

“Forever young, beautiful, and scandal-free”: Exploring the Ethical Frames and Crafted Authenticity in the Animated Images of Female Virtual Influencers

Debopriya Roy

Tezpur University, Assam

Abstract

This paper discusses the social media presence of female virtual influencers providing an exploratory argument on their identity construction as authentic influencers and the ethical perils of that fabricated identity formation. Influencer interaction for marketing purposes forms a salient means for brands to communicate with their consumers. Influencers are highly branded internet celebrities. They accumulate sociocultural capital through authenticity, strategic communication, and intimate, parasocial relationships with their audience. Unlike human influencers on social media platforms, a virtual influencer is a digital character made through computer graphics software, then yielded a personality defined by a subjective view of the world, and has a social media profile for influencing purposes. Owing to state-of-the-art computer technology, virtual influencers share a striking resemblance with human bodies. Moreover, they indulge in platform rituals extensively. Despite these, virtual influencers have no existence in real geographical space. Popular brands started engaging with virtual influencers to further their marketing goals because the risk of influencer transgression is nonexistent, and their popularity among younger generations is enormous. Additionally, differing from their human counterparts, creators can design virtual influencers to align with the brand identity or ideology they promote. However, to blur the lines between real and virtual, virtual influencers are often positioned in the sociocultural discourse of the real geographical space and its politics. Comprehending the ethical aspects of this identity formation is the primary aim of this paper. It talks about how the construction and presentation of these virtual influencers conform to the norms of human influencers by employing spatial tactics and creating contradicting identity performances, and the ethical pitfalls of these practices. Hence, it studies nine female virtual influencers' public photographs, posts, and information on their Instagram profile as the primary text incorporating a textual analysis method.

Keywords: virtual influencer, computer-generated imagery, identity construction, influencer marketing, ethics

Introduction:

“I definitely wouldn't say my identity is crowdsourced. I'm an artist and have expressed opinions that are unpopular and as a result, have cost me fans.”

- Miquela Sousa (In a 2018 interview with the publication *Business of Fashion*)

The pursuit of identity curated by the "artist" Miquela Sousa follows the typical patterns found in contemporary influencer culture. In 2019, this online persona shared her experience of being sexually harassed on YouTube, which sparked significant controversy because she is not a real person (Klein, 2020). Miquela Sousa is, in fact, a virtual influencer—a digital character created using computer graphics software, endowed with a subjective worldview, and a social media presence for the purpose of influencing (Travers, 2020). This phenomenon of virtual influencers, who bear a striking resemblance to human beings and engage in typical platform activities, challenges the notion of reality. They can be seen as multi-layered media texts with a constructed identity that suspends the audience's disbelief. By blurring the boundaries between the real and the virtual, virtual influencers often become part of the sociocultural discourse in the physical world, including its sociopolitics. This paper explores the social media presence of selected female virtual influencers, offering an exploratory argument of how their identities are constructed as authentic influencers and the ethical concerns associated with this fabricated identity formation.

Positioning virtual Influencers in the context of influencer culture:

Virtual bodies have been used in online spaces among young people for years in video games. Scholars from diverse academic fields have attempted to comprehend these visual's impact on the minds of individuals (Gestos et al., 2018; Mou & Peng, 2009; Breur et al., 2015). However, virtual influencers surpass their visual representation. Apart from their striking resemblance to human visuals, virtual influencers engage in captivating storytelling through strategic text and visuals on platforms like Instagram. These digital characters exist exclusively within the realm of social media and differ from robots with social media profiles. Their entire presence revolves around their social media footprints, which are meticulously crafted to cater to influencing tactics. Ami Yamato, an early virtual YouTuber can be considered one of the initial virtual influencers. Although her appearance does not resemble that of a human, she adopted a human vlogger-like approach to address her audience (Tickle, 2015). Virtual influencers on Instagram too embody subjective personalities. They participate in influencer practices by sharing narratives of their personal lives and lifestyles, their representation of inhabiting physical spaces and monetize their following by incorporating sponsored content into their feed.

Maintaining visibility as an influencer requires labour-intensive strategies (Mavroudis, 2019). This involves conforming to the expectations and pressures of influencer culture which can be further understood through the concept of "feeling the rules" by Arlie Russell Hochschild (1979). Here, humans can make mistakes or refuse to comply. Virtual influencers can be designed to possess exceptional beauty, eternal youth, and certainly prevent any occurrence of transgressions (Yeung & Bae, n.d.). They can be continually tailored to meet brand requirements without posing any risk




of damaging the brand image. Another reason for their prevalence is their popularity among younger audiences (Baklanov, 2019; Yeung & Bae, n.d). Virtual influencers expand the scope of influencing making them preferable to luxury brands.

Research Design: Introducing the subjects

Influencers are not platform-exclusive (Mavroudis, 2020). They prefer utilizing multiple platforms concurrently to uphold their influential status. Instagram has emerged as one of the significant platforms for virtual influencers. Again, this paper does not analyze male virtual influencers despite the existence of at least 7-8 of them on Instagram primarily due to their lower follower count. To address how virtual influencers construct identity and the ethical implications of that, 9 female virtual influencers from Instagram were chosen through a purposive sampling procedure. The criteria for selection were: 1. The virtual characters should possess human-like appearances, and 2. Their Instagram profiles must be publicly accessible. The research analysed elements such as profile pictures, usernames, brief bios, Instagram feeds, and any linked content to gain insights into the issue at hand in the month of January 2023. This paper also studies popular articles on virtual influencers. It's important to highlight that the decision to refer to virtual influencers using 'they/them' or 'he/she' instead of 'it' was a deliberate choice. This decision reflects the paper's recognition of virtual influencers as intricate entities comprising meticulously crafted narratives and virtual embodiments.


The selected digital personalities vary in their fabricated professional, societal, national, and ethnic backgrounds. Prior to beginning a more detailed conversation, the subsequent table outlines a concise depiction of these personas.

