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### Article Review

#### Article #1: [Influencer Authenticity: To Grow or To Monetize](#)

- What problem does it address?
  - o dynamic tension faced by social media influencers between being authentic to grow their follower base and being inauthentic (or broader) to maximize revenue from sponsored posts
  - o The core problem addressed is how an influencer optimally manages the trade-off between growing awareness and generating immediate revenues over time
  - o 1. Strategic Endorsement Policy: Influencers must continuously decide whether to:
    - Be authentic: Endorse only products fitting their persona to maximize the growth rate of their followers and awareness.
    - Be inauthentic: Endorse a wider variety of products (including those with poor fit) to maximize current revenue per follower, even though this slows down future growth and causes some current followers to unfollow.
  - o 2. Reputation Dynamics in Social Media: The paper examines how an influencer's perceived authenticity and subsequent policy choices evolve from the initial growth stage until widespread awareness is achieved.
- Why do existing methods for solving the problem not work?
  - o The article highlights that traditional reputation models yield contrasting implications compared to the social media influencer context:
  - o 1. Inversion of Reputation Incentives: Standard reputation models typically imply that larger firms are more protective of their brand and reputation than small firms. This is because the cost of losing reputation is higher when the stock of reputation (or market size) is larger.
  - o 2. Contrast with Influencer Reality: Our model and empirical observations suggest the opposite for influencers: small, growing influencers are more authentic than large, established ones.
    - Existing models fail because they often focus on firm quality/investment (which reduces the value of the stock of reputation if low quality is chosen).
    - In the influencer model, the inauthentic choice reduces the growth rate of awareness but does not reduce the large stock of awareness already built. Small influencers must prioritize growth, making authenticity essential, while large influencers prioritize monetizing the existing large stock
- What is innovative about the article (what are the contributions)?
  - o The main innovation lies in developing a dynamic model specifically tailored to the growth-vs.-monetization trade-off in the context of social media influencers.
  - o 1. Dynamic Model of Authenticity: The paper develops a dynamic model where the influencer's state variable is awareness, and the control variable is the authenticity level, which simultaneously affects profit (revenue) and the growth rate of awareness (followers).
  - o 2. Inverted Authenticity Finding: It derives conditions showing that small influencers are authentic to grow awareness quickly, while large influencers

- become inauthentic to monetize their current following, contrasting with standard reputation results.
- o 3. Application of Bass Model with Strategic Control: It adapts the Bass (1969) new product adoption model by introducing the influencer's authenticity level as a new control variable that affects both profits and growth, allowing for the derivation of the optimal policy.
  - o 4. Analysis of Model Extensions (Mechanisms): The article provides insights through several extensions, exploring the impact of:
    - Celebrities: Showing they become inauthentic at a lower awareness level because they can generate awareness externally.
    - Viral Content: Identifying a three-phase policy: initially inauthentic (hoping for a viral sponsored post), then authentic (rapid growth), and eventually inauthentic again (monetization).
    - Follower Turnover: Showing high turnover forces the influencer to stay permanently authentic.
    - Partial Authenticity: Demonstrating a gradual shift from complete authenticity to partial, and eventually, complete inauthenticity, without the sudden drop in followers predicted by the main model.
  - What are the results?
    - o The primary results describe the optimal dynamic strategy for the influencer:
    - o 1. Optimal Policy: Authentic then Inauthentic: The influencer optimally starts by being authentic to maximize the growth rate of awareness, but switches to being inauthentic (monetization phase) once a sufficiently large fraction of potential followers are aware of her. The transition happens when the incentive for faster future growth is outweighed by the immediate financial gain from higher revenue per follower.
    - o 2. Comparison of Influencer Types:
      - Celebrities vs. Pure Influencers: Celebrities (who generate awareness through external means) become inauthentic at a lower awareness level than pure social media influencers.
      - Small vs. Large Influencers: Small influencers have a stronger incentive to be authentic than large influencers; thus, followers trust smaller influencers more.
    - o 3. Impact of Platform Features:
      - Viral Content (e.g., TikTok): The optimal policy involves three phases: initially inauthentic (to increase chances of a viral sponsored post), then authentic (to grow awareness rapidly), and finally inauthentic again (to monetize).
      - Follower Turnover: If follower turnover is high, the influencer remains permanently authentic
  - What are shortcomings of the article or future research opportunities?
    - o 1. Empirical Validation: Future research should empirically test the predicted pattern that influencers initially endorse only authentic products and later begin endorsing other types of products as their growth rate slows.
    - o 2. Contractual Arrangements: Future work could model the optimal strategy for a firm, including the design of contracts with influencers. This includes:

