



Virtual influencers as an advertising medium for brands and products: The Noonoori case

Los influencers virtuales como medio publicitario para marcas y productos: Caso Noonoori

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze and identify the key resources used by the virtual influencer Noonoori as an effective advertising medium, along with other emerging technologies that have arisen with the rapid growth of digitization. Virtual influencers are a phenomenon worthy of analysis for the development of advertising strategies. This study took an exploratory approach, collecting data through posts, audiovisual material, articles, and subsequent evaluation of this content. The results successfully identified specific aspects and elements of virtual influencers that effectively position them as advertising mediums, while also highlighting the associated collaborative advantages. In the conclusions, the importance of authenticity, values expressed through storytelling, the adaptation of the virtual character, and the presence of aesthetics and integration of elements into the virtual environment were emphasized. Beyond contributing insights for future professionals, this research prompted reflection on the importance of influence and communication in the advertising realm.

Keywords: Advertising; Virtual Influencers; Influencer Marketing; Social Media.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar e identificar los recursos claves que utiliza la influencer virtual Noonoori como medio publicitario eficaz. Así como otras nuevas tecnologías que surgieron con el acelerado crecimiento de la digitalización, los influencers virtuales son un fenómeno digno de análisis para la creación de acciones publicitarias. Esta investigación tuvo un enfoque exploratorio, se recopilaban datos a través de publicaciones, material audiovisual, artículos y la posterior evaluación de este material. Dentro de los resultados se lograron identificar aspectos y elementos específicos de los influencers virtuales que los posicionan efectivamente como medio publicitario, así como también se resaltaron las ventajas colaborativas asociadas. En las conclusiones, se destacó la relevancia de la autenticidad, los valores expresados mediante el storytelling, la adaptación del personaje virtual y la presencia de la estética e integración de los elementos al entorno virtual. Además de aportar conocimientos para futuros profesionales, esta investigación nos permitió reflexionar sobre la importancia con respecto a la influencia y la comunicación en el ámbito publicitario.

Palabras clave: Publicidad; Influencers Virtuales; Marketing de Influencers; Redes Sociales.

INTRODUCTION

The 2021 Balenciaga and The Simpsons campaign was a collaboration between the fashion house and the animated series. It consisted of one special 10-minute episode in which Homer Simpson gives Marge a Balenciaga dress for her birthday, but he has to return it because it is expensive. Then, Balenciaga's creative director, Demna Gvasalia, is moved and decides to take the citizens of Springfield to walk on the Balenciaga runway in Paris.

In the audiovisual piece, the Simpson family and other characters from the series wore iconic garments from different Balenciaga collections. Both the real event and the animated parade featured the participation of celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, Kanye West, Justin Bieber, and Anna Wintour.⁽¹⁾

During Paris Fashion Week, the luxury brand presented this episode of The Simpsons, replacing the traditional runway shows. The premiere took place at the Théâtre du Châtelet, where runway presentations are held. The episode is currently available on Balenciaga's official channel on the YouTube platform.

This campaign demonstrated that animated characters can transcend physical and geographical limitations, by presenting the fashion show in a theater in Paris and, in turn, presenting it online to the rest of the world.

Of particular interest is the synergy between the real and digital worlds that was noted in this combination of Balenciaga and The Simpsons, since it gave rise to a campaign that managed to generate a great media, social, and cultural impact, combining luxury and humor.⁽²⁾

The accelerated advancement of technology and global interconnection have not only transformed the way we communicate, but the ways in which products and services are marketed have also evolved. The challenge, then, for those who communicate and resort to marketing on social media is to capture the limited attention that the public has.⁽³⁾

It is worth mentioning here the people who generate influence within social media: influencers. These are all those who, through their accounts on different social media platforms, influence and alter the purchasing behavior of a specific audience. Moreover, they tend to share lifestyles, experiences, and to use products or services from different brands.⁽⁴⁾

Although influence is not a new phenomenon, it is among the forms of communication preferred by brands, as it dates back to word-of-mouth advertising.⁽³⁾

Thus, we can mention a new stage of influencers, a figure as an advertising medium: virtual influencers.

First, we must understand that a virtual influencer refers to a digital character created using computer graphics software or Computer Generated Imagery (CGI). Subsequently, the personality that this figure will have is determined, which reflects a first-person perspective of the world and, in this way, is presented on various digital media platforms with a specific purpose: to exert influence. They can appear in a diversity of sizes and shapes. They also adopt any personality, offering companies a way to generate connection with audiences in a novel manner.⁽⁵⁾

Currently, there is a wide variety of virtual influencers. We can find hyperrealistic characters that can easily be mistaken for real humans; caricature-style ones, with exaggerated shapes, similar to television cartoons; others created for specific campaigns, and many others that engage in different categories depending on their activity.

Virtual Humans is the page that presents, in catalog format, the aforementioned virtual influencers and "VTubers" (digital characters on the YouTube platform), a similar concept.

On the other hand, it is necessary to clarify that, to date, none of these characters are controlled or generated entirely by artificial intelligence (AI). Because it is a current term, users associate it with virtual influencers, even though the latter still require a human team.⁽⁶⁾ "Behind virtual influencers, there is an extensive team of professionals from different disciplines, in charge of their life stories, working on their programming, their design, and their public relations, as if it were a complete marketing agency".⁽⁷⁾

In 2016, the line dividing reality from virtuality became even more blurred. Thus "Lil Miquela" emerged, also known as Miquela Sousa, among the most popular and influential virtual characters on social media. Her hyperrealistic appearance and her ability to captivate the audience led Time magazine to include her among the 25 most influential people on the Internet of 2018, despite her not being a real human.