Sl. no.	Name	Instagram username and Image of the Virtual Influencer	Description	Number of Posts at the time of Data Collection	Number of followers at the time of Data Collection	Year of starting Instagram account/Creation
1.	Lucy	@here.me.lucy	Identifies to be a 'digital innovator' hailing from South Korea (Lucy, n.d.). As per widely circulated articles about her, she is the creation of Lotte Homeshopping and	230	103000	2021

		 <p><i>Fig.1</i> Lucy [Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/lucy</p>	portrays herself as a 29-year-old design researcher with an additional role in fashion modeling.(MIN-JI, 2021; Yeung et al., 2022).			
2.	Miquela Sousa, or Lil Miquela	<p>@lilmiquela</p>  <p><i>Fig.2</i> Miquela Sousa [Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/miquela-sousa</p>	Miquela Sousa, a virtual influencer, embodies an imaginary American persona brought to life by Trevor McFredries and Sara DeCou (Petrarca, 2018). Presenting herself as a '19-year-old robot living in LA,' she collaborates with fashion labels.	1246	2.9 Million	2016
3.	Imma	<p>@imma.gram</p>  <p><i>Fig.3.</i> Imma</p>	Imma, imagined to be originating from Japan, exists as a virtual influencer crafted by Aww. Inc. Functioning as a fashion model, she has collaborated with well-known brands such as IKEA and Porsche (Imma, n.d.).	719	405000	2018

		[Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/instagram				
4.	Shudu	@shudu.gram  <i>Fig.4. Shudu</i> [Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/shudu	Created by Cameron-James Wilson, a fashion photographer (Jackson & Waldman, 2018). She is ‘the world’s first digital supermodel’(Shudu, n.d.).	116	239000	April 2017
5.	Rozy Oh	@rozy.gram  <i>Fig.5. Rozy Oh</i> [Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/rozy-gram	Fashion model, created by Sidus Studio-X. (Yu, 2022). In an interview, she claims, “I’m South Korea’s first virtual influencer, with a strong passion for the lifestyle. Oh Rozy is my real name, which means “one and only” in Korean.” (ibid.).	345	153000	August 2020

6.	Mayaa	<p>@mayaaa.gram</p>  <p><i>Fig.6.</i> Mayaa [Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/maya-gram</p>	Developed by PUMA, identifies herself as a Southeast Asian fashion model.	47	7508	2020
7.	Bermuda	<p>@bermudaisbae</p>  <p><i>Fig.7.</i> Bermuda [Online Image]. (December, 2018). Refinery 2019. https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/bermuda-instagram-cgi-influencer</p>	She is conceived as a fictional individual from the United States. Bermuda endorses Miquela's efforts on her profile (Bermuda, n.d.).	268	257000	
8.	Kyra	<p>@kyraonig</p> 	Kyra stands as India's pioneer virtual influencer, brought to life by TopSocial. Her initial appearance during her inception in 2021 exhibited distinct characteristics (Rasmussen, 2022).	44	227000	2021

		<p><i>Fig.8. Kyra</i> [Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/kyra</p>				
9.	Mar.ia	<p>@soymar.ia</p>  <p><i>Fig.9. Mar.ia</i> [Online image]. (n.d.). Virtual Humans. https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/mar-ia</p>	<p>The first Mexican virtual influencer. She champions causes such as gender equality, a wholesome lifestyle, mental well-being, and environmental concerns.</p>	147	91600	2020

Construction of an authentic influencer identity:

The construction of an online persona or a sense of self through an internet presence has become an essential characteristic of the 21st century (Mavroudis, 2019; Ching & Foley, 2012). Social media platforms enable individuals to shape their identities through customization options (Marwick, 2013). Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube offer features that allow users to add their profile pictures and express their self-perception. Rob Cover (2016) presents two ways in which identity is constructed in this context. Firstly, individuals can create a profile where they have control over which information is shared and with whom. Secondly, identity is formed through the connections one establishes on these platforms, such as "Facebook friends" (ibid.).

Identity formation differs in influencer culture. It involves the integration of strategic planning and performative acts (Franssen, 2019). In this context, the concept of authenticity deviates from the

traditional definition. Distinguishing between genuine identity expression and image fabrication becomes challenging due to influencers' identities being inherently performative (Orsatti and Riemer, 2012). Here, authenticity can be interpreted as the deliberate construction of a branded self, meticulously developed to attain and sustain cultural and economic significance (Marwick and Boyd, 2010). Here, individuals begin shaping their identities by creating and sharing photos, videos, and other forms of content, essentially transforming the process of self-documentation into self-consumable material for others (Senft, 2013). However, this process of identity creation becomes even more complex when considering virtual influencers, as they are created to assume a human influencer-like identity. The following section investigates how these identities are constructed within the realm of virtual influencing from three perspectives: the creation of human-like visual narratives, the utilisation of location-based digital technology, and the creation of artificial authenticity.

- ***“Forever young, beautiful”*: Analysing the visuals of virtual influencers**

Instagram as a platform has been a visual one with mobile phone-based photography and editing techniques (Leaver, Highfield, & Abidin, 2020). Its transition from an iPhone-only app to a platform pivotal to influencer culture has made it a site where people “strive for authenticity on a platform best known for selfies and self-representation” (ibid.). However, the visuals in the context of virtual influencers are not a self-representation. The visuals are designed to make them look like selfies sometimes to create a human-like aesthetic.

One of the ways the visuals of the virtual influencers are studied is through the Photographic Figure Rating Scale (PFRS) (shown in Figure 10 below). This scale consists of ten photographic images of real women with different body mass index (BMI) from malnourished to obese (Swami et al., 2008). Full-body pictures of the influencers were taken. Then these photographs were matched with the body types from the attached figure and coded. 22% (2) were found to be matched with the fourth frame, the other 22% were matched with the third, while 55% (5) matched with the 2nd frame.