- Restricting the contract duration to the period when the influencer is expected to remain authentic.
  - Designing contracts that explicitly restrict the influencer's other endorsements.
  - Offering bonuses for viral posts and how that risk affects the required expected payment.
- o 3. Adapting to New Platforms/Segments: Research could examine how influencers adapt their content to new technology platforms (e.g., migrating from Instagram to TikTok) and how an influencer who has become inauthentic might launch a new period of authenticity to attract the next generation of followers or segments.
- o 4. Other Business Contexts: The growth-versus-monetization trade-off could be studied in other contexts, such as social media platforms deciding between offering free services to attract users versus generating revenue through fees and advertising, or technology products with network effects.
- o 5. Fixed Costs of Endorsement: The model, for parsimony, does not include explicit fixed costs of endorsement deals, which might prevent a very small influencer (nano-influencer) from making any endorsements initially

**Article #2: Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers**

- What problem does it address?
  - o The core problem addressed is how to leverage influencer marketing effectively to drive positive consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (purchase and recommendation) toward sponsored products. The study seeks to understand the underlying congruence psychological mechanism that contributes to the success of this novel form of persuasive communication
  - o It specifically investigates the interplay of congruence among the three inherent contributors to any influencer marketing campaign:
    - 1. The influencer
    - 2. The consumer (or follower)
    - 3. The sponsored product
- Why do existing methods for solving the problem not work?
  - o The article does not explicitly state that "existing methods for solving the problem do not work." Instead, it grounds its analysis in established psychological frameworks—balance, cognitive dissonance, and congruity theories—to propose a mechanism (congruence) that may be critical to the success of these novel campaigns. The implication is that understanding the specific roles and interactions of the three types of congruence (influencer-follower, influencer-product, and follower-product) is crucial for optimizing these campaigns, which represents a gap in the current understanding that the study aims to fill.
- What is innovative about the article (what are the contributions)?
  - o 1. Grounded Theoretical Framework: It grounds the study of influencer marketing success in established theories (balance, cognitive dissonance, and congruity theories) to highlight the critical role of a congruence psychological mechanism.

- o 2. Focus on Triadic Congruence: It specifically addresses the congruence among all three inherent contributors to an influencer campaign: the influencer, the consumer (follower), and the sponsored brand/product.
  - o 3. Demonstrating Causal Linkages: The study empirically demonstrates how congruence levels interact and affect outcomes:
    - Influencer–follower and influencer–product congruencies are shown to affect follower–product congruence.
    - It confirms that consumer–product congruence is a positive driver of attitude toward the sponsored product.
  - o 4. Linking Attitude to Intentions: It establishes that a positive attitude toward the sponsored product leads to higher intentions to purchase and recommend, ensuring optimal returns on influencer marketing campaigns
- What are the results?
  - o The study, which involved an experimental design with 372 followers of a top fashion influencer, confirmed the following key results:
    - Congruence Interaction Effect: When the congruence between the influencer and the consumer is fixed and high, high (low) congruence between the influencer and the product prompts high (low) congruence between the consumer and the product.
    - Attitude Generation: Strong congruence between the consumer and the product generates more favorable attitudes toward the product.
    - Behavioral Intentions: Favorable attitudes subsequently lead to higher purchase and recommendation intentions
- What are shortcomings of the article or future research opportunities?
  - o The article does not explicitly detail its shortcomings or future research opportunities within the provided text segments.
  - o Based on what I see:
    - The study is limited to fashion influencers on Instagram. Its results regarding congruence might not generalize immediately to other platforms (e.g., TikTok, YouTube), other product categories (e.g., technology, finance), or different types of influencers (e.g., micro-influencers, celebrity endorsers)

#### Article #3: The role of influencers in the consumer decision-making process

- What problem does it address?
  - o The article addresses the vital role of influencers—as modern opinion leaders in the globalized, social media-driven marketing environment—and aims to systematize knowledge about their position, roles, typology, influencing factors, and the intensity of their impact on the consumer decision-making process. The core problem is understanding how this specific type of social media marketing (influencer marketing) affects consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions in the contemporary market
- Why do existing methods for solving the problem not work?
  - o The article does not explicitly state that existing methods for solving the problem do not work. Instead, it notes that while influencer marketing is prevalent in firm strategies, little is known about the factors that drive the success of online brand

engagement at different stages of the consumer purchase funnel. This suggests a knowledge gap or a lack of specific, empirical understanding regarding the effectiveness and mechanics of influencer marketing campaigns

