

An investigation into how the Primark brand use social media to influence the buying behaviour of Irish female customers.

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Abstract

With the changing face of the social media landscape, many brands have adopted their marketing strategies to include social media marketing as a low cost yet effective way at marketing their products to customers. Recently customers have started to neglect advertising and have turned to social media, where marketers have also followed suit. Marketers have had to adapt their strategies to deliver their marketing messages to consumers in a more natural and consumer friendly way.

This research focuses on the Primark brand within Ireland and investigates how a brand who relies solely on social media to help deliver their marketing messages. The findings show strategies such as scarcity and influencer marketing as some of these strategies that are excelled within the social media context and some of the challenges that are faced in delivering marketing messages in this way.

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Introduction

Social media has been a platform that has brought global communications closer together than ever before. It has allowed people to connect with each other and share more personal media with one another.

For brands, it has also been a revolutionary new platform to connect with their customers. Social media allows brands to have two way conversations with customers that allow them to promote products as well as better understand and receive feedback from their customers. It is now implemented into many brands marketing strategies as not only is it a great way to connect with customers, it is also a cost-effective way to communicate marketing messages on.

Primark are a brand who offer low cost fashion to its customers. The reason this brand has consistently offered low cost prices over the years to its customers is because it is able to reduce its operating costs in any way it can. One of these ways is by completely cutting out advertising from its marketing budget. The brand does not do advertising of any sort with the exception of new store launches. The advertising budget for many companies is one of their biggest sources of expenditure. Primark cutting out this expense allows them to use that money elsewhere to deliver value to its customers.

The rise of social media has allowed brands such as Primark who do not do much advertising to use social networks as a means to overcome this lack of advertising and communicate with customers in a cost-effective manner.

This research will look at how the Primark brand is influencing customers buying behaviour using some social media marketing techniques that are just as effective as expensive advertising platforms.

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature surrounding the various concepts and theories involved in this topic. This chapter reviews the topic of influence and in particular how the various theories of literature relate to a social media context. The topic of social media will also be considered in relation to how marketers can use its potential to influence the customers online. Finally, consumer behaviour will similarly be investigated within the context of how consumers go about purchasing a product and how different influencing factors can affect the process at which consumers buy.

Influence

Social interactions within today's modern society are now increasingly incorporating the use of online communications through social media platforms. Many social interactions are now carried out through the use of text, image and video content means. Online interactions have led to many academics to research the area of social influence within an online context to assist marketers in their attempts to influence the customers buying behaviour.

Social influence refers to how an individual in a social network is influenced by the behaviour of others to conform to community behaviour patterns (Venkatesh & Brown, 2001). This research aims to look at how social influence is maintained in an online context and particularly how customers behaviour conforms to the social norms on social media.

For customers, there are two types of psychological aspects that Deutsch and Gerard (1955) describe as requirements in order to influence a person to adapt their behaviour to others.

The first aspect described by Deutsch and Gerard (1955) is informational social influence which is the willingness *“to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality”*. In simple terms, it is that which *“involves accepting information or advice from a person who may not have previously been known as a friend or colleague”* (Lee et al., 2011). Within a social media context this may

refer to how marketers are using cues to guide customers in situations of uncertainty. Marketers inform customers that products are trending or are a best seller by displaying positive product evaluations (Kaptein and Eckles, 2012).

Social proof as Robert Cialdini (2014) describes it, is most influential under two conditions. The first condition is that of uncertainty where customers are unsure and follow the actions of others. The second condition is that of similarity. Customers will be more influenced by others who are similar in nature to them. For this research, the aim is to uncover whether social proof is one of the reasons Primark customers follow influencers who are similar in nature to them and if the number of followers an influencer has effects how followers are influenced by them.

The second aspect described by Deutsch and Gerard (1955) is normative social influence. This aspect refers to people's need to belong or to be accepted by a social group. Normative social influence describes the social pressure an individual receives from their social group to conform to that group's behaviour regardless of their own individual beliefs. Within the online context influencer marketing can be used to get customers to conform to the group of followers. The example of *“where recipient behavior is based on interpreting the information provided by the influencer as an implied expectation to conform”*.(Subramani, M.R. and Rajagopalan, B., 2003).

This example discusses how influencers can have an impact on their followers where the followers are influenced by the influencer to conform to certain way, such as believing a product is more popular or better than it actually is. This research will seek to find some examples of this to further understand influencers impact on conformity.

An example of this informational and normative social influence within the online context is for example, users may assign “Likes” to products that are already popular (Muchnik et al., 2013). This example displays the informational social influence when the customers sees a high number of likes as a social proof as well as normative when the customer feels compelled to also “Like” the product to conform with the social norms of their peer group.

Our social peer group within a digital context are more open to sharing aspects of their lives compared to that of an offline context. Belk, R (2013) states *“The sharing*

of information about self online facilitated by the disinhibition and confessional effects means that it is now far easier to present our selves in ways that would have been awkward at best in predigital times”. Social media gives customers a more acceptable platform to share their extended self through their own personal sites with their peer groups. This openness allows normative social influence to prosper and potentially further emphasise the groups social rules through the content they post online. This present research aims to uncover how the openness of the digital self allows for social influence to be even more influential within a social media context.

Past research undertaken by previously mentioned Cialdini (2009) reveal six key principles of social influence: reciprocity, authority, consistency & commitment, social proof, liking and scarcity. However, Cialdini concluded that not all of these principles can be adapted to an online context, in fact only three of the principles had been research within an online context with one of the principles finding conflicting evidence (Guadagno, R. et al., 2013).

Social media

Social media has been a growing platform that has been defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. Social media platforms have developed into large online communities that allow for the creation and sharing of communication across the globe through such mediums as text, images, audio and video (Turban et al., 2012).

With the rapid popularity of social media, we see many brands joining the 2.8 billion social media users (Walters, 2016).

Social media is built on the premise of peer to peer communication, however in recent years brands have embraced social media to join the conversation to include branded word of mouth messages among customers online conversations (Chu and Kim, 2011).

Many academics claim social media has been linked to a shift in marketing practice (Smith, 2009) as more and more *“young individuals, have moved online and the use of traditional media channels has declined”* (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014).

Not only are customers shifting away from traditional forms of communications, but also advertisers have moved into online channels especially after the 2008 recession when traditional more expensive methods were less favoured (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009).

This has allowed for many brands to use online word of mouth as a cost effective way to advertise their business through social media. The Italian fashion brand Dolce and Gabbana for example invited fashion bloggers to a fashion show who posted their real time opinions on twitter resulting in a low cost promotion using social media (Lee, 2010). This study aims to further the understanding as to how brands are able to market their brand on social media using unconventional methods.

This relatively new emergence of brands using social media to advertise and promote products and services has been coined the term social media marketing.

