

The Impact of Interpersonal Relationships on Micro-influencer Marketing

Zhenyi Liu

Tianjin Xinhua High School, Tianjin, 300000, China

Abstract. The widespread use of mobile internet and social media has driven the creation and development of the micro-marketing model. Micro-influencers utilize marketing techniques that have a small and highly targeted reach, which in turn affects the psychology and perception of the target population. In the process of micromarketing, a very important influencing factor is interpersonal relationships. Therefore, this paper takes interpersonal relationships as an entry point, analyzes several aspects of interpersonal relationships participation in micro-marketing, the current situation of interpersonal relationships among micro-influencers, and the influence of interpersonal relationships on marketing strategy, which is of great significance in exploring the influence of interpersonal relationships on micro-marketing from the perspective of social influence. The author analyzes some micro-marketing strategies on the Chinese social platform Red Booklet. The empirical study shows that the more interaction between micro-influencers and the target population, the stronger the influence on the target population; compared with unilateral promotion by celebrities, micro-influencers have a stronger influence on the target population.

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the arrival of the 5G era and the booming of social media, not only have people's lifestyles changed, but their perceptions and behaviors are also being updated. With such a background, a newer way of marketing has emerged. Micro-influencer marketing has gradually been noticed and emphasized, becoming an important development direction in the marketing field. Micro-influencer marketing can be understood as a marketing tool for marketers with a small sphere of influence to gain personal influence through channels such as social networks and digital media. Compared with traditional marketing methods, micro-influencer marketing has the characteristics of closeness, openness, and spreading, so it is favored by more and more enterprises and brands.

Micro-influencer marketing is influenced by many factors, and one of the most important ones is interpersonal relationships. In micro-influencer marketing, these interpersonal relationships have a direct impact on the promotional effect because people tend to trust their relatives, friends, and people around them when they buy and consume, and acquaintances are more likely to have an impact on consumers' decisions. If companies want to utilize micro-influencer marketing to promote and sell their products and services, they must fully understand the impact of interpersonal relationships on their brand communication. Therefore, it is crucial to study the impact of interpersonal relationships on micro-influencer marketing.

In this paper, the history of interpersonal relationships with micro-influencers and their influence on marketing will be sorted out. The author will study several aspects of interpersonal relationship participation in micro-marketing, the current status of interpersonal relationships among micro-influencers, and the influence of interpersonal relationships on marketing strategy to further explore the influence of interpersonal relationships on micro-influencer marketing. It has important theoretical value and practical significance to further improvement of the theory of online consumer psychology and behavior and enhance the marketing effect of individuals, merchants, or enterprises engaged in micro-influencer marketing.

2 Literature review

2.1 Micro-influencer marketing

With the booming development of mobile social media in China, social platforms represented by WeChat, Weibo, Red Booklet, and Tic Tok are widely used as efficient marketing tools due to their features such as streamlined content dissemination and precise information pushing. In order to develop a marketing model that can be better adapted to social media platforms, micro-influencer marketing has emerged. It aims to analyze and understand the psychological needs of individual consumers, and classify them into different consumer groups, and then implement targeted marketing strategies, promotional tools, and further

Corresponding author: 1910660233@mail.sit.edu.cn

action plans. This form of marketing emphasizes the effective analysis and satisfaction of individual consumer needs. Enterprises, businesses, and individuals engaged in micro-marketing activities will establish, strengthen, and expand interpersonal relationships, enhance emotional interactions, etc., by sharing information with circle members, thus strengthening word-of-mouth communication and the consumer experience [1].

Micro-influencer marketing is characterized by its targeted selection and by placing marketing efforts on individual consumer communications. This approach can effectively stimulate consumers' emotional responses and active participation and thus increase their willingness and enthusiasm to buy. In other words, micro-influencer marketing emphasizes the role of individual and emotional communication, which is also the biggest difference between it and traditional marketing.

