***Interviewee: Alex, 35 yo***

***Niche: Wellness and Health***

***Reach: 15 million followers (Instagram & TikTok)***

**Q1. Please tell me a little about your work as a digital influencer, how it started, and how you have established yourself in your current niche.**

Absolutely! It’s been quite a journey. I started out as a wellness coach and personal trainer. I was passionate about helping people live healthier lives, but I was mostly working with individuals in one-on-one sessions and small groups. It was actually a bit of a surprise even to me. A friend suggested I start a blog to share my health tips and insights.

At first, I was hesitant—I wasn’t sure if I had anything new to offer, and the idea of putting myself out there online felt a bit overwhelming. But I decided to give it a shot. I set up a simple blog and began writing about balanced nutrition, workout routines, and stress management. Then, late in 2017, I decided to get started with a more professional profile on Instagram came. I created an account to complement my blog, sharing daily tips, quick recipes, and workout videos.

Initially, the growth was slow, but I stayed consistent and focused on being authentic. I shared practical advice and personal stories, which helped me connect with my audience. And honestly, I think a few key things really set me apart from other influencers. I focused on a holistic approach to health instead of just fitness and integrated mental well-being and emotional balance into my content. I also emphasized sustainability and ethical living—talking about eco-friendly products and zero-waste tips, which resonated with many people. In hindsight, authenticity was crucial to establish myself on this niche.

I shared my personal journey, including both successes and challenges. This openness helped me build trust with my audience. Additionally, I engaged actively with them through Q&A sessions, live workouts, and interactive polls. Creating a private Facebook group where followers could support each other was also a big part of fostering that community feel. But, you know,to remain relevant in this space requires effort! I keep my content fresh by experimenting with new formats and topics. I pay close attention to feedback from my audience and adjust my strategy based on what resonates with them. I also stay updated with the latest research in health and wellness, and I’m always learning and improving my own knowledge.

Anyhow, I’m really excited about exploring new technologies, like virtual reality workouts and interactive wellness apps. I also want to use my platform to advocate for broader issues, like mental health awareness and equitable access to wellness resources. There’s always something new to explore and ways to make a positive impact!

**Q2. In what ways do you believe digital influencers shape consumer behavior? Could you share any examples?**

Oh, absolutely! Influencers have such a big impact on shopping habits these days. You know, it’s like when I recommend a product, my followers really trust my opinion because we’ve built this relationship over time. It’s not just about selling something; it’s about sharing a piece of my life.

For example, if I rave about a skincare product I’ve been using and genuinely love, people are way more likely to check it out. They know I’m not just trying to push something for a paycheck; I’m sharing what actually works for me. It’s kind of like chatting with a friend who’s tried something awesome and wants to share it with you, right?

Plus, the beauty of social media is that it allows for real-time feedback. When I post about a product, I often get comments and messages from followers asking questions or sharing their own experiences. It creates this whole conversation around it, which makes the recommendation feel even more authentic. It’s not just a one-way street; it’s interactive, and that connection makes a difference.

And let’s be honest, we all appreciate that personal touch. Who wants to buy something from a random ad when you can hear about it from someone you trust? That kind of influence can really drive people to make purchases because it feels more relatable. It’s like we’re all part of this big community, sharing tips and discovering new things together. It’s pretty cool!

Another way we influence shopping is by creating a sense of FOMO, or fear of missing out. If I post about a new fitness gadget that’s getting a lot of buzz, it can make people want to get one too, just to be part of the trend. It’s like seeing everyone else getting something cool and feeling like you need to join in.

Sharing personal stories also helps. I remember talking about a wellness supplement that really helped me manage stress. When I share how it made a difference in my life, it becomes more relatable, and many of my followers end up trying it themselves.

Demonstrating how a product works can be a game-changer too. For example, when I do a video showing how to use a new blender for smoothies, it helps people see the product in action and understand its benefits. It’s not just talking about it; it’s showing them how it fits into a healthy lifestyle.

Exclusive deals can drive a lot of sales as well. I’ve partnered with brands to offer special discount codes or limited-time offers, and that sense of exclusivity really gets people to act quickly. And then there’s the way products are integrated into my daily life. When I feature a product in my “day in the life” videos, it helps my followers see how it might work for them too, making it feel more natural and appealing.

One time, I did a campaign for a new eco-friendly fitness apparel line. I posted a bunch of Instagram Stories and wrote a detailed review on my blog, talking about the quality, sustainability, and how the clothes felt during workouts.

The response was incredible. I saw a huge spike in engagement and got tons of messages asking for more details. The brand saw a big jump in sales from the discount codes I shared, and there was a lot of buzz and discussion in the comments. It was clear that my honest endorsement and the special offer really resonated with my followers. However, I should say that one downside is that if influencers start promoting too many products or seem to lose sight of their core values, it can make followers skeptical. People appreciate transparency and authenticity, so if it feels like I’m just pushing products or being disingenuous, it can hurt trust. It’s important to stay genuine and honest to maintain that positive connection with my audience.

