RESEARCH ARTICLE   **OPEN ACCESS**

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer-Brand Relationship: The Case of Amabile

Rachele Calamia
Graduated in International Communication and Advertising

Giancarlo Scozzese
Department of International Human and Social Sciences University for Foreigners, Perugia, Italy

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Multiple factors have been involved in changing the characteristics of markets, including political, social, economic and, most of all, technological ones. The advent of the Internet has facilitated digitalization, accelerating a phenomenon that has already been occurring for some time, namely *customer centricity* – the focus of companies is no longer on the product, but on the customer.

Method: Digitalization has led to the emergence of social media, which has paved the way for a new form of marketing – social media marketing. This tool enabled large, medium and small enterprises to grow exponentially with no need for the huge investments that other ways of development require.

Effects: The study aims to analyze the significant impact of social media marketing on consumer-brand relationship, focusing on the importance of communication in the digital age to build longer lasting relationships. In support of this thesis, a case study of the jewelry brand *Amabile* is presented.

Key words: digitalization, social media, marketing, growth, customer centricity and communication.

I.   Introduction

Social media allows any company to effectively convey the brand personality and brand identity, i.e., those corporate traits that are similar to a human personality, in order to create an attractive image that will be communicated to potential consumers. This phenomenon results in increased brand awareness, which means the memorability of a company and brand advocacy, i.e., the ability of a company to convince the consumer to move from awareness of the company's existence to recommending it to other consumers.

Communication has an essential role to play within social media as it enables corporate storytelling, that is, spreading fragments of a story in order to build a single organic narrative. Humanizing a company through stories helps it to add value to a product beyond the functional benefits it already offers and to persuade consumers to pay a price higher than the standard one.

Amabile is one of the most interesting cases of entrepreneurship related to the digital world, as it is a vivid evidence of the exponential growth that social media can provide when used wisely. The company's CEO is Martina Strazzer, and being only 19 years old, in 2020, she decided to start a brand that today, five years later, has managed to generate a turnover of around 7 million euros.

1.   The Amabile Case

1.1.   The Story of Amabile

The Amabile company was founded in 2020 by a very young girl, Martina Strazzer, who, at the age of only 19, decided to drop out of university and pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. Due to her young age, Strazzer did not have significant financial resources to invest, mainly because her family did not believe in her entrepreneurial project. Unable, therefore, to afford the costs of a warehouse, rent or minimum production quantities, she was forced to choose a product category allowing her to work from home while avoiding numerous expenses, namely jewelry.

Using the available options, Martina Strazzer decided to turn to a jeweler from her hometown, Modena, and had her first product in the brand's history made for only €12. The CEO uploaded a photo of the jewelry piece to the company's newly created Instagram profile to introduce it to her as yet small audience and stimulate sales. She followed this path for several weeks, producing new, apparently very simple products, selling them among her circle of acquaintances and adopting the philosophy of "first you cash in, then you spend".

A few months later, Martina Strazzer chose to create an account on TikTok, an extremely trendy social network in recent years, enabling her to make a name for herself to thousands of people. Thanks to this platform, the brand had grown so much that the CEO was able to move into a warehouse, purchase an office and hire her first employees.

Martina Strazzer believes that three important soft skills are crucial to the company's progress and success: self-confidence, initiative and the active involvement of the whole team. Hard skills, on the other hand, are necessary for brand growth, but these are qualities that can be obtained over time through experience.

Today, a mere five years later, Amabile has become a SRL *(t/n – type of legal entity in Italy, similar to Limited Liability Company)*, employs around 40 people and has a million turnover. All this became possible thanks to the social media power and their proper use.

1.2.   Diversification of Amabile in the Market

Since its beginning, Amabile has diversified the market through the innovative use of communications and social media. Through the latter, users are able to view the company from three perspectives: the *catalog* (social profile or website visitors), the *entrepreneur* and the *team*.

As a matter of fact, Martina Strazzer never spoke for her company, but always let it speak for itself, telling what it is, what it does and what goes on behind the scenes. It is often her team, the protagonists of the company's life, who communicate with the public, letting the story be told from a different perspective, making the experience more authentic and developing a strong empathic bond.

