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Chair of Marketing

The Rise of Social Media and A.I. Marketing: An Added Value for Small Businesses and Startups?

Andrea Parisini

Student Reg. No. 242491   Prof.ssa Maria Giovanna Devetag

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CANDIDATE   SUPERVISOR

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Introduction

Our world is constantly being shaped by the technological advances arising every year. Since the introduction of the internet, marketing strategies have changed considerably. Businesses are no longer just using traditional ways to advertise their products or services. They are shifting toward a strategic marketing mix that uses a combination of both traditional and digital strategies. Today the use of the internet and, in particular, social media is becoming a habit for more than half of the world population and represents an optimal strategy to reach billions of people. For this reason, marketers should prioritize digital strategies and truly exploit the enormous potential of social media, which especially for small businesses may constitute a game-changer.

In the first chapter of this thesis, social media and A.I. marketing are defined. Since social media marketing has a strong trial and error component, it is hard to provide a common guideline for every business, however, a six-step guideline is presented in order to help brands succeed in their digital campaigns. Besides, it is described how today's consumers contribute to businesses' marketing through eWoM, which can be monitored and enhanced through the use of influencer marketing.

In the second chapter, the digital marketing influence on consumers and the consequent change in their behavior is discussed. Moreover, the introduction of new features from existing social media and the creation of completely new platforms, such as TikTok, is examined.

When only traditional marketing was available big companies were largely advantaged since the high costs of this strategy limited the possibility of small businesses to apply it consistently and reach a broad target. In the third chapter, thus, the major differences between small businesses and startups are defined. Both may find in digital strategies the path toward success and a way to challenge big businesses by paying less respect to traditional means and reaching a broader target. The advantages of social media marketing for small businesses will be covered together with some examples of how social networks such as TikTok are helping small companies to grow and have success.

Chapter 1 – Social Media and A.I. Marketing

1.1 What is Social Media Marketing

The daily use of Internet, smartphones, social media and other technologies is becoming progressively an habit of billions of people in the world. In 2021, there were 4.9 billion internet users globally, which implies that about two-thirds of the world's population is now linked to the internet.

Part of this expansion has been spurred by social media. As a matter of fact, more than half of the world's population (58.4%), 4.62 billion individuals use social media, with 424 million new users joining in the last year. Facebook, the most popular social media platform, was the first to cross one billion registered accounts, and it now has more than 2.89 billion monthly active users. Facebook (main platform), WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Instagram are the company's four largest social media platforms, each with over one billion monthly active users.

People are increasingly engaging in digital and social media activities for a variety of reasons, including in their positions as consumers, when they seek information about things before purchasing and using them, and when they share their experiences with others. As a result, marketers have increased their use of digital marketing channels.

Social media marketing has emerged as one of the most popular and effective kinds of digital marketing in recent years. Advertisers can reach billions of prospective customers with the click of a mouse thanks to the large userbases of networks like Facebook and Instagram. Industry professionals recognize the improved visibility for their brands and products, as well as the increased traffic on their websites, among the many advantages of using social media platforms for business objectives.

From a Marketing standpoint, Social media are platforms on which people develop networks and share information and/or sentiments (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Social media have caused three basic transformations in the marketplace due to their unique character as "dynamic, networked, egalitarian, and interactive creatures" (Peters et al. 2013, p. 281). To begin with, social media allows businesses and their customers to connect in ways that were previously impossible. Various platforms, such as social networking sites (for instance, Facebook), microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter), and content communities (for example, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok), enable social networks to emerge around common interests and ideals (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Second, social media has changed how businesses and their customers communicate and influence one another. Social contact entails "activities" that impact others' decisions and consumption habits, whether through dialogue or passive observation (Chen et al. 2011). Such social contacts were named "word-of-mouth (WOM)

effects" or "contagion effects" by Nair et al. (2010). According to Muller and Peres (2019), social interactions rely heavily on social network structure and offer enterprises quantitative value (also known as "social equity"). Researchers have long acknowledged the relevance of social impact in influencing consumer decisions in social media studies, and recent findings have demonstrated that people's connection patterns and social relationships can indicate the intensity of social interactions (e.g., Aral and Walker 2014; Katona et al. 2011). Third, the availability of social media data has made it easier for businesses to better manage consumer connections and improve commercial decision-making (Libai et al. 2010). The 3Vs (volume, variety, and velocity) are commonly used to describe social media data, as well as other digital data. The 3Vs relate to a large amount of data, diverse sources of data, and expansive real-time data (Alharthi et al. 2017). With the help of modern information technology, a massive amount of social media data derived from various venues (e.g., social networks, blogs, forums) and in different forms (e.g., text, video, image) can now be simply retrieved and advantageously exploited (Moe and Schweidel 2017). As a result, social media data can be used for customer analysis, market research, and crowdsourcing new ideas, while capturing and creating value with social media data symbolizes the birth of a global strategic resource that can enhance a marketing campaign's effectiveness (Gnizy 2019).

After looking at social media from a marketing perspective we can proceed by giving a clear definition of what we mean by "Social Media Marketing".

> "Social Media Marketing, (S.M.M.), is a form of digital marketing that uses social networks and networking platforms to promote products and services of a business; through the management of communication and integrated marketing on all platforms, it follows the idea of meeting the clients where they have more propensity to spend their (free) time, generating visibility on online communities."

The main objective that this type of marketing tries to achieve is to create interaction with possible and actual consumers working on the affinities of values and interests with the addressee of the message, and to affectionate them to the brand, increasing the brand loyalty and equity. This kind of communication and marketing actions have the characteristic of being bidirectional and 1:1, therefore very entertaining and engaging. Through social networks, businesses have the opportunity to establish direct conversations with actual and possible future customers, and to have real-time feedback on products and/or digital advertising campaigns. They can monitor the conversations that happen in the community and encourage opinion leaders and influencers to share the company's product/service to generate the "Buzz Marketing" phenomenon, a form of word of mouth highly intensive and

interactive that enables the companies to obtain more feedback from the users. This type of communication helps customer satisfaction to grow, together with brand awareness and authority.

Investing on Social Media Marketing allows the company to improve brand visibility, respond to possible questions related to the product or service that the business offer, promote new products and services quickly, and finally to shape the purchasing decisions of customers with a relatively contained budget.

The aforementioned results can be obtained by influencing the customers' behavior during the different phases of the production process. First, the company aims at increasing its brand awareness remaining constantly active on social media where consumers spend most of their free time. This means being active in the community, creating new content and applying content marketing to encourage the buzz marketing phenomenon to happen. Subsequently, the company tries to guide the consumers' desires through promotions and activities on social networks to make the same consumers aware of their desires. In the intermediate phase, the company encourages testing, in fact, social media can also be used to support loyalty and sampling programs, where the latter consists of offering a free trial product. In this context, social media is used to find new potential customers interested in testing samples and possibly retaining them. After that, the company aims to facilitate purchases, in fact social media are excellent distribution channels and fit for many sales promotion incentives such as discounts or deals. This is possible, as consumers follow brands closer to them to keep up to date on new releases or offers. Finally, the company consolidates its brand loyalty through social media, given their function as a meeting place between brands and consumers, where they can spend time in contact, through activities aimed at increasing brand loyalty, such as social games, which offer compensation to the most loyal visitors.

Figure 1: Digital Touchpoints
Source: *Why Digital Touchpoints are the Key to Your Content Strategy, Gary Magnone 2013*

Marketing Managers and their teams to obtain the desired goals, dispone of different distribution channels and for what it concerns social media marketing they can be divided into three macro-categories: "Paid Media", "Owned Media", and "Earned Media".

- o Paid Media represents paid advertising spaces used to deliver the message of the brand and obtain support while trying to encourage viewers of the ad to interact with the company. The interaction could be represented by either a visit on the business' website or the user sharing the content, the post, or the video advertised, on their profile. This behavior might induce also their "online friends" to do the same, increasing the business' visit flows.

- o Owned Media embodies those tools already owned and/or controlled by the business. They could be official accounts or e-commerce websites. These types of communication channels enable the company to practice content marketing, which allows them to institute constant contact with the target market. The use of content marketing is fundamental for the growth of a consumer community that associates with the brand and increases the brand advocate.

- o Earned Media are messages distributed without direct costs for the business. While on one hand, they are particularly appreciated by the companies since they do not require cash flow, on the other hand, they are the hardest to monitor and control. In fact, this category is made of all the views that derive from spontaneous network activity.

1.1.1 Planning of a Social Media Marketing Strategy

In order to maximize the results from a marketing campaign, businesses use both traditional marketing and social media marketing. Each of the two has to follow a strategic plan and if correctly integrated it allows the business to unite the different components of the social mix that are used to reach the predetermined goals. The planning process is composed of different phases and each of them is fundamental to exploit completely the potential of every social media platform in order to obtain good results from the campaign. First, the company has to take into consideration different factors, the goals, the target, the platforms to use and clearly the budget. The company's objectives need to be clear both in the short and long-run since through different tools the campaign can be conducted to reach separate goals. In the case of new brand on the market it would be preferable to increase the brand awareness. Further, when a new product is being released it can be useful to build up the hype around it and increase its customer base. Moreover, other goals of social media marketing campaigns are when the company is planning a rebranding strategy in order to keep consumers engaged, or furthermore, to provide customer service and improve customer experience.

The targeted audience needs to be studied deeply, since the increased use of internet and social media is common to almost all ages, knowing the company's targeted clients can lead to the maximization of the results from each campaign. Each social media platform is different, they have different characteristics and functions, and thus they have different targets and different ways of developing a strategy. Therefore replicating the same strategy on multiple platforms hardly ever is the best strategic choice since in this way the target reached is inefficient. Ultimately, the budget is an important factor that has to be taken into consideration since it requires the allocation of capital or work resources from the company. To better identify the aforementioned factors the company can follow a six-step guideline. Firstly, the company has to conduct an audit so that it can identify precisely what types of campaigns worked in the past. A good starting point to analyze the performance of the past is to start from the insights and analytics section of the different social media platforms. With this approach, we are able to study and understand all of the demographic characteristics of the audience, and which of the published content performed relatively better. After that, the company has to define its objectives so that it can monitor the correct indicator to verify quickly the results of the campaign. As an example, if the company wants to raise its brand awareness, generate lead from the campaign, or in general increase its visibility, it should pay attention to specific metrics and KPI that indicate the reach and impressions of the content. On the other hand, if they want to increase their website's traffic through social media they should look more at the Click Through Rate (CTR), which is an index of how many viewers of the post were curious enough to click on the link and visit the company's website. Moreover, another metric is used if the company's goal is to obtain conversions from the campaign. With conversions, we indicate an active action from the consumer that might be the subscription to a newsletter, buying some products or services, or downloading an App. To keep track of this metric the business has to look at the Bounce Rate, which is an index of how fast a user that reaches the website leaves it. After these, in the third and fourth steps, the business has to identify the target audience and the buyer personas based on demographics, content preferences, job, and interests to define a content strategy with posts that can arouse the curiosity, educate, engage, and persuade the viewers. In the fifth step, the company can choose whether to use or not paid media, which is highly suggested to grasp the benefits of social media marketing and increase engagement and sales. Lastly, once a campaign is started, the company has to keep monitoring the indicators and trying to introduce small corrections to improve the performance of future campaigns. Reasonably, social media marketing has a strong trial and error component. It requires continuous improvement and studies of the market, as the business needs to be aware of the new online trends to exploit them as an instrument to increase reach and acquire new customers.

1.2 Active Customers and Influencers

The usage of social media is rapidly rising, posing significant challenges to academic research and corporate practice. Consumer research must establish conceptual notions about social media activity that are supported by empirical findings from the consumer's perspective. Consumers are being empowered by information technology, and their roles are moving from passive recipients of information to active creators of content (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002). The entire marketing landscape is shifting dramatically as customers increasingly perform activities traditionally controlled by firms and exert influence over their reference group.

The internet behavior of consumers is rapidly evolving. They engage in a wide range of activities, including consuming content, participating in discussions, and exchanging knowledge with other consumers, as well as contributing to the actions of other consumers. Consumers are invading the marketing realm of businesses, which is transforming the media and marketing landscape (Berthon et al., 2008). Consumers are perceived as actively contributing to marketing content via social media and user-generated content (UGC) on sites like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Tik-Tok.

A general definition that we could give for user-generated content is: "the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media, usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 61).

In actuality, due to variances in interest and resources, only a small number of consumers create the majority of user-generated content, resulting in various levels of consumer involvement. The fact that customers are the ones producing, designing, publishing, or revising the content in the media (Krishnamurthy and Dou, 2008) distinguishes user-generated content, i.e. the service is user-created. As a result of social media, people may share and communicate with each other, democratizing material (Drury, 2008).

Consumers can be divided into three groups based on their reasons for utilizing the internet as a medium: information, entertainment, and social aspects. If we wish to dig deeper into this distinction, we can split the reasons into two categories: Knowledge-sharing and advocacy are rational motives, while social connection and self-expression are emotional motives.

Based on members' communication/participation habits, Valck et al. (2009) identified six main virtual community member types: 1) The core members were individuals who made the greatest contributions to the community by retrieving, supplying, and discussing information. 2) Information was the goal of conversationalists. 3) Informationalists, which mostly retrieved and provided data. 4) Hobbyists, concentrate on keeping their personal information up to date on the internet.

5) Functionalists, whose objective is the retrieval of information. 6) Opportunists just retrieved a small portion of the website's material.

