



## State of the Art: Authenticity and Influencer Marketing

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### ABSTRACT

Digital marketing is a new form of marketing that uses several digital media to spread a message. Influencer marketing is a promising acquisition channel for companies to explore. Engaging with influencers can help a company improve its brand image and stand out in an increasingly competitive marketplace. However, these opinion leaders can influence the purchasing behavior of the target audience. These are individuals with skills in a particular field, using them to create quality content, they are recognized as experts in their field. The content they publish is often in the form of a personalized story incorporating their opinion on a situation, a product or a service. Success lies in establishing a genuine, preferably long-term, relationship between the brand and its influencers. The objective is to rigorously analyze the links and elements that give meaning to this “Influencer marketing authenticity” interaction. As part of this research, we presented a detailed literature review of authenticity and influence marketing.

**Keywords:** Influencer Marketing, Authenticity, Influencers, Brands, Buying Behavior

**JEL Classifications:** L2, M31

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, the digital environment is an integral part of many people’s daily lives. Companies must therefore adapt their marketing strategy to include a digital component if they want to reach new customers. The rules of communication have changed, consumer behavior has evolved and new opinion leaders are coming into play, where influencer marketing comes in. The concept of influencer marketing originated in word-of-mouth marketing, the phenomenon of spreading information or opinions about a product, organization, or service.

Word-of-mouth marketers can therefore be anyone. However, most people’s radius of influence is limited to their circle of acquaintances. Therefore, to increase the impact of word-of-mouth communication, it is necessary to call on influencers, also known as opinion leaders. More than 1600 influencers are working on digital social networks, in various fields such as fashion, sport, art, etc. (Boucher et al., 2022; Troisi et al., 2022; Dutot and Lichy, 2022). These are individuals with skills in a particular field, leveraging them to create quality content (Heiderich and Maroun,

2014), these are recognized as experts in their field (Nandagiri and Philip, 2018). The content they publish often takes the form of a personalized narrative incorporating their opinion as to a situation, product, or service (Abidin, 2016) and is perceived as credible in the eyes of their subscribers (Nandagiri and Philip, 2018). Marketing researchers are increasingly interested in the phenomenon of influencers on social networks (Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014; McQuarrie et al., 2013).

Influencers are content creators who accumulate a solid base of subscribers (De Veirman et al., 2017). These online spokespersons have become one of the best ways for a brand to convey a message to its target audience, and to do so via social networks. 89% of influencers’ subscribers have already visited the company’s website after viewing content proposed by the influencer (Deblaere and Charry, 2019). Another study mentioned that 75% of subscribers ended up buying a product vaunted by an influencer. It’s also important to note that these influencers have a remarkable ability to engage their communities since traditional media don’t record such good results. Moreover, influencer marketing has been shown to deliver 11 times the return on investment of traditional

advertising. For all these reasons, companies need to seize the opportunity offered by influencers.

In light of the above, the problem is as follows: How is authenticity perceived in influencer marketing?

In this research, we will provide a conceptual clarification of the main theoretical foundations related to authenticity and influence marketing.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Exploring Authenticity

#### 2.1.1. Definition of authenticity

Historically, authenticity is a concept that has been explored and defined from two perspectives: the existentialist philosophical perspective, also known as the interpersonal perspective, and the psychological perspective, also known as the individual perspective (Ménard and Brunet, 2012; Novicevic et al., 2006; Hudders and Lou, 2022; Le and Aydin, 2023). Concerning the existentialist perspective, Harter (2002) asserts that the Greeks were the first to address the notion of authenticity through the use of the expressions “be true to yourself” and “know thyself.”

Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012), adopting the existentialist perspective, define authenticity by emphasizing the notion of “self-awareness.” Moreover, self-awareness, from this perspective, is not relative to one’s values, intentions, or feelings. Rather, self-awareness represents an awareness of one’s identity, which is not predetermined and is influenced by others, context, and the individual’s history. An authentic individual is first and foremost one who is aware of his or her freedom as a non-determined being and conscious of the elements that influence the construction of his or her identity (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012).

