***Interviewee: Otto, 25 yo***

***Niche: Travel & Adventure***

***Reach: 10.4 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.**

Oh man, where do I even start? So, I kicked off this whole digital influencer gig a few years ago when I was just a broke backpacker with a killer sense of direction and a camera that barely worked. I figured if I was going to be out there living the dream, I might as well share it with the world. I started posting my epic adventures—think insane cliff dives, hidden beaches, and all that jazz. Fast forward to now, and I've got a solid crew of followers who live vicariously through my travels.

I really cranked up the volume on my content by focusing on eye-popping destinations and living it up like there’s no tomorrow. People love the high-octane lifestyle, and it’s paid off big time. Brands started noticing, and now it’s all about those sweet sponsorship deals and collabs. It’s been a wild ride, but I’m all about the numbers and making sure every post drives up the engagement. I mean, who wouldn’t want to hit that next big milestone?

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

Well, I like to think that digital influencers are basically the new-age gatekeepers of cool, right? We shape shopping behaviors by giving our followers a glimpse into what’s hot and what’s not, often before it even hits the mainstream. When I post about a killer travel gadget or the latest must-have gear, my followers see it as a kind of shortcut to the good stuff—stuff they might not have known about otherwise.

This kind of content isn’t just about showing off; it’s about storytelling. When I feature a product, it’s integrated into the narrative of my adventures, which makes it way more relatable. We craft these stories that make our followers feel like they're part of something special or exclusive. My followers don’t just see a product; they see how it fits into an aspirational lifestyle. It’s like they’re getting a sneak peek into a world that’s just a few clicks away from them.

We, influencers often have a direct line to their audience. When I share genuine excitement about something, it’s like a personal recommendation from a friend, and people tend to trust those more than traditional ads. That’s why when I say something’s great, it’s not just a casual mention; it’s a powerful endorsement that can drive sales. Brands love it because they get a direct boost in visibility and engagement, and my followers get in on the latest trends before they become mainstream.

For instance, last summer I showcased this rad brand new eco-friendly travel backpack. It wasn’t just about flaunting it; I highlighted its features, how it made my life easier, and how it looked in those epic mountain shots. The response was nuts—sales skyrocketed for that brand, and they even reached out for a long-term collab. I guess that’s proof that when an influencer like me endorses something, it’s not just a shout-out; it can seriously impact what people are buying. It’s all about creating that need, which some people might not even be aware exists, and showing off how awesome life can be with the right gear. So yeah, we are need makers somehow.

**Q3. What strategies would you say digital influencers typically rely on to encourage followers to purchase new products or services? Which ones have you used? What worked and what did not work for you? Why?**

Oh, that's a great question. There’s a bunch of tactics we use to drive those sales. One thing I've found super effective is pushing notifications to different segments of my audience. Like, I can target specific groups with tailored messages about new products or special offers. It’s a way to make sure the right people get the right info at the right time.

For example, I often use comments to engage directly with my followers. I’ll post about a promotion and then ask people to drop a specific passcode in the comments to unlock exclusive content or special deals. It’s a cool way to drive interaction and make people feel like they’re getting a special perk just for being engaged.

Another trick I've used is broadcast channels. These are awesome for sharing updates, behind-the-scenes content, and exclusive deals with a larger audience without flooding my main feed. Plus, I’ve set up exclusive groups like ‘Close Friends’ on social media, where I share more personal insights and limited-time offers. It’s like giving my most loyal followers a VIP pass to everything.

**Interviewer:** And how have those strategies worked out for you?

They’ve been pretty solid! The notifications and segmented pushes really help in making sure people see what’s relevant to them. The passcode idea has been a hit too; it creates a sense of exclusivity that people seem to love. I’ve seen good engagement and a nice bump in sales when I use those methods.

Broadcast channels are great for keeping the buzz going without overwhelming my main feed, and the exclusive groups make my followers feel like they're part of something special.

**Interviewer:** Have there been any strategies that didn’t work as well for you?

Yeah. For instance, if I try to be too pushy with sales content, it can backfire. Followers pick up on that and it can come off as insincere. Also, I’ve learned that if I use the same approach too often, it can get a bit stale. People appreciate fresh and engaging content, so mixing things up is key.

**Q4. In your view, what are the essential ethical responsibilities that content creators and digital influencers should uphold? Can you share any personal experiences that illustrate these responsibilities in action?**

Oh man, ethics in the digital world? It really feels like the Wild West out there! (laughs) When folks buy followers or get obsessed with vanity metrics, they totally miss out on those genuine connections. Authentic engagement isn’t just a quick win—it takes time and effort. It’s all about being present, responding to comments, and really listening to what your followers are saying.

Creating a space where people feel valued and heard is what matters most, not just seeing them as another number on a page. Unfortunately, some people lose sight of that and end up with their priorities all mixed up. It’s a shame because real connections are where the magic happens!

I should acknowledge that the social media landscape has definitely seen some more rigid regulations. We have had some post and content labeling regulations in place for a couple of years now, and while we see inconsistencies across profiles and niches, still, whenever I promote a product or a service, I always make sure to label it as sponsored clearly. My followers need to know when I’m getting paid to push something. Nobody likes feeling like they’ve been duped, right?

We know this is how social media marketing works. For example, if I post a clip of me enjoying a cocktail at a swanky resort in Bali, you bet there’s going to be a spike in bookings and people wanting to try that same drink. It’s a direct line from my experience to their actions.

Back to ethics, though—I always tag my posts as sponsored and share a bit about how the partnership came about. Transparency is key to keeping that genuine connection with my audience. But it's not just on me. Brands also have a role here. They need to be upfront and deliver on their promises. I had a situation where a product I endorsed had quality issues shortly after launch. I addressed it openly with my followers and showed that the brand was working to fix the problem. It’s crucial for both sides to be accountable.

That said, followers also need to be a bit savvy. There’s this tendency to blame influencers if they end up overspending or buying something that doesn’t meet their expectations. But honestly, it’s a two-way street. My followers should think critically and not just buy into everything they see. If they feel a product isn’t worth it or isn’t good quality, that’s not solely on me. They should do their own research, assess their needs, and make informed decisions.

So, I should say It’s all about trust and transparency. I aim to be honest and genuine with my endorsements, and I expect the brands I work with to do the same. But followers also need to be discerning and responsible in their purchasing decisions. It’s a partnership where everyone has a role to play.