How Can Social Media Influencers Satisfy Consumers with Different Regulatory Focus Through 'How-To' Videos?

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INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing has becoming one of the most effective advertising strategies for brands, as social media influencers with strong persuasive power can dramatically affect consumers' purchase behaviour (Torres, Augusto & Matos 2019). These influencers usually have a creative say in different types of content, and present the content in their usual styles, so that is comes across as relatable and authentic (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget 2019). One of the most popular types of content is 'How-To' videos, where influencers provide step-by-step details of how to accomplish a task. It usually features sponsored products, for example, influencers might create makeup tutorials showing how to make Halloween makeup with sponsors' products. 'How-To' videos have become a popular means of promoting products, but the underlying mechanism are not fully understood yet. To address this gap in literature, we apply theories of goal-oriented behaviour (e.g., consumer motivation classes model), construal level theory and source effect model to better identify consumer wants and how they fulfil their wants through consuming 'How-To' videos; and further, how can influencers respond to different consumer wants through generating different content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer Marketing utilizes influential online opinion leaders to disseminate brand related user-generated content and shape audience attitudes through social networking sites (Lim et al., 2017), is currently widely adopted by brands to effectively reach their target audiences (Evans et al., 2017). Influencer marketing is generating growing interest amongst academics (Audrezet , de Kerviler & Moulard 2020; Voorveld et al. 2018), and numerous researches (e.g., Lou & Yuan 2019; Chung & Cho 2017) have indicated that the characteristics of influencer (e.g., expertise, similarity, attractiveness) affect consumers' purchase intention. However, little attention has been given to consumers, for example, consumers' motivation for consuming videos generated by influencers.

Consumer behaviour is often goal-oriented, as they frequently make purchase to facilitate the attainment of one or more specific end goals. Such motivations can be differentiated on the basis of one major criterion: either the consumer is motivated to reach a desired state, or the consumer is motivated to avoid an undesired state (Boesen-Mariani, Gomez & Gavard-Perret 2010). Regulatory focus theory provides one perspective for understanding consumers' motivations underlying consumption (Lee & Raugh 2014; Das 2016). This theory posits two motivational orientations including a promotion focus and a prevention focus (Higgins 1997; 2002), suggesting promotions focus uses an approach strategy to goal attainment (e.g., solve the current problem), whereas prevention focus uses an avoidance strategy to goal attainment (e.g., prevent potential problem) (Asker & Lee 2001; Lee & Koo 2015). Regulatory focus theory has gained influence in marketing, as its ability to explain and predict a variety of psychological processes and consumer behaviours at the beginning level of customer journey (Avnet & Higgins 2006; Ouyang et al. 2015). When people consuming the 'How-To' video, there is a possibility that they are looking forward to making adjustments that their

circumstances dictate. As influencers normally promote sponsored products through creating the product-use situation for the products, it is important to know how to meet consumers need with different regulatory focus (e.g., perceived problems – how to reduce wrinkles?/anticipated problems – how to prevent wrinkles). Thus, this study will look at how consumers motivation in terms of promotion focus versus prevention focus might influence their responses to 'How-To' videos shard on social media networks. In addition, based on regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1997), individuals tend to solve problems via approach strategy are promotion-focused, whereas individuals tend to prevent potential problems via avoidance strategy are prevention-focused. Avnet and Higgins (2006) further suggest when the manner of individuals' engagement in an activity sustains their current goal orientation and the strategy to goal attainment, the regulatory fit occurs, which can change the significance of individuals' reactions to the persuasiveness of a message they have received (Ashraf & Thongpapanl 2015; Ashraf, Razzaque & Thongpapanl 2016; Hsu & Chen 2014). The main objective in this paper is to examine how these motivating wants – 'problem solve' versus 'problem prevent' – affect consumers responses toward 'How-To' videos through experiencing regulatory fit.

Furthermore, another variable that is likely to be an important determinant of behaviour is regulatory mode (Kruglanski et al. 2000), which involves the degree to which an individual engages in analytical activities such as comparing alternatives versus activities oriented toward goal-related movement. Regulatory mode theory proposes two independent orientations that underlie most self-regulation behaviours, referred to as locomotion and assessment, and suggesting individual's regulatory mode can influence how people carries out a wide variety of activities in their life, ranging from the types of goals they select to the manner in which they pursue those goals (Higgins, Kruglanski & Pieero 2003; Kruglanski et al. 2000). Locomotion reflects a preference for moving from one state to another and a tendency to pursue goal-directed behaviour without interruption or pause. By contrast, assessment reflects a preference for evaluating states and alternatives and a tendency to evaluate multiple possible courses of action before choosing a direct (Pierro et al. 2011; Pierro et al. 2008). Previous research (e.g.,van Putten, Zeelenberg & van Dijk 2013; Hong, Tan & Chang 2004) suggests individual's regulatory mode can influence how people carries out a wide variety of activities in their life, in this study, the author argues that consumer behaviour in social media context will be better understood when it is taken into account that individuals' regulatory focus and their preferences for a specific regulatory mode can affect their selection and the pursuit of goals.

