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4-6-2023

Best Practices for Social Media Branding

Allison Myers
Georgia Southern University

Best Practices for Social Media Branding

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in
Department of Art

By
Allison Myers

Under the mentorship of *Jason Murdock*

ABSTRACT

Social media is a fast growing marketplace for businesses to advertise themselves to established and potential consumers. Each platform has different algorithms, demographics, and ways for users to interact and connect. Even with a constantly growing research field and course options around the subject, understanding the behaviors of viewers on each app can still be a tough guessing game. Therefore, I have used both research studies and online courses, to present a strategy with which to efficiently and effectively market one's business for Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. I then present ways to understand the success of this and personal marketing strategies. Using social media can improve your business, using a strategy specific for your brand can drastically improve your business.

Thesis Mentor: *Jason Murdock*

Honors Dean: Dr. Steven Engel

April 2023
Department of Art
Honors College
Georgia Southern University

From the very beginning of every brand's life comes the never ending effort of persuading consumers to buy their products over their competitors. Over the years there have been many advancements in the world of marketing to get more advertisements in front of more people as quickly as possible. Today, there are thousands of spaces and means with which to advertise. With the countless ways to reach such a wide range of people, businesses wonder, "how do we make our product/service stand out, reach our target audience, and grow our sales?". Each company practices different strategies to achieve these goals, but almost all use social media in some form to promote themselves. And with 30.57 million businesses using this platform in the United States alone[1] standing out and enticing customers can be a daunting task. The rapid growth of content creation as a career has led to an increase in social media proficiency among younger generations. This has led to a variety of online and institutional courses to inform people on how to use social media in the most effective way and achieve their goals. Along with courses, there is a constant growing research field aiming to gain an insight into the minds of consumers on different social platforms. By using these studies, businesses can begin to understand the demographics and typical behaviors of users on each app which can help them to reach their target audience and learn how to promote their content. By comparing both of these major sources of information, I plan to create a well thought out and informed strategy for companies to promote themselves

[1] M Yaqub, "How Many Businesses Use Social Media 2022: Social Media For Business Statistics," BusinessDIT, October 14, 2022, https://www.businessdit.com/social-media-for-business-statistics/.

efficiently and effectively. With such a large selection of social media platforms, it can be difficult to know which ones are most important to devote time and effort to. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as these have been the most used platforms in 2022.[2]

As of 2022, Facebook reached an average of 2.91 billion active users monthly. Of these users, statistics show that 43% are female and 57% are male. The largest age group of this audience is between 25-34 years old.[3] In 2019, 96% of businesses were using Facebook in some way to promote themselves[4], and with users only spending an average of 33 minutes per day on the app, it is crucial to be ahead of the competition to stay on people's feeds.[5] In order to do this, it is necessary to understand what the algorithm wants to show. The algorithm is the way certain social media sites "sort user's feeds based on relevancy instead of publish time."[6] Facebook changed theirs in 2018 when the creator, Mark Zuckerburg, wanted to make the app display more of what each user wants based on their interests. This is determined by how users interact with each post. By showing more of what the user interacted with, the goal was to make each person's feed more valuable to them.[7] This calls for accounts to

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[2] Brent Barnhart, "Social Media Demographics to Inform Your Brand's Strategy in 2022," Sprout Social, March 2, 2022, https://sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics/.

[3] Barnhart, "Social Media Demographics to Inform Your Brand's Strategy in 2022."

[4] Claire Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits* (HarperCollins Leadership, 2019), 91.

[5] Barnhart, "Social Media Demographics to Inform Your Brand's Strategy in 2022."

[6] Brent Barnhart, "Everything You Need to Know about Social Media Algorithms," Sprout Social, March 26, 2021, https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/.

[7] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 93.

focus on getting engagement from current followers rather than trying to reach for wider audiences.

To tackle this task as a business, a suggested strategy was made to call users to interact with each post. For Facebook, interacting can include liking, commenting, sharing, and sending via Facebook messenger. This challenge can be daunting as "Facebook users are the least engaged of any major social media network." Diaz-Ortiz makes a few recommendations on how to make the algorithm for one's account. Creating fewer, more meaningful posts and calling for interaction drives the algorithm to push one's content. A way to try to get around issues with the algorithm is to suggest that viewers look at the "Pages Feed" instead of the "News Feed", turn post notifications on, and have them join a "group" so they can see more of the content.[8] What is created is equally as important as how it is promoted through the algorithm. Knowing what part of the "customer journey" viewers are in can help one create content catered to these customers. The "customer journey" simply refers to the pathway consumers follow when purchasing things starting at awareness of a company all the way to being a returning loyal customer. To reach established fans, pushing new products or features may increase interest and interaction. Mixing these kinds of posts with easy to understand graphics and information allows newcomers to the page to also gain interest.[9] After planning out the posts' topics, the next step is deciding how to show it. Cvijikij and Michahelles found that, of the five different

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[8] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 93.

[9] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*. Online Course, https://www.coursera.org/learn/10kw-digital-marketing

types of posts Facebook supports (status, video, link, photo, and music), status

was the most popular form.[10] However, Dias-Ortiz noted that shared videos can

get 186% higher engagement and users will spend "3x longer on live videos than

recorded ones."[11] Often the best way to show the information will change with

each topic, so trial and error may be the best way to learn how the audience

interacts and learns with different types of content. Catching the audience at the

right time is crucial to one's content being seen; the lowest level of activity was

found to occur at 2:00 am GMT; from 17:00 to 21:00 GMT the most amount of

posts were shared. By using status posts as their basis, Cvijikj and Michahelles

distinguished three major categories of topics that typically trend: disruptive

events, popular topics, and daily routines. Because of Facebook's algorithm

system, being seen can sometimes be difficult. Therefore staying on top of what

is trending increases the chances of being seen by joining in that trend, speaking

out on popular issues, or simply joining in on the audience's routines.[12]

  In addition to being seen, it is important to build a relationship with one's

fanbase. This bond helps to build a positive reputation, and a greater likelihood of

purchasing among the audience. It has been shown that more than 50% of users

are more likely to shop with a company they can message on Facebook

Messenger, and 56% of consumers would rather chat online than call for

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[10] Irena Pletikosa Cvijikj and Florian Michahelles, "Monitoring Trends on Facebook," *IEEE International Conference on Dependable, Autonomic and Secure Computing*, December 11, 2011, https://doi.org/10.1109/dasc.2011.150.

