

Within-Brand Favoritism Enhance Perceived Endorsement Authenticity

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Abstract:

Influencer marketing is integral to many brands' outreach strategies but often faces consumer skepticism. How can influencers convey authenticity when promoting multiple products from the same brand? We propose *within-brand favoritism*—expressing preference for one or more products within a brand's larger set—as a solution. Six experiments show that within-brand favoritism enhances perceived authenticity of endorsements and increases viewer engagement. This is because within-brand favoritism leads viewers to attribute the endorsement more to intrinsic (e.g., personal preferences) than to extrinsic motivations (e.g., sponsorship). In line with this, we show that the effect diminishes when the endorsement appears on a personal (vs. professional) account or when there are salient ulterior motives for favoritism (vs. not). Our findings identify within-brand favoritism as an effective strategy to boost authenticity perceptions, offering valuable insights for influencers and marketers.

Keywords: Favoritism, Authenticity, Influencer Marketing

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media