

PR WIRE

E-zine designed and published by PR students as part of the experiential learning process at SCMC



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EDITORIAL DESK

The PR Wire is an initiative by the students of SCMC specialising in the field of Public Relations. The PR Wire is a platform for students to discuss various aspects of the industry, both local and global, backed by research along with opinion pieces and industry news. Public Relations is an ever-growing and dynamic industry, and with this first edition of the PR Wire we give you a glimpse into how PR education is shaping up at our institute

SOCIAL MEDIA FEATURES THAT PR PROFESSIONALS TRUST

By Urvi Shetye

Ever since the horizon of social media has extended from mere networking to carrying out business, the very structure of the platforms has undergone massive transformation. Today, social media offers an exclusive platter of information ranging from current affairs, to art and culture, to showcasing one's work to the world. With every brand having a digital presence, the multi-fold content generated is fairly justified. However, it comes with the added pressure to constantly stand out and leave your mark among the crowd. In order to overcome this and reach the audience faster, brands have started using paid tools.

Paid tools are essentially a way of approaching the audience, instead of shooting in the sky and waiting for them to notice you, thereby generating better output. PR professionals are including these tools in campaign plans and thus saving time and efforts. An added boon? The communication is more personalized along with promising conversion rates.

Today, there are a variety of paid tools across all social media platforms. Here are a few go-to approaches of PR professionals:

INSTAGRAM STORY ADS

These ads appear just like other stories with a sponsored tag below the username. A paid tool, they can be targeted to a specific set of audience, filtered through various metrics. Story ads are more effective than feed ads, carousel ads or even explore ads for that matter, because they occupy the entire screen without dividing the viewer's attention elsewhere. They often include a swipe up link that leads to the website or the Instagram page of that particular brand/ individual.

Story ads are effective irrespective of the industry or business one indulges in. However, PR professionals suggest the structure of the message being communicated to be altered to suit a particular industry. Visually appealing and informative ads go a long way attracting more conversation. The aim is to light a spark in the audience to know more about your work, product or services. But irrespective of the aim, it should have a CTA because they lead the consumers to the final product.

50% visited a website after seeing it on story ads
Source: Instagram Business

60% stories are viewed with sound on
Source: Instagram Business

30%-50% lower CPC
Source: Digiday

There are a variety of other paid tools but this was a quick breakdown of how PR campaigns are imbibing some of the most effective tools, by focusing on the user's response patterns. It is also hinting normalisation of paid campaigns, making them a must constituent of brand building and ultimately even lead generation!

LINKEDIN INMAILS

An email message, it enables one to start a conversation with a second or third degree connection. It has proved effective in landing employment offers, connecting with potential employees and striking a conversation with any individual or industry expert without an introduction. A tool accessible through LinkedIn premium, it offers various Inmail credits under different LinkedIn plans. The basic plan users cannot send out Inmails unless they pay for the same.

It is most often suggested to B2B firms as well as educational institutions in connecting with the potential consumers. The most important success rule of Inmails is to personalise them as much as possible and keep them brief. One should also divert equal resources to curate the list of people to be targeted. Aimlessly shooting Inmails will only cost a bountiful and embark on a dead end.

3x response rate than emails
Source: LinkedIn

85% open rate
Source: LinkedIn

FACEBOOK CAROUSEL ADS

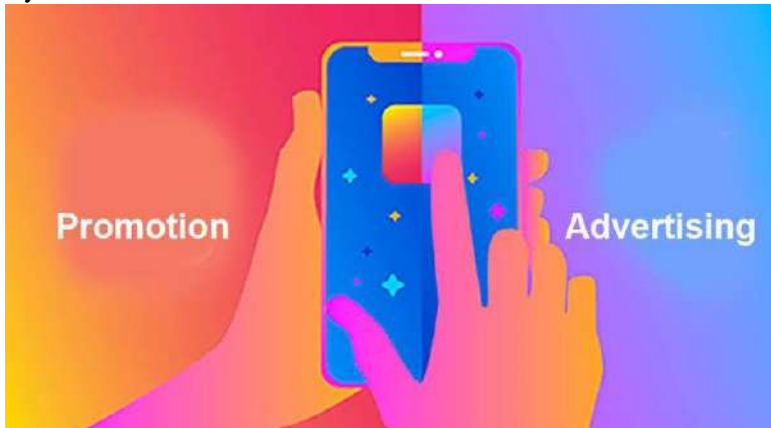
They are typically like brochures presenting information of nearly 8-10 products at one place. A one-stop solution, they are proving to be the most effective Facebook ads, since they come along with a description, price details and a CTA link. They are flexible and give brands and individuals the liberty to play with content and creativity, by using multiple images and visuals, backed up with in-depth information.

