

**BBDO KNOWS**

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*Deinfluencing*

*Deinfluencing*

A significant shift is underway, where the old ways no longer hold sway. This silent revolution, this overall “vibe shift” that we have termed as **Anticulture**, is marked by the rejection of fads, trends, and beliefs that no longer resonate with people. Trends rise and fall as quickly as they emerge, making them short lived and temporary. In this evolving landscape, conspicuous consumption loses its allure, and the once-celebrated “IT girls” are now deemed “cheugy.” Toxicity and conformity find little favour as individuals prioritize their own values and principles.

Are we moving beyond trends, towards “modern movements” – meaningful social shifts tethered to our beliefs. Or will these terms be outdated before we know it?

**DEINFLUENCING**

One phenomenon that encapsulates this shift is the concept of “deinfluencing.” At its core, deinfluencing represents consumers’ quest for authenticity and trust. But what is deinfluencing really?

In early 2023, a controversy dubbed “Mascara-Gate” unfolded when Mikayala Nogueira, a prominent influencer, was accused of wearing false lashes in a sponsored mascara advertisement. Despite denying the allegations, the incident ignited a broader conversation about the authenticity of influencers in paid promotions. Mikayala’s followers felt betrayed, leading many to unfollow her. Authenticity is paramount.<sup>1</sup>

“If influencing is about personal endorsement, **deinfluencing is a way of thinking critically about spending habits and evaluating the necessity of certain purchases.** Influencing is a late-night impulse-buy; deinfluencing is sensibly requesting a refund”.

- **KRPT** [link](#)

Deinfluencing gained momentum on TikTok as a rebellion against the lack of authenticity among influencers. #Deinfluencing has more than 565 million views on TikTok<sup>2</sup> and it has quickly spread across sectors, reflecting a desire for genuine experiences and transparent influencer relationships. Deinfluencing allows people to reclaim control over their choices and break free from high-volume consumption. It’s about embracing a simpler, more fulfilling way of life and aligning choices with personal values.

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<sup>1</sup>YPulse, 2023: Deinfluencing, everything brands need to know [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> TikTok, 2023, [Link](#).

### *Deinfluencing*

In a world where everyone's busy chasing the latest trends and struggling to make ends meet, a new behaviour has emerged —deinfluencing. It's like saying "no thanks" to an influencer's sway over our wallets. We're realizing that maybe, just maybe, we don't need all that stuff they're telling us we can't live without. We're embracing a simpler, more fulfilling way of life. We're saying goodbye to the pressure to conform and hello to making choices that align with our values.

Despite being seen as a fleeting buzzword, deinfluencing significantly impacts consumer behavior and industry practices.

"There's a theme of over-consumption when it comes to social media, and I think people are starting to notice just how detrimental it is towards our wallets and the environment, add in the economic downturn and... consumers are starting to grow tired of the rhetoric that they NEED every viral product they see."

— *Karen Wu, Deinfluencer* [Link](#)

### **BUT IS DEINFLUENCING, REALLY REINFLUENCING?**

Put simply, *de*-influencing is still *influencing*. In fact, it's re-influencing: the term has been hijacked by some creators to talk down trending products with the simultaneous aim of promoting cheaper alternatives. This practice has garnered criticism for its "toxic authenticity."

Essentially, creators trash trending items and conveniently recommend other products through affiliate links, blurring the line between genuine de-influencing and self-promotion. It's crucial to recognize this misuse of the term. True de-influencing should revolve around making informed choices and supporting a sustainable future. However, these creators have twisted its meaning for their own gain. To navigate this landscape effectively, we should remain discerning and show support for those who genuinely embrace the principles of de-influencing, rather than falling into the trap of re-influencing.

But amidst the mixed bag, there's a group of consumers advocating for a more significant shift. They believe that true de-influencing is a crucial pillar for a sustainable future. It's about making genuine, informed choices that benefit everyone, rather than just focusing on personal gain.

