The Newest World Order

A look at the ways social media has revolutionized our social dynamics and daily lifestyle.

Shelby Kienitz

Online Modeling

Dani Urbina

Senior Shelby Kienitz uses Instagram to promote clothing brands and photographers. She shoots trade sessions with photographers and receives free pictures in exchange for a shoutout on her page. Clothing brands provide Kienitz with promotional codes that she gives to her followers whenever she posts a picture in one of their outfits. Every time somebody uses her code at checkout, Kienitz receives a portion of the profits.

Kienitz began her promotional deals by reaching out to photographers in Denver who might need some help advertising their name. "The more I posted and started using the brands, the more they reached out to me and asked me to do more promotions," said Kienitz.

The photoshoots and promotions don't come without effort from Kienitz. "Getting ready for the photoshoots depends on each photographer," said Kientiz. "Sometimes they'll give you a look that they're going for, so getting ready for that takes a while. It takes probably two hours to prep and on top of that, if they do your make-up, that can take up to 3 hours. The photoshoot itself can range. A lot of times it will be like 1 hour to 2 hours of photos. Sometimes it can take weeks for the photographer to get all of the photos edited. For the posting, it doesn't take too long, but it's sometimes hard to make sure you include their name and put it out there and represent them. That takes a little bit of time to plan for all of that."

The amount of money that Kienitz makes from her promotions often depends on the season. She does not have many winter ambassadors, but she promotes a lot of brands that sell summer dresses and sunglasses. "Each brand gives me some free clothing in the beginning just so that I can start taking pictures for them," said Kienitz. "One brand gave me $1000 worth of jewelry for free. I had to pay shipping and handling, but other than that, it didn't cost me anything."

Kienitz would like to make a career out of modeling, but isn't entirely sure if the goal is realistic at this time. "I got offered to model for an agency," said Kienitz, "but it wasn't what I was going for because you're paying the agency a lot to represent you so I'd rather get my shoots for free and just be doing it for myself. I'd like to go make it bigger, but I'm also not tall. I don't have the height on my side. The only way I'd make it is with magazine shoots. I did one of those, but I don't know if it will be published or not. It just depends on what kind of opportunities come."
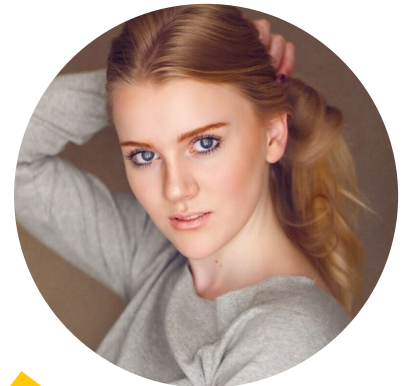
Instagram *vs.* Snapchat

Oliver Mckinney (10)

The difference between the two: "I think there is a difference between Instagram and Snapchat because Snapchat is more personal. Instagram is more for public view, for anybody. Snapchat's more for your friends and people you know...I don't want to make myself look like an idiot on Instagram, but I'll say more stupid stuff on Snapchat."
Personal use: "I sell stuff over Snapchat. I make money from it. I sell shoes and Supreme gear. It is a very helpful way to make money...I also like Instagram because there's a lot of funny memes on there."

Leo Brooks (12)

"My instagram is way more of the idealistic version of me, just like Instagram is the idealistic version of a lot of people. People put their best foot forward so that everyone is jealous of their lives and that concept in and of itself is toxic. That is kind of what I do too. It's what everybody does. I'm not going to post a picture of myself looking bad. I put my senior photo on there, I wouldn't put my senior photo on Snapchat. Instead, I post stupid stuff on there."

A Friend Group's Perspective

"Instagram is something that you're okay with being up permanently," said sophomore Emily Chalker, "and Snapchat's something that you don't want up permanently."

