

Role Perceptions of Influencers in Virtual Selling Tools: How Do Consumers Perceive the Influencer's Role in Fashion Hauls on Instagram, and How Do These Perceptions Affect Purchase Intentions?

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Abstract

Consumers are increasingly purchasing products that are advertised by social media influencers (SMIs). Depending on the type of content, SMIs take on different roles. This study examines the role perception of SMIs in the virtual sales tool of fashion hauls from a consumer perspective and its influence on purchase intention. The results show that the role of SMIs is partly comparable to that of classic salespeople. The behavioral impact depends on how consumers perceive the SMI's role: if only a weak emotional connection between follower and SMI is present, fashion hauls are perceived as advertising, but if consumers perceive SMIs as parasocial friends, they trust the SMIs and are willing to buy.

Subject Areas: *Advertising, Branding, Promotion, Sales Force*

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