Deinfluencing is part of a wider trend of more considered consumption online. It is about truth seeking. It is built on three macro trends:

*Deinfluencing*

**COST-OF-LIVING**



Trends come and go, and the hype around "deinfluencing" will likely fade when **economic conditions** improve. But this is a good time for marketers to re-evaluate their influencer marketing strategies to ensure that they are partnering with the right creators and not overloading audiences with sponsored content.

**GREENWASHING**



"The current de-influencing trend is just the **latest iteration of greenwashing or** repackaging something to make it seem more environmentally friendly. It's a tactic often employed by major corporations concerned with public image, and something the influencing economy will see more in the next few years."  
— *Isaias Hernandez,*

**"EAT THE RICH"**



"The concept of 'De-influencing' is a survival tactic deployed by influencers to **head off criticism forming around the "Eat The Rich" narrative.** As a narrative it's a rallying call in response to growing wealth inequality and greed of the elite. It revolves around the idea that the rich should be held accountable for their wealth and power."

**WHAT CAN BRANDS DO?**

**1. Act with Empathy -**

Amidst rising inflation, increasing costs, and political instability, consumers are facing financial and emotional struggles. The abundance of choices worsens these difficulties. Brands can alleviate these pain points by offering innovative solutions that address overconsumption while maintaining brand loyalty. To engage with sustainable communities, brands should prioritize accountability and genuine action.

Not every company is positioned to benefit from the de-influencing trend. But those that provide lower-cost alternatives, embrace sustainability or champion DEI might be able to take advantage."

- *AdAge, 'TikTok De-influencer Trend—how Gen Z Can Still Be Reached By Marketers', 2023 [link](#)*

Additionally, brands can inspire better everyday choices by highlighting ways to decrease consumption and offering accessible and aspirational options. Even if a brand is not low-cost, they can still contribute to sustainability and meet consumer needs.

*Deinfluencing***2. Choose Authenticity over Influence**

The internet is cluttered with 'spokespeople', and as a result trust is dwindling, leaving us in search of credible sources we can rely on. How can authenticity and trust be cultivated? The answer lies in partnering with creators who value authenticity and are highly regarded within their communities. These ambassadorships provide a sense of security for creators and assurance for brands, nurturing authenticity, and trust.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, journalists are increasingly embracing platforms like YouTube, highlighting the importance of diverse sources of expertise and credibility.<sup>4</sup>

Brands can also strengthen their community management practices to build trust. Instead of reacting defensively to feedback, they should embrace it as an opportunity for growth. Engaging with communities openly and honestly, addressing constructive criticism, and actively involving the community in decision-making processes are crucial steps. Audiences not only consume content but also read and engage with comments.

To cultivate authenticity and trust, brands can form strategic partnerships with authentic creators, embrace evolving platforms, and consider diverse sources of expertise.

**3. Embrace Humour**

In the quest for levity online, we are constantly seeking out content that brighten our days. Brands that exhibit self-awareness and embrace humour have a special place in our hearts. But how can brands effectively integrate humour and connect with the culture around them?

One opportunity is to accentuate your brand's value through jest. 91% of global consumers prefer brands to be funny. This rises to 94% for Gen Z and Millennials.<sup>5</sup> Finding humour in your competitors or engaging in playful banter, like the legendary "clapback" between Aldi and M&S, can create a light-hearted and engaging atmosphere. By showcasing a sense of humour, brands can demonstrate their understanding of the industry landscape and connect with their audience on a relatable level.

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<sup>3</sup> Creative Pool, Deinfluencing or Reinfluencing [Link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Insider, 2023 [Link](#)

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Another opportunity lies in using humour as a vehicle to shed light on important issues. Humour can be a powerful tool to address serious topics in a more approachable and digestible way. By using wit and satire, brands can draw attention to social or cultural matters, creating conversations and fostering a sense of shared understanding

**SUMMARY**

Deinfluencing might just be another form of influencing in disguise – be it encouraging people to buy another product, or consume less overall. However, it's clear that the conversation triggered by the movement has marked a key shift in the cultural zeitgeist.

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<sup>5</sup> Marketing Dive, 2022 [Link](#)

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## **ABOUT BBDO KNOWS**

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BBDO KNOWS offers thinking, strategy, insights, and inspiration on key categories, key themes and consumer segments.

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