

Ethical Blogging Relations: Developing Disclosure to Build Trust and Avoid Brand Disputes

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between brands and bloggers has not only increased in this changing landscape of digital marketing but also commands a greater focus on ethical practice issues that promote transparency and trust. The paper discusses the ethical aspects of blogger relations, particularly disclosure practices that can add credibility and resolve disputes for brands, bloggers, and their audience. The Discussion suggests a good historical background of influencer marketing; it is predominantly shifting from informal partnerships to proper regulated practice stimulated by consumer scrutiny and guidelines set up by the authorities, such as the Federal Trade Commission. A review conducted in the study for a literature review found that transparency is vital in building trust in influencer communications. Empirical evidence argued that audiences are most likely to engage with more content when disclosing clear information. Case studies, such as health-related blogging and controversies over it, exemplify the consequences that would emerge in failure to observe ethics tenets. Research into disclosure provides recommendations toward aggressive disclosure policies that have not only an alignment with the principles of ethics but can also function as competent marketing strategies with which to contribute to a more accountable digital landscape. This study hopes to provide brands and bloggers with actionable insights on how to nurture trust and project a positive reputation in an overwhelmingly scrutinized world.

Keywords: Blogging Blogger Legal Compliance Ethical Trust and Transparency Practices Framework Credibility Behavior Influence Collaboration Brand

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, the interaction between brands and bloggers has become highly significant and is now also requiring ethical practices aimed at promoting transparency and trust between the involved parties. This article seeks to explore ethical blogger relations, especially in terms of disclosure, so as to promote credibility rather than disputes between brands, bloggers, and their audience. This article investigates the ethical dimensions of blogging collaborations and seeks to offer actionable insights for brands and bloggers alike: trust must be a solid basis for successful cooperation. With all this taken into account, the final aim is to make clear that the ethical dimension will help in better reputation building, loyalty of consumers, and rendering a more accountable digital landscape.

Today, ethical blogger relations are very much different than in the days when influencer marketing started nearly a decade ago. In its early days, it was barely an organized practice consisting of informal partnerships and unclear guidelines. But with growing consumer and regulatory scrutiny, there have been many changes over time. The United States Federal Trade Commission and like institutions across the world have put regulations that require bloggers to declare their relationship with brands. The Federal Trade guidelines make influencers have to, from time to time, communicate to their followers whether a post, video, or statement is in a material partnership with the owner of the product.

According to Llm & Pinarbasi (2024), a shift requires only transparency in influencer marketing: failing to disclose sponsorships can be a way towards bringing about distrust in consumers and eventually even create

legal cases. In this changing landscape, knowledge of how ethical standards developed will help not just protect the blogger-brand relationships but also those of consumers.

An illustration that sadly embodies the importance of ethical communication in blogging is the case of Doc Willie Ong, a famous health blogger who gained popularity owing to the informative posts he made about various health issues. His entrance from being a professional, trusted health advisor to a patient suffering from cancer reminds everyone of the great responsibility a blogger has over their readers when posting health-related content. Recently, the Philippines FDA issued an advisory against consumers' buying and taking an unregistered product which is a powdered drink that is highly promoted by various bloggers including Ong. This can easily recreate the ethical implications of promoting health products without registration and proper safety measures. The story of Ong highlights the ethical aspects of blogging, including areas where misinformation can be very highly consequential. With this, however, he shows that his is a journey of illumination into the crucial distinction between communication being honest and true as well as transparent, and which rightly claims that bloggers must also be able to find their balanced influence with ethical responsibility-not misleading or deceiving their audience. Proper disclosure policies come first; the policies not only resonate with ethical principles but are also good marketing tactics for ensuring that consumers are aware of what they are reading or watching. Lastly, blogs have emerged as the most valuable learning tools in health sciences where interactive opportunities for learning abound, but the need for a low engagement threshold among students presents a challenge (Conde-Caballero et al., 2019). Even as blogging continues to play the most central role in information dissemination, it is the commitment of brands and bloggers alike to uphold the highest standards of ethical behavior in their relationships to establish trust and mutual accountability between each other.

Developing disclosure in blogger relations is essential for the reason that building trust and, more importantly, the prevention of potential disputes between brands and their audiences cannot be realized without the brand, whether in a form of paid money or free products they create an honest impression for the consumer thus engaging with the content and trusting the recommendations from the blog. Failure to disclose has legal implications on the blogger and the brand, losing consumer trust and causing potential backlash against the brand. Therefore, a proper disclosure policy formulated can both be in harmony with the ethical principle as well as an effective marketing since it would ensure that the consumers are abreast of themselves with what they consume.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part of the article summary presents the literature review from the internet, journals, and articles related to the research topic.

Trust and Transparency Among Bloggers, Brands, and Audiences

Based on Powell and Pring's systematic review in 2023, the role of health influencers on social media is complex, where positive and negative impacts overlap. One of the conclusions reached was that audience trust and engagement in communications by influencers are considerably influenced by transparency. For instance, when influencers can explain whether or not they have relationships with brands, they tend to promote trust among their followers, which also plays a crucial role in successful passage of health messages. This is similar to the findings of Advertising Standards (Council of India, wherein 63% of the respondents trust influencers mainly due to their honesty and transparency. Afaqs, 2023.)