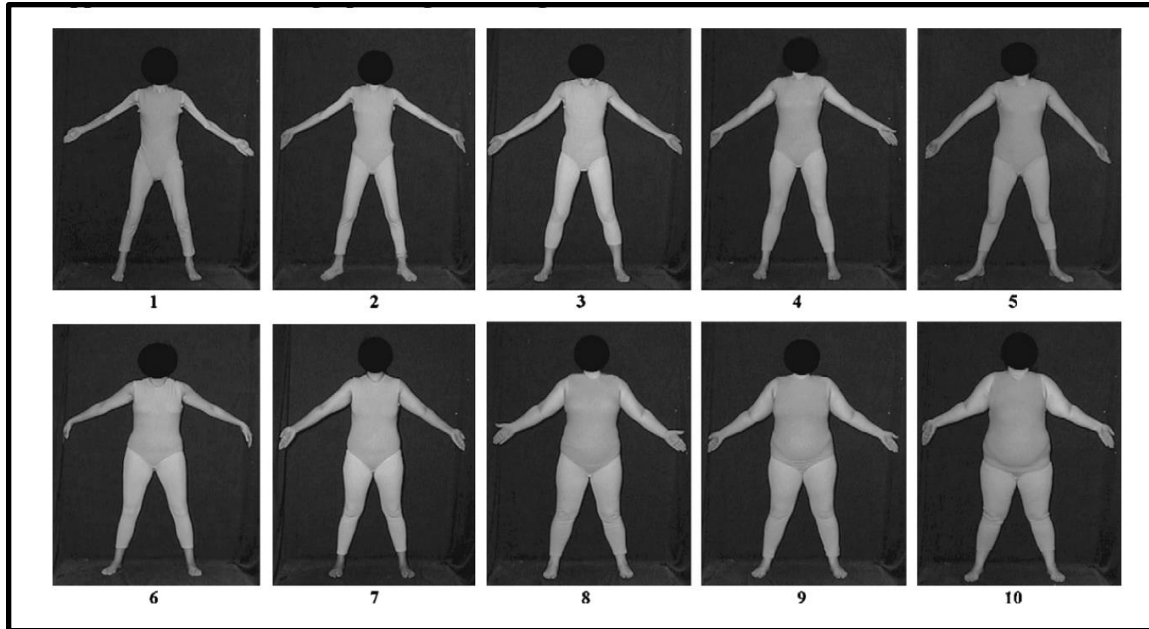


Fig. 10 PFRS [Photograph]. 2008.

Age and ageism have been essential factors in advertisements and the beauty industry (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). However, virtual characters do not experience the process of ageing naturally. For instance, Cameron-James Wilson mentioned in one of Shudu's Instagram stories that she does not age like ordinary individuals, but the creator envisions her to be in her mid-twenties (Shudu, n.d.). This creative visualisation is consistent in the development of all these influencers. Through a subjective analysis of these profiles, it can be concluded that these nine women influencers possess youthful characteristics and are designed with facial features that are considered beautiful within their specific cultural contexts. Among the nine virtual influencers, eight of them exhibit symmetrical faces and well-groomed hairstyles. Additionally, seven of them had flawless skin. However, Mar.ia stands apart by not endorsing the unattainable beauty standards promoted by others.

Historically, there has been a persistent presence of stereotypical media portrayals of women with idealised and unattainable body types (Grave, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Mills, Musto, Williams, & Tiggemann, 2018; Piccoli et al, 2021). These portrayals have been detrimental to women's sense of body image (Huang, Peng, & Ahn, 2020; Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012; Piccoli et al, 2021), leading to various issues such as dissatisfaction with oneself, body insecurities, low self-esteem, eating disorders, and other mental health problems (Meier & Gray, 2013; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Rounsefell et al., 2019; Marks et al., 2020). Isabelle Coy-Dibley (2016) uses the term "digitised dysmorphia" to highlight the disparity between the beauty ideals presented on social media and the actual appearances of women. In this regard, these images inevitably sustain harmful beauty ideals that can adversely affect the mental and emotional wellness of numerous individuals. The potential risks linked to creating a visually authentic character that closely resembles a real

person can be understood better if the economic and commercial dimensions of the virtual influencer phenomenon are explored.

- ***The Spatial Self: Locating virtual bodies in a real space***

Virtual influencers actively engage in the performative act of situating themselves within real geographical locations. The profile description (bio) of Mar.ia, "La primera humana virtual mexicana" (The first virtual human of Mexico), emphasises her Mexican identity (Mar.ia, n.d.). Miquela Sousa's bio describes her as a "19-year-old Robot living in LA" (Miquela, n.d.), thereby associating herself with Los Angeles. OH!_ROZY, another virtual influencer, identifies herself as "Korea's first virtual influencer" and establishes a connection to Korean ethnicity (OH!_ROZY, n.d.). The manner in which these virtual influencers associate themselves with geographical regions differs. Puma's virtual influencer, Maya, transcends country borders and labels herself as the 'virtual girl from Southeast Asia' (Maya, n.d.). In contrast, Imma and Kyra position themselves within distinct cities: Tokyo and Mumbai, respectively (Imma, n.d.; Kyra, n.d.). In an interview with Yourstory, Kyra states, "I am based out of Mumbai, although I am originally from the Metaverse" (BU & Sarma, 2022). This spatial negotiation disrupts the conventional representation of real geopolitical space and incorporates performative elements, such as using location-specific language. Some virtual influencers like Rozy, Lucy, and Imma produce content in Korean and Japanese, underscoring their ethnic identities. (OH!_Rozy, n.d.; Lucy, n.d.; Imma, n.d.). Mar.ia's entire content in Spanish serves the same purpose (Mar.ia, n.d.).

Virtual influencers' documentation and display of their experiences in different spaces and places to perform identity can be explained by the framework of 'Spatial self' which constitutes how online self-representation is connected with depicting real offline experiences (Schwartz & Haleboua, 2015). Expanding Goffman's theoretical underpinning of identity as performance in the context of social media, they explain - "In this case, the spatial self relies on a stylized repetition of presenting certain places, with certain connotations and meanings, as constitutive of one's identity performance" (Schwartz & Haleboua, 2015; Hogan, 2010). This has been also amplified in De Souza e Silva and Frith's (2012) understanding of how the presentation of location has some role in encouraging homophily among the people who inhabit those geographical spaces as well as the online spaces. Sharing location associates the user with a certain kind of lifestyle which creates and endures intimate relationships among users (Barkhuus et al, 2008). Miquela, OH!_ROZY, Kyra, Imma, Lucy, Mayaa, Bermuda curates a visual narrative depicting a trendy urban lifestyle favored by the youth. Their inhabitation of real places complements their authenticity and their association with an aspirational way of life that many long for. Each of these nine influencers actively showcases their exploration of tangible physical spaces. Consequently, it can be inferred that this representation of real space is helping virtual influencers create an identity that resonates with their followers and adds to their influencer practices. However, more extensive and rigorous investigation is required to understand how the virtual influencers' act of

inhabiting real space also aids brands in targeting specific markets beyond conventional influencer strategies.

