Commodifying Authenticity: How Food Bloggers Use Ethnicity As Branding

 **Abstract:** *Social media influencers leverage a performance of their authentic, everyday lives as a method of gathering followers online, building community, gaining fame and ultimately earning income. They often fall into specific niches, and a large subset of influencers use food and cooking as a way of facilitating closeness with their community. The experience of cooking and eating is a universal one; each experience is unique. I look at how food bloggers leverage their gender and ethnicity in order to portray an authentic self that can be commodified. Emily Mariko, a long time YouTube influencer who gained massive fame on the app TikTok, will be an example. Her story will also briefly touch on the technological affordances that different apps give users, and why one person might find massive success on one platform while remaining in relative anonymity on another.*

 Humans have used their authority to influence each other long before social media was around. For the purpose of this paper, I consider an influencer as someone with a large following, who is not a celebrity by way of the arts, politics or other realms of fame, who partners with brands in order to promote products and make money. It’s widely accepted that what could be considered the first instance of an “influencer” collaboration dates as far back as 1760, when a potter named Wedgewood made a tea set for Queen Charlotte of England (Suciu, 2020). She liked it so much the potter was granted permission to call himself the “Potter to Her Majesty” and to this day the brand benefits from the influence of the royal family to make sales (“Wedgewood History,” nd).

 Before the rise of social media networks, but within the age of the internet, “mommy bloggers” ruled the roost. These women, such as Melinda Roberts in 2002, (“A history of social media influencers,” 2021) would write about the ups and downs of motherhood and recommend the tips, tricks and products that helped them navigate a stressful time. These posts influenced a large audience of women and how they mothered. Mommy bloggers influenced federal law as well, when the FTC enacted a law in 2012 that required bloggers to disclose when they received compensation from a brand for a review (“History of Influencer Marketing, 2020).

Fast forward to today, and you’ll see influencers and brands working hand in hand to promote products to their audiences on blogs, Instagram, Tiktok, Twitter and more. The influencer marketing industry has ballooned, and *Business Insider* predicts it will become a $15 billion industry by 2022 (“Influencer Marketing, 2021). “Influencer” has now become the dream job of the young: a Morning Consult study found that 54% of Americans surveyed aged 18-38 said they would become one if given the opportunity (Ehlers, 2021).

Influencers have garnered audiences up to the millions, and are considered celebrities in their own right. But they are distinct from celebrities like movie stars and musical artists. Influencers stand out because these individuals build their brands from a foundation of authenticity. These “highly visual tastemakers” toe the line between authority and “commerciality and authenticity” (Arriagada, 2021, p 568). Authenticity is critical to the success of an influencer. It’s authenticity that allows them to build relationships based on expertise and trust (Ehlers, 2021), but in a warm, approachable and friendly way. Thus, influencers enact what Arturo Arriagada and Sophie Bishop (2021) call a “strategic performance” (569) in order to “organize the social world in ways that enable them to justify moving between contradictory poles of commerciality and authenticity” (568). The two scholars have constructed an “influencer imaginary,” which “sheds light on how individuals experience and justify the commodification of the self and forms of knowledge as subject to valuation in markets when they communicate their brands” (Arriagada, 2021, p 568). Indeed, the duties of the influencer can be summarized as the commodification of self, which holds a tension between the commercial and the authentic. Many influencers straddle the line between the average, everyday layman and an expert (Arriagada, 2021, p 575). They must be aspirational: followers must have an ideal to strive to. Yet, they must also be ordinary in order to “stay within a certain threshold of calibrated amateurism” which Arriagada and Bishop (2021) call a sort of “contrived authenticity” (577). Stray too far from the realm of the amateur and the influencer risks going from being aspirational to being unrelatable; followers lose interest if they feel there is no chance they could live the way their favorite influencers do.

This line and tension between amateurism and expertise or authority puts the influencer in a separate category than celebrities. In fact, many marketing agencies differentiate between micro influencers (with fewer between a few thousand to 100,000 followers), macro influencers, (with 250,000 to 1 million followers) and celebrities when categorizing key names they’d like to work with (Porteous, n.d.). Celebrities have been around longer than influencers, and current research on them is more robust. Even then, social media has changed the way normal people interact with them. The interactivity of social media has allowed fans to experience an “intensified intimacy” (Aw et al., 2020, p. 895) that could be comparable to if they saw the celebrity in person. Aw et al. (2020) found that people with a strong need to belong found it easier to develop these strong parasocial bonds with celebrities (p. 898) and consider these celebrities to be a substitute for friends they may not have in real life (Aw et al., 2020, p. 903). In turn, the strength of these perceived relationships are an indicator of how powerful a celebrity endorsement for a product might be.

