

International Journal of **Strategic Communication**



CALL FOR ABSTRACTS & PAPERS

Special Issue

Social Media Influencers in Strategic Communication

Guest Editor: Nils S. Borchers, Leipzig University, Germany

Deadline for Abstracts: September 30, 2018

RATIONALE

Cooperating with social media influencers has become a widely popular practice in strategic communication. Social media influencers can be defined as internet users that have established a relevant number of relationships with and influence on their followers through content production, content distribution and interaction on the social web (Enke & Borchers, 2018, p. 181). According to communication departments and agencies, influencer marketing and influencer relations are both effective and efficient. This is mainly related to the authenticity and credibility of influencers, their wide reach in attractive and contested publics (e.g., teenagers and young adults for consumer communication; decision-makers in niche communities in Business-to-Business communication), multiple opportunities for storytelling, and an appropriation of the social media competencies of influencers.

To benefit from these advantages, an increasing number of corporations as well as other organizations such as government agencies and non-profits adopt influencer communication. The statistics are impressive: For example, the number of sponsored influencer posts on Instagram is predicted to reach 21.7 million in 2018 (Mediakix, 2017). 57 per cent of fashion and beauty companies paired with influencers already in 2016, while an additional 21 per cent was planning to do so (Fashionmonitor, 2016). In Germany, to name just one large market, 63 per cent of marketing decision makers regard influencer marketing as very important or important (Brecht, 2018).

Despite the relevance that influencer communication has recently gained in strategic communication, academic research has been slow to catch up. Little is known about specific practices of influencer communication, its challenges and opportunities and how it is organized within organizational contexts. Several studies, however, shed light on these issues from the perspective of organizations (e.g., Enke & Borchers, 2018; Hutchins & Tindall, 2016; Krömer, Borchers, & Enke, 2018; Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014) and influencers (e.g., Archer & Harrigan, 2016; Pang, Yingzhi Tan, Song-Qi Lim, Kwan, & Lakhanpal, 2016; Walden, Bortree, & DiStaso, 2015). Others have taken a more critical position (e.g., Hunter, 2016). This special issue of the *International Journal of Strategic Communication* will advance the body of knowledge in the field by addressing key questions from different perspectives. To do so, we seek in-depth investigations from multiple disciplines and sub-disciplines.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- (1) conceptual and theoretical approaches for analyzing, integrating and interpreting social media influencers in strategic communication;
- (2) managing social media influencer campaigns and programs;
- (3) establishing relations to social media influencers and building influencer databases;
- (4) strategic aspects of relationships between organizations and social media influencers;
- (5) integration of influencer communication in paid, earned, shared and owned media programs;
- (6) institutionalization processes in organizations;
- (7) the role of influencer marketing agencies as intermediary between client and influencer;
- (8) measurement and evaluation of influencer communication;
- (9) effects and efficiency of social media influencer campaigns;
- (10) strategic communication and self-branding of social media influencers to position themselves and cooperate with organizations;
- (11) commercial content production strategies and practices of social media influencers;
- (12) regulation of influencer communication in different environments;
- (13) the role and relevance of platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Musical.ly, Twitch, Pinterest, or Snapchat in influencer communication;
- (14) ethics of influencer communication;
- (15) influencer communication from an international and comparative perspective;
- (16) critical evaluations of influencer communication as an approach in strategic communication.

The selection of papers will reflect the scope of the *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, which aims to build an interdisciplinary body of knowledge in strategic communication, often defined as the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission, and more recently as all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals. Entity includes all kind of organizations (e.g., corporations, governments, or non-profits), as well as social movements and known individuals in the public sphere. Communication can play a distinctive role for the formulation, revision, presentation, execution, implementation, and operationalization of strategies. Such research can be based on theoretical and methodological approaches from diverse disciplines, including corporate communication, organizational communication, public relations, marketing communication, advertising, public diplomacy, celebrity studies, digital culture, media sociology, information systems and other areas. Research questions and topics addressed should be valuable for a global readership. While international, comparative, and cross-cultural studies are especially welcome, research with a regional or national focus is suitable if insights or results build understanding of strategic communication in other parts of the world.

SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Abstracts with proposals for submissions should be no more than three pages, including references (double-spaced with 1" margins, Times New Roman 12 pt.). Abstracts should outline the paper, providing research questions and/or hypotheses, methods, key messages or results, and contribution to the body of knowledge. Please attach a short bio of the author(s) to the submission. Abstracts and bios should be submitted, by September 30, 2018, to guest editor Dr. Nils S. Borchers at nils.borchers@uni-leipzig.de.

The authors of the abstracts most suited to the topic of the Special Issue will be asked to submit full papers of not more than 36 pages, including references and tables/figures (maximum 9,000 words), by December 20, 2018. Full papers will receive blinded external review, as well as review by the guest editor. The accepted manuscripts will be published in *IJSC Vol. 13, No. 4*, in September 2019.

