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Social Media Influencers: A Global Perspective on Legal Accountability and Media Ethics

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ABSTRACT

The rise of social media influence has reshaped the communication of information and the trust of consumers in the digital age. The opinion and endorsements of influencers shape and control the markets and behaviors of consumers as they become dominant communication vehicles. Their opinion and endorsement control the markets and behaviors of consumers. The rise of social media influences control and dominate the communication of information and the trust of consumers of the digital age. The rise negatively impacts the legal and ethical concerns of transparency, truthfulness, and the commercialization of oneself. This essay addresses the legal and ethical concerns of the influence of social media on the individual on a global scale focusing on the 2022 US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) lawsuit against Kim Kardashian, who was fined for the unlawful promotion of the cryptocurrency EthereumMax due to a failure to disclose sponsorship. The case illustrates the advertising endorsement of a public figure, the financial power they possess, and the advertising gap legal control. This essay concerns mainly with the ethics of celebrity endorsement with changes in legal and financial power. The case illustrates the ethical concerns with celebrity endorsement and financial power. The case illustrates the new financial power of celebrity endorsement and the gap in legal control. The author, using ethical theories (deontological, ethical, and virtue theories) to analyze the cross border legal retrospective of the US, UK, EU and UAE, confronts the deficiency of aiding influence marketing with legal and ethical theories. This essay argues that the caution of the SEC vs. Kardashian as a new legal precedent is the basis for a globally coordinated ethical underdevelopment in law, digital trust, and media freedom in the digital economy.

This study concludes that social media marketing is an ethically sustainable practice due to the increasing need for social media influencers to adopt ethical literacy and transparency in their activities and the necessity for a sustained and formal global regulation.

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Introduction

In today's world, there is no one more powerful as a communicator than a social medial influencer, and their numbers are astounding. Experts believe the industry's worth is over $21 billion and growing quickly. As a result, social media influencers are blurring the lines between advertising, journalism, and entertainment. They do this without the restrictions and codes of conduct traditional journalists face, making their work highly unreliable. The damage this could potentially do is very serious (Gerhards, 2025).

The dilemmas associated with influencer marketing have gained audiences' attention across the world, questioning the authenticity of online endorsements and the responsibilities of digital personalities. Although online influencers have the image of being relatable communicators, there is often a great deal of influence that is entirely attributed to hidden commercial collaborations, false representations, and selective stories of the truth (Wellman, 2020). These concerns are about honesty, privacy, and manipulation and advocacy of the trust deficit, which are all concerns within the field of media ethics. Governments across the world, as a result, have compliance frameworks and requirements to account for due diligence. For instance, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) requires influencers to state when endorsements are paid; U.K. Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) rules commercial communications must comply with clear attribution; and the

Media Council of the UAE requires influencers to acquire official documents to promote advertisements online (FTC, 2023; ASA, 2022; UAE Media Council, 2023). Just like the above, the Digital Services Act of the European Union (2023) also provides new frameworks and expectations for online advertising accountability and transparency.

While the initiatives are commendable, the challenges posed by the global and borderless digital marketplace continue to complicate the enforcement of uniform ethical practices. The global marketplace allows influencers to reach target demographics in areas with highly diverse cultural and legal systems, values, and expectations in regard to media actions. Hence, the present paper reviews global social media influencers' practices, focusing on the application of fundamental ethical theories of utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics in regard to these influencers' social and professional obligations. The paper analyses the legal regimes of several jurisdictions of the US, UK, UAE, and EU to provide both similarities and differences on the regulation of influencers. By using the case of Kim Kardashian v. SEC (2022) on the promotion of cryptocurrencies, the paper illustrates the lack of global uniform regulation, though most countries are in the processes of updating their domestic legislation. On the Influencer Economy, the paper insists that greater self-regulation on ethical practices is necessary to advance digital influences in a manner that upholds the values of transparency, accountability, and social welfare. It is of paramount importance that we grasp the interrelationship of law, ethics, and the responsibility of media in social influencing to primarily shield audiences from the dangers posed by unrestrictive global communication.

