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Social Media Platforms for Small Fashion Businesses

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Technological advancements have brought changes in the marketplace, and specifically changes in the marketing communication industry, enabling companies to use digital marketing strategies, including social media, to market and create value for their products (Al-Zyoud, 2018). Social media can be defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Al-Zyoud, 2018). Web 2.0 is defined as the second wave of development of the internet, characterized especially by the change from static web pages to dynamic or user-generated content and the growth of social media (“Web 2.0”, 2019). Social media focuses on the consumers as being at the centre of the company and allows marketers a new medium through which to listen to consumers, communicate with them and engage them in the brand (Graham & Anouti, 2018). Social media has developed into an essential part of marketing strategy for its ability to generate co-created value, to interactively connect brands to consumers, to guide consumers in the decision-making process, to instigate customer-to-customer interactions, and transform customers into brand advocates (Vinerean, 2017). According to Al-Zyoud (2018), social media provides many opportunities that enable businesses to share their brand and attain the needed attention to their platforms; social media websites can generate consumer sentiment, motives, contents, attitudes and prospects through the virtual community that they build for the brand. Research on social media has indicated that while users perceive social networking sites as platforms where they can communicate with friends and family members, users also admit to using these platforms to talk about and engage with businesses (Davis, 2017). These social media sites give consumers the ability to reach brands on a personal level and review their favorite fashion products.

Social media marketing is a technique that employs social media, which is content created by both consumers and businesses using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as social networks, blogs, microblogs, message boards, podcasts, social bookmarks, communities, wikis, and videoblogs (Singh, 2014). Retailers and marketers utilize social media to provide consumers with the opportunity to shop in an easy and convenient way (the reason why consumers favor it) while simultaneously using it as a way for them to reach their customers. Social media has become an important tool for marketing products including fashion products. Al-Zyoud (2018) explains how it is easy for companies to reach their target consumers through social media because of the availability of diverse consumers accessed via these sites; hence, social media creates a platform for companies to market their products/brands/services to possible customers. With the expansion of social media, customers are 77% more likely to buy from a brand they follow on social media in 2019, a 20% increase from 2016 (“The complete guide to social media”, 2019). This is a huge increase and opportunity for businesses to take advantage of and engage with their customers.

Social media allows marketers to embrace interactive communications by moving away from the traditional one-way communication to two-way communication with customers getting a chance to engage and participate in the communication loop (Dennis, 2009). Companies dedicate part of their budget towards social media marketing because they recognize social media’s ability to elevate and increase multidimensional interaction and increase user generated content (Al-Zyoud, 2018). Although technological developments have changed the way all businesses market to and interact with their customers, no matter their size, it is especially important for small businesses trying to build their brand (Bruce, 2016). The more familiar networks of Facebook and Instagram currently being used in the fashion industry are changing,

as new tools and mediums such as Snapchat and Pinterest seek to allow unedited access to the previously exclusive, polished world of fashion (Graham & Anouti, 2019).

The research question driving this paper is: what social media platforms are most effective for small fashion businesses? In this paper the word “platform” refers to an individual social media outlet such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. A fashion company is a business that designs market and sells apparel merchandise; this includes clothing, as well as accessories (Henderson, 2019).

Typically textbooks on fashion retailing classify retailers on the basis of their merchandising and operating strategies, which result in the following categories: department stores, specialty stores, discount retailers, off-price retailers, supermarkets and hypermarkets, warehouse retailers, convenience stores, contractual retailers, chain stores, and nonstore retailers (Burns, Bryant, & Mullet, 2011). For the context of this paper, the type of retailer being focused on would classify as a specialty store. According to Burns, Bryant & Mullet (2011) a specialty store focuses on a specific type of merchandise in one of the following ways:

- by carrying one category of merchandise, or a few closely related categories of merchandise (e.g., jewelry, footwear, eyeglasses, intimate apparel, housewares)
- by focusing on merchandise for a well-defined target market (e.g., men, women, bicyclists, plus-size consumers, individuals with small children)
- by carrying the merchandise of one manufacturer or brand (e.g., Liz Claiborne, Polo Ralph Lauren, Guess Kids)

Over 99% of America’s 28.7 million firms are small businesses (“Small Businesses”, 2014). 88% of employer firms have fewer than 20 employees, and nearly 40% of all enterprises

have under \$100k in revenue (“Small Businesses”, 2014). The parameters for classifying a fashion business as “small” is not easily defined but can be observed in an extensive chart published by the U.S. Small Business Administration as explained in the next section.

Small Fashion Businesses

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the parameters in which a business can be considered “small” varies by the industry. A size standard, usually stated in number of employees or in the case of retail, average annual receipts, represents the largest size that a business may be to remain classified as a small business (Table of Size Standards, 2019).

According to the table of size standards provided by the SBA, the clothing and accessories industry ranges depending on the specific type of store with a minimum of eight million and a maximum of 35 million dollars in revenue (Table of Size Standards, 2019). Under the retail sector, in order to be considered small, a business must make anywhere under an average annual dollar amount determined by the type of store, which is broken down into categories by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The following information is pulled directly from the Table of Small Business Size Standards (2017); the list states the maximum amount of annual revenue a business can make in order to be classified as a small business, categorized by the type of retailer.

- Men’s clothing stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 12 million dollars.
- Women’s clothing stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 30 million dollars.

- Children's and infants' clothing stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 35 million dollars.
- Family clothing stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 41.5 million dollars.
- Clothing accessories stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 16.5 million dollars.
- Other clothing stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 22 million dollars.
- Shoe stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 30 million dollars.
- Jewelry stores must have an average annual revenue of less than 16.5 million dollars.
- Miscellaneous store retailers must have an average annual revenue of less than 8 million dollars.

This information allows small business owners to consider how their small businesses fit into this spectrum according to these small business standards.

