

Double Trouble: Who Takes the Fall in Company-Influencer Brand Transgressions?

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Abstract:

Companies increasingly collaborate with influencers to capture consumer attention and promote products. Unfortunately, these collaborations can lead to transgressions that escalate into brand crises. This study investigates consumer responses to brand transgressions involving influencers (as personal brands) and companies (as corporate brands) within such collaborations. By analysing real-world data and experimental insights, we show that transgressions elicit harsher reactions toward influencers than companies. This occurs due to influencers' superior media coverage. Notably, while media coverage shapes consumer responses toward influencers, it does not similarly affect responses toward companies. Further, more negative media coverage (conditional on its extent) can mitigate backlash toward influencers as consumers question media motives for focusing on individuals over companies. The findings provide valuable guidance for social media and crisis management professionals on protecting influencer reputations during crises.

Keywords: brand transgressions, influencer marketing, media coverage

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media