# The Rise of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Lifestyle Branding: A Case Study of Lucie Fink

Morgan Glucksman

Strategic Communications Elon University

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements in an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

# Abstract

Influencer marketing, the process of identifying, engaging and supporting individuals who create conversations with a brand's customers, is a growing trend used in public relations initiatives. In recent years, this strategy has become predominantly centered around social media, creating an opportunity for brands to market through social media influencers. To investigate this phenomenon, the author conducted pentadic analysis as well as qualitative content analyses of posts by social media influencers. Findings revealed that the use of social media influencer marketing in public relations initiatives has broken the wall between the consumer and the brand, changing the way the two interact.

# I. Introduction

According to Forbes, influencer marketing can be defined as a form of marketing in which focus is placed on specific key individuals rather than the target market as a whole (Forbes.com). Traditionally, when people think of influencer marketing, they think of a celebrity appearance in a TV commercial or a famous person posed on a billboard along a highway. Companies hope that by showcasing people of interest to their target markets, consumers will be more inclined to try the product or service that the company offers.

As media and technology have become more advanced, companies can choose from a range of options in outlets to market their products. These options have also led to the evolution of social media influencer marketing. Now you can find people representing companies through branded content on personal social media accounts, such as Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube. More than ever, consumers are looking to fellow consumers to inform their purchasing decisions.

The rise of social media has opened up a new channel for brands to connect with consumers more directly and more organically. If a brand is not using social media influencer marketing as a strategy to better attract its target audience, now may be the time for the company to start evaluating their advertising strategy. Social media brand influencers are on the rise, becoming one of the biggest marketing and public relations trends of 2017, especially those who promote lifestyle brands. Lifestyle influencers focus on working with companies whose products non-celebrity individuals use in their everyday lives. By working alongside social media influencers, public relations agencies can capture the attention of brand consumers and promote relevant and relatable content to clients. While influencer marketing based on traditional media has been used

**Keywords:** influencer marketing, social media, advertising, social media influencers, lifestyle branding Email: mglucksman@elon.edu

in public relations for many years, the rise of social media has created the boom of social media influencer marketing. Social media influencer marketing has successfully changed the way that brands interact with consumers, especially in regard to lifestyle branding.

This study examined what strategies have made influencer marketing such a successful public relations tool and how the use of social media has allowed brands and consumers to connect on a more personal level.

## II. Literature Review

Influencer marketing incorporating social media is a new phenomenon within the industry. Due to the constantly evolving and changing market, this topic has been widely discussed by contemporary media, but not enough by scholarly researchers. The literature review covered the identification of social media influencers, their importance and impact on brands, and the strategic planning they employed while communicating with consumers. To include an analysis of the latest techniques used by social media influencers in their marketing, this study reviewed trade publications and news articles as well as traditional academic sources.

#### Who Are Social Media Influencers?

Social media influencers represent a new type of independent, third-party endorsers who shape an audience's attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media channels (Fredberg, 3). Through sites like Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, social media influencers create content promoting certain brands with the goal of obtaining a following and brand recognition.

According to Fredberg, the success of social media influencers is vitally important to brands; therefore, technology has been developed to identify and track influencers' relevance to a brand or organization. This technology tracks the number of hits on a blog, times a blog is shared, likes and comments, and followers. All of these points are pivotal aspects of a social media influencer's success (Fredberg, 3).

Influencer marketing on social media opens up a new channel for brands to connect with consumers more directly, organically, and at scale to their everyday lives (Adweek). Social media influencers promote brands through their personal lives, making them relatable to the average consumer. According to Ledbetter, "When a party attempts to influence another to take specific actions, a dynamic ensues that can change the course and content of their relationship" (Ledbetter, 3). Influencers truly serve as the ultimate connection between a brand and a consumer. Through their candidness and openness with consumers, influencers have high social clout and credibility (Buyer, 2016), which is what makes the phenomenon so successful. Where traditional marketing targeted mostly mass audiences, influencers have the unique ability to target niche audiences that have until now been unreachable (Ledbetter).