[11] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 93.

[12] Cvijikj and Michahelles, "Monitoring Trends on Facebook."

customer service issues. Using Facebook's messaging system was particularly successful for LEGO. They set up a chat bot known as "Ralph" to suggest different toys customers should buy at Christmas time. This also resulted in a 71% lower cost per purchase for the company.[13]

With the algorithm constantly evolving to meet each user's needs, it can be difficult to stay ahead of the game and on people's feeds. To supplement this, companies can boost content with paid ads. These have been proven to be successful so much so that brands that use them are more than twice as likely to say social media marketing has been "very effective" versus than brands that do not. Part of what makes this so successful is the ability to push ads to a specific target demographic.[14] Goldman Sachs uses keywords and call to action on posts to attract attention and business with paid advertising.[15] Diaz-Oritz suggests three things to consider when creating an ad. First is using the "grunt test." This essentially states that if someone sees an ad or website, they need to immediately know what is being promoted or they will leave. Secondly, pattern disruption which is trying to catch viewers off guard to notice something. For example, instead of constant high-quality professional pictures, throwing in a "raw" picture might disrupt the feed enough to get more people interested in what is written in the caption.[16] Finally, Diaz-ortiz notes that the creator has to discern if

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[13] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 95.

[14] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 97.

[15] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*.

[16] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 99-100.

using long or short form text in the caption or status post will be more successful for what is being promoted.[17] Getting to know the target audience and the Facebook algorithm are the best ways to push content and increase views on Facebook.

GoPro is one of the top performers on Facebook when it comes to views and engagement according to various online sites.[18] With a quick scroll through their pinned posts on their page, it is clear to see a strategy at work. This strategy proves itself as their personal route to success and can be used as an example for up and coming accounts. The pinned posts clearly show a variety of content for those who just became aware of the brand and for those who are repeat customers. On February 5, 2023 they posted a "Photo of the Day" of a dog (fig. 1). This is a great tactic for showing newly interested consumers what their products can do, and it also gets more people involved by asking them for their own picture submissions further increasing their chances of being seen on people's feeds. Another pinned post shows a short video with an easy to read caption highlighting the features of a new product (fig. 2). A quick, simple, easily understandable post like this can grab the interest of already established customers. The pinned posts also use a fairly even mix of photos and videos, most of which show some kind of scenic location, and/or an in-action video. This seems to be the best for their audience, as their target customer is outgoing and

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[17] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 102.

[18] Jessica Malnik, "16 Most Interesting & Engaging Company Pages on Facebook | Databox Blog," Databox, January 21, 2022, https://databox.com/best-brands-on-facebook.; Dayne Topkin, "7 Brands With Brilliant Facebook Marketing Strategies, and Why They Work," April 20, 2020, https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/facebook-marketing-examples.

adventurous. In addition to calling for photos to post, GoPro connects with their

audience through Facebook Messenger. You can see on their "About" section on

their page they are rated as "very responsive to messages." Once again, this has

been shown to build trust and sales from the consumers to the brand. They use

both hashtags and tagging to increase views and engagement. By tagging the

people in the images or the products they boost both the views of that post and

whomever they tag. On February first, we can see in figure three an example of a

great caption using these tactics. In the caption, Jesper Tjäder is tagged, the link

to what they are promoting is included, and they use both specific to their brand

hashtags (#GoProHERO11, #GoProSnow, #GoPro) and generic hashtags

(#Skiing, #Ski, #Creative, #Colorado). This is a perfect example of using the

caption to work at its greatest potential. Finally, it is clear that part of GoPro's

successful strategy is using other popular pages and people to promote their

products or brand. This is a form of advertising where a user and brand each

post on their own accounts in collaboration. In this case, gold-medallist Sage

Kotsenburg, promotes GoPro on his account, by tagging them in his caption, and

the GoPro account spotlights him (fig. 4). This is an ideal relationship because

both accounts have a similar target group of people they are trying to reach, it is

mutually beneficial for them. GoPro knows what their audience wants on

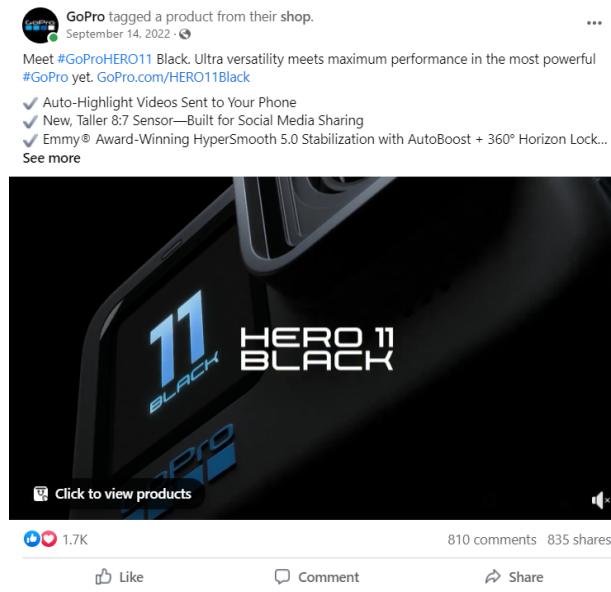Facebook, and they have found a way to deliver that to create a successful page.

