



Article

A Matter of Style: Community Building between Seduction and Indirect Communication

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Abstract: Diverging from studies that categorize influencers solely as advertising figures subject to interpretation within marketing frameworks, this research employs an extensive netnography to examine influencers through the lens of cultural production theory. It views them as creators and creative individuals who adeptly cultivate communities around themselves using communicative techniques akin to literary narration. On digital platforms, social connections are reshaped into a seductive game, unfolding on both aesthetic and communicative planes. This process yields influence indirectly, gradually reshaping the community imaginary, over time. Users become immersed in a realm of objects, each bearing the distinctive mark of the influencer who has imbued them with their unique style, “like that of the potter cradling a clay cup”. Influencers’ ability to invent and inhabit digital platforms effectively positions them as key figures in shaping the dynamics of these new environments.

Keywords: influencer; creator; community imaginary; influence; platform; seduction; style

1. Ethnography of Netnography: The Predicament of Netnographic Analysis

This article centers on research focused on the influencer phenomenon. In this section, we address several problematic elements encountered during field observation and the establishment of the research corpus, presenting methodological insights gleaned from these experiences.

Our survey adhered to the methodology outlined by Robert Kozinets (2010) in his studies on netnography. Specifically, we concentrated on the realms of fashion, food, and technology, as these were areas in which our research team possessed considerable expertise and had been monitoring certain figures within the Italian media landscape for some time. As Kozinets elucidates, “the essence of netnography—what distinguishes it from mere online data collection and qualitative coding—is its participatory approach to studying online cultures and communities” (Kozinets 2010, p. 74). Therefore, digital ethnography necessitates familiarity with the social and symbolic realms under investigation, rather than a detached stance from the community being studied.

In our case, where direct contact with the community was absent, the concept of participatory research did not stem from a desire for acceptance, but rather from a need for nuanced observation. The abundance of cases and data in digital contexts requires researchers to select exemplars that epitomize the phenomenon under scrutiny, necessitating a keen understanding of the research domain. According to Kozinets, “entering” a digital environment demands prior acquaintance with it, acquired not solely through scholarly literature but through personal engagement with the subject matter. This approach facilitates the identification of suitable methodologies tailored to the specificities of digital cultures, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. Pre-existing familiarity with environments provides researchers with access keys for detailed observation, stemming from accumulated experience. Thus, netnography demands researchers transform into active observers capable of discerning pertinent fragments to construct a cohesive understanding. However, this



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mosaic of observations comprises exogenous elements that may mislead researchers. The formulation of research questions must, therefore, arise from casual, disinterested observation, embedded within the lived experiences of the researcher within the community. Amidst the familiar signs, researchers must focus on the exceptional elements that disrupt continuity rather than the comfortable ones. While identifying significant elements often occurs serendipitously, recognizing predictive or explanatory clues is vital. The importance of this methodological approach is further underscored by the evolution of the digital sphere, with its unique capabilities and functionalities. In a landscape where participatory culture, a cornerstone of 'convergent culture' (Jenkins 2006), shapes the experiential landscape, researchers cannot afford to adopt an approach divorced from the medium itself. More than ever before, a symbiotic relationship between the researcher and the object of analysis is imperative, transcending mere instrumental methodologies. Netnographic research, therefore, demands prolonged engagement, continual revisits to the subject of study, and an unwavering commitment to adapt to its ever-changing dynamics.

