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Advertising and Consumer Behaviors: Evaluating Microinfluencers on Social Media

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Advertising and Consumer Behaviors: Evaluating Microinfluencers on Social Media
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Introduction
Given that the average individual spends 142 minutes a day on social media applications (Global Web Index, 2019), many find themselves exposed to digital advertisements. However, individuals, particularly Millennials, are also disengaged and distrust traditional advertisements (The Nielsen Company, 2017).

Micro-influencers vs. Influencers
On social media applications, there are two types of “influencers”.
- Influencers have a large following online and/or offline (100,000+ followers online). AKA name-brand, household celebrities.
- Micro-influencers have 1,000-100,000 followers online. Often have higher engagement rates, as well as niche audiences. (Main, 2017).

Research Questions
1. Will participants perceive micro-influencers as more trustworthy and authentic than ‘household name’ celebrities?
2. Will participants be more likely to purchase a product when suggested by a micro-influencer rather than by a celebrity?

Hypotheses
H1) Participants will rate the micro-influencers as more trustworthy and authentic than celebrities
H2) Participants will be more likely to want to purchase the products advertised by micro-influencers.

Method
Participants recruited via SONA
Presented with 6 corresponding sets of 2 images
- Micro-influencer VS Influencer
- Participants Ratings
  - Trustworthiness of poster
  - Amount of photo editing
  - Poster’s use of product
  - Likelihood to purchase
  - Affect

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Advertiser and Trustworthiness</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Error bars: 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro-Influencer</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants rated the micro-influencers as more trustworthy ($M = 4.65, SD = 0.76$) than the celebrities ($M = 4.12, SD = 0.96$) $t(111) = -4.88, p < .001$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Advertiser and Likelihood to Buy</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Error bars: 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro-Influencer</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were more likely to want to try the product advertised by micro-influencers ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.30$) rather than the products advertised by celebrities ($M = 3.26, SD = 1.27$) $t(111) = -2.65, p < .001$

Discussion
These results suggest that advertisements may be more effective when posted by micro-influencers rather than celebrities, and that micro-influencers successfully cultivate a sense of trust and authenticity with their followers.

Limitations
- Sample skewed towards younger population
- No behavioral measures

Future Directions
- Within-subjects study with identical materials but altered numbers of followers.
- Perceived photo modification - will participants be able to tell if a photo has been modified when it is a micro-influencer VS celebrity?

References

Acknowledgments
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