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Capstone Research Seminar

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March 5, 2024

Analysis Paper

Instagram is a global marketing platform, and through analyzing the term deinfluencer as a departure from this ideology emerges as crucial to the field of communication studies as a highlight, of the evolving landscape of digital communication. Deinfluencing is a trend that was created to discourage viewers of social media content from hyper-consumption. Although the main goal is to promote anti-consumerist practices, some Instagram users have turned it into a marketing opportunity to promote their preferred products over those that are in favor. Through my analysis, I hope to reveal the truth behind this trend and Instagram members' manipulations of the deinfluencing trend, and why this confusion is controversial for audience members of this content. Using a Marxist analysis that focuses on consumer practices, and an eco-feminist approach to understanding women within such a field of digital videos, these methodological approaches allow me to reveal my thesis. Including a thoroughly detailed recounting and analysis of each of my research objects which was the source for reasoning, and facts, behind my thesis.

Research Object #1:



The video above is from the Instagram account @Laura.girard, one of the self-proclaimed deinfluencers I will be analyzing. The video is from December 28, 2023 and at the time of this analysis the video has 1,256,828 plays and 100,568 likes. To begin with the caption of the video she states, “bull**** is in season this time of year - stay safe out there, besties!!” Firstly, Laura is addressing her audience and followers by establishing a casual relationship with them by calling them her “besties”- this creates a trusting relationship because it creates a deeper level of intimacy with her followers/audience. In her caption she also mentions the time of year being December, which is around Christmas and New Year’s by the videos’ release date. Addressing this holiday season as one that is filled with “bull****” meaning there is nonsense being spread throughout society both online and offline that she warns her audience about- which adds to the trusting relationship her followers have with her calling them besties and then feeling protected by her as she warns them before they have the chance to be swayed. Furthermore, her caption

includes the hashtags, “#deinfluencing #deinfluenceme #consciousconsumerism #consumerism” each of which directly ties the video to deinfluencing along with the anticonsumerist practices that deinfluencing pushes.

To begin, the video itself is made in response to a comment she received on another post as there is a text bubble in the video from the account @jesskirchner stating “this content is a breath of fresh air”. Being that this comment was from one of her followers it is acknowledging the content Laura is making and encouraging her to make more by saying she enjoys how refreshing it is to watch and hear deinfluencing content. If her audience is being so reciprocative towards this content then it is going to push Laura to continue making such videos which further push the deinfluencing agenda. Analyzing the transcript of the video Laura begins by stating, “I think it’s time for a little more deinfluencing [acknowledging that deinfluencing is a recurring content subject from her social media page], ‘this ___ changed my life’- did it?? Or is it just a concealer with a good shade match or did you like find a planner that you’re still excited about or did you like lose a marginal amount of belly fat” Right away Laura deflects the claim that a certain object has the ability to change a person’s life entirely, and rather she presents a more practical analysis of an individual finding a correct skin color match for a makeup product, or an agenda book that they have remained excited about and used since their purchase. Going on to comment on an individual losing a small amount of weight around their stomach area proclaiming the product the individual is selling or promoting is responsible for such a result. She then says, “We’re playing it fast and loose with the definition of ‘life-changing’ over here”- the use of “we” here connects and groups herself with the audience to include herself within the conversation rather than just talking at her audience. This re-acknowledges the trusting relationship that Laura promotes through her content. She thrives on relating, grouping, and

connecting herself with her followers, and establishing such relationships promotes deinfluencing content because people find her content “refreshing” meaning, unlike the typical content they consume. This in turn benefits Laura as she gains views, likes, and followers from her continuing to create such content. So, although she is promoting smarter consumption she is still gaining something personally by creating this content and staying on top of the trend. This is a pattern I will be analyzing later in this paper. The video continues with, “Also most people do not have eight besties... most people do not have eight besties (period) if each of those eight besties is getting matching stockings full of hundreds of dollars worth of product, chances are it’s a tax write off” Mentioning stocking brings back the idea of the Christmas holiday season and the tradition of filling stockings with items of your choice to then give to other people. By including this in her speech Laura is dismantling the idea that not everyone has, what I’m interpreting her to mean is a large number of people, that they consider best friends. Further mentioning the hundreds of dollars that an individual can spend on said numerous stockings as something, by my interpretations of her mannerisms of holding her hands together and the softer tone in her voice, to be highly uncommon and unrealistic. This both ties in the amount of money one may spend, and the products themselves. All coming together to say that the act of spending said money on certain products is simply an act that becomes a tax write-off. She continues this idea by saying, “in the comment section on those videos full of ‘what do you do for a living??’, ‘I wanna do what you do for a living!’, chances are you’re looking at it, and that’s! Fine!” Many of the videos she recognizes that there are people who are commenting on things that pertain to a state of wanting what another has, and she critiques this point of view when she mentions that what an audience member is watching is legitimately what they do for a living. Content creation and influencer’s income rely on the content they are producing and the views, likes, comments,