A fashion business is different than a regular business. For the context of this paper, social media marketing will be applied to small fashion businesses; meanwhile, all small businesses may find the information/recommendations resourceful. The fashion industry runs at a very fast-moving pace, always required to be ahead of the trends in order to forecast what is to come in future seasons. This makes it important for fashion businesses to stay up to date on the newest social media platforms which are also ever-changing. This combination creates a very fast paced, trend forward marketing mix of getting products to consumers, receiving feedback from consumers on these platforms, creating a dialog between the brand and consumer, all while simultaneously creating brand image. In a recent article from the Business of Fashion, Thorbeck

(2019) explains how speed in the fashion industry is increasing, and it is critical for businesses to keep up with fashion changes well beyond keeping up with faster trend cycles. Fashion changes cannot only be spread through social media, but fashion businesses can also be influenced by social media. A relationship and dialogue between brands and consumers is beneficial for the business; it can consist of consumers tagging business pages showing how they wear the product or reviews of the product in order for businesses to take into consideration for future fashions. Speed is just as important as value in the industry, with speed being a direct contributing factor in gross margin improvement (Thorbeck, 2019). In the age of fast fashion, fashion business is only becoming more fast moving while we see the same thing happening with social media. This advice in regard to speed applies to fashion businesses of any size.

Social Media Challenges

One of the main factors to acknowledge and keep in mind about the social media industry is that it is always changing. Some channels may stay in the spotlight longer than others but platforms will go in and out of popularity because so many people are using them, and they are constantly evolving. A business should become familiar with the big channels, but also be open to learning new ones as they come into popularity and be cognizant of the fact that social media marketing increasingly is becoming mobile advertising (Kelsey, 2017). With a variety of constantly evolving social media platforms, it has become challenging for small businesses marketing to consumers to determine which platforms are the most efficient and worth investment.

Customarily, social platforms have periods of immense growth, plateaus, and then slow, painful declines. Over time, this has been observed for all social platforms. This poses a challenge for marketers making it hard to decipher where to invest a company's marketing dollars (Singh,

2014). Often small businesses are run by people who grew up without social media, and they could use some guidance on which platform(s) to concentrate on in order to reach their target market in this fast-changing field.

Another challenge small businesses face in terms of influencing or joining the social conversation is that there is simply too much information out there making it difficult to know where to start, where to focus, and where to invest the marketing dollars and time (Tsai, 2013). With the limited budget of a small business it can be impractical to invest in multiple platforms, especially if there is little to no guaranteed return on investment. Many factors need to be taken into consideration when choosing the right platform for a business. Unfortunately, identifying which platform is best for a brand is not as easy as looking up the platform with the most users. This is because different platforms attract people with certain demographics, interests, and involvement, which may not align with the consumers a business is attempting to target. According to Pew Research, there are substantial age-related differences in platform use as stands true in other surveys conducted over the years which can help businesses pick a platform(s) of their choice that they feel fit best based on the target market they are trying to reach (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). This is why it is important for small businesses to select the platforms they incorporate in their marketing mix custom to their brand, products, and stories. It is important to have the right kind of conversations on social media, which depends on the type of business being run (Tsai, 2013). Social media allows small business owners a great way to connect with prospects and customers; it can also have a large impact on the sales and increase profits for the business (Detweiler, 2018). However, it is important for a company to know which platforms to invest in, so they do not end up wasting their time and money.

Social media marketing can become so time consuming that some small businesses hire employees under the job title of “social media manager,” whose role is to control a business’s platforms in an effort to create an aesthetically pleasing brand across social media for the business. A social media manager has an average base pay of \$59,965 which can be hard to afford for companies on the smaller end of the spectrum (“Social Media Manager Salaries”, 2019). For many small businesses, this is simply not an affordable option, so the alternative is for the owner or another employee to take on the job of online marketing.

This paper reviews literature that is intended to serve as a guide for small fashion businesses allocating their marketing budget in social media platforms. This decision is important for a business to make in order to reach their target consumer market and select the platforms to incorporate in their marketing mix to maximize success and grow the brand. The five popular platforms that this paper focuses on are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Pinterest.

Included in this literature review is a synthesis of research published in refereed journal articles and books with current business advice from newsletters and business consultants. The literature is constantly changing and by the time scholarly literature is published, the social media preferences may have changed. This is due to the fast-moving nature of social media marketing as mentioned earlier. Studies published as of 2015 in the *International Journal of Information Business and Management* referred to well-known models of the social media marketing domain developed in 2007 which are clearly out of date (Rigopoulos, 2015). This results in a delayed information system which leads people to look to business newsletters and business consultants for current social media marketing information that can be considered relevant and up to date. Articles in business blogs and newsletters address the “best” platforms to

use, but little scholarly research has been conducted to determine which are truly the most efficient for small businesses and that is because it is an ever-changing industry and it varies for the type of business. Research exists on social media marketing and why it is important for a business to incorporate it, but there is limited research that specifies which platforms a business should use depending on their target market which is a crucial decision in this marketing process.

Social Media Platforms

Facebook

Founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook was created as a social curation social media platform that allows users to create a profile of themselves and explore the profiles of others gaining insight into others' interests and lifestyles (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013). The site serves as a place for private citizens to create public identities and post content about anything they please including their personal information, political beliefs, the businesses where they work, the places they go for entertainment, and the groups they join with whom they share similar interests (Vargas, 2010). Facebook has strict privacy policies that are constantly evolving to protect its users; users themselves can select who can see their profile and posts ranging from only their friends, to friends of friends, to anyone on Facebook (Vargas, 2010). Since as early as 2009, Facebook has served as a social media portal allowing businesses to create profiles to disseminate information about their products and services, which shifts the focus from creating personal relationships to reaching customers (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013). An example of a Facebook page from a small fashion business can be seen in Figure 1.

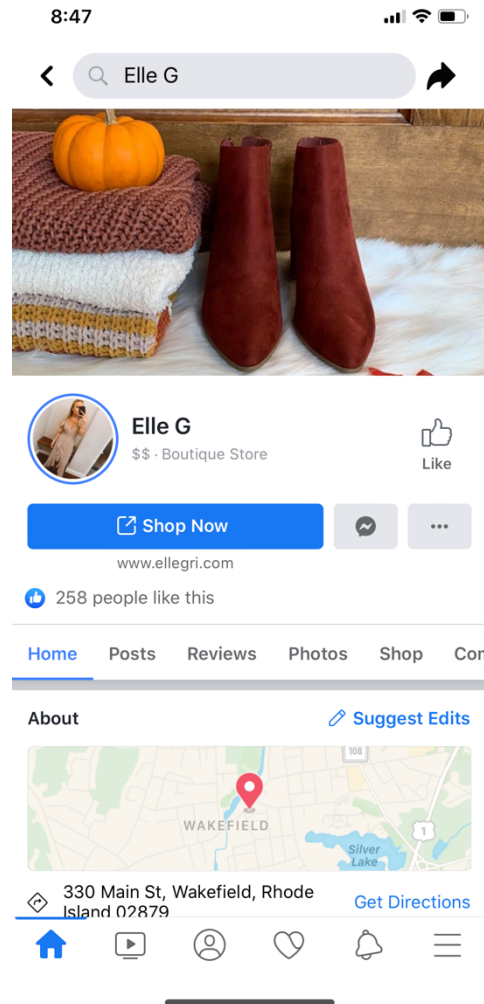


Figure 1. Elle G Boutique's Facebook Business Profile.