2.2 Interpersonal relationships

An interpersonal relationship is a psychological relationship established by people in the process of interaction, reflecting the interpersonal interactions of people in order to fulfil their various needs [2]. With the development of the Internet, interpersonal relationships relying on network development have increasingly become a very important form of interpersonal relationships in today's society [3]. In the mobile Internet environment, an individual's interpersonal circle gradually becomes a value circle composed of groups with the same value and interest systems. An individual's interpersonal circle gradually evolves into a value circle composed of groups of people with a common value system and interest system. This new type of interpersonal relationship develops in a way that is closely related to behaviors such as paying attention, interacting, and sharing. Li Carp analyzes the interpersonal relationships in social networks from the system perspective of social capital research in terms of structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions and points out that not only the "strong association" relationship mode but also the "weak association" relationship mode exists in the social networks established based on interpersonal relationships [1]. and pointed out that in social networks based on interpersonal relationships, there are not only "strong association" relationship patterns but also "weak association" relationship patterns [4].

Nowadays, a very large number of self-employed people are utilizing existing interpersonal relationships on social media platforms such as Weibo, Red Booklet, WeChat, and other social media platforms to carry out micro-marketing activities with a smaller scope and a more precise audience. The paper focuses on the marketers and consumers, which are the important components of micro-marketing, and further explores the role of interpersonal relationships on the two parties and the marketing strategies by studying the influence of the

relationships on the two parties and the marketing strategies.

3 Methodology and discussion

3.1 Interpersonal involvement

In the Internet era, with the maturity of network technology and more common applications, different marketing methods are attracting attention. With the increasingly obvious development trend of network segmentation and niche, more micro-level, more targeted marketing methods have emerged, bringing new development paths for the development of network marketing. To explore the impact of interpersonal relationships on micro-marketing, it is first necessary to determine the definition of interpersonal relationships in the process of micro-marketing as well as their composition. Interpersonal relationship refers to the psychological relationship gradually formed by people in the process of interaction, which has a close connection with people's daily activities. In relationship marketing, relationships exist to facilitate successful transactions [5]. Marketers sometimes establish a long-term and direct relationship of mutual benefit and trust with customers, and trust between people becomes the basis for establishing business cooperation.

Xiang Zhou concluded that interpersonal relationships are the key factor that dominates consumers' choices of goods in "micro-marketing" activities through the theoretical knowledge of consumer psychology and audience choice, etc [6]. Chiu et al. pointed out that the strength of the relationship between users in a virtual community positively affects the amount of knowledge shared [7]. Jiao Feng and Zhong Yao used an experimental study to verify that strong relationships between users can improve the quality of information received by users and enhance their purchase intentions [8]. Jiansheng Tang and Sijing Jiao [9], in their study of interpersonal relationships between employees and consumers, pointed out that the strength of employees' interpersonal relationships has a significant positive effect on consumers' behavioral intentions, and the greater the strength of interpersonal relationships, the stronger the consumers' purchase intention and recommendation intention towards the brand. Latane argued that the number of sources of influence, the strength of sources of influence, and the distance of sources of influence from the target determine the size of social influence [10]. The distance between the influence source and the target audience includes dimensions such as time, space, and emotional distance. Therefore, the greater the intensity of the relationship between the two parties, the greater the social impact.

3.2 Status of micro-influencers' interpersonal relationships

The ultimate goal of a micro-influencer is to make transaction successful and profitable, and micro-

influencers conduct marketing activities to achieve this goal directly or indirectly. In traditional marketing activities, what the seller will do is analyzing the psychology of the consumer, developing product features that meet the needs of the consumer, improving the quality of the product, and finding efficient advertising channels to enhance the connection between the seller and the buyer to increase the likelihood of a successful transaction and maximize profits. Compared to traditional marketing, the ultimate goal of micro-marketing remains the same, which is to sell products to maximize profits. However, unlike the traditional marketing approach, influencers who adopt the micro-marketing approach take advantage of the features of the self-marketing platform and capitalize on the interpersonal and emotional foundation developed with the users on this platform to further enhance their connection with the target audience and get better marketing results. Theodore Levitt once said that the task of marketing is to attract and keep customers. While traditional marketing focuses on attracting new customers and does not focus on maintaining interpersonal relationships with existing customers, in relationship marketing, the previously mentioned micro-influencer marketing elevates the emphasis on this point.

In micro-marketing activities, the form of interpersonal relationship construction is similar to the interaction and construction of real interpersonal relationships, through a certain medium [6]. In micro-marketing activities, micro-influencers take the initiative to utilize self-media for the construction and dissemination of interpersonal relationships so as to make two-way connections and emotional exchanges with other users and to continuously strengthen the already established interpersonal relationships. Through this process, utilizing platform interactions, micro-influencers can attract and connect with potential and indirect consumers, as well as strengthen existing relationships with other consumers. Both sides of the interpersonal relationship in this marketing model may be people who are already socially connected offline or people with similar interests. In a micromarketing campaign, these relationships are strong and facilitate the creation of trust and the building of a common psychological relationship.

