

How to Sell via Fashion Hauls on Instagram: Social Media Influencers

Acting as Virtual Sellers for Brands

Luisa Mahn, markstones Institute of Marketing, Branding & Technology, University of Bremen, Germany, Luisa.Mahn@gmx.de

Michael Schade, markstones Institute of Marketing, Branding & Technology, University of Bremen, Germany

Christoph Burmann, markstones Institute of Marketing, Branding & Technology, University of Bremen, Germany

Abstract

Products advertised by social media influencers (SMIs) can increase purchases; in the fashion sector, such advertisements often take the form of video postings known as fashion hauls. Fashion hauls differ fundamentally from other brand-related user-generated content, in that they are aggressively sales-oriented and similar to traditional sales pitches. To understand the effect of this virtual sales tool on consumers, the authors use a mixed-methods approach. With 31 qualitative in-depth interviews, they determine how consumers perceive the roles of SMIs in fashion hauls; the results indicate they regard SMIs as virtual salespersons. A second quantitative study reveals five design factors of fashion hauls that exert the greatest impact on consumers' purchase intentions: liking the brand, needing the product, liking the product when worn by the SMI, outfit inspiration by the SMI, and product integration into the everyday life of SMIs. The results of this study are highly relevant for the growing, digitalized practices associated with purchasing clothing, including virtual sales pitches such as fashion hauls.

Keywords: social media influencer, fashion hauls, virtual seller, influencer role perception, purchase intention

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