



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the ethical challenges in influencer marketing, including potential societal and individual consequences of unethical practices. (150 Words)

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Approach

- Begin your answer by defining influencer marketing.
- Discuss ethical challenges associated with Influencer marketing. Also, discuss the potential societal and individual consequences of unethical practices.
- You can conclude the answer with a personal opinion.

Introduction

Influencer marketing is a **form of digital marketing that involves collaborating with social media personalities** who have a large and engaged following to promote a brand, product, or service. Influencer marketing has become an integral part of many brands' marketing strategies, allowing them to reach their target audience authentically and effectively.

Body

Influencer marketing also poses some ethical challenges which are:

- **Transparency in sponsored content:** Lack of transparency in disclosing sponsored content, leading to trust erosion, and potential violation of consumer rights due to non-compliance with labeling guidelines like #ad, #sponsored, #collab, or #partnership set by Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI).
- **Authenticity and trust:** In influencer marketing, authenticity and trust are vital. Influencers should partner with brands that match their values, avoid promoting products they don't believe in, and have creative freedom. Brands should respect influencers, build lasting relationships, and avoid unethical demands.
- **Intellectual property rights:** Another ethical challenge in influencer marketing involves respecting intellectual property rights. Influencers and brands must avoid copying or using others' content without permission or proper credit, including copyrighted material like music, images, or videos, to prevent legal issues.
- **Data privacy:** In influencer marketing, a key ethical concern is safeguarding data privacy. Influencers and brands must respect consent, refraining from sharing personal information without permission and using data only as agreed upon. Compliance with data protection laws is essential.

The potential societal and individual consequences of unethical practices in influencer marketing:

- **Societal consequences:**
 - Misinforming or misleading consumers about products or services may affect their health, safety, or well-being.
 - It can encourage harmful lifestyles, especially among vulnerable individuals, can lead to

negative consequences like addiction and eating disorders.

- It can undermine trust in digital media, making it hard for consumers to distinguish between truthful and misleading content.
- It can normalize dishonesty, harming not just consumers but also society's integrity.
- It can create unfair competition and market distortion among brands and influencers.

▪ **Individual consequences:**

- Unethical behavior can harm one's reputation and credibility, making it hard to regain trust.
- Violating laws or regulations can lead to fines, penalties, or even imprisonment.
 - Influencers can be penalized for misleading advertising under the Consumer Protection Act, of 2019.
- Unethical actions can strain relationships with brands and peers, limiting career opportunities.
- Guilt, remorse, and loss of self-esteem can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Conclusion

Influencer marketing is a robust digital strategy benefiting brands and influencers when conducted ethically. However, it raises ethical issues that require attention from all involved parties. To ensure ethical influencer marketing, the Central Consumer Protection Authority has notified the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements , 2022. By adhering to ethical guidelines and industry best practices, brands and influencers can ensure regulatory compliance, cultivate consumer trust, and achieve successful influencer marketing campaigns.

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