

Department of Marketing



Research Seminars Series

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May 22, 2025 | 12:00 - 14:00 | TC.0.58 TC Hall

The Importance of Influencers' Relatability and Aspiration in Political and Social Discourse

Previous research in marketing has studied how influencers play an essential role in advocating brands and products to their followers. At a societal level, influencers may also shape public opinions that lead to positive social changes or belief polarization. Why are some influencers more effective than others in conveying their messages? In this research, we examine how social media influencers' persona can affect consumer engagement and beliefs in the context of political and social issues. We focus on two relevant and less studied persona types: relatability and aspiration. We used a multi-method approach to address our research question. In Study 1, we curated more than 5,000 YouTube videos from over a hundred influencers to link textual, visual and audio (i.e., multi-modal) features from each video that we hypothesized to make influencers relatable and aspirational to social media engagement measures. In Study 2, we validated if these hypothesized features make viewers evaluate influencers as being relatable and aspirational using survey data. Our results demonstrate the importance of relatability vs. aspiration in helping influencers drive social discourse, and their malleable qualities within influencers.