People engage in a variety of activities online, according to Shao (2009): 1) consumption of information and entertainment, 2) social interaction and community development, and 3) production of self-expression and self-actualization. Shao (2009) also noted that these three activities are often integrated, that people engage in all three activities or a combination of the two, and that it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between the activities.

Because there are so many definitions and classifications for what consumers do online and who they are, it's difficult to distinguish between the incentives that drive people to create content. As a result, it's important to find other activities that may be useful for social media users.

The majority of consumer research on UGC (User-Generated Content) focuses on consumers' communication behavior, which is divided into two categories: contribution (posting) and consumption (lurking). To grasp why UGC analysis is critical, consider that what made a brand successful was its ability to become an integral part of people's daily life. When a brand is incorporated into a consumer's daily life, it allows them to connect with, interact with, and benefit from like-minded brand users, increasing the possibility of consumer-generated advertising (Zinnbauer and Honer 2011). Consumer Generated Advertising (CGA) is a type of user-generated material that refers to specific occasions where individuals develop brand-focused messaging with the goal of informing, persuading, or reminding others (Campbell et al. 2011). Vigilante marketing, defined as "unpaid advertising and marketing efforts, including one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many commercially oriented communications, undertaken by brand loyalists on behalf of the brand" (Muiz and Jensen Schau 2007, 35), is another type of user-generated marketing strategy that businesses can take advantage of. According to Campbell et al. (2011), traditional marketing and CGA coexist today.

Retailers should be aware of this because CGA has the potential to either assist or undermine traditional marketing. Cheong and Morrison's (2010) research, which explains how the lack of research on the credibility of both positive and negative user-generated content (UGC) emphasizes the necessity for retailers to be aware of and study UGC in order to fully comprehend its impact, support the foregoing remark.

To compare CGA with Firm Generated Advertising (FGA), Pehlivan, Sarican, and Berthon (2011) used a grounded theory approach, specifically for the well-known Apple Corporation. They discovered that CGA differs from FGA in that each style of ad (CGA or FGA) evokes different discussion content. Consumers appreciate FGA, but they find CGA to be more fun, causing them to

talk about it more. Cheong and Morrison's study from 2008 was similar; they interviewed college students to investigate the differences between UGC and producer-generated content (PGC), which refers to content published by product marketers.

As a result of the study, they found out that consumers trust product information created by other consumers more than information generated by manufacturers. Individuals who publish UGC become opinion leaders because customers read other consumers' thoughts to reduce their risks and receive pre-purchase information. As a result, other consumers' information emerges as more essential than advertising (Cheong and Morrison 2008). Customers are more inclined to share an online advertisement that is congruent with their identity since it represents who they are and what they appreciate. As a result, "advertisers should evaluate the symbolic and self-expression aspects of their online commercials and match them to targeted customers' self-concepts," (Taylor, Strutton, and Thompson 2012, 13). In other words, a company's marketing should have similar traits to its target market's interests. Now that the WoM has become even more important than before, brand managers must decide how to respond when their brand is mentioned by customers (Campbell et al. 2011). To expand their customer base, Zhang, Jansen, and Chowdhury (2011) recommended that firms have a brand presence on a variety of social media sites. "Exposure to electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communications can stimulate greater interest in a product category than exposure to content produced by marketers," (Birkart and Schindler 2001 as cited in Zhang, Jansen, and Chowdhury 2011, 161). Because the internet has empowered consumers to get access to information, they are now more aware about the items they consume, making them active co-producers of value (Zhang, Jansen, and Chowdhury 2011). Because it increases brand recognition, consumers as co-producers of value can give companies with a high return on investment, indicating the importance of eWOM in today's marketing landscape. "By passing on advertising to friends, openly connecting them to the marketers, or commenting on the ad and having those remarks forwarded via viral networks, social media platforms such as Facebook allow target customers to become message senders" (Interactive Advertising Bureau 2009 as cited in Chu 2011)

Furthermore, businesses are realizing the importance of creating their own brand presences on social media, not only to control some of their brand promotion, but also to stay informed and follow consumer-generated material. Although firms cannot directly control consumer-to-consumer messages, Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue that they can influence the discussions customers have about their brand in order to obtain more social currency. The latter might be thought of as the capital of network connections that each person can successfully mobilize. Companies may and should manage the social currency obtained through UGC. As their brands become an integral part of the bigger communities found within social networks, businesses must carefully manage the dangers

involved (Jones et al. as cited in Zinnbauer and Honer 2011). Social connection activities appeared to foster a sense of belonging and connecting to a specific social environment and between members of a social group in these huge online communities.

In the study conducted by Rebecca Dolan, "Social media engagement behavior A framework for engaging customers through social media content", respondents visited the UGC to discover what was being discussed and to engage with others in their social circles. Social connection can also refer to activities in which people can share different types of content with one another or try something new or unusual together. User-generated information altered and modified respondents' perspectives on rare occasions, such as after reading Internet discussion board content. Furthermore, social connection entails staying informed about events and happenings in the social network as well as engaging in such events. One of the great attractions of social networking sites, blogs, discussion forums, and video sites is exactly the aforementioned. Many respondents admitted to being obsessed to being up to date with news. Knowing things provided them a sense of social superiority. UGC has a significant impact on people's social lives since some sites, such as Facebook, make it simple to maintain one's contacts with others. The majority of respondents stated that they are becoming more social.

Consumers should be viewed as active producers of corporate value, given their prominence in internet marketing through UGC. Companies should aim to participate more in their customers' social media activities, rather than relying simply on marketing communication, in order to better understand the influence of these on their brand image and to promote interaction with future customers.

As previously introduced, consumers spend time online for many different reasons, and even though marketing is changing and companies should constantly pay attention to UGC they could still use some marketing strategies to interact directly with their users. In order to, increase interactions between consumers and brands, businesses have two major ways to engage directly with customers online: rational appeals and emotional appeals. The formers are appeals that contain pieces of information about the brand, mention the products, facts or actions correlated to the brand and the products, information about the availability of products, and comparisons of prices and warranties.

Figure 2: Example of Rational Appeal.

Source: "What You Feel, Is What You Like Influence of Message Appeals on Customer Engagement on Instagram", Robert Rietveld & Willemijn van Dolen & Masoud Mazloom & Marcel Worring, journal of interactive marketing, November 2019.

The second type of content, on the other hand, reflects more on the psychological and social needs of consumers, they focus more on the stimulus of emotions associated with the brand or the products. Their goal is to generate positive emotions around the brand or products in order to induce the consumers to buy what they are offering.
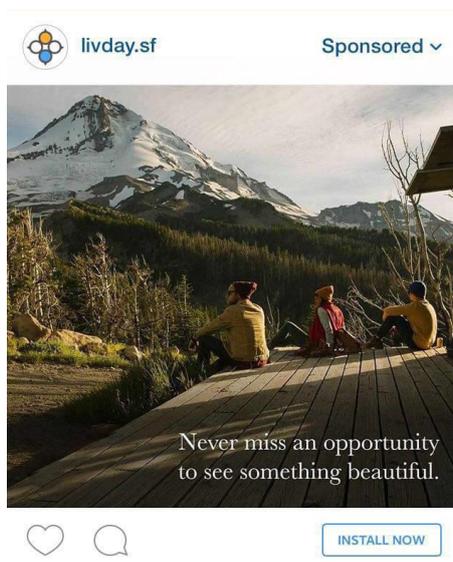

Figure 3: Example of Emotional Appeal.

Source: 10 Amazing Instagram Ads to Copy (And Why They are So Great), Gian Pepe, 2019.

These two types of content differ among other reasons for the target that they aim to reach. As a matter of fact, rational appeals are appreciated mostly by consumers whose consumption decisions are guided mostly by logic, information, and facts. On the other hand, the emotional appeal has as a target the consumers that have a greater emotional involvement and that value less factual information. Therefore, the business has to identify clearly the brand image of the company, and through the publication of content that is coherent with their brand identity the probability that customers reached will share the post grows, giving extra benefits to the brand from UGC.

While businesses might try to influence directly customers through emotional or rational appeals, recent studies showed how the level of trustworthiness that consumers give to ads online is decreasing at a fast pace. "Research shows the believability of trustworthiness of the medium influences how the consumer views the credibility of the information offered" (Moore and Rodgers as cited in Kelly et al. 2010, 17). The evidence of the study shows how today the majority of ads found on social media are irrelevant to consumers and most of the time they are just skipped, consumers happen to notice them just in case the relevant ad annoys or entertains them.

To solve this problem, and take advantage of the fact that consumers can be influencers at the same time, businesses should integrate social media marketing with influencer marketing. To understand better what influencer marketing is and how it works we need to define who these influencers/micro-celebrities are and how they can help a certain brand to increase its lead. "People who have created a big network of followers and are recognized as credible tastemakers in one or more niches" are defined as influencers (De Veirman et al., 2016, p. 1). Micro-celebrities, on the other hand, are defined as "[...] everyday, ordinary internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in both 'digital' and 'physical' spaces, and monetize their following by incorporating 'advertorials' into their blogs or social media posts and making physical paid-guest appearances at events" (Abidin, 2016, p. 3). These two words are nearly identical, with the following main similarities: enormous numbers of followers, active interaction, and product or brand promotion. Because they fit the criteria for both terms, bloggers on Instagram can be classified as both micro-celebrities and influencers. An Instagram influencer, according to the current study, is any prominent Instagram character with a large number of followers who has a strong sense of fashion and lifestyle and can monetise their appearance. Because of their great recognizability and use of it for social influence and commercialization, these influencers can be classified as micro-celebrities. Social media influencers have a unique persona that allows them to be both famous and average.

What truly characterizes this new type of celebrities, perhaps, is exactly the fact that they are perceived as being more similar to regular audiences, Unlike traditional celebrities, they are more likely to communicate with followers and are simpler to identify with. With the term traditional celebrities, we are referring to those who became famous from movies, music, and TV shows. Recently, many studies were conducted in order to assess whether consumers who see Instagram celebrity brand posts think the source is more trustworthy, have a more positive attitude about the endorsed brand, have a greater social presence, and are more envious of the source than consumers who see traditional celebrity brand posts. The results highlighted that consumers have a greater interconnectedness with this new type of celebrities and that the brands of these influencers or those brands that they promote are perceived as real and relatable. For this reason, they are more appealing to the eyes of customers. It follows that many brands find that influencer marketing constitutes one of the best strategies that they can pursue. Linking up with lead users who act as consumer advocates via their personal blogs is ideal in order to raise awareness and interest in the firm. Many consumer goods businesses employ this method by providing things to well-known influencers with the hope that they will lead users that after capturing the value of the product, will comment positively about it. It is fundamental for the companies that decide to use this method to choose the right influencer since each one has different characteristics and targets. On the other hand, the effectiveness of the campaign does not depend only on the closeness between the influencers and their followers. The credibility of the source is crucial to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, and influencers' attractiveness is determined by the amount to which they establish their personal brand via their own efforts. Celebrities will be seen as more trustworthy if they are successful in developing warm and likable relationships with their viewers (Silvera and Austad, 2004). Furthermore, the more engaging a public persona is, the more affinity and trust it will develop (Van Noort et al., 2012). Numbers of follows, followers, shares, likes and comments are all indicators of interactivity and engagement. Because a "normal" person's high numbers of followers and likes can be linked to this person's active participation, openness to audiences, and popularity in the online community, these indices are more significant for non-mainstream celebrities (Van Der Heide and Lim, 2016).

Rather than focusing on technology or push marketing, social media plans should take a consumer-centric approach, beginning with the consumer's perspective on social media behaviors and habits. The current findings point to influencer marketing as an effective branding technique capable of pushing user-generated content and eWOM. Traditional celebrity endorsement is still a dependable method, but influencers may be more effective in specifically targeting consumers with diverse interests who like to spend time online and eventually engage with companies or brands on social media.

