



ENTREPRENEURIAL DIGITAL COMMUNITY: NETWORKS TO PREVENT ADVERTISING FRAUD IN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the various ways in which digital advertising fraud manifests within the social media ecosystem in Colombia, with special attention to the experiences and strategies that content creators have developed to identify, confront, and mitigate this phenomenon. This was achieved through a qualitative approach, phenomenological design, and descriptive type. The results of the study indicate the impact of the preventive content disseminated by entrepreneurial influencers, serving as a learning action to assist consumers in avoiding fraudulent activities. This study also explores the establishment of pertinent communicative and preventive chains within digital interaction spaces.

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1. Introduction

In the context of Colombia's evolving business environment, the digital entrepreneurial community has emerged as a pivotal element in driving economic growth and innovation. This community, comprising entrepreneurs, start-ups and technology companies, has identified digital platforms as a medium for the exchange of ideas, collaboration and the establishment of networks that serve to empower their initiatives. Nevertheless, this exponential growth has also given rise to significant challenges, including the issue of advertising fraud in the digital environment.

Digital ad fraud can be defined as deceptive practices that seek to manipulate or falsify online advertising metrics for the purpose of illicit financial gain. These practices encompass, but are not limited to, the generation of fictitious clicks, fraudulent impressions, and the creation of fraudulent websites with the objective of generating advertising revenue. According to a report by the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) and White Ops, digital ad fraud could cost advertisers globally as much as \$5.8 billion by 2024 (ANA & White Ops, 2024).

A similar situation is reported from Colombia. The escalating trend of digital advertising investment, as documented in the IAB Colombia's Digital Media Investment Study (IAB Colombia, 2023), which recorded an investment of 600 billion pesos in 2023, has rendered the nation a lucrative target for fraudulent activities. This context poses a significant threat to digital entrepreneurs, who, by allocating limited resources to online marketing strategies, can be severely affected by fraudulent practices that diminish ROI and erode trust in the digital ecosystem.

In order to combat this phenomenon, the digital entrepreneurial community in Colombia has initiated the development and strengthening of collaborative networks with the objective of preventing ad fraud. These networks seek to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, tools and best practices for the identification and mitigation of fraudulent activities in the digital advertising environment. A notable example is the Digital Cluster Community, initiated by the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce in 2023, which offers a platform for entrepreneurs from various economic sectors to interact, share experiences and access resources that promote transparency and integrity in their digital operations (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá, 2023).

In addition to local initiatives, international collaboration is also of crucial importance in the fight against ad fraud. The collaboration between the Spanish Association of the Digital Economy (Adigital) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which was revealed in January 2025, has the objective of accelerating the advancement and conscientious utilisation of artificial intelligence in Latin America, encompassing Colombia. This initiative, entitled IAméricas, aims to enhance the competitiveness of startups and SMEs by promoting the adoption of responsible AI tools and standards. This includes the implementation of mechanisms to detect and prevent fraud in digital environments (Cinco Días, 2025).

The significance of these networks and collaborations lies in their capacity to engender synergies, thereby enabling entrepreneurs to access contemporary information, state-of-the-art technological tools and specialised counsel to address ad fraud. For instance, digital platforms such as SiembraCo, established by Yuly Galindo, have illustrated how digitalisation and the formation of online communities can encourage fair and transparent business practices, resulting in benefits for both producers and consumers (El País, 2024).

Nevertheless, in order to combat ad fraud, a comprehensive approach is required that engages all participants within the digital ecosystem. Regulatory authorities, such as Colombia's Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio (SIC), play a pivotal role in overseeing and sanctioning deceptive advertising practices. In 2022, the SIC imposed significant fines on operators such as Claro and Tigo for misleading advertising, thereby demonstrating its commitment to protecting consumer rights and promoting transparency in the advertising market (Noticias RCN, 2022).