The Global Rise of Influencer Culture

The last ten years have seen social media change how people interact, how people get information, how people make decisions, and how people buy things. Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and

Snapchat, among others, have introduced new stakeholders called social media influencers. Social media influencers are people who amass large online followings and use that visibility to affect and change opinions, trends, and consumer irrational behaviors. Social media influencers have become an essential element in global digital marketing, receiving billions of dollars every year in marketing content sponsorship and multimedia influencer collaborations. Research suggests that social media influencer marketing may have exceeded 21 billion dollars in 2023, signifying rapid growth and mainstream acceptance of the marketing dissemination model (Wellman, 2020). This phenomenon represents one of the most formative changes in modern media, the emergence of modern social media influencers' impacting the traditional celebrity culture, and the participatory culture of communication.

Digital personalities are believed to have an influence because of how authentic and relatable people consider them to be. Traditional celebrities have their whole images and reputations and are seen as characters because their images are controlled by the publicity and media. On the other hand, influencers manage their characters by posting daily, providing stories, and interacting with their audience and followers. Because the audience feels so close to the influencer people place their trust in them and amplifying that trust becomes an endorsement and promotion. However, the trust people place in the influencers can cause extreme ethical issues, especially when the influencers mix their own personal interests and authentic promotion with commercial

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partnerships. The content that influencers produce can be carefully crafted and monetarily motivated without them knowing. Wellman (2020) states that because of these issues the topics of transparency, manipulation, and consumer vulnerability have become the most important issues within the context of the social influencer economy and social media.

Publicized events such as these demonstrate the power influencers have and the damage that can be done when there are no ethical frameworks in place. One such event, and the main case study for this paper, is the case brought against Kim Kardashian by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission for the unlawful promotion of the cryptocurrency EthereumMax. Kardashian posted on Instagram, promoting the cryptocurrency to the 300 million users who follow her. She failed to mention that she was paid $250,000 for promoting the token, and the SEC claimed that she broke the law due to the lack of compliance for federal securities law that requires mentioning the financial relationship within an endorsement. This case is studied in many countries due to the power one influencer can have over the entire market and consumer behavior as well as the ethical and legal consequences of influencer marketing (U.S. SEC 2022).

The Kardashian case shows how influencer's culture has gone beyond fashion, beauty, and leisure with potentially serious consequences in finance, health, and political messaging. This creates a greater need for influencer's liability. Today`s influencers lack the editorial supervision, professional ethical codes, and regulatory restrictions customary in the field of broadcasting journalism, yet they reach audiences as large as, or larger than, traditional media. Their instantaneous, unregulated, and unauthorized distributions of content enable misinformation and unethical promotion to go viral. This phenomenon has prompted governments around the world to address regulatory shortcomings in the control of digital media.

In the absence of a global regulatory framework, several jurisdictions have implemented diverse and innovative responses to the global rise of influencer culture. In the USA, entities such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) set guidelines and impose fines to enforce rules of advertising disclosure. In the UK, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) safeguards compliance with transparency legislation in influencer content. The Digital Services Act of the European Union

(2023) places the onus on online platforms to ensure that advertisements and sponsored materials are adequately flagged. In the UAE, a licensing model permits influencers to engage with paid posts in a culturally shaped, socially responsible, and public oriented approach.

These regulatory frameworks indicate an embracing of the influence of the social media star, however, their lack of enforcement coordination is worrisome for cross-border influencer violations. Sponsored content can lead cross-border influencers to consumers in jurisdictions with none of the protective rules. In addition, an influencer's expansion into higher-risk, sensitive areas like finance, wellness, and political communication increases the need for the social media star to have self-regulated internationally agreed upon ethical practices. The expansion of cross-border culture showcases the innovative and outstanding capabilities of communication in the digital world while still being held accountable and ethically in the media world.