- What is innovative about the article (what are the contributions)?
  - o Systematization of Knowledge: It systematically reviews and compiles existing knowledge (from global research studies) regarding the roles, typology, and impact factors of influencers.
  - o Empirical Research: It contributes new quantitative findings based on an original online research study (a survey of 430 respondents) processed by the authors to determine the specific extent and manner in which influencers affect consumer purchasing decisions.
  - o Identification of Product Suitability: The study identifies specific product categories (clothes, shoes, cosmetics, and services) where promotion through influencers is most advantageous and effective, and areas (food, jewelry, electronics) where consumers rely more heavily on other factors.
  - o Insight into Trust Factors: The research provides insight into which characteristics and types of influencers (e.g., experts/athletes over purely attractive personalities) are considered most trustworthy by consumers
- What are the results?
  - o The key results of the authors' quantitative online survey include:
    - Most Trusted Influencers (H1): Sportsmen were the most trusted influencer type, accepted by 44.5% of respondents, leading to the acceptance of hypothesis H1.
    - Quality Perception (H2): Only 32.8% of respondents consider products promoted by influencers to be of high quality, which led to the rejection of hypothesis H2 (which assumed >55% would consider them better).
    - Influence on Purchase (H3): Only 21.9% of respondents would buy a product just because their favorite influencer promoted it, leading to the rejection of hypothesis H3 (which assumed at least 30%).
    - Greatest Influence by Product (H4): Influencers have the greatest impact on purchasing decisions when buying clothes (45% of respondents were influenced), confirming hypothesis H4.
    - Most Affected Categories: Influencers have the greatest impact when buying clothes, shoes, cosmetics, and, surprisingly, services. Consumers rely heavily on other factors when buying food, jewelry, and electronics.
    - Desired Characteristics: Consumers place more emphasis on the skills and expertise of influencers than on beauty and attractiveness
- What are shortcomings of the article or future research opportunities?
  - o The article implicitly suggests several areas for future consideration and research:
    - Microinfluencers: Although the paper notes that companies are increasingly using microinfluencers due to the high prices of world influencers, the survey results focus on influencers generally and do not deeply compare the success drivers of macro vs. micro-influencers.
    - Specific Risk Factors: While the study identified risks (e.g., negative perception when promoting inappropriate products like fur coats, or negative publicity/scandals), future research could delve deeper into

- mitigating these risks or measuring the financial impact of such negative events on brands and influencers.
- Transparency and Trust: The finding that a large proportion of consumers think influencers promote products simply for money suggests an ongoing issue with transparency and trust. Future research could investigate ways to establish more transparent and intensified relationships between influencers, agencies, and consumers.
- Different Purchase Funnel Stages: The paper notes that practitioners may use different influencers depending on the specific goals at different stages of the consumer purchase funnel (e.g., creating buzz vs. publicizing newly launched products). The current results focus generally on purchasing decisions, suggesting an opportunity to analyze influencer effectiveness across the entire purchase funnel

#### Article #4: Do Influencers Influence? A Meta-Analytic Comparison of Celebrities and Social Media Influencers Effects

- What problem does it address?
  - o The article addresses the lack of clarity in understanding the persuasive effects of social media influencers (SMIs) compared to traditional celebrity endorsers in advertising.
- Why do existing methods for solving the problem not work?
  - o Existing methods often fail to differentiate between SMIs and celebrities, leading to conflicting narratives and insufficient insights into their unique impacts on consumer behavior.
- What is innovative about the article (what are the contributions)?
  - o The article contributes by providing a meta-analysis that synthesizes experimental designs, highlighting key characteristics such as influencer type and perceived credibility, and offering a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of SMIs in advertising.
- What are the results?
  - o The study finds that SMIs are generally more persuasive than brand-only ads, with no significant difference in effectiveness compared to celebrity endorsements, and identifies the moderating role of perceived credibility.
- What are shortcomings of the article or future research opportunities?
  - o The article acknowledges limitations due to a small number of studies and a narrow focus on empirical studies, suggesting future research should explore additional factors like emerging platforms, content formats, and the role of moderators such as emotional attachments and product categories.

#### Article #5: Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behavior and Online Shopping Preferences

- What problem does it address?
  - o The article confronts the evolving digital marketing landscape where traditional marketing methods are increasingly ineffective due to consumer skepticism and ad fatigue. Particularly, it focuses on the problem that existing research often treats consumers as a homogeneous group, failing to account for variations across

industries, demographics, and technological contexts. Moreover, prior studies have not fully elucidated how influencer authenticity, transparency, and content quality impact consumer trust and purchasing intentions over time. There is also a lack of empirical evidence on how technological advancements (e.g., AI-driven personalization, augmented reality) integrate with influencer marketing to influence online shopping behaviors.