On repeated occasions, Lil Miquela collaborated with beauty and lifestyle brands and, mainly, with fashion firms. Thus, she became an important reference in the promotion of products and services through social media, with a greater presence on the Instagram platform.

Some of the brands that chose to work with this virtual influencer were Prada, Channel, Ve-

tements, Samsung, and Calvin Klein. The latter generated the most controversy. In May 2019, the brand launched an advertising campaign called “MYTRUTH”. Its objective was to celebrate authenticity and personal expression. Thus, they presented several celebrities, including Lil Miquela and model Bella Hadid. The campaign included a video in which they kiss while wearing Calvin Klein clothing. It was accused of queerbaiting, the practice of using queer themes to attract attention without truly representing the LGBTQ+ community. Calvin Klein apologized, but the video remains on the internet. Although other brands were able to achieve success by collaborating with this and other virtual influencers, in this case it is understood as a misuse of digital figures as an advertising medium.(8)

Its impact is undeniable, and moreover, we can identify the case as a relevant precedent for understanding the way in which virtual influencers participate in the emerging digital culture and in advertising environments.

Thus, new technologies gain increasing relevance with respect to their use in what is called digital culture. Digital machines are established as the environment in which language is produced, interacts, and interpreted. The integration of oral and written languages into these digital machines makes it possible for them to remain within digital culture as indispensable and involved elements, since they are typical markers when considering a culture per se. In this sense, we emphasize that “just as language must be enacted, performed, in order to have effects, digital culture too can only exist in the performance of its participants.”(9)

Thus, we can understand the fact that we are participants in a digital culture, which is increasingly expanding. In this way, social networks present themselves as a key component of digital culture and, in turn, as the sphere par excellence in which virtual influencers operate.

If we consider these elements in digital culture, it is worth noting that social networks, according to Celaya (10), coincide with digital spaces in which users disseminate and, in turn, share a wide variety of information. They also involve other individuals who may be known or completely unknown but inserted in the digital world.

In turn, the role of social media relates to recommendation and exchange among users, actions that are becoming increasingly relevant when searching for products and services.

In addition to the previous ideas, the author explains that social networks on the Internet are feasible environments for advertising campaigns. However, it should be taken into consideration that there is an oversaturation of information. This leads us to understand that there is a need, on the part of brands, to stand out and, in this way, connect with the public.(10)

But how can the brand stand out and leave saturation aside? The mere fact of being present on social media does not ensure that a firm stands out. Following the line of thought proposed by the authors Kotler et al.(11), we understand that the ability to merge the digital realm with the physical world represents a transformative element in the field of marketing. The large number of opportunities that arise for the creation of attractive content in marketing are immense if the convergence of the digital and the physical or real is used creatively.

The ways in which users interact with the product are more attractive than the product itself. How they use, buy, recommend, and evaluate it becomes relevant. Thus, the term marketing 5.0 becomes relevant, which the same authors define as “the application of technologies that imitate human beings to create, communicate, offer, and improve value throughout the customer journey.”(11)

Taking this concept into account, the authors suggest that the advanced technologies on the horizon will be key to empowering companies and will provide them with the capacity to introduce previously nonexistent processes and strategies. These emerging technologies are fundamental in the context of marketing 5.0 and will free companies from the restrictions they experienced in the past.(11)

The same authors state that “customers yearn for a genuine connection with brands, which paradoxically has become scarce in the connected era.”(11) Therefore, it is relevant for brands to consider marketing strategies that can integrate a real connection with consumers.

One person is more likely to be influenced by people they trust, states Ramos (12), who indicates that this is the basis of what is understood as influencer marketing.

Currently, what was previously known in classic marketing books as opinion leaders is now called influencers. This phenomenon became popular in recent times.(13)

In short, the term describes a real or artificial user who generates engagement or impact through their activities on the Web.(13)

In order to understand this type of marketing in greater depth, we return with greater specificity to what it refers to:

When companies’ organic posts on social media began to lose reach, new alternatives had

to be sought to reach users. From these practices, Influencer Marketing took shape, which encompasses the identification of people who have influence over potential buyers and the marketing activities oriented around these influential people.(12)

Likewise, according to Ramos (12), content generated by an influencer is a form of testimonial advertising, a marketing tool that uses people's opinions to build trust and explain the benefits of a product or service.

The company Hugo Boss is an example of how a brand became involved in the digital world. It carried out two campaigns for Spring-Summer 2022 in which it divided the Hugo and Boss identities, generating two hashtags “#HowDoYouHUGO” and “#BeYourOwnBoss”. Imma and Nobody Sausage, two virtual influencers, participated in the campaign alongside renowned human figures such as Kendall Jenner and Hailey Bieber, among others.

The two virtual influencers published a post on their respective Instagram profiles, using a garment on which “Boss” could be read, and, in turn, tagged the brand and the campaign hashtag. The posts received all kinds of positive comments from users.

For Generation Z and millennials in particular, this type of advertising action is attractive, since these are the audiences targeted by these virtual profiles (7).

