

The growth of influencer marketing: A comparison of TikTok and Instagram

Munif Mohammed Al-Zoubi

Social media has changed our day to day life in so many aspects, and especially with COVID-19 forcing people to stay at home, the use of the internet and platforms has increased dramatically. We now use social media for communication, learning, entertainment, and even for work purposes. There has been a significant increase in the number of people on all social media platforms, and this increase in the number of users viewing all sorts of content gave rise to influencers or “leaders of opinion”, i.e. experts in certain fields with many followers viewing their content. Influencers in many cases have the ability to affect the decision-making process of their followers, which caused many organizations to turn to them, giving them partnerships and sponsorships in exchange for influencers marketing their products/services. In this study, a comparison is attempted between the two biggest influencer marketing platforms, Tiktok and Instagram, and an attempt is made to give businesses who are thinking of using influencer marketing a better understanding of this phenomenon. The paper also aims to help businesses that already have an influencer marketing strategy in place realize if their current platform is most suitable to their business. This study uses qualitative research, as the data has been gathered through the multiple interviews with different types of businesses, influencers and social media experts.

Keywords: social media, social media marketing, influencer, influencer marketing, Instagram, TikTok.

1. Introduction

We can now do almost anything with a single click: grocery shopping, shopping, studying, traveling, attending concerts, resolving any document issues, and so on. Most companies, whether small businesses or a large governmental agencies, strive to transfer their services online in order to facilitate workflow and improve client interaction.

There are numerous social media platforms available today, each with a unique type of content sharing opportunity and a distinct demographic of followers. The most famous platforms are as follows:

- Facebook: founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, the site is free for members to sign up and predominantly derives its revenue from advertisements. Facebook is currently the platform with the highest number of users worldwide. On Facebook users can create profiles and share their thoughts and information, the information can be quotes about themselves or other subjects, pictures, and news, allowing other users to comment and respond to any of the posts.
- Twitter: the site was created by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, and Evan Williams in 2006. It is a “microblogging” website, initially created as a short message service (SMS). Twitter allows users to create accounts and share their ideas

in the form of a 280 character message and can include links to websites, journals, or news pages; these messages are called Tweets. For users to be able to read someone's Tweet they need to follow them on Twitter. Users can follow friends, celebrities, and organizations that have similar academic or personal interests.

- Instagram is a social networking site that allows users to share photos and short videos, the site was acquired by Facebook in 2012. Instagram is one of the most popular applications for mobile users, the app allows users to take photos, edit and add filters to pictures before the user uploads them, and the pictures could be uploaded with a caption to describe the picture, hashtags, or a geotags which allows the user to share the location of the picture. These additions to the picture can help other users search for these picture via an index. The pictures shared can be viewed by the user's followers, or by the public when tagged using a hashtag or geotag.
- TikTok is growing social media platform that was originally created in China under the name A.me in September of 2016, and was changed to Douyin, and when they expanded overseas it was given the name TikTok. Tiktok is a social media platform for sharing and creating 15-second videos on cellphones, it has a personalized feed that allows users to upload videos with music and sound effects, the app is considered to have a high level of engagement.

The wide dynamic audience is the reason most of the showcasing campaigns these days are centered on social media marketing. As our individual representation on social media gets to be more imperative, so does the representation of the businesses. In order to remain competitive on the market, firms ought to be beyond any doubt that they are well represented on diverse social platforms, have a solid association with their customers, and make the services they provide user-friendly and consistent with the consumers.

The marketing instruments have changed through time: from basic banners and content advertisements to close association and communication with customers, where they do not only tune in, but interact, provide feedback, ask questions and share opinions. These changes led to the appearance of the primary influencers and content creators on social media, who afterward began to cooperate with businesses and got to be an important element within the creation of marketing strategy.

These days the concept of influencer could be a whole social phenomenon, they are the "leaders of opinions", whereas influencer marketing is a multi-million dollar industry that keeps developing. The number of businesses making partnerships with influencers in order to promote their merchandise and services is expanding. Companies need to adjust to the realities of the time and construct their business and promoting techniques smartly in order to remain on the market and keep their brand image.

1.1. Research relevancy

This study aims to understand the growing industry of influencer marketing and compare two of the greatest online influencer marketing platforms, Instagram and

TikTok. It attempts to assist businesses in understanding whether they need to utilize collaborations with influencers for their marketing strategies, how each influencer marketing platform works, and what are the criteria for choosing a particular platform for the business. For this purpose, information is collected using brief interviews with companies, Influencers, and social media specialists.

1.2. Research questions

The research has multiple questions to answer:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using influencer marketing platforms?
- What are the main benefits a business can gain from using influencer marketing?
- What are the factors that should be considered when building an influencer marketing strategy?

