MKT 3596
Individual Application Paper I Assignment

This is the first individual assignment of this course and accounts for 15% of the overall course grade. You may consider it as a take-home exam and perform in-depth research and analysis to prepare a thorough, detailed and well thought-out answer.

The title of this application paper is "The Role of Micro-Influencers in Social Media Branding and Marketing". In recent years as social media has exploded, there has been a veritable surge in the number of influencers in many niche categories – typically, they are seen on "visual social media" like YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest since that is where the Millenials are increasingly found. As for a Micro-Influencer, each of these individuals has gained a smallish but dedicated following (1,000 – 100,000) due to a variety of motive reasons. Their followers are very devoted to them and follow their every post. Consequently, these special social media users are very compelling to marketers who are looking to leverage them in the branding and marketing of their offerings. They are now using influencers to make subtle or not-so-subtle endorsements often using rich, visually appealing photos and videos (called "micro-content"). It can truly be said that these amateur Micro-Influencers have achieved a sort of "micro-stardom" within their own social communities. *It is worthwhile to note here that the rules of consumer behavior are being entirely rewritten by these largely unknown influencers on the visual social networks, which may offer directions for new branding practices in the future.*

After reading this introduction, research the factors behind the appeal of Micro-influencers among their followers. Next select a Micro-Influencer who fits the above description. Then answer the following.

You are asked to address the following questions (in order):
  (1) Based on your research, identify 3-4 psychological and/or behavioral motives that make modern-day consumers, especially Millenials, to be *more* persuaded by Micro-influencers than by traditional advertising and marketing programs. These reasons should be detailed in a paragraph each, and backed up by appropriate article references.
  (2) Discuss your selected Micro-Influencer and their social space in terms of their personality, back-story and cachet. What factors have made him or her into a trusted influencer whose

opinions carry weight within the social community? Be as clear and specific as possible with actual evidence. Also, provide a photo of this person in the Appendix along with a screenshot of the number of followers.

(3) Finally, based on what you observed and researched about this Micro-Influencer and their tactics, provide 3-4 lessons your Micro-Influencer has to offer their peers (i.e. other Micro-Inflencers) in terms of managing followers, building connections, gaining trust, and brand marketing. These lessons should be clear, specific, and actionable. Feel free to cite actual social media conversations where necessary to illustrate your answer. The lessons can be bulleted as complete sentences, each with a brief explanation.

You have considerable latitude in your choice of the Micro-Influencer. Make sure that he or she is micro not macro using the number criterion (<100,000 followers). You may not discuss your selection with anyone else. If you are unsure about your choice, you may clear it with me beforehand.

You are asked to be complete and thorough in the analysis. The deliverable will be a typed paper **between 900-950 words**. The citations (including all web references) should be listed in full as end-notes in APA format – they do NOT count for the word count. Note this is an individual assignment. If you need any clarification, get it from me. Do absolutely make sure your writing is both grammatically and stylistically correct. **Remember to state the WORD COUNT (excluding the heading and references) at the end of the paper.**

Good luck!