Addressing again the considerations of Ramos (12), social influence is perceived as a motivating factor when making a purchase. In this regard, when a potential buyer decides to research a particular product or service, instead of relying on the information provided by the company, they seek the opinion—perceived as objective—of an influencer whom they generally follow. In this way, influencers aim to be perceived as close to their followers and to generate a sense of naturalness and sincerity. Therefore, we can understand that an influencer possesses their image as a personal brand. They operate in the fields of fashion, technology, lifestyle, and video games. In their area of expertise or specific knowledge, they are considered opinion leaders.(12)

The “BAFWeek” fashion week, where this year's winter collection, 2023, was presented, was a particular event since, once again, the real and virtual world was blurred. This event took place in the city of Buenos Aires, in different parts of the capital. The virtual influencer Noonnoouri was present at the parades held at the Obelisk and the San Martín Theater. This digital character dazzled with garments from the new collection. In one of her posts on her Instagram profile, Noonnoouri is shown dressed by the brand that held the parade held on 9 de Julio Avenue.(14)

It is relevant to note that this type of event combines established brands, emerging brands, technological advances, and social commitment. The event “BAFWeek” is regarded as a celebration of creativity, talent, and innovation in Argentina. “In a world where fashion is often perceived as superficial, BAFWEEK demonstrates that it can be much more: a driver of change, a reflection of culture, and a window into the future.”(15)

As a key factor for the creation and proliferation of so-called virtual influencers, the concept of storytelling is present, that is, the technique of telling stories in such a way that they are appealing to users.(16) According to the author, in marketing and advertising, storytelling can establish a successful connection, through a story, between people and the messages to be conveyed. “It seeks to appeal to emotions to unite rational and emotional messages at the same time”.(16)

In the digital context in which we are immersed, the term life experience emerges, a concept that replaces what was previously mentioned as storytelling. Why, then, is it so important to give virtual influencers a story? Social networks have evolved and become spaces where influencers narrate events that occur in their lives and, in turn, followers are regarded as participants in these moments.(16)

Noonnoouri has more than 400 thousand followers on the Instagram platform, has collaborated with Dior, Valentino, Versace, Miu Miu and other luxury brands and was on the cover of magazines such as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar. However, Noonnoouri is not a real person, she is a virtual influencer created by Joerg Zuber, founder of the creative agency “Opium Effect”. She is characterized by having a cartoonish and fashionista style, passionate about fashion, creativity and style. She is a character from Germany, but she considers herself a global citizen, since she has virtually traveled to different places in the world such as Paris, New York, Dubai, Tokyo, Argentina, among others. Its creator, Joerg, commented that the main objective is to provide entertainment and inform the public through a new medium. In addition, he defined Noonnoouri as vegan, concerned about sustainable fashion. These are some of the values and trends that represent generation Z.(17)

Taking into account that any brand that collaborates with a virtual influencer results in something new, that attracts attention and generates a certain impact, it can be said that “The appearance of noonnoouri on the scene implies a radical change in the rules that govern the world of social networks”. The field dedicated to fashion is the one that is strongly linked and, in turn, benefited. In this area, brands have the possibility of molding and adjusting the necessary characteristics of

virtual influencers in such a way that a great affinity is generated between both parties.

In this way, it is possible to eliminate risks and concerns because there is greater control over those who represent the products or services of a specific firm. Thus, these virtual influencers can be understood to have a certain flexibility advantage for brands, unlike their human counterparts.(18)

In this sense, Schwarz (19) presents the following advantages of collaborating with virtual influencers:

Creative opportunities: brands can adapt virtual characters according to their needs and even match the personality and values of the brand in question. These characters can be fully designed and adapted in terms of personality, appearance, clothing, hobbies, age, gender, and more.

Total management by brands: risk can be reduced when promoting products. Virtual influencers can accurately and consistently represent the brand's identity and values through their social media content.

Cost reduction: logistical coordination is no longer necessary because the characters are completely digital. Transfers and shipments of products are no longer necessary. Similarly, if the brand is the creator, it will only have to bear the fixed production costs, and these will not increase. An example of this is Candy, a virtual character created by Prada to promote a line of its perfumes.

The opportunity to continue in the metaverse: virtual influencers will be able to transfer brands to the metaverse effectively. Because they are computer-generated characters, brands will be able to use them easily in these new virtual environments. This would create the capacity to strengthen trust and thereby create new emotional connections between users and brands.

On the other hand, the same author presented the risks to consider when working with virtual influencers:

They may not be perceived as authentic or realistic: some users refuse to use new technologies and prefer traditional human relationships.

It is often difficult to relate to someone who is not human because they do not have a real-life backstory.

Unattainable standards: the perfect lives of virtual influencers can be presented as an obstacle and have a negative impact. Some users have difficulty separating reality from what they see in Instagram posts with perfect images. This could generate unrealistic ideals and lead to reduced self-esteem among vulnerable audiences.

There is a possible risk of inconsistency: since people know that they are invented characters, they could be even more attentive to the details of the avatars. It is not enough to appear human and to have the life that this entails; virtual influencers also have to convey emotional expressions. Furthermore, since several developers or teams of social media experts may manage these accounts, inconsistencies could quickly occur.

In the same way that human influencers attract millions of followers on social media, virtual influencers can also offer brands a creative way to connect with their target audience. Both can strategically complement each other in what we previously defined as influencer marketing.(19)

This new way of presenting and promoting products and services is part of the phenomena that, according to Carrión (20), will be part of important milestones in culture and advertising.

In light of the above, the following questions arose: What relevance does a virtual influencer have in the advertising industry? How can a virtual influencer be considered an effective advertising medium for promoting brands and products in the social media environment?

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the relevance of a virtual influencer as an advertising medium in marketing strategies for brands and products in the context of social media.

Thus, we establish that the general objective of this study is to analyze and identify the key resources used by the virtual influencer Noonoori to be an effective advertising medium.

The specific objectives include the following: To describe the case of the virtual influencer Noonoori and the role of new technologies in her viability and effectiveness. To identify the aspects that stand out in the virtual influencer Noonoori when promoting a brand. To define a set of recommendations and best practices regarding the use of virtual influencers as an advertising medium.

