
When Influence Becomes Manipulation: Navigating the Dark Side of Influencer Marketing

¹Ms. Disha Kakkar, ²Dr. Rajan Sharma

¹Research Scholar, University School of Management, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

²Associate Professor, Institute of Management Studies, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

Abstract: Social Media Influencer marketing has led to a significant transformation in the digital marketing practices by helping the brands to build stronger and long-term relationships with consumers through social media influencers. The effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns in improving marketing outcomes like brand awareness, consumer engagement, and purchase intentions has made it an indispensable component of modern-day marketing strategies. Nevertheless, as influencer marketing has become rapidly commercial, it has given rise to a wide range of concerns regarding its ethical and psychological impact. Practices such as undisclosed sponsorships, extremely promotional messages, fake engagement metrics, and unrealistic lifestyle depictions have raised serious questions regarding the authenticity of influencer recommendations and their likely influence on consumer decision-making process. Although these concerns have attracted growing intellectual attention, current body of literature remains fragmented, with most studies exploring isolated aspects rather than offering a holistic understanding of the shadier dimensions of influencer marketing. Current study seeks to address this gap in literature by providing a critical review of the current literature regarding the darker side of influencer marketing. It uses existing knowledge to explain how an increasingly commercialized influencer marketing has changed digital marketing landscape and has led to the creation of new challenges for consumers, brands and influencers. The study identifies key research gaps, discourses the ethical and managerial implications of unscrupulous influencer marketing practices, and outlines promising directions for future research. By considering diverse aspects of literature, this paper offers a more balanced comprehension of influencer marketing. It further signifies that transparency, authenticity, and responsible marketing contributes to the current discourse on how influencer marketing can develop in a manner that is both commercially viable and socially responsible.

Keywords: Influencer marketing; dark side of influencer marketing; authenticity; commercialization; consumer trust; consumer well-being; ethical marketing; digital marketing.

1. Introduction

Emergence of social media platforms has significantly changed the way modern consumers make their purchase decisions. Quite contrary to conventional marketing, in which there is a unidirectional flow of communication from brands to consumers, digital platforms have created a unique environment where consumers actively generate, disseminate and evaluate promotional content. This development has paved the way for adoption of relationship-oriented communication strategies. Among these, influencer marketing has emerged a key form of digital marketing (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Influencers are generally perceived as more authentic and relatable, as compared to traditional celebrities which enables them to establish strong bonds with their followers (Freberg et al., 2011). Furthermore, influencers develop online communities in which they regularly share their opinions, experiences and everyday lives with their followers making their recommendations appear more authentic and persuasive (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Consequently, diverse industries such as beauty, travel, food, healthcare, education, and finance have adopted influencer marketing collaborations for the success of their branding strategies.

The success of social media influencer marketing campaigns has gathered a substantial attention from academicians globally. Certain influencer characteristics like credibility, authenticity, trustworthiness and relatability positively influence consumer outcomes (Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020a). Consequently, influencer marketing has been portrayed as symbiotic strategy that creates value for brands as well as consumers and has been accepted as an essential component of contemporary promotional strategies.

Influencer marketing landscape has undergone a considerable transformation in recent years. As a result, social media influencing has converted into a highly profitable profession where commercial collaborations have become very frequent. Influencers have adopted sponsored content, affiliate marketing and brand partnerships as a major source of their income. Although these developments have increased the opportunities for brands and content creators, they have also raised doubts regarding the authenticity and transparency of these campaigns. Building on this, researchers have increasingly argued that excessive commercialization of influencer campaigns may weaken consumer trust that originally differentiated influencer marketing from traditional celebrity campaigns (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Several emerging influencer marketing practices like misleading endorsements, hidden sponsorships, fake followers and unrealistic lifestyle portrayals have become very frequent in digital creator economy. These unethical practices have blurred the line of distinction between genuine recommendations and commercial advertising making it increasingly difficult for the consumers to recognize the persuasive intent (Boerman et al., 2017). Moreover, influencer marketing has also been linked to some other broader issues like consumer well-being, body image concerns, fear of missing out (FOMO) and impulsive buying (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). Therefore, these developments clearly suggest that influencer marketing should not only be understood as a powerful promotional tool but also as a phenomenon with significant psychological, societal, and ethical implications.

