ALEX

CONSUMER CULTURE: INFLUENCER MARKETING

What is it?

Influencer marketing is a **digital phenomenon** where a company pays or encourages influential people with a large list of followers on social media to post about their product or service. It can consist of promoting a specific product, generating excitement for a campaign, or obtaining followers for the company in question.
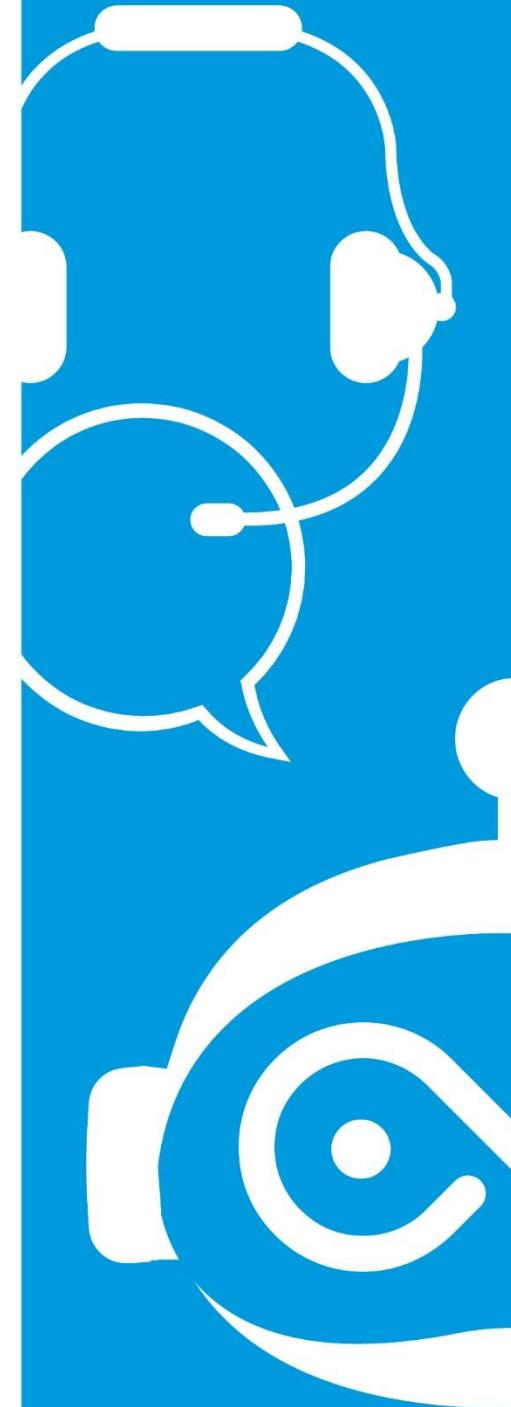
How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

Influencer marketing often focuses on product and lifestyle promotion, leaving comprehensive SRH education to the side. This can result in a lack of understanding about crucial issues such as consent, contraception, or sexually transmitted infections, among others. Influencer marketing may provide inaccurate or incomplete information on sexual and reproductive health issues, which could lead young people to make decisions based on incorrect information. Some influencers may also promote products such as sex toys, supplements or birth control methods. If accurate information and education about these products is not provided, young people may make decisions without a full understanding of their implications.

If influencers actively promote a promiscuous or extremely adventurous sexual lifestyle, young people may feel pressure to experiment beyond their comfort level or knowledge.

Relatedly, media portrayals and the opinions of influencers can influence young people's attitudes towards consent, respect and healthy relationships.

How influencers depict body image issues can be both positive and negative. Some may promote an idealised and airbrushed image of sexuality and the body. This can generate insecurities and pressure on young people to conform to certain aesthetic standards or sexual behaviour. On the other hand, there are others who very vocally advocate for body acceptance and positivity, such as Jameela Jamil.
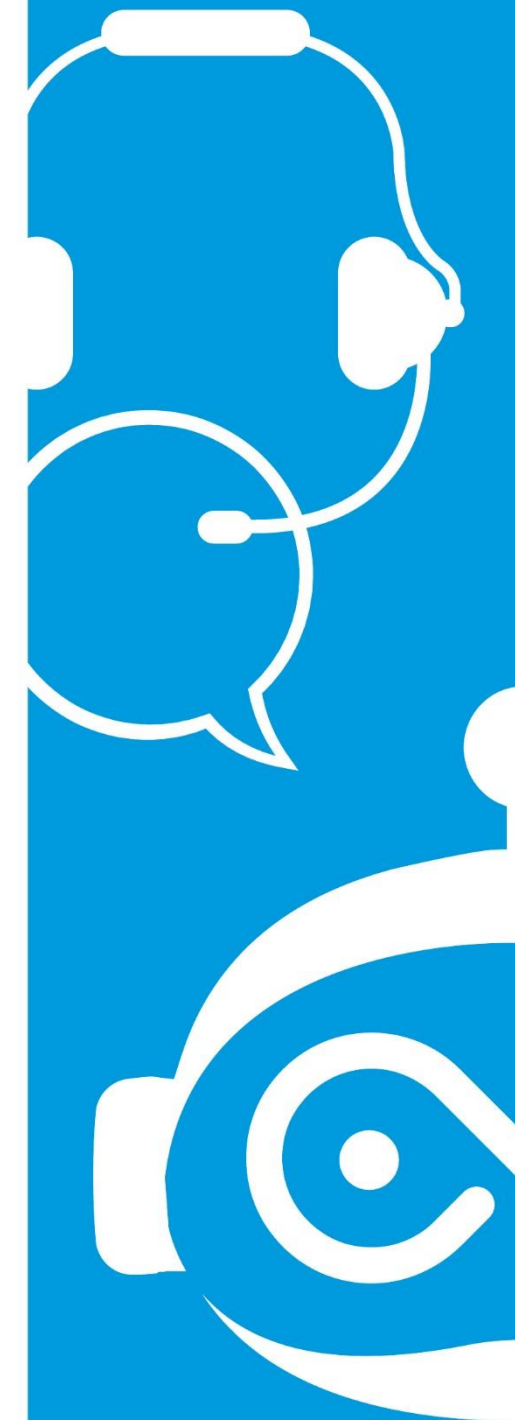
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