Brands are able to use social media marketing as part of their marketing strategies in ways such as *“stimulating sales, increasing brand awareness, improving brand image, generating traffic to online platforms, reducing marketing costs, and creating user interactivity on platforms by stimulating users to post or share content”* (Felix et al., 2017). However, some academics stress the importance of managing the right mix of traditional and social media marketing (Weinberg et al., 2011). Many brands fail in their marketing efforts as they fall victim to the social media bandwagon by neglecting traditional mediums as part of an integrated marketing communications strategy. Brands overestimate social medias return that can lead to implications in other marketing strategies such as face to face word of mouth for example (Miller & Lammas, 2010).

The modern social media platform is saturated with brands trying to communicate their messages to consumers, something which Dellarocas et al (2007) argues is a reason consumers trust other consumer reviews more than an expert opinion.

This has led to customers ignoring online advertisements and marketing messages while turning their attention to more trustworthy sources such as other customers to gain insights about products and services. Marketers have had to adapt their social media strategies to join the social media conversation rather than bombard customers with messages. One of these methods is through a social media influencer which Marshall and Redmond, (2016) describe as someone who *“works to generate a form of “celebrity” capital by cultivating as much attention as possible and crafting an authentic “personal brand” via social networks, which can subsequently be used by companies and advertisers for consumer outreach”*.

Social media influencers are a strong tool for marketers to use. These influencers have large amounts of followers who actively engage with the influencers storytelling's and product recommendations. Many of these followers feel the influencers are authentic because they are unaware as *“to what appears to be*

genuine, raw and usually inaccessible aspects of influencers' personal lives" (Abidin, 2015). Brands are able to use influencers as brand advocates who will promote a product or service in a more authentic and natural way to their large followings.

Consumer Behaviour

The area of consumer behaviour is a largely researched area that involves *"the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services"* (Blackwell et al., 2006). Within this area of consumer behaviour research, academics have conceptualised the processes consumers make in terms of their decisions when buying a product or service. This model is known as the consumer decision making process. Originally conceptualised by Cox et al. (1983) the consumer decision making process involves five stages that are involved in the purchasing of a product or service.

1. Problem recognition

The first stage of the decision making process is the Problem recognition. This arises from two reasons. Assortment depletion is where a customer has used up their goods and needs to buy more or from assortment extension where the customer feels the need to buy more products to add to their existing collection Blythe (2008).

The need is assumed to be concerned with a product's functions or its enjoyable elements something which Engel et al. (1995) recognise as an equal amount of both.

2. Informational search

The informational search results from the customer being driven to find a solution to their problem. When the customer seeks a solution to their problem they search for the information both internally through past experiences and externally. Internally the customer retrieves information from past information searches from

the last time the need came about. When an internal search is unsuccessful the customer relies on an external search which include sources outside of the customers knowledge including, word-of-mouth and online social networking (Castronovo & Huang, 2012).

The rise of the internet and in particular social media channels has had a considerable impact on the external information search. Consumers now have access to a wider range of information and are able to access the opinions of others more easily. The presence of online review sites and forums has been noted as key examples that social media and the internet has on influencing the decision process during the information search stage. The reason these are powerful influencers is because they are two way communication between the customer and the brand and customers tend to trust other customers more so than the brands one way message (Jaffe, 2010, p185).

3. Evaluation of alternatives

According to Schiffman et al., (2012) when evaluating alternatives, a customer accesses the information in two ways.

The first is from a subset of brands that they know and are willing to consider purchasing from. The second aspect is then evaluating the product features from the list of brands.

This subset of brands was originally coined by Howard and Sheth (1969) as the Evoked set. The evoked set is usually a small set of brands however the more interest appointed to the brand category the larger the evoked set grows as customers become more familiar with brands in that category (Johnson & Lehmann, 1997). This research may indicate whether social media has influenced the evoked set and if a customer's participation in the fashion category has influenced their evoked set.

4. Purchase decision

The most important step in the decision making process is the purchase decision. At this stage, the customer has considered all the options and has considered a product for purchase. According to Schiffman et al., (2012) consumers make three types of purchases, trials, repeat purchases and long term commitments.

It is important to note that some academics have stated that there are some factors that affect the process. Kotler, (2009) mentioned two factors that can intervene in the consumer purchase decision. The first being the intensively of negative feedback from others on the chosen alternative with the second being our motivation to comply with others feedback. The closer the person is to us the more likely a customer is to adjust their purchase intention (Kotler, 2009).

Social media is the modern platform where customers go to seek feedback and the resulting negative feedback from other customers can severely impact the purchase decision. However, some will argue that customers can also revoke their decision if feedback seems overly positive. Postmodern customers understand that sometimes *“anonymous accounts are used to enable employees to post fake messages and overly-positive feedback”* and this positive only feedback can be *“corporate advertising in disguise”* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This research aims to give a better understanding regarding the role social media plays on positive and negative reviews in relation to the purchase decision.

5. Post purchase evaluation

The final stage in the consumer decision making process involves the experience in using a product and whether it lived up to the expectations of the customer. Based on the customer's own expectations there are three outcomes. The performance exceeds expectations, performance is below expectations or performance and expectation match (Schiffman et al., 2012).

Firms must consider this stage an important aspect of the process as it can affect future purchases for the customer and also other customers as feedback spreads. Customers can start to feel cognitive dissonance and it is important for brands to communicate post purchase to ensure the customer they have made the right choice (Foxall, 2005).

While this current research focuses on the influence of social media on the buying behaviour many academics such as Blythe (2008) agree that there are three main influences on the consumer decision making process.

Personal factors relate to how firms would often segment customers such as age gender etc but also include internal factors for instance the consumer's current situation and level of involvement with the brand or product. The level of involvement varies per customer. Some customers may have high levels of emotional attachment with a product or brand and as discussed by Batra et al., (2012) customers can experience a sense of brand love whereby they are highly involved in the brand and will be more likely to be influenced because of the high emotional attachment.

Psychological factors are elements of the consumer's mental process with attitude being the most prominent factor. Macdonald and Uncles (2007) describe savvy customers who are highly competent at gathering information from online sources and through interpersonal networking to get what they want from firms, as they know exactly what to expect from these firms. From this knowledge and thought process customers can develop an attitude towards a product. Traditionally it is believed an emotional attachment towards a product derives from the customers thought process of that product. However, Zajonc and Markus (1985) argue that some customers plan a purchase off of a 'gut feeling' as opposed to previous knowledge gathering and thought.

Social factors are influences from others that can persuade the decision making process. As mentioned earlier normative compliance is one of the strongest influences on a person because they feel compelled to act a certain way by conforming and complying to the accepted behaviour of others, particularly their family and friends. Behaviour outside of the social norm leads to disapproval from friends and family (Blythe, 2008).

Conclusion

This literature review has attempted to highlight the key areas of research that have previously been undertaken. The past research has provided an overview to which this research can use as a basis to further continue on the work of others to develop a deeper understanding of the influencing factors that affects consumers decisions within the context social media. It is important to gain an understanding of these areas for future research much like this study. Increasingly many brands are attempting to take their marketing efforts onto social media alone at the expense of lower costs. The tools and strategies for communicating with customers have changed drastically over the years leading to some suggesting social media is the latest component to the promotional mix (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

With this in mind, the need for further research is aiming towards the areas of social media marketing and particularly if it alone is a sustainable strategy that can influence buying behaviour.

