



Department of Marketing

Major in Market Relationships and Customer Engagement

**Influencer Marketing
as a Brand Promotion Tool on Social Media**

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Rumen Pozharliev

CO-SUPERVISOR

Prof. Matteo De Angelis

CANDIDATE

Brando Savi Campagna

761671

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the advent of the Internet and the increasing use of social media have brought important changes to the marketing landscape, particularly on the communication front between companies and their customers or potential customers.

There is in fact a clear process of evolution of the consumer, who had until recently played a passive role, but now is becoming increasingly important to become not only fundamental, but also highly proactive in the relationship.

This is explained primarily by the fact that the customer appears to be extremely informed about products and services; in fact, thanks to the vast possibilities offered by the advent of the internet it is possible to compare prices, analyze the various products/ services, search for the best offers and read reviews, before proceeding with the purchase.

Another great innovation generated by the development of the internet and social media is also the way in which companies communicate with their consumers and promote their products/services, highlighting their brand.

Therefore, before making a purchase, customers often prefer to rely on advice and reviews from people they have a decent level of esteem.

In this context a new working figure is born: the influencer, a subject able to influence the decision-making processes and purchase of users. Companies are increasingly engaging social media influencers, whose task is to create content to share through social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, in order to entice buyers to proceed with the purchase, Improve the reputation of a given brand, try to change consumers' preferences by generating curiosity and interest in certain products.

The objective of this thesis is to analyze who is the influencer and why it has become so important for the companies from a marketing point of view. Also, we will see how a company can effectively use influencers to reach consumers and then we will see where this phenomenon is going in the future.

In the first chapter we will explain and analyze the role of the Social Media Influencer, providing a definition of the phenomenon of Influencer Marketing. After a thorough description of the influencer, we will continue with a distinction between the different types of existing influencers, the Nano-

Influencers, the Micro-Influencers, the Marco-Influencers and finally the Mega-Influencers. It will be explained later which of the mentioned typologies is the preferred one by companies when they decide to create an Influencer Marketing campaign, providing adequate reasons. Finally, we will analyze the key factors and aspects that companies must consider when deciding to undertake an Influencer Marketing strategy, to ensure that it is effective.

The second chapter will focus first on how the transition from traditional medias to social medias has been possible, what are the main communication channels that are used by influencers and companies to communicate better with their target audience. Special attention will be paid to TikTok, this social is in fact becoming more important in recent years. This extraordinary rise is explained by its great ability to engage users, making them participate in the generation of content.

The third chapter will be structured around how to develop an influencer marketing campaign and how to evaluate it.

The last part of this chapter will be dedicated to analyze the case of the first ever social influencer Michael Jordan.

CHAPTER 1

INFLUENCER MARKETING

1.1. Definition of Influencer Marketing

Influencer Marketing is an activity that aims to engage and use the qualities of individuals with strong references and reputation, namely influencers, for business communication objectives. Influencer marketing (IM) is defined as a form of online marketing based on the collaboration between a brand and an Influencer, that is to say an important character present in social media, aimed at making a particular product or service known to a wider and more targeted public. The influencer, in exchange for a monetary compensation, free products or other forms of remuneration, offers visibility on social networks to companies. They generally focus on a particular niche market and work through the publication of content, photos, videos, reviews, posts, blogs, etc. on social networks.

Specifically, the Influencer Marketing can work in two different ways: through sending by the company of free products or samples to an influencer, in the hope that the latter reviews it online through social networks by inserting a reference to the company; or by entering into a real contract by the company with the influencer in question, the submitting party undertakes to offer an appropriate consideration to the influencer in exchange for publishing on its channels, blog or account reviews related to the products to be sponsored. The figure of the Influencer (SIM) assumes the task of influencing the choices and behaviors of people who follow him; and collaborates with companies and brands, showing products/ services, describing them also informing about special discounts; however, it never becomes "face of the brand".

1.2. A new way of communicating

Influencer marketing is not a strategy that has remained the same over time but evolves over the years. Before the advent of social media, using an Influencer Marketing strategy meant building a relationship with a celebrity who first had affinity with the company and secondly spoke about the company itself to the target audience (word of mouth).

The widespread use of social networks in recent years has had a strong impact and made important changes to this marketing strategy. Today, in fact, the opinions of "ordinary people" have become increasingly important and decisive to influence purchasing choices. Therefore, the term "Influencer Marketing" takes on a new meaning that can provide valuable strategies to achieve the objectives of the marketing plan. It can help to achieve greater visibility of the brand, as well as helping to build trust and credibility through the building of a relationship with influencers, and consequently with your own audience.

The prominent spread of this new marketing strategy was undoubtedly accompanied by the digital evolution of "Referral Marketing", in turn reinforced by the increasingly evident trend on the part of people to trust less traditional advertising, Preferring the testimonies and the advice of friends, family or personalities considered expert, influential and impartial, in other words "the word of mouth". This important change in customer attitude has its roots in the birth of the internet, which made it possible to move from a one-way communication to a two-way communication, characterized by greater interaction, Sharing and participation among users. The consumer gains more power, starts to take an increasingly active role through the creation of blogs, chats, forums, etc. Making the sharing of information more efficient and direct.

Today, consumers are able to find information from multiple sources, can interact with marketing professionals, but also access to consumer communities where there is an exchange of views and where companies can also find useful contents.

Thanks to new technologies, the moment prepurchase is characterized by a careful search on the part of the customer for information, reviews, opinions and comparisons about the product in question that reassure him of the right final satisfaction, trying to reduce the likelihood of a possible post-purchase disappointment. This two-way communication is in fact to encourage an active exchange between users/ customers in which to share opinions and reviews about products, services or brands, offer more information to potential consumers, and attract new users who until then did not believe they were interested in certain products/services.

And it is in this context that has become increasingly important the figure of the Influencer, which promotes the sharing of tips and suggestions that will then be used by consumers before buying products.

The distinction between traditional advertising and Influencer Marketing is therefore evident: the former is characterized by the pervasiveness of advertising messages that chase users on various

platforms and different screens; On the contrary, those who follow an influencer are guided by personal reasons, choosing autonomously and voluntarily to be recipients of its content.

