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Age of the Influencer: Exploring How Influencers Build Trust Online and Its Effect on Young Consumers

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Eastern Kentucky University

**Age of the Influencer: Exploring How Influencers Build Trust Online and Its Effect on
Young Consumers**

Honors Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements of HON 420

Spring 2022

By Lillian K. Herbstreit

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Age of the Influencer: Exploring How Influencers Build Trust Online and Its Effect on Young Consumers

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Abstract description: As technology and social media continue to further integrate themselves into everyday life, incredible platforms are dedicated to marketing to our rising generations (Spotswood and Nairn 2016). Inspired by these advancements, Influencer Marketing arose as a uniquely customer-centric approach (Bang and Lee 2016). Despite this approach's growing popularity in today's consumers (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat 2009), there is scarce research regarding how influencers as endorsers can cultivate levels of trust with online consumers. This research question emphasized finding literature exclusive to the significance of follower count as a quantitative social status, influencers as endorsers, and the relationships offered by different types of influencers. Inspired by the research question and enforced by previous literature, the study hypothesized high trust and favorability to influencers with a large following, less endorsements, and a socialite image. An electronically distributed survey, dedicated to testing the study's hypotheses, randomly assigned subjects to one of eight scenarios presented as an influencer profile with varying titles, followers, and endorsements.

By conducting ANOVA tests, the data was analyzed to determine relationships between the varying interactions and output trust levels. Data analysis found insignificance in follower count and endorsement levels; however, significance was found within influencer type. The implications of this research go beyond academic contribution and can be observed from multiple perceptions. For both rising influencers and brands seeking to improve or begin

strategies in influencer marketing, it is important to recognize factors that contribute to the perception of the consumer; these implications and opportunities for future research remain endless.

Keywords: Brand Deals, Endorsements, Influencer Marketing, Influencer, Purchase Intentions, Reciprocity, Skepticism, Trust

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take a moment to recognize a few people who, without their guidance and support, this research would not have been possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank the faculty of the ECU Honors Program; specifically, Katie Patton, Dr. Erik Liddell, and Dr. David Coleman. These administrators offered consistent and valuable advice not only for the duration of this thesis, but throughout my time in the program. I would also like to express my gratitude to my family and fellow classmates for their endless faith and push. Most of all, I would like to express a special thanks to my faculty mentor, Dr. James Blair, for working with me every step of this project and remaining my biggest supporter. Over the duration of this research, he cultivated sincere discussion and offered me crucial insight and advice. It is with his energy, guidance, and support, all of which I can never thank enough, that I am able to complete this research, and thus, my Honors thesis.

Thank you, again, to all the scholars and supporters for helping me every step of the way; my gratitude is endless.

Introduction

Traditional Marketing, as it relies on offline strategies, uses traditional and tangible platforms to promote products and spread a brand's message (Safco and Brake 2009). Longevity is the main reason people are so accustomed to traditional marketing (Safco and Brake 2009). Reading advertisements in daily newspapers, watching commercials on the television, reading billboards advertisements— these are all traditional marketing experiences the overwhelming majority of society participates in consistently. However, as society has quickly come to know it, the world is constantly changing. With these changes come new practices, trends, and technological advancements that transform our daily activities. For example, the creation and integration of social media created a new public platform that ultimately blurred the lines between friend, follower, and consumer (Halligan 2009).

As opportunities arose with these advancements, Digital Marketing automated and digitized the practices of Traditional Marketing- creating a customer-centric approach that the marketing industry had yet to explore (Bang and Lee 2016). This approach combined with social media's design for creating online relationships generated levels of engagement and empowerment in individuals, specifically in their role as a consumer. Researchers and analysts argue as digital marketing is booming throughout our digital age, traditional marketing practices are beginning to lose their effectiveness and importance (Hu, Zhang, and Wang 2019). Despite the debate that Digital Marketing is overpowering and surpassing traditional practices, there is no denying the constant changes in technology force new and creative approaches which allow the incumbents to evolve (Stewart 2003). Amongst these strategies lies what we have come to know as Influencer Marketing.