1.3 A.I. Marketing

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a key topic in the management and marketing sciences, despite the fact that research into its development in other fields of science has been ongoing for more than half a century. AI has been in and out of the spotlight over the years, depending on how far technology has progressed and how broad its possible applications have become. The first large-scale commercial uses of AI, which have demonstrated the promise and capabilities of this technology in the area of marketing, have sparked interest in and significant discussion about it. The rapid progress of AI in recent years has been made possible by advances in AI cognitive mechanisms and machine learning capabilities based on acquired data (Lieto, Bhatt, Oltramari, & Vernon, 2017). AI has primarily attracted the interest of engineers, IT professionals, and analysts, but it is now expanding outside its usual areas of application, gaining traction in the fields of management and marketing. Because AI is built on data analysis in practically every area of its application, it has become a significant ally of marketing as the amount of consumer data available online, in big data platforms, or on mobile devices continues to grow. To measure the results and effects of the established strategies, marketing makes extensive use of data derived from consumer requirements research, market studies, customer insights, and competitor intelligence, which is pursued through activities in various communication or distribution channels. As information technology advances, marketing becomes a natural benefactor (Mazurek, 2011a, 2011b, 2014). Information technology gives rise to artificial intelligence. It is frequently used interchangeably with terms like automation and robotics. It is also easy to mix it up with terms like machine learning and algorithm application. To understand clearly what we intend with AI we can look at the Oxford Dictionary which says that AI is "the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages" ("artificial intelligence | Definition of artificial intelligence in English by Oxford Dictionaries", 2019). Artificial intelligence-based technology can mimic cognitive functions that we associate with the human mind, such as the ability to solve problems and learn (Syam, Sharma, 2018). AI's role is to process and recognize acquired data before performing certain activities. This is the definition of Artificial Narrow Intelligence, which operates and performs tasks in a specific domain (Shanahan, 2015). The second type of AI is Artificial General Intelligence, which has a range of cognitive abilities comparable to the human brain (Sterne, 2017). Machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing are three technologies that have advanced in recent years to help AI achieve its current potential. AI has progressed thanks to machine learning (ML). By building relationships between various pieces of data, machine learning has enabled computers to learn on their own based on the available data. ML allows you to draw inferences and make generalizations based on the results of

your analysis thanks to these capabilities (McIlwraith, Marmanis, & Babenko, 2017). Data exploration, knowledge discovery, pattern recognition, statistical modeling, predictive analytics, data analytics, adaptive systems, self-organizing systems, and many more terms are used to describe the many different forms of machine learning (Domingos, 2016). Deep learning (DL) is a higher degree of machine learning since it uses learning algorithms that do not require manual management. DL makes it feasible to understand and offer the result for a new piece of information instantaneously by leveraging massive data and computational capacity (e.g. server farms, CPU power, cloud computing) (Alpaydin, 2016). Natural language processing (NLP) is an ML and DL application that aims to recognize speech. Many years of research in this field have allowed researchers to work with vast amounts of data (text samples) that serve as sources of context, vocabulary, grammar, and semantic meaning (Alpaydin, 2016). AI has been developed in the areas of voice, text, and picture recognition, decision-making, and autonomous robotics and vehicles thanks to advancements in those technologies. Each of these topics can be used in a practical way. Smartphones, for example, include voice recognition capabilities (e.g. Siri, Google Assistant). Text recognition software is utilized as a virtual assistant that provides quick responses (e.g. Deakin University and IBM Watson). Image recognition is used for payment approval; the system can make payments by comparing face photos (e.g. food chain KFC). For instructional reasons, a decision-making system is available – IBM Elements is devoted to instructors in order to assist them in student assessment and to establish individualized growth paths for each student. Finally, autonomous robots and vehicles are utilized to manage inventories in warehouses (e.g. in Amazon Kiva system).

We ask ourselves two research questions to better understand the AI application within the marketing mix and find answers: (1) Is AI used in marketing in all domains (speech, text, picture recognition, decision-making, autonomous cars, and robotics); (2) what are the consequences of AI in marketing practice?

Authors have found AI applications in marketing for each of the AI areas described (text, speech, picture recognition, decision making, autonomous cars, and robotics). While text recognition, picture recognition, and decision-making technologies are extensively used, voice recognition, autonomous cars, and robotics are not. The higher complexity of both technologies may be to blame. Furthermore, autonomous vehicles and robotics are more commonly associated with Industry 4.0 than marketing. As a result, it is rarely thought of as a technique to create and develop innovations in sales channel management, merchandising optimization, or customer service delivery. Each verified case demonstrates how AI affects every aspect of a marketing mix program. So this conclusion is extremely significant for practitioners who are responsible for producing innovations. It is worth noting that the field of 'place' necessitates collaboration with Industry 4.0 experts, as autonomous

vehicles and robots play a critical role in the development of new sales channels and customer service. Furthermore, AI extensions that go beyond the primary product necessitate a creative design approach to uncover insights that correspond to ideas that are not limited to the product or even category. This is critical for incorporating AI in the marketing mix program's 'product' and 'promotion' parts. According to market research, AI activities have a two-way impact on marketing. On the one hand, the consumer benefits from changes, but on the other hand, new solutions have an impact on all marketing activities.

As a result, we see AI's impact on customers as a critical component of marketing tactics revolutions. In the same way that the Internet has provided many benefits to consumers, such as automatic recommendations and relevant product suggestions (Grewal, Roggeveena, & Nordfältba, 2017), shorter shopping times (Moncrief, 2017), and customer service personalization (Jordan, & Mitchell, 2015), AI takes things a step further and opens up new marketing opportunities. There are primarily three benefits that AI provides to consumers:

• Improved processes (e.g., automatic payments, higher-quality search engines, and 24/7 customer support) result in more convenient and faster shopping time.

• A new consumer experience is created through mass-scale hyper-personalization and after-sales service that adds value beyond the core product.

• A new dimension of the consumer-brand interaction was delivered by building surprise and delight, which reduced post-purchase dissonance by allowing users to virtually test the product in question, eliminating the process of category learning, and finally using benchmarking against other users.

Furthermore, the impact of AI on marketing management is regarded as equally significant as the impact on customers. In fact, AI is having a huge impact on current methods, and it will undoubtedly force a new approach to marketing team activities. Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly important in marketing management since technology helps marketers do their jobs more efficiently by:

• Eliminating time-consuming and arduous tasks. Routine and recurring tasks (such as data collection and analysis, picture search, and adaptation/processing) are automated by AI.

• The importance of creative and strategic efforts has increased. AI-assisted precise analyses expand the importance of creative and strategic actions in gaining a competitive advantage.

• New design concepts. AI changes the way value is delivered to customers and elevates the role of design in creating new solutions.

• Improving the marketing team's capabilities. Incorporating data scientist abilities into the marketing team, as well as a knowledge of new technology possibilities, is required.

• The emergence of a new marketing ecology. The importance of organizations that create AI solutions grows as AI becomes more advanced. Because of the current state of AI (Artificial Narrow Intelligence), a new form of collaboration with AI entities supplying data engineering or machine learning tools is required.

The researchers reported that AI is used in a variety of marketing situations. Image recognition, text recognition, decision-making, voice recognition, and autonomous robotics and vehicles are all used in commercial solutions based on it. While the first three are widely used in marketing, actual applications of voice recognition are rare and are studied on a large scale by the largest tech companies such as Amazon, Google, Apple, or Microsoft. Similarly, autonomous vehicles and robots are not a common solution, as this field is much more associated with Industry 4.0 than with marketing mix innovation design. Currently, AI in marketing is mostly used at the operational level, as one-off initiatives or operations. This could be due to the fact that we are dealing with the first examples of AI in practice, and corporations are being cautious about installing and experimenting with this new technology. The costs of developing innovative concepts, as well as the uncertainty of the success of their implementation, may influence the caution with which these innovations are implemented. When looking at the popularity of products like Salesforce Einstein and Albert AI, it appears that the first implementations inspire trust in AI solutions, and businesses are more ready to use them if they see favorable outcomes. The collected examples indicate that AI provides a new level of quality to a consumer's life. Customer care that is available 24 hours a day, hyper-personalized solutions, more convenient shopping, and the ability to prevent making the wrong decision all contribute to a new level of the marketing organization. These changes have an undeniable impact on marketing departments and businesses' operations. Most importantly, it needs the introduction of new functions and talents to marketing teams, i.e. personnel with the necessary knowledge of AI, data science, and design and implementation credentials. It is also about navigating a new form of collaboration with organizations that provide sophisticated AI solutions and achieving a synergistic effect in AI and other areas. According to the findings, AI applications are used in all aspects of the marketing mix, and five different AI technologies are applied in marketing practice. With the advancement of technology in the years ahead, AI will become even more prevalent in our lives, and its usage as a marketing tool will become a critical component of marketing plans in order to be more efficient and quickly acquire and retain new clients.

Chapter 2 – Social Media New Frontiers (E-commerce Platforms, TikTok)

2.1 Digital Marketing Influence on Consumer Behavior

A great deal is being written and said about the possibility of influencing consumer behavior through the use of digital and AI marketing. Around 74 percent of today's shoppers will rely on social media to help them make purchases[1]. This demonstrates that today's young generations rely on social media to guide their feelings and purchasing decisions. Simply connecting with potential clients will raise brand awareness and begin to establish a corporate reputation. Each communication will be delivered to a different group of people, with the possibility of them becoming future clients. The more people who are aware of the business, the better. As a result, we may conclude that social media advertising is effective in reaching a broad audience, as evidenced by the influence of "sarafan radio." There seems to be no doubt that simply having a social media page will help a brand become more visible, and if used consistently, it may help a company reach a larger audience. Advertising on social media allows you to have a lot of control over your target market. Digital advertising is a key issue in marketing literature, and it examines how customers react to various components of digital advertising in terms of consumer behavior. Every day, more people rely on social media for information. S. Moore looked at the explanatory language in the online surveys and discovered that the meanings people gave to actions or emotions had an impact on perceived utility. These businesses, which are generally modest in terms of resources and personnel, must develop quickly, offer new marketing channels and skills, and be innovative in order for budgets to stretch farther. He looked into negative WOM and discovered that using mitigating language when expressing negative comments boosts the reviewer's trustworthiness and attractiveness. T. Tang looked at two types of neutral language: mixed (positive and negative) and indifferent, and found that when WOM is mixed, it increases the direct impact of positive and negative WOM on a purchase. Another key problem that has recently been examined is the distinction between online and offline word-of-mouth. Based on a vast set of data regarding the WOM brand's online and offline settings, online WOM is defined by the social and functional features of the brand, while offline WOM is defined by the emotional aspects of the brand. Accepting a more limited but still essential perspective, researchers discovered variations between WOM transmission on social media (e.g., Facebook) and offline (personal),

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[1] *Starngage.com, 2017.*

indicating that consumers are less likely to transmit WOM on social media due to higher perceived social risk.

In the digital economy, many organizations recognize the relevance and necessity of using social media in marketing to develop brand loyalty, directly and on a regular basis, to communicate with potential customers. The question of how social media influences consumer behavior has resurfaced in recent years. It's fascinating to see how different types of information and social qualities in the social environment, such as the influence of other consumers' opinions or decisions (e.g., bids on online auctions), or even the lives of friends via social networks, can influence later behavior. C. Lamberton studied how people learn from others in the digital world and how such observations might influence people's decisions in these contexts, as well as the conclusions they draw about others. Environment changes showed scientists how Facebook use affects self-control. They discovered that when consumers were in contact with closer friends on Facebook, they had less self-control when choosing, for example, healthful behavior (e.g., choosing a healthier snack instead of an unhealthy one). However, this was only available to persons who knew their closest Facebook friends. As customers use mobile devices more frequently, consumer behavior in mobile environments is becoming increasingly relevant. This is especially intriguing when it comes to shopping. For large and technology-oriented firms, using digital marketing tools and tactics to change consumer behavior has become standard practice as they begin to explore the wonders of AI and big data analytics to change their digital marketing strategy. The application of artificial intelligence (AI) to digital marketing can help reduce overall marketing costs and time spent implementing digital marketing strategies and achieving underlying marketing goals and objectives. The next phase will be to specify the data quantity and sources of data gathering in order to acquire appropriate data for targeted marketing campaigns. Marketers require a vast amount of data in order to make informed decisions based on past features of customer interactions with the brand and communication for current information. This information can be gathered from a variety of sources, including marketing efforts, CRM data, and social media interactions. To support AI-based digital marketing and analytics, data sources must be dependable (Stone, 2020). However, this information should not be utilized at the user's discretion in order to comply with social media and other online platforms' data policies.

Almost all marketing channels went digital during the lock-down in 2020/21, and the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior is altering the industry by compelling businesses to adjust their digital marketing approach and strategy. Consumer behavior data is required by businesses all around the world. This is because they are always looking for ways to improve their shopping experience and, as a result, their sales results. They can learn more about market expectations by doing consumer

behavior research. It also helps them create enhancements that will allow customers to make better purchasing decisions. The study includes information on what clients purchase, where they purchase it, and when they purchase it. It also shows information about their buying purpose, frequency, and other aspects.

Although AI is expanding marketing prospects, it also has significant drawbacks. Because of artificial intelligence, when we open social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, we frequently see items that we have discussed with others, or that we have seen somewhere and wished to buy, or that we are thinking about and it appears in front of us. But how? This implies that the data is processed using AI techniques, but did we supply the data? The answer is no; the major issue here is privacy. Customers' data is being utilized without their permission or approval, which could pose problems in the future if customers become aware of the implications of data privacy (Newman, 2019). For many organizations, capturing attention and engaging with today's tech-savvy audience has proven difficult; nevertheless, applying the correct marketing strategy can assist in overcoming these problems. Since it provides individualized experiences depending on the data processed, AI is becoming a trend. However, most customers, prefer not to be pushed to make a purchase. Paid advertising ROI has steadily declined for a variety of reasons: Facebook Advertising CTR is at an all-time low of less than 1%, Google Search Ads are being ignored by savvy customers who use other search engines or browse incognito mode, and advertising costs are reaching new highs due to fierce competition for users' attention.

Customers are more demanding of online stores and digital purchases as a result of the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior. Businesses must have a strong e-commerce presence with smooth and secure payment methods, fast delivery, and a clear return policy that protects consumers' rights in order to survive. Consumers have evolved to be pickier when interacting with a brand online; online reviews demonstrate how extreme consumers are when evaluating a product or service, relying on other customers' opinions, and influenced by what they read through their own search; and if they are dissatisfied, they may easily switch to other buyers. To meet consumer demand, even tiny shops in developing countries are turning to full-fledged internet sites. It is no longer enough to be active on social media, to rank top on Google, or to have a fantastic website. If you are not relevant to your customers' online journey, you risk losing them to a competitor. Consumers are more likely to click on a brand that they are familiar with if they see it in both the physical and digital worlds at the same time. Even for small businesses, reputation management is essential. Polishing your online presence and providing exceptional quality, customer service, and appealing to their expectations will translate into positive reviews that strengthen your brand, increase customer loyalty, and encourage consumer spending. There is no other way to grow than to actually serve your customers best.