Additionally, the criticism also states that ambiguous practices lead to mistrust and disengagement of the audience, as indicated by ASCI's statistics that 43% of the consumers also avoid influencers who fail to clearly disclose sponsorships (Afaqs, 2023). This connection between transparency and trust is again emphasized by Bullock (2023), who claims himself to be an ad-vo-CED of clear disclosure statements in the influencer marketing to also preserve credibility and develop genuine relations with the audiences. Powell's and Pring's summary highlighted that authenticity from influencers is crucial to the activity of furthering good health behaviors. From the literature, the fundamental elements that characterize influencer marketing within a health context is trust and transparency. Ensuring transparency in communication makes influencers more believable

and effective, thus positively influencing their audience's health behavior.

In the other blogging aspects, the article titled “Gaining trust: the articulation of transparency by YouTube fashion and beauty content creators”, introduces a typology of “transparency markers” used by these bloggers in their videos, along with an examination of how these creators disclose product selection processes as well as actions of transparency, authenticity, and independence in the video to obtain trustworthiness with the audience. In them, it has been found that, although of very narrow scope, these tactics alone offer insights into the dynamics involved in creating content in beauty and fashion media as opposed to the conventional practices in magazines. (Dekavalla, 2020). This study further deepens comprehension regarding the effectiveness of transparency in new media environments.

According to Reiter (2013), the high popularity rate of beauty blogs in Ireland significantly calls for transparency in the reviews of products. The paper brings to light how stealth marketing may be engulfing the credibility of beauty blogs and that the proper practice for bloggers to assume would be to disclose the source of products. Through these e-research methods, Reiter can acquire information not just from bloggers but also from PR professionals as well, hence it may be validly assumed that both parties have a stake in credibility. Findings in the discussion above suggest that acceptance from the two parties of bloggers and PRs may lie in the issues of transparency in the terms of the view of trust among their target audiences. Further research on mixed methods may be necessary for deeper insights into such dynamics.

According to Lilach Bullock (2023), a blogger outreach strategy is an extremely important practice through which a business can further expand its online reach and engage with potential target audiences in the right manner. Transparency constitutes the main ethical edge around disclosure of the relationships between brands and bloggers. Bullock emphasizes that bloggers should disclose any compensation or incentive for a product they are endorsing and that failure to do so will be detrimental to audience trust and raise some legal implications (Bullock, 2023). Lastly, the article highlights some best practices in practicing transparency, including the clear definition of relationships, educating bloggers on guidelines surrounding disclosure, and honesty in reviews.

Further, an Ahrefs study proves that 60% of guest posts post on credible websites, a rationale to partner with credible bloggers (Bullock, 2023). Ethical considerations in blogger outreach elevate brand credibility and give more priority to the wellness of the audience by ascertaining that what products are being promoted don't harm the customer. Conclusion: Therefore, creating trust and transparency within outreach is essential for effective blogger outreach campaigns, and this can be done through long-term relationships based on authenticity rather than short-term achievements from non-ethical practices (Bullock, 2023).

Best Practice for Disclosing Collaboration

According to Ahmed Z. (2023) A content creator is clearly able to have a huge impact on buying choices. In any case, it is essential for organizations to completely evaluate their target advertiser and select influencers who improve their product or business services. To enhance successful campaigns and build trust with the audience, brands must ensure that their influencer marketing efforts are authentic.

In marketing, working with influencers has become an important part of many brands' strategies. The brands' gain and engagement to reach their target audience and build brand recognition. Brands must also ensure that their influencer marketing campaigns are accurate, transparent, and unique to build trust with their target audience and boost campaign effectiveness. It is important for a brand to choose an influencer that has a good characteristic. It is effective when the influencer of a brand has a good image; the customer gets trust in the brand. Also, it is important for brands to carefully consider their target audience and choose influencers who are relevant to their product or service. The study focuses on how users' trust in product review blog articles is impacted by self-disclosure (Huang, 2014). Huang examines how much blog readers can rely on bloggers to provide their partners' information truthfully. More self-disclosure has also been found to increase a blog's credibility, particularly for well-known ones. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of good communication in order to foster trust, and as a result, it suggests methods for providing users with accurate and significant partner information in order to gain their trust. In the end, this could help to increase the readers' level of

engagement and interest. Additional investigation of various disclosure strategies and their variants in the blogging seems necessary.

As stated by Winit et al., (2023), the impact of different types of sustainability performance disclosures on consumer relations and brand reputation Transparency and authenticity are emphasized in best practices for brand partnership disclosures as they are essential to gaining customer trust brands can further strengthen their connection with their target audience by establishing greater recognition and credibility through clear communication about their partnerships This is consistent with research showing that appropriate disclosure can improve customer impressions and brand loyalty effective partnership disclosure can improve customer engagement and brand visibility, supporting the idea that transparency in partnerships drives goodwill and loyalty.

According to Musiyiwa, & Jacobson, (2023), the importance of ethical considerations in digital content partnerships lies in promoting transparency and trust between influencers and their audiences. It highlights the need for transparent disclosure practices to clarify relationships with brands, recognizing that ethical standards are essential to building credibility. Transparent communication about partnerships, such as using clear tags for sponsored content, not only complies with ethical standards but also protects brands from potential lawsuits. Transparency in disclosure promotes authenticity and encourages consumers to engage meaningfully with content. This partnership with the brand highlights the importance of maintaining integrity in marketing tactics. These measures ensure that the partnership is trustworthy, ultimately benefiting both the brand and the influencer.

According to Naess, C (2016). Blogging is used by both businesses and individuals and is considered a fundamental change in the way we communicate. Blogging has created a new space where individuals can connect with the outside world. Through followers and comments, bloggers can connect in real time with an almost unlimited audience. They use the concepts of social media and technological innovation to highlight how technology shapes blog content.

