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The Creator, The Content, and the Connectivity: Uncovering the Factors that Drive Followers to Content Creators



Abstract: The article provides an overview of the study, which sought to investigate the factors influencing people to follow content creators. The study proposed to use a pilot test to discover these factors and then determine the content creator-follower relationships. It highlights the importance of the idea of creator, content, and connectivity as key factors that influence people to follow content creators. The study found that the majority of respondents placed great importance on the creator, content, and connectivity. The results showed that the creator had a positive relationship with following the content creator, reinforcing findings from previous studies. The study used a quantitative approach with an online survey, and the data was analyzed using Smart PLS 4. The abstract notes that this study provides new insights that had not been studied before, specifically the findings on the importance of the creator, content, and connectivity. Overall, the abstract suggests that this study provides a valuable contribution to understanding the factors that influence people to follow content creators, which has important implications for marketers and content creators.

Keywords: creators, content, quantitative, provides

INTRODUCTION:

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The growing importance of content creators in the digital marketing landscape has sparked increased research interest in understanding the factors that influence people to follow content creators. A 2022 Sprout Social study found that content creator outperforms follower count, and creators are significant participants in the future of brand marketing. Customers scrutinize a creator's activities before judging their success based on business metrics (Sprout Social, 2022). By upholding the norms set by their community, well-liked brands gain trust. Consumers look for various factors when deciding which new accounts to follow, such as the content creator's authenticity, the quality of their content, their follower count, and their demographic alignment with the target audience.

1.1 Research Background

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1.2 Problem Statement

While several studies have identified factors that determine whether people will follow a content creator, such as authenticity, high-quality content, follower count, and demographic alignment, there is currently insufficient research that focuses on this topic. Authenticity is crucial in creating a successful brand, as customers can detect when a company's values and promotional methods are misaligned. The same principle applies to content creators, as it is a common misconception that creators need hundreds of thousands of followers to secure business relationships. Instead, opportunities are attracted by active communities and consistent voices and

content styles.

1.2.1 Research Gap

The existing literature on factors influencing people to follow content creators has several research gaps. While studies have examined how content creators' personalities affect their ability to gain followers, there is limited data on how platform features affect follower behavior. Additionally, while research has identified several factors, such as the need for entertainment, social connection, and information, that inspire people to follow content creators, there is still much to learn about the underlying causes of follower behavior. Most studies on follower behavior have been conducted in Western countries, primarily the United States, and more research is needed to understand how culture affects follower behavior, as attitudes towards content production and consumption can vary greatly across cultures and countries. Furthermore, most follower behavior studies are longitudinal, and more long-term research tracking follower behavior is required to understand how it changes in response to various factors.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study aims to provide organizations with a deeper understanding of the perceived factors that influence people to follow content creators, which may differ from findings in other countries. By identifying the critical factors that drive people to follow content creators, organizations can develop more effective content creation and marketing strategies to engage their target audiences. Additionally, the study's findings can contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse on digital content creation and consumption, as well as the growing field of influencer marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research on people following content creators is a relatively new area of digital research. The existing literature explores whether people's following of content creators is "real" and genuine, focusing on the value of the content itself.

2.1 Content Definition

Digital media, such as movies, photos, text, and music, has become an integral part of our daily lives (Schellewald, 2021). As a result, there has been a significant increase in the literature on digital content. Researchers have studied different types of digitized material, including online entertainment content, video content, and blog content, and have identified the unique characteristics of each that impact how people engage with and consume the content (Barbosa et al., 2023).

From the perspective of content creation, research has explored the process of creating digital content and the role of creators. Factors such as creativity, authenticity, and credibility have been identified as critical factors in content creation (Hewapathirana, I. U., & Perera, N., 2024).

Studies have also examined content consumption, focusing on how users consume and engage with digital content. Factors such as motivation, interest, and perceived relevance have been identified as important determinants of content consumption and engagement (Pang, 2021). Research has also explored user-generated content, which is created by users rather than professional creators, examining the motivations behind its creation and its impact on consumer behavior (Yang et al., 2021).

The role of digital content in marketing and advertising has also been explored, with research examining how digital content can be used to build brand awareness, influence consumer behavior, and create brand loyalty (Ebrahim, 2020). Intellectual property and the legal and moral concerns related to digital content, such as copyright and intellectual property concerns, have also been areas of inquiry (Okonkwo, 2021). Additionally, the impact of technology on digital content, including the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to create and curate digital content, has been explored (Khatri, 2021).