In addition to regulation, education and awareness are recognised as fundamental elements in preventing ad fraud. Enterprising digital communities should encourage ongoing training on issues related to digital security, advertising ethics and the use of emerging technologies for fraud detection. The implementation of training programmes and the dissemination of information regarding the tactics employed by fraudsters can empower entrepreneurs to recognise and avoid fraudulent practices.

It is evident that technological solutions hold considerable potential in the ongoing efforts to combat ad fraud. Tools based on artificial intelligence and machine learning have the capacity to analyse large volumes of data in real time to identify suspicious patterns and alert advertisers to potential fraud. The

development of innovative solutions by technology companies and start-ups for the monitoring of the integrity of advertising campaigns, and the assurance that the resources invested generate the expected results, is a current area of research.

One of the most prominent theories is the Cat and Mouse Game, which describes the dynamics between fraudsters and fraud detection systems. According to this theory, fraudsters perpetually develop new techniques to circumvent detection systems, while the developers of these systems update their methods to identify and prevent fraudulent activities. This continuous cycle engenders an environment in which both parties are engaged in a constant race to outdo each other (Tappx, 2023).

Recent research in this area includes a study conducted by Tappx in 2023, which identified nine common types of digital ad fraud, including spoofing, click spamming and ad stacking. These deceptive practices have consequences for all stakeholders, including advertisers, publishers and users. The financial losses resulting from these practices are significant, and they erode trust in the digital ecosystem (Tappx, 2023).

In the context of Colombia, the Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio (SIC) has initiated measures to address misleading advertising in the digital environment. In 2023, the SIC initiated investigations into several influencers for alleged misleading advertising, underscoring the significance of providing consumers with clear and truthful information. These actions are indicative of the commitment on the part of Colombian authorities to protect consumer rights and to promote transparent advertising practices (Romero, 2023).

Moreover, the implementation of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, has been posited as a viable solution to detect and prevent ad fraud. These technologies facilitate the analysis of substantial volumes of data in real time, enabling the identification of suspicious patterns and the notification of advertisers regarding potential fraudulent activities. However, it is imperative that these tools are employed in an ethical and responsible manner, ensuring the privacy of users and averting any potential biases in the detection algorithms (Cadena SER, 2025).

The objective of this study is to examine the various manifestations of digital ad fraud within the social media ecosystem in Colombia, with a particular focus on the experiences and strategies that content creators have developed to identify, confront and mitigate this phenomenon. In the context of the digital market, which has undergone exponential growth driven by the increasingly predominant presence of influencers in the promotion of brands and products, it is essential to analyse the dynamics that emerge around misleading advertising, the generation of fraudulent interactions and practices that compromise transparency and ethics in the relationship between advertisers, consumers and digital platforms. The research therefore focuses on the intersection between the monetisation strategies implemented by content creators and the fraudulent tactics that affect the credibility of the advertising ecosystem, with the aim of understanding the mechanisms through which Colombian influencers have learned to detect and counteract such practices.

1.1. Some Theoretical Considerations

From a theoretical perspective, the research is based on the concept of attention economy, proposed by authors such as Goldhaber (1997). Goldhaber's argument is that competition in digital environments is based on capturing and retaining the user's attention, which explains the proliferation of strategies aimed at artificially inflating visibility and engagement metrics. Similarly, Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation is pertinent to understanding how influencers manage their digital identity and construct a public image that must remain aligned with the expectations of both their audiences and the brands with which they collaborate. In this sense, ad fraud poses a threat not only to the authenticity of content creators, but also to consumer trust, which justifies the need to analyse the practices and strategies adopted by influencers to counteract it.