Referred to in previous literature as the next logical step in digital marketing (Dholakia and Kshetri 2004), Influencer Marketing has created an entirely new level of intimacy to a customer-centric approach. Influencers can be academically defined as individuals perceived as influential and trusted in one or several niche markets (Holt 2016); ultimately, these individuals are accompanied by a significant social media following. Influencer Marketing focuses on and exploits these influencers and their following to drive a brand's message to a specific target market (Hanna et al., 2011). Considered the future of digital marketing, influencer marketing already shows signs of promising and profitable potential (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat 2009). Analysts and professionals argue this growth potential lies in the industry's audience (Martin et al., 2000).

Minors show strong engagement with social media (Spotswood and Nairn 2016). These young consumers have not only spending power but a direct influence on the purchases and preferences of their surrounding peers, making them the perfect target group as these preferences reflect into habits in their adult life (Spotswood and Nairn 2016). The consistent exposure young consumers experience with marketing tactics results in a generation that values and prioritizes their personal relationships with brands (Ringold 2005). Discouraged by its transactional and shallow nature, traditional marketing practices have less efficiency with young consumers. This psychological need for trust (Kennedy, Jones, and Williams 2019) places pressure on brands to mask, or at least soften, the sterile and commercial nature of their messages. Instead, brands have begun cultivating genuine, yet synthetic, relationships (Bannigan and Shane 2020) between consumers and a personified extension of the brand to trust- i.e. the influencer.

Significance and Objectives of Research

In the early phase of research, it seemed more literature sparked more ideologies and, ultimately, an array of questions. Only then was it clear how little was known about the online strategies and practices that are actively influencing the very behaviors of our future consumers. This gap in current marketing research, desperate for contribution to a discussion that was barely scratching the surface, created the study's purpose. As an amateur study, the main goal was to focus the research and ultimately experiment on a fundamental level that surrounded trust. Specifically resulting in what quickly became the study's main research question: what factors help influencers create such high levels of synthetic trust on an online platform that they have the capacity to not only encourage followers to not only accept but recommendations but alter behaviors entirely?

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Follower Count

As previously discussed, a key attribute to the role of an influencer is their follower count- a quantitative measurement of communal support (Awobamise and Jarrar 2018). As discovered, research suggests follower count has a significant relationship with perception of influencers. So much so that developing and maintaining a large following is one of the primary goals of influencer marketing (Bannigan and Shane 2020). These influencers have the ability to build a large and loyal social media following and are now leveraging their platforms to promote brands, causes and ideologies to their hundreds, thousands and even millions of dedicated followers.

Often a quantitative symbol, follower count reflects both an influencer's activity levels as well as their social acceptance (Hu, Zhang, and Wang, 2019). In addition to this, follower count can reflect monetary value as well. Influencers are financially compensated relative to the size of their following; the transparency of this directly displays how much a certain influencer is likely worth (Bannigan and Shane, 2020). Contradicting research additionally suggests an opposite school of thought- the potential power in influencers with low followers. The lack of fame contributes to their perceived sincerity and, as quoted by literature, "almost as if their word seemed as genuine as advice from a friend" (Maheshwari, 2018). While this opposing thought cannot be ignored, there remains an overwhelming amount of literature suggesting a high following's contribution to the trust and ultimate success of an influencer. It is with this ideology that the first hypothesis of this study is created:

H1: Scenarios with a higher number of followers will generate higher levels of general trust.

Brand Disclosure

Due to their large following, influencers are viewed as thought-leaders in their specific niche and, consequently, often receive offers from companies to endorse their brand or goods in their posts (Almeida et al., 2018; Silva et al., 2020). This endorsement is recognized as a form of advertising that allows for an intimate and unique relationship between endorser (celebrity) and brand (Temperley & Tangen, 2006; Till, 1998). Social media influencers, in their role as endorsers, are sponsored to represent brands and products

in a way that purposefully displays the quality and benefits of the brand spontaneously and organically (Centeno & Wang, 2017; Jin & Phua, 2014). In doing so, previous literature suggests their followers are more likely to succumb to the endorsement; recognizing it as a sincere recommendation, the ultimate consumers (i.e. followers) believe the message to be more trustworthy and attractive (Lim et al., 2017). Sponsored to represent brands and products, influencers act as bridges between product and consumers as they bring their audience closer to specific and carefully chosen goods and services (Silva et al., 2020). They aim to convey a positive perception to their followers. In doing so, the products become a reflection and extension of the influencers personal characteristics and beliefs placing a lot of pressure on the brands and products they choose to endorse (Belk 2014).