Carousel ads also simplify the consumer's buying decision by demystifying details down to the tee. The simplest catch of these ads is to save the viewer's time by minimizing the total steps involved in leading the consumer to the end product. These ads reap maximum benefit of the user's attention span by banking on the consumer's psychology to always look for more options than settle for one choice.

10x CTR than static ads
Source: Facebook Business

SHOULD BRANDS USE PAID PROMOTIONS?

By Ritika Patni



Promotion is an element of the Marketing Mix. It broadly means informing or generating awareness about a product, and communicating the benefits and features of the product, such as through advertising and public relations.

Advertising is a subset of promotion, and it is usually impersonal and directs attention in such a way so that consumers buy the product. It is through paid media and targets a large number of people at the same time. The purpose of advertising is increasing sales while the purpose of promotions is brand building.

The approach of advertising is usually unique to the product while promotions are done keeping the brand in mind, and not necessarily an offering.

Paid promotion in the digital world uses various tools provided by platforms so that their website traffic increases lead generation. It has become increasingly more popular because it guarantees a reach to the specific targeted audience and the message doesn't get lost. It is also more cost-effective than traditional advertising.

A lot of brands have switched to paid promotions as the conversion percentage is better, the results are quicker and the metrics can be tracked very easily using tools. Among consumers who were initially unaware, paid promotions showed excellent results. The general audience wasn't equipped with the knowledge of digital marketing, SEO, Analytics etc. But with the increase in the number of brands using this, awareness has increased rapidly.

Consumers today are not just aware about this, but they're also able to do basic digital marketing and promotions on their own due to the easy availability of learning resources on Coursera, Udemy or even YouTube. This also makes them see through brands that use paid promotion tactics.

Brands are thus focusing on increasing their organic reach instead of using tools to push their content because consumers are wary of inadequate content. Most brands are following the three Cs – Creative, Consistent and Captivating – of content that

consumers genuinely engage with. Understanding the social media demographics and putting suitable content platform wise has been the strategy used for successful brand campaigns.

Consumers have truly started turning a blind eye towards most forms of paid promotion. While googling something, most segments of the audience tend to avoid the top few websites as they are aware that those are ranked higher through SEO. Similarly push ads, banners etc. have stopped generating the results that they used to previously. The modern consumer is increasingly focusing on what provides them value, and only affiliates or interacts with those brands that provide them those values and that too consistently.

Even though Presence, Planning and Posting are being chosen over Promoting, it doesn't mean it has been rendered completely useless. Using promotional tools in the right way and along with the organic content can help the brands be on the favourable side of the audience and truly create a successful campaign. They can help foster brand values that people want to associate with and gain consumer trust and loyalty and not just interest for a fleeting second.



INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE TALE

By Arshiya Kolhi

A lot of students join college and choose a course that they are not sure to pursue in the future or what path they will follow, whether they will stick to the course they chose. Classes and professors help us figure out that, I personally feel an internship always helps you figure that out whether you want to continue with what you are studying currently. Students always find what they love through their classes, but real-world experience always helps you get clarity on what you actually want to do when you enter professional life.

Internships always look fancy on your CV, but it also helps them a lot academically. Our college gave us the opportunity to intern after every semester for 2 months which now that I think of, was very beneficial. Similarly, we got a chance to intern in an industry. In this article, I will be writing about Khushi Kayeless's experience.

The internship involved making reports, strategic branding, client servicing, managing data which she thoroughly enjoyed. As it was a work from home internship she attended meetings over calls which saved a lot of time so she could focus on work her mentors were very supportive they helped her and encouraged her throughout.



