

Medical student influencers induce more intention to change behavior when communicating in a formal style

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Social media sites like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X (formally Twitter) provide a platform for various kinds of content creators who build their online presence by posting about their day-to-day lives or their field of expertise using their credentials to make them seem more credible. In the current 2×2 between-subject online exploratory study, we aimed to examine how the influencer type (lifestyle or knowledge/medical student) and the communication style (formal or informal) affect the way people perceive their health-related messages and how likely they would be to change their behavior afterwards. Results revealed that people will be more likely to change their behaviour when the knowledge influencer uses a more formal communication style. Moreover, regardless of communication style, respondents perceived the knowledge influencer as a more credible source, and she elicited more parasocial interactions than the regular lifestyle influencer.

Keywords: behavior change; health communication; influencer communication; parasocial interaction; source credibility