Ethical Analysis

As regards social media influencers, what social media ethics influencers should adhere to lie primarily on one of social media ethics influencers should adhere to. Social media influencers operate outside of social media ethics influencers should adhere to one of social media ethics influencers should adhere to. Outside of social media ethics influencers should adhere to ethical responsibility such as social media influencers such as social media ethics influencers should adhere to. To understand social media influences such as social media ethics. To understand social media ethics influencers should adhere as social media ethics influencers should adhere to social media influencers to social media ethics influencers should adhere to social media ethics. Social media influencers should adhere to social influencers such as social media ethics. To understand social ethics influencers should adhere to social media influencers should adhere. Social media influencers to understand social media ethics influencers should adhere are social media ethics

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Deontological Ethics

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The SEC explained how deficient her were legally required disclosures when she promoted EthereumMax to unsuspectingly millions of followers without careful stating that her post, however regrettably, was not a paid advertisement (U.S. SEC, 2022). It does not matter that some proportion of her followers (or, to the opposite of that, the investors targeted by her post) suffered no harm or even made a profit. The important, or even the only, relevant point was already made— active participation in the absence of such vital information is a moral breach in itself. Sounds a little contradictory. With baseline microeconomic theory- perspective, not really.

The Kardashian case is a case study of ethical irresponsibility. In deontology, that breach is an obligatory one just by the virtue of absence of the outcome. Facts already matter. It is not a matter of providing the outcome of the act that the moral agent is required to follow his utmost primary ethical goals that are not to be compromised by any form of ethical consideration. That bar of compliance act is to be set in such a way that it is kept to the sanctions only. In simple terms, ethical goals are to be set to the best ethical measure compliance with the set ethical minimum, or breach of compliance to the set minimum.

Assessment of Harm and Social Consequences Through Utilitarian Ethics

Theories of Utilitarianism, proposed by John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, focus on whether an action or decision increases overall utility. Through this perspective, the influencers' actions should be evaluated according to the effect of their actions on their audiences, the markets, and on society as a whole.

In the case of Kardashian, the endorsement had the potential to do a great deal of harm. The cryptocurrency market is a nascent, and incredibly volatile market, and is poorly understood by the general population. Having a celebrity sponsorship creates a false sense of security and legitimacy, not to mention that many of Kardashian's followers may not be sophisticated investors. After Kardashian's endorsement, the price of the highly volatile cryptocurrency, EthereumMax, skyrocketed, only to collapse soon after, resulting in severe losses for many unsuspecting investors (Markham, 2023).

Utilitarianism sees this as a failure to promote overall social good, or a failure to uplift the wellbeing of society as a whole. Kardashian's sponsorship, as not done with any good faith or malicious intent, still had an overall negative impact. The societal impact of Kardashian's promotion was great and so even the financial penalty of the SEC had a societal value in that it placed a cost on the social harm of unregulated and unethical influencer marketing.

In a wider sense, the ethics of utilitarianism sheds light on how influenced liability impacts public faith in digital platforms. Followers feeling deceived fosters skepticism toward all digital content, which negatively affects those with valid promotions and the media's overall credibility. Thus, from a utilitarian view, the ethics of transparency and accountability should directly influence one's individual morality, in order to protect the digital public's overall welfare.

Virtue Ethics: Integrity, Character and Moral Responsibility

Virtue ethics, on the other hand, shifts the emphasis from actions and consequences to the person, his character and the moral attributes he possesses. This school of thought inquires: Who is this influencer and what do their actions disclose about them? Influencers, particularly in this context, have the potential to impact audience behavior as public figures and role models to impressionable youth

who admire and emulate the lifestyles and choices they portray.

Virtue ethics emphasizes moral attributes of honesty, justice, bravery, moderation and integrity. In the Kardashian example, the absence of disclosure is a sign of moral integrity deficiency, the virtue that calls for individuals to do the right thing on ethical grounds, even when it is not convenient or profitable. Masking a paid financial endorsement under personal advice is a breach of virtue as it neglects the moral credentials and social accountability expected of influencers.