The goal of this study is to continue the research using a case study of the Primark brand to understand how Irish consumers have been influenced on social media by Primark and other third party. Further research into this area will help gain an understanding of how social media marketing can be used effectively to aid the many emerging Irish start ups who rely on their online presence to market their products and services.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to understand how the Primark brand uses social media to influence the buying behaviour of its Irish female customers.

The research aims to understand how Irish female customers are using social media in a fashion buying context and uncover the interactions they have with the Primark brand whether directly from the brands own social media channels or through other third parties. The research intends to decipher these social media interactions and the role they play in customers buying behaviours. These interactions on social media are built up around a number of major influencers but also regular customers who are contributing to comments and their own postings.

This research aims to understand if high engagement social media channels such as the Penneys Ireland Facebook page is having any influence over the purchase intentions of female customers specifically when they visit the store.

Primary Objectives

How are female customers purchases influenced by social media?

What types of content are most influential to female customers?

These questions will be the primary focus of the research. This research conducted will add to the currently existing research by filling the gap on the understanding of purchase intentions for Irish females. The research will also look at the social media tactics used by Primark to directly and indirectly influence its customers. The research will also help large retail stores such as Primark to better understand the types of content that influences female customers purchase intentions.

Sub objectives:

Are customers more influenced by the retailer's content or by bloggers and influencers?

In relation to the sub objective, the focus will be about understanding who has the most influencing power over Primark customers, the retailer or the bloggers and influencers that they follow on social media. This sub objectives allows retailers to understand how influential they can be compared to the influencers that blog and post about their products online to their large followings. This sub objective will also seek to uncover the ways in which influencers engage with their fans on social media and what activities they are doing which may be more influential than the brands activities. This sub objective will be beneficial to the organisation as it allows them to see where customers are more likely to be influenced by whether that be the retailer or a trusted online persona.

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors on social media that are influencing Irish Primark customers. This may be the Primark brand itself, other customers or third parties such as micro-celebrity influencers. This chapter looks at how the data was collected and analysed.

This investigation is formulated around a number of objectives and sub objectives which are defined in the research objectives chapter. To achieve these objectives, it is important that the correct research methods are chosen in order to achieve the most accurate results. A failure to choose the appropriate method to conduct the research will lead to the data and results to be inaccurate and will ultimately fail to meet the research objectives. One of the most important aspects of conducting this study is choosing the correct method. In this chapter of the study the reasons for choosing the appropriate research design will be justified over other methods and the reasons they were not considered appropriate for this study.

This chapter also discussed the participants involved in the research and the reasons for choosing such participants and also the ethical considerations involved in this study. An outline of the steps involved in conducting this piece of research will also be outlined in this chapter.

Research Design

The aims of this study as previously outlined are to uncover the factors that are influencing female Primark customers on social media. The most suitable method considered appropriate was a qualitative data. Similar past research used a quantitative approach to see how social media messages influence smoking behaviours Yoo, W., et al (2016). This study aims to understand how customers of Primark behave in a social media setting. The primary method of research that will be used for the purpose of this study will be a netnographic study as it helps us to observe and understand how customers behave online.

Kozinets, (2009) reiterates the importance of netnography as he states that *“our social worlds are going digital”* and that we *“must follow people's social activities and encounters onto the internet”*. Netnography is an accepted form of research that allows us as researchers to observe the social interactions of customers in the digital world. A netnographic study will allow this research to understand the behaviours of Primark customers.

Bryman (2012) defined ethnography as a data collection method where the observer/ ethnographer is immersed in a group or community where they observe the interactions and behaviours of the subjects in a natural setting. In a similar manner netnography allows us to become immersed in the digital world and observe how customers are interacting and behaving online.

Netnography is an exceptional method of obtaining naturalism over questionnaires (Demuth and Mey, 2015). For this research, a more natural method is favoured as it gives us more accurate data over other methods. In more face to face methods for example, some of the participants may be hesitant to share how they truly behave online. This observational method allows the researcher to avoid any bias they may have had if interviews were conducted. Rather than asking if a customer was influenced, netnography allows us to see their behaviour and interactions online and if at all this has had any influence over their buying behaviour.

Netnography was the primary choice of qualitative data chosen for this study. While other methods such as interviews, focus groups and surveys were considered, the netnographic approach allowed for all aspects of social media to be considered

while still maintaining a natural environment. Interviews and focus groups would have to contain a range of participants that had some influencing contact through each aspect of social media. It would be a difficult task to find participants who collectively had experience in different areas of social media without asking the participant beforehand. Interviews, although an appropriate method were not as effective as observational methods because of the risk of saturation among interviewees. Netnography allows for a more accessible method of data collection from all influencing aspects of social media.

Surveys were originally considered as part of mixed methods approach but a purely netnographic approach was chosen in order to maintain the natural environmental study. A survey questionnaire would have also had to ask customers to think back to a few months prior in relation to certain products and social media posts. This may have led to respondents giving inaccurate data due to a lack of memory in terms of how they responded to posts at that current time. Their feelings or views may have changed within that timeframe and a purely netnographic approach was chosen so that data at that time could be observed as it was as opposed to how customers remembered it.

Sample

According to Walliman, NR (2005) there are two main types of sampling. They are probability sampling and nonprobability sampling. Probability sampling is a technique that involves the researcher selecting participants which they believe to be an accurate representation of the population. This technique allows subjects an equal opportunity to be represented in the study. Also known as random sampling this approach selects a sample of random participants that aims to provide an unbiased result that can be applied to the general population of the study. In regard to the netnographic research approach a theoretical sampling method will be used. Theoretical sampling *“is the process of data collection whereby the researcher simultaneously collects, codes and analyses the data in order to decide what data to collect next. Deciding where to sample next according to the emerging codes and categories is theoretical sampling”* (Coyne, 1997).

Data Analysis

In analysing the data the researcher collected information from the relevant online sources, saving and storing them in a computer file in order to be analysed at a future date. The netnographic data that was collected was primarily archival data. Archival data is described by Kozinets, (2009) as saved communal interactions that provide the researcher with a bank of observational data that may stretch back years, or in this study's case, a few months.

This type of data allowed for the collection of data that was unaffected by the actions of the researcher. The data was a reflection of the true actions of consumers behaving within the online context without the observer disturbing these interactions which allowed for more natural data to be collected. The data collection strategy was a thematic approach.

Using this method, large amounts of data could be observed and examined to determine its relevance. Relevant data is then collected by means of a visual screen capture. The data captured was then assigned to the relevant theme and

stored in a specific folder relating to that theme. Themes were identified through examining the data to observe common components that alone are meaningless but together help uncover patterns that evolve into thematic areas.