2. Literature review

2.1. Social media for business

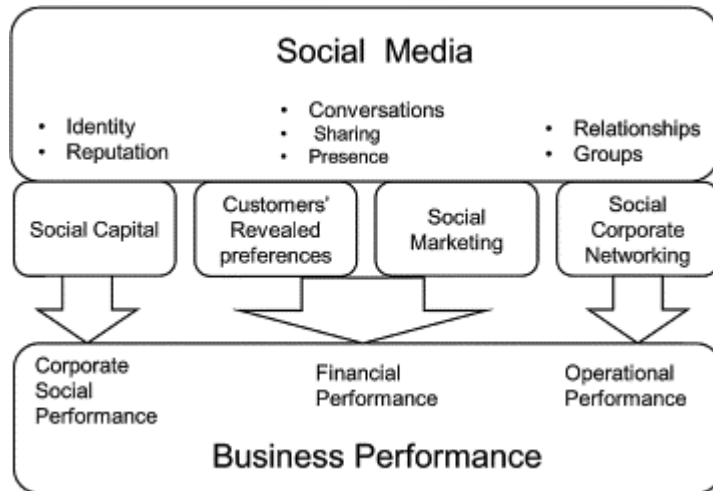
Social media is a new phenomenon that hit the world and grew exponentially over the past two decades. There are several definitions provided by different sources, for example, the Cambridge dictionary (2020) defines social media as a form of media that allows people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones, and the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2020) defines social media as a form of electronic communication (e.g. websites for social networking, microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (e.g. photos or videos).

With this growth in the number of users on social media networks, and with digitalization becoming a part of the world's everyday life, many businesses decided to adopt social networking sites into their corporate strategies, businesses saw an opportunity to connect with their consumers like never before. Moreover, most large organization are already on social media and are trying to grow their communities and followers to gain more brand recognition (Wijaya et al. 2009).

Furthermore, with the current highly competitive market in most industries, organizations are not limited to one form of content sharing sites, social media is allowing businesses to take advantage of their strengths and giving them an advantage of focusing on a certain community that their competitors are not targeting. For example, a business could focus on content communities, blogs, forums, news sites, virtual worlds and other types of content and can emphasize spreading their brand awareness and building communities on sites that their competitors are not using (Kaplan-Haenlein 2010), making social media a high priority for most organizations. Most large organizations are now present on multiple social media platforms to connect with more of their consumers (Paniagua-Sapena 2014).

According to Paniagua and Sapena (2014), Figure (1) shows us how social media and the resources provided by platforms can assist in the increase the development of business performance in financial, operational and corporate social performances:

Figure 1 Social media and business performance channels



Source: Paniagua–Sapena (2014)

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986), business performance is categorized into three different categories:

- Corporate social performance: The organization’s ability to create a sincere relationship with their consumers, institutions, communities, and societies, focusing mainly on their brand’s image and reputation.
- Financial performance measures the organization’s ability to use its assets from its primary mode of business and how it generates sales level, growth, profitability, and stock prices using those assets.
- Operational performance refers to the organization’s performance against prescribed standards such as regulation compliance, the reduction of waste, and productivity. Examples of operational performance are the introduction of new products, increasing product quality, elimination of waste, and increasing the level of consumer satisfaction.

Each performance is affected through a certain channel: social capital, customers’ revealed preferences, social marketing or social corporate networking. Each channel consists of several social media functional resources: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

Social media provides much more than only growing a business’s followers and increasing their brand awareness, it provides most businesses with an insight into other businesses’ online strategies and products. A business can benefit from social media by finding new business opportunities, developing new ideas for their brand, discovering

methods to deepen their relationship with their followers by communicating with them, and even building relationships with other businesses to collaborate on projects (Gillin and Schwartzman 2011).

Mckinsey & Company is a management and consulting company that conducted a survey that showed that 69% of companies around the world reported significant benefits from using social media platforms. The benefits varied from an increase in sales and revenue, an increase in efficiency while running marketing campaigns, an increase in their brand awareness, to higher consumer involvement in the process of developing their products and services (Bughin et al 2009).

2.2. The “word-of-mouth” marketing

One of the main aspects of marketing that social media has changed is “word-of-mouth” marketing (WOM). The term was changed to E-WOM or “electronic word-of-mouth” marketing. According to Richins (1984), the idea of “word-of-mouth” comes from consumers having used a product or service and having the need to share their experience of said product or service with their friends and family; or a community they are a part of. By sharing their experience they spread their positive, or in some cases negative, experience with other consumers.

There are many reasons researchers believe that individuals have a “need” to share their experiences, and Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) developed a framework to attempt to understand what motivates consumers to share their experiences, and had categorized these motives into five categories:

- Focus related utility: the need to add value to the community the individual is part of, focus related utility motivates the consumer to attempt to help their fellow community members by sharing their experience, negative or positive.
- Consumption utility: when an individual is assisted by another community member’s experience in their own purchase, the individual is then motivated to help the other community members the same way they were helped.
- Approval utility: when an individual receives praise from the community for their contribution; whether formal or informal praise.
- Moderator related utility: this type of motive is more towards negative experiences, and it is when there is a third party that relays the community’s experience to the producers or retailers.
- Homeostase utility: the final type of motivation comes from “Balance Theory”, and it is when an individual tries to keep a balanced state, which is, in purchasing, when a consumer buys a product and is either impacted positively or negatively by it, then the consumer tries to praise the product to their community; or vent their frustrations if it was a negative experience.

