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# WHO WILL BREAK THROUGH THE SCROLL FATIGUE? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HUMAN AND VIRTUAL INFLUENCERS HOLDING THE STRONGER SWAY IN INFLUENCING

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## ABSTRACT

*A saturated social media feed can be a nightmare for brands, thus forcing marketers to scrutinize the most suitable influencers as they have the potential to garner the attention of consumers and elevate the brand perception at large. This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of who holds the stronger sway between Human and Virtual influencers when it comes to content strategies, associating trust, brand promotion and engagement. Through in-depth interviews of Industry professionals, this research undermines whether Virtual Influencers outperform Human Influencers or not? Thematic analysis has been employed to uncover the chief drivers of effectiveness. The findings indicate that in terms of strategic control, scalability as well as targeted engagement through the brand aligned narratives virtual influencers vouch better for breaking the scroll fatigue. The research delivers critical recommendations for marketers who are often on a lookout for choosing a human or virtual influencer for maximizing their brand impact and engagement for their campaigns.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Human Influencers, Virtual Influencers, AI Influencers, Brand Promotion, Brand Engagement.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The endless content on social media results in scroll fatigue i.e. minimal cognitive engagement; which can hamper the visibility of a brand as well as its engagement with the social media users. To break through this barrier Virtual Influencers have emerged as a potential challenger for Human Influencers. Virtual Influencers are AI generated, digital personas which are designed to imitate the human influencers. There is a complete creative control over their appearance, brand content as well as messaging of these AI influencers.

According to [influencermarketinghub.com](https://influencermarketinghub.com) the influencer marketing industry has been projected to reach \$32.55 billion in global market size by 2025. They further state that youth and GenZ are the most influenced by them and are the primary consumers on Instagram. For marketers who plan on targeting the audience, their most critical dilemma lies that amongst these both influencers which would assure in generating a meaningful brand outcome. In the past few years, these AI Influencers have gained a considerable amount of traction in the Indian market.

Alongside human influencers, brands have been increasingly adopting these virtual influencers; however there is very limited comparative evidence on their impact on brand promotions. This study investigates the understanding of industry experts on how human and virtual influencers leverage their strengths to cope with the scroll fatigue. This research contributes to the present debate regarding the evolving future of influencer marketing and provides significant insights to marketers who plan to employ a virtual influencer for their influencer marketing campaigns.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is bombarded with excessive promotional content leading to lesser attention span and disengagement amongst the audiences. Scroll fatigue is not just a feeling of getting overwhelmed due to excessive content consumption; but it also leads to considerable amount of emotional exhaustion like boredom, skepticism and avoidance of sponsored content amongst youth who multitask across platforms (Wang & Ding, 2025). To counter this Influencer Marketers are increasingly focused on content tactics against the barrier- scroll fatigue. In the saturated market the content strategies need to be explored more (Jin, 2021).

The essence of relatability and authenticity nurtures the parasocial bond between the human influencers and the social media users. Their relatable content elucidates emotions as well as

expertise which eventually results in building trust (Audrezet et al., 2020). Research suggests that the relational warmth between the audience and human influencer results in stronger brand attitudes (De Veirman, 2017). However inconsistent posting, scandals, overexposure can disengage the audience raising questions whether their organic relatability will be able to sustain the audience engagement (Ki & Kim, 2019). According to Ameen Human influencers can magnify the likelihood of negative content scenarios (Ameen, 2024).

Virtual Influencers enable brands to take complete control over their appearance, content and everything and can be easily molded to target specific audiences. They have the potential to generate enormous content as they can never get tired, and their content can be quickly updated for trends (Thomas, 2021). The customizable personas of virtual influencers can resonate perfectly with audiences with particular subcultural interest, which can outperform the human influencers as their targeted audience is broader and the essence of less focused resonance (Wang 2024). In some particular niche such as fashion or gaming, they give the impression of being expert (Franke, 2023). When it comes to the utilitarian products such as electronics, the recommendations of virtual influencers are believed to be credible (Belanche, 2024). Virtual Influencers excel

### 2.1. Research Questions

1. Amongst Human and Virtual Influencer, audiences associate greater trust with whom and what are the factors that drive this?
2. What unique aspects do virtual influencers and human influencers vouch when it comes to brand promotion and engagement?
3. How do the human and virtual influencers differ when it comes to content effectiveness to tackle scroll fatigue?
4. How do the youth perceive the brand promotions by virtual influencers in comparison to the human influencers when it comes to brand perception and likeability?