The prevalence of digital ad fraud has been thoroughly examined in recent studies, underscoring its economic and social ramifications within the industry. As stated in a report by Juniper Research (2023), the losses resulting from digital ad fraud amounted to US\$84 billion on a global scale. This figure serves to underscore the severity of the issue and emphasises the pressing need to implement effective mitigation strategies. In the Latin American context, research such as that of Cárdenas and Ramírez (2021) has highlighted the pivotal role of influencers in digital advertising. The credibility and proximity these content creators have with their audiences exerts a considerable influence on consumer decision-

making, thereby prompting advertisers to allocate increasing financial resources towards influencer marketing strategies. However, the same study cautions that the absence of explicit regulation and the opacity of metric measurement have contributed to the proliferation of fraudulent practices, including the purchase of followers, the automated generation of interactions, and the manipulation of metrics through bots, which generates distortions in the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

In order to comprehend the manner in which content creators have developed strategies to prevent and respond to these dynamics, this research will focus on conducting interviews with influencers from various categories and audiences in Colombia. The specific strategies implemented by these content creators to protect the authenticity of their interactions and ensure transparency in their collaborations with brands will be identified through the course of this study. These interviews will facilitate an exploration of the personal experiences of content creators, as well as their perceptions of the evolution of digital fraud and its impact on the industry. Furthermore, network analysis will be employed as a methodological instrument to examine patterns of fraudulent behaviour on digital platforms. This will facilitate the identification of structural relationships between different actors and the detection of nodes of suspicious activity that may serve as indicators of fraud.

Network analysis has been proven to be a highly effective methodology for the study of interactions in digital environments. This is due to the fact that it allows for the visual representation of the way in which different actors interact with each other, thus revealing patterns that may be imperceptible through traditional research methods. Studies such as that of Zhao et al. (2022) have demonstrated that network analysis applied to digital advertising fraud has enabled the detection of communities of fake accounts that interact with each other to inflate engagement metrics and create the illusion of popularity. In this sense, the application of this methodology to the Colombian case will provide valuable information on the specific fraudulent dynamics that affect content creators and will make it possible to generate proposals to strengthen transparency in digital advertising.

2. Methodology

The objective of this study is to examine the dynamics of digital advertising fraud in Colombia through a qualitative approach based on a phenomenological design. The present design is deemed appropriate insofar as it seeks to explore the experiences and perceptions of content creators regarding the fraudulent practices that affect their professional activity on digital platforms. The qualitative methodology employed in this study enables a more profound and detailed understanding of the interactions among the actors involved in digital advertising, including content creators, advertisers, and audiences. Moreover, the research employs a descriptive strategy, seeking to represent and analyse in detail the phenomena related to fraud in digital advertising and the strategies implemented to counteract it.

With regard to the data collection tools employed, two primary approaches were utilised: in-depth interviews and social network analysis. The research focuses on the interviews conducted with 10 Colombian content creators. The objective of the present study was to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of digital ad fraud held by influencers. In order to achieve this, an interview-based methodology was employed. The results obtained from the interviews revealed the most common forms of fraud experienced by influencers, as well as the strategies employed by these individuals to protect themselves from such practices. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing for flexibility in responses and exploration of emerging themes during conversations. Consequently, the interviews yielded comprehensive insights into the dynamics of content creators' work and their perspectives on the issues they encounter in the digital sphere, particularly regarding fraudulent practices and interactions with advertisers and audiences.

In addition to conducting interviews, social network analysis was employed to examine platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, with a view to identifying patterns of fraudulent behaviour on these networks. This form of analysis facilitates the exploration of digital interactions among various actors (e.g., influencers, advertisers, audiences, fake accounts, bots) and offers a visual depiction of the structural relationships within these ecosystems. Network analysis has been proven to be an effective methodology for detecting fraud patterns that are often difficult to identify with traditional methods. These include the purchase of followers, manipulation of interactions and the use of bots to inflate visibility and engagement metrics. The tool's function is to identify nodes of suspicious activity and

communities of fake accounts that interact with each other to generate a false perception of popularity. This is key to understanding the dynamics of ad fraud on social platforms.

The use of social network analysis, in combination with in-depth interviews, will facilitate triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and richness of the findings. This methodology facilitates the capture of content creators' subjective perceptions, whilst simultaneously enabling the identification of objectively measurable patterns in social media data. Consequently, it is possible to construct a more complete and accurate representation of the magnitude of digital ad fraud. In this manner, the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the phenomenon are integrated, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors involved in fraudulent practices and their impact on the industry.

