

Happier thanks to my virtual friends? The virtuous effect of SMI genuineness on followers and brands

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Abstract

Social media influencers (SMIs) have become an important part of consumers' lives leading marketing research to extensively study their effectiveness as marketing tool. Unfortunately, SMI's practice is often regarded negatively as SMIs tend to depict an idealized life that psycho-socially affects followers. Therefore, studies that analyse the factors that could reconcile social and commercial concerns are needed. This research investigates further SMIs' impact on consumers' well-being. Relying on two studies, we demonstrate that an SMI's genuine visual presentation in posts may increase followers' well-being more than a non-genuine presentation, without affecting SMI's commercial influence. We then explain the process through social comparisons. Last, we investigate the role of gender in the process. As such, we offer theoretical, managerial, and societal contributions that could accord commercial and societal perspectives of the influencer marketing practice.

Keywords: *social media influencers; genuineness; well-being*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media