One of the most significant effects of digital marketing on consumer behavior is that ordinary customers who used to go to the first shop they saw are now searching for products online the day before going to the physical store, reading other customers' reviews, and comparing prices, delivery, and similar products. Their purchasing decisions are influenced significantly by the abundance of information they acquire as a result of digital marketing. Consumers have grown increasingly impatient as technological improvements have increased their expectations for quick, efficient service. Through internet user reviews and forums, they are exposed to real feedback on products and services. Inadequate services and facilities are unacceptable. Customers expect brands to respond to their concerns as soon as possible. When customers do not receive what they were promised, they vent their dissatisfaction in public forums, causing a brand's online image to suffer. Businesses must now produce informational content around their products, create extensive product descriptions, and detail all aspects of the products they sell as a result of the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior, and focus on organic, paid, and social media parts of the customer journey to stay relevant in competitive markets.

2.2   Social Media, the New Frontier of E-Commerce Marketplaces

The distinctions between e-commerce and social networking are blurring more and more. Many of the characteristics of social networks may be found on e-commerce platforms like eBay, such as real-time status updates and interactions between buyers and sellers. Some e-commerce sites also feature social login, which allows new users to sign in using their Facebook, Twitter, or Google+ login information. Recently, both Facebook and Twitter launched a new feature that allows users to purchase merchandise directly from their websites by clicking a "buy" button in advertisements or other contents. ALIBABA, a Chinese e-commerce company, has made a strategic investment in SINA WEIBO, allowing ALIBABA product advertisements to be delivered directly to SINA WEIBO users. With the growing trend of performing e-commerce activities on social networking sites, it is critical to use social networking site knowledge in the development of product recommender systems. Let us take a closer look at what e-commerce entails.

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) is a dynamic combination of technology, applications, and business processes that connect firms, customers, and specific communities through electronic transactions, exchange in products, services, and information. It is the activity of purchasing and selling products and services over the internet using online consumer services. Electronics,

abbreviated as "E", has become a popular prefix for other terms associated with electronic transactions (Baum, David, 1999). Entrepreneurs have become even more sensitive to the digital phenomenon of internet buying as customers increasingly shop online due to logistical restrictions. For both large and small businesses, sales is the most important activity for earning income. The growing popularity of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter has given rise to a new type of e-commerce delivery platform known as social commerce. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram allow the establishment of virtual customer environments in which online communities emerge around specific firms, brands, or goods. Social media, on the other hand, has given consumers new ways to engage in social relationships on the internet. Through an extranet, trading on the internet provides a cost-effective way for businesses to collaborate with vendors, partners, and customers. As more businesses learn about the advantages of e-commerce, and as the Internet makes services cheaper for nearly any sort of business, the power shifts to buyers, who have access to various sellers. "It's no longer about vendors offering and consumers buying," Esther Dyson, an internet expert, argues, "but about the consumers specifying the parameters and the vendors fulfilling them." As a result, a highly competitive atmosphere exists in which innovative enterprises thrive.

To understand better the flow of activities on an e-commerce platform we can look at the following picture:
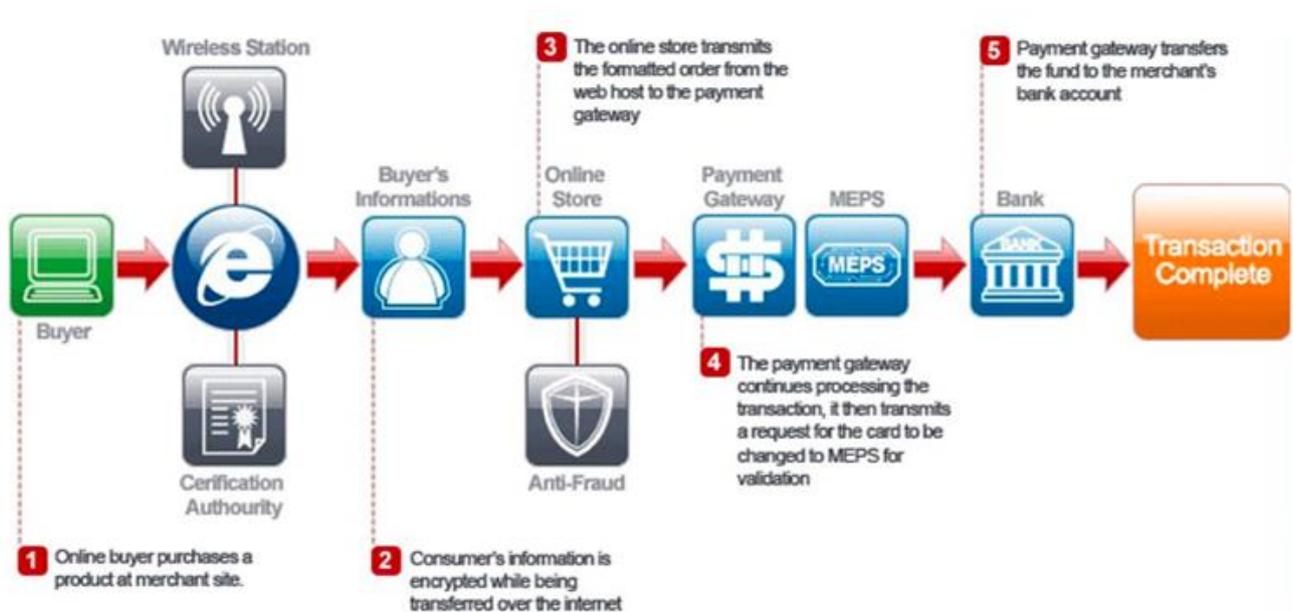

Figure 4: Flow of Activities on an E-commerce Platform.

Source: *Research on e-commerce Business Model Based on Intelligent Terminals Mobile, Hongyan Xin 2015*

Based on the general flow of operations, e-commerce comprises four main components:

- A seller, that is a person who owns or operates an online store.
- Consumers that in the world of e-commerce, play a crucial role.
- E-commerce technology, which encompasses all information about technology employed in the process.
- Computer Network, which can serve users from all around the world. The most significant component for using E-Commerce is in particular the internet.

Moreover, e-commerce may be divided based on the nature of participants that are involved in the transaction. First, we could have a B2C (Business to Consumer) e-commerce, which is the electronic and direct sale of goods and services to individual consumers. Take, for example, Barners & Noble.com, a website that sells books, software, and music to individuals. Second, Business-to-business e-commerce (B2B) is the electronic sale of goods and services between companies. Third, Consumer to Consumer e-commerce (C2C) which refers to the electronic sale of goods and services between enterprises. As an example, on eBay, you can sell things to other consumers by auctioning them to business people and even customers.

Large corporations, medium-sized firms, and individual businesses are all starting to think about how to grow and maintain their operations in order to keep up with their competitors. Technology and the internet can aid in the development and maintenance of a business, as well as the generation of leads and sales. Bill Gates, one of the modern business's visionaries, wrote an essay called "Content is King" (Gates, 1996), in which he emphasized how, with the arrival of the internet, consumers are beginning to substantially shift their shopping habits. Gates compared it to the 1950s and 1960s television revolution, which produced a slew of new companies and allowed the entertainment industry to thrive. Due to the relative simplicity with which anyone may be a publisher, he believes the internet will do the same. The essay is considerably more relevant today than it was when it was first written, as evidenced by the popularity of YouTube, Instagram, and other social media platforms. For example, Instagram is rapidly growing into not only a crucial tool for content marketing communications but also a viable sales channel for goods and services.

Instagram is a photo-sharing app that allows users to share beautiful photos with their followers. Since 2010, the service has been available. The app was purchased by Facebook in 2012, and the two sites have remained tightly connected since then, particularly in terms of marketing (Lisowski 2016, p. 45). The service connects individuals looking for inspiration with those who inspire others,

bringing together people who share similar interests[2]. Only Facebook and YouTube have more users than Instagram (Clarke, 2019), which has more than one billion monthly active accounts. The key reason for its enormous popularity is that it is continually responding to the needs of users, which is linked to the development of new applications and the addition of new features. Simultaneously, the website's founders are constantly improving its marketing aspect: initially in terms of advertising, then in terms of selling. In the last several years, the app has progressed to the point that it is now setting trends in the world of social media. The Instagram algorithm, which is meant to ensure that the content is most closely matched to the user's interests, determines which posts the user can see in the app. This is done automatically and is based on things like the accounts you have followed or the posts you have liked. The content that is shown in each user's feed is chosen based on a combination of algorithms and promotional funds. Instagram is increasingly selling its resources as the number of users and the volume of content grows. Paid advertising on Instagram was previously restricted to a small number of large businesses, a strategy that Facebook abandoned in 2015 when it opened up advertising to everyone. The ability to promote posts in the Main Feed was first introduced, followed by Instagram Stories. Advertisers can use this to track activity related to posts, app installations, site redirect clicks, and website conversion rates, among other things. Advertisers can use a variety of ad formats and optimization methods, as well as precise targeting based on age, gender, location, family status, relationship status, level of education, or even characteristics like recently starting a new job, owning a mobile device of a specific brand, and previous visits to a given site or performing a specific action on it. An imported database of phone numbers or email addresses can likewise be used for targeting (Lisowski, 2016, pp. 45–46). The shopping feature debuted in 2016[3] and was tried by a number of enterprises in the United States before being rolled out to other nations. It is currently available in 46 countries. This feature, in addition to the links in the bio and Instagram Stories, is the third way to convert from the app (Chacon, 2018). The possibility of tagging organic content with links to the online store was first introduced at the beginning [4]. After that, Instagram Stories got a product tagging function, allowing users to tap on a tag or sticker to see the product's name and price. Before making a purchase or browsing further in the app, a double tap on the tag or sticker took the user to a page containing product descriptions, extra photographs, and similar items. Instagram announced the "Checkout on Instagram" option in 2019, which eliminates the need for users to visit an external website to make purchases. The application is used to enter billing and shipping information. Furthermore, payment information is saved so that customers do not have to enter it

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[2] Osomstudio.com, 2017.

[3] *Business.instagram.com/blog/shopping-on-instagram, 2016.*

[4] *Ibid.*

again, even while shopping at different stores. Instagram has already stated that it will be making changes to the shopping feature in the future[5]. Because users have grown accustomed to seeing companies on Instagram, shopping appears to be a more natural fit for this medium[6]. With the Instagram shopping feature, users can easily go through phases such as searching for a company, reading about it, and adding items to their shopping cart - all with just a few taps and without having to leave the app (Chacon, 2018). This Instagram buying feature allows users to easily purchase products and services, decreasing consumer search time while raising conversion rates and income for companies. Another intriguing feature is the save for later function, which allows users to bookmark items they find interesting for later review[7]. Businesses gain measurable benefits from selling through this channel since it saves time and gives great measurability. New application functions have increased income measurement and monitoring[8], allowing marketers to compare product views to purchases[9]. Companies can use the "Instagram Shopping" feature to reach a large, precisely specified group of recipients in their natural habitat. It provides direct access to the younger groups of Internet users, who often favor electronic communication over traditional communication because they have grown up with online media. Many youths regard Instagram as their favorite media and use it as their primary source of information (Grabiwoda, 2018). The app is most commonly used on smartphones and was designed in a vertical format to fit the mobile-first world we live in today. It provides an appealing and functional advertising space with a limited number of components that could distract its audience. Instagram is an excellent platform for building customer experiences because of its freshness and innovation, which gives users a one-of-a-kind experience. At the same time, the design of this site allows for effective contextual selling, which increases the likelihood of success. Instagram allows for storytelling, which enables consumers and brands to form a deeper, more intimate, longer-lasting, and hence more valued relationship. Instagram has four times the amount of interaction of Facebook and has the greatest engagement rate of all social networking platforms (Buryan, 2018). This application's users willingly interact not only with other users, but also with brands. They behave differently than on other websites, focusing on product viewing, trend discovery, and innovation[10]. Eighty percent of them admit to following business accounts[11], and brand promoters make for one-third of the most viewed stories[12]. The high engagement is due to the fact

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[5] *Business.instagram.com/blog/new-to-instagram-shopping-checkout/, 2019.*
[6] *Business.instagram.com/blog/a-better-shopping-experience-on-instagram, 2017.*
[7] *Business.instagram.com/blog/shopping-on-instagram, 2016.*
[8] *Facebook.com/business/news/instagram/inspirational-insights-for-businesses-on-instagram, 2018.*
[9] *Business.instagram.com/blog/a-better-shopping-experience-on-instagram, 2017.*
[10] *Refer to footnote 8.*
[11] *Refer to footnote 9.*
[12] *Business.instagram.com/blog/announcing-shopping-in-instagram-stories-and-explore/, 2018.*

that Instagram users form particular relationships with brands, which makes them feel like they're part of a select group. Instagram had a key role in the purchasing decision process even before the shopping feature was introduced since it was most likely to induce young customers to think about and plan purchases. According to the 2018 Global Web Index study, 50% of Instagram users said they got product information from the platform (Grabiwoda, 2018). Today, these rates are substantially higher, with 130 million Instagram users displaying product tags in shopping posts in a month[13]. When compared to Pinterest (13 percent), Twitter (13 percent), and Facebook (9 percent), Instagram (14 percent) scores best among all social media sites when it comes to the use of the "Shop" button (Business Insider report 2015, as cited in Miotk 2016, p. 50). Instagram looks to be a sales booster as well, with 54 percent of buyers claiming that seeing a product or service on Instagram motivated them to buy it[14]. Consumers no longer have to go through the trouble of multiple buying phases thanks to the advent of Instagram's shopping feature. Many users ask for product names, prices, and links in comments, send messages via Instagram Direct, or search for products on a search engine and the store's website[15].