METHODS

Design

To carry out the study of the virtual influencer Noonoori as an advertising medium, it was

optimal to adopt an exploratory approach because, as indicated by Hernández et al.(21), a new topic with few precedents to date was addressed. The objective was not to describe variables, search for correlations, or explain the phenomenon; instead, an attempt was made to investigate a novel field, identify trends and possibilities for application, focusing on the analysis of the aforementioned case.

The approach selected to carry out the analysis in this work was qualitative in nature and is framed within the interpretive paradigm, with the purpose of analyzing phenomena in their natural contexts. This was done to understand them based on the meanings given to them by the people involved.(22) At the same time, a descriptive analysis was carried out to provide a more complete view of the observed aspects. “The purpose of qualitative research is to understand and interpret reality as it is, as understood by the subjects participating in the studied contexts.”(23)

The methodological design was non-experimental because no alteration or manipulation of the selected samples was performed, and the phenomena were only observed as they were (21). It is also characterized as cross-sectional because, in the present work, the data extracted from the sources were collected at a specific point in time.

Participants

Regarding the population, it consisted of news articles about the virtual influencer Noonoori, posts made on the Instagram platform by her account, and advertising videos. Sources that provided the necessary information for the development of the analysis were used, and these were in written, visual, and audiovisual formats. It can therefore be indicated that the sampling was probabilistic and purposive. Thus, the sample consists of a thematic selection, and its purpose is to delve into and understand the case globally rather than to generalize the results (24).

The selected population is listed below:

1. The time has come for a new era – Noonoori POST No. 1
2. Apple Vision Pro – Apple – Noonoori POST No. 2
3. SWAROVSKI – Noonoori POST No. 3
4. BeYourOwnBOSS – Noonoori POST No. 4
5. CHERSACE – Noonoori POST No. 5
6. Workout with Pamela Reif – Noonoori POST No. 6
7. Saint Laurent – Saint Laurent X Noonoori
8. KKW – KKW Beauty X Noonoori
9. HONOR 50 – Honor 50 X Noonoori
10. BUCCELLATI – Buccellati X Noonoori
11. GUCCI – Gucci X Noonoori
12. Vogue – Meet Noonoori (25)
13. Luxury Daily – Dior X Noonoori
14. Infobae – Virtual model

Analysis

As mentioned above, the analysis is qualitative in nature; moreover, the objectives established for this research were considered in conducting it. For greater clarity, the categories used to conduct the analysis are specified in the “Instrument” section.

Table 1. Instrument

Categories of analysis	
Experience	Commercial
	Digital content creation
	Other type
Environment	Virtual
	Combined with reality
Format	Visual

Categories of analysis	
	Audiovisual
	Text or other
Visual analysis	Aesthetics used
	Connotation
	Tone
	Referencias
	Representation
Diffusion	
Market segment	Item
Brand presence	Explicit
	Implicit
Collaborative advantages	Creative opportunity
	Brand control
	Cost reduction

RESULTS

Experience

Observation of the Instagram account “@noonoouri” reveals that most of its content focuses on commercial-type experiences. The character’s *raison d’être* is specifically linked to the commercialization and visualization of brands, dressing in them, and using their products.

In the post “The time has come for a new era - Noonoouri POST nº1” (1), she presents her portfolio of collaborations and outstanding achievements. The audiovisual shows a portfolio of luxury brands with which Noonoouri has worked, such as Versace, Dior, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Valentino, etc. It also shows the attention of the main media that mention or talk about her and highlights a series of clips featuring famous renowned designers, models and celebrities who greet her and interact with the character. Among them are Kim Kardashian, Stephen Jones, Carine Roitfeld, Anna Dello Russo, among others. In this way we can say that the relevance and prestige that Noonoouri has achieved stands out. Her ability to collaborate with these leading fashion brands is a sign of her influence and reach.

It is worth mentioning that Noonoouri dresses similarly to the real people with whom she appears. This visual concordance creates a connection with the audience, since for followers the line between the virtual and the real becomes blurred, considering her on par with the person. This generates empathy and the feeling that Noonoouri is an extension of the real person’s identity in the context of fashion.

It is worth mentioning that during 2023, at Buenos Aires Fashion Week, known as BAFWeek, the virtual influencer Noonoouri made an appearance. In this context, her participation became an experience that merged the real and the virtual in a rewarding way. At BAFWeek, Noonoouri was considered a prominent figure of the event, since it was the first time that this type of influencer was introduced to walk the runways. It is mentioned that “With different formats such as fashion shows, performance shows, and unique experiences, each proposal will tour iconic points of Buenos Aires and will invite people to rediscover spaces of the urban scene, connecting fashion, music, and architecture”.(26) On her Instagram account, Noonoouri published content in stories and reels format in which she wore garments from local brands such as Kosiuko, Revolver, Prüne, among others. In this way, Noonoouri’s followers were able to live the experience of Buenos Aires Fashion Week through the content generated by her.

In turn, Noonoouri’s participation in real-life fashion events transcends the boundaries between reality and virtuality. Followers share the synergy generated between the real world and a virtual character, which adds a level of authenticity and closeness to the relationship between Noonoouri and her audience.

Their publications feature a variety of garments from recognized designers and fashion brands. Followers experience a feeling of being in the middle of one high-level fashion event, which is exciting for the audience.

Likewise, Noonoouri publishes content related to social causes. Although this type of post

was not taken into account, it is worth mentioning that in the publication “CHERSACE - Noonnoouri POST n°5” (5), we identified a combination of a social cause with the sale of a product. The campaign consisted of launching an exclusive piece in collaboration with the singer Cher and the brand Versace to show support for the LGBTQ+ community. It combined fashion with a social cause, which generates a positive impact and allows followers to become involved in such topics.

