



Social Media and Emotional Marketing: The Role of Influencers in Building Emotional Bonds with Brands

Redes sociales y marketing emocional: El papel de los influencers en la construcción de vínculos afectivos con las marcas

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Abstract

The work will seek to analyze the role of influencers on social media as facilitators of the construction of links between consumers and brands through emotional marketing strategies. Emotional marketing is defined as a strategy that seeks to create an effective, interactive, and lasting connection between the consumer and the brand by appealing to their emotional feelings rather than focusing solely on the rational characteristics of the product or service. A mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative methods is proposed for the ongoing research in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under study, using a quantitative approach. The expected results of this research could indicate that influencers act as an emotional bridge between brands and consumers, humanizing the research and generating a sense of closeness.

Keywords. Social media, emotional marketing, influencers, brand loyalty, consumer behavior.

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Resumen

El trabajo trara de Analizar el papel de los influencers en las redes sociales como facilitadoras de la construcción de vínculos entre los consumidores y las marcas, a través de estrategias de marketing emocional. El marketing emocional se define como una estrategia, que busca crear una conexión efectiva e interactiva y duradera entre el consumidor y la marca ,apelando a sus sentimientos emocionales en lugar de centrarse únicamente en las características racionales del producto o servicio. Se propone para la investigación en curso de una metodología mixta que combina los métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos para obtener una comprensión del fenómeno de estudio, en enfoque cuantitativo. Los resultados esperados de esta investigación podrían indicar que los influencers actúan como puente emocional entre las marcas y los consumidores humanizando la investigación y generando un sentido de cercanía.

Palabras Clave. Redes sociales, Marketing emocional, influencers, lealtad de marca, comportamiento del consumidor.

Introduction

This article is based on a solid theoretical foundation that integrates the disciplines of digital marketing, communication, and consumer psychology. It explores key concepts such as social media, emotional marketing, influencer marketing, source credibility, and the construction of emotional ties to the brand. Social media has dramatically transformed the way people communicate, interact, and consume information. These platforms are not simple channels of dissemination, but dynamic ecosystems where communities are formed, opinions are exchanged, and relationships are built (Moreno 2020). For marketing, they represent a highly relevant space due to their ability to facilitate two-way interaction between brands and consumers, and between consumers themselves (Maritza and Darío, 2020). Their immediacy makes them a fertile ground for the development of more personalized and emotional marketing strategies.

Emotional marketing. – Emotional marketing is defined as a strategy that seeks to create an affective and lasting connection between the brand and the consumer by appealing to their feelings and emotions rather than focusing solely on the rational characteristics of the product or service (Cadavid Gómez, 2009, Rabanal, 2019, citing Escribano, Alcázar, and Fuentes, 2014). This approach recognizes that purchasing decisions are not purely logical, but are strongly influenced by emotional and psychological aspects (Rytel, 2010, Montoya-Restrepo et al., 2019). The goal is to generate loyalty, attachment, and a memorable experience that goes beyond the commercial transaction, turning customers into followers (Quintana, 2017). In the digital context, emotional marketing leverages the ability of social media to transfer narratives, images, and videos that elicit emotional responses, reinforcing brand identity and values (Ruiz, 2025).

The phenomenon of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most powerful strategies in the digital age (Shareef et al., 2019, Vielman et al., 2017). Influencers are individuals who have built a significant and engaged audience on one or more social media platforms (Lou and Yuan, 2019). They are distinguished by their ability to lead opinion and persuade their followers due to the sense of immediacy and the creation of authentic content they generate (Pedrayes, 2018; Audrezet et al., S.F). Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers are often perceived as ordinary people with whom followers can more easily identify, generating a relationship of trust that the influencer has cultivated with their audience (itsmet, 2023).

Credibility of the source and authenticity of influencers. – A critical aspect of the success of influencer marketing is the credibility of the source (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Credibility is mainly composed of trustworthiness (perceived honesty and objectivity) and expertise (knowledge and qualifications in the subject). In the realm of influencers, authenticity is a fundamental pillar of their credibility. Followers value influencers who are genuine, transparent, and consistent with their personal image and the products they promote (ciencia latina revista científica multidisciplinar, 2025). The perception of authenticity is key for followers to accept their recommendations and establish a real influence on purchasing decisions and the formation of attitudes toward brands.

