

PSY 368

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The Psychology of Leadership

Influencers on Instagram

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Introduction:

1. What are the main variables in this article and how are they defined?

This study focuses on fashion opinion leaders on social media, specifically Instagram, and their influence. The main variables in this article were perceived originality, uniqueness, quality and quantity and its effect on perceived opinion leadership. Perceived originality is defined as, “the extent to which these actions (posts) are perceived as unusual, innovative and sophisticated.” Perceived uniqueness is defined as, “a state in which a person feels differentiated from other people around him or her and involves using behaviors that others will pay attention to.” Perceived quality is defined as, “sharing high quality posts (photography, writing, consistent use of logos, etc.) is a means by which a professional and successful fashion blog can be created.” Lastly, perceived quantity is defined as, “a high level of communication activity (number of posts and replies) is relation to the capacity to influence others in the online context.”

2. Identify two past studies referenced in the introduction, what they studied, and what they found.

One study referenced was, “Technological opinion leadership: The role of personal innovativeness, gadget love, and technological innovativeness (2016)” by R. Thakur, A. Angriawan, and J.H Summey. This study used existing information to develop and test a model of factors that drive technological opinion leadership. Specifically the authors expanded on Bruner and Jumar’s (2007) study by using student and national samples to test the relationship

between three groups: technological innovativeness and technological opinion leadership and between gadget lovers and technological innovativeness. The results indicated three things. The first being that technological innovation and gadget lovers are predictors of technological opinion leadership. Next, personal innovation is positively related to technological innovation and gadget lovers. Finally, they found that gadget lovers partially mediate the relationship between personal innovativeness and technological innovativeness.

Another study referenced was, “Navigating person-branding in the fashion blogosphere (2016)” by M.P Delisle and M.A Paramentier. This study focused on how fashion bloggers build status and audience through person-branding. They conducted their study through an 18-month netnography in the “fashion blogosphere” using a Bourdieuan theoretical approach. This approach seeks to show that social agents develop strategies which are adapted to the needs of the social worlds that they inhabit. The study identified two sets of practices that fuel fashion blogger’s person-brand capital: building and signaling cultural capital and building and signaling social capital. Examples of how fashion bloggers can create this person-brand capital are: finding a unique voice, embodying the fashion code, connecting with other bloggers, and being connected to the fashion crowd.

3. What predictions (hypotheses) were made in this study? (if there three of more, you may just focus on one or two).**

There were multiple predictions made in this article; however, there are two that I feel are important to focus on. The first prediction is that perceived originality has a positive effect on opinion leadership. The second prediction is that perceived quality has a positive effect on opinion leadership. To understand what these hypotheses mean it's important to better understand opinion leadership in relation to this study. Opinion leaders are important sources of advice for other consumers and in the modern era have been referred to as “influencers.” As this study focuses on Instagram and fashion it is also important to note that, “opinion leadership influences consumer behavioral intentions toward both the influencer (intention to interact in the account and recommend it) and the fashion industry (intention to follow fashion advice posted).” Looking at the first hypothesis, perceived originality has a positive effect on opinion leadership, the authors mean that when an opinion leader has original content, their influence on the Instagram platform will increase. The second hypothesis, perceived quality has a positive effect on opinion leadership, means that when an opinion leader has better quality posts, their influence on the Instagram platform will also increase.

Method:**4. What were the demographics of the participants (sample size, how recruited, age, race, position, etc.)?**

The data used to test these hypotheses was collected from a (one) fashion focused Instagram account in which a potential influencer posts pictures related to new trends in the fashion industry that can be imitated by the account's followers. The selection of this account was based on the accounts growing number of followers (76,000 followers), focusing on the fashion industry, it's increasing popularity in the media and it's accessibility. This account was accessible because the influencer agreed to collaborate with the research project by distributing a questionnaire among it's account followers.

5. Describe the materials and procedures used in this study (i.e., the steps of the study, the tests and equipment used, etc.). Be sure to note what type of research study this is (i.e., survey, experiment, etc.).

This study was a survey study because a questionnaire was used. 808 participants were given the questionnaire which asked their perceptions on opinion leadership in regards to originality and uniqueness of the account, their online recommendations, their interaction intentions, their intention to follow the accounts advice, their online interaction propensity, and the perceived fit of the account with their personalities. The questionnaire used a seven-point scale, which the participants rated from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). To measure quality and quantity they participants rated 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much").

Results:**6. Were the hypotheses supported (you should restate them here)? Explain what the study revealed.**

The hypothesis that stated that perceived quality has a positive effect on opinion leadership was not supported. However, the hypothesis that stated that perceived originality has a positive effect on opinion leadership was supported. The work confirmed that, instead of perceived quality or quantity, perceived originality and uniqueness of the posts on an Instagram account are the key factors that lead a poster to be perceived as an opinion leader in this study. This means that aspects such as creativity, or being one of a kind are necessary to become an online influencer in the fashion industry.

Discussion

7. ****What were some limitations of the study that the author noted? What are some of your own thoughts as to flaws in the study? (clearly distinguish whose criticisms are whose)**

One limitation that the the author noted is that studies related to opinion leadership on social media, specifically Instagram, are limited despite Instagram being the most used platform by influencers. This limitation made it a greater challenge for the authors to gather background information on this specific topic. Personally, I also thought that one limitation of the study was that they only used one opinion-leaders account. By only using this account and it's followers a bias in the study was inevitable.

8. *****Describe a good follow up study to this one. What would the hypothesis be and why? How would you test it? Who would the subjects be and why? What would the procedures be?**

I personally feel that a good follow up study to this would be what users perceive as original and unique content for opinion-leaders. My hypothesis would be that the more unique and aesthetic pictures are on an account the more engagement this opinion-leader would have on their posts. I think that this subject would be important to study because it would generate a more specific range of data. Personally, I would test this by using 10 different posts with varying photographic elements and use a questionnaire to rate the uniqueness and aesthetics of the photographs.