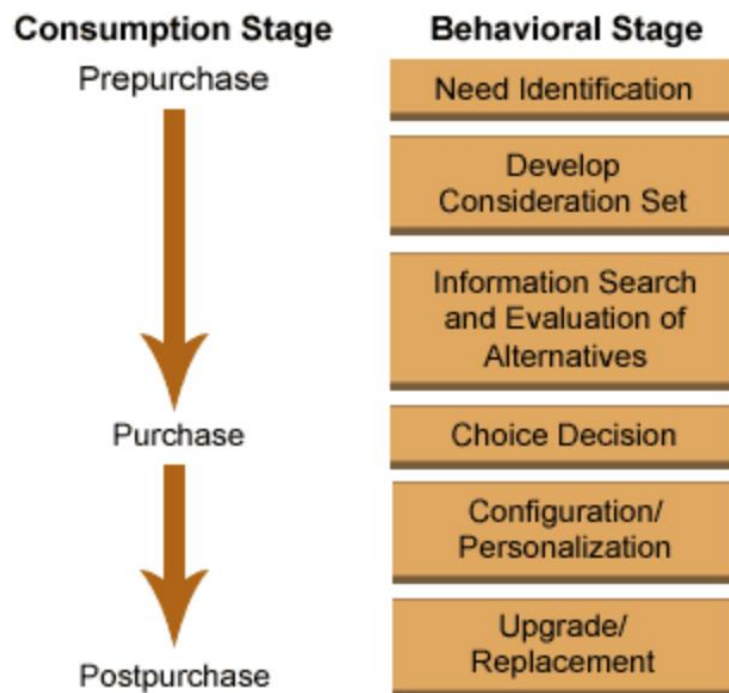


Figure 1.1 – Pre-purchase stage

Statistical data about influencer marketing

- The influencer marketing market is estimated to reach \$21.1 billion by 2024 with steady growth in the years to come
- Global spending on influencer marketing reached \$34.08 billion in 2023, of which \$26.09 billion in the US alone
- 93% of Italian consumers say they know a brand through influencers (Creativart¹)
- 31% of Italians said they made a purchase following a recommendation or suggestion from an influencer while 93% of Italian influencers use Instagram as a platform to share their content
- 49% of online consumers rely on influencer recommendations to buy something (Exelab²)

Top influencers with millions of followers can earn up to \$000 for a post on Instagram, a figure that increases on platforms like YouTube where it can reach \$187,000 (Exelab).

Influencer marketing is, of course, merely one part of the marketing mix. Most businesses balance their marketing budget across a wide range of media to reach the greatest possible relevant audience. However, from a survey from influencer marketing hub only 86% of respondents' firms intend to include some influencer marketing in their mix.

Brands of all sizes participate in influencer marketing. Therefore, it should be no surprise to see quite some variation in what firms spend on the activity.

47.4% of the brands surveyed said they spend less than \$10K annually on influencer marketing (higher than last year's 43% - these are probably a mix of newcomers dabbling with influencer marketing combined with more seasoned marketers operating with reduced budgets). 20.9% spent between \$10K and \$50K (down from last year's 22%).

A further 8.9% spent \$50K to \$100K (noticeably lower than 2023's 14%), 8.3% \$100K to \$500K (down from 10%), with a sizable 14.5% spending more than \$500K (up from last year's 11% nearly 4x more than in 2022). Clearly, the amount that a firm spends depends on its total marketing budget affects the proportion it chooses to devote to influencer marketing. Those brands that opt to work with mega-influencers and celebrities spend more than brands that work alongside micro- or nano-influencers.

All these recent developments in communication technologies have made it increasingly easy to create, publish and share content with people sharing common interests, and have had a decisive impact on the nature of message delivery. This mechanism can be partially explained by referring to the Two step flow of communication theory, also known as "Two-stage flow theory of communication³" according to which most people form their own ideas and opinions from the influence of opinion leaders.

This theory took shape around the 40s in some studies on the effect of mass media and social influence, immediately contrasting with the hypodermic needle model, according to which newspapers, Radio, television were very powerful persuasive tools and able to act directly on a mass defined as "unarmed".

Paul Lazarsfeld (1944) is considered the true pioneer in the field of sociological research on communications, as with his research and theories they tried to consider the role of human and personal intermediation in reprocessing the messages coming from the media.

This theory, in its classical formulation, as you can guess from the name, provides for two distinct phases in the reception of media messages: the first subjects to be exposed in a way the messages from the media are thought leaders. The latter then have the task of reworking the message and directing it to a specific, more general audience. What reaches the final recipient is no more the simple message conveyed by press, television and newspapers, but the original message enriched by the elaborations, opinions and subjective reviews of intermediaries (Inside Marketing, 2023).

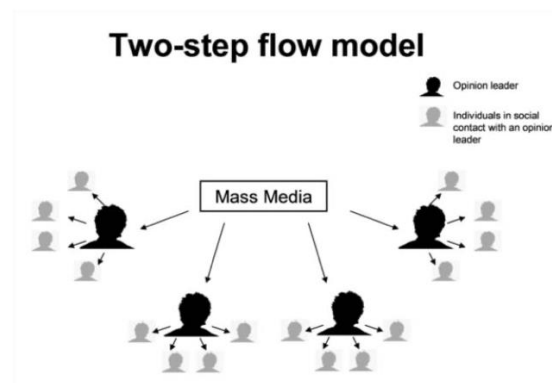


Figure 1.2 – The two step flow model

1.3. The figure of the Influencer

An influencer is an individual who has the ability to affect the purchasing decisions and opinions of others due to their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their audience. Influencers typically have a significant following on social media platforms, blogs, or other online channels, where they share content related to their niche or area of expertise.

Considering this definition, we might consider it consistent to link the figure of the Influencer to that of the Opinion Leader, even if the advent of the Internet and social media has favored a partial distinction between these two subjects. The figure of the Influencer is now considered with a new meaning, more strongly quantitative, that is the fact that this figure, having a wide audience, has the possibility to reach a large number of people, promoting the spread of messages through word of mouth. Influencers are people who have built a large community on their social media profiles through their online activities. Thanks to their wide following, through the publication of content, posts, videos, etc. They have the opportunity to influence a large audience by significantly impacting on the construction of the brand image in the consumer's mind.

Because of the strong power that influencers have in communication processes, companies are increasingly investing more and more in this new medium that allows them to reach end users with a less institutional and more human communication. From the perspective of companies, influencers are an excellent means to use not only to communicate and disseminate all information about their products/services to a wide audience, but also to improve the brand reputation.

1.3.1. Four different types of influencers

The figure of the influencer can be categorized in different ways, but the most common one is to delineate four types based on the number of followers detained on social networks and the consequent scope of their actions.

By definition, followers are all users who choose to follow (actively or passively) the influencer's activity within the social platform.

At the first level we find the Nano-Influencers, then the Micro-Influencers, Mid-tier influencers, Macro-Influencers and finally the Mega-Influencers. These categories move into 2 opposite variables: The engagement rate and the audience reach: more the influencer has followers, less is the engagement rate, more is the audience.

- Nano-Influencers are characters with a relatively low number of followers, typically 1,000 to 10,000 followers. These profiles certainly have very limited coverage, but if used correctly, their use can lead to enormous value for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that want to promote their products. Nano-influencers, because they are followed by a limited number of followers, manage to establish closer relationships with them, precisely because they are really related to them. Typically, these characters tend to specializing in a specific sector, thus targeting specific and well-defined niches.

Nano influencers also promote few products, paying special attention to them and devoting ample space and care to their presentation. Being nano influencers not overly known, they have a fairly low cost and it is therefore easy for companies to involve them in numerous strategies. Nano influencers are therefore a real asset for companies, not only those with limited budgets but also those with greater investment opportunities. These, in fact, in an eye of diversification, could rely on both a mega influencer and less known figures but still able to influence their circle of contacts and be so effective.

