

Proper use of branded social content under the spotlight

 By [Thabiso Mboli](#)

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We've seen a number of articles around influencer marketing, [what it is](#), [why it matters](#) and [how it's continually evolving](#). However, did you know that, like most industries, influencer marketing is also subject to a set of laws and rules?

Specifically, proper disclosure and authenticity are central to the whole (influencer marketing) industry, and that's where the [Federal Trade Commission](#) (FTC) comes in.



From a general point of view, the FTC is a body established “to prevent business practices that are anticompetitive or deceptive or unfair to consumers; to enhance informed consumer choice and public understanding of the competitive process; and to accomplish this without unduly burdening legitimate business activity.”

In finding a balance between content positively influencing people and the misleading of audiences, the (FTC) has

introduced new rules to ensure disclosure around sponsored content published on influencer channels. What this basically means is that marketers/brands could be held responsible should social influencers not follow these set rules and vice versa. Needless to say, this could potentially lead to serious implications for both parties involved.

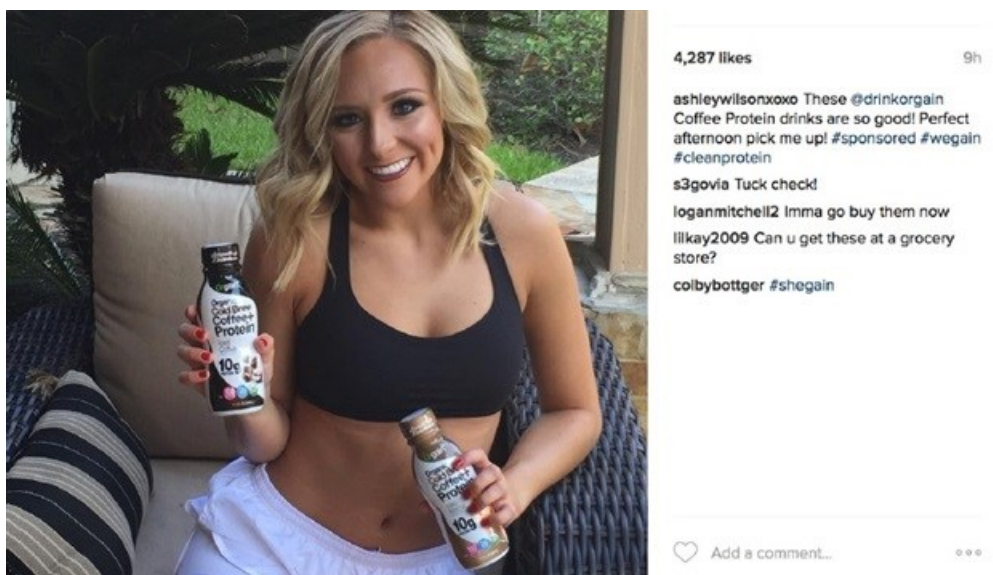
Influencer marketing technology company, [Webfluential](#), have taken this a step further by compiling and releasing an ebook titled [The Rules and Regulations of Sponsored Content](#). The ebook comes complete with all the important facts and examples. It goes further by acting as a guideline around the correct use of branded content, broken down according to each of the popular social platforms.

“Suppose you meet someone who tells you about a great new product. She tells you it performs wonderfully and offers fantastic new features that nobody else has. Would that recommendation factor into your decision to buy the product? Probably. Now suppose the person works for the company that sells the product – or has been paid by the company to tout the product. Would you want to know that when you’re evaluating the endorser’s glowing recommendation? You bet.”
- Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) Endorsement Guides.

To help give you an idea, below are two examples of the proper vs the improper use of branded content on Instagram.

How to do it:

In this sponsored advert for protein drink Orgain, Oklahoma State cheerleader Ashley Wilson tags the brand @drinkorgain clearly and does not bury the #sponsored hashtag. It is also authentic content, as a cheerleader definitely supports all things health- and fitness-related.



How not to do it:

Bex Finch is a well-known Instagrammer and photographer who coined the term #fromwhereIstand. This is a sponsored post with Tretorn boots without the #sponsorship or #ad, but with a mention of the product.



Most brands and influencers aren't aware of the rules and regulations around the proper use of branded content, and it's easy to see why many get it wrong. The above are good examples of how fine the margins are but also how easy it is to get it right and that's the main aim of the ebook. The above are just two examples in a long line of others which can be found [here](#).

It's a no-brainer why these laws have been enforced by the FTC especially when the main is fairness, authenticity and disclosure. For all stakeholders involved in the influencer marketing industry, being aware of them goes without saying.

ABOUT THABISO MOLOI

An in-between introvert and extrovert, Thabiso is a curious individual who has interests in a number of topics including (but not limited to) influencer marketing, sports, technology and writing...

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