In the picture - Khushi Kayeless



Khushi's learning from the internship was invaluable while learning she also took up real-life skills and had a new perspective on the field of PR and got to know about her personal creativity which helped her realize that she is ready for the corporate world and is a competitive candidate for a job and is a team player.

Ketchum also helped Khushi to build up her network and she made contacts that would help her professionally in the future. It was very important for Khushi to bring her professionalism in her internship which she learned in the tenure.

This internship molded her into a very different individual who is now very well-prepared to enter the workforce, she is now very confident and knows when to be professional and how to work with colleagues.

This internship taught Khushi to seek help in a work environment and that sometimes it's okay to rely on your teammates when you need help because that is what teamwork is about. One should never be hesitant when it comes to asking for help when you are not aware of something or you have not dealt with that situation or work before you are constantly learning so make the best out of it when you are surrounded by such talented professionals who are willing to teach you

In the end, Khushi mentioned that her internship experience with Ketchum was beyond amazing. Now, she is ready for her future work interviews because she has already dealt with all of it in college and that she is ready for her future.

INFLUENCERS DEFINING BRAND SUCCESS: A LOOK AT BURGER BAE'S MODEL

By Sukanya Ahuja

The public relations industry has seen a major transition in the onset of unconventional digital channels breaking barriers and creating new avenues for reaching the public. The digital channels have created a huge dependence on influencer marketing, a big constituent of paid promotion.

An influencer is anybody who possesses big reach and engagement to relevant audiences. These individuals are known as opinion leaders and can shake public perception with their voices. Usually, most influencers operate within a singular niche to maintain expertise and authority rather than spreading themselves thin.

Influencers, both micro, and macro can create a big difference in how businesses succeed. One such case was for a shopping and retail company called 'Burger Bae'.

A HOME-GROWN BRAND

Burger Bae started out of Ludhiana, Punjab in 2018 as an Instagram marketplace for quirky clothing. The brand's key target demographic was young millennials who were highly interested in westernized clothing.

The brand's USP sat as one of the few home-grown brands that offer a wide variety of ready-to-wear garments that have a superior design aesthetic at an affordable price point. The company quickly succeeded once it started employing influencers to place their products all over social media by simple barter and commercial deals.



USING INFLUENCERS FOR SUCCESS

The idea was simple, micro-influencers were given the option of buying clothing at subsidized prices in exchange for stories and static posts. This allowed the company to generate both revenue and buzz without denting its budgets.

Macro influencers were either given free merchandise or a paid collaboration contract was in place for permanent posts. Depending on the follower bracket, the barter or paid collaboration route was taken. This resulted in high reach in a cost and time-efficient manner.

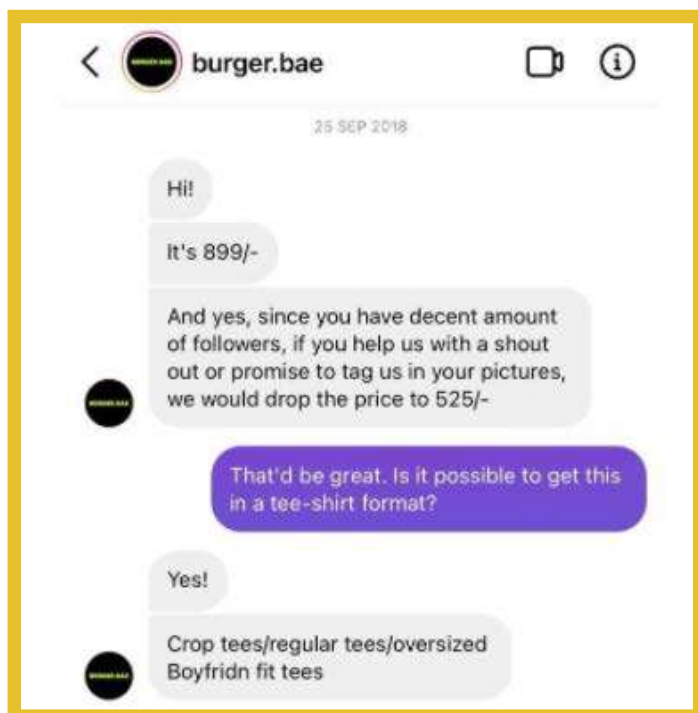
The simple deployment of an influencer PR campaign resulted in huge success for the company which now stands at 126,000 followers on Instagram. The company has not deployed any conventional advertorial or marketing campaigns as it sees great success in influencer marketing and digital channels.