Instagram's posts last virtually forever and accumulate in a feed that come to represent some degree of a person's life over a few years. "Instagram creates more of a first impression," said sophomore Anna Larson. However, the impact one's profile has on someone might be limited. "Once you get to know someone, it doesn't matter."

Still, they, like most other users, recognize the effort put into most posts and the social effect of this cultural trend. "Photo angles, photo quality, setting, background, the right lighting make a good Instagram post," said junior Miranda Duarte, "I think it's just more visually pleasing when you're scrolling through a feed." Apps like VSCO and FaceTune offer varying amounts of aid toward the "perfect" Instagram post. "It's not that it's important," said Larson, "It's just that it's a thing that everybody does. You become accustomed to doing it."

Snapchat offers a more relaxed environment for sharing. "Snapchat's more goofy and relaxed," said Duarte, "Instagram, I think, is more serious and kind of uptight because more people are going to be seeing it." Larson also recognizes the more personal side to Snapchat, especially through keeping streaks with her friends. "[Streaks are] weird, but it's normal," said Larson, "I've come to think of it as it's like you're always in contact with someone. You never have to be completely alone."

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Dustin Vogelbacher

Online Fame

Johanna Landmark

Dustin Vogelbacher has 264.6 thousand followers on Tik Tok, an increasingly popular social media app that allows its users to create and share short videos. He has accumulated such a large following primarily from his dancing videos but also from his versions of viral trends. Several major YouTubers, such as Reaction Time and Wolfie, have watched and reacted to his videos, adding to his exposure as a rising social media influencer.

Vogelbacher is a self-taught dancer with a passion for film. He takes film classes at Lakewood and recently submitted a video about his story to the LHS Film Festival. However, his social media career began more recently. "My friend Sage showed me this app called Musically at the time," said Vogelbacher. "I downloaded it just for fun, and it had the most hilarious videos I had ever seen in my life. So, I was like, okay, I'll do this. I'm gonna get big on this app, just wait." By the time Musically merged with Tik Tok in 2017, he had 40,000 followers.

He then, along with most Musically users, was forced to transfer to Tik Tok where his popularity increased exponentially with the surge of new users. In particular, one dance video received 4.7 million views. "I had this surgery done, and then, I woke up a few mornings after the surgery, and I was at 135k on Tik Tok and before I was at 46k. It was like 103k overnight. I was astonished. It was amazing."

This newfound success also raised the stakes for his videos. "It is [a lot of pressure], honestly, because I have to post. I can't be inactive because if I am, they start to unfollow me, so I kinda have to be on top of it." He mainly posts videos of himself doing trendy dance moves or following along with the current viral trends that go with songs such as "Breaking Free" from High School Musical or the most recently popular "Old Town Road" by Lil Nas X.

"After I get off work, I'll stay up all night making videos, and then I come to school all tired, but that's okay." He loves making and posting videos and can sometimes spend up to 30 minutes making one 15 second video. He works to perfect his timing, moves, and original ideas. "I try to portray myself as a comedic guy, who's really funny, but someone who doesn't really care about what other people think, who lives life to the fullest."

He feels that much of his influence lies in his appearance. "Because I'm a bigger guy, a lot of people think that I can't dance, and then, when they see that I dance and I have these really great moves, they end up being like 'wow, I really want to watch this guy.' So, I embraced it."

Vogelbacher has struggled with his weight his entire life. However, he recently began the intensive process to lose weight. He lost 103 pounds in five months, and he recently received bariatric surgery. "I just feel better as a person, and I don't want to ruin that by going back to what I was."

His weight may also play an elemental role in his social media success. "I've had some social media influencers tell me that my defect of being overweight is what's keeping me going as a social media influencer." In such short videos, many influencers must rely on their appearance to help define their online persona. "I have a feeling that I'm gonna not be who people think of me as, so I don't know how that's going to affect my social media. That's what scares me." Vogelbacher will currently still continue his pursuit of further weight loss.