Pew Research Center recently released a report showing that more than two-thirds (69%) of U.S. adults are active Facebook users (Marks, 2019). This shows Facebook remains one of the most widely used social media sites among adults in the U.S. with roughly seven in ten adults saying they use the platform (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Facebook use is relatively common across a range of age groups, with 68% of those ages 50 to 64 and nearly half of those 65 and older saying they use the site (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). There are more than two billion active users each month, and 75% of them interact on Facebook daily, including about half who do so several times a day (Perrin & Anderson, 2019; "Targeting correctly on Facebook," 2019). Some

other statistics for a business to consider are that 71% of American adults use Facebook while only 51% of American teens use Facebook showing that Facebook usage is more common among older clientele (Newberry, 2019). In addition to this, seniors are the fastest-growing group of Facebook users; the newsletter eMarketer predicts Facebook will see 7% growth in users 65 and over this year, which is partly because this demographic is the one with the most room for additional growth (Newberry, 2019). At the same time, use by teens is dropping (Newberry, 2019). The senior population serves as potential customers for both big and small businesses to target when choosing a platform for a certain demographic to best suit their product. It has been found that 15% of U.S. social media users shop on Facebook (Newberry, 2019). Newberry (2019) recommends that when getting users to shop at a business, it is important to create a good content mix to develop a loyal following on Facebook. People follow a brand because they want to know the product, so it is recommended to promote approximately 30% of a business's posts (Newberry, 2019).

Brands can interact with Facebook users in two different ways. The first way, which is cost free, allows a brand to maintain a page for its business that can be liked and shared, to post content including pictures and videos on brand pages that allow for engagement and interaction between the brand and its target market (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). Facebook offers a well-structured business page template that allows brands to put in a header photo, a short description, a company history, some more facts about the company and their content feed (Graham & Anouti, 2019). Fashion brands have made good use of this; most fashion businesses have a Facebook page to communicate with their consumers about products launches, campaigns, store openings and any other newsworthy information they want the consumer to have (Graham & Anouti, 2019). Facebook also allows apps to be embedded in business pages, which help it to

operate as a central hub; this includes the ability to link quickly to other social media platforms, the brand's e-commerce site, or to generate a lead capture form to assist with building a database of users (Graham & Anouti, 2019).

The second way is through paid advertising, which includes sponsored posts, pay-per-click advertisements, click-to-site advertisements, carousel advertisements, social plugins or applications, and sponsored stories (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). The first type of advertising Facebook offered was banner advertising down the side columns of Facebook pages; the appeal of these was that the huge audience could be targeted more specifically by demographic factors such as age, gender, location or by interests, behaviors, and connections (Graham & Anouti, 2019). The measurability of the advertising response data provided by Facebook directly helps brands to see the results, justify budgets, and plan actively (Graham & Anouti, 2019). This ensures that users are only seeing advertisements that pertain to and interest them.

Facebook offers different types of advertising such as Boosted posts and Dynamic Ads. The most current information about how Facebook runs "boosted" posts can be found on the Facebook business page. A boosted post is when a social media platform reposts the selected post to an extended audience. Here Facebook walks a business through how to boost posts so they are more likely to appear in the desired audiences' news feed. Facebook allows businesses to control and limit their budget through an app which makes the process user friendly and convenient for business owners ("Give your business story a boost", 2019). With the budget limitations of a small business, it is important to share meaningful updates about the business, get more attention for a special post, or promote news or special discounts ("Give your business story a boost", 2019).

Facebook's Dynamic ads automatically promote a business's inventory to users who have expressed interest on the business's website, app or elsewhere on the internet ("About Dynamic Ads", 2019). These ads look exactly like other single image ads, carousel ads or collection ads on Facebook; however, instead of individually creating an ad for every item a business promotes, a business can create an ad template that automatically uses images and details from its catalog for items the business wants to advertise ("About Dynamic Ads", 2019).

A business can add a shop to its Facebook page in just a few easy steps; this allows a business to show and sell products right on Facebook ("Add a Shop", 2019). This way customers can purchase products from a business directly from its Facebook shop with the checkout feature ("Add a Shop", 2019). An example of Facebook's shoppable feature on a small fashion business's page can be seen in Figure 2.

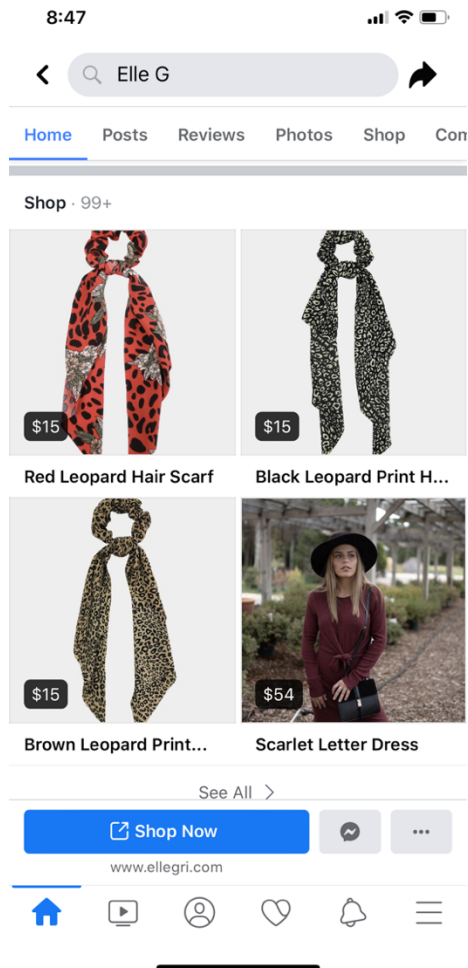


Figure 2. Elle G Boutique’s “Shop” Feature.