### 2.2. Research Objectives

1. To find out whether the audience associates greater trust with a virtual influencer or a human influencer and identify the underlying factors that drive these perceptions.
2. To examine the unique aspects and strengths of Human V/s Virtual Influencers in terms of brand promotion effectiveness and engagement amongst the audience.

3. To understand the content strategies adopted by Human and Virtual Influencers in order to overcome the scroll fatigue.

4. To compare how the youth perceive human and virtual influencers in the context of brand perception and likeability.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study adopts a semi structured in-depth interview to gain comprehensive insights about the industry perspective on Human V/s Virtual Influencers. Purposive sampling was used to identify seven industry experts who hold five years or above industry experience and possess their expertise into digital marketing, brand strategists,

### 4. DATA COLLECTION

influencer marketing and content strategy. The interviews were administered through Zoom and it explored aspects such as content strategy, relative performance, brand perception, brand promotion and effectiveness linked to source credibility theory (trust, expertise and attractiveness/ likeability) etc.

The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase thematic analysis i.e. familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. Furthermore, the transcripts were subjected to manual color coding in excel, thus generating layered themes supported by sub-themes. The ethical protocol for this research includes the informed consent of the interviewees as well as the anonymity of the participants.

*Table 1: Details of the Interviewee for the In-Depth Interview.*

S.no	Name of Interviewee	Designation, Organisation, City	Experience
1	P1	Founder and Director, Curry Nation, Mumbai	26+ years
2	P2	Principal consultant, Alchemist	13 years
3	P3	Senior Manager, Media Planning, IPG Media Brands, Bangalore	5 years
4	P4	Senior Celebrity Manager, Dot Media, Mumbai	5 years
5	P5	Former Vice President, Touchstorm, Mumbai	15 years
6	P6	Senior Social Media Analyst at Annalect India	7 years
7	P7	Independent Media Consultant, Gurgaon	8 years

#### 4.1. Data Analysis and Results of In-depth Interview

##### 4.1.1. Themes and Sub themes for - Acceptance

##### Theme 1- Consumer perception and trust

###### 1. Skepticism Toward Artificial Authenticity

Consumers express doubt about the credibility of virtual influencers due to their non-human nature, questioning the authenticity of product endorsements and personal experiences.

###### 2. Cultural Relatability and Emotional Connection

Indian audiences prefer human influencers they can emotionally connect with, rooted in cultural nuances and personal interactions, making virtual influencers feel distant and less trustworthy.

###### 3. Generational Acceptance and Influence

Gen Z shows higher openness to virtual influencers due to digital nativity and fascination with novelty, indicating a shift in future consumer

behavior despite current skepticism.

### **Theme 2- Brand Strategy and Innovation**

#### 1. Pursuit of Technological Novelty

Brands leverage virtual influencers to project innovation and stay ahead in marketing trends, using them as a tool for brand differentiation and modern image building.

#### 2. Strategic Collaboration and Long-Term Viability

While initial collaborations with virtual influencers create buzz, brands remain uncertain about sustained partnerships and long-term impact on consumer behavior and loyalty.

#### 3. Case Studies and Market Experimentation

Early adopters like Myntra (with Maya) are testing the waters by launching virtual influencers for engagement-driven content such as styling tips and customer interaction.

### **Theme 3- Market Readiness and Sector Suitability**

#### 1. Category-Specific Effectiveness

Virtual influencers are more accepted in tech-related product promotions (e.g., smartphones, earphones) where experiential authenticity is less critical compared to skincare or lifestyle categories.

#### 2. Content Appeal vs. Conversion Efficacy

While virtual influencer content is visually and aesthetically engaging, driving views and curiosity, it currently falls short in translating engagement into tangible consumer actions like purchase decisions.

