

The Effect of Influencers on High School Students

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Abstract: The rise and thriving of the anchor industry introduced the concept of “influencers” to society. As the main group of people engaging in the online world, students in high school have become the main audience of the influencers. However, with this industry developing rapidly, different voices appeared, criticizing the negative impacts of the influencers on teenagers, causing conflicts or even family tension. Hence, this essay focuses on the question of what are the effects of influencers on high school students. This problem is related to the underlying reason for this argument, as most parents take the impacts as extremely negative. From previous essays, it can be seen that influencers are promoting consumers in purchasing, while more data focusing on teenagers themselves should be done. In the research, thirty-two teenagers studying in high schools were interviewed. Through analyzing the data, the result is influencers do have impressive impacts on high school teenagers, however, most of these impacts are positive and encouraging.

Keywords: social media, anchor, influencer, high school teenager

1. Introduction

With the development of human civilization and the level of technology, social media thrived. Naturally, a new industry in the digital world, the anchor industry, also rose and gradually became common in people’s lives. This industry created a new phrase, the “social media influencers,” referring to those who post their digital content on the internet through several different methods and on different platforms, then gain likes, comments, and so on [1]. Being the mainstream surfing online, teenagers, especially those still studying in high school, are the main audience that is mainly getting in touch with the influencers, so automatically, high school teenagers might be affected by the influencers, no matter positively or negatively. However, in recent years, there have been some different voices toward this relatively new industry. Parents are complaining that their children are watching videos, articles, or listening to radios posted by influencers too much. Worrying that their children would be addicted to them while this seems to be a “waste of time” for the parents, automatically, it is discouraged for high school teenagers for there are too many negative effects on them.

This conflict is common among young families nowadays. Parents and their children have different points of view of following the influencers, which causes them to argue about the degree to which they should accept influencers. Considering the underlying reason and the main difference is the effect of influencers on teenagers, the research question of this essay is the effect of influencers on high school students. This research question offers information about the effect of influencers on

teenagers themselves, specifically on their personal feelings and their behavior changes, which can help with providing more people the more accurate opinions and phenomena instead of possible results getting through reasoning from data in theory. In previous research, it has been discovered that influencers create close relationships with consumers, and this promotes them to be more willing to purchase products [2]. However, previous research was hardly focused on the personal experiences that influencers brought on teenagers themselves, but more considered the influence on the whole society and how it is affecting the society working as a group. In order to know better about the effect on high school students, it should focus more on the social group of high school teenagers themselves, so that it can be easier to conclude and analyze the unimaginable experience that influencers bring to the students.

2. The Effect the Influencer Pose on High School Students

The samples of this research are teenagers studying in high school. In this research, thirty-four people were interviewed. Among these thirty-four people, striking off who had already graduated from high school and who had not been to high school, the final adequate sample size is thirty-two. In the survey, only 3.13% of participants stated that they had never heard about influencers, while 15.63% had only heard about the influencers, and 81.25% of them not only knew the concept but also understood at least a bit about this occupation or industry, who dominate the crowd. This result clearly shows that influencers held a significant part of the high school student' lives. Hence, it may be assumed that they could had an impact on these teenagers' lives.

2.1. Increasing Desire to Buy

From 2015 to 2017, the anchor industry thrived gradually, and their existence soon became common among people getting in touch with the internet. Before, these anchors were only sharing their thoughts, lives, or so on on the internet, gaining a huge amount of attention. Since this way was impressively attractive to the crowd, the popularity that the anchor industry created was soon aware of the fine method of advertising by the entrepreneurs [3]. This awareness led to a new wave of influencers cooperating with the producers, recommending those products to their fans. As compensation, the influencers usually receive free products or directly receive money [4]. Besides, to develop the anchor industry itself, the social media flats that support the influencers to have streams gradually came up with the function "giving reward", allowing audiences and fans to pay the streamers directly. These phenomenons of the influencers advertising, contributing to the commerce, and giving an entrance for everyone to donate their money to anchors, had an effect on teenagers' consumption, who are the main audiences of the anchor industry.

According to the author's survey, the influencers had an impact on around 60% of the participants. To those whose shopping behavior, habits, and preferences have been changed by the influencers, there are mainly two categories. About 20% claim that they are willing to buy almost everything that the anchors they followed commanded, or in another situation, they want to purchase the same products that those celebrities are also using. The rest 40%, differing from the 20%, said that they are not consuming everything that the influencers would buy. Rather than pursuing access to the influencers themselves, they prefer to deliberate and consider the practicability of certain products. As a result of succeeding advertisements, the quantity demanded by consumers increased because of the exposure brought by famous people. Another kind of consumption, the donation toward anchors, is also a common behavior of spending money. However, the rate of teenage audiences willing to donate to them is not high. When viewing their streams or videos uploaded, only 42.31% of the interviewees chose to donate money. There are extreme examples received in this questionnaire, of juveniles donating over \$1000 to anchors or even more. Nevertheless, the quantity donated is a little

polarized, as 37% had donated greater than \$1000 accumulatively, meanwhile, 37% had only donated less than \$20. It can be analyzed that donating to anchors is not the main trend for high school teenagers to consume on influencers.