According to Facebook reports, businesses have created more than 90 million pages on Facebook with more than seven million advertisers spending almost \$17 billion in just the last quarter alone (Marks, 2019). A small business needs to take many factors into consideration to determine if Facebook is the right fit for them. The first factor a small business should consider is whether their audience is actually on Facebook, which it can determine from examining its progress with Facebook; for example: if the page is active, if people are engaging, and if the company lends itself to creating a Facebook community that enjoys commenting on posts and sharing photos (Marks, 2019). A business should not assume they know their target market

demographic when targeting potential customers on Facebook because it is important to let the demand from Facebook and conversions of users to customers determine the best demographic to target (Marks, 2019). Facebook allows a business to target its market very carefully so a company can reach the intended audience and save money by sending the ad to fewer people who are actually interested in the product (Dally, 2018). The platform does this by tracking how many people like a business's ads, and it uses complex analytics to determine the quality of the ad, which then determines the price it costs to the business to advertise (Dally, 2018). If Facebook approves the ad to be sent out, it will provide feedback to the business on the quality of the ad so it can be improved and the advertisements can continue to improve (Dally, 2018). With over five hundred audience-targeting possibilities on Facebook Ads Manager, a business can start determining the best audience by breaking down the main segments which are interest audiences (interests and hobbies), demographic audiences (age, gender, education), behavior audiences (based on past purchases), lookalike audiences (common qualities with your existing customers), and custom audiences (created from your contacts) in order to reach the right users ("Targeting correctly on Facebook," 2019). Facebook accumulates this user data in order to make these targeted advertisements from the customer profile information entered at the time an account is created, which is then used for all of the business analytics ("Targeting correctly on Facebook," 2019). This shows how a business can target any demographic it wants using Facebook as their social media platform for marketing their products.

Facebook is far from the only social media platform aiming to attract businesses to advertise and promote their brands. Facebook competes with other social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Pinterest, which will all be introduced below. One of these

competitors, Instagram, is a social media platform that promotes personal connections and brand interactions through photo/video sharing.

Instagram

Instagram is an image based social networking application created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger that launched in 2010, and was later bought by Facebook in 2012; it is built around sharing photos and videos allowing users to follow other users of their choice creating a feed showing posts from everyone they follow (Stegner, 2019). All Instagram users have a profile and a visual newsfeed; the creative benefits of the platform such as photo filters and editing options allow an additional dimension of interaction for users (Graham & Anouti, 2019). Instagram works with hashtags, so brands can use them to tap into the general mood of followers on the network or create their own campaign-specific hashtags (Graham & Anouti, 2019).

Instagram launched its own Stories feature in 2016 and by 2018 Instagram Stories had 400 million active users, which is more than twice as many as Snapchat, showing how quickly users took to the new feature (Lieber, 2019). Pew Research Centers reports 67% of users are between 18 to 29 years of age (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Seventy-six percent of Instagram users ages 18 to 29 claim to visit the site on a daily basis, with 60% reporting that they do so several times per day (Perrin & Anderson, 2019).

In terms of the adult Instagram users, a study done in 2018 reports that 35% of U.S. adults use this platform which increased from the 28% who said they used it in 2016 (Smith & Anderson, 2018). In 2017, after Instagram introduced brand advertising in between Instagram Stories, the company revealed that 150 million people used Instagram Stories daily, representing a 50 million user increase in just three months (Heine, 2017). This was the reaction even with the

story feature being such a new tool for brands like Asos, Nike, Buick and Airbnb testing it out (Heine, 2017). An example of an Instagram page from a small fashion business can be seen in Figure 3.

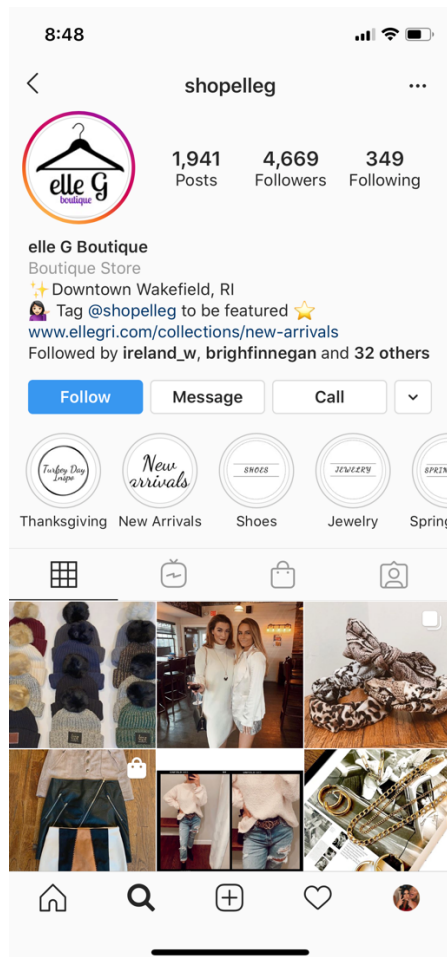


Figure 3. Elle G Boutique's Instagram Business Profile.

Businesses also have the opportunity to market through Instagram influencers. Influencers are content creators who have accumulated a solid base of followers through blogging, vlogging, or creating short-form content where they provide their followers insight into their personal, everyday lives as well as their experiences and opinions (Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Companies can involve influencers by offering them opportunities to test out

products, organize exclusive events, or simply pay them to endorse their products in an effort to build their brand image among the influencer's follower base and in the long run drive sales (Veirman et al., 2017). For small businesses this can be more realistic in terms of budget and more desirable than endorsing mainstream celebrities because influencers are believed to be accessible, believable, and intimate by their followers who feel they can more easily relate to them and trust their opinions (Veirman et al., 2017).

Instagram provides the option for users to shop the looks they like while scrolling through Instagram via tags that users can click on which direct the consumer to a sales point for that particular product. Instagram's Director of Product Management stated that 90 million people are clicking on products through shopping tags on Instagram (Holbrook, 2018). A Daily News article highlighted Instagram's omnichannel dominance and acknowledged the value of Instagram to brick-and-mortar retail adding that associates are racking up sales by connecting with clients via Instagram (Holbrook, 2018).