The levels of intricacy and disclosure for these endorsements remain powerful as they can affect the initial perception of an influencer (Bannigan and Shane 2020). With excessive amounts of disclosure argued to ruin the organic and spontaneous nature of influencer marketing, previous research argues excessive endorsing can negatively impact the endorser (i.e. the influencer) as they appear too commercial (Silva et al., 2020). Maintaining this ideal organic nature is so important to brands, that legal actions have been put in place to avoid malicious concealment of disclosure (Bannigan and Shane 2020). Brand authenticity plays a key role in personal branding as Allison et al. (2020) found personal brand concept belief and personal brand management efficacy impacted personal brand authenticity which impacted an individual's self-actualization. These results suggest the level of authenticity influencers use can impact their reaching a self-actualization stage of developing their brand online. The significance of influencers as public and intimately

unique endorsers is clear in previous literature, strengthening the creation of the following hypothesis:

H2: Scenarios with less brand deals will generate higher levels of purchase intentions.

Public Figure v. Industry Expert

As previous research suggests, levels of trust do not simply stem from an influencer's quantitative attributes. The concept of both source trustworthiness and expertise remain as critical dimensions of the source credibility model (Hovland and Weiss 1951). This particular piece of literature introduces the idea of source expertise as "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions" (Hovland and Weiss 1951). The source attractiveness model (McGuire 1985) also goes on to define attractiveness as the consumer's perceived and reflected likability, familiarity, and similarity with the brand or its endorser.

There are, however, varying opinions in research regarding the ideal mixture of credibility and attractiveness. One side of the discussion argues that figureheads with an extensive background and expertise in a subject-matter offer the highest levels of trustworthiness, thus creating positive consumer behavior and increased purchase intentions (Ohanian 1990; Biswas, Biswas, and Das 2006; Trivedi and Sama 2020). However, the opposite end of the argument exists that an attractive figurehead, a concentrated socialite of some kind (e.g. public figure), offers a more significant impact on the trust levels between brand and consumer (McGuire 1985; Trivedi 2018). These

different levels of interaction resulted in varying levels of trust and repaid trust- also referred to as reciprocity (Rietz 2018). It is incredibly noteworthy, however, that these opposing opinions fall short of recognizing the unique persona that social media influencers can provide (Trivedi 2018). The ability for these unique third-party endorsers to alter consumer behaviors directly make them fascinating and under-researched figureheads for brands to reach consumers in a way that matches the technological growth society faces (Trivedi and Sama 2020). Thus, it is both the opposing opinions present in current research as well as the obvious gap that led to the formation of the study's final hypotheses:

H3: Scenarios including an industry expert will generate lower levels of skepticism.

H4: Scenarios including a public figure will generate higher levels of reciprocity.

Research Method

Survey Procedure

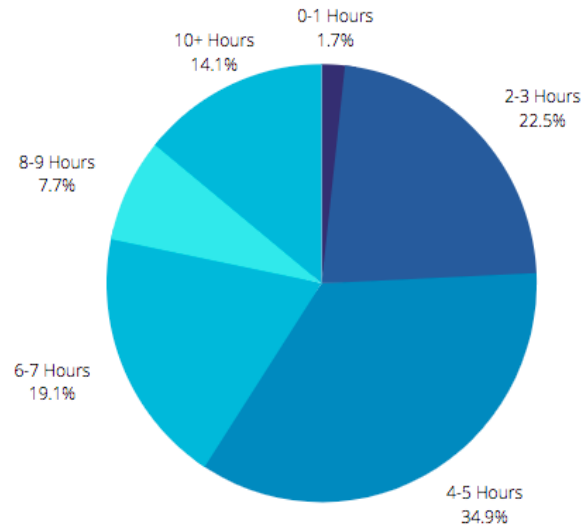
An electronically distributed survey was conducted to examine the proposed hypotheses reflecting trust levels in influencers. The survey consisted of eight scenarios, all differing slightly, representing specific characteristics in numerous hypothetical influencers in order to determine what contributes to varying levels of trust. Of these eight scenarios, presented as simulated profiles of an influencer, one was randomly assigned to each subject. After being presented with the scenario, respondents were asked a series of varying questions regarding their personal opinions on their assigned influencer's profile.

The survey concluded by asking a series of demographic questions to recognize any potential trends between respondents.