The selection of content creators for interviews was based on purposive sampling, with influencers who had significant digital experience and established audiences on the main social media platforms being considered. The selection of these ten participants was made on the basis of their direct knowledge and experience in dealing with the dynamics of social media advertising, and in particular, their exposure to potential fraudulent practices. The diversity of content creators in terms of market niches, number of followers, and platforms used allows for a more complete perspective on the different realities faced by influencers within the Colombian digital landscape.

In order to address the key topics identified, including perceptions of ad fraud, prevention strategies, personal experiences and interactions with brands and audiences, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. Furthermore, the investigation sought to explore respondents' perspectives on the regulation of digital advertising and the role of platforms in the fight against fraud. The aforementioned questions addressed aspects such as the most common forms of fraud, perceptions of the effectiveness of measures implemented by platforms to detect fraud, and content creators' recommendations for improving transparency and trust in digital advertising.

It is important to note that all interviews were recorded and transcribed with the prior consent of the participants. The transcription of the interviews enabled a content analysis to be conducted, seeking to identify patterns and recurring themes in the responses of content creators. Emerging themes were grouped into key categories related to forms of fraud, protection strategies, relationships with advertisers and audiences, and views on regulation and transparency in digital advertising. This inductive approach facilitated the establishment of a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by content creators in relation to ad fraud.

In terms of social media analysis, specialised tools were utilised to collect and analyse data on interactions on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. The selection of these platforms was predicated on their demonstrable relevance within the domain of digital advertising in Colombia. This country has been observed to have a high concentration of active users, alongside a prevalence of fraudulent practices, including the purchase of followers and the manipulation of metrics. Network analysis tools enabled the extraction of data on interactions, mentions, hashtags, followers, and activity on influencers' posts and their audiences. This provided crucial information on how visibility and engagement metrics are manipulated to create the illusion of popularity. This analysis also mapped relationships between actors within platforms and identified clusters of suspicious or fraudulent accounts, resulting in the identification of patterns and trends in digital ad fraud.

The social network analysis also included the visualisation of the data obtained, which facilitated the identification of possible links between fake and real accounts. Network visualisation facilitates the examination of network connections between actors, identifying the presence of organised groups of accounts exhibiting anomalous or suspicious interactions. This approach to analysis is particularly valuable in the field of fraud detection, as it allows graphical representation of the relationships between the various entities involved in fraud dynamics and facilitates the identification of patterns that can often go undetected without the use of specialised technologies.

The interviews and network analysis were complemented by a review of the academic literature on digital ad fraud, fraudulent practices in influencer marketing, and current policies of social media platforms to detect and prevent fraud. The present review furnished the requisite context for the interpretation of the findings obtained from the interviews and network analysis and facilitated the identification of the predominant trends and challenges confronting the digital advertising industry in Colombia. Moreover, the comprehensive literature review facilitated a comparative analysis of the

research findings with those from previous studies conducted in diverse international settings, thereby enriching the interpretation and discussion of the findings.

In conclusion, the research also comprised a series of recommendations for the enhancement of transparency and trust in digital advertising in Colombia. In light of the findings from the interviews and network analysis, the following recommendations are put forward: firstly, the implementation of more rigorous measures to detect and prevent ad fraud is necessary; secondly, there is a need to improve the regulation of engagement and viewability metrics; and thirdly, promotion of collaboration between content creators, digital platforms and advertisers is required to create a more transparent and ethical environment for influencer marketing.

It is important to emphasise that ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence tool, was employed for the spelling, semantic and stylistic correction of the texts. This facilitated the optimisation of the writing and ensured the linguistic quality of the work. The utilisation of this instrument facilitated the enhancement of the clarity, coherence and fluency of the text, thereby ensuring that the ideas were presented in an appropriate and accessible manner for the intended audience.