In the digital age, where many market sectors are becoming oversaturated, it is vital to rapidly get rid of anonymity in order to build a reputation that anticipates the experience and the brand as a

consequence. What makes this possible is a solid storytelling asset based on which an effective corporate Storytelling online can be developed. As a result, both large and small enterprises are able to make themselves known and increase brand memorability, contributing to exponential business growth. Social media is the mass medium through which this phenomenon is brought to life, as it reveals the person behind the corporate role.

In the process of storytelling online, it is important to share particular content in order to shape the Customer Value Proposition, i.e., the distinctive value proposition addressed by the company to its customers, explaining the unique experience the company presents in the market, to retain existing consumers and attract new potential ones. Definitely, when it comes to social media, it is critical to bear in mind the aspect of asynchrony: content is often viewed ad hoc, so an editorial plan should be developed to ensure consistency between pieces and ensure that individual content can live on its own.

Amabile is a representative case of the fact that marketing moves of such kind can develop a brand quite fast, especially if they are coupled with the virality typical of the Internet.

1.3.   Social Media of Amabile

In the digital age, social media is of great importance from a multitude of perspectives. Each social platform is designed for a different purpose and performs different functions, so the "four social media channels" model can be drawn upon to identify the main features of different social media platforms:
§   <u>Channel of social communities</u>: these include all social relationship-oriented platforms where active interaction between communities is supposed to take place. An example is Facebook;
§   <u>Channel of social commerce</u>: this channel refers to e-commerce and involves the use of social media to help consumers buy and sell goods and services online. A clear example is Amazon;
§   <u>Channel of social publishing</u>: this comprises all platforms that allow sharing content (text, photos or videos) with an audience. Instagram can be an example of such channel;
§   <u>Channel of social entertainment</u>: this includes platforms that offer gaming and entertainment experiences and further develop entertainment communities. An example is TikTok, a relatively new platform built on the exclusive publication of short videos.

Brands have the opportunity to undertake social exploration to establish an even stronger

connection with their community and various stakeholders through a clearly defined brand identity based on visual creativity and well-thought-out strategies. Platforms enable companies to promote themselves by posting content sponsored directly by the brand or by third-party content-makers, such as influencers, collaborating with the brand under special agreements.

It is important for companies to create a consistent image that will ensure continuous engagement. Humanizing a company's reality by sharing the story of the business, and bringing the employees who are part of it to the forefront, stands to form customer loyalty in more effective ways, providing an unbreakable virtual bond between the brand and the consumer. Martina Strazzer realized this from the very beginning, and her story in a digital context is a testament to this: Amabile was born at the intersection of the two social platforms most popular in recent times, Instagram and TikTok. These two channels have functional characteristics and therefore objectives that are different from each other; for this reason, Amabile explored various marketing strategies to be implemented in different contexts.

First of all, Amabile enters Instagram, a more professional and official platform that requires the development of a proper editorial plan to create a more refined and coherent business card. The main goal of Amabile's Instagram profile is to reinforce the loyalty of its existing audience through daily storytelling and a thoroughly developed communication and visual flow, leaving no room for spontaneous and poorly designed videos.

TikTok, in turn, is a customer engagement channel itself, as it is a "no follower-based" platform that works according to an algorithm. It geolocates and categorizes profiles according to their location and interests. The algorithm's goal is to show users only content that might interest them, even if it is posted by unknown users. Guided by this logic, Amabile explores strategies on a daily basis to reach its target audience and expand its consumer niche by targeting the opinions and interests of TikTok users. Unlike Instagram, TikTok is a social network that evolves every day, so it is important to keep up with current trends and create more spontaneous content.

We can say that Amabile was one of the first cases of businesses that realized the power of social media and used it as a tool for their own development, achieving impressive growth.

1.4.   The Basic Principles of Amabile's Marketing

Given the digital economy, brands have the opportunity to utilize certain marketing strategies to achieve their objectives. Listed below are some of them:

§   Humanistic marketing for brand attraction: in order to make a company more attractive in the eyes of the customer, it is necessary to expose the human aspect of the brand. Such aspects can be emotionality, intelligence or morality;

§   Content marketing for stimulating customer curiosity: content marketing is considered the future of advertising in the digital economy. While there is a significant difference between these two. The first one shares information that customers would like to use to achieve their personal and professional purposes, while traditional advertising contains information that brands intend to convey in order to sell products and services;

§   Omnichannel marketing for building loyalty: in the digital age, many consumers shop non-linearly, making multiple switches between online and offline. This contributes to such phenomena as "showrooming", i.e., the physical selection and comparison of products against each other and then buying online at a lower price, or "webrooming", i.e., the selection and comparison of products against each other online and then physically buying at a point of sale;

§   Engagement for building brand affinity: in order to increase brand loyalty, certain customer engagement strategies can be used to improve the customer's shopping experience through a set of targeted interactions.