TIMELINE

- Deadline for abstract submission: September 30, 2018
- Requests for full papers provided: October 10, 2018
- Deadline for full article submissions: December 20, 2018

- Reviews of full papers provided: January 31, 2019
- Deadline for revised submissions: February 28, 2019
- Final versions due: May 10, 2019
- Papers and editorial transferred to production: June 10, 2019
- Proofs sent to editors and authors: July 15, 2019
- Special Issue published online: August 2019
- Special Issue published print: September 2019

ABOUT THE GUEST EDITOR

Dr. Nils S. Borchers, Institute of Communication and Media Studies at Leipzig University, Germany, represents the temporary working group Advertising Research of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and serves as head of the Advertising Research division of the German Communication Association (DGPK). His research interests include advertising theory, advertising literacy, influencer communication, online consumer reviews and the sharing economy.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The *International Journal of Strategic Communication* is part of a multi-national effort to integrate various communication disciplines into a coherent body of knowledge and facilitate the development of strategic communication as a domain of study. The *IJSC* seeks to define the field of strategic communication, address the application of theory to this emerging field, provide a forum for multidisciplinary approaches and diverse research traditions, and espouse a truly international perspective that gives voice to cross-cultural research and scholars in all regions of the world. The *IJSC* provides a foundation for the study of strategic communication from diverse disciplines, including corporate and managerial communication, organizational communication, public relations, marketing communication, advertising, political and health communication, social marketing, international relations, public diplomacy, and other specialized communication areas. To view an online sample, visit www.tandfonline.com/HSTC. The *IJSC* is edited by Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, Institute of Communication and Media Studies, University of Leipzig, Germany, and Center of Corporate Communications, BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo, Norway, and Dr. Kelly Page Werder, Ph.D., Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA.

REFERENCES

- Archer, C., & Harrigan, P. (2016). Show me the money: How bloggers as stakeholders are challenging theories of relationship building in public relations. *Media International Australia*, 160(1), 67-77.
- Bottesch, S., & Goldhammer, K. (2017). *Influencer marketing in the DACH region: Market structure, size and future outlook*. Berlin: Goldmedia.
- Brecht, K. (2018, September 14). Sind echte Kunden die besseren Influencer? [Are real customers the better influencers?] *Horizont*, p. 36.
- Enke, N., & Borchers, N. S. (2018). Von den Zielen zur Umsetzung: Planung, Organisation und Evaluation von Influencer-Kommunikation [From objectives to implementation: Planning, organizing and evaluating influencer communication]. In A. Schach & T. Lommatzsch (Eds.), *Influencer Relations: Marketing und PR mit digitalen Meinungsführern* (pp. 177-200). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Fashionmonitor. (2016). The rise of influencers. Retrieved from <http://hello.fashionmonitor.com/rise-of-influencers>
- Hunter, A. (2016). Monetizing the mommy: Mommy blogs and the audience commodity. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(9), 1306-1320.
- Hutchins, A. L., & Tindall, N. T. (2016). New media, new media relations: Building relationships with bloggers, citizen journalists and engaged publics. In A. Hutchins & N. T. Tindall (Eds.), *Public relations and participatory culture: Fandom, social media and community engagement* (pp. 103-115). Florence: Taylor and Francis.
- Krömer, L., Borchers, N. S., & Enke, N. (2018). Own the Follower: Wie lassen sich Influencer erfolgreich in den eigenen Unternehmenskanal einbinden? Eine Untersuchung anhand der YouTube-Kanäle deutscher Beauty-Unternehmen [Own the follower: How can influencers be successfully integrated into company channels? A study on YouTube channels of German beauty companies]. In A. Schach & T. Lommatzsch (Eds.), *Influencer Relations: Marketing und PR mit digitalen Meinungsführern* (pp. 07-128). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Mediakix. (2017). Instagram influencer marketing is a 1 billion dollar industry. Retrieved from <http://mediakix.com/2017/03/instagram-influencer-marketing-industry-size-how-big/>
- Pang, A., Yingzhi Tan, E., Song-Qi Lim, R., Kwan, T. Y.-M., & Lakhanpal, P. B. (2016). Building effective relations with social media influencers in Singapore. *Media Asia*, 43(1), 56-68.
- Uzunoglu, E., & Misci Kip, S. (2014). Brand communication through digital influencers: Leveraging blogger engagement. *International Journal of Information Management*, 34(5), 592-602.
- Walden, J., Bortree, D., & DiStaso, M. (2015). This blog brought to you by ...: Exploring blogger perceptions of a product endorsement policy and reviews. *Journal of Communication Management*, 19(3), 254-269.