 While celebrities have huge fan bases and followers numbering the millions, Daniel Cochece Davis and Jeffrey Hall’s concept of conserving energy within their “communicate, bond, belong” theory could explain why marketing agencies might rely on influencers, who have much smaller fanbases but can often outscore celebrities on engagement and conversions, or how many customers actually purchase a product. Hall and Davis (2017) categorize relationships between individuals as either having relatively weak or strong ties. Stronger tie relationships come with more obligations and expectations of reciprocity when it comes to communication as opposed to weaker tie relationships. (p. 26). In order to maintain these relationships, “striving behaviors” are used (Hall et al, 2017, p. 27). The larger your community of followers, the harder it is to maintain relatively strong ties with each individual follower.

Macro influencers were found to have a 1000% increased engagement rate on average than those with more than 1 million followers or more, whereas micro influencers have a 60% larger engagement rate over macro influencers as well as a 20% higher conversion rate (Porteous, n.d.). Thus, while celebrity endorsements used to be the “end all be all” of advertising, the rise of influencers has changed the game. Since humans are “biologically oriented toward the reduction of extraneous energy expenditure both behaviorally and mentally” and are “cognitive misers,” (Hall et al, 2017, p. 34), it makes sense that the larger an influencer’s community gets, the more energy expenditure it takes to maintain that community. Eventually, a community would grow too large to maintain authentically. In a group of people who share similar relationships, each group member requires more energy investment to maintain group cohesion (Hall et al, 2017, p. 35).

None of this community building and construction of the influencer imaginary would be possible without the technological affordances that digital technology such as social media networks provides. Indeed, the digital space can account for much of why authenticity is such a hard concept to pin down. Russell Cobb (2014) explores authenticity in the digital age first by setting it up in opposition to Walter Benjamin’s famous position that an artifact’s authenticity relies on the fact that it occupies a certain place in time and space, as well as evoking a sense of place (3). In the digital world, anything can be reproduced on a massive scale. Yet, more than ever we are inundated with messages of authenticity in order to persuade consumers to make purchases. Authenticity thus becomes a virtue, which people like influencers leverage to earn trust and authority. Thus, Cobb (2014) introduces another aspect of authenticity first discussed by Lionel Trilling: “the notion of authenticity as a correspondence between what a person says and what he or she truly feels” (2).

Despite the challenges that globalization and digital reproduction bring to the concept and definition of authenticity, it is still a virtue we crave. Cobb (2014) says “our increasingly globalized world has not led to cultural flatness, but has rather piqued the interest of diners, readers, and listeners about what lies beyond their physical and virtual borders. Rather than destroying authenticity, globalization has created an ever-increasing appetite for it” (3). We crave to know about things that feel different from ourselves, and crave to understand it authentically. Thus, things are sold to us under the promise of authenticity, and we are “in a constant search for something pure and completely authentic, even when the authentic thing is a little more than a response to market demands” (3).

This new function of authenticity is fragile, however. Despite the market’s attempt to meet demands for authenticity, authenticity and money have a fraught relationship. “Commodification - or the transformation of a good into a product whose value is determined by the market - is a phenomenon that destroys the artifice of authenticity, even though all cultural products have a market value (Cobb, 2014, pg. 6). Thus, objects (and people) are subject to an authenticity trap. Authenticity is held on a pedestal, but what does it mean? Cobb describes it as a “you know it when you see it” phenomenon. Use it to sell, but don’t use it *too* obviously, otherwise it won’t be authentic anymore. “To create an aura of authenticity in the age of digital reproduction, an object or a text must seem not only reproducible, original, but also uncorrupted by Western capitalism, even though these very objects rely on the marketplace for dissemination” (Cobb, 2014, pg. 5-6).