In the early days of the company, Amabile's marketing was extremely spontaneous and poorly thought out, although today we can say that it is formed according to several basic principles.

First of all, there are strong team involvement proven by the fact that goals are developed together in a friendly environment and customer involvement: the ways in which *customer centricity* is developed vary depending on the platform used.

Secondly, communication is worth mentioning. Amabile thrives on this aspect and for this reason it cannot be underestimated. Evidence that the customer is at the center of the company's attention is the change in the brand's communication style. At first, communication could be described as *random*: Martina Strazzer published funny videos wearing her jewelry to stimulate curiosity and, consequently, sales of her products. As the company

and team grew, communication became more *Amabile-oriented*, as the CEO began to share how her life had changed with the brand. Over time, the goal evolved to build a more direct relationship with the community, placing a high value on feedback from the target audience and making strategic listening a culture of Amabile.

Thirdly, it is important to talk about the inspirational aspect. Amabile succeeded in giving consumers a "taste" of the brand's life by taking them behind the scenes. Telling them about the life of a young entrepreneur, showing the growth of the team, factory and offices was a very innovative move, because when Amabile appeared on TikTok, there were few companies using social media for similar purposes. Acting in this way, the brand was able to create an even stronger bond with the community, as all events were experienced as everyone's successes and failures. This aspect allowed the company to build an emotional connection between the seller and the buyer, conveying a unique value to the consumer and creating an environment of trust for the sale. Thus, the stories shared daily on social channels allowed Amabile to add value to its products by making the buyer more aware of what its competitors do not offer. The goal is to achieve a favorable position in the mind of the potential customer compared to competitors: Amabile did a great job of this, quickly getting rid of anonymity and raising brand perception to a higher level.

This aspect is related to another important principle of Amabile's marketing, namely creating strong brand awareness through certain steps: enhancing the attractiveness of the corporate image, optimizing curiosity through content marketing (sharing content to attract traffic), promoting engagement so that the potential consumer becomes a full-fledged buyer, and finally, increasing brand affinity by monitoring the shopping experience during and after purchases. Amabile has started this journey after making sure that consumer behavior has changed over these five years. In 2020, the potential customer was more skeptical and less trusting due to the small brand size. Nowadays, it can be said that Amabile has evolved and no longer needs to gain people's trust, taking into account the virality phenomenon that has brought the brand into the sight of millions of people.

Undoubtedly, customer interaction is one of Amabile's core values. Since the beginning, the brand has been recognized for its commitment to establish a close relationship with the consumer every time Amabile launches a collection or project. A striking example is the Maldives Contest. This was a project where, for purchasing one of the brand's products, one could get a trip to the Maldives with Strazzer as a prize. The powerful interaction consisted in the fact that users had to record video of the moment of opening the package, thereby recording their reaction to winning (or not) and post the video to their TikTok profile. Strazzer learned about the winners through this social network. These seemingly simple practices allowed Amabile to capture the public's attention, causing so much resonance that it had an extremely positive impact on the company awareness.

Another fundamental principle of Amabile's marketing is the development of a strong emotional bond with the consumer. Developing a strong psychological connection and identification of the consumer with the brand has a positive impact on the process of forming customer loyalty. For example, Martina Strazzer communicates the meaning of her jewelry on a daily basis to convey the human and interpersonal values shared by the brand. Basically, Amabile aims to guide consumers to the emotional values they attach to the products, reflecting the company's values to customers while leaving room for free personal interpretation.

While mentioning Amabile's marketing principles, Influencer Marketing cannot be omitted. The brand is inseparably linked to the persona of Martina Strazzer, but Amabile utilizes the Influencer Marketing strategy with exceptional intelligence: this method essentially enables the brand to rely on the Influencer to reach new audiences, showcase the company's product/service and social channels online to generate visits to the company's account. An Influencer is a person who actively participates in discussions with other community members and consumers through content distribution, and who provides a link between different social spheres to help spread the advertising message to a wide range of people.

