



The Rise of Legal Influencers: Communication Strategies on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The intersection of law and social media has given rise to a new category of content creators legal influencers who are reshaping public engagement with legal discourse. This study investigates the communication strategies, platform-specific practices, and ethical challenges faced by legal influencers, with a focus on YouTube and TikTok. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that includes quantitative engagement metrics and qualitative content analysis, the paper explores how legal influencers inform, entertain, and at times mislead audiences through emotionally charged, multimedia-driven content. It also analyzes how these influencers adapt traditional legal norms to fit the informal, fast-paced language of social platforms. Drawing from three in-depth case studies, the research reveals a communication paradox: while legal influencers increase legal literacy and democratize legal discourse, they also risk spreading misinformation or oversimplifying complex issues. The findings underscore the need for legal influencers to develop strategic communication literacy and uphold ethical standards while remaining accessible and engaging to a lay audience. This paper contributes to understanding how the legal profession is evolving in the digital age and offers guidance for ethical, impactful legal communication online.

Keywords: Legal influencers, social media law, communication strategies, Law Tube, digital legal ethics, TikTok law.

INTRODUCTION

At the moment, when a terrible thing occurs, everyone goes to social networks and everyone finds videos, comments, and opinions uploaded at a breathtaking speed. A highly relevant yet under-studied niche of legal content creation in English on YouTube was analyzed. A multiple-case study on disenchantment and engagement through a quantitative and qualitative network analysis on the best consumption strategy of such content was conducted through three case studies, one for initial analysis of engagement on a broad social level, and another two for more in-depth analysis of disenchantment and engagement, for two chosen content creators. It was shown that misunderstanding of what is discussed is a recurrent pattern, which leads to social discontent. Passionate opinions and emotional discourse through a wide use of multimedia lower critical thinking and encourage another round of re-shared media. Legal influencers must improve their vocabulary to educate on the subject matter to avoid such miscommunication. After several high-profile trials went public in 2022, several legal influencers surfaced and began discussing and debating the legality and constitutionality of the issues in court by emailing or texting with vloggers. They took advantage of these trials' notoriety and began posting compilations, podcasts, and commentary with the hope of attracting viewers. Legal influencers, defence attorneys, and law students provided legal opinions on cases within their expertise, and vlogged lawyerly comments using creativity and screen sharing, with or without substantially modifying the source material. LawTube, the umbrella term for legal influencers on YouTube, has grown into a respectable influencer niche since then. Most legal influencers in this niche are lawyers with familiarity in trial law. Legal influencers are prominent legal figures on social media, primarily YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok, who are driven at least partially by a profit-seeking motive and whose content touches on legal issues, events, or phenomena. Most research on social media influencers predates the emergence of legal influencers. The emergence of this new creative

profession, which encourages illegal conduct and festivities, especially among the youth, has not yet been thoroughly documented [1, 2].

The Evolution of Influencer Marketing

The social media landscape has expanded significantly over the past ten years, with different platforms coming and going. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok are ubiquitous nowadays. While some platforms are best suited for posting and sharing very short, short, or long videos, others are better for just sharing photos. A new trend was created by the emergence of photo-centric social media platforms, which allowed individuals to curate a visual representation of their lives and persona. While Instagram was the first significant platform of its kind, it has been surpassed by TikTok, which is a video-centric platform that plays the videos automatically on loop, thus immediately drawing in the viewer's attention. Just like how written journals were at first used as a diary but became a medium for self-formation and self-packaging for a broader audience, the use of social media applications turned from a private pursuit into a public exhibition and a career for some. These 'social media stars' each hopped on different platforms and invented new ways to communicate and engage their audience. Following a few early instances of viral fame, a whole new industry of digital marketing specializing in managing these influencers, conducting endorsements, and developing marketing strategies was founded. The current standards of influencer marketing were thus drawn from the celebrity endorsement industry and adapted for a very different context operating under different economic, social, and psychological principles. Influencer marketing has had a perceptible global impact on the economy and culture. At its core, influencers have become the intermediaries between brands and consumers. They establish relationships and thus a common ground with their audience, and position to be the prospective buyers' peers. Their importance derives from the fact that, in the post-social media age, marketers face a new challenge of intimacy and credibility that traditional marketing can hardly overcome. Influencer marketing thus becomes a viable alternative [3, 4].