The experiment was implemented and data was collected using various online survey tools including both Qualtrics and Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk). The use of these platforms helped to contribute to the research's validity by allowing respondents to be randomized and outsourced; subjects were recruited via their membership of mTurk. After omitting 53 responses due to incompleteness and 76 responses due to failing an attention check, the data comprised 403 final responses. The final respondents were primarily middle-aged Caucasian men with 67.33% of subjects identifying as male and 88.12% of subjects selecting their race as Caucasian. The ages of the subject averaged at 35 years old with a minimum of 22 and a maximum of 70. It was also found that 86.14% of respondents received an annual salary that was below \$75,000.

In addition to demographics, there was also a question in the study inquiring about the subjects' estimated weekly average of social media usage. This was included as a judgment of relevancy. As depicted in Figure 1, there was a fair distribution of responses ranging from two hours per week to seven; however, the average time respondents felt they spend on social media every week was approximately four to five hours.

Figure 1: Respondents' Frequency of Social Media Usage [Hours per Week]



Manipulations and Measurement

The manipulations for all eight scenarios were completed by altering a combination of three separate variables: follower count, number of disclosed brand deals, and the type of influencer. Follower count and disclosure of brand deals were altered on scales of either High or Low while each profile was simultaneously assigned as either an “Industry Expert” or “Public Figure”. The goal of these different levels of interaction was to output varying levels of trust. Contribution to these varying levels of trust consisted of an array of dependent variables.

The study drew upon previous literatures' scales to assess mainly four dependent variables: Yamagishi's (1986) General Trust scale, Lee and Shin's (2014) Purchase Intentions scale, Obermiller and Spangenberg's (2008) Ad Skepticism scale, and Pope's (et al., 2015) Social Reciprocity scale. In spirit of the amateurism of the study, other scales were also utilized for any opportunity of external patterns or significant findings. Among

these, the study drew upon scales such as Jonason's (2010) Dark Triad Dirty Dozen scale and Wang, Sun, and Hou's (2021) Emotional Interaction scale.

Data Analysis

Manipulation Checks

To ensure the manipulations maintained some sort of relation to the measures of latent independent variables, manipulation checks were included throughout the beginning of the survey. Initially, subjects were asked to summarize any information obtained from the presented profile. Proceeding this, manipulation checks for all three independent variables were also included. Regarding follower count, subjects were asked, "on the scale below, how many followers does the influencer's profile have?" with the scale ranging from Very Few to Very Many. The manipulation check for levels of brand deal disclosure was similar as subjects were also asked, "on the scale below, how many brand deals does the influencer's profile have?", again, with the scale ranging from Very Few to Very Many. Finally, a manipulation check for the type of influencer was included as subjects were asked which type of influencer did the profile belong to with options being the following: Industry Expert, Public Figure, Both Industry Expert and Public Figure, Neither Industry Expert Nor Public Figure. A trial was initially run, and all manipulation checks were found to be successful; the study was then able to be completed in its entirety.

Testing Hypotheses

In order to assess the hypotheses corresponding with the objectives of this research, it was first necessary to determine the relationship between the recognizable number of followers and the subjects' general level of trust. When testing H1, a one-way ANOVA

test was conducted which allowed for a comparison between general trust levels and the manipulated follower count; the results of this one-way ANOVA proved to be insignificant ($F(1,402) = .00, p = .96$). These findings resulted in being unresponsive to H1 which suggested manipulated follower count has a significant effect on general trust levels. This was not an incredible surprise to the research seeing as there were a multitude of other factors that could contribute to a general lack or surplus of trust in the synthetic influencers' profiles.

In order to assess the next hypothesis pertaining to the research, it was then necessary to determine the relationship between the recognizable amount of brand deal disclosures on the profiles and the subjects' level of purchase intentions. When testing H2, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted in order to compare the effects manipulated disclosure levels had on purchase intentions. The results of this ANOVA test were also found to be statistically insignificant ($F(1,402) = 2.16, p = .14$). Therefore, these results do not support H2 in suggesting scenarios with a lower number of brand deal disclosures will generate higher levels of purchase intentions. The results of this one-way ANOVA test were profound as previous literature suggested high levels of disclosure could possibly lead to lower levels of intentions to purchase.