Figure 1[19]

Figure 2[20]

[19] GoPro. 2023. "Photo of the Day: Puppy portraits 📸 Snapped on family photo day by Matt Mitchell Make sure to submit footage of your furry friends to GoPro.com/Awards for a paw-portunity for them to get featured ," Facebook, February 6, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/gopro/photos/a.383457956918/10159763226551919 (GoPro 2023)

[20]GoPro. 2022. "Meet #GoProHERO11 Black. Ultra versatility meets maximum performance in the most powerful #GoPro yet. GoPro.com/HERO11Black Auto-Highlight Videos Sent to Your Phone…," Facebook Video, September 14, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/gopro/videos/562773962311676/ (GoPro 2022)
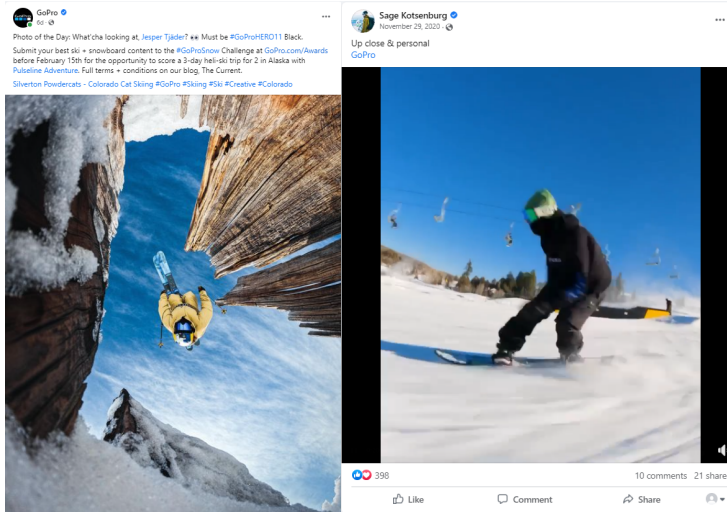
Figure 3[21]   Figure 4[22]

Instagram is another important place to find and create consumers. 72%

of users say they have bought a product off the app.[23] The users here have a

fairly similar demographic to Facebook. Out of the 2 billion monthly active users,

the largest age group is 25-34 years old, though 18-24 are quickly behind them.

There is a fairly even male, female split, and they average 29 minutes on the app

everyday.[24] Despite being run by the same company and having similar

demographics, research conducted for Instagram marketing seems to follow a

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[21] GoPro. 2023. "Photo of the Day: What'cha looking at, Jesper Tjäder? Must be #GoProHERO11 Black. Submit your best ski + snowboard content to the #GoProSnow Challenge at GoPro.com/Awards before February…," Facebook, January 30, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/gopro/photos/a.383457956918/10159752144681919 (GoPro 2023)

[22] Sage Kotsenburg. 2020. "Up close & personal GoPro," Facebook video, November 29, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/SageKotsenburg/videos/475706783414341/ (Kotsenburg 2020)

[23] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 103.

[24] Barnhart, "Social Media Demographics to Inform Your Brand's Strategy in 2022."

different strategy for the best branding practices. Before determining how to

promote the content, deciding how to convey the brand or company on Instagram

must come first. Jodie Cook states that creating a unique and professional look

for one's page starts with deciding what the main niche the company fits in to.

Determining this is the basis for building a look. Next, looking at competitors to

see what works and what does not work for them. When building the brand, it is

important to think of it as a whole; for example, thinking about how the account

name and bio work together, how specific colors and fonts show up on

Instagram, and how they relate back to the brand's official scheme.[25] Even

perfecting the username and profile picture of one's page holds value especially

because these appear on every post.[26] Building recognizability is also a key

factor in building trust and interest with consumers. An easy way to this is by

using consistent brand colors and complementary secondary colors, limiting the

palette to around four total. Once a consistent look for the content has been

decided, it is smart to archive older posts that do not fit within the new guidelines.

Fewer posts and more followers generally suggests a more successful page than

accounts with a lot of posts and less followers.[27] In order for each post to

contribute to one's goal, the Goldman Sachs course suggests asking "how will

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[25] Jodie Cook, *Instagram Rules: The Essential Guide to Building Brands, Business, and Community* (White Lion Publishing, 2020), https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=cat06429a&AN=gso. 9916321275802950

[26] *Tips for Creating Instagram Posts. Online Course*, https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/lessons/create-instagram-business-content?ref=search _new_0

[27] Cook, *Instagram Rules: The Essential Guide to Building Brands, Business, and Community*.

this help my audience, will this be different from what is already around, and is this easily consumable?" as a way to cut out unnecessary posts.[28] With the basic brand guidelines of the posts, collecting imagery is the next hurdle. Diaz-Ortiz suggests a key ingredient in gaining interaction and views is to make the audience feel like part of a story. The example given in her book is instead of a suitcase company posting simply their products, they gained more interest by posting models traveling with their products. By marketing this "aspirational identity", what the character of one's social media story wants on an "external, internal, and philosophical level", consumers are often left with a greater interest in the story that has been created and the product featured.[29] An online course even suggests asking, "What problem does your business solve?" Promoting your solution welcomes customers experiencing that problem to visit your page and learn more about the fix.[30] The difficulty in creating consumer personas and how to pique interest is considering customers that are at different levels of purchasing. Creating content to fit the needs of both those who have just become aware of the brand and repeat customers looking to purchase again can be difficult but is possible with a variety of content and strategy.[31]

Connecting with the target audience, like on all other platforms, is one of the biggest relationship boosters. There are a number of ways to do this on

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[28] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*.

[29] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 105.

[30] *Tips for Creating Instagram Posts.*

[31] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*.

Instagram. Simply sharing about struggles, or about devastating events that affect the company and customers is a great way to be "relatable" and more "trustworthy." Instagram also offers direct messaging. Similar to Facebook this is where most customers like to come for help, and by creating a better customer experience companies are more likely to build lifelong customers. Diaz-Ortiz, also suggests encouraging offline engagement. Her example listed was a company posting fan mail on a postcard they received.[32] Keeping up with the different ways of connecting will supply huge benefits for one's business.

Likewise to Facebook, the Instagram algorithm can be tricky.Something as simple as adding the location of where the photos were taken can encourage people to view other photos taken at the same location.[33] But an even bigger driver to keep up with the algorithm are hashtags. These can be key tools to reach more people since specific hashtags can be globally searched. Oliveria and Goussevskaia uncover ways hashtags helped boost influencer ad posts to increase viewers and engagement. From their dataset, they found the most popular hashtags were related to "fashion, fitness, and beauty" in that order, and generic hashtags (i.e. "love", "blogger", "instagood") can be used to boost posts as they always remain popular. Around certain holidays or major events, there is a steep increase in use of related hashtags but they often quickly decline shortly after. Many creators mix and match different hashtags to see what produces the best result for their content specifically. But, it can be a tricky task as using too

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[32] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 114.