- **Faking Authenticity: Intimacy, relatability, and strategic identity construction**

Influencer holds a strong obligation to their audience. And the interaction between the audience and the content creator differs from traditional celebrity discourses. Influencers often share their authentic, intimate self on social media platforms to acquire fame (Papacharissi, 2010). Here, this act of sharing intimate details with a public audience on social media becomes important in creating strong social bonds (John, 2013). Rojek (2015) calls this “presumed intimacy” where relationships with “mediated others” are “founded on the assumption of personal disclosure, ranging from online friends to celebrities”. This enhances the influencers’ realness. Eight virtual influencers in this study indulged in self-disclosure and strategic communication. Using what Abidin (2015) terms ‘communicative intimacy’, they construct a narrative of their lived experiences as women belonging to a particular identity within a pertinent socio-cultural framework, enhancing their influencer appeal. The content shared on Shudu’s account differs. Except for her, the remaining individuals craft a storyline around their daily routines, travels, professional engagements, and more. The number of interactions, the frequency of appearance, etc. belong to the platform-specific tactics that virtual influencers embrace to maintain their influence on the audience or to create a parasocial relationship with them.

Relatability is another crucial element in influencer culture and this holds true for virtual influencers as well. Virtual influencers immerse themselves in contextual socio-cultural discourse to maintain relatability. For instance, Kyra posted a photograph of herself wearing the Indian cricket team’s jersey on the day of the India vs. Pakistan match in the T20 WorldCup (Kyra, 2022a). Here, the spatiotemporal context should be considered to evaluate it. Cricket provides a space and a discourse on the relationship between India and Pakistan (Crick, 2009). Studies also indicate the emotional experience of the supporters and their direct connection with stock markets (Asim et al, 2021). Kyra’s post needs to be understood within the broader context of audience engagement on social media platforms during the match. The post’s caption ‘Go team India’ with a blue heart emoji effectively indicates her emotional support (Kyra, 2022a). This contributes to her identity as someone with an Indian connection, thereby resonating with the South Asian audience. To further this formation of identity, she also created content on the occasion of *Diwali* (the festival of lights), the FIFA World Cup and Christmas (Kyra, 2022b; Kyra 2022c; Kyra 2022d). Interestingly, she donned Argentina’s jersey in her post for the FIFA World Cup 2023. This could be linked to the considerable support Argentina received from Indian football enthusiasts during the FIFA World Cup (Ellis & Shaji, 2022). A similar pattern is recurrent in Lucy, Oh!_Rozy, imma, and Mar.ia’s content (Lucy, 2022a; Lucy, 2022b; Oh!_Rozy, 2022a; Oh!_Rozy, 2022b; Imma, 2023; Mar.ia, 2022a; Mar.ia, 2023). These performative acts construct a semblance

of reality where the followers of these cultural events can relate to them resulting enhancement of the virtual influencer's appeal.

Here, identity is crafted through performative acts (Marwick, 2013; Senft, 2012) and intertwined with intricate and multifaceted intersections that continue to develop rather than being a fixed form. This process involves engaging with popular culture and political discussion to fulfill the requirements of an influencer role that goes beyond mere intimacy. All virtual influencers in this study except for Shudu and Maya extensively participate in this process. Miquela Sousa, the fashion icon and musician, openly expresses her views on contemporary socio-political issues.. Her bio reads '#blacklivesmatter' positioning her as a progressive advocate against racism (Miquela, n.d.). Kyra specifies her preferred pronouns in her bio, displaying her grasp of and empathy for nonbinary gender identity (Kyra, n.d.). Imma and Rozy use pride flag emojis in their bio (Imma, n.d.; Oh! Rozy, n.d.). These tactics create an emotional self, value-laden and seemingly relatable to their audience's experiences which further makes these virtual influencers seem genuine and authentic. They build up a narrative of their lived experiences as women of a specific identity located in a relevant socio-cultural context to allure their influencer appeal by appearing authentic.

Although authenticity holds great importance in influencer culture, the question arises whether these identities would have been shaped in the same manner if they contradicted the brand's image. Mar.ia has sculpted her identity as an environmentally-conscious and inclusive individual with a passion for plants and cuisine. She produces content related to Pride Month and encourages contemplation of these concepts. She posts content on healthy living and environmental consciousness. Her posts revolve around healthy living and environmental awareness, endorsing products like paraben-free shampoos and vegan ice cream (Mar.ia, 2022b; Mar.ia, 2022c). The tactics employed to establish an authentic persona also align closely with the virtual influencers' brand identities while fostering strong connections with their followers.. However, differing from their human counterparts the construction of virtual influencers as subjects is tailored to simultaneously resonate with their brands and audience, sometimes embodying contrasting identity practices driven by the human operators behind them.

The ethical aspects of virtual influencer practices:

- **Issue of Fake Identity Creation**

The social media presence and the communicative aspects of virtual influencers do not naturally differentiate them from their human counterparts. From an ethical standpoint, both raise similar questions regarding honesty, accountability, transparency, and responsibility. However, virtual influencers muddle these ethical perceptions by introducing a fresh stratum of fabricated personas.

Virtual influencers have no real-life existence or identity. The complex manoeuvre of identity outlined in the prior section is executed by an individual belonging to a distinct identity – a living, breathing human behind a digital device. Consequently, these manufactured identities of virtual influencers lack the authentic real-world experience inherent to genuine identities.