In direct reference to fashion businesses, a study completed in 2018 found that using a snapshot aesthetic, as opposed to using a traditional studio aesthetic, when marketing a fashion brand on Instagram resulted in more likes on the images and a higher perceived credibility of the brand behind the account (Colliander & Marder, 2018). A snapshot aesthetic can be explained as a picture that portrays average situations and appears as if it could have been taken by the average consumer. This evidence shows that brand attitudes were positively affected; as a result, viewers recommended the Instagram account to other people (Colliander & Marder, 2018). This can be credited to people wanting a more authentic connection and relationship to the brand rather than content being formal and posed. This says something about the consumers that businesses are trying to target and what types of content attracts the audience's attention.

Twitter

The platform to be looked at next, with a very different system of sharing information and advertising for businesses, is Twitter. Twitter has unique communication features and its own demographic that the platform attracts based on its many different networking features. Twitter is a microblogging platform that has continued to grow since its launch in October 2006 where users create profiles and send messages (containing photos and URLs linked to content), called tweets, out to their followers with each posting being limited to 140 characters (Kinney & Ireland, 2015). The registered members can broadcast tweets and follow those of others by adopting an @ handle (Graham & Anouti, 2019). Unlike Facebook, there are no brand pages; companies create profiles just like other users and have their profiles marked as verified (blue checkmark) to ensure users that the page represents the brand (Kinney & Ireland, 2015). The platform has created a lot of interest through its ability to provoke user comment, in particular to hash tagged words and phrases, which invite all users to take part in trending topics and current opinion (Graham & Anouti, 2019).

Pew Research Center in 2019 found that Twitter users are much younger than the average U.S. adult with a median age of adult twitter users being 40 whereas the U.S. median age is 47 years old (Wojcik & Hughes, 2019). Twitter users are nearly three times as likely to be younger than 50 as to be 50 or older; a study showed that 73% of users reported being younger than 50 while only 27% reported being 50 or older (Wojcik & Hughes, 2019). This current information is useful for business deciding if Twitter is a good marketing investment for them depending on the demographic toward which they are targeting their product.

For businesses looking to advertise on this platform, Twitter offers Promoted Tweets, which are tweets that are marked as “promoted” and appear on users’ timelines using an algorithm to determine which users will view them with access to “reply,” “favorite,” or “retweet,” and Promoted Accounts (Kinney & Ireland, 2015). An example of a Twitter profile from a small fashion business, Fifth and Ninth, can be seen in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Fifth and Ninth’s Twitter Business Profile

Twitter offers Twitter Ads for businesses of all sizes even if they are just starting out. Before getting into the logistics of Twitter, the company recommends that a business should decide the objective of the campaign and what it is trying to achieve, including whether it be to

raise awareness, attract new followers, send traffic to their website, or increase engagement (“Find the types”, 2019). Twitter Ads use targeting features to reach the audience the business intends to attract. The ads run in an auction where businesses can decide how much they want to pay for each interaction (adding a new follower or clicks to their website), or they can use automatic bidding which determines the best bid cost based on the business’s given budget and goals (“Find the types”, 2019). Twitter Ads has no minimum campaign fee and the business can determine the daily budget for their ads (“Find the types”, 2019). The creative aspect is left up to the business and should be designed by selecting the tweets the business wants to focus on in the campaign including call-to-actions, like “sign up” or “start today.” This option may be successful and worth the investment, however, it can get costly for a business. Twitter analytics shows the business its tweet activity by measuring engagement for the company to improve its tweets and information about its followers to explore the interests, locations and demographics of its followers (“Analytics”, 2019).

Twitter cards allow users to attach photos, videos, and media experiences to Tweets helping drive traffic to their website (“Optimize Tweets”, 2019). A business can simply add a few lines of HTML to its webpage, and users who Tweet links to the business’s content will have a “Card” added to the Tweet that is visible to their followers (“Optimize Tweets”, 2019). With four different card types to choose from, a business can use Twitter cards to ask its audience to view an image, watch a video, visit a landing page or download an app without them ever having to leave Twitter; these four different types are summary cards, large photo summary cards, player cards, and app cards (Seiter, 2019).

If a small business does not yet have the time or money to invest in Twitter Ads, Twitter’s Promote Mode option can be considered an affordable, always-on promotion engine.

This option automates the brand's marketing efforts for "less than the price of a cup of coffee per day", enabling a business to focus more time on creating their best tweets ("Build your brand", 2019). Twitter Promote Mode grows a personal brand or business's influence by automatically amplifying its message to a larger interested audience for a low monthly fee where a business can reach up to 30,000 additional people and add new followers every month ("Build your brand", 2019). Once the business starts gaining traction and wants a more targeted solution or brand campaign, it can then pair Promote Mode with Twitter Ads for easy customer advertising solutions ("Find the types", 2019). Twitter also provides advertisers with data sets that show the number of impressions (reads or scroll-overs), engagement rates, retweets and those users who have made a post a favorite (Graham & Anouti, 2019).

Twitter stands as one of the main platforms for businesses to communicate with consumers. This is because the platform allows individuals to ask questions, write complaints, and make comments, among other interactions where a consumer can receive responses more quickly than other forms of communication with the company, some companies responding within the hour (Davis, 2017). Social media sites like Twitter are beneficial for companies because they participate in highly viral conversations where customers are making suggestions, asking questions, and voicing concerns for all Twitter users to see on their feed and join in on displaying the business's customer service and the dialogue they create with their customers (Davis, 2017). The social aspect of businesses engaging with their audience is appealing to customers and will encourage them to shop with a specific business. The twitter audience is influential, receptive, and eager to discover new brands, ideas, and products ("Find the types", 2019).

A study done in 2017 showed that tweets of fashion brands using emojis were positively related to the number of replies, retweets, and likes as a new form of communication providing an opportunity for fashion brands to increase engagement with their consumers by humanizing themselves through the use of emojis (Mathews, Botwin, & Lee, 2017). It was found that fashion brands use of emojis is minimal; this is a great opportunity for a business looking to market products on Twitter to take advantage of and explore a wide array of emojis developing creative ways to implement them into their Twitter messages (Mathews et al., 2017).