3. Results

3.1. Results of the Interviews Conducted with Colombian Content Creators

The content creators interviewed provided testimonies that reflected several issues related to the presence of digital ad fraud in Colombia. These testimonies also demonstrated a growing concern about the impact of such practices on the credibility of the industry, on relationships with brands, and on the trust of audiences. The majority of respondents concur that fraudulent practices have become increasingly prevalent as a result of the ease with which metric manipulation strategies can be implemented, thereby establishing a digital ecosystem in which authenticity and transparency are constantly challenged by the presence of actors who resort to deceptive tactics in order to secure a A recurrent theme in the interview findings was the identification of the most prevalent forms of ad fraud in the digital environment. In the field of content creation, a plethora of tactics have been employed, with some of the most frequently mentioned being the purchase of fake followers, the automation of interactions through bots, the simulation of engagement through organised groups exchanging fake interactions, the manipulation of metrics through the use of platforms specialised in generating automated comments and reactions, and the alteration of analytical data to show inflated figures to advertisers. These practices have resulted in a shift in the way content creators are required to demonstrate their value within the industry. Furthermore, these practices have engendered an environment in which brands, reliant upon superficial metrics, may be misled when selecting influencers for their campaigns.

Influencers' perceptions of fraud within their professional relationships with advertisers and audiences are characterised by a pervasive sense of distrust and constant pressure to substantiate the legitimacy of their work. It was observed by several interviewees that the proliferation of fraud has resulted in a significant number of brands adopting an overly quantitative metrics-based approach. This has had the effect of excluding content creators who prioritise quality and authenticity over artificial audience growth. Moreover, this predicament has engendered an atmosphere in which bona fide creators are compelled to incessantly substantiate the organic provenance of their audience and the genuine extent of interaction they engender with their adherents. This engenders an augmented workload and incessant evaluation of their own analytical efficacy.

From the perspective of audiences, the presence of influencers resorting to fraudulent practices has led to a decrease in trust towards promoted content on social media. It has been posited by some content creators that their followers have expressed reservations regarding the authenticity of certain advertisements, and that, in many cases, audiences have begun to perceive influencer marketing as a space where transparency is not always guaranteed. This predicament has compelled influencers to adopt strategies to differentiate themselves from those who resort to fraudulent tactics. These strategies include the implementation of measures such as the publication of verifiable metrics, collaboration with brands that prioritise transparency, and constant interaction with their followers to strengthen trust in their recommendations.

Regarding the strategies that content creators have developed to prevent and report fraudulent practices in the industry, interviewees mentioned various initiatives aimed at protecting the

authenticity of the digital ecosystem. A number of individuals have opted to directly denounce profiles that employ fraudulent strategies by exposing them through posts or reporting them to digital platforms. Conversely, others have advocated a more preventative approach, entailing the education of brands on the significance of analysing metrics that extend beyond superficial numbers and the promotion of the evaluation of qualitative indicators. These qualitative indicators include the consistency of content, the level of real interaction with the audience, and consistency in the type of posts made.

Another strategy that was mentioned by interviewees is the implementation of codes of ethics within communities of content creators. These establish principles that ensure authenticity and honesty in the relationship with brands and the public. These initiatives aim to establish a culture of transparency within the industry, promoting adherence to responsible practices and deterring the utilisation of deceptive tactics. Furthermore, some influencers have indicated that they have commenced collaboration with specialised agencies for the verification of the authenticity of their analytics data. This allows them to provide advertisers with additional assurances regarding the legitimacy of their audience and the real effectiveness of their campaigns.

Notwithstanding these efforts, content creators recognise that fraud remains a challenge within the digital ecosystem and that the absence of specific regulations has enabled the perpetuation of these practices without significant consequences. In this sense, interviewees have expressed the need for more rigorous control mechanisms to be implemented and for regulations to be established that force platforms and brands to adopt stricter criteria for the selection of influencers, prioritising authenticity and content quality over the artificial growth of metrics.