Most influencers have limited ethical awareness on a global scale because their professions develop outside fields which prioritize morals the way ethics do. Unlike journalists who have formal training and a code of ethics, influencers work on gut feeling, following trends, and negotiating deals. This is precisely the reason why virtue ethics is concerned, since it is more about individual accountability and having personal ethics rather than relying on external dictates.

An influencer with ethical virtue would consider the well-being of their audience, take pains to not promote highly risky products, and declare sponsorships transparently and legally, as a matter of ethical principle rather than legal compliance.

Ethical Codes and Global Expectations

While influencers do not have professional codes to govern them, global influencers are now beginning to provide ethical outlines aimed at regulating them.

Some of them are:

FTC Endorsement Guides (USA): Disclosure of material connection is required.

ASA and CMA Guidelines (UK): Advertising transparency, and claims must be truthful.

EU Digital Services Act (2023): Requires platforms to identify advertising.

UAE Media Council Rules: Media ethics are licensing and culturally appropriate.

These have been regarded as universal ethics: transparency, truthfulness, responsibility, and safeguarding of the less privileged. When ethics are violated, as in the case of Kardashians, the public trust is eroded, the economy is put at risk, and unethical advertising regulation is required, which became a global example of influencer ethics disregard.

3.5. Ethical Conclusion

This case has shown that some unethical behavior, such as that exhibited by the Kardashians, is not just a question of law; it is an ethical problem. Kardashians (and all other influencers, for that matter) can shape the behavior of their consumption; therefore, their influence must extend farther than just legalism. Ethical behavior is a matter of duty, of character, and of consequence. Should influence be ethically exercised, the influencer culture can become a legitimate social media phenomenon.

Legal Accountability

As influencer marketing becomes a global multi-billion-dollar industry, regulators around the world are starting to deal with the legal issues concerning the lack of advertising disclosure, misleading advertising, and misinformation. Influencers are no longer just entertainers and lifestyle promoters. They are commercial agents who can shape the finances, health, politics, and purchasing decisions of individuals. Because of this, legal accountability must now be accommodated when dealing with the regulation of digital communication. The 2022 Kim Kardashian v. U. S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) case, in which Kardashian was fined for illegally endorsing a cryptocurrency and failing to disclose the required information, illustrates the legal risk liabilities of influencer marketing, as well as the growing tendency of regulators to intervene.

The SEC Case: A Landmark for Influencer Accountability

For these reasons, in October 2022, the SEC alleged that Kim Kardashian had breached America's federal securities laws by promoting a highly speculative and very volatile cryptocurrency (EthereumMax). Kardashian had neglected to disclose, and, therefore, was fraudulent in failing to disclose, a "full and fair disclosure to the public regarding the terms of the public endorsement agreement," (U.S. SEC, 2022). $250,000 was the going rate for sponsorship, but Kardashian has been influenced as if she were a genuine fan of the cryptocurrency. However, promoting a high- risk financial asset therefore makes sponsorship as a bad faith advocate, an act contravening subsection 17(b) of the 1933 Securities Act, as failing to disclose the terms of a sponsorship agreement makes the advocacy a fraudulent promotion of an asset.

The resolution of Kardashian's SEC case required her to pay $1.26 million in sponsorship fees and fraudulent

promotion profits; to cease actively promoting any cryptocurrencies for a period of three years; and to cooperate fully with the SEC's investigations. Aside from any sponsorship fees and profits Kardashian might have earned, the case, for the very first time, conclusively affirmed the principle that an influencer must comply with the same advertising and disclosure laws that other, non-social media, advertisers comply with. From this case, it became evident that, for the first time, popular indictments of celebrity influencers had legally enforceable consequences.