Research instrument

In relation to the chosen technique, netnography was deemed the most appropriate method for this study. The context of this research is set in an online environment with the main objective of understanding how social media influences the buying behaviour of Irish customers using the Primark brand as the subject of this study. Given this online context, netnography was believed to be the most appropriate method to allow for an accurate and natural reflection of the customer expressing how they feel online.

The netnographic research conducted in the early months of 2017 by observing the interactions that were conducted on social media. In the early stages of data collection, the observation was observed and collected on Facebook by monitoring the comments published on the official Primark Ireland (@PenneysIreland) page. The observation gradually branched out to other 3rd party pages such as influencers and local news and media pages as well as moving to other social media platforms such as twitter and Instagram. Other areas online were also observed such as news articles and forum sites that related or discussed social media activity.

The relevant data that was collected was done so by means of a screen capture software to capture the content. The screen grab was then cropped to a readable format whilst also editing to remove any evidence of personal information such as names or faces to ensure confidentiality of subjects.

As observational efforts were monitored over the coming months, any of the data that was deemed relevant could then be sorted into themes as the more observational work done the more themes started to emerge to the researcher. These themes could then be used as evidence to support the hypothesis and

explain some of the aspects that influence customers online. Due to the nature of this study only relevant data was used attached in the appendix.

Ethical considerations

Due to the nature of this study and its involvement of human participants it is important to recognise and be aware of the ethical considerations that may surround this study. The study focuses on the female customers within the online context, and by definition did not directly involve the research of vulnerable members of society.

This study involves primarily observational methods on members of the public within a virtual environment. Although the data gathered was on public forums, social media pages and other online contexts, individuals involved are aware that their messages are public, they still have some expectations of privacy. With this in mind it was important that the participants involved in the netnographic and survey data had their identities remain anonymous. No names or profile pictures were revealed in the screen capture data of the netnography with the exception of influencer page names for the purpose of identifying differences and due to their celebrity like status.

Limitations

This research has aimed to uncover the influencing factors social media has on buying behaviour by using the most appropriate and effective methods. Although these methods were deemed the most appropriate means of uncovering and analysing the data there is no one best way to do research and there are limitations to this research that must be addressed.

In terms of the sample of participants that were involved in the netnographic aspect of the data collection, it is impossible to guarantee that all participant data was sourced from Irish females. Although there may be some possibility of a participant being outside of Ireland, the data was collected by using such tools as location

searches, Irish used hashtags and Irish social media pages to ensure the data was as accurate as possible.

Another limitation is that this study examines the behaviour of customers within an online context and although their behaviours and intentions may be expressed online it is not always the case that these behaviours follow through when it comes to actual buying behaviours.

Analysis and findings

Introduction

This chapter will begin to analyse the findings that were found during the collection of the research. The first section will look at the theme of social influence within the online context and analyse how customers are being influenced within the online context. Following on from this the use of scarcity by the Primark brand will be examined and explain how social media is a big factor in scarcity's success. Finally, the topic of influencers will be looked at considering it is one of the biggest emerging marketing strategies to be used by the brand. The analysis will focus around some popular influencers activities and how they are influencing customers or possibly negatively influencing customers.

Social influence

Social influence as discussed in the literature review refers to the need to belong or to be accepted as part of a social group. As emotional beings, we humans are influenced by the opinions and behaviours of others. We care about the opinions others have about us to some degree and in order to maintain positive opinions others have about us we often alter our behaviour and the beliefs we hold just to be accepted into our social group. Social influence comes in a variety of ways with the most applicable for this study being conformity, peer pressure, leadership and marketing.

Whilst social influence is used primarily in an offline consumer behaviour setting it can also be applied to the social media environment. We see many examples on social media of users trying adapting behaviour and beliefs to maintain their status

as part of their social group such as the ALS ice bucket challenge. Users here felt out of place if they did not conform to what everyone in their peer group were doing.

For Primark customers, we see similar actions undertaken. We see a developing trend of women following similar behaviour of bloggers by posting their outfits of the day along with hashtags such as #penneys. This social influence leads to regular customers mimicking the posts of influencers such by expressing their reactions and opinions by reviewing their purchases by means of social media. One example in the data shows a customer posting about a Primark top she purchased and the feelings it gives her as well as how the products adds more to her style:

“Loving this perfect-in-every-way top from @primark. It adds a lovely pop o0f colour to a look. I wear mine under my leather jacket and I love the contrast of the black leather with the vibrant pretty frills”.

Posts like these are a regular sight under the Primark hashtag. The importance and relevance of these type of posts to this research and to brands such as Primark is not the number of views these posts receive, rather the influencing power they generate. A recent report tells us how 92% of customers trust recommendations from friends and family compared to other forms of advertising (Chaney, P. 2012). This trend of regular customers posting such content gives social media a stronger power to influence customers purchasing behaviour. If customers are trusting their friends more so than advertising, these posts have a greater chance to influence customers to buy a product on a social media post compared to an advertisement. Although the reach per post is much smaller than an advertisement, these posts are posted regularly by numerous customers who each have a small number of followers who are mostly people they know.

Other examples in the data show another type of customer who is affected by social influence. This customer is the start up equivalent of a blogger who mimics bloggers posts in the same manner but without the large following. In this example,

we see the customer posting her outfit of the day (OOTD) along with tags and hashtags:

“OOTD:

Blazer Mango Dress & Boots Primark

#fblogger #penneys #mango #style”

Despite the fact that this customer has only 300 followers, the quality of her posts are up there with more well known bloggers and influencers. The followers she has are more than likely going to be her personal friends along with others who are interested in following her content. Aspiring influencers who have small numbers of followers would also have a strong influencing power compared to those who are just posting to their friends. Aspiring influencers are not endorsed or sponsored by any brands and this is why many of their relatively small number of followers find their content to be more authentic compared to someone who is known to be sponsored or endorsed by a brand. The content they post may be similar to more popular influencers but fewer number of followers allow the person to seem more genuine. We see some evidence of this within the data:

“I love the tie detail on that dress! The colour is fab on you x”

“That’s what drew me to it, something a bit different”

In this example, we see some evidence of a follower having some authentic feeling and conversation toward the poster. The follower is able to have some natural conversation with the poster. With there being only 19 comments in this example, the follower is able to make some conversation which generates some real value within the posts. This is something that is not possible to do with someone who has around 20,000 followers. The sheer volume of comments that are left makes it

difficult for the poster to respond to them all or to make any sort of conversation within the comments section. This exclusive interaction between the poster and follower is one of the reasons an up and coming influencer can deliver some real value that helps influence followers and customers of brands alike.

The number of customers who are engaging with this trend and wanting to be famous bloggers followed by the influencing power these posts carry makes these social influence posts a strong factor in influencing the buying behaviour of Primark customers.

Scarcity

One of the main inspirations for this research was the emerging trend of scarcity around a number of Primark products and how social media was used to persuade customers into buying these scarce products.

One of Primark's most popular trends over the last few months was the Disney Chip cup. Having launched a Disney cup in line with the release of the beauty and the beast movie the product was met with great response on social media. The chip cup had sold out very quickly leading to the majority of customers not being able to purchase one.

