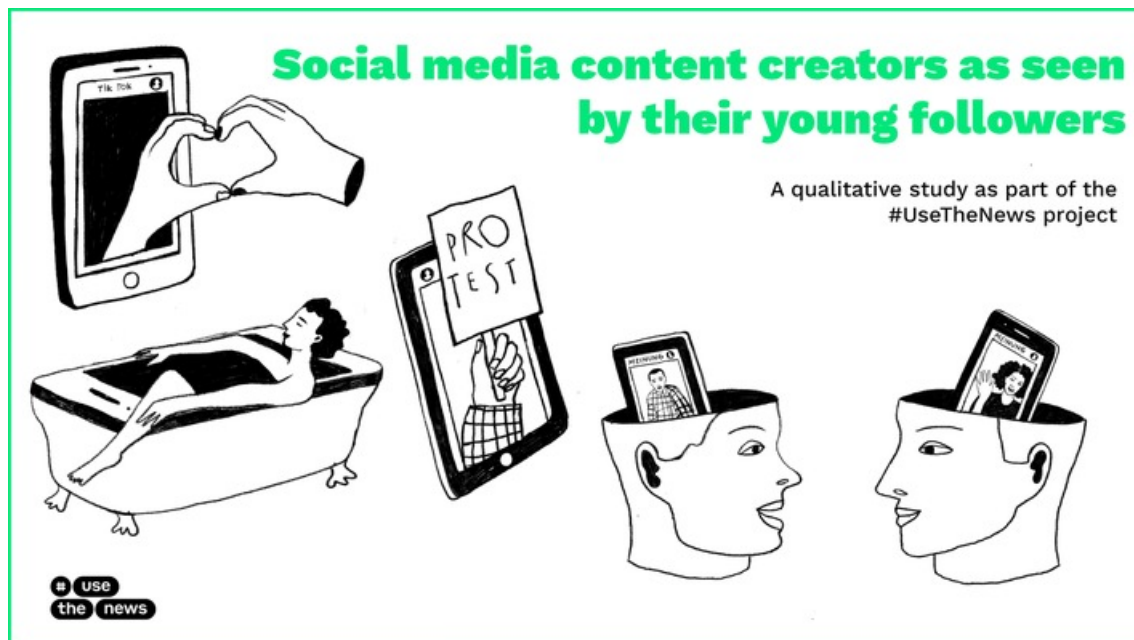


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Inspiration, role model, getting to have a say: What makes influencers so successful among young people - and what journalism can learn from them



Hamburg (ots) -

- "I would say that they influence my own opinion, and that's a responsibility they have to deal with." (Britta, 15)
- "I'm always on TikTok when I have nothing to do or I'm just bored." (Nicki, 20)
- "It's always a good place to have a conversation." (Julia, 16)

Young people follow influencers because they expect them to bring tangible benefits to their lives. On TikTok, Instagram, and other platforms, the so-called social media content creators offer inspiration, serve as role models, and provide information that allow young people have their say - and thus make a significant contribution to shaping opinions and categorising news. The traditional information media, which have lost relevance among at least some young people, can score points with adolescents on the social web, provided they take the opportunity to position themselves there as independent and trustworthy players.

These are the findings of the study "Social media content creators from the perspective of their young followers. A qualitative study as part of the #UseTheNews project," conducted by the Leibniz Institute for Media Research/Hans Bredow Institute in Hamburg. The independent study, for which in-depth interviews were conducted with adolescents aged 14 to 17 and young adults aged 18 to 24, is published in the context of the #UseTheNews initiative, with which renowned media organizations and educational institutions, together with dpa, promote news literacy among young people (www.usethenews.de).

To better distinguish between the activities of content creators on social media, the researchers identified four forms of offerings: "person-focused" channels run by individual influencers with either a specific topic or a variety of topics, and "content-focused" channels that are either devoted to a particular topic such as climate or - like ARD's "Tagesschau" on TikTok - cover the entire spectrum of events.