Additionally, adopting the role of a meticulous observer allowed us to perceive online platforms as narratives. Influencers, through their communicative techniques, weave ordinary life into narrative fragments, blurring the lines between life and storytelling. The researcher must undertake a significant methodological shift, a "fatal strategy" (Baudrillard 1990) aligning with the object of study to establish a correspondence with the system of objects they inhabit, fostering a dense network of connections. Drawing on Timothy Morton's concept of entities embedded within an 'interobjective' mesh, our research positioned the researcher as a node within a network of interobjectivity, encompassing influencers, followers, and pre-literary apparatuses. "Meshes are potent metaphors", Morton writes, "for the strange interconnectedness of things, an interconnectedness that does not allow for perfect, lossless transmission of information, but is instead full of gaps and absences" (Morton 2013, p. 83), this perspective highlights not only the connections but also the gaps within this dense web, revealing cultural processes. In the digital platform's aesthetic and social system, randomness supplants causality for the researcher. Another challenge encountered in our research, particularly in its initial stages, was the absence of a suitable sociological lexicon to critically interpret the influencer phenomenon. The social sciences seemed to appropriate marketing-centric concepts, limiting the analytical scope. Language, inherently non-neutral, constructs the field of investigation, shaping research questions accordingly. Initially, we attempted to compartmentalize the digital sphere akin to separate fields, mirroring a marketing perspective. However, we discovered that viewing influencers as 'creators' revealed significant consistencies across fields. Such compartmentalization reflects the marketing viewpoint, while the segmentation of the public—as Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) have already explained—is an artifact of the cultural industry, facilitating content categorization to saturate the cultural market. To transcend this marketing-oriented language, we pursued an alternative approach guided by Giorgio Agamben's gnoseological insight, "only in the burning house does the fundamental architectural problem become visible" (Agamben 2020, p. 11). Emphasizing the necessity of returning to the "essence of phenomena", Agamben's metaphor of the burning house underscores the importance of delving into the core of existence, transcending superficial interpretations. Agamben's intent is to operationalize the dichotomy between the alchemist and the chemist, as delineated by Walter Benjamin in his essay *Goethe's Elective Affinities* (Benjamin 1996). In Benjamin's view, the chemist studies only wood and ash, while the alchemist recognizes the hidden truth within the flame. It is this elusive truth that social investigation must strive to uncover, fostering critique rather than mere commentary on the "light ashes of experience and the heavy strains of the past" (Benjamin 1996). Our research represents an initial endeavor to explore the multifaceted influencer phenomenon within the framework of cultural history and theory.

2. Unveiling the Dynamics of Digital Influence: A Case Study

This study aims to delineate key characteristics of digital influence by presenting findings from a research project conducted as part of a multi-year ethnographic endeavor. Our investigation delves into the mechanisms underlying influencers and social media, challenging the terminological and epistemological frameworks commonly used to describe these phenomena across everyday, journalistic, and scholarly contexts.

A covert digital ethnography was conducted from March 2020 to May 2021, focusing on the operations of platforms, particularly YouTube and Instagram, and the practices of users within these spaces. This entailed extensive online immersion, selectively following posts and, in the case of Instagram, stories, to elucidate the social dynamics within communities. We documented trending and viral activities through field notes, including written observations, screenshots, and downloads. Additionally, our research involved frequent and intensive periods of observation, notably during Instagram live streams.

The analysis of three micro-influencers, selected from a larger corpus for their cross-activity, and two mega-influencers, chosen to verify potential alterations in communication techniques, revealed that community engagement primarily occurs through horizontal communication via stories. Meanwhile, vertical communication through feeds caters to a broader audience, including casual visitors to the page. This duality of communication is inherent in digital environments. Drawing from Patrice Flichy's (2010) study on contemporary amateurs, we conceptualize the blog as an "ex-time space"—an 'ex-timate space' where authors address both familiar users, such as family and friends, and strangers, given the potentially boundless nature of online platforms like blogs.

Instagram's introduction of stories in 2016 marked a significant shift in user expression, offering two distinct modes of interacting with their community—"ephemerality is a significant shift since previous understandings of social media positioned permanence of communication as one of their defining features" (Leaver et al. 2020, p. 30). The key differentiator between these communication channels is time: stories are structured around the principle of limits, while the feed adheres to a principle of solid identity. Community time, rather than being linear or circular, takes on a rhizomatic quality, continually modified by individual members and their myriad connections. This non-linear process unfolds through events that reshape time, with each event dictating its own temporal flow.

