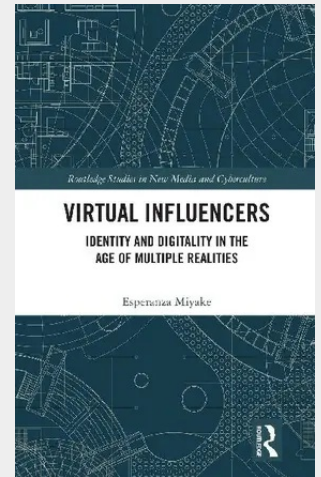


Miyake

Virtual Influencers

Identity and Digitality in the Age of Multiple Realities

This book identifies the converging socio- cultural, economic, and technological conditions that have shaped, informed, and realised the identity of the contemporary virtual influencer, situating them at the intersection of social media, consumer culture, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and digital technologies. Through a critical analysis of virtual influencers and related media practices and discourses in an international context, each chapter investigates different themes relating to digitality and identity: virtual place and nationhood; virtual emotions and intimacy; im/ materialities of virtual everyday life; the biopolitics of virtual human-production; the necropolitics of pandemic virtuality; transmedial and mimetic virtualities; and the political economy of virtual influencers. The book argues that the virtual influencer represents the various ways in which contemporary identities have increasingly become naturalised with questions of virtuality, mediated by digital technologies across multiple realities. From practices relating to AI-driven, invasive data profiling needed for virtual influencer production to problematic online practices such as buying digital skin colour, the author examines how the virtual influencer's aesthetic, social, and economic value obfuscates some of the darker aspects of their role as an extractivist technology of virtuality: one which regulates, oppresses, and/ or classifies bodies and datafied bodies that serve the visual, (bio)political, and digital economies of virtual capitalism. In the process, the book simultaneously offers a critique of the virtual influencer as a representational figure existing across multiple digital platforms, spaces, and times, and of how they may challenge, complicate, and reinforce normative ideologies surrounding gender, race, class, sexuality, age, and ableism. As such, the book sheds light on some of the more troubling realities of the virtual influencer's existence, inasmuch as it celebrates their transformational potential, exploring the implications of both within an increasingly AI- driven, digital culture, society, and economy. Drawing from a wide range of disciplines, this book will appeal to scholars, researchers, and students working in the area(s) of: Popular Culture and Media; Internet, Digital and Social Media Studies; Data justice and Governance; Japanese Media Studies; Celebrity Studies; Fan Studies; Marketing and Consumer Studies; Sociology; Human-Computer Studies; and AI and Technology Studies.



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