Even though the brand deployed paid media, it still achieved its public relations with the objective of being positioned as the streetwear clothing brand for Indian Millennials.

Despite being extremely successful, the brand has continued to use influencers for its collection launches and reaching out to prospective audiences.

Along with that, the brand also re-uses all influencer content on its own native channels for promotional purposes. This allows them to get maximum value on whatever investments they might put in while also not having to spend much on content creation.

With the case of Burger Bae, we see how influencers can define the success trajectory for a small brand. With relevant reach and higher engagement on traditional PR campaigns and media, paid influencer promotions can remain ethical and successful.



IMPRESSIONS AREN'T EVERYTHING: ARE THOSE CLICKS REALLY LEADS?

By Richa Pherwani

While reading this article, it is very possible that many readers are also scrolling through Instagram or Facebook or '10 Summer Dresses Bollywood Celebrities Swear By'. As I write this article, I have already scrolled through dozens of paid promotions. Each of these have gained me as an 'Impression', I am also one of the people that they have 'Reached' but have had no impact on me whatsoever.

Measuring the impact of paid promotions isn't easy and mechanisms to do the same are being created and invented every day. There are several metrics that are essential to understanding the performance of a paid promotion like, Cost-per-Click (CPC) and Click-through Rate (CTR). However accurate, these don't manage to capture the impact of the promotion.

Acting on metrics alone and letting those numbers alone decide the impact of the promotion isn't enough since it doesn't show you the clear picture. How many of those clicks are actually turning into leads? Leads are part of the impact that we need to measure. Conversion tracking has been a part of analytics for a while but not enough people are making use of its vast functionalities. On tracking the promotion on any platform one can accurately understand the impact of them.

To understand the impact of a promotion you need to know a lot of basic things without which even if your promotion was a hit you wouldn't know. These are the following:



Image Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review



Image Source: www.evinex.com

- **Baseline:** The regular sales volume needs to be known by the digital marketer to be able to understand how much volume has increased due to the promotion.
- **Forward Buying:** Just after a sale promotion is over, sales go down! (Who would like to shop in full price when the same stuff was on half price)
- **Cannibalization:** More sale on discounted products than fresh price products, that's just the way it works

Increase in **sales volume** doesn't automatically mean that a paid promotion was impactful on the audience. For it to have an impact there needs to be a positive buying behaviour which leads to profit. Which means that the total promotion cost should not exceed the **profit** earned by the increased sales volume. This is also the reason why people are never completely sure if their promotion was a success or a failure.

Customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal. It also helps in measuring the impact of paid promotion. Satisfaction is the key to loyalty. For this one needs to measure the satisfaction levels to understand the real impact on the public. This can also be deeply understood by diving into conversations that the public is having about the organization. A physical indication like that of more and more out of stock items in your store could also indicate the same.

Lastly the **achievement of set goals** before rolling out the promotion is one of the best and most effective ways of understanding impact.

So the four metrics I would use to measure the impact of a paid promotion are: profits; sales volume; customer satisfaction and the achievement of goals. Impressions aren't everything.

DO PAID PROMOTIONS PROMOTE A LOYAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CUSTOMERS?

By Sukanya Ahuja

The typical image of the public relations officer drafting press releases and reaching out to various journalists for organic coverage is not as near reality as one would imagine. Times now incorporate a mix of such traditional practices with modern-day activities like influencer marketing, paid publicity and Google AdWords.

The big push for a separate line between paid promotions and PR in traditional setups was on account that audiences often ignoring paid messages citing them to not be credible. So how do practitioners deploy paid PR tools while building A mutually trustworthy relationship with audiences?

The answer lies in a combination of the hybrid approach of both organic and paid media while remaining transparent to audiences.

ORGANIC AND PAID MEDIA: HITTING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Creating strategies that use the benefits of both organic and paid media to realize the objectives of

the brand while still remaining true to its vision is extremely crucial. Public Relations professionals need to find the balance between all the tools for successful idea dissemination.

Such an approach has proven to be successful time and again in terms of reach as well as cost and time efficiency.