For social correlation. – The concept of social interaction (Horton and Wohl, 1956) is fundamental to understanding the nature of the relationship between influencers and their followers. This refers to the illusion of an interpersonal and reciprocal relationship that viewers or followers develop with media figures (in this case, influencers) despite the fact that the interaction is one-sided. Through continuous exposure to influencer content, followers develop feelings of familiarity, closeness, and attachment, as if they knew the influencer personally (Pérez et al., 2024). This social correlation or interaction is a powerful driver for influencer recommendations to be perceived as advice from a friend, thus facilitating the acceptance of brand messages and emotional connection.

Building emotional bonds with the brand. The goal of emotional marketing and the use of influencers is to build deep and lasting emotional bonds between the consumer and the brand. An emotional bond transcends the functional satisfaction of the product; it implies an emotional connection, a loyalty based on feelings of trust, liking, and identification of relevance (Mailerlite, 2025, Rebold, 2021). Influencers contribute to this process.

Humanizing the brand. They present products or services in a more intimate and authentic way through their own experiences.

Build trust and credibility. Recommendations from trusted influencers are perceived as more reliable than traditional advertising (Engage.ec, 2023).

Creating communities. They encourage interaction and a sense of relevance among their followers and around the brand, which reinforces the emotional connection (Imolko.com, 2025).

Stimulate emotional engagement. Through storytelling, empathetic content, and calls to action that resonate emotionally, influencers drive participation and identification with the brand (ESDESIGN, 2025).

Building these bonds translates into greater customer loyalty, greater willingness to pay a premium price, and greater brand advocacy over others.

Impact on purchasing decisions and loyalty. According to Ignite Sales (2023), 95% of consumer decisions are based on how they feel, highlighting the importance of appealing to emotions. Consumers who establish emotional connections with their favorite brands are 8.4 times more likely to trust their products or services and 7.1 times more likely to make a purchase (Tempkin Group, cited by Núñez 2023). Emotional marketing has become a key strategy for brands to stand out, creating value that is difficult for competitors to replicate (Cisneros et al., 2024).

Brand loyalty is a fundamental concept in both consumer behavior and marketing, exploring its determining factors and its impact on relevant information. Key factors such as brand value, which is the influence of brand value on purchase intention and loyalty, continue to be an area of interest. Vera-Reino, Ugalde, Piedra-Aguilera, and others (2022) studied how brand value affects purchase intention in companies of different sizes.

Social media marketing and brand communities: The ways in which social media and brand communities influence loyalty was a topic examined by several authors, such as Aljuhmani, Elrehail, Bayram, and Samarah (2022), as well as Hamudi, Handayani, Musnaini, Suyoto, Prasetio, Pitaloja, and Cahyon (2022), who also examined the impact of brand communities and loyalty.

Trust and perceived value. Trust and perceived value by the consumer are crucial elements. Ríos Portales and Almeida Cardona (2022) analyzed the influence of marketing and consumer characteristics, such as brand loyalty in the field of higher education.

Consumer experience. Consumer experience remains a key factor in building brand value and, therefore, loyalty. Gallart Camahort, Callarisa-fiol, and Sanchez-Garcia (2022) explore its influence. More recently, this theory suggests that participation in brand communities (online or offline) can strengthen loyalty. When consumers feel part of a group of users of a brand, they share experiences, provide support, and identify with the brand's values, which reinforces their commitment and loyalty.

Importance of visual appeal and innovation: Brands that are not visually appealing or that do not constantly innovate will find it difficult to connect emotionally with customers, as first impressions and novelty are crucial (Julca et al., 2023, cited by Pérez Diaz and Ramírez Bazán, 2024).

Authenticity and closeness: Conveying emotional values such as authenticity and closeness is essential for customer loyalty and differentiation in a competitive market (Jiménez Mullo et al., 2025).

In summary, theories about brand loyalty have evolved from a purely behavioral view to a more logical understanding that integrates cognitive, affective, social, and relational aspects. Loyalty is not just an action, but a complex psychological state that drives repeat purchases and brand advocacy.

