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Preston Starkey

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**“TikTok Made Me Try It”: Social Media’s New Role in
Marketing Strategies and Its Effect on Consumer Behavior**

by

Preston L. Starkey

Advisor: Mrs. Nicole Cox

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**Sam M. Walton College of Business
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“TikTok Made Me Try It:” Social Media’s New Role in Marketing Strategies and Its Effect on Consumer Behavior

The past decade has seen a significant rise in social media, completely revolutionizing the way we communicate, connect, and influence one another (Ki et al., 2020). As of July 2021, the number of worldwide social media users reached 4.48 billion, compared to 0.97 billion in 2010 (Dean, 2021). The use of social media has allowed us to “generate information and share [our] experiences with [our] friends, companies, and broader online communities via posts, tweets, shares, likes, and reviews (Jacobson et al., 2021). It has also allowed us to gain access to information that we would not normally see. For example, TikTok allowed users for the first time to have “behind-the-scenes” access to the 2021 Summer Olympic Games, as Olympians would post videos of the Olympic Village, the food they were served, and their overall experience in Tokyo. Fans across the world normally only have access to the events on television, but social media created the opportunity for an inside look into the worldwide sporting event (Hunter, 2022).

The rising popularity of social media has also introduced the phenomenon of social media marketing: “the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization’s stakeholders” (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). Many findings declare social media as a highly effective tool for marketing strategies, and it is constantly being adopted by startups and well-established companies alike (Kapoor et al., 2017). Li et al. (2020) classified four different types of Social Media Marketing Strategies (SSMS): social commerce strategy, social content strategy, social monitoring strategy, and social CRM strategy. These different types were based on “the nature of the firm’s strategic social media objectives with regard to using social media, the direction of interactions taking place between the firm and customers, and the level of customer engagement achieved.” For this research, I will focus on social commerce strategy and social content strategy. Social commerce strategy is a concept in which consumer engagement is not necessary, and it is a one-way interaction between a consumer and a firm. Examples of a social commerce strategy are advertisements in between posts or an Instagram Story². Social content strategy, on the other hand, is a two-way interaction between the consumer and firm and is designed to create brand awareness through firm-generated or user-generated content. An example of social content strategy is more widely known as influencer marketing.

Influencer Marketing

A branch of social media marketing that has become quite popular is partnerships with social media influencers to promote products or brands. Social Media Influencers (influencers or SMIs, for short) are individuals who have built a massive social network of followers either through their knowledge on particular topics or by sharing details about their personal lives and experiences (Ki and Kim, 2019). Some well-known influencers include TikToker Addison Rae and YouTuber David Dobrik. There are numbers of studies to show why influencer marketing has become so successful. Tafesse and Wood (2020), in an attempt to understand the relationships between influencers and their followers, suggest the Social Influence Theory, which is split into three separate processes of social influence: compliance, identification, and internalization. Social influence through compliance is when an individual is influenced due to seeking approval from or avoiding disapproval from the SMI. Next, social influence through

identification is when the influencer “possesses qualities, such as desired roles, popularity, or creativity that the followers themselves, lack, which in turn makes an ongoing relationship with the influencer desirable.” This is the most common process, as many influencers are admired through the lens of social media. Finally, social influence through internalization occurs when the influencer displays the same value system as the individual. There is another discussion on the phenomenon of mimicry, and a study showed evidence that individuals will intentionally mimic others when they perceive them as role models. Examples of role models within this study included family members, friends, and celebrities (Ruvio et al., 2013). These studies have been proven to show that individuals who perceive SMIs as having desirable traits will show trust and instinctively be influenced.

According to a study in 2019, 54% of marketers planned to spend more than \$250,000 annually on influencer marketing with 17% planning to spend over \$1 million (Linqia). The amount of money going towards social media marketing has been steadily increasing over the past decade, as it has been deemed very effective. In 2018, revenue from online marketing increased 21.8% to \$107.5 billion compared to 2017, while the next highest revenue stream was television which only grew by 1.4% (*The Evolution of Social Media*, 2021). To learn more about social media marketing, I conducted two case studies on businesses that have effectively utilized social media marketing: Crumbl Cookies and Chipotle.