[33] *Tips for Creating Instagram Posts.*

many results in damaging the post's activity. Oliveria and Goussevskaia found

that with an increase in the number of hashtags used, there was a decrease in

interactions. For influencers, using a small but diverse set of hashtags resulted in

the greatest increase in interactions.[34] Staying on top of current hashtags and

tracking their performance are great ways to determine the hashtags that work

best for posts based on how effective they are in achieving the set goals.

Sometimes using a more niche few hashtags might benefit views. When thinking

of the "aspirational identity" of her audience, a mom blogger created the hashtag

"#surprisedbymotherhood" which quickly took off among other moms sharing

their stories. By knowing her audience, this mom was able to create a small scale

trend that allowed her to reach and connect with other users.[35] Finding the

people to reach, and what kind of relationship to build with them is a key factor in

determining the best hashtags for each business' needs.

A large trend on Instagram is influencer marketing. This refers to popular

opinion leaders on the app sharing their experiences or recommending different

products in collaboration with companies. They offer a "low risk, affordable, and

effective entry point" into promoting content.[36] Finding the best influencer for

one's brand is paramount to making the collaboration valuable and effective. One

study found that "micro-influencers" boost better results than celebrities or

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[34] Lucas Nonato De Oliveira and Olga Goussevskaia, "Topic Trends and User Engagement on Instagram," *Web Intelligence*, November 30, 2020, 488–95, https://doi.org/10.1109/wiiat50758.2020.00073.

[35] Diaz-Ortiz, *Social Media Success for Every Brand: The Five StoryBrand Pillars That Turn Posts Into Profits,* 105.

[36] Martina Ngangom, ""How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship with Brands?" (Dissertation, Dublin Business School, 2020)

"macro-influencers." Micro-influencer in this case was defined as "users with relatively few followers (between 10,000 and 100,000), but high engagement" compared to celebrities who have "large follower bases (more than 100,000) but relatively low audience engagement."[37] However, if the goal is to simply raise awareness of a product, an influencer with millions of followers might work best. With countless accounts to choose from, finding someone who already posts content in the same industry is what separates a successful campaign from an unsuccessful one. Having someone with a genuine interest in the product creates a seemingly more "honest" review. Once the best influencer for one's needs has been decided on, the next step is determining how to incentivize them to collaborate. If one's company has control over any part of the post itself i.e. the time posted, the key points mentioned, the style used then the influencer must label the post as an ad. To avoid the "ad" label, sending the product over for free could be the solution.[38] The risk with this tactic is that a negative review could get out and create a negative image on the company, but the benefit is that non-disclosed ad posts had a 14.7% higher engagement rate than posts labeled as ads.[39]

Various sources have highlighted Nike as a brand that has a great strategy for Instagram marketing.[40] Having more followers than any other fashion

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[37] De Oliveira and Goussevskaia, "Topic Trends and User Engagement on Instagram."

[38] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*.

[39] De Oliveira and Goussevskaia, "Topic Trends and User Engagement on Instagram."

[40] Kaley Hart, "33 of the Best Brands on Instagram Right Now," Jumper Media, November 9, 2022, https://jumpermedia.co/33-of-the-best-brands-on-instagram/.;Lily Ugbaja, "26 Most Engaging Instagram Brands (and What We Can Learn From Them) | Databox Blog," Databox, August 4, 2022, https://databox.com/best-brands-on-instagram.

brand account on Instagram is no easy feat[41]; they have honed in on their

audience and they do it well. Like GoPro on Facebook, Nike posts a mix of

videos, images, product spotlights, and people spotlights. This increases

engagement for the many different types of followers and the different things they

find interesting. Much of their post content is based on someone using their

products rather than just the product itself. Like the suitcase company, creating

this "aspirational identity" encourages viewers to want the product to become

their ideal self, see figure 5. Nike finds its way of connecting with the audience

through athlete's stories and struggles shared on their page. On January 26,

2023, they posted about how the "running community has stepped up in so many

ways for the Asian community of New York City…" see figure 6. This is a great

example of a real world group of people that use Nike's products and make a

positive change in the world. Using influencers is another way Nike has moved

up in success on Instagram. This mutually beneficial relationship can be seen on

Nike's post from December 21, 2022 showcasing Craig Engels (figure 7), an

olympic runner, and on Engels post from May 2, 2022 where he is promoting a

giveaway of signed Nike shoes (figure 8). With many other influencers promoting

Nike and vice versa, Nike has found a way to reach a huge audience in an

efficient way. Like previously mentioned research suggests, using captions can

be key in increasing engagement and promoting your posts. For Nike, many of

their posts include tagging the locations and people in the pictures. The brand

also created a hashtag challenge "#FeelYourAll" encouraging fans to comment

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[41] Hart, "33 of the Best Brands on Instagram Right Now."

on posts sharing what makes them feel and work their best shown in figure 9.

This campaign led to over 500 posts from other users sharing their stories. With

such a high follower base, and engagement level, Nike knows how to strategize
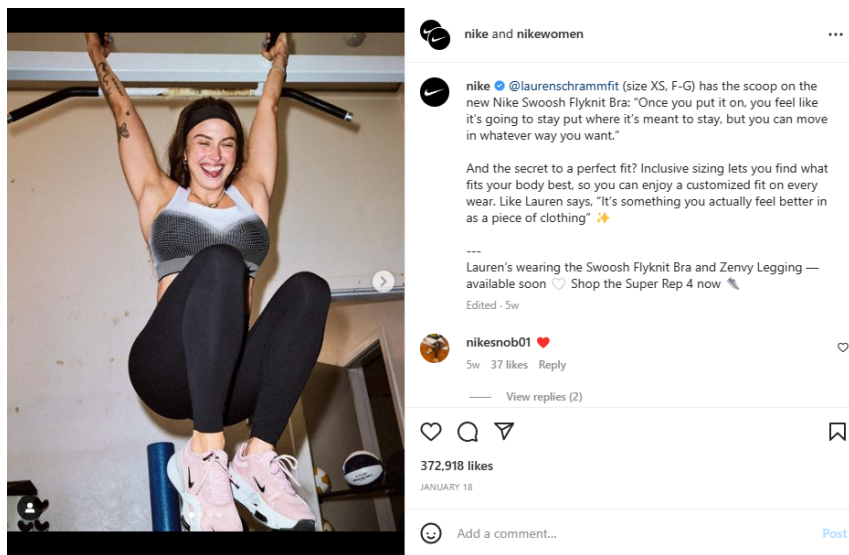
when it comes to advertising on Instagram.

