

Sustainable influence: ethics and authenticity at the heart of marketing

WHITE PAPER

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INTRODUCTION



In a world where consumers are **demanding ethical values from brands**, influencer marketing must integrate moral and social issues. Influencers play a central role in how brands are perceived. **Integrity and transparency** are now essential in establishing and maintaining **consumer trust**.

This white paper explores **ethical influencing** and offers a roadmap for brands and influencers aiming for responsible practices. It discusses ethics in influencer marketing, the challenges facing the sector and strategies for ethical campaigns, with case studies and concrete recommendations.

At Efluenz, a specialist influencer marketing agency with 6 years' experience, we connect brands with authentic and committed influencers who **promote ethical and responsible practices**. **Our mission is to help brands** achieve their objectives while **respecting transparency, integrity and social responsibility**, thereby strengthening consumer trust.

Ethical influence is a necessary transformation. By adopting ethical principles, brands and influencers can **earn the trust of consumers** and contribute to a more responsible and sustainable world.

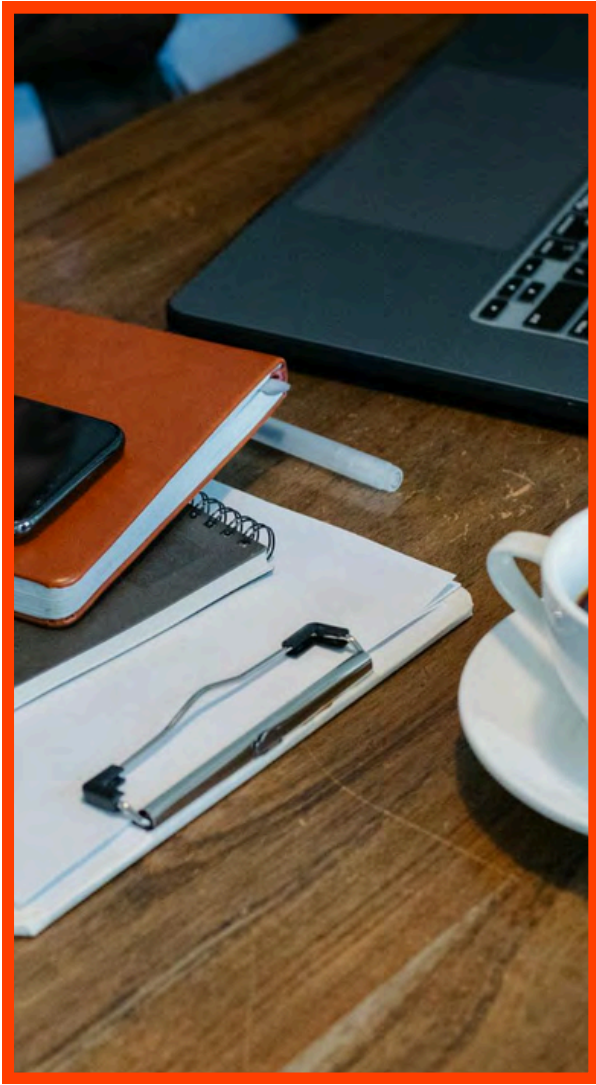
CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE OF ETHICAL INFLUENCE

The rise of social networking has revolutionised the way brands interact with their audiences. Influencers, thanks to their ability to engage large and diverse audiences, have become indispensable partners for many companies. However, this relationship is not without its challenges. With the proliferation of commercial partnerships, issues of authenticity and transparency have taken on paramount importance.

Today's better informed and more demanding consumers **require marketing practices that reflect strong ethical and social values**. A significant proportion of consumers are prepared to boycott a brand if its practices are deemed contrary to their moral values. Ethical influence is therefore no longer an option, but a **strategic necessity for brands** wishing to survive and prosper in a competitive environment.

Ethical influence is characterised by several fundamental principles: **transparency in partnerships, respect for users' privacy and data, social and environmental responsibility, and fairness and non-discrimination**. By adopting these principles, brands and influencers can not only meet consumer expectations, but also make a positive contribution to society.





UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL INFLUENCE

DEFINITION

Influencer marketing is a **strategy where brands work with influential people to promote products**. Ethics, in this context, are about transparency, authenticity and responsibility, implying integrity and respect for consumers.