According to the existentialist perspective, an individual who is aware of the influences that affect his or her personality will be authentic when he or she makes existential choices consistently (Lawler and Ashman, 2012; Kapitan et al., 2022). Sartre (1946) uses the expression “existence precedes essence,” where a person is a free being who has no nature. It is responsible for defining itself because it is not predefined, i.e. the freedom to be what a man wants to be. Man is nothing other than what he makes of himself, defining himself through his actions and commitments. Consequently, his decisions show what kind of person he is, what he accepts, and what he considers representative of what a man should be. Sartre (1946) points out that a person who uses deterministic justifications is not authentic, but acts in bad faith to deny all responsibility. Bad faith indicates the denial of one’s freedom, the denial of the possibility, and the obligation of man to define himself, e.g.: an individual decides to lie to support a socially valued image. The authenticity described in Sartre’s existentialist thought is based on these fundamental principles of responsibility and freedom, where the project of being is “the only way to define a being theoretically without definition” (Guigot, 2013).

#### 2.1.1.1. A psychological perspective

Luthans and Avolio (2003) explain that authenticity refers to being aware of and acting in accordance with one’s “true self” by expressing one’s true thoughts and beliefs. On the other hand, the work of Koydemir et al. (2020) and Kernis (2013) proposes that authenticity is made up of four elements: self-awareness, objective information processing, behaviors, and relational orientation.

First, self-awareness is defined by these authors as knowledge of one’s thoughts, feelings, intentions, and values. Second, objective information processing is described as being objective about oneself, including accepting one’s positive and negative attributes. Thirdly, behaviors are described as authentic when they are based on the individual’s true preferences, values, and needs rather than to please, obtain rewards, or avoid punishment. Finally, relational orientation is described as authentic when the individual values relationships based on openness and truthfulness.

This conceptualization proposed by Koydemir et al. (2020) and Kernis (2013), along with that of Harter (2002), served as a reference for the concept of authenticity present in the LA theoretical models of Gardner et al. (2005) and Walumbwa et al. (2008). The definition proposed by Harter (2002) has been the most widely used in the LA literature. It defines authenticity as “taking ownership of personal experiences, whether they are thoughts, feelings, needs, desires, preferences or beliefs.” Being “true” implies that the individual acts in accordance with him/herself and expresses him/herself in a way that is consistent with his/her thoughts and feelings (Harter, 2002). According to this definition, authenticity is related to identity: the authentic individual acts in accordance with his or her convictions and values (Novicevic et al., 2006).

More specifically, they propose that authenticity is composed of three dimensions: self-awareness, self-acceptance, and authentic actions and relationships. Precisely, self-awareness is expressed as knowledge of one’s motives, values, desires, and cognitions (Gardner et al., 2005; Kernis and Goldman, 2006). Self-acceptance is described as taking ownership of one’s self-knowledge and personal experiences (Harter, 2002), as well as the ability to be objective and to accept one’s strengths and weaknesses (Gardner et al., 2005).

Finally, authentic actions and relationships are defined as acting consistently, in accordance with one’s “true self” (expressing one’s true thoughts and beliefs and acting accordingly) (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). The Table 1 mentions the different definitions of authenticity.

#### 2.1.2. Types of authenticity

Grayson and Martinec (2004) shed light on the nature of the clues consumers use to construct their perceptions of authenticity. Grayson and Martinec (2004) build on this foundation of authenticity and conceptualize two types of authenticity: indexical and iconic.

##### 2.1.2.1. Indexical authenticity

It refers to something thought to be “the original” or “the real thing.” It has a spatiotemporal link with reality.

Take the example of a colonial-era rifle. For the individual to attribute indexical authenticity to it, the rifle must really have been designed and used in colonial times. In other words, it is the direct and genuine link with what the object refers to that enables it to be perceived as authentic. Many researchers agree that the main meaning of authenticity is undoubtedly that of a veridical property, i.e. being the “true object” (Beverland, 2006), being perceived as “true in itself” (Illicic and Webster, 2016; Moulard et al., 2015) or having a “true, real experience” (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). The vision of the authentic object as the original version or “real object,” where any kind of copies or duplications are considered inauthentic, is called indexical authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Moulard et al., 2015).

