

Before the
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20580

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| In the Matter of |) | |
| |) | |
| Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising |) | Project No. P204500 |
| |) | |
| Request for Public Comment |) | |
| |) | |

**Comments of
Campaign for a Commercial Free-Childhood and
Center for Digital Democracy**

In a world where YouTube and Instagram have become the new television, children and teenagers closely follow the advice given by social media celebrities and aspire to become influencers rather than doctors, firemen or astronauts, it is imperative to discuss the need to regulate social media influencers.¹

Campaign for a Commercial Free-Childhood (CCFC) and Center for Digital Democracy (CDD) are filing these comments in response to Question 15 of the FTC Request for Public Comment, which asks about marketing to children. CCFC and CDD have long believed that covert advertising practices now generally referred to as “influencer” advertising are deceptive and unfair to children. In fact, as far back as April 2015, these organizations raised the alarm about “videos provided to children on YouTube Kids [that] intermix[ed] commercial and other content in ways that are deceptive and unfair to children and would not be permitted to be shown on broadcast or cable television.”²

¹ Catalina Goanta and Sofia Ranchordas *The Regulation of Social Media Influencers: An Introduction*, 2019.

² Letter to Donald Clark from CDD, CCFC, et al, April 7, 2015. In particular, we discussed how unboxing videos constituted program length commercials and host selling, practices that the FCC prohibits on broadcast and cable television for children because they take unfair advantage of children. We also argued that unboxing videos violated the FTC’s

In October 2016, CDD and CCFC filed a Complaint, Request for Investigation, and Request for Policy Guidance on the Deceptive Practice of Influencer Marketing Directed to Children. That filing explained in detail why child-directed influencer marketing violates Section 5 of the FTC Act, which prohibits unfair and deceptive practices in advertising.³ But the FTC did not respond to these complaints. Since then, influencer marketing has become even more widespread, but it is still deceptive and unfair when targeted to children. The Commission has also failed to investigate the numerous data collection practices involved with child-directed influencer marketing, raising concerns over privacy.⁴ Unfortunately, due to the FTC's inaction, influencer marketing has now become a key strategy used by many brands to reach and engage young people.⁵

While it is encouraging that the FTC is finally asking questions about sponsored advertising to children, the FTC should apply the existing Endorsement Guides to influencers viewed by children. Despite the huge size of the influencer marketing business and its impact on our economy, the FTC has brought relatively few enforcement actions involving influencer

Endorsement Guidelines. See also Supplement to Request for Investigation into Google's Unfair and Deceptive Practices in Connection with its YouTube Kids App, at 15-18, Nov. 24, 2015..

³ Other organizations and members of Congress have also called on the FTC to stop deceptive influencer marketing and children. See, e.g. Letter from Anna G. Shoo, Edward J. Markey, et al, to FTC, May 23, 2019 (asking FTC to investigate unfair and deceptive marketing practices of influencers including Jake Paul and to give guidance to influencers who create content for children); Letter from Truth in Advertising, Inc. to FTC, Aug. 28, 2019 (alleging that YouTube channel Ryan ToysReview is deceptive advertising to children).

⁴ For example, influencer marketing is now often operated via data driven programmatic systems. Antoine Forest, *Programmatic Influencer Marketing: A Profitable Venture*, <https://www.martechadvisor.com/articles/influencer-marketing/programmaticinfluencermarketing-a-profitable-venture/>.

⁵ E.g., Meera Jagannathan, *How Social-media Influencers are Making Your Kids Fat*, MarketWatch, Mar. 5, 2019, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/how-social-media-influencers-are-making-your-kids-fat-2019-03-05>.

marketing.⁶ And significantly, it has brought *no* enforcement actions against influencers or their sponsors that have a significant child audience. Thus, regardless of what the FTC does with its Endorsement Guides, it should start enforcing the law to protect vulnerable children.

At the same time, we support strengthening the Enforcement Guides and the adoption of a rule that would prohibit the use of influencers for marketing to children under age 13. We also support efforts to make sponsorship disclosures more effective for adults and teens. When it comes to children under age 13, however, sponsorship disclosures cannot cure the deceptive and unfair nature of influencer advertising. While ensuring that material connections are disclosed in a clear and prominent manner may help parents identify influencer posts or videos as advertising, children are incapable of understanding the significance of such disclosures.

I. Influencer marketing has become a major way of marketing goods and services

Influencer marketing has become a huge business supported by a global infrastructure with boutique and well-established agencies, buying platforms, and specialized measurement applications.⁷ The recent Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report: 2020 found that:

- Influencer Marketing Industry is set to grow to by approximately \$9.7B in 2020
- More than 380 new influencer marketing-focused agencies and platforms were established in 2019
- Average earned media value per \$1 spent has increased to \$5.78
- 300% more micro-influencers were utilized by large firms than in 2016
- There has been a massive increase in influencer content in recent years
- The majority of brands surveyed (55%) have a standalone budget for content marketing

⁶ The lack of FTC enforcement encourages influencer marketing. E.g. Laura E. Bladow, *Worth the Click: Why Greater FTC Enforcement Is Needed to Curtail Deceptive Practices in Influencer Marketing*, 59 Wm. & Mary L. Rev.1123, 1126-27 (2018).

⁷ See, e.g., klear, *The New Standard In Influencer Marketing*, <https://klear.com/>; FameBit, *YouTube's Branded Content Platform*, <https://famebit.com/>; Mediakix, *Influencer Tiers for the Influencer Marketing Industry*, <https://mediakix.com/influencer-marketing-resources/influencer-tiers/>.

- Nearly 4/5 of brands surveyed intend to dedicate a budget to influencer marketing in 2020
- 91% of brands surveyed believe influencer marketing to be an effective form of marketing.⁸

Morning Consult interviewed 2,000 13-38 year-olds and found that

Influencers have become a central part of social media for young Americans, and social media is an increasingly central driver of consumer decisions. Nearly three quarters of Gen Z and Millennials follow influencers on social media, and a majority say social media is where they most often learn about new products they're interested in.⁹

Influencer marketing is prevalent on virtually all digital media platforms. Oftentimes, an influencer utilizes multiple platforms.¹⁰ A study of 161 children ages 9 to 12, found that

Tweens can access their favorite YouTuber across many social media platforms. Indeed, many (41.5%) of the tweens reported following their favorite YouTuber on at least one other social media platform. The most popular social media platform used to follow a YouTuber was Instagram (31.3%), followed by SnapChat (20.4%), Musical.ly (12.2%), Twitter (10.2%), and Facebook (1.4%).¹¹ .

A relatively new entrant into influencer marketing is TikTok, which has a huge tween following. Kidscreen reported in March 2019, that “TikTok exploded in popularity over the past year, especially with kids and tweens.”¹² Kidscreen noted that TikTok’s popularity with young audiences attracts brands looking to advertise to children:

⁸ Influencer Marketing Hub and CreatorIQ, *Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report: 2020*, at 5.

⁹ Morning Consult, *The Influencer Report, Engaging Gen Z and Millennials*, <https://morningconsult.com/form/influencer-report-engaging-gen-z-and-millennials-download/>.

¹⁰ Even on YouTube Kids, many of the influencers tell viewers to watch or follow them on other platforms. App. ____.

¹¹ Tolbert & Drogos, at 8.

¹² Alexandra Whyte, *Majority of kids want shows with YouTubers*, Kidscreen, Mar. 22, 2019.

The crazy popularity of TikTok, and the crazier antics of the kids on it, have somehow combined to create the perfect new platform for kids brands to reach their audience. With an incredibly young demo that's not really anywhere else online yet (except maybe YouTube), where else are brands supposed to engage these kids?¹³

As MediaKix recently reported: “Now, with brands and influencers feeling more comfortable on the burgeoning platform, [TikTok] has truly begun to demonstrate its potential as a marketing tool. Combined with a rapidly growing user base of young millennials and Gen Zers, TikTok has found itself in the enviable position of being the hottest influencer marketing tool of the year.”¹⁴ TikTok’s Vice President of global business solutions “has been advising brands looking to use the platform – some big names include Walmart and Nike – about how to make the most of TikTok’s homespun feel and to work with influencers, who can help to turn content viral.”¹⁵

The industry has developed a variety of ways for cultivating, categorizing, analyzing, and measuring influencer marketing. For example, it has identified distinct types of influencers, including “rising star creators,” “macro-influencers,” and “micro-influencers.” Macro-influencers are digital celebrities known for their large followings on YouTube and other platforms, and for their ability to “speak authentically” to their communities.¹⁶ The impact of

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ 10 TikTok Marketing Campaigns, How Brands are using TikTok Influencers, <https://mediakix.com/blog/tiktok-marketing-campaigns-case-studies/>.

