

The Impact of Follower-Based Status Change on Influencer Content Creation: Evidence from a Regression Discontinuity Approach

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Abstract

Social media platforms often use tiered status systems to categorize influencers into different tiers based on their follower count. However, few studies have examined the effects of these follower-based status systems on influencers' content-creation behaviors. This study addresses this gap using data from a leading Chinese social media platform. We explore the platform's influencer status-assignment rule that grants "mid-tier" status to influencers with more than 50,000 but less than 500,000 followers; specifically, they estimate the impacts of gaining mid-tier status on influencers' content creation using a regression discontinuity (RD) approach. The results show that obtaining mid-tier status positively impacts the quantity of sponsored but not organic content. However, status change does not affect the quality (measured through user engagement) of sponsored or organic content. Moreover, all the positive effects on the quantity of sponsored content are driven by influencers affiliated with multi-channel networks; there is no increase among influencers without these affiliations.

Track: Marketing Strategy and Marketing Mix