For example, if a brand can cause social controversy, practitioners should rely on organic tools to spread their ideas. The use of paid media can seem like agenda-setting rather than message dissemination. On the other hand, if a brand is well-established and wishes to expand the reach, using paid tools in tandem with organic media is a viable approach.

A creative way to use such a hybrid approach is using paid tools like social media ads on Facebook and Twitter to promote your organic material. This best of both worlds approach allows you to reap the reach that monetized content

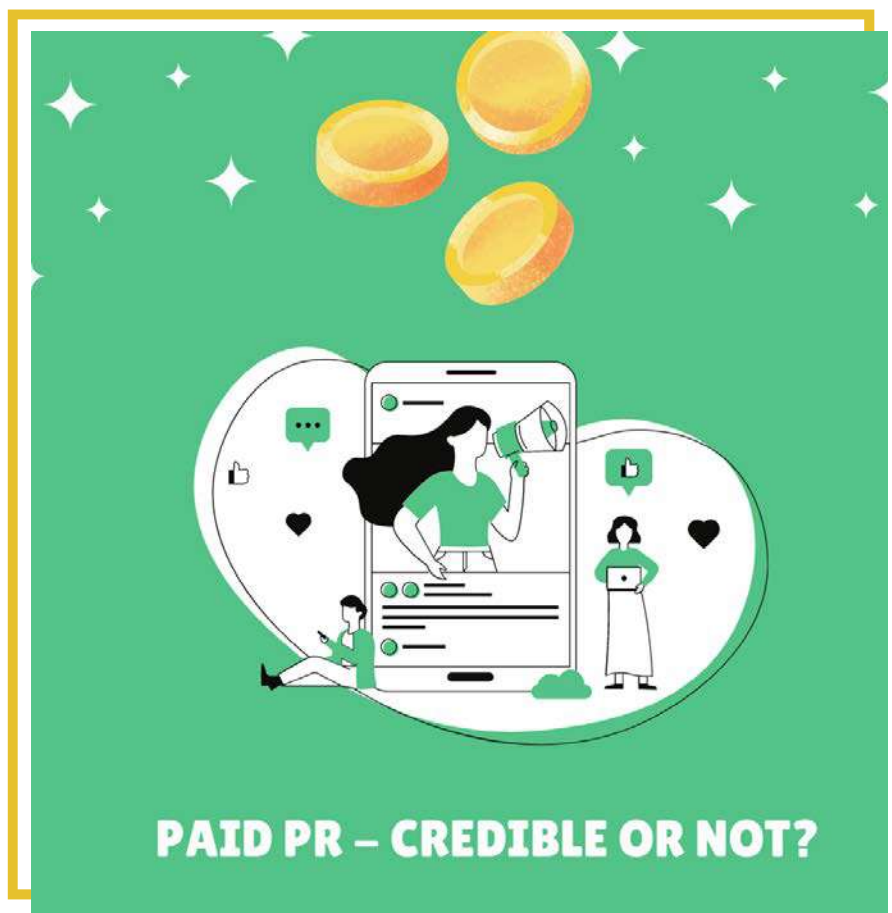
offers while still remaining true to the brand messaging.

TRANSPARENCY:

Many research studies have shown that incorporating transparency and visibility into businesses has proven to create a higher rate of consumer loyalty. All messaging and communications directed towards consumers should do so too, even if it's a tough battle like paid media. Inculcating and building trust with audiences can be an important part of public relations and mark the success of PR activities.

A new development for transparency and paid media is a new regulation introduced by the Advertising Standards Council of India that requires influencers to clearly state if any of the content is paid promotion. It is said to keep the interests of both companies and audiences in mind.

With such practices in place, building a credible relationship with audiences can be an achievable goal for brands despite using paid media.



ARE INDIAN BRANDS GAINING GROUND THROUGH EARNED PR?

Traditionally, there have been three types of media in which brands use for PR activities – earned, owned and paid media.

Earned media is when brands are featured, covered or specifically mentioned on news websites and social media organically – either by journalists, through word of mouth or through reviews or product testimonials, etc.

Owned media on the other hand are media channels that are owned by a brand or organization, and where they market themselves on – such as their website, social media channels, corporate films they create etc.