- **Micro-Influencer** is meant to identify the characters who boast on their social channels a number of followers that ranges between 10,000 and 100,000. These characters tend to specialize in a specific sector, such as sports, art, fashion, food or environmental sustainability, incorporating the figure of real Opinion Leaders (ItaliaOnline, 2020⁵).

They target a specific target group in a more intimate way but gain their full confidence. They are also called "proximity influencers", that is, "those personalities who for a series of distinctive factors emerge in a certain geographical area that is of great interest by a company" (Bellini & Carriero, 2019). A strategy that is widely used by companies consists in the loyalty of the community of a Micro-influencer, equipping it with discount codes and traceable coupons to provide its followers: This will also enable the company to track the actual success of this investment.

Key traits of micro-influencers:

1. **Niche Focus:** They usually operate in a specific niche (e.g., beauty, fitness, travel, fashion, etc.), making them attractive for targeted marketing.
2. **Higher Engagement:** Due to their smaller and more focused follower base, micro-influencers tend to have higher engagement rates, meaning their followers are more likely to interact with and trust their content.
3. **Authenticity:** They are perceived as more genuine and relatable compared to influencers with millions of followers, which helps in building trust with their audience.
4. **Cost-Effective:** Partnering with micro-influencers is usually more affordable than working with larger influencers, making them a popular choice for small and medium-sized businesses.
5. **Local or Niche Impact:** Micro-influencers are often experts or passionate individuals within their community or niche, giving them authority and influence over a specific audience.

- **Mid-Tier Influencers** (100K–500K followers):

Mid-tier influencers offer a balance between a broad reach and high engagement. They often have more influence and recognition but are still seen as relatable and approachable.

- **Macro influencers** are social media personalities with large follower bases, typically ranging from **100,000 to 1 million followers** on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or

Twitter (X). They are considered highly influential within their niche and often collaborate with brands for marketing campaigns. Due to their large following, macro influencers can help brands reach a broad audience quickly. They are ideal for increasing brand visibility and generating awareness on a larger scale. It is also important to highlight the negative aspects of this category, such as the high costs that companies have to bear for their involvement and the high difficulty in creating close and sincere links between the influencer and the audience of users.

- **Mega/Celebrity Influencers** (1M or more followers):

These influencers are often public figures or celebrities with millions of followers. Their reach is massive, but engagement rates are typically lower compared to smaller influencers.

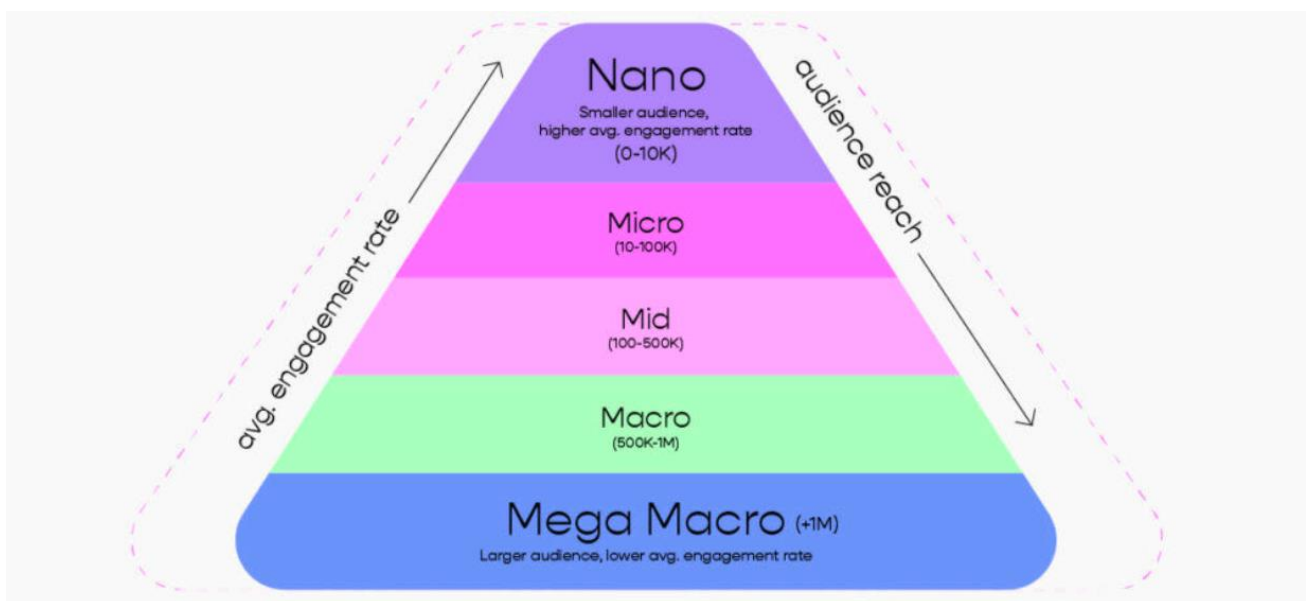


Figure 1.3 – Influencer categories

To know which type of influencer companies tend to prefer, we refer to the well-known Benchmark Report "The State of Influencer Marketing 2023⁶", which summarizes the ideas of over 3500 marketing agencies, Brands and other relevant professionals regarding the current status of Influencer Marketing. When asked about preferences among different types of influencers, 39% of brands chose nano-influencers as their most likely partners, followed by 30% who opted for micro-influencers. The

companies that have declared instead of wanting to use larger influencers are very few, it is recorded 19% who has opted for macro-influencer and a mere 12% the mega-influencer typology.

Audiences need authenticity more than ever in 2024, with around 70% preferring authentic social media content to high-quality and refined content (HubSpot, 2023). In addition, 70% of customers confess to paying more for companies they consider "authentic" (Psychology Today, 2023). It is crucial that influencers pay attention when creating brand-related material, making sure the articles they support are in line with their target audience's expectations, tastes and values.

1.3.2. The choice of firms: what factors to take into account?

The moment of the choice of the influencer by the companies is very crucial because there are many factors to be considered in order to create a campaign that is effective. The first step that companies must take when they decide to undertake a valid Influencer Marketing strategy is to start from an in-depth analysis regarding the campaign's objectives, followed by a proper study on the target audience. Regarding the definition of objectives, companies may decide to take two different paths:

- Focus the Influencer Marketing campaign on simply expanding knowledge of a new product, trying to feed the virtuous chain between interaction-conversion-sales, developing a content plan with the chosen influencers with posts, videos, presentations or reviews. Other companies, on the other hand, could aim for more intangible Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), aimed at capitalizing in a long-term perspective, such as increasing the visibility and brand awareness, increasing the Lead Generation, an increase in the company's credibility and authority, repositioning strategy, customer loyalty or even, communicate values or social causes of the company.
- The second important factor that companies must consider when formulating an Influencer Marketing campaign is the identification of the target audience, that is the public to which the company is addressed, in order to be able to choose the most suitable influencer for this audience. The content that will be created and disseminated through influencers, in fact, depends heavily on the habits, needs, interests and demographic characteristics (age, sex, origin) of the target that the company decides to select. It will therefore be advisable to choose an Influencer suitable for the target group considered.

