

#Ad is not enough: The Effects of Authenticity of Social Media Influencers on Persuasion Knowledge and Follower Engagement

Anouk Spekking
University of Amsterdam
Hsin-Hsuan Lee
ESCP Europe

Cite as:

Spekking Anouk, Lee Hsin-Hsuan (2020), #Ad is not enough: The Effects of Authenticity of Social Media Influencers on Persuasion Knowledge and Follower Engagement. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 49th, (63089)

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



#Ad is not enough: The Effects of Authenticity of Social Media Influencers on Persuasion Knowledge and Follower Engagement

Abstract

Brands often rely on social media influencers (SMIs) to promote products. With more SMIs becoming brand endorsers, their authenticity has been questioned. This study examines whether and to what extent authenticity can influence user engagement through the establishment of parasocial interaction and attitudinal persuasion knowledge. In particular, four paths of authenticity (i.e. absolute, fairytale, disembodied and fake), which are categorized by expressing intrinsic motivation and disclosure of sponsored content, were investigated. Utilising Instagram post data from a field study and an online experiment, we found that intrinsically motivated authenticity paths are likely to trigger fewer distrusting beliefs and result in higher engagement. This relationship can be mediated by parasocial interaction but only when SMIs show a strong passion and limited transparency. However, transparency is not always the best policy and some paths of authenticity can lead to negative results.

Keywords: *influencer marketing; authenticity; attitudinal persuasion knowledge*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media