This type of publication, which addresses social (and, in turn, commercial) topics, adds the necessary depth to the user experience—that is, to the experience of the individual who chooses to consume virtual influencers.

Environment

The main environment in which Noonnoouri interacts and appears is the virtual world. However, on several occasions, her presence extends to real-world spaces. For example, “Workout with Pamela Reif - Noonnoouri POST n°6” (6) is a brief exercise routine that Noonnoouri and the influencer Pamela Reif posted on their Instagram accounts. There, the virtual character and Pamela perform a brief exercise routine together, set on a beach in Ibiza, while a song authored by Noonnoouri plays in the background (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Image sequence from the video “Workout with Pamela Reif”.



Source: prepared from [instagram.com/noonnoouri/workout](https://www.instagram.com/noonnoouri/workout).

It is also pertinent to mention the interview that Vogue conducted with the virtual influencer Noonnoouri, “Vogue - Meet Noonnoouri” (12). In it, the questions are implied to have been answered by the virtual character, placing her as the protagonist of the interview and, therefore, making her interact with the real environment.

In this section, it is relevant to consider the visual and audiovisual advertisements in which products that exist in the real world have been represented virtually. We observe this in the piece “GUCCI - Gucci X Noonnoouri” (11), where she wears the brand’s “Heels shoes satin pink and pearl.” These are real items that the brand has previously presented on runways or in advertising campaigns with human models.

Format

The predominant format in the selected publications by Noonnoouri is audiovisual, especially on her Instagram account and in YouTube advertisements.

In particular, when videos in reel format are chosen, Noonnoouri remains in a static position, creating composite and dynamic images. This choice responds to a specific strategy, as mentioned in the article “Infobae - Modelo virtual” (14), which explains that producing videos requires more time and work than assembling images. In the same article, Noonnoouri’s creator states that “Everything is recorded with a technical team. There is a person for makeup, another for styling, another for music... And then everything is unified into a single piece” (27). Despite the effort in-

volved in producing the pieces, collaborating with top-level brands such as Dior, Balmain, Gucci, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, or Versace is the culmination of the work.

Visual analysis

Visual analysis refers to all the ways in which the character Noonnoouri is shown and represented within visual and audiovisual products.

Noonnoouri's visual strategy focuses on pieces designed to highlight the products being promoted. The physical appearance of the virtual character is also adapted and used for this purpose.

In turn, we observe that, when the character is represented in a real-world environment, she exhibits visual concordance with the person sharing the space (Figure 2). This contributes to the humanization of the character in order to foster empathy with the virtual influencer.

Figure 2. Image sequence from the video “The time has come for a new era”.



Source: prepared based on [instagram.com/noonnoouri/Thetimehascome](https://www.instagram.com/noonnoouri/Thetimehascome).

Every choice of wardrobe, hairstyle, style, music, and other elements that make up advertising pieces has implications for status, sophistication, and challenge. At the same time, there is an aspirational tone, since most of the brands she works with are related to luxury and exclusivity. The images and messages convey the idea of avant-garde and uniqueness. An example is the post featured on Noonnoouri's profile, “BeYourOwnBOSS - Noonnoouri POST n°4” (4). In it, a character capable of anything is shown, since it alludes to the slogan of the Hugo Boss campaign. This relates to the target audience: people who seek trends and high-quality products.

Collaborations between Noonnoouri and brands usually contain certain references to advertisements that were carried out in reality, depending on each advertiser. In advertisements such as the piece “GUCCI - Gucci X Noonnoouri” (11), elements such as the presence of natural settings, wild animals (a dinosaur in this case), and different poses, such as weightless rotation, are repeated.

Regarding the presentation of the products, these are effectively adapted to their digital versions. Each of them is integrated into Noonnoouri's virtual environment, allowing us to perceive it in a coherent and attractive way. Attention to detail in the representation of the products is key for the audience to appreciate their characteristics. In the same piece “GUCCI - Gucci X Noonnoouri” (11), as mentioned previously, she wears the “Heels shoes satin pink and pearl” (Figure 3), shoes that exist in reality and are part of a collection by the brand.

Figure 3. Image from the video “@noonoouri x @gucci @AlessandroMichele”



Source: retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZedAGotLzyg>

Likewise, integrating products into the virtual environment, together with the virtual influencer, makes it possible to represent a brand's values in a visually attractive and animated format. A brand that implemented this type of strategy is Buccellati in the piece “BUCCELLATI - Buccellati X Noonoouri” (10), where we observe how the jewelry worn by the virtual influencer is progressively assembled, thereby highlighting the artisanal value present in the brand's products. On the other hand, Noonoouri stands out for her facial appearance:

human, caricatured, and striking features. Furthermore, her bold and self-confident personality is reflected in posts featuring extravagant situations. Noonoouri's images are presented in diverse settings, ranging from fashion runways to high-end exotic locations. Her collaborations with numerous well-known brands and designers have contributed to her image as a virtual influencer.

Dissemination

This virtual character presents an innovative way of showcasing products. It generates interest, especially among younger audiences, particularly millennials and Generation Z, who connect effectively with its communication style. An example is Dior's strategy and its collaboration with Noonoouri, who recreated the advertisement that Natalie Portman had made for the Rouge Dior Ultra Rouge lipsticks.

The importance of dissemination on social media for both established and emerging luxury brands is emphasized. This strategic approach was highlighted in the news article “Luxury Daily - Dior X Noonoouri” (13), where it is mentioned that “Dior receives double the exposure and can reach younger audiences, especially on Noonoouri's most popular platform, Instagram, who are beginning to develop an interest in high-end beauty products”.(28) Noonoouri brings modernity and freshness to brands, qualities particularly attractive to social media audiences. This is due to the importance of connecting with the target audience, digital natives who spend most of their time on platforms such as Instagram. Brands keep up with trends and attract an audience seeking authentic and engaging experiences.