- Other relevant factors to consider when choosing an influencer are the authenticity and values that the character conveys. Nowadays, the public has learned to recognize immediately if an influencer is really convinced of what he is promoting or if he is only doing it for a subsequent economic return. For companies from this point of view, being able to identify creators already passionate and interested in the products/ services in question, or whose values are consistent with those pursued by the same, will always be a winning choice.

1.3.3 The 4R Model

As with any other marketing activity, it is not recommended to choose influencers to collaborate with solely based on the audience they have, so since 2010 (Grasso, 2018) various theories about social scoring have been born. Initially it was simply to catalog profiles on social networks based on the amount of content shared, the frequency with which this occurred and the size of the audience.

In 2013, as the digital world becomes more complex, Brian Solis with his "The rise of digital influence" (Solis and Webber, 2012) theorized three pillars on which influence is based:

- Reach: the influencer's network in which information can spread, composed of popularity, proximity and correctness of the subject towards its audience;
- Relevance: the relevance that content has on the community of reference. It must be twofold: the influencer's fanbase must not only be the right target for the brand but the same brand must be relevant to that audience. This is based on the authority of the person, if it is considered competent or specialized in an area; on the trust and affinity that the audience has towards the influencer.
- Resonance: the resonance that a topic has on social, the higher it is and the greater the spread of the message will be, depending on the frequency of appearance in the social stream, the visibility period of the content and the breadth of engagement in the network.

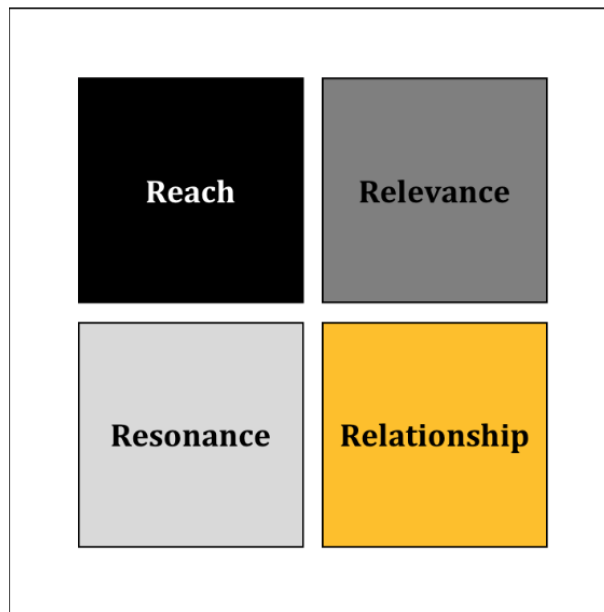


Figure 1.4 4R variables

Today we have come to define the so-called "4-R model" (Cantor et al., 2014), the most common model for identifying influencers, that is the relationship that is created between brands and influencers at the moment when you decide to start a collaboration; It is not just a question of affinity but of defining rules governing roles. This is based on transparency and compliance with agreements between influencers and brands, the type and mode of content production and the degree of engagement and exposure expected.

It is therefore important to consider all these aspects to assess whether an influencer can really be a valuable help for the marketing strategy or not and, within the large panorama of influencers present today, choose the best ones, or those which appear to have the best model indices proposed.

In conclusion, the key factor that will make or break your influencer campaign is choosing the right influencers. First this means working with influencers whose content and style is relevant to your brand, and whose followers are likely to be in your target market. Second this means working with influencers who have loyal fans and score above a 2% engagement ratio. And finally this means working with influencers who have genuine authentic audiences and aren't faking it. If you get these three things right you are on your way to creating a successful influencer campaign.

CHAPTER 2

THE INCREDIBLE DIFFUSION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING

2.1. From traditional media to social media influencer marketing

Social media today, have become an integral part of the lives of all individuals, a study conducted by the team of Kepios⁷ (Kepios, 2023) confirms the existence of 4.80 billion social media users worldwide in April 2023, which corresponds to 59,9% of the global population.

The GWI data reveals that the typical social media user spends an average of 2 hours and 24 minutes a day using social media. Considering that people generally sleep between 7 and 8 hours a day, the latter suggest that people spend about 15% of their lives awake using social media. These figures, which at first glance may be frightening, are however perfectly capable of justifying the action of companies in drastically reversing the marketing route, almost abandoning traditional channels and turning to these new online platforms (Ooi, 2023).

And it is precisely this strong migration and presence of individuals on social channels that has encouraged companies to use and develop the influencer marketing phenomenon more carefully by choosing social media as their main channels.

Aspect	Traditional Mass Media	Influencer Marketing
Targeting	Broad, demographic-based	Niche, interest-based, behavior-driven
Audience Size	Mass reach (millions)	Smaller, more segmented audiences
Communication	One-way, brand-to-audience	Two-way, interactive, influencer-audience
Credibility	Celebrity endorsements	Authentic, peer-like recommendations
Cost	Expensive, high production costs	More flexible, affordable options available
Engagement	Passive (viewing/listening)	Active engagement (likes, comments, shares)
Measurability	Indirect metrics (brand recall, GRPs)	Direct data (clicks, conversions, reach)
Content Creation	Highly produced, formal ads	More personal, user-generated content
Real-Time Feedback	Delayed or unavailable	Instant feedback, audience interaction
Adaptability	Less flexible (longer lead times)	Agile, quick content creation, adaptable

Figure 2.1 – Differences between traditional media and influencer marketing

2.2. The factors that made the transition to the social world possible

A first element of success that characterizes the new world of Influencer Marketing on social media is the strong interactivity. The idea of the Theory of interactivity was born by Rafaeli, in the late '80s (Song & Zinkhan, 2008). Interactivity is defined by marketing as “the immediately interactive process by which consumers' needs and desires are discovered, modified and satisfied by the supplier company”.

A recent study builds on past research that has examined interactivity as a single dimension (France, Grace, Merrilees, & Miller, 2018), describing interactivity as a two-way interaction between influencers and the audience (Xiao et al., 2018). This study analyzes interactivity as a concept focused on the unpredictability between influencers and their viewers through the use of social media, where influencers are given ample creative freedom to communicate their experiences with the products/services/brands they intend to promote and sponsor. We can therefore argue that the interactivity and engagement that social media allows is important factors that ensured their great rise in the marketing world.

2.3. The most popular social media for Influencer Marketing campaigns

Among the many channels used by brands in the implementation of Influencer Marketing campaigns, four social media stand out in particular, undoubtedly very popular and used by many users: Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube.

The report provided by Influencer Marketing Hub shows a precise classification of these social

Indicating the percentages in which companies prefer to use them.