It also requires **consideration of the social and cultural implications of advertising**. Ethical practices build trust and credibility, establishing lasting relationships with audiences.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS IN INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing goes beyond product promotion and **has a significant societal impact**. Influencers shape the opinions and behaviour of their followers, making it crucial to align campaigns with ethical values.

Brands and influencers need to consider the **long-term impact of their actions, promote inclusive messages, raise awareness of important social causes such as environmental sustainability, and encourage responsible behavior**.

Campaigns that promote sustainable practices or support social initiatives **can strengthen the brand image and contribute to collective well-being**. An ethical approach makes it possible to achieve commercial objectives while having a positive impact on society.

Careful choice of partnerships and messages is essential if we are to make a constructive contribution to society's values.



THE EVOLUTION OF INFLUENCE AND ETHICAL PRACTICES

BACKGROUND

Influencer marketing existed before social networks, with celebrities and public figures promoting products. In the early 20th century, film stars and athletes were the faces of major advertising campaigns.

The digital age has transformed this landscape. In the 2000s, the first digital influencers emerged via blogs, attracting loyal audiences in a variety of niches. Brands quickly saw the opportunity to collaborate with them.

CHANGING CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

Over time, consumers' expectations of influencer marketing have evolved. Initially focused on product awareness, they now **include criteria of authenticity, transparency and integrity**. The scandals linked to false recommendations and lack of transparency have accentuated this need.

Today, **consumers expect brands and influencers to be committed to social and environmental issues**.

The movement for sustainability, social justice and inclusiveness has gained momentum. Influencers need to **show a genuine commitment** to these causes, and brands are being judged not only on the quality of their products, but also on **their ethical practices and societal impacts**.

CURRENT REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES

The rise of influencer marketing has prompted many countries to strengthen their regulations to ensure transparency and consumer protection.

Each jurisdiction has put in place specific directives to govern the practices of influencers and brands, in order to maintain consumer confidence.



1 - BELGIUM : Belgian regulations on influencer marketing

In Belgium, legislation relating to influence marketing is mainly **governed by the law on advertising and the rules laid down by the Competition Authority**. Belgian guidelines emphasise the need for clear disclosure of any commercial partnership. Misleading practices, such as promoting a product without disclosing the commercial link, are strictly prohibited.

Advertising law:

Belgian legislation stipulates that all advertising must be clearly identified as such. Influencers must use **explicit references such as #pub or #ad** in their sponsored publications.

2 - FRANCE : Directives issued by the DGCCRF

In France, the **Direction Générale de la Concurrence, de la Consommation et de la Répression des Fraudes (DGCCRF) strictly regulates influencer marketing**. Influencers must clearly identify sponsored content. The use of hashtags such as #pub or #partenariat is mandatory. Transparency is essential to avoid any confusion for consumers.

DGCCRF :

The DGCCRF **imposes transparency and clarity obligations on sponsored publications**. Influencers must explicitly mention commercial partnerships in their content.



CURRENT REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES

3 - NETHERLANDS : Dutch regulations

In the Netherlands, **the Dutch Competition Authority (ACM)** monitors influencer marketing practices. Dutch rules require **sponsored content to be clearly identified**. Influencers must clearly indicate any commercial partnership, for example by using hashtags such as **#advertentie** or **#sponsored**.

Dutch Competition Authority (ACM):

The ACM stipulates that all advertising must be **clearly recognisable**. Influencers must use explicit mentions to ensure the transparency of sponsored content.

4 - LUXEMBOURG : Luxembourg regulations

In Luxembourg, the rules on influence marketing are **similar to those of its European neighbours**. The Competition Commission oversees the compliance of advertising practices. Obligations include clear disclosure of commercial partnerships, with terms such as **#sponsorisé** or **#publicité**.

Luxembourg Competition Commission:

The Commission imposes **strict rules** to ensure transparency in sponsored content.

THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL INFLUENCE

TRANSPARENCY AND AUTHENTICITY

When it comes to influence, transparency and authenticity are essential. Consumers, sceptical about promotional messages, demand **clear disclosure of paid collaborations or products offered**. This enables them to make informed decisions and understand the relationships between influencers and brands.

Authenticity is also crucial to ethical influencing.

Audiences are **looking for genuine opinions** and a **true identity**. Buying fake subscribers or using fake testimonials undermines the credibility and integrity of campaigns. Preserving this authenticity is essential for a genuine and effective influence.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Incorporating social and environmental responsibility into influence strategies is now crucial. Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environmental and social impact of brands. As a result, influencers and brands need to work together to promote **sustainable practices**, such as reducing waste and using recyclable packaging.

