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FROM FEED TO IDENTITY - INFLUENCER-DRIVEN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONCEPTS OF YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY GEORGIA

KETEVAN PACHULIA*
*PhD Student in Social Sciences LEPL Georgian Technical University Visiting Lecturer at Caucasus University

***Corresponding Author: KETEVAN PACHULIA**

Abstract
The presented article explores how influencer cultures help shape the social and cultural worlds of 14-29-year-olds in a platform-saturated, post-Soviet, economically fragile context. Drawing on a mixed-methods design (survey of 450 young people, 10 in-depth interviews and 3 focus groups) and situating the findings within international research from more than 15 countries, it identifies four key clusters through which influencers structure youth life: norms of online self-presentation, health and risk practices, consumption and lifestyle aspirations, and career and future imaginaries. The analysis shows that young people do not simply imitate influencers, but negotiate continuously between global scripts of authenticity, self-branding and success, and local expectations around family honor, tradition and collective responsibility, producing hybrid identities that are creative yet marked by intensified comparison, emotional pressure and uneven media-literacy resources. In doing so, the article argues that influencers function as new socialization agents whose power depends less on single posts than on their integration into the everyday infrastructures of news, advice and recognition that young people rely on.

Keywords: Influencers, social media, youth identity, self-presentation, social constructs, consumption and lifestyle.

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INTRODUCTION

Georgian teenagers and young adults aged 14-29 open their phones first thing in the morning, scroll through Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok while eating breakfast, and-whether they realize it or not-start their day by comparing themselves to someone else's carefully edited life. This is not a dramatic exaggeration. It is the default reality for millions of young people in Georgia, a country where social media has become the primary infrastructure for everything from learning about the world to deciding what clothes to buy to figuring out who they want to become (CRRC Georgia & Media Development Foundation, 2025).

But here's the thing: these young people aren't just passively absorbing content. They are navigating a genuinely complex ecosystem in which a small number of highly visible creators- influencers-have quietly become trusted authorities on everything from health and beauty to politics and careers. And while influencer culture is not unique to Georgia, the way it lands in a

Post-Soviet, culturally conservative, economically precarious context creates distinctive patterns worth understanding (Ruiz Gómez, 2019; Barrueta Pinto et al., 2025).

This article explores how global influencer-driven social and cultural concepts manifest in Georgian youth. Drawing on mixed methods research in Georgia (surveys of 450 young people, 10 in depth interviews, and 3 focus groups) alongside extensive international evidence from over 15 countries (Austria, Germany, Spain, Croatia, Portugal, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Egypt, UAE, Pakistan, South Africa, the United States, Mexico, and India), the article traces four key social and cultural concept clusters that shape how young Georgians present themselves online, navigate health and risk decisions, consume lifestyles, and craft their futures (Cheng, Burke, & de Gant, 2021; Engel et al., 2026).

The argument is straightforward that Georgian youth operate at the intersection of global influencer scripts and local cultural scripts. Sometimes these align. Often, they clash. And in those clashes- between the influencer's promise of authenticity and the pressure to conform, between individual self-expression and family honour-we see the real texture of contemporary youth identity work in Georgia (Goffman, 1959; Gorea, 2021).

Chapter 1 – Georgian Youth X Social Media Platforms: The Everyday Ecology

To understand influencer-driven social and cultural concepts in Georgia, we first need to see the landscape young people actually inhabit. And that landscape is dominated by a small cluster of platforms: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

The numbers tell a straightforward story. Among 18-34-year-olds in Georgia, 93% use the internet or social media daily or almost daily (CRRC Georgia & Media Development Foundation, 2025). Facebook remains the king-93% of internet users mention it as their main platform, though it skews older (International Republican Institute, 2023). Instagram (31%) and TikTok (21%) are where the action increasingly happens, especially among those aged 18-24. TikTok's advertising audience now reaches around 90% of Georgia's adult population, which means that whatever TikTok decides to show is, effectively, part of the national mood. The picture that emerges is one of near- total platform saturation. Social media is not something Georgian youth do; it is where Georgian youth are.

