

The lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram stimulates portrayals of identities by adjusting and adapting to fake ones.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to shed light and explore the role of the lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram and how they stimulate portrayals of identities. The nature of influencers is constantly evolving. In today's world, they are more pronounced and becoming more popular. Some have grown from virtual obscurity to being nearly as famous as traditional icons in the world. This paper, argues that, the lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram stimulates and influence their audience towards the modification of their identities that is their authentic self. The paper also stresses on the fact that people in the society should have this acceptance feeling, that is, showcasing their authentic self. Different articles which helped in building arguments will mainly address to the different aspects of the lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram and how they impact on their audience. The paper proves that such influencers are even collaborating with different businesses in order to promote their products and service thereby, easily influencing their audience which later result to the altering of their identities. Another aspect which is taken into consideration is the setting up of beauty ideals by the fashion and lifestyle influencer community.

Keywords: #Influencers, #Instagram, #Identity, #Modifiedidentities, #Bodyideals, #Influencermarketing, #Onlineadvocacy, #socialmedia

Emerging technologies have revolutionized individual's networks and this has influenced and compelled behaviors. Throughout the last decade, it has been noticed that social media platforms have been rapidly expanding in importance. According to Belanche et al. (2020), around 3.5 billion people make use of social media platforms which consist of 1 billion Instagram active users. As individuals in the society have shifted from traditional media and spend most of their time on social media platforms, influencers showed up. Torbarina et al. (2020), stated that influencers are the modern marketing tools for many brands. Social media influencers are people who have set up a name for their understanding and awareness on a particular matter. They usually create contents about specific matters on their accounts. This give rise to the number of their followers which are mainly those social media users who are engaged and pay attention to their contents. Instagram which was launched in 2010 is now considered among the most popular social media platforms with the most influencers (Venus and Aziz 2019). In addition to this, Tassi (2018), stated that it performs a key role under the attention economy from which appears this influencer community. However, the main focus of this paper is to show how the lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram stimulates portrayals of identities by adjusting and adapting to fake ones. Their audience are easily influenced and this leads toward the modification of their authentic self. The paper will explore how those aspects are conveyed that is, how influencers mainly carry out their role for business intentions, doubting the reality behind their contents and they also tend to create an ideal representation of themselves thereby leading to the perturbation their follower's identity and their authentic self.

The promotion of brands and products by the lifestyle and fashion Influencer community

As stated earlier, influencers are the modern marketing tools for many brands on Instagram. Influencers mainly represent different brands on Instagram and this allows them to represent an active relationship with consumers. It facilitates the level of communication between the different contents posted and the followers. According to Audrezet et al. (2018), some marketers have acknowledged that influencers are trusted by their followers. The main role of influencers is to experiment the products or service and provide feedbacks through their Instagram account. This is mainly done by posting some tutorials, photos, their 'opinions' about a particular product or service thereby, always calling attention to what they are

advertising. Venus and Aziz (2019), pointed out that, such actions demonstrate the whole idea of performing business tasks considering to the contents posted. Such actions are mainly executed for the purpose of being rewarded by the particular brand. However, this makes individuals doubt about the perception of truth in their actions, for example, whether they are executing such actions to educate and benefit their followers or whether for achieving self-benefits that is being recompensed. Such questions are mostly referred to the lifestyle and fashion influencer community which are among the most popular types of influencers. As a matter of fact, as stated by Izquierdo-Iranzo & Gallardo-Echenique (2020), some Instagram influencers have revealed that their authentic self differ completely from what they tend to showcase online, where there is the tendency of creating and embodying different identities so as to be able to portray themselves as being perfect in every single way and also in an approach of selling their image as well. Djafavora and Rushworth (2017), showed that many individuals in the society tend to accept and trust whatever is being posted and presented to them by their favourite influencers. Here, this can be referred to self-identification where the audience tries to identify themselves as their idols. However, they are more disposed to being persuaded in buying products only by seeing the contents posted by their preferred influencers without interrogating the authenticity of the act of the influencer. This tends to have a direct repercussion on their identity whereby affecting their authentic self.