#### 2.1.2.2. Iconic authenticity

It refers to something whose physical manifestation resembles something that is indexically authentic (Grayson and Martinec, 2004), i.e. a faithful reproduction of the original. The icon is something that, like the piece, is perceived as being similar to something else (Peirce, 1998). Artists can shape perceptions of “real” and “fake” (Gilmore and Pine, 2007), to capture scenes, to stage them, to tell stories, to make them real so that people find what is presented authentic. Iconic authenticity contributes to the coexistence of the real and the fake (Crawford Camiciottoli et al., 2014).

#### 2.1.3. Authenticity: modern designs

In marketing today, the focus is on making an object authentic or even more authentic than the original in the eyes of consumers (Camus, 2023). It is recognized as a necessary condition for a good marketing strategy.

Authenticity must be felt through the consumer experience. This can be defined as “the whole phenomenon experienced by the consumer with products, brands or services.” (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

A brand is authentic if, in the eyes of the observer, it is true to itself and true to its consumers.

Authenticity, from a marketing perspective, is a brand-new field of research and is still in its infancy (Napoli and Flores 2013). As Fritz et al. (2017) point out, although greater research attention has been paid to authenticity in recent years, there are still gaps to be filled in the scientific literature. To date, research has focused mainly on influencing factors, as well as the consequences of brand authenticity (Fritz et al., 2017). This research is often exploratory (Illicic and Webster, 2015), descriptive and interpretative, and then limited to a specific product or category of products (Fritz et al., 2017). Moreover, there is no consensus on the definition of brand authenticity, in addition to none on the different dimensions of the construct (Illicic and Webster, 2014). In general, researches have yet to clearly define, conceptualize and measure this construct to understand its underlying processes and limitations (Morhart et al., 2015). The terms at the heart of authenticity:

##### 2.1.3.1. Being “honest”

In the Larousse definitions, it can be defined as acting uprightly and loyally, then leading an existence following the rules of social morality and probity. It also involves acting and speaking under one’s thoughts and being in good faith (Larousse, 2017). These aspects can also be reflected in a brand, when it may appear to be morally upright, by not causing scandals, for example. A brand would also be honest if it were transparent in its communications and with its customers.

##### 2.1.3.2. Being “sincere”

According to Larousse (2017), is the expression, without disguising them, of one’s thoughts and feelings, or that which is marked by frankness, uprightness, and which is truly experienced. Trilling (1972), quoted by Berger (1973), is one of the first authors to formally define sincerity in the context of an authentic being. The word sincerity means pure, unadulterated being. Initially attributed to things, such as wine, the term becomes metaphorical for people, first as constancy in the face of virtue, and then as refraining from pretense (Trilling, 1972 and Berger, 1973). Trilling (1972) argues generally that integrity consists in avoiding falsehood, i.e. being true to oneself and avoiding conformity to expected social roles. Being true to one’s brand means following one’s deepest motivations and primary values, and striving to remain true to them at all times. In other words, a brand sells a product of which it is proud and which represents it, and does not necessarily follow market trends.

The values of authenticity, transparency, honesty, and sincerity have always been important in marketing strategies. By being authentic and honest, it is easier to get closer to customers and prospects. And at the same time, they get closer to the brand and it will be top-of-mind in their future decision and purchase process. This is a long-term strategy with long-lasting effects.

##### 2.1.4. The need to invest in authentic marketing

Authenticity is a rare virtue that has a positive impact and positive consequences for the brand and helps to improve its equity. Several empirical studies show that consumers have a more favorable attitude to authentic objects or brands, compared to inauthentic ones (Carù and al., 2017; Valsesia et al., 2018). In a world of fake news, seamless product placement, and media scandals, it can be difficult to know who and what to believe. Young people in particular are concerned that the distinction between truth and fiction is becoming increasingly blurred.

This is a threat to marketers, who must do their best for their brand while maintaining credibility and transparency. According to Stackla’s Digital Age Impact report, 57% of consumers believe that less than half of brands create authentic content.