Case Study of Crumbl Cookies

Crumbl Cookies is a nationwide gourmet cookie brand created by cousins Jason McGowan (CEO) and Sawyer Hemsley (COO) who decided to work together to create the best chocolate chip cookie. After finding the perfect recipe, the first Crumbl Cookies store opened in Logan, Utah in July 2017. After a year of increasing sales and popularity in Logan, Crumbl began to expand its cookie flavors and created the concept of weekly flavor rotations in December 2018. The weekly rotations allowed the company to focus on “developing unique and delicious cookies inspired by popular flavors, foods, desserts of all kinds – from pies to cakes to candies and more.” Some of the popular cookie flavors include Chocolate featuring Oreo, Cornbread, Cosmic Brownie, and Sugar featuring Twix.

In July 2020, Crumbl only had approximately 100 locations across several states. Less than two years later and through the COVID-19 pandemic, Crumbl now has over 400 locations across 43 states, with McGowan anticipating 600-700 locations by the end of 2022. Crumbl became the fastest-growing cookie brand in the United States and is now second in the nation behind Great American Cookie. Furthermore, none of its locations have shut down since the chain’s initial opening in 2017. The key to its success is the dedication to consistent content creation across its social media platforms. From the beginning, Crumbl has been very intentional in its content posted on social media by creating aesthetic photos and videos of the weekly cookie flavors. In February 2021, the company posted its first TikTok which gained over a million views. Over the next six weeks, their account gained 1.6 million TikTok followers. Crumbl quickly became a viral sensation, as customers began posting their reviews of the weekly cookie flavors thus creating the #crumblreview trend. Now, the #crumblreview hashtag has over 7.5 million views and the official Crumbl Cookies page has over 5 million followers. In a strategic effort to maximize exposure, its marketing team created a concept called “hype cycle marketing” in which they announce the weekly cookie lineup across all Crumbl’s social media platforms through a big reveal event that gains millions of views every week. Its team is also

very active in posting other content on its page, such as posting a Crumbl History “story time⁴” and commenting on users’ TikTok posts. While striving to keep its mission of “bringing family and friends together over the world’s best box of cookies,” Crumbl will continue to grow substantially due to the influence of social media.

Case Study of Chipotle

Chipotle is one of the most popular fast-food restaurants in the nation that specializes in burritos, bowls, and other Mexican-inspired dishes that are prepared in front of the customer. Although Chipotle is known for its high-quality ingredients and quick service, the company has gained a large following on social media for another reason—memes³. By quickly browsing through any of Chipotle’s social media accounts, it will be rare to see any post that is directly promoting one of its new menu items. Instead, many of the posts are Chipotle-related memes to engage with consumers. Candice Beck, Director of Social and Digital Activations, recently said her team creates content using memes “as a way to both relate to our customers and tap into specific insights, sometimes even trolling ourselves” (eMarketer, 2021). A notable example of their use of memes as an effective strategy was the Cilantro Soap. Over the past few years, many fans have posted their thoughts on the herb used in some of Chipotle’s menu items, saying they experience a soapy flavor (many studies have shown that there is a genetic component directly related to the taste of cilantro (Eriksson et al., 2012)). To address these concerns on social media, Chipotle created Cilantro Soap which could be purchased for the holiday season. Chief Marketing Officer Chris Brandt stated, “our Cilantro Soap plays into a larger trend of turning digital moments into real-life experiences” (Chipotle, 2021). Although this strategy is not the traditional route to engage with customers, Chipotle has solidified its position with a rather untapped market and is increasing its brand awareness within a wider audience.

Furthermore, Chipotle has launched many collaborative campaigns with notable figures in pop culture to attract a wider audience. In September 2021, Chipotle announced the inaugural Chipotle Creator Class, “a program that supercharges some of the brand’s most influential creators through exclusive perks and partnerships to help shape the future of Chipotle” (Chipotle, 2021). This class included many popular influencers on TikTok including Newton Nguyen, Griffin Laszlo, and a selected fan that created a Chipotle-themed Tiktok video. The hashtag #ChipotleCreator which was created during the announcement now has 12.8 million views on TikTok.