¹⁵ WARC, *TikTok will ramp up its US advertising Capabilities*, WARC, Dec. 9, 2019, warc.com/newsandopinion/news/tiktok-will-ramp-up-its-us-advertising-capabilities/43008#:~:text=According%20to%20Blake%20Chandlee%2C%20the,verification%20of%20its%20ad%20metrics.,

¹⁶ Tania Yuki, *Celebrities, Macro-influencers, Rising-star Creators and Micro-influencers: What Brands Need to Know*, Admap Magazine, Feb. 2019, https://www.warc.com/content/article/admap/celebrities_macroinfluencers_risingstar_creators_and_micro_influencers_what_brands_need_to_know/124860. See also Mediakix, *Influencer Tiers for the Influencer Marketing Industry*, <https://mediakix.com/influencer-marketing-resources/influencer-tiers/>.

influencer brand promotion efforts are documented with increasing granularity through analyses of numerous indicators, including specific online responses by users.¹⁷ Admap, an advertising trade publication, reported that in 2018, influencer content “generated 72% of all total actions (post-level Likes, Reactions, Shares, Comments, Retweets) taken by consumers across brand content on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in the US.”¹⁸

A. Influencer marketing is effective

Brands employ influencer marketing because it works. Neuroscientists found that influencer ads generated 277% greater emotional intensity and 87% higher memory encoding than television ads.¹⁹ One agency found companies earned an impressive 520% return on every dollar they spent on influencer marketing.²⁰ A survey of 4000 marketing agencies, brands and industry professionals found that 91% think influencer marketing is effective.²¹ A different survey of 3,600 shoppers globally found that 61% interact with an influencer at least once a day and 35% interact with influencers multiple times a day.²² In addition, 80% said they made a purchase recommended by an influencer.²³

¹⁷ Yuki, *supra*.

¹⁸ WARC, *Get Your Influencer Metrics Right*, Feb.4, 2019, https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/news/get_your_influencer_metrics_right/41630.

¹⁹ Blake Droesch, *What Does Your Brain on Influencer Marketing Look Like?*eMarketer (Aug. 26, 2019) <https://www.emarketer.com/content/your-brain-on-influencersneuroscience-study-explains-the-effects-of-influencer-marketing>.

²⁰ NeoReach, *Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report 2019*, (Feb. 12, 2019) <https://neoreach.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report-2019/>.

²¹ Benchmark 2020 at 20.

²² Rakuten Marketing, *2019 Influencer Marketing Global Survey Consumers* at 3.

²³ *Id.* at 11.

B. Children are involved in both creating and viewing influencer marketing

Many of the top influencers are children themselves. They even have their own category name -- Kidfluencers. According to Business Insider's Influencer Marketing 2019,

Kidfluencers are a booming segment of the influencer market. These internet-famous kids have massive followings — largely on YouTube and Instagram — as gamers, vloggers, toy reviewers, fashionistas, or just because they're cute. Sometimes kidfluencers are featured on parents' accounts, while others are stars of their own account, but even those are typically managed by a parent because platforms require users to be over 13 years old to join.²⁴

Among the best known Kidinfluencers are 8-year-old Ryan of Ryan's ToysReview and Evan of EvanTube HD. Ryan, whose Toys Review channel is usually one of the top 10 channels on YouTube, earns an estimated \$22 million a year by reviewing toys.²⁵ EvanTube HD is considered a "macro-influencer" in the business. He hosts his own show playing with and consuming various toys and products. He has become a successful YouTuber operating a number of channels and attracting nearly 4 billion views.²⁶ "Unboxing" videos, which feature young influencers simply opening a package to reveal a toy, game, or other child-oriented item, have attracted huge numbers of children who watch to share in the excitement.²⁷

According to Kidscreen, the "number of kids creating content is unknown as many influencers don't divulge their ages. Yet some of the most popular creators currently on the

²⁴ Audrey Schomer, *Influencer Marketing 2019*, Business Insider Intelligence, July 2019, at 24.

²⁵ *Id.* at 25. Madeline Berg, *How This 7-Year-Old Made \$22 Million Playing With Toys*, Forbes, Dec. 3, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maddieberg/2018/12/03/how-this-seven-year-old-made-22-million-playing-with-toys-2/#6658f25e4459>.

²⁶ "EvanTube HD," <https://www.youtube.com/user/EvanTubeHD/about>.

²⁷ "The Magic Behind Unboxing on YouTube," Think with Google, Nov. 2014, <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/youtube-insights-stats-data-trends-vol7/>; Jonathan Morrison, "YouTube Unboxing Videos May Hold Secrets To Viral Video Marketing," Mediakix, <http://mediakix.com/2015/10/youtube-unboxing-videos-go-viral/#gs.b1xjmf>.

scene—including Ryan, Like Nastya Vlog (28 million), EvanTubeHD (6.3 million), EthanGamer (2.4 million) and Hayley LeBlanc (1.3 million on her own channel and 7.2 million on her family’s Braytaley channel)—are all under 13.”²⁸ Many of these child influencers earn millions of dollars per year.²⁹

But there are many other lesser known Kidinfluencers.³⁰ For example, MediaKix highlights a successful marketing campaign for the Goosebumps 2 movie featuring the Quinn sisters, whom it describes as micro-creators.³¹

MICRO-CREATORS



In this video, the Quinn sisters create fun, monster-themed snacks and drinks for their movie night screening of Goosebumps 2. This micro-creator duo pulls roughly between 10,000 and 25,000 views per video, reaching a modest but highly engaged “tween” target audience that Goosebumps aims to reach.

Another report explains that

²⁸ Alexandra Whyte, Why aren’t there laws protecting kid influencers? Kidscreen, Aug. 12, 2019.

²⁹ Madeline Berg, *The Highest-Paid YouTube Stars of 2019: The Kids are Killing it*, Forbes, Dec. 18, 2019.

³⁰ Sapna Maheshwari, *Online and Making Thousands, at Age 4: Meet the Kidfluencers*, NY Times, Mar. 1, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/01/business/media/social-media-influencers-kids.html>.

³¹ MediaKix, *Influencer Tiers for the Influencer Marketing Industry*, <https://mediakix.com/influencer-marketing-resources/influencer-tiers/>,

Unlike mega-influencers, micro-influencers tend to have stronger relationships with their followers, which often leads to greater authenticity, engagement, and ROI. Micro-influencers are perceived as thought leaders with expertise in a particular niche. Because they have comparatively lower reach, micro-influencers typically charge less than celebrities, but their more targeted, engaged audiences still drive strong returns.³²

Food and beverage marketers regularly use influencers to target young people. CCFC and CDD have documented the extent of marketing of foods and beverages that do not meet the self-regulatory guidelines established by the Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI) in 2015.³³ That practice continues and may be increasing as large food marketers such as PepsiCo and Burger King have been increasing their use of influencer advertising.³⁴

Burger King recently announced a partnership with TikTok to launch a dance video that can be used to order a Whopper for only \$1. Three TikTok influencers will post tutorial video on their personal TikTok pages.

To receive the \$1 Whopper® sandwich on the BK® App, users need to follow the BK brand on TikTok and then must post their order dance video on TikTok using the specialized BK soundtrack and #WhopperDance. Afterwards, users will receive a direct message on TikTok from Burger King with a unique code to be used on the BK® App. Guests can pick up their order in restaurant or place the order for delivery with a \$10 minimum per order.³⁵

³² Schomer, *Influencer Marketing 2019*, at 22.

³³ Robert Williams, *Kool-Aid crashes onto TikTok with holiday video challenge*, *Mobile Marketer*, Dec. 4, 2019.

³⁴ *E.g. How PepsiCo builds an influencer-marketing funnel*, Nov 2019. This article discusses how influencers are integral part of digital marketing mix for many brands Pepsi’s vp for creative/digital: ““We’re shifting more and more dollars into the digital influencer space,” Bellinger said. In fact, he added, “We are viewing ‘digital’ and ‘influencer’” as almost synonymous with each other.” Burger King: Twitter Bait, WARC 2020, (“Influencer marketing works so well that the market has nearly tripled in size in just three years.”).