Legal Compliance to Avoid Disputes

Organizations must navigate the framework of compliance to adhere to rules and regulations fit to their activities effectively. Legal compliance needs to align business practices with the requirements. These standards differ based on the industry and geographical location. Simply adhering to laws is one element of this concept; establishing robust corporate policies and procedures is equally important, for sustaining compliance over time. To minimize the chances, for not following the rules and facing consequences such as penalties and legal issues that harm one's reputation, effectively managing compliance is crucial. Businesses typically create compliance departments to handle the separate yet interconnected elements of legal responsibilities and regulatory requirements. Legal teams concentrate on interpreting laws, resolving conflicts and protecting the rights of the organization while compliance units are tasked with verifying that all day to day operations conform to regulations and ethical standards.

In addition, maintaining legal compliance not only meets regulatory requirements but also promotes moral behavior within the company and builds confidence with stakeholders and clients. A thorough compliance approach must include personnel training programs, continuous tracking systems, and routine audits. By following these methods, businesses can stay informed about changes to laws and regulations and make necessary adjustments to their business.

Maintaining legal compliance is important to the long-term success of any kind of business. Following the rules and regulations is something that organizations may do to protect their interests, increase operational efficiency, and grow the economy as a whole. In addition to protecting against any legal consequences, the proactive approach to compliance establishes a foundation for ethical conduct that benefits all involved parties.

Bollinger (2021) focuses on the importance of the general data protection regulation (GDPR) compliance in the context of data protection and privacy within organizations. The general data protection regulation (GDPR) is a known as a comprehensive legal framework that is established by the European Union to secure personal

data and ensure that individuals or users have a control over on their personal information. This study focuses on the fact that achieving this compliance is not just a legal obligation, but it is also an important aspect of building trust with your customers and other stakeholders or readers. Organizations also must know how to implement data management practices, conduct some regular audits, and have knowledge on privacy awareness to those employees to meet these kinds of requirements. By prioritizing this general data protection regulation (GDPR) compliance, businesses cannot only avoid some fines or other disputes, but it also enhances their reputation on their businesses or on their organizations and competitiveness. It highlights that effective strategies for this compliance involve continuous monitoring and adoption to these evolving regulations, to make sure that the organizations must remain proactive rather than reactive in their approach to the data protection. General data protection regulation (GDPR) compliance in blogging is also important because first bloggers usually collect personal data through the comments, subscriptions, and sometimes even advertising with their readers or customers. Following these kinds of rules helps bloggers to protect their readers personal information or personal data, it shows some respect for their privacy. For the bloggers, who may be transparent about how data is being collected and used, can also build trust to their readers or audiences it tends to return to or partner up with blogs that make privacy secure. Just like some companies try to gain a competitive edge by applying this complaint, to those bloggers who are actively managing privacy risks are better to grow their audience and readers to avoid some potential legal issues or disputes. Prioritizing data protection in blogging not only avoids the fines but also strengthens or builds trust relationships with followers or audiences, especially in making the blog more reputable and respected.

Blogging is growing in importance as a way for people and companies to interact with audiences and exchange content. However, it also creates several kinds of legal concerns that must be properly addressed. Soheila Azizi and Associates highlight important legal issues that bloggers need to be aware of to ensure compliance and protect themselves from possible legal consequences. Here are a few examples of legal issues that bloggers might get into. Bloggers' top concerns include plagiarism, online threats, and copyright infringement. The act of passing off someone else's work as one's own is known as plagiarism. It is also important for bloggers to understand these legal concerns if they want to create content in a professional and moral manner. To be aware of plagiarism, copyright infringement, personal information safety, and so on., bloggers can more effectively engage with their audiences or customers not only aware of being plagiarized you also protect themselves legally. So that in order to avoid plagiarism, bloggers or writers should always give acknowledgement to their sources or provide some references and use plagiarism checkers to confirm originality, work on creating original content based on their own observations and experiences, and identify themselves with copyright laws. Bloggers can develop a reliable online presence and benefit the blogging community by following these guidelines.

The upfluence article about "legal considerations in influencer marketing" contains some thorough summary about the key legal framework guiding influencer marketing strategies. It emphasizes how crucial compliance with laws and regulations and the need for transparency in the influencer brand is working together. It also describes the standards, which require some clear information of any meaningful relationships that influencers may have with brands. Allowing the customers to base their decisions on the accuracy of endorsements requires some of this. It highlights that all influencer marketing, such as bloggers, paid posts, product endorsement and social media partnerships, are subject to these legal compliance. It emphasizes that in order to effectively meet with the legal requirements the brands and influencers must be encouraged to familiarize themselves with these kinds of guidelines and minimize the appropriate disclosure methods such as hashtags like hashtag ad or hashtags sponsored. This will ensure compliance through all the phases from influencer selection to a content creator or blogger and the publication on it. The importance of these following platforms specifying the disclosure regulations is also addressed in the essay especially when using social media platforms like Instagram that provide some tools for transparent branded content.

It highlights how important legal compliance is to maintain consumer confidence and prioritizing the interest of all sides participating in influencer marketing. Noncompliance may lead to serious consequences like legal actions, disputes, and some other reputational harm. Prioritizing this legal compliance is more important for the relationships of the influencing marketing. In addition, this article highlights or serves as an important resource to understand more the complex legal issues that influencers or bloggers and brands must navigate with to make sure successful partnerships. The relationship between blogging and advertising is so crucial.

According to Caruso (2023), bloggers must comply with the truth or legit advertising regulations, which states that all advertising products must be claimed accurate and legit and to avoid fake news or in other words misleading false information. Bloggers must take note of these guidelines; they must reveal any important relationships with the corporations, including with the payment or the free products that are obtained in return for the reviews. To ensure that readers see and understand this kind of information, it is the best place to start new blog entries.