Stories on Instagram have a finite lifespan, rapidly approaching their conclusion only to be perpetually extended by subsequent fragments, creating an illusion of endless continuity. The repetition of fragments fills each absence with the promise of presence, forming a relational chain that envelops community members. This new conception of time diverges from the metamorphosis seen in cinematic time Morin (2005), characterized by rhythmic accelerations through montage. Instead, Instagram stories evoke a sense of temporal expansion, drawing viewers into a parallel reality where community members find belonging.

Despite their appearance as on-demand, serialized fragments, stories impose a 24 h deadline, fostering almost simultaneous collective participation. This communal time, spanning multiple communities, integrates into daily life, redefining institutional time norms such as school, work, and family. It represents an informal temporality, uniting the totem and its tribe in a world defined by its unique temporal rhythm.

The addictive allure of stories lies in their perpetual cycle of dissolution and recreation, with community members bound by an insatiable appetite for consumption. This continuous cycle, punctuated by subtle variations, perpetuates the pleasure of engagement, transforming it into a necessity. The aesthetic of stories, offering glimpses into users' daily lives, solidifies community bonds by providing exclusive content accessible only through consistent participation.

In the cases examined, influencers utilize stories to share an imaginary realm comprising not just topics but also linguistic forms and rituals. These elements serve as the community's symbolic fluid, anchoring members' participation. However, due to their

ephemeral nature, stories serve a dual purpose: they are inclusive, by absorbing users into the community's symbolic framework, yet exclusive to those who fail to engage consistently.

If stories embody the flowing aesthetics reminiscent of radio and television, then the feed adopts a typographic style akin to photography and newspapers, crafting a narrative identity that endures over time and remains tethered to the self. This persistence and searchability, as noted by [Boyd and Ellison \(2007\)](#), often lend feeds a celebratory quality. For instance, consider *The_food_sister*, an Italian influencer who, on 30 April 2021, commemorated reaching 10,000 followers with a post detailing her journey and inviting community members to share their own stories.

Additionally, live broadcasts constitute a third element, serving as a digital adaptation of traditional media ceremonies ([Dayan and Katz 1992](#)).

The community that coalesces around an influencer showcases the emergence of a collective imaginary, comprised of anecdotes, sayings, and cultural mythologies, which serve as the foundation for individual identity. Within this communal imaginary, a potent form of influence arises, wherein specific language usage and references to icons transmit underlying values, ideas, and lifestyles almost effortlessly. In this sense, my research aligns with the reflections of [Kenneth Burke \(1969\)](#), who posits that even ordinary discourse constitutes a form of rhetoric. Consequently, the communicative dynamics between influencers and their communities, where rhetorical topoi offer footholds for an imagined citizenship, also fall within this realm. In this context, persuasion is closely tied to the idea of identification, referring to the potential narrative correspondence that develops between interlocutors, which Burke terms "consubstantiation".

This phenomenon is exemplified by the practices of three distinct influencers, *Artemisia*, *The_food_sister*, and *Sara Porro*, who share a common passion for the renowned Anglo-Israeli chef *Yotam Ottolenghi*. Together, they initiated the hashtag *#lebambinediottolenghi* and organized a series of live IGTV feeds in early 2021, each preparing dishes from *Ottolenghi's* celebrated cookbooks in their respective kitchens. These live sessions sparked a wave of imitations as followers prepared *Ottolenghi's* recipes and shared them under the designated hashtag. Each influencer introduces a cult object into their community, imbued with a myriad of values.

The act of sharing *Ottolenghi's* recipes is not neutral; it signifies a distinct mode of influence in digital realms. This is a specific way of exerting influence in digital contexts: Individuals who gather a community around themselves are comparable to media that simultaneously exert direct forms of influence, sometimes immediately visible, and less conspicuous forms of influence that may manifest over longer and unexpected periods, thus eluding the researcher's observation. This occurs through the construction, in collaboration with community members, of an imaginary that becomes the community's heritage, a primordial soup from which symbolic figures emerge and circulate within the community.