³⁵ *Ever Whopper Sandwich Dance Ordering*, *Business Wire*, June 18, 2020, [businesswire.com/news/home/20200618005576/en/Burger-King-Resaurants-Partner-TikTok-Launch-Whopper](https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200618005576/en/Burger-King-Resaurants-Partner-TikTok-Launch-Whopper). *Mobile Marketer* reported that as “of press time, the #WhopperDance hashtag had received 3.6 million views, a metric that TikTok can track among specific users who

Last Christmas Kool-Aid launched a very successful ad campaign on TikTok. It featured holiday themed videos with brand mascot Kool-Aid Man and rapper Lil Jon. They urged viewers to post their own videos using the branded hashtag for chance to win \$10,000. Kool-Aid also brought other influencers into the campaign, including Glitterandlazers, kidrl, nickandsienna, and kingcamo_1. Over 10,000 people uploaded video in response to this campaign.”³⁶

TikTok also partnered with Doritos to create #CoolRanchDance videos featuring the TikTok-grown star Lil Nas X.

In the one minute ad Lil Nas X challenges Sam Elliott to a comedic dance battle to his hit Western jingle.

The video has over 12.6 million views on the snack brand’s official YouTube page and the commercial ends with the hashtag #CoolRanchDance, a hint for viewers to discover more on social media.

So far 2,776 users have created dance videos using the dance challenge’s official sound clip on TikTok. Most of the user-generated #CoolRanchDance videos feature a western transformation transition, dance moves, and— a bag of Doritos.³⁷

The article describing this campaign notes that “[b]y sponsoring TikTok Hashtag Challenges, brands essentially turn users into brand content creators.”³⁸

may be receptive to future advertising from Burger.” Robert Williams, Mobile Marketer, June 18, 2020, <https://www.mobilemarketer.com/news/burger-king-debuts-1st-dance-ordering-on-tiktok/580147/>.

³⁶ Influencer Marketing Hub, *12 Example of Influencer Marketing on TikTok*, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-tiktok-examples/>.

³⁷ *Doritos Scores on Social with TikTok Hashtag Challenge During Super Bowl*, https://mediakix.com/blog/tik-tok-hashtag-challenge-case-study/?utm_campaign=Weekly.

³⁸ Id.

The kids influencer market is lucrative. As one article put it, “children are worth their weight in data to YouTube creators.”³⁹ Another study notes that:

the digital advertising market for children is projected to reach \$1.2 billion by 2019. Advertisers see numerous opportunities including allowing “brands to use more engaging content—videos and games, for instance—to connect with kids” and “the creation of communities through the use of social media and influencer marketing” An aspect that makes the under-18 audience so desirable is that these viewers take the time to engage with social media and come back every day.⁴⁰

Influencer marketing to kids is growing for several reasons. First, children are an important market. Influencer marketing has become the primary method for marketing toys to kids.⁴¹ And, as discussed above, is also a major way that food and beverage companies advertise to children.⁴² A study by TotallyAwesome found that kids have pester power and considerable spending power as shown in this infographic.⁴³

³⁹ Hannah Frishberg, *YouTube influencers beg FTC to not limit lucrative kid-tracking data*, NY Post, Dec. 30, 2019, <https://nypost.com/2019/12/30/youtube-influencers-beg-ftc-to-not-limit-lucrative-kid-tracking-data/>.

⁴⁰ Nathaniel J. Evans et al., *Parenting “YouTube Natives”: The Impact of Pre-Roll Advertising and Text Disclosure on Parental Response to Sponsored Child Influencer Videos*, 47 *J. of Advertising* 326, 342(2018).

⁴¹ E.g. Alexandra Whyte, *YouTube influences Google’s top holiday toys*, Kidscreen, Dec. 11, 2018 (new data from Google shows that toys featured prominently in YouTube videos are the most searched for playthings this holiday season).

⁴² See also Frans Folkvord, et al, *Children’s bonding with popular YouTube vloggers and their attitudes toward brand and product endorsements in vlogs: an explorative study*, 20 *Young Consumers* 78, 86 (2019) (study finding the majority of children frequently view vlogs and that their degree of bonding with the vlogger predicted the time spend on viewing vlogs. Children recalled products and brands that were shown in vlogs, which were mostly food and beverages and considered themselves and others affected by endorsements in vlogs).

⁴³ Totally Awesome, *New study finds online to be the main driver in kids’ purchasing decisions*, Sept. 24, 2019, <https://www.totallyawesome.tv/blog/kids-turn-to-online-content-and-influencers-on-what-to-buy/>. This study also found that traditional TV was the least preferred way for kids to consume content.

Influencers drive purchasing decisions

Kids have pester power and considerable spending power



Influencer advertising has also increased because children are spending more time on digital media. A survey by Common Sense Media in October 2019 found that more than twice as many young people watch videos every day as did four years ago and the average time spent watching video -- mostly on YouTube -- has roughly doubled, to an hour each day.”⁴⁴ Business Insider explains that “Kidfluencers can help brand reach other kids, who are increasing fleeing traditional media.”⁴⁵ It observes:

Most of the viewers on kidfluencer content are likely to be kids themselves: "When you see the analytics of a kidfluencer channel, the dominant audience is 25- to 34-year-old women. That's obviously not the case. The case is that the child is watching it on their parents' device," said Alex Chavez-Munoz, founder of Viral Talent, per The New York Times.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Rachel Siegel, *Tweens, teens and Screens: The average time kids spend watching online videos has doubled in 4 years*, Wash. Post, Oct 29, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/10/29/survey-average-time-young-people-spend-watching-videos-mostly-youtube-has-doubled-since/>.

⁴⁵ Shomer, *Influencer Marketing 2019*, at 25.

⁴⁶ Id. citing Saphna Maheshwari, *Online and Making Thousands, at Age 4: Meet the Kidfluencers*, NY Times, Mar. 1, 2019, [nytimes.com/2019/03/01/business/media/social-media-influencers-kids.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/01/business/media/social-media-influencers-kids.html). The same article featured two six-year-olds—Ava and Everleigh—who have more than a million followers on their shared Instagram and YouTube accounts.

Advertisers has a strong interest in reaching what they refer to as “Generation Alpha,” that is, children born between 2011 and 2025. Advertisers view “Generation Alpha as the surest path to millennial parents’ wallets.”⁴⁷ Children influence many family purchases, not just toys and food. Roughly 95% of US parents surveyed by National Retail Federation in October 2019 said it was “important” to involve their children in purchases specifically for the child, and 85% said the same regarding purchases for the family or household.⁴⁸

A recent *New York Times* article reported that

advertisers like Walmart, Staples and Mattel are bankrolling lucrative endorsements deals for toddlers and tweens with large followings and their own verified profiles on YouTube and Instagram. As a result, children too young to make their own accounts on the platforms are being turned into tastemakers.⁴⁹

While children watch Kidinfluencers, they watch older influencers as well. A study of 161 children aged 9-12 in the US south found that 98% reported watching YouTube and 91.9% reported having a favorite YouTuber.⁵⁰ Study participants identified 98 unique favorite

“YouTube’s analytics say Ava and Everleigh’s viewers are largely between the ages of 25 and 44,” the article reported. But Ava’s mother told the paper that “she thought the core audience was between 8 and 18.” As she explained: “When we go out, parents never know who we are, but kids do.”

⁴⁷ The Complete Guide to Generation Alpha, The Children of Millennials (“It has been reported children under 12 and teens influence parental purchases totaling between \$130 to 670 billion a year. However, it appears that never before has there been such a passionate, intense and borderline obsessive relationship between two generations as the one between millennials and generation Alpha.”)

⁴⁸ Lucy Koch, *Is YouTube Turning Kids Into Budding Shoppers?* eMarketer, Feb. 20, 2020, <https://www.emarketer.com/content/is-youtube-turning-kids-into-budding-shoppers>.

⁴⁹ Saphna Maheshwari, *Online and Making Thousands, at Age 4: Meet the Kidfluencers*, NY Times, Mar. 1, 2019, [nytimes.com/2019/03/01/business/media/social-media-influencers-kids.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/01/business/media/social-media-influencers-kids.html).