Snapchat

Another platform to be considered by a small business when looking to market on social media is Snapchat. Snapchat was created by Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy and Reggie Brown at Stanford University and launched in 2011 as a photo and video messaging application that enables users to talk with friends, view live stories, and explore news (Chang, 2017). Snapchat differentiates itself from other platforms by its privacy features. The unique privacy aspect of this app enables users to share snaps with friends including images, videos, and text that disappear forever in a matter of seconds after the user views it for a set amount of time determined by the sender (Vaterlaus, Barnett, Roche, & Young, 2016). Fun editing tools such as the ability to draw on or add animations to images make Snapchat content customizable, creative and less serious for users; the network is intended to show raw, unedited and unpolished footage that is about capturing the moment (Graham & Anouti, 2019). The app uses an algorithm to calculate who the user snaps the most which creates a list of the users' "best friends" which can now only be viewed by users themselves. Previously, a user's friends could also see their "best

friend” list which they updated in the effort to increase the privacy of users and names of those with whom they communicate (Vaterlaus et al., 2016).

In its most recent earnings report (December 1, 2019), Snap Inc. stated it had 203 million active users which was an increase from 188 million a year earlier and the company revenue is up 48% (Lieber, 2019). This shows that despite rumors of Snapchat’s popularity being on the decline, this is indeed not true, and people are still largely engaged with the platform and it continues to grow its user base. The platform is bouncing back at a time when private messaging platforms are becoming the social media of choice; there is no pressure because the platform is not fueled by likes, comments and views. In a time of increasing awareness of online context collapse and of privacy issues, Snapchat provides users a more personal and limited communication platform which people prefer (Vaterlaus et al., 2016). Pew Research Center reports that roughly eight in ten Snapchat users age 18 to 29 (77%) say they use the app every day, with 68% who say they do so multiple times a day (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). The age difference in relation to the use of social media is especially notable for this platform where 78% of 18-24 years old are Snapchat users, but the share falls to 54% among those between the ages of 25 and 29 (Smith & Anderson, 2018). The main demographic using Snapchat are teens in which 90% of users are between the ages of 13 and 24 (Lieber, 2019).

Snapchat has found its niche for fashion advertising, since teens are precisely the demographic many brands are looking to target (Lieber, 2019). According to the National Retail Federation, Gen Z holds \$44 billion in buying power which is Snapchat’s demographic; they claim to reach 75% of teens in the U.S. (Lieber, 2019). Fashion brands need to know how to use Snapchat to their advantage in order for them to turn users into customers and make their marketing efforts worthwhile. According to Lieber (2019), businesses should use the platform

less to show off their products sharing ad campaigns and more as an opportunity to reach loyal audiences when users are looking to engage with, and connect to, friends. Snap Ads are the main source for businesses to spread awareness or allow purchases to be made with one tap on the ad that can consist of videos, photos, gif-like creatives, or cinemographs; the ads take over a user's full screen in between tapping through friends' Snapchat Stories so ads are never competing for a viewer's attention ("Ad Types Overview", 2019). Snapchat has enabled shopping via a third-party app that works from screenshots saved by users; once they are saved, users can link directly to the products featured by influencers on Snapchat (Graham & Anouti, 2019).

In order to differentiate the platform from competitors, Snapchat added the location feature that tracks a user's location, accessible to their friends, that can also be viewed on a map and interacted with. The company can use this location information for their analytics to determine users store visits (Johnson, 2018). Snapchat invested significant engineering resources into location for advertising purposes (Johnson, 2018). Snapchat began testing Snap to Store in 2017, a product to track how many users who viewed an advertiser's ad actually went to a store, which is now available to all brands whether they buy advertising or not (Johnson, 2018).

Fashion brands can now pay for Snapchat technology where a brand can place "buttons" in their stories that allow users to access special Snapchat lenses providing special codes that give users access to cartoon-like 3D branded graphics for their Snaps (Lieber, 2019). This way users can access the brand through Snapchat augmented realities even though they many not necessarily be able to afford the brand. This allows all consumers to create a relationship with the brand through Snapchat.

Pinterest

The final platform to be considered by a small fashion business is Pinterest. Although less established in popularity than previous platforms discussed, Pinterest is a constantly growing platform that businesses should not overlook because of the potential it may hold for the fashion industry. Pinterest launched in 2009 as a networking site that allows users to create and share images or videos by creating digital pinboards, which is a collection of so-called pins that usually share a common theme (Hayden, 2012). The platform is available as a web and mobile application for the collection and curation of online images (Graham & Anouti, 2019). Pinterest also uses hashtags as a useful tool for followers searching for niche topics. The platform allows users to bookmark and save images that appeal to them according to themes, preferences, and interests, and to arrange them on a board that can be shared and liked by followers; the action of pinning an image to a board maintains a link to its original source directing customers to a business's website to purchase the product being advertised (Graham & Anouti, 2019). Fashion brands can tell a wider visual story about a product by including inspirational images or providing followers with helpful information about the product (Graham & Anouti, 2019).

Pinterest has seen rapid growth in part due to people moving away from other social platforms with security risks and looking to market through other platforms. As of 2018 Pinterest boasts 250 million active monthly users, which is a 75% increase over 2017 with 77.4 million users in the U.S. alone (Holbrook, 2018). One and a half million businesses currently advertise on the platform, and there are 3 billion virtual pin boards (Holbrook, 2018). Pew Research Center found that women are nearly three times more likely to use Pinterest as men by 42% versus 15% (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Businesses targeting women specifically should keep

Pinterest in mind when choosing a social media platform to suit their brand. An example of a Pinterest profile from a small fashion business, Fifth and Ninth, can be seen in Figure 5.

