

THE INFLUENCE OF INFLUENCERS ON ONLINE PLATFORMS ON CREATING OWN BRANDING OF ONLINE AUDIENCES

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ABSTRACT

The rise of digital platforms has fundamentally changed how individuals construct personal identity and develop their own branding (Belk, 2013; Schau & Gilly, 2003). Influencers—individuals who possess the ability to shape attitudes, preferences, and behaviors through online content—play a critical role in this transformation (Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016). Their visibility, perceived authenticity, and social presence significantly affect how online audiences learn, imitate, and internalize branding practices (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2020).

This article employs a literature-based analytical approach to examine how influencers on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube shape the personal branding processes of online audiences. Findings indicate that influencers affect audiences through three primary mechanisms: social learning, aspirational identification, and participatory engagement (Khamis et al., 2017; Escalas & Bettman, 2017). These mechanisms encourage audiences to adopt branding strategies, aesthetic styles, identity performances, and digital storytelling techniques modeled by influencers (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Veirman et al., 2017).

Results reveal that online audiences do not merely consume influencer content but actively refashion themselves through digital persona creation, visual curation, and interactive engagement (Senft, 2013). However, challenges remain, including unrealistic beauty standards, algorithm-driven pressure, and the commercialization of identity (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016).

Keywords: influencers, personal branding, online platforms, digital identity, social media behavior

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed how individuals present themselves, communicate, and shape public perception (Marwick, 2015). Influencers—content creators with substantial reach and persuasive capacity—have emerged as powerful cultural intermediaries capable of altering trends, lifestyles, and values within digital environments (Abidin, 2016; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016). As audiences increasingly consume influencer-generated content, the process of creating personal branding has shifted from being exclusive to public figures and organizations to becoming a widespread social practice (Khamis et al., 2017).

Personal branding is no longer limited to professionals or celebrities; rather, digital users of all backgrounds strategically curate online identities to attract followers, enhance social status, or pursue economic opportunities (Schau & Gilly, 2003; Belk, 2013). Influencers contribute significantly to this phenomenon by providing models, templates, and narratives that audiences can adapt and emulate (Childers et al., 2019).

This article examines how influencers function as agents of behavioral modeling, shaping the personal branding strategies of online audiences. Through a review of international and regional literature, the article explores (1) how influencers influence audience behavior, (2) how audiences construct their own brand identities, and (3) the implications for digital culture and online participation (Escalas & Bettman, 2017)

Conceptual Framework and Related Literature

2.1 Influencer Concepts

Influencers are individuals who possess perceived expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, or social authority in particular content domains (Audrezet et al., 2020). Their persuasive power is derived from three key dimensions:

Parasocial interaction: audiences feel personal connection or intimacy (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Perceived authenticity: influencers appear “real,” relatable, and trustworthy (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Social proof: large follower counts and engagement create perceived credibility (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019)

Influencers affect attitudes and behaviors through modeling lifestyles, values, and consumption patterns that audiences imitate or internalize (Marwick, 2015)

2.2 Personal Branding

Personal branding refers to the strategic process of defining and communicating a distinctive identity or image to influence others' perceptions (Khamis et al., 2017). On digital platforms, personal branding includes:

identity curation (Schau & Gilly, 2003)

visual aesthetics (Marwick, 2015)

consistent messaging (Senft, 2013)

lifestyle narratives (Belk, 2013)

community engagement (Childers et al., 2019)

Digital platforms amplify personal branding because algorithms reward visibility, consistency, and interaction (Veirman et al., 2017; Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

2.3 Digital Platforms and Audience Behavior

Social media platforms play a structural role

Algorithms promote influencer content to targeted audiences (Veirman et al., 2017)

Interactive tools (likes, comments, shares) reinforce identity performance (Marwick & Boyd, 2011)

Platform cultures (challenges, trends, aesthetics) shape branding norms (Ting et al., 2015)

Studies suggest that online audiences learn branding behaviors through social learning theory, peer influence, and aspirational identification (Escalas & Bettman, 2017)

2.4 Related Studies

Existing research identifies several themes

Influencer persuasion—Influencers shape perceptions of beauty, lifestyle, and consumption (Marwick, 2015)

Audience imitation—Younger audiences replicate influencer aesthetics and communication styles (Childers et al., 2019)

Digital identity formation—Users construct multiple identities across platforms, influenced by cultural norms and digital interactions (Belk, 2013)