⁵⁰ Amanda N. Tolbert and Kristin L. Drogos, *Tweens’ Wishful Identification and Parasocial Relationships With YouTubers*, 10 *Frontiers in Psychology* 1, 6 (Dec. 17, 2019), <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02781/full/> (“*Wishful Identification*”).

YouTubers.⁵¹ Although not all YouTubers are necessarily influencers, a large number are, as shown in the attachment to these comments.

Most of the favorite YouTubers of these children ages 9-12 were over the age of 18.⁵² The study observed that “Many of the YouTubers, like JoJo Siwa and DanTDM appear to be developmentally appropriate for tweens. Yet, many of the YouTubers produce content for mature audiences, such as Logan Paul, who was recently punished by YouTube for posting a video featuring a dead body.”⁵³

Many kids also watch influencers on TikTok. In February 2018, the FTC filed a complaint against Musical.ly, which became TikTok, alleging that the app was directed at children and that Musical.ly had actual knowledge that it was collecting personal information from children.⁵⁴ CCFC and CDD’s subsequent investigation of TikTok, which resulted in a request for the FTC to enforce the consent decree, found numerous videos of children who were

⁵¹ Id. at 15, App. A. A copy is attached to this filing as App. ____.

⁵² Specifically, the study participants reported that 87% were over age 18, with only 6% listed as 10 to 12-years-old, and 5% between 13 and 15-years old. *Wishful Identification* at 6. This seems consistent with the birthdates reported in App. __.

⁵³ For example, TikTok’s biggest star Charli D’Amelio, age 16, teamed up with Proctor & Gamble and ad agency Gray to produce a short dance video urging young people to stay home and do the #distancedance. “Charli encouraged fans to post TikToks of themselves replicating the dance, with the hashtag #distancedance. . . . After nine weeks, Charli’s video has been watched more than 192 million times and has spawned nearly 3.5 million other videos with more than 16 billion combined views.” Travis M. Andrews, *Charli D’Amelio is TikTok’s biggest star. She has no idea why*, Wash. Post, May 26, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/05/26/charli-damelio-tiktok-star/?arc404=true>.

⁵⁴ *United States v. Musical.ly*, Case No. 2:19-cv-1439 Complaint (filed Feb. 27, 2019), available at https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/cases/musical.ly_complaint_ecf_2-27-19.pdf.

under age 13 at the time of the consent decree that still have regular accounts on TikTok.⁵⁵ In addition, some of TikTok's top influencers are slightly older attract a large under-13 audience.⁵⁶

Despite the fact that children are large market for advertisers and are more vulnerable to advertising than adults, the FTC has not brought a single action against influencers or their sponsor that are popular with children. By contrast, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has long been held that that children are more vulnerable to advertising than adults, and thus "basic fairness requires that at least a clear separation be maintained between the program content and the commercial message so as to aid the child in developing an ability to distinguish between the two." Consequently, FCC policies do not permit product placement, or host-selling on children's programs shown on broadcast, cable and satellite television.⁵⁷ The FTC's failure to take action against these same deceptive practices when they occur online is undoubtedly another reason for the huge uptick in influencer marketing aimed at children.

While it is a positive development that the FTC is now asking questions about online advertising to children, there is no reason to wait for the outcome of this proceeding to begin enforcement actions against influencers, advertising agencies, brands and social media platforms that use or allow the deceptive and unfair practices of influencer marketing to children.

⁵⁵ Complaint and Request for Investigation of TikTok for Violations of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and Implementing Rule at 23-25 & App. 1 (May 14, 2020).

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ These policies were originally adopted in Children's Television Report and Policy Statement, 50 FCC 2d 1, 14 (1974). Congress codified and endorsed these policies in adopting the Children's Television Act of 1990. The FCC expanded its policies to digital television. See Children's Television Obligations of Digital Broadcasters, 19 FCC Rcd 22943 (2004).

II. Influencer Advertising is Inherently Deceptive and Unfair as to children ages 12 and under

The FTC utilizes a three-step test to determine when an advertising practice is deceptive. First, there must be a representation, omission, or practice likely to mislead the consumer. Second, the act or practice must be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable consumer. Third, the representation, omission, or practice must be material. All three prongs are satisfied here.⁵⁸

First, as shown above in Section I, children ages 12 and under are a large audience for both Kidfluencers and other social media influencers. Section II(A) evaluates the practice of influencer advertising from that of a reasonable child, which has been studied by numerous researchers. It concludes that influencer advertising is deceptive to children because itself to be something other than advertising.⁵⁹ While much influencer marketing does not have any sponsorship disclosure, even if it did, most children are unable to recognize and process the implications of sponsorship disclosure. Finally, Section II demonstrates that influencer marketing has a material impact on whether and what products are purchased.

A. Children under age 12 do not recognize and process influencer marketing as advertising

As a literature review of 138 academic articles published from 2006 to 2016 provides a good overview of how children recognize and process advertising generally.⁶⁰ It explains that

⁵⁸ If the Commission finds that influence advertising by children is a deceptive practice, it need not also find it unfair. We believe, however, that it meets all three parts of the test for unfairness. 15 U.S.C. § 45(n) (2012). First, child-directed influencer marketing substantially injures large numbers of consumers by causing economic harm to children and their families and by threatening children's health, especially when used to market unhealthy foods and beverages. Second, children cannot reasonably avoid the injury caused by child-directed influencer advertisements—these ads are pervasive across platforms known to be used heavily by children. consumers must not reasonably be able to avoid the injury. Third, there are no countervailing benefits from child-directed influencer marketing.

⁵⁹ *Cliffdale Associates, Inc.*, 103 F.T.C. 110, 170–71 (1984).

⁶⁰ Steffi De Jans, et al., *Advertising targeting young children: an overview of 10 years of research (2006–2016)*, 38 Int'l J. of Advertising 173, 174 (2019).

“children above 12 years have generally acquired the cognitive and emotional (e.g. self-control) capacities that enable them to critically and skeptically process advertising. Children below 12 years old . . . cannot always differentiate between media content and advertising, their development of persuasion knowledge has not yet been fully developed . . .”⁶¹

1. Research shows that children have trouble recognizing and resisting influencer marketing

Most research that specifically addresses how children perceive influencers have focused on children older than 8.⁶² This research suggests that children ages 8 to 12 or even older have difficulty identifying influence advertising and understanding the persuasive intent. Since children generally get better at these tasks as they get older, it is safe to assume that younger children would have even greater difficulty.

Research also shows that children have greater difficulty activating their critical reasoning skills viewing influencer advertising compared to traditional television advertising. This is because the “subtle and embedded nature makes it difficult for audiences to recognize influencer marketing as advertising.”⁶³

But even if children recognize an influencer video as an advertisement, that does not mean it is not deceptive. Children must activate more complex levels of advertising literacy to

⁶¹ Id. (citations omitted).

⁶² Marijke De Veirman, et al., *What Is Influencer Marketing and How Does It Target Children? A Review and Direction for Future Research*, 10 *Frontiers in Psychology* (Dec. 2019), <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02685/full>.

⁶³ Sophie C. Boerman and Eva A. van Reijmersdal, *Disclosing Influencer Marketing on YouTube to Children: The Moderating Role of Para-Social Relationship*, 10 *Frontiers in Psychology* at 2, Jan. 21, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338422363_Disclosing_Influencer_Marketing_on_YouTube_to_Children_The_Moderating_Role_of_Para-Social_Relationship.

use their cognitive defenses in response to sponsored content as advertising. However, children's

motivation and ability to critically process the marketing message of the vloggers will be relatively low, compared to other forms of advertising because the advertising cues in vlogs are highly embedded in the entertaining content. Therefore, children's cognitive resources will be automatically used to process the entertaining aspect of the vlog and additional sources are needed to activate skepticism toward the advertising element of the vlog, while most children will not be highly motivated to do so.⁶⁴

Another reason why children do not understand that influencer videos are advertisements is because they often bond with the influencer. Even “[y]oung adolescents often build a special type of relationship with their favorite vloggers because they admire these influences and consider them as their friends, imagining them being part of their social world and follow their advices.”⁶⁵ This relationship is often referred to as para-social relationship or interaction.⁶⁶ Research has found that “indicate that the majority of children frequently view vlogs and that their degree of bonding with the vlogger predicted the time spend on viewing vlogs.”⁶⁷ Studies have shown that developing a parasocial relationship has a positive effect on brand perceptions.⁶⁸

Influencers frequent utilize techniques to encourage para-social relationships. For example, they may let viewers be part of their personal life by sharing intimate personal stories. They are often shown in a residential setting.⁶⁹ As one article put it, effective influencers

⁶⁴ Folkvord at 79.