2.2 Connectivity

Digital content has the potential to connect with audiences in ways that traditional forms of media cannot. Personalization of content can be a key factor in creating engagement, as digital content can be customized to

match the interests and preferences of specific audience segments (Lutkenhaus et al., 2019). This personalization can help to create a more meaningful connection with the audience and increase engagement (Bodó, 2021). Digital content can also be interactive, allowing audiences to engage with it in real-time, which can create a sense of community and belonging among the audience (Mandagi, D. W., Indrajit, I., & Wulyatiningsih, T., 2024).

Storytelling is another important factor in engaging with the audience. Digital content can be used to tell stories in new and engaging ways, using visual and multimedia elements to create immersive and emotionally compelling narratives that resonate with the audience (Boyras, A, 2023). Authenticity is also crucial, as digital content that is authentic, transparent, and honest can help to build trust and credibility with the audience, leading to increased engagement and loyalty (Nelson, J. L., & Kim, S. J., 2021).

Social media platforms have become a powerful tool for connecting with audiences through digital content, as creators can leverage these platforms to reach a wider audience and build relationships with their followers (Goldenberg, J., Lanz, . et al., 2024). User-generated content, created by the audience themselves, can also be an effective way to connect with audiences, as this type of content is often more authentic and relatable than content created by professionals (Rao Hill, S., & Qesja, B., 2023).

2.3 Consistency

Consistency in digital content is essential for establishing credibility, trust, and reputation. Factors such as accuracy, reliability, and objectivity are critical for building credibility in digital content, and consistent messaging, tone, and branding can help to reinforce this credibility (Li, X., et al., 2021). Consistency is also essential for building trust with the audience, as research has shown that consistent messaging, values, and behavior can help to build trust in digital content (Kim, D. Y., & Kim, H. Y., 2021). Consistency can also contribute to a positive reputation for brands and organizations, as consistent messaging and behavior can help to build a strong brand identity and reputation over time (Mtengwa, E., & Muchenje, C., 2023).

Consistency in digital content can also contribute to a positive user experience, as factors such as consistent navigation, layout, and design can help users to navigate and interact with content more easily (Mandagi, D. W et al., 2024). Consistency in branding is also essential for building a strong brand identity, as the consistent use of logos, colors, and messaging across all digital content channels can help to reinforce brand recognition and contribute to a positive reputation over time (Hayes, J. L. et al., 2020).

2.4 Channel

There are various channels and platforms that can be used for promoting products online, facilitating social conversations, and enabling the purchase of products recommended online. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn are commonly used for promoting products online, offering a range of advertising options and targeting capabilities (Macarthy, A., 2021). These platforms are also key channels for social conversations around products and online recommendations from friends, family, and influencers.

E-commerce platforms such as Amazon, eBay, and Etsy are important channels for buying products online, offering features such as product listings, reviews, and recommendations that can help consumers make informed buying decisions (Mu, J., & Zhang, J. Z., 2021). Search engines like Google and Bing are also crucial channels for online promotion and advertising, with search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising helping to increase visibility and drive traffic to product pages (Kumar et al., 2022).

Influencer marketing, which involves partnering with social media influencers and content creators to promote products online, can be an effective way to reach specific target audiences and drive sales (Nurfadila & Riyanto, 2020). Email marketing is another direct channel for promoting products online, allowing for personalized and targeted campaigns to specific audience segments (Behera et al., 2020).

2.5 Creator Content creators play a critical role in digital marketing, particularly in social media, as they have the ability to connect with audiences through authentic and engaging content (Di Domenico et al., 2021). Audiences are more likely to trust and engage with content created by individuals rather than by brands themselves, and brands can work with content creators to promote their products or services in an authentic way that resonates with the creator's audience (Rihfenti et al., 2023).

Promoting relevant content is essential to effective digital marketing, as brands must understand their target audience's needs and interests to create content that is engaging and valuable (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Relevant content is more likely to be shared and to attract new audiences, and brands can use social listening tools to monitor conversations about their brand and industry to identify topics that will resonate with their audience (Majid et al., 2019).

Communicating brand values is also important in building brand trust and loyalty, as consumers are more likely to support brands that share their values. Brands can communicate their values through their messaging, advertising, and content, with social media platforms providing an opportunity to engage with their audience and showcase their values through storytelling (Vinerean, 2019). Effective communication is essential to successful digital marketing, as brands must communicate their message clearly and consistently across all channels (Kurdi et al., 2022).

