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Influencer marketing research: a systematic literature review to identify influencer marketing threats

Seyyed Mohammadhossein Alipour[1] · Mohammad Ghaffari[1] · Hamid Zare[1]

Abstract

This study aims to identify and classify the influencer marketing threats mentioned overtly or implicitly in previous studies on brand use and future research. In this study, a systematic literature review protocol was followed, in which 28 influencer marketing studies from January 2012 to January 2022 from ten databases were selected, and relevant data were extracted to answer the research questions. There are 11 identified threats to influencer marketing and include the following: fake followers and fake comments; lack of proper disclosure and explanation of sponsorship; inappropriate influencer selection; heavy brand control over influencers; insufficient brand control over content produced by influencers before publishing; choosing an inappropriate platform; the negative influence of influencers on the appearance of the brand; negative influence on the consumption, habits, and lifestyle of children; lack of proper and special contracts with influencers; increased saturation rate; and running parallel advertising for brands. The most prominent threats identified in the studies include inappropriate influencer selection; choosing an inappropriate platform; and the negative influence of influencers on the appearance of the brand. Using an inductive approach and zooming in and out of the target research, a general framework for influencer marketing threats was obtained. Brands, influencers, organizations, policy makers or researchers interested in influencer marketing and digital marketing can use the resulting framework of this research.

Keywords Influencer marketing · Meta-synthesis · Systematic literature review · Social media · Brand · Media advertising

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1 Introduction

In recent years, due to the expansion of the social networking industry and the increasing use of this space by users to communicate with each other, as well as the rapid development of various tools and facilities on social networking platforms to meet the various needs of human society. Many normal and daily human activities have undergone extensive changes. In practice, virtual space and social networks have replaced many virtual processes instead of practical ones by creating high access speed at a reasonable cost. One of the emerging phenomena in this field is the use of influencers for marketing purposes. Influencer marketing is considered a brand marketing activity that focuses on partnering with specific individuals to promote the brand in their social media posts and influences a significant number of followers of individuals who have an interest or need relevant to the brand's work (Hayes 2008; De Veirman et al. 2019; Belanche et al. 2021; Holiday et al. 2021; Vrontis et al. 2021).

Influencer marketing, like any other advertising tool, will include short-term and long-term benefits for the brand and audience if used correctly. On the other hand, if brands have incorrect exposure to this phenomenon, it cannot be effective. It will set a low for brand advertising campaigns, but in some situations, it may have negative effects on the brand, brand advertising, and consumers, and cause heavy damage. Any of their behaviors can affect people's views of the brand that supports them. For example, an influencer's moral scandal can negatively impact the image of his sponsoring brand. Influencers can lead to damage to the brand's position among consumers by leaving the ethical frameworks set by the brand (Belanche et al. 2021; Campbell and Farrell 2020; Childers et al. 2019; Frederick et al. 2012; Hwang and Jeong 2016a, 2016b; Kim and Kim, 2021; Knittel and Stango 2014; Zhou et al. 2021).

In the social media, influential people have collaborated with different brands in many cases. This cooperation has both positive and negative aspects, and can be a double-edged sword. For example, advertising clear brand products by famous footballers has attracted fans of these players to the brand. However, it should be noted that these collaborations sometimes yield positive results. For example, an Iranian movie actor publishes a clip on social media. She introduced one of a brand's products to the audience, pointing out the existence of prevention and treatment methods using organic products for respiratory diseases such as COVID-19. This claim has received significant attention and has been trended and criticized in social networks and media. In response to these criticisms, the actor declared that he did not mean COVID-19. Still, during these struggles, regardless of whether the influencer did not convey his meaning correctly, was misunderstood, or anything else, this brand was damaged and had a negative image from the consumer.

There are many cases in which it must be said that the cooperation of brands and influential people can bring many opportunities and threats for the consumer or the brands themselves, and neglecting them causes a loss of benefit or, in some cases, causes It will cause failure. Therefore, by correctly identifying marketing

opportunities and threats through influential people, one can adequately manage the interaction environment of the brand and influential people while using the options available from the threats that can befall the consumer or the brand. be prevented. The purpose of this research was to identify the threats to influencer marketing using the meta-synthesis method so that by correctly identifying the threats in this field, brands can start implementing it with proper knowledge and open eyes.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Influencer

The emergence of the Internet and subsequent creation of social networks have provided a suitable platform for sharing people's opinions. This space became the basis for the emergence of people who became known as experts in the field of reviewing a specific product or service by sharing expert opinions over time. By sharing appropriate content from the point of view of their contacts, these people found a special social personality so that they influenced the opinions, behavior, taste, and general needs of consumers, which they are called influencers (Hayes 2008; De Veirman et al. 2017; Backaler 2018; Wilson 2019; Campbell and Farrell 2020; Holiday et al. 2021). An influencer is someone who has found an acceptable personality and social role over time and shares appropriate content, which is called a Personal Brand. In management, this person has high potential to influence the opinions and behavior of the audience (De Veirman et al. 2017). An influencer is someone who has created a large network of followers and is known as an expert in one or more specific fields from the perspective of his/her followers, and his/her followers see him as an expert in that particular field. Such influencers are people whose content they produce has a significant number of followers, and through blogs, short content production, and many other things, they offer insights into their daily lives, experiences, and opinions. The important point in this content production is that the content published by an influential person has a specific focus; for example, he works in the field of specialized reviews of mobile phones, and his opinions in this field are respectable and reliable for followers (Goldsmith and Clark 2008; Booth and Matic 2011; De Veirman et al. 2017; Martínez-López et al. 2020).