The increased request for online shopping clearly attracted many entrepreneurs that became more receptive to the digital phenomenon of online buying. As we said, Instagram with its shopping functions is influencing, even more, the growth of online shopping but still it is not recognized as valuable as other e-commerce websites. People might like to inform on social media and they are influenced by them but in the end, they might prefer buying on well-known platforms that offer for example a review system and clear refund policies. Instagram is working hard on the customer journey and in the future, it might even guide other social networks in a revolution that could most definitely unite social networks and e-commerce functions.

2.3   The Innovation in S.M.M.: TikTok a Completely New Type of Social Media

TikTok is a Chinese social media platform that was founded in 2016. It was first known as Duoyin, and its objective was to allow people to practice their languages. Because the majority of its users were teenagers, they began to change the way they used it, and fun became their primary purpose. As a result of the company's quick expansion, TikTok was re-launched on a global scale (Hu, L. 2020). The TikTok app is built on the notion of small format video, and it provides users with a wide range

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[13] *Business.instagram.com/blog/new-to-instagram-shopping-checkout/, 2019.*
[14] *Facebook. com/business/news/insights/how-instagram-boosts-brands-and-drives-sales, 2019.*
[15] *Facebook.com/business/news/instagram/inspirational-insights-for-businesses-on-instagram, 2018.*

of sounds and music, as well as the ability to add unique effects and filters. It also includes a feature that allows users to upload films directly from their phones, a reaction tool that allows users to record and share their reactions to other videos, and a digital wellness feature that sends an alarm when users spend more than two hours on the app. The app's popularity has skyrocketed since its debut. TikTok was the most downloaded photo and video app in the Apple store worldwide in October 2018. The app has more than 500 million active users, with the United States being the most popular country to download it, with over 80 million downloads (Anderson, K. E. 2020). The popularity of Apps has risen due to a number of causes, including simplicity of use, celebrity sponsorship, and a concentration on localized content. TikTok made it easier to make and share videos (Xu, L., Yan, X., Zhang, Z. 2019). All users have to do is record whatever they want in their everyday routines and post them immediately. The video-making and viewing processes are both quick and easy due to the short format. Furthermore, as soon as the user starts the apps, this short video material is played. The videos begin to play one by one, and the spectator gets caught in a sea of entertaining and addictive contents. It is very easy to lose track of time watching random videos due to the addicting nature of the content format. The software also uses hashtags from local trends to propose ideas for its users to create content, allowing the company to capitalize on local trends and develop viral content. TikTok provides each of its customers with individualized recommendations. This ensures that users are always up to date on the most recent videos and never run out of video ideas. TikTok was able to accomplish global localization using these strategies. Partnerships with celebrities have been a key component of TikTok's geographic expansion strategy. Celebrities and influencers are used by the app to promote the platform and create viral content (Alperstein, N.M. 2019). These celebrities not only use TikTok to create content but use these to promote TikTok on other social media platforms. Another aspect of TikTok's appeal is that, although being a global application, it places a heavy emphasis on localized content. Local contests and challenges are frequently held on the app, and local trends are captured through the usage of hashtags that are specific to the area. In numerous countries, TikTok is holding a "1 million auditions" competition. Participants are given themes to produce videos on, and the best video creators are then recognized. This competition not only results in the development of hundreds of local videos for each nation in which it is held, but it also aids TikTok creators in gaining notoriety and fans. Although TikTok's current success is astonishing, it does not ensure that the app will reach the same levels as other social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. TikTok will need to innovate and discover new methods to engage its user base in order to maintain its current popularity. Short video APPs have been the most popular platform in 2019 compared to other social media platforms. The number of daily active users (DAU) increased to 800 million, more than double the number of DAU on competing online video platforms. In

addition to the growing number of users, a growing number of investors and content providers are becoming involved in short video APPs marketing as platforms evolve.

TikTok has become a social phenomenon, and it is now the world's sixth most popular social network, with more than double the number of active Twitter users, and third if WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Weixin/WeChat chats are excluded. TikTok's success is mostly fueled by the youthful generation Z, with 41% of users being between the ages of 16 and 24. Because 72 percent of its users follow an influencer in the app and 38 percent of users believe in celebrity recommendations, the platform allows for actions with influencers. TikTok is currently available in 154 countries and 75 languages, according to Apptrace, with 135 of those countries ranking in the top 25. TikTok has a monthly active user base of 1000 million people. According to SensorTower, the apps have been downloaded more than 2 billion times worldwide. The Asia Pacific region accounts for 32%, North America for 12%, the Middle East and Africa for 11%, Latin America for 10%, and Europe for 10%, with 55 percent female users and 45 percent male users.
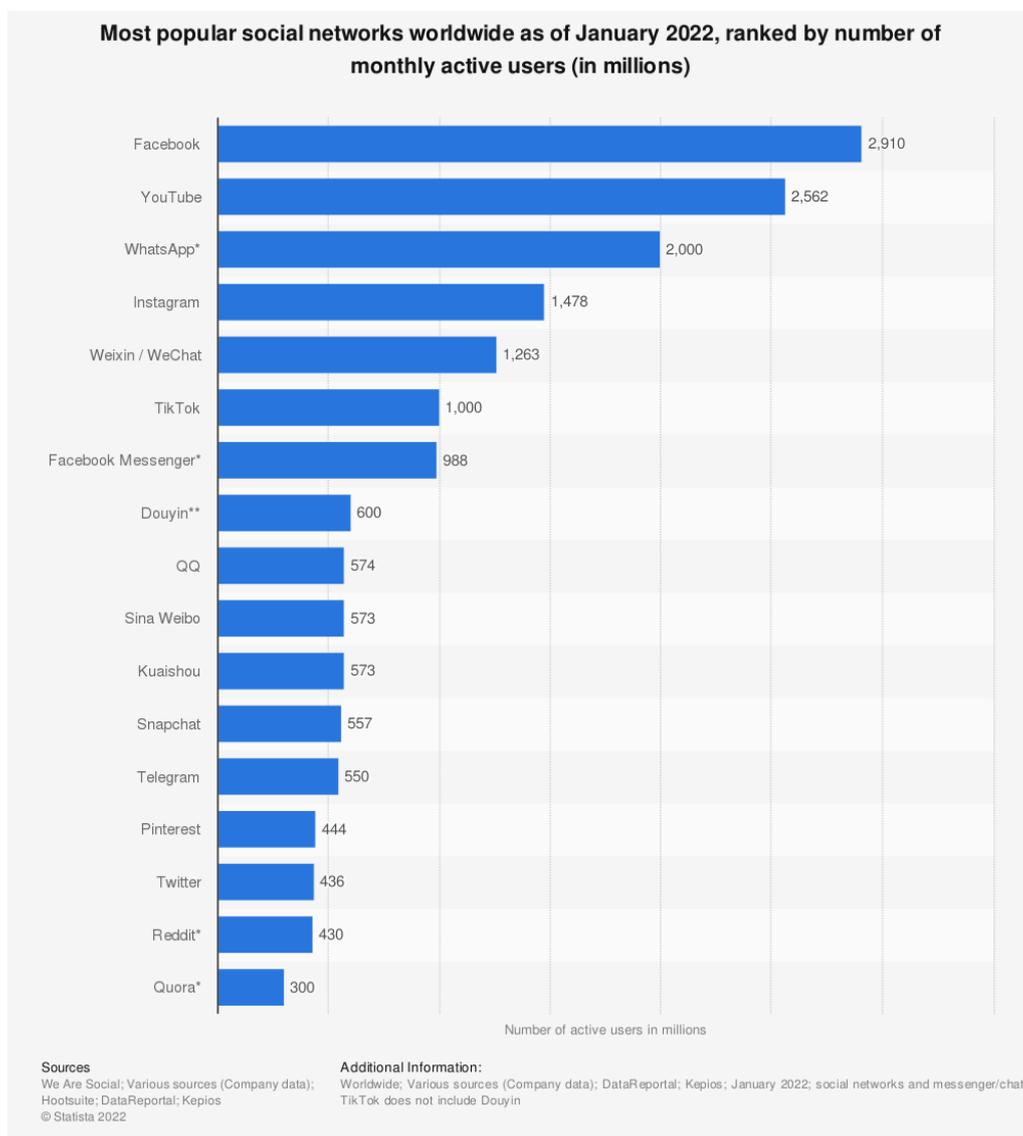
Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users (in millions)

Network	Users
Facebook	2,910
YouTube	2,562
WhatsApp*	2,000
Instagram	1,478
Weixin / WeChat	1,263
TikTok	1,000
Facebook Messenger*	988
Douyin**	600
QQ	574
Sina Weibo	573
Kuaishou	573
Snapchat	557
Telegram	550
Pinterest	444
Twitter	436
Reddit*	430
Quora*	300

Number of active users in millions

Sources
We Are Social; Various sources (Company data);
Hootsuite; DataReportal; Kepios
© Statista 2022

Additional Information:
Worldwide; Various sources (Company data); DataReportal; Kepios; January 2022; social networks and messenger/chat a
TikTok does not include Douyin

Figure 5: Most Popular Social Networks, January 2022.

Companies generally use a variety of techniques to reach out to their target audience, one of whom is partnering with digital or traditional influencers. Because you can't run direct sales operations, the manner you advertise is different. The brands are featured in the clips in a more creative way, without it becoming obvious that it is an advertisement. Do Influencers require Brands or vice versa? Consumers need new perspectives and trustworthy voices to make purchasing decisions. This provided a fantastic chance for influencers and businesses to collaborate and form genuine ties with the public at large. TikToker is the name given to TikTok's digital influencers, who have already established themselves as professionals in the social media business. Users of the short video app can generate money with paid posts and encourage purchases among potential customers who follow them. Influencer marketing campaigns on this social media platform have a high success rate. For example, the film "The House with a Clock in Its Wall" had a viral campaign, thanks to the popularity of various users on the platform who shared recordings of the film along with reviews. These celebrities on the site have thousands or even millions of followers, and they are mostly sought out by major brands to promote their products. However, they must be familiar with the company's target audience and product in order to do so. Businesses can use the TikTok marketplace to find the ideal creators for their advertising. This is possible through the creator search tool that enables marketers to use different filters, helpful to navigate between creators and choose the best fit for the campaign. The filters can be related among other things also to the argument of the ads, the number of followers, or the age of the creator.
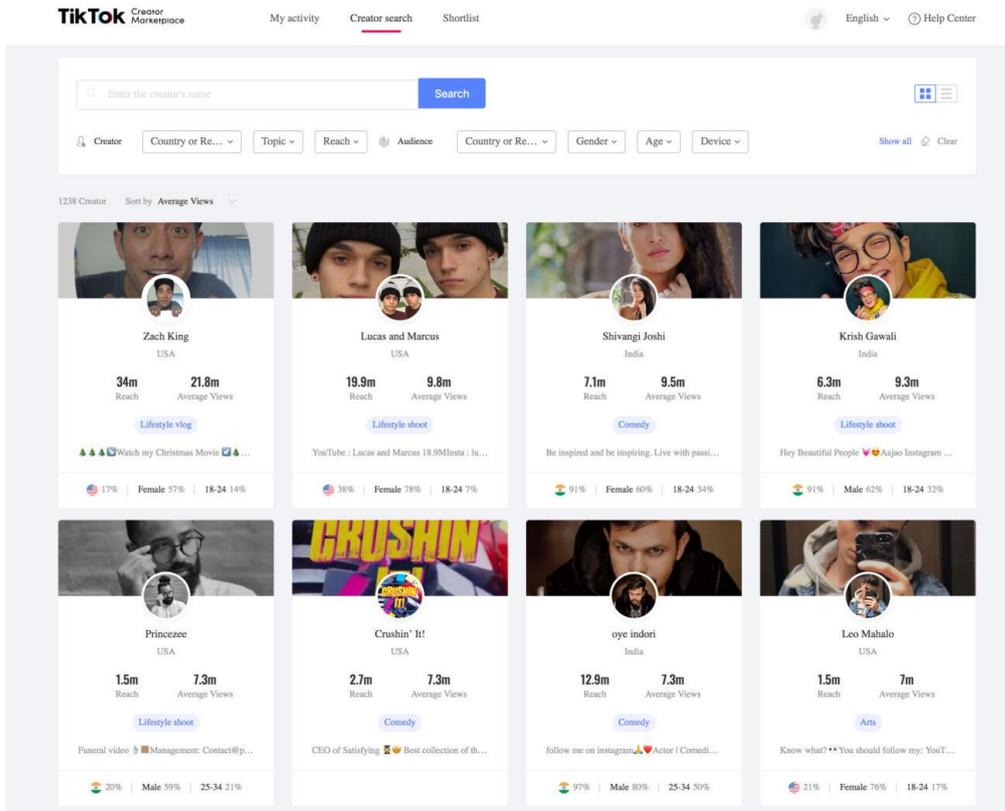
Figure 6: TikTok Creator Marketplace