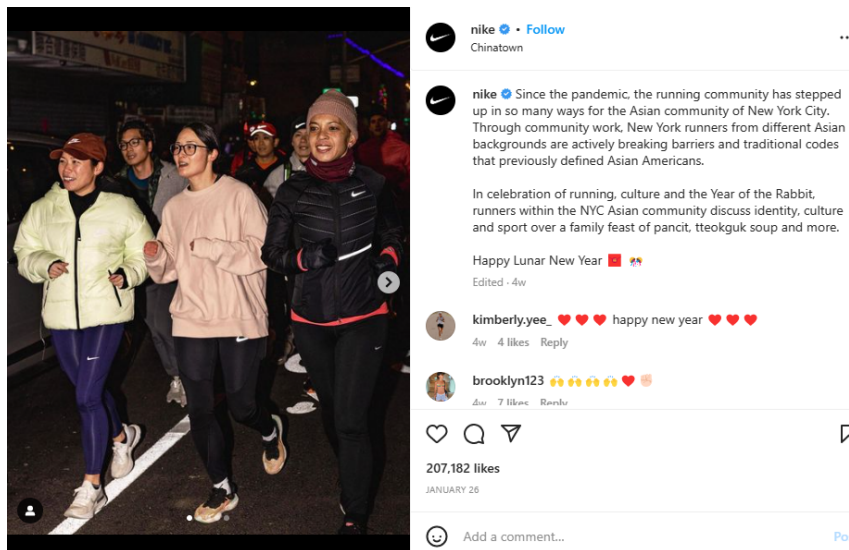Figure 5[42]

Figure 6[43]

[42] Nike. 2023. " @laurenschrammfit (size XS, F-G) has the scoop on the new Nike Swoosh…"
January 18, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CnkNdCSuzeH/ (Nike 2023)

[43] Nike. 2023. "Since the pandemic, the running community has stepped up in so many ways…"
January 26, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn4635fvmof/ (Nike 2023)
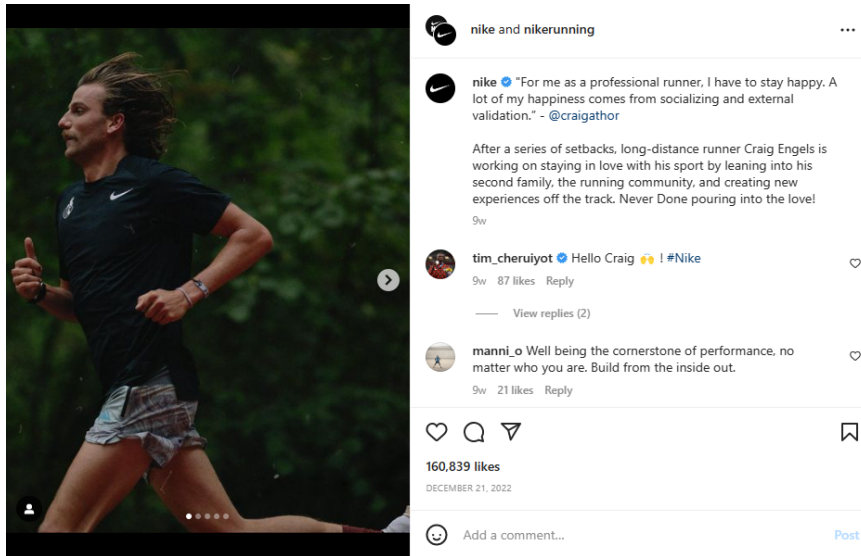
Figure 7[44]

Figure 8[45]

[44] Nike. 2022. "For me as a professional runner, I have to stay happy. A lot of my…" December 21, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CmcU9pYJzeD/ (Nike 2022)

[45] Craig Engels (@craigathor). 2022. "The first Carolina Distance Carnival was a blast Come get yourself…" May 2, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CdDwtjYOi6B/ (Engels 2022)
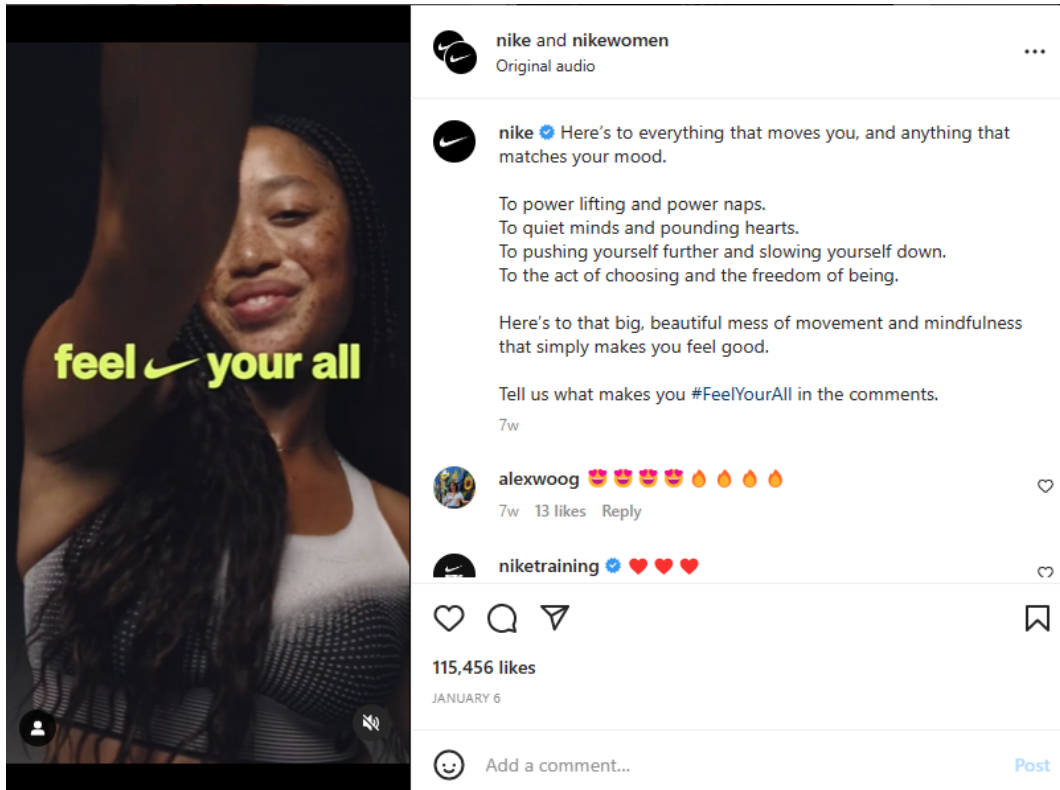
Figure 9[46]