With this understanding of the fragile space that authenticity holds in the digital space and the pressures that influencers face in order to build community and make money, it’s important to understand how influencers themselves contend with the insurmountable challenge of staying true to themselves while earning a living. The more authentic you are, the bigger the fan base, and the more brands want to collaborate with you. Yet brand collaborations “call this authenticity into question (Audrezet et al, 2020, p 556). Thus, influencers must use strategies “to maintain their personal authenticity when partnering with brands” (Audrezet et al, 2020, p 558).

 Audrezet et al (2020) propose two main forms of authenticity paradigms when influencers are engaging in brand sponsorships: passionate and transparent. Passionate authenticity has to do with intrinsic motivation and self-determination, in which “authenticity involves an individual's engagement in intrinsically motivated behaviors - those that emanate from a person’s innate desires and passions. These behaviors involve the ‘active engagement with taste that one finds interesting” (Audrezet et al, 2020, p 559). Transparent authenticity involves letting consumers know that a message has been paid for by a brand, or disclosure of a prior working relationship with a brand. By law influencers must be transparent in order to follow the FTC guidelines mentioned earlier. It’s also been shown that fans want to know when messages given to them are influenced by brands or money, and transparency about paid opportunities increases trust in the influencer. With these two forms of authenticity, “social media influencers might encounter a tension between creating content that satisfies their inner needs and creating content that satisfies the brands with which they partner” (Audrezet et al, 2020, p 560). Four types of authenticity management strategies emerge: absolute authenticity management, fairytale authenticity management, disembodied authenticity management and fake authenticity management.

 Absolute authenticity involves high levels of passion and transparency This approach is the “optimal” method of managing authenticity (Audrezet et al, 2020, p 564) because the intrinsic passions of the influencer are preserved, and fans are aware that the influencer is working with a brand. The influencer feels fulfilled that they would still be doing this if the money were not involved. While this is optimal, it might not be economically optimal as it would involve the influencer turning down opportunities that do not reach the right level of intrinsic satisfaction. Many aspiring influencers can’t afford to be absolutely authentic if they want to survive solely off of influencer income.

 Fairytale authenticity management is all passion, no transparency. Influencers take pleasure in promoting a brand, but do not disclose the professional relationship to their fans. This risks fans finding out and feeling betrayed. “The belief that passion compensates for lack of transparency can be described as ‘naive’ or ‘fairytale’” (Audrezet et al, 2020, p 564).

Disembodied authenticity management arises when influencers feel jaded about the industry (Audrezet et al, 2020, p 567). Influencers are transparent about business relationships, but the passion is no longer there. Influencers may not feel emotional satisfaction from their work, and risk their fans feeling the same, despite making money from the exchange.

Fake authenticity management involves no passion or transparency. “Both gratification and honesty” are lacking here and it is not an optimal way of presenting oneself online.

 It’s clear that authenticity is critical to the success of any influencer. But authenticity becomes further complicated for a specific niche: that of the food blogger. Food, as well as eating and cooking, are deeply personal yet universal experiences. Often it is one that is intrinsically tied to culture and identity, thus bringing up the importance of authenticity once again. While a fashion or beauty blogger must put forward an authentic version of themselves, food bloggers often face the added pressure of representing the authenticity of entire nations’ cuisines. What unique complications do influencers in the food niche deal with? The food blogger industry is huge, and we need to narrow down the subject. By looking at Asian food bloggers belonging to the diaspora of their respective countries, one is able to look at a unique cross section of history, identity, personal branding and authenticity.

 Lori Kido Lopez (2016), through a textual analysis, examined how food blogs work to “uphold notions of authenticity as a means of capitalizing on racialized branding” (160) and how they “illustrate the way that national identity, ethnic identity, and discourses of authenticity are contradictorily invoked and destabilized in the blogosphere using the lock of racial branding” (152) .

 Authentic blogs are seen as trustworthy and authoritative, and therefore promote loyal readers. Lopez (2016) however points out the contradiction of authenticity as “a subjective quality that is socially constructed and relational rather than an inherent quality of food, people, spaces or media” (155). Still, bloggers promote their authenticity by tapping into their personal connections to the shared recipes, a geographic specificity, the history and tradition of the dish and their own ethnic connection to the cuisine (Lopez, 2016, p 155). Thus, the narratives of these recipes “uphold the authenticity of the blogger through their close connection to the place and people who originated the dish” and characterizes authentic food as “being made in the same way it always has been made in the place where it comes from,” creating a value judgment that devalues “a brand-new flavor or the cooking of someone who does not understand or connect to a dish’s history” (157).