Methods

This study adopted a quantitative research design, utilizing a cross-sectional survey approach to collect data from a sample of individuals who follow content creators. The use of a quantitative approach allows for the statistical analysis of the relationships between the key variables, enabling the researcher to test the proposed hypotheses and draw conclusions about the factors influencing people's decisions to follow content creators. The study employs a mono-method quantitative approach, relying solely on the collection and analysis of numerical data to address the research question and objectives. This choice is appropriate given the study's focus on examining the relationships between the identified factors and people's decisions to follow content creators. The study utilizes a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, to select the participants. This approach is appropriate for the current study, as it allows the researcher to reach a diverse range of individuals who follow content creators, regardless of their demographic characteristics or geographic location. The sample size for this study was determined using a statistical power analysis. Assuming a medium effect size, a significance level of 0.05, and a desired statistical power of 0.80, the minimum required sample size was calculated to be 138 participants. The data for this study was collected through an online survey distributed to individuals who follow content creators. The survey instrument was developed based on the literature review and included measures for the key variables, such as content, connectivity, consistency, channel, and creator. The survey was pilot-tested with a small group of participants to ensure the clarity and reliability of the measures before the full-scale data collection. The variables in the study were operationalized and measured using well-established scales from the existing literature. For example, the "content" variable was measured using a scale adapted from Barbosa et al. (2024), while the "connectivity" variable was measured using a scale adapted from Camilleri and Kozak (2022). The reliability and validity of the measures were assessed through standard statistical techniques, such as internal consistency analysis and convergent and discriminant validity assessments. The data collected from the survey was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) techniques. PLS-SEM was chosen as the data analysis method due to its ability to handle complex models with multiple latent variables and its suitability for exploratory research. The analysis involved evaluating the measurement model, assessing the structural model, and testing the hypothesized relationships between the study variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preliminary analysis of the survey data revealed that the sample consisted of 175 respondents, with a relatively even distribution across gender (52.6% female, 47.4% male), age (36.6% between 25-34 years, 30.3% between 35-44 years), and other demographic characteristics. The data was found to be normally distributed, with no significant issues of skewness or kurtosis. The measurement model was evaluated through factor loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity assessments. The results showed that all the constructs had satisfactory factor loadings (> 0.70), composite reliability (> 0.70), and average variance extracted (> 0.50), indicating good reliability and convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio analysis also confirmed the discriminant validity of the constructs. The structural model was assessed through path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and collinearity diagnostics. The results indicated that content ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < 0.001$), connectivity ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$), consistency ($\beta = 0.184$, $p < 0.01$), and creator ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) had significant positive effects on

people's decisions to follow content creators. The channel variable, however, did not have a significant direct effect.

Table 1: Structural Model Path Coefficient Analysis

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values
Channel -> Follow Content	0.081	0.079	0.049	1.666	0.096
Connectivity -> Follow Content	0.123	0.124	0.05	2.476	0.013
Consistency -> Follow Content	0.071	0.069	0.05	1.424	0.154
Content -> Follow Content	0.347	0.349	0.067	5.144	0
Creator -> Follow Content	0.406	0.405	0.068	5.991	0

The strong positive relationship between content creators and people's decisions to follow them highlights the importance of the creator's personality, authenticity, and engagement with the audience. Organizations should focus on identifying and collaborating with content creators whose values and content align with their brand, as this can help to build trust and increase engagement among the creator's followers. By aligning with content creators who resonate with their target audience, organizations can leverage the creator's influence and credibility to effectively communicate their brand message. The positive relationship between content quality and people's decisions to follow content creators underscores the importance of creating high-quality, relevant, and engaging content. Organizations should invest in producing content that resonates with their target audience and aligns with the content creator's style and preferences. By understanding the content preferences of the creator's followers, organizations can create content that seamlessly integrates with the creator's existing content, fostering a more cohesive and compelling experience for the audience. The positive relationship between connectivity and people's decisions to follow content creators suggests that cultivating a sense of community and fostering interactive engagement are crucial for building a loyal following. Organizations should leverage the content creator's ability to connect with their audience and encourage active participation, such as through comments, shares, and user-generated content. By fostering a sense of community and active engagement, organizations can create a more loyal and engaged audience, leading to increased loyalty and brand advocacy.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the factors that influence people's decisions to follow content creators, focusing on the roles of content, connectivity, consistency, channel, and creator. The findings suggest that content, connectivity, consistency, and creator have significant positive effects on people's decisions to follow content creators, while channel did not have a direct impact. The study's insights can help organizations and content creators develop more effective strategies for engaging target audiences and building loyal followings. By understanding the critical factors that drive people to follow content creators, brands can collaborate with creators whose values and content resonate with their audience, produce high-quality and engaging content, and foster a sense of community and interactivity. Future research should explore the moderating effects of demographic variables, as well as examine how cultural differences and the use of various digital content platforms may influence the factors that drive follower behavior. Longitudinal studies tracking changes in follower behavior over time would also provide valuable insights to further advance the understanding of this important phenomenon in the digital marketing landscape.

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