In this context, the significance of influence lies not solely in individual messages but in the imaginary structures propagated by the influencer and embraced by his community: He is a sort of catalyst for change, both emotionally and culturally. This change is not imposed through the power of immediacy, but rather through a gradual process that unfolds moment by moment via the content he shares and the techniques he employs to create it. This communal imaginary, akin to that produced by mass media, assumes a participatory nature, negotiated through interactions between influencers and their followers.

The platform system, with its incessant communicative impulses, inherently fosters such forms of influence, altering social structures and promoting novel relational dynamics. Their specificity lies in fostering relationships: these are indeed 'connection technologies' ([Boccia Artieri et al. 2017](#)) that have instigated changes in social structures. However, insights from our investigation lead us to question whether relationships on these platforms are merely socially grounded. The idea proposed here is that platforms not only enable new types of social bonds but also promote novel relational dynamics centered around seduction. What may be perceived as 'commercial' communication techniques that influencers use to

connect with their followers could be reinterpreted as seduction techniques, underscoring the nuanced nature of digital influence.

The notion of seduction within communication extends beyond its commercial connotations; one could argue that it embodies its archetype. Roland Barthes eloquently encapsulates this concept through his definition of *punctum*, which transcends mere visual engagement to evoke a profound emotional response.

According to Barthes, every image—or any form of message—elicits varying degrees of pleasure and participation. While the observer may initially be drawn to an image due to personal taste or interest, a deeper level of engagement occurs when the image possesses a punctum—an element that “pierces” the viewer, evoking an emotional response that demands intense attention (Barthes 1981). The punctum signifies a profound connection between the observer and the image, a connection that is inherently personal and deeply rooted in individual sensitivity. It captures the viewer’s gaze, transforming mere interest into a profound affinity, from like to love, thus fostering a more immersive participation.

In the realm of digital platforms, content creators meticulously craft their communication to evoke a punctum, seeking to seduce their audience and engender a more profound and engaging interaction. Thus, seduction, as exemplified by the pursuit of punctum, lies at the heart of effective communication, transcending commercial objectives to establish meaningful connections with audiences.

Seduction has evolved into a pervasive communicative technique, forming a relational paradigm wherein creators actively seek to provoke desire and enhance erotic attraction, as Lipovetsky (2017) suggests. Whether on Instagram or YouTube, users crafting messages cannot help but consider other users and their tastes and desires. This echoes Edgar Allan Poe’s notion in *The Philosophy of Composition* (Poe 2009), wherein he posits that the essence of creative expression lies in the pursuit of a specific “effect”. Poe contends that writers consciously aim to evoke particular emotions or responses in their audiences, shaping their creative endeavors with this objective in mind. This inclusive approach acknowledges the audience’s presence within the creator’s creative intention, emphasizing that art is meant to be enjoyed by the audience.

In the realm of digital platforms, this ethos of communication extends beyond professional writers to encompass all platform users. Interactions on platforms like Instagram and YouTube are not merely neutral or instrumental but rather playful and recreational, with users actively curating their communication to engage others. Words, videos, and images serve as the building blocks of digital relationships, embodying the seductive allure of communication.

Through prolonged immersion in YouTube and Instagram communities, it becomes evident that creators constantly seek spaces of stylistic autonomy and expressive forms to connect with their audience. The diverse array of platforms inundating human life serves as a vast repository of media, communication techniques, and content. Understanding these phenomena requires recognizing communication as inherently linked to seduction.

Analysis of influencer–brand partnerships reveals that campaigns hinge on the communicative prowess of individual creators. Brands leverage influencers’ seductive styles—honed through their photographic, scriptural, and discursive content—to engage their followers. This dynamic was exemplified in the Italian launch of Apple’s iMac M1 2021, where tech influencers were provided with samples of the computer to create videos in their distinct styles. We analyzed the five most-followed Italian technology influencers, all involved in the advertising operation, focusing on the content analysis of the video made for the occasion and the study of the influencers’ narrative identities. Our analysis has shown that each influencer provides their own unique perspective on the product. For instance, the well-known Italian influencer Andrea Galeazzi, with 1.34 million followers on YouTube, and Otto Climan, with a community of 289,000 followers, both offer highly personalized reviews. There is no negotiation of the message with the brand; instead, the brand relies on the special relationship that the influencer has built with their community, which is their true asset.