But usage is not neutral when it comes to social media. Young Georgians use these platforms primarily for two intertwined reasons: staying informed and performing identity. 73% of 18-29 year olds name social media as their typical source of news and information-far ahead of Georgian

TV (International Republican Institute, 2023). This matches global patterns where influencers' pages, YouTube channels, and TikTok videos become "news" in everything but name (Omar & Casero Ripollés, 2023; Harff & Schmuck, 2025). At the same time, these platforms are the central stage for everyday self-presentation: curating images, maintaining multiple profiles (a public account and a private one for close friends), and watching the traction of how many likes and comments their posts receive. The phone is both a window to the world and a mirror reflecting one's own worth (Gorea, 2021; Hjetland et al., 2022).

Where do influencers fit in this puzzle? In every bit of the puzzle piece. In focus groups conducted with Georgian youth in Tbilisi, participants describe scrolling past influencers almost automatically, encountering their content mixed seamlessly with posts from friends, family, and brands. When asked directly whether they follow influencers, the response is often casual: "Of course, who doesn't?" This is the normalization of influence-it is so embedded in everyday platform use that young people rarely distinguish between what comes from an influencer and what comes from anywhere else (Mikrut Nađsombat & Tomičić, 2023).

The types of influencers followed vary by age and interest. Some youth follow comedians and entertainers (the "just make me laugh" category). Others follow fitness coaches, beauty creators, and lifestyle gurus. Still others follow activists and political commentators. But a pattern emerges: young Georgians grant these figures substantial weight in decisions about consumption, style, relationships, and increasingly in domains like education and career choice. Influencers, in short, have become new social agents-partly complementing and partly overshadowing family and school in the process of growing up (Padilha et al., 2022).

If we translate this into Goffman's language, the Georgian social media feed is simply a new front stage, where performances are carefully managed, and audience reactions (likes, comments, shares, views, and subscriptions)

become the main cues for whether the performance is "working" (Goffman, 1959). The backstage-the private chat, the second profile, the deleted story-is where doubts and stress leak through.

Chapter 2 – Global Influencer-Driven 4 Key Social and Cultural Clusters (15+ Countries)

In order to clearly discuss the Georgian case, the global landscape ought to be also analysed. Across Europe, North America, Latin America, and Asia, influencers are reshaping how young people behave, present themselves, and make decisions. 4 key clusters emerge consistently across countries and cultures and they are significant because they capture the main arenas where influencers now quietly "co-write" youth culture: how young people show themselves, what they do with their bodies and health, how they "become someone" through consumption and lifestyle, and how they imagine and signal their futures and values (Chung et al., 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025; Harff & Schmuck, 2025). Put simply, these clusters aren't just random groupings-they're
key focus areas, especially considering that once we begin a task, 88% of our daily actions tend to run automatically (Rebar et al., 2025; Earth.com, 2025).

- **Self-Presentation and the Crafting of a "Perfect" Self**

In every country studied-from Austria to Indonesia to South Africa-young people report investing significant effort in managing their online image. This is not vanity. It is survival in a visibility economy where a curated feed equals social currency (Ruiz Gómez, 2019; Gorea, 2021).

The global evidence is both striking and alarming. Across an 18-country Facebook study, young people in Vietnam and India reported the highest rates of social comparison (2.71 on a 5-point scale), while Germany reported the lowest (1.80). Yet country-level differences alone explained 7.6% of the variance in social comparison-more than age, gender, or time spent online combined (Cheng, Burke, & de Gant, 2021). In other words, culture matters, but the underlying mechanism is universal: exposure to highly edited profiles triggers upward comparison.