Nielsen is a marketing organization that helps its clients, which are usually businesses, to connect with the audience they need to reach; whether it is through social media, streaming clients, or even podcasts. Nielsen (2015) had a survey done that showed that 92% of consumers believe in the experiences that their friends, family, or people in their community have had with a product or service over any other form of advertisement.

The data from the survey could be interpreted to show that the opinion of consumers about products and services can greatly influence the opinion of many other consumers, which is what makes WOM market such a powerful tool.

In recent studies, data has shown that younger consumers will usually check online before buying a product, to check the reviews and experiences of other consumers. Furthermore, younger consumers use social media platforms and other websites to compare the products they are interested in with other products from competing companies, making social media an extremely important tool when it comes to spreading word-of-mouth for most products (Sasmita et al. 2015).

With this major increase in the usage of the internet and social media, businesses have started to use social media as a great tool to control word-of-mouth and to help increase the awareness of their brands. Furthermore, marketers have also now been able to find another tool to use in their social media strategy, which is influencers, influencers have the power to start this “word-of-mouth chain”, open the discussion about their personal experience with a brand or product, and influence the decision-making process of other consumers.

2.3. Influencers

Social media platforms have now over 3.6 billion users worldwide, according to Statista (2021), and the number of users are only expected to grow in upcoming years. With this increase in number of users across all platforms, users are currently consuming content at a never before seen pace, which gave many content creators a large number of followers, with such content creators now being called “influencers” or “leaders of opinion”.

In a study conducted by Fredberg et al. (2011), influencers are defined as a new type of independent third party individual or group that organizations can use as an endorser to a product or service. The influencer usually has a large following due to the audience enjoying their content, whether it is blogs, tweets, videos, or live streaming on a specific platform. Influencers are usually also social media users that gained benefit from being on social networks with a large following. The benefits are either tangible, such as money, or intangible, such as fame.

Although social media influencers are considered a new concept, the concept of influence is not. Researchers have been trying to analyze this concept for a very long time, and have not been able to measure it, since influence is intangible. However, marketers have been using the phenomena of influence and celebrity for many years before the boom of the internet. There are many examples of celebrities used for their influence, for example, Marilyn Monroe was used in an advertisement campaign for Westmore cosmetics in 1952, Michael Jordan is one of the biggest basketball superstars of all time, and with his Nike sponsorship and advertisements he managed to make Nike one of the leading sports apparel companies in the 1990's (Jahnke et al. 2018).

Many social media users who follow influencers on any social media platform could consider these influencers are role models, which makes many organizations consider them as high business value assets. In many cases, these influencers are experts in a certain specific field, making their followers interested in that field as well. Today, one can find influencers in almost any field: sports, parenting, musicians, painters, even professional video gamers. Unlike celebrities, influencers could not have a very broad

demographic of followers, on the contrary, they could have a niche number of loyal followers (Geppert et al 2016).

For example, PewDiePie is one of the biggest YouTubers in the world, with 109,561,457 subscribers, which is the second highest number of subscribers on the entire site. However, one could ask many people who have no interest in gaming and they would not know who he is (YouTube 2021).

As mentioned previously, being an influencer does not require a user to be a celebrity, however, it requires them to have content, whether it is blog posts, videos, photos, or even a streaming channel, which is the reason behind naming them “content creators”. Also, unlike celebrities, the followers view this content for the influencer’s take and experience with a brand, whereas celebrities are just using their fame to deliver the brand’s message, which in many cases makes influencers more relatable to the viewers (Geppert et al. 2016).

The loyalty these followers have for the influencers they are following is usually developed by constant day to day “communication” between them, influencers share their content and the followers usually comment, react, and share the posts. Thus, in order to build trust with the followers, influencers have to create content on almost a daily basis, making it a full time job. The content created is then reacted to by the followers, making them a constant part of the community.

Influencers will assist companies in reaching out to new potential customers and increasing follower involvement. Growing the number of followers might help businesses to get more targeted users viewing their posts, sales promotions and product offerings, which can lead to the growth of the number of sales.

However, when a company uses an influencer as a spokesperson for their brand, the brand and the influencer become interconnected. Putting both their brands in jeopardy if one of them is viewed in a bad light, making many bad reviews on the influencer’s behalf is a big issue for company’s image, and if the company’s products or services are considered bad, that would majorly affect the influencer’s credibility, making them lose many followers.

In a case that happened in 2017, a scandal occurred on very large scale that cost many influencers their credibility, costing them many followers and scrutiny from the community. The scandal involved the Fyre music festival. The festival was set to be in the Bahamas and was supposedly going to be a high-end music festival, with a great number of musical artists coming to perform (Stanwick–Stanwick 2019).

However, what the festivals attendees arrived to was far from that: no accommodations, food, water, or medical care, causing alarm and panic among them. This led to a great number of lawsuits against the organizers of the festival, for breaching consumer protection statutes (Stanwick–Stanwick 2019).

The Fyre Festival marketing campaign was an extremely large one, the festival used over 400 different influencers on multiple social media platforms to advertise for their festival, generating a large buzz around the festival and reaching over 300 million people in less than two days. The influencers were paid between \$20,000 to \$250,000 per post related to the festival. Needless to say the tickets were sold out immediately (Gilbert et al. 2020).