Choosing an Influencer to invest in the social scene is by no means an easy task, as the company must have the skills to identify the personality that best embodies the brand's values and perfectly represents a particular collection. Martina Strazzer uses this marketing strategy in a moderate but very savvy way to reach an increasingly wide audience while avoiding large investments. Precisely because of such small actions, Amabile always manages to generate a flow that fully provides the brand with human resources.

Finally, it is important to bring up the opening of a temporary physical store. Amabile can consider it a marketing strategy for two reasons: on the one hand, it made it possible to measure the flow that the

point of sale could provide; on the other hand, the creation of a temporary physical store stimulated an even more abundant flow of consumers, which further increased curiosity and therefore sales. This experience allowed the brand's CEO to evaluate the possibility of realizing a more specific project, such as opening a permanent store. To date, Martina Strazzer has announced that she has indeed launched permanent physical sales in Italy, opening the first permanent physical store in Bologna on April 12, 2025. Strazzer stated on her social media accounts that for the first time, Amabile will allow customers to purchase jewelry offline, not temporarily but on a permanent basis, fostering *"an embrace that will never be interrupted"*. It is a milestone that marks a turning point in Amabile's story.

II. Analysis

Amabile is one of the most interesting examples of entrepreneurship tied to the world of social media. Within only five years, the brand has experienced exponential growth, managing to reach millions of people. It is a testament to the fact that Martina Strazzer has been able to effectively communicate the identity and personality of the Amabile brand, positively affecting brand awareness and advocacy, that the brand has been able to achieve such a level of significance that consumers consider Amabile as a benchmark against which they evaluate competitors.

Amabile's memorability is achieved not only through intangible values such as empathy and strategic listening, but also through product design. The brand's iconic jewelry pieces include the Lovli and Charmi earrings, as well as pendants based on the "waterfall" concept. The iconic nature is achieved when the mere sight of a product immediately associates it with the brand; in this case, the concept of something sparkling in the hair is *"molto Amabile" (t/n - "very lovely")* as the brand's CEO says of the *Amabile brand's iconic earrings*. As much as it may seem like the company falls to the top of the brand *market driving* for inventing a product like Lovli, that's actually not the case. On the contrary, Amabile was the first brand to bring back in a modern way the earring concept that already existed in the 1990s and 2000s under the name *"saliscendi" (t/n - "chain drop earring")*, precisely because it consists of a chain that is pulled up and down. The feature, however, lies in the name given to this piece: *Lovli* is none other than the English translation, written as it reads, of *Amabile*.

Hence, it can be said that Martina Strazzer has created such a strong brand identity for Amabile that it has been able to gain a favorable position in the minds of millions of consumers through the effective use of social media. The latter, along with rich storytelling, enabled Martina Strazzer to tell the brand's life and product story step by step, conveying strong emotional values. This factor had a positive impact on brand equity, allowing the company to further increase the value of its products.

In the eyes of the "viewer-consumer", Amabile humanized itself by telling the company's story from the perspective of the now 25-year-old entrepreneur and her team, thus making the experience more authentic than ever. Ultimately, it could be stated that this was key to the success of such a young brand.

III. Conclusion

The CEO, Martina Strazzer, who was born in 2000, has demonstrated the power of social media that can be achieved when used wisely. Strazzer shows great transparency and is very consistent between real life and what she demonstrates on social media. This favorable perception has a positive impact on brand positioning, turning the effort into pure monetization. Amabile clearly indicates the existence of a new age of marketing, where classic communication levers and traditional tools are no longer sufficient. New media and all subsequent modern technologies are the new actors in a trend that is striving for an extreme degree of digitalization.

The relationship with the consumer, however, shall remain central, despite the high level of intangibility. Maintaining the human relationship is proving to be a key factor in modern business, especially when the market has reached a high degree of saturation. The multiple incentives to which consumers are exposed can disorient them when making a purchase decision. Therefore, building a solid reputation is one of the key factors. Figures such as influencers or phenomena such as word-of-mouth contribute to the success of such a challenging project: getting into people's hearts and heads. Amabile paved the way for such a powerful phenomenon, which over time has led to the emergence of many small businesses on social platforms. Martina Strazzer at the same time promoted a very simple concept: make your dreams come true.

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