The main effects of buying products that anchors recommended to consumers are mainly dominated by the reputations of influencers. Through the introduction by the anchors, the consumers are able to attain the most positive pieces of information easily, and their reputations help with building consumer trust toward sellers [5]. The good reputations of the celebrities online transmitted the potential information of “this product and the producer are trustworthy”, making the consumers concentrate more on the celebrities themselves rather than the products [6]. This is a reliable marketing strategy, as the desire of teenagers to purchase was promoted and at least 60% of their shopping behaviors are affected by this information they receive subconsciously.

The result of this effect is not as negative as a part of the parents claimed. One direct benefit of this is that this relatively new industry encourages consumption, which even stimulates domestic demand to a certain extent. To teenagers engaging in this themselves, they were having positive responses as purchasing with a guide of influencers helps them to screen out quality merchandise, and even buying peripheral products of their adored influencers provides them in a better mood that nothing else can offer.

2.2. Abundant Entertainment Ways

Clearly, it is pretty much reasonable that watching those videos, streaming, or even just listening to the radio are all popular methods for high school students to relax, primarily for amusement. As for the pieces of information that the audiences may receive from the outcome of influencers' works, they could be divided into three kinds, educational, selling, and entertaining. Most teens, suffering from the stress of studying and competing, will not look for more courses online on their own initiative, which infers the main function of the anchor industry to the teenage audiences is to offer them variable and abundant entertainment life.

As the result of the survey shows, viewing videos online, watching live, or listening on the radio accounted for 48% of the respondents' entertainment life on average. This is a relatively high rate that almost reaches half of the entertainment of the interviewees and stands out from many other kinds of amusements.

As for responding to the question of leading entertainment before the thrive of anchors, 42% of the participants gave different answers, including reading, video games, variety etcetera, altogether over ten kinds of entertainment. For the rest 58%, they all kept watching anchors even before they became popular or just forgot about what they had been doing before the anchor industry appeared in their lives. All these two interview questions' indicate one situation: Influencers have already become an important part of contemporary youths' entertainment life, even an integral part for most people.

Many influencers themselves, are skilled in making interesting and attractive videos that do not require much thinking, so they create a space for high school students to have fun without pondering like they always do during school days. After this, even for some content they make that contains advanced knowledge, the audience is still willing to spend time on them because they know well enough that this content must be fun. In this situation, those profound contents are only having a positive effect on building the image of a “clever role model” to the audiences. So after rounds of filtering, the influencers left on the platforms are those who can keep the audience's attention on them with their high-quality content. These finest influencers are able to provide teenagers in high school with the entertainment they need. To some teens being interviewed, the entertainment that the influencers bring to them is spiritual support. An anchor can be seen as a role model, a beloved one, or anything they want that could comfort them. This is giving youth the opportunity to release themselves from pressure.

2.3. Effect on Teenagers' Values and Standpoints

As in the beginning, anchors are who share their ideas, opinions, and statements on social platforms [3], it is easy for these public characters to expose their characteristics, and show their values, or even attitudes and standpoints toward social problems. Hearing these sounds, even for those who do not know about the concept of "influencer", the anchors' viewpoints are everywhere on the internet, so the teenagers' mode of thinking could be readily affected.

In order to discuss the specific impact on high school students' values and standpoints of anchors, the author designed two questions for all thirty-two participants to answer according to the truth. As a result, over 80% of the participants admitted that their standpoints would be affected by the influencers' speeches. Among these people, slightly more than half of these people think that they could judge all those contents according to their own formed values, but there are not a few people still claiming that ever since they were so young their values were not built, they began to notice the voices online, so they suppose they were strongly affected by those influencers. However, when considering the question "If you come across an anchor who makes statements you do not agree with, but many of their fans agree, what might you do", only less than a half selected to think carefully about and weigh both ideas, then keep what they think is more correct. The rest 60%, rather than choosing whether they would be affected by this different point of view from the influencer and their huge amount of fans, decided that they would either point out their own statement in the comment or just leave it alone and pretend they had not seen a different idea.

Combining the data of both questions, it can be told that the voices of these although in the second question, the rate of being affected is not the majority, as public figures, the anchors' voices can be heard easily by the masses, and correspondently, having a non-negligible impact on the high school students, whose values were just built.