##### 2.1.5. The importance of authenticity in marketing

Consumers want transparency, honesty, and sincerity above all else, but there are certainly fraudsters and scoundrels who don’t hesitate to lie to our faces to extract our money. On the other hand, a lack of honesty and sincerity breeds mistrust and contempt. People always seem to fall for a dishonest or manipulative person because they’ve

managed to fool them once or twice (Moulard et al., 2015). But when these unhealthy attitudes are discovered, trust is shattered, often for life and forever. Customers want to deal with decent, honest, genuine people. In fact, in the long term, this is the best way for any organization to succeed. The more exemplary the code of conduct, the more people will trust the organization, whether at home, in the community, or in the workplace. Brand's high level of honesty and integrity will earn it respect - the foundation for building trust with its customers or anyone else.

### 2.1.6. Authenticity effect

#### 2.1.6.1. Authenticity earns trust

Generally speaking, brand trust has been perceived alternatively as a belief, a willingness, and a presumption. According to Gurviez and Korchia (2002), brand trust, from the consumer's point of view, is a psychological variable that reflects a series of aggregated presumptions related to the credibility, integrity, and benevolence attributed to the brand by the consumer. The literature offers a variety of views on this subject, ranging from the unidimensional (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), to the two-dimensional (credibility and benevolence) (Doney and Cannon, 1997), to the three-dimensional (credibility, benevolence, and integrity) (Gurviez and Korchia, 2002).

#### 2.1.6.2. The effect of authenticity on word-of-mouth

Brand authenticity affects word-of-mouth, mainly when it is seen as continuous (possessing a history), credible, and honest (Moulard et al., 2016). In terms of quality expectations, the study by Moulard et al. (2016) showed that the more unique a brand is perceived to be, the more quality consumers will perceive its products to be. The following Table 2 presents the different effects of authenticity.

## 2.2. Understanding Influencer Marketing

### 2.2.1. Definition

Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy that enables a company to promote its service or product by relying on the reputation of experts and personalities recognized in their field, influencers, or opinion leaders, to spread brand content to their community. In a way, it's the ability to create influencers or ambassadors for a certain brand, although there is a difference between influencers and ambassadors, depending on the angle. An efficient tool to get known by new targets, to create interest, and to generate conversion (Leung et al., 2022; Bharadwaj et al., 2022).

In psychology, influence is the process by which one person causes another to adopt a point of view. Influence implies an inflection, i.e., the person who would have thought or acted differently had he not been influenced, moves in the direction desired by the influencer in a seemingly spontaneous way. It's an imperceptible and profound phenomenon. Today, Influence Marketing is booming. It's a communications method that addresses the major issues facing brands and communications agencies when communicating on social networks (Pei and Mayzlin, 2022).

### 2.2.2. Types of influencers

In digital culture, an influencer is a person who, by virtue of his or her status, position, or media exposure, is able to act as a relay of opinion, influencing consumer habits for marketing purposes.

An influential person has the ability to persuade others and is seen as a role model. In sociology, we speak of mimicry or gregarious effects, to designate the fact that an individual or group of individuals consciously or unconsciously reproduces certain behaviors (Arzhanova et al., 2022).

- The larger an influencer's audience, the more attractive he or she is
- The more relevant the content produced by an influencer is, and the more in tune it is with user expectations, the more engagement it generates
- The more their fans recommend them to their own circle of contacts, the greater the appeal and notoriety of the influencer
- The more big-name brands work with a particular influencer, the greater his or her power becomes
- These new web stars master the codes of digital and create content with a high audience. They have the power to amplify messages on behalf of a brand if they like it.

#### 2.2.2.1. Celebrities

With more than 500,000 subscribers, the presence of a celebrity on a brand's side gives the brand greater visibility. This type of influencer attracts a very large audience to an event or drives significant traffic to a company's website. They bring credibility thanks to their powerful image and the values they embody. Their main assets are visibility and notoriety; for example, when launching a new product on the market, a famous influencer will be more beneficial.

