

43. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MICRO INFLUENCERS VS. CELEBRITY INFLUENCERS IN SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

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The paper aims to compare the effectiveness of social media campaigns organised with the participation of two fairly close in the field of activity, but different in the number of followers, social media users: micro-influencers and celebrity (macro-) influencers. The paper presents the peculiar properties of such campaigns, analyses various aspects, including audience reach, level of engagement, trust in the source, as well as the cost and effectiveness of investments.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media and influencers have surged in importance, presenting businesses with unprecedented opportunities for digital-marketing. With consumers spending more time online, influencers, both micro- and celebrity, have capitalised on this increased audience attention, making them pivotal figures in digital marketing strategies. Nowadays influencer collaboration offers a direct route to engage with target audiences in more original and natural ways. That is why understanding the differences between macro-influencers (also known as celebrity influencers) and micro-influencers, as well as their impact on audiences' purchase behaviour, is essential for businesses aiming to maximise the effectiveness of their social media campaigns. While macro-influencers provide broad reach, micro-influencers offer niche targeting and authentic engagement, making them invaluable assets in today's digital marketing landscape.

The research aims to study characteristics of micro- and macro-influencers with regard to the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and identify their impact on brand awareness, engagement metrics, and sales conversions. By analysing the distinct traits and performance metrics of micro- and macro-influencers, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for businesses looking to optimise their social media marketing strategies and maximise ROI (return on investment). The second objective is to assess benefits and drawbacks of collaborating with different influencers, impacting profit or wastage based on business scale and goals. Misaligned partnerships can harm engagement, brand credibility, and lead to negative publicity. Thorough research and planning are vital to prevent pitfalls and ensure campaign success. The study also examines audience behaviour to improve influencer marketing. Understanding engagement, trust, and purchasing decisions is essential for leveraging influencer partnerships and achieving marketing goals efficiently.

According to the modern division of commercial accounts on social networks, there are two main categories of influencers differing in the size of audience reach: micro-influencers and macro-influencers also called celebrity influencers. Micro-influencers are social users with niche social followings ranging from 10,000 to 100,000. Macro-influencers are commonly known to have more than 100,000 followers and at least a 3 % engagement rate. In many cases, celebrity influencers have another title such as a TV personality, athlete, or thought leader in their community [1].

Macro-influencer marketing involves partnering with influencers boasting substantial followings, typically ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions, endorsing products or initiatives. Brands leverage them for visibility, tapping into established audiences and generating higher engagement [2]. Conversely, micro-influencers, with smaller but engaged follower bases, foster genuine relationships with their audience. Brands collaborate with them to access specific demographics, benefiting from the trust and rapport they have built. Micro-influencers offer cost-effective collaborations, ideal for smaller businesses or niche campaigns. Despite their smaller reach compared to macros, micros are trusted by followers, resulting in high engagement when promoting products or services.

A study conducted by Social Bakers highlighted that compared to macro-influencers, micro-influencers have a 60 % more engagement rate. The conversion rate of micro-influencers is also higher than that of macro-influencers, which helps brands in boosting their online sales. However, when the number of followers increases for a social media influencer, their engagement with the followers declines [2].

The point about micro-influencers being more effective in influencing purchase decisions of followers than macro-influencers is supported by the persuasion knowledge model, which is known to describe that the knowledge or responses of people to persuasive marketing content is determined by the realisation of the consumers of the intent of the marketer [2]. When consumers are exposed to promotions of a product or service by both micro-influencers and macro-influencers, they are more likely to interpret that macro-influencers are attempting to persuade people by leveraging their popularity and fame, as opposed to micro-influencers. Therefore, consumers are less likely to trust the endorsement of celebrity influencers compared

to those from micro-influencers. This demonstrates how the authenticity of the promoted message serves as a determining factor for the viewers influenced by social media influencers.

After examining five surveys that compared the various impacts of advertising campaigns by micro- and macro-influencers, several trends have been identified. The first statistically proven fact is that micro-influencers are seeing the highest engagement on social media, TikTok and Instagram specifically. According to the IMH State of Influencer Marketing 2023: Benchmark Report, engagement rates on TikTok range between 10.53 % for accounts with over 1 million followers and a whopping 15.04 % for accounts with 1,000 to 5,000 followers. Meanwhile, Instagram's engagement rate for influencers is on the decline in spite of its popularity with marketers. Accounts with fewer than 5,000 followers see an engagement rate of about 4.21 % on the platform, which is pretty decent by today's standards [3].

The second trend drawn from the research is that marketers prefer to work with smaller influencers. According to HubSpot's 2023 Social Media Marketing Report, 80 % of influencer marketers prefer collaborating with small creators and influencers, defined as individuals with fewer than 100,000 followers. Conversely, only 16 % report working with celebrity influencers boasting over 1 million followers [4].

However, the decision to partner with smaller influencers is not solely driven by their elevated engagement rates. One of the most revealing questions asked during The HubSpot survey was a question about the biggest benefits of working with small influencers/creators (under 100,000 followers) compared to bigger accounts. The survey reveals the significant impact of cost on marketers' preferences, with 44 % highlighting affordability as a key factor in choosing smaller influencers. Forty-four percentage of respondents also indicate that establishing long-term partnerships with micro-influencers is easier. Furthermore, 41 % of marketers believe that small creators provide access to more niche, close-knit communities and are more receptive to feedback. Additionally, 37 % of respondents observe higher engagement rates with content from micro-influencers, while 35 % affirm that followers place greater trust in smaller influencers [4].

Another study by The Kelly Fay Group found that 82 % prefer micro-influencers due to relatability, fostering authenticity compared to celebrity influencers. Trust Barometer data supports this, with "people like me" being the most trusted category on social media, gaining credibility from 61 % of respondents. This trend highlights relatability's impact on consumer trust in influencers, outweighing popularity [2].

Collaborating with celebrity influencers can drive sales, especially for co-branded or limited products, creating scarcity and impulse buying. Such influencers serve as key opinion leaders, providing instant validation and momentum. This strategy is common for health-related, high-cost, or sensitive products, enhancing brand legitimacy and trust. However, partnering with macro-influencers may incur high expenses due to their understanding of their influence, justifying their elevated collaboration fees.

In conclusion, most of the actual data on the topic of social media campaigns strongly advocates for using micro-influencers as the primary choice for most influencer-marketing campaigns. Such partnering offers several advantages over collaborating with macro-influencers.

Firstly, working with micro-influencers is notably cheaper due to lower collaboration costs and the potential for product trade, allowing businesses to maximise their influencer marketing budget. Additionally, micro-influencers are generally more accessible and willing to collaborate with multiple brands or products, making the process easier and more flexible compared to working with macro-influencers who tend to be more selective. Furthermore, micro-influencers offer a more efficient cost per thousand impressions (CPM) compared to traditional digital ads, providing a higher return on investment for businesses. Moreover, the authentic engagement fostered by micro-influencers, characterised by meaningful interactions and content resonance within their community, enhances the reach and impact of marketing campaigns beyond just likes and comments. This organic engagement can lead to further sharing across different platforms, amplifying the visibility of the brand and product.

In addition to the identified benefits, it is important to consider some limitations associated with partnering with micro-influencers. Firstly, working with multiple micro-influencers to achieve the reach of a single celebrity influencer requires increased management and coordination, or the implementation of a dedicated influencer marketing solution. This can add complexity and require additional resources.

Moreover, smaller influencers, especially those with up to 10,000 followers, often publish more sponsored content, potentially affecting audience engagement and trust. Businesses should carefully select ambassadors, monitoring content quality to predict collaboration outcomes beyond current audience activity.

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