The last platform for my review is TikTok as it has quickly grown in the

public's interest. Launched in 2016, the app has exceeded 1.5 billion downloads

by 2019.[47] As of 2022, it has around 1 billion monthly users, each spending an

average of 89 minutes a day on the app. Unlike Facebook and Instagram,

TikTok's largest age group covers 10-19 year olds. Research found that 61% are

female and 39% are male.[48] Additionally, the app shows a different kind of

community that is seemingly more supportive than other platforms. This can be

understood as the result of content creators trying to entertain rather than show

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[46] Nike, Nike Women. 2023. "Here's to everything that moves you, and anything that matches your…" January 6, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CnE-UaCI518/ (Nike 2023)

[47] Teresa Guarda et al., "The Impact of TikTok on Digital Marketing," *Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies*, December 31, 2020, 35–44, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4183-8_4.

[48] Barnhart, "Social Media Demographics to Inform Your Brand's Strategy in 2022."

off the "best version" of themselves for great engagement.[49] TikTok uses artificial

intelligence to determine the video preferences of individual viewers. These

suggested videos are shown on the "For You" page when the app is opened.

There is another tab called "Following" that shows recent posts from creators the

user is following.[50] Just like on the other algorithms, hashtags can be used to

boost views on posts. Ngangom suggests creating "hashtag challenges" as one

tactic for engagement. These can start organically or a business can sponsor

established creators to help boost the participation. A popular way brands boost

their challenges and videos is through "brand takeovers" or "top view." This refers

to being able to pay to have a certain video be the first one shown when the app

opens. Another option that can still be successful is through in feed ads where

users have a chance to interact with the video.[51] Creating these challenges are a

main part of the appeal to the TikTok community and mostly only consist of text,

sound, and movement working together to create an enticing activity.

Like the other platforms, connecting with the audience is key to building

relationships. TikTok allows liking, following, commenting, sharing, direct

messaging, and even "stitching" and "dueting" other creator's videos.[52] And with

the ability to create short form videos and go live with the audience in real-time

users can "talk" to the audience, allowing relationship building.

[49] Nganhom, "How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship with Brands?

[50] Guarda et al., "The Impact of TikTok on Digital Marketing."

[51] Nganhom, "How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship with Brands?"

[52] Guarda et al., "The Impact of TikTok on Digital Marketing."

Collaborating with influencers can be a great way to promote certain products or businesses on TikTok as well. With 72% of users following influencers on TikTok, building relationships with these opinion leaders mutually benefit both accounts involved. But, as many researchers have noted, it is important to not forget to use influencers that are related or already interested in the product or topic in order to make the campaign more successful.[53] This is especially true for the younger generation who put more value in honest portrayals. Like other researchers, Ngangom also found that micro-influencers versus celebrity influencers show greater campaign effectiveness.[54]

However one big issue with TikTok specifically is there is a greater unpredictability compared to other channels. A study on "Gen Z" TikTok users noted that while most of the participants showed neutral attitudes to brand promotions, their perception of brands could be swayed negatively or positively based on "normal TikTok user's videos." A big influence in creating negative views is former customers or workers "exposing" brands for different reasons. One participant even mentioned disliking brands that over-saturated their page; remarking that they got annoyed seeing them all the time. Even with negative influences, there are ways to create positive correlations between users and businesses on TikTok. Participants mentioned watching haul videos, product

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[53] Guarda et al., "The Impact of TikTok on Digital Marketing."

[54] Nganhom, "How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship with Brands?"

reviews, and clips of how the products were made,all produced positive interest for the products.[55]

Ouyang et al. researched ways precision marketing can be applied to TikTok videos as an important stimulus to the online shopping environment. This proved to not only stimulate purchasing behavior of what was being promoted, but also indirectly increased the perceived value of online products in general. For them, precision marketing refers to relevant businesses marketing their information to their target customers accurately which then produces a maximized effect of their marketing. Finding ways to create and build upon a consumer's positive emotional response towards a company or product enhances their buying behavior. Their study verified that with precision marketing there is a positive correlation in online shopping behavior. Moreover, they found that this effect is even more visible in online consumers with high extroversion than those with lower extroversion personalities.[56] As of right now, users can not make purchases within TikTok, but creators can link certain items either in the comment section or in their bios.

Fenty Beauty has been noted as a great example of a brand that uses TikTok well.[57] This account has nailed their advertising techniques and is a great

[55] Nganhom, "How TikTok Has Impacted Generation Z's Buying Behaviour and Their Relationship with Brands?"

[56] Yi Ouyang, Liang Huang, and Zhongbin Wei, "Research on the Influence Mechanism of Precision Marketing on Online Consumer Behaviour Based on the 'S–O–R' Paradigm and Eroglu's (2001) Online Shopping Response Model : Take the TikTok Platform as an Example," *2021 2nd International Conference on E-Commerce and Internet Technology (ECIT)*, March 4, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1109/ecit52743.2021.00055.

