

# Influencer Gifting as New Form of Advertising

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## **Abstract**

Many social media influencers advertise products they received from brands, sent without any explicit obligations but with the objective of being endorsed voluntarily. Brands increasingly send such products along with additional gifts such as flowers, champagne, or balloons. By offering such elaborate influencer gifts, brands hope to elicit more favorable reactions from both influencers and consumers. However, elaborate influencer gifting has recently raised concerns regarding consumer perceptions. With four experiments, this research examines the effects of simple and elaborate gifting on consumer perceptions of the brand and influencer. Elaborate gifting evokes higher perceptions of a persuasive attempt by the brand on the influencer, which relates to decreased trust toward influencers who showcased the elaborate gifts voluntarily. The negative effect on perceptions of a persuasive attempt is mitigated though if the elaborate gift is linked to a brand occasion, such as the brand's anniversary. This research extends the scarce literature on influencer gifting.

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