This not only **enhances the reputation of companies**, but also helps to **preserve the environment** and **support local communities**.



EQUITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Finally, equity and non-discrimination are essential values to incorporate into influencer campaigns. It is important to **represent and celebrate diversity in all its forms**, be it ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or physical ability.

Genuine inclusion helps to **avoid stereotypes** and promote positive messages. What's more, inclusive practices **enrich brands' image**, broaden their audience and encourage deeper engagement. By promoting these principles, influencers and brands play a key role in creating a fairer and more respectful world.

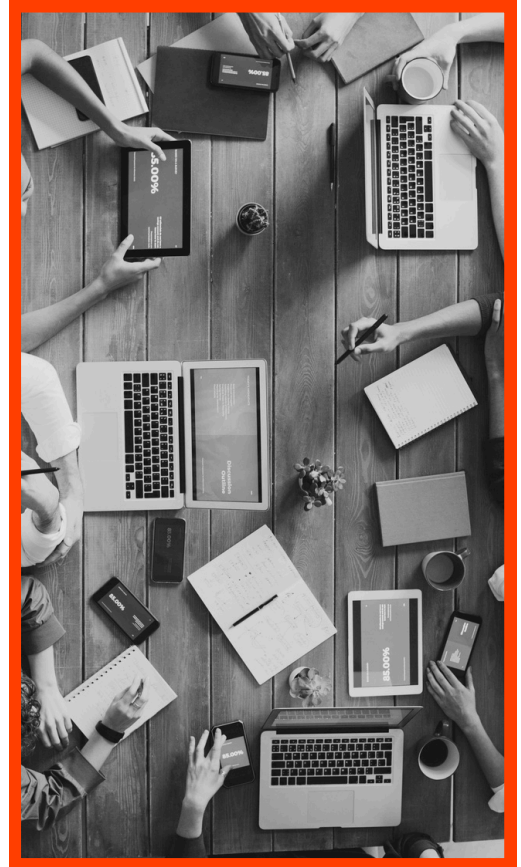
THE CHALLENGES OF ETHICAL INFLUENCE

COMMERCIAL PRESSURES AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Brands are looking to maximise their ROI, sometimes pushing influencers to promote products **they don't really approve**. Performance expectations can lead to less transparent strategies, and tight deadlines can compromise ethical standards.

Conflicts of interest arise when **influencers' personal interests diverge from those of their business partners**, such as promoting an unapproved product or not disclosing the commercial nature of the relationship. Scandals related to buying fake subscribers or not disclosing partnerships can lead to sanctions.

At Efluenz, we maintain integrity and authenticity in our collaborations. Our influencers prefer to work with brands they know or can test before promoting them. They try out the products to provide **genuine feedback**. If a direct test is not possible, we **encourage them to share personal experiences and difficulties encountered**, explaining how the product could help them. This approach builds audience confidence.



MANAGING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

To overcome these challenges, rigorous management of partnerships and collaborations is essential. Here are the key steps:



Draw up clear and transparent contracts

Contracts should include **clauses on the disclosure of partnerships**, with the obligation to mention sponsored content via hashtags such as **#ad** or **#sponsored** and the necessary legal notices. It is crucial to define expectations regarding content, tone, messages and delivery times.

Influencer training and awareness

Organising training courses to inform influencers about ethical best practice, the risks of conflicts of interest and regulatory requirements is essential. **Providing practical guides and educational resources** help them to manage their partnerships transparently and ethically.

Control and monitoring mechanisms

Setting up regular audits to check that **campaigns comply with ethical and regulatory standards is essential**. Encouraging feedback from subscribers on the transparency of sponsored content is also important. Using campaign management software can automate the verification of disclosures, guaranteeing compliance with transparency standards.

By following these steps, influencers and brands **can deal with commercial pressures** while maintaining their credibility and strengthening their relationship with their audience.

At Efluenz, we take personal responsibility for contacts with influencers. This allows us to ensure **total transparency** regarding the type of client, the content to be published and the remuneration. We also inform influencers that their selection is not guaranteed and inform them promptly if they are not selected. This method fosters **clarity and trust in our collaborations**.



