

En vous appuyant uniquement sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

Are online influencers just opportunistic hucksters*, or do they fulfil a more meaningful role in society?

** A huckster is anyone who sells something or serves biased interests, using pushy or showy tactics. Historically, the term meant any type of vendor, but over time it has assumed pejorative connotations. (Wikipedia)*

Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots. La synthèse devra être précédée d'un titre et les candidats devront indiquer le nombre de mots comptés en fin de copie.

Ce sujet propose les 4 documents suivants :

- 'Influencer Marketing: A Phony Industry Based On False Premises', article d'Enrique Dans paru dans le magazine *Forbes* le 17 juillet 2019,
- Un dessin humoristique de Tom Fishburne publié sur son site Internet en avril 2019,
- Should influencers be expected to behave like role models?, *The Daily Targum*, by Lauren Singer, April 21, 2021
- 'The rise and fall of influencers: Is the age of giveaways and #ad posts coming to an end?' de Lydia Venn, publié dans *The Tab* en mars 2021,
- Do Consumers Trust Social Media Influencers? Here's What Statistics Show, www.slicktext.com, December 2021.

Document 1 - Influencer Marketing: A Phony Industry Based On False Premises

Enrique Dans, *Forbes*, July 17th, 2019

[...] Google says searches for the term “influencer” are through the roof; there are supposed influencers with millions of followers unable to sell 36 t-shirts, while others sell even their bath water. All this would suggest to brands that advertising as they knew is dead [...].

[...] The first issue here is that [...] notching up a certain number of followers, comments and likes on a social network is not influence; it just means that a certain number of people are prepared to follow your activities, for whatever reason. It doesn't mean that they trust you, that they think your criteria are reliable or that they are willing to do what they are told [...]

Influence [...] is limited to some areas and is achieved thanks to a series of mechanisms. It's true that there are people who seem to exercise absolute influence and who are capable of turning everything they touch into gold, but that's based on trust, albeit defined very loosely. [...]

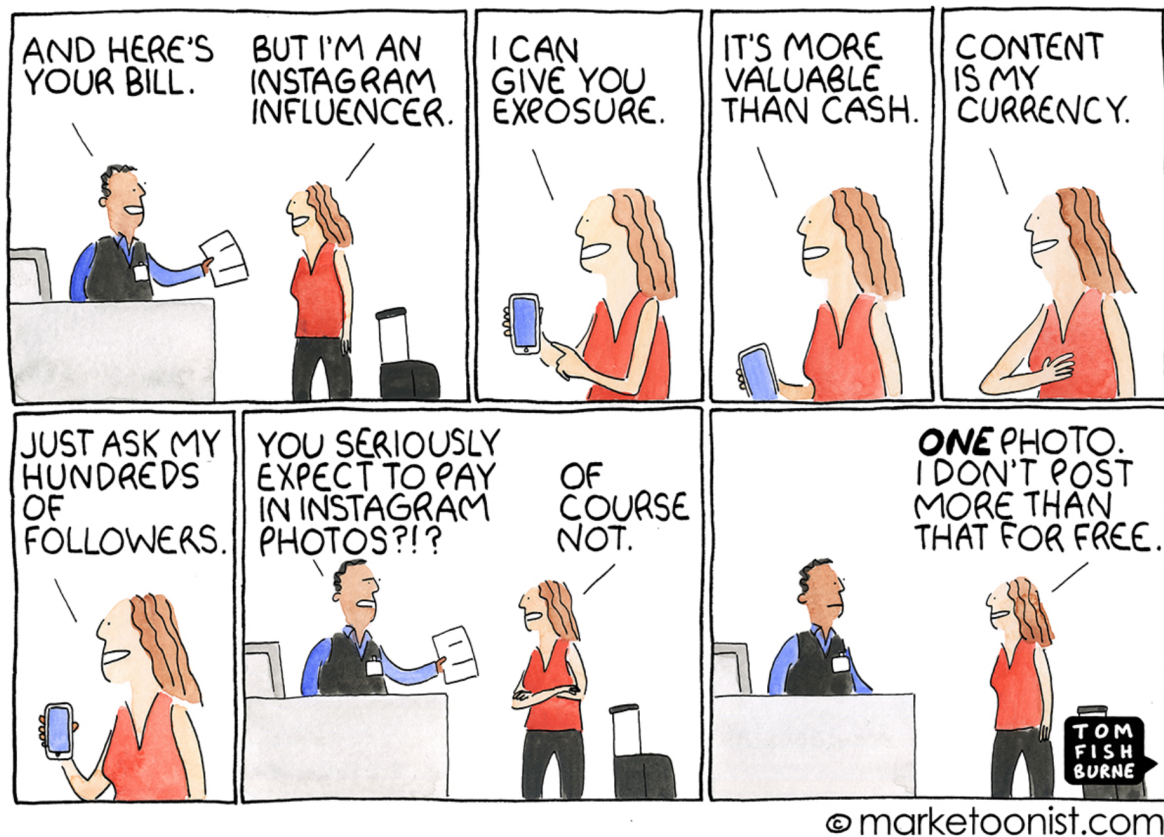
Influence works when it is credible. When it is corrupted, when there is no transparency, when it is based on lies or when we're clearly being taken for fools, influence doesn't work. When it becomes a contract in which somebody is told to make a certain number of mentions on certain channels in exchange for a certain amount of money, they stop being an influencer, and become something else: a mercenary. Influencers recommend what they know, what they like, what they know is good, based on a supposedly superior level of experience to you and me. If you do not have that experience and you simply sell what you have been told to sell, you are not an influencer, no matter how glamorous it sounds: you are simply a walking advertisement.