Young people globally describe recognizing that influencer profiles are "highlight reels," yet this awareness rarely translates into resilience. Likes, comments, and profile visibility operate as dominant social signals guiding self-evaluation and anticipatory self-presentation (Cheng, Burke, & de Gant, 2021; Hjetland et al., 2022). In Croatia, 75% of youth report following preferred influencers; for many, "authenticity" is precisely the curated aesthetic of being real but beautiful, honest but on brand (Mikrut Nađsombat & Tomičić, 2023). In Spain, adolescents explicitly link edited bodies and idealized lifestyles to feelings of discomfort, self-comparison, and pressure to look "perfect" online (Feijoo, Zozaya, & Sádaba, 2023; Feijoo, López Martínez, & Núñez Gómez, 2022).

Research in Singapore shows that upward comparison is not just about looks. Young people compare achievements, lifestyles, and material success, and these comparisons are tied to diminished self-esteem, perceived inadequacy, and even behavioural self-regulation—like restrictive eating or obsessive self-optimization (Samari et al., 2022). Many identify as "lookers" rather than posters, but spend enormous emotional energy scrolling, judging, and silently measuring themselves against others (Gorea, 2021). Posting less does not mean feeling less.

Advertising and sponsorship are not invisible either. When Instagram Stories clearly disclose sponsorships in adolescents' native language, recognition goes up, and teens understand better how influencers make money (Balaban, Mucundorfeanu, & Mureșan, 2022). But this understanding does not automatically translate into resistance. In fact, it sometimes increases willingness to follow and share influencer content. Knowing it is advertising becomes "part of the game," not a reason to step out of the game (Balaban et al., 2022).

The result is familiar: young people are technically literate, good at curating, and very aware that everything is staged—yet they remain emotionally vulnerable to the very systems they understand.

- **Health, Body, and Risk-Related Practices**

Here is where influence becomes dangerous. Across 15+ countries, influencers are shaping youth decisions about their bodies and health in ways that would alarm any parent—and often without young people even realising it is happening.

Start with e-cigarettes. A social network analysis of 55 highly engaging Instagram influencers promoting e-cigarettes and their 640 collaborating brands worldwide found that Asian and US influencers had roughly five times more followers than European influencers, with followers aged 13–17 representing a significant slice of the audience (Vassey et al., 2022). Only 5% of promotional posts were fully compliant with US sponsorship disclosure requirements (Vassey et al., 2022). Young people, meanwhile, saw around 90% of challenge videos displaying only positive outcomes—no mention of risks, addiction, or health consequences (Li, 2025).

In the US, survey data show that 14.8% of adolescents have tried e-cigarettes, and those who view or interact with e-cigarette content weekly or daily are significantly more likely to use them themselves (Derrick et al., 2025). Experimental evidence confirms that even brief bursts of Instagram-style vaping posts increase intentions to use and make attitudes more positive, especially when content looks like slick advertising rather than amateur posts

(Vogel et al., 2020). Adolescents can tell ads from peer posts with 90%+ accuracy, but this does not reduce persuasion (Vogel et al., 2020).

Move to food and supplements. In Germany, influencers promoting dietary supplements to youth aged 14–29 mentioned dosage levels, overdose risks, or reference values in 0% of their posts— even though many supplements exceeded recommended daily maximums, and some exceeded tolerable upper intake levels (Ricke & Seifert, 2025). Instead, influencers relied on "persuasive authenticity cues": personal testimonials, before-and-after images, and promises of effectiveness. The message was simple: buy this and become your best self. Side effects, interactions, and price are mostly invisible (Ricke & Seifert, 2025).

Food content is not much kinder. A scoping review of adolescent social media showed that 67.7– 68% of food images posted by young people on Instagram featured high-calorie, nutrient-poor foods, while only about 22% showed fruits and vegetables (Chung et al., 2021). "Healthy" food appears mostly in aspirational, aesthetic posts, while everyday eating is dominated by fast food and snacks (Chung et al., 2021).