⁶⁵ Id. at 86.

⁶⁶ Id. Para social-relationship (PSR) is “the illusion of having an enduring personal relationship with a media personality” that develops over time. Para-social interaction (PSI) refers to perception of the media personality as an intimate conversational partner that usually arises during the interaction. Boerman & Reijmersdal at 5.

⁶⁷ Folkvord at 86.

⁶⁸ Id.

⁶⁹ Id.

maintain a level of trust, intimacy, and engagement that's difficult for traditional advertising to match. Followers typically are interested in the lives of the influencers they follow, believe their recommendations sincere, and perceive the separation between themselves and those influencers—especially micro and nano-influencers—to be smaller than the distance between fans and celebrities. They view influencers as friends.⁷⁰

It is not uncommon for influencers to communicate directly with followers. One study found that a third of tweens reported leaving at least one comment for a YouTube influencer during the average week, and 11.6% reported they had received a response.⁷¹ It found that “[n]ot only did tweens want to be like their favorite YouTuber, they also reported experiencing feelings of friendship.”⁷² Endorsements by peer-aged influencers are especially seen as more credible and authentic than regular commercial messages.⁷³

In sum, influencer marketing is promoted to brands as an effective advertising method because children do not see it as advertising. As a review of the literature concluded, children “fail to recognize influencer content as advertising and cope with such persuasion tactics critically. As a result, instead of advertising, influencers’ brand-initiated endorsements are likely to be perceived as highly credible electronic word-of-mouth the influencer shares out of genuine liking of the brand.”⁷⁴ Thus, influencer marketing is a deceptive practice under Section 5.

⁷⁰ Alexandra J. Roberts, *False Influencing*, 20 Geo. L. J. (forthcoming)(footnotes omitted), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3388274.

⁷¹ *Wishful Identification*, at 8.

⁷² *Id.* at 10.

⁷³ Steffi De Jans, Veroline Cauberghe, and Liselot Hudders, *How an Advertising Disclosure Alerts Young Adolescents to Sponsored Vlogs: The Moderating Role of a Peer-Based Advertising Literacy Intervention through an Informational Vlog*, 47 J. of Advertising 309, 311 (2018).

⁷⁴ Marijke De Veirman et al., *What Is Influencer Marketing and How Does It Target Children? A Review and Direction for Future Research*, 10 Frontiers in Psychology at 7 (Dec. 3, 2019) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6901676>. (*What is Influencer Marketing?*)

2. Research shows that sponsorship disclosures are ineffective for children

Question 15 asks “To what extent do young children understand disclosures of material connections?” and “How can disclosures of material connections in media consumed by young children be made clearer or more effective?” These questions suggest that disclosures could ameliorate the fundamental unfairness of influencer marketing aimed at children. But research suggests that disclosures by influencers do not engender skepticism in children nor do disclosures affect children’s consumer behavior.

Most influencer videos do not have sponsorship disclosures.⁷⁵ Sometime the lack of disclosure is at the request of the advertisers. For example, the Wall Street Journal reported that for the “Japanese artists hired to promote Walt Disney Co.’s movie “Frozen 2” on Twitter said they were instructed to hide that they were paid work, contradicting Disney’s initial explanation that the omission was accidental.”⁷⁶ In other cases, “influencers are hesitant to transparently disclose the commercial nature of their posts, either because they are not aware of

⁷⁵ One influencer marketing agency reviewed posts from Instagram’s 50 most-followed influencers over the course of a month and found that 93% of posts promoting a brand were not labeled in a way that complied with FTC guidelines. MediaKix, 93% of Top Celebrity Social Media Endorsements Violate FTC Guidelines (May 31, 2017). Another study found that 82% of shoppers say that it is not always clear when an influencer has been paid to promote a product. Shomer, *Influencer Marketing 2019* at 42. Computer scientists at Princeton University found only about 10% of YouTube video with affiliate links had disclosures, and that the language recommended by the FTC was included on only about 2% of affiliated content (the sample included both YouTube and Pinterest). Danny Crichton, *Princeton study finds very few affiliate marketers make required disclosures on YouTube and Pinterest*, Mar. 28, 2018, <https://techcrunch.com/2018/03/28/affiliate-marketing-rarely-discloses/>.

⁷⁶ Takashi Mochizuki, *Disney Accused of Snow Job Over ‘Frozen 3’ Tweet Apology*, Wall St. J., Dec. 12, 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/disney-accused-of-snow-job-over-frozen-2-tweet-apology-11576127949?mod=hp_lead_pos11.

the rules or because they want to avoid irritation among their followers.”⁷⁷ Another problem is that regulators “allow semi-disguised constant advertising, in part because they can’t (or won’t) keep up with the innovations of social media. Failing to explicitly disclose brand deals is almost an industry norm.”⁷⁸

While some social media platforms have policies requiring disclosure of influencer marketing, “they do not strictly enforce or control for proper disclosure.”⁷⁹ This study notes that YouTube’s process require influencers to go to a great deal of effort and “actually shift the responsibility to check regulations to the influencer, without enforcing disclosure in their policy.”⁸⁰ It notes that even YouTubeKids “currently has no specific rules on the proper disclosure of sponsored content.”⁸¹

Even where disclosures are made, children (and adults as well) often do not recall seeing them. Disclosure recall is an important prerequisite for any disclosure effects.⁸² Yet, one study found that 30 of 58 children ages 8-12 shown a video with a ten second disclosure in large white letters on a black background, did not recall seeing the disclosure.⁸³

One reason is that disclosures typically occur while the influencer is talking. This makes it harder for children to attend to the disclosure.⁸⁴ Also, when disclosures are present, they are

⁷⁷ Marijke De Veirman et al., *What Is Influencer Marketing and How Does It Target Children? A Review and Direction for Future Research*, 10 *Frontiers in Psychology* at 7 (Dec. 3, 2019) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6901676>. (*What is Influencer Marketing?*)

⁷⁸ *Marketers Wanted a New Generation to Target, Hence Alphas*, *Wired*, Sept. 17, 2019.

⁷⁹ *What is influencer marketing?* at 10.

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² Boerman & Reijmersdal at 11.

⁸³ *Id.* at 7.

⁸⁴ Nathaniel J. Evans et al., *Influencer Videos* (2018) (noting that the disclosure on the EvanTube HD video used in the study occurred while Evan was talking and beginning to unbox

typically provided for only a short time at the beginning of the video. Sometimes, as shown in the screenshot below from YouTube, disclosures are hard to read.



But the bigger problem is that even when there is a sponsorship disclosure and children remember seeing it, it has little effect. A study of children ages 7 to 16 found that exposing children to a sponsorship disclosure did not activate their advertising literacy even when children noticed and remembered the disclosure.⁸⁵ Another study found that young adolescents' (ages 11-14) "recognition of advertising increased only moderately after exposure to the advertising disclosure."⁸⁶ Thus, more frequent, clear or prominent disclosures would not help young

the toy); Eva A. van Reijmersdal, et al., *Effects of Disclosing Influencer Marketing in Videos: An EyeTracking Study Among Children in Early Adolescence.*, 49 *J. of Interactive Marketing* 94 (2020)(find that disclosure shown prior to the start of the videos leads to more visual attention than a disclosure shown concurrently with the start of videos).

⁸⁵ Rhianne W. Hoek et al, *Testing the Effectiveness of a Disclosure in Activation Children's Advertising Literacy in the Context of Embedded Advertising in Vlogs*, 11 *Frontiers in Psychology* (Mar. 17, 2020), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7090090/>.

⁸⁶ Steffi De Jans, et al., *How an Advertising Disclosure Alerts Young Adolescents to Sponsored Vlogs: The Moderating Role of a Peer-Based Advertising Literacy Intervention through an Informational Vlog*, 47 *J. of Advertising* 309, 321 (2018),

children who lack the capacity to recognize influencer marketing as advertising and to activate advertising literacy.