#### 2.2.2.2. Macro-influencers

Macro-influencers are the biggest influencers. They have a community ranging from tens of thousands of fans to millions. Present in all fields of activity, their main advantage is the size of their community with a high rate of engagement. Macro-influencers generally have a high level of notoriety and can be excellent at attracting public attention. They are also more likely to be used to working with brands than micro-influencers.

#### 2.2.2.3. Micro-influencers

From 10,000 to 100,000 subscribers, also known as niche influencers communicate in very specific areas of activity and can create high-quality content that enhances the brand and engages its community. Micro-influencers have the merit of being more accessible than celebrity influencers, some studies have shown that engagement in micro-influencer publications is higher than that observed in the publications of social network stars, these are ordinary people who have made a name for themselves through their knowledge of a specialized field. Generally speaking, it has become an important element of social media.

#### 2.2.2.4. Nano-influencers

Have <10,000 followers: an influencer with a limited audience, he is perfectly at ease on social networks and through his universe. They can influence trends in specific universes thanks to their expertise, and target their audience with relevant content. Their fans tend to be engaged.

### 2.2.3. The objectives of a brand working with influencers

Brands no longer hold sole responsibility for the image they wish to convey. They are introducing influencers into their digital marketing and communications strategies, to promote their products and services. When a brand wishes to collaborate with influencers, its objectives are:

- Promote its products/services
- Search for traffic/visibility
- Work on its brand image
- Expand its audience
- Seek a rapid return on investment
- Positioning content.

### 2.2.4. The impact of influencers on consumer behavior

Followers are the target of almost every digital communication campaign. They are also the main motivation for influencers, whose job is to create valuable content for their followers. Most influencers have this obsessive goal: to grow their community and build up a large enough following to attract brands. The more followers they have, the greater their impact. Their mission is to interact, communicate and exchange with a federated community.

#### 2.2.4.1. Purchase intention (purchase decision)

Influencers on social networks play the role of influencers and opinion leaders for the people who follow them, which in turn translates into a real intention to buy and which subsequently translates into an act of purchase, “according to the study carried out by Ipsos, l’Argus de la presse and Cision, 75% of consumers buy after having read one of their contents. 3 out of 4 people who have bought a product after reading content published by an influencer say they are satisfied. Only 6% said they had been disappointed.”

#### 2.2.4.2. Encourage word-of-mouth

The power of prescription acts by rebound, 64% of Internet users who follow an influencer recommend products and brands after reading content published by influencers, which helps generate word-of-mouth and increase brand awareness.

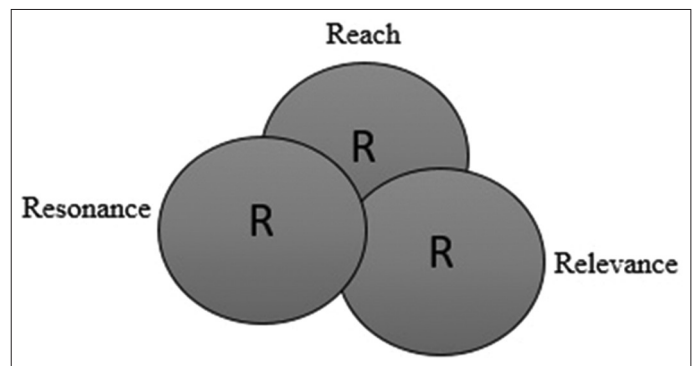
#### 2.2.4.3. Notoriety

Influencer marketing is the solution for increasing audience and brand awareness by leveraging an influencer’s reputation to build rivalry around products. Brand awareness influences consumer choice. In the context of social networks, the concept of brand awareness is defined as the degree to which consumers can recognize the specific quality of a product or service and even its image, hence “Today, 70% of consumers prefer to find out more about a brand, product or service, thanks to a detailed article that is relevant and informative, a review or even the recommendation of an influencer. And this, rather than through traditional advertising.”

#### 2.2.4.4. Gaining consumer confidence

“When an influencer shows their fans their favorite products, it’s like following their friends’ suggestions. Fans have a real sense of belonging to this community and a feeling of identification with the influencers. They want to be like them and therefore consume in the same way, According to a MediaKix 2017

**Figure 1:** The three pillars of the influencer



study, 82% of Internet users say they follow the advice of a trusted influencer, and 44% of women consider it necessary to see the product or service used to trust the influencer’s publication and 41% of men place expertise as a factor in trusting influencers.”