However, since the festival was a disaster, the image and credibility of many of the influencers sharing the news of the fire festival were seriously compromised.

Furthermore, lawsuits were not only filed against the festival. The festival bankruptcy trustee also sued many of the influencers causing their reputation to be further damaged; the Fyre Festival LLC sued the influencers on the grounds that the money paid was part of a scheme to defraud investors (Stanwick–Stanwick 2019).

The influencer marketing industry is growing rapidly, and unlike previously when one could only measure an influencer through the number of followers (which could have been fake accounts), now marketers are able to use programs and platforms such as Google Analytics, Leadfeeder, Foxmetrics, and many others. Allowing businesses to check their ROI (Return on investment), a performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency or profitability of an investment or compare the efficiency of a number of different investments, website traffic, currently as a platform inside the Google Marketing Platform brand (Welcome to Google Analytics 2021).

2.4. Influencer marketing

“‘Influencer marketing’ can be defined as a form of marketing in which focus is placed on specific key individuals rather than the target market as a whole. Influencer marketing on social media opens up a new channel for businesses to connect with consumers more directly, to be more understandable and closer to their audience and to form a good image of their product.” UKEssays (2018).

The dissemination of innovations communication theory states that a minority of users, called “influentials”, have exceptional capacities in influencing others (Rogers 1962). This theory predicts that by focusing on these influentials within the network, one may accomplish a great chain response of impact, driven by the word-of-mouth with least marketing costs (Hepp 2018).

There are numerous sorts of influencer collaborations, and some of the most known ones are supported content, brand ambassador programs and affiliate marketing. Next each of them is discussed.

Supported Content: In many cases when marketers decide to use influencer marketing, the customer concludes that the interest of the influencer is more commercial than true, it might have a negative impact on the advertisement and would not benefit the sponsoring company (Speed–Thompson 2000). Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the popularity of the sponsored content on Instagram and other social media networks has been developing, the customers are not continuously happy with the associations of the influencers with the some of the brands online, due to the lack of validity in paid collaborations. When viewing some of the comments on SMIs’ channels, the comments regularly uncover disappointment and outrage from doubtful followers toward sponsored brand content (Uzunoğlu–Kip 2014).

A Brand Ambassador is someone who is enthusiastic about an organization or its brand, and participates in activities, frequently on social media, that give brand meaning for buyers (Ambroise et al. 2014). Brand ambassadors are the organizational representatives who humanize the brand and encourage the social connections with an organization (Ambroise et al. 2014).

Affiliate marketing is a prevalent sort of web business promotion in which an affiliate is compensated for each visitor, subscriber or customer they refer. One of the foremost well-known cases is Amazon’s “Associates program”. Amazon permits web

sites to connect to Amazon and earn a 15% expense for any sales from customers that came from the partner web site (Biyalogorsky et al. 2003). In this case the affiliate plays the part of the influencer promoting Amazon.

In this study, some data is gathered from statistics by Mediakix, an organization founded in 2011 in Venice Beach, California, which is one of the early influencer marketing agencies with over 20,000 sponsored placements. They aim to provide marketers with the latest strategies to create an effective influencer marketing program (Mediakix 2021).

With data provided by Mediakix (2021), the foremost common important objectives for influencer marketing techniques are expanding the brand awareness – 85%, reaching new audience – 71%, producing sales – 64%, progressing brand advocacy – 44%, and driving lead generation – 42% (Mediakix 2021).

Within the most recent survey of Mediakix (2021), most of the companies pointed out that identifying the fake followers and inauthentic engagement is their main influencer marketing challenge.

The Instagram Audience Credibility Checker is the foremost accommodating instrument for spotting fake followers and inauthentic engagement in order to guarantee productive influencer campaigns and security of the businesses. Unfortunately, on the rise of influencer marketing numerous content creators found a way to control the number of followers and fake the engagement rate on their accounts, which ended up as a major risk for the reputation of the brands that are planning to partner with them. In order to maintain a strategic distance from any false schemes with the analytics of Instagram, companies might utilize this instrument and spot the fake accounts. The Audience Credibility Checker is not an official tool of Instagram, but it could be a great platform to guarantee the safety of the business (Johnson et al. 2019).

Another vital issue for the companies working with influencers was the method of finding the proper influencer who can become the representative of their company. Choosing the right influencer is an important factor for the success of the marketing strategy. The proper influencer ought to be reliable within the eyes of the audience. An extraordinary expert in a certain field, which is specifically associated with the business, should be able to deliver the general message and values of the brand.

These days with the developing influencer industry companies do not have to spend a parcel of time looking and checking the foundation of the influencer any longer. There are a few valuable online marketing platforms that can help a company discover and connect with an influencer for their particular field. These platforms contain all the information and freely accessible data of the influencers: the specialty, number of followers, evaluated engagement rate, assessed budget, basic audience information (sexual orientation, age, area) etc.

For example, the marketing platform Upfluence, promising to “find the perfect influencers from your own visitors or within Upfluence 3M+ list and turn them into long-term ambassadors in minutes” (Upfluence 2020), has been revolutionizing the way brands connect with the influencers. The program is utilizing AI in order to gather and analyze the information of the company and make influencers and brand ambassadors from their customers, which can provide both parties advantages from these collaborations.

