NATCP National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection

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Hashtag advertising – the consumer protection authority is checking influencers

Under the professional guidance of the National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection (NATCP), government agencies are investigating advertisements shared by influencers on social media. The justification for these checks is underpinned by the fact that, during last year's investigations, objectionable adverts were uncovered in 12 percent of cases, whilst influencer content is enjoying ever-increasing popularity amongst young people.

With the rise of social media, digital content creators are exerting an ever-greater influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. However, the promotional nature of the content they post is not always clear, which is why it is particularly important for shoppers to recognise commercial posts and paid partnerships.

Monitoring content published by influencers is also of paramount importance because followers often regard the products and services showcased by their favourite content creators as personal opinions or credible recommendations. This relationship of trust can significantly influence consumer decisions; however, it can be misleading if the promotional nature of the content is not made clear to followers. The risk is particularly significant in the case of children and young people, who may find it more difficult to recognise the commercial interests underlying personal recommendations. The proper labelling of adverts is therefore not merely a legal obligation, but one of the fundamental prerequisites for informed consumer decisions.

For all these reasons, the national initiative initiated by the NATCP focuses on the clear labelling of promotional content, the correct use of disclosures relating to paid partnerships, and transparency in the promotion of one's own products and services. As part of this, the authority is examining, amongst other things, whether influencers are correctly using the labels 'advertisement', 'promotion' or 'paid collaboration', whether in the form of a tag, caption, hashtag or verbal disclosure. The checks primarily cover the Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube platforms.

In addition to the Consumer Protection Authority, the Hungarian Competition Authority also has the power to monitor the correct labelling of advertisements. Last year, government agencies found issues in only 12 percent of their inspections; however, given the extremely widespread use and distribution of such content, this year's investigation remains of paramount importance.

The NATCP emphasises that the aim of the inspections is not to restrict influencers' advertising activities, but to ensure that consumers can clearly recognise content intended for commercial purposes. The authority pays particular attention to the protection of children and young people, and to ensuring that advertisements appearing on social media are transparent and do not mislead consumers.

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