#### 3. Future Potential and Market Evolution

Stakeholders acknowledge that while the Indian market is not yet ready, virtual influencers may gain traction over time with increasing digital immersion and technological adoption.

2. Themes and Sub-themes for "Key difference between Human Influencers & Virtual Influencers"

### **Theme 1- Authenticity & Emotional Connection**

#### 1. Human Emotion and Relatability

This sub-category focuses on the genuine emotional expression and personal relatability offered by human influencers. They can share real feelings, personal stories, and lived experiences, fostering deeper trust and emotional resonance with their audience.

#### 2. Perceived Realism in Brand Promotion

Highlights how human influencers enhance brand credibility by sharing authentic, first-hand product experiences. Their ability to speak from personal conviction contributes to a sense of realism that audiences perceive as trustworthy and unbiased.

#### 3. Lack of Emotional Depth in Virtual Influencers

Addresses the absence of genuine emotion in virtual influencers due to fully scripted and brand-controlled interactions. Despite advanced

storytelling architecture, the missing 'human touch' makes their engagement feel less sincere and harder for audiences to emotionally connect with.

### **Theme 2- Content Creation & Operational Efficiency**

#### 1. Speed and Scalability of Production

Explores the advantage of virtual influencers in terms of rapid content generation and faster turnaround times. Unlike human influencers who may require reshoots or face logistical delays, virtual content can be edited and produced quickly, enabling agile marketing responses.

#### 2. Scripted Control vs. Spontaneity

Contrasts the highly controlled, pre-scripted nature of virtual influencer content with the organic spontaneity and adaptability of human influencers. While virtual influencers offer precision, they lack the improvisational value that humans bring during live or unscripted moments.

#### 3. Behind-the-Scenes Storytelling Architecture

Refers to the complex planning, scripting, and creative strategy required to develop and maintain a virtual influencer's narrative. Despite the lack of organic expression, significant creative effort goes into crafting their digital persona and content flow.

### **Theme 3- Audience Engagement & Brand Integration**

#### 1. Offline and Organic Interaction

Focuses on the unique ability of human influencers to engage audiences in real-world settings such as events, meetups, or live experiences creating memorable, authentic interactions that strengthen brand loyalty and audience connection.

#### 2. Brand Customization and Identity Alignment

Highlights how virtual influencers can be fully tailored to align with specific brand identities, aesthetics, and marketing goals. Their malleable nature allows for consistent, on-brand representation across campaigns without personal inconsistencies.

#### 3. Artificial Engagement Ecosystems

Describes the ecosystem where virtual influencer engagement may involve bots or interactions with other virtual entities, leading to metrics that lack genuine user sentiment. While scalable, this raises concerns about authenticity and long-term audience trust.

3. Themes and Sub-themes for "Brand promotion Expertise"

### **Theme 1- Effectiveness and Limitations of Virtual Influencers**

#### 1. Perception vs. Performance

Explores the gap between the perceived innovation and brand modernity brought by virtual influencers versus their actual performance in

driving consumer trust and conversions.

## 2. Emotional Authenticity and Trust

Focuses on the inability of virtual influencers to convey genuine emotions, build authentic connections, or inspire real trust, which are critical in influencing purchase decisions.

## 3. ROI and Brand Impact

Discusses the challenges in measuring return on investment and the limited tangible benefits brands receive from virtual influencer campaigns despite high engagement metrics.

### Theme 2- Strategic Use and Niche Applications

#### 1. Targeted Marketing and Niche Expertise

Highlights how virtual influencers can be effective when aligned with specific niches or expert domains, enhancing campaign relevance and resonance with targeted audiences.

#### 2. Technology and Innovation Positioning

Addresses the suitability of virtual influencers for tech-forward brands seeking to reinforce a modern, innovative brand image through futuristic marketing

tools.

## 3. Campaign Amplification and Responsiveness

Emphasizes the efficiency of virtual influencers in quickly delivering messages and boosting reach, making them useful for time-sensitive or awareness-driven campaigns.

### Theme 3- Human vs. AI Influence

#### 1. Human Connection and Relatability

Contrasts the deep, emotional rapport human influencers build with audiences against the scripted and robotic nature of virtual influencers.