This paper analyzes the interpersonal relationship status of micro-influencers using the Chinese social platform Red Booklet as an example. The data in Figure 1 shows the distribution of influencers for the Chinese emerging beauty brand "Perfect Diary". As can be seen from the figure, the proportion of the brand's influencers is higher among folks and primary influencers, and the sum of the two parts is as high as 80%. It is found that Perfect Diary is not just pursuing celebrity endorsement. Instead, micro-influencers dominate advertisements placement.

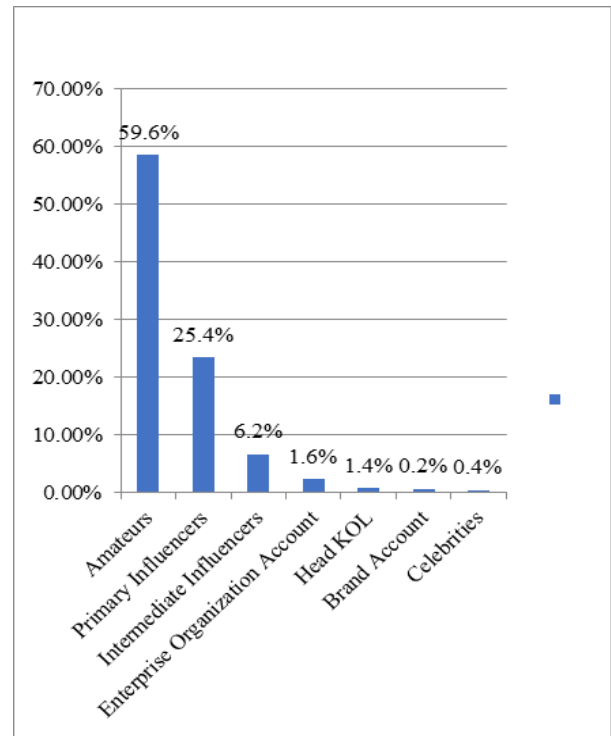


Fig. 1. Distribution Of influencer attributes [11].

Figure 2 and Figure 3 below counts the number of influencers with different follower sizes of the Perfect Diary beauty products brand between June 22, 2023, and July 21, 2022, as well as their interaction volume contribution. The figures also validate the previous statement that micro-influencers account for the bulk of ad placements, with influencers with 1–10 followers contributing the most interaction. In the community, the more social interaction between influencers and fans, the stronger the fan stickiness, and the more significant the influence of relevant content on fan consumption behavior will be [12]. That is to say, the more interaction between micro-influencers and the target population, the higher the degree of interpersonal relationship stability, and the stronger the influence on the target population. Compared with unilateral promotion by celebrities, micro-influencers have a stronger direct influence on the target population.

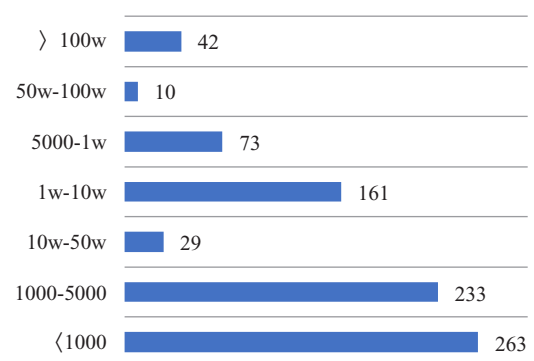


Fig. 2. The number of different type of influencers categorized by follower size [11].

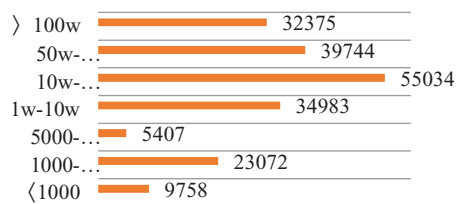


Fig. 3. Influencer interaction volume/fans contribution [11].

