

## **Influencers: selfish opportunists or altruistic advisers?**

Influencer marketing was born of social media and the role of influencers is growing with many firms and individuals trying to jump on the bandwagon. But what is their role? Are they just opportunistic hucksters or something more? The documents at hand explore the inner-workings of this industry, scorn its shaky foundations and analyze the evolution of young people's attitudes to influencers.

Famous people endorsing products is nothing new (docs 1-4), the efficiency of this technique is proven. The economic value of influencer marketing is estimated at several billion dollars a year (doc.1) and 22% of people who want to buy a new product turn to influencers, social media and youtube (doc.5). People used to turn to celebrities, the "pioneers of influencer culture" (doc.4), to emulate their idols, now they turn to influencers to whom they can identify or with whom they can interact and talk about the pros and cons of products (doc.5). Big money is made (doc.4) and more brands and firms turn to this form of marketing. Yet, the dynamics have shifted.

Unlike past celebrity advertising, there is something dishonest about influencers and people denounce a phony industry built on duplicity and the credulousness of both firms – which think that by generating likes and clicks, influencers will sell their products – , and influencers – who overestimate the sway they hold over others (doc.1). Sometimes the financial contract tying them to a product is hidden (doc.1). Sometimes self-promotion overtakes any desire to recommend a product, as it seems unlikely that the woman in the cartoon really cares about promoting the hotel (doc.2). The cartoonist is poking fun at the arrogance of Instagram influencers, who try to cadge freebies in exchange for the "influence" they exert on their followers. Sometimes it is their lifestyles which angers, like jetting off to Dubai while the rest of the world is stuck inside because of Covid (doc.3). Which is why some young people turn their backs on the inane world of fast fashion and unattainable lifestyles displayed by many influencers (doc.4). Because with great visibility comes great responsibility (doc.3).

Online influencers can reach large audiences, especially among youngsters, and this power shouldn't be taken lightly (doc.3). First, there must be trust. Influencers must be perceived as sincere, to care about their audience and what they are promoting based on their experience

(doc.1). They must look sincere and not overact (doc.5). Plus, part of their credibility is the fact that influencers must lead by example and not show questionable behavior (doc.3) like shaming, drug abuse... The influencers who are enjoying a surge in popularity are those who stand for something and defend issues like mental health or social causes like positive body image or LGBTQ+ rights (doc.4). The influencers who will survive are those who help change things (doc.1), and can be role models whom young people can admire (doc.3), hence the necessity for there to be guidelines and regulations, like those edicted by the Advertising Standards Authority (doc.4).

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