The resulting polyphonic portrayal of the product, characterized by theatricality, intimacy, technicality, and euphoria, seamlessly integrates into the community's symbolic universe. The influence of creators' communication extends beyond product purchases; it constructs a symbolic universe that users, driven by their fascinations, choose to inhabit. Thus, the impact of creators' communication lies in their ability to shape a mythic narrative and engender a sense of belonging within their audience.

3. Influence Trouble

To truly grasp the mechanics of influence as described earlier, we must diverge from the conventional sociological understanding of the term. Traditionally, influence in the realm of mass communication has been viewed through the lens of its effects on opinions and behavior, as elucidated by Denis McQuail in his essay *The Influence and Effects of Mass Media* (McQuail 1979). This notion aligns closely with Robert Dahl's definition of power, wherein one entity can compel another to act contrary to their original inclinations: "A has power over B to the extent that he can make B do something he would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957, p. 203). Thus, the concept of influence entails intentional exertion of power over a generalized audience or collective, whether through media channels or personal interactions.

However, the focus often remains on the outward effects of influence, neglecting the internal processes within the recipient. What occurs within the psyche of individuals who are persuaded to alter their opinions or behaviors in response to a message? To comprehend this aspect, we must move beyond what Lazarsfeld and Katz (1955) termed "impact analysis"—an approach aimed at determining the influential factors shaping individuals' decision-making processes. This method, primarily reliant on demographic variables and statistical computations, provides only a superficial understanding of the intricate dynamics at play.

To delve deeper into the mechanisms of influence, we must explore the nuanced interplay between communication messages and the internal cognitive processes of recipients. This necessitates a shift towards more comprehensive methodologies that encompass psychological, sociocultural, and contextual factors influencing individual responses to persuasive communication. Only by transcending traditional paradigms of influence analysis can we unravel the complexities inherent in the recipient's subjective experience and cognitive transformation.

Herta Herzog's groundbreaking essay, *On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches* (Herzog 1941), marks a significant departure in sociological reflection by delving into the profound consequences of message exposure on the subject's ego. Herzog's work, often considered the precursor to "gratification studies", employs categories rooted in Freudian psychoanalysis to identify the psychological pleasures experienced by viewers. She argues that listeners utilize mechanisms such as sympathy, catharsis, or *schadenfreude* (derived from enjoying the misfortunes of others) to immerse themselves in or distance themselves from the world presented through radio programs.

Herzog emphasizes the necessity of conducting quantitatively meaningful analyses and periodically checking for changes in the ambitions, thinking patterns, and lifestyles of female listeners influenced by radio programs. Central to Herzog's approach is the concept of "feeling", whereby interviewees are prompted to reflect on their media experiences to become aware of the changes they have undergone as a result. This introspective process highlights Herzog's sophisticated investigation into perception and self-perception.

Herzog's research underscores that the sociological examination of media effects and influence entails a profound alteration of consciousness within the audience. Rather than focusing solely on observable effects, Herzog delves into complex forms of influence that penetrate deep into the psyche, resulting in a transformation of the self. This transformation can only be perceived through introspection, as individuals trace the subtle traces of change back to the moments of media consumption.

Viewed through this lens, sociological research on influence converges with mediological investigations pioneered by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s. McLuhan's work suggests that influence should be understood as an alteration of the self, manifested through changes in perception and sensation induced by media. [McLuhan \(1964\)](#) posits that media shape a second nature by continuously reshaping sensory experiences, thereby altering human identity at its core. In this view, media not only transmit content but also reconfigure the very structure of perception and consciousness, leading to profound transformations in individual and collective identities.