Testing the next hypothesis, H3, was critical in determining the effects manipulating the type of influencer had on the levels of trust subjects felt towards their provided profile. Specifically, H3 focused on consumers' conveyed levels of skepticism—an adverse variable of trust. This testing was completed by conducting a one-way ANOVA test which offered insight into the relationship between different types of influencers and consumers' conveyed levels of relevant skepticism. The effects manipulating influencer

type had on consumers' levels of skepticism were found to be insignificant ($F(1,402) = .01, p = .94$). Manipulating the type of presented influencer had no effect on the consumers' perceived levels of skepticism. As a result, the proposed hypothesis, H3, was not supported by the results of this study.

In testing the final hypothesis, it was, again, critical to determine the relationship between the type of influencer and the levels of trust the subjects felt towards their profile. However, H4 focused specifically on the subjects' displayed levels of reciprocity. This testing was completed by conducting a one-way ANOVA test. This test allowed comparison between the effects manipulated influencer type had on consumers' conveyed levels of reciprocity; these effects were found to be statistically significant ($F(1,402) = 2.16, p = .14$). Therefore, the results of this study were able to support H4, stating that scenarios including an industry expert will generate higher levels of reciprocity. The results of this one-way ANOVA were incredibly profound as there has been limited previous literature suggesting a relationship between differing influencer background/types and conveyed levels of reciprocity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Empirical Findings and Managerial Implications

In terms of the study's significant findings which lies in the relationship between reciprocity and classification of influencer, respondents felt an incredibly mutual sense of benefit, value, and trust with influencers that identified as Public Figures. The lack of significant findings continues to prove significance to this research. From this, it is reasonable to suggest decreasing focus on both their number of followers as well as brand

deal disclosures. Rather, there should be an emphasis on the positioning of the influencer and the level of mutual benefit, value, and trust (reciprocity) between influencer and follower. Moving forward, these findings may reflect a sense of need for more transparency between influencer and consumer- an idea that previous literature already debates.

The implications of this study could prove to be beneficial for a variety of groups. For brands seeking to either begin or strengthen their marketing strategies via influencer marketing, it is important to recognize attributes to look for in endorsers. Ensuring a genuine mix of different levels of followers and different levels of brand deal disclosures is important; however, identifying influencers that create a more socialite persona (e.g. public figure) could allow for a greater sense of relationship, trust, and reciprocity. Contrastingly, the implications of this study could prove to be beneficial to individuals attempting to pave their way as a social media influencer. Understanding followers' needs for organic, genuine, and social relationships in an endorser and influencer gives potential influencers an advantage in successfully creating their online persona.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study possesses several limitations that provide significant avenues for continued research in the future. The first limitation lies in the study's external validity. While the manipulation checks suggested the varying influencer profiles were relevant, there was low significance. This can be attributed to the study's lack of "relationship" when examining this relationship-selling scenario. Realistically, followers not only get to choose who they follow, but also their level of interaction and commitment to the influencer grows and the relationship grows (i.e. the length of time as a follower). As an amateur study, only

quick, synthetic, and surface-level relationships were examined which, ultimately is not realistic in this scenario. Another potential limitation to this study is the exclusion of minors. As previously mentioned, minors remain the largest consumers on any social media platform. Their generational familiarity and adaptability with technology makes minors ideal subjects concerning relationship-selling with social media influencers. The implications of this constant exposure to these synthetic relationships could be an incredible path for future research, specifically paired with the research field of psychology.

Additionally, not only do celebrities such as social media influencers, politicians, athletes, musicians, artists and movie stars have personal brands, but so do everyday people. Business educators are now focusing on skills to develop the personal brands of students (Allison and Blair 2021). This includes getting them to create a positive image online through different social media platforms, posting content signaling to potential employers their interests as well as skill sets, and networking with professionals (Fore, Blair, and Allison 2021). Future research exploring effectiveness of personal branding strategies on employers and other professionals would be beneficial in addition to determining the effectiveness of different personal branding classroom assignments.

Finally, as consumers face increasing accessibility to technology and information, some have started terming them fluid consumers (Correia 2016). These individuals have access to significant information through smart devices like phones, tablets, and laptops allowing them to conduct multiple product searches simultaneously. This technology is shifting the way these fluid consumers live their daily lives (Blair 2019). With all of this access to information, and rapid consumption of content it would be interesting for future

research to explore how these consumers perceive influencers. Additionally, being able to identify what information they search for about these influencers now that they can readily access and search for this through the internet would be beneficial so these influencers can place that information online and in the correct locations to better engage with their audiences. As society's consumers continue to get younger and platforms continue to digitize, further research is bountiful and endless. After all, no one truly knows what lies ahead of society as consumers of all ages embark on this next logical step in digital marketing and are left with no other choice than to embrace this age of the influencer.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this study. It will take approximately ten minutes to complete.

