Promoting dietary supplements (DS) on Instagram – Which role does source status (expert vs. non-expert) play?

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This study investigates how different influencer types (expert vs. non-expert) shape young consumers' evaluations of dietary supplements on Instagram. Using a one-factor experimental design, 347 Austrian participants were exposed to one of three fictitious Instagram posts promoting a multivitamin product and subsequently assessed the influencer's credibility, the product, and indicated their purchase intentions. Results show that the lifestyle influencer was rated highest in attractiveness and trustworthiness, while the doctor and pharmacist scored higher in perceived expertise. Product evaluations varied only minimally across conditions, but purchase intention was highest for the lifestyle influencer. These findings suggest that non-expert influencers may exert stronger persuasive effects in low-elaboration social media environments, where relatability and perceived authenticity outweigh formal expertise.

Keywords: social media influencer, expert / non-expert, dietary supplements, source credibility, product evaluation, purchase intention