STRATEGIES FOR **ETHICAL INFLUENCE**

SELECTION OF ETHICAL INFLUENCERS

For an ethical influence, choose influencers whose values **match those of your brand**. In Belgium, although there are not many of them, we select those who are transparent and committed to social or environmental causes. In France, we work with influencers certified by **the Certificate of Responsible Influence**.

Our database includes ethical influencers, many of whom have been working with us for years. Their audiences trust them because **they value authenticity over profit**. This helps us to build lasting relationships of trust with influencers and their audiences.

CREATING RESPONSIBLE CONTENT

Responsible content creation **must be authentic and truthful**. At Efluenz, we check all influencer content **before publication** to ensure compliance. We are committed to promoting inspiring and educational messages on social and environmental issues, with inclusive visuals reflecting diversity and equality.

ETHICAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Engaging communities ethically involves **respect, honesty and transparency**. Encourage constructive discussion, moderate comments to avoid hate speech, and promote two-way dialogue.

Organise interactive events and campaigns to get subscribers involved and support positive causes. These actions **strengthen loyalty and trust in your brand**.

STRATEGIES FOR ALIGNING BRAND PERCEPTION WITH ETHICAL VALUES

1

Total transparency

Ensure clear disclosure of all collaborations with influencers, using terms such as **#ad** or **#sponsored**, in accordance with the directives of regulators such as the FTC in the United States and the DGCCRF in France. This **helps build a relationship of trust with consumers** who are increasingly attentive to authenticity.

2

Careful selection of partners

Choose influencers whose **values and image are in line with those of the brand**. Working with influencers who share the same ethical and social convictions **strengthens the brand's credibility** and ensures that the message is consistent. For example, a brand committed to sustainability should favour influencers who are committed to the environment.

3

Authentic and coherent communication

Ensure that the brand's messages are sincere and aligned with concrete actions. **Avoid greenwashing** and make a real commitment to initiatives that have a positive impact on society and the environment. Communication should be **based on verifiable facts and actions**, rather than vague statements or broken promises.

4

Monitoring and ongoing assessment

Measure **the ethical impact of campaigns** and adjust strategies according to consumer feedback and performance indicators. Analysing feedback and results helps to **identify areas for improvement** and ensure that practices remain in line with the brand's ethical values.



CASE STUDIES

EXAMPLES OF COMPANIES THAT HAVE **MADE AN ETHICAL IMPACT**

Patagonia

Patagonia is a model of environmental commitment in the outdoor clothing sector. With landmark campaigns such as "**Don't Buy This Jacket**", it encourages responsible consumption. The company is **actively involved in environmental causes**, donating 1% of its sales to environmental organisations and working with like-minded influencers.



Lush

Lush stands out for its **natural cosmetics**, which are **not tested on animals**, and its commitment to sustainable development. The brand uses minimalist packaging and recycles its product jars. It runs **hard-hitting social and environmental campaigns**, while giving its employees and customers a voice in its communications.



Ben & Jerry's

Ben & Jerry's, famous for its ice creams, is also known for its **social and environmental commitment**. The brand supports causes such as **civil rights and fair trade**. It uses its communication channels to **educate and mobilise** its consumers around crucial social and environmental issues.



ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSFUL ETHICAL CAMPAIGNS BY EFLUENZ



1

The Gigapuces of Dunkerque

Les Gigapuces is an annual second-hand, secondhand and second-hand clothing event held in Dunkirk on Ascension Thursday. The event attracts large crowds of visitors keen to bargain for second-hand items and clothing. Efluenz orchestrated a campaign with local influencers to promote the event, highlighting the importance of reuse and sustainable consumption. The campaign achieved an engagement rate of 3.9%, with 737,002 impressions and a story view rate of 17.4%.

2

Fondation ENGIE

The ENGIE Foundation supports various projects aimed at including young people and protecting the environment. Efluenz worked with influencers to highlight these initiatives, sharing success stories and tangible impacts. Influencers used their platforms to raise awareness of social and environmental issues, reinforcing the importance of corporate social responsibility. The campaign reached 264,133 people, with a reach on followers of 536.3% and a view rate of 13.7%.

3

Victor Habchy and the Grand Est region

Victor Habchy, an influencer renowned for his immersive videos, undertook a three-day cycling trip through the Grand Est region, covering more than 350 km. Efluenz worked with him to promote sustainable and authentic tourism in the region. Victor's videos captured the picturesque landscapes and cultural riches of the region, drawing attention to the importance of environmentally-friendly travel practices. The campaign generated 6,153,537 impressions, a 13.4% engagement rate and over 32,000 interactions.

