

TO: Dr. Stephanie Madden

FROM: Sarah Mitchell

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SUBJECT: Cracking the Code Behind Ethical Influencer Marketing

Message

Determining whether or not it would be beneficial for a brand to take part in influencer marketing is a decision many brands and companies face. However, some brands and companies take into question the ethics and credibility of hiring an influencer to promote their brand on a social media platform, before deciding if influencer marketing is the best for them. A recent study published by the Journal of Media Ethics, and a blog post, looked at the overall approach regarding how influencers maintain this ethical relationship with the brands they work for, as well as their audiences and how to provide utter transparency on social media.

Here are a few major points from the study and the blog:

- By being true to one's self (authenticity) and to one's audience (credibility), influencers believe they successfully and ethically navigate the sponsored content process
- For influencers, there is no "wall" between advertising and news departments; influencer marketing intentionally bridges the gap between business and content decisions
- Influencers are held to similar standards as journalists when it comes to disclosure
- As more media outlets become personal and personality-driven, authenticity will only further serve as an ethical framework for media professionals
- There are three main types of influencers: Aspirational Influencers, Authoritative Influencers and Peer Influencers

Based on these findings and based on the prompt for the PR Week Outstanding Student Submission, I aim to incorporate guidance from the two articles that will allow me to best determine how to incorporate and insure that influencer marketing for my campaign plan is ethical. For this specific campaign, seeing as it revolves around viewership for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, I plan to use an athlete that has a large, positive following surrounding them and their sport. The influencer I would primarily select would be snowboarder Chloe Kim. She would be a credible source because she already has influencer contracts with seven other companies meaning that she would very well understand the terms and agreements of the contract. In addition, she also has over half a million Instagram followers that can potentially be reached through this additional influencer campaign.

The messaging I would choose to include in the campaign would revolve around athletes promoting the appeal to tune into the NBC broadcast of the Winter Olympics. In addition, potential influencers will also be able to showcase a "day in the life" of them before they get ready to compete on the biggest athletic stage in the world. These showcases of glimpses into what these athletes go through to prepare for competition will show their authenticity on its own. Additionally, since most of these potential influencer athletes already have influencer contracts,

they will have little to no issue continuing to display their authenticity and transparency to not only their followers, but to NBC as well.