Here are some tools and resources that may be helpful to support youth adopt a more informed and critical approach towards online influencers:

- Organise a workshop about how marketing strategies work and developing a critical view on the goals of each campaign in different contexts (not necessarily just in SRH). This will lead to the development of the media literacy and critical thinking related to influencer marketing and prevent SRH risks.

- Encourage open and honest conversations among youth by prompting peer-led discussions. Create a safe space for them to share their experiences and concerns about influencer marketing. This can help raise awareness and promote healthy discussions.

- Identify responsible and credible influencers who prioritise factual information and promote positive messages about SRH. Collaborate with them to create informative content and campaigns that challenge harmful narratives spread by other influencers.

- Launch digital campaigns and challenges on social media platforms to engage youth in spreading accurate information and debunking myths related to SRH. Encourage them to share their experiences and knowledge, empowering them to become advocates for healthy behaviours.
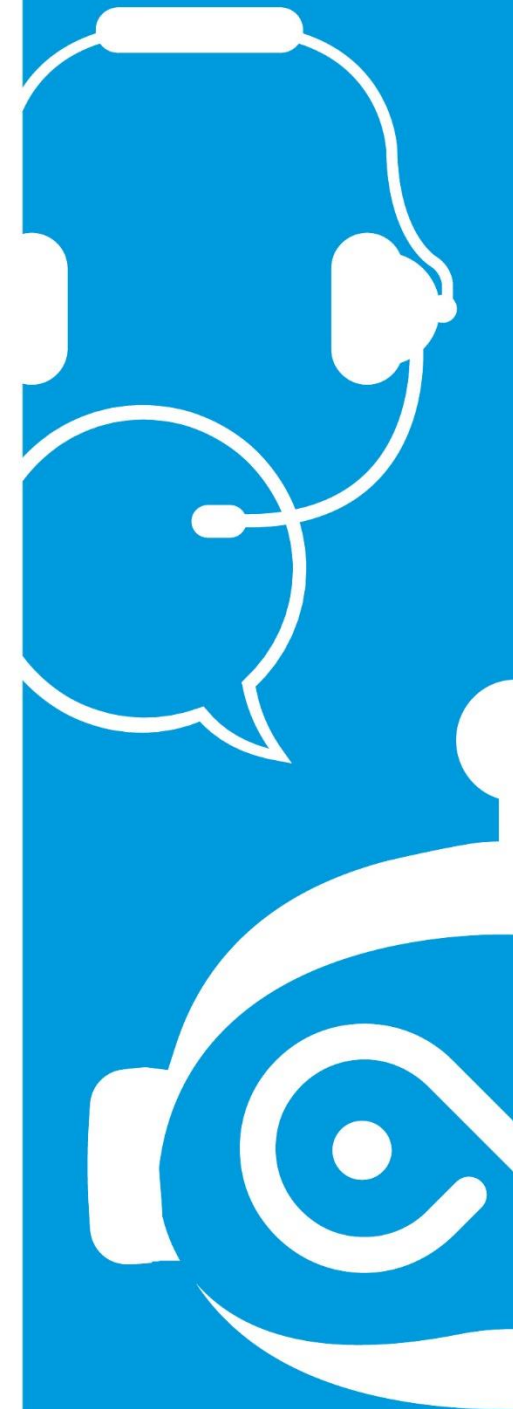
Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Social media: Instagram
- Social media: Snapchat
- Social media: Tik Tok

Further reading:

- Rodríguez Alarcón, Diego Rodrigo. "Publicidad y marketing digital: Concientización sobre la sexualidad precoz." bachelorThesis, Universidad Técnica de Ambato. Facultad de Diseño y Arquitectura. Carrera de Diseño Gráfico Publicitario, 2021. https://repositorio.uta.edu.ec:8443/jspui/handle/123456789/33557.

- UNESCO. "A Review of the Evidence: Sexuality Education for Young People in Digital Spaces - UNESCO Digital Library," 2020. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373885.