Alcohol marketing tells a similar story. Across European adolescents, over 65% reported seeing alcohol advertisements on websites, 33% received promotional emails, and age verification systems proved largely ineffective (Radoš Krnel et al., 2023). 82% of alcohol advertisements violated at least one self-regulatory guideline, with 50% associating alcohol with success or health benefits (Radoš Krnel et al., 2023).

At the same time, some studies show that influencer-based health campaigns can work in the opposite direction. Simulations in Virginia demonstrate that anti-tobacco campaigns using a small number of social media influencers can significantly reduce cigarette consumption among existing young smokers-if campaigns are carefully designed and reach enough of the network (Lin et al., 2025; Kostygina et al., 2020). The same network logic that sells vapes can, at least in theory, sell quitting.

In short, globally, influencers are normalizing risk behaviours-e-cigarettes, alcohol, unhealthy food, body-focused spending-by embedding them in aspirational, emotionally appealing narratives that bypass critical evaluation and feel like everyday life rather than advertising.

- **Consumption and Lifestyle as Identity**

If self-presentation is about looking good, consumption is about becoming good-or at least the version of "good" that influencers are selling/promoting.

The numbers are striking. In Austria, 52.8% of youth aged 15-25 had purchased a product based on an influencer's recommendation, including food and drinks (45.4%), beauty products (42.6%), and dietary supplements (31.2%) (Engel et al., 2026). In Vietnam, exposure to influencers was a strong predictor of both purchase intention ($\beta = 0.400$) and the aspiration to imitate influencers' lifestyles and preferences ($\beta = 0.546$) (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025). This tendency to mirror how influencers dress, eat, travel, and consume has become a widely accepted way of managing one's self-presentation.

What is particularly triggering is how seamlessly commercial messaging blends with everyday life. In Brazil and Portugal, youth influencer activists combined advocacy content with fashion, leisure, and relationship posts, normalizing the idea that activism itself is a lifestyle choice and a branding opportunity (Deslandes & Ferreira, 2025). Across Instagram, the highest engagement content disproportionately references brands: fast fashion labels, cosmetics, and "viral" products show up again and again (Lozano Blasco et al., 2023; Gonzalez, Akgün, & Vandenbosch, 2025). The algorithm rewards visibility, and visibility requires commercial performance.

Gender shapes this differently across regions. In Western contexts like the UK, women reported more frequent social comparison; in parts of Asia, men reported more (Cheng, Burke, & de Gant, 2021). In many studies, young women describe more pressure around body image and beauty standards, while young men emphasize consumer tech, status items, and performance (Gorea, 2021; Hjetland et al., 2022; Feijoo et al., 2023). The same pattern repeats across contexts: influencers set the blueprint for aspirational consumption, and young people align their choices with those examples (Barrueta Pinto et al., 2025; Azmat, Yousaf, & Ahmed, 2024).

Systematic reviews show that trust, perceived authenticity, and emotional attachment are key. Youth are more likely to follow the recommendations of influencers they find "friendly,"
"approachable," or "authentic," even when they know the content is sponsored (Azmat et al., 2024; Radwan et al., 2021). Nano and micro influencers—often closer to ordinary youth in follower count—can be especially persuasive because they feel "like us, but better" (Ruiz Gómez, 2019; Barrueta Pinto et al., 2025).

Of course, brands love this. Emotional branding aimed at Gen Z works by mirroring identity, values, and "vibes" rather than pushing product features (Isroni et al., 2025). Influencers become human billboards for mood and aspiration: buy this to feel like you belong to this world.

- **Career, Entrepreneurship, and Civic Signaling as Lifestyle**

Finally, influencers have become models not just of what to buy, but of who to be—specifically, who to be as a worker and citizen.