#### 2. Sustained Engagement and Credibility

Examines how long-term audience engagement relies on authentic personalities and credibility, which virtual influencers often lack compared to real individuals.

#### 3. Influence on Consumer Conviction

Analyzes how personal conviction and real-life validation outweigh influencer type, with human experiences proving more persuasive than AI-generated recommendations.

Figure 1.1: Would virtual influencers be able to do justice to Brand promotions?



## 4. Themes and Sub-themes for "Content effectiveness"

### Theme 1- Strategic Content Planning

#### 1. Market Research & Audience Insights

Involves gathering and analyzing consumer behavior data to inform content strategies. Research is conducted prior to campaign launches to ensure messaging aligns with audience preferences, demographics, and psychographics, such as targeting younger audiences or millennials with tailored scripts.

#### 2. Targeted Content Creation

Content is curated based on the brand's identity and its specific audience segment. Messaging, tone, and creative elements are customized such as adjusting scripts for different age groups or interests to enhance relevance and engagement.

#### 3. Campaign Structure & Creative Direction

Led by experienced marketers and creative professionals, campaigns are thoughtfully designed with a clear narrative and visual direction. Every

element, especially in virtual influencer content, is meticulously planned and controlled by the brand or marketing team.

### Theme 2- Audience Engagement & Interaction

#### 1. Interactive Content Formats

Includes engagement tactics such as polls, Q&A sessions, and other participatory formats that foster direct involvement from the audience. These methods aim to strengthen community connection and gather real-time feedback.

#### 2. Personal Resonance & Relatability

Content is designed to reflect audience interests and identities such as gamers connecting with a virtual influencer who also game enhancing authenticity and emotional connection despite the absence of organic one-on-one interactions.

#### 3. Digital Behavior-Based Targeting

Leverages insights from users' online behavior to deliver personalized advertising and content. Ads and messaging are dynamically adjusted based on digital footprints, ensuring relevance and higher

engagement potential.

**Theme 3- Virtual Influencer Ecosystem**

1. Influencer Persona Development

Virtual influencers are crafted with detailed personas aligned to niche interests—such as gaming or traditional domains like lifestyle, beauty, and travel. Female personas are most commonly represented in the latter categories.

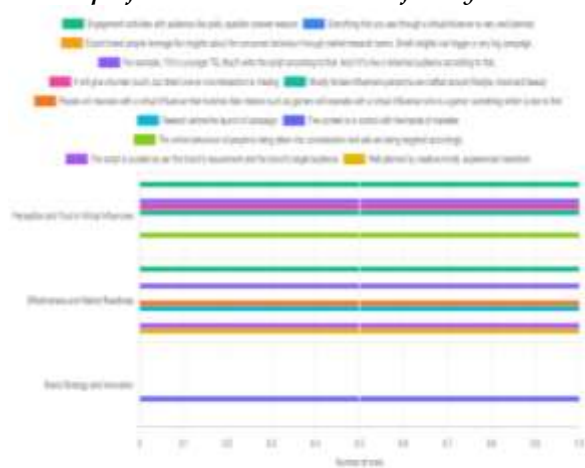
2. Controlled Brand Narratives

Unlike human influencers, virtual influencers offer complete control over messaging, appearance, and behavior. This allows brands to maintain a consistent image and avoid unpredictability in content delivery.

3. Scalability & Innovation in Influence

Virtual influencers represent a blend of technology and marketing innovation, enabling scalable, globally accessible brand ambassadors that can be updated or reimagined based on campaign needs and trends.

*Figure 1.2: How do you ensure that the content produced by virtual influencers resonates with the preferences and interests of the youth?*



5. Expertise

**Theme 1- Lifestyle & Consumer Experience**

1. Fashion & Personal Style

Encompasses clothing, accessories, and trends that reflect individual identity and cultural influences; often driven by authenticity and relatability in brand collaborations.

2. Travel & Hospitality

Covers travel experiences, accommodations, dining, and leisure activities; thrives on storytelling and emotional connection, with emphasis on real-life trust and local relevance.

3. Food & Beverage

Includes consumable goods such as baked goods, ready-to-eat meals, and restaurant experiences;

appeals to sensory engagement and daily habits, with strong regional preferences.