 Thus, Asian American bloggers practice a form of racial branding, defined by Lopez as “a process in which racial identities are carefully managed and packaged for consumption while simultaneously reifying and essentializing racial difference” (159). Bloggers do this in order to make their work unique, build authority and ultimately make money through their blogging endeavors. Lopez concludes that this process of racial branding builds a sense of solidarity via identity while serving as “an extension of food tourism” (160).

 To understand the unique racialized branding that ethnic food bloggers participate in, it’s important to understand how culinary traditions develop among migrants and why certain behaviors, norms and values are maintained in these communities while others disappear. Fabio Parasecoli (2014) attempts to do so by framing the immigrant experience as an attempt to cope with the “dislocation and disorientation” experienced in “new and unknown spaces'' through “recreating a sense of place around food, production, preparation and consumption” (416). He posits that this coping is done on four different levels: Personal, collective, communal and institutional. On a personal level, eating is an “inevitable component of daily life” that reminds migrants of their otherness (Parasecoli , 2014, p 418). They are constantly resolving the tension between the “curiosity to try new foods” and the “fear of the unknown” (Parasecoli , 2014, p 419). Communal experiences through interacting with close circles of individuals like family and friends help them develop “the personal understanding and use of foods” (Parasecoli , 2014, 419). These communal experiences strengthen migrants’ sense of belonging, but also further marks them as outsiders to the host community. One level up, the communal experience of sharing a meal is “influenced by practices, norms and representations” of the collective, or groups that share an origin and story but do not have direct contact with migrants. These collective experiences arise when host communities group migrants together, despite significant differences. This process brings some food-related traditions, such as special occasions and holidays, to the forefront of a community’s heritage. The traditions are “filtered through cookbooks, media and other discursive elements together with restaurants, stores and other institutions which over time establish conventions and expectations, often shared and reinforced by the host community” (Parasecoli , 2014, p 421). The last level Parasecoli (2014) discusses is of the institution Organizations such as governments and cultural institutes also shape foodways, immortalizing and protecting aspects of a culture’s food practices deemed essential (422). An issue arises here as to who has the authority and power to decide what is important.

 Through these processes of adaptation, ethnic identities are formed. Food heritage, behaviors and cultural practices become a form of cultural capital for migrants, who then become producers of goods in a foreign land (Parasecoli , 2014, p 424). Ingredients, dishes, and cooking methods become “signifiers” of community, ever evolving and shaped by both the migrants and their host communities. The performance of these cultural practices gives outsiders, or those who belong to the host community, “a safe and pleasurable way” to experience the culinary essence of a place. (Parasecoli , 2014, p 423). Thus, migrants use the cultural reproduction of their food practices in an attempt to experience a “stronger sense of control” over their choices (Parasecoli , 2014, p 430). They use this knowledge to create new social and economic positions within their host community and “defend an often imagined past that is perceived as threatened with extinction, and to claim roots that are constantly antagonized or negated by the surrounding environment” (Parasecoli , 2014, p 431).

It’s through this lens that one can begin to understand the racial branding that Asian immigrant food bloggers participate in. Asian food blogs are some of the most visited in the U.S., across platforms. Indeed, for many Americans, their first or only interactions with Asians come during dining experiences, in what Lopez (2016) calls “culinary tourism” (153). She notes that these encounters inherently form a power imbalance where Asian Americans are “in the position of serving and providing a satisfying experience for the patron” and further emphasizes that these patrons are usually non-Asian. This necessitates a need to “provide an experience that is suitably exotic and yet still comfortably palatable for Americans who may not have previously had meaningful interactions with Asian culture” (Lopez, 2016, p 154). Thus, the Asian food blog functions as a form of virtual culinary tourism, and further expands the discourse on Asian cuisine for outsiders, and necessitates that the bloggers form an aura of authority over their cuisine. This authority keeps them safe, as Parasecoli (2014) posits.

Stephen Fielding (2014) saw these power struggles play out in real life in his studies of Indian restaurants in Britain. His definition of “authenticity is informed by a limited number of works on the relationship between ethnic cuisine and power relations” (39). The power in a dining experience, you’d think, would come from the producer. After all, they are the experts who define what counts as authentic in order to provide an experience. But it can be argued that it is the consumers, especially white consumers, who hold the power in their search for authenticity. “Within a commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, a seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white society.” During the exchange, white diners temporarily appropriate another’s history or culture, not because of sincere appreciation or desire to understand it, but for a “short lived and specious fling.”