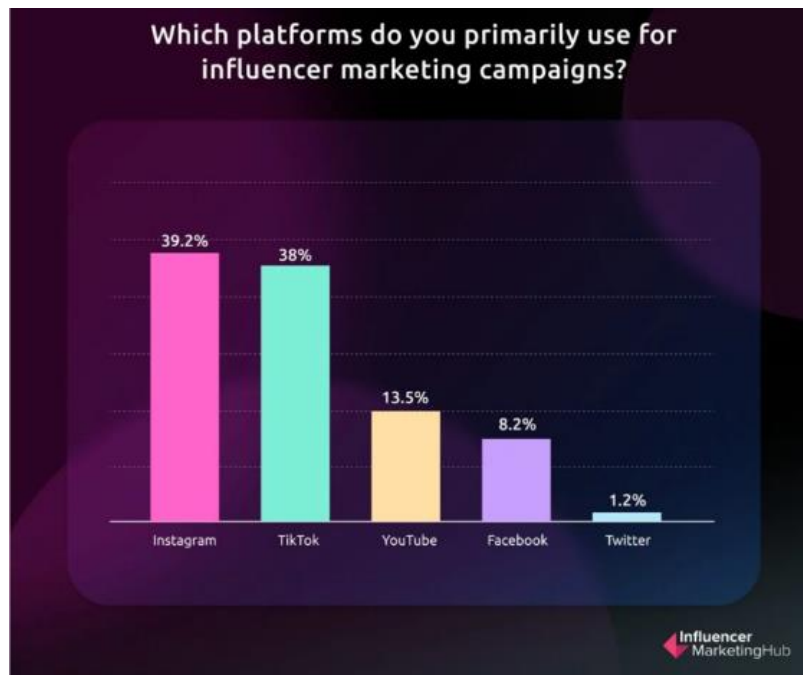


Figure 2.2 – Main social medias

According to this survey⁸, brands, when they decide to undertake an Influencer Marketing campaign, choose to focus their activities and efforts mainly on Instagram, and just 1% less TikTok. Instagram has always been the preferred network for Influencer Marketing campaigns since 2017 the 2022 report reported that as many as 79% of respondents had chosen this channel for their Influencer Marketing campaigns. This year's data, however, highlights the effects of the great growth of the rival TikTok. In third place we find YouTube, with a percentage of 13.5% and finally Facebook, used by 1.2% of the companies (influencer marketing hub, 2023).

2.3.1. The rise of tik tok

TikTok's rise has been rapid and transformative in the social media world. Launched internationally in 2018 after ByteDance merged its app **Douyin** with **Musical.ly**, TikTok quickly gained popularity with its short-form video format. Key to its success was its **powerful algorithm** that personalized content on the "For You" page, keeping users engaged with highly relevant videos.

The platform thrived on **viral trends, challenges, and dances**, which allowed users to easily participate and gain widespread attention. Its deep connection with the **music industry** also propelled new artists and songs into the spotlight, creating a direct link between TikTok trends and pop culture.

The app's ability to democratize content creation, making anyone a potential viral sensation, cemented its role as a dominant global platform.

TikTok is particularly popular among Gen Z, with 76% of Gen Z users indicating they use the platform, making it their favorite social media app. However, numerator insights reveal that 57% of Gen Z users would be upset if TikTok were banned, indicating a strong attachment to the platform.

This demographic is crucial for brands targeting younger consumers, as TikTok users are 51% more likely to say that social media is the most influential ad touchpoint. The potential loss of this platform could disrupt marketing strategies aimed at engaging Gen Z. Rival IQ has done the 2024 social media industry benchmark report. From the graphic below is possible to see that, even though TikTok accounts earned about half the engagement rates they did last year, the video channel continues to outpace Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter by miles.

Engagement rate benchmarks over time

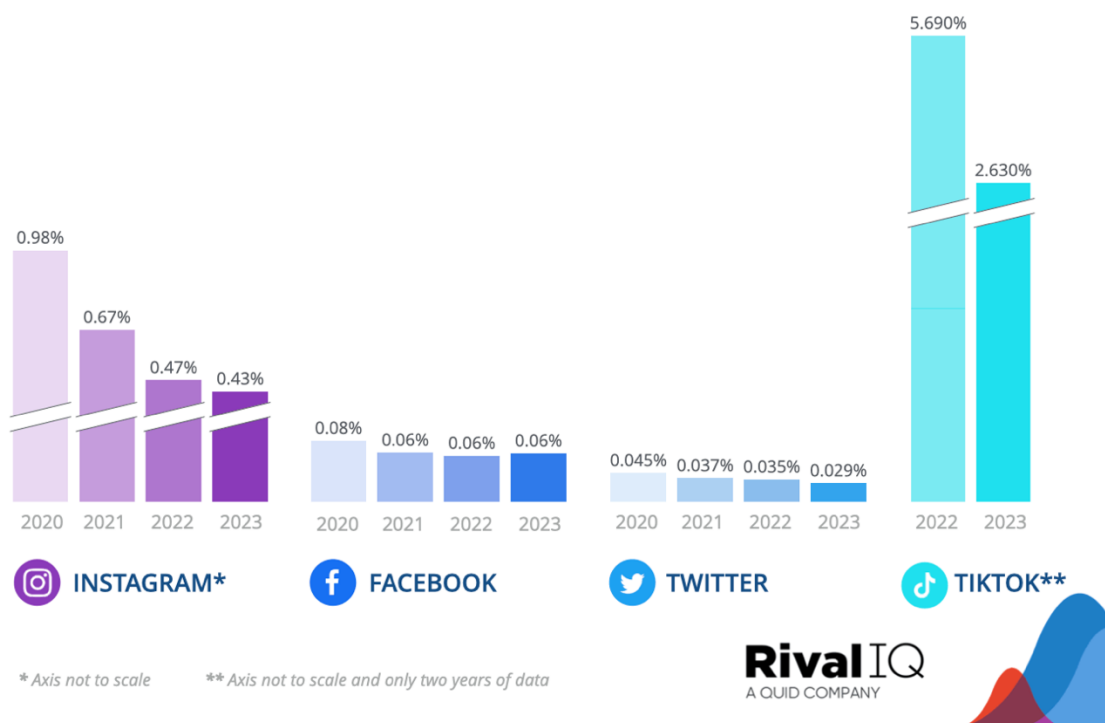


Figure 2.3 engagement rate over time

2.3.2. TikTok social selling and e-commerce

TikTok has emerged as a powerful platform for **social selling** and **e-commerce**, blending entertainment with shopping. The platform introduced in-app shopping features like "Shop Now" buttons and partnered with e-commerce sites like **Shopify** to enable seamless purchases.

Influencers play a major role in driving sales by showcasing and reviewing products, often leading to viral trends like "TikTok Made Me Buy It". TikTok has also embraced live-stream shopping, where creators sell products in real time. Combined with targeted advertising, TikTok has become a key player in the social commerce space, driving direct sales through engaging, interactive content.

This integration is gaining traction among marketers, with 51.9% actively selling through tik tok shop and 25.7% planning to use it. However, the transition is not without challenges. 58.2% of marketers face difficulties driving traffic to TikTok Shop, and 14.1% report low conversion rates. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the platform's e-commerce potential.