#### 2.2.4.5. Involvement and commitment

By being present on different communication channels, influencers can reach a wider audience and be close and in tune with their followers. With the right social media strategies, a brand can truly engage the entire consumer community in its campaign. “The use of hashtags is a good example, as they allow anyone to join the discussion and publicly share their views on the brand. This possibility of interaction helps establish a good relationship between the company and the customer. This small symbol placed before the word or expression on the social network is one of the most important basic elements for marking participation. This symbol allows social network users to interact on topics. It establishes a link between followers and influencers. Brands and influencers are looking to differentiate themselves to showcase their content, using hashtags to increase interaction with their products and services. In addition, today’s brands are using other levers, such as previewing products, especially during new product launches, sharing reviews and the examples don’t stop” and also influencers are putting consumers at the heart of a company’s online marketing strategy and content, offering experiences, sometimes live, and direct interaction, especially through live chat.

#### 2.2.5. The “3Rs of influencers” rule defined by Brian Solis

To maximize the impact of an influencer marketing strategy, we need to take into account the following three pillars concerning the influencer: reach (its audience), relevance (its relevance to the company), and resonance (its capacity to influence) (Solis and Hammes-Schiffer, 2012). The following Figure 1 presents the three pillars of the influencer.

- **Reach:** The total size of an influencer’s online audience across all social platforms, measured in terms of followers, subscribers, traffic.
- **Resonance:** That is, the engagement of the influencer’s audience with their content, measured by shares, likes, views, comments, retweets, etc.
- **Relevance:** The contextual affinity with the areas of interest, measured by the degree of correspondence between their content and the subjects that matter to you.

**Table 1: Definitions of authenticity**

Authors	Vocables	Definition
The psychological/individual perspective Erickson (1995. p. 131)	Acting in accordance with your values	(...) Authenticity can be defined as “the extent to which the individual fulfills the expectations or commitments he or she has set for him- or herself”. Authenticity comprises two aspects: the individual’s values and the individual’s evaluation.
Harter (2002. p. 382)	Be “real,” in accordance with yourself.	“The act of taking ownership of one’s personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, needs, desires, preferences or beliefs. Being “true” implies that the individual acts in accordance with himself and expresses himself in a way that is consistent with his thoughts and feelings.”
Kernis and Goldman (2006. P-294)	“True self, central self”	“Authenticity is the operation by which the individual accesses his or her “true self” or “core self” in everyday endeavor. (...) we suggest that authenticity can be broken down into four distinct but interdependent elements; awareness, impartial treatment, behavior and relational orientation.”
The existentialist/interactionist philosophical perspective Barrett-Lennard (1998, p. 82)	Coherence, three-dimensional relationship, consciousness	Authenticity is defined as “coherence between three levels: (a) a person’s primary experience, (b) symbolized consciousness, and (c) external behaviors and communication”.
Heidegger et al.(1962) and Sartre (1943, 1946)	Intersubjectivity, inauthenticity, duality, acceptance, consciousness, relationship	These authors do not propose an official definition, but they do discuss the concept extensively, these authors use certain points to define authenticity: authenticity is a dynamic concept (cannot be acquired in a stable manner), authenticity is an interactional concept (cannot be experienced alone).

**Table 2: Effects of authenticity**

Authors	List of effect variables
Napoli and Flores (2013)	- Trust and credibility
Llicic and Webster (2015)	- Purchasing intentions - Attitude
Morhart et al. (2015)	- Emotional connection to the brand - Positive word-of-mouth - Brand selection
Schallehn et al. (2014)	- Brand trust
Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016)	- Brand attachment
Fritz et al. (2017)	- Relationship quality - Willingness to pay the additional premium - Purchasing intentions - Willingness to forgive mistakes
Moulard et al. (2016)	- Expected quality - Trust
Napoli and Flores (2013)	-Value - Self-authentication level - Love for the brand - Reputation - Brand trust - Brand equity

