***Interviewee: Linda, 27 yo***

***Niche: Beauty & Skin Care***

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

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

So, my journey as a digital influencer in the beauty and skincare world really began from a personal place. Back in 2016, I was dealing with my own insecurities about my appearance—especially my freckles, which were a big deal for me as a teenager. You know, during my teenage years, my freckles were often a target for bullying, and it really impacted my self-esteem. One day, I was done covering them up, it was just too much work, and I decided to share a post celebrating those freckles with a simple, radiant makeup look, and, honestly, I was blown away when it went viral. That’s when I launched the hashtag “#freethefreckles,” which has become a symbol of self-acceptance and empowerment for girls with freckles like me. So, yeah, by sharing my story and embracing my unique features, I found this amazing community of people who not only understood my struggles but also celebrated their own individuality. What started as a personal challenge has turned into a mission to redefine beauty standards and promote self-love.

Seeing how many people connected with the message was amazing, and when some celebrities reposted it, it really boosted my confidence. That support helped me realize I could use my platform to promote body positivity and celebrate unique beauty. Since then, I’ve been all about creating content that highlights self-love, shares skincare and makeup tips, and encourages others to embrace their own features.

Building my presence in this space has been about staying true to myself, engaging with my community, and teaming up with brands that share these values. I’m super excited to keep growing and spreading positivity in everything I do.

And, you know, it’s kind of amazing how things change over time. Not too long ago, freckles were often seen as, you know, something people wanted to cover up or hide. They were considered a 'flaw' by the so-called beauty standards. But nowadays, people are actually paying for fake freckles. Yeah, you heard that right—paying for them! Whether through makeup hacks or permanent tattoos, people are going out of their way to get that trendy, freckled look. Crazy, right?

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

I think digital influencers, you know, have a pretty huge effect on how people shop and their beauty standards these days. Again, back to the freckles, I would never have thought that a simple post could have changed an entire market or perception around a stigmatized look.

I guess that is because our recommendations or things we promote, like, feel way more personal and relatable compared to traditional ads, which really helps build trust with their followers.

I really think digital influencers have a huge impact on how people shop and the beauty standards we see today. It’s wild to think that something as simple as a post could change perceptions around looks that used to be stigmatized, like freckles. It just goes to show how powerful these platforms can be!

What makes influencers stand out is that their recommendations feel so much more personal and relatable compared to traditional ads. When you see someone you admire sharing their honest thoughts and experiences, it creates a real sense of trust. It feels like a friend is giving you a recommendation rather than a faceless brand trying to sell you something.

But with that influence comes responsibility. Influencers have the power to change the conversation around beauty standards and promote self-acceptance. When they celebrate unique features and embrace diversity, it can help break down harmful stereotypes and redefine what beauty really means.

That said, there’s also a flip side. If influencers chase trends without thinking about the messages they’re sending, they could end up promoting unrealistic expectations or products that don’t really resonate with their followers. It’s important for them to be mindful of the impact they have and to be transparent about their partnerships.

At the end of the day, the relationship between influencers and their followers is built on trust and understanding. When influencers use their platform to promote positive values and authentic products, they can truly drive change in how we consume and perceive beauty. It empowers their audience to make choices that feel right for them, fostering a culture of acceptance and authenticity.

You asked for examples, right? So, for example, when influencers, like, give honest reviews or show how they use products in their everyday lives, it makes those products seem way more appealing and trustworthy. I remember featuring this skincare brand that focuses on natural ingredients, and my followers were, like, super engaged—they shared their own experiences and asked questions. This kind of interaction can really, you know, boost interest and sales for those brands.

And another thing is how influencers use affiliate links and discount codes. When I share special codes with my followers, it not only gives them a chance to save money but also creates this sense of urgency and exclusivity. This often leads to more sales because people get excited to try out new products.

For example, I partnered with Sephora a month ago to promote a new skincare line called Light up. I did, you know, create content like a detailed review or a tutorial showing how I use the products from this new brand they are carrying called Freck OG. Along with that, I shared the discount code “FRECKLEGLOW20,” which gave my followers 20% off their purchase on Sephora’s site. It is a win-win situation for everyone.