When integrating the classical sociological understanding of influence with a mediological perspective, influence can be conceptualized as a shift in consciousness and knowledge—a change in the self. This transformation can be instigated intentionally by media and individuals or inadvertently by various factors such as places, objects, or circumstances. It may not always be immediately perceptible to the individual but can emerge gradually or unexpectedly, akin to a posthumous shock, after acting silently in the background of one's identity.

This expansive definition of influence complicates attempts to measure and verify its effects, as it transcends the confines of media and extends into broader social, cultural, and technological domains. Influence is portrayed as an ongoing, inexhaustible process that operates beyond the realm of media alone, making it challenging to delineate and quantify its impact accurately.

4. Conclusions: The Indirect Power of Community Imaginary

The investigation we have conducted diverges from classical paradigms of influence by drawing from Michel de Certeau's insights ([De Certeau 1984](#)), particularly his evaluation of the "effect" of a work in terms of its usage and behavioral impact. Rather than focusing solely on observable behaviors, de Certeau emphasizes understanding how a message becomes integrated into the user's identity, akin to a prosthesis, until it manifests itself through the user's actions. This concept of the work as a "repertoire" suggests that consumption of communicative messages acquires meaning through the practices it engenders and the ways in which users employ it.

De Certeau's approach contrasts with earlier research that primarily aimed to quantify immediate effects of message exposure, highlighting the passive nature of consumption. He emphasizes the "invisible" and "silent" nature of effects, which may only become apparent over time, often through indirect manifestations. Effects may not coincide with the moment of consumption but can emerge later in subtle and unpredictable ways, influencing identification processes.

Consumers should not be defined solely by the products they consume but by how they use them, according to de Certeau. This highlights the importance of considering the ways in which individuals appropriate and incorporate media into their lives, shaping their identities and experiences.

The emphasis on the "invisible" nature of consumption tactics underscores the indirect visibility of effects, which may lie dormant until triggered by subsequent events. This latent presence in the individual's memory reflects the complexity of modern experience, characterized by continual recollection and reinterpretation of past encounters. This occasional process of recollection reveals experiences that have left lasting imprints on the individual's emotional fabric, contributing to their ongoing self-regeneration.

Michel de Certeau's analysis of reading as the "exorbitant eye" of contemporary culture and consumption is heavily influenced by Roland Barthes' ideas, particularly as articulated in *The Pleasure of the Text* ([Barthes 1975](#)). [Barthes \(1975\)](#) conceptualizes the reader as akin to a spectator at a striptease, eagerly anticipating the revelation of secrets within the text. The reader, like the spectator, navigates the text with a sense of excitement, bypassing uninteresting passages and focusing on those that promise revelations.

Barthes argues that the author does not dictate the reader's response to the text, as individual readers interpret and engage with the text in unique ways. The pleasure of

reading, according to Barthes, arises from the varied emotions, reactions, and feelings evoked during the reading process. Each reader “bites into” the text, tearing it apart with their interpretation, and in doing so, they regenerate it in a new form.

De Certeau extends this notion by suggesting that the reader detaches the text from its original context and fabricates a new one through their interpretation. This process of reading is both destructive and regenerative, as readers create their own meanings and narratives from the text, contributing to its ongoing evolution and reinterpretation.

Henry Jenkins’ (2006) studies, building upon and extending Michel de Certeau’s analysis, demonstrate how digital platforms have transformed users into potential content producers. In the digital era, individuals have the ability to create and disseminate content through various channels provided by networked digital environments. This shift marks a departure from the traditional model of media production, which was dominated by a few broadcasters due to the high costs associated with production and distribution.

Yochai Benkler (2007) refers to this traditional model as the “industrial information economy”, characterized by centralized production and control over cultural content. However, in recent years, digital platforms have enabled an alternative approach known as distributed production. This model allows for the creation, distribution, and preservation of cultural content in ways that were previously unimaginable, thanks to advancements in communication technologies. The advent of digital platforms has democratized content creation, breaking the monopoly of traditional media gatekeepers and empowering individuals to participate in cultural production. This shift has profound implications for media consumption, as users now have greater agency and autonomy in shaping the content they consume and engage with.

