

# The Interplay of Influencer Status and Intimacy in Generating Sales: Evidence from Secondary Data and Three Field Experiments

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## **Abstract**

Marketers increasingly believe that influencer marketing is an efficient option for seeding. In this article, the authors' goal is to answer whether to target low- or high-status influencers by considering for the first time the whole influencer-marketing funnel, i.e., conversions from followers on user-generated content networks (e.g., on Instagram), to reached followers, to engagement with the sponsored posting, to actual revenue. In line with the rationale that with increasing status of an influencer, the trust relationships with followers become less intimate, the authors hypothesize and show that low-status seeding outperforms high-status seeding by a factor of nine. A mediation analysis reveals that indeed intimacy can explain 52% of the negative relationship between the influencer status and the revenue per follower. These two findings are derived from secondary sales data of 366,120 purchases and results of three field experiments with hundreds of influencers, which delivered convergent validity of the relevant findings.

**Subject Areas:** *Direct Marketing, Marketing Strategy*

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media