First you will answer a few questions about a scenario. Please read this scenario carefully and answer these questions as if the decision were real. After that, you will answer some more general questions about yourself.

In return for your thoughtful responses, you will be paid \$1 through Amazon Mechanical Turk. Eastern Kentucky University will not be funding this payment.

Consent

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to investigate how you evaluate alternatives and make decisions.

Information on Research

You have been invited to participate in academic research involving either an in-person or online survey that will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This research is sponsored by Dr. James Blair of Eastern Kentucky University. This form will give you some information about the study. Please read this form and feel free to ask any questions about the purpose of the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible involved risks and benefits, your rights as a research volunteer, and anything else about the research that is not clear from this form. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. James Blair at james.blair@eku.edu.

Please note that this research study is only open to individuals who are 18 years of age or older. If you do not meet this minimum age requirement, you may not participate in this study. If you are participating online, you must be logged in from the United States. Responses to these items will be anonymous. You will not be asked to provide any information that could identify you.

If you decide to take part in this study, your participation will involve reading short scenarios and filling out a survey pertaining to your beliefs and preferences.

There are no known risks or discomforts from participating in this study. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time if you feel that your physical comfort, safety, or privacy is not fully safeguarded.

Benefits of the study. There are no direct benefits that will come to you for participating in this survey. However, your participation in this study will be of scientific value by contributing to our understanding of people's behavior.

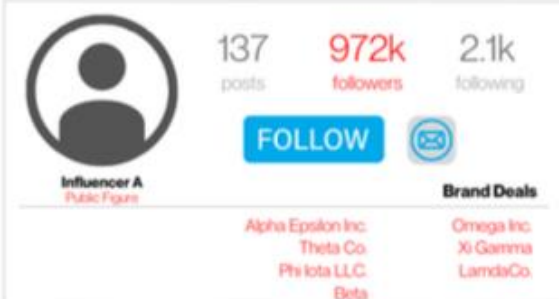
Your part in this study is anonymous. Your name will not be attached to your answers. Any reports derived from the data will not personally identify participants. The consent forms will be kept in separate locations from the data, and the data will be kept on secure servers or password protected computers as required by journals.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and noncoercive with no negative consequences for refusal to participate. You may choose to leave the study at any point if you experience discomfort or find that there are any parts of this study that you do not wish to complete. Furthermore, you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Finally, you may refuse to complete any of the questionnaires or refuse to partake in any of the tasks without penalty or negative consequences.

This study has been reviewed and approved for exemption by the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Kentucky University as research protocol number 000001. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Dr. James Blair at james.blair@eku.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, please contact the Division of Sponsored Programs at Eastern Kentucky University by calling 859-622-3636. By completing the activity that begins on the next screen, you agree that you (1) are at least 18 years of age; (2) have read and understand the information above; and (3) voluntarily agree to participate in this study.


Scenario

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.



Influencer A
Public Figure

137 posts 972k followers 2.1k following

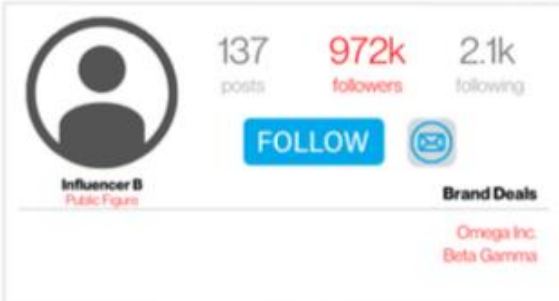
FOLLOW 

Brand Deals

Alpha Epsilon Inc.
Theta Co.
Phi Iota LLC
Beta


Omega Inc.
Xi Gamma
Lambda Co.

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.