Despite the fact that interest of academicians all over the world has grown rapidly in these issues, the existing body of knowledge remains fragmented. Furthermore, the existing literature tends to focus only on positive results of influencer marketing, creating a need for a more balanced understanding of influencer marketing in today's digital marketing environment.

Building on this background, the current study critically reviews the dark side of influencer marketing rather than focussing only on the effectiveness of influencer marketing. It also examines the challenges resulting from increasing commercialization of influencer content and changing relationships between influencer and consumers. In doing so, important gaps in the current literature are identified and future research directions are proposed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Evolution of Influencer Marketing

Over the past two decades, the method of communication between the consumers and brands has undergone a remarkable change. Rapid expansion of social media has created a paradigm shift in the marketing communication from one way communication to interactive methods where consumers actively create and share content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This has given rise to influencer marketing strategy, in which brands collaborate with individuals who build loyal online communities with their expertise and credibility (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). As opposed to traditional marketing practices, influencer marketing heavily relies on trust, engagement and perceived authenticity, which makes it one of the most effective forms of contemporary digital marketing strategies (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Freberg et al., 2011). The theoretical roots

of influencer marketing can be traced back the concept of opinion leadership. Katz and Elihu Lazarsfeld (1955) proposed that information from mass media rarely influences consumers directly. Rather, information is filtered by opinion leaders who are individuals possessing great knowledge, expertise and social influence within their communities. In today's digital marketing ecosystem social media influencers perform a similar role by sharing personal experiences and shaping consumer attitudes and purchase decisions.

Emergence of platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Facebook has rapidly expanded the scope of influencer marketing. These platforms enable ordinary social media users to become content creators by sharing their opinions and experiences in the form of online content (Abidin, 2016a). Influencers are often perceived as more relatable by their audience since they engage directly with their audience and give them an insight in their everyday lives. As a result, influencers are able to form strong emotional bonds with audience which further enhances the credibility of their recommendations (Abidin, 2016a; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020a). According to Freberg (2011), social media influencers shape audience perception through their content and play the role of independent third party endorsers.

2.2 Positive Outcomes of Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing possesses a widely known capability of enhancing the brand awareness. Content generated by influencers is actively consumed and shared by their followers through their loyal online communities. Therefore, the promotional messages generated by the influencers are able to attain greater reach and visibility than conventional digital advertisements.

Influencer marketing aids in improving brand exposure along with creation of meaningful interaction with the target audiences (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Further, influencers who have a large follower base can enhance the perception of brand popularity and visibility, although the effectiveness of these endorsements depends to a large extent on the perceived credibility of influencers (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Apart from increasing visibility, influencer marketing campaigns have been recognized as an important mechanism for building consumer trust. Influencers create a two-way communication pathway with their followers by responding to their comments and sharing personal experiences which is not done by traditional celebrities. As a result, influencer content is perceived as more trustworthy and credible as compared to traditional advertising. Building on this, Lou (2019) reported that credibility of influencer content positively enhances consumer purchase intention. Similarly, Ki and Kim (2019) posited that consumers develop a favourable attitude towards the brand when influencer generated content is perceived as authentic and sincere.

Further, Influencers are also able to generate consumer engagement by encouraging their followers to participate in discussions by liking, commenting on and sharing influencer content. Apart from strengthening consumer brand relationships, such engagement also facilitates the spread of product information by electronic word of mouth which is regarded as one of the most effective sources of product information in digital environments (Casaló et al., 2015).

Past research has also highlighted the psychological mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns. Consumers tend to develop parasocial relationships with influencers through repeated content exposure, which aids in creating feelings of familiarity, friendship and emotional bonding. Though these relationships are one sided, they increase the tendency of consumer to trust influencer recommendations and adopt endorsed products. According to Sokolova (2020b) parasocial interaction has a positive influence on both influencer credibility and purchase intention. Similarly, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) demonstrated that followers frequently perceive influencers as relatable individuals whose recommendations resemble advice from the friends.