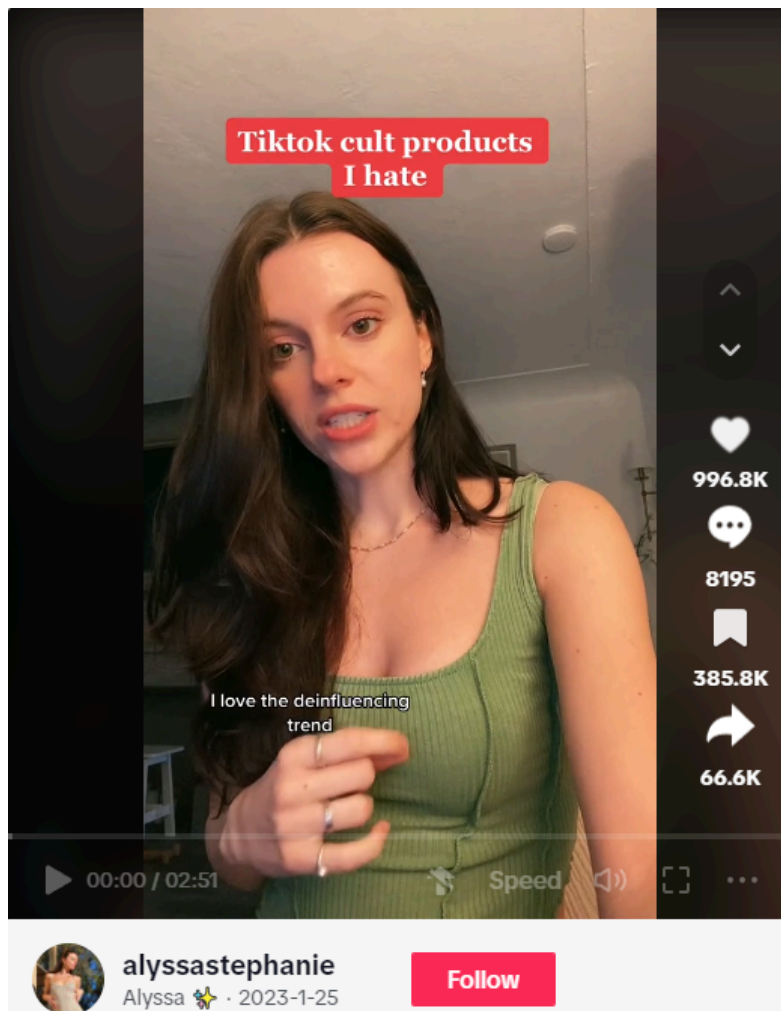
shares, etc that they receive on a video which is all perpetuated by such comments. Tying it back together with being a tax write-off as these individuals are filling these stockings for their social media content jobs. Laura continues to say, “we are ALL trying to live under capitalism but just keep that in mind.” Which directly ties in with the current socio-economic climate. Living in a capitalist society, I believe Laura is trying to comfort her audience by relating to them and including herself within that “all” makes her more relatable to her viewers and makes them feel less alone as they too are battling capitalism. Further tying in consumerist habits and the need to make some sort of living within society.

