

41063-MOS-83

Date: / /20

M T W T F S

ENGLISH ESSAY

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS: INSPIRATION OR DIGITAL DECEPTION?

OUTLINE:

1- INTRODUCTION

Thesis statement: Although the social media influencers are celebrated as a voice for social change, a deeper analysis reveals that the whole system is designed on deception and rewards fueling consumerism.

2- EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS NEW OPINION MAKER

3- COUNTER PRESPECTIVE : SOCIAL MEDIA: A SOURCE OF EMPOWERMENT AND INSPIRATION

3.1 FAME AND OPPORTUNITY
for the ordinary people.
(Rise of village YouTubers in Pakistan)

3.2 Informative and educational content

(MIT Open Courseware, Khan Academy, etc.)

3.3 Social Awareness and Digital Activism.

(Teacher Usman working for tree plantation and water harvesting using Youtube income)

3.4 Economic Growth and Digital Ecommerce

(Growth of organic influencers based advertisement, reviews industry)

4. INFLUENCERS : THE AGENTS OF DIGITAL DECEPTION

4.1 Commercialization for a Price.

(Stars Promoting il-legal housing schemes).

4.2 Illusion of Perfection and

Unrealistic lifestyle.

(Rajab Butt, Nadim Haniwala Promoting unrealistic luxurious lifestyle by family dressing)

4.3 Promoting il-legal business and betting for Personal gains

(Ducky Bhai Promoting and earning from binary options trading apps)

4.4 Promoting anti-state agenda

(Adil Raja continuously Promoting anti-state agenda from outside the country)

4.5 Spread of mis information

(Influencers Promoting medicines and oils for Pain relief with no medical background)

4.6 Fueling Hyper consumerism

(Influencers led rise of brands, cars, mobiles e.t.c.)

4.7 Algorithms rewarding sensationalization and twisting for virality.

(Influencers Preferring sensationalization, weapon display, security guards and chasing trend culture to stay viral rather than Preferring authenticity.

5. CONCLUSION

①

Date / / 20

Page

In the twenty first century the influencers do not just are Produced in Parlment, newsrooms or necessarily have a rich background but they are digitally manufactured by algorithms based on engagement, views, likes and ability to retain viewers.

This has transformed the whole Power dynamics of Print and cable media, industrialists, Politicians and every strategist who want a Piece of Public attention.

This has given a way for wars on narrative and counter narratives online where, now, marginalized communities also have a chance to be heard and a common Person has a chance to turn into an influencer. Yet, beneath this narrative of empowerment lies a carefully created social space controlled by algorithms. This space offers

little to no incentive for promoting what goes against those behind veils. The truth is over shadowed by the excessive Paid Promotions, lies, Propaganda and often by digital Prosecution by shadow banning or banning the accounts altogether. In this space, only those influencers are rewarded who wish to be loyal to the system and a part of the carefully created deception.

Social media has created new opinion makers and its Power can not be denied. Its living Proof is that same Print media outlets and TV channels who first used to undermine social media and used to call 'Social media analyst' as a derogatory remark for their Panelists today have

a whole social media department and dedicated teams. Many other social media observers and dedicated channels have emerged such as TCM originals, Nugta and Raftaar etc. It all points to the fact that social media has become a part of power corridor and new opinion making.

Social media influencers are also doing good work and social media, as a tool used correctly, has been a source of empowerment. Mubashir Siddiqi a chef running a Youtube channel with 4 million+ subscribers is probably earning many folds more than a chef in a 5 star hotel in Pakistan. Sheraz, a village boy from Gilgit Baltistan was able to change not only his life but also opened a school in his village due to social media.

People are able to upskill and learn new courses by social media courses and teachers.

Universities such as MIT, Harvard etc have made their courses free on social media. Social media

raised a strong voice against Israeli brutality in Palestine and mobilized one of the strongest protests against Israel in Europe. Environmentalists like

teacher Usman are promoting environment friendly lifestyle and raising awareness regarding environment disasters about to unfold. He is using his social media fame to promote water harvesting projects and collaborating with different organizations, using his Youtube income, to fund for such projects.

Similarly, social media has given rise to influencers and life coaches who promote healthier and financially

stable lives. Lastly, digital ecommerce has become easier where people are promoting their talents and products using social media and are able to earn respectable income from home. It has promoted economic growth and women participation in the workforce.