Kyra in one interview said “Even though 90% of the comments that I receive are positive and encouraging, there are some who would harass me or bully me in the comments or DMs. It is so unfortunate yet something that most women influencers undergo” (BU & Sarma, 2022). When Miquela made a claim of sexual assault, her narrative closely paralleled the stories of women worldwide. This situation raises concerns about virtual influencers needing to utilize and commodify the gender-specific experiences of female content creators or women from various social backgrounds in order to remain relevant and authentic. This becomes even more complex with the example of Shudu. In this case, a white British man is constructing the identity and appearance of a young Black female supermodel (Jackson, 2018). Shudu's Instagram account doesn't showcase her personal encounters. Displaying immaculate dark brown skin and balanced facial features, Shudu is occasionally photographed wearing an *iindzila*, a neckpiece worn by the Ndebele people of South Africa (Shudu, 2021). The fashion tactics inform her racial identity.

The discrepancy between the creator's identity and the identity they are portraying allows for the perpetuation of identity stereotypes. Undoubtedly, when a white man from the UK endeavors to shape the online identity of a black woman, he can only simulate the latter's identity without the real-life experiences that shape that identity in reality. This creates a significant potential for misrepresentation. Furthermore, as the bodies of women are fashioned to communicate various appeals and aesthetics, including those of a sexual nature, by individuals from diverse backgrounds, the issues of the male gaze and race come to the forefront.

- **Perils of suspension of disbelief and lack of accountability**

“I feel like she looks realistic because she’s captured in a very editorial way, and your only comparison for my images are other fashion images which are often unrealistic and quite retouched.”

- Cameron James Wilson on Shudu as quoted by Sara Semic (2019)

The need for critical consideration of this arises from the fact that virtual influencers possess the appearance and online behavior of actual humans, yet lack real-world accountability. The striking resemblance between visual depictions of virtual influencers and their human counterparts leads to a suspension of disbelief among individuals. Influencers and their human counterparts lead to a suspension of disbelief among individuals. On top of that, their realistic engagement with cultural and political discussions within the real world adds to their authenticity and relatability as flesh and blood ‘real’ influencers. Instances such as Miquela advocating for #blacklivesmatter or Mar.ia

endorsing pride marches involve virtual influencers in the sociocultural dialogue of younger generations. The intentionality of this kind of engagement awaits in-depth empirical understanding. But, it raises critical questions on trust, and reliability in the post-trust age.

Especially, here the identity is integrated with the experiences of the tangible world, wherein these virtual characters partake in socio-political dialogues. This strengthens the argument for owning responsibility for their content. Consider instances like Lucy promoting a food product, Imma experimenting with spicy ramen, or Mar.ia endorsing a specific shampoo brand. Their experiences aren't as genuine as they would be for an actual human follower. Ambiguity lingers regarding who is responsible for any potential fallout

Trusting a crafted identity does not involve the deep psychological process of trusting another human, but mimics it with edgy marketing and communication tactics. Ben Robinson (2020) argued the pitfalls of the lack of accountability on the part of virtual influencers after studying Miquela. Diverging from Miquela's approach, Mar.ia, self-proclaimed as Mexico's pioneering digital human, actively endorses a certain lifestyle. No matter how harmless and aesthetically pleasing that seems, it cannot deny the overriding question regarding the unclarity of the virtual creators' accountability and intentions. Adding to this, the fact that virtual influencers solely inhabit the digital realm magnifies the impact of a few simple clicks, which could potentially result in the complete alteration or erasure of their digital existence.

Indian voluntary self-regulatory organisation of the advertising industry ASCI became the first regulatory authority to create a guideline for virtual influencers (Guthrie, 2021). It defined virtual influencers as “fictional computer-generated ‘people’ or avatars who have the realistic characteristics, features, and personalities of humans, and behave similarly as influencers” and directed “A virtual influencer must additionally disclose to consumers that they are not interacting with a real human being. This disclosure must be upfront and prominent” (ASCI, 2021).

Except for Lucy, all the other virtual influencers maintain this disclosure in their bios. However, when a post appears on a feed, it doesn't include the bio descriptions. And, the concept of digital humans, avatars, meta influencers, and virtual humans is relatively new to people. Further, children-Instagram users (Mosseri, 2021) and inadequate digital literacy among individuals can exacerbate the potential risks of the situation. For them, it will be difficult to recognize the deceptive nature of these accounts. In this context, the issue becomes more problematic when these influencers start endorsing experiences or encouraging people to participate in certain actions. Addressing these ethical concerns requires further research, engagement, and initiatives to enhance media literacy, ensure transparency, and establish accountability for the content and opinions that are shared.

Conclusion:

This paper attempted to set forth the much-needed discussion on the social media presence of female virtual influencers. Discussing nine virtual influencers' Instagram content, this attempted to establish how the identity construction of virtual influencers follows the performative aspects of their human counterparts. It draws on the existing understanding of ethics and concludes that the blurred line between the virtual and real is raising crucial ethical concerns.

The challenge of establishing trust while advertising a product or endorsing a brand aligns with the longstanding theme of trust within modern marketing. In this situation, things become intricate. The progression of technology, evolving landscapes of advertising and marketing, and the popularity of virtual influencers among young people will likely lead to an increase in the number of virtual influencers on social media platforms. As a result, it is crucial to thoroughly address the virtual influencer culture to mitigate ethical issues related to transparency, honesty, and accountability.

It is acknowledged that this paper has its limitations, and further empirical and in-depth research conducted with a rigorous methodology is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of these phenomena, particularly from a gendered standpoint. Moreover, the paper does not address the emergence of male virtual influencers, despite their increasing prominence. While it investigates Imma, it overlooks the profile of Zinn (@plusticboy), who claims to be Imma's brother (Loh, 2022). India too now has a male virtual influencer named Kabir (@kabirlivinhere) who was created after the data collection of this study was over ("RAJ YADAV- Who Created India's First Male Virtual and Meta Influencer 'Kabir,'" 2023). As the number of male virtual influencers continues to rise and find appropriation, it becomes crucial to scrutinize this aspect, particularly in comparison to male influencers or models. It is also essential to explore the differences in the communicative attributes of male and female virtual influencers, real and virtual male influencers. Given that the concept of a virtual influencer is still relatively novel in India's intricate social landscape, there exists a need to study Indian virtual influencers to gain insight into how audiences perceive them. Additional research and active involvement are essential to effectively navigate ethical concerns through enhanced media literacy, transparency, and ownership of responsibility for both content and opinions shared.