And that leaves us with the last type – paid media – which is when brands secure media space by paying for it. In the digital era, the concept of paid PR has been made popular with the advent of social media influencers.

Until about a decade ago, consumer-oriented industries, such as fashion and lifestyle, would engage in PR on earned and owned media – whereas more business-to-business marketing and PR happened through paid channels.

However, this trend started to shift as fashion, lifestyle and FMCG brands, began relying more on earned rather than traditional PR. This has been particularly noticeable since around 2010 with the advent of social media and the likes of YouTube and Vimeo disrupting traditional media channels.

Content creation on YouTube and MySpace around this time brought about the rise of ‘social media influencers’ – brands saw this as a new, different and unique way to market themselves and reach a wider audience they had never before – and as a result the trend shifted from earned PR to paid, promotional PR campaigns.

However, this begs the question – does this mean that earned, traditional forms of PR are redundant? The answer is far from no.



Source: Seedership.com

With consumers being bombarded with advertisements from traditional and digital channels, one question that is often asked by them is – how credible is this advertisement that I am seeing? The catch with paid promotions is that it is often written somewhere – albeit in small print – that this is a paid promotion. And this, specifically, is something consumers are very wary of, according to current research in consumer behavior.

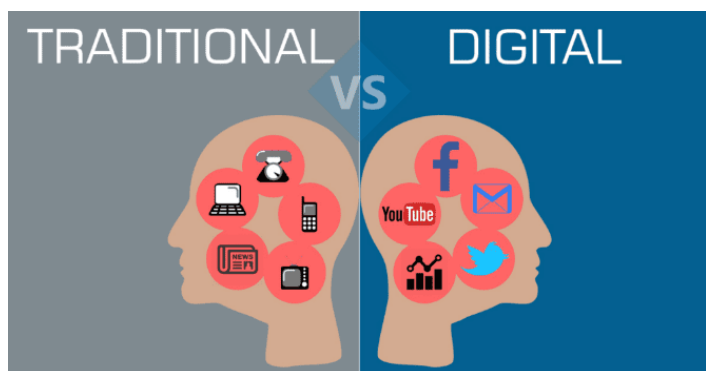
Studies also indicate that consumers do not trust brand ambassadors and influencers straight away, and are often skeptical in believing what they hear – the bottom line being, paid promotions and influencers don't always work with the Millennials today.

Hence a shift back to earned, traditional PR is needed in today's overloaded world of PR and marketing. Doing so will break the clutter, make the brand more genuine, since word-of-mouth, reviews and testimonials are more credible – which Millennials today have made perfectly clear time and time again on blogs and social media pages.

Consumers yearn for brands to be authentic and genuine in their communications. The likes of Nicobar, Fabindia, Anokhi, BIBA etc. – the Indian fashion brands have a separate, more loyal consumer base, as opposed to global fashion brands such as H&M, Zara's, MANGO, who hardly engage in traditional PR anymore.

These Indian brands have grown organically on social media. Indian consumers have started to make the switch to more authentic, local and home-grown brands that are invested in earned, traditional forms of PR – such as word of mouth, traditional event coverage, press releases, and product launches.

And so, the shift from earned media at the start of the 2010s may now be reversing as brands go back to the good old fashioned, traditional channels of public relations.