### Influencers' Impact on the Brand

Brands have always had a focus on targeting their consumers' wants and needs. The image a brand gains from its social media influencers helps build direct relationships with its key consumers and encourages brand loyalty. While a brand does not have total control over its online conversation, the direct voice of an influencer and trust that consumers have for this individual is instilled in the brand through the two-way conversation that is established for the product via social media outlets (Booth and Matic, 3).

Social media tools are becoming more valuable and one of the core elements of a communication strategy in an average consumer's life. According to Gillin, there are a wide range of factors that cause influencer marketing to become increasingly popular. These factors range from difficult-to-measure criteria, such as "quality of content," to highly measureable factors including page views and search engine rank. With media platforms rapidly improving, these criteria are bound to change. In addition, other criteria for evaluating influence include participation level, frequency of activity, and prominence in the market or community (Booth and Matic, 3). In terms of goals on the influencer's side, social media influencers work to enhance relationships with key audiences by improving the reputation of the business/brand, driving customer awareness on their online activities, and soliciting customers' comments and feedback (Booth and Matic, 3).

### **Theories Behind Influencer Communication**

Bandura, the social-science theorist responsible for much of our understanding of how people react in social situations, wrote, "In the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviors of others (Bandura, 3). This explanation can help one understand why influencers are so "influential." Bandura explained, "On the basis of informative feedback, they (consumers) develop thoughts or hypotheses about the types of behavior most likely to succeed. These hypotheses then serve as guides for future actions" (3). To put this into simpler terms, people learn from example, and influencers lead by example for those who "follow" them. By observing examples through social media, people are more likely to adopt the behaviors exhibited by the influencer (Forbes, 2016). Companies are using their resources via social media influencers in hopes that the experience that a consumer has with an influencer allows the behavior of the influencer to be adopted, that is, copied by the consumer (Forbes).

In addition to Bandura's social learning theory, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) can help one better understand the strategies that make social media influencers so successful. eWOM refers to any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, and former customers about a product or company via the internet. eWOM encourages consumers to share their opinions with other consumers. Word of mouth is known to be one of the most credible and trusted sources of marketing. Social media influencers are masters at eWOM. Social media influencers take on the role of forming consumers' opinions on products and services. That said, it is in the interest of the company as well as the influencer to keep online conversations positive and persuade other consumers to try products in a way that makes it feel as if the decision to make the purchase was in the interest of the consumer as opposed to the persuasion of the influencer (Lee and Youn, 473-475).

Researchers have studied who social media influencers are, their impact on the brand, and the strategic planning behind their communication with consumers, but not much on how influential these people might be. This study conducted qualitative analyses to discover how these social media influencers have become so successful and why influencer marketing is the fastest growing and most popular tactic in public relations today.

This research addressed the following two research questions and set up one hypothesis:

RQ1: What makes a social media influencer successful?

RQ2: Do companies view social media influencers as positive or negative to their companies?

H1: Social media influencer marketing has successfully changed the way that brands interact with consumers.

## **III. Methods**

To answer the two research questions and test this hypothesis, the author gathered examples of influencer marketing from Instagram and YouTube and examined these media forms. Two types of analysis were performed.

The first was a pentadic analysis, which looked at Instagram to examine the strategies that influencers appear to use when posting content. A pentadic analysis considers the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of a media artifact. The act tells what happened; the agent performed the act, the tools/means an agent used to perform the act; the scene provides context for the act; and the purpose explains why the event occurred. This provides an opportunity for the researcher to begin to understand what goes through social media influencers' minds when they create an Instagram post. The analysis can also reveal what appears to be the motives behind the posts of influencer marketers.