2.2 Influencer marketing

Brands try to give credibility to their products by cooperating with influencers (for example, by offering to test a brand product on behalf of the influencer to their followers) and promoting themselves among the followers of the influential person in this way: first, they are introduced to the customer, and second, by using an influential image in the eyes of their audience, gain credit for their product or service, and in some way present themselves among the followers of the influential person. This process is called influencer marketing (Goldsmith and Clark 2008; Booth and Matic 2011; De Veirman et al. 2017; Jin et al. 2019; Lagree et al. 2019; Martínez-López

et al. 2020). Many brands take advantage of the opportunities created by influencer marketing, and by creating an atmosphere of cooperation with this influencer, they aim to use their influence as a tool to encourage consumers to consume a product or use a specific service. In the space created by influencer marketing, a wide range of companies that seek to present their products in the target communities were able to use the potential created in influencer marketing and reach virgin and wide markets through social media influencers (Backaler 2018; Campbell and Farrell 2020; De Veirman et al. 2017; Hayes 2008; Holiday et al. 2021; Krisam and Altendorfer 2021; Lagree et al. 2019; Li and Peng 2021; Ouvrein et al. 2021; Wilson 2019).

2.3 Classification of influencer marketing research

Research on influencer marketing has investigated different fields, which can generally be divided into four categories. The first group investigated their influential position, for example, identifying the appropriate influential criteria (such as the number of followers and cooperation with other influentials). The second group investigates the influential effects on organizations' strategic decisions. The third group focuses on the issue of financing and disclosure of brand sponsorship of the influencer, and the fourth and largest group of research focuses on how influencer marketing works to create positive and negative behaviors and attitudes in consumers (Goldsmith and Clark 2008; Booth and Matic 2011; De Veirman et al. 2017; Martínez-López et al. 2020).

3 Materials and methods

3.1 Methodology

In this study, data were collected and analyzed using a meta-synthesis method. As a type of qualitative research, meta-synthesis combines the findings of other qualitative studies on a specific topic and, by doing so, attempts to provide an overall interpretation of a new phenomenon. In this study, the statistical population included articles published in reference databases related to, or close to, influencer marketing. Number of articles published in citation databases from January 2012 to January 2022 (Sandelowski et al. 2007; Sandelowski 2008; Antony-Newman 2019; Bartos and Langdridge 2019; Moeyaert 2019; Aydin and Kabukcuoglu 2021; Levitt et al. 2021; Kataja et al. 2022). Figure 1 briefly describes the seven-stage model for meta-synthesis that was used in this study.

3.2 Meta-synthesis

3.2.1 The first stage, set the research questions

Similar to other studies, the first step is to precisely define the research question. We will study what exactly this is. When determining the research question, care

Fig. 1 Sandelowski and Barroso's seven-stage method
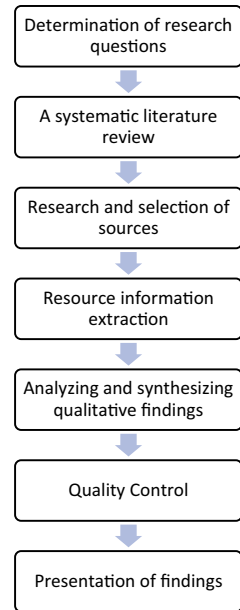
must be taken to ensure that the area under investigation is sufficiently broad to allow for comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, the investigated area should be as wide as necessary and contain sufficient obstacles to ensure that the results obtained can be relied upon. At this stage, it is important to answer four questions: what (target community), when (timeframe), and how (Sandelowski et al. 2007; Sandelowski 2008; Bergdahl 2019; Bressan et al. 2019; Chua et al. 2022). In the first question, this research aims to identify possible threats to influencer marketing. In the second question, the statistical population under study includes all articles in reference databases that are related to or close to the topic of effective marketing. In the third question, this research includes studies conducted between 2012 and 2022. Finally, the fourth and last question, this study uses secondary data (articles) for meta-synthesis.

3.2.2 The second stage, systematic literature review

This stage involved the compilation of a comprehensive list of all studies. To accomplish this, it is important to determine the keywords and alternative words. we used the following combination of keywords: [("Influencer marketing") OR ("Threats of influencer marketing") OR ("Influencer marketing threat*") OR ("Influencer marketing disadvantage*")]. Subsequently, a search of the desired citation databases was conducted by applying a time limit (Sandelowski et al. 2007; Sandelowski 2008; Clews et al. 2020; Clancy et al. 2021). A list of the databases and the main keywords used is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Databases and keywords

Databases	Keyword
ISI	Influencer marketing
Scopus	Threats of influencer marketing
Elsevier	Influencer marketing threats
Science direct	Influencer marketing disadvantage
Emerald	
Springer	
Wiley	
IEEE	
Taylor & Francis	
SAGE Journals	

3.2.3 The third stage, searching and choosing the right sources

Prisma method was used at this stage. First, the sources were searched in the databases. As part of the search phase, appropriate sources were selected based on predetermined criteria. The extracted articles were evaluated and refined based on inclusion and exclusion criteria (Sandelowski et al. 2007; Sandelowski 2008). After determining the results of the keyword search, the articles were screened. Some articles were removed because of their unavailability or duplicate content. Others were removed from the final list due to inappropriate titles, abstracts, and content. After filtering out articles that were not accessible, they were downloaded from the databases. Figure 2 illustrates the stages of the screening process (a flowchart).

Table 2 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study.

3.2.4 The fourth stage, extracting information from sources

The texts of the final articles were analyzed and studied at this stage. The news statements related to the research question were coded, referred to as open coding. Because of the axial coding concept, codes determined in different articles were classified into several categories (Sandelowski et al. 2007; Sandelowski 2008; SmithBattle et al. 2020; Xie et al. 2020; Smit et al. 2021). Table 3 shows the article that was coded.