One last aspect that is relevant to the popularity of food influencers and the crossroads between identity and authenticity is gender. Arriagada (2021) touches on how the performed authenticity that influencers participate in is a highly gendered endeavor. He compares the labor of being authentic to emotional labor, in which “feelings are evoked or suppressed along lines of commercial femininity” (572). It’s important to note that the influencer marketing industry is made up of a majority of women, and consumers of influencers trend towards women as well. Yet male influencers still make more money. It is with this understanding of the interconnectedness between food culture, authenticity and gender that I take a look at how Emily Mariko, a half-Japanese woman, soared to success on TikTok .

As of December 2021, Emily Mariko has 82 million followers on Tiktok, more than 400 thousand followers on Instagram and more than 500 thousand subscribers on YouTube. Though she’s been making YouTube videos for almost a decade and started out as a lifestyle and fashion vlogger, the 29-year-old gained notoriety in 2021 on Tiktok for her cooking videos. Her “salmon rice bowl” dish, which consists of leftover salmon flaked onto day old rice topped with Japanese Kewpie Mayo and Sriracha, was named one of *Ad Age’s* top five TikTok trends of the 2021 (Wheless, 2021).

Mariko lives in a world of contradictions, just as Arriagada describes. She’s half Japanese, and cooks a lot of Asian food on her account, but presents as ethnically ambiguous and is white passing. Whether she is cooking a Japanese dish like shabu shabu (hotpot) or an American one like roasted chicken and kale, her videos are formatted in exactly the same way: with Mariko meticulously cooking in her sparsely furnished kitchen in complete silence. In the comments of her videos, those with a connection to Japan or prior knowledge recognize the cultural origins of her dishes, but those that don’t are left to interpret the dish as presented with no other context. In fact, many commenters are surprised to learn that she is Asian at all, and have expressed that they thought she was white. Her cooking often requires few ingredients. She eats her leftovers and does not present herself as having any special culinary training or knowledge. Sometimes she spills or makes a mess in the process. Still, she eats all her food at the end of every week. Her kitchen is reset to pristine condition every Sunday, and she buys her food fresh from the farmer’s market. Thus, she is relatable while being inspirational to young viewers because of her perceived beauty, ability to stick to routine and the cleanliness and organization of her home. Although followers look forward to watching her cook for inspiration, she does not talk in her videos or give actual instructions to make the food. Her videos are formatted more as a “day in the life” rather than traditional recipe videos, which seek to inform.

It’s exceptionally important that Mariko does not speak during her TikTok videos. Because of this, her fans are able to consume her ethnic recipes without having to engage with any of its history or descriptions. If a viewer is watching without any prior knowledge of a dish being cooked, such as Japanese curry, they would be at a loss to learn what Japanese curry is, how it differs from Indian curry, and how the dish came to exist in Japan. Any descriptions of taste, smell or tradition are stripped away, and what is left is a type of culinary tourism via social media. Fans can engage with Asian culture on their own terms, because Mariko does not package her ethnic cooking videos as different from any other cooking videos. Those familiar with the dishes can revel in seeing an authentic ethnic dish represented by an extremely popular user without the racialized branding and emphasis on difference that Lopez (2016) mentions in her essay. Those who are not familiar get the experience of watching something exotic without the experience being too jarring. Using Koichi Iwabuchi’s (1998) framework, Mariko’s content could be considered “culturally odorless.” Iwabuchi defines “cultural odor” as “the way in which the cultural presence of a country of origin and images or ideas of its way of life are positively associated with a particular product in the consumption process” When these cultural odors are associated with an attractive image of the origin country of the product, Iwabuchi calls this “cultural fragrance” (p. 166). With Mariko, viewers get a “fragrance” of what a diverse diet could be like, as Mariko sprinkles in Asian recipes throughout her content. But without an explanation of what she is eating, viewers avoid the “odor” of learning about ingredients they might find off putting. The food is always presented in a visually appealing way and artfully plated. Any engagement with Japanese culture is done at a safe digital distance. Thus, a viewer can aspirationally feel they’d like to try it without worrying about what strange ingredients they might have to interact with. A salmon rice bowl with mayonnaise and sriracha is a common Asian meal but in the hands of the white consumer, it becomes the next great TikTok trend.