The second method employed was a content analysis of YouTube videos to examine how social media influencers engage with their audience members as well as the techniques that they appear to use to advertise via YouTube. In order to conduct this qualitative content analysis, the author analyzed videos based on three characteristics that were determined to be important based on previous research: confidence, interactivity, and authenticity (Bandura, 4). In terms of social media influencers, these characteristics mean:

- **Confidence**: When influencers trust their own-self and assures not only themselves but also their viewers of their abilities.
- Authenticity: The influencer is genuine and relatable with their followers.
- Interactivity: The influencer works together with the viewer to solicit feedback.

Overall, social media influencers post content on some form of social media and use similar strategies to distribute their messages. There are hundreds of social media influencers within the lifestyle industry, and YouTube and Instagram appear to be the two most popular platforms. These influencers have individual personalities but seem to operate in the same way. Therefore, if we understand how one lifestyle influencer operates, we can understand how many of them operate. To conduct research, a case study focused on one influencer, Lucie Fink, a continually growing and successful influencer, and it will combine the pentadic and content analyses to draw conclusions.

#### Background on Lucie Fink

Lucie Fink is a social media influencer and a lifestyle host at Refinery29, leading digital-media company focused on women. Refinery29 provides its audience with the inspiration and tools to discover and pursue a more independent, stylish, and informed life (Refinery29 Corporate). Fink has a following of more than 65,000 people on Instagram and two YouTube shows, "Try Living with Lucie" and "Lucie for Hire." Her "Try Living with Lucie" video series currently has 46 videos, which have more than one million views combined.

In a personal interview with Fink, she described her personal brand in two ways. First, she described herself as a lifestyle personality, noting "I'm not trying to be a beauty blogger or a fashion blogger or a fitness blogger. I am kind of every piece of the puzzle. I can try out almost anything and it would feel natural to my feed. I feel like the audience is really there for me and my personal life, which includes fitness, food, fashion, beauty. Almost everything" (Personal interview). Fink then shared that curiosity was a part of her personal brand: "I like my personal brand to be all about being exploratory and trying new things and it really is closely aligned with both my Refinery29 video content and also just my personal persona of who I really am" (Personal interview). While already a respected lifestyle social media influencer, Fink's exploratory and versatile personal brand has resulted in an increase by hundreds of followers on a daily basis.

Fink's personal brand has caused many companies to seek her out to promote their products through advertisements on both Instagram and YouTube, attempting to connect the brand and the consumer on a more personal level. While Fink's influencer marketing tactics appear more traditional on Instagram, when she utilizes YouTube, a more unique storytelling influencer marketing approach is used, which could be the secret to her success.

### **IV. Findings and Discussion**

This qualitative study found that social media influencers' success does not rely solely on their follower count, but their ability to influence followers through authenticity, confidence, and interactivity to create a connection between the follow and the brand.

#### Social Media Influencers on Instagram

This research found factors that make a social media influencer successful using a pentadic analysis. Many influencers, like Fink, take to Instagram because it is a quick and easy way to post authentic content and streamline brands directly into posts by tagging them. Tagging brands makes it easier for an interested consumer to go directly to the source of the product.

In order to examine Fink's posts further, a pentadic analysis was performed. A pentadic analysis studied the act, agent, agency, and purpose of the images posted by Lucie. In many social media influencers' posts, including Fink, the act, agent, and purpose are all generally the same. Based on primary research, the author found that the act is the advertisement being posted to Instagram; the agent, is the influencer. In this analysis, Fink is the agent. The purpose is to promote a product and gain follower interest, follow the influencer's lead, and purchase the said product. What changes in every influencer's post and makes

it unique is the agency, which is the different brands that the influencer promotes. Since Fink is a lifestyle influencer, there are a number of brands that she promotes on Instagram, such as Murad Skincare, Carnival Cruise Line, and Soul Cycle. These findings are reflected in one of Fink's Instagram posts based on a pentadic analysis.