Similarly, Influencer marketing has proven to give substantial positive results in shaping consumers' purchase decisions. Followers are more likely to evaluate the products favourably and make purchase decisions, when followers believe that influencers genuinely use and endorse the products they promote (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The persuasive influence of social media influencers has encouraged beauty, fashion, healthcare, technology and travel organizations to increasingly integrate influencers in their marketing communication strategies.

The existing literature related to influencer marketing focusses on the effectiveness of influencer marketing, often overlooking the negative outcomes. Trust, authenticity, credibility, purchase intention and consumer engagement are some widely studied constructs, while little attention has been devoted to issues like declining authenticity, deceptive endorsements and excessive commercialization. As a result, current understanding of influencer marketing fails to capture complexities of digital marketplace. The section that follows reviews the current literature on darker dimensions of influencer marketing and highlights the need of more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

2.3 Emerging Challenges and the Dark Side of Influencer Marketing

As the industry has attained maturity, commercial collaborations have become more widespread. Consequently, researchers have begun to question whether influencer marketing always offers benefits to the consumers. Increasingly, there has been a shift in attention towards understanding the unintended consequences of influencer marketing, giving rise to a novel concept referred as “dark side”.

A major and one of the earliest concerns discussed in literature is the growing *commercialization* of influencer content. Earlier, influencers attracted the followers by sharing personal experiences and recommendations that appeared genuine. This helped them to build trust and strong relationships with their audience (Abidin, 2016b).

Sponsored collaborations became an integral part of content creation, as influencer marketing gradually evolved into a profitable profession. Although commercial partnerships provide ample economic opportunities for influencers, they also put pressure to promote products frequently making it difficult for the influencers to maintain an authentic online identity. Audrezet (2020) posited that influencers constantly negotiate the tension between commercial objectives and presenting themselves authentically. Similarly, Moulard et al. (2021) proposed that authenticity perception reduces when followers begin to identify financial motives in influencer content. As a result, excessive commercialization may slowly weaken the feeling of mutual trust between influencer and follower.

Another issue linked to commercialization is the issue of *transparency* in influencer content. It is generally expected from the influencers to disclose their paid collaborations openly so that consumers can clearly distinguish between genuine recommendations and paid collaborations.

However, disclosure practices are not always uniform across various platforms and therefore sponsored content is not always identified. As a result, followers may unknowingly perceive paid promotions as honest personal opinions. Boerman (2020) proposed that disclosing the sponsorship transparently enables the consumers to recognize persuasive intent more efficiently. In contrast, inadequate disclosures may reduce the transparency of promotion and increase the susceptibility of consumers to persuasive communication. These practices have raised the concerns of researchers and regulatory agencies.

Another aspect that has received increased attentions from academicians is the widespread inclusion of *fake followers* and *artificial engagement metrices* in influencer promotion. The success of influencer campaigns is measured using metrices like followers count, likes, shares and comments. This encourages influencers to inflate their popularity using artificial means by purchasing followers or using automatic engagement tools. These practices may create a false impression of popularity. Artificial engagement undermines consumer's confidence

in digital promotions apart from misleading the brands at the time of selection of influencers (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Going further, academicians have also expressed their concerns regarding *idealized lifestyles* portrayed by influencers on social media. Majority of the content posted by influencers presents images of happiness, luxury, success and physical attractiveness which have been curated carefully. If the followers are continuously exposed to such idealized representations, it can potentially encourage unhealthy social comparisons. De Jans(2020) also suggested that influencer content increases aspirational consumption among the followers by associating the products with social success and a desirable lifestyle. Similarly, Chae (2018) found that repeated exposure to influencer generated images may lower self-esteem and contribute to dissatisfaction among young adults.

To a large extent, effectiveness of influencer marketing effectiveness depends on the emotional bonds developed between influencers and their followers. These bonds develop through regular interactions, story telling and continuous online presence and encourage the followers to perceive them as trusted friends rather than commercial endorsers. Horton (1956) explained this phenomenon as parasocial interaction, which strengthens emotional attachment between followers and influencers and positively impacts purchase intention. Supporting this viewpoint, Sokolova (2020a) pointed out that stronger parasocial relationships significantly increase the trust of followers in influencers and reduces their tendency to critically evaluate promotional content which makes them susceptible to impulse purchases and fear of missing out (FOMO) (Wellman, 2020).