Influencer B
Public Figure

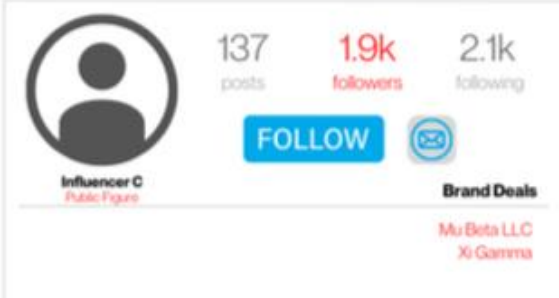
137 posts 972k followers 2.1k following

FOLLOW 

Brand Deals


Omega Inc.
Beta Gamma

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.



Influencer C
Public Figure

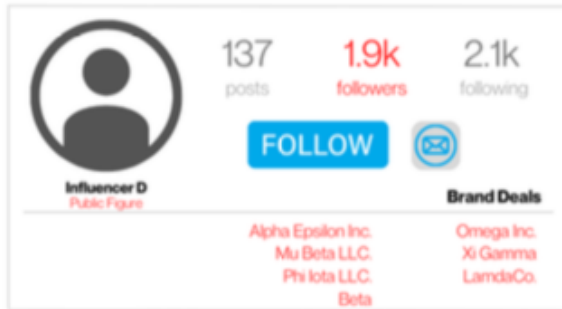
137 posts 1.9k followers 2.1k following

FOLLOW 

Brand Deals

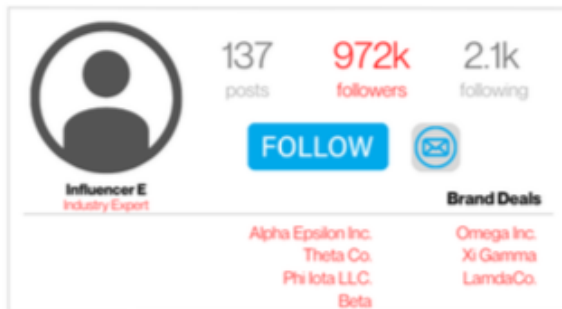
Mu Beta LLC
Xi Gamma

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.



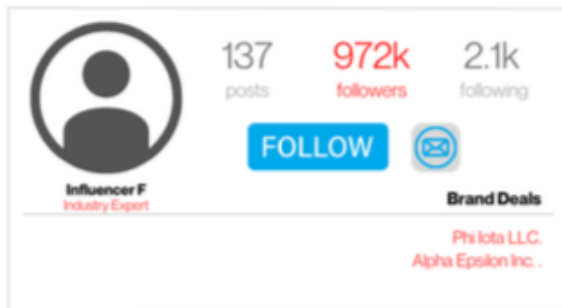
Profile card for Influencer D, Public Figure. The card displays 137 posts, 1.9k followers, and 2.1k following. A blue 'FOLLOW' button and a direct message icon are visible. Under the 'Brand Deals' section, the following brands are listed: Alpha Epsilon Inc., Mu Beta LLC, Phi Iota LLC, Beta, Omega Inc., Xi Gamma, and Lambda Co.

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.



Profile card for Influencer E, Industry Expert. The card displays 137 posts, 972k followers, and 2.1k following. A blue 'FOLLOW' button and a direct message icon are visible. Under the 'Brand Deals' section, the following brands are listed: Alpha Epsilon Inc., Theta Co., Phi Iota LLC, Beta, Omega Inc., Xi Gamma, and Lambda Co.

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.



Profile card for Influencer F, Industry Expert. The card displays 137 posts, 972k followers, and 2.1k following. A blue 'FOLLOW' button and a direct message icon are visible. Under the 'Brand Deals' section, the following brands are listed: Phi Iota LLC and Alpha Epsilon Inc.

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.

Influencer G
Industry Expert

137 posts 1.9k followers 2.1k following

FOLLOW

Brand Deals
Lamda Co.
Alpha Epsilon Inc.

Please carefully read the information about this influencer that is provided on their profile screen located below.

Influencer H
Industry Expert

137 posts 1.9k followers 2.1k following

FOLLOW

Brand Deals
Alpha Epsilon Inc.
Theta Co.
Phi Iota LLC.
Beta Omega Inc.
Xi Gamma
LamdaCo.

Please summarize the information from the account profile.

On the scale below, how many followers does the influencer's profile have?

Very Few Few Somewhat Few Neither Few Nor Many Somewhat Many Many Very Many

On the scale below, how many brand deals does the influencer's profile have?

Very Few Few Somewhat Few Neither Few Nor Many Somewhat Many Many Very Many

Which of the following is the influencer's profile?