#### Pentadic Analysis Performed on Instagram

In *Figure 1*, Fink (agent) is advertising for a company (agency), Murad, which is a skincare brand. Fink has a partnership with Murad, and it is her job to reach a new, younger market for this product that has been predominantly sold to middle-aged women in the pre-social media era (purpose). Fink posts Instagram content for Murad as well as weaves its products into her YouTube videos to try to expose it to her followers, which include Murad's desired demographic.



Figure 1: Murad advertisement on Instagram posted by @luciebfink

*Figure 1* shows one of Fink's Instagram posts for Murad. What many people might notice is that Fink uses brand specific tags, such as #ad, #muradskincare, and @muradskincare. The use of the company name gives the followers many opportunities to connect with the brand directly through Fink with a simple click.

### Marketing the Feeling

When it comes to her personality, Fink leaves a quirky, down-to-earth, and relatable impression on her followers. In her photos, she tries to market the product through her personality. In order to advertise the Murad product, Fink applied it to her face in a fun and exciting way (as shown in *Figure 1*) that is reflective of her quirky style. While it might seem like the placement of the product on her face is not a big deal, it catches the attention of consumers without them even realizing that they are viewing an advertisement.

In addition to the placement of the product on her face, Fink holds the product that a consumer can buy in stores. This is an opportunity for potential product consumers to begin to recognize the brand without having personally experienced the product and visualize using the product themselves.

If the follower didn't get a chance to catch the name of the product through the image, there is another opportunity for them to do so in Fink's caption. The caption in *Figure 1* provides the product in addition to tagging the company so that followers can read it and remember the name of the product and not have to rely solely on the image. In addition, Fink writes that she is "never going to take it (Murad) off," subtly hinting to her followers how much she enjoys wearing the product and having it as a part of her everyday skincare routine. This strategy directly relates to Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 3) in the literature review. It is the idea that influencers have the power to persuade their followers through the actions of the influencer. In this case,

Fink's followers—she and Murad hope—will begin to use Murad skincare products.

#### Enhancing Relationships with Followers

Instagram also gives followers the opportunity to talk to these influencers and the ability for the influencer to interact and respond to their followers. For example, some followers left comments on the image shown in *Figure 1*:

- "I'm looking for a good sunscreen to put under my make-up. Maybe ill try this one!"
- "I am testing out another brand but when I'm finished I'll switch to this one. Thanks for the recommendation!"
- "I haven't found a sunscreen I like yet so really want to try this one out!!"
- Fink responded all of these followers confirming their interest in the product:
- "I've been wearing it every day and you can barely tell its there"
- "Let me know how you like it!!!!"
- "Do it!!!!"

The two-way conversation between the influencer and the follower gives this advertisement a new dimension that did not exist before the use of social media influencers. This two-way conversation also gives the influencer one more opportunity to promote the product through a personal recommendation, which can turn a follower into a brand consumer. Advertising and gaining new brand consumers through Fink's social media advertisements is the main goal of Murad's partnership with Fink.

This pentadic analysis reveals that everything that Fink and other social media influencers do to promote products through Instagram is meticulously planned out and strategic. An influencer shares with followers firsthand experiences of how a product can benefit them. This then allows a consumer to connect to the brand in a new and innovative way. From the placement of the product, to the caption, and even to the context of the scene in which the advertisement is taking place, everything is executed in a particular way to maximize brand recognition through individual personalities.

Performing a pentadic analysis on Fink's Instagram content helped answer Research Question 1 which was, what makes a social media influencer successful? Through examination of Fink's Instagram content, it is clear that she is successful in placing products in photos, directly linking the company to potential consumers, and answering consumers' comments. This shines a positive light on the advertised brand as well as encouraging consumers to recognize that the brand will help answer their problems.

#### Social Media Influencers on YouTube

In addition to Instagram, social media influencers use YouTube to target desired audiences. What makes YouTube such a unique media platform? Unlike Instagram, which is mostly photos, graphics, and short video clips, YouTube gives an influencer the opportunity to create and share videos that dig deeper into their lives. Social media influencers create how-to videos, advice videos, and so much more, and that viewers watch because they value influencer opinions.

