

Influencer Marketing in China: Examining the Psychological Mechanism of Processing Branded Content in Social Media

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Abstract

In a context of influencer marketing, this research explores the mechanism through which Chinese consumers develop positive responses toward branded content in social media. A nationwide online survey (N = 511) was conducted in China, revealing that consumers' parasocial identification with influencers contributed to engagement with, trust in, and attitude toward branded content. Engagement with branded content further mediated the relationships between parasocial identification and trust in and attitude toward branded content respectively, while inferences of manipulative intent moderated such indirect effects. The findings provide insights into the mechanism through which Chinese consumers react to influencer marketing and offers suggestions for practitioners to leverage the persuasive power of influencers efficiently.

Keywords: *Influencer marketing; Parasocial identification; Advertising outcomes*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media