[57] Pamela Bump, "TikTok Brands That Are Winning at Marketing in 2022," July 15, 2022, https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/brands-on-tiktok.; Kamila Dantas, "12 Brands Doing Great Marketing on TikTok to Inspire You," Rockcontent, July 25, 2022, https://rockcontent.com/blog/brands-on-tiktok/.

source of inspiration. To increase engagement and sales, Fenty Beauty

combined an influencer with a hashtag challenge. On their page you can see a

playlist titled "#MadisonBeerMadeMeBuyIt." Throughout these videos is Madison

Beer showing her favorite Fenty Beauty products, see figure 10, and how she

uses them, and the idea is for users to see this, buy it, and then post with that

hashtag trying out the item themselves. This was a genius campaign as Madison

Beer presents an aspirational identity that a lot of young people want, it

encourages them to buy a product, and then reshare that to even more viewers.

In addition to gaining the interest of viewers, the Fenty Beauty account is also

working to build the relationship with viewers. Within the comment section, you

can see the account responding to and liking other's comments see figure 11.

And, by allowing and encouraging duets and stitches on their videos, they further

build this relationship. The account mixes up their posts with tutorials, product

spotlights, and participating in popular trends. While they continue to grow and

find new ways to reach people, Fenty Beauty has built up a powerful strategy on
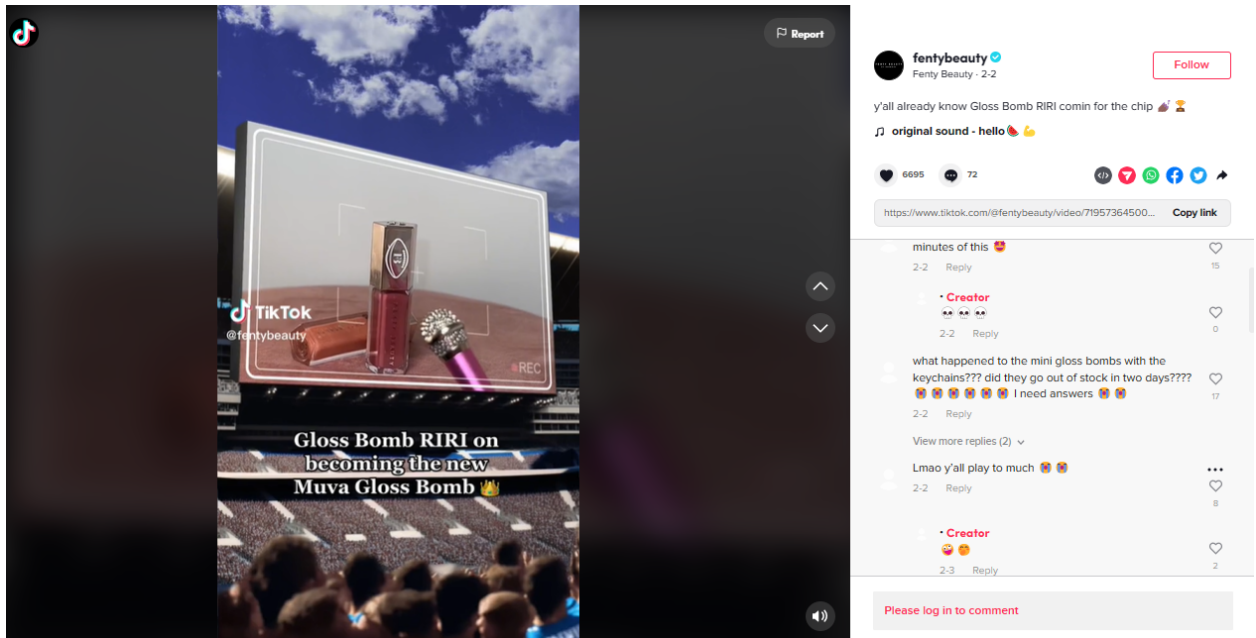
TikTok.

Figure 10[58]

Figure 11[59]

[58] Fenty Beauty. 2023. ""It is the best lip gloss on the market." 🏆 Y'all already…," TikTok Video, January 11, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@fentybeauty/video/7187556281392155946 (Fenty Beauty 2023)

[59] Fenty Beauty. 2023. "y'all already know Gloss Bomb RIRI comin for the chip 💄🏆," TikTok Video, February 2, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@fentybeauty/video/7195736450070056235 (Fenty Beauty 2023)

Based on my personal experience with social media and on my research in this field, I have created a basis with which to determine an effective and efficient strategy of social media content creation for one's business and brand. When posting on a business account on any social media, it is important to be consistent with branding. Having the same schematic guideline allows viewers to quickly recognize the brand when they see similar content no matter where it appears. However, this can be a double edged sword. Even though brand recognizability may help viewers identify a company, it also runs the risk of looking harsh or unaesthetic. This can damage that relationship if the design guidelines are poorly designed. Working with an established designer, doing research on color and font choices, and getting feedback from the fanbase that is already there is crucial in creating and ensuring one's brand comes across as intended. For some companies this may be done by simply keeping up with their established brand guide, for others a total rebrand may be needed to showcase the desired aesthetic. Rebranding can be especially difficult when trying to change a look that is already recognizable to audiences. Firefox is a great example of a rebrand done well. When they were looking to update their logo to better represent what they offer, they used three different design teams with completely different aesthetics, opened discussion with their established fans throughout the process, and went back and forth until the entire look was cohesive and successful in what they wanted to convey. While there was inevitably the group of people that did not want a change at all, the fans who were open with the change shared their feedback, and after a long process of

fine tuning the details, the Firefox company created a new look and feel, without losing the established user base they had already built.[60] Whatever the final brand guide used, sticking to it can be a strong way to start recognizability and build relationships between audiences and businesses.

