

Category System for Analysis of the Qualitative Guided Interviews

"Social Media Influencers' Role in Shaping Political Opinions & Actions of Young Audiences"

1. Used influencers

Coded if respondents talk about the influencers they use. Even if they do not use influencers, this is coded.

Example: "So definitely Louisa Dellert, dariadaria..." (I7, f, 22)

1.1 Subject area

Coded if respondents provide information on the topics covered by the influencers they use.

Example: "Maybe also fashion bit. Beauty, fashion, so exactly (laughs)." (I6, f, 20)

1.2 Frequency of use

Coded when respondents talk about the number of times they use influencers per week.

Example: "Actually every day (laughs)." (I3, f, 18)

2. Intention of influencer use

Coded when respondents talk about the reasons for using the influencers they report.

2.1 Political information

Coded when respondents use influencers for information about political issues. This can happen regularly or by chance.

Example: "These are more of the current issues, for example now in America the elections. On top of that." (I1, f, 16)

2.2 Entertainment

Coded when respondents use influencers for entertainment. This can happen regularly or by chance.

Example: "Well, I think they're very entertaining. And I think it's fun to watch. Yes." (I8, m, 16)

2.3 Inspiration

Is coded when respondents use influencers for inspiration, as they pursue similar interests as the influencer. This can happen regularly or by chance.

Example: "Inspiration for, I don't know, exercise or clothes." (I3, f, 18)

2.4 Tips and recommendations

Coded when respondents use influencers for recommendations. This can happen regularly or by chance.

Example: "And otherwise, yes, maybe so go out to eat. If they are now in such bars or restaurants. Then you see the food and you say "oh, that looks delicious. I could go there too." " (I11, m, 21)

2.5 Sympathy / interest in the life of influencers

Coded when respondents use influencers out of interest in their lives. This can happen regularly or by chance.

Example: "So, on the one hand, of course, sympathy. I only look at people because I can suffer them." (I12, m, 21)

2.6 Pastime

Coded when respondents use influencers out of pastime or boredom. This can happen regularly or by chance.

Example: "That's why I'm just doing this as a distraction. So I don't get bored." (I12, m, 21)

3. Influencer definition

Is coded when respondents talk about how they define influencers, including examples, categorical classification of different types of influencers, and activity description of influencers.

Example: "Well, I just think a public figure who [...] brings regular content and entertains or educates people or has its own task to deliver something to people, because now like I said entertainment, education, that sort of thing." (I1, f, 16)

4. Definition of political influencers

Coded when respondents talk about how they define political influencers, including examples, narrowing down in thematic statements, information on the need for political engagement, job description, and differentiation from their influencer definition.

Example: "Well, I don't think political influencers are doing all the advertising stuff now. But nevertheless, they also have influence in a different way. And then they are called influencers, I think." (I2, f, 17)

5. Channels for the information and news usage

Encoded when respondents provide information about the apps, platforms and media they use to provide information about current events. This can be both social and traditional media and their online offerings.

5.1 Traditional media

Coded when respondents use the traditional media, such as television, radio, newspapers and their online services, as the sources they use to provide information about current events.

Example: "To be honest, I actually read the newspaper. So I don't use any media for that." (14, w, 19)

5.2 Online offers

Is coded when respondents use online services, such as apps and social media, as the sources they use to provide information about current events.

Example: "Over the Internet, i.e. via messages on the T-Online site." (13, f, 18)

5.3 Influencers

Coded when respondents use influencers as the sources they use to inform about current events.

Example: "So dariadaria is definitely one I adore for what she does (both laugh)." (15, f, 19)

6. Information transfer by influencers

Coded when respondents give their assessment of the type and quality of information conveyed by influencers in their social media posts.

6.1 Positive qualities

Encoded when respondents name characteristics they like about influencers' information in their social media posts. This can concern, among other things, the type and quality of information processing, its authenticity, its entertainment character or also advertising and cooperation.

Example: "But I think the mix of personal information is quite good, simply the person himself, that he is authentic, that you also get to know him apart from her political attitudes, I say now, as well as you can." (17, f, 22)

6.2 Negative characteristics

Is coded when respondents mention characteristics, they don't like about influencers' information in their social media posts. This can concern, among other things, the type and quality of information processing, its authenticity, its entertainment character or also advertising and cooperation.

Example: "And then you can also see that they are perceived by companies, I say. And get things sent. And then they also post. [...] And then you think "yes okay. It doesn't have to be now." Or sometimes it gets annoying." (12, f, 17)

6.3 Politic expression by influencers

Coded when respondents give their personal opinion and assessment of influencers expressing themselves politically. These can be both positive and negative assessments.

Example: "But in general, I think it's actually such a good thing, because then maybe for some people they can just tell all the political things like that and maybe bring a personal connection." (II, f, 16)

6.4 Information transfer in comparison to traditional media

Coded when respondents compare their assessment of the information transfer by influencers with their assessment of the information transfer by traditional media.

Example: "It's probably often a bit more distorted and the influencers bring in their own opinion more, so that it then digresses from what comes in the Tagesschau, for example, because everyone contributes their own opinion." (I4, f, 19)

7. Credibility

Is coded when respondents make assessments of the credibility of traditional media, influencers and politicians as well as academics.

7.1 Classic Media

Coded when respondents give an assessment of the quality, transparency, credibility and authenticity of the information provided by traditional media. These can be both positive and negative assessments.

7.1.1 Credible

Is coded if the respondents perceive the information of the traditional media as credible.

Example: "For most people, yes. (...) Yes they do. So I don't have any other way to get the news. That's why I have to believe it somewhere." (I3, f, 18)

7.1.2 Not credible

Is coded when respondents do not perceive the information of the traditional media as credible.