Market segment

In previous sections, we mentioned some of the main sectors that choose to collaborate with the virtual influencer Noonoouri. These market areas include brands related to luxury fashion, jewelry, technology, and cosmetics.

Noonoouri has established collaborations with well-known brands in fashion and haute couture. Brands such as Hugo Boss, Versace, Saint Laurent, and Gucci have chosen to collaborate with her to promote their products. Thus, she becomes a style ambassador who showcases the garments and accessories of these brands.

Also, she has collaborated with well-known brands in the jewelry industry. Companies such

as Swarovski and Buccellati have partnered with her to present their creations. By wearing these jewels in her publications and presentations, Noonnoouri helps highlight the aesthetic appeal and value of these pieces to attract an audience interested in high-quality jewelry and exclusive designs.

Technology is another sector that has recognized Noonnoouri's appeal. Brands such as Apple and Honor 50 have collaborated with her to promote their products. An example is the publication "Apple Vision Pro - Apple - Noonnoouri POST n°2" (2), where she is seen using the technological product fully adapted to her style. In this way, Noonnoouri demonstrates versatility by adapting to and covering different market segments (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Publication "Future Now"



Source: prepared based on [instagram.com/noonnoouri/Futurenow](https://www.instagram.com/noonnoouri/Futurenow)

The virtual influencer has also entered the cosmetics industry. Well-known brands such as Dior and KKW Beauty have used her influence to reach an audience interested in high-quality beauty products. The piece "KKW - KKW Beauty X Noonnoouri" (8) is the virtual influencer's first project in this product category, presenting a makeup tutorial in which she uses the brand's cosmetics.

Brand presence

Brand presence is explicitly shown in all analyzed samples because, as mentioned in the "Experience" section, this presence is specifically commercial in nature.

In the article "Vogue - Meet Noonnoouri" (12), the brands with which the virtual influencer collaborated are explicitly mentioned, thus illustrating another way of engaging with commercial content through the interview. Noonnoouri mentions that her favorite beauty products are the contour and highlighter from KKW Beauty. She also specifies that her favorite designers are Dior, Versace, and Gucci.

In the Instagram posts and YouTube videos, brands are intentionally highlighted. In the post "BeYourOwnBOSS - Noonnoouri POST n°4" (4), the garment printed with the BOSS brand name is constantly present, as it is the product being promoted. The rest of the video setting is specifically adjusted to highlight the brand.

This explicit presence in these samples is expressed as a strategy aimed at reinforcing brand recognition and fostering affinity with the target audience.

Collaborative advantages

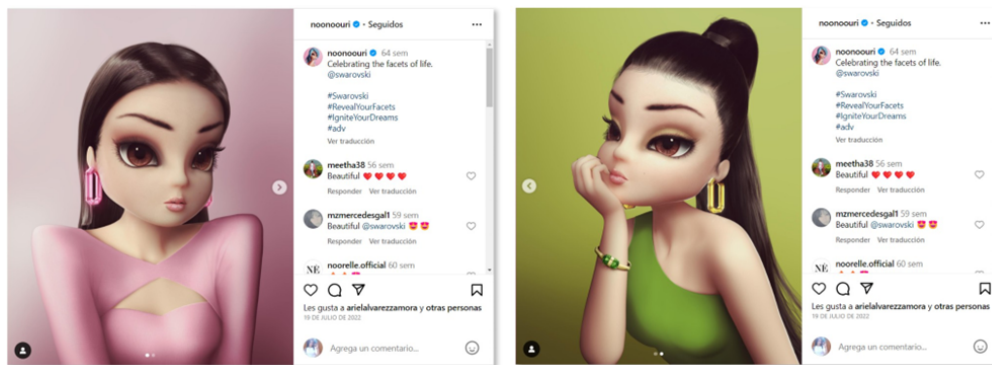
Virtual influencers have the ability to adapt and represent real-world products in virtuality; therefore, we understand this phenomenon as an innovative and versatile way for marketing strategies.

An example of what we mentioned regarding adaptation is the collaboration in the post

“SWAROVSKI - Noonnoouri POST n°3” (3). In the following figure, we observe Noonnoouri’s Instagram post, where she shows two earrings and a bracelet from the “Lucent Hoop” collection of the campaign (figure 5). It was fully adjusted to the character to reflect the brand’s values such as elegance.

Furthermore, two different images were presented in the same publication, thus presenting two facets of life, the slogan of the Swarovski campaign.

Figure 5. Publication “Celebrating the facets of life”



Source: compiled from [instagram.com/noonnoouri/swarovski](https://www.instagram.com/noonnoouri/swarovski)

The animated format enables the creation of extravagant and unreal scenarios that are positively perceived by the public because the elements succeed in integrating correctly. Thus, it is possible to depict in an exaggerated and extravagant manner products from brands such as Saint Laurent and Gucci, which have this type of characteristics. In the piece “Saint Laurent - Saint Laurent X Noonnoouri” (7), high-shaft, stiletto-toe boots are presented that became an object of desire among celebrities and have gone viral for having been worn by prominent celebrities such as Kendall Jenner and Rihanna. In her virtual representation, Noonnoouri wears them while they emit diamond-like crystals, in an exaggerated manner (Figure 6). In the physical world, representations of these characteristics are complex to achieve, and most of the results are limited or poorly achieved.