Another example is beauty & wellness and fitness influencers which forms part mainly under the lifestyle influencer community. They generally advertise and recommend healthy products or services to their followers so as to stay healthy and in a good physical condition. What needs to be pointed up here is that, most influencers under the lifestyle influencer community are normal people who has been experiencing instafame according to Jin et al. (2018). It is also important to shed light on the fact that, some influencers may not be aware of an existing brand before that particular brand seeks to reach them out. They do not have any knowledge about what the particular brand is, whether their products or services are worth, but they will accept to collaborate with them in the sense of promoting their products or services thereby in return being recompensed. What can be concluded here is that so as to be accepted and communicate the message for the brand clearly to their followers, influences tend to adjust and modify their own identity which later makes their audience thinks that they are living a better life and that they have achieve a higher standard in the society followed by the help of the particular products they are promoting. The identities of those influencers are formed through the interactions with the brands and is mostly known as the postmarxist

model of identity. This is however, a deceiving behavior from the influencers. This is so, as they are misinforming their audience who for instance, believed in their ability. Some individuals might support them by buying the products that has been presented to them by their preferred influencer, because they set out high expectations to it as someone who they usually trust promoted the particular product or service. However, when taking into account the fact that individuals in the society believe to the different contents posted by those particular influencers and are certainly influenced by what they undertake, it is essential to highlight that the influencer community on Instagram more precisely lifestyles and fashion ones directly impacts on their audience identity that is their authentic self. Again, this is also linked to the concept of Postmarxist perspective, where the identities of the audience are formed through their interactions with those influencers. This can be also explain how those individuals tend to interact with the posts of influencers. Such contents posted by the influencer directly influence their viewers.

The creation of beauty ideals by the fashion and lifestyle Influencer community

The lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram generally set beauty ideals. However, this tend to have negative repercussions in peoples' identity, which influence them to their authentic self. In addition to this, there is the western civilization ideal of beauty. It is a particular representation of being the meaning of what it looks like to be beautiful. According to Forbes et al. (2007), it is mainly recognized by being light-skinned, sleek hair, slim or even the body shape and as a matter of fact, nowadays most influencers look like this. They still maintain this ideal of beauty standard and display it to their audience on their Instagram account. Boerman (2020), stated that teenage girls and women are mostly concern regarding this issue that is being easily influenced by the definition of the beauty ideals. This does not mean that men are not influenced, but only a few compared to women and teenage girls. As per Nur Syuhada and Musa (2017), when noticing that they are completely different and do not meet the norms of the ideal beauty when compared to their Instagram idols, they are directly affected. This result to self-esteem issues, depression, weight gain or loss and also feeling frustrated. However, before getting through the stages of mental breakdowns that is self-esteem issues or depression, the followers often undertake and accept changes so as to modify their identity. Such acts can be related to the 'performing the self' concept. They act in a way which influences how a particular audience sees themselves, usually with the intent to create, present and maintain a favourable image in social situation for a particular purpose (Goffman 1959). They go ahead by attempting everything possible to create and modify their

identity by changing their authentic self, their physical appearance in order to fit in this ideal of beauty. As they are about to look for a new sense of self identity, a lot of ideas and influences will be approached from the flood of contents available on several platforms mainly Instagram (Langner 2013). Throughout this process, they are directly transforming their identity without thinking of the consequences that this might bring to their offline identity and community too. A simple example would be the use of several applications for editing their photos before posting them on their page. Such applications help them to hide some imperfections by providing its users with different features such as filters, lightning effects and many more. However, how those individuals distinguish themselves and choose to distinguish themselves on Instagram are seriously impacted by the identity cues they are influenced by. This is mainly the representation of identities in commodified contexts.

Another example would be the promotion of plastic surgeries on such platform. While referencing to plastic surgery and Instagram, one of the most popular influencers that comes to mind and catch our attention is Kylie Jenner. Having 224 million of followers on Instagram, Kylie Jenner alongside her sister Kim, they are well known for the promotion of plastic surgery. Having done breast implants, hips, lip injection etc., they considered it to be a lifestyle for them. Monteverde (2016), stated that within their family, such actions are considered to be normal and that supporting the idea that someone's appearance needs to be improved for them to be accepted. This affects people's identity in the community even if for them it is something which seems to be normal. They considered it to be important to change some of their facets so as to have a better appearance on the media. This might easily influence the self-identification of their fans. In addition to this, one concept that can be linked to such situation is the objectification and hyper sexualization. The idea here is that, in order to gain awareness online, they must objectify themselves and showing off sexy photos as claimed by Drenten et al. (2020). This however, makes their audience believe that it is the only way to become popular and succeed in gaining attention. In other words, it can also be said that they are encouraging people towards the modification of their identity. As Goffman (1959) stated, those influencers usually carry out identity performance through their influential behaviour on their audience. Some followers will be definitely influenced and will tend to follow their favorite influencers. An important note to take into consideration is that the lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram has accompanied their audience to modify their identities in relation to the concepts of self-identification and the postmarxist perspective as explained earlier.

