

“Are you doing this for good reasons?” Consumers’ attributions of SMI’s motivations mediating the persuasion process and the moderating role of SMI type.

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Abstract

Social media influencers (SMIs), particularly effective at endorsing products and brands, have become an essential tool in many marketers’ strategy. This research investigates further the factors explaining their effectiveness. Relying on two experiments, we first study the special relationship SMIs develop with their followers, related to the concept of para-social interaction (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019) and confirm that a high level of para-social interaction positively impacts attitude towards the SMI and purchase intentions of the endorsed product. Second, we study the role of consumers’ perceptions of SMIs’ motivations to endorse products (i.e., altruistic or individualistic) and demonstrate that perceived altruistic motivations positively mediate the relation between para-social interaction and consumers’ responses. Third, considering the emergence of virtual SMIs, we question further the role of para-social relationships and perceived motivations.

Keywords: *Social media influencers; Para-social interaction; Perceived motivations*

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