For those customers who were lucky enough to get one, many of them felt the need to post pictures of their new purchase on social media which again lead to an increase in popularity. The data shows many examples of those customers who shared their purchases on social media. The examples in the data suggest that these customers felt a sense of exclusivity among their peers. Some of the captions along with the pictures include:

“Bet you're all jealous?!? 😊”

“Does drinking tea from my #chipcup really make it taste better ? Why, yes it does!”

“I GOT THEM! 🍷”

“Its been months but #chipgate is finally over for me #chipcup”

These captions suggest that it was a struggle and frustrating process in order to get a chip cup but that the end result was a worthwhile effort that they felt they needed to share their accomplishments with their friends online. These captions also suggest that these customers were part of an exclusive group of people who have the cup. This exclusivity is an aspect that helps drive the theme of scarcity on social media. Customers who don't have access to the cup are "jealous" of others and that owning the cup gave them exclusive benefits such as the tea tasting better in the chip cup.

This led to an increase of demand for the chip cup yet the supply was never there to meet it. In the data, we see images of customers huddling around a mere empty shelf display where presumably the cups were stocked. The behaviour of the customers is interesting as we see them rushing and almost panicking to get their hands on the product. This is evidence of the influence that scarcity has over customers. It leads them to want the product more and the more they can't have it the higher the drive is to find ways to purchase it.

"I need a #BeautyAndTheBeast #Chipcup badly and seems #Pennys are sold out #feelingsad"

"@Primark can you please make the #BeautyAndBeast chip cup available in Galway & Limerick Penney's stores. #chipgate #chipcup"

"Went looking for the #chipcup in @Primark Athlone today! They got none in #devo #ineedthiscup #BeautyAndBeast"

While this buzz surrounding the chip cup was developing, Primark saw an opportunity to further benefit from the chip cup hype without supplying the demand and decreasing the scarcity of the product. Primark released a number of sub products that were similar or relating to the chip cup such as purses, socks and bedsheets. Although these products were not what the customers originally wanted, Primark were able to continue their sales using the influence of the chip cup to sell a wider range of products that customers reacted positively. The socks

released shortly after the initial release of the chip cups displayed the caption “I wanted a chip cup but all I could get were these socks #chipgate”.

“No #BeautyAndTheBeast @Primark Chip coin purse or cup for me but I did get these #chipgate socks 😊”

Primark had directly played on the scarcity of the chip cups in a humorous manner by releasing these socks which customers found amusing and continued the hype of the chip cups. The inclusion of the chip gate hashtag encouraged customers to use it and promote the products on social media.

Following this Primark released another batch of chip cups along with postings on their social media. The anticipation was again met with great response from customers who were posting about getting a cup this time around. Local news and media sites such as fm104 and her.ie also created social media posts about its return to stores. Although this met with great success from customers due to its scarce nature, some customers were not susceptible to the influence of scarcity. Many customers felt frustrated with their unsuccessful attempts to obtain the product as seen in these posts:

“Like many others I hope this time I wont be disappointed hoping pennys get a bigger order in this time I checked every few days but codnt get one come on pennys bigger orders for beauty and the beast fans”

“I have to say the way Penneys are dealing with the demand for these cups is disgraceful !!! I have tried each time these were released to purchase one / two, and each time you get the same response “their all gone”

“What penny's are they in can you tell us please I'm not going all over Dublin to find there all ready sold out if anyone got them can they tell us where thanks”

The backlash against this marketing strategy is evidence that not all customers are influenced by scarcity marketing. Although some customers enjoy chasing around stores looking for that rare product, some have reacted negatively. Despite the fact that customers want to purchase the product, their frustrations lead them to either reject the product altogether or other means such as eBay where the chip cup for example was selling for six times its original price.

Social media Influencers

The term influencer is a recent term to emerge from the social media revolution. Freberg et al., (2011) define a social media influencer as *“a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media”*.

Although some academics view influencers as unfavourable allies (Gorry & Westbrook, 2009), It is clear to see in the data that Primark value both direct and indirect influencers on social media.

One of the more notable examples of how Primark are using these micro celebrities to influence buying behaviour is the popular Irish blogger Suzanne Jackson (@sosume_ie). Having gained a following of fans Sosume has released her own line of beauty products which were exclusively available only in Primark stores. This suggests that the brand express confidence in her influencing ability enough to allow her own line of products to be sold exclusively in Primark stores. A large following of 300,000 on Facebook and 200,000 on Instagram it is clear to see why the partnership was beneficial for both parties. Upon announcement of the Primark exclusive products the data shows us how the fans reacted favourably to the announcement with fans straight away showing signs of interest.

“When can I buy them because I need them in my life today.”

“We need to go to Penneys so I can stock up!!!”

“What day is the launch?”

“Yass tbh I can’t afford your other lashes but these are 🌹”

In these example extracts we see the reactions from customers who have already expressed an interest in purchasing the products. Some of the reasons for this may vary but the implied intention to purchase the product is because of the bloggers influencing power that has developed from her large following. Many of those who have bought or have expressed an interest in buying these products do so because they believe this blogger is a representation of other customers who are like them. Followers of bloggers and many fashion pages alike tend to be influenced by them because they can attach a face to the brand just like in this example. Followers believe these influencers have a sense of authenticity behind them because of their inclination to critique other products they use. Customers have that sense of trust behind a blogger for this reason, and when they launch their own branded products they believe that trust is carried through to deliver an authentic product. This exclusive Primark range is in line with low prices customers expect as well as supporting the case of an authentic trustworthy blogger who can provide customers with a cheaper alternative while still maintaining a perceived better quality product.

There are many bloggers and social media influencers within the fashion industry who started out posting their shopping hauls as a hobby which eventually grew to a full time job as large amounts of followers were gained. These bloggers are still maintaining their original strategy by posting about many different things that interest them or products that they bought, hence they do not tend to strictly post items from the same brand. The examples in the data are from such bloggers as @penneys_hun, @penneystoprada, @thankshun_penneys. These bloggers and the many others like them represent a collective group who together directly influence customers purchase intentions for Primark and other brands alike. Although these bloggers individually have relatively small numbers of followers compared to international standards together their interests and styles help

influence customers who see a number of influencers all collectively admiring new fashion trends.

The data shows us some examples of how collectively these influencers help to create a trend and simultaneously promote these products. The first example is a pair of boots which imitate a pair sold by the luxury brand Chloé.

“They look fab and I wouldn't know they're Penneys!”

“Just got these the weekend, look so expensive and so comfy.”

“FAB need to get my hands on a pair”

“These are an amazing dupe, penny's are killing it ATM”

“I'm getting all three tomorrow!!