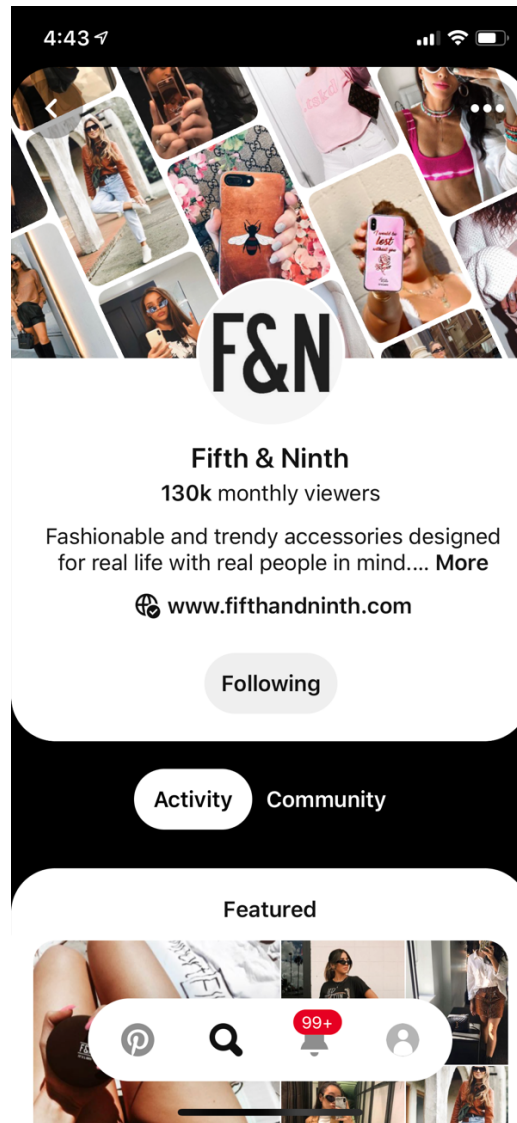


Figure 5. Fifth and Ninth's Pinterest Business Profile.

Pinterest ads can be created in four easy steps. First a business must select the best pins to be promoted so they appear in the most relevant places; this is followed by step 2 which is setting up targeting so the consumers the business is attempting to target are the users viewing the ad (“Reach more people”, 2019). Step 3 is to choose the budget for engagement and visits to

the business's site followed by the final step which is to track the progress to make changes to optimize the ads ("Reach more people", 2019).

The core of Pinterest's advertising model is shoppable content with a "Shop the Look" feature that allows users to discover specific items on the platform that they can purchase with a click if they are for sale, and if not, to be directed to similar items for sale within Pinterest (Holbrook, 2018). Pinterest Lens, which facilitates the Shop the Look feature, has seen a 140% increase in usage since 2017 (Holbrook, 2018). This provides a simple model for users to purchase, share, and save the content trending on Pinterest that interests users. Pinterest can drive immediate online sales through visual, shoppable pins but not all pins instantly drive conversion; some users create inspiration boards that they bring with them to brick and mortar stores to use as inspiration (Holbrook, 2018). An example of Pinterest's shoppable feature on a small fashion business's profile can be seen in Figure 6.

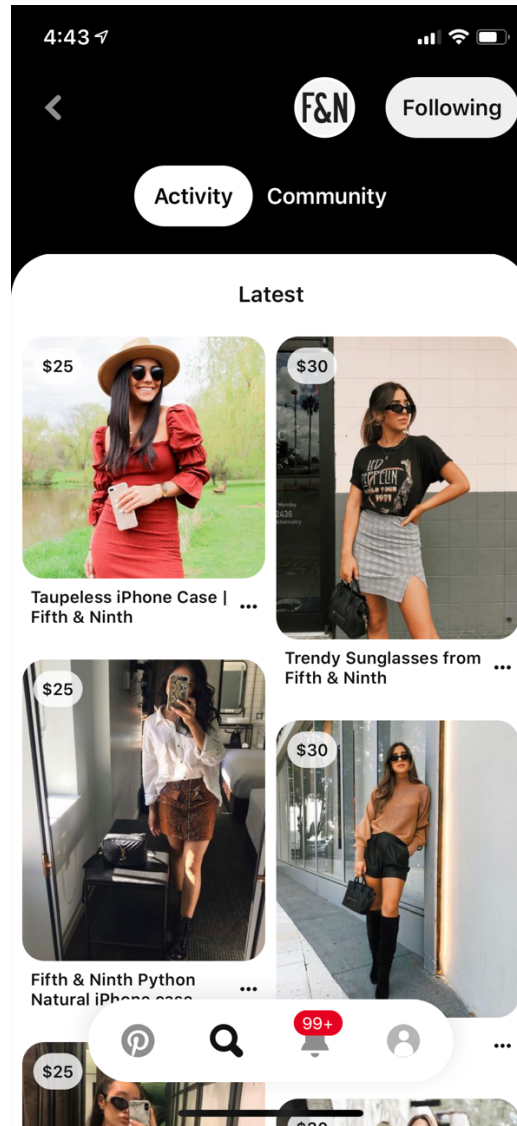


Figure 6. Pinterest's Shoppable Feature.

The demographic reach hits the retail sweet spot of millennials but extends from Gen Z through the Baby Boomers integrating a wide demographic (Holbrook, 2018). People look to Pinterest for inspiration for fashion, weddings, vacations, home renovation projects, and much more. Pinterest is different from the other social media platforms because it is less invasive and straight to the point; users go on Pinterest to find what they are looking for without the ads, gossip, and information so that they spend less time scrolling and more time living their lives.

Analysis

Five social media platforms have been discussed in this paper for small fashion businesses to consider when implementing their marketing mix. This section analyzes the literature to provide recommendations for small businesses to apply to their marketing mix. This advice is helpful for small businesses deciding which platforms are most efficient in which to invest their marketing budget based on factors unique to each business. Brands have launched business profiles on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, often appearing across all channels and working with the nature of each platform (Graham & Anouti, 2019). They have placed their brands in this consumer-centric forum that has created an opportunity for followers to comment on, contribute to and create content with the brands in which they are interested (Graham & Anouti, 2019). While it is ideal to advertise on all sites, many small businesses do not have the time or money to do that while they are still “small”. Narrowing down to a few select platforms will allow a business to focus its efforts and get the best return on investment while accomplishing goals and reaching its intended audience (Weist, 2018).

The first thing a small business should do in this decision-making process is identify the business’s audience. Businesses can do this by identifying their typical customer, how old he/she is, male or female, income and education level, and their interests outside of the business’s products (“Choosing the Right Social Media”, 2019). This helps to build a profile for the audience a brand is targeting. The platform sections above help draw the parallels between who the brand is targeting and who makes up the majority of the users on each platform.

After identifying the audience (target market), a business should then define the goals it has for that audience. Aside from the obvious goal of driving sales by attracting customers, there are other creative goals for a social media strategy like driving brand recognition and developing

friendly relationships with potential buyers, which can also be used for customer service (“How to Effectively Market”, 2019). Some other goals a business may want to consider are brand awareness, finding new sales opportunities, reputation management, increasing customer satisfaction, inspiring customer loyalty, product launch analysis, and a competitive analysis (“The complete guide to social”, 2019). A company can do this by taking the time to think of typical and also unusual ways social media could work for the brand.