TikTok Symphony, launched on June 17, 2024, represents a significant leap in AI integration within social media marketing. This suite of AI tools enables the creation of ads using avatars that look like real people, which can be customized and dubbed in multiple languages. The potential of these tools is already being recognized by marketers, with 51.9% very likely to incorporate AI-generated avatars into their campaigns and 74.3% finding TikTok Symphony's AI tools highly attractive. According to tik tok, ads created with Symphony boost purchase intent by 37% and enhance brand favorability by 38%, underscoring the game-changing potential of AI in connecting with global audiences authentically and effectively (influencer marketing hub, 2024).

Based on a recent study by Datos⁹, TikTok has seen a noticeable increase in search activity year over year. In May 2024, 15.4% of TikTok's desktop users engaged in search activities, up from 11% in May 2023. This rise is indicative of the platform's expanding utility as a search engine, especially as users look to discover content, products, and trends organically through the platform's unique algorithm. Despite this growth, the study also emphasizes that TikTok's search activity is still relatively modest when compared to platforms like YouTube, which leads the social search space with over 41% of its users conducting searches. However, the increase in the number of searches per TikTok user, from 3.7 in May 2023 to 5.3 in May 2024, with a peak of 8.3 in March 2024, underscores the platform's potential. This growth indicates that users are increasingly relying on TikTok not just for entertainment but as a tool for finding specific content and information. It is possible to see that in the last year Tik Tok gained a plus 3%; so among 10 consumers, 1 choose Tik Tok as social search.

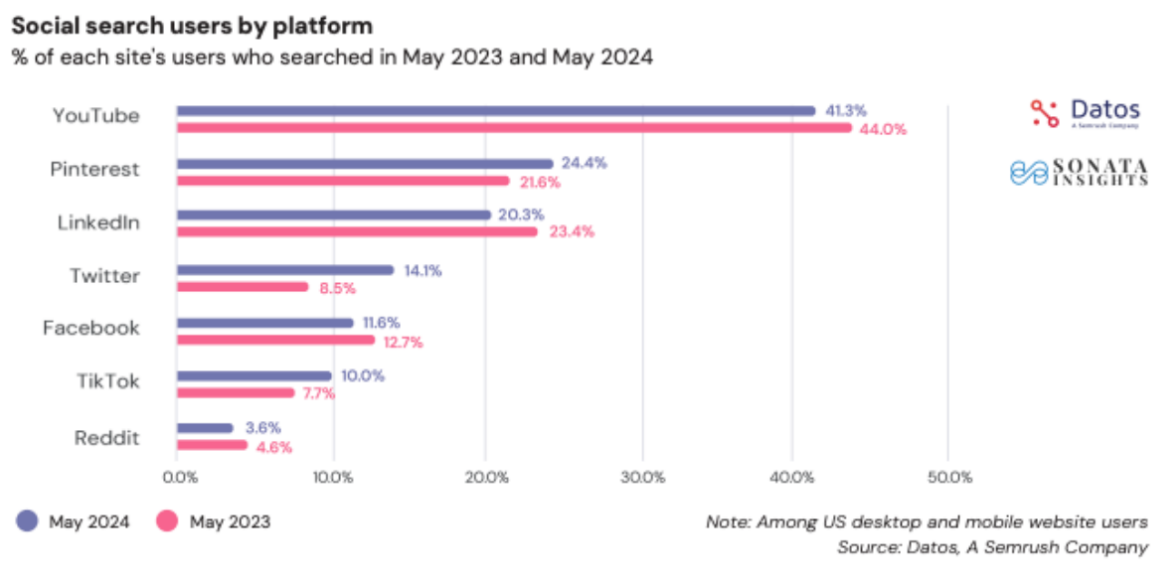


Figure 2.4 – Social used for searching (Datos)

2.3.3. Instagram: always a good choice

The launch of Instagram was on October 5, 2010 by two founders Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. The application was a great success from the beginning, becoming viral: on the first day alone it registered 25,000 users, who then turned into 2 million after a few months (Marketing, 2021). Despite the spectacular growth of its rival TikTok, and the growing attention given to it by marketers, Instagram remains a guarantee for many brands, maintaining its position as a leader in influencer marketing globally (Dencheva, Influencer marketing worldwide - statistics & facts, 2023). This is confirmed by a survey conducted in 2020, which showed that 89% of marketers considered Instagram as an important platform for their influencer marketing.

The phenomenon of Influencer Marketing on Instagram is therefore constantly growing. A recent study has analyzed the global size of Instagram influencer market from 2021 to 2025, data obtained predicts that the global market will grow from US\$13.8 billion in 2021 to almost double that amount by 2025 (Dencheva, Global Instagram influencer market size from 2021 to 2025, 2023). One of the most important reasons for Instagram's popularity as a tool for companies is that it offers different kinds of interactions with users that generate insights, for example:

- Sponsored posts – you pay influencers to create content on behalf of your brand, which they share with their followers on Instagram. They will need to tag these posts as being sponsored to meet legal disclosure requirements.
- Branded content – here, you share posts through your company Instagram account, but you feature influencers in that content.
- Reviews – influencers make posts where they review your products. You should let influencers be as honest as possible in these reviews to keep credibility with their audience.
- Contests – you send free products to influencers that they use in a giveaway contest for their followers.
- Instagram stories, regular post, video or reels

There are many ways through which an influencer of any kind can earn money from this social network:

1. Collaborations with Brands and Sponsored Posts

Influencers are paid by brands to promote their products or services through posts, stories or videos on Instagram. The compensation varies according to the number of followers, the engagement rate (engagement) and the niche of the influencer. The larger and more active the audience, the higher the remuneration.

2. Affiliate Marketing

Influencers promote products or services with a trackable link or discount code. Earn a commission on every sale generated through these links or codes. It's a common method because brands don't have to pay in advance, but only based on actual sales.

3. Sale of Own Products or Services

Some influencers create and sell their own products, such as clothing, cosmetics, or even online courses. Instagram provides features like "Instagram Shopping" to directly link posts to products for sale.

4. Instagram Partnership Programs

Instagram has introduced forms of direct monetization such as the ability to earn through badges during live, which fans can buy to support the influencer.

5. Long-term partnerships

Some influencers make long-term deals with brands, becoming brand ambassadors. In this case, they receive a fixed or continuous remuneration in exchange for a constant promotion.

6. Exclusive Content and Subscriptions

Some influencers use subscription platforms (such as Patreon or OnlyFans), or sell exclusive content to users through tools like Instagram Subscriptions. Users pay to access special content, private videos, tutorials, or direct interactions with the influencer.

7. Participation in Events or Appearances

Influencers are often invited to events or product launches, sometimes with a fee for their presence, which is a form of advertising for the brand that organizes the event.