Taken together, the literature suggests that the dark side of influencer marketing can be explained on the basis of interaction of multiple factors including inadequate sponsorship disclosures, artificial engagement and algorithm driven amplification. Building on this, the following discussion synthesizes these findings, examines their theoretical and practical implications and highlights important avenues for future research.

4. Discussion and Future Research Directions

Current research demonstrates that influencer marketing is one of the most effective digital marketing strategies which offers brands an effective means of engaging consumers through authentic online personalities. Previous research focussed on its positive outcomes including enhanced brand awareness, improved brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, recently conducted studies also suggest that factors which are responsible for the success of influencer marketing campaigns may also increase the consumer's vulnerability to subtle form of manipulation in influencer's content when commercial interest overpower the genuine recommendations (Audrezet et al., 2020).

A key insight emerges from this review is that consumers tend to trust influencers whom they perceive as honest and transparent (Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, authenticity perception of influencers continuously changes with the behaviour of influencers and the nature of their collaboration with brands. As observed by Audrezet (2020) influencers constantly fulfil commercial obligations while maintaining the need of authenticity. When the promotional content appears excessively financially motivated, trust and engagement with influencer content reduces. Therefore, the success of influencer promotions depends upon preserving credibility and meaningful relationships with audience.

The research also highlights that the flip side of influencer marketing cannot be explained by a single factor. Instead, it can be explained by the combined impact of inadequate sponsorship disclosure, fake engagement, parasocial relationships, excessive commercialization and algorithm driven amplification. Often, these factors reinforce one another. For instance, the effectiveness of hidden sponsorship disclosures increases when followers have strong emotional bonds with influencers while algorithm of platform increases the response of

consumers towards highly engaging content (Boerman et al., 2017; Cotter, 2018). An in depth understanding of these mechanisms is therefore essential for having a balanced perspective on influencer marketing.

Existing literature focusses on favourable outcomes of influencer led promotions such as purchase intention, electronic word of mouth and consumer engagement whereas less attention has been given to potential negative consequences. Evidence points out that continuous exposure to influencer content may contribute to impulsive buying, body image concerns, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and reduced emotional wellbeing particularly among social media users (Chae, 2018; De Jans et al., 2020). As influencer marketing expands its reach, researchers should pay greater attention to consumer welfare aspects rather than limiting investigation to traditional performance indicators.

The investigation also puts emphasis on the joint responsibility of brands, influencers, social media platforms and regulatory agencies in promotion of ethical marketing practices. Rather than building partnerships with influencers solely on the basis of their follower counts or engagement metrics, brands should prioritise on developing long term partnership with influencers. Simultaneously influencers should ensure a greater transparency by adequately disclosing paid collaborations and maintaining a balance between curating sponsored and non-sponsored content. These practices are likely to enhance consumer trust and increase the credibility of influencer marketing campaigns (Boerman, 2020; Evans et al., 2019). Similarly, digital platforms can also play an important role in improving content transparency, formulating strict policies against fake engagement and responsible content creation.

Although considerable academic research has been carried in the domain of influencer marketing, several gaps remain unexplored. Majority of the existing studies rely on cross sectional survey designs, which makes it difficult to understand the result of long term exposure to influencer content. Longitudinal studies might also help researchers to understand the development of consumer attitudes and behaviours as evolution of influencer consumer relationships gradually takes place. Further, future studies should also focus on manipulative influencer practices and how they impact consumer trust, decision making and wellbeing.

Further research should focus on rapid growth of artificial intelligence, virtual influencers and AI generated content which present new opportunities and challenges for influencer led promotions. Conducting investigations on the authenticity, credibility and persuasive effectiveness of AI influencers as compared to human influencers would add a significant value to existing literature. In addition, comparative studies should be conducted across various cultures that would aid in understanding the impact of cultural values in shaping consumer responses in different countries.