This data extract show comments left on a number of different social media pages in relation to the boots. The data shows clear evidence of how these bloggers can help promote products and influence the intention to buy. Customers are explicitly expressing their intention to purchase as well as revealing some of the reasons why they are so fond of the boots. One aspect that is revealed in the data is that customers can express their reasons for liking a product. In this example, we see customers commenting on the imitation aspect of these boots. Although it was not stated by the brand customers are able to see similarities to that of other famous more expensive brands and then they themselves along with influencers create a craze around. Customers are the ones who have coined these boots as the “Chloé dupe” and they themselves are using influencers pages to influence other customers by reinforcing the efforts of the brand.

The hype around products such as this are stimulated by influencers who give customers a platform judgment for products which can then trigger purchase behaviour. This leads to the actual product selling out for a few days which again drives demand much like the Chip cup example. This social media buzz originally emerging from influencers pages is then acquired from larger news and media brands such as for example FM104, Spin 1038, RSVP magazine and Evoke.

These brands have social media pages that have by far a bigger reach of users. Although the audience on these pages is much larger the target market for the Primark brand is not fully represented on these social media pages. Influencer pages such as ones mentioned previously have a similar target audience of followers which is more specific to the Primark brand. Pages such as FM104 for example had a varied audience which allows posts to be subject to more negative criticisms. Some examples of this in the data include comments on a similar dupe product that was posted on the FM104 page:

*“You’d break your **** with the height of the Penneys version”*

“They’re both ugly! But to each there own!”

“Not my cup of tea bit outdated”

“Penneys version looks painful”

These examples show how easily negative criticism can be expressed online. This study focuses on how social media can have an influence on buying behaviour but it is important to note that not all of the influences online can be positive. These examples are very small scale but it does lead the question as to how much of an impact they have on customers perceptions and if they have negatively influenced a customer not to buy a product.

Another interesting finding within the data is customers recognising how influencers are posting about brands:

“Do you have shares in Penneys? Always jayzus posting about it!”

This example shows that the customer's frustration as to the number of times the brand has posted articles concerning Primark products. Customers have become aware of sponsorship and whether articles like this are directly sponsored by

Primark is unknown yet customers seem to have a sense it is and this diminishes the sincerity of the article.

Customers rejecting influencers

Another aspect of social media that needs to be discussed and analysed is the negative side of social media and if there are any aspects of social media that can cause customers to be negatively influenced on social media.

Big brands such as the likes of Primark have a team of experts that are required to manage the brands online reputation on social media collectively. Brands often schedule and review posts and content before they are actually posted to ensure they fit the brands persona and are appropriate material to be posted.

One of the aspects that brands cannot control are customers and in particular how they react to influencers who the brand also have no control over.

Influencers are a popular option marketers use within their marketing strategy as because they are real people who are sharing their daily lives and activities online, customers seem to trust them more so than an advertisement. In recent times however, customers are starting to understand how these influencers earn their money from the content they post. Bloggers and influencers are now required to use the hashtag #ad or #spon under new guidelines by the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland to inform followers the post is a form of marketing communication (asai.ie, 2017).

There has been a trend of customers who are now rejecting some influencers who seem to have lost their sense of legitimacy and are now becoming like a brand by constantly promoting products with fewer authentic content posts.

These hashtags help followers distinguish adverts from regular posts. Some customers get frustrated when they mislead customers:

“Very offputting when you don't know if they genuinely like something or are, in essence, being paid but don't state this.”

In this extract, we see a user express their annoyance of influencers deceiving their followers. Although it may have just been carelessness from the influencer, some

followers are concerned as to how they are supposed to trust an influencer if it is unclear what is an advertisement and what is honest content.

Some of the influencers in question are unaware that most customers find it difficult to tell the difference between sponsored and unsponsored content. However, there is an example in the data that shows evidence of influencers directly misleading their followers:

“Basically she told everyone that she had brought her mum a present because she let her and her boyfriend move in with her when she had her baby. She showed a big red fancy box with a bow and the mum opened it and it was a tv”.

“Fast forward a few hours, almost all the major bloggers showed of the same big red box and box and told everyone how Currys had kindly sent them some products that they needed. For example, Siobhan oh fitness got loads of laptop stuff as she had given up her job and was working from home on her health stuff”.

Here we see clear evidence of a blogger misleading followers into thinking she had bought her mother a fancy new tv when in reality it was a sponsored gift from an electronics brand. Although these posts may not be the most honest of posts, they do however seem to have an influence on customers:

“Friend of mine works in a pharmacy and said, you can definitely see people coming in asking for particular products they've seen on snaps and social media from bloggers, so those saying they don't have an impact on them and so why does it matter, maybe should be aware of the power these influencers have”.

The question for marketers to consider is how long will influencer marketing stay relevant considering how regularly we see brands collaborating together, and how long until customers become fed up seeing adverts and sponsorships and cause its effectiveness to decline.

Discussion

The discussion chapter of this research will reflect on the netnographic findings that were outlined in the analysis and compare them with the literature review to demonstrate any advances in the literature surrounding this topic. This chapter will also discuss any limitations of the research to ensure future research on this topic can learn and adapt a more suitable approach to uncovering a more accurate representation of findings. The topic for this study was to understand the methods direct and indirect methods Primark use to influence the buying behaviour of their Irish female customers. With this topic, there followed some research objectives that were set in order to help answer some questions around this topic, these objectives will also be answered to determine if they were met and in what way they help develop the literature.

The analysis and findings chapter revealed some of the ways in which customers are influenced. In this chapter, these findings will be discussed in detail as to how they help further the literature surrounding the topics of influence and consumer buying behaviour.

The primary objective for this research was to understand how the Primark brand use social media to influence the buying behaviour of its Irish female customers. The findings in relation to this primary objective revealed a number of ways that customers are influenced by Primark's social media activities.

In relation to the finding that Primark consumers are conforming to the same behaviours as their favourite bloggers and influencers, this finding highlights Belk, R (2013) point that customers today are now using social media to reveal themselves to brands and other customers. Before social media it was seen as awkward to reveal lots of personal information about one's self, however social media gives customers a platform to become more comfortable with sharing your personal tastes and interests. The finding in the data that shows that customers are now not only more comfortable revealing their outfits and styles but that they are actively engaging in this phenomenon. What this means for brands such as Primark is that customers are actively revealing their interests and tastes in products that they have purchased. Before social media, brands have invested lots of time and resources in market research in order to find out what customers are

interested in. Now that customers are beginning to voluntarily reveal their interest's bands can use social media to help assist research efforts in developing new fashion trends based on social media posts. Brands can use the concept of social influence and the digital self to encourage customers to reveal their interests. In the literature Subramani, M.R. and Rajagopalan, B., (2003) discusses how customers interoperate influencer information as an implied expectation to conform. This statement can be applied to how customers are conforming to popular influencer behaviour. The more users who conform to this behaviour the more regular these types of posts will become in the future. If brands can help inspire customers to conform to this behaviour it will be beneficial to them to help them understand the type content needed to influence buying behaviour. This trend can also help set and define the social norms which as mentioned in the literature by Blythe, (2008) helps influence customers during the decision making process by conforming to socially accepted behaviours and interests of others. this behaviour also allows other customers to benefit from social media activities such as viewers receiving a more authentic feeling of value.