Figure 6. Sequence of images from the video “@noonnoouri x SAINT LAURENT”



Source: retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLCA8i6JQwQ>

It is evident that the adaptation of the virtual influencer is presented for the purpose of highlighting products due to the great control that can be exercised over what these virtual characters say and do, as they always maintain an impeccable appearance and the margin of error is minimal. However, we must take into account that, in areas dedicated to cosmetics, it does not faithfully reflect how they would look on a real person. Such is the case of “KKW - KKW Beauty

X Noonnoouri" (8), where Noonnoouri presents one audiovisual piece dedicated to promoting the brand's highlighters and eyeshadows. In a brief tutorial, she shows us how to use these products.

Lastly, cost reduction, as observed in "HONOR 50 - Honor 50 X Noonnoouri" (9), represents a relevant factor for brands when it comes to collaborations with virtual influencers.

The elimination of expenses related to travel and accommodation, as well as the optimization of the virtual influencer's time, give brands the ability to maximize their investment.

DISCUSSION

This work delved into the study of virtual influencers, focused on the case of Noonnoouri. The general objective proposed in this work was to analyze and identify the key resources used by the virtual influencer Noonnoouri in order to be an effective advertising medium. As a result, the characteristics specific to the use of this new technology were correctly identified, and further details are provided below.

Noonnoouri has the ability to be versatile in terms of style. Her look adapts to and integrates with the products she promotes. In this sense, we consider that this versatility of the character establishes itself as a key factor when choosing to carry out a collaboration between brand and influencer. At the same time, Noonnoouri represents almost identically the real person with whom she comes into contact. Whether she is interacting with a celebrity, a fashion designer, or any other public figure, her appearance and tone integrate as part of the same harmonious scene.

Another key factor is storytelling, considered a key strategy of influencers. When a virtual or human influencer narrates their day-to-day life and makes us part of their story, they strategically use storytelling as a resource. It is effective because it increases audience participation and fosters loyalty and trust. This form of communication by influencers is positive for brands because it allows them to connect deeply with their followers and, in turn, to show products in an integrated way.⁽¹⁶⁾ The most important aspect of storytelling is that it allows virtual influencers to connect emotionally with their followers, a limitation considering that they are not real humans. We must bear in mind that Noonnoouri presents and represents herself with very marked values that her creators enforce when collaborating with different brands; for example, she does not use animal leather since she leads a vegan lifestyle.

Likewise, the aesthetics used by the virtual influencer Noonnoouri are another noteworthy element within the strategies she presents. In each post, products that align with her personal style and reflect the visual identity of the brands with which she collaborates predominate. Each product is integrated organically into her virtual environment. This adds an element of novelty to each post she makes, owing to the influencer's avant-garde tone and the ability to modify her style at will that we have already mentioned. Her creators adapt the products to her virtual version impeccably. Each garment, accessory, or cosmetic she presents is precisely designed so that she can showcase it authentically in the digital environment. This ensures that the products are experienced as natural and consistent with her virtual image. Thus, we can state that she attracts a young audience eager for innovation and, in addition, positions Noonnoouri as a pioneer in the representation of fashion and beauty products in the virtual world. Through the narrative and visual aesthetics provided by Noonnoouri, we can understand that a brand's ideals are conveyed coherently. The flexibility and other advantages offered by these virtual characters translate into a greater return on investment and a more efficient marketing strategy.

Along these lines, we indicate that the first specific objective set out in the work was to describe the case of the virtual influencer Noonnoouri and the role of new technologies in its viability and effectiveness. Thus, we can state that when consuming content from virtual influencers, elements such as the integration of products into the virtual space and the visual concordance between the virtual influencer and the scene come into play.

Taking into account that Noonnoouri is capable of replicating the looks of the human individuals with whom she shares space, we can understand that this is how she becomes closest to her audience. In this way, all the elements are integrated, and the experience of consuming this type of content becomes acceptable. In the medium in which she operates, social media, these platforms propose an ideal panorama where diverse audiences interact and, above all, young audiences. Thus, they present an ideal space for brands that want to attract new audiences or maintain a certain positioning. We must bear in mind that, generally, luxury fashion brands are the ones that experiment with new proposals regarding the distribution of content and advertising. The phenomenon of using virtual influencers, at least in this case, has been established since 2018, which indicates that it is a technology in use and currently valid. The choice of high jewelry

brands, for example, Buccellati or Swarovski, highlights their capacity to be an effective medium in such an exclusive field. Thus, the quintessential format of the virtual influencer has to do with audiovisual products published on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. In this way, they become 2 major digital spaces where the influencer exists and operates. Although they are places where virtual influencers compete with human influencers and other virtual ones, the latter operate more organically in these spaces. We must bear in mind that their production involves hard work on the part of the agencies, but if a large brand requests this type of content, it is the perfect opportunity to find the space.

In addition to Noonooori, other characters that also interact in real spaces and with real people have been mentioned in the introduction. This opens a field of possibilities for brands that wish to continue showing their products but using a new medium: a virtual influencer. This leads us to return to the second specific objective, which was based on identifying the aspects that stand out in the virtual influencer Noonooori when promoting a brand. Thus, we indicate that these characteristics make up an effective strategy because it contains aspects that highlight her presence in the digital world and connect with the audience to convey brand values. Currently, it is possible to carry out this type of collaboration, and these collaborations are striking because the integration of the real and virtual worlds offers a novel perspective to enhance product promotion. In her collaborations, Noonooori adapts her content contextually. This implies references to advertising campaigns that have been carried out in the real world, which establishes a link between the virtual world and reality. It should be noted that the elements in Noonooori's presentation are meticulously chosen to express status and sophistication. Her clothing, hairstyle, style, and music are carefully selected to meet these objectives, thereby creating an aspirational image in line with the luxury brands with which she collaborates.

