

How Can Brands Work with Influencers to Create Authentic Branded Content?

Barbara Duffek

Imperial College Business School

Andreas Eisingerich

Imperial College Business School

Omar Merlo

Imperial College London

Guan Lee

Imperial College London, Unilever

Cite as:

Duffek Barbara, Eisingerich Andreas, Merlo Omar, Lee Guan (2023), How Can Brands Work with Influencers to Create Authentic Branded Content?. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 52nd, (112601)

Paper from the 52nd Annual EMAC Conference, Odense/Denmark, May 23-26, 2023



How Can Brands Work with Influencers to Create Authentic Branded Content?

Abstract

This study explores influencer and brand authenticity, examining how consumers perceive branded content when either the brand or the influencer has a high or low degree of authenticity. The authors generate new theory on influencer marketing and offer managerial recommendations on how brands can work with influencers to create authentic branded content. We conducted exploratory in-depth interviews with consumers, influencers, brand managers, and intermediary agencies to triangulate how each group perceived the authenticity of influencers and their branded content. We define influencer authenticity and discuss how brands can leverage working with authentic and inauthentic influencers to build brand awareness, positive brand associations and engagement. We examine the tension between influencers' and brands' authenticity through principal-agent theory. We explore how intermediary agencies can be used to manage the tension of authenticity inherent in the influencer-brand relationship.

Subject Areas: *Branding, Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Strategy*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media