Advertising and Consumer Protection Laws

Influencers must adhere to the U.S. FTC Guidelines. The Oversight of financial marketing and advertisement in the U.S. falls under the SEC, while advertisement in general falls under the FTC. The FTC Guidelines require that:

Influencers disclose sponsorship.

Use clear and straightforward terms like 'Paid Partnership' or Ads

Omitted the usage of hashtags, captions or links in which to bury disclosures.

Ensure that testimonials are genuine and are made in good faith (FTC, 2023).

These guidelines are applicable to both micro and macro influencers. Most of the time, the influencers who fail to disclose sponsorships mislead, harm and deceive consumer, which under

U.S. federal laws constitutes an unfair or deceptive trade practice. The Kardashian case illustrates the situation in which an influencer contravenes consumer protection laws and securities laws at the same time, thus showing how multi-faceted the situation in digital marketing and the laws that govern them can be.

United Kingdom: ASA and CMA Enforcement

The UK, like the U.S. is home to one of the world's most restrictive influencer advertising regulations. The ASA and CMA have to work together when it comes to the imposition of the advertising norms, Regulators in the UK require that influencers at all times acknowledge all paid, gifted or sponsored collaborations. Failure to comply can result in the withdrawal of endorsements, and in some cases, prosecution.

In the UK, influencers and celebrities, such as reality stars and people working in the beauty sector, have been called out for posting promotional content without identifying it as such. UK regulators, in a manner similar to the Kardashian case, tend to target what may be considered egregious acts. While UK regulators like to target repeat offenders visible in the UK case, influencers do not have to violate the law in an SEC- style manner to be legally liable for misleading advertising.

The Digital Services Act of the European Union

The Digital Services Act (EU) 2023 provides legal obligations to digital service providers such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube concerning Ad Transparency. Under the DSA:

There must be straightforward promotional content.

There must be adequate user empowerment in controlling the visibility of ads to which users are subjected.

Influencers must comply with the consumer protection legislation in all member states.

There is a legal obligation to timely removal of misleading advertising (European Commission, 2023 DS).

The DSA provides less accountability to influencers and a greater liability to social media platforms for the construction of a social media architecture that facilitates undisclosed and misleading advertising. The influencers and social media platforms, in the EU, would be legally liable like the case of Kim Kardashian.

United Arab Emirates: Licensing and Cultural Regulation

Only licensed influencers can make pay-per-post advertisements. This is an attempt to promote cultural sensitivity, professionalism in the media, and the respect of the public. Influencers, unlicensed and unregulated, risk:

Monetary fines

Automatic suspension of the license

Removal of content

Prosecution

Unlike the West, the UAE model places influencers within a formal media framework, thus having legal responsibilities akin to those of a journalist and broadcaster. Though the Kardashian incident took place in the United States, a parallel infringement within the UAE would encompass both

monetary fines and consequences related to the Dubai incident, in addition to the loss of an advertising license.

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Ongoing Legal Challenges

Around the world, some regulations have been introduced, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. These include:

Differences in territory and jurisdiction

Influencerstakepartinpromotingdangerousandunregulatedproducts(i.e. cryptocurrency, dieting pills, unregulated financial services)

Inter-platform communication that skirts around a country's laws

Limited capacity to track and monitor micro-influencers

Emerging complications like AI influencers, which fall outside of regulation entirely

The Kardashian case highlights the question of what to do when the world is digitized and borders disappear. Though there are regulations and punishments for violations, enforcement struggles to keep up with evolving technology, new platforms, and novel behaviors influencers might display.

Legal Conclusion

Legal responsibility is a crucial facet for the regulation of the influencer's culture. The Kim Kardashian SEC case showed real consequences of nondisclosure, and the increasing severity with which regulators approach influencer misconduct. However, global disparities show the necessity for unified international frameworks. Enhanced cross-border collaboration, more precise accountability for platforms, and ongoing renewal of law are required to shield consumers and sustain the integrity of the worldwide influencer economy.