Once a business has its audience profiled and goals defined, it can determine its audience uses by looking at the demographics of the users on each platform (“Choosing the Right Social Media”, 2019). A business also needs to consider how active its audience is on each platform and then aside from both demographics and engagement, a business should consider how individuals use the platform. Just because there are more users on one platform, does not mean all users are active or have the intention to shop for merchandise that pertains to a specific fashion brand.

To briefly breakdown the brands and make it easier to put into perspective, they can be organized by demographics, purpose, what they are used best for, and the disadvantages:

Facebook’s demographic in America is mostly adults but generally all age ranges (Perrin & Anderson, 2019; West, 2019). In terms of gender, it is nearly split down the middle but leans more towards a female user base (Perrin & Anderson, 2019; West, 2019). It serves as a platform that allows a business to interact with its community and build brand awareness (Weist, 2018). Facebook’s purpose is for building relationships, and for small businesses it is best for building brand loyalty (“Choosing the Right Social Media”, 2019).

Instagram’s demographic is much younger than that of Facebook and is more popular among women with 39% of online women using Instagram compared to 30% of online men (West, 2019). Instagram’s purpose is also building relationships and conversations; the

platform's lead generations are retail, art, food, entertainment and the beauty business ("Choosing the Right Social Media", 2019). Knowing the business's user performance is also helpful to look at the current website traffic. For example, if users are all females that gravitate to the visuals of each landing page, then Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest are great platforms for the business (Weist, 2018).

Twitter's demographic is mostly made up of people in their 20s while it is still commonly used amongst the ages of 13-49 and is split almost exactly even by females and males with 24% of online women and 23% of men using Twitter (West, 2019). Twitter's purpose is for news and conversations and is best for public relations while the disadvantage is the limited characters in tweets ("Choosing the Right Social Media", 2019). According to Pew Research Center Americans ages 18 to 24 are substantially more likely to use platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter even when compared with those in their mid to late 20s (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Snapchat's demographic is also a younger audience mostly in the range of 13-29 years old with 31% of online women and 23% of online men using Snapchat so the platform is slightly more female dominated (West, 2019). The platform's purpose is communication and it is great for brand interactions with the filter features and the sharing of stories. If a business is comparing advertising opportunities, Snapchat is actually bigger than Instagram due to the fact that Snapchat is less saturated: when users see an ad, they are more likely to watch it than on Facebook where they click away because they are flooded with ads on their timeline (Lieber, 2019).

Pinterest's demographic ranges in age and is largely female dominated (West, 2019). The platform is more popular amongst younger users between the ages of 18-49 but it still has a

steady user base ranging from 50-65+ years old (West, 2019). Pinterest's purpose can be referred to as "scrapbooking" and is ideal for showcasing clothing, art, and the food business ("Choosing the Right Social Media", 2019). For the fashion industry specifically, Pinterest and Instagram are the most preferred platforms with 93% of active pinners reporting they use Pinterest to plan for purchases because it is mainly visual where 81% of Pinterest users are female (Weist, 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

This paper reviewed literature on which platforms used in social media marketing are most suitable for the needs of small fashion businesses. The literature review began with books and refereed journal articles. The addition of literature from research centers, newsletters, and business consultants allowed incorporation of current statistics and information for business owners to take into consideration. This is crucial because of the fast nature of today's fashion business, and the need to stay on top of quick changing social media platforms. Five platforms have been reviewed: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Pinterest. It would be inaccurate and misleading to claim that one platform is the "best" for all small fashion businesses because the platform that is most efficient for a small fashion business depends on each individual business. A business's social media marketing mix has to be customized to each individual business. Many factors making up the business determine which platform(s) is best; thus, the recommendations combined with those factors can help a business confidently make this decision. Before deciding which platforms work best for a small fashion business, factors have to be considered such as target audience, product mix, budget, and goals. Once these factors are clearly defined by a business the information in this paper can be applied to best fit the business.

A small fashion business selling good quality apparel for middle-aged women should consider Facebook as an efficient platform for its brand. Facebook has an adult dominated user base and a growing senior demographic as well as a high percentage of users who use Facebook to shop. Facebook analytics help target the specific demographic a business is trying to attract on a platform with a wide range of users in terms of age.

A business selling inexpensive trendy items for the teen market should consider using Snapchat or Instagram with both platforms' user demographic being heavily saturated in the teen market. Ninety percent of Snapchat users are between the ages of 13 and 24. Snapchat has found its niche for fashion advertising through Snapchat filters and "buttons" in Snapchat stories. Instagram's main demographic is between the ages of 18 to 29, but that is not to say that adults do not use this platform. Instagram has become a platform known for sharing and influencing fashion through brand pages and the use of influencers by brands.

A brand marketing gender neutral merchandise would find Twitter to be efficient because of its even gender use and campaign capabilities. Any business looking to build relationships and communicate with consumers would find Twitter effective because of its interactive nature.

A fashion brand looking to target mostly women and a wide age range anywhere from 18-49 years old should consider Pinterest. Pinterest is largely woman dominated and has a diverse demographic ranging from Generation Z to Baby Boomers. However, millennials are mostly attracted to the retail content of Pinterest.

Social media is not going away anytime soon; rather than ignoring it, small businesses should use it as a tool to their advantage to grow their businesses. Social media has worked more than any other tool to push the demand for instant access to the latest fashions (Graham & Anouti, 2019). In order to engage younger, centennial-age audiences, and to meet audience

demand to buy immediately, it is expected that initiatives to make social media more directly shoppable will emerge over the coming years (Graham & Anouti, 2019). When shoppable features are added, social media works as a hub for fashion brands to communicate quickly and directly with audiences (Graham & Anouti, 2019). Some 88% of 18 to 29-year olds indicate that they use any form of social media, while 78% among the ages 30 to 49, to 64% among those ages 50 to 64 and down to 37% among Americans 65 and older (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Not only do people use it for social interaction, information finding, and browsing products, but people depend on social media and struggle when they do not have access to it. The share of social media users who say these platforms would be hard to give up has increased by 12% compared to a survey conducted in 2014 showing the growing reliance on social media in users' lives (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Limitations and Future Research

The literature search was restricted to social media platforms suitable for small fashion businesses. Case studies and comparative studies would validate the recommendations supplied above. Additional research is warranted to generate the analytics provided by the social media platforms specifically for small businesses.

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