62.3% of consumers who follow influencers on social media say they are confident and highly likely to buy any products and brands if the products are promoted by their favorite influencers. The role of influencers in building links with brands results in an influential person or influencers who, thanks to their personality and social skills, have a great influence on the opinions and decisions of others. These qualities are ideal for becoming a brand or product prescriber, because the opinions or views that an influencer has about a service or product shape the pre-established perception that their followers have of it, whether positive or negative. The relationship between companies and their target audience is one of the most effective ways to maintain a close consumer bond. Trends in communication and marketing have been pointing in a clear direction for many years, creating a close bond between companies, brands, and their consumers. Therefore, appealing to emotions and using new digital channels is essential for them. (Ruiz, 2025).

In short, the rise of social media has catalyzed a fundamental transformation in the marketing landscape, shifting from a purely transactional approach to one focused on emotional connection. At the end of this analysis, it is clear that influencers are not a public channel, but rather the architects of this new era, capable of forging emotional bonds with brands that go far beyond superficial loyalty. Their power lies in their perceived authenticity and the personal relationship they have cultivated with their followers, an asset that brands crave and that traditional advertising cannot replicate. Their power lies in perceived authenticity and the personal relationships they have cultivated with their followers, an asset that brands crave and that traditional advertising cannot replicate.

It has been explored how influencers act as human mediators, telling personal stories that give products and services a unique emotional resonance. The concept of social relationship emerges as the pillar of this phenomenon, as the trust and admiration that followers feel for their influencers is transferred, almost subconsciously, to the brands they promote. It is not only the visibility they offer, but also the validation they provide. When consumers see a product being used in the everyday life of someone they admire, they perceive not only a recommendation, but also an invitation to become part of a community and an aspirational lifestyle. This process of humanization, which transforms a corporate entity into something familiar and relatable, is the key to turning consumers into true brand advocates.

However, the path to forging these links is not without its challenges. The growing saturation of the influencer market requires careful curation on the part of brands, which must ensure that influencers not only have reach, but also share their values and target audience. A mistake in selection can undermine not only the credibility of the campaign, but also that of the brand itself. Likewise, transparency and honesty are ethical imperatives, which if neglected can break the delicate pact of trust between influencers

and their audience, and by extension, with the brand. The superficiality of sporadic campaign collaborations without a common thread gives way to the need for long-term relationships that allow for a coherent narrative and true integration of the product into the influencer's discourse.

Materials and methods

Research objective. To explore how social media influencers contribute to building emotional bonds between consumers and brands, analyzing both the perceived emotional impact and the strategies used.

Methodology. Mixed qualitative and quantitative research, with a structured survey design, simple random sample using social media users who follow at least one influencer, with samples obtained from Instagram and TikTok, with an approximate sample size of 300 users, a margin of error of plus or minus five percent, and 95% efficiency.

Measurement instrument. Online questionnaire including demographic questions (age, sex, gender, location) with a Likert scale with closed and open questions about emotional connection felt towards the brand promoted by influencers, measurement of purchase probability influenced and recommended by them (influencers), and finally emotions.

Data analysis. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups in qualitative analysis, personal experiences with influencers and brands, perception of the authenticity of influencers, and how emotions influenced their purchasing decisions, stories about key moments where they felt a connection.

Expected results. - In quantitative terms, it is expected that the majority of respondents will recognize that they feel an emotional connection to brands through influencers. The results could show significant correlations between the perception of influencer authenticity and the emotional bond with the brand. In qualitative results, interviews could reveal positive or negative experiential stories that have affected brand perceptions. Participants may identify specific emotional elements that influence their loyalty and purchasing decisions.

Discussion. – Compare the qualitative and quantitative findings for a comprehensive understanding, evaluate the importance of emotional marketing and influencer authenticity in building long-term relationships, and finally consider limitations and future lines of research, such as the evolution of platforms and the role of influencers.

Conclusion. This research will provide an understanding not only of the tangible impact of influencers on purchasing decisions, but also of the emotional complexities behind those decisions. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods provides an approach to addressing this issue in marketing.