Caruso (2023) also highlights how important it is for bloggers to differentiate between the editorial content and the advertising content by the labeling practices. Building trust with your consumers is very crucial, because we can see how they are very careful in terms of honest influencer marketing. It also suggests against making some supporting claims, specifically when it comes to the health of the consumers or readers, especially when it comes to relating to the health products, since providing some false information to your customers can have serious consequences in the court. Bloggers are asked to use exact or specific wordings in their product descriptions or promotions and keep clear of lies that can mislead the customers in order to reduce risks. In order to avoid any legal issues, it is also advised to create a strong knowledge policy and maintain accurate records of sponsored correspondence. Bloggers may safely promote their products or items while maintaining their credibility and following federal restrictions by being aware of the federal trade commission constantly changing requirements and following recognised best practices.

Ethical Framework

The literature on Kant's duty to speak the truth and its implications for ethical discourse offers valuable insights into sincerity and political communication. Mertens (2016) contends that Kant sees truthfulness as a strict legal obligation, crucial for the functioning of the juridical state and the social contract. He argues that even fundamental rights do not possess the same unconditional status as the duty to speak truthfully. This viewpoint aligns with Anderson's (2017) concept of a "Kantian rhetoric of sincerity," where she stresses that effective political persuasion must be grounded in ethical commitments to truthfulness. Anderson references Aristotle's framework, which underscores the significance of the speaker's character, audience engagement, and the content of speech for successful persuasion. Collectively, these works highlight that sincerity in communication is essential for building trust in public discourse, advocating for a balance between ethical responsibilities and persuasive techniques that resonate with audiences.

According to Wolf (2023), Kant's formula of universal law as a test of causality, its role in the determination as to whether an interpretation of a situation can continue to serve the role of a universal law. The analysis reveals how the categorical imperative of Kant functions to establish a framework wherein the definitions can be applied across the board without conflict, thus supporting an organized logical order of morals. This approach reveals some insight regarding Kantian ethics based on a test concerning causality, where it assesses whether universal moral laws have any stability as well as relevance. "Kant's Formula of universal law as a test of causality," appearing in *The Philosophical Review* (2023), Whether he can do it. The study shows that the central objective of Kant's basic law is to outline principles that can be clearly defined and universally adopted, thus advocating for a logical moral system. This framework helps to understand Kantian ethics more so when the cause and effect of implementing the universality of moral principles have been examined.

According to Kolomý (2022), Immanuel Kant's "On Moral Satisfaction" indicates each person's self-worth and dignity with respect. Kant's simple theory is that individuals need to be respected and never treated only as tools to further one's own goals. Instead, individuals need to be seen as independent beings with a unique worth and the capacity to make their own decisions. Therefore, it is important to take into account how decisions may affect the emotional and general well-being of others anytime they have an impact on them. Respecting another individual means actively interacting with their ideas and viewpoints while respecting their rights to self-determination. Developing a sense of belonging and respect for one another is made easier by the creation of spaces where many different kinds of voices are acknowledged and can be heard. By putting empathy and understanding first, we develop closer relationships with others based on mutual respect and trust. By engaging in such meaningful behavior or manner, we all work to create a peaceful world community that is marked by true respect for the inherent dignity of every individual.

According to Schmidt (2024) Kantian ethics, was established by the philosopher Immanuel Kant, it explores moral principles that are relevant to anyone without consideration for circumstances. Kantians use a deontological approach, which states that the right thing to do is defined not by the consequences of the action but by the intention behind the action hence, individuals should never use others as mere means to an end. This view emphasizes the inherent worth of human beings and their reason, which assumes that respect is the dominant ethical stance. Which suggests that actions to be taken should be capable of being rolled out to every human being. Some may say that Kant has failed to consider the subjectivity of situations with regard to people and his strict, objective reasoning, but Kant argues that reason is a common ground for establishing moral laws. He has stated ideas in the modern justice system and ethical thought, arguing that moral actions should be rational and for the good of mankind.

Research Gap

The researchers came up with four several gaps that the whole paper is lacking. These gaps, if answered and full-filled, may help the future researcher who will create a research similar to this topic.

Firstly, most of the literature that exists has covered ethics about influencer marketing and the need for transparency, but there's a huge gap in research on the ways in which changes over time in how authenticity and brand alignment among these influencers can impact consumer trust and engagement. Specifically, these studies tend to miss determining long-term perceptions among consumers due to factors attributed to those influencers, particularly within sensitive populations, such as teens and young adults. This gap, therefore provides an avenue for future studies on the empirical study of how the perceived authenticity and brand-alignment impacts the resulting trust, engagement, and purchasing behavior in the long term, and would therefore provide valuable insights to the brands seeking to build sustainable relationships with their audiences. Moreover, while the article is to be full with calls for transparency (particularly trust and ethicality) in influencer marketing, blogging, and digital partnerships, there remains a gap between general studies centering on the importance of ethical disclosure practices within the social media space and a more focused investigation that explores the relationship between such practices and proper long-term trust-building processes across different promotion settings (specifically amongst bloggers). Although research such as Huang (2014) has discussed the impact of self-disclosure on trust, it fails to uncover how these disclosure mechanisms can be expected or mediated in order both that brand disputes are discouraged and influencers/brands credibility is heightened. In addition, many articles outline characteristics of influencers or, more broadly, content marketing; limited studies have examined how ethical standards as they relate to disclosure affect audiences' perceptions of authenticity and trust across different blog types or digital content.