3.2.5 The fifth stage, synthesis of qualitative findings

During this stage, the data obtained from the fourth stage were evaluated by combining axial codes with common concepts. The sub-themes were identified and classified under the main theme of this research: the threat of influencer marketing. To arrive at the sub-themes, we combined the axial codes while examining the conceptual links between them. This involved using both inductive and deductive approaches simultaneously, which is known as the abductive approach.
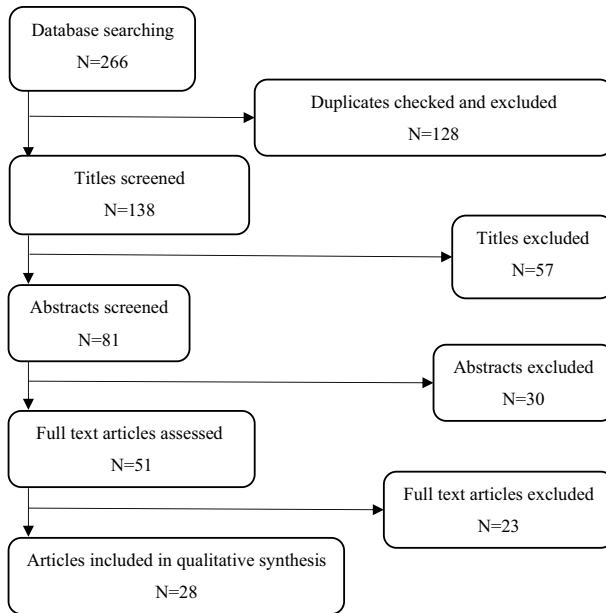
Fig. 2 The chart of the process of refining the articles

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
English language	Another language
Published between January 2012 to January 2022	Published before January 2012
Peer reviewed	Non-peer reviewed
Mentioning influencer marketing threats	Not to mention the threats of influencer marketing
Article, review article	Early access, meeting abstract, proceeding paper, letters, book chapter, book review

We categorized the codes under sub-themes through several stages of abductive reasoning, discovering relationships and connecting the axial codes to one another. Finally, we grouped them under appropriate sub-themes. (Sandelowski et al. 2007; Sandelowski 2008). A total of 65 axial codes were classified into 11 subthemes and one main theme. Table 4 shows the central coding and resulting subthemes.1

According to Table 4, 11 main factors and 65 secondary factors were identified as threats of influencer marketing. Among the main factors, "Improper impactful choice" has received the most attention in studies, and this indicates the high importance of the correct choice of influencer in the implementation of marketing campaigns. The two factors "Choosing the wrong platform" and "The influencer's negative influence on the face of the brand" also had a high number of repetitions in the sources. Also, the "Fake followers and fake comments"

Table 3 Coded articles

Code	Reference	Title
D1	Belanche et al. (2021)	Building influencers' credibility on Instagram: Effects on followers' attitudes and behavioral responses toward the influencer
D2	Vrontis et al. (2021)	Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda
D3	Zhou et al. (2021)	How social media influencers' narrative strategies benefit cultivating influencer marketing: Tackling issues of cultural barriers, commercialised content, and sponsorship disclosure
D4	Kim and Kim (2021)	Influencer advertising on social media: The multiple inference model on influencer–product congruence and sponsorship disclosure
D5	De Jans and Hudders (2020)	Disclosure of Vlog Advertising Targeted to Children
D6	Al-Emadi and Ben Yahia (2020)	Ordinary celebrities related criteria to harvest fame and influence on social media
D7	Campbell and Farrell (2020)	More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing
D8	Taylor (2020)	The urgent need for more research on influencer marketing
D9	Martínez-López et al. (2020)	Influencer marketing: brand control, commercial orientation and post credibility
D10	Haenlein et al. (2020)	Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to be Successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co
D11	Reinikainen et al. (2020)	'You really are a great big sister'—parasocial relationships, credibility, and the moderating role of audience comments in influencer marketing
D12	Holiday et al. (2021)	Influencer Marketing Between Mothers: The Impact of Disclosure and Visual Brand Promotion
D13	Feng et al. (2021)	An expert with whom i can identify: the role of narratives in influencer marketing
D14	Harrigan et al. (2021)	Identifying influencers on social media
D15	Tafesse and Wood (2021)	Followers' engagement with instagram influencers: The role of influencers' content and engagement strategy
D16	De Cicco et al. (2021)	The effect of influencer–product fit on advertising recognition and the role of an enhanced disclosure in increasing sponsorship transparency
D17	Sokolova and Kefi (2020)	Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions

Table 3 (continued)

Code	Reference	Title
D18	De Veirman and Hudders (2020)	Disclosing sponsored Instagram posts: the role of material connection with the brand and message-sidedness when disclosing covert advertising
D19	Jin and Phua (2014)	Following Celebrities' Tweets About Brands: The Impact of Twitter-Based Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Consumers' Source Credibility Perception, Buying Intention, and Social Identification With Celebrities
D20	Coates et al. (2019)	Social Media Influencer Marketing and Children's Food Intake: A Randomized Trial
D21	Stubb et al. (2019)	Influencer marketing: The impact of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification on sponsored content effectiveness
D22	Childers et al. (2019)	#Sponsored #Ad: Agency Perspective on Influencer Marketing Campaigns
D23	Lou and Yuan (2019)	Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media
D24	Djafarova and Rushworth (2017)	Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users
D25	De Veirman et al. (2017)	Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude
D26	Hwang and Jeong (2016a, 2016b)	"This is a sponsored blog post, but all opinions are my own": The effects of sponsorship disclosure on responses to sponsored blog posts
D27	Wang et al. (2017)	Consumers' attitude of endorser credibility, brand and intention with respect to celebrity endorsement of the airline sector
D28	Uzunoğlu and Misci Kip (2014)	Brand communication through digital influencers: Leveraging blogger engagement

