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THE DISEASE OF INFLUENCE – Podcast transcript, English



Recorded in April 2023 at Goodit Studios in Madrid.

Host: Stephane M. Grueso

Participants: Pino, Juan, Walter and Miguel (students)

HOST:

Welcome to a new podcast as part of the Creative FLIP Learning Labs Program, co-financed by the EU, the Goethe-Institut Brussels with the support of the Intellectual Property Institute of Luxembourg and European Creative Hubs Network.

As part of this project different cultural entities offer a training program, a Learning Lab, to a group of local students, introducing their professions. In this case it has been the students of PEMAR and DIVER from the IES Blas de Otero who have produced their own podcast.

With our Learning Lab, we at Maldita have contributed to bringing the world of journalism closer to these students who learned to make their own podcast. They chose and investigated a topic, recorded some audio cuts, and today we are going to see/hear the result, titled THE DISEASE of INFLUENCE.

You have already heard it, friends, the Disease of Influence. So, today the thing is about Influencers, about a person with a significant number of followers and admirers over whom they can exert an influence, they can motivate the action of an audience in a certain way thanks to the credibility and authority that influence was able to acquire over time.

Today we are accompanied by some friends from IES Blas de Otero. We have here Pino, Juan, Walter and Miguel in the Goodit studio.

Good afternoon friends. Okay you know we are going to talk about this topic you have chosen and investigated: influencers and the influence that they exert. The first question I would ask is to Juan.

Juan, for you, what is an influencer?

STUDENT:

For me, it depends because there are many influencers like for instance the content creators. I like to call them more content creators than influencers. There are different types of influencers that use different networks: Instagram, tiktok...

HOST:

Well, Miguel you would like to be an influencer? Don't you get the impression that today a lot of young people don't see it as a real professional opportunity, that is, they see this as a way of diversion or to express themselves in the networks. Not that there is money and such. Have you thought of dedicating yourself to this?

STUDENT:

Well, as a child yeah, I did want to.

HOST:

Since then you have met the reality of trying to be an influencer and you don't want it anymore?

STUDENT:

Yes, it is very difficult.

HOST:

Walter, in fact that's what I wanted to talk about, because the thing with influencers... is that it seems to be a very easy way of life. Like: "I'm going to parties, I do promotions..." and such. Do you think that in reality it is so easy to be an influencer and to have such a life?

STUDENT:

I don't think it's as easy as you described because on the other hand, it is complicated. First of all, you would have to cooperate and find someone who supports you and enables you to go climbing, following famous people and trying to get followers. You'd have to do things that are obviously good for the whole world to see, or things that connect you to something interesting.

HOST:

Yes, I think that one of the problems is precisely that image we have: that everything is possible and that it is easy. In reality however, one in a million succeeds in being a famous influencer. So, it really is complicated. Well, one thing that I wanted to talk about, because it seems important to me, is the matter of responsibility. Let's say the importance of the words that influencers use. Many followers of those influencers are very young, they hear them talk about issues such as fashion, cosmetics, whatever... But sometimes they get to talk about more serious things. Now we are going to listen to a cut, and then I want to know your opinion. Try to reflect whether they are conscious about the effect that may have on young people. Do they realize that they are a figure of authority for many listeners, especially a young audience that is easily influenced... We are going to listen to a piece of recording and then we will comment on it.

AUDIO RECORDING:

They have already washed your mind. What this thing about the masks? What problem do you have if I don't want to put it on? It's my problem. I'm at home in my Urbanization. There is a global pandemic and everything you want, but that matters you, that I don't put it on myself? Oh, you're irresponsible, blah, blah, blah, I don't have elderly people at home, my mother doesn't care. In fact, she doesn't believe in the coronavirus and I honestly think that: "oh, oh, I don't believe anything about the government or the media."

HOST:

Well, we listened to Marina Yers, a young woman who creates content on different social networks on various topics, but who also expresses critical opinions like what we just heard. And these statements actually do scare me. Imagine that in the middle

of the pandemic you listen to this... Walter, what do you think? Do you think that these people should face a certain amount of responsibility for the things they say?

STUDENT:

I think, that they should be more careful with the words they say. In this case, speaking about a fairly important disease that is worldwide known, and I don't think it's necessary to say do or don't do that, and if you have to use the mask or not in that case. She should have used it, rather not to protect herself but to protect others.

HOST:

Well, speaking so lightly and so cheerfully about these issues, when this woman has millions of people who follow her... It is this type of phenomenon of people who talk to you about cosmetics today, and about completely other serious issues tomorrow. Maybe the same thing we see on TV, with all these experts that know everything,

STUDENT:

Well, it doesn't seem right to me, because the people who are seeing her are going to imitate what they saw. When she is saying that she is not going to put on the mask, one has to expect that her followers are going to do the same. Because most people pay more attention to the influencer and do not really think what is right for themselves.

HOST:

What Juan says is really interesting. It's about the authority figure that influencers are for young people. They are really going to listen to them and believe in what they say. That can be a problem, no, Miguel? Have you ever listened to an influencer and did what he or she said? I mean, have you ever heard something that you thought was wrong, but because of your social media consumption and certain persons of reference you convinced yourself otherwise? You do consume social networks and you have people that serve as a reference for you, like a person that interests you...

STUDENT:

Actually, I only follow singers, not influencers. Yes, it's worth following an interesting singer.