There is also a noticeable and clear gap regarding the literature about legal compliance that they must need to know or follow. Issues such as plagiarism, copyright infringement, and federal trade commission (FTC) rules, but they often treat these topics separately. This makes it hard for all bloggers, especially to those beginners, to find a simple guide that explains everything they need to know in an easy way. Some bloggers may know that they should avoid copying other work or plagiarism, but they may not totally understand the copyright law about being honest when it comes to promoting products. There are some guides that are too difficult to understand because they are missing important details, because of these bloggers might break the rules which can lead to legal trouble or disputes that can harm their reputation.

Lastly, the discussed ethical guidelines for content creators pertains to the lack of clear guidelines on how to address the issue of transparency in sponsored content. Although several articles focus on authenticity and disclosure, they do not give enough details about how influencers can reconcile individualism and commercialism. The guidelines are known to rarely consider the imperative of continuous learning when it comes to new ethical practices in digital communication. Moreover, the presence of these ethical codes is not followed by sufficient enforcement leaving creators not protected by any rules. Lastly, there is a gap in the literature regarding the psychological aspect and awareness towards the audience affected by influencer marketing especially for vulnerable audiences.

Aims of the Study

The dynamics between trust and transparency in influencer marketing are very pertinent in today's digital

world, especially with a growing level of skepticism among consumers. As suggested by (Powell and Pring, 2023), transparency also heightens the trust that the audience has in health-related content since misinformation might end up having disastrous consequences for them. Probably, the different forms of influencers, including beauty, lifestyle, and fitness influencers, have different applications of transparency and thereby produce varied effects on their audiences therefore, further research is needed. Additionally, in response to increasing regulatory scrutiny, such knowledge may prove to be crucial to ethical marketing and the avoidance of potential liability under law. Brands that practice transparency are less likely to have legal issues and build stronger reputations. Based on the findings of the current study will serve as a comprehensive guideline for the brands to pick the right and effective ethical influencers and step forward into the strategies which support real connections leading to healthy consumer behavior in many industries.

As the digital marketing landscape continues to feature bloggers and influencers more noticeable, it is necessary that greater study be given towards ethical considerations in these partnerships. Naturally, the increasing saturation of influencers into influencer marketing has resulted in audiences being increasingly exposed to a larger volume of sponsored content. This has, in turn, led to a real lack of standardized disclosure and loyalty, or at least transparency, on the part of enterprises that continue advertising and promoting their mission-driven work, which further destroys trust. Supported also in the field of ethical concerns emphasized through the Federal Trade Commission (2009), warns brands from potential lawsuits causation or bad reputation misses utter lack of transparent disclosure. Additionally, in death research is necessary to unpack the potential short-term effects of disclosure on audience trust and engagement in blogging a feature present here when bloggers intertwine personal stories with sponsored narratives. Considering that there is still a knowledge gap about how ethical blogging outreach might influence long-term relationships between a brand and an audience, this paper will examine appropriate disclosure practices that both bring and keep trust but avoid potential brand conflicts in establishing a solid business plan.

Furthermore, this study aims to help all bloggers by creating a simple or a complete guide that covers some important legal issues that they need to know, such as plagiarism, copyright infringement and federal trade commission (FTC) rules, so that they can avoid some legal problems. By filling this gap, the study will provide bloggers more knowledge they need to stay safe from some legal disputes and it can also help to build trust with their audiences or customers. Following these rules also helps bloggers to avoid fines or lawsuits and it showcases that they care about honesty and fairness. This also helps them build better relationships with their readers and any brands they might work with. The study will also state the importance of staying updated on new rules, especially since online laws can change quickly. In the end, this approach will help bloggers create better content and be more successful in the long run.

Finally, the need for this research is due to lack of guidelines that can help influencers remain credible especially when undertaking sponsorship initiatives and keeping the audience's trust might become an issue. Adopting such rules might help improve the ethical base of influencer marketing and engage more trust from the parties involved. Ethical standards should therefore be improved in the blogging profession in order to improve credibility and trust. These measures will ensure that sponsored contents shall be easily understandable and free from confusion while at the same time preserving the integrity of the content creators. According to these guidelines, there is a comparison of better relationships between influencers and audiences through increased transparency and accountability.

Problem Statements

In this section, the problem statement will serve as a guide in identifying research focus and provides direction for the entire article regarding blogging.