Table 4 Axial coding and determination of sub-themes based on open coding

Sub-Theme (Code of Related Articles)	Axial Coding (Code of Related Articles)
Fake followers and fake comments (D7-D8-D24)	Fake follower (D7-D8-D24)
	Fake comment (D7)
	Fake participation rates (D7-D24)
	Fake sharing (D7)
Lack of proper disclosure and explanation about financial support D1-D2-D3-D5-D6-D7-D8-D9-D13-D16-D18-D22-D24	The negative effect of sponsorship perception (D1-D10-D16-D18-D22-D24)
	The effect of the perception of content production for financial gain (D6-D7-D9)
	Failure to comply with the principles of disclosure of support and inappropriate type of disclosure (D2-D3-D5-D7-D8-D9-D13-D18-D24)
Improper impactful choice D1-D2-D3-D4-D6-D7-D8-D9-D10-D11-D13-D16-D18-D22-D23-D24-D24-D25-D28	Type of influencer contacts (D7)
	Inappropriate number of followers (D7-D10)
	Inappropriate participation rate (D3-D7-D9-D10-D11-D24)
	Stability and quality of posts (D2-D7-D9-D18-D22)
	Difficulty measuring credit (D8-D10)
	Improper criteria for choosing an influencer (D4-D7-D25-D28)
	The inappropriate personality of the influencer (D4-D6-D23-D28)
	Types of influencers (D7-D10-D22)
	Types of influencer marketing (D7-D8-D22)
	The difficulty of managing influencers (D1-D7-D10-D22)
	The effect of Lack of fit on sponsorship perception (D1-D10-D16-D18-D22-D24)
	Influencer and product mismatch (D1-D2-D3-D4-D10-D13-D16-D25)
Too much control of the brand over the influencer D2-D3-D8-D9-D10-D11-D19-D26	The negative effect of brand control perception on influencer effectiveness (D8-D9-D10-D26)
	Reducing the desire to search and pay attention to the brand with the perception of control (D2-D9-D26)
	Reducing the influencer's creativity and originality (D3-D10)
	High control of the factor of content similarity (D10)
	Too much control is a factor in reducing participation (D11)
	Reducing influencer credibility (D2)
	Reducing influencer attractiveness (D2)
	Overdoing brand endorsement is a factor in reducing credibility (D19)

Table 4 (continued)

Sub-Theme (Code of Related Articles)	Axial Coding (Code of Related Articles)
Lack of sufficient brand control over the content produced by the influencer before its sharing D1-D3-D7-D9-D10-D17-D22-D28	Failure to provide a suitable framework for content production (D7)
	Loss of brand control over the influencer (D9-D28)
	The requirement to control content before sharing (D3-D10-D17-D22-D28)
Choosing the wrong platform D2-D3-D5-D6-D7-D10-D12-D14-D15-D16-D17-D18-D20-D21-D28-D29	Little knowledge of marketing managers about platforms (D10)
	The dominant age of the platform and the difference in the consumption needs of different ages (D3-D10-D20)
	Ignoring the price of platform ads (D10)
	Failure to pay attention to the content format of the platform (D10-D12-D17-D28)
	Ignoring the culture and language of the platform (D3-D10)
	Failure to check platform features (D3-D6-D10-D14-D17-D20)
	Misalignment of platform strategy (D10-D14-D18)
	The negative effect of countries' laws on the platform (filtering) (D5-D10-D21)
	Ignoring the number of platform contacts (D10-D12-D14-D15-D16)
	Failure to pay attention to the change of algorithms of platforms and artificial intelligence (D3-D7-D10)
	Not paying attention to the pattern of interactions on social networks (D2-D28-D29)
	Change in audience consumption pattern and power structure (D2-D10-D14-D28-D29)
	Change in platform information disclosure rules (D20-D21)
The influencer's negative influence on the face of the brand D2-D3-D7-D9-D10-D12-D13-D16-D17-D18-D19-D21-D22 D23-D27-D28	The negative impact of the influencer's inappropriate behavior and performance (D7-D9-D10-D18)
	Brand ambassador influencer (D9)
	Checking the characteristics of the influencer before cooperation (D7-D21-D22)
	Loss of brand meaning (D7-D17)
	Influencer brand to the audience (D7-D9-D10-D12-D17-D19-D22-D23-D27-D28)
	The fit of influencer brand with content and product (D2-D3-D10-D13-D16-D18-D22-D23-D28)

Table 4 (continued)

Sub-Theme (Code of Related Articles)	Axial Coding (Code of Related Articles)
Negative impact on children's habits and lifestyle D3-D5-D13-D20-D20-D28	The high impact of inappropriate content on the brand preference of children and teenagers (D3-D20-D28)
	The challenge of children's media literacy (D5-D13-D20)
	The need to protect the child influencer (D5-D20)
	Absence of sufficient practical rules and principles regarding children in cyberspace (D20-D20)
	The negative impact of content on children's habits and behaviors (D20-D20)
Not having a proper contract with the influencer D3-D5-D7-D8-D9-D10-D13-D20-D20-D22	Not having a contract with the influencer (D7-D8)
	The low quality of the contract with the influencer (D7-D10)
	The inability of the brand to control the influencer's behavior (D3-D7-D9-D10)
	Failure to comply with the rules by the influencer (D5-D7-D10-D13-D20-D20-D22)
Increase the saturation rate D8-D14-D15-D18	Reducing influencer influence by posting too much (D8-D14)
	Separation of unsponsored posts from sponsored posts to maintain influencer influence (D18)
	Conflict of a large amount of content with creativity and originality (D15)
Doing parallel advertising for brands D6-D8-D10-D24-D25	The negative effect of cooperation with many brands (D6-D8-D10-D24-D25)
	The negative effect of cooperation with competitors in the short term (D10)
	The negative effect of non-exclusivity in long-term cooperation (D10)

factor has received less attention in the studies due to its high clarity, and for this reason, it has the lowest number of repetitions in the studies.