However, this finding may also have some implications for Primark and brands alike. Chaney, (2012) reports that customers are trusting their friends more and advertising less. If this trend continues, customers may begin to completely distrust advertising and turn to other means such as social recommendations from family and friends. Brands will need to be able to balance their advertising while monitoring the social media activities of their customers.

Another finding in relation to the primary objective of this research relates to Primark's scarcity strategy. the data shows us just how well scarcity can influence a customer's buying behaviour. the use of scarcity allows customers to feel a sense of exclusivity. This exclusivity encourages customers to express their purchases on social media to share their success of obtaining a hard to access product. this difficulty in obtaining a product only further encourages customers to share their success on social media. this strategy is a successful way of influencing customers purchase behaviour because it inspires people who post about their success which only further develops the hype surrounding this particular product and in turn influences buying behaviour.

Those customers have not yet obtained their exclusive product are influenced by social pressure to purchase the product because they see this product as a popular one which helps them to be better accepted within their social group. Scarcity also helped the brand build a range of products around the chip cup such as the socks and purse. Customers were influenced to buy these related products because they felt they were also able to join in on hype around this product in some way. Although this worked well for Primark, other brands must consider the negative consequences of this strategy. The data revealed some examples of how customers feel frustrated when they find it hard to purchase an exclusive product. Brands need to monitor customers reactions to their scarcity strategies to determine the levels of frustration customers have when this strategy is implemented like we saw in the data customers can vent their frustrations on social media which may have negative implications on the influencing power of brands. While the literature mentions how customers trust other customers more because of the volume of brands all communicating a message Dellarocas et al (2007). The findings reveal to us how brands are able to overcome this by creating a word of mouth buzz that have customers spreading a brand's message which other customers are more likely take on board.

One of the sub objectives refers to bloggers and influencers and whether they have a stronger influence over customers than the brands owned content. To analyse this the data looked at the topic of influencers as they play a big role in social media and marketing today.

The data showed us the example of Suzanne Jackson who is a popular blogger that holds great influencing power due to her large following of fans. These influences have strong influencing power much like celebrities would. The fact that this influencer can release her own range of branded products supports this claim. Followers of this influencer reacted very favourably to the announcement of her own branded products which demonstrates how influential bloggers alike can be. Influencers have large followings of fans because as Abidin, (2015) describes in the literature, they share genuine aspects of their lives that would otherwise be kept private. Customers feel a close connection to these influencers because they are allowed access into their personal lives giving followers a personal face to a brand which allows them to develop a close sense of trust. For this reason,

customers are more easily influenced by bloggers on social media as opposed to a brand's message. This is why many brands have turned to influencers to help promote their products through the use of sponsorship and affiliate marketing.

Because influencers and their followers have a relationship built on trust it is often the case that social norms and fashion trends are created and dictated by influencers collective posts on social media. What this means for brands is that influencers have the power to create boundaries as to what is deemed acceptable within the social norms. In the findings we discover how influencers have been the cause of many products becoming popular due to influencers having mutual followers, these followers are constantly seeing similar products being posted online by many different influencers which can lead to the customer believing that these products fall within the social boundaries and because of social influence customers become motivated to purchase.

What this means for brands is that influencers have a great deal of power in influencing customers to believe which products are trendy and which are not. Brand should consider monitoring popular influencers social media activities and the response to these posts as they are a great source of information on customers reactions to products. We know that Primark already have some communications with influencers in terms of sponsorships and partnerships. For other brands, however this research may highlight some of the reasons brands need to monitor the influencers in their industry to see if they are having any influences over their customers.

The final finding uncovered during this piece of research relates to the sub objective which asked whether customers were more influenced by the brand or by bloggers and influencers. In answering this objective, the study looked at some strategies and content the brand have used to influence as well as the activities of influencers and bloggers. The finding relates to influencers losing some of their influencing power over customers. The literature states that influencers are a success because they come across as genuine people who share insights into their personal lives. Brands have begun to use non celebratory influencers as part of their marketing efforts only within the last number of years. The rise of the influencer and the growing number of them has resulted in some customers

understanding that marketing is now part of an influencers job. Some customers have started to express their annoyance of the over use of sponsorship within the influencer landscape. The marketing sponsorships in influencers content has become too obvious for some customers that it has resulted in them distrusting and neglecting the influencer. The over use of marketing within content has caused influencers to lose their sense of authenticity which is what had made them so popular in the first place.

For marketers, this may be something that needs to be considered and as marketing academics it may be an area for further research. The implications of this finding is that influencers may one day lose their appeal because customers and followers alike will find it difficult to decipher marketing communications from genuine content. Although we see rules and regulations being implemented on bloggers and influencers in relation to this, the question remains as to whether influencers will retain their influencing abilities in the long run considering it is a fairly new phenomenon.

Conclusion

The aim of this piece of research looked to uncover some of the reasons customers are influenced on social media by looking at the case of Primark. The research sought to fill the gaps in the literature regarding social medias effectiveness as a tool which marketers can use to influence their customers.

The research looked studied areas regarding consumer behaviour, social media and influence. The research has been able to add to the literature by providing a new viewpoint of how customers are engaging in online activities by using unconventional methods of study to examine their natural behaviour on social media. New areas in regard to customers behaviour were revealed in relation to influencers and other customers around them, we discovered the changes in behaviour that occur when people are influenced by other customers in regard to social influence.

The findings in this study give marketers and insight into how the social media landscape is effecting its customers and even looks at a potentially new shift away from the authentic use of influencers. This research will not help in stopping this shift but may help in understanding some of the reasons a new change in consumers attitudes is developing.

Appendix:

Scarcity

 Aldi Ireland and 4 others follow
[Redacted] Mar 29
Went looking for the #chipcup in @Primark Athlone today! They got none in #devo #ineedthiscup #BeautyAndBeast
1 2

 James [Redacted] follows
Ken [Redacted] @ [Redacted] Mar 29
Never seen so much commotion over a cup in my whole life 😂😂😂 #chipcup

 HDC_Ireland and 4 others follow
[Redacted] @ [Redacted] a · Mar 29
I need a #BeautyAndTheBeast #Chipcup badly and seems #Pennys are sold out #feelingsad

 [Redacted] ps · May 12
I GOT THEM! 🙌 #chipcup #chippurse #primark #beautyandthebeast #disney #disneycollector [instagram.com/p/BT_FeO8FwzC/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BT_FeO8FwzC/)
1



J. [redacted] · Mar 23
#chipgate #chipcup #primark @Primark #leeds



1 1 2



[redacted] · Mar 29
So annoyed at the fact people have gone out bought the chip mug and are selling it for much more on eBay! 🙄 #BeautyAndTheBeast #chipgate

1

Aldi and 4 others follow



Michaela Rayes Radio · Jul 1

Its been months but #chipgate is finally over for me #chipcup
#BeautyAndTheBeast #thankshunpennys



Aldward and 4 others follow



Michael Hayes Radio · Jul 1

Its been months but #chipgate is finally over for me #chipcup
#BeautyAndTheBeast #thankshunpennys



What penny's are they in can you tell us please I'm not going all over Dublin to find there all ready sold out if anyone got them can they tell us where thanks

Like · Reply · May 10 at 9:42am



 [\[redacted\]](#) [Follow](#)

[\[redacted\]](#) [\[redacted\]](#) Bet you're all jealous?!? 😏
#chipcup #chippurse 😂😂
[\[redacted\]](#) omg i love
[\[redacted\]](#) Im soooooo jealous
[\[redacted\]](#) [\[redacted\]](#) xx
[\[redacted\]](#) I want themmmmm
[\[redacted\]](#) x
[\[redacted\]](#) One of the girls at my work is
obsessed too, you would love her. Haha! She
bought it when they first came out.
[\[redacted\]](#) Ah I was devo'd I couldn't
get them the 1st time. I'm going to have to
display it haha x



23 likes

MAY 11

[Log in](#) to like or comment.