**Theme 2- Personal Care & Beauty**

1. Skincare & Beauty Products

Focuses on cosmetics, dermatological products, and grooming solutions; highly dependent on perceived authenticity, peer recommendation, and shared physical characteristics like skin type or climate.

2. Lifestyle Wellness

Integrates personal well-being with daily routines, combining beauty, self-care, and sustainable habits; influencers in this space often build trust through relatable, real-world experiences.

**Theme 3- Technology & Electronics**

1. Consumer Electronics

Includes smartphones, headphones, and other portable tech devices; benefits from expert reviews and aspirational branding, with growing potential for tech-savvy virtual influencers.

2. Emerging Tech & Virtual Influence

Covers innovations like virtual influencers and digital avatars in tech marketing; more effective in tech-forward categories where visual appeal and novelty drive engagement.

3. Smart Devices & Wearables

Focuses on connected gadgets such as smartwatches and audio wearables; success in this space relies on perceived functionality, lifestyle integration, and brand credibility.

6. Themes and Sub-themes for "Unique aspects"

**Theme 1- Efficiency and Scalability**

1. High Volume Content Production

Virtual influencers can produce a high volume of content in a short period, far exceeding the capacity of human influencers.

2. Fast Response Speed

The ability to rapidly respond to trends or audience interactions gives virtual influencers a time-sensitive advantage in dynamic digital environments.

3. Scalability in Content Distribution

Operating at scale without proportional increases in cost allows brands to expand their reach efficiently across multiple platforms.

**Theme 2- Cost and Resource Considerations**

1. Initial Expertise and Development Cost

While virtual influencers offer long-term savings, significant investment is required initially for content planning, design, and AI development.

2. Long-Term Cost Efficiency

Over time, virtual influencers become more economical than human influencers due to reduced contractual, logistical, and maintenance expenses.

3. Cost-Benefit Trade-off

The balance between automation benefits and ongoing technological investments affects overall cost-effectiveness.

**Theme 3- Authenticity and Engagement Limitations**

1. Limited Relatability and Emotional Depth

Virtual influencers lack genuine human emotions and lived experiences, making it harder for audiences to form deep, authentic connections.

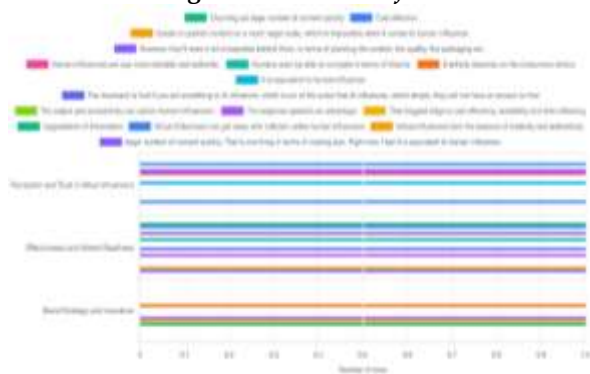
2. Inflexibility in Unscripted Situations

When faced with unscripted or complex queries outside predefined parameters, AI-driven influencers cannot provide meaningful or context-aware responses.

3. Authenticity Gap in Representation

Despite technological advances, virtual influencers may struggle to reflect cultural nuances or real-world dynamics that human influencers naturally express.

*Figure 1.3: Do you believe that Virtual Influencers have some unique aspects that give them an edge over Human influencers.*



7. Themes and Sub-themes for "Effectiveness in Brand promotion"

**Theme 1- Brand Trust and Perceived Safety in Influencer Collaborations**

1. Trust in Human Influencers

Explores the perception among marketers that human influencers provide a reliable and trustworthy platform for brand promotion, fostering confidence in campaign outcomes.

2. Reluctance Toward Virtual Influencers

Highlights brands' hesitance to adopt virtual influencers due to concerns about authenticity, audience reception, or unproven track records in brand alignment.

3. Lack of Brand Interest in Virtual Collaborations

Captures the absence of expressed interest from brands in engaging with virtual influencers, indicating a current disconnect or lack of strategic pursuit in this space.