One more factor which plays a noteworthy part within the decision of some firms to dodge associations with influencers in building a marketing strategy is the challenges that a few businesses encounter when it comes to measuring the assessed costs of the campaign.

2.5. The different influencer marketing platforms

2.5.1. Instagram

Instagram is an American photo and video sharing app established in 2010. Instagram has around 1 billion active users month to month and 500 million active accounts every day. More than 25 million businesses owned an account on Instagram by 2020 (Statista 2020).

The statistical information of Facebook (2021) shows that the top reported interests of Instagram clients are travel (45%), music (44%) and food and drink (43%) (Business of Apps 2020).

Concurring to Statista (2020), the top-countries by Instagram users are USA with 110 million users, Brazil – 70 million, India – 69 million, Indonesia – 59 million, and Russia – 40 million (Statista 2020).

Within the later survey of Mediakix (2019), 69% of marketers replied that Instagram is the influencer marketing channel they will spend the foremost of the budget on. Instagram was followed by YouTube with 11%, and blogs with 7% (Mediakix 2019).

Taking after the success of the cooperation with businesses Instagram introduced the Business profile, permitting to see the particular information and metrics such as the number of profile visits, number of profiles reached by a post, how many times the post was saved, age and sexual orientation of the audience, etc. These highlights offer assistance to analyze the preferences of the audience and which sort of content is more successful.

Nowadays more marketers are attempting to analyze and work with the calculations of Instagram in order to make their content more obvious for the customers. One of the foremost popular ways to publicize products on Instagram presently is to form a partnership with an influencer. Paid collaborations between brands and SMIs are commonly realized within the shape of sponsored content (Stubb–Nyström 2019). More often than not the influencer reviews and publishes the impressions about the product and gets a recompense from the sponsoring company. The partnerships with brands are mostly the primary source of income of the influencers on Instagram.

There are more than 500 thousand active influencers on Instagram. As the audience of the app and the partnership between the influencers and businesses keeps growing, the marketing and advertisement is still considered to be the least demanding and cheapest way for companies to attract new clients.

Following the success of other video sharing apps and social networking services, Instagram has also developed new functions for their users to create various video content on their platform: story, live stream, video in profile feed, and IGTV (Instagram 2021).

2.5.2. TikTok

TikTok is a video sharing app presented by a Chinese company ByteDance in 2016 and known as Douyin in its domestic market. After blending with the social/live streaming app Musical.ly, it was pushed into the worldwide market. TikTok permits users to make, share and see 15-second-long recordings with music in the background. The users can moreover connect a few brief clips together for up to 60 seconds of the full length of the video or upload longer recordings which have been recorded outside the app. In addition, there is a live-streaming choice and an assortment of filters and instruments to assist progress in the video content.

Moreover, each user has the “For You” personalized page that is designed for giving suggested content, which is the foremost significant and suits the preferences of the user based on the content they have already interacted with. Typically this is the reason why the most well-known hashtags on the app are #foryou and #foryourpage (TikTok 2021).

In 2018, from August to October, Tiktok’s month to month active users grew from 100 million to 130 million (Sensor Tower 2020). In Q1 2020 TikTok had the foremost downloads for any app ever in a quarter, with 315 million installs over the App Store and Google Play (Sensor Tower 2020).

TikTok can be the perfect platform for focusing on millennials and gen-Z clients with brand advancements. As a relatively new social platform, TikTok’s users are dynamic and mobile youthful individuals. This fact helped TikTok to become the app with the most elevated average engagement rate leaving behind such enormous platforms like Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

This fact made marketers turn to TikTok to promote their brands, particularly in case they are searching for the more youthful audience. TikTok is additionally a great way to bring a tremendous traffic to the official website of the company or the accounts on other social networking platforms, for example, Instagram. Such large and well-known brands like Guess, Red Bull, NBA, The Washington Post, Nickelodeon and numerous others are as of now present on TikTok.

In spite of the exceptional results of the app, the algorithms of the platform are still obscure and numerous marketers do not need to take a chance and utilize it for business purposes. Concurring to Social Media Industry Report in 2020 as it were, 5% of marketers are utilizing TikTok in their marketing strategy. A critical 74% do not plan on utilizing the platform within the next year, and 30% are curious about learning more about TikTok (Social Media Inspector 2020).

Right now there are many ways for businesses to promote their company: in-feed advertisements, brand takeover advertisements, hashtag challenge advertisements, shoppable advertisements “Hashtag Challenge Plus”, branded TikTok stickers, and influencer promoting advertisements.

Due to TikTok being a new platform, very little literature is available online. Moreover, due to it being run by a the Chinese company Douyin, data about the website is not available for public use online. However, this study attempts to use Mediakix’s data provided online, and as mentioned, Mediakix is one of the leading influencer marketing companies in the United States (Mediakix 2021).

In-feed advertisements are exceptionally natural for the TikTok's short-video content. There are three action models for this sort of ads: CPC (cost per click), CPM (cost per impression) and CPV (cost per 6-second view). The app's targeting is based on location, age and gender. The cost for the in-feed advertisements is \$10 cost-per-impression with a \$6,000 minimum campaign spending (Mediakix 2021).