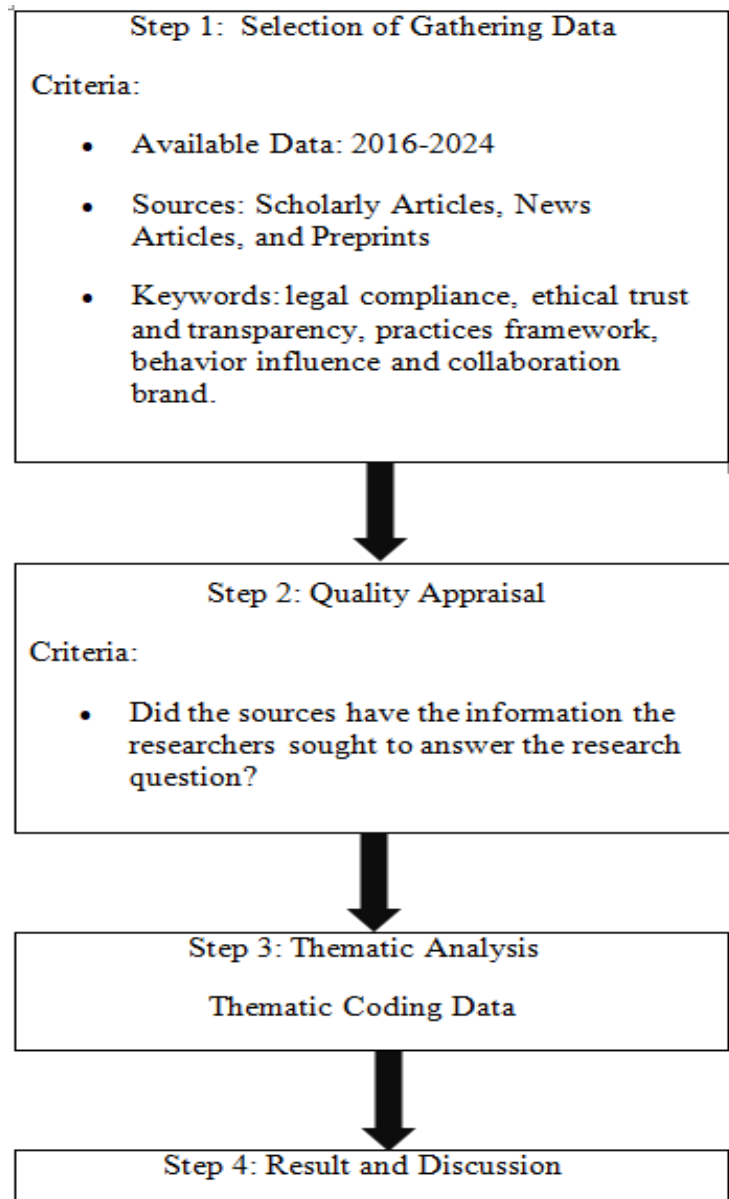
1. How does trust and transparency influence the impact of health influencers and bloggers in communicating health messages to their audience, and what can they do to improve trust and transparency in their communications?
2. What challenges do bloggers face when they aim to be open about collaboration, and how do they deal with these challenges successfully?
3. How can bloggers make sure they are following privacy laws when collecting personal data from their

readers?

4. What are the ethical responsibilities of brands and bloggers, and how do they cooperate to avoid misleading while keeping the audience trusting the information they share and interested in it?

METHODS

The researchers provide answers and solutions to the problem statement and collect data for the study. The researchers used thematic code in data coding to indicate recurring themes associated with trust and transparency as well as the various aspects of ethics in blogging. (Qaissi, 2024). It focuses on ethical trust and transparency. The research systematically gathered and analyzed appropriate data to investigate ethical trust and transparency in blogging. The process of data gathering, illustrated in the research framework, covered sources dated between 2013 and 2024, including scholarly articles, news reports, ResearchGate papers, and reliable websites. Important phrases such as "legal compliance," "ethic trust and transparency," "practices framework," "behavior influence," and "collaboration brand" framed the selection criteria so that scope would be narrowed. Once data was collected, a quality appraisal stage was conducted on all sources to evaluate relevance and completeness concerning the research question. Then thematic analysis was utilized, where thematic coding drew out the repeating themes, as directly associated with ethics in blogging. This structured approach allowed the in-depth examination of how trust, transparency, and ethical practices are perceived in the blogging landscape and thereby influenced the results and discussion.



Source: (Delmo et al., 2023)

RESULTS

The researchers develop a table, the main findings of the research, and the meaning of each finding will be discussed.

Table 1: Trust and transparency influence the impact of health influencer

Findings	Description	Source
Blogger Characteristics and Trust	The popularity and the level of attractiveness that reach the people's standard serve as cues that enhance perceptions of brand authenticity.	Influencer marketing effectiveness: the mechanisms that matter. Wilkie et al. (2022)
Impact of Transparency on Engagement	63% of consumers trust influencers due to their honesty and transparency, crucial for health messaging.	Influencers lose followers' trust due to non-transparency. Afaqs (2023)
Consequences of Lack of Transparency	43% of consumers avoid influencers who do not disclose sponsorships, leading to mistrust.	Lack of trust impacting influencers effectiveness. Sharma (2023)
Authenticity and Brand Alignment	Bloggers connected with brand values foster positive consumer attitudes and engagement.	Influencer marketing effectiveness: the mechanisms that matter. Wilkie et al. (2022)

Description

The table presented above draws very significant insights into the position of transparency and trust concerning bloggers, audiences, and brands. It shows the importance of characteristics in the blogger, mainly popularity and authenticity, which influence trust and increase credibility. Transparency is mentioned to be a critical component as it has 53% of consumers who value honesty, while failure to disclose sponsorships results in distrust, as 43% of consumers will avoid such influencers. Besides this, positive alignment between the values of bloggers and brands also results in favorable consumer attitudes and engagement. Overall, the results reveal how ethical practices and transparent communication can forge trust, avoid conflicts, and amplify the influence of influencer marketing.

Table 2: Challenges do bloggers face in being Transparent about Collaboration.

Topic	Results	Suggestions
Relationship between Bloggers and Audiences	Bloggers respect their readers and hold personal privacy. Blogs are an extension of themselves for bloggers, but readers come for conversation mainly. Reinikainen, H. etal (2021)	Tension between bloggers' personal boundaries and the expectations of readers. The risk of negative anonymity.
Conflict in blogging	The products are often promoted without much transparency. Tek-Ing,J. (2024)	Damages the customer's trust. Possible legal implications on the bloggers and the brands.
Transparen cy	Transparency Increases the trust and loyalty of customers to brands.	Companies that practice openness get support from the consumers.