**Q3. What strategies would you say digital influencers typically use to increase sales of sponsored products and services? Which ones have you used? What worked and what did not work for you? Why?**

Absolutely! There are a few strategies that really stand out. For starters, authentic reviews and testimonials are huge. When I give honest feedback about a product, sharing my real experience, my followers tend to trust those recommendations more. It’s all about being genuine and transparent. I am trying to think…so another strategy is making use of Demonstrations and tutorials, yeah that have been really effective for me too. I love showing how a product works or how to use it in daily routines. For example, I’ve done workout videos featuring new fitness gear or cooking demos with health products. It helps my followers see the product in action and understand its benefits. Another approach I follow is to provide my followers with exclusive discounts and offers - who dosen’t love that?...yeah, they are also a great way to drive sales and for influencers to profit. I often work with brands to provide promo codes or special deals for my followers. It creates a sense of urgency and gives my audience an extra incentive to buy. For this, I use affiliate links, and they can be useful. They help track sales and allow me to earn a commission. But I’ve found they work best when combined with other strategies. Just sharing a link without any context doesn’t always lead to great results. Oh, giveaways and collaborations can be a lot of fun and generate a lot of excitement. I’ve teamed up with brands for giveaways that really engaged my audience. But, it’s crucial that the brand fits well with my niche and values. If the partnership doesn’t feel authentic, it can fall flat. I should say though that affiliate links alone haven’t been super effective for me. They need context and personal touch to really work. Also, in the past I have tried some overly aggressive promotion, like frequent product mentions or hard sells, and that didn’t go over well. My followers prefer a more balanced and authentic approach.

I tend to say that my biggest piece of advice is to stay true to your brand and only promote products you genuinely believe in. Authenticity really resonates with audiences. Also, listen to your followers’ feedback and adjust your strategies based on what they respond to. It’s all about building trust and maintaining a genuine connection with your audience.

**Q4. Moving on, what do you see as key ethical responsibilities of digital influencers? In your opinion, how should these ethics apply to endorsements and recommendations? Are there any personal examples you could share?**

That’s a really good question. In the world of digital influencing, there are definitely some key ethical standards that we should follow. For one, being upfront about transparency is huge. If I’m endorsing a product, I always make it clear if it’s a sponsored post or if I’m using affiliate links. I use hashtags like #ad or #sponsored so my followers know when there’s a financial connection. It’s all about keeping things honest and maintaining trust.

Authenticity is another big one. I only promote products that I genuinely believe in and actually use myself. I wouldn’t want to push something just for a quick paycheck. For example, there was a chance to promote a supplement brand, but after looking into it, I felt it didn’t match my personal health values. So, I turned it down. It’s important to stay true to what you believe in and what’s best for your audience.

Honesty in reviews is also crucial. I aim to give a balanced view of any product I’m talking about. If there are any drawbacks or things that might not work for everyone, I make sure to mention them. Like, when I reviewed a new workout gadget, I talked about its benefits but also pointed out its size and price. Being upfront helps my followers make informed decisions and keeps the trust strong.

And then there’s the need to consider the impact of the products I’m promoting. I try to focus on brands that are not just good but also have positive values, like sustainability or ethical practices. For instance, I’ve promoted reusable water bottles from a company that’s really committed to reducing plastic waste. It’s about aligning promotions with values that matter to me and my audience.

**Interviewer:** Those are great points. Do you have any specific examples?

**Interviewee:** Definitely. There was a time when I was offered a big sponsorship deal to promote a weight loss supplement. After checking it out, I found it made some claims that seemed too good to be true and didn’t have solid scientific backing. I decided to pass on the deal, even though it was tempting financially. I explained my decision to my followers, and they really appreciated the honesty. It reinforced the importance of staying authentic and responsible.

Another example is when I promoted a brand of reusable water bottles. I chose them because they’re all about cutting down on plastic waste and have strong ethical practices. By highlighting not just the product but also the company’s mission, I was able to align my promotion with my personal values and those of my audience.

You know, I think it’s crucial to keep ethics front and center in this space. It’s all about building trust and staying true to what you believe in while promoting products that genuinely align with your values.

Honestly, I think it boils down to a few core principles: transparency, honesty, and responsibility. When we’re out here recommending products, it’s super important to be upfront about any partnerships or sponsorships. For me, that means tagging posts with “#ad” or “#sponsored” so everyone knows what’s going on behind the scenes.

I’m a big believer in doing my homework before I promote anything. I check out the ingredients, look into how the product is made, and if I’m unsure about anything, I’ll consult with experts. For example, before I endorsed a new supplement, I made sure to research it thoroughly and even had a chat with a nutritionist to make sure it was legit.

There was this one time I was offered a deal with a fitness gadget company, but after looking into it, I felt their claims were a bit too good to be true. I didn’t want to mislead my followers, so I passed on it. Instead, I focused on promoting something that I truly believed in and knew was going to be beneficial.

So, I try to be as educational as possible. I’ll break down how to read product labels, what certain terms actually mean, and give them tips on spotting marketing fluff. I did a whole series on understanding supplement labels because I think it's crucial for people to know what they’re putting into their bodies. It’s all about giving them the tools to make smart choices. At the end of the day, it’s all about trust. I want my followers to know that when I’m recommending something, it’s because I genuinely believe in it and have done my due diligence. It’s not just about selling products—it’s about supporting and educating my community.