Anchors, or influencers, are the ones attempting to attract others' attention on the internet, leading to the high exposure of the influencers' everything that they exhibit online. Reasonably, their arguments on the internet can attract more people to notice. Also, the interaction between anchors and fans is causing the "follower-influencer experience" [7]. As this experience affects, most of the time the audience subconsciously chooses to agree with the influencers, unless the mistakes they make are outrageous. Especially for the youth in high school. They had just grown up, building their own value of right and wrong, and mostly had not heard so many different voices on one problem. This makes it easy for the statements to guide the high school students and have a strong effect on their thinking.

It cannot be decided whether it has a more positive or negative effect on the teens. For sure, hearing too many different voices can get the students confused, or even worse, accidentally receive information related to violence and so on. But on the side of cultivating critical thinking, this massive amount of arguments could help teenagers to doubt what they learned, rather than blindly accept it.

3. Discussion

Creating a "word-through-mouth marketing" strategy, making full use of the influencers' reputations, and focusing on the effects of oral communication effectively promoted the consumers to purchase through anchors [8]. Under this successful marketing strategy, high school teenagers, having a certain ability to distribute their properties, are also part of those whose buying behavior has been affected by the anchors. Not only by offering a new entrance and avenue to get in touch with different kinds of products and get a deeper knowledge of the market but also by marketing the influencer's popularity or even the teens' adoration for them. The formation of this "internet celebrity economy" mode is contributing to the whole economic growth internationally, and leading the development of industries [9].

Through the interview, it had been received some reflections about their current situation “It feels like an endless nightmare, repeating the same actions, studying and dealing with my social relationships every day, but I cannot wake up.” Indeed, adolescents experience both normative stress, referring to those brought on by their academy, schools, and so on, and non-normative stress, containing social relationships, conflicts among families, etcetera [10, 11]. As this common stress on high school students increases gradually, their entertainment plays an important role in protecting their mental health. *I once was the apron and about to jump, when I saw the team I followed uploaded a new video. I don't know why, but I got down, finished watching the video, and went back to sleep.* Combining the conclusion from the effect of influencers on teenagers' entertainment, it can be seen that influencers are having great positive guiding to high school students that they might even be saving lives unconsciously. Thus it is inferring the importance of influencers to not a few of adolescents who suffer from mental pressure or diseases. Through the observation of some anchors themselves online, it can be summarized that their main goal is to share their interesting “trivia” and spread happiness to the crowd. Considering all these facts, influencers are creating spiritual values for teenagers in high school.

Because of these reasons, the anchor industry should be supported and attain development since it is necessary for youth. While participants in the survey claimed that their elders in their families still insist on the idea of an “influencer is not a serious job,” and hold biased opinions against them. This is leading to attack and abuse of people engaging in this occupation, which is avoidable. So for teenagers who are still not grown-ups and have to be supervised by their guardians, there might be troubles, like parent-child conflicts, because of their need to follow influencers. The core of this discriminative idea is due to the uncertainty of their income, almost like every star and other public figure, audiences might never know how their income is calculated. To reduce discrimination, it can be published of their actual, whole working content and the way they earn income like every other common job does. This may increase the acceptance of the elders to this relatively new occupation, and be beneficial to the teens.

This research mainly analyzed thirty-two samples, more specifically focussing on the particular ideas of people, this research provides qualitative data rather than quantitative data. Therefore, to get a bigger picture of the more general thinking of most teenagers, more students should be interviewed.

4. Conclusion

In this research, there are three main results: influencers increase the teenagers' desire to buy; influencers offer high school teens new avenues to release their stress and look for spiritual comfort; the speeches of influencers are having, and already had impacts on teenagers' value building.

According to the interview, the successful marketing strategy of getting advantages from the influencers' reputations is increasing the consumption rate of teenagers in high school was promoted to increase to a certain degree. It can be seen that the way teenagers distribute their property has been affected by the existence of anchors, and their consumption was promoted.

And being a public figure, the explosion of the influencers' speeches has more explosion than common people. This is leading to their ideas affecting the teenage audiences, whose values of right and wrong were just built. So what the anchors say, is going to change what some of the teenagers think, and move their standpoint.

As most of the interviewees reflected, watching influencers has become an essential part of their entertainment lives, it is having a positive effect on their mental health as those contents can bring them happiness without requiring thinking hard to understand. Even some influencers who are studying real psychological knowledge can affect the teens' mental health more directly. However, not all the elders, being those teens' guardians, can accept this new and mysterious thriving industry, causing trouble to the adolescents who need the funny content of influencers as their spiritual support.

To reduce this problem, influencers' working content and their main income can be revealed to reduce the sense of the unknown, and as this occupation becomes common to the crowd, the acceptance level could increase.

In future research, more quantitative surveys could be done to reduce the subjectiveness of the result. The reason why teenagers adore influencers' content discussed in this paper is considered to be deep but not general, so more quantitative information would help with receiving a more average answer.

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