Another promising avenue for future research could be examination of factors which make consumers more susceptible to manipulative intent of influencers. Consumer related variables like digital literacy, self-esteem, media literacy, advertising scepticism and product involvement may enable a consumer to recognize persuasive intent of influencers effectively and critically evaluate it. Understanding these factors could aid in the development of consumer education initiatives which are aimed at promoting responsible social media use. Ultimately, in long term, success of influencer marketing will potentially depend on maintain the balance between commercial orientation, authenticity, and well-being of consumers, ensuring that digital influence remains both ethically responsible and effective

5. Managerial and Policy Implications

The findings of this study include several implications for influencers, policymakers and social media platforms. Although influencer marketing is one of the most effective strategies for ensuring the reach of brands towards consumers, its long-term success depends upon ensuring campaign transparency, consumer trust and promotion

of ethical marketing practices. As concerns of regulators regarding declining authenticity of influencer content and consumer manipulation increase, brands and other stakeholders across the entire influencer marketing ecosystem must adopt strategies that balance consumer objectives with ethical concerns.

Based on managerial perspective, brands should not prioritize selection of influencers based solely on follower count and engagement metrics. These indicators provide an estimation of influencers reach but they do not reflect quality, credibility and authenticity of influencer content. Some recently conducted studies also support the argument that consumers place greater interest in influencers that are authentic, expert and transparent in their promotions (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020a). Therefore, organizations should aim at developing long term collaborations with influencers whose values, style of communication, values and audience profile align with the identity of brand being promoted. Such partnerships tend to support consumer trust, develop meaningful relationships and generate sustainable marketing outcomes.

The review also highlights the significance of authenticity in influencer collaborations. Frequent brand endorsements by inclusion of excessive promotional content may reduce consumer's perception of influencer's sincerity and reduce the effectiveness of influencer promotions. Audrezet (2020) emphasizes that influencers should continuously strike a balance between commercial partnerships and maintaining an authentic online identity. So, marketers should encourage influencers to include sponsored content within their regular content rather than overwhelming the followers with repetitive promotional messages.

Influencers also play a significant role in promoting responsible digital marketing practices. Their impact extends beyond providing product recommendations to influencing consumer attitudes, aspirations and purchase behaviour. As trust of the public in one of the most valuable assets possessed by influencers, they should always ensure that sponsored collaborations are disclosed clearly and endorsements reflect their true experience and personal values. Transparent communication not only complies with advertising regulations but also helps in building long term relationships and credibility of influencers (Boerman, 2020). Further, influencers should be careful regarding the psychological impact of their content on the audience as portraying idealized lifestyles, beauty standards and luxury consumption may encourage unhealthy social comparisons among vulnerable audiences.

The findings of this study have some important implications for promotional campaigns to be designed for digital platforms. Platform algorithms play a key role in deciding the type of content that reaches consumers and the frequency of their exposure to influencer content. Although these algorithms are designed to amplify engagement, sometimes they unintentionally amplify unrealistic lifestyle portrayals or misleading promotions. Digital platforms should therefore strengthen mechanisms to ensure greater algorithmic transparency of algorithms which would enhance consumer confidence while promoting a healthy digital marketing environment.

From the perspective of policy making, growth of influencer marketing campaigns call for a stronger regulatory oversight and more consistent standards for advertising. Regulatory agencies in many counties have introduced guidelines requiring agencies to disclose paid partnerships, however insufficient compliance remains a major challenge in this regard. Therefore, policy makers should develop clearer disclosure standards which are easy for the consumers to recognize. This would help in improving transparency across the social media platforms (Boerman et al., 2017).

Another significant policy implication is consumer education. Researchers argue that improving consumers' digital literacy can help in identification of sponsored content by the consumers and thus make more informed purchase decisions (Wright, 1994). There should be a collaboration between digital platforms, educational institutions and consumer protection agencies.

Overall, future of influencer marketing depends on collective efforts to maintain transparency, authenticity and ethical communication by brands, digital platforms and policy makers. By the adoption of responsible marketing practices, stakeholders can reduce the risks associated with manipulative influencer marketing to foster trust, accountability and sustainability within evolving digital market place.

6. Conclusion

Influencer marketing has significantly transformed the recent influencer marketing landscape by enabling the brands to engage with consumers through authentic and relationship-based communication. Its ability to builds trust and create a positive impact on purchase decisions has made it one of the most widely preferred marketing tools for digital marketing (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, the study highlights that rapid commercialization of influencer content has led to many ethical, societal and psychological challenges that deserve managerial attention.