Brand takeovers are shown instantly when the user opens the ad, which makes them exceptionally effective and visible for the audience. It guarantees more than 5 million impressions for a day of takeover. The primary objective of these advertisements is to make users click on the Call to Action button and visit a certain link of the brand inside or outside the app. The brand takeover advertisements are accessible for purchasing for a few categories of businesses (e.g. fitness, fashion, food, etc.). TikTok offers only one brand to take over an industry category per day. Brands might pay approximately \$50 thousand dollars for a day of brand takeover (Mediakix 2021).

Hashtag Challenge Advertisements is one of the foremost well-known advertisement on the app. This sort of advertisement promotes users to produce their own content featuring their personal cooperation within the challenge of the brand. The discover page on TikTok gives examples of other content created by users and gives the instructions for the challenge. The Hashtag Challenges could be created without any installment, but the paid content of TikTok ensures the next level of engagement (Mediakix 2021).

The shoppable advertisements of "Hashtag Challenge Plus" permit brands to create hashtag challenges and make experiences for users that permit them to buy the products or services of the brand. On the hashtag challenge page potential customers can find the Video Tab with the content produced by other users and the Explore Tab with items shown by the company and the "Shop Now" link to the external site where they can make their purchase (Mediakix, 2021).

Brand TikTok stickers are branded video effects that TikTokers might utilize in their content. This strategy assists advertisements to generate higher engagement more naturally, without any "invasion" compared to other conventional disruptive advertisements (Mediakix 2021).

TikTok influencer marketing advertisements empowers companies to collaborate with TikTok creators that will offer assistance to create and share the sponsored content with their followers. With the extension and further advancement of the app the tracking capabilities of the platform will permit businesses to have access to more details about the execution of the marketing campaign (Mediakix 2021).

The time of the filtered perfect pictures and faces on media is coming to an end, and individuals are trying to find something new, a more natural and live content they can relate to. As consumers are becoming more doubtful about the ads, TikTok could be an extraordinary platform where it is possible to present a brand and show it being a part of the lifestyle of the buyers.

Among the foremost well-known businesses on TikTok are, for example, boutiques and fashion clothing stores with the try-on recordings on their channels. A few other businesses are utilizing TikTok in order to show the method of production and operations of the firms, "behind the scenes". Guess was one of the primary popular brands that collaborated with TikTok for their campaign #inmydenim in US.

In September of 2020 Oracle and Walmart agreed to secure 20% of the shares of TikTok's worldwide business, which got to be the conclusion of the long debate between the government of the USA and ByteDance video-sharing platform (Forbes 2020). This was the only way for TikTok's owners to urge the endorsement of Donald Trump in order to keep the operation of the app in the USA, which is the 2nd nation on the list of nations where TikTok had the most downloads (Statista 2020).

3. Methodology

3.1. Philosophical approach

There are many philosophical paradigms when it comes to researching a topic, and each one is associated with a different way of gathering and analyzing information. The "paradigm wars" have been an issue that researchers cannot agree upon for many decades, and the two main paradigms are the following:

1. Positivism is a paradigm under objectivism, epistemology is a methodological philosophy which is a type of quantitative research. In this paradigm researchers should apply the methods of natural sciences in order to discover the study of social science (Crotty 1998).

2. Interpretism is a philosophical approach based on the belief that studies about people and society cannot use the same methods that are used by physical sciences, as people interpret the world and then act based on their personal interpretation while the world does not. Interpretivists adapt a relativist ontology where a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations rather than a truth that can be determined by a process of measurement (Pham 2018).

For this study, the researcher believes that the most suitable approach is Interpretism, due to the study being about social science and is based on interviews to understand the experience of companies with influencers, how influencers are starting their businesses, and what social media experts believe is the best way to navigate these platforms. Hence, due to all the information being interpretations of the data, the most suitable paradigm is Interpretism.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

There are two main data types in research, qualitative data and quantitative data. First, qualitative data, which is the type of data that cannot be quantified, for example, life experience and insight knowledge of the person being interviewed, the personal opinions, thoughts, and views in a certain context and circumstances (Nieswiadomy 2002), which is the only way for a researcher to develop a precise hypothesis using their findings.

Second, quantitative data, which is the type of data using numbers for the generalization of the findings in order to use the results for other situations that require the same statistical data. The research objectivity is of utmost concern. The observed and measured data should be kept from "contamination" with the researcher's personal involvement with the research subjects (Thomas et al. 2011).

In this study, due to the data being acquired through interviews, and due to the fact that this research is following the Interpretism paradigm, the study uses qualitative data.

3.3. Data collection tool

In this study, the data have been gathered using short interviews with companies, influencers, and social media experts.

According to Boyce and Neale (2006: 3), an interview is a qualitative research method that includes “conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation”.

The advantage of the interview research method is the possibility to collect more detailed insight data concerning the research subject and elucidate the issues that might appear during the process of interviewing. The disadvantages of this type of primary data collection include the arrangement of the interviews with the members of the sample group, as the interviews require an effective scheduling of time and an appropriate environment.

The questions covered the information about the interviewee, the reasoning behind their preference in social media platforms, and what their future plans are with regards to their social media marketing strategy. The questions of the interview can be seen in the Appendix (Appendix, Interview Questions).