Source: *"TikTok Creator Marketplace: ecco cosa possono fare le aziende italiane con questo nuovo strumento",*
Michele Miconi, 2020: https://www.insidemarketing.it/tiktok-creator-marketplace-aziende-italiane-cosa-fare/

If the marketer wants to learn more about some of the creators, he can look at their personal accounts. Businesses can study the creator's primary metrics using the latter. Views, amount of likes and comments, shares, and engagement rate are the most important indicators to consider. They can also watch sample clips to get a sense of how the creator typically works, the demographics of the audience, and the performance trend from previous sponsorships. Specifically for the demographic data, it is possible to obtain information about the gender and age of the public, the percentages of active or inactive followers; or even discover what type of smartphone the consumer is using.
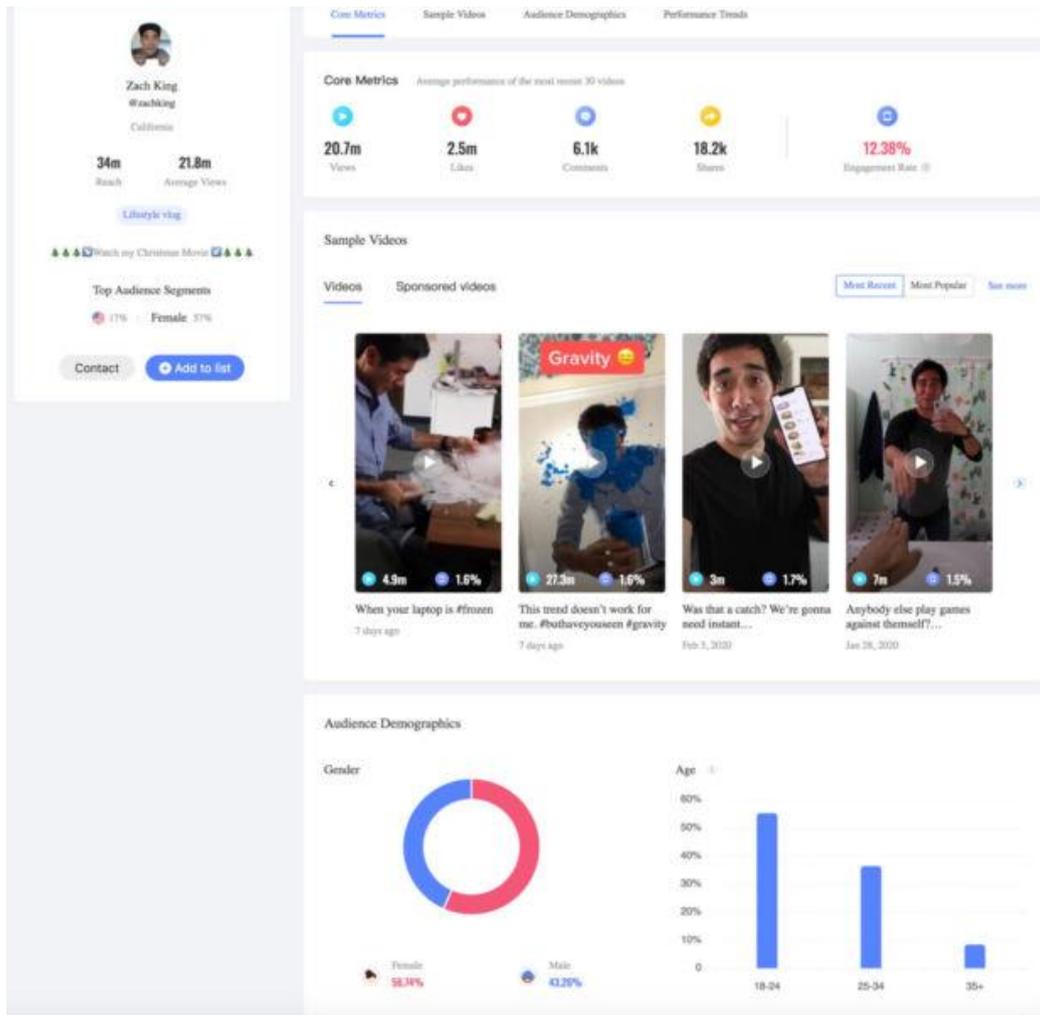
Figure 7: TikTok Creator Marketplace Analytics

After inspecting all these features marketers have to contact directly the chosen creator through the contact section on the creator profile. On the other hand, the creators need only the initial registration and if they are chosen by businesses they will receive a notification on their profile.

When starting advertising, you can choose from a variety of goals and payment models, including cost per click, cost per thousand impressions, and cost per view. TikTok allows you to target people based on their age, gender, and location. Interest and behavior targeting will be accessible in the near future. TikTok has a few ad campaigns available:

- Biddable advertising are the most traditional and consist of native ads that are displayed in the user's feed, similar to how they are displayed on other social networks. They are the once-in-a-lifetime advertising (or, to be more accurate, once-in-a-lifetime ads in social networks), the ones that display in the user's feed. These videos redirect you to a website or an application.

They are named "biddable" since they can be customized based on dynamic bids and advertising spaces: CPC (cost per click), CPM (cost per thousand impressions), and CPV (cost per view). Impression, clicks, view duration, and interactions are the metrics used. Because of its low cost, it is more accessible than other initiatives we have seen.

- Brand Takeover is a 2019 format that arises when someone uses advertising for the first time, and creativity takes up the entire display of the gadget. This creativity can be static or animated, and it can promote an app profile or a Web application through an external link. These advertising are measured in impressions, clicks, and visualizations. According to Adweek, the cost of this type of dramatic tan bells might range between $50,000 and $100,000.

- Hashtag Challenge is a type of advertising that may be pushed both organically and through influencers. It is quite simple and interactive, and it consists of challenging users to utilize the label to create and post content. If a corporation sponsors the challenge, the advertisement will include a banner with challenge instructions. The following metrics were used: banner display and clicks, number of videos generated, and user interaction. It might cost anywhere from $100,000 to $200,000 to sponsor a hashtag through a challenge.

- Branded Lenses are sponsored filters that are similar to those found on Snapchat and Instagram. We don't have the pricing or operational details at this time, but based on the prices of the other campaigns, it must be highly cost-effective. As a result, it has tremendous engagement and virality potential.

TikTok ads manager, a self-service ads service that allows marketers to create and monitor their advertising campaigns, is one of the tools TikTok offers to assist marketers. Brand awareness, attention and consideration, and conversion are the three macro-categories that most businesses strive to attain. The brand recognition goals are intended to increase brand awareness, and by selecting this goal, marketers are instructing the advertising management system to optimize ads to address this problem. Through the second macro-category, the algorithm encourages viewers of the ad to remember the business and look for further information on the service or product offered. Finally, the third macro-category seeks to persuade interested viewers to buy firms' products or services. In order to achieve these objectives, TikTok advertisements management provides marketers with three budget options: no limit budget, daily budget, and lifetime budget.

The usage of artificial intelligence is one of TikTok's most notable features. It is used in two ways by the application. The technology assesses individual preferences from the standpoint of the viewer user, taking into consideration likes, comments, and content display time. This information allows

you to get tailored video recommendations. Artificial intelligence also helps shared videos receive thousands of views from the perspective of the content creator user. The system simplifies video editing by suggesting music, filters, and hashtags based on popular posts at the time. With the debut of TikTok, the major social networks recognized the dangers that this platform could pose. The biggest social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, each have their own content sharing methods. Marketing experts regard the app as a gold mine since it is currently in a phase of expansion that makes it incredibly accessible, and it has greater user engagement rates than we have seen previously. CNN and the Washington Post, for example, have taken up significant sections to advertise TikTok videos as viral items. Nike and Apple Music, for example, have TikTok accounts and are producing content. Consolidated companies like Guess have previously used TikTok to generate campaigns. #InMyDenim, for example, became a viral phenomenon. The #ChipotleLidFlip challenge was promoted by influencers for Chipotle, a fast-food business. The user was given the task of turning the Chipotle lid, which was a thrill. Universal Pictures used the network to promote the September 2019 release of "The House with a Clock in Its Walls." Another example of how the social network benefits many brands is the BBC television channel, which established the CBBC children's space with 14-year-old twins Max and Harvey Mills, who have 6 million TikTok followers. In Malaysia, McDonald's employed TikTok for the #BigMac TikTok Challenge. The National Football League uses animated stickers to promote the Super Bowl (NFL). The MTV European Music Awards were broadcast live on the app. TikTok is the most popular social media platform right now. Even if we don't have a platform account, the videos can still reach us. Many influencers use the network to create content that they then share across several platforms.

With more firms turning to TikTok to expand their social media marketing reach, the app is on the right track, and if it can profit from brand activity within the app, TikTok will undoubtedly grow much more, and may even compete with the most prominent social media platforms. The system has the potential to become the next great social networking and marketing platform. However, how the app's founders tap into this potential and maintain the app's current popularity remains to be seen. No one can determine if TikTok will become permanent in the realm of social media, even though it is undeniably popular right now. No other social media app has experienced such widespread and rapid growth, and competing social media platforms are losing out on their potential or real audience, which is migrating toward TikTok together with big brands and organizations.

Chapter 3 – Social Media Marketing Impact on Small Businesses

3.1 Definition of Small Businesses and Start-ups

Generally, there is no commonly accepted definition of a small business or a small-medium enterprise (SME). Many attempts have been made to define small businesses using criteria such as employee count, sales volume, and asset value. The European Commission's definition of SME is used in a lot of academic literature. The latter defines SMEs as those businesses which employ less than 250 workers (Gilmore et al., 1999). On the other hand, Small businesses are defined as those with less than 500 employees in the United States (SBA, 2011)[16]. Small business and SME are frequently used interchangeably in the literature analyzed for this research, which uses either definition. Small businesses account for 99.7% of all U.S. employer firms, making them vital to the country's economy (SBA, 2011). According to the Office of Advocacy of the United States Small Business Administration, there were 27.5 million small enterprises in the United States in 2009. According to the most recent Census data, there were 6 million businesses with employees in 2007 and 21.4 million businesses without employees in 2008. Small businesses (employers and non-employers) account for 99.9% of the total , whereas major businesses (employers and non-employers) are around 18,311 of the total (SBA, 2011). The economy of the United States relies heavily on small companies. They provide jobs, and it is critical for them to survive in order to maintain or enhance their economic contributions. From the perspective of a small business, marketing is a way of informing customers about the company, its products, and services, as well as establishing and maintaining client connections (Reijonen, 2010). Small businesses nowadays have a plethora of marketing options because of the abundance of resources available.

The term startup, on the other hand, refers to a business in its early phases of development. One or more entrepreneurs form a startup to produce a product or service for which they feel there is a market. These businesses typically start with high costs and low revenue, which is why they seek funding from a number of sources, including venture capitalists. Startups are businesses or initiatives that are solely focused on bringing a single product or service to market. These businesses usually lack a fully formed business model and, more importantly, sufficient finance to advance to the next stage of development. The majority of these businesses are financed by their founders. Many startups seek additional money from family, friends, and venture investors. Silicon Valley is well-known for its thriving venture capital industry and as a popular startup destination, but it is also commonly regarded as the most difficult arena. Seed capital can be used by startups to fund research and the development

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[16] *Small Business Act, 2011*

of their business strategies. A complete business plan covers the company's mission statement, vision, and goals, as well as management and marketing strategies, while market research helps assess the demand for a product or service. When it comes to taking a business off the ground and running, there are a lot of things that entrepreneurs must consider. The company's location may make or break it. And it's frequently one of the most critical factors to consider for anyone beginning a business. Startups must select whether they will conduct their business online, in an office or at home, or in a store. The location is determined by the type of product or service being provided. Startups must determine which legal form is best for their business. A sole proprietorship is ideal for a firm owner who is also a significant employee. Partnerships are a valid legal form for enterprises involving multiple persons with joint ownership, and they are also quite simple to set up. A startup's personal responsibility can be lessened by forming a limited liability corporation (LLC). Startups frequently raise financing from family and friends or from venture capitalists. This is a group of professional investors who focus on startup investment. Crowdfunding has become a feasible option for many people looking to secure the funds they need to drive their businesses ahead. The entrepreneur creates an internet crowdfunding page where people who believe in the business can donate money. An alternative might be credit. A startup with excellent credit may be able to obtain finance through a line of credit. This method bears the greatest risk, especially if the startup fails. Small business loans are used by other businesses to help them develop. Small firms often have numerous specialized choices available from banks, including microloans, which are short-term, low-interest loans designed specifically for entrepreneurs. In order to qualify, a detailed business plan is frequently necessary. Working at a startup comes with a slew of benefits. Two examples are increased responsibilities and learning chances. Because startups have fewer employees than large, established organizations, employees are more likely to wear many hats and work in a variety of jobs, leading to increased responsibility and learning opportunities. Startups are more laid-back by nature, making the workplace more communal through flexible hours, more employee engagement, and flexibility. Startups are also more likely to offer superior workplace advantages, such as child care, free food, and shorter workweeks. Working at a startup can also be more fulfilling because managers encourage creativity and allow talented staff to run with their ideas with less supervision. On the other hand, the increased risk is one of the most significant downsides of a startup. This is especially true when it comes to a startup's success and durability. Before they can start making money, new enterprises must prove themselves and raise funding. It is crucial to keep investors up to date on the startup's progress. The possibility of closing down or not having enough funds to continue operations before making a profit is always present. Long hours are common in startups since everyone is working toward the same goal: to see the company prosper. This might result in high-stress situations and compensation

that is not always commensurate with the number of hours performed. Because there are usually a few businesses working on the same idea, competition is always fierce.