References

- Abidin, C., Highfield, T., & Leaver, T. (2020). *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures*. Wiley.
- Abidin, C. (2015). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia*, 161(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16665177>

- ASCI. (2021). *Guidelines for Influencer Advertising in Digital Media*. ascionline.in. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://ascionline.in/images/pdf/guidelines-for-influencer-advertising-in-digital-media-final.pdf>
- Baklanov, N. (2019, November 13). The Top Instagram Virtual Influencers in 2019. *HypeAuditor*. <https://hypeauditor.com/blog/the-top-instagram-virtual-influencers-in-2019/>
- Barkhuus L, Brown B, Bell M, et al. (2008) From awareness to repartee: sharing location within social groups. In: Proceedings of CHI'08, Florence, 5–10 April, pp. 497–506. New York: ACM Press
- Bermuda [@bermudaisbae]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, <https://www.instagram.com/bermudaisbae/?hl=en>
- Breuer, J., Kowert, R., Festl, R., & Quandt, T. (2015). Sexist Games=Sexist Gamers? A Longitudinal Study on the Relationship Between Video Game Use and Sexist Attitudes. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18(4).
- BU, P., & Sarma, A. (2022, September 9). Hello World and the Metaverse: A chat with Kyra, India's first virtual influencer. *YourStory*. <https://yourstory.com/the-decrypting-story/indian-virtual-influencer-kyra-metaverse-web3>
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40(4).
- Chung, S., & Cho, H. (2017). Fostering Parasocial Relationships with Celebrities on Social Media: Implications for Celebrity Endorsement. *doi:10.1002/mar.21001*, 34(4).
- Cover, R. (2016), *Digital identities: Creating and communicating the online self*, UK, Elsevier
- Coy-Dibley, I. (2016). 'Digitized Dismorphia' of the Female Body: The Re/Disfigurement of the Image. *Palgrave Communications*, 2.
- Crick, E. (2009). Contact Sport: Cricket in India-Pakistan Relations Since 1999. *South Asian Survey*, 16(1), 59–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152310801600105>
- Edwards L (2018) Understanding Public Relations: Theory, Culture and Society. Sage. Error A (2018) Meet Lil Miquela, the AI Influencer on the cover of our new print issue. Highsnob
- Ellis, H., & Shaji, K. (2022). 'Our team will win': how so many Indians started supporting Argentina. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/dec/17/our-team-will-win-how-so-many-indians-started-supporting-argentina-world-cup-fever>
- Fardouly, J., & Vartanian, L. R. (2016). Social Media and Body Image Concerns: Current Research and Future Directions. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 9.
- Feller, M. (2018, April 18). We Can't Get Enough of This Drama Between Two 'Virtual Instagram Influencers'. *ELLE*. <https://www.elle.com/culture/tech/a19849553/lil-miquela-bermuda-instagram-virtual-influencer-hacking/>
- Forever young, beautiful and scandal-free: The rise of South Korea's virtual influencers. (2022, July 30). *KESQ*. <https://kesq.com/cnn-other/2022/07/30/forever-young-beautiful-and-scandal-free-the-rise-of-south-koreas-virtual-influencers/>
- Franssen, G., (2019). Sincerity and authenticity in celebrity culture: Introduction, *Celebrity Studies*, 10:3, 315-319, DOI: 10.1080/19392397.2019.1630117

- Frith, J., & Silva, A. D. S. e. (2012). *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces: Locational Privacy, Control, and Urban Sociability*. Routledge.
- Furnham, A., & Paltzer, d. S. (2010). The portrayal of men and women in television advertisements: An updated review of 30 studies published since 200. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 51.
- Gascón, M. (2020, September 20). Mar.ia, la influencer virtual generada a partir de inteligencia artificial que está arrasando en Instagram. *20minutos.es*. <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/4386825/0/mar-ia-la-influencer-virtual-generada-a-partir-de-inteligencia-artificial-que-esta-arrasando-en-instagram/>
- Gestos, M., Smith-Merry, J., & Campbell, A. (2018). Representation of Women in Video Games: A Systematic Review of Literature in Consideration of Adult Female Wellbeing. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21(9).
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh Press.
- Grabe, S., Ward, L. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(3), 460– 476. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.3.460>
- Guthrie, S. (2021, August 12). India's ad watchdog first to regulate virtual influencers. *Scott Guthrie*. <https://sabguthrie.info/india-ad-watchdog-virtual-influencers/>
- Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2778583>
- Hogan, B. (2010). The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30(6).
- Huang, Q., Peng, W., & Ahn, S. (2020). When media become the mirror: A meta-analysis on media and body image. *Media Psychology*, 24, 1– 53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2020.1737545>
- Imma [@imma.gram]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/imma.gram/?hl=en>
- Imma [@imma.gram]. (2023, January 1) New years resolution! Try something new! [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cm2-Gg9yZX0/>
- Jackson, L. M., & Waldman, K. (2018, May 4). Shudu Gram Is a White Man's Digital Projection of Real-Life Black Womanhood. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/shudu-gram-is-a-white-mans-digital-projection-of-real-life-black-womanhood>
- John, N. A. (2013). Sharing and Web 2.0: The emergence of a keyword. *New Media & Society*, 15(2), 167–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812450684>