Clearer and better disclosure might help parents better identify the commercial intent of influencer videos as parents themselves often have difficulty telling whether an influencer video is advertising. As one study noted, parental mediation is “strongly dependent on parents’ ability to be able to recognize unboxing videos as advertisements. As the videos created by unboxing channels continue to blur the boundaries between advertising content and genuine, user-generated material found on YouTube, it would not be inaccurate to assume that parents who are unaware the promotional tactics used by these influencers will not be able to counter their persuasive messages.”⁸⁷

Moreover, research shows that tweens rarely watch with their parents. In the study discussed above, which tweens identified their favorite YouTuber,

About half (52%) of the participants reported watching YouTube by themselves “almost every time” and 21% reported watching alone “every time” they watched. It was also common to watch with friends, with three out of five participants (58%) in the sample reporting doing so “sometimes.” It was extremely rare for participants to report watching YouTube with parents. In fact, a majority (82%) of tweens in this sample reported co-viewing YouTube with their parents “never” or “almost never.” Only 2

⁸⁷ Harsha Gangadharbatla and Deepti Khedeka, *Children and Unboxing Videos Online: Implications for Advertisers and Policy Makers*, Presented at Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference in Toronto, August 8, 2019, at 14. See also Nathaniel J. Evans & Mariea Grubbs Hoy, *Parents' Presumed Persuasion Knowledge of Children's Advergaming: The Influence of Advertising Disclosure Modality and Cognitive Load*, 37 *J. of Current Issues & Research in Advertising* (2016) 146 (finding that parents have a limited understanding of advergaming and noting that whether the player is a child or a parent, advergaming naturally result in cognitively loaded players so that they have reduced cognitive resources to devote to the inference of persuasive intent).

individuals (1%) reported watching YouTube with a parent “every time.”⁸⁸

B. Influencer marketing has a material impact on purchasing

Influencer marketing has a material impact on purchasing by children and their parents. A recent marketing study of U.S. children 5-12 found that influencers affect “what kids watch and buy,” with more than three-quarters of children surveyed saying “they trust YouTubers over commercials on recommendations on what to buy.”⁸⁹ A survey from Wunderman Thompson Commerce found that roughly a quarter of US and UK children and teens said that influencers influenced their purchases and that “their influence was more substantial than celebrities and athletes.”⁹⁰ Children report that they consider themselves affected by endorsements in video blogs.⁹¹ Moreover, a survey of 421 parents with children between the ages of 4 and 10 found that

unboxing videos are highly effective in eliciting the purchase demands from young children so much so that our study provides evidence for displeasure, tantrums and emotional distress from children when parents refuse to buy the products depicted in unboxing videos. As anyone with kids knows, sometimes giving into the demands and tantrums is an easier route to some peace and quiet in the house after a long day at work than a measured parental mediation approach to such content.⁹²

⁸⁸ *Wishful Thinking* at 6.

⁸⁹ MarketCast, *The Influence of Influencers on Kids*, Mar. 11, 2019, <https://marketcast.com/the-influence-of-influencers-on-kids/>.

⁹⁰ Lucy Koch, *Is YouTube Turning Kids Into Budding Shoppers?* eMarketer, Feb. 20, 2020, <https://www.emarketer.com/content/is-youtube-turning-kids-into-budding-shoppers>.

⁹¹ Folkvord at 77.

⁹² Harsha Gangadharbatla and Deepti Khedeka, *Children and Unboxing Videos Online: Implications for Advertisers and Policy Makers*, Presented at Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in Toronto, August 8, 2019.

In addition to economic harm, studies have shown that exposure to food and beverage cues featured in influencers' social media affect children's food intake of unhealthy foods and beverages.⁹³

Conclusion

Influencer marketing is big business. Children, however, lack the maturity to understand that influencer marketing is advertising and to evaluate it critically. They perceive it more like a recommendation from a friend. Thus, it is inherently deceptive to children.

The FTC has the authority to enforce Section 5's prohibition on deceptive ad practices against all of those responsible for deceptive influencer marketing to children, including the influencers, who often make vast amounts of money, the brands who benefit from the deceptive advertising, the advertising agencies, and the social media platforms that allow deceptive influencer advertising. It should start enforcing the law now. Waiting until this inquiry is completed will only allow the problem to get worse.

At the same time, the FTC should strengthen the Enforcement Guides to make sponsorship disclosures more effective for adults and teens and to clarify that influencer marketing directed to or viewed by a substantial number of children is deceptive. It should also begin the process to adopt a rule that would prohibit the use of influencers for marketing to children under age 13.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁹³ Anna E. Coates et al., *Social Media Influencer Marketing and Children's Food Intake: A Randomized Trial*, 143 *Pediatrics* (April 2019). , <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/143/4/e20182554>.

APPENDIX A

Summary of participants' favorite YouTubers (N = 148).

| YouTuber Name | Number of Times Identified | Percent % |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| PanTDM | 6 | 3.7 |
| AS-A | 5 | 3.1 |
| The Odd 1s Out | 5 | 3.1 |
| Annie LeBlanc | 4 | 2.5 |
| Musoka | 4 | 2.5 |
| Myth | 4 | 2.5 |
| Ninja | 4 | 2.5 |
| Wongio | 4 | 2.5 |
| LDShadowlady | 3 | 1.9 |
| Rebecca Zamolo | 3 | 1.9 |
| Rosanna Pansino | 3 | 1.9 |
| Alax Wasabi | 2 | 1.2 |
| Aisha Marie | 2 | 1.2 |
| Cole and Saw | 2 | 1.2 |
| Dekotaz - BCC Troll | 2 | 1.2 |
| F2 Fraestylers | 2 | 1.2 |
| Jacksepticeye | 2 | 1.2 |
| Jake Paul | 2 | 1.2 |
| Jula (Crafty Girls) | 2 | 1.2 |
| Liza Koshy | 2 | 1.2 |
| Logan Paul | 2 | 1.2 |
| MatPat (Game Theory) | 2 | 1.2 |
| Natoo | 2 | 1.2 |
| PowDePie | 2 | 1.2 |
| Preston Playz | 2 | 1.2 |
| Shane Dawson | 2 | 1.2 |
| Sofia Dossi | 2 | 1.2 |
| Squeoso | 2 | 1.2 |
| 5minute crafts | 1 | 0.6 |
| AlaxACE | 1 | 0.6 |
| Alaix and Toddie | 1 | 0.6 |
| Aphmau | 1 | 0.6 |
| As Is (Freddie) | 1 | 0.6 |
| Beasty Games | 1 | 0.6 |
| Binging with Babish | 1 | 0.6 |
| Blitz | 1 | 0.6 |
| Carnado Gaming | 1 | 0.6 |
| Carina Garcia | 1 | 0.6 |
| Coedey | 1 | 0.6 |
| CGP Grey | 1 | 0.6 |
| Chris Stuckmann | 1 | 0.6 |
| Gifford Owusu | 1 | 0.6 |
| Collin Koyas | 1 | 0.6 |
| Coyote Peterson | 1 | 0.6 |
| Crafty Girls | 1 | 0.6 |
| DangmatSmith | 1 | 0.6 |
| Dnagast | 1 | 0.6 |
| Dude Perfect | 1 | 0.6 |
| Emma Chamberlain | 1 | 0.6 |
| Evantube | 1 | 0.6 |
| Fitz | 1 | 0.6 |

Continued

| YouTuber Name | Number of Times Identified | Percent % |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| Funnel Vision | 1 | 0.6 |
| Hunter Hayes | 1 | 0.6 |
| Infinio Lists | 1 | 0.6 |
| Jackie Aina | 1 | 0.6 |
| Jolly | 1 | 0.6 |
| Jojo Siwa | 1 | 0.6 |
| Kayla Davis | 1 | 0.6 |
| Kids React | 1 | 0.6 |
| Kitty Plays | 1 | 0.6 |
| Lachlan | 1 | 0.6 |
| Lolo Pons | 1 | 0.6 |
| Madden Mobile Goods | 1 | 0.6 |
| Markplier | 1 | 0.6 |
| Mathias | 1 | 0.6 |
| Matt Maeso | 1 | 0.6 |
| Merodith Foster | 1 | 0.6 |
| Moosa | 1 | 0.6 |
| Nathan/Unspeakeable | 1 | 0.6 |
| Nicola Skyles | 1 | 0.6 |
| Onyx Kids/Shich | 1 | 0.6 |
| Pixelated Apollo | 1 | 0.6 |
| Popular MMs (Pat) | 1 | 0.6 |
| Roland Bauduin | 1 | 0.6 |
| Royal Opera House | 1 | 0.6 |
| Ryan Higa | 1 | 0.6 |
| SaraBeautyCounter | 1 | 0.6 |
| SimplyLogical - C | 1 | 0.6 |
| Skits4Skittles | 1 | 0.6 |
| Skyeart TV | 1 | 0.6 |
| SSundee | 1 | 0.6 |
| Stampy | 1 | 0.6 |
| Studio C | 1 | 0.6 |
| Stupid Things With S | 1 | 0.6 |
| Talking to 1 | 1 | 0.6 |
| The Seven Girls | 1 | 0.6 |
| TheGamingBeaver | 1 | 0.6 |
| Thimbleodles | 1 | 0.6 |
| Today I Found Out | 1 | 0.6 |
| Trend Craze | 1 | 0.6 |
| Unlisted Leaf | 1 | 0.6 |
| Vennessa Marmil | 1 | 0.6 |
| Yannick Barbaron | 1 | 0.6 |
| Yassy | 1 | 0.6 |
| Yolanda (Daka Maker) | 1 | 0.6 |
| Zach Hampel | 1 | 0.6 |
| Zach King | 1 | 0.6 |

