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Answer Key: Dissect the Parasocial Paradox: 11th Grade Media Literacy Quiz

Evaluate the complex ethical landscape of digital curation and algorithmic bias through critical analysis of contemporary influencer culture.

1. A lifestyle influencer consistently posts high-production imagery showcasing a minimalist home, yet privately accepts commissions to promote fast-fashion hauls. According to the concept of 'performative authenticity,' which sociological tension is most prevalent?

Answer: A) The commodification of the self vs. the labor of transparency

Performative authenticity involves the tension between maintaining a relatable 'brand' (minimalist) and the economic necessity of monetization (fast-fashion sponsorships), turning the creator's identity into a marketable commodity.

2. The 'Filter Bubble' phenomenon, intensified by AI-driven influencer content, primarily serves to challenge users' existing cognitive biases by introducing radical counter-perspectives.

Answer: B) False

Filter bubbles actually reinforce existing biases by using algorithms to show users content that aligns with their previous behaviors and preferences, limiting exposure to dissenting views.

3. When an influencer leverages their niche community to launch a successful grassroots political campaign, they are exercising _____, a term coined by Joseph Nye to describe influence through attraction rather than coercion.

Answer: C) Soft Power

Soft Power is the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction, which is the primary mechanism by which influencers drive social or political change.

4. Examine the 'De-influencing' trend of 2023. This movement is best analyzed as a response to which prevailing digital economic condition?

Answer: B) Saturation of the 'attention economy' and consumer skepticism

De-influencing emerged as a strategic pivot toward authenticity when audiences began to feel overwhelmed by constant product promotion (hyper-consumption) and loss of trust in influencer recommendations.

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5. Under the FTC's 'Endorsement Guides' (applied to digital media), an influencer is legally required to disclose a material connection to a brand even if the influencer truly believes in the product's quality.

Answer: A) True

Legal transparency mandates that any 'material connection' (payment, free products, family ties) must be disclosed regardless of the influencer's personal opinion, to prevent misleading the consumer.

6. A specialized influencer targeting 11th-grade students about 'study-web' productivity habits relies on _____ relationships, where followers develop a one-sided sense of intimacy and friendship with the creator.

Answer: B) Parasocial

Parasocial relationships are one-sided psychological bonds where the viewer feels they know the influencer personally, despite the influencer having no direct interaction with that specific individual.

7. Which scenario best illustrates the 'Shadowbanning' controversy regarding algorithmic bias and social justice content?

Answer: B) An influencer's content is demoted in search results without notification due to 'sensitive' hashtags.

Shadowbanning refers to the stealth suppression of content by algorithms, often sparking debate about whether certain political or social topics are being unfairly silenced by platform moderation.

8. In the context of 'Digital Colonialism,' Western influencers visiting developing nations to document 'authentic' experiences always contribute positively to the local economy without cultural appropriation.

Answer: B) False

Digital Colonialism and cultural appropriation are critical concerns where influencers may use foreign cultures as 'backdrops' for aesthetic gain, often reinforcing stereotypes or extracting value without benefiting the local community.

9. The use of 'Virtual Influencers'—CGI characters with backstories and personalities—challenges the concept of _____ in digital marketing, as their entire existence is curated by a corporate team.

Answer: A) Authenticity

Virtual influencers raise questions about 'authenticity' because their emotions, appearances, and preferences are artificial, yet they are marketed to evoke the same trust as human influencers.

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10. Consider the 'TikTok-ification' of news. How does the pivot to influencers as primary news sources for Gen Z affect 'Media Sourcing' ethics?

Answer: B) It prioritizes emotional resonance and engagement over objective verification.

Influencer-led news often focuses on the creator's personal reaction or narrative style (engagement), which can lead to the rapid spread of information that lacks the traditional rigor of institutional journalism.