A startup entrepreneur wants to disrupt the industry with their scalable and impactful business model, develop quickly, outperform competitors, and so on. On the other hand, this is not always the case with a small business owner. You do not need to disrupt the industry or break into a completely new market to run a small business; all you need is the desire to start your own business and a market that you can effectively reach. You can successfully run your small business as long as you can do so while earning money. Small businesses are commonly what we call "main street businesses"—local coffee shops, grocery stores, auto repair shops, hair salons, plumbers, and more—whereas startups are typically formed in the digital industry. Despite the fact that small firms are not challenging the market, they constitute the backbone of local economies and jobs in the United States, employing approximately 60 million people. Startups want to expand in order to disrupt the market. Small enterprises, on the other hand, are founded with the goal of entrepreneurship and serving a local market and are hence unconcerned with large-scale expansion. In comparison to a small business, the startup's end purpose is considerably different.

Small businesses and startups are actually much more distinct than most people believe. At the end of the day, the distinction between a startup and a small business extends beyond our common understanding of these terms. It is, however, far more important for future entrepreneurs. In both cases, the range of marketing tools accessible today allows these two types of businesses to enlighten customers and build long-term customer relationships, and it is critical to pursue digital tactics to achieve this goal.

3.2   Marketing Challenges and Advantages of Social Media Marketing for Small Businesses and Start-ups

For completeness in the previous paragraph, we have analyzed the differences between small businesses and start-ups, however, when we look at social media marketing challenges and advantages for the two, there are no particular differences in the strategies and opportunities they can pursue. For this reason, in this paragraph, we will treat them equally and refer to them as small businesses.

Despite the proven benefits of digital marketing, the majority of the digital marketing literature focuses on large firms and organizations (Celuch and Murphy, 2010; Järvinen et al., 2012; Michaelidou et al., 2011). Large companies are expected to have mobile-friendly websites, and they can hire outside experts to manage SEO projects and social media marketing firms to implement and

run campaigns, whereas small businesses must "develop, change, and evolve their marketing activity intelligence through social media use" (Atanassova and Clark, 2015, p. 163). Considering the fact that both the practitioner and academic literature assume that businesses outsource some or all of their digital marketing functions (Edelman, 2010; Leeflang et al., 2014; Montalvo, 2011), 55 percent of small businesses in the United States lack a website (Pisani, 2014), due to financial constraints (Chaffey, 2010). The amount of money spent on digital marketing is determined by the company's current marketing tactics and success expectations (Reichheld and Schefter, 2000). Small firms would most certainly benefit from participating in and implementing a digital marketing strategy, and the lack of such a strategy widens the performance gap between large and small businesses by limiting their ability to access target audiences and promote sales growth. As a result, small firms have different digital footprints and technology adoption speeds than large businesses (Harrigan et al.,2011; Nguyen et al.,2015), necessitating further research into their digital marketing practices.

Internet technologies and social media have been shown to have a significant impact on business operations and success (Bennett, 2012). The main reason for this is that "online communication, as seen by the success of services like Facebook and LinkedIn, provides the potential of substituting physical proximity with virtual engagement and even intimacy" (Barnes et al., 2012, p. 688). "Content provided through social interactions" is what social media refers to. These media work with a variety of companies that provide services or technologies to enable consumers and businesses to communicate (Grewal and Levy, 2013, p. 82). All businesses should embrace social media because it allows them to engage with, listen to, and learn from their customers in ways they have never been able to do before (Grewal and Levy, 2013; Smith et al., 2011). These technologies, on the other hand, are probably more crucial for small enterprises, owing to the fact that they lack traditional marketing resources (Barnes et al., 2012; Levy and Powell, 2003). Web pages and social media sites enable them to overcome these time and money constraints, allowing them to reach out to clients in a cost-effective manner. Yet, according to a Wall Street Journal poll of over 800 small businesses, the majority of them are still confused about how to use social media, which platforms to use, or whether it is worth the time and effort (Maltby and Ovide, 2013). Furthermore, research into small business use of the internet, particularly social media, is still in its infancy (Brown et al., 2007; Jung et al., 2013). We want to learn more about how and why small businesses use a website and social media to sell their products and services, as well as how small businesses might profit from websites and social media. To achieve these goals, Nory Jones, Richard Borgman, and Ebru Ulusoy conducted a study in which they interviewed about 300 small businesses in a rural region of Maine who were given a web-based survey that looked at attitudes toward the internet, social media, definitions of success, and desired business performance in that region. Websites are now one of the most widely

utilized business tools. A website establishes a one-to-many relationship between an organization and the message recipients (site visitors), allowing both to communicate in real-time (Sen et al., 1998). Despite the fact that other tools, such as social networking sites, are becoming more important and popular, internet marketing professionals advise that a company's website should be the ultimate destination (Guarino, 2013; Murtagh, 2013). The most crucial reasons, according to Guarino (2013), are that businesses cannot control what content or advertisements appear when a user visits a social media site and that businesses can acquire deeper web analytics on their prospects and existing customers on their own web pages. Additional reasons for choosing the web page as the ultimate destination, according to Murtagh (2013), include: first, orchestrating efforts across multiple platforms is easier when pointing to the web page as one destination; second, the relationship built between the business and the customer is owned by the business rather than the social media site; third, the data collected is owned by the business rather than the platform; and fourth, the terms and limitations imposed by the social media site are owned by the business rather than the platform. Overall, a website is more distinctive, as it allows a company to control all content and delivery methods. The company has complete control over how it approaches customers. As a result, the message and approach have the potential to be more powerful and captivating (Guarino, 2013). According to Pick (2013), 93 percent of marketers utilize social media for business, and 75 percent aim to increase their use as social media continues to rise. Consumer-generated content is defined as "media impressions made by consumers, generally informed by relevant experience, and preserved or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers" via social media (Blackshaw, 2006). Simply put, these are "sites that rely on user contributions" (Agichtein et al., 2008). According to Grewal and Levy (2013), social media can be divided into three categories: social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), media-sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Flickr), and thought-sharing sites (e.g., Blogs). Businesses make considerable use of websites and social media. Around 73 percent of small firms were expected to be using social media in 2012. (Bennett, 2012). Approximately 81 percent of these small firms said they planned to increase their use of social media, while 62 percent of those who had not yet used it said they planned to do so. According to NM Incite's research, 66% of social media users utilize it to learn about products and services (Murtagh, 2013). Furthermore, consumers are more likely to believe other users than commercial advertising marketing communications. According to a survey conducted by Northwestern University, Facebook and Twitter account for more than half of all visits to small company websites (Metinko, 2012).

Small businesses profit from internet technologies in a variety of ways. Overall, web pages and social media sites have the potential to deliver new distribution and marketing communication channels, as well as cost savings (Sahay et al., 1998). The fact that these tools have a direct impact on consumer

attitudes and decision-making is a major argument for having a website and social media presence. Social media, which has exploded in popularity in recent years, is especially crucial for small businesses because it can be used to cut through the noise and connect with customers (Block, 2011). Businesses can benefit indirectly from having a social media presence. In other words, it is utilized as a tool to create relationships with clients over time, rather than directly leading to immediate decision-making or purchase behavior. The goal is to finally entice customers to the company's web page, which is totally under its control. The presence of social media has also been demonstrated to increase brand recognition and, as a result, search ranking on search engines like Google (Wood, 2009). Consumers' information satisfaction on social media sites impacts their behavioral intentions, thus it's vital for businesses to supply the finest information possible to attract customers (Jeong et al., 2003). This implies that social media has a big and growing influence on consumer sentiments, as well as the need of providing attractive information to the right target demographic. Peer communication via social media has been demonstrated in previous studies to have a significant impact on attitudes and purchasing behavior (Wang et al., 2012). Our study found that using social media to actively interact and engage target market customers and influence customer behavior was a very effective tool for businesses. The potential of social media to enable interactivity and debate is a powerful tool to engage customers and build long-term relationships with a company or brand (Van Noort et al., 2012). Perhaps the most compelling incentive for businesses to prioritize social media use is that promotion on social media is less expensive than traditional media. It also offers the ability to better target consumers. Overall, social media is the most cost-effective method of disseminating information and interacting with customers (Wang et al., 2012). Furthermore, because social media is not a one-way communication channel, it is critical to use social media sites in the information gathering process (Chung and Buhalis, 2008). These websites enable organizations to understand more about their customers in a more efficient and productive manner. Nonetheless, social media participation is not restricted to information exchange. Relational, recreational, and transformational interaction styles exist within social networks (Kozinets, 1999). The term "relational interaction" refers to the beneficial reinforcement of social contact via online communication. This interaction form has a social orientation. Customers that form long-term ties with firms are looking for long-term personal gain. These clients are frequently committed to adding to the material on the web and in social media. Customers engage in recreational engagement for a shorter time. The goal is to have a good time and mix without forming any bonds. The transformative method of interaction, on the other hand, focuses on communicating with the purpose of achieving long-term social advantage. Even if firms with higher social purposes, rather than solely commercial goals, may pay attention to generating such engagement, this form of interaction most commonly occurs between

customers and non-profit enterprises and organizations. Businesses must be aware of the various forms of interactions and select the ones that are most useful to them.

While social media seems to have its advantages, it also has its drawbacks for smaller companies. Many small business owners are technologically inept and have no experience with social media. As a result, the time and knowledge required to establish and maintain a web and social media presence is a significant barrier for them. According to a study conducted by Experian Business Information Solutions (2007), the average age of a small business owner is 50 years old (the data were collected in 2004). According to an SBSI poll, "Small Business owners are slightly older than the general population; 76 percent are at least 45 years old, and 16 percent are 65 years or older"[17]. This data suggests that older business owners are less comfortable and knowledgeable about digital web-based technologies than younger people who grew up with them. This obstacle, however, is not insurmountable. Indeed, numerous relatively simple web development websites oriented at small business owners exist, allowing businesses "to create a simple and feature-lacking presence on the web without the potential given by the wide options of a professional website" (Guarino, 2013). Another issue is that, in addition to a website, multiple social media sites provide fragmented media that businesses find difficult to handle properly (McLeod, 2010). The primary benefit that businesses get from using web pages and social media sites is that they may attract more desirable clients for free or at a cheaper cost than they could with traditional media. The interviewees noted that web pages and social media sites assist businesses in increasing awareness, increasing web search for the business, forming better relationships with customers, increasing sales, and repeat sales. These media alternatives allow organizations to communicate with customers more frequently and on a deeper level. The increased online presence of firms is mostly responsible for greater awareness. Prior to the increased online presence, businesses claim that regional customers were the only ones who were aware of the region and its enterprises. This was due to the fact that these enterprises could only use local or regional media to promote themselves. "However, social media crosses traditional geographic borders," (Smith and Wollan 2011, p. 4). Today, regardless of where they live, a rising number of customers and prospects may conduct in-depth research on the region and its businesses. This is owing to some of social media's key properties, such as its ease of use and accessibility (Smith et al., 2011). Overall, greater quantity and quality awareness is critical to attract more national and even worldwide clients, who are more attractive to enterprises. Increased online presence, particularly on social media platforms, leads to more consumer and prospect internet searches for the company. Small businesses are increasingly relying on their web presence to boost sales and create repeat

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[17] "Small Business Report", 2009. Sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/sb_econ2009.pdf

business. Even for attracting consumers and prospects who are local or who are currently visiting the region, having a strong social media and web presence is critical. As many managers of small firms noted, today, even if customers are in front of a facility, they do not walk inside; instead, they conduct a web search on their phones or other portable devices to obtain information, As a result, even among local or regional consumers, having an online presence has become critical for making and increasing sales. One of the reasons, according to our results, is that, as previously said, businesses use the web and social media platforms to develop better and more successful relationships with consumers and prospects. The rising accessibility of these firms to customers from all around the world is another cause for increased sales. Therefore, an integrated web presence combined with targeted social media can help small businesses survive and develop at a low cost (Sledge, 2014). Our research also reveals that small business owners have substantial problems in terms of time restrictions and a lack of technological skills, both of which are impediments to implementation. We discovered, however, that small business owners of all ages and generations might successfully overcome these obstacles.

The result is that if small company owners can overcome the first learning curve of establishing a website and register with acceptable web providers such as Trip Advisor as well as appropriate social media, the outcomes will be beneficial in the majority of cases. It's critical to realize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to the internet and social media. It's not easy to navigate the social media marketing world. There are several possible channels, and they do not all produce the same results. Small firms must know what they are doing and have a well-thought-out strategy (Harding, 2013). According to DeMers (2014), businesses must take two important steps in order to achieve the best results: they must target their content efforts based on an understanding of client needs and wants, and they must select the appropriate platform for their enterprises. Each small business is unique, therefore take the time to discover web intermediaries that can help them reach their target customers at the lowest possible cost. However, our findings demonstrate that, while time investment is critical for small businesses when using social media and the internet, they also need to master time management on social media. Otherwise, these organizations would face insurmountable obstacles when it comes to utilizing social media and the internet but if they do not overcome these obstacles they would be missing vital opportunities.