Example: "Sometimes maybe no, if some journalist brings in more his own opinion than he actually should, or maybe some economic/ sponsored it from the outside or something, maybe to turn it around a bit so that they are in a more positive light." (I4, f, 19)

7.1.3 Traditional media vs. influencers

Is coded when respondents compare their assessment of the quality, transparency, credibility, and authenticity of the information from traditional media with the same assessment of the information from influencers.

Example: "Yes, definitely. Also much more credible than now an influencer or something. Yes." (II, f, 16)

7.2 Influencer credibility

Coded when respondents give an assessment of the quality, transparency, credibility, and authenticity of influencers' information. These can be both positive and negative assessments of credibility.

7.2.1 Credible

Is coded when respondents perceive the influencers' information as credible.

Example: "But as far as the information is concerned, I actually find it very credible. You just have to differentiate that the person does not keep his own political orientation under wraps." (I7, f, 22)

7.2.2 Not credible

Is coded when respondents do not find the influencers' information credible.

Example: "Well, I think they are just very far away from the truth, because they always market you some products and write positive reports about it." (I4, f, 19)

7.2.3 Characteristics of credible influencers

Is coded when respondents name characteristics of influencers that they characterize as credible. These can be personal memories of the character as well as the appearance in one's own contributions, as well as memories in the way in which they present information.

Example: "As I said, if the political orientation is similar. When the same topics are close to your heart. If you have already read similar information, which will be taken up again. Then, of course, this confirms one's own orientation somewhere. But also the feeling that you can trust this person." (I7, f, 22)

8 Influence of influencers on political opinion

Is coded if the information provided by respondents allows conclusions to be drawn about an influence on their political opinion through the use of posts by influencers to form political opinion. Furthermore, it is coded when an assessment of the influence on other users is made. These influences can be assessed as large or small.

8.1 High influence

Is coded when respondents consider the influence of influencers on the (political) opinion of users to be high.

Example: "I believe that influencers have a pretty big influence because many only or mainly inform themselves through Instagram." (I2, f, 17)

8.2 Low influence

Is coded when respondents consider the influence of influencers on the (political) opinion of users to be low.

Example: "Although I also have to say that I don't really attach so much importance to their opinion, or use it as objective or accurate information about political issues, I'll say now. But just listen to it and okay." (I3, f, 18)

8.3 Special influence on young people

Is coded when respondents explicitly make assessments of influencing young people's political opinions by using contributions from influencers to form political opinions. This influence could be clarified in terms of the age of young people.

Example: "Especially now maybe a little younger than us. 14, 15, 16-year-olds, who then maybe at 16 are already allowed to vote here in the city, I think." (I11, m, 21)

9 Use of information for voting decisions

Is coded when respondents provide information about their information behaviour and their political opinion formation before an election. In the case of first-time voters, this can also refer to the planned opinion formation.

9.1 Voting decision with influencers

Is coded if the information provided by the respondents allows conclusions to be drawn about an influence on the voting decision of the reception of the contributions of influencers to the formation of political opinion. This also includes assessments of the video "The destruction of the CDU" by influencer Rezo and its influence on the recipients' voting decision in the 2019 European elections.

Example: "So maybe with the political influencers, so now before the elections, for example, if you deal with it, that you then believe them." (I4, f, 19)

9.2 Voting decision without influencers

Is coded if the information provided by the respondents does not allow conclusions to be drawn about an influence on the election decision by the reception of influencers' contributions to political opinion-forming. This also includes assessments of the video "The destruction of the CDU" by influencer Rezo and its influence on the recipients' voting decision in the 2019 European elections.

Example: "Well, I've noticed everything that's going on. I have also read through a bit of what the individual parties are committed to. But I don't have anything to do with "I'll look at this and that again from everyone". No, so then I kind of/ there was no one for my thing/ the influencers or the media were not much influence. In the election. So the election is not so huge in the media." (I12, m, 21)

10 Influence of influencers on the voting decision of others

Coded when respondents make assessments of influencing other people's voting decisions through the use of influencer posts. This influence can be seen as present or non-existent and can be clarified in terms of the age of the persons who are influenced in their voting decision.

10.1 High

Coded when respondents perceive the influence of influencers on other people's voting decisions to be high.

Example: "Definitely, because I think the opinion hangs/ So the choice is influenced by the opinion and the opinion is influenced by influencers. So yes (both laugh)." (I3, f, 18)

10.2 Low

Coded when respondents consider the influence of influencers on other people's voting decisions to be low.

Example: "I can only speak of myself personally. I don't think my voting decision would be directly influenced by it. Yes difficult to say. I just think that you have to take this step to be interested in it. Of course, you also have a certain amount of prior knowledge and thus a more solid political opinion." (I7, f, 22)

10.3 Particular influence on young people

Coded when respondents explicitly make assessments about an influence of young people's voting decisions through the use of influencer posts. This influence can be specified regarding the age of young people.

Example: "But I do believe that people are more likely to deal with it over 18 and a little older. And the older ones tend to vote normally and then listen to politicians or so. I do believe that some 18-year-olds can also be influenced. Not many, but I think a bit. So from influencers." (I8, m, 16)

11 Personal data

Coded when respondents provide personal information.

11.1 Political interest

Coded when respondents indicate their political interest.

Example: "Well I'm definitely interested in politics. So, of course, I'm very interested in what's going on right now." (I2, f, 17)

11.2 Political participation

Coded when respondents provide information about their political commitment, signing petitions, exercising the right to vote and standing for election, and participating in demonstrations such as Fridays for Future.

Example: "Not yet as active as I would like to be." (I5, f, 19)

11.3 Political inclination

Coded when respondents indicate their inclination towards a political party.

Example: "Right now, I think it's more of a mixture of CDU and Green maybe." (I11, m, 21)