Although Mariko’s content straddles the authenticity line and remains somewhat disconnected from Japanese culture, she does not risk coming off as inauthentic in her TikTok videos precisely because she talks very little. Because she is half white and half Asian, she has options when it comes to racialized branding. She can be as white or as Asian as any single fan wants. Fans that can’t already tell she is Asian will assume she is white, because she passes as a white woman. As a seemingly white woman making Asian food, she endears herself with a sense of amateurishness that Arriagada mentions is beneficial for the influencer imaginary. Those that recognize her as Asian will view her cooking with a sense of authority she never directly appeals to through words, simply because she comes from the same ethnic background as the food she is cooking. Her authority is assumed simply through her heritage. When she doesn’t speak or communicate, the viewer can fill in the gaps for themselves.

The tensions between the ordinary and luxurious that Arriagada mentions also play a role in Mariko’s content. She comes off as earnest and everyday by cooking food that has few steps and always eating her leftovers. She dresses in muted, simple outfits and her kitchen apartment is bare. What viewers may not realize is that Mariko most likely makes more money than most of her fans do. She is a former Google and Facebook employee who quit her job to influence full time with the support of her fiancé’s finances. Her calmness and neatness and social status make her both an aspirational character as well as a relatable one. Her social status is just as ambiguous as her race. Because she doesn’t talk about it in her videos, fans are left to figure it out by themselves. Those that have done the work and know of her background view her as aspirational. Those that don’t know and assume she’s “just like them” view her as relatable.

Mariko also performs gendered stereotypes of authenticity. When compared to one of Tiktok’s most popular male Asian food bloggers, chef Jon Kung, the differences are stark. Kung positions himself as an authority figure on Tiktok. His videos are filled with authoritative and informational voice overs. He speaks about his heritage as a Chinese man, and why he has the authority to cook the dishes he cooks, such as noodles and dumplings. He expresses opinions about who should be allowed to cook what types of dishes, and provides reasoning and analysis, leaning heavily on his personal experience as an Asian man. His videos are shot in a studio kitchen, whereas Mariko, by contrast, is always in her home. Whereas Kung’s influence comes from absolute authority in his knowledge of what it’s like to be Asian in America because he *is* Asian American, Mariko’s comes again from the contrived authenticity Arriagada outlined, as she is not a chef but simply a woman who enjoys cooking in her own home. Although her followers love her content, she operates as an “amateur.” Her video is set in domesticity. She always makes two plates, implying that she is cooking for her male partner (who does not appear in videos but is sometimes referenced). She does not offer her own recipes, but uses ones she finds online. She takes us on trips with her to the Asian grocery store, but does not attempt to inform us of what she is buying. Instead, we are brought with her as she does the duties typically associated with women: shopping, cooking, cleaning. All of these are done in silence, so as to let the viewer identify themselves with the character she is portraying.

Further analysis of a blogger like Mariko, whose popularity hinges on the format of their TikTok videos, could look at the technological affordances of the app itself. Research into Tiktok is scarce, as the app is relatively new. But one cannot ignore that Mariko has nearly twice as many followers on Tikok as she does on Instagram or YouTube, where she speaks much more often. This could be because of the affordances that TikTok vs YouTube gives to the creator. Mariko excels using TikTok’s shorter video format, where she does not need to speak and can be a blank slate. On YouTube, where videos are encouraged to be much longer, it forces a creator to show off much more of their personality. The more personal details a viewer sees in you, the more chances there are that a viewer will not see themselves in you and become uninterested. TikTok also has a robust recommendation system, and viewers actually see recommended TikToks upon first opening the app, rather than TikToks from people they have chosen to follow. Thus, it’s much easier to be “discovered” on the app when compared to ones that prioritize content that people are deliberately following.

As digital technology brings us all closer together, the lines between what is considered authentic and inauthentic will continue to blur, especially when it comes to our foodways. The FTC’s laws for influencer marketing were put in place not that long ago, and as the industry continues to grow, further understanding of how transparency, authenticity and trust function within the influencer ecosystem will be crucial not only for influencers looking to cultivate a community and earn an income, but for keeping consumers and followers safe and informed as well.

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