Unlike other social media influencers, Fink produced content through an original web series called "Try Living with Lucie." In true form to Fink's personal brand, the whole premise of the series is that Fink tries a new lifestyle change for five days at a time and records her experience vlog style (video-blog). By using this style of presentation, the viewers feel as if they are taking the journey with Fink. She hopes that by sharing these experiences with her followers, they are encouraged to implement these lifestyle changes into their everyday lives as well. In an interview, Fink stated that "overly branded content has a way less impactful outcome than content that seems organic" (Personal interview). Each weekly challenge is designed to influence people to make subtle changes in their everyday lives. Two examples of Fink's videos are "5 days of minimalism and cutting out excess in your life" and "5 days of personal acceptance and self-confidence." While all her videos attempt to influence a lifestyle change, each subtly includes branded content as well. Brands now focus on marketing products through personal experience. This allows a brand to be worked into an individual's life as opposed to just being advertised through traditional marketing strategies.

### Content Analysis Performed on YouTube

Performing a content analysis helped in further answering RQ 1, what makes a social media influencer successful" In addition, the analysis helped to evaluate the hypothesis that social media influencer marketing has successfully changed the way that brands interact with consumers. In order to look at the success of lifestyle social media influencer marketing through YouTube videos, a content analysis was performed on Fink's series, "Try Living with Lucie," looking for the three specific characteristics that are thought to create successful influencer content. Each video was evaluated based on authenticity, confidence, and interactivity between the influencer and the viewer. For this study, the researcher focused on one "Try Living with Lucie" video called, "5 Days of New Experiences," which was sponsored by Carnival Cruise Line. This analysis used the three characteristics to determine how successful Fink was in producing branded content via YouTube for Carnival Cruise Line.



Figure 2: Screenshot from "5 Days of New Experiences," Carnival Cruise Line

### Influencer Authenticity

For social media influencer's whose focus is on lifestyle branding, authenticity is key. This study defined authenticity as the influencer being genuine, honest, and open with her followers. Authenticity allows an influencer to relate with followers on a new level and aids in building a relationship between followers and brands. Creating content for YouTube that is authentic gives influencers the opportunity to share their personal thoughts, opinions, and style with their followers who may then take their lead.

In Fink's video, "5 Days of New Experiences," she was challenged, with her friend Ashley, to try something new every day for a week. Since this video is also an advertisement for Carnival Cruise Line, Fink's new experiences take place on a five-day Carnival Cruise. The company attempts to establish itself as a young, vibrant, and friendly cruise line. As a result, Carnival chose to partner with Fink, an individual who is authentic and relatable and shows off those similar personality traits in her videos.

In a personal interview, Fink explained that being authentic in her videos is important and that is what makes her unique from other lifestyle influencers. She said, "the reason why I have become so successful is because all of my content is one hundred percent me. My personality on camera mirrors my personality off camera; there is no acting" (Personal interview).

"5 Days of New Experiences" stays true to Fink's authentic, down-to-earth style while showing off the similarities between her and the cruise line. While many of the Fink's experiences showcase what the cruise line has to offer, such as ropes courses, water parks, spa services and more, Fink also takes the time to challenge herself to new experiences on a smaller more relatable scale such as unplugging and prioritizing a close friendship, as shown in *Figure 3*.



Figure 3: Screenshot from "5 Days of New Experiences" posted by Refinery29

While "5 Days of New Experiences" is all about trying new experiences, it is ultimately meant to inspire Fink's followers through her authentic content to experience Carnival Cruise Line. This video could be considered successful because, as one of Lucie's followers commented, "I seriously cannot wait to go on a cruise with my best friend!! Adding this my bucket list." Carnival Cruise Line directly benefits from Fink's content because her followers are introduced to the company. This new awareness encourages thousands of new customers to consider Carnival Cruise based on the enthusiasm that Fink and her friend share from their experience.