4. Interviews

There were four interviews done for this study, two were with small businesses (SMEs) and two with large companies, which are documented and discussed in this section.

4.1. SME interviews

En Flique, Miss Katarina Mogus

En Flique is an online social media agency, based in Toronto, Canada. The agency targets other small businesses, blogs, and start-up applications as their main clientele, and helps them by enhancing their online strategy to grow their follower count. The interview was conducted with the CEO of En Flique, Miss Katarina Mogus, who started her company by sharing “small tips for growing your TikTok and Instagram followers” videos on TikTok. These videos went viral in 2020, making her an influencer, which allowed her to gain a big following on both TikTok and Instagram, and to publish a book under the title “Powerful Presence”, which is a guide for small businesses for using Instagram in their online strategy.

Miss Mogus used her large online presence to start her business. Like many other social media influencers, En Flique currently has 167 thousand followers on Instagram and over 1.9 million followers on TikTok. Moreover, Miss Mogus also is also currently in charge of managing both accounts. As she is the only En Flique employee, and only uses statistical data provided by the Instagram and TikTok platforms, she currently does not use any social media metrics third party applications, and believes it is much more effective when one grows one’s presence personally and without using paid advertisements.

En Fliques' targeted demographic is the younger audience and entrepreneurs, the largest group of En Fliques followers were 24 year old females from the United States. The main problem Miss Mogus faced in the past couple of years was shaky political relations between the United States and China, which almost caused the United States to ban the use of the TikTok application there, which would have been a big blow to her online follower base.

Leyla Elmans, Vladislava Alexeenko

Leyla Elmans is a small Azerbaijani silk shawl company from Moldova. Leyla Elmans is a fully online run business, which uses Facebook and Instagram as their main marketing tools. The owner of the company, Miss Alexeenko, runs all the social media platforms herself, due to the company having only three employees. Miss Alexeenko believes that since the company is running on an online basis, there is no need for a larger number of employees yet.

However, Miss Alexeenko chose operating the entire business on Instagram and Facebook, due to them being affordable platforms. Since Instagram is owned by Facebook, they both have a shared advertisement fee, and they are easy to use in terms of platforms for businesses. The business data is easy to acquire, the set-up of the business is not overly complicated, and communicating with customers is extremely easy. The next step for Leyla Elmans is to open a physical showroom in Chisinau, however, Miss Alexeenko believes that the online store will always be up and running.

Furthermore, after running the whole business using social media platforms, Miss Alexeenko decided to partner with a travel agency and some well-known Moldovan influencers. The idea behind this collaboration was a giveaway, one of the most popular methods of promotion when using influencer marketing. The winners received either a travel tour or shawls from Leyla Elmans, and the conditions for the giveaway was to simply comment on the post and be a follower of all the organizers of the giveaway. The winner was picked by Instagram's Random Comment Picker. Miss Alexeenko believes that the giveaway brought the business a lot of online traffic and that it is a great way of getting awareness towards their brands. It is very important to pick the correct Influencers for one's business.

The Leyla Elmans' Instagram and Facebook accounts are run entirely by Miss Alexeenko, and she does not use any third party programs to measure the traffic: they use the internal statistics provided for business account on Instagram. Moreover, Leyla Elmans do not plan on starting a TikTok account, as they believe that TikTok is more geared towards a younger audience and that is not the demographic they are targeting.

4.2. Large Enterprises

CMA CGM SA., Adey Al-Awamleh

CMA CGM is an international shipping company with over 110 thousand employees around the world. Its headquarters are in Marseille, France, and it is one of the world's leading shipping companies, providing freight maritime transport to over 150 countries.

The interview was conducted with Adey Al-Awamleh, a marketing officer in the Jordanian branch of CMA CGM. In the interview Mr. Awamleh talked about the

company's current Instagram pages, the Jordanian branch has a separate Instagram account than the main branch, to make it easier to communicate with their customers. It does not have much traffic, with less than 400 followers. He explained that since most of their business in Jordan is corporate, the page is not as active as they would like it to be. Moreover, they are more focused on LinkedIn to connect with other businesses, since it is more focused on (B2B).

The account of the main branch has currently over 115 thousand followers on Instagram, with thousands of likes on each posts. Mr. Awamleh believes that the main use of the Jordanian branch's account is for more brand awareness and to advertise any new promotions or milestones for the company, as they cannot post anything unless an approval is provided from the main branch.

Due to the company only targeting businesses in Jordan and Instagram being more frequented by younger audience in Jordan, which is not the targeted demographic, Mr. Awamleh believes that the Instagram page must be updated regularly but should not be one of the main tools for their marketing strategy. Mr. Awamleh feels that the Jordanian branch's current followers could be increased, however, it would be difficult due to the approval needed from headquarters for each post. The company is planning on gathering as many followers on the Jordanian branch to increase brand awareness and to advertise the company's promotions, but it is not one of their top priorities at the moment. The company does not have a TikTok account and is not planning on using influencer marketing in the near future, as it is also not their targeted demographic.