2.3.4. YouTube

Despite ongoing challenges like ad blockers and increasing competition from platforms like TikTok, YouTube's efforts in improving its ad technology and creator tools are pivotal in maintaining its market position. Youtube ranks first as search platform for social media users. Here are some features:

- **Enhanced video quality:** YouTube has introduced a 1080p Enhanced video quality option for subscribers using 4K-compatible devices, which aligns with the platform's commitment to high content standards. This move is crucial as more creators adopt 4K recording to future-proof their content, addressing the 54% of marketers who believe that video quality directly impacts audience engagement.
- **AI integration:** YouTube is at the forefront of leveraging AI to enhance creative processes, particularly within its Shorts platform. The Dream Screen feature, which uses AI to generate

background visuals based on user prompts, represents a significant leap in creative tools available to marketers and creators. This aligns with the **60.3%** of marketers who are increasingly using AI driven tools to boost content personalization and creativity.

- **Advanced Creator Tools:** The evolution of YouTube Studio continues with the introduction of tools like the Research Tab and Enhanced Playlist Analytics. These tools offer data-driven insights to creators, enabling them to optimize content based on audience preferences. This is particularly relevant as 49.1% of marketers prioritize data-driven content strategies to stay competitive in 2024.
- **E-Commerce Integration:** The Shopping Collections feature, which allows creators to curate and showcase products within their content, has been a game-changer for YouTube's e-commerce strategy. With 43.3% of marketers reporting improved product visibility and 37.7% noting increased direct sales, this feature underscores YouTube's growing influence in the creator commerce market. This is especially critical as 58% of marketers are expanding their e-commerce efforts on YouTube. (influencer marketing hub report, 2024¹⁰).

The influencers marketing hub has recently written a youtube report with statistical data. Here are some of the most interesting

- **31.6% of marketers allocate zero budget to YouTube**, indicating a mixed perception of its ROI, contrasted by **21.4% who dedicate over half of their budget** to the platform, betting on its vast reach and engagement.
- **YouTube's ad revenues hit \$8.1 billion in Q1 2024**, a robust 21% increase from the previous year, fueled partly by **44.7% of marketers noticing improved ad performance** post-anti-ad blocker measures.
- **37.7% of marketers** find YouTube marketing to be **very effective** in achieving their brand's goals, while **27% remain neutral** and **12.1% find it not applicable**.
- **Main marketing strategies used:** **Influencer marketing (25.6%)** and **organic content marketing (25.1%)** are the most common strategies, followed by **paid advertising (13.5%)** and **sponsored content (10.2%)**.

YouTube Shorts has quickly become a critical tool for brands looking to engage with younger audiences and compete with TikTok. As a marketer, leveraging Shorts allows you to capture attention quickly and drive top-of-funnel awareness. With 32.5% of marketers regularly using Shorts in their strategies, the format is proving effective in boosting brand visibility. Focus on creating bite-sized, impactful content that aligns with the fast-paced consumption habits of today's viewers. However, remarkably 25.6% don't use Shorts in their marketing campaigns.

CHAPTER 3

STRATEGIES AND EVALUATION OF INFLUENCER MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

3.1. Development of an effective influencer marketing strategy

In this chapter we will talk about how a company should use influencers as tools for an effective marketing campaign.

Developing an effective influencer marketing strategy requires careful planning and understanding of the business objectives, target audience and communication channels.

A well-defined strategy helps to maximize the impact of campaigns and achieve measurable results.

1. **Setting Goals:** The first step in creating a strategy is to clearly define the goals. These can range from brand awareness to increased sales, from public engagement to promotion of a new product. The objectives should be specific, measurable, realistic and time-bound.

Make sure to get very specific so that you can use this goal to guide the rest of your campaign development. It will determine everything from the type of content you create to the messaging you share. Based on your goal, you may even need to determine whether you can rely on organic approaches alone or invest in paid methods such as influencer marketing.

2. **Competitive research:** Before you brainstorm campaign ideas and specifics, it's important to get a better understanding of the competitive landscape. See what your competitors are doing so you can do it better and build a campaign that really stands out. C

A social media competitive analysis will help you understand what types of campaigns your competitors are running. You'll be able to see how they execute those campaigns and how their audience is responding. See which channels they're using and what content formats they're making the most of. Identify whether they're working with influencers and, if so, which influencers they're working with and how.

3. Target audience is critical to selecting the right influencers and creating relevant content. It is about defining demographic characteristics, interests, preferences and behaviors of the audience in order to identify influencers who have an aligned audience.
4. Selecting the right influencers: Choosing the right influencers is crucial to the success of the campaign. Influencers should have an audience that corresponds to the brand and an image consistent with the company's values. The influencer's reach, authenticity and personal history are factors to consider in selection.
5. Campaign Ideation Content and key message definition: Once you've selected influencers, it's important to develop a creative plan. Campaign key messages should be clearly defined. Influencers should understand what message or value the brand wants to communicate and how to integrate it into their unique style.
6. Activity Planning: The planning of activities involved in the campaign is essential to ensure consistency in time and effective management. This includes the timing of posts, start and end dates of the campaign, audience engagement activities, and plans to respond to any comments or questions.

Creating a timeline for your campaign helps you stay on track and ensures that you're revisiting your strategies at regular intervals. This will help you avoid overspending on campaigns that don't work while adjusting them in a timely manner to improve your results. Specify the campaign start date and end date as well as when you expect to complete specific tasks and deliverables.
7. Budget and Resource Management: Financial planning is crucial. The budget should cover not only influencer fees, but also production costs, marketing expenses and any necessary technological resources.

3.2. Valuation metrics (KPI)

Evaluating the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns requires the use of accurate metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs).

- Number of impressions: How many times the influencer's content was viewed
- Shares: How many times the influencer's content has been shared
- Engagement rate (Engagement rate): $\text{Like+comments/follower} \times 100$
- Number of clicks on specific links: Clicks on trackable links inserted by the influencer (for example a link in the bio or swipe-up in stories)
- Click-through rate: Percentage of users who clicked compared to the number of views of the content
- Sales generated: Number of purchases made through links or discount codes promoted by the influencer
- Number of mentions on social media: How many times the brand was mentioned in comments, posts or user stories during the campaign
- ROI: Ratio between total investment in the campaign and revenue generated (in terms of sales or conversions)

The choice of KPIs to monitor depends on the campaign's objectives: if the goal is brand awareness, KPI as coverage and engagement are crucial, while if you focus on sales, conversions and ROI are key metrics.

3.2.1. Best tools for marketing campaigns

The success of these campaigns is driven by data, making influencer analytics tools¹¹ essential for brands aiming to maximize their impact.

These tools offer detailed insights into audience demographics, engagement rates, and content performance, helping brands refine their influencer partnerships and boost ROI. (influencer marketing hub,sept 2024).

1. MODASH

Modash excels in its ability to help brands find the perfect influencers for their campaigns. The platform offers extensive filters that allow you to narrow down your search by criteria such as follower count, engagement rate, audience demographics, and even fake follower rate. The platform automatically collects all influencer content and performance metrics, eliminating the need for manual tracking. This data is aggregated into a single dashboard, providing you with a clear overview of your campaign's performance.



2. CREATOR.CO

The platform provides access to a vast database of over 300 million influencer profiles, complete with detailed analytics to help you identify the perfect fit for your campaigns. The search filters allow you to narrow down influencers based on various criteria, such as engagement rates, audience demographics, and content style, making the recruitment process both quick and precise.