3.2.6 The sixth stage, quality control

As a quality control measure, the opinions of two experts in the field of digital marketing were analyzed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) and considering the conditions for this method of analysis during the quality control stage (Sandelowski et al. 2007; Sandelowski 2008). This evaluation resulted in an excellent score (between 40 and 50 points).

Table 5 Summary of identified threats for influencer marketing

Influencer marketing threats
Fake followers and fake comments
lack of proper disclosure and explanation about sponsorship
inappropriate influencer selection
Brand absolute control over influencers
not enough brand control over content produced by Influencers before sharing
choosing an inappropriate platform
the negative influence of influencers on the appearance of the brand
negative influence on the consumption habits and lifestyle of children
lack of proper and special contracts with influencers
increased saturation rate
running parallel advertising for brands

3.2.7 The seventh stage, presentation of results

Finally, Table 5 presents 11 threats of influencer marketing resulting from the systematic review of studies conducted on this concept of influencer marketing. These threats are "sub-themes" resulting from the coding presented in Table 4. Each of these threats includes a number of indexes that are presented under the title of "axial codes" in Table 4. Table 5 Summary of identified threats for influencer marketing.

4 Discussion and findings

In this research, the influencer marketing threats were identified by systematic literature review on the issue of influencer marketing. Each of the presented threats influencing the effectiveness and efficiency of the advertising campaigns of the brands and can ultimately affect the productivity, so paying attention to them is the basis for the correct implementation of influencer marketing. In the following, each of the threats identified in this research is described.

4.1 Fake followers and fake comments

Examining the time period of the growth of followers can be effective in detecting the use or non-use of fake followers in such a way that if the number of followers increases suddenly in a short period of time, the probability of using fake followers increases significantly (Haenlein et al. 2020). One of the biggest challenges for brands in the future is the difficulty of recognizing fake comments bought by influencers. Owing to the rapid growth of artificial intelligence, fake comments made by bots are expected, and click forms are placed in large numbers to be of high quality and similar to the comments of a real human being,

which can become an important challenge in this field (De Veirman et al. 2017; Reinikainen et al. 2020). Using fake followers, likes, and comments will disadvantage both brands and influencers. In the case of brands, considering that the influencer's followers or their likes and comments are fake, it is clear that the statistics obtained from the created marketing campaign are not actual, so the results cannot be evaluated, and the brand will not achieve its goal of creating this campaign. Does not achieve. In the case of an influencer, if his followers find out that he uses fake followers and likes them, a negative view of him is created. This can lead to negative feedback from followers, or even unfollowing (De Veirman et al. 2019). With the boom of the influencer market and the rise of this style of marketing among brands, many people buy fake followers or order fake likes and comments to make the most of brands. These people are trying to increase the amount of money they receive from the brand for cooperation by increasing the number of their followers and showing a high participation rate in their posts (by increasing fake likes and comments).

4.2 Lack of proper disclosure and explanation about sponsorship

Disclosing the financial support of the brand to the influencer is also essential for its impact on the audience. Whether the sponsoring brand is well-known can affect the audience's impression of sponsorship disclosure. Disclosure of financial support and the correct explanation can lead to an increase in the influencer's credibility; that is, by sponsoring the influencer, the brand conveys this message to its followers that the quality of the influencer's work is at a high level. Additionally, different types of financial support require different methods of revealing support (Uzunoğlu and Misci Kip 2014; Stubb et al. 2019). Failure to comply with ethical principles by influencers can have significant consequences on the part of their followers, and one ethical principle is not to hide the financial support of brands (Martínez-López et al. 2020). The laws of many countries force influencers to disclose the financial support of their posts in certain formats to their audiences (Feng et al. 2021). Disclosing the financial relationship by providing explanations and reasons increases attention to the influential person and trust in the source of the message compared with disclosure without providing explanations and reasons (Stubb et al. 2019). If the influencer's content covers the interests and needs of the consumer well, even if it has financial support from a brand, it can have high value for the customer (Martínez-López et al. 2020). Influencers who cooperate with brands receive financial support from them in different ways. The disclosure of this financial support is required in some countries because of consumer rights. The way these sponsorships are disclosed to the audience can have a significant impact on the audience's reaction to this sponsorship, and inappropriate disclosure can threaten the brand's marketing campaign.

4.3 Inappropriate influencer selection

Brands are always asked which influencer can better convey their voice to the audience and which is more effective. For example, using an influencer with ten

million followers is a solution, or it would be better to work with an influencer with 500 thousand followers. Here, it should be noted that the participation rate of an influencer with lower following is lower in absolute terms than an influencer with higher following, but the participation rate is conversely lower in an influencer with high following and in an influencer with low following. More than. All of these factors are influential in the decision-making of brands, and answering the question is not an easy task considering the many aspects of the work, and a mistake in choosing the right influencer can lead to failure to achieve the goals of the brand's advertising campaign. The purpose of the campaign was important in choosing the right influencer. For example, if a large national or international brand is going to advertise its product at the national or international level, according to the large market it is considering, it is better to use a large influencer, but if a small brand is looking for advertising in a geographical area, such as a special city, using a small influencer can bring higher productivity. Another aspect of influencers is their management cost. When a brand uses several influencers in an advertising campaign, it must coordinate and manage it. This means that the advertising strategy of the company must be implemented well, and with coordination created at the operational level. It should be noted here that influencers with more than one million followers usually have a program manager and operational teams with them, which makes their interaction and management easier, but small influencers usually do not have such advantages, and it is difficult to manage them. This can bring costs to the brand, which, by including their number in the campaign, may greatly reduce the amount of profit and, as a result, question the value of the campaign (Haenlein et al. 2020). Although small influencers have a high participation rate, they may have some disadvantages. Among other things, this group of influencers may share significant contact with each other, which means, for example, that 10% of their contacts are common. The problem that occurs here is that brands consider their target community to be influencers' followers and plan accordingly, so this overlap in the target community will lead to incorrect calculations and planning by brands. Another case is that their content is not of sufficient quality for the brand to be used in other advertising spaces or that their content lacks the appropriate creativity and is made by imitating others. In this situation, for example, several influencers do similar advertising for a brand, which is repetitive and not interesting from the consumer's point of view. It should also be noted that the implementation of communication strategies when an expert influencer in the desired field is chosen will be far more successful than when only an attractive influencer is used for cooperation (Haenlein et al. 2020; Trivedi and Sama 2020). Brands operate at different levels and with different specializations. Choosing the right influencer for cooperation is an important challenge for brands. If the influencer is not chosen properly and if he does not match the conditions of the brand, the result of the marketing campaign will not be very suitable, and its goals will not be achieved well, so there is a need for brands to Use maximum care in choosing the right influencer in order to be safe from the threats of choosing the wrong influencer.