3.2. Network Analysis and the Detection of Patterns of Digital Ad Fraud

The application of network analysis to the identification of fraud patterns in digital advertising has facilitated the visualisation of fraudulent strategies within the digital ecosystem. This has enabled the establishment of a structured representation of the organisation and operation of these strategies. The identification of trends and behaviours has been enabled by the collection and processing of data from social networks and metrics analysis platforms. This has revealed the existence of organised structures that are designed to manipulate the reach and interaction of promoted publications.

A salient finding of network analysis is the identification of communities of interconnected accounts that specialise in artificially generating interactions. These networks frequently function through the automation of processes that facilitate mass interaction with particular posts, resulting in the artificial inflation of metrics and the creation of the illusion of authentic engagement. In many cases, these communities consist of accounts exhibiting anomalous behaviour patterns, such as interaction rates disproportionate to the number of followers, extremely fast response times and the repetition of identical comments on multiple posts.

Network analytics is an emergent methodology that has been demonstrated to be effective in understanding the dynamics of fraud in the digital environment. Furthermore, it has been shown to facilitate the development of strategies that can strengthen transparency in the industry. This, in turn, enables a more accurate assessment of the authenticity of content creators and greater protection for brands and audiences from fraudulent tactics.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, we have investigated the various ways in which digital ad fraud manifests itself within the social media ecosystem in Colombia, paying particular attention to the experiences and strategies adopted by content creators to identify, confront and mitigate this phenomenon. Through the conduction of interviews with prominent influencers and the application of network analysis, the intricate nature of fraudulent practices that have a detrimental effect on both advertisers and consumers was exposed. Furthermore, it was elucidated how these practices have permeated the monetisation dynamics of content creators on digital platforms. The results obtained reveal significant patterns that not only confirm the existence of fraudulent tactics but also provide a deeper insight into the mechanisms that Colombian digital entrepreneurs are using to combat them.

Firstly, the data obtained through interviews with influencers suggests that digital ad fraud has reached alarming levels in the country, which is in line with international reports highlighting the economic impact of this phenomenon. It is evident from the responses obtained that content creators in Colombia encounter numerous challenges pertaining to the authenticity of their interactions and the veracity of metrics reported by digital platforms. The responses indicate the prevalence of fraudulent practices such as spoofing, click spamming and ad stacking. These practices have the effect of distorting the visibility of content and also affecting the actual performance of advertising campaigns. This finding is consistent with previous research, such as that of Tappx (2023), which points out how these techniques have gained ground as fraudsters constantly update their methods to circumvent detection systems.

A salient issue that has come to light from the interviews conducted is the mounting concern among influencers regarding the relationship between their audiences and the brands with which they are affiliated. In this context, Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation, which focuses on how individuals manage their public identity, is particularly relevant. This is because influencers are obliged to maintain a consistent and authentic image, not only to meet the expectations of their followers, but also to preserve the trust that brands place in them. However, the presence of ad fraud poses a significant threat to this image, as fraudulent tactics, such as the purchase of followers and the manipulation of metrics, erode the authenticity of influencers and, consequently, the credibility of the brands that utilise their services. This phenomenon engenders a vicious cycle that feeds back on itself, as the proliferation of fraud affects the effectiveness of advertising strategies and reduces advertisers' willingness to invest in influencer marketing.

It is imperative to acknowledge that, despite the endeavours of influencers to uphold transparent practices, the findings indicate that the absence of stringent regulation and the opacity of metrics persist as substantial impediments to the eradication of fraud. As Cárdenas and Ramírez (2021) have demonstrated, influencers in Latin America are pivotal actors within the digital advertising landscape due to their close relationship with audiences, thereby endowing them with considerable influence over consumers' purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, the absence of sufficient controls over engagement metrics and audience measurement can encourage the growth of fraudulent practices, such as the automation of interactions and the manipulation of clicks, which distorts the effectiveness of campaigns and generates unfair competition.