Amazon, Jordan branch, Khaled Jaber

Amazon is an American multinational technology company and one of the largest organizations in the world. Amazon provides its customers with many services such as online streaming of movies and series, cloud computing services, online commerce, and the company is even working on artificial intelligence.

Khaled Jaber is a junior manager at Amazon's customer service's branch in Amman, Jordan. Furthermore, Mr. Jaber handles not only customer feedback on the Amazon site, but also monitors any customer issues coming through social media. According to Mr. Jaber, Amazon uses many social media platforms, for many different purposes. For example, Amazon has a very successful Instagram page with over 3.1 million followers, used to connect with their customers through regularly updated posts. They use Twitter for PR and to connect more with their United States customers, Twitter being mostly popular in the United States. They post on Facebook regularly, the company owns a video game streaming platform called Twitch, and people can contact them from any platform for customer service.

According to Mr. Jaber, Amazon uses a social media management tool to keep track of how many messages, comments and Tweets they receive on daily basis, and their metrics are sentiment analysis and response time, and by using these they can track the average response time of the company, and sentiments of the users, and how much customers are satisfied with their services.

As for influencer marketing, Amazon has their own influencer strategy called the Amazon influencer marketing program, which allows users to get their own web page on Amazon. This page will show the products that are recommended to their

followers. The influencer promotes the page and receives an amount for each purchase coming from their Amazon page.

Moreover, this program is offered to any type of influencer on any platform as long as they have an acceptable number of followers, and according to the number of followers and other social media engagement metrics, the influencer can qualify for the program.

As for TikTok, Amazon seems to have many influencers on TikTok that are part of the influencer marketing program, but does not have an official TikTok page.

Discussion

The interviews with the large enterprises showed different uses of Instagram and TikTok for both organizations. CMA CGM SA. is a large shipping company and due to it being more focused on corporate shipping, reaching the demographics they target would be difficult through the use of TikTok, which explains why they are uninterested in using the platform for their online strategy. The same goes for Influencer marketing, it would be difficult to find an influencer that has a large number of followers that are interested in Maritime shipping.

However, they do still use Instagram, although Jordan does not have a large Instagram user base, they still use it for “Brand Recognition”. On the other hand, Amazon is a much larger corporation and is utilizing the influencer marketing to the maximum with their Amazon Influencer Marketing program, giving a chance for any influencer to represent their company if they meet the requirements needed to join the program.

As for the small businesses, the interviews showed a large contrast in their social media platform usage. One was more TikTok focused and was an influencer herself, while the other only used Instagram, and hired influencers as a collaboration. This difference could be due to the targeted demographics, number of users on each platform, or the popularity in each country.

The Interviews showed that influencer marketing can benefit businesses. However, it also showed that businesses should choose which platform they use according to the country they are in and the demographics they are targeting. For example, if your target demographic are younger users and the business is located in Indonesia, which has the highest number of active TikTok users worldwide, then TikTok would be the platform the business should focus on.

5. Conclusion

Social media has changed our day to day life in so many respects, and especially with COVID-19 forcing people to stay at home, the use of the internet and these platforms have increased dramatically. We now use social media for communication, learning, entertainment, and even for work purposes.

There has been a significant increase in the number of people on all social media platforms, and with this increase in the number of users viewing all sorts of content, this gave rise to influencers or “leaders of opinion”, which are experts in certain fields with many followers viewing their content.

This study has attempted to explore the concept of influencer marketing and its recent sharp growth of popularity in the digital world, and attempted to compare two of the biggest online influencer marketing platforms, Instagram and TikTok. Even though many businesses are already present on these social platforms and have influencers that represent their companies, most of them still do not have a clear view and understanding of the ways of building an efficient influencer marketing strategy.

From the interviews, the study has shown that at the moment Instagram is more popular with businesses, especially when it comes to influencer marketing platforms. Although advertisements on Instagram is more expensive compared to TikTok, businesses tend to pay more instead of taking risks while working with a fast-growing new platform. Furthermore, most of the information provided in the study by the interviewees showed that mostly younger users are the demographic served by TikTok, which was unfortunate. All the businesses interviewed were targeting an older audience.

All the results obtained show the variety of different ways to promote brands and businesses on influencer marketing platforms and indicate the factors that should be considered for building an efficient marketing campaign for business.

Appendix:

Interview Questions:

1. Can you tell me a bit about your organization? (Organization size, profile, number of employees in the marketing department, day to day activity, etc.)
2. What is your current job title and description?
3. Is TikTok and Instagram a part of the marketing strategy? And how long have you been using it?
4. What made you incorporate Instagram and TikTok into your strategy?
5. How are you currently using these platforms in your organization? And for what purpose?
(Example: word of mouth, informing customers about new products/ services, customer service, interacting with customers, PR tool, managing the brand).
6. Which platform was more useful for your business: Instagram or TikTok?
(Example: brought higher traffic, engagement, sales)
7. How much resources do you put into your TikTok and Instagram marketing strategy?
8. Have you ever had or are you planning in the future to have any collaborations with influencers?

9. How do you measure your effectiveness of using these platforms?
10. What are the problems you are facing when using Instagram and TikTok?
11. What would you like to change in your marketing strategy in future? Will you continue using both platforms or focus on one of them?

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