Understanding The Legal Landscape

Lawyers and other professionals are embracing social media advice. Individuals have turned to services such as Snapchat and Instagram for their daily social media updates. Expectations for posts have placed pressure on companies, public relations professionals, and legal ethics commentators to present a new way of processing legal issues. Some issues remain unchanged in how social media is utilized in professional communication. This includes the aging legal and ethical issues regarding how legal professionals, lawyers, law firms, and courts communicate in the virtual landscape. An immediate adaptation to new normative expectations serves public and professional interests. Dissemination of legal knowledge, compliance with rules, and promotion of professionalism are widely cited reasons for the use of social media by lawyers. Despite the quick adoption of new platforms and the resulting pressure on legal industry professionals and institutions to adapt their messages to new audience norms, many of these messages have adapted poorly, relying on old professional writing norms that founded much legal communication. This essay draws on a large corpus of social media messages from legal influencers to explore whether those messages are handled in ways that are meaningful and appropriate on social media. The messages raised many social and legal issues. If the messages do not align with social media practices, legal influencers could risk negative consequences not just for themselves. Communication on social media is profoundly contextual. People's conduct in different forums, with different modes of interaction and technologies, adapts to those contexts and their expectations. Changing environments have pre-existing norms and standards. Generally, individuals must accept new linguistic conventions and wisdom on social media, including the use of visuals, memes, and emojis, and the acceptance of an informal tone. In the process of adaptation, one need not immediately and fully give up on old conventions, but must view them in the light of the new environment, allowing them to inform the adapting norms while giving room for the absorbing new messages. Attempts to impose stricter and more formal genres on the new scene could lead to misunderstandings, hazards, or alienation from the community [5, 6].

Defining Legal Influencers

Legal influencers are individuals with law degrees who have become popular social media content creators, typically by entertaining and educationally vetting concerns about social issues. Legal influencers can typically be characterized using the following four points. 1. Legal influencers create one or more social media accounts. Legal influencers may create accounts on social media platforms dedicated to their legal content or include legal content in accounts that feature other personal or professional interests. Most legal influencers have more than one social media account, however, there are some legal influencers who, despite their size, remain popular only on a single platform. 2. Legal influencers focus on

specific communities. Legal influencers are best known to the general public for entertaining and creating educational content related to a specific community. For example, lawyers who made a name for themselves creating entertainment and educational content about the issues of court cases involving celebrities and, most recently, political figures. 3. Legal influencers are not traditional legal content creators. In academic and legal practice literature, traditional legal content is created chiefly for what is termed an “expert” audience. Such material can take the form of scholarly articles, text, or drafting banks of pleadings, motions, briefs, public comments, etc. These types of legal content have traditionally been compiled for use by other members of the legal profession, be they within private, public, or academic practice backgrounds. Traditional legal content does not usually include humorous or sophisticated means of masking the delivery of legal arguments, counterarguments, and analysis. 4. Legal influencers use legal degrees to benefit the lay audience selectively. Legal influencers vet and entertain social issues pertinent to both lay and professional audiences efficiently and entertainingly. Lay audiences benefit from legal influencers by becoming more legally literate, continuing to support or change their opinion of social issues, gaining confidence in their understanding amongst peers and on jury duty, and engaging in discussions about legal trending topics with law students and professors [7, 8].

Social Media Platforms and Their Impact

The most-used social media platforms on which legal influencers build their presence include Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. The survey respondents consistently reported TikTok and YouTube to be the primary platforms used to reach a wider audience and the ones in which they had found the most success. They further reported TikTok as one of the top platforms through which they saw an increase in followers. These platforms were widely regarded as having the highest potential for broad reach and audience engagement. The legal influencers who participated in the survey generally agreed that digestible and entertaining content was important for engaging followers. TikTok, much like Instagram, relies heavily on attention-grabbing visuals, fast-paced editing, and memes. TikTok and YouTube also provide native video with a substantial amount of time for more extended production and contextual information to be conveyed. The rise of TikTok and its potential for reach were noted by many participants. For lay audiences—the primary audience for most legal influencers—the app’s algorithm dispenses content aggressively based on interests and previous engagement. This means a post could go viral overnight, exposing millions of users to the influencer and their content. The design of social media platforms impacts the content seen and shared, but legal influencers recognize an awareness of those nuances. By understanding a platform’s technical characteristics and culture, they could innovate, leaving meaningful footprints on historically stagnant platforms. Should a sudden cultural shift bring shock, many watershed legal influencers could transform their content to remain relevant. However, the participants expressed significant concern that a more profound algorithmic change could render their hard work useless [9, 10].