Source: Amanda N. Tolbert and Kristin L. Drogos, *Twens' Wishful Identification and Parasocial Relationships With YouTubers*, 10 *Frontiers in Psychology* at 15 (Dec. 17, 2019), <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02781/full/> (“*Wishful Identification*”)

To assess whether the Favorite YouTubers in this list are influencers, the first 11 listed, that is, those that named as favorites by 3 or more tweens, were looked up using Naibuzz, What’s Buzzing Online, a website that estimates the network of celebrities. A pdf of the entire article

for the first one on the list, DanTDM, is copied below. It gives a brief description of the YouTuber, estimates how much money he makes on YouTube, and notes additional sources of income. All of the profiles follow the same template. For the other 10 favorite YouTubers, the Naibuzz descriptions of their YouTube channel(s) and sponsorships are excerpted below. Of the 11, only one (TheOdd1sOut) did not list any sponsorships. The dates of birth were obtained from Famous Birthdays, <https://www.famousbirthdays.com/>.

1. DanTDM, Nov. 8, 1991- see attached

2. Ali-A, Nov. 6, 1993

Ali A is one of the most famous Call of Duty Youtube gamers online. He has an estimated net worth of \$17 million. He is from the United Kingdom and has over 8.6 million subscribers on YouTube as of the end of 2016. He also has another account called More Ali A where he does other games such as Minecraft and Pokemon Go. This account has around 4.5 million subscribers. He makes money from advertisements from all these accounts.

Ali A in full is Alastair Aiken. He started out back in 2009 uploading gaming videos with Call Of Duty being his most popular. He even gets early access to the games months before they are released.

The main channel has over 16 million subscribers as of 2020 and has accumulated over 5 billion views so far.

Ali A makes extra income from sponsorship deals from big companies like Monster Beverage, Ubisoft, Blizzard Entertainment, G2A, Alienware etc which pay thousands of dollars for the promotion of their products. He also sells merchandise through his website and launched a new comic book in 2018.

3. TheOdd1sOut, May 14, 1996

The Odd 1s Out is a web comic created by Robert James Rallison, an America YouTuber from Arizona. He started drawing to impress a girl while he was in 8th grade. His first comic was based on the movie Twilight which didn't make sense to him. When he was 15 he decided to put his comics on the internet hence he went to Tumblr to post his creations.

4. Annie LeBlanc, Dec. 5, 2004

Annie LeBlanc is one of the three siblings from the famous family vlog Bratayley. She has her own self-titled channel which she used to call Acroanna. She is also very popular on Musical.ly where she has over 11 million fans. She has an estimated net worth of \$800,000. Her content is mainly vlogs, challenges and skits. She started making videos on YouTube back in 2008 and has evolved to be a gymnast, actor and singer.

Annie . . . is signed to Disney's Maker Studios. She also gets sponsorship deals from big companies like DreamWorks.

5. Muselk, Nov. 22, 1994

Elliott Watkins is the guy who runs the channel Muselk and is also known as MrMuselk. He has an estimated net worth of \$8 million. He is an Australian gaming YouTuber based in Sydney, New South Wales. He is famous for playing popular games such as Team Fortress 2, Garry's Mods, Overwatch, Star Wars Battlefront, Rainbow Six Siege and many others.

The channel has over 8.5 million subscribers as of 2020 and has accumulated over 3.3 billion views since starting out. The channel grows by an average of 10,000 subscribers daily and is able to average 1.5 million views per day.

Muselk makes extra income through doing sponsored videos and has been paid to promote products like Steamgroup, EA Ronku, Paragon, OnePlus and others. He also sells various merchandise through his website.

6. Myth, May 24, 1999

TSM Myth AKA Myth is a popular American Twitch streamer whose real name is Ali Kabbani. He has an estimated net worth of \$3.5 million. He is a professional Fortnite Battle Royale player but also streams other games like IRL, Battle_eld, Call Of Duty and League Of Legends.

Myth is also a popular YouTuber with a very popular gaming channel that is growing tremendously.

[Myths' YouTube] channel has over 5 million subscribers as of 2020 and has accumulated over 350 million views so far. It is able to get an average of 100,000 views per day from different sources. This should generate an estimated revenue of around \$500 per day (\$180,000 a year) from the ads that appear on the videos.

Myth makes extra income through brand deals and has been sponsored by brands like Geico.

7. Ninja, June 5, 1991

Ninja is a Twitch streamer from Illinois who got popular due to the massively popular game known as Fortnite. His real name is Tyler Blevins and has an estimated net worth of \$22 Million.

Ninja has over 25 million [YouTube] subscribers as of 2020 and has accumulated over 2.4 billion views so far. The channel is able to get an average of 1.1 million views per day from different sources. This should generate an estimated revenue of around \$5,500 per day (\$2 million a year) from the ads that appear on the videos.

Ninja makes extra income through selling merchandise to his fans. He also has a number of sponsorship deals endorsing products like Scufgaming, DX Racer, Fantasy Stud, Space Jam, Bud Light, Uber Eats, Red Bull and many others.

8. Wengie, Jan. 9, 1986

Wengie is an Australian beauty and lifestyle YouTuber who has one of the top subscribed YouTube channels in Australia. She does make up tutorials/tips, hair tutorials, skin care tutorials, diet & fitness, fashion and everything related to beauty & cosmetics. She has two channels, her main channel Wengie and her vlogging channel Wengie Vlogs. She has generated majority of her estimated net worth of \$5 million . . .

Wengie's main channel has over 14 million subscribers as of 2020 and has accumulated over 1.8 billion views since 2010. She uploads 2 videos per week and in a day her channel currently gets an average of 750,000 views.

Wengie supplements her income through affiliate links and sponsorship deals in the beauty industry which pay thousands of dollars for some exposure. Some of the companies she has worked with include Clinique, SODA & Co Natural Skin Care, Opinion Outpost, Sugarbearhair, Best Fiends, Teami Blends etc.

9. LDSshadowlady, Oct. 7, 1992

Lizzie is the British YouTuber popularly known as LDSshadowLady online. She has an estimated net worth of \$6.5 million. She posts gaming videos mainly about Minecraft. Her Minecraft series known as Shadowcraft has been widely popular.

Lizzie makes more money through ads on her Twitch channel where she streams gameplays from time to time. She also does some sponsored videos from time to time and companies pay thousands of dollars for product exposure. She has worked with QuizUp, Pixar, Sims 4 etc

10. Rebecca Zamolo, Sept. 28, 1982

Rebecca Zamolo is an American YouTuber, actress, writer and producer. She has an estimated net worth of \$5 million. Her content is mainly DIY videos, musical.lys, challenges, skits and any other random entertaining content.

Rebecca makes extra income from selling spreadshirts on her website. She also does sponsored videos from time to time and has promoted products like Alice, Facemoji, Best Fiends, Warner Bros, Bubble Island 2 etc

11. Roseanna Pansino, June 8, 1985

Rosanna Pansino is an American YouTube personality who built her **net worth of \$13 million** from baking and posting videos on YouTube. Her cooking show Nerdy Nummies was one of the most popular shows online. Nerdy Nummies is a tutorial on how to make a nerdy themed baked goodies which resembles characters from video games, tv shows, books and films.