When creating this branding guide, consider the type of content to post, and the language for captions. Both of these play a role in establishing the overall "mood" of the page and business. Each platform supports and boosts different types of content. Seeing what viewers respond the most to is the best way to find the ideal; pattern of posting. Remember though, this is not an exact science or hard rule to follow. Having a mix of content will better reach an audience that is all at different stages of the customer journey. But, if the audience seems to definitively prefer one style of post over others, use it. Still, do not forget, breaking up that pattern can work as an eye catcher for a bored audience and a new field of people. If, for instance, a company often posts professional product images on their Instagram because that is what their audience engages with the most, they might break up the pattern and post a behind the scenes of the work put in to break the pattern. Whatever media choice is for one's brand and audience, the post is not complete without the caption. Much of choosing the caption depends on what kind of mood is meant to be conveyed. Using short captions can help peak curiosity in what is shown, and long captions can help tell a well rounded story to teach viewers. The length one chooses for their post might change with each one, but an important feature to

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[60] Firefox. "Firefox: Evolution of a Brand, YouTube Video," 4:20. June 11, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYvsIenveTY

remember with all of them is adding in hashtags to boost views. Using a small diverse group of hashtags is the best way to not overwhelm but still increase the reach. I think using one of two personalized hashtags on every post helps to easily identify an account's specific content, and using a few generic hashtags can most effectively help the post views grow. Generic hashtags can reference a holiday, major trending topic, or descriptions based on the image used. Tagging the location of where the image was taken or tagging people in the image can also help increase views and engagement when posting. Though a small and not often eye-catching piece of the post, these small details can have a huge effect on the algorithm's promotion of one's content.

With the style of content decided, the next big focus for creating successful marketing is when the posts are shared. Cvijikij and Michahelles found the highest time of activity for Facebook is between 17:00 to 21:00 GMT[61]; this would be a good time frame to start with to feel out one's audience and their level of activity if they have not tested this out before. It is important to note the lifestyle of the target audience to determine the best time to appear on their feeds. The best way to do this is by collecting data from posts at different times and days to determine what is best for one's audience. Comparing both the amount of views received and the level of engagement on each post can help to strategize the best posting schedule. Depending on the goal, one may want the most people possible to see it, or they may want established fans that are following them already to be interested and interact with the post. Either way, collecting data is the best way to understand and predict the best posting

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[61] Cvijikj and Michahelles, "Monitoring Trends on Facebook."

schedule. It is also important to remember that different platforms can reach different demographics. So a business may need to post at 6:00 pm on Instagram and Facebook to show up on the feeds of people just getting off from an office job, but post later at night on TikTok to reach the younger audience. Figuring out the time and day the audience is active will be time consuming, but once established, it will be easier to build engagement levels to help boost sales and consumer's interests.

Despite all the efforts to organically boost content on people's feeds, there will inevitably come a time when these will simply not be enough. Using paid ads and influencers are great ways to overcome this issue. Each platform offers different ways to promote content. Tiktok allows for "biddable ads" and "brand takeovers"[62], Facebook offers placing certain posts on more people's main feeds[63], and Instagram allows for in feed advertisements that viewers can directly shop from.[64] As is the case for most strategy practices, knowing the goal is how to determine what the best paid way to boost one's account is. Across all platforms, using influencers has proven to be an effective way of promoting one's business and products. Paying influencers to post content is an easy way to quickly reach an already established audience that fits within one's target niche group. Compensating influencers can allow one to review what the creator says, especially if specific points of interest need to be pushed. This tactic allows businesses' to be more confident their interests are getting out to the public, but

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[62] Guarda et al., "The Impact of TikTok on Digital Marketing."

[63] Cvijikj and Michahelles, "Monitoring Trends on Facebook."

[64] De Oliveira and Goussevskaia, "Topic Trends and User Engagement on Instagram."

viewers often trust labeled ads less. Simply sending products to influencers for free leads to influencer generated content that appears more honest to the viewers, but it runs the risk of negative or no attention received for the brand. While there are pros and cons to both paid ads and influencers, both of these methods can improve engagement and interest when implemented correctly.

It is well known that trends are constantly changing. Trends that are happening today could easily be old news tomorrow. The trouble for brands is trends are often sporadic, quick to change, and different on every platform. Collecting data and using sites that track trends as they are just beginning to pick up traction are useful ways of staying on top of the latest fads. Once the account has built a decent following, they may also consider creating their own trends. Using a specific hashtag and challenging followers to do some sort of task can simultaneously promote the business and create a relationship with the audience. To initially help boost the trend, hiring influencers or creating original content for paid ads can get the post out on people's feeds. While they can be difficult to navigate, trends often lead to viral posts which will greatly increase content interaction and business interest.

Measuring the effectiveness of whatever strategy is created will ultimately be guided by what the business' goal is. For most creators and businesses, the ideal outcome is a wider reach, engaged audience, positive relationship with existing and potential customers, and increased sales. Working to grow the views on posts can help reach a new set of consumers and refresh old fans with new interest. For most social media platforms, the amount of views per post is already

tracked and can be viewed within the account's profile. Making note of the amount of views relative to the click through rate can provide a better understanding of what events and posts are the most successful if the goal is to drive up more sales.[65] While being able to reach mass amounts of people can be useful for certain goals, usually finding specific niches of people that personally resonate with what is being presented is more effective in reaching a business' greatest potential.

Knowing if the brand's relationship with the public is positive or negative can be tricky, but completing a sentiment analysis may help give an idea on the opinion people have of the brand.[66] A sentiment analysis uses a data mining technique to take reviews and comments on a business' site, split them into explicit and implicit comments, then uses the data collected to understand the overall opinion of the users towards one's company.[67] This analysis can aid in tracking impressions and engagement around specific campaigns, identify influencers discussing work, and understand the demographic that resonates with each campaign.[68]

Social media has been a constantly increasing online world since its creation. With 4.76 billion users worldwide[69], there is so much guess work when it

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[65] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*.

[66] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*.

[67] Mejova, Yelena. 2009. "Sentiment Analysis: An Overview." Comprehensive Exam Paper, University of Iowa.

[68] Ang, Dionysius. *Digital Marketing Strategy with Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women*.

[69]"Global Social Media Statistics," DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, n.d., https://datareportal.com/social-media-users.

comes to content creating strategies to reach the specific audience that fits within your niche. Each new rising platform brings a need for new research to be conducted. Though this can be a challenge to creators, there are always new ways to grow one's following and relationship with users. Though I only covered three in this paper, there are numerous apps used to connect with the worldwide population, and more are constantly being created. For my future research, I would like to detail and test how great of an impact my strategy has across these three and more social media platforms. I would like to cross reference how the same post can produce different results, and use that to help me conduct my own research study finding more ways to use the algorithm to benefit one's account and engagement. Though there is much more to learn, this paper provides a well rounded general outline for understanding the inner workings of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok for business content creation.

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