Despite the above arguments, that show social media influencers to be filled with zest and inspiration, the reality of the influencers space is dark and filled with controversies. The influencers' whole life is up for commercialization and has a value. What they wear, what they use and what they show can all be carefully planted promotion which the people and their fans might not even realize. Influencers get the things for

free and even charge money for product placement so the fans can't distinguish between the genuineness and promotion.

The influencers will be seen promoting poor investment options with poor returns such as housing societies and plots, which are dead asset essentially. Secondly, family vlogging influencers promotes a so called perfect life deception which is not only fake but also a major source of depression and promotes feelings of unfulfillment in their viewers and fans.

The influencers earn by promoting unhappiness in people and to ease that feeling, the people come back to view their carefully curated and scripted fake life. Some such influencers include Ragab Butt and Nadim Naniwala who use their families to create the deception of

success and Perfection do gain fame and thrive by Promoting the misery. Thirdly, when money is the objective then the influencers will do any thing to gain it even if it's illegal or harmful for the viewers. The influencers have been seen Promoting legal but harmful and bad financial Products but many will go ahead and Promote illegal apps that include affiliate marketing, crypto, future trading and binary trading scam apps based outside the country where the influencer get commission on every signup and a cut on every loss people makes because of them. One such case was of Ducky Bhai who was caught earning hundred of millions by Promoting a binary trading app (which is a betting app with just overview of trading). The case was highlighted but more work on constructing consumer Protection laws

Date: ___/___/20___

M T W T F S S

is needed to save common people from such scams. Furthermore, social media came into hot waters due to the anti-state Propaganda being done by certain influencers and social media teams sitting outside the country, being sponsored by Pakistan's enemies. Adil Raja is one such individual who is spewing baseless venom against Pakistani state and state agencies while sitting outside Pakistan. These influencers brainwash the youth against the state to fulfill their agenda and no direct mechanism is out there to make them accountable. This leads to terrorism, depression and a sense of unfulfillment in the youth which make them an easy ~~to~~ target for recruitment by terror organizations and anti-state elements. In addition to that, the influencers have been seen

Promoting misinformation due to their limited knowledge. Influencers are masters in their fields or niche but when they start promoting products unrelated to their background, they often spread misinformation. There are influencers promoting medical products such as herbal oils for pain relief, moringa powder or magnesium tablets to general public and suggesting it to every individual which is neither proven medically nor recommended. Such products with unproven manufacturers are promoted which causes a stress on people's financial life with causing no benefits medically. This should be tried under false marketing. Moreover, the deception of influencers is promoting consumerism and marketing products. Now a days, there is hardly a single video without paid sponsors and an influencer promoting or trying

to sell something with Promise of a better lifestyle. The whole deception of luxury and success they have created around them with the help of free sponsored lifestyle is so that they can increase the sales of companies sponsoring their life.

There has been a recent upsurge in consumerism, brands, phones, new cars and eateries in the previous decade and the influencers had a major role in spreading that unhealthy lifestyle.

The companies reward the influencers for all their deception and hardwork they do in increasing their benefactors' sales. Lastly, the algorithm promotes sensationalization and virality over authenticity and quality. Sadly, people enmasses have trained the algorithm but this has poorly affected the quality of videos and the

quality of influencers being promoted to the masses. This creates an unbreakable chain of rewarding mediocrity and pushing poorly crafted content and trends due to which the better influencers also become part of the herd by promoting all the bads of social media to get rewarded.

Social media influencers are the performers of digital age. The promise authenticity while promoting paid products, advocate reliability while doing self promotion, demands respect while telling lies and selling deception. Social media goods can't be ignored and it has changed lives of millions but when an ecosystem is analysed, it is analysed as a whole and not selectively. As a whole, the social media ecosystem

is broken. It promotes sensationalism, consumerism, illegal practices and overall promotes unhealthy lifestyle with little to no grip from the law. The influencers don't have to be perfect and thus it is not right to expect them of perfection or to uncritically ~~eat~~ admired or entirely dismissed. They should be rigorously questioned and self-research should be done in making and personal decision rather than relying on a stranger on screen. The overall evidence suggest that the digital deception is not an accident but a baseline of social media influencers economy where unreal lifestyles, self promotions, branding, campaigns, misinformation and hidden advertising ~~are~~ rewarded and it will continue to be so until the strong regulatory framework is enacted with regulatory framework and collective social insight over the happenings to tilt the balance in favour of inspiration over illusion.