In this regard, the network analysis applied in this study has facilitated the visualisation of the interconnection between different actors within the Colombian digital ecosystem, thereby enabling the identification of suspicious behavioural patterns that correlate with fraudulent practices. In particular, the existence of communities of fake accounts interacting with each other to inflate engagement metrics and generate a false perception of popularity was observed. This finding is consistent with previous studies, such as that of Zhao et al. (2022), which demonstrate how network analysis can be an effective tool for detecting fraudulent behaviour by identifying nodes of suspicious activity and mapping structural relationships between fraudulent actors. Indeed, the application of this methodology has revealed a high degree of interconnectedness among the accounts implicated in fraudulent activities, suggesting the existence of a coordinated effort among fraudsters to manipulate metrics with ease.

A salient strategy employed by Colombian influencers to mitigate the impact of fraud is the enhancement of collaborative networks. The findings of the research indicate that a significant number of content creators have initiated collaborative endeavours with other influencers and digital entrepreneurs, with the objective of facilitating the exchange of knowledge and resources. This collaborative approach has been found to enhance the efficacy with which fraudulent activities can be identified. This collaboration has resulted in the establishment of initiatives such as the Digital Cluster Community, initiated by the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce. This community provides entrepreneurs with a collaborative environment where they can exchange experiences and access tools that promote transparency and ethical principles in digital advertising. This collaborative approach is indicative of an organisational response that seeks to counteract fraudulent dynamics through the creation of support networks and the adoption of good practices that benefit all members of the digital community.

In this regard, Goldhaber's (1997) attention economy theory provides a valuable perspective for understanding competition in digital environments. In the context of digital marketing, users' attention has evolved into a scarce resource, a concept that has become increasingly significant in the field. The proliferation of content, coupled with the saturation of digital markets, has given rise to a range of

fraudulent strategies aimed at artificially capturing and retaining attention. Nevertheless, the results of this study suggest that while fraudsters persist in devising novel tactics to manipulate attention and metrics, resistance to these practices is also undergoing constant evolution. Digital entrepreneurs, including influencers, are developing the capacity to identify the hallmarks of fraudulent activity and counteract it by implementing advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, that enable the real-time monitoring of advertising campaigns and the detection of suspicious patterns.

Regarding international collaboration, the results indicate the significance of strategic alliances in the effort to combat digital ad fraud. The collaboration between the Spanish Association of the Digital Economy (Adigital) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) through the IAméricas initiative is a clear example of how joint efforts can promote the adoption of ethical standards and technological tools to prevent fraud. This type of partnership is of particular benefit to Colombian influencers, as the tools and knowledge shared contribute to strengthening their capacities to detect and prevent fraudulent practices, while fostering a safer and more transparent digital environment.

Nevertheless, despite the progress that has been made, the findings also indicate that ad fraud remains a persistent and difficult-to-eradicate problem. The perpetual progression of deceptive strategies, in conjunction with an absence of efficacious regulatory measures and ambiguous engagement metrics, persists in constituting a substantial menace to the integrity of the digital ecosystem. A comprehensive approach involving all participants in the ecosystem, including regulators, advertisers, digital platforms and content creators, is required to establish a more transparent, ethical and sustainable digital advertising environment. This approach should include the implementation of clear public policies, the promotion of education and awareness of fraudulent practices, and the development of advanced technologies to detect and prevent fraud in real time.

In conclusion, this study has revealed the complexity of digital ad fraud in Colombia and provided a detailed insight into the strategies adopted by content creators to tackle this phenomenon. Despite the advancement of collaborative networks and the integration of technologies for fraud detection, there remains a considerable challenge to ensure transparency and ethical principles within the digital ecosystem. It is imperative to perpetuate the promotion of collaboration amongst the various actors within the digital ecosystem, in addition to the development of policies and technologies that fortify the battle against ad fraud and contribute to the establishment of a fairer and more sustainable environment for all digital entrepreneurs in Colombia.

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