	Brands lack transparency and risk loss of goodwill. Psico-smart (2024)	Research indicates the preference for transparency and reliability by the consumers.
Unprofessionalism in Blogging	The importance of fixing professionalism into blogging so that you are on good terms and you do not get into any trouble with the content created as well as behavior. Mahdi, M. (2024)	Building long-term trust with the audience Critical to career lifespan in the blogging industry

Description

The table presented above examines the challenges bloggers face in interactions with audiences, brands, and ethical practice. It highlights that the relationship between bloggers and audiences is very complex because they have to respect people's individual privacy while balancing expectations of and risk of being harassed by the audience, such as negative anonymity. Conflicting issues regarding blogging entail low transparency in products that diminish trust and can lead to litigation between parties involved: the blog writers and the brands. On transparency, the study reveals its major influence on building audience loyalty and trust and openness as the main aspect of consumer acceptance. These risks highlight the importance of ethical transparency and even-handed communication in order to reduce the risk and maintain trust in blogging practice.

Table 3: Ensuring Privacy Law Compliance for Bloggers

Guidelines	Description	Violations
Plagiarism	Using someone else's work without proper credit. Trusty press (2023)	Legal disputes or lawsuits Loss of credibility Penalties or fines.
Copy infringement	Using copyrighted material without permission. Bollinger (2021)	Fines or damages.
Federal trade commission Rules (Disclosure)	Disclosing paid partnerships or sponsored content. Caruso (2023), upfluence (2023)	FTC fines. Legal action from brands. Loss of trust with the audience.

Description

This table above summarizes basic guidelines for bloggers in maintaining ethical and legal standards. Such guidelines include three primary concerns: plagiarism, copy infringement, and the Federal Trade Commission rules disclosure. Each guideline will have descriptions of unethical practices, such as using work by others without the writer's credit, using copyrighted material without permission, or failing to disclose paid sponsorships. About this legal compliance there are such lawsuits, fines, losses of credibility and also losses of trust on your audiences and customers. References such as Trustypress (2023), Bollinger (2021), and Caruso (2023). By understanding this table above, it helps to have some ideas and helps bloggers on how to follow these ethics and rules properly, while blogging to earn your audience's trust and avoiding some legal disputes with brands.

Table 4: Ethical responsibilities of brands and bloggers

Article Title	Theme	Description
On the Dark Side of Lifestyle Blogging – The Case of Negative	Kants Duty to	Truthfulness as a righteous duty that is necessary for social existence and for the social contract, considering

Anonyms (Merten,2016)	Truthfulness	that even rights are adhering to this duty.
Kant on moral feeling and respect (Kolomy,2022)	Equal treatment	Kantian ethics observe that equal worth should be accorded to fellow human beings, people should not be used solely as tools to achieve certain objectives.
Wolf Kant's Formula of Universal Law as a Test of Morality Wolf (2023)	Moral Principles	Principle that provides a standard for moral actions that should guide brand and blogger interactions objects to be used.
Kantian ethics. Corporate Finance Institute Schmidt (2024)	Deontological Ethics	Rely on duty and intention instead of consequences and therefore support the code of ethics for brands and bloggers in social media communication.

Description

The table presented above highlights the application of Kantian ethics toward responsible practices. It identifies key ethical principles such as Kant's Duty of Truthfulness, which stresses that honesty is important in the maintenance of societal harmony and conformity with the social contract. The implication is equal treatment for awarding greater consideration to each individual's equal worth and abolishing people as tools to achieve objectives. Moral principles, according to Kant's Universal Law, provide a yardstick from which to gauge ethical acts that dictate how brands and bloggers should interact. Lastly, deontological ethics moves from the perspective of duty and intention instead of results, and a code of ethics is henceforth complied with in social media interaction. The results show, supported by resources such as Merten (2016), Kolomy (2022), Wolf (2023), and Schmidt (2024), the importance of utilizing ethical principles to build trust and respect in brand-blogger collaborative work.

DISCUSSION

The research findings on trust and transparency in influencer marketing reveal some critical insights that reflect the significance of these elements in shaping consumer behavior and brand perception. First, characteristics of influencers are believed to influence the audience's trust. Research affirms that traits such as popularity and attraction are heuristic cues that enhance perceptions about brand authenticity and, therefore, create consumer attitudes toward an influencer's endorsement (Wilkie et al., 2022). This implies that brands have to pick the right influencer since characteristics have to resonate with values and preferences of the target audience in question. Furthermore, the influence of transparency on audience involvement is quite profound. In that regard, the statistics reveal that 63 percent of customers trust influencers due to honesty and transparency about the brand relationship (Afaqs, 2023). That brings into sharp focus how important such communication is in building trust, especially within sensitive sectors such as health and beauty. On the contrary, the consequences of lack of transparency are severe and 43% of consumers will deliberately avoid an influencer who does not reveal a sponsorship clearly, according to (Sharma, 2023). It reflects that transparency will be an absolute requirement for influencers to engage with their audience and then maintain their credibility. The other finding is that the one-time collaborations with influencers are not as effective as the long term collaborations with influencers have better results. Long term collaboration enables the incorporation of brand messages to a greater extent. This incorporates authenticity in endorsement as well, which goes on to result in high brand loyalty of the influencer's audience. This would thus mean that brands have to build long-term relationships with the influencer and not just converse in one-time connections. To sum, these findings conjointly outline that in the arena of influencer marketing, trust and transparency plays a pivotal base that significantly influences consumer behavior. Brands who aim to gain maximum engagement from marketing influencer campaigns ought to lay emphasis on the transparent relationship with their influencers, actual collaborations, and rigorous assessment of their strategies through general metrics. In doing so, they end up increasing the brand's trustworthiness value and prompt and promote rewarding behaviors among today's highly competitive digital consumers.

