

Influencer window-dressing: How teens judge content creators' advertising role

Arantxa Vizcaíno-Verdú^a, Beatriz Feijoo^{b*} and Patricia Núñez-Gómez^c

^{a,b}*Marketing and Communication, Universidad Internacional de la Rioja, Logroño, Spain.*

^c*Audiovisual Communication and Advertising, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain.*

*corresponding author

Beatriz Feijoo

Universidad Internacional de la Rioja, Spain.

Avenida de la Paz 137, 26006 Logroño, La Rioja, España

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This study examines teenagers' skepticism towards influencer trust and its impact on their perception of social media advertising. Through qualitative focus groups with 55 teens, we explore various perceptions, including distrust of influencers, breakdown of parasocial relationships, and the concept of influencer window-dressing. Erosion of trust affects teenagers' consumer behavior, as influencers prioritize commercial interests over authenticity. The incongruity between influencers' projected flawless lifestyles and concealed struggles creates emotional conflicts. Teens perceive influencers as vacuous entities, highlighting the consequences of monetizing images of human value in the era of AI influencers.

Keywords: parasocial relationship; influencer advertising; social media; AI influencers; teenager