Today’s technological landscape enables users to extend and augment content through various forms of interaction such as comments, images, and reactions, which remain linked to the original work. This augmentation reveals a parallel and spontaneous production that would have remained hidden in the past. Digital languages do not fundamentally alter the open nature of the work but unveil new layers of user engagement, allowing individuals to insert themselves into the content with their unique perspectives and contributions.

Productive consumption can be understood as constructing one’s own narratives using received vocabulary and syntax, as Michel de Certeau describes. However, beyond technological changes, every act of consumption reflects an ongoing and subconscious reconfiguration of the self. While the centrality of the user is significant, attention must also be paid to the relationship between influencers and followers, which extends beyond social implications to encompass aesthetic and communicative dimensions.

Contrary to the prevailing research perspective that views influencers as individuals pursuing online fame for profit (Baker and Rojek 2020), or “a critical form of internet celebrity given their ability to attract and maintain a sizable following on their social media platforms, through highly engaging and personalized content production, which can be used as conduits of information to amplify messages” (Abidin 2018, p. 71), it is important to consider them as content creators: Authors, constantly in search of a creative gesture, navigate a landscape where innovation and expression intersect. Their pursuit is marked by a restless exploration of ideas, styles, and techniques to breathe life into their creations. Whether they’re writers, artists, filmmakers, or influencers, these individuals immerse themselves in the process of crafting narratives, images, or messages that resonate with their audience.

For writers, this journey often involves delving into the depths of imagination, mining personal experiences, and experimenting with language to evoke emotions and provoke thought. Each word becomes a brushstroke on the canvas of the reader’s mind, shaping worlds and characters that linger long after the final page is turned. Similarly, artists push the boundaries of their chosen medium, harnessing colors, textures, and forms to capture fleeting moments or timeless truths. They seek to transcend the constraints of convention, forging new paths of expression that challenge perceptions and inspire wonder. Even influencers, in their quest for relevance and impact, continuously adapt their content

and engagement strategies to engage and resonate with their followers. They leverage digital platforms as canvases for self-expression (Márquez et al. 2022), employing a blend of authenticity, creativity, and relatability to forge connections in an increasingly crowded online landscape.

In all these endeavors, the creative gesture is not merely a moment of inspiration but a sustained journey of exploration, iteration, and reinvention. It is a dance between intuition and craftsmanship, fueled by passion, curiosity, and the relentless pursuit of excellence.

Influencers, in particular, produce self-exposure through their digital platforms, and their style of exposition forms the basis of their influence. In this sense, they act as catalysts for an emotional atmosphere within which the members of their community are immersed. Similar to other forms of media such as television series or books, influencers blend life and narrative, emphasizing the everyday through images, videos, and texts. The research shows how the social bond between influencers and followers is essentially based on an aesthetic dimension, although the affinity networks provide a lens through which to deepen our understanding of social networks (Ito et al. 2018). The concept of platform vernaculars, as described by Gibbs et al. (2015), underscores the unique linguistic and communicative ecosystems that emerge within digital platforms. Each platform possesses its own distinct set of styles, grammars, and logics, which shape the interactions and content creation possibilities available to users. These platform-specific characteristics, known as affordances, are both provided by the platform itself and adapted and appropriated by users in their mediated practices and communicative habits (Leaver et al. 2020). The uses of platforms are not solely dictated by the platform's design or functionalities, they are co-constructed through the ongoing negotiation between platform features and user behaviors. Users play a crucial role in shaping the vernacular of a platform by engaging with its affordances, experimenting with different modes of expression, and collectively establishing norms and conventions for communication. This negotiation process is dynamic and ever evolving, influenced by a myriad of factors including technological advancements, cultural trends, and social dynamics, and the style of the influencer plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of their community and influencing how members engage with the platform. The influencer's style works as a guiding compass for community members, providing cues on various aspects of his communication, content creation, and platform usage. The ability to invent and inhabit digital platforms effectively positions the creators as key figures in shaping the dynamics of these new environments.

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