[...] The only thing that really works is sustainability, genuine relationships and transparency. If, as a brand, you have to stipulate how often an influencer has to mention your brand and where and when, while you cross your fingers in the hope he or she doesn't do something disastrous, you're playing a losing game. [...]

Back in the days of traditional advertising, everything was clear: nobody believed that the movie star sat around drinking coffee made from capsules all day or even that he had the slightest idea about coffee or that his desirability was due to a certain fragrance

or that he always drove that particular car. He had just been paid to be associated with the product, and that was it. We all knew where we were. But with influencer marketing, the idea is to deceive, to make believe that a recommendation is genuine and to hide the fact that there is a contract, or worse still, fake it till you make it to try to gain the prestige required for brands to pay you to hawk their stuff. [...]

Document 2



Cartoon by Tom Fishburne, published on his website 'Marketoonist', April 2019

Document 3 - Should influencers be expected to behave like role models?

Lauren Singer, *The Daily Targum*, April 21, 2021

When I think of the word "role model," I think of my parents — the people I've looked up to my entire life, who've been by my side and who've cheered me on since the beginning. They taught me right from wrong, filling the spot of "best role models" by being both relatable and inspirational.

But for the young people of today, there is a new group of people to look up to: social media influencers.

Influencers are people who can reach a large audience with the content that they put out due to their large followings. And since young people spend a large part of their free time online liking, watching and commenting on influencers' content, they end up idolizing them.

As we've seen, social media has the power to influence entire generations, and this power of guidance shouldn't be taken lightly.

Let's take Bryce Hall, for instance, a social media "star" that has 7.9 million followers on Instagram, 19.7 million followers on TikTok and close to 3.6 million subscribers on YouTube.

Despite his major platform, his behavior has been nothing short of problematic. He's been involved in an abundance of controversies, such as slut-shaming girls on the internet, getting arrested for drugs and continuously being charged for violating coronavirus disease (COVID-19) guidelines by throwing huge parties. And just recently, he was sued and charged by a Los Angeles restaurant owner for assault, battery and "violence motivated by race."

What Hall fails to realize is that so many of his young followers actually look up to him, and when they see him doing things like this, it leads to normalizing really bad behavior. Given the power of his influence, it's time he steps up and takes on the responsibility to be a better role model for his audience.

[...] Fundamentally, I don't think a lot of these influencers are the best role models for high schoolers and college students. We can't forget that underneath all their social clout, these influencers are young adults, just like us, who are still trying to figure it out. Their frontal lobes are still developing, and as they continue to learn about the world around them, they're going to make mistakes. The only difference is that they make these mistakes in front of millions of impressionable kids. The eagerness for fame and fortune that a lot of these young influencers have blinds them to all of the good possibilities that can come out of their immense platforms.

Regardless of whether influencers should be role models, they are. The stars of social media are just as likely to be role models as traditional celebrities — maybe even more so because it's so easy for children to access their content at any point during the day.

[...]

The followers of all popular influencers will be quick to follow any fad that the influencer advertises, so influencers should make it their responsibility to be good role models and display positive behavior through their posts to help create a more positive environment on social media. [...]

Document 4 - The rise and fall of influencers: Is the age of giveaways and #ad posts coming to an end?