### 2.2.6. The different levers of influencer marketing

With influencer marketing, companies have the opportunity to get its brand in front of the right people. Depending on the influencers the company chooses, it can increase brand awareness among consumers who are similar to old customers. Today, there are many possibilities for influencer partnerships. It’s very important to choose the type of content they want to create with their partner. Depending on the company’s objectives and budget, it can turn to different forms of partnership:

#### 2.2.6.1. The Buzzkit

The company promotes its new product by sending it to an influencer, who then tries it out and shares their opinion with their community. We can also link this principle to unboxing. The aim is obviously to get the receiver (the influencer) talking about

the product or event, in order to generate buzz. In this case, the company promotes its new product by sending it to influencers, who then test it and share their opinions with the community.

#### 2.2.6.2. Content sponsorship

This technique involves sponsoring a blog post or a message on social networks to gain maximum traffic and visibility. Indeed, working with influencers and using sponsored content is an option that makes it easier for brands to attract target audiences. This is the case with Instagram, which recently launched a new feature that allows brands to increase their sponsored content, so they can reach audiences outside the influencer community they work with. The market for sponsored posts on Instagram was at 6.5 billion in 2019 according to Influencer Marketing Hub’s research, and that topped 20 billion in 2020.

#### 2.2.6.3. Product placement

An advertising technique that uses a product’s prominence on a variety of media, from photos to videos to any other content relayed by an influencer, product placement can be adapted to different audiovisual and editorial landscapes. To determine how well it works, the number of views, users of a promotional code, clicks on a URL, mentions and appearances of the product or the number of engagements are all key indicators of the success of this type of influencer leverage. Product placement is most often done based on financial agreements, but sometimes it can also take the form of an exchange.

#### 2.2.6.4. The Takeover

This technique involves giving an influencer control over a company or brand account. The influencer is programmed for a specific period of time, with the aim of drawing the attention of his or her community to a service, product, page, or event. It all depends on the objective of the campaign, i.e. an influencer can take control of a brand’s story in the context of an event. This enables the brand to recruit new subscribers from the influencer.

**Table 3: The difference between ambassadors and influencers**

	<b>Ambassador</b>	<b>Influencer</b>
Brand relations	They've had a positive experience with a brand and want to share it. They are very often attached to that particular brand (and not to another in the same sector).	He is "hunted" by brands to promote products or services to his community. However, they do not have an exclusive contract. Brands can use specialized agencies to put them in touch with each other.
Compensation	He is not paid by a brand. Nor has the brand hired him to promote its products and/or services.	They are often paid (in kind or financially) by a brand to produce content, which is then distributed to their community.
Audience and visibility	It all depends on how well-known it is, but generally, it doesn't have a huge audience. But it does bring visibility to the brand.	It has a community that follows and engages with its content. Virality is guaranteed

#### 2.2.6.5. Meet-Ups

The brand organizes a moment of sharing between the influencer and his community. This allows the brand to be talked about and creates an image of proximity to the brand.

#### 2.2.6.6. Unboxing

Unboxing is a fast-growing phenomenon. It is generally performed by an influencer in front of a camera. The action consists in unboxing the product received live and sharing the experience with his or her community, as well as sharing his or her thoughts and opinions on the product. A moment based on emotion that works very well.

#### 2.2.6.7. Competition

The brand and the influencer jointly organize a contest. On the account of the influencer, offers to win a product or a set of products of the brand. The conditions of participation have been set to maximize visibility and thus promote the brand and the influencer.

#### 2.2.7. *The difference between ambassadors and influencers:*

**Influencers:** These are web users who are highly respected in their field or area of activity. They generally have a large following on the social network. Some influencers are compensated financially or in exchange for goodwill towards a brand or cause.

**Ambassador:** An ambassador is a person who is generally committed to a brand, either through satisfaction with a purchase or through affinity, and to whom he or she becomes attached by devoting a little time to it. On social networks, ambassadors are relatively "loyal" to the brand they follow, and to which they adhere. The Table 3 mentions the difference between ambassadors and influencers.