Brand co-creation—Audiences participate in branding through engagement, memes, and user-generated content (Senft, 2013)

Together, these studies highlight influences as key agents in shaping digital behavior and personal branding practices (Khamis et al., 2017)

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the mechanisms through which influencers affect online audiences on digital platforms (Escalas & Bettman, 2017)
2. To examine how online audiences construct personal branding based on influencer models and digital culture (Schau & Gilly, 2003)
3. To identify implications and challenges arising from influencer-driven personal branding (Marwick, 2015)

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a qualitative review of academic research, digital culture studies, marketing literature, and social media behavioral analysis (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016) Sources include journal articles on influencers, branding, and digital identity (Abidin, 2016) marketing and communication research (Childers et al., 2019) reports on social media usage case studies of influencer-audience interactions (Liu et al., 2019)

The analysis focuses on three key dimensions mechanisms of influencer impact personal branding practices among audiences cultural and behavioral implications of online identity formation (Belk, 2013)

Findings

5.1 Mechanisms of Influencer Impact

Influencers shape audience behavior through:

Social Learning

Audiences observe influencer behavior—style, language, aesthetics—and replicate them (Marwick, 2015)

Aspirational Identification

Audiences identify with influencers' lifestyles and seek to emulate their digital success (Escalas & Bettman, 2017)

Engagement and Participation

Interactive features motivate audiences to participate, imitate, and perform similar content (Marwick & Boyd, 2011)

5.2 Personal Branding Practices of Online Audiences

Digital audiences create personal branding through:

Identity Construction

Curating photos, captions, and themes inspired by influencers (Schau & Gilly, 2003)

Aesthetic Replication

Adopting influencer-style visuals, filters, fashion, and tone (Abidin, 2016)

Narrative Building

Sharing personal stories modeled after influencer storytelling structures (Childers et al., 2019)

5.3 Cultural and Behavioral Implications

Influencer-driven branding has several impacts

increases pressure for self-presentation (Marwick, 2015) blurs boundaries between personal identity and commercial identity (Khamis et al., 2017) reinforces platform algorithms that reward aesthetic conformity (Veirman et al., 2017) influences youth culture, career aspirations, and social norms (Ting et al., 2015)

Discussion

While influencers offer inspiration and skill-building for personal branding, challenges arise

Digital Inequality

Not all users have equal access to technology, editing tools, or platforms (Childers et al., 2019)

Psychological Pressure

Influencer culture fosters perfectionism, comparison, and self-image issues (Marwick, 2015)

Commercialization of Identity

Personal branding becomes linked to monetization, leading to identity commodification (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016)

Algorithmic Influence

Platform algorithms shape what personal branding styles become visible or successful (Veirman et al., 2017)

Development directions should emphasize media literacy, healthy online engagement, and better regulation of influencer commercial practices (Audrezet et al., 2020)

Case Studies

7.1 Micro-influencers on Instagram

Audiences replicate minimalistic aesthetics, lifestyle photography, and color palettes (Childers et al., 2019)

7.2 TikTok Content Trends

Short-form videos create rapid cycles of imitation, accelerating branding trends among youth (Ting et al., 2015)

7.3 YouTube Personality Branding

Long-form vlogs inspire audiences to develop persona-based branding (Liu et al., 2019)

RESULTS

Influencers significantly shape how online audiences understand and practice personal branding through modeling, imitation, and interactive engagement (Marwick, 2015; Khamis et al., 2017)

Online audiences actively co-construct their digital identities by adopting aesthetic styles, narratives, and branding frameworks demonstrated by influencers (Senft, 2013)

The influence is moderated by algorithmic exposure, digital literacy, socio-cultural backgrounds, and psychological factors (Veirman et al., 2017)

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Influencers play a powerful role in shaping how online audiences create personal branding. Their visibility, authenticity, and aesthetic leadership offer templates that audiences adopt, modify, and internalize (Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016). While influencers provide learning opportunities and inspiration, their impact also raises concerns about digital pressure, identity commodification, and algorithmic shaping of self-expression (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016). Strengthening digital literacy, promoting responsible influencer practices, and encouraging diverse forms of identity expression can support healthier personal branding among online audiences (Audrezet et al., 2020). The entertainment business or e-commerce business as the different consumer behaviors such as their independence and convenience in choosing digital media on any social media as required. Chomchoom, N., Assawapongvanich, K., Phakajang, A. (2024).

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