Lydia Venn, *The Tab* (an online student newspaper in the UK), March 8th, 2021 (adapted)

In the last few months influencers have been at the forefront of national attention for travelling to Dubai to take bikini pictures whilst the rest of us struggle at home. [...]

Influencers often show how out of touch with reality they are – promoting weight loss plans whilst more people than ever are using food banks, claiming furlough for their companies whilst being worth millions and travelling to Dubai for “work” when all they appear to do is sit on a sun-lounger, drinking cocktails.

[...] According to a survey by *The Tab*, 85 per cent of young people have unfollowed influencers during the pandemic. They cited the breaking of lockdown rules as a major reason – but that wasn’t the only reason. The promotion of fast fashion, lack of original content and promoting an unattainable lifestyle all fed into many young people’s abandonment of influencer culture. [...]

Influencers have always existed in some capacity. In the 90s it was Jennifer Anniston’s ‘Rachel’ haircut that saw women all over the world cut their hair into a flicked-out bob. It was so impactful it helped Anniston become the face of L’Oreal Elvive. Before that Michael Jordan had one of the first influencer collaborations, signing off a \$2.5million deal with Nike which included the custom Air Jordans. [...]

These [...] celebrities were early pioneers of influencer culture. However, the key difference with those celebs and the influencers we see now is that Michael Jordan and Jennifer Anniston’s branding deals were an add-on to their already successful careers as a basketball player and actress. Without their branding deals they still would have long careers, but now for many young influencers, their entire career is selling products because of how famous they are as a person. [...]

Before the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) guidelines took over Instagram, influencers didn’t have to disclose that what they were promoting was gifted or they were being paid for it. In 2018 that all changed when the ASA stepped in and placed stricter rules essentially bringing more transparency to our Instagram feeds about what we were being shown.

There’s even bigger money to be made in influencer marketing beyond individual posts; many influencers can garner six figure deals with brands to collaborate on collections. The global influencer industry is worth over \$5 billion and is expected to grow by 15 per cent this year.

But with the pandemic drastically altering everyone's lives it has made people reassess who they follow and why. [...]

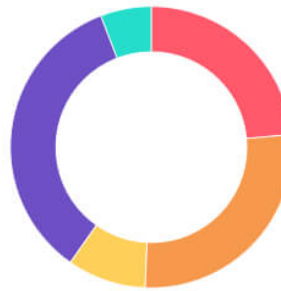
But does this mean all influencers are over? Not at all.

[...] The pandemic and the BLM protests that occurred in June last year have made it clearer to young people they don't want to just follow a pretty person showing them the latest bag. They want people who align with their values of caring for the environment, social justice, diversity and activism.

What types of content from influencers makes you view them as more authentic?

All respondents

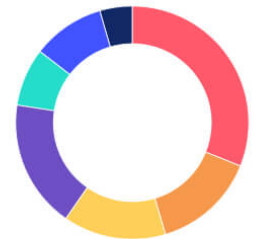
■	Insights into their personal life	23.56%
■	When they interact with followers	27.12%
■	When it's coming from an influencer who looks like me	9.04%
■	When they provide an unbiased review of a product or service	34.43%
■	Other	5.84%



What erodes your trust in an influencer?

All ages

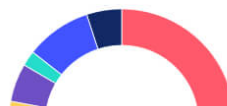
■	Too many sponsored posts	31.07%
■	Using stereotypical influencer phrases	14.33%
■	Photos that look too edited	14.23%
■	Politicized content	17.78%
■	Promoting too many similar products	8.05%
■	Over-enthusiastic endorsements	10.04%
■	Not sharing enough of their everyday life	4.50%



What makes you more likely to purchase a product an influencer has promoted?

All respondents

■	If I need that specific product	39.78%
■	If the influencer has explained pros and cons of the product	21.81%
■	If there's a discount code	16.33%
■	If the product is currently trending	5.47%
■	If the product is styled aesthetically	2.19%
■	If it's clear the influencer genuinely uses the product in their everyday life	9.40%
■	Other	5.02%



When shopping for a new product, how do you prefer to research?

All respondents

■	Read online reviews	52.46%
■	Read articles about the product	14.96%
■	See what an influencer in that niche has shared about the product	7.76%
■	Read the company's website	9.31%
■	Read social media comments	5.02%
■	Watch YouTube reviews	8.94%
■	Sign up for company's newsletter or text list	1.55%