This is ironic to Laura’s account as she too is making content on social media that is marketed under the deinfluencer hashtag. Her videos receive the same attention that those of a standard influencer would receive- but her approach is to be more vulnerable and relatable to her audience and do the proclaimed opposite of an influencer. It is therefore granting her a higher seat within the social media trends as she is doing the proclaimed opposite of what an influencer is doing on their social media sites- yet there would be no deinfluencing without there being influencing, as Laura herself is created influencing content for her audience that is promoting anti-consumerist practices. She then says, “In a couple of weeks you’re gonna start to see the 75 hard videos, no matter how you **feel** about the 75 hard, the one thing I can guarantee the 75 hard gives you is 75 days worth of content. So are you seeing people do the 75 hard? Or do you see the people make the content? And again that’s fine, see the point about surviving under capitalism” What I am interpreting from what Laura is saying here is that she wants her audience to understand that some of these macro trends that are coming out of social media stem from influencers creating content that adheres to such algorithms and further gains them more revenue from the audience consuming such content. She is advising the audience not to base what they

feel about the 75 Hard Challenge on the number of posts or people they see taking part. A pattern that I am noticing within the video is though she is dismantling and disagreeing with the content standard influencers are presenting, she states “That’s fine”, almost to ensure that though she disagrees it doesn’t mean that the other people are wrong for stating or promoting what they want to. She then brings up capitalism and society once again, as she relays “trying to survive” as if there is a unanimous detriment “all” people are experiencing under the vice of capitalism.

Research object #2:

My second research object is a video by @alyssastephanie on TikTok. Alyssa is a content creator



on both Instagram and TikTok, with the majority of her videos being posted on the TikTok platform. Though my analysis is mainly focusing on the platform of Instagram, Alyssa’s video was removed by her, and is now only viewable on the TikTok platform. At the time of this analysis paper, the video has 998,000 likes, 8,201 comments, and 66,600 shares. The video is two minutes and 51 seconds long, but I will only be focusing on the first minute and

forty seconds of the video for succinct purposes. The video was posted on January 25th, 2023.

To follow a similar analysis pattern I will be talking about Alyssa's caption which says “I love deinfluencing *heart emoji*” clearly stating the sort of audience that Alyssa is trying to reach and the basis for the content of this video. Similarly, Alyssa uses the hashtags “#deinfluencing #deinfluencergang #cultproduct” within the caption of her video. As the video goes on, Alyssa shows the products that she doesn't recommend people buy which is ironic because she obviously had to have bought it to show it in the video or she was sent the product by the brand and then stated the cheaper option that she advises people to purchase instead. Before I begin my thorough analysis of the video, it's important to state that Alyssa's video, in particular, is twisting the meaning of a true deinfluencer into someone who is suggesting other products, rather than telling people that they don't need the products at all. Her video shows that the trend is being placed on videos that are not necessarily deinfluencing, but making other direct consumer list recommendations.

Looking at the cover page of the video there is an evident speech bubble that states, “TikTok cult products I hate” which immediately claims that the products she will be mentioning are on a predetermined list of hyper-consumed and crazed. This list of products that people have generated attention for being referred to as “cult” products, has never sat right with me. There is always a tone-deaf attitude towards the true meaning of a cult and using that word freely instead of calling it what it is - hyper-consumed products. Alyssa begins her video by stating, “ I love the deinfluencing trend, so here are all the things that I would deinfluence you from buying as somebody that spends thousands of dollars a year on health, beauty hair products, but loves to save a buck” just from this first sentence it's obvious that this is something that Alyssa has done continuously, and particular to her referencing that she spends thousands of dollars a year which immediately can separate her from her audience as not everybody can spend that money on

health and beauty products which should differ them from the video, but instead gains more of their attention as she then tries and goes on to say less expensive products that she would recommend instead. So instead of telling people not to purchase these products, she's just showing them cheaper options. As a screenshotted image of the *Dyson Air Wrap* (a \$500 product) appears on the background of the screen, She goes on to say, "People ask me all the time 'what the f**** do you used to style your hair?' ... [She points to the image behind her.] it's not this." The video then cuts to another image of Alyssa, holding a hair curler set saying, "Go on Amazon, spend \$30, you're welcome" She never states what the product is called. She never states where to find the products that she talked about but rather just to simply go onto Amazon the website and somehow miraculously finds the \$30 hair curler set that she's talking about. However, upon further research, all of the products that she mentions within her videos are mentioned in her linked accounts that she has in her social media bio which takes you to her Amazon influencer page. no matter who clicks on the link, Alyssa will gain a percentage of that sale simply by using her affiliate link to purchase the product. so within the first 19 seconds of this video, Alyssa is already gaining profit off of using the #. She then goes on to talk about the *Olaplex Bond Repair Shampoo and Conditioner* stating, "This is a cult product that I hate if you have thin hair, fine hair, little bit of hair this is gonna be too heavy for you. Also, it smells bad." Each of these bottles of shampoo and conditioner is \$30. Alyssa is also physically holding the bottles in her hand while claiming that she hates them which makes sense if you were to buy the product to test it, but why couldn't she have shown a picture of them like the *Dyson Air Wrap*? Then stating, "The *Redken* version. Obsessed. I have fine hair. I have a lot of it. This has saved my hair. It has changed my hair. I love it." My initial thoughts of this were that *Redken* is not a version of *Olaplex* shampoo and conditioner, but rather an entirely separate company that costs

