

Increased use of influencers in advertising

Level: Advanced (C1-C2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Overview: This article discusses the fact that Unilever is using more and more social media influencers to market its products rather than traditional forms of advertising. Its new CEO is also in the process of restructuring the company to focus on top-selling brands.

Business topic: Effects of demographics on economies

Business language: Use of social media influencers in advertising

Activities: Key words, understanding the article, business language (phrases), discussion about different aspects of using social media influencers for advertising, presenting a plan for using a social media influencer to market a product

Groups: Whole class, pairs, small groups

1. Warmer

- a. Ask students to discuss the questions either as a whole class or in small groups. If they follow any influencers, encourage them to talk about why they follow them.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to scan the article to find the words that match the definitions. When they have finished, ask them to read the whole article carefully and to look at how the key words are used in context.

Key:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. <i>high end</i> | 8. <i>overall</i> |
| 2. <i>underperforming</i> | 9. <i>ire</i> |
| 3. <i>fund manager</i> | 10. <i>listed</i> |
| 4. <i>board</i> | 11. <i>predecessor</i> |
| 5. <i>CEO</i> | 12. <i>ousted</i> |
| 6. <i>portfolio</i> | 13. <i>disposals</i> |
| 7. <i>investors</i> | 14. <i>shareholders</i> |

- b. Ask students to use words from task a to complete the sentences. Point out that not all of the words will be used and remind them that they will have to change the forms of some of the words so that they are grammatically correct in the sentences. When you go over the answers, make sure that students understand all of the sentences and the key words.

Key:

1. *underperforming*
2. *portfolio*
3. *listed*
4. *shareholders*
5. *board*
6. *Investors*
7. *CEO*
8. *disposal*

3. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to scan the article to locate the information they need to complete the sentences. Explain that they don't necessarily have to use the exact words from the article. When you go over the answers, ask them to point out the parts of the article where they found the information.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *... consumers don't trust corporate branding, and they trust social media influencers, who they see as more like them, more.*
2. *... the company's biggest markets, the US and India, and on speeding up the sale of underperforming food brands.*
3. *... the board of directors thought the turnaround plan was taking too long.*
4. *... consumers are depending more on social media influencers than on traditional advertising messages from companies.*
5. *... they give a lot of flexibility and some of them give high margins and generate cash.*

4. Business language – corporate management and marketing

- a. Ask students to use the words and phrases in the box to complete the sentences. Encourage them to scan the article to look at how each phrase is used in context before completing the sentences. When you check the answers, make sure students understand both the phrases themselves and the sentences they are used in.

Key:

1. *Turnover*
2. *bolt-on acquisition*
3. *fiduciary duty*
4. *Market activity systems*
5. *at scale*
6. *joint venture*
7. *turnaround plan*
8. *demerger*
9. *accretive in margin*

- b. Ask students to use words from the previous activity to complete the sentences. Point out that not all of the words will be used. When you go over the answers, make sure that students understand all of the sentences and the key words.

Key:

1. *bolt-on acquisitions*
2. *market activity systems*
3. *at scale*
4. *turnover*
5. *demerger*
6. *fiduciary duty*

5. Discussion

- a. Put students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. Encourage them to think of as many reasons as possible to explain why consumers don't trust corporate branding and advertising.

For question 3, encourage them to think about all the elements and stages of traditional advertising, e.g. paying an advertising agency for the concept and design, possibly paying for the right to use copyrighted music or other material, paying the actors (especially if they are famous people), paying for TV time or advertising space in a publication. Costs of social media advertising would be things like paying the influencer and giving products to the influencer, and possibly paying agency fees if the influencer works through an agency

For question 4, ask them if they think all influencers make a lot of money. Ask them if they know anyone personally who is an influencer and if so, whether the person feels happy with the pay. You may also want to point out that influencers work for themselves and do not get many of the benefits that company employees get. They also have to pay self-employment tax as well as income tax. In a traditional job, the company pays part of the tax that goes to a social security or national health system.

6. Wider business theme – planning for a social media influencers campaign

- a. Ask students to read the introductory paragraph and then to read the steps for planning for an influencer in the last paragraph before numbering them in a logical order.

Key (suggested answers):

- A. 4
- B. 3
- C. 1
- D. 5
- E. 2

- b. Explain that when a company hires social media influencers, it has to give them a brief with information about the product and what they want the influencer to emphasise. The brief often contains words or phrases that the company wants the influencer to include and/or suggestions for words or items they should avoid, for example, leather clothing if they are selling vegan food products. Put students into pairs to complete the influencer brief.
- c. Ask pairs to present their plan to the class or to another group as if they were the board of directors of the company. Point out that they may want to include phrases from the *Useful language* list. The class or group should ask questions to clarify parts of the brief or ask for changes to make the brief better.