Once influencers are onboarded, Creator.co's analytics tools enable you to monitor their performance in real-time, giving you insights into key metrics like clicks, conversions, and overall campaign impact.

3. LTK

Founded in 2011, LTK has grown to become a global technology platform that empowers lifestyle creators and generates billions in annual sales for over 7k retailers worldwide. . With a strong focus on influencer analytics, LTK equips brands with the tools and data needed to scale their marketing efforts and achieve measurable results.



LTK practical case

Oasis, a prominent fashion brand, partnered with LTK to enhance engagement and brand affinity through influencer marketing across the UK and Ireland. With these markets critical to the brand's success, Oasis sought to establish an "always-on" network of local creators who could consistently drive sales and produce content for repurposing across its marketing channels. LTK's expertise in influencer analytics and performance tracking made them the ideal partner for this initiative.

LTK leveraged its decade-long experience in Creator performance insights to identify and recruit a mix of luxury and high-street influencers with a proven track record of driving sales.

The influencers' performance was meticulously reviewed on a quarterly basis, allowing LTK to optimize the ambassadorships and ensure maximum impact.

The campaign far exceeded expectations, with a 680% increase in sales YoY, compared to a 50% goal, and a 477% increase in click rate YoY. The collaboration reached 6 million across social platforms like YouTube and Instagram, and November achieved an ROI of 3.6x. Notably, 60% of overall sales came from Irish Creators, with global clicks from Ireland jumping from 22% to 36% within ten months. (influencer marketing hub).

3.3. "Shoe is just a shoe, until my son steps into it. Than it has meaning."

The last part of this chapter will be dedicated to analyze the greatest and oldest example of influencer marketing campaign promoted by Nike in 1984.

Product: AIR JORDAN 1

The first influencer marketing campaign and also the most iconic.

In the mid-1980s, Nike was struggling to compete with other sports brands like Adidas and Converse. In an effort to revive its basketball division, Nike decided to invest in a promising young player, Michael Jordan, who had just been drafted into the NBA in 1984.

A PHONE CALL THAT CHANGED THE WORLD¹²

In 1984 Nike was selling 834 million dollars and the marketing director was Sonny Vaccaro who made history by closing the Jordan contract.

Nike made an exorbitant offer for the time, but this was not enough to close the deal.

The real difference was made by Deloris Jordan (who said a shoe is just a shoe until my son steps into it), mother of the legend, who sensed that it would have been appropriate for Michael to get a percentage on each Air Jordan shoe sold from there onwards (still today). The mother blindly believed that the son would become the most legendary athlete in history and imposed on Nike an unknown clause considered insane at the time.

Nike came to accept the offer by creating a personalized shoe on Michael that reflected his skills and was a popular icon as a sneaker for everyone. The insistence of MJ's mother has completely revolutionized the concept of marketing.

THE SHOE

The idea of the marketing campaign was to promote a popular shoe for the street. When you wore it, you were MJ. He has been the first marketing influencer.

First colorway shoe ever worn in the NBA, the original black and red model was initially banned for violating league uniform policy, with the threat of a \$5,000 fine for each game it was worn. The legacy of the original shoe survives in the Air Jordan 1 Retro, which pays homage to a legend that developed the creative potential of basketball and redefined the relationship between this sport with style and culture.

The Nike Air Ship was launched exclusively for Michael Jordan in the color Black/ Red and displayed in the game against the Knicks on October 19, 1984. David Stern, NBA commissioner, banned them from the league and prohibited the player from reusing them because of restrictions on the colors of uniforms. Consequence: a fine of 5000\$ per game. THE GOAT continued to wear Air Ship in Black/Red for 3 games and Nike covered the fine until White/Red came out. But don't think it was a loss, Nike took a big advantage.



Figure 3 – Michael Jordan and the AIR 1

TODAY Influencer marketing has reached exorbitant payments. Mega influencers earn crazy fees only through posts. These celebrities transfer their values to the product sponsored, in which the consumer find an accessory for their personality.

For example the products of Chiara Ferragni or the mercurial nike of Cristiano Ronaldo.

At the end of 2023, Hopperhq has done a leaderboard of the most payed influencers in the world

It starts from the ranking of the highest paid in the world. Among the 100 influencers who can earn more, 10th place is Justin Bieber. The singer, currently followed by 292 million followers, would earn \$1,763,000 per post. In 9th place is Khloé Kardashian who, with 311 million followers, earns 1,866,000 dollars per post. We climb to the podium. 8th place Beyoncé: 318 million followers, \$1,889,000 per post. 7th place Kim Kardashian: 364 million followers, \$2,176,000 per post. 6th place Ariana Grande: 380 million followers, \$2,264,000 per post. 5th place Dwayne The Rock Johnson: 392 million followers and \$2,326,000 per post. 4th place Kylie Jenner: 398 million followers and \$2,386,000 per post.

The podium: in third place is Selena Gomez, with 430 million followers, puts in the pocket 2,558,000 dollars per post. Silver medal for Lionel Messi: 493 million followers and 2,597,000 dollars per post. On the first place, ahead of all, there is CR7. Cristiano Ronaldo, who can count on 612 million followers and who would earn a good 3,234,000 dollars per post.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that influencer marketing from the case Jordan has become more and more common to use also through niche nano influencers. The influencers are an important part for a marketing strategy of a business of any kind that can offer products or service. Also, if the business has not so much social appealing, if the influencer is choose taking into account the target market and the authenticity, is very common that it will boost the revenues, the brand awareness and make the investment worth. The focus is shifting more and more towards micro-niche influencers, who are focusing on specific topics or niche communities. These influencers can have a significant impact on a highly interested and engaged audience, allowing companies to achieve more accurate segmentation. Ephemeral content, such as those offered by Instagram Stories or Snapchat, is gaining popularity. These temporary contents provide a sense of authenticity and urgency, encouraging real-time interaction between influencers and followers.

Live streaming is also becoming an effective way to engage the audience directly. Influencers are experimenting with new forms of content, such as podcasts, 360-degree videos, virtual reality and more. This innovation allows for more engaging and memorable experiences for the audience, expanding opportunities for engagement. Social awareness and ethical responsibility have become priorities for many influencers and consumers. Influencers are increasingly using their platforms to promote social causes, uphold values and contribute to positive change. With the emergence of new social platforms, influencers are diversifying their online presence. This allows companies to reach different audiences and exploit the specificities of each platform

For giant companies as Nike, the best strategy is to choose sport champions that, better than any other market, can represent values in which consumers identify themselves. Another point is that in influencer marketing, creativity makes a huge difference for the success of a campaign. The influencer is just the vehicle through which the consumer experience the product.

We live in an always more materialistic society where the experience makes the difference in a purchase and how much that product reflects who I want to be. The negative side of everything is that now, teenagers, the main demographic on social media, consume these advertisements, they associate the influencer and their success with the brand's products. Consequently, an identity is linked to a material good, which directly fuels materialistic and consumerist ideals among the youth.

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