Professional Responsibility in Media

The impact of social media influencers hinges on the responsibility these influencers have. Although not professionally trained influencers have a responsibility, like journalists, to report honestly, transparently, and accountably. The work of influencers impacts, and the influencers do have a social duty to the public, particularly the work of an influencer, an integrity, and do not harm the audience socio-economically and damage the audience, predominantly the audience, the audience.

From the social responsibility perspective, the influencer audience trust is bolstered by voicing these partnerships. For example, K Kardashian, Samsung and SEC endorsed K's promotion of EthereumMax leading Kardashian to lose the SEC's example where K, on social media, exercised EthereumMax. Many see Kardashian's promotion of EthereumMax as a leading example of K misrepresented equity in the social space. Kardashian EthereumMax created an interest to the audience as personal financial advice. The breach of sponsorship terms is the professional role without social sacrifice.

Another aspect of professional ethics regards potential audience vulnerability. Influencers frequently develop highly personal online identities that give rise to parasocial relationships, whereby followers feel a personal bond with them. This emotional bond makes audience members more open to persuasion. Therefore, influencers have a responsibility not to abuse this trust for personal benefit, particularly with respect to promoting very high-risk products such as cryptocurrencies, dubious health supplements, or other unregulated services. The Kardashians crypto promotion is a prime example of how one endorsement can lead to widespread financially consequential decisions, particularly for younger followers who lack the experience to assess such

risks. Influencers are aware of the potential consequences of their endorsements, and this is their responsibility as ethics in media.

Part of that responsibility also includes professional responsibility, in addition to audience care and transparency, is accountability and truthfulness. Influencers take on a quasi-journalistic role when offering product recommendations or advice on lifestyle and social issues. The potential for spreading misinformation is greater when fact checking is absent. Ethical influencers should check claims, avoid exaggerations, and should not endorse products they have not honestly reviewed. Truthful endorsements are not only a legal responsibility, but also a professional and ethical one, as many regulatory bodies – the FTC, ASA, and UAE Media Council – emphasize.

The merging of social media and marketing has caused influencers to have more responsibility. For example, influencer licensing in the UAE is made to protect the participants as well as the United Arab Emirates social and cultural standards. On the other hand, western countries have more individualistic views in balancing professional responsibility with self-expression, individual accountability and consumer protection advocacy. Nonetheless, influencers have to meet the universal standard of digital responsibility and accountability for the social forum they dominate for advocacy.

Ultimately, influencers, like all other professionals in the media, must abide by the same social responsibility as

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traditional media influencers. The Kardashian saga is a case in point of the diminished social responsibility harming social trust and the legal accountability and regulatory scrutiny that may follow. Hence, the positive social impact influencers shape is proportional to the proactive ethical responsibility they Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and accountability.

Discussion and Recommendations

Investigating influencer marketing from both legal and ethical viewpoints shows how far-reaching and complicated the interplay between personal marketing and digital advertising is and how the global marketplace and social media do not have legal systems in place to protect society. The Kardashian case shows how one erroneous endorsement can create unnecessary global controversy about the obligations and duties influencers have on their audience and how attainable these responsibilities are. The global marketplace and social media are also to blame for the unethical actions in these fields. New law regulations emerging in different jurisdictions present the disputes in the ethical and legal fields. Kardashian case shows the importance of legal and ethical regulations in social media to protect society from unethical marketing.

The Kardashian case illustrates the gap between the global reach of an influencer and the diverging national jurisdiction. Each country has its own way of obtaining advertising and securities laws. For example, the United States has the FTC and SEC, the United Kingdom is primarily ASA and CMA, the European Union is the Digital Services Act, and the European Union is the Digital Services Act. The United Arab Emirates, on the other hand, has a licensing system which ensures that influencers are professional and culturally responsible. The global diversity of these systems creates uncertainty for influencers who operate globally. If influencers engage with their audience by publishing a post, and that post is able to reach audience members who reside in a different country, their audience could be subjected to unethical marketing practices that the influencer's country of laws does not address.