### Influencer Confidence

Brands want influencers promoting their products who are confident in themselves. When influencers express confidence in themselves, it also promotes confidence in the brand. This brand confidence leaves a lasting impression on followers and causes them to consider becoming a consumer of the product. According to the Influencer Orchestration Network, "51 percent of marketers believe they get better customers from influencer marketing. That is because the relationship began with the trust of the influencer" (Burgess, 2017).

Although Carnival Cruise Line had a loss of customer trust due to experiences while on cruises, the company is continually working on building confidence with consumers. In addition, Carnival has a certain stigma of being a lower quality cruise line in comparison to their competitors, Royal Caribbean and Norwegian Cruise Line. This stigma could cause potential customers to choose one of Carnival's competitor cruise lines when planning their vacation. Carnival needed an individual that target consumers trust to advertise its product, which is, ultimately, why it partnered with Fink.

This content analysis found that confidence can be shown through both verbal and physical actions. In her video, "5 Days of New Experiences," Fink exhibits confidence in the cruise line through the specific claims she makes about her Carnival experiences. These claims can also be backed up by footage of her participating in an array of experiences. Throughout the video, Fink consistently uses word such as "excited," "amazing," and "success" in the video, which verbally shows followers that Fink is confident in the company. For example, Fink refers to a snorkeling trip as "a great success." Fink shows confidence in the Carnival Cruise Line by spending an entire video promoting and highlighting its features in a positive light. In addition, the trust her followers have in her made Carnival believe that Fink was the perfect individual to reach their target demographic.



Figure 4: Lucie displays confidence through her body language in "Try Living with Lucie."

Fink also exhibits confidence through her actions and body language. In all of Fink's YouTube content, when talking to her audience, Fink makes eye contact with the camera when having a conversation with her followers. She also constantly appears engaged and speaks with certainty. *Figure 4* is a screenshot from one of Fink's "Try Living with Lucie" videos, which shows her talking with followers while exhibiting these body language characteristics. By creating content like this, viewers feel as if they are participating in a personal conversation with her. Positive talk and body language give the illusion to followers that influencers instill their confidence in themselves as well as the brand, which could then make the follower more inclined to purchase the advertised product.

### Influencer Interactivity

Traditional public relations influencer marketing tactics utilize media outlets such as newspapers, television, and radio to reach audiences. These traditional tactics can be successful in terms of increasing brand awareness, but don't necessarily create a relationship between the brand and consumers like social media influencer marketing does today. Through interactive video content, influencers shed a positive light on brand products and invite their followers to purchase a product and experience it themselves.

This study defines interactivity as the influencer working together with the viewer to solicit feedback. Fink's "Try Living with Lucie" series would not exist if it weren't for the interactivity that she initiates with her followers. Throughout all her videos, Fink takes the time to ask her followers their opinions about what she is sharing and also tells the viewers to apply her experiences to their everyday lives. In "5 Days of New Experiences," Fink signs off by saying, "In true form to the series, now you guys need to take what we did this week and apply it to your lives." While viewers can interpret that goodbye in their own way, this is one last opportunity for Fink to push her experiences and products onto her followers. In this case, Fink is giving her followers one last reminder of her experiences on Carnival Cruise Line and encouraging them to participate in the experiences she's had.

In addition to verbal interactivity with her followers, Fink invites her followers to share their feedback at the end of her videos. When followers leave comments on her video, it offers an opportunity for a personal conversation between Fink and her followers, creating a more personal connection. An example of this can be seen in *Figure 5*.



Figure 5: Follower comment on "5 Days of New Experiences"

Similar to the findings of the pentadic analysis performed on Fink's Instagram post, comments also allow an opportunity for a conversation between followers to develop that reflect the represented brand. In "5 Days of New Experiences," Fink invites her followers to not only engage with her through comments, but also with each other. This interactivity causes followers to comment, asking what ship she is on, what activities are available on other ships, and other Carnival Cruise Line brand specific questions. Having conversations that ask these kinds of questions are an important part of the strategy behind Carnival Cruise Line's partnership with Fink.