The study asked young people about their main motives for following social media content creators and sorted them into six different usage motives. They ranged from entertainment to establishing social closeness to providing inspiration, guidance, knowledge, or empowerment to have a say. The researchers found that young adults whose primary requirement is knowledge turn more to content-focused offerings, while adolescents tend toward people-focused channels from which they hope to gain identification and orientation.

The young people surveyed are not uncritical of influencers, for example when it comes to the question of the independence of creators who are financed by advertising or the issue of competence when social media personalities with a wide reach comment on complex political issues.

"This study provides in-depth knowledge on the role of influencers in social media news consumption," emphasizes Meinolf Ellers, managing director of the non-profit UseTheNews gGmbH. "For journalism, the question is what can we learn from the success of social media content creators and how can we better serve the usage motives of teenagers and young adults with our own

offerings." One goal, he said, is therefore also to work with the media partners of the #UseTheNews Lab to design cooperation opportunities between influencers and editorial teams and to test them in pilot projects.

About #UseTheNews:

The #UseTheNews initiative gets to the bottom of young people's news usage and literacy and develops new information and education offerings. In a News Literacy Lab, new news offerings are designed on the basis of the study results. The News Literacy Lab is supported by journalism experts from the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg). In addition, under the title Open News Education (ONE), educational offers, teaching materials, and training courses for teachers are being developed to strengthen the teaching of media literacy in schools. #UseTheNews was initiated by the German Press Agency dpa and the Hamburg Authority for Culture and Media. The project is supported by a board of trustees made up of well-known personalities from the media and politics. In May 2022, the initiative was put on a legal footing and transferred to UseTheNews gGmbH. #UseTheNews has partners in Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United States, who are driving the initiative forward in their own countries.

Initiators, partners and supporters of #UseTheNews:

ANP, APA, ARD, Bayerische Landeszentrale für neue Medien (BLM), Behörde für Kultur und Medien der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn Institut, Bundesverband Digitalpublisher und Zeitungsverleger (BDZV), Deutsche Presse-Agentur dpa, Deutschlandradio, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Funke-Mediengruppe, HAW Hamburg, Journalismus macht Schule, Keystone SDA, Media Lab Bayern, Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung | Hans-Bredow-Institut, Landesanstalt für Kommunikation Baden-Württemberg (LFK), Medienanstalt Hamburg / Schleswig-Holstein (MA HSH), MISCHA, Museum für Kommunikation, Lie Detectors, NDR, News Literacy Project, NOZ, ntv, Reporterfabrik, RTL, Schöpflin Stiftung, so geht MEDIEN, Spiegel, SWR, Vodafone Stiftung, SZ-Institut VÖZ, VRM, ZDF, ZEIT-Stiftung, Zeitungsgruppe Ostfriesland (ZGO)

About dpa:

The German Press Agency (dpa) was founded in 1949 and is one of the world's leading independent news agencies. dpa supplies media outlets, businesses and other organizations with editorial content, including text, photos, videos, graphics, audio and other formats. As an international agency, dpa reports in seven languages. The company has around 1,000 journalists at some 150 locations in Germany and abroad. Its shareholders are about 170 German media companies. Staff work according to the principles outlined in the dpa statute: independently from ideologies, businesses and governments. The central editing desk, under the leadership of Editor-in-Chief Sven Gösmann, is located in Berlin. The management team, headed by President & CEO Peter Kropsch, is based in Hamburg. The Chairman of the Board is David Brandstätter (Main-Post GmbH, Würzburg).

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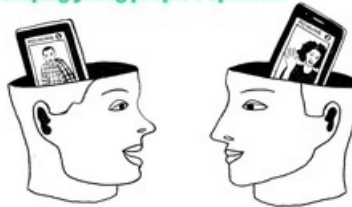


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Influential: Influencers make a significant contribution to shaping young people's opinions.



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"Social media content creators as seen by their young followers. A qualitative study as part of #useTheNews project." Leonie Wunderlich and Sascha Hilbig, Leibniz Institute for Media Research Hans-Bredow-Institute (HBI), October 2022.

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