

Between Autonomy and Control: Influencer-Marketers Relations and Campaign Development

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Abstract

Social media influencers have complex advertising functions, such as content creators and managers of social media channels. At a declarative level, marketers follow the so-called *letting go* paradigm by giving influencers the freedom of content creation. However, aiming to attain

marketing and advertising objectives, marketers use control strategies and tools to collaborate with influencers that often generate tensions in their relationships. Within the theoretical framework of the agent theory, the present research delves into the interaction processes between marketers and social media influencers during the development of the advertising campaign. While previous research focused on the perspective of marketers, little is known about the influencers' perspective. We conducted in-depth interviews with $N=15$ social media influencers from a European country to better understand the dynamics of simultaneously maintaining creative autonomy, fostering positive audience reception, and aligning with the brand's overarching advertising objectives.