Across countries, youth increasingly imagine their futures through an influencer lens: the idea of becoming a content creator, starting a "side hustle," building a personal brand (Ruiz Gómez, 2019; Coman et al., 2025). In

South Africa, university students describe followership of lifestyle and travel influencers as providing "the life I want"—entrepreneurial imaginaries, aspirational careers, models of success (Mlambo et al., 2025). In Portugal, young people explicitly describe influencers as central reference points for consumption desires and lifestyle aspirations, even when they know they are being manipulated (Padilha et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, during the 2019 ReformasiDikorupsi movement, youth used social media as an infrastructure for activism and political self-presentation, with virality (over 1 million tweets per day using the main hashtag) functioning as a measure of political efficacy and collective belonging (Nugroho, 2025). Digital activism here is inseparable from influencer logics: memes, aesthetics, followers, and reach.

Political influencers matter too. Youth who rely on social media influencers for political information often report higher political participation—but also lower perceived political knowledge and greater vulnerability to framing and misinterpretation (Harff & Schmuck, 2025; Zainurin, Wan Husin, & Mohd Zainol, 2024). Influencers simplify complex issues, make politics feel closer, and offer ready-made identities: “the engaged citizen,” “the woke feminist,” “the sarcastic critic.”

The global pattern, then, is quite vivid: influencers have become epistemic authorities for segments of youth with low institutional trust, shaping digital self-presentation norms, consumption choices, health decisions, and career imaginaries-often in ways that privilege visibility and commercialization over critical thinking (Diehl et al., 2023; Sercu, 2024).

Chapter 3 – Georgian Social and Cultural Concept in a Global Frame

Now, where do Georgian youth take us with this? The question is not whether these global patterns appear in Georgia-they do. The question is how they present themselves locally, what they displace, and where Georgian youth push back. Georgian youth do not simply mirror global influencer cultures; they fold them into a pre-existing landscape marked by strong family ties, collectivist expectations, and a recent history of political upheaval, producing a hybrid social script rather than a straightforward copy. While platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube function as primary arenas of self-presentation and aspiration, your Georgian data show that these global logics displace some traditional authorities-school, church, even parts of the family hierarchy-by elevating influencers to the status of “new social agents” whose tastes, lifestyles, and value narratives travel faster and more persuasively than local institutions. At the same time, they do not erase locality: interviewees navigate multiple selves that are simultaneously “global” and recognisably Georgian, negotiating between supra-style obligations, intergenerational respect, and highly individualised scripts of success, self-branding, and bodily optimisation promoted in their feeds. Crucially, your findings suggest that pushback happens less through open cultural resistance and more through selective appropriation and quiet boundary-drawing—for example, using global aesthetics while preserving certain family norms, or embracing influencer-driven self-improvement while remaining sceptical about overt political messaging—so that Georgia appears not as an exception to global patterns but as a site where their limits, frictions, and local renegotiations become particularly visible.

Self-Presentation and the Curation of the "Perfect" Self – Georgian Style

When it comes to self-presentation and comparison cluster, globally, young people curate profiles, perform authenticity, and suffer from upward comparison. In Georgia, the pattern is similar-but with a distinctly Georgian manner. Under my mixed-methods PhD study “Influencers’ impact on 14-29-year-olds in Georgia” (survey n=450, 10 interviews, 3 focus groups) Georgian youth in focus groups describe meticulous attention to their online image: choosing which photos to post, deleting undesirable content, and maintaining a curated public profile separate from a private one shared with close friends. One 22-year-old described it bluntly: "I show my best self. “Everyone does.” Yet, in Georgia, what qualifies as doing one’s best is often negotiated between globalized ideals (blonde, slim, stylish, successful) and local norms (modest, family-oriented, respectful, and aligned with traditional gender roles).

This creates a particular kind of tension. Young Georgian women report pressure to be both globally attractive and locally respectable-a contradiction that social media makes visceral. It is one thing to look like an Instagram model; it is another thing to explain that look to your grandmother at the "Supra." The focus group data reveal ambivalence: youth appreciate inspiration and skill building from influencers, but simultaneously describe stress, comparison, and "identity dissonance" when curated feeds make their own lives feel inadequate (Rameshwari, 2025).

