

Real or not, doesn't matter, as long as you are hot- exploring the perceived credibility of an Instagram virtual influencer

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the following study was to check whether or not the knowledge regarding the fact that an influencer is a fictional/virtual character affects their perceived credibility. The research is of a pioneering nature as the virtual influencer phenomenon is just developing. When conducting the study, we wanted to find out whether or not the knowledge regarding the virtual influencer differentiates the assessment of their credibility in relation to its three dimensions: attractiveness, trust towards them and their expertise. In order to meet the objectives of the study, own experimental research was conducted (246 management students have been recruited for the study). The research findings have confirmed that when it comes to assessing the source credibility it is irrelevant whether recipients know if the character they have to do with is virtual or real.