[\[redacted\]](#) others follow



[\[redacted\]](#) · Apr 5

Does drinking tea from my #chipcup really make it taste better ? Why, yes it does
! #BeautyAndTheBeast





Amish I have to say the way Penneys are dealing with the demand for these cups is disgraceful !!!

I have tried each time these were released to purchase one / two, and each time you get the same response "their all gone". I wouldn't usually comment but, the condescending attitude I got from not just one, but THREE so called managers / supervisors who were in a group, yesterday, in the Liffey Valley store, was disgraceful to put it mildly. 😡😡 When I asked why bother saying that they are back in if there's not enough to go round I got laughed at 😡😡 and again was told the they were all 🙄 gone.

Penneys have really dropped the ball on this one and could do with changing or maybe retraining ALL of their so called management staff (young and OLDER, especially the older ones !!!!) in Liffey Valley, just so they can be any way polite to their customers. At least the staff and management in the more established stores are polite and helpful, unlike the ones I encountered yesterday. 😡😡



Like · Reply · 🗨️ 2 · May 11 at 1:27pm



Sarah Smyth · Apr 21

No #BeautyAndTheBeast @Primark Chip coin purse or cup for me but I did get these #chipgate socks 😂





6 likes

Victoria Loving this perfect-in-every-way top from @primark 😍 It adds a lovely pop of colour to a look. I wear mine under my leather jacket and... more

Victoria #ootd #ootdshare #instastyle #instafashion #primark #penneys #fbloggers #irishblogger #bloggernation #wiw #aboutalook #fbloggerstyle #fblogger #streetstyle #asom #asseenonme #outfitinspiration [...]



21 likes

██████████ OOTD:

Blazer Mango

Dress & Boots Primark 🥰🥰🥰 #lauraholly

#fblogger

#penneys

#mango

#style



Comments



p... I love the tie detail on that dress! The colour is fab on you x

2d 1 like Reply



r... Stun hun adore khaki

2d 1 like Reply



c... You look gorge !

2d 1 like Reply



s... Beaut 🍷💕🍷

1d 1 like Reply



s... le Boots are fab 💕💕

1d 1 like Reply



l... Love the dress, the colour is 🍷

1d 1 like Reply



h... @... That's what drew me to it, something a bit different 😊



Add a comment...



Influencers



t[redacted]x Fab and a bargain! 😍



6w Reply



[redacted] They look fab and I wouldn't know they're Penneys!



6w Reply



[redacted] Got the grey ones in penny's cork.... weak



6w Reply



[redacted] Do you have shares in Penneys? Always jayzus posting about it!

Jul 3 · Like · 😂 1 · Reply · More



Gen [redacted]

You'd break your hole with the height of the Penneys version 😂😂😂😂

Jul 3 · Like · 🍷 30 · Reply · More



[redacted]

Am I the only one that thinks the Penneys version is better ha

Jul 3 · Like · 👍 18 · Reply · More



[redacted]

I have the nude ones from penneys and they are so comfy. I wouldn't wear heels very often but these are just fab and a bargain price.

Jul 3 · Like · 👍 1 · Reply · More



[redacted]

[redacted] gonna look like I've these now omg no hahahahaha

Jul 5 · Like · 👍 1 · Reply · More

[redacted] replied · 1 reply



[redacted]

I [redacted] these are very yours 😍

Jul 4 · Like · ❤️ 1 · Reply · More



Got them today in that colour love them 🍷🍷🍷



6w Reply



jojo...



6w Reply



Just got these the weekend, look so expensive and so comfy.



6w Reply



Feels so weird to be buying boots in July!



6w Reply



Yass tbh I can't afford your other lashes but these are 👍 😁



37w Reply

Customer rejecting Influencers

19-06-2017, 22:55 #13

Registered User
★★★★★

Join Date: Dec 2008
Posts: 798
Adverts | Friends

This is happening with a lot of Irish bloggers. No ad or spon hashtags. But if it's a freebie and they therefore aren't obliged to, I'm not surprised. Very offputting when you don't know if they genuinely like something or are, in essence, being paid but don't state this.

Quote

25-06-2017, 21:35 #62

Registered User
★★★★★
Join Date: Nov 2010
Posts: 298
Adverts | Friends

Quote:
Originally Posted by : 
The #ad #spon thing really grates on me. I find it hard to believe anything FBG says to be honest.
What was this about?

Basically she told everyone that she had brought her mum a present because she let her and her boyfriend move in with her when she had her baby. She showed a big red fancy box with a bow and the mum opened it and it was a tv.

Fast forward a few hours, almost all the major bloggers showed of the same big red box and box and told everyone how Currys had kindly sent them some products that they needed. For example, Siobhan oh fitness got loads of laptop stuff as she had given up her job and was working from home on her health stuff.

So Grace clearly got a free tv and was passing it off as she had bought it with her own money for her mum.

Quote

28-06-2017, 11:15 #110

Registered User
★★★★★
Join Date: Jul 2012
Posts: 162
Adverts | Friends

You've summed it up there  it's the lack of transparency that annoys most people, not begrudging them anything. I dont mind the launches and lunches so much. Most of us on here are pretty wise to most of them but there are a huge number of people who take what these people say as gospel and buy what they're selling, companies wouldn't bother with them otherwise so they obviously affect sales etc.

The baby stuff is a bug bear with me as I had a baby around the same time as a couple of them, and I can see how when you're tired, desperate, doubting everything and mentally exhausted and looking for any help you can get, some blogger banging on about how great their baby slept in this cushion for 250, can get into your brain and convince you that this might help. I think new parents are particularly vulnerable to this.

Quote

29-06-2017, 15:45 #163

Registered User
★★★★★
Join Date: Apr 2013
Posts: 166
Adverts | Friends

"I asked Bella baby could I take over their snapchat to show you guys all the useful things they have and they kindly said yes"
Is she having a laugh?! Sorry Grace but did you mean, Bella baby gave me free products and in exchange I am taking over their snapchat.

Quote

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