Source: Digital Marketing Community

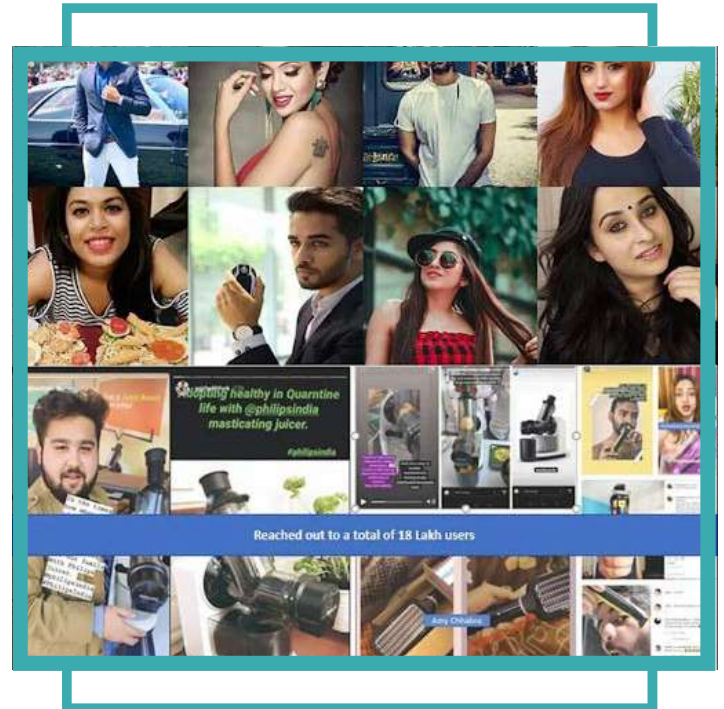
By Arjun Singla

PHILIPS MAKES A MARK IN DIFFICULT TIMES

By Ritika Patni

In early 2020 when the pandemic hit, lockdowns had swept the streets of India empty, causing many retail stores to shut down indefinitely. Moreover, most media houses in print had to downsize and shift to digital, where the stories were focused majorly on the trending topic of Covid-19. Philips, being one of the largest players in this industry, faced a hit as their products could neither be brought to stores, nor could they be spoken of by any media outlets. With the help of Avian We, a leading integrated communications agency in India, they tackled this by launching their campaign 'Catering to lifestyle aspirations in difficult times'.

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Source: Google

SOME FUNCTIONS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

By Arshiya Kolhi

Media Relations: The PR professionals use media of various kinds to spread information about the organization and its offerings. The experts design the storyline and gather all the relevant facts about the organization and market these to various media sources such as TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, the internet, etc.



Source: Bonus.ly

Counselling: An advisory role where PR professionals guide the senior management in special communication programs. They give suggestions and recommendation on the policies of the organization. This helps the management to efficiently manage their flow of information to their publics.

Publicity: The purpose of publicity is to encourage prospective customers to make purchases and provide all the necessary information about the company and its products with which the customers can associate their needs, wants and desires.

Employee Relations: For any organization, its employees are among its most important internal publics. And therefore, corporate public relations professionals create several employee communication programs, including internet postings, newsletters, bulletin boards, etc.

Research: Two-way communication models of public relations facilitate free flow of information between the organization and its publics. For this, PR professionals extensively use research and survey techniques to better understand the public and influence their behaviour.

“Paid promotions should be balanced with honest reviews”

Ilisha Dhond on paid promotions

As an influencer, do you think paid promotions with brands change the trust audiences have in their influencers?

For a lot of influencers, social media is their main source of income, thus making paid promotions inevitable. Considering the amount of time, energy, money and research that goes into creating quality content, charging for the same is just! I believe that if the right balance between paid promotions and genuine content is maintained with honesty, it doesn't really matter to the followers. They are bound to be influenced, because they are certain that the person they are following won't deceive them and can be trusted. However, even if it's a paid collaboration, I make sure that I use the products for a couple of weeks before posting, to make sure the claims are right. I don't take up paid collaborations with brands I wouldn't personally use. If other influencers also followed this pattern, I don't think any followers would mind giving paid promotions a chance!

In your opinion, what is the most essential element in delivering content: is it the variety or the originality?

Originality, without a doubt! Social media today is a gigantic pool flooded with so many influencers and content creators. If you want to stand out, you need to be yourself. I believe that your unapologetic personality and individuality is your superpower, when it comes to content creation.



With 30k+ followers on Instagram, Ilisha Dhond is a fashion and lifestyle influencer based out of Kolhapur. Her eye for fashion and creativity led her to become an influencer and content creator.

Do you simply collaborate with brands depending on their image in the market or is it equally important to you that you connect with their ideology?

As I mentioned earlier, I don't collaborate with brands that I wouldn't personally use. To me, my audience is more dear and precious than a paid collaboration. Hence, I would rather be truthful and earn a little less than deceive and lose the trust that took years to be earned. For example: I have opted out of various collaborations with tobacco brands and fairness products along the way because I don't believe in their brand ideology.

What is your take on the sudden spike in paid promotions over the last couple of years? Do you really think they are effective?