On the other hand, from the perspectives of influencers, the type of the content they generated and the characteristics of them also play important roles in the link between regulatory focus and consumers responses. The construal theory that describes the relation between psychological distance, such as temporal distance, and the extent to which people's thinking is abstract or concrete (Liberman & Trope 1998; Trope & Liberman 2010). Compared with individuals who are about moving away from undesirable state of affairs that imagined to occur at some future time, individuals who are facing the current problems have higher construal level, suggesting stronger positive persuasive effects when individuals aim to solve current problems encounter concrete content and individuals aim to prevent potential problems encounter abstract content (Kim & Youn 2019; Dhar & Kim 2007). Furthermore, with respect

to the source credibility model, influencers' perceived similarity and expertise can affect consumer outcomes (Chung & Cho 2017; Wang & Scheinbaum 2018). In this study, we argue influencers' characteristics play moderate roles in the link between the motivation class and consumer outcomes.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

By bring together the topics of motivational theories an influencer marketing, this research has established a research framework (Figure 1) to identify consumer goal-oriented behaviour in the social media content. Drawing from extant literature, the research argues that consumers regulatory focus affect consumer outcomes through constituting perceived regulatory fit. Furthermore, this link is moderated by regulatory mode, social media content types, influencers' perceived similarity and expertise. Five empirical studies will be conducted to test these hypotheses. These results will offer important insights regarding the effects of consumer motivating wants on consumer outcomes in the age of social media. In addition, our result will help companies and influencers to boost their brands through providing products that their consumers' circumstances dictate.
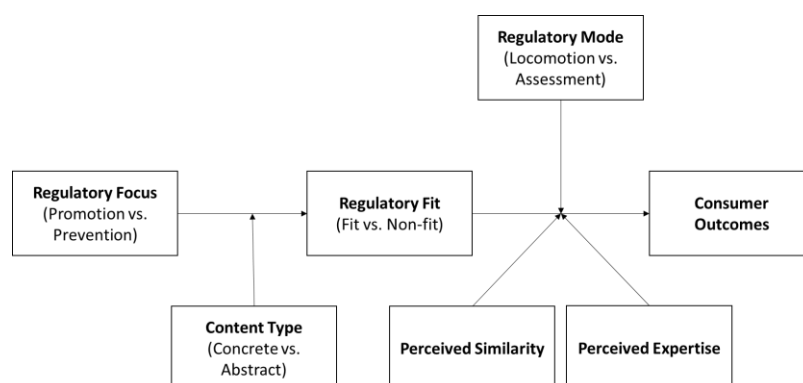

Fig.1. Research framework

METHODS

This research will test this model in five empirical studies through online experiments, where different types of 'How-To' videos will be served as stimuli. Study 1 aims to differentiate the effects of regulatory focus on purchase intention, as well as the mediating effect of perceived regulatory fit between regulatory focus and consumer outcomes, through using a 2 (Motivation Class: promotion vs. prevention) x 2 (Regulatory Fit: fit vs. non-fit) between-subjects design. Subjects in the study 1 will be randomly assigned to the four treatment conditions. Study 2, 3, 4 and 5 will further investigate the moderating effect of regulatory mode, content type, perceived influencers' similarity, and perceived influencers' expertise on the link between regulatory focus and consumer outcomes, respectively. In each study, subjects will be randomly assigned to the eight treatment conditions.

Convenience sampling will be used for these five studies and participants will be recruited form MTurk. Each experimental session comprised three parts. First, participants will complete

demographic questions, followed by questions pertaining to regulatory mode and regulatory mode. Importantly, participants will be asked whether they are interested in buying the presented object, which ensure their recent involvement with the presented topic. Next, participants will be asked to watch the 'How-To' video that they are randomly assigned to, followed by complete the perceived influencers' similarity and expertise scales. Finally, participants are invited to complete the remaining questions. This part includes questions concerning the consumers' responses toward the 'How-To' video from three different levels (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioural). The experiment will take approximately 15 minutes for each participant to complete.

To access participants' regulatory focus, we development a scale which adapted from Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda (2002) and Hsu, Yu and Chang (2017). Additionally, the locomotion and assessment dimensions of self-regulation will be measured using two 12-item scales development by Kruglanski et al. (2000). In terms of the measurement of the perceived similarity expertise toward influencers, we will rely on scales provided by Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) and Ohanian (1990). In the present scale, all scales will be scored by participants using a seven-points Likert scale (with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.)

CONCLUSION

This study will explore to what extent consumer motivation can affect their response toward the "How-To" video in the social media content, thereby providing suggestions for influencers and companies to better identify various consumers' motivation. Fennell (1978) suggests marketing success lies in the identification of consumer wants and the formulation of brand positioning to respond to these wants, this works can help marketers to meet consumers want within the situation that activate their purchase intention. The result in the current study might have several theoretical and potential practical implications. First, previous influencer marketing research has studied the effect of influencers' characteristics on consumer response (e.g., attitudes, purchase intention). However, the present study will also consider factors from the perspectives of consumers. Second, the result may contribute to explaining the inconsistent relationship influencer characteristics and consumers outcome between found in previous influencer marketing research. From the practical perspective, our research encourages managers to corporate with influencers and provide social media content at an earlier stage and ensure to activate consumers' purchase intention through constituting perceived fit.

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