4.4 Brand absolute control over influencers

In general, brand marketing managers have a strong desire to exercise strict control over everything related to their brand, and influencers are no exception, as they are in charge of advertising the brand and have become a kind of symbol for that brand. However, it should be noted that extreme control and management with very high influencer accuracy can cause more harm than good. Extreme control can lead to the destruction of the influencer's creativity and the production of duplicate content, which means that the message issued by different influencers who are active on different platforms and participate in the brand's advertising campaign may be similar. When an influencer publishes uncreative and stereotyped content, it is not very attractive to followers and may even lead to unfollowing the influencer. Therefore, strict control can lead influencers to avoid participating in brand advertising campaigns Influencers should have sufficient freedom in their advertising so that their followers can trust the influencer's advertising content. If the brand exerts strong control over the influencer, followers may show negative feedback towards the influencer, who is strongly controlled by the brand, and this can lead to the ineffectiveness of the advertisement. When having commercial goals is removed from an influencer's post, trust in the influencer is more affected and reduced than when the influencer is perceived to have control over the brand. An influencer's followers are less likely to view their posts when under strong brand control than when they have little control over the influencer. In addition, the level of trust in the influencer's posts is lower in this situation, and followers' tendency to search the Internet for the content of the published post is lower (Martínez-López et al. 2020). Excessive brand control over influencers can severely affect advertising campaigns and pose a threat to brands. This means that with a lot of brand control over the influencer, the amount of following the influencer's published posts and searching about them the followers will decrease. Also, too much brand control over the influencer can lead to a decrease in creativity and, content originality, content similarity. And finally, participation will decrease, and this can lead to the Lack of proper efficiency in the advertising campaign.

4.5 Not enough brand control over content produced by influencers before sharing

A lack of sufficient brand control over the content produced by influencers can lead to financial losses and even legal problems. Brands must control the information and content produced by the influencer and control the accuracy of their performance. For example, incorrect information about the brand may have been given to the influencer, and the created advertisements may not achieve the desired goals if published. Alternatively, if the influencer uses the product incorrectly, for example, he mistakenly uses the washing liquid powder to wash the dishes. Another case is the non-observance of laws, for example, not disclosing the advertising nature of the message in the correct way, which leads to legal conflicts for the brand (Campbell and Grimm 2018; Haenlein et al. 2020). The brand's absolute control over the

influencer's activity may lead to a loss of creativity. Brands should try to optimize the control of the influencer and his freedom of action so that neither the control of the content is out of the brand's hands nor the influencer's creativity is harmed. Here, is a suggested solution for influencer control: pre-sharing. In this way, there is no obstacle to the influencer's creativity, and the brand will have sufficient confidence in the published content. Another important point is determining the policies, frameworks, and rules for the influencer as well as explaining the purpose of the campaign correctly for them to use their creativity to produce content within the set limits. For example, to advertise a company, the focus should be on the interior space of the company and its employees, rather than the exterior space and its views (Haenlein et al. 2020; Sokolova and Kefi 2020). Brands have principles and rules for their business and every brand considers itself committed to a mission. Cooperation with an influencer, considering that the influencer will have a significant impact on the consumer's perception of the brand after starting the cooperation, if the necessary limits for his content production activity are not determined, the content produced may be inconsistent with the goals and thoughts of the brand and pose threats. In this field, bringing the brand. Therefore, in the cooperation between the brand and influencer, frameworks and rules must be specified for the influencer to produce and publish content within that framework and based on the specified rules.

4.6 Choosing an inappropriate platform

The conditions of the virtual space are such that if the influencer produces high-quality content, the content may not reach the consumer properly. Today, platforms are strongly supported by artificial intelligence; for example, a user who searches for food and cooking on Instagram will encounter more posts related to food and cooking on Instagram page suggestions. The artificial intelligence algorithm of each platform has specific rules; therefore, influencers should be aware of these rules to publish their message on the desired platform. However, each platform was optimized for specific use. For example, Instagram is a suitable platform for sharing short-term photos or clips, whereas it is better to use YouTube to share long-term videos. Influencers usually choose one platform as their main platform because of the difficulty of working simultaneously on several platforms owing to the difference in the type of content required, and they also operate on other platforms to support the main platform. Therefore, influencers must act correctly when choosing the desired platform. Second, they are familiar with the capabilities and techniques of the platform. For example, working as a YouTuber is considered an incorrect choice for an influencer who likes to publish artistic photos. When sharing posts, the influencer must follow the rules of the platform well; for example, he uses the appropriate hashtags on Instagram to make his post visible. Another factor that should be considered is the emergence of crises, such as the global spread of the Covid-19 virus. With the spread of this virus, many people have stayed at home, and this has led to more people using virtual spaces. In the meantime, teenagers have started using the Tik Tok platform at a high rate, so influencers should also pay attention to environmental conditions when choosing or changing the platform (Haenlein et al. 2020). The