That discount code does more than just offer savings; it actually helps Sephora track how well my promotion is working. By seeing how many people use the code, they can measure the direct impact on sales from my audience. This kind of collaboration not only boosts sales for the brand but also lets me offer something special to my followers, which, like, strengthens our connection.

**Q3. What strategies would you say content creators/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?**

I’d say it’s definitely a mixed bag! It really comes down to the kind of support you have when it comes to strategizing and setting priorities. Just managing content production alone is a huge task. Luckily, I’ve got a fantastic team that handles the monetization side of things, so I don’t get too tangled up in the nitty-gritty technical details or what makes the algorithm tick. What’s important to me is that we stick to our agreement of keeping everything authentic.

For beauty influencers like myself, the key is really integrating products into our daily skincare routines and showing how they perform. My followers expect to see real-life demos, like how a new serum fits into my morning routine and what the pros and cons are. It’s not about using fancy persuasion techniques—though I’m sure some influencers are experts in that area. For me, sticking to the facts and showing real results is what truly inspires people. That’s the kind of influence I want to have.

A lot of my content revolves around before-and-after photos or videos to clearly show how a product impacts the skin. This approach has really helped build a community of trust, and the feedback I get has been overwhelmingly positive. So yeah, maintaining trust is at the heart of my strategy. Building a genuine and reliable connection with my followers is crucial, and honestly, I can’t imagine doing it any other way. I believe that digital influencers who prioritize monetization over authenticity and a meaningful purpose might not have long-lasting success. Trust and genuine engagement are what keep audiences coming back and make the influence sustainable.

**Q4. What do you see as key ethical responsibilities of content creators/digital influencers? Are there any personal examples you could share?**

Trust and reliability are crucial across all niches, and they’re especially important in the influencer world. We owe it to our audiences to be respectful and genuine in all our interactions. I recommend only those products that I truly believe will benefit my followers. It’s not about following the latest trend or pushing high-paying deals. For me, it’s about aligning with products that genuinely offer value to my audience.

For instance, I once collaborated with a skincare brand that I was excited about. Although I loved the brand overall, I found that one of their new products didn’t perform as well for me as their other items. I chose to share an honest review, highlighting both the pros and cons of the product. This balanced feedback was well-received and reinforced my commitment to honest and ethical influencing. My audience appreciates this transparency, and it helps maintain the trust we’ve built.

My team and I are also very selective about the brands we partner with. We prioritize brands that uphold ethical practices, including those that do not test on animals. It’s important to us to support companies whose values align with ours and our audience’s.

We also consider the logistical aspects of working with a brand. We partner only with reputable companies known for timely product delivery, excellent condition upon arrival, and straightforward return policies. Good customer support is a must as well. These factors contribute to a positive experience for both me and my followers, ensuring that any recommendations I make are backed by reliable and supportive brands.

Lastly, I truly believe it’s our responsibility as content creators to break the cycle of suffering that ordinary women, have endured for far too long. I’m fortunate to be in the beauty industry at a time when society is beginning to recognize and celebrate the idea that beauty is not one-dimensional but incredibly diverse.

It’s essential that our content authentically reflects this diversity. This means featuring products that cater to all skin tones, types, and unique concerns, ensuring that everyone feels represented and valued. I’ve made it a priority to collaborate with brands that champion inclusivity and showcase diverse models in their campaigns, rather than perpetuating narrow beauty standards.

In my own content, I strive to highlight various skin types and concerns, creating space for dialogue around issues that affect different communities. I regularly invite guests from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences and insights, enriching the conversation and providing a platform for voices that often go unheard. This way, we can create a more inclusive beauty narrative that empowers everyone to embrace their individuality and feel confident in their skin. By doing so, we not only uplift our audience but also contribute to a more equitable industry where all forms of beauty are celebrated.

I recognize the vital connection between beauty and mental health. So, promoting realistic portrayals of life is important, showing that it’s okay to have bad skin days or struggle with self-acceptance. I aim to spread positive messaging, encouraging self-love and reminding my followers that beauty comes in many forms. I often share content with tips on practicing self-love, like setting aside time for self-care and being mindful of negative self-talk. The feedback I received has been overwhelmingly positive; many followers expressed gratitude for the honesty and felt encouraged to share their own experiences. By promoting this realistic portrayal of life, I hope to create a space where everyone feels validated and empowered, knowing that their worth isn’t defined by societal standards.