HOST:

OK, in fact, we're going to talk about a specific influencer. I don't know him very well or whether he's a singer, if he's an influencer... But I hope you'll explain to me because I'm a little confused about this guy.

But before, wait a second.... they tell me here through the earpiece that someone here who could really become an amazing influencer... Wait. And enjoy what you are going to see. Jorge, play us that cut, please...

AUDIO CUT

[A student singing, imitating Shakira]

HOST:

It is amazing... things are happening, things are happening here [laughing]... Maybe Shakira has not moved to Miami, but she actually has enrolled in the IES Blas de Otero..., or maybe it was the good one from Pino that has done this incredible performance, that has been recorded, and you know: things that are recorded stay, and might be used later...

So, the time has come for you to take over the program, so come on, ask us some questions and discuss with your colleagues.

STUDENT (AS HOST):

Yes. First of all, how much money can an influencer earn per publication?

STUDENT:

Each influencer is different, well, it depends on the amount of influence you have, or it also depends on the brands that sponsor you. You'll get more or less money. For example, there is Ibai Llanos, he is one of the biggest influencers in Spain, he has different brands, he does many events and he does different things. But there are other situations that we don't see... Correct me, but I think that there is a lot of money to earn, but probably most influencers' collaborations are quite shabby, meaning, like a lot of work and little money. Or something like that, I don't know. It depends on the influencer.

STUDENT (AS HOST):

Thanks, does it take a lot to be an influencer Miguel, what do you think?

STUDENT:

It's like there are a lot of people who try, but only few who succeed. Yes, I believe that. Like maybe you wake up one day wanting to be an influencer. You try it for a week, and after that week you have already given up.

HOST:

Well, this question seems quite interesting to me. What happens if you don't succeed? Walter, here you may have two options: one is to keep trying for as long as possible. That's it. Work harder and continue implementing more work and see. And if it doesn't work, leave that influencer job and consider doing something else that you're good at. But it can be a complicated process to stop and go back to that more "normal" life that we all know.

STUDENT:

Well, I do think that at first it will pull you down because one wouldn't want to do anything else anymore, if they have been a lot into their role as an influencer.

HOST:

Pino, thank you very much for your collaboration, continue working hard and remember: only few succeed.

Thank you very much, and Jorge, give me now another song but a little more 'movidita' because we are going to talk about an influencer who is a bit unique.

MUSIC

HOST:

Well yes, we are going to talk about a person who has made millions of followers with "blessings". I don't know if you know who I'm talking about, but listen, listen...

AUDIO CUT. SONG:

*This song
I dedicate it to God and to my followers
listen to it please
I never imagined
reaching a lot of people
through these networks
Today we are in TikTok
we are on YouTube
we share on Facebook
the word of the Lord
I just want to say thank you, thank God
Thanks to you I am very happy*

HOST:

Well friends I am really shocked, and I need you to explain to me for a moment... Who is this man and how he is so successful?

STUDENT:

'JH' has been a person who previously had a very complicated life. And then from one day to the next, with a mobile phone just recording and saying any nonsense on tiktok, he has gone viral. He easily uploaded 100 tiktoks a day out of which probably 3 were a hit with millions of visits and watched by a lot of people that liked him, because he is very funny. He has become very popular especially in Colombia and he is moving around the world: Spain, Latin America....

HOST:

Miguel, I am wondering about the fact that once you have a certain reputation, you can no longer disconnect from this lifestyle. It is not the usual routine anymore, doing your job, going home and that's it.

STUDENTS:

If you are JH your life probably looks like this - going at 2am in the morning to buy milk at the supermarket on the corner and you will get five guys talking to you and wanting to make photos with you. And it's like you can't stop. Imagine living like this, I couldn't, to tell the truth. On the bright side though, the world likes and appreciates you. People recognize your work and that's cool. But yes, it would still be a lot of stress. I couldn't really do it...

HOST:

Well, before we wrap up I also wanted to ask you what you think of the project that we have done together? Have you learned something? Can you tell us about your experience?

STUDENTS:

I found the work on the podcast interesting and appreciate the opportunity we had, to be able to record in person, doing a podcast ourselves.

HOST:

And also, friends, remember today and mark in your calendars. Because if one day Pino becomes famous, it all started, here at Goodit studios.

Walter what do you tell us? What did you think on the very first day of the project?

STUDENTS:

Thank you very much for this opportunity, I liked it. For my part, I really liked how we were researching the information for the podcast. We really had a good time and laughed. I liked it because this was not something individual but more a teamwork. And then of course it was great to come here and record it...

HOST:

Well I'm glad you say that because as I mentioned before, for us at Maldita, this project wasn't only about journalism and doing a podcast. There were other goals such as teamwork and other things that will be useful to us for the rest of our lives.

Miguel, what can you tell us...?

STUDENTS:

Well, personally, I liked it. This has been very interesting because I learned what's a podcast I I also really liked coming here to record. Thank you very much.

HOST:

And Juan, you are the last one. Tell us about your experience.

STUDENTS:

I really liked recording a podcast because I had never done it before and didn't know to expect. I knew podcasts, but from the audience's perspective. I have listened to many but I had never experienced the process of producing one myself. It was really cool.

HOST:

Miguel, Walter, Juan, Pino.... Thank you very much for being with us today. And thank you for this opportunity to also work with you at your school. Finally, we'd also like to mention your teachers who helped us a lot. And well, from here nothing more than to say but goodbye to the audience. See you soon!