Mirror, mirror on the wall: Which type of content has the most engagement of all?

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Cite as:
Gross Jana, von Wangenheim Florian (2020), Mirror, mirror on the wall: Which type of content has the most engagement of all?. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 49th, (63677)

Paper from the 49th Annual EMAC Conference, Budapest, May 26-29, 2020.

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Abstract

Influencer marketing's success has prompted many companies to cooperate with social media influencers for sponsored posts. This paper disproves the false commonly held belief that sponsored posts receive less engagement than non-sponsored ones. We answer the following questions: How do consumers engage with sponsored compared to non-sponsored posts, and why? Does a higher number of an SMI's followers affect consumer engagement with sponsored posts? If so, how should sponsored posts be crafted for microinfluencers and macroinfluencers? We show that consumers engage more with sponsored than non-sponsored posts. Yet, a higher number of followers negatively affects consumers' engagement with sponsored posts. Consumers are less involved with sponsored posts by macroinfluencers. In line, a higher number of followers positively affects consumer engagement with promotional sponsored posts. Empirical evidence is based on 64,438 posts on Instagram and is supplemented with an online experiment.

Keywords: *social media influencers; Instagram data; sponsored posts*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media