Lifestyle bloggers consider their readers as one of the most essential resources of blogging, while

simultaneously they value their personal lives and maintain a very strict regime controlling their privacy. It has thus become important enough to examine this relationship between bloggers and the public in contexts such as authenticity and the debate about private and public. All of which challenges the relationship of bloggers with their readers and predisposes lifestyle blogging to the appearance of negative anonymity. It argues that the conflict between bloggers and their readers is based on a discontinuity, where in the bloggers' view blogs are in fact a corporeal extension of the self, but where readers seem to agree to only consider it a place in which to engage in conversation. (Reinikainen, etal 2021).

Some instances in the Philippines show problematic behavior between bloggers and brands, especially with respect to things like weight-loss teas and capsules. For instance, there are always issues of bloggers and influencers pushing health products, such as slimming teas or "pampapayat" beverages, under the guise of failing to disclose side effects or having sponsorship agreements. Most of these issues involve cases against misleading advertisements and the science that does not back up the claims of the influencers (Tek-Ing, 2024). The article mainly explores how blogging about its activities lacks transparency and severely damages the trust of an audience. It highlights how consumers prefer and increasingly support brands that are open about their practices. Studies show that a huge percentage is more likely to support companies that provide clear, honest information. Brands that do not maintain transparency can suffer reputational damage, as in the case of several case studies. Trust and loyalty are therefore instilled by transparency, and this leads consumers to become involved in a deeper way with brands (psico-smart, 2024). Unprofessionalism in the blogging world can have adverse, devastating implications similar to those wrongly linked with improper usage of social media by employees. The blogger risks attracting inappropriate or negative content either to demolish their reputation or lose readership and partnerships. Publicized unprofessional behavior leads to loss of trust from followers and potentially results in legal issues, especially if the content causes defamation or dangerous action. Another issue is the effects that online existence may have on employers. In this context, blogs, in particular, can significantly influence the hiring decisions of employers because of posting inappropriate information. There are also copyright, defamation, and privacy issues with relation to the content being posted by bloggers. Thus, in the blogging world, professionalism is quite important, affecting the reputation of an individual, not just in his or her career but also the audience's trust and then the sustainability of the career inside the blogging world. This is why it is necessary for the blogger to practice and be knowledgeable about the importance of the practices mentioned (Mahdi, 2024).

It is very important nowadays for bloggers to understand more or know what are the rules and regulations that govern their own content. By not following these kinds of rules it can be possible to lead to legal disputes. To help bloggers negotiate those problems. We will create a simple chart that outlines all the laws and guidelines to avoid potential legal disputes. The charts will cover such as plagiarism, copyright infringement, and federal trade commission or in other words FTC rules. By having this kind of information, it can be easy for all the bloggers to have this for free and available, making it simpler for them to ensure compliance. This approach will allow bloggers to create content responsibly while also minimizing their risk of some legal disputes (Caruso, 2023).

The ethical principles include duty, truthfulness, respect, and universality as explained by Kant to help in today's society, especially in the use of social media. Although the first of these concepts speaks about moral action and rational deliberation, the purpose of it, in particular online forums, is not entirely clear. The current literature reflects that there is insufficient coverage of interpersonal relationships and legal issues, although Kantian ethics can effectively deal with problems of error and division that occur virtually on the internet. The Kantian approach has to be brought into the modern age of social media, thus dictating the need for a responsibility-based system that first seeks to correct disinformation and second provides for a public sphere that encourages ethical engagement as well as embracing others' independence (Merten, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the importance of ethical practices in collaborations between bloggers and brands is extremely high, as they are crucial for creating trust, openness, and reliability in the online world. As influencer marketing has grown from casual agreements to more formal, controlled interactions, the need for clear ethical rules has become vital for ensuring both legal compliance and consumer trust. Rules from organizations, like

the United States federal trade commission FTC, emphasize the importance of transparency by requiring disclosures of significant partnerships. Famous examples, such as Doc Willie Ong's case in health blogging, show the possible negative outcomes of ignoring these ethical rules, especially in sensitive fields. This analysis shows that ethical disclosure practices are not just a moral duty but also a smart strategy, as they help build consumer loyalty and improve brand reputation (Powell et al. 2023).

RECOMMENDATION

Based on finding, for building ethical blogger relations and to increase transparency and trust, a few relevant recommendations can be implemented. Firstly, brands and bloggers should set clear guidelines for disclosing sponsored content to allow for better compliance with FTC regulations. This includes the use of straightforward language and visual indicators in informing their audience about partnerships in the most effective manner. Moreover, long-term collaborations between brands and influencers help build authenticity and trust. Such partnerships create even more opportunities for integration of brand messaging to create credibility. Another important aspect of involving influencers is teaching them ethical standards in marketing. Helping such influencers with ethics training that focuses on transparency, truthfulness, and the potential ramifications of having false information punishable by law will help an influencer be responsible. Brands should also use authenticity verification tools so that the metrics for influencer engagement contain real followers rather than inflated numbers. Another important strategy is encouraging consumer feedback; building avenues for consumers to share their thoughts on influencer content fosters two-way communication, which enhances trust and accountability. In addition, compliance needs to be checked frequently with an in-built review mechanism for influencer content that adheres to the ethics standards and disclosure requirements. Ethical marketing campaigns that promote consumer welfare and transparency become the standard of the industry and will pull people into behaving ethically while doing influencer marketing. With these recommendations, brands will maintain a reputable position, increase consumer loyalty, and significantly contribute to increasing accountability in the digital landscape through influencer marketing.

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