear Association	8,958	1	,003
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 3 cells (50,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,09.

The third most interesting however quite logical founding is that there is a significant relationship between gender and what type of influencers they are following. The types of influencers were lifestyle, beauty, travel, videogames, technology, green, and film influencers.

I also did an analysis of their frequencies which showed me that the top 3 topics were lifestyle, beauty, and green influencers in the order shown above. After that the fourth most interesting topic was travel.

I also asked them about the type of product they have bought because of an influencer's suggestion. I made a word cloud out of their answers. The bigger the word is, the more important or most frequently used that word is. This can be seen on Table 4.

Table 4. Types of products they have bought

skin care products
headphones mascara hat cosmetic
movies beauty products
makeup
shoes parfume smart phone
videogames clothes deadline diary
sports accessories smart watch
food

Another important question was: "What kind of green influencers they are following?" I also made a word cloud out of the answers.

Table 5. Most followed green influencers by the answers

As you can see in Table 5. most of the influencers seen in this picture are in connection with veganism in one way or another. Also, Tebe is a shop but also the name of an influencer's brand. They sell products without any packaging.

For the last hypothesis, I analysed the possibility that gender and age have a relationship with the importance of promoting sustainability. I found out, that there is no difference in attitudes toward promoting sustainability in terms of age or gender.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I can say that out of the three hypotheses I made two should be rejected and one accepted.

The results show that my first hypothesis can be accepted as gender is indeed a big influence in terms of the capability of being influenced by an influencer. This is the one hypothesis that both this and my older research showed me.

My second hypothesis was: that younger people are more prone to influencer marketing than older. Unfortunately, this hypothesis should be rejected as my research showed me that age is not a deciding factor in terms of influencers' influence.

The third one should be also rejected as neither age nor gender makes difference in connection with the attitude toward promoting sustainability.

Future research possibilities

As for the future of this sustainable questionnaire, I think I need to do this with not only the older part of Gen Z (18-26) but also, I would like to ask the younger generations as well. Even though they are under so I will need parental permission to do this research with them.

The second possibility is to do this research with the same age group as this time, but the sample should be even higher, like the entirety of the University of Miskolc.

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