#### 2.2.8. *Benefits of influencer marketing for brands*

Influencer marketing is one of the best ways to quickly build a brand online and raise awareness among its target audience. According to Forbes, influencer marketing is growing faster than digital advertising, with the emphasis on tapping into an industry leader's following to help grow its own business.

##### 2.2.8.1. Gain notoriety

Influencer marketing enables organizations to send messages to a large, targeted, and qualified audience. Thanks to influencers, they can significantly increase the reach of their messages. Working with influencers not only gives them greater visibility on the web and raises their profile among Internet users, but also develops word-of-mouth communication: subscribers will identify or share publications with their circle of friends.

##### 2.2.8.2. Creating commitment

Influencers interact with their communities, which are often very active and reactive to their new publications. Subscribers interact with influencers through likes, comments, private messages, and more. Likewise, subscribers feel closer to the brand and don't hesitate to connect with the company on social media.

##### 2.2.8.3. Increase sales

Influencers will promote a certain product. The product is visible and exposed to a potential target audience in the form of a recommendation. Positive reviews from influencers are relayed, boosting sales.

##### 2.2.8.4. Reaching target audience effectively

This is an important point. With relevant influencers, companies' content is placed in front of social users who are already interested in their niche. They don't need to spend extra money to test and find new audience; the influencer has already encouraged that audience on social media.

#### 2.2.9. *Find the right influencer for a brand*

The beauty of influencer marketing is that the audience is already there, so all is needed to do is establish a win-win partnership where both parties offer incredible value to each audience. Since we're essentially talking about the Internet, the influencer's strength lies in the number of subscribers. The more subscribers they have, the greater their impact. Their mission is to communicate, exchange, and interact with a federated community. They are usually experts in a particular field, so companies need to carefully select the influencer to whom they will entrust the task of disseminating content according to their strategies, to guarantee effective collaboration. Identifying and targeting the right audience is an important part of the marketing strategy planned. It's often a daunting process that requires an in-depth understanding of potential customers. Choosing the right influencer is equally important to put in action a valid communications strategy. They need to be in tune with the brand's image and the audience wanted to reach.

#### 2.2.10. *The link between influencer and community: authenticity above all else*

"Why do influencers have so much power over the public (and in turn over brands)? First of all, these social networking experts are also experts in their field. Thus, they have the power to prescribe to users. Authenticity is defined by the sincerity of feelings, and the truth of a testimony. 82% of Internet users say they follow the advice of a trusted influencer. A third of consumers have bought a product or service following a publication by an influencer.

What's more, the content created has more impact when the influencer contributes his or her expertise, opinion, style, and creativity. Internet users are not mistaken: 39% believe that influencers' publications are of better quality than those of brands and 42% think that influencers share more information about the product or service cited. The main reason for their trust? 43% cite the authenticity of the influencer and his or her discourse. Indeed, today's consumers analyze, compare and seek advice on the products they are considering buying. They are also increasingly wary of brands' discourse, which they don't consider transparent enough. Influencers are people who look like them, often in the same age range and are "wise friends" with whom they can easily identify. Internet users, therefore, want to look like influencers, and consume like them to get closer to their community."

### 3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Authenticity, far from being a buzzword, is now recognized as a prerequisite for a good marketing strategy. The world is increasingly governed by packaging that meets marketing standards. Today's challenge for brands is to stand out from the crowd and, paradoxically, return to the source of a true, sincere, and trusting relationship with customers. This requires authenticity, which is lacking in many brands and companies.

"The notion of authenticity refers to the "sincerity of feelings and the truth of a testimony." A definition that resonates with social network users. Indeed, 46% of them believe that to deserve the label "authentic," an influencer must be driven by passion and deliver good advice. We've just shown in this final-year project that influencer marketing is very important and beneficial for the brand, but above all, the presence of the values of authenticity, transparency, honesty, and sincerity, has always been major factors in marketing strategies." Thanks to this project, we have enriched our knowledge of influencer marketing and the importance of investing in authentic marketing.

This investigation has revealed several limitations that may provide avenues for future research. On the one hand, this research presents only a review of the literature, which could be supplemented by a qualitative and quantitative study.

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