Communication Strategies for Legal Influencers

Social media has become a preferred online platform for legal influencers and practitioners to establish their personal brands and increase outreach to varied audiences. However, sharing legal knowledge and information related to a person's personal brand is not devoid of risks, as legal influencers can attract outcomes that are contrary to their intentions when taking actions on legal social media. A lack of understanding of the social media platform, limited knowledge of social media strategies, and negative experiences with inputs can turn legal influencers as a whole avatar of a communications strategy into a liability rather than an asset. Instead of traditional legal communicators, a new generation of “legal influencers” have emerged on social media platforms, often owned by younger lawyers and hosting larger audiences than high-profile legal practitioners or organizations with decades-long histories. Legal influencers have become public-facing brands that obtain and share information related to the legal profession while attracting audiences’ attention to their own personal lives/brands through various formats. Referred to as “self-branding,” producing and consuming online content that mixes one’s profession with personality is viewed as a defining feature of social media platforms today. On social media, networking and being “social” have become part of one’s job, and sharing and consuming experience-based content is a field to strategize how people and organizations present themselves online and build a personal brand through online content. To co-create a personal brand, the change of influencers’ communication strategies might be called for due to two reasons. First, the idea of a personal brand itself does not exist among many legal influencers, especially in non-English jurisdictions. Although they continuously communicate on legal themes, the communication strategies are often not visible to them. In communications of individuals or groups, these intentions might be derived from their beliefs about their personal and communicational agency, as well as power of social media. The power of This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

social media platforms to amplify one's message is often unquestionable. Instead of a snail mail newsletter sent to only a few subscribers, a tweet can be transmitted to a chosen few (or to many, if the necessary parameters are absent) in the blink of an eye, and participatory locations like multimedia platforms allow thousands and key decisions to be co-owned. The power to co-operate, co-build, and co-publish creates a new understanding of communications. However, narratives that hold dissimilar beliefs in agency, communicational acts, or themselves and social media could exploit, and maybe even successfully exploit social platforms' inherent exposure to reproduce, distort, or negate an influencer's pathways to reshape its communications strategy and intention [11, 12].

Ethical Considerations in Legal Influencing

The rise of social media platforms for public expression raises discussions about their implications for the legal profession. This new realm of discourse presents unique challenges in litigation, legal advice, and advocacy. Some caution against hasty participation, while others offer best practices and emphasize participation over methodology. The legal profession can benefit from open discussions on law, allowing judges and lawyers to share ideas without fear of repercussions for poorly phrased statements or heated exchanges. However, social media can turn serious legal discussions into tabloid fodder. Lawyers must balance their character and public engagement while avoiding thoughtless discourse that distracts from their professional responsibilities. Competent representation requires understanding how public statements might impact clients, especially in sensitive cases. These considerations shape suggestions on how legal professionals should navigate public discourse, especially on social media. Emphasis is placed on what to avoid rather than how to engage thoughtfully and tastefully. Acknowledging the potential downsides of publicity, this section discusses errors and their negative consequences. Introducing another framework for public discourse risks futile attempts at suppression. Topics like legal ethics and professionalism, alongside the aim of competent representation, apply to lawyers' public conduct. While some abuses are serious, the need for publicity shouldn't lead to overly punitive rules. A clear approach is to identify behaviors that don't align with public and bar standards, guiding professionals towards acceptable conduct [13, 14].

Case Studies of Successful Legal Influencers

Many lawyers have attracted noteworthy followings because of their creative communication styles. This section highlights the unique social media strategies of three successful legal influencers. These legal experts teach audiences about various legal topics through clever graphics, engaging videos, and whimsical storytelling. One sole practitioner in Orlando, Florida, has attracted a significant number of followers on TikTok and Instagram. She uses eye-catching graphics to teach legal topics and share thoughtful business, finance, and real estate tips with thousands of potential clients. She breaks down tedious information into easy-to-read graphics and infographics, often using a box logo format to maintain brand consistency. Her videos, including short, conversational clips with humor, visual captions, and transitional filters, frequently focus on common legal misconceptions. She frequently answers user questions, often using popular phrases in response to social media engagement and courtroom experiences. Another attorney in Illinois, a former civil defense attorney, has amassed a large following on TikTok. He shares educational and comedic videos covering a wide array of legal topics, including trials, types of evidence, courtroom decorum, objections, and jury selection. His presence is backed by a large following on Instagram and a second TikTok account. He employs multiple video styles, including skits, talking-head storytelling, courtroom reenactments, 'list' formats, and commentary on viral videos. An attorney in Chicago has a significant number of TikTok and Instagram followers. She creates entertaining, humorous, and educational videos that take mundane topics like taxation, torts, and criminal law and deliver them in a whimsical format. She edits detail-heavy information into engaging videos, utilizing cue cards and graphics to maintain viewer engagement throughout longer educational videos. Her presence on TikTok and Instagram has recruited clients and employers from around the United States [15, 16].

