

Behind the Scenes with Virtual Influencers: Unveiling Managerial Perspectives on the Utilization of Virtual Influencers by Companies

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Abstract

The notion of Virtual Influencers (VIs) is relatively recent but has already attracted considerable attention in the realm of Social Media Marketing. VIs offer several advantages, including availability, controllability, and adaptability. They possess the potential to play a pivotal role in a company's strategy, as they can be customized to closely align with the brand's values and image. These virtual entities have shown various positive effects on brands, such as reaching new audiences, increasing awareness and sales, generating positive publicity, and enhancing audience engagement. Whereas multiple research has documented consumers' view of VIs, we have a very limited understanding of managers' opinions on VIs. In the present research, we interviewed eight experienced managers worldwide who actively engage with VIs. We documented the main themes that emerged, described VIs from a managerial perspective and offered recommendations on how VIs can be effectively utilized in social media marketing.

Subject Areas: *Advertising, Electronic Commerce and Internet Marketing*

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