3.3 TikTok case study: TikTok's features to help small businesses.

TikTok has introduced a new advertising option to help small and medium-sized businesses leverage the potential of "TikTok For Business" to expand their brand. TikTok's self-serve advertising options are now available globally, giving marketers the chance to tap into the TikTok community's creativity,

reach new audiences, and optimize their marketing campaigns with an easy-to-use platform. TikTok is also offering its Back-to-Business ad credit program, which includes $100 million in ad credits for small businesses worldwide to use on their road to rebuilding when small businesses have been badly damaged around the world. With the introduction of self-serve tools designed to assist marketers at each step of the campaign creation process, "TikTok For Business" has reached a key milestone in its progress. TikTok, a platform that encourages users to express themselves via creativity and storytelling, wants to provide marketers with cutting-edge tools to create original, creative content that is exclusive to the app. The advent of new advertising alternatives for SMBs makes it smooth, easy, and efficient for all organizations to now meaningfully connect with the TikTok community. TikTok's Vice President of Global Business Solutions, Blake Chandlee, stated that TikTok's immersive, short-form videos provide a platform for businesses to join in and engage with a community known for its creativity, originality, and fun,. He also said that they are constantly developing for the future as their marketing solutions scale and adapt, seeking to meet the growing needs of their partners. They are, in fact, looking forward to continuing to serve the community by providing tools and services to help small business owners navigate these difficult times. Through a simple interface, the "TikTok For Business" Ads Manager enables businesses of all sizes to target their ideal clients on TikTok. It's now easier than ever to start activating at scale on the platform, thanks to new creative tools and performance capabilities developed specifically for small businesses. The following are the primary features that aid advertisers in their marketing initiatives through the app:

- Creative tools: TikTok includes a set of creative tools that allow any marketer to embrace the TikTok community's creativity and authenticity. Everyone gets the chance to share their narrative, and TikTok's creative tools enable brands to portray their brand in the most genuine way possible.

- Budget flexibility: TikTok Ads Manager was created with ease of use in mind for users of all skill levels. Flexible budgets enable businesses to alter their spending at any time, allowing even tiny firms to use social media to promote their products.

- Targeting based on performance: Targeting based on performance allows businesses to be discovered by new, engaged audiences.

- Business accounts: TikTok is also employing business accounts, which will provide extra tools for performance analysis and audience engagement that are tailored to the needs of businesses.

Many businesses now realize the true potential of TikTok, for instance, the CEO of Slate and Tell, Isaac Gad, said: "We see the endless potential on TikTok and wanted to get in early to start building our presence this summer in preparation for the peak holiday season", and continued: "We've met our return on advertising spend goals within days whereas on other platforms it's taken months. We're excited about experimenting with creatives and growing on the platform.". Today, Small enterprises are particularly vulnerable, as local economies have slowed in order to safeguard public health. SMBs all over the world are dealing with the effects of the crisis, and TikTok has pledged to help them get back on their feet and begin rebuilding by donating $100 million in advertising credits. Small businesses are the backbone of TikTok's local communities, and they want to stand with them and help them as they face these difficult times. TikTok is transforming the marketing landscape by providing small company owners with new methods to connect with customers and generate revenue. Proof of this is the fact that TikTok launched "Small Wins," a new project to assist small businesses to unleash the magic of TikTok, as part of its continued efforts to support small businesses on the platform. Small Wins aims to promote TikTok's value to small businesses, educate them on how to utilize TikTok to expand, and demonstrate how small businesses are turning "small wins" into great success on the platform through a series of videos starring small businesses from across the world. Small companies of all kinds are proving that on TikTok, small wins. From the bakery owner who grew his audience from 3,000 to two million, to the candlemaker who went viral without even trying, small businesses of all kinds are proving that small does win. Small business operators have several hats to wear. They frequently serve as the company's CEO, marketing strategist, operations director, and product manager all in one. They are the visionaries, doers, and risk-takers who have had to overcome numerous challenges as a result of the global pandemic since March 2020. TikTok's management recognizes the importance of small businesses in the community, and they are committed to assisting them in recovering from a challenging year. TikTok and the Hispanic Heritage Foundation joined in 2021 to launch Creciendo con TikTok, a grant program for Latinx small business owners. They also launched the TikTok Small Biz Block Party, a series of 20 workshops that give small business owners the skills and methods they need to expand their TikTok brand. TikTok's small business solutions make it simple to get the job done—and get results—whether they're launching their first account or their 50th video. A next-level marketing approach combines smart technology, data-driven insights, and critical partnerships. It all starts with a TikTok Business Account, which is intended specifically for businesses. TikTok Business Accounts provide a slew of useful features and capabilities, including access to TikTok's content management platform and commercial music library. Extra clickable features and data analytics are now available to businesses to help them improve and optimize their content. When marketers are ready to launch paid campaigns, TikTok

Ads Manager, TikTok's self-serve advertising platform, allows them to create ads in minutes. It's affordable for businesses of all sizes, and it's easy to use owing to features like Smart Video Soundtrack and TikTok Ad Studio, which handle the heavy work for you. If sales are the primary goal, the Shopify relationship allows small businesses to easily build shoppable TikTok advertising and distribute them to our global community. We've looked at some of TikTok's initiatives to help small businesses, but how are they doing it on the platform? We'll look at some of the businesses that participated in Small Wins and how they're using TikTok to make a difference.

It's not about having the greatest budget, the hottest celebrity spokesperson, or the slickest advertisements when it comes to TikTok marketing. It's simply a matter of being yourself. It's all about being honest and connecting your content to your brand's personality. Whether you're a business owner who wants to star in your own clips or collaborate with TikTok creators, the best way to succeed is to show your genuine colors. This is the case with Carpet Repair Guys, a carpet repair company based in the Bay Area that has transformed the often-overlooked craft of carpet repair into a TikTok phenomenon with 762,000 followers and 19.6 million likes. His remarkably satisfying carpet videos are now viewed by hundreds of thousands of people. This, however, did not happen overnight. Carpet Repair Guys founder Josh Nolan had to go through a lot of trial and error to discover a style that suited his company's attitude. Many of the most successful small enterprises stumble into their true style by chance. Consider Natural Annie Essentials, a soy candle brand with Jamaican roots situated in Connecticut. Annya Brown, like many other small company owners, was initially hesitant to use TikTok. Her first viral hit was an unintentionally filmed video of herself attempting to figure out the app. Brown became a productive TikTok maker since then, sharing candid films about her life and company on a regular basis. Another example is the indonesian tech retailer Acome. For them, it's all about delivering content that promotes the company's products in a pleasant and relatable way. Despite the fact that Acome's films cover a wide range of forms, from unboxing videos to amusing skits, they all have a clear brand identity and a consistent down-to-earth approach. And when Acome collaborates with well-known creators, which they do frequently, they let them be themselves with few restrictions. Acome has seen a big increase in business by working with TikTok producers, delivering practical answers for everyday living, and not taking themselves too seriously. TikTok, without a doubt, links people and businesses in ways that other platforms cannot. Its unique format allows visitors to discover and interact with niche brands they might not have known about otherwise. As a result, new brands and goods are discovered. Most businesses were hesitant to use TikTok at first, but after they saw its potential for discovering original content tailored to people's interests, they saw a huge chance for people to discover their products or services. TikTok is a genuinely global platform that helps small companies from all over the world to be discovered. TikTok not only helps

businesses succeed, but it also affects people's lives. Several product lines are sold out. New stores are being opened by brands. On the street, owners are recognized. Small businesses can see an impact when they use TikTok, no matter what industry they're in. It provides them with an amazing opportunity to gain new clients and expand their business. It also assists brands in making a positive impact by bringing individuals from all over the world together. TikTok genuinely cares about the marketers' experience and ad effectiveness on the platform, which is why, in 2022, it provided some key features to help businesses perform better. TikTok has evolved into a retail paradise for clever shoppers as well as a community-driven entertainment platform. TikTok users are actively participating with #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt and seeking for their next purchase, with over 12 billion views and counting. According to TikTok's research, 53% of TikTok users would recommend the platform to a friend or colleague as a source of inspiration, 58% of TikTok users utilize the platform to research/learn more about new products or brands, and 48% of TikTok users have discovered something on the platform and quickly purchased it at least once in the past year. The TikTok community is changing the way people discover and shop for new products, and they're building an ecosystem of tools to help businesses communicate with their customers in new ways. They launched their partnership with WooCommerce in March, making it simple for WooCommerce sellers to integrate their businesses with TikTok and reach a worldwide audience. WooCommerce is an open-source, WordPress-based e-commerce solution. It hosts about a third of all online retail websites and allows anyone to sell everything, anywhere. You can connect your store catalogue, apply the most advanced TikTok pixel for campaign performance tracking in one click, and create a targeted ad in minutes with the TikTok for WooCommerce integration. Small businesses can now sync their WooCommerce product listing to TikTok with a single click, enabling catalog-based ad formats such as Collection Ads and Dynamic Showcase Ads. Moreover, by adding the most powerful TikTok Pixel on their website with a single click, businesses can simply measure and optimize their advertising efforts. It enhances the results of their campaign efforts and helps maximizing their return on ad spend by automatically updating and leveraging advanced matching capabilities to boost the visibility of the businesses' advertising in front of the right shoppers. Furthermore, last year, TikTok teamed with AppsFlyer to improve in-app measurement and performance for marketers and small companies. The latter is a TikTok Measurement Marketing Partner and a mobile analytics and attribution tool that helps digital firms focus on post-install measurement and use the results in their growth strategy. After becoming a TikTok partner, AppsFlyer published an in-App Event Measurement and Performance, a paper that explains why discovering, monitoring, and increasing in-app activity is critical for driving acquisition and retention. TikTok For Business has been voted 'B2B Brand of the Year' at the Drum Awards for B2B 2021, in recognition of its efforts in providing the proper tools to

marketers and the extraordinary achievements it has achieved in recent years. The Drum Awards, which are held every year, are a global awards program that honors best practices in the marketing and communications business. This award honors "TikTok For Business" for its successful relaunch as a worldwide brand and platform, as well as updated digital and social channels and other strategic efforts that have revolutionized how marketers and consumers view advertising. In June 2020, TikTok For Business was relaunched as a brand, with a bold call for marketers, advertisers, and businesses of all sizes to ditch traditional marketing and embrace their creative side. "TikTok For Business," TikTok's new and improved B2B brand, was unveiled during the launch campaign. TikTok For Business is something distinctive that audiences are looking for from advertisements. TikTok For Business is also honored for its general commitment to assist businesses and support them in achieving actual results. In May 2021, TikTok launched #SpotlightAPI, a two-month initiative that featured high-visibility media placements, education sessions, community assistance, and networking opportunities for API-owned small and medium companies. TikTok For Business has collaborated with Ad Age Studio 30 to release the AdAge + TikTok Holiday Tool Kit, a one-stop shop with a variety of resources to assist small businesses to prepare for the holidays on TikTok. TikTok For Business has altered the way marketers and users think about advertising over a year of successful campaigns, and the industry has realized it. In both 2020 and 2021, TikTok was voted #1 in AdAge's annual Marketers of the Year and #1 for ad equity globally in Kantar's Media Reactions. TikTok's branded content was also considered to be the most "authentic and enjoyable" among social audiences in Nielsen's Authenticity Study.

TikTok is proving to be a huge success for small businesses. Most of the businesses mentioned above, as well as many others who choose to advertise on TikTok, were just regular small businesses before joining the community; they had no prior experience with TikTok. They simply dived in head first with a trial and error method, which any business could do because TikTok has rendered it as simple as possible for companies to get in on the activity and try to propose different content, identify their audience, or build an entirely new one.

Conclusion

The rising engagement in digital and social media activities led social media marketing to emerge as one of the most popular and effective kinds of digital marketing in recent years. Advertisers can reach billions of prospective customers thanks to the large userbases of social networks. Businesses that fully understand and succeed in applying the right social media marketing campaign, therefore, obtain a competitive advantage. As a result, marketers have increased their use of digital marketing channels. Successful strategies on social networks grant businesses to improve brand visibility, respond to possible questions related to the product or service that the business offer, promote new products and services quickly, and shape the purchasing decisions of customers with a relatively contained budget. Digital marketing allows for real-time feedback and monitoring of the WoM in the community. Marketers should encourage opinion leaders and influencers to talk about the product or service offered generating more WoM and UGC from the public. As a result of the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior, customers have evolved to be pickier when interacting with online brands, if the business is not relevant to the customers' online journey, the latter are going to prefer competitors providing a better digital experience. Now, marketers, must produce informational content around their products or services, create extensive descriptions, have a strong e-commerce presence with smooth and secure payment methods, fast delivery, and a clear return policy that protects consumers'. By doing so they can beat competitors and be remarkable in the eyes of customers. Different social networks are working hard to increase the tools available to marketers, from Instagram with the e-commerce functions to TikTok with marketing tools and easy-to-use settings. Digital marketing is a real game-changer when we talk about small businesses and startups. They can benefit from a wide range of public with a relatively small budget and compete even with bigger firms. The result is that if small company owners can overcome the first learning curve of establishing a website, creating content on social media, and engaging in different ways with the public the outcomes will be beneficial in the majority of cases. It's important to know that there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to the internet and social media. It's not easy to navigate the social media marketing world and optimal results are reached through trial and error. TikTok is particularly involved in sustaining small businesses. Today, Small enterprises are particularly vulnerable, as local economies have slowed in order to safeguard public health. SMBs all over the world are dealing with the effects of the crisis, TikTok intervened by providing $100 million in advertising credits to small businesses. Moreover, it helps small businesses to grow on their platform by publicizing success stories from small entrepreneurs on the platform and sharing their stories and insights with the hope of inspiring and teaching other small businesses to win too.

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