**Theme 2- Perceived Effectiveness and Performance Metrics**

1. Reported Benefits of Virtual Influencer Campaigns

Focuses on the observed benefits brands experience when partnering with virtual influencers, including novelty, control, and innovation in messaging.

2. Agility and Responsiveness of Human Influencers

Discusses the advantage human influencers offer in terms of response speed and agility in addressing consumer queries and market dynamics.

3. Absence of Measurable ROI for Virtual Influencers

Addresses the current gap in measurable outcomes, particularly the absence of documented ROI when using virtual influencers, leading to uncertainty in performance evaluation.

**Theme 3- Cost and Strategic Control in Influencer Marketing**

1. Cost-Effectiveness of Virtual Influencers

Examines the potential cost efficiency of creating and managing brand-owned virtual influencers versus paying external human influencers.

2. Preference for Human Influencer Partnerships

Reflects brands' growing preference for human influencers as a mainstream and strategically safe choice in promotional campaigns.

3. Brand Ownership and Control Over Virtual Influencers

Highlights the possibility for brands to develop proprietary virtual influencers, allowing full creative control and brand consistency in digital engagements.

8. Themes and Sub-themes for "Brand Perception"

**Theme 1- Influencer Authenticity and Emotional Connection**

1. Emotional Essence in Human Influencers

Human influencers are perceived as more authentic due to their ability to express genuine emotions, which creates deeper connections with audiences, unlike virtual influencers who follow scripted content.

2. Lack of Emotional Depth in Virtual Influencers

Virtual influencers are seen as emotionally limited because they operate based on pre-defined scripts and lack spontaneous emotional expression, reducing their relatability with most audiences.

3. Scripted vs Organic Behavior

Virtual influencers strictly adhere to their programming with no deviations, while human influencers can adapt and respond organically, leading to more authentic and trustworthy brand

messaging.

### Theme 2- Youth Perception and Engagement

#### 1. Visual Appeal and Audio-Visual Engagement

The youth are drawn to virtual influencers primarily due to their visually striking and technologically advanced content, which provides a novel and immersive experience.

#### 2. Skepticism and Disbelief in Virtual Influencer Credibility

Many young people are surprised and skeptical about virtual influencers collaborating with real brands and earning substantial income, questioning their legitimacy and role in marketing.

#### 3. Limited and Niche Engagement

While virtual influencers show limited broad engagement, specific groups such as lonely men seeking connection or technophiles show repeated interaction, indicating segmented audience appeal.

### Theme 3- Brand Value and Collaboration Impact

#### 1. Elevation of Brand Status through Virtual Collaborations

Partnering with popular virtual influencers can enhance a brand's image by associating it with innovation, technology, and futuristic appeal, thereby increasing brand prestige.

#### 2. Perceived Effectiveness of Human Influencers

Human influencers are believed to drive greater impact due to their personal experiences and credibility, making their endorsements more persuasive than those of virtual counterparts.

#### 3. Consumer Trust Based on Personal Experience

Many consumers, especially youth, emphasize the importance of firsthand product experience over word-of-mouth or influencer recommendations, challenging the effectiveness of both human and virtual influencer marketing.

### 9. Themes and Sub-themes for "Trust"

#### Theme 1- Perceived Trustworthiness of Influencers

##### 1. Authenticity and Relatability of Human Influencers

Explores the belief that human influencers are more trustworthy due to their authenticity, emotional transparency, and ability to provide genuine feedback based on lived experiences.

##### 2. Artificiality and Scripted Nature of Virtual Influencers

Highlights concerns about the lack of authenticity in virtual influencers, as their content is often seen as scripted or pre-programmed, making it harder for audiences to form emotional connections or perceive sincerity.

##### 3. Transparency and Honesty in Influencer Communication

Discusses how trust is often tied to transparency,

honesty, and demonstrated integrity – qualities more commonly attributed to human influencers who share personal opinions and usage experiences.

### Theme 2- Credibility Based on Real-World Experience

#### 1. First-Hand Product Experience and Testing

Emphasizes the advantage human influencers have in building trust through hands-on product testing and first-hand experience, leading to more credible endorsements.