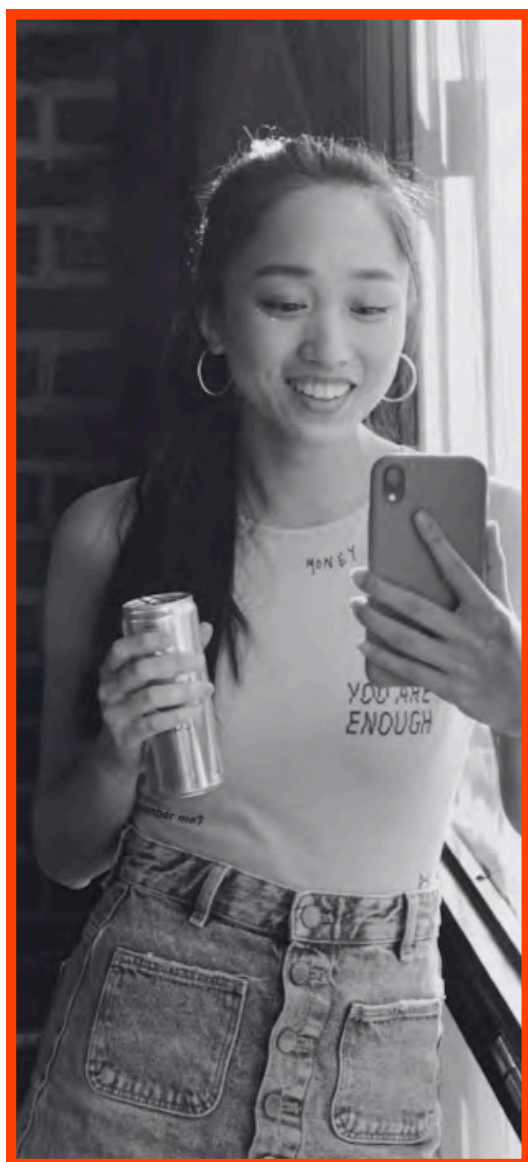
4

Recupel

Recupel is a Belgian organisation dedicated to recycling electronic equipment. Efluenz ran a multi-wave campaign with influencers to raise public awareness of responsible e-waste management. Influencers highlighted initiatives such as the Recupel Café Experience, E-Waste Day and the Recupel Retour service, underlining the importance of recycling and reducing electronic waste. The campaign recorded 202,520 impressions, with a reach of 174,160 people and a reach on followers of 32.74%.

THE FUTURE OF ETHICAL INFLUENCE

EMERGING TRENDS IN ETHICAL INFLUENCER MARKETING



REQUEST FOR AUTHENTIC CONTENT

Consumers prefer real stories and real experiences, encouraging brands to create sincere content and avoid greenwashing.

INCREASED REGULATION

Regulators are tightening the rules around influencer marketing, pushing brands to adopt more rigorous practices.

THE RISE OF MICRO-INFLUENCERS

Micro-influencers, perceived as more authentic, are playing an increasing role in marketing strategies, often within niche communities.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Brands are incorporating sustainability criteria and supporting social causes, responding to growing consumer demand for products and services that have a positive impact on society and the environment.

PREDICTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMING YEARS



Ethical influencer marketing is evolving with several key trends:

Enhanced regulation

Expect strict regulations against deceptive practices. Brands must put in place rigorous processes to ensure compliance.

Ongoing training

Invest in training for influencers and marketing teams to make them aware of best ethical practice and new regulations.



Sustainability and social values

Integrate sustainability and social values into your strategy. Partnerships with influencers committed to social or environmental causes will increase.

