

Direct Support to Influencers: Role of Parasocial Relationships

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Abstract

Influencers play a key role in social media marketing today, given their ability to create parasocial relationships with their followers. Influencer marketing has given rise to a three-part multi-stakeholder model where both third-party companies and followers can offer financial support to influencers. Thus, the interplay between perceived relationships and monetary dimensions of the influence-audience link deserves more attention. With two experimental studies (including a longitudinal one) conducted online via Prolific, this research demonstrates that a greater perception of parasocial relationship with influencers, inspires greater intention to donate. This research offers significant theoretical contributions to the literature on influencer marketing by examining the overlooked topic of direct support and bears managerial implications for both influencers and companies sponsoring them.

Keywords: *influencer marketing, parasocial relationships, sponsorship*