- Why do existing methods for solving the problem not work?
  - o Many studies overlook the heterogeneity among consumers, neglecting demographic, behavioral, and industry-specific differences.
  - o Simulation models and algorithmic approaches for influencer selection often lack validation in real-world scenarios.
  - o The qualitative aspects of influencer-audience relationships, such as authenticity and trust, are inadequately incorporated into quantitative models.
  - o Traditional digital marketing strategies fail to engage consumers on a personal, trust-based level, which influencer marketing partially addresses but still faces challenges like over-endorsement and lack of transparency.
  - o Regulatory and ethical concerns around influencer disclosures and fraudulent practices remain underexplored empirically, limiting the practical application of findings.
  - o The dynamic and rapidly evolving technological environment requires more adaptive, data-driven, and consumer-centric analytical frameworks, which earlier research has not sufficiently integrated.
- What is innovative about the article (what are the contributions)?
  - o It employs a structured, mixed-methods approach combining questionnaire-based surveys, statistical modeling (including multiple categorical regression and Spearman's correlation), and Fuzzy Cognitive Mapping (FCM) to capture causal relationships among influencer marketing variables and consumer behavior. This integration allows for dynamic scenario analysis.
  - o It explores industry-specific and demographic variations in influencer marketing effectiveness, moving beyond generalized assumptions to provide nuanced insights.
  - o It highlights the critical role of content authenticity, transparency, and engagement quality in sustaining consumer trust and optimizing marketing outcomes.
  - o It incorporates technological advancements like AI personalization and virtual try-ons into the analysis of online shopping behavior, addressing emerging concerns about product quality and consumer satisfaction.
  - o The study provides empirical evidence from a representative Greek consumer sample, with findings showing significant gender, age, educational, and income-based differences in engagement and trust toward influencer marketing.
  - o The use of FCM simulations to test the impact of ±50% changes in key variables (influencer engagement, marketing effectiveness, utility, shopping behavior, and preferences) offers practical, actionable insights for marketers aiming to optimize influencer selection and campaign management.
  - o It bridges theoretical models such as the Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) with empirical data, reinforcing how

influencer credibility and message relevance affect consumer attitudes and purchase decisions.

- What are the results?
  - o Influencer marketing significantly enhances customer loyalty and profitability, with stronger effects observed in specific industries (e.g., fashion, beauty) and among younger, more digitally active demographics.
  - o Consistency, authenticity, and high-quality engagement in influencer posts substantially improve marketing effectiveness and consumer trust.
  - o There is a dual effect where influencer ads boost sales but also cause ad fatigue and annoyance if overused, emphasizing the need for balanced promotional strategies.
  - o Online shopping satisfaction varies by product category and is moderated by factors like website usability and clarity of promotional offers.
  - o Technological features and consumer concerns about product representation strongly influence continued online shopping behavior.
  - o FCM scenario analysis shows that increasing influencer engagement and marketing effectiveness positively impacts consumer purchasing intentions and online behaviors, while declines in these factors reduce trust and sales.
  - o Demographic data reveal that women and younger consumers are more responsive to influencer marketing, with higher reported trust and purchase rates.
  - o Income levels influence the perceived value of influencer marketing, with higher earners favoring premium products promoted by influencers.
- What are shortcomings of the article or future research opportunities?
  - o The cross-sectional design restricts insights into longitudinal trends and sustained consumer behavior changes over time. Future longitudinal or experimental studies are recommended.
  - o The research focuses primarily on the Greek market, limiting the generalizability to other cultural contexts. Cross-cultural studies are needed to explore how cultural differences mediate influencer marketing effectiveness.
  - o The study does not differentiate in depth between types of influencers (micro, macro, virtual) or explore emerging technologies such as AI-generated influencers, which could reshape marketing dynamics.
  - o Self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias, impacting the accuracy of consumer perceptions and engagement metrics; combining survey data with behavioral tracking or platform analytics would strengthen validity.
  - o Technological aspects like AI and machine learning in personalizing consumer experiences are acknowledged but not deeply analyzed; future research could integrate predictive analytics and cross-validation techniques to enhance robustness.
  - o Ethical issues, including disclosure practices and fraudulent influencer activities, are recognized but require more empirical investigation.
  - o Platform-specific dynamics (e.g., Instagram Stories vs TikTok Reels) are not compared, which could yield insights into the design features that optimize engagement.

### My Contributions:

- What drives the success of influencer created products remains an open question, as most influencer marketing research focuses on paid endorsements rather than influencers acting as product creators and owners. Building on prior work on influencer authenticity, influencer–product congruence, engagement quality, and follower trust, this project examines how influencer attributes such as perceived authenticity, audience fit, and follower engagement interact with product level characteristics including category choice, product visibility within content, and launch transparency to determine sales performance. Unlike earlier studies that evaluate campaign effectiveness or influencer selection, this project shifts the unit of analysis to influencer owned products, allowing social capital and trust to translate directly into market outcomes. By linking influencer content, engagement metrics, and sales data, the study contributes to the literature by identifying when influencer driven attention converts into sustainable product success rather than short term hype.