platforms on which the influencer is active follow artificial intelligence algorithms and certain rules that the influencer has followed, and following these rules correctly increases the probability of the success of the advertising campaign in delivering the message to the audience. But it should be noted here that these rules and algorithms are provided by the company that provides that platform, and after any period, the algorithms may be changed, or details may be added at the decision of that company. Here, influencers need to be well informed about the changes made; otherwise, by changing an advertising campaign algorithm, it may not be able to achieve the desired goals well. Like any other technology, social media must be optimized and adapted to the needs and experiences of its users. When users of a social media show a positive reaction to an algorithm implemented in that media, the desire of these media to develop that algorithm and use it as much as possible increases. This has led to changes in social media that are challenging for influencer marketing. Changes in social media algorithms have led to changes in the way social media platforms work, and influencers are forced to adapt. This change in the algorithm can be a minor and insignificant change, but there may be fundamental changes in the platforms. Changes in the algorithm often lead to making the influencer's job easier, but there may be changes that make their job more difficult (Haenlein et al. 2020; Harrigan et al. 2021). In cooperation with influencers, brands should be careful that the different platforms used by influencers change their rules and algorithms over time, so influencers should be aware of the latest changes in these fields. Otherwise, the brand marketing campaign may be affected. Endanger and prevent access to the intended goals. When working with influencers, brands should pay attention to the platforms they use. In cooperation with influencers, it should be ensured that the platform used is suitable for the content produced. Each platform has its own rules, features, and content style. Also, influencers should be aware of the latest changes in the platform in order to achieve the desired results. Otherwise, there is a risk of not achieving the goals of the brand's marketing campaign.

4.7 The negative influence of influencers on the appearance of the brand

Influencers are people who have achieved some kind of fame among others, so any of their behavior can affect people's view of the brand that supports them. For example, an influencer's moral scandal can negatively impact the image of his sponsoring brand. Influencers can damage a brand's position among consumers by leaving the ethical frameworks set by the brand (Knittel and Stango 2014; Campbell and Farrell 2020). For example, in the investigation of the Tiger Woods scandal, the famous American golfer was found to have lost more than 2% of its market value in about two weeks after his scandal was revealed and faced a significant drop among its competitors. The three main brands that supported him and saw significant losses were PepsiCo, Nike, and Electronic Art. This scandal and its impact on sponsoring brands led companies to consider the risks of collaborating with celebrities to promote their brands (Knittel and Stango 2014). When two brands cooperate, each tries to maintain its brand name and, at the same time, benefits from the partnership. Influencers have a kind of personal brand, and when they want to cooperate

with companies, these two brands may have conflicting values, which prevents the company from reaching its goals. For example, if a European company intends to operate in African countries if it cooperates with an influencer with racist tendencies and sometimes expresses these tendencies, not only may it lose many of its consumers, but this can also lead to hatred of the company's brand among consumers. It is noteworthy that if the influencer does not comment on racist beliefs, this thinking is attributed to him from the media's point of view, his personal brand is influenced by the media, and a racist brand is introduced (even if it is untrue). In this situation, the company should avoid working with him because the negative atmosphere of the influencer also affects the results of the advertising campaign. Therefore, in cooperation with an influencer who has a personal brand, companies should evaluate the audience's point of view and his understanding of that brand well so that these two brands, i.e., the company brand and the influencer's brand, which intend to cooperate with each other, are completely aligned and can cooperate. To make the most of what has been created (Backaler 2018). When influencers cooperate with a brand, they practically become a representative of the brand, and any behavior they show affects the customer's perception of the brand. In case of inappropriate behavior from the influencer, the image of the brand will be destroyed among the consumers. Harmful influencer behaviors, such as ethical scandals, affect many consumers.

4.8 Negative influence on the consumption habits and lifestyle of children

Today, children spend several hours watching social media videos. Influencers are busy unboxing toys and products related to their children. These influencers regularly create and publish interesting and entertaining posts to increase their number of followers. This content produced by the influencer can affect their preferences because of the low media literacy of children and their insufficient knowledge and skills in criticizing and challenging the nature of advertisements. Children under 12 are vulnerable as a target group because they are easily persuaded; therefore, caution should be taken when implementing this marketing tactic (De Veirman et al. 2019). Today, children have many options for digital entertainment. For example, YouTube and Instagram have replaced traditional entertainment platforms, such as television (De Veirman et al. 2019). In 2019, a young influencer who reviewed toys and products related to children from various brands was ranked as the sixth most-viewed YouTube site for children with more than 19 million views. This high viewership has led to an increase in investment in advertising for children. When children see a young influencer promoting a product, they imagine that their personal lives are very similar to those of the young influencer, and they feel a kind of relationship, which is a parasocial relationship. Subsequently, young influencers become an effective source for children to receive information, make decisions, and strongly influence the child consumer (Gannon and Prothero 2018; De Jans et al. 2019; De Veirman et al. 2019; Schouten et al. 2020). This strong influence means that if the young influencer promotes inappropriate habits and behaviors, his audience will be strongly influenced and will follow this example, which can have very destructive effects. Another point is that the influencer's promotion of harmful habits has a far

greater effect on the child audience than the promotion of healthy behaviors. For example, by promoting unhealthy and fast foods, influencers encourage children to consume these types of foods, whereas the promotion of healthy foods does not have such an effect (Coates et al. 2019). Children as a group are strongly affected by cyberspace; if they are affected by inappropriate content, they will not have the ability to analyze enough, and therefore, they will be highly impressionable. This can harm them, and if the influencer provides them with inappropriate content when dealing with children, the brand that cooperates with them will suffer from this issue, and its image will be affected in the public mind.

