

Attractive social media influencers can hinder the success of products they promote

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Tuesday, 12 January 2021

Social media influencers often use their platforms to promote new products, however new research from Trinity Business School reveals that using them to develop new products can ultimately make them much more successful.

The study finds that the involvement of fashion influencers in the value cocreation process can significantly influence new product development performance. Proving that consumers trust influencers to represent them and that collaborating with them can help firms develop innovative fashion products. However, surprisingly, if the influencers are deemed as attractive it can have a negative effect on the success of the product.

According to Dr. Xiaoning Liang Assistant Professor of Marketing Trinity Business School

“Cewebrities can be defined as web celebrities who have gained fame mainly via their presence on the Internet, especially social media platforms. They are deemed as an effective marketing tool for firms to improve their brand awareness and business performance.

“Cewebrities are now more involved in new product development activities due to their association with innovative clothing and fashion design. Our study has identified and validated five key attributes of fashion cewebrities; attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, interactivity, and intimacy.

“Our research reveals that different attributes of fashion cewebrities exert different impacts on new product development. For instance, the expertise and interactivity of fashion cewebrities are found to improve product design, production, and commercialization performance, whereas intimacy is found to affect only the performance of product design and commercialization. Surprisingly, attractiveness is found to have negative impacts on both product design and production performance. This may be because, since attractive Chinese fashion cewebrities may appear similar to followers, the perceived uniqueness of their co-created fashion products may be correspondingly reduced as exclusivity and uniqueness are considered more important attributes. This may lead to a negative impact of attractiveness on new product development performance.”

Currently, there is real hype surrounding social media influencers and this research sheds new and never before seen light on their effectiveness when developing new products.

These findings came from 178 surveys with 172 valid responses. The respondents are aged between 17 and 25 years old, all of whom reported having heard of fashion cewebrities, from whom more than 50% of respondents had purchased or used product samples.

The study, co-authored by Professor Hao Zhang, Northeastern University (China) and Professor Hakil Moon, Eastern Michigan University (USA), is published in the Journal of Business Research.

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