Unlike in some Western contexts where peers are the main comparison point (Gorea, 2021), Georgian youth often compare themselves simultaneously “upwards” to global influencers and “sideways” to local peers, while also monitoring invisible audiences-relatives, neighbors, teachers. The result is layered self-presentation: one feed for the world, one for friends, one for “the family gaze,” and a lot of backstage editing (Feijoo et al., 2023; Samari et al., 2022).

Georgian youth, like their peers in Spain and Canada, know very well that much of what they see is staged (Gorea, 2021; Feijoo et al., 2023). Yet, as in the global studies, this awareness does not magically protect them

from feeling "behind." In interviews, some describe deleting photos that do not get enough likes, or delaying posting until "a better version" of themselves can be staged- echoing the high self-presentation groups described in Norway (Hjetland et al., 2022).
If Goffman were scrolling Georgian TikTok today, he would probably say: the performance has more stages, more audiences, and fewer exits (Goffman, 1959).

Health, Body, and Risk-Related Practices – Aspiration Meets Precarity

With regards to health, body, and risk practices, here the Georgian case becomes more distinctive. Globally, influencers normalize risky behaviors through aspirational narratives. In Georgia, the same happens—but Georgian youth have the added burden of navigating these influences with lower media literacy and within a context of economic precarity.
Georgian data show that many respondents grant influencers substantial weight in decisions about food, fitness, and health. Young people describe following fitness influencers, beauty creators, and wellness gurus—absorbing their messages about supplements, diets, and body image. Yet the Georgian context introduces a difference: many of these influencers promote products and practices that are either unaffordable or culturally suspect (extreme dieting, cosmetic procedures, imported supplements).
The result is a particular kind of frustration: young Georgians desire the bodies and lifestyles influencers model, but lack the economic means to achieve them, or face family disapproval for pursuing them. It is one thing to watch a German influencer casually recommend a €60 collagen supplement; it is another thing to buy it on a Georgian salary and justify this to your parents (Ricke & Seifert, 2025)
Moreover, Georgian youth report very low rates of active information verification. In general, 52% of the Georgian-speaking population never verifies suspicious information (CRRC Georgia &
Media Development Foundation, 2025). This means that health claims made by influencers circulate without scrutiny. A 19-year-old in Tbilisi might see a beauty influencer recommend a supplement, believe it works because the influencer "looks good," and purchase it without checking dosage, contraindications, or evidence. The global pattern (consumption without transparency) intersects with a local vulnerability (low media literacy and weak verification habits) to create particular risk (Diehl et al., 2023; Sercu, 2024).
The same goes for vapes, alcohol, and diet trends. Georgia is not yet as saturated with youth- targeted e-cigarette influencer networks as some Western markets (Vassey et al., 2022), but imported content, cross-border brands, and TikTok challenges easily cross language and geography (Li, 2025; Derrick et al., 2025). In a small, economically fragile country, the combination of cheap nicotine products, aspirational vaping aesthetics, and weak regulation is not a comforting formula.
One more twist: Georgian families often hold strong moral positions on drinking, sexuality, and appearance, but these do not always translate into digital guidance or media literacy. Supportive parent-youth communication can buffer fear of missing out and emotional dependency on influencers (Schmuck, 2021), but in Georgia, intergenerational digital gaps often make these conversations rare or awkward (Diehl et al., 2023).