The fast growth of digital media is the other side of the coin. The rise of unregulated influence is multifaceted. Influencers can now promote not only beauty and lifestyle products, but also financial, political, and health claims, which can be highly volatile. Most of these categories are

highly dangerous for the consumer and, in turn, the influencer, who is likely to be untrained in critical ethical communication, is highly irresponsible. To make matters worse, laws on the books are not likely to be effective in these areas, since the law primarily regards humans.

To overcome the challenges we face, the following would be the most helpful: First, there should be a unified global standard for disclosures. We need international advertising associations, governments, and digital platforms to work together to establish clear, standardized, and universally accepted measures for identifying sponsored advertisements. A system that is as well recognized, if not as well recognized as global systems for nutrition or privacy-related products, would eliminate confusion and ensure comprehension among audiences regardless of the system's jurisdiction.

Second, we ought to establish compulsory ethics and compliance training for influencers, particularly those in contentious and high-risk sectors like finance, health, & politics. Influencers, like journalists, are trained in media ethics, ought to be minimally trained in compliance, transparency, truthfulness, and consumer protection, especially those in advocacy. This training is already taking place on platforms, through certification or national licensing systems, similar to the ones in the UAE.

Third, there is a need for social media platforms to be more responsible and implement automated systems to identify posts that have not disclosed sponsorships in order to flag such posts and enforce sanctions. It is unacceptable that those platforms that profit from users' activities and influence, do not also adopt responsibility to ensure that users are protected from pseudo influence and other unethical practices.

The last step is continued outreach for greater public education. The public must learn how to discern various types of influencer content, identify advertising, and realize the dangers of taking advice from social media personalities for money or health issues. Educated consumers are the best defense in any imbalanced ecosystem.

To summarize the Kardashian example, there is an immediate need for balance and ethical frameworks in influencer marketing. The influencer economy can be turned into an ethical and socially responsible means of communication with education, collaboration throughout the world, improved training, and responsible use of platforms.

Conclusion

From the beginning of global conversation, the advent of social media and the influencers that accompany it, have provided the opportunity of instant digital conversation

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that is now accompanied by, and has impact from, social media influencers. Some argue their impact is stronger than the old media outlets. Perhaps the most evident example of the impact from social media influencers, where the legal and ethical implications of promotion are still being established, is the Kim Kardashian SEC case. Kardashian parameters of promotion brought to legal light the impact of unregulated and inconsistently regulated social media influencers to the public and the immense public monetary exposure. Kardashian's promotion brought millions to monetary risk. Across different areas, regulators have tried to implement advertising regulations, legislative measures on securities, and frameworks on influencer licensing to mitigate the challenges. Yet, global discrepancies remain. U.S. SEC and FTC have stringent rules on disclosure. In the UK, ASA and CMA have a transparency focus. The EU Digital Services Act holds platforms accountable, and the UAE A and the UAE have a model of licensing that emphasizes the cultural and moral responsibilities. Collectively, these systems demonstrate the same concerns, but with

different solutions. The situation creates an environment for influencers to entertain global audiences, but with different legal and moral responsibilities depending on the country.

A more anticipatory and harmonized approach is required to deal with these challenges. Ethical theories of deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics approach influencer conduct from the perspective of duty, consequences, and moral character. However, more change needs to happen. Coordination of regulators, platforms, influencers, and audiences will enable the ecosystem to evolve. Responsible ecosystems are built on global standards of disclosure, enforcement of ethics training, platform empowerment, and awareness by the audiences.

In the end, guaranteeing ethical and legal accountability should not only involve harm reduction, but also entail enhancing public confidence in digital communications. As the culture of social media influencers continues to develop, timely adoption of strong and uniform ethical frameworks will be essential in maintaining authority, safeguarding the target audience, and protecting the media assets of the world.

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