Rosanna makes more money from endorsement deals which are very lucrative. She has worked with brands like home decor company Wayfair, Home and Family TV and cake decorating magnate Wilton Enterprises for branded series. Companies like these are willing to pay tens of thousands of dollars to promote their products. Her Nerdy Nummies Cookbook has had some great sales and she gets a cut of these sales. On social media she has over 2 million followers on Instagram and this has been a great marketing tool for her cakes.

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| BEST PRODUCTS | BIOGRAPHY | BUSINESS | CELEBRITY GOSSIP | CELEBRITY NET WORTH | How About Another |
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| NEWS | PLAYLIST | | | | |



How Much Money Sam (Academy Makes On You Net Worth

How Much Money DanTDM Makes From YouTube - Net Worth

Julian CELEBRITY NET WORTH

(Last Updated On: January 1, 2020)



How Much Money XpertThief (KevinLaSean) Makes On YouTube – Net Worth



How Much Money Fancy Vlogs By Gab Makes On YouTube – Net Worth

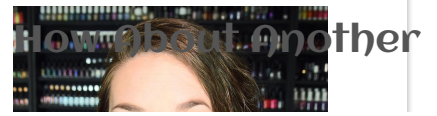
How Much Money



THE DIAMOND MINECART (DANTDM) NET WORTH - \$60 MILLION

The Diamond Minecart gaming channel was created by a guy named Daniel Middleton. His main focus is on the hit game Minecraft. He post daily reviews and game-play videos on the channel and this has made him attract a massive fan-base. At one point he was the most watched YouTube channel in the world.

Dan was born in Aldershot England and is the eldest of two siblings. He started YouTube by posting Pokemon videos while he was in Northampton



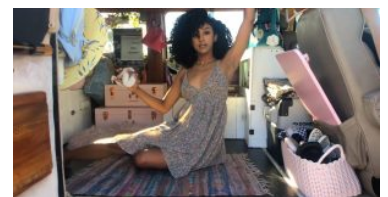
How Much Money Sam (Academy Makes On You
Net Worth



How Much Money
CallMeCarson
Makes On YouTube
& Twitch – Net
Worth

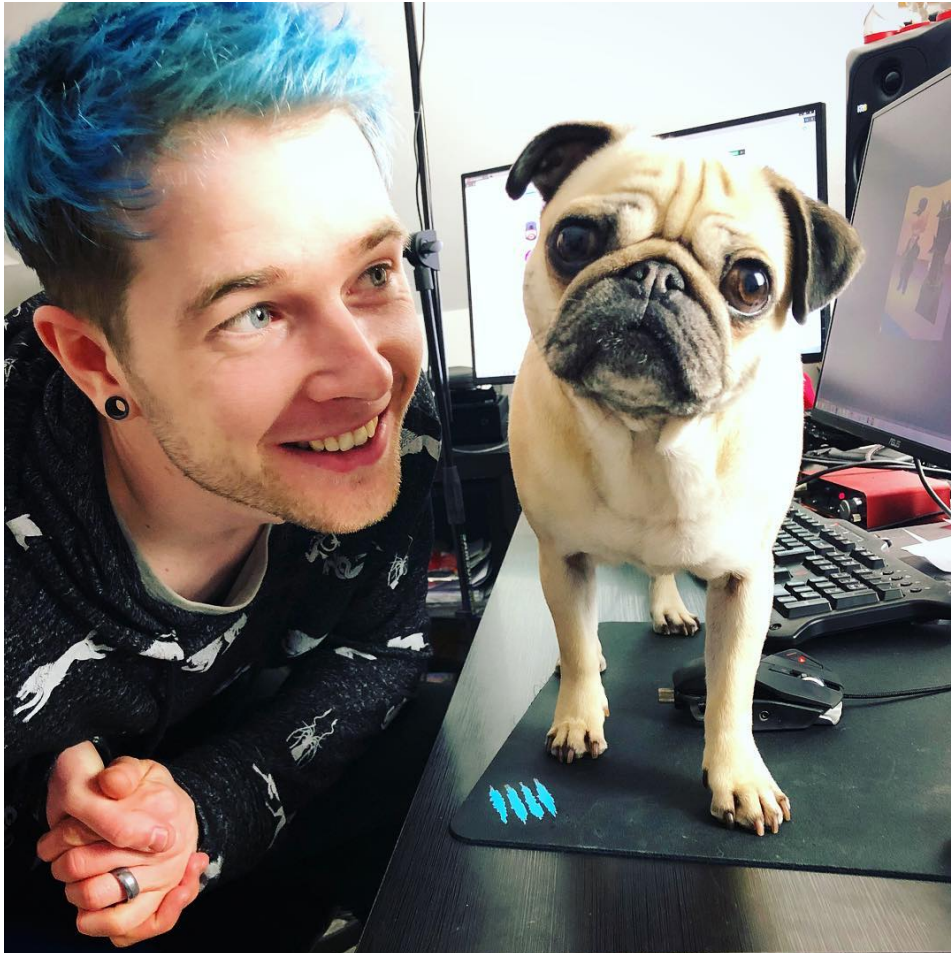


How Much Money
Pantons Squad
Make On YouTube –
Net Worth

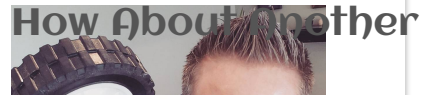


How Much Money
Jennelle Eliana
Makes On YouTube –
Net Worth

University. He started The Diamond Minecart channel in 2012 focusing on the children audience. Through all the hard work, DanTDM has been able to amass an estimated **net worth of \$60 million** over the years from income from his two channels, sponsorship deals and other sources.



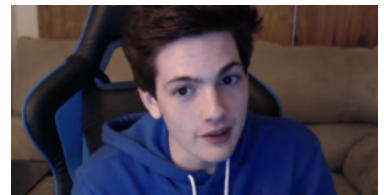
HOW MUCH MONEY THE DIAMOND MINECART/DANTDM EARNS ON YOUTUBE



How About Another (Net Worth) Makes On YouTube - Net Worth



How Much Money Will NE Makes On YouTube - Net Worth



How Much Money Golden Modz Makes On YouTube - Net Worth



How Much Money Magic Box Makes On YouTube - Net Worth





The Diamond Minecart YouTube channel has over 23 million subscribers as of 2020 and has accumulated over 16.5 billion video views since its creation in 2012. This is massive in such a short time span. Daniel uploads a video at least once a day, indicating how much commitment he has put into this game. His channel generates an average of 5 million video views every single day while it grows by an average of 5,000 subscribers daily. Some days it spikes to over 25 million hits. On average he makes around **\$20,000 every day (\$7.3 million a year)** ranking him among the highest earning MineCraft YouTubers.

The second channel MoreTDM has over 3 million subscribers even though it has been inactive for a long time. It gets an average of 100,000 views per day which should generate an estimated revenue of around \$180 per day.

YouTubers get paid between \$2 – \$7 per 1000 monetized views after YouTube takes its cut. Monetized views range from 40% – 80% of the total

How About Another



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How Much Money Sam (Cody Strong) Makes On YouTube - Net Worth



How Much Money Flamingo Makes On YouTube - Net Worth

views. All these are influenced by several factors like device played on, the location of the viewer, ad inventory, how many ads there are on a video, how many people skip the ads, type of advertisement, ad engagement , type of content etc. The cost of an ad view is based on an auction between advertisers based on views. Advertisers have to bid a minimum of \$0.01 per view.

There is also a program known as Google Preferred where deep-pocketed companies can target ads on the top 5% most popular content. The ad rates here are higher than normal. Apart from ads, YouTubers also generate extra from YouTube Red viewers who pay a monthly fee to view premium content on YouTube plus watch videos without ads. Here they get paid based on watch time on their videos. The longer the viewers watch their videos, the more money they earn.

The Diamond Minecart Channel can generate even more revenue from merchandise sales and other direct sponsors such as Telltale Games, Best Fiends, Disney etc. He recently inked a deal with Trapeze to publish a graphic novel by the name Trayaurus and the Enchanted Crystal.

How Much Money The Food Ranger Makes On...

(Last Updated On: April 1, 2018)The Food Ranger Net Worth – \$250,000

The Food Ranger YouTube channel is run by a guy named James Trev...

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How About Another



How Much Money Sam (Academy Makes On You Net Worth