According to Zambrana et al. (2020), the population is the group of citizens belonging to a certain place that corresponds to the development of a study. In this case, the study

population has main characteristics such as the northern area of Guayaquil, the Alborada citadel sector, route 4, and the fifth stage, which is 48,000 people.

Zambrana et al. (2020) state that sampling is a process used to obtain information from the groups under study in order to analyze the facts that are repeated in the research, detailing the characteristics of the opinions expressed by a certain part of the population.

Results

According to Feria et al. (2020), this is considered a group of closed or open questions that are analyzed qualitatively or quantitatively depending on the focus of the study, and it also uses a scale of acceptance levels for the research questions. A group of open-ended questions was used for the interview, and a group of closed-ended questions with a Likert scale was used for the survey: Strongly agree, Agree, Indifferent, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.

Age range of people from whom information was obtained on the research topic, considering important aspects of each specific age, including analysis of the contributions that each age group makes to understanding the issues surrounding the problem. As with gender, it is often women, namely housewives, who would attend the market.

Gender range of people from whom information was obtained on the research topic, considering important aspects of each specific gender, including analysis of the contributions that each gender makes to understanding the facts surrounding the issue. According to the data obtained, 47% is due to content generated by influencers, 26% to promotions, 16% to personal stories, and 11% to humorous content, resulting in influencers promoting brands through their content as brand ambassadors.

According to the data obtained, 37% would buy a product based on an influencer's recommendation, 26% would do so on occasion, 14% would not but would consider it, and 13% would not consider it, resulting in influencers having an influence on consumers in terms of brands and services. The data obtained, 37% consider it very reliable, 24% consider it reliable, 18% consider it moderately reliable, 13% consider it moderately reliable, and 8% consider it unreliable, given that influencers' opinions about a traditional product in brand advertising are totally strong and reliable. The 31% go for personal stories, 28% for interactive content, 25% for specific content, 16% for genuine and honest content, and 8% as a result of influencers generating a stronger emotional connection with a brand more frequently.

According to the data obtained, 34% say that the influencer's lifestyle does not match their own, 26% say that the influencer promotes too many products, 24% say that the content is not specific or realistic enough, and 16% say that the influencer does not engage with their comments and followers on social media, the data obtained, 34% increase the visibility and reach of the brand, 26% humanize the brand, 21% show that brands care about opinions, and 19% create community awareness, the data obtained,

34% increases brand visibility and reach, 26% humanizes the brand, 21% shows that brands care about opinions, and 19% creates community awareness, the 40% cited a high level of interaction, 30% cited a personality that aligns with their values, 22% cited a large following, and 8% cited brand discounts

Conclusions

In a world where consumers are bombarded with information and skepticism toward conventional advertising is at an all-time high, influencer marketing is positioned as a strategic and sustainable response. The ability to generate feelings of belonging, loyalty, and genuine connection is what sets successful brands apart in today's digital landscape. More than a passing trend, this model represents a market evolution, where the power of influence lies in the ability to touch emotions and not just in the promise of a benefit. In this context, investing in influencers is, in essence, an investment of emotional capital, which underscores that the future of marketing is not based on what we sell, but on how we make people feel. In the digital age, marketing has evolved from simply selling products to creating deep, emotional connections with consumers. This is where social media and, crucially, influencers come in. These public figures have cultivated their own credibility among brands and audiences. Their role goes beyond traditional advertising; it is about facilitating a form of emotional marketing.

Unlike impersonal advertisements, influencers share their experiences and opinions of a brand in a way that feels authentic and personal. By showing how a product or service fits into their daily lives, they humanize the brand and give it emotional resonance. This process is key to building emotional bonds. Followers not only see a product, but also associate it with the trust and lifestyle of the influencers they admire. This connection creates a one-way relationship where the follower feels a personal closeness to the public figure, which is then transferred to the brand, creating loyalty that goes beyond price and quality.

Brands collaborate with influencers, who leverage this pre-existing trust to generate a richer and more persuasive narrative. Influencers not only promote the brand, but also tell stories, share values, and build a community. This strategy fosters a long-term relationship, transforming consumers from mere buyers to brand advocates. In this way, influencer marketing has become an indispensable tool for brands seeking not only to sell, but also to connect, inspire, and build lasting relationships in the digital marketplace.

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