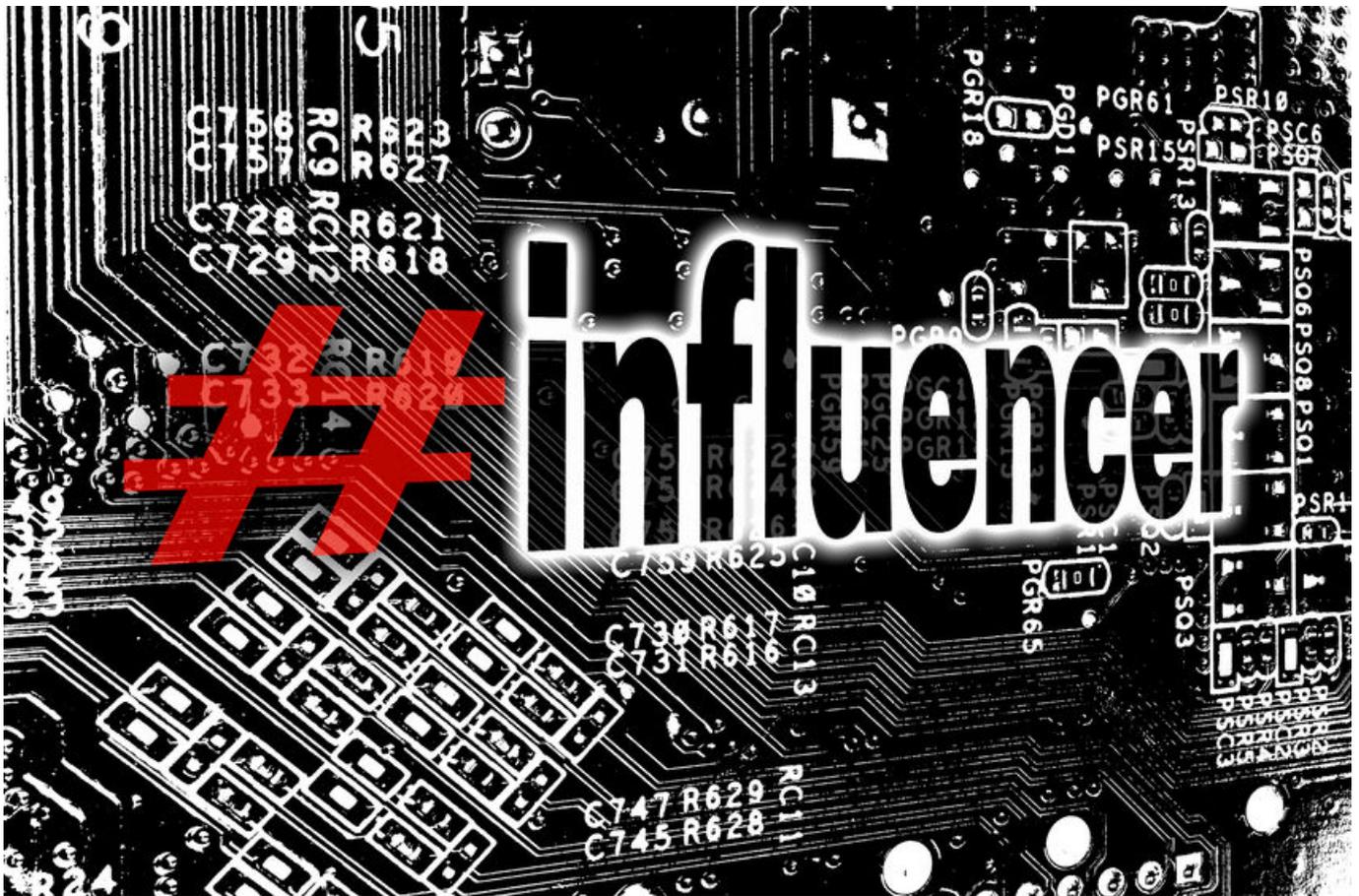


Are CGI Models the Future of Influencer Marketing?



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Back in 2016, a startup based in Los Angeles called Brud created three virtual influencers, specifically models, along with social media profiles for these influencers, with accounts closely resembling the ones that human influencers have. These virtual people have complex backgrounds and even relationships, which only intrigue the public and make them even more interesting.

Since then, the popularity of CGI models has been on an upward rise, with many more CGI models showing up on social media platforms, garnering even more interest with the general

public, influencer marketing and mainstream media outlets.

The first one became incredibly popular as Lil Miquela, who currently has nearly 3 million followers on Instagram. In the beginning, the public was wondering whether this CGI model was actually a real-life person. She released music, dated real people, and frequently interacted with real celebrities out in the real world, which confused many people.

When they're done well, these CGI images are so realistic that people find it hard to tell them apart from actual human beings. It's only up to their creators whether they reveal that these models are created with computers or not. Plus, the public often tends to interact with these CGI models' posts like any other influencer.

These CGI models have created a dilemma with ad regulations. They don't have to follow the same online rules regarding sponsored content and marketing campaigns because all of the regulations are focused on human influencers. This is very beneficial for brands because they can benefit from the loophole and have their content more authentic in people's social media feeds.

The CGI model Shudu, created by Cameron-James Wilson, started booking actual fashion campaigns through the digital modeling agency The Digitals.

As marketer Alexei Orlov noted, "With real-life influencers being limited by different variables, such as their modeling abilities or their photography skill, these digital models are completely adaptable, which is a big benefit for brands. They can be formed into any promotional capacity that the creator of the brand can imagine. The CGI models also ensure brand safety for the companies they collaborate with, as they lessen the chances of embarrassment for the companies with any potential unwanted words or controversial past situations common with other social media influencers."

A lot of the appeal of these CGI influencers is their relatability and authenticity. Most of the target audience buys into them as real influencers as their human counterparts. These virtual models also have their own personalities that are cultivated for them by their own creators. They are often presented having their own social or political opinions, which has proven to be very popular with younger target audiences. For brands looking to reach out to this segment of the audience, working with CGI influencers might be a great way to do so, which means their popularity will continue to grow.