

Chapter 3

A Strategic Evaluation of Fraud Detection Solutions for Influencer Marketing Integrity

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ABSTRACT

Influencer fraud manifested through fake followers, bot-driven engagement, and manipulated growth patterns has become a costly threat to brand reputation and campaign ROI, creating an urgent need for systematic influencer vetting. This study examines the research problem of rising inauthenticity in the influencer ecosystem

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and its financial, strategic, and reputational consequences. The objectives are to analyse the scale and forms of influencer fraud, compare the capabilities of 20 leading fraud detection tools, and identify key differentiators that support strategic tool selection for brands of varying sizes. Using a qualitative content analysis of platform features, pricing models, methodological approaches, and compliance factors, complemented by comparative analytical mapping, the study reveals a mature and diverse market clustered into enterprise-level AI solutions, specialised vetting tools, and accessible quick-scan options.

INTRODUCTION

As influencer marketing has matured from a niche tactic into a multi-billion-dollar industry, the financial and reputational risks associated with fraud have grown in tandem. What was once a minor concern has become a significant threat to campaign ROI and brand integrity, making robust fraud detection a critical business function for any organization investing in creator partnerships. Consequently, robust fraud detection has transitioned from a best practice to an indispensable component of the marketing technology stack (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025).

Influencer fraud occurs when creators artificially inflate their metrics to appear more influential than they are. This deception takes several common forms, including buying fake followers, using bots to generate likes and comments, and joining coordinated “pods” where groups of influencers agree to engage with each other's content to manipulate platform algorithms. While these tactics can create a superficial appearance of popularity, the audience they claim to reach is often illusory, composed of inactive accounts or automated bots rather than real, engaged consumers (Siering et al., 2016).

The tangible impact of this inauthenticity is significant, undermining campaign performance and eroding consumer trust.

Key data points illustrate the scale of the problem:

- **Financial Losses:** Brands are estimated to lose approximately \$1.3 billion annually to influencer fraud.
- **Reduced Performance:** Campaigns that partner with influencers who have more than 30% fake followers often see, on average, 58% lower conversion rates.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Approximately 74% of consumers report that they are less likely to trust a brand that works with inauthentic or fake influencers.

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