Being a media student myself and having worked in the influencer marketing arena as an influencer as well as a brand manager/ influencer marketing executive, I have witnessed brand sales skyrocket with just one perfect influencer campaign. Point being, the reason why you see so many paid collaborations is because it's working well for brands. It's comparatively affordable than traditional advertising and also the ROI can usually be tracked.

By Urvi Shetye



PAID PROMOTION - WHEN, WHY AND HOW SHOULD IT BE USED?

By Arjun Singla

One might assume paid promotions are only be used by established brands – as running a paid campaign on a social media page would require large investments.

However, increasingly brands that have just entered the market – ones that are not established yet – are opting for paid promotional campaigns.

Fashion brands such as *Redwolf* and *Anavila* are both relatively new brands in the Indian fashion industry – but they started their PR and marketing using paid promotional campaigns – albeit with a small budget – on various different social media channels.

The point being that today paid promotional channels have become so customizable that even on a small budget a brand can engage in these types of activities.

Social media marketing apps such as *Sprout Social*, *Buffer* and *Hootsuite* allow to optimize paid campaigns on social media in terms of time, target audience, and views generated – all possible on a small budget.

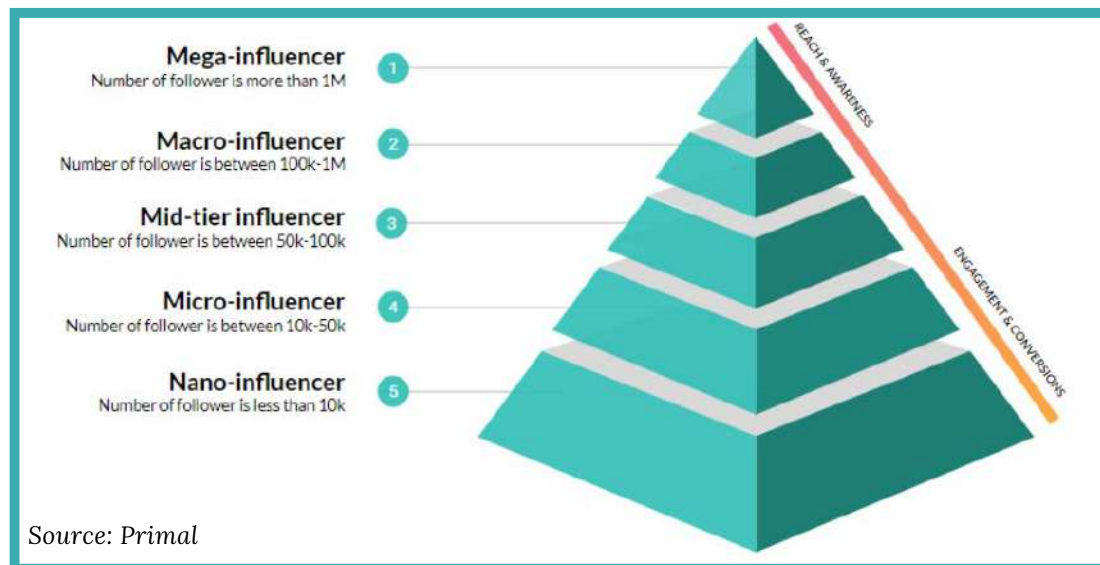
Growing brands organically on social media today is increasingly difficult, so when starting out promotional activities for the first time, investing in paid promotions will certainly help kick-start your brands social presence!



Source: Hootsuite.com

WHAT DO INFLUENCERS HAVE TO OFFER YOUR BRAND?

By Urvi Shetye



Source: Primal

Influencers occupy a large constituent of the monetized PR world. They create sponsored content. Most influencers have a niche set of audience who are heavily impacted by the content curation styles of these famous figures. However, not all influencers have a million followers or high conversion rates.

Seldom, it is a preconceived notion that a mere google search on the best influencers makes for a good influencer campaign. Contrary to popular belief, the number of followers and engagement rates of an influencer plays a crucial role in reaching the target audience. This has marked boundaries thereby segregating influencers even further.

These infographics are a sneak peek into the different types of influencers, and how their scale of presence determines the brands that will benefit from them!

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CENTRE FOR MEDIA AND
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