#### 2. Lack of Genuine Product Interaction by Virtual Influencers

Addresses the perception that virtual influencers cannot genuinely use or evaluate a product, resulting in skepticism around their recommendations and assumptions that all promotions are paid.

#### 3. Experiential Credibility and Endorsement Validity

Examines how experiential credibility being able to try, test, and critique affects audience confidence in the influencer's opinion and overall message reliability.

### Theme 3- Audience Preference and Influence on Brand Perception

#### 1. Audience Preference for Human Creators

Reflects the tendency of audiences to favor human creators over virtual ones, driven by emotional connection, trust, and a sense of shared reality, which enhances engagement and impact.

#### 2. Influencer Trust as a Driver of Brand Value

Analyzes how the trustworthiness of an influencer, especially human ones, indirectly boosts brand credibility and consumer confidence in the marketed product or service.

#### 3. Contextual Dependence of Trust (Influencer Skill and Brand Fit)

Consider situational factors where trust may depend on the influencer's persuasiveness, messaging, or brand alignment, rather than strictly on being human or virtual.

Figure 1.4: Do you believe that audiences tend to associate trust more with human influencers or virtual influencers?



## 5. CONCLUSION

We are flooded with ads daily, there should be some differentiating factors. That is why brands are moving towards Virtual Influencers, they are appealing and are designed to pull the audience. Ever brand wants to stay at the forefront in terms of technology and wants to be perceived as innovative. However, not every creative experiment can drive business results in the long term.

The results of this research indicates that when technology related brands such as earphones and mobiles are endorsed through virtual Influencers, the audience tends to be more accepting towards it. However, there are a few brands which require an essence of human touch for resonating it effectively amongst the target audience. One such segment is the skincare products where the consumers prefer the product to be showcased to them or the influencer is trying that product Infront of them. If a virtual influencer endorses such products the audience are unable to relate with the product. Some experts believe that using Virtual Influencers for brand promotions can work out well for brands. It is their audio visual content which is quite is appealing as a result the users are inclined to see more of it.

On the contrary, a few industry professionals believe that Indian Market is not yet ready for Virtual Influencers. An expert Prashansa Bohare stated that "I would not trust a virtual Influencer that much because I would want someone to give their personal opinion and experience using a certain product". For stimulating purchasing decisions, building brand affinity, driving brand loyalty in the India, Marketers need a real person to influence them. Virtual Influencers are great for drawing engagement, entertainment but are not on that level here they can actually create an impact.

It has been found that brands are still preferring to collaborate with human influencers and are hesitant to use virtual influencers for brand promotion. Human Influencers can be trusted more because at times they also share their personal

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opinions and genuine feedbacks about products/ brands. Virtual Influencers cannot test and try a product, therefore their promotions will always be paid or will be perceived to be a paid promotion. Therefore, virtual influencers cannot drive connectivity. The missing essence of authenticity, reliability and lack of trust factor creates a disconnect with the followers.

Marketers should explore opportunities by focusing on specific niche or expertise. For instance, brand promotion of a technology brand through a virtual influencer can be effective. Virtual Influencers are tailored to fit as per marketing goals and helps in amplification of a campaign. They are effective only for perception building and showcasing themselves as an innovative brand, for some brands, actually, that might work. Their shortcoming lies in not being able to replicate trust and genuineness. Food, skincare, technology, hospitality, fashion, FMCG, smartphones are a few niches where virtual influencers can have an expertise in.

Virtual Influencers are cost effective and have the potential to churn out large amounts of content quickly. The output and productivity can outrun Human Influencers. They can create or publish content on a much larger scale, which is impossible when it comes to human influencers. Their biggest edge is cost efficiency, scalability and time efficiency. Developing a backstory about the journey of a virtual Influencer can increase the engagement of the audience. Crafting a unique personality is imperative as it aids in establishing credibility, relatability and trust with the influencer.

Brand promotion through Human Influencer has an essence of realism in it as they can share their personal experience after using a product. Brand promotion through Virtual Influencer doesn't seem organic. If Virtual Influencers can be made more engaging and less robotic, where users can talk to the influencer and the person behind that can help with the queries, that will make it more relevant for users.

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