On the whole, it has been argued that the lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram have some pessimistic effects upon their audience. The idea of the collaboration between brands and influencers was persuading their audience as the main aim there was to only market their particular products and services. Afterwards, it was important to shed light on the aspect of beauty ideals which has pushed many people in the society to adjust and modify their identities that is their authentic self, so as to portray another image of them. Moreover, recommendations would be mainly targeted to the lifestyle and fashion Instagram influencer community. For example, influencers under such community should enlighten and notice their audience about their collaboration with different brands, that is in other words, they are promoting some particular products or services for the brand in question. However, this simple explanation would help their audience that is their followers to become fully aware that such contents posted are personal and that there is no other action than business purposes within the contents posted. However, taking advantage of the influencer marketing strategy is a good idea for brands but it is also important for them to maintain their authentic self. Furthermore, while there are only a few influencers who discourage beauty ideals, it would be much better if more and more influencers could join them by encouraging body acceptance and boost the self-confidence of their followers. They should also encourage their audience to keep their authentic self thereby having a positive influence on their self-identification. This will result to the empowerment of their followers and thus discouraging the creation and modification of identities. Despite that this issue is still omnipresent in the society where more people are being influenced by the lifestyle and fashion influencer community on Instagram, it is important for those influencers to take online advocacy into consideration and this will help them to reinforce their authentic persona.

Reference list

Abidin, C. (2021). From “Networked Publics” to “Refracted Publics”: A Companion

Framework for Researching “Below the Radar” Studies. *Social Media + Society*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120984458>

Audrezet, A., Kerviler, G., Guidry Moulard, J. (2018). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of business research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008>

Belanche, D., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Followers’ reactions to influencers’ instagram posts. *Spanish Journal of Marketing*, 24(1), 37-54.
[doi:http://dx.doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1108/SJME-11-2019-0100](http://dx.doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1108/SJME-11-2019-0100)

Boczkowski, P. J., Mitchelstein, E., & Matassi, M. (2018). “News comes across when I’m in a moment of leisure”: Understanding the practices of incidental news consumption on social media. *New Media & Society*, 20(10), 3523–3539.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817750396>

Boerman, S.C. (2020). The effects of the standardized Instagram disclosure for micro- and mesoinfluencers. *Computer in Human Behavior*, 103, 199-207.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.09.015>

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>

Drenten, J., Gurrieri, L., & Tyler, M. (2020). Sexualized labour in digital culture: Instagram influencers, porn chic and the monetization of attention. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(1), 41-66. [https://doi-org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1111/gwao.12354](https://doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1111/gwao.12354)

El Jurdi, H., & Smith, S. (2018). Mirror, mirror: national identity and the pursuit of beauty. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 35(1), 40-50.
<http://dx.doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1108/JCM-11-2016-2001>

- Goffmann, E. (1990). *The presentation of the self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1959)
- Izquierdo-Iranzo, P., & Gallardo-Echenique, E. (2020). Studygrammers: Learning influencers. *Comunicar*, 28(62), 111-121.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.3916/052-2020-10>
- Jin, S.V., Ryu, E., & Muqaddam, A. (2018). Dieting 2.0!: Moderating effects of Instagrammers' body image and Instafame on other Instagrammers' dieting intention. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 87, 224-237.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.06.001>
- Langner, S., Hennigs, N., & Wiedmann, K. (2013). Social persuasion: targeting social identities through social influencers. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(1), 31-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07363761311290821>
- Monteverde, G. (2016). Kardashian komplicity: Performing post-feminist beauty. *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty*, 7(2), 153-172. <https://doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1386/csfb.7.2.153>
- Tassi, P. (2018). Media: From the Contact Economy to the Attention Economy. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 20(3), 49-59.
<https://link.library.curtin.edu.au/gw?url=https://www-proquest-com.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/scholarly-journals/media-contact-economy-attention/docview/2092791898/se-2?accountid=10382>
- Torbarina, M., Jelenc, L., & Brkljačić, I. (2020). Increasing Consumer Engagement on Social Networks: Social Media Influencer's Followers 'Like' to See a Face in a Post. *Trziste = Market*, 32, 67-81.
<http://dx.doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.22598/mt/2020.32.spec-issue.67>

Venus, J. S., & Aziz, M. (2019). Product placement 2.0: “Do Brands Need Influencers, or Do Influencers Need Brands?”. *Journal of Brand Management*, 26(5), 522-537.
<http://dx.doi.org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1057/s41262-019-00151-z>