more than double (\$80 combined) what *Olaplex* costs. Furthermore, she mentions the unessential need for “expensive hair oils to help your hair grow. [but she rather advises her audience to] go to Ulta, buy *The Ordinary’s multi-peptide serum* for your hair. I swear it’ll change your life.”

One pattern I immediately began to notice within Alyssa’s video is that besides the first product in the video, she does not mention the price of the products she is referring to, but rather states her opinion on how much she believes they are going to impact her audience's lives. By stating that she “swears” to buy a product. This opens the invitation for people to come back at her, and make claims that could go against what she is promoting in her videos, while it simultaneously establishes more of a trusting relationship with her audience, as they are conditioned to believe ‘if it worked for her, it has to work for me’. Continuing on she states, “On top of hair growth. Don’t spend a lot of money on hair, growth, shampoos, and things, put these in the shampoo that you already like. they’re from Target. They’re three dollars a pop, I buy them for everybody. They are so good.” -and yet again, fails to name what the product is or what it is called. to me as an audience member watching this video. It’s not only frustrating that she’s not mentioning the name of a product but it’s making me question if she’s allowed to state the name of such companies in a video that is directly telling a mass population of people to not buy their product. The next two products that she brings up are a sunscreen from the company *Supergoop* that she compares to a *Trader Joe’s* \$8 one, and a *Kosas Air Brow* (eyebrow tinted gel) that she compares to one from the company *Essence*. Within each of these products, I noticed the pattern of her simply stating it was not worth the money to buy the cheaper option to “save your coin”.

In the portion of the video where she talks about her next product, I wanted to highlight specifically the language she uses. she states, “I’m so mad y’all made me go on a waitlist for this s***. The *Glowgasm Charlotte Tilbury*. horrible. I hate this. I never use it”. From the very

beginning of her sentence, it's evident that she is very upset with the product that she tested, but she goes further to place the absolute blame on her audience members who supposedly "made" her go on the waitlist. As if her online audience has any sort of physical power or ability to make her do something. not only that, but she's establishing a personal emotional relationship with said viewers, stating that she's mad at them specifically. Adding a layer to this interaction is that she is a content creator, a lot of her income stems from the number of likes, comments, views, etc. that she receives on a post. If she were to speak to such an audience that has control over her presentation of information, I would think she should use more respectful language and mannerisms. Her vulgar use of language makes the video more explicit for any younger viewers who are watching being someone who has such a large fan base, likes, and view count on this video. All of this to say, her content reaches a larger demographic of viewers who potentially enjoyed the video and may not have taken this comment of hers too personally, yet rhetorically there is an interesting relationship going on here between Alyssa and the viewer. Lastly, Alyssa finished off this section of her video by stating, "Go buy it. Or don't because I'm trying not to influence you but I'm just telling you cheaper alternatives' ' Which ties directly into my overall thesis for this analysis; she is stating cheaper alternatives rather than advising her content consumers to not purchase at all, which opposes the deinfluencing trend as a whole. Yet, Alyssa still includes and highlights that she "loves the deinfluencing trend" and uses it for her benefit and popularity. Though this is one video, this small scale escalates quickly through social media trend culture to thousands of videos, all of which are choosing to turn the deinfluencing trend in this direction rather than promoting anti-consumerist and conscious consumption practices as a whole. Promoting this use of the platform furthers the notion that Instagram will always be a platform for marketing and audience manipulation.

Works Cited

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