

Is Being a Social Media Influencer a Sustainable Career?

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Social media influencers (SMI's) are stereotyped to be Gen Z and Millennial individuals who have no interest in serving society through hard work and skills. All they want to do is post pretty pictures of themselves and make money without having to put on a uniform and serve their community. It would be a false statement to say that people like this do not exist. There are plenty of lazy people who spend all their days on the web. However, those who stereotype SMI's know nothing of what the job really entails. Similar to a career in music production or theatre and acting, becoming a successful SMI is not an easy task; it takes hard work, skill, and being in the right place at the right time. Additionally, SMI's are not useless in society; they help shape the minds of listeners by emotionally connecting with them and being a regular part of their lives. They economically benefit society through advertising and selling their sponsors' products. Additionally, the positive habits that an influencer implements into their daily routine will be adapted by their viewers, thus slowly making people healthier, and more confident in their beliefs and body image. Despite the slander SMI's receive, being a social media influencer is a real career in which the influencer positively impacts their viewers' lives, and it can be a path to success for individuals who captivate an audience's hearts and wallets.

The work of influencers follows the social cognitive theory, which is discussed by the four professors who conducted a research study on how digital food marketing impacts children. The purpose of the study is to explain that influencers have the power to change people's minds through their own behavior. Thus, the influencer's work is a valuable resource to the economy. When influencers show others how they achieved their goals, their followers will feel inspired by that individual and confident that they can fulfil the same goals (Jans, Steffi De, et al., page 4). The impact that influencers have on their viewers stems from the relationship between the two parties, and this can have either a negative or positive effect on the viewer. This is because when food in low nutritional value is advertised, young people have difficulties

resisting food marketing attempts on sites such as YouTube and Instagram. That being said, the better an influencer can hide the persuasive tactics in their work, the more likely they will profit from their posts.

Influencers are stereotyped as not wanting to put effort into a job that requires a uniform. They are lazy and they post pictures of themselves looking cute in the gym to make money, so they are seen as useless to society in what they do. These stereotypes should not deter people from recognizing the hours of planning, executing, and editing that goes into videos and posts. Not to mention that these videos can be used to help society. Whether the video is instructions on how to do something or stimulating for one's mind, these videos take time and resources to create. Due to the amount of work that it takes to hide persuasive tactics and sell the products of their sponsors, successful influencers cannot be lazy. Not only do they have to hide their persuasiveness in content that is not cliché, but they also have to compete with other influencers who could have a stronger, more loyal fan base. An example of this is how influencers will have advertisements embedded into their selfies because "certain products and services require more work on the part of the influencer" (Abidin, Crystal, page 6). A post such as this could be a picture of their work desk with links to buy any of the products the viewers find visually appealing, and the same goes with makeup or jewelry.

An influencer must be good at what they do in order to be successful. This makes becoming an influencer a bad career choice for those who do not have a special skill that will make them stand out against their competition. This is not the case, take the average influencer who plays video games as an example: influencers who are charismatic but are not good at the game they play can still be successful influencers. The goal of being a successful influencer is to have a large fan base and sponsors, so they have the money to keep making content. Organizations and individuals, the sponsors, usually contact influencers to pass information because these individuals already have followership, so it is often easier for them than it is for the average

news site to reach the public. (Mike, John. "Is Being a Social Media Influencer a Real Career?"). If the gaming influencer is not competing for the championship title of some gaming tournament, then who cares if they are good? The audience expects entertainment, and if watching gaming fails is funny and makes the influencer money, then being a mediocre level gaming influencer is a great job option. People will often choose to make content in addition to another job they do because reaching out to the public with one's interests and getting positive results back can be a rewarding experience for both parties.

The overuse of social media in young adults can often come from a fear of missing out (also known as FOMO), and the role that SMI's play in posting regularly for their followers counters the argument that being an SMI has no purpose to society as a job. SMI related activities help people get out of that fear by talking about recent news, following what's trendy in pop culture, and making connections with viewers by responding to their comments and participating in question-and-answer sessions about themselves. An expression talked about in some Communication courses is the concept of "media friends". These friends can be anyone, but they are more often media celebrities; it is a friendship where the viewer knows the media star, but the media star is not able to know all their followers on a friend-based level. SMIs gratify various psychological needs, including informational needs, social needs, and selfactualization needs.

Similar to motivation from a friend, more interaction with SMI's content increases the motivation to improve oneself, thus having a positive effect on various aspects of life, including health, fashion, and leisure. (Lee, Jung Ah, et al, page 10). An argument to this would be that young people are spending too much time on social media and should make real friends instead of media friends. That is not the current world; media friends are able to give viewers what many real-life friends cannot match. It is perfectly okay for one to have both in person friends

and media friends, and this is because the concept of media friends helps companies make money.

Social media influencers must maintain some professionalism if they are to make money, the same way someone in a marketing or sales position for a company would sell products to clients. It is a job that requires one to be personable with their viewers and persuasive in getting their viewers to make money. Unknowingly, viewers make the influencer and the platform they use money by watching their videos and ads. Initially, a successful influencer does not use many ads because they want to gain their viewers' trust. This is so when they produce ads they can be seen as more credible because they are advertising something they use and enjoy rather than doing an ad for just the money from the sponsor (Lou, Chen, page 3). Additionally, if the SMI becomes increasingly successful, they will sell merchandise with their logo on wares such as sweatshirts and hats, or their viewers will want to copy what decorations and products the influencer has in their home from the sponsors. The money from viewers and sponsors benefits the influencer as much as it does the general economy and platforms such as YouTube and Tik Tok. For example, travel influencers use this money to go to the places where they will document their lives for their viewers (Stoldt, Ryan, page 2). These contractual relationships between SMI's and marketing organizations are what allow influencers to travel who would not have the money otherwise. This makes success in the influencer career much more competitive compared to more run of the mill careers.

The job of being a social media influencer is not only a coveted position in the media's workforce; it benefits the community in ways that other jobs cannot. This is because social media influencers can be an emotional and educational part of their viewers' everyday lives, and thus can change their viewers' minds on topics to improve the mental and physical health in their own lives. They do this with skills in their own hobbies and interests, along with the knowledge of the tools needed to craft exciting, creative content. The job benefits the economy

the same way the average marketing job would: through the credible advertisement of products the influencer uses in their daily life. While one may not be solely a social media influencer for more than a few years, the job leads to many opportunities of what one could do for a future career. If one has a passion for a hobby and a desire to connect with others who enjoy that hobby, then they should consider pursuing being a social media influencer for a job. They just may change someone's life for the better.

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