3.3 Research on the impact of interpersonal relationships on marketing strategies

In the increasingly competitive marketing environment, Red Booklet has become the preferred promotion platform for many brands by virtue of its "strong recommending attribute" and "great influence on users' consumption decisions," among other characteristics, and the circle of influencers constitutes the brand's investment strategy. A key opinion leader (KOL) is a person with great influence in the community. There are three main types of KOL marketing in the Red Booklet: focus type, diffusion type, and functional type [13]. Focused type is to build a vertical KOL matrix, focus on key people, and concentrate firepower to promote sales conversion for products with specific consumer groups; diffusion type is to build a pyramid-type KOL matrix and promote the diffusion of marketing information in stages, which is applicable to mass consumer products; functional type is to explore the different functions of KOL to support the integration of various aspects of marketing communication.

As shown in the bottom of the triangle in Figure 4, the largest volume and most common are primary influencers and folks, the micro-influencers mentioned earlier. These micro-influencers, by posting product usage and reasons for recommendation on social platforms, are the root of the community of Red Booklet, as well as the founders of the brand's traffic and word-of-mouth. They establish different degrees of interpersonal relationships through behaviors such as liking, positive reviews, favoriting, and retweeting, or follow the trend of unboxing, or share their experiences to precipitate brand word-of-mouth. Hong et al. pointed out that, in entertainment mobile services, social influence has a positive role in promoting consumers' purchase intentions and behaviors. Micro-influencers can utilize their positive reviews and high number of likes to further attract potential consumers, enhance the image of the product in the perspective of passersby, and increase the exposure of the product [13]. Good interpersonal relationships between micro-influencers, and between micro-influencers and target audiences, can enhance the product's reputation and increase the target group's desire to buy. Continuous and stable interpersonal relationships can enhance the connection between the micro-influencer and the target audience, making them more convinced of the micro-influencer's recommendation, and thus increasing the impact of micro-marketing.

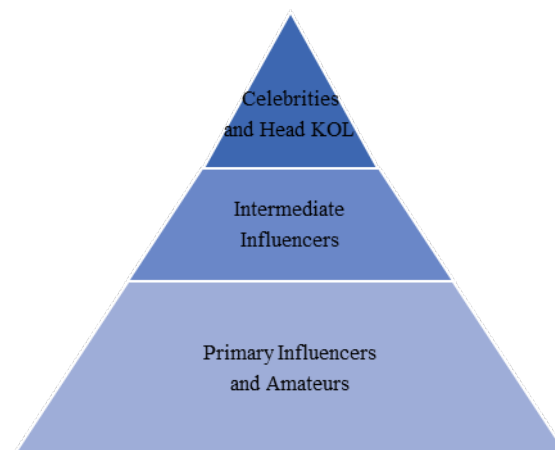


Fig. 4. Pyramidal KOL matrices [14].

4 Conclusion

In micro-influencer marketing, interpersonal relationships are a factor that cannot be ignored. Through the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, enterprises can effectively promote the dissemination of products or services and increase brand awareness and sales. At the same time, interpersonal relationships also have an important impact on micro-influencer marketing.

In this paper, the author takes micro-marketing in the mobile Internet environment as the background, and takes interpersonal relationships in the mobile social network as the entry point, and studies the influence of interpersonal relationships on micro-marketing from the perspective of social influence. The empirical research shows that the more the micro-influencers interact with the target population, the stronger the influence on the target population; compared with the unilateral promotion of the stars, the micro-influencers have a stronger influence on the target population.

Besides, by analyzing the actual case of social platform Red Booklet, the author discusses the mechanism and empirical analysis of the influence of interpersonal relationships on micro-influencer marketing, as well as the methods and insights for optimizing the promotion strategy and social media application. In the optimization of promotion strategies, enterprises need to combine the characteristics of interpersonal relationships and the influence mechanism of micro-marketing and adopt diversified, personalized, and interactive means so as to improve the promotion effect and consumer participation. In the application of social media, enterprises can actively utilize various social media platforms to plan and implement marketing activities through positioning, interaction, dissemination, and other aspects in order to achieve better marketing effects.

To summarize, interpersonal relationships play a very important role in micro-influencer marketing. By utilizing the influence of the majority of micro-influencers and establishing and maintaining good interpersonal relationships with consumers, enterprises can promote the dissemination and sales of their

products or services and improve brand awareness and market influence. Therefore, enterprises should fully recognize the value and influence of interpersonal relationships and actively explore innovative strategies and means to continuously improve the efficiency and quality of micro-influencer marketing in order to better achieve marketing objectives.

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