- Kalpokas, I. (2018). *A Political Theory of Post-Truth*. Springer International Publishing.
- Klein, M. (2020). The Problematic Fakery Of Lil Miquela Explained—An Exploration Of Virtual Influencers and Realness. *Forbes*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattklein/2020/11/17/the-problematic-fakery-of-lil-miquela-explained-an-exploration-of-virtual-influencers-and-realness/?sh=5ac63b761b8d>
- Kyra[@kyraonig]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/kyraonig/?hl=en>
- Kyra[@kyraonig]. (2022a, October 23) Go Team India IN 🇮🇳❤️❤️ [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CkDEMy-r3m5/>
- Kyra[@kyraonig]. (2022b, October 28) Hope everyone had a great Diwali 🇮🇳 [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CkQhEhevYso/>
- Kyra[@kyraonig]. (2022c, December 13) The 🏆 World Cup has been so thrilling. Who are you supporting? I'm supporting Argentina and @leomessi 🇲🇪❤️ [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CmHG0vmvaBX/>
- Kyra[@kyraonig]. (2022c, December 24) Merry Christmas 🎄 [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CmjPzALrvu6/>
- Loh, L. (2022, March 22). *Rozy Oh, Rae, Imma, and 4 Other Meta-Fluencers You Need to Know*. Tatler Asia. Retrieved August 25, 2023, from <https://www.tatlerasia.com/style/fashion/metafluencers-metaverse-influencers-nft-rozy-lil-miquela-ailynn-sua-imma-ayayi-zinn-plusticboy>
- Lucy[@here.me.lucy]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.instagram.com/here.me.lucy/?hl=en>
- Lucy[@here.me.lucy]. (2022a, December 31) 22년 마지막 !
 누구보다 화려한 연말을 보내는중 [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cm1AU4pLtYX/>
- Lucy[@here.me.lucy]. (2022b, December 31) Happy new year🎉 [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023 from https://www.instagram.com/p/Cm1jFk_LdqL/
- Makarim, N. H., Dimiyati, D., & Kurniullah, A. Z. (2020). The use of Instagram account in constructing the concept of beauty: A case on“UNPAD GEULIS”. *ASPIRATION Journal*, 1(1).
- Mar.ia[@soymar.ia]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5,2023.<https://www.instagram.com/soymar.ia/?hl=e>
- Mar.ia[@soymar.ia]. (2021, June 24) ¡Agárrense la peluca! Resistencia y unidad. [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5,2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQe2d3sNysj/>

- Mar.ia[@soymar.ia]. (2022a, December 18) Niños nivel: Llegamos todos con nuestro #uglyswear sin ponernos de acuerdo 🤔.[Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CmSkFYBszHS/>
- Mar.ia[@soymar.ia]. (2022b, November 17)¿A quién no le gusta ver su cabellito sano? Pues así quedé 😊👉 probando el nuevo shampoo de @sedal . Amé que tuviera ingredientes naturales y sin parabenos ni sales. [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CiCve7bNkq6/>
- Mar.ia[@soymar.ia]. (2022c, November 2)CC your amix understands your love language 🍷 @heladosholandamx love you, thank you for giving us yummy, dairy free ice cream.[Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CiCve7bNkq6/>
- Mar.ia[@soymar.ia]. (2023, January 3)Defeated Level: It's the beginning of the year, it's still overheated and my soul can't take it that I'll soon have to put away the tree and the ornaments [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cm7cQY9tCy5/>
- Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>
- Mavroudis, J (2019) *Am I Too Branded? Fame Labour and Microcelebrity Culture* (Publication No. *if present*) [Doctoral thesis, Swinburne University of Technology]
- Maya[@mayaa.gram]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, <https://www.instagram.com/mayaaa.gram/?hl=en>
- Meier, E. P., & Gray, J. (2013). Facebook Photo Activity Associated with Body Image Disturbance in Adolescent Girls. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 17(4).
- Mills, J. S., Musto, S., Williams, L., & Tiggemann, M. (2018). “Selfie” harm: Effects on mood and body image in young women. *Body Image*, 27, 86– 92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2018.08.007>
- Miquela[@lilmequela]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, <https://www.instagram.com/lilmiquela/?hl=en>
- Morency, C. (2018, February 5). Meet Fashion's First Computer-Generated Influencer | BoF. *The Business of Fashion*. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/media/meeting-fashions-first-computer-generated-influencer-lil-miquela-sousa/>
- Mou, Y., & Peng, W. (2009). Gender and Racial Stereotypes in Popular Video Games. In R. E. Ferdig (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Effective Electronic Gaming in Education*. Information Science Reference.
- Muscanel, N. L., & Guadagno, R. E. (2012). Make new friends or keep the old: Gender and personality differences in social networking use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(1), 107– 112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.08.016>

- Nascimento, T, Dias Campos, R. & Suarez, M. (2020): Experimenting, partnering and bonding: a framework for the digital influencer-brand endorsement relationship, *Journal of Marketing Management*, DOI: 10.1080/0267257X.2020.1791933
- Nascimento, T., Suarez, M., & Campos, R. (2021). Authenticity, cultural and paracrisis: A typology of digital influencers' transgressions. In *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*. <https://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/3000921/volumes/v49/NA-49>
- Oh!_Rozy [@rozy.gram]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023 <https://www.instagram.com/rozy.gram/?hl=en>
- Oh!_Rozy [@rozy.gram]. (2022a, November 28) 카타르 월드컵 현장.png
 직관이라 더 짜릿했던 우루과이전!
- 오늘밤 가나전 응원은 #더뜨겁게 알지? [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023 <https://www.instagram.com/p/Clf7RAkh4b-/>
- Oh!_Rozy [@rozy.gram]. (2022b, December 25) 🐻 *Beary Christmas* 🌲 [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved January 5, 2023 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CmklsIFBPG2/>
- Orsatti, J. and Riemer, K. 2012. Identity and self-presentation: from a representational to a performative lens in studying social media engagement in organisations. 23rd Australasian Conference on Information Systems. 3-5 Dec 2012, Geelong
- Papacharissi, Z. (ed.). (2010). *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*. Routledge.
- Perez, C (2021) *Parasocial Relationships with Influencers on YouTube: Relatability and Trust as Predictors and Manifestations of PSI and PSR* [Masters' dissertation, Florida State University] e DigiNole: FSU's Digital Repository
- Petrarca, E. (2018, April 18). Everything We Know About Lil Miquela's Instagram Hack. *The Cut*. <https://www.thecut.com/2018/04/lil-miquela-hack-instagram.html>
- [Photograph of Lucy]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/lucy>
- [Photograph of Miquela Sousa]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/miquela-sousa>
- [Photograph of Imma]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/imma-gram>
- [Photograph of Shudu]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/shudu>
- [Photograph of Rozy]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/rozy-gram>
- [Photograph of Mayaa]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/maya-gram>
- [Photograph of Bermuda]. (2018). <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/bermuda-instagram-cgi-influencer>

[Photograph of Kyra]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/kyra>

[Photograph of Mar.ia]. (n.d.). <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/mar-ia>

Piccoli, V., Carnaghi, A., Grassi, M., & Bianchi, M. (2021). The relationship between Instagram activity and female body concerns: The serial mediating role of appearance-related comparisons and internalization of beauty norms. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 32(4).

