

The Rise of AI Influencers: Examining Consumer Trust and Anthropomorphism

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Abstract

This study fills a significant research gap in influencer marketing by examining how consumers' intentions to follow AI influencers are influenced by their perceived authenticity and credibility. We uncover a paradox through in-depth interviews with Generation Z consumers: although AI influencers are suspected in lifestyle domains because they lack human relatability, they are more trusted in endorsements about technology, where their knowledge is regarded as reliable. Results show that consumers value transparency and logical consistency in AI-generated content. The study offers a conceptual model identifying important trust drivers, building on source credibility theory. The study provides valuable information for marketers, indicating that while AI influencers work better for utilitarian products, they must be carefully positioned in hedonistic contexts to prevent mistrust. This research advances our understanding of the dynamics of human-AI trust in marketing by bridging theoretical and empirical viewpoints.

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