This paper critically reviews the recent literature on the dark side of influencer marketing and has clearly demonstrated that aspects such as declining content authenticity, excessive commercialization, fake engagement metrics and algorithm led amplification has fundamentally changed the entire influencer marketing ecosystem and has increased susceptibility to persuasive influence (Audrezet et al., 2020; Boerman, 2020).

The study also highlights that strong emotional connections between influencers and their followers can blur the difference between authentic recommendations and commercial promotions. The study also identifies several gaps in existing literature. While the previous research focused on the positive outcomes of influencer marketing, relatively very less attention has been devoted to potential adverse consequences of influencer marketing on consumer wellbeing and trust.

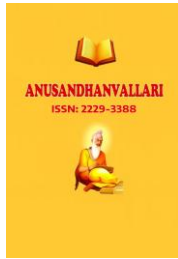
As influencer marketing evolves along emerging technologies like virtual influencers, social media algorithms and virtual influencers, new opportunities and challenges are likely to emerge. Researches to be conducted in future should therefore focus on how these developments influencer consumer behaviour, well being and trust across different cultures. An in depth understanding of these issues can also help in the development of responsible marketing practices.

In total, influencer marketing has emerged as a very powerful tool for creating meaningful consumer brand relationships. Nevertheless, long term success of these campaigns depends upon the commitment of marketers, influencers, social media platforms, researchers and regulators and policy makers to promote ethical conduct, transparency and consumer trust. Recognizing risks as well as opportunities associated with influencer marketing ensures that influence continues to inform and inspire the consumers instead of manipulating them

7. References

- [1] Abidin, C. (2016a). "Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?": Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity. *Social Media and Society*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641342>
- [2] Abidin, C. (2016b). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia*, 161(1), 86–100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16665177>
- [3] Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Guidry Moulard, J. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, 117(November 2017), 557–569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008>

- [4] Boerman, S. C. (2020). The effects of the standardized instagram disclosure for micro- and meso-influencers. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 103, 199–207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.09.015>
- [5] Boerman, S. C., Willemsen, L. M., & Van Der Aa, E. P. (2017). “This Post Is Sponsored”: Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure on Persuasion Knowledge and Electronic Word of Mouth in the Context of Facebook. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 38, 82–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2016.12.002>
- [6] Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons*, 63(4), 469–479. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003>
- [7] Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., Guinalíu, M., & Ekinci, Y. (2015). Avoiding the dark side of positive online consumer reviews: Enhancing reviews’ usefulness for high risk-averse travelers. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(9), 1829–1835. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.01.010>
- [8] Chae, J. (2018). Explaining Females’ Envy Toward Social Media Influencers. *Media Psychology*, 21(2), 246–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2017.1328312>
- [9] Cotter, K. (2018). *Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate influence on Instagram*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818815684>
- [10] De Jans, S., Van de Sompel, D., De Veirman, M., & Hudders, L. (2020). #Sponsored! How the recognition of sponsoring on Instagram posts affects adolescents’ brand evaluations through source evaluations. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 109(November 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106342>
- [11] De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- [12] De Veirman, M., & Hudders, L. (2020). Disclosing sponsored Instagram posts: the role of material connection with the brand and message-sidedness when disclosing covert advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(1), 94–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1575108>
- [13] Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities’ Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>
- [14] Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001>
- [15] Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). *Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction*. 2747(March). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>
- [16] Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world , unite ! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Journal Article*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- [17] Katz, Elihu; Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*. Free Press.
- [18] Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
- [19] Moulard, Julie G.; Raggio, Randle D.; Folse, J. A. G. (2021). Disentangling the Meanings of Brand Authenticity: The Entity-Referent Correspondence Framework of Authenticity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 49(1), 96–118. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00735-1>
- [20] Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020a). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53(September 2018). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>
- [21] Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020b). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and*



-
- Consumer Services*, 53(January 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>
- [22] Wellman, Michael L.; Stoldt, Ryan; Tully, Melissa; Ekdale, B. (2020). thics of Authenticity: Social Media Influencers and the Production of Sponsored Content. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 35(2), 68–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1736078>
- [23] Wright, P. (1994). The People Persuasion Cope with Knowledge Persuasion Model : How Attempts. *Friestad, Marian; Wright, Peter*, 21(1), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209380>