Industry Expert

Public Figure

Both Industry Expert and Public Figure

Neither Industry Expert Nor Public Figure

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the influencer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The influencer would be a good role model.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The influencer genuinely enjoys the products they advertise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The influencer is active on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The influencer is successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The influencer prioritizes their supporters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The influencer has a valuable opinion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The influencer is well-supported.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust the influencer's advice about the products they advertise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How satisfied are you with products advertised by this influencer?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
If I needed to, I believe I would be satisfied with purchasing products advertised by this influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe I would be completely satisfied purchasing products advertised by this influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, in purchasing the products, I believe that I would be pleased with those advertised by this influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Wang Sun Hou

These next few questions are about you. Please rate how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Friends' recommendations and reviews are very important to my consumption.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I hope to keep a long-term relationship with my friends on social media platforms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information I get from interactions on social media platforms is updated timely.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In social commerce, I want strongly to buy the product if it was recommended by a friend.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often want to buy something because of the emotional interaction with others on social media platforms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I will buy something because of product recommendations and reviews from my friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The interactions on social media platforms enable me to make purchase decisions faster.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know my friends on social media platforms by sharing photos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know my friends on social media platforms through social exchange.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends on social media are very sincere, and I believe them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I interact with friends frequently on social media platforms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will discuss personal topics with friends on social media sites.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The interactions on social media platforms allow me to better understand purchase goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information I get from interactions on social media platforms are useful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Mediators/Moderators: Dark Triad

These next few questions are about you. Please rate how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I tend to want others to admire me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to be cynical.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to expect special favors from everyone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have used flattery to get my way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have used deceit or lied to get my way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to want others to pay attention to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to be unconcerned with the morality of my actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to seek prestige or status.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to manipulate others to get my way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to lack remorse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to exploit others towards my own end.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to be callous or insensitive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Mediators/Moderators: General Trust

These next few questions are about you. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about you.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most people are basically honest.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people respond kindly when they are trusted by others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people are trustful of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most people are trustworthy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am trustful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people are basically good and kind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Reciprocity

Please rate how likely would you be there for one or more members of your social group...

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither Unlikely Nor Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
to get through a difficult time emotionally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to provide spiritual support (i.e. pray for them).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
share your own experiences and knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither Unlikely Nor Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
do something enjoyable with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to take a meal if they were sick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how likely would one or more members of your social group be there for you...

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither Unlikely Nor Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
do something enjoyable with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to get through a difficult time emotionally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
share your own experiences and knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither Unlikely Nor Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
to provide spiritual support (i.e. pray for you).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to bring you a meal if you were sick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Skepticism

These next few questions are about you. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about you.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Advertising is generally truthful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe advertising is informative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising is truth well told.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fairness

Please answer the following questions about your perceived fairness of the influencer.

The treatment given to me by the influencer was:

Very Unfair To Me Unfair To Me Somewhat Unfair To Me Neither Unfair Nor Fair To Me Somewhat Fair To Me Fair To Me Very Fair To Me

The treatment given to me by the influencer was:

Very Much Less Than I Deserved Less Than I Deserved Somewhat Less Than I Deserved Neither Less Than I Deserved Nor More Than I Deserved Somewhat More Than I Deserved More Than I Deserved Very Much More Than I Deserved

The treatment given to me by the influencer was:

Very Unequitable To Me Unequitable To Me Somewhat Unequitable To Me Neither Unequitable Nor Equitable To Me Somewhat Equitable To Me Equitable To Me Very Equitable To Me

Demographics

This question confirms that you are paying attention and carefully reading the text we are presenting to you. It is important that you ignore the instruction below and instead write "Reader." As you know, some portion of the people who complete surveys are not carefully following instructions - so we are forced to interpret all incorrect responses to this question as evidence that the question text was not read carefully. But since you are obviously reading this carefully, please carefully answer this writing prompt as described in this paragraph.

What is your overall trust level for this influencer?

Approximately how many hours per week do you spend on social media?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 6-7
- 8-9
- 10+

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer Not to Say

What is your age, in years?

Please describe your marital status.

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Single
- Cohabitation/Living with a Partner

Please specify your ethnicity/race.

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American/American Indian
- White/Caucasian
- Other

Please specify your annual income.

- \$0-\$24,999
- \$25,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000+