

EVERYDAY MICRO-INFLUENCERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CORPORATE BRAND REPUTATION

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Purpose

Social media influencers (SMIs) are an important actor within the social media domain impacting upon organisations and brands. Traditionally SMIs are seen as individuals with millions of followers (Audrezet et al., 2018), however, there are also micro-influencers who have a relatively small follower base of less than 10,000 followers (Lin, Bruning, & Swarna, 2018). These micro-influencers are now being recognised in the practitioner domain as having higher engagement and trust factors than a professional-type of influencer/ celebrity with their million-plus follower-base (Main, 2017; Hyman, 2018).

There remains a dearth of research on (EDMIs) everyday micro-influencers (unpaid, non-commercial, social media micro-influencers who share their experiences of corporate brands with their followers as a part of their daily lives). This study sought to understand the impact that EDMIs can have on a firm's corporate brand reputation through receivers being exposed to their positive and negative experiences. Secondly, we aimed to establish the specific variables that influence a receiver's evaluation of a firm's corporate brand reputation after exposure to positive and negative tweets from EDMIs

Methodology

A quantitative study of 372 Twitter users was undertaken with respondents being exposed to six positive and negative EDMI tweets about corporate brands in an online experiment that replicated the Twitter environment.

Findings

Our findings suggest that a change in corporate brand reputation does take place when receivers are exposed to both positive and negative everyday micro-influencer activity on Twitter. Our findings also suggest that receivers of positive valence EDMI tweets are more likely to seek additional information about a corporate brand's reputation. In contrast, receivers of negative valence EDMI tweets are more likely to solely rely on emotional reactions when exposed to negative information. Finally, our study demonstrates that valence and type of tweet play a key role in determining the factors that influence a receiver's perception of a firm's corporate brand reputation after exposure to EDMI tweets.

Management Implications

These findings highlight the need for managers to utilize social listening platforms to closely monitor EDMI tweets about their organisation. Managers may then have an opportunity to amplify micro-influencers' positive impact as recipients seek more information about the brand experience shared. However, managers also need to be vigilant and respond to negative valence EDMI tweets quickly, and use diffusing language when doing so.

Originality and Value

Although there has been research undertaken about the impact of celebrities and individuals with large numbers of followers, this research focuses on a very different but equally influential group, the everyday micro-influencers and their impact on corporate reputation.

References

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