Challenges Faced by Legal Influencers

As consumer consumption of legal information has evolved, legal influencers have found themselves operating within a culture that emphasizes viral videos and attention-driven platforms. Yet, as a result, ethical concerns and professional regulatory issues have arisen that may jeopardize their trustworthiness and viability as valid purveyors of information. Every legal influencer must weigh the public good against professional obligations to peers and the profession. Important conversations regarding ethical online behavior and the trustworthiness of legal influencers are ongoing, but they remain fragmented across states, social media companies, and academic disciplines. Transgressions of journalistic rigor, such as the posting of misleading information or the acceptance of payment for positive reviews, must be taken

seriously. Legal influencers reflect the societal norms of the platforms they inhabit, norms that at times may be at odds with the competing ethical obligations of attorneys. For example, a hashtag indicating a lack of sensitivity toward racial justice awareness or an abrupt tone meant for ironic social commentary may lead to vitriol toward those uninformed of the nuance of legal discourse. Such behavior can set back the important, budding conversation about legal language in modern society. Legal influencers engaged in prosecutor-focused advice can be particularly at risk of inciting serious consequences. While real-time risk to life or loss of liberty is minimal post-arrest, a social media post arguing for the strength of one's defense may unilaterally disqualify legal representation. A pro-tem attorney discounting the state's valid position in a plea bargain may jeopardize their ability to practice law. On their platforms, legal influencers can give a view of the law that does not, and cannot, exist in a courtroom. These spaces are punctuated by nuance, tone, and diverse competing perspectives, leading to at-odds interpretations, both by followers and by attorneys themselves [17, 18].

The Future of Legal Influencing

The future of legal influence is closely tied to the evolution of communication on social media platforms. Since its inception, the social media landscape has undergone profound changes that have impacted the way legal influencers communicate. While some strategies, such as the use of memes and plain language videos, are predicted to stand the test of time, others are more likely to evolve or disappear entirely. Foundational strategies such as visual communication and storytelling are expected to endure but will likely be adapted. Like all forms of communication, the rise of new platforms is expected to bring new challenges and require new communication strategies. For instance, the effects of the TikTok phenomenon on lawyers' communication have yet to be analyzed. Similarly, the impact of generative AI tools remains to be seen, as the legal industry is exploring their application and advantages across various fields. While it is difficult to predict the future of social media and how legal influencers will adapt, trends, patterns, and best practices can be established based on current developments. Notably, the prevalence of humor and memes on social media is anticipated to persist. A synergy of litigation, impact, and humor is expected to characterize the communication strategies adopted by most legal influencers, with users responding positively to advocates employing humor in their messages. There is, however, a fine line between humor that engages and humanizes and humor that belittles a serious topic. Appropriateness is paramount in legal communication. Although humorous content may lighten the conversation, it is crucial to avoid trivializing significant issues. In addition to humor, visual communication is expected to remain a foundational strategy, as a high percentage of engagement is derived from video content. There is a consensus among experts and advocates that TikTok is not a passing trend and that it will play an essential role in legal influencing going forward. Finally, the future of communication strategies to cultivate followership lies in interaction, connection, and accessibility. While the application of generative AI tools is still being deliberated, it is anticipated that their role will be to provide support in addressing queries and simplifying complex topics, rather than taking over the communication [19, 20].

CONCLUSION

Legal influencers have emerged as a powerful force at the intersection of law, media, and public education, offering a new lens through which lay audiences engage with legal systems. Through creative storytelling, humor, and multimedia tools, these professionals have successfully broken down complex legal concepts for mass consumption. However, the rapid pace and informality of social media present risks—chiefly, the potential for misinterpretation, ethical oversights, and reputational harm. As legal influencers continue to shape public understanding and opinion, they must strike a careful balance between accessibility and accuracy, engagement and ethics. Platforms like TikTok and YouTube offer significant opportunities for outreach, but they also demand a nuanced, context-sensitive communication strategy that honors the profession's standards. Moving forward, interdisciplinary dialogue among legal scholars, practitioners, and media theorists will be critical to guiding this evolving practice. With appropriate strategic awareness, legal influencers can contribute meaningfully to legal literacy, civic engagement, and justice in the digital public square.

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