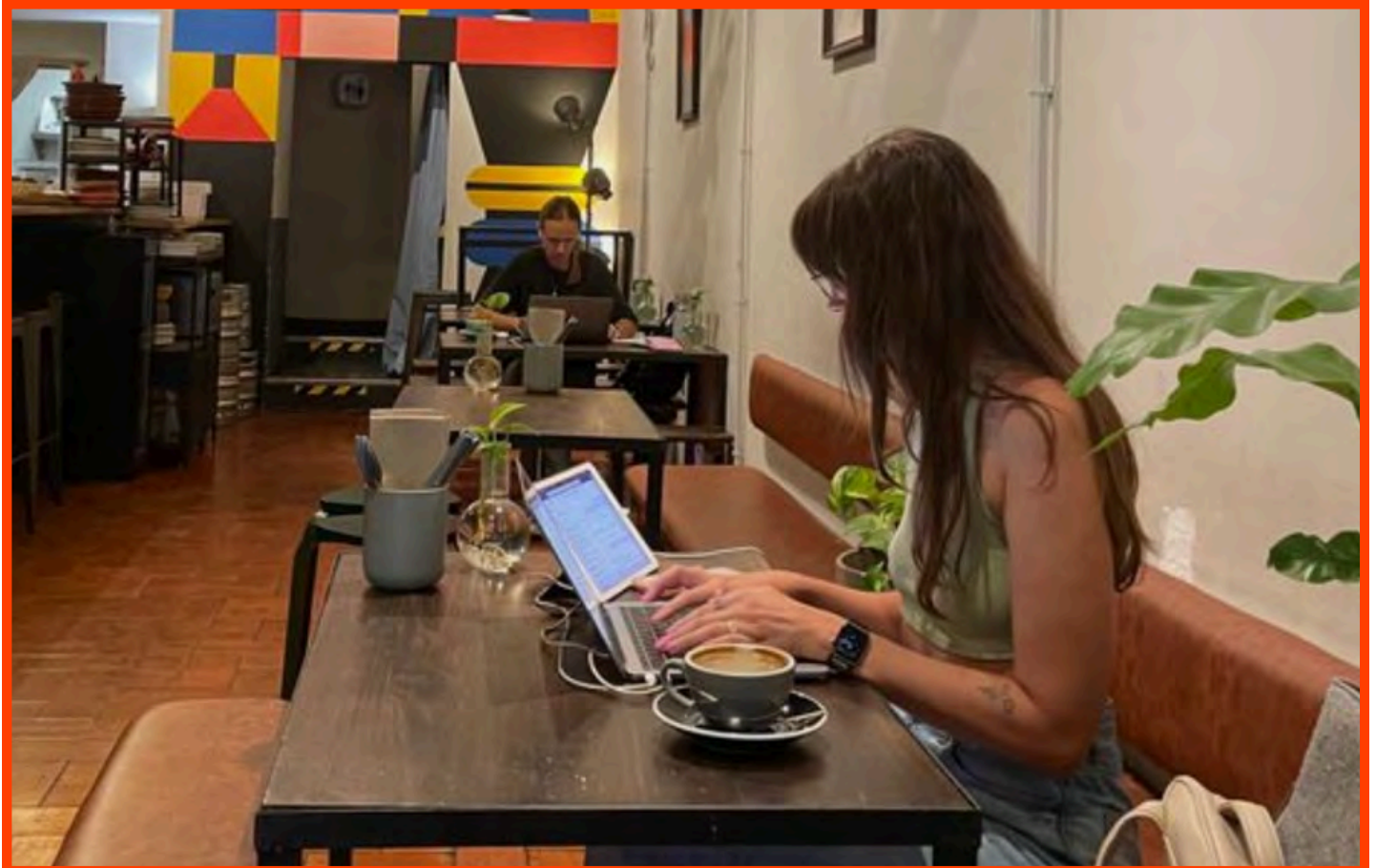
These measures will **strengthen the credibility** of brands and improve their relationship with consumers.

CONCLUSION

Influencer marketing now goes beyond the simple promotion of products, incorporating values of integrity, transparency and social responsibility. Brands and influencers need to avoid deception, respect consumer expectations and deliver messages that respect diversity.

Consumers are looking for authenticity and transparency, and expect brands and influencers to commit to social and environmental causes. Campaigns that focus on sustainability and inclusivity build credibility and brand loyalty.

Ethical influencer marketing will evolve with stricter regulations, increased training and better integration of social values. By adopting these practices, brands and influencers can build strong relationships and make a positive contribution to society.





To build a future where influencer marketing embodies authenticity and responsibility, choose Efluenz. We encourage brands to integrate transparent and sustainable practices into their campaigns, while choosing partnerships aligned with ethical values. Influencers, for their part, must adopt a sincere approach and support initiatives that have a positive impact.

With Efluenz, you'll not only boost your credibility and build loyalty among your audience, you'll also be contributing to more ethical and responsible marketing. Together, let's build a future today where every action counts!





Thank you for reading!

**Want to start a sustainable influencer campaign?
Contact us at: contact@efluenz.eu**

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