According to the Influencer Orchestration Network, "37 percent better retention is reported through word-of-mouth advertising" (Burgess). The literature review explains electronic word of mouth as a strategy, which refers to any statement made by potential, actual, and former customers about a product or company via the internet. Fink is a master at electronic word of mouth, as many successful influencers are, not only because she takes on the role of forming consumers' opinions about products and services, but she also encourages them to share their opinions with other consumers as well. Since word of mouth is the most credible and trusted source of brand marketing, followers may be more inclined to take a Carnival Cruise based on their interaction with Fink's content.

Findings from this content analysis prove that interactivity, authenticity, and confidence are crucial characteristics for influencers to possess when creating lifestyle branded content. When influencers possess these three characteristics, they are likely to be successful in attaining brand partnership goals. In addition, this content analysis helped answer RQ 2, do companies view social media influencers as positive or negative for their companies? This research above affirms H1 that social media influencer marketing has successfully changed the way that brands interact with its consumers.

## V. Conclusion

Social media influencers who promote a lifestyle brand are most successful interacting with consumers when they are authentic, confident, and interactive in their content. While this research focused on lifestyle branding, the same likely holds true for many products that public relations agencies and marketers promote, from automobiles to electronics to household products.

The use of social media influencer marketing in lifestyle public relations initiatives has broken the wall between the consumer, the brand, and followers through social media content. Before the rise of social media influencers, advertising to brand consumers was one-sided. Before the days of social media, a consumer could only see a product through print advertisements, billboards, radio ads, and television commercials. Today, a consumer now can interact with a product through social media. Watching a trusted source, such as Fink, use a product allows consumers to feel as if they are making a more informed decision when making a purchase. Through research, it is evident that social media influencer marketing has, in fact, changed the way brands interact with consumers in a positive way. The success that brands may expect is due to this two-way interactive public relations tactic and helps to explain why social media influencer marketing is one of the biggest trends of 2017.

## **Acknowledgments**

This author is thankful to David Copeland, A. J. Fletcher Professor at Elon University, for his supervision and advice, without which the article could not be published. The author also appreciates numerous reviewers who have helped revise this article.

## References

Bandura, A. (1971). Social Learning Theory. General Learning Corporation.

- Booth, N., & Matic, J. A. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. Corporate Communications : An International Journal, 16(3), 184-191.
- Burgess, Eric. "11 Essential Stats for Influencer Marketing in 2016." *ION*. N.p., 23 Jan. 2017. Web. 29 Apr. 2017.
- Buyer, Lisa. "PR Under the Influence: Why Influencer Marketing is all the Buzz."#SocialPR Chat. N.p., 18 Jan. 2016. Web. 28 Mar. 2017.
- Fink, Lucie/Try Living with Lucie. "5 Days of New Experiences." Online video clip. YouTube. Refinery29, July 8, 2016. Web. April 23, 2017.
- Forbes, Kristin . "Examining the Beauty Industry's Use of Social Influencers." *Elon Communications Journal*7 (Fall 2016): n. pag. Web.
- Freberg, K., et al. Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. Public Relations Review (2010), doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001
- Fink. Lucie. Personal Interview. April 29, 2017.
- Gillin, P. (2008). New Media, New Influencers and Implications for the Public Relations Profession. Journal of New Communications Research, 2(2).
- Ledbetter, Erin. "The Change in Influencer Marketing from PR Strategy to Media Strategy."*Carusele*. N.p., 03 Nov. 2016. Web. 28 Mar. 2017.
- Lee, M., & Yuon, S. (2009). Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). International Journal of Advertising, 28(3), 473-499.
- "Our Story." Refinery 29 Corporate. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.
- "10 Reasons Why Influencer Marketing is the Next Big Thing." *Adweek*. N.p., 14 July 2015. Web. 28 Mar. 2017.