

Sponsor clarity and its impact on SMI influence and brand outcomes: insights from micro, macro, and mega influencers

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Abstract

Drawing on persuasion theory and parasocial interaction theory, this study examines how clear sponsorship disclosures affect social media influencers' (SMIs) perceived influence and attitude, purchase intention, and favorable word-of-mouth (WOM) towards sponsored brands. Despite the growing use of influencer marketing, research on sponsor clarity remains limited and existing findings are contradictory. To address this, an online survey was conducted among SMI Instagram followers. Data from 371 responses were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), and multigroup analyses were used to examine differences across micro, macro, and mega influencers. Findings indicate that sponsor clarity positively impacts SMI perceived influence and brand outcomes, with significant differences across influencer categories. This research offers insights for brands, influencers, and social media platforms, highlighting the importance of transparent sponsorship.

Keywords: influencer marketing, sponsor clarity, persuasion knowledge

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media