Finally, the third specific objective consisted of defining a set of recommendations and good practices regarding the use of virtual influencers as an advertising medium. This objective was established and defined based on a need to understand that virtual influencers, in particular, must be used responsibly, since no regulation exists. In particular, this objective is developed in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

Returning to the key theories, and in accordance with Schwarz (19), creative opportunities and full control on the part of brands are reflected on different occasions, in which virtual characters adapt to the brand's needs. This is reflected in cases such as the HONOR 50 and Gucci campaign, where the products used and the way they dress adapt to the brands' values. Furthermore, ideas were implemented that, otherwise, could prove costly or even unfeasible to carry out with real influencers.

Likewise, the author presents certain disadvantages, such as the perception of a lack of authenticity or realism in virtual influencers and the promotion of unattainable standards. These issues become evident in the case study, for example, in the KKW Beauty campaign, where idealized and unrealistic results are presented, which could contribute to decreased self-esteem in more vulnerable audiences. Furthermore, the very morphology of the virtual character is considered an unrealistic standard.

Following the perspective of Kotler et al.(11), the idea is highlighted that interaction with a product is more attractive than the product itself. This premise reflects the importance of emerging technologies in the context of marketing 5.0, where companies no longer face the restrictions they used to experience. This is reflected in the use of virtual influencers by companies to promote their products, which gives them total control not only over the products themselves, but also over the way in which they are interacted with.

Taking into account Celaya (10), with respect to information oversaturation on social networks on the Internet and the need to stand out and connect with the public, it can be observed that the use of a virtual influencer as an advertising medium is intrinsically novel and attractive. We consider that this occurs because there are a large number of opportunities that arise for the creation of attractive content. Furthermore, virtual influencers represent a growing medium and are little used compared to real influencers.

Based on the analysis conducted in this study, to use a virtual influencer in an advertising campaign or to carry out a collaboration, it is recommended to strategically select the virtual influencer, taking into account the alignment of the brand's values and interests together with the character. This will allow affinity with the audience. Likewise, it is suggested to generate authentic and creative content in such a way that it integrates with the brand's style and tone. Users respond better to posts that appear genuine.

As a final recommendation, it is suggested that the type of product to be used be taken into account when conducting a campaign with a virtual influencer. The KKW Beauty brand, where Noo-

noouri promotes the collection of eyeshadows and highlighters, is a clear example of this because the products are not applied to a real person, despite these being the consumers. It is important to remember that before carrying out this campaign, Kim Kardashian had already published one tutorial in which she demonstrated the application of her products on her own skin. Previously, we mentioned that there are no regulations and laws regarding virtual influencers because it is a new phenomenon; therefore, it is essential that professionals take into account the characteristics of the product, the target audience to be reached, among other variables, when collaborating with a virtual influencer.

Taking into account that during this year 2023, the strategy of incorporating Noonnoouri as a figure at Buenos Aires Fashion Week was used, we consider it pertinent that the advertising sector be trained in the 3D creation of characters or figures in order to incorporate this type of action into campaigns for both fashion and other categories. Although there is a trend on the part of fashion brands, the opportunities for implementation are infinite. What is most taken into account is the creativity of how to use a virtual influencer as a medium.

In our local environment, a little-explored field of research persists that offers the opportunity to conceive cutting-edge, outstanding, and innovative strategies for brands. Strategic alliances with virtual influencers provide a competitive advantage because they focus on innovative practices that distinguish themselves from traditional advertising strategies, thereby capitalizing on emerging marketing trends.

Other elements that we should consider include differentiation and the incorporation of advanced technology. Taking the fashion sector as an example, most firms employ conventional promotional methods, such as print advertisements and social media promotions involving real models. Collaboration with virtual influencers is presented as a strategy that generates distinction from the competition. On the other hand, the use of advanced technologies, such as computer animation and tridimensional modeling, presents, from its execution, a perspective that contrasts with promotional approaches of a traditional nature, which represents an innovative strategy.

Despite the fact that brands have already experimented with “mascots” or their own characters, making collaborations with characters that exist on social media, the most consumed medium at present, is a current innovation.

In turn, it is important to consider that, although it is possible to use this medium, it is also necessary to take into account all aspects related to the technology employed. Tools that are already being used in the market to generate similar content can be explored.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the objectives of this research have been met, we can acknowledge certain limitations. The analysis lacked the necessary resources to assess the reach of the virtual influencer's publications. In turn, the study was limited due to limitations in the available bibliographic material. Since the phenomenon has been little researched and existing theories predate it, it was difficult to obtain quality and up-to-date information.

On the other hand, we must consider that the sample was limited in order to complete the analysis. However, if a more in-depth and broader-reaching investigation is desired, it would be pertinent to use one sample with a larger number of pieces and to incorporate other relevant virtual influencers that can be compared and analyzed.

Virtual influencers continue to generate content on the social media platforms where they exist, so it is pertinent to study the evolution of these contents, the reactions, and the participation of the characters. In addition, the reaction should be taken into account, that is, the perception and reactions of consumers, since it is important to be able to understand the phenomenon through those who give it value.

The present work presented us with an interesting and highly valuable challenge by addressing a novel phenomenon, particularly for advertising. It opens a range of possibilities for new research and applications regarding virtual influencers.

In the digital era, influence and communication can be highly variable. Their impact on the advertising field is key to understanding the continuous evolution of technology and culture. Thus, we face the challenge of constantly learning and adapting to changes in order to achieve effective communication regarding virtual influence and new phenomena that emerge as effective possibilities and to be efficient media.

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