4.9 Lack of proper and special contracts with influencers

When the company starts its cooperation with the influencer, it must determine the frameworks for its activities so that the influencer can start their activities in that framework and produce content. Establishing legal control over an influencer's performance is of great importance, and the requirement to establish this control is to conclude a good contract between the company and influencer. By signing a suitable contract with the influencer, the company must determine the necessary frameworks for determining the limits of the influencer's performance, and oblige the influencer to implement them. Failure to enter into a proper contract, as described above, may result in the company not achieving its marketing campaign goals. When setting up a contract with an influencer, the country's laws in this field should also be taken into account, and any violation of these laws should be considered (Backaler 2018; Campbell and Grimm 2018; Haenlein et al. 2020; Sokolova and Kefi 2020). When brands work with an influencer, if they do not mention the clauses required to determine the framework and rules of the influencer's action in the contract with him, they may face problems and threats from the influencer during cooperation. When brands intend to work with an influencer, they must mention the influencer's framework and operating rules in the contract before starting collaboration. In the case of not paying attention to this matter, the deviation of the influencer from the established framework and rules can lead to failure of the brand campaign to achieve its goals and even cause losses to the brand.

4.9.1 Increased saturation rate

The important thing to maintain the effect of the influencer's message is to specify limits for your advertising messages so that there is no saturation in this field. If the influencer engages in consecutive advertising activities for different brands to reduce the usual and unsupported content, the effect of his/her message on the audience will decrease. Therefore, brands should pay attention to the fact that the influencer should not be involved in continuously sending advertisements to their contacts, and there should be a balance between the production of regular and promotional content; otherwise, no matter how high the quality of the content produced by the influencer is, to reduce the impact of his message on the audience, the goals of the brand's marketing campaign may not be achieved well (Taylor 2020). Influencer

marketing activities that work with a brand must be balanced. Excessive advertising of a brand among the published posts of an influencer can cause the brand to face the threat of reducing the impact of the message on the audience. The creation of a large amount of content by the influencer questions the principle of creativity and reduces the quality of work. In addition, the continuous sending of sponsored posts can lead to a decrease in effectiveness, which will ultimately lead to a decrease in the quality of the brand campaign.

4.9.2 Running parallel advertising for brands

One of the problems that companies face when working with influencers is reducing the influencer's advertising effect for many brands. Influencers work in various fields. Some influencers collaborate with brands that compete in the advertised product market. This simultaneous influencer advertisement for two or more competing brands is a type of parallel advertisement. For example, when an influencer intends to advertise a car brand, considering that people usually use a personal car, the simultaneous cooperation of the influencer with several brands and conducting parallel advertisements for them is detrimental to the brand, and one should avoid conducting simultaneous advertisements. This is prevented, and a kind of monopoly is created in the cooperation; however, when the influencer cooperates with several cosmetics brands, the problem of parallel advertising may not be so serious for the brands, and they do not feel the need to follow up (Haenlein et al. 2020; Taylor 2020). Therefore, checking and preventing parallel advertising should be performed according to the product category. One of the cases that requires the creation of exclusive cooperation between the brand and the influencer is long-term advertising campaigns that include a cooperation period of more than three months.

5 Conclusions

Owing to the significant growth of computer science, the use of developed communication and information technology platforms, including social networks, has brought about many advantages. However, in addition to these advantages, there are also threats to brands. If they are addressed, the quality of brands' marketing activities on social networks will be protected. In recent years, valuable research has been conducted on influencer marketing, indicating the importance of this issue in the marketing world. The current study seeks to identify the threats from this phenomenon by systematically reviewing the research literature on influencer marketing. In conducting this research, based on an inductive approach, the results obtained from another valid scientific research were categorized and presented.

According to the result of this research, successful influencer marketing campaigns require careful consideration of several key factors. It is essential to select influencers whose values and goals align with those of the brand, and to establish clear contracts that outline expectations, deliverables, and compensation. Brands should have the ability to approve content while still allowing influencers creative freedom and choose the most suitable platforms based on target audience and

campaign objectives. Transparency in sponsored posts, as well as measures to detect fake followers and comments, are vital for maintaining campaign authenticity. Additionally, it is important to avoid any negative influence on brand image and consumer habits, particularly among children, and to strike a balance between brand control and influencer creativity. Monitoring market saturation and avoiding parallel advertising campaigns for multiple brands are also crucial for maximizing the impact of influencer campaigns. By implementing these measures, brands can ensure the success and authenticity of their influencer marketing efforts.

6 Future research

Researchers interested in conducting research on influencer marketing threats have several suggestions to consider. First, they can investigate the prevalence and impact of fake followers and comments on influencer marketing campaigns. This could involve exploring potential solutions, such as improved algorithms for detecting fraudulent activity. Second, researchers can examine current disclosure practices among influencers and brands and identify ways to improve transparency and accountability in sponsored content. Additionally, they could conduct a study on effective methods for selecting appropriate influencers for a given campaign, considering factors such as audience demographics, engagement rates, and brand fit. Another area of research could involve analyzing the benefits and drawbacks of different levels of control that brands may exert over influencers and proposing best practices for achieving a balance between brand consistency and creative freedom. Furthermore, researchers can develop tools and strategies for evaluating the quality and appropriateness of the content produced by influencers before it is shared with their audience. They could also assess the relative effectiveness of different social media platforms for influencer marketing campaigns, considering factors such as reach, engagement, and demographic targeting. Additionally, investigating the potential negative effects on brand image or reputation resulting from inappropriate influencer behavior or endorsements and developing guidelines for mitigating these risks is another possible research direction. Researchers may also study the impact of influencer marketing on children's consumption habits and lifestyle choices, considering ethical implications and potential regulatory responses. In addition, analyzing the legal and contractual frameworks governing influencer-brand relationships and identifying areas where greater standardization or regulation may be necessary to protect all parties involved is another potential research area. Lastly, evaluating the sustainability of influencer marketing as a marketing strategy, considering factors such as audience saturation, evolving consumer attitudes, and emerging technologies and platforms, could provide valuable insights. As the industry continues to evolve and grow, there will likely be many new challenges and opportunities to explore in the field of influencer marketing.

Declarations

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