

**JULIA SZAMBOLICS<sup>1</sup>**

MIHAI CHIRICĂ. 2024. *Celebritățile digitale și publicitatea. Utilizarea platformelor Instagram și TikTok dintr-o perspectivă comparativă/ Advertising endorsed by digital celebrities. A comparative perspective of Instagram and TikTok usage*. București: Tritonic. 250 p.

Mihai Chirică's debut publication as a unique author is entitled "Advertising endorsed by digital celebrities. A comparative perspective of Instagram and TikTok usage." The book is the outcome of his PhD thesis, which he successfully defended at Babeș-Bolyai University. Due to the extensive literature on the topic, the comparative cross-platform approach, and the mix of qualitative and quantitative results derived from empirical research, this publication is an important addition to the national literature on influencer marketing and social media influencers.

The development of the influencer marketing field presented the advertising industry with a new, extremely dynamic, fast-changing phenomenon. Platform affordances change, new social media platforms emerge, and algorithms undergo adjustments. As the reader progresses through the book's pages, the necessity for this book becomes increasingly evident.

In the introduction of the book, the author emphasizes the theoretical and practical implications of the research. The findings contribute to refining the Persuasion Knowledge model and support the importance of transparency

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in advertising campaigns on Instagram and TikTok. This work represents one of the few empirical studies conducted within the local context, utilizing an online questionnaire-based experiment with young adult respondents from Romania.

From a practical standpoint, this study has several implications for influencers, brands, marketers, and users. The author emphasizes the need for clear advertising disclosure laws in Romanian and European landscapes to uphold ethical standards in influencer marketing practices.

The book contains eight chapters. The first four chapters cover the context and the theoretical background, while chapters 5-8 outline the methodological approach and present the research outcomes, the limitations of the study, and future research opportunities.

Chapter 1 defines the concept of a digital celebrity or social media influencer and dives into the specifics of influencer marketing. The theoretical background of this book continues to evolve in Chapter 2. Here, the author presents the evolution and particularities of various social networking platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X, YouTube, and Facebook, pointing out their significance for social media influencers and influencer marketing.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the most relevant theories for the study. Hereby, the author turns the reader's attention to the Uses and Gratification Approach and the Persuasion Knowledge Model. Due to important legislation regarding advertising disclosure in several countries, Mihai Chirica looks at the effects of advertising through influencers by referencing key studies published on the matter.

Chapter 4 concludes the theoretical aspects of the research. This chapter discusses the ethical considerations surrounding influencers' advertising activity, and, more importantly, the author draws attention to legal regulations on influencers' advertising activity on social networks from a European perspective. I believe this chapter is one of the most valuable for several reader groups, especially content creators and regulatory bodies.

The research design and the methodology are the subject of Chapter 5. The research aims to investigate the use of Instagram and TikTok by teenagers and young adults in Romania, evaluate the impact of influencers' advertising disclosure on recognition, and investigate the influence of

influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok platforms on influencers' perceived credibility and advertising outcome variables (attitude towards the brand and purchase intention, respectively). The author uses a mixed-methods approach to achieve the study's objectives, incorporating two group interviews (25 participants) and a questionnaire experiment with 183 participants.

Chapters 6 and 7 extensively present the final results. The final chapter shows the main conclusions, the limitations, and future research opportunities.

The current book sheds light on the importance of advertising disclosure on social media and offers pertinent data on the social media consumption of young Romanian adults, their interaction with social media platforms, and the gratifications they achieve by using TikTok or Instagram. The questionnaire experiment determined the effects of advertising disclosure on the influencer's credibility, and it was developed with the support of a real micro-influencer. This aspect contributes to the originality of the research.

The book is written in an accessible manner, well documented, and offers an overview of fundamental and specific literature from both national and international sources on the topic. It is a must-read for policymakers and advertisers, as it not only offers valuable insights on a specific target audience but also presents data on advertising effectiveness, enabling marketers and advertisers to create more successful campaigns.

I recommend this book for scholars and students interested in influencer marketing. It offers not only an approachable research design but also a critical view of the current legislation regarding the online activities of social media influencers and the regulation of advertising disclosures.