RAJ YADAV- Who Created India's First Male Virtual and Meta Influencer 'Kabir'.

(2023, April 10). *Mid-day*. <https://www.mid-day.com/brand-media/article/raj-yadav-who-created-indias-first-male-virtual-and-meta-influencer-kabir-23280266>

Rasmussen, M. (2022, January 27). Who Was the First Virtual Influencer? — VirtualHumans.org. *Virtual Humans*. <https://www.virtualhumans.org/article/who-was-the-first-virtual-influencer>

Rasmussen, M. (2022, June 14). Kyra, India's First Virtual Influencer, Has Over 100000 Followers. *Virtual Humans*. <https://www.virtualhumans.org/article/kyra-indias-first-virtual-influencer-has-over-100-000-followers>

Robinson, B. (2020). Towards an Ontology and Ethics of Virtual Influencers. *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, 24.

Rojek, C. (2001). *Celebrity*. Reaktion Books.

Rojek, C. (2015). *Presumed Intimacy: Parasocial Interaction in Media, Society and Celebrity Culture*. Wiley.


Rounsefell, K., Gibson, S., McLean, S., Blair, M., Molenaar, A., Brennan, L., Truby, H., & McCaffrey, T. A. (2019). Social media, body image and food choices in healthy young adults: A mixed methods systematic review. *Nutrition & Dietetics*, 77(1).

Schwartz, R., & Halegoua, G. R. (2015). The spatial self: Location-based identity performance on social media. *New media & society*, 17(10). 10.1177/1461444814531364

Semic, S. (2019, July 15). Meet The Man Behind The World's First Digital Supermodel. *ELLE*. <https://www.elle.com/uk/fashion/a28394357/man-behind-worlds-first-digital-supermodel/>

Shudu[@shudu.gram]. (n.d.) posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/shudu.gram/?hl=en>

Shudu[@shudu.gram]. (n.d.) stories [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17942063797178555/>

Shudu[@shudu.gram]. (2021, February 9) @sergekponon X @shudu.gram  [Instagram photo]. Instagram. Retrieved on January 5, 2023 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CLDSZ7DBluc/>

Senft, T. M. (2013). Microcelebrity & the branded self. In J. Hartley, J. Burgess, & A. Bruns (Eds.), *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*. Wiley.

- Social Media Public Outraged as Fictional Instagram Personality Complains of Sexual Harassment. (2019, December 19). *Sputnik News*. <https://sputniknews.com/20191219/social-media-public-outraged-as-fictional-instagram-personality-complains-of-sexual-harassment-1077629492.html>
- Swami, V., Salem, N., Furnham, A., & Tove'e, M. J. (2008). Initial examination of the validity and reliability of the female photographic figure rating scale for body image assessment. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 44(8). doi:10.1016/j.paid.2008.02.002
- Tickle, G. (2015, March 18). Ami Yamato, A 3D-Animated Vlogger That Does Not Appear to Know She Is Virtual. *Laughing Squid*. <https://laughingsquid.com/ami-yamato-a-3d-animated-vlogger-that-does-not-appear-to-know-she-is-virtual/>
- Travers, C. (2020, November 4). What is a Virtual Influencer? Virtual Influencers, Defined and Explained. *Virtual Humans*. <https://www.virtualhumans.org/article/what-is-a-virtual-influencer-virtual-influencers-defined-and-explained>
- Virtual influencers: How are they set to change the future of influencer marketing? (2022, September 22). *The Drum*. <https://www.thedrum.com/profile/honcho/news/virtual-influencers-how-are-they-set-to-change-the-future-of-influencer-marketing>
- Wakefield, L. (2019, December 16). Fake CGI influencer Lil Miquela claims she was 'sexually assaulted'. *PinkNews*. <https://www.thepinknews.com/2019/12/16/lil-miquela-cgi-fake-influencer-robot-ai-brud-sexually-assaulted-instagram-twitter-viral/>
- Who is Lucy? @here.me.lucy, explained. (n.d.). *Virtual Humans*. <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/lucy>
- Who is Mar.ia? @soymar.ia, explained. (n.d.). *Virtual Humans*. <https://www.virtualhumans.org/human/mar-ia>
- Yamato, A. (2013) How I make my video [video] YouTube. [How I Make My Videos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9m311111111)
- Yeung, J., & Guelman, M. (2022, August 16). Forever young, beautiful and scandal-free: The rise of South Korea's virtual influencers. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/south-korea-virtual-influencers-beauty-social-media-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>
- Yu, H. (2022, August 25). Who Is Rozy, South Korea's First Virtual Influencer? *Tatler Asia*. <https://www.tatlerasia.com/style/fashion/rozy-virtual-influencer-south-korea>

Ethical declaration:

The Instagram accounts, and photographs studied for this work were collected from public profiles. This is an accepted approach under the ethical guidelines of the Association of Internet Researchers, 2002. Images of the virtual influencers are collected from different websites and used under the fair use policy of the Indian Copyright Act.

Authors:

Debopriya Roy¹ (Research Scholar)

Dr. Joya Chakraborty² (Professor)
Department of Mass Communication and Journalism,
Tezpur University.
Tezpur, India.

Email id: debopriyapritiroy@gmail.com¹, joya.chakraborty@gmail.com².