This part of his identity also inspires some of his future plans. "I want to be a motivational speaker, more for people who are bigger...for people who get bullied

and have insecurities." He has struggled with bullying himself, and his online presence can also attract negative comments that worsen the issue. "The negative comments are the worst part of it. I don't try to read them, but it's hard."

On the other hand, social media represents a source of great positivity in his life in regard to his self image. "I get DM's on Instagram that say 'I love your videos' or 'you're an inspiration' or 'a role model'...I get so many comments saying, 'you're the bravest person I've ever seen in my life' and that 'I look up to you every single day, when my day is bad, I watch your videos.'" He feels that these reactions boost his confidence even higher and have had a greater effect on him than the negativity, though he says he has always been perfectly comfortable with dancing in public and online.

Vogelbacher plans to move to Los Angeles this summer to pursue social media as a career. First, he hopes to expand to YouTube and Instagram and to connect with bigger online stars. "All of the headquarters are down there too, so it will give me the opportunity to market myself a little more," said Vogelbacher. He will be living with other social media influencers, and eventually, he will pursue his lifelong dream of acting.

"Stay positive, and live your life." One of his favorite life mottos comes from History teacher Chris Poisson's parting statement at the end of each class. "I live by that everyday," said Vogelbacher.

Opinion: It's a Strange World After All

Johanna Landmark

Together, we have created a world that no science fiction movie could ever have predicted. Reasonable aspirations of flying cars and mind reading dominated Hollywood for more than 50 years, and yet social media defies them all in its outlandishness. We live in a future where we spend hours in a world that simply does not exist in space and time, and strangely enough, it controls an increasing amount of the real world.

I spend at least two hours a day snapchatting and scrolling through Instagram. My friends and I exchange mediocre pictures of our faces continuously throughout the day, and this has somehow become normal. I am fluent in the etiquettes that vary from Instagram to Snapchat to Facebook. However, when I take a step back from it all, I realize how truly peculiar a big part of my life has become.

For instance, I would assume that most high schoolers have attempted to show their parents a funny video on their phones, only for the parents to (first squint and ask if they can zoom in) and then to ask, "Who is that?" They completely---and frustratingly---miss the point. However, it actually makes more sense that they would expect to see someone I know. Why would I possibly take interest in someone I have never met? I simply ignore the person's identity and interpret the humorous part of the video.

Along with this comfort with anonymity, comes the subtlety of online culture. If the Internet can be likened to a culture, memes represent the Internet's weirdest quirks and shared experiences. It's almost like a new language, from understanding what's dead and what's relevant, to understanding how to apply a new meme trend, and understanding how to laugh at a bass-boosted song overlaying a blurry two-second video. Honestly, most things that I watch on a daily basis would make no sense to someone ten years ago.

Social media also transcends our phone screens and crosses into our real life. Group chats on Snapchat, for example, have revolutionized the concept of friend groups. Despite seeming like a harmless collection of people making plans, they define the boundaries between being in and out. The group agrees to exclude one member? Simply, all leaving the group chat or forming a new one creates real-life drama and sends a clear message to that one person, often without having to make any moves in real life.

Every culture also shares a language, and social media has one as well. Take the laughing-crying emoji, for example. It's over-exaggerated and there are at least ten other variations of laughing on the emoji keyboard, yet it's universally understood to lighten the mood of a much-too-serious sentence or simply to laugh at someone's joke over text. Also, internet slang has evolved, bringing new words into existence online and in our everyday conversations.

To me, that's the oddest of all: social media overlaps into real life. Social media rearranges how we use our time, changes our humor, and weighs in on the course of our friendships. This culture becomes part of all cultures. I choose every day to live some of my life online, and it has become a part of every other area of my life as a result.

I no longer blame my parents for misunderstanding. I barely understand how I started to devote so much time and trust without question and without hesitation. It became somewhat of an addiction to battle but also a very instrumental part of modern life. We live in an odd version of the future, and the collision between real life and simulated one is worth noting.

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