Consumption and Lifestyle as Identity – Frustrated Consumerism

Consumption and lifestyle cluster in Georgia follows the global pattern with a Georgian twist: aspiration colliding with precarity.
Georgian youth follow lifestyle influencers, want the products they see, and make purchases based on influencer recommendations. But many of these products are imported, expensive, or unavailable in Georgia. The result is a kind of frustrated consumerism: young Georgians scroll past influencers living in Dubai or Istanbul, curate their own aspirational feeds, and spend money they arguably cannot afford on goods that signal a lifestyle they do not actually inhabit (Padilha et al., 2022).
This is not unique to Georgia. But it is intensified in Georgia, where young people are entering a precarious job market with limited opportunities, where family economic support is often essential, and where displaying wealth or excessive consumption can trigger envy or moral judgment within one's community (Coman et al., 2025). The influencer promise-that consumption will transform your life-lands differently when your life is already economically unstable, and when your cousin can literally see the gap between your Instagram life and your actual house.
At the same time, Georgian youth are not passive victims of advertising. Like youth in Portugal, Spain, and Pakistan, they show moments of skepticism and humour, mocking "over the top" influencers or unfollowing those who feel fake or exhausting (Padilha et al., 2022; Feijoo et al.,
2023; Siddiq, 2023). Some actively use influencers to learn about fashion, fitness, or study opportunities-while trying to ignore the push to buy every item shown (Engel et al., 2026).
Still, the broader pattern is one of asymmetric power. Influencers and brands operate in a global economy; Georgian youth shop in ₾ (Georgia Currency Lari).

Career, Entrepreneurship, and Civic Signaling as Lifestyle – Transgressive Dreams

And finally, with career, entrepreneurship, and civic identity norms dimension influencers have become role models for Georgian youth, imagining their futures. Some youth describe aspiring to influencer careers themselves; many more describe wanting careers that incorporate personal branding, visibility, and self-promotion.

Yet here, too, Georgian context matters. While global youth admire influencers as entrepreneurs, Georgian youth often frame influencer careers as impossible, impractical, or morally suspicious ("they are just selling themselves"). Influencer life can look like a dream, but it is also seen as socially risky and unstable, especially in a culture where “serious” jobs are still associated with institutions and formal education (Coman et al., 2025).

Instead, influencers function more often as inspirational figures who model confidence, success, and self-determination-qualities that feel transgressive in a context where family obligation, collective identity, and institutional deference remain culturally salient (Vankov et al., 2024). Watching a confident young woman speak directly to the camera about her own career choices, body, or politics can be deeply disruptive-in a good way or a terrifying way, depending on who is watching.

Politically and civically, the picture is mixed. Georgian youth use social media for information and self-expression, but media literacy is weak, and many rely on algorithmically curated feeds that may reinforce existing views or expose them to misinformation (CRRC Georgia & Media Development Foundation, 2025; Diehl et al., 2023). When influencers address political topics, youth may follow them-but often without the critical distance to evaluate influencer motives, expertise, or biases (Harff & Schmuck, 2025; Zainurin et al., 2024).

Some of the global patterns of youth activism-like Indonesia’s hashtag-driven protests or European climate movements-do echo in Georgia, especially around elections or major crises (Nugroho, 2025; Zainurin et al., 2024). But the underlying structural problem is similar: platforms reward emotion and visibility; they do not reward nuance or fact-checking.

In short, Georgian youth are playing a double game. They are learning to be visible and entrepreneurial in a digital economy that barely notices their country, while also trying not to lose face at home.

Conclusion

Georgian youth are not simply copying global influencer scripts. They are creatively adapting them, negotiating them against local expectations, and sometimes rejecting them altogether. Yet the weight of influencer culture is undeniable. Across self-presentation, health decisions, consumption, and career imagination, influencers have become routine reference points-often more trusted than parents, teachers, or institutions.

The critical insight is this: influencer-driven social and cultural concepts in Georgia are not a problem of "too much influence" in the abstract. They are a problem of asymmetric influence- where a small number of highly visible creators, most of them abroad, shape the aspirations and decisions of young people who lack the media literacy, economic resources, or institutional support to engage critically.

Influencers are not going away. The ship has left the harbour, posted a Reel about it, and is now doing a brand partnership in Dubai. The question for Georgian policymakers, educators, and families is not how to eliminate influencer culture. It is how to build critical capacities, strengthen alternatives to algorithmic feeds, and create space for young people to navigate global influences while remaining rooted in local communities, values, and possibilities.

In other words: log in and follow, yes. But with eyes wide open.

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