This strategy of injecting itself into the heart of pop culture has given Chipotle an extreme advantage over its competitors in the marketplace. Chipotle was named the Most Innovative Company in Branding in 2022 for “leveraging emerging social platforms and finding highly creative ways to use them for maximum impact,” which also earned their spot as one of the Top 50 Most Innovative Companies of 2022 (Beer, 2022). In addition, Chipotle had a 26.1% increase in revenue in 2021 with total revenue of \$7.5 billion (Chipotle, 2022). These strategic marketing efforts have helped Chipotle solidify itself in the fast-food and pop culture marketplace.

Despite the significant adoption of social media and influencer marketing in company strategies over the past decade, little research has been done to discuss engagement with social media marketing and its effect on consumer behavior. It is the purpose of this thesis to discover the impact of the use of influencers' promotions of products or brands upon the purchasing behaviors of social media users. This research will create insight for brands and marketing

agencies, providing a more in-depth understanding of the average social media user and how to market their products through posts, influencers, and ads more effectively.

Methodology

To understand the effects of social media and influencer marketing on consumer behavior, a survey was created and sent to University of Arkansas students. The survey adapted the work of Azpeitia (2021), who studied social media marketing for solely TikTok users. Azpeitia's study aimed to "discover whether TikTok marketers are successfully reaching their target audiences" (Azpeitia). However, a study by Haenlein over multiple social media platforms that compared audience characteristics, active users, and content format declared that both TikTok and Instagram stood out the most regarding their importance for social media marketing. "They have the youngest user base and therefore attract customer segments who are particularly susceptible to this form of marketing communication" (Haenlein, 2020). Therefore, I included Instagram as an additional platform to understand the potential differences between marketing strategies on these two platforms. I also decided to solely target college-aged students based on a study by Sarah Gambo and Bahire Ofe Özad who concluded that social media sites are mostly dominated by youths between the ages of 18 and 29 (2020). With this knowledge, I could get a more accurate representation of social media users by targeting college-aged students.

The survey is split into five blocks: Screening, TikTok, Instagram, Influencers, Income, and Demographics. The screening block is designed to screen out any respondents who are not active social media users, as they will not be able to answer the rest of the survey effectively. The TikTok and Instagram sections of the survey are designed to test the respondents' engagement on the respective platform. They are also asked about the type of content they normally view, the products/brands seen advertised, and their likeliness to purchase products from an advertisement or sponsored post. The influencer block is designed to test the respondents' understanding of the concept of an influencer, as they are asked to provide their definition of one. It will then proceed to ask about their engagement with influencers and the likeliness of purchasing products advertised or even used by influencers in a non-sponsored post. The final block is designed to determine an approximation for the respondents' level of disposable income.

Upon detailed research on prior questionnaires, it was important for the questions to be asked in a manner that maximized the respondents' understanding of the question. To support this idea, I utilized the work of Nicole Ellison. In March 2014, Ellison conducted a study that "explores the relationship between perceived bridging social capital and specific Facebook-enabled communication behaviors..." (Ellison et al., 2014). Within this study, she extended her previous research on Facebook Intensity Scales (FBI) and created behavioral scales that will accurately examine a user's engagement on the social media platform. I modified these scales to fit the relevancy of Instagram and TikTok, as the navigation and lexicon are different. For example, Facebook connects users through the term "Friend," in which acceptance from both parties is required before one can see the other's content. In contrast, Instagram and TikTok allow users to "follow" others without consent from both parties. After creating the survey, I decided to perform a pre-test to ensure that the questions are clear and the survey is functional for mass administration. I selected four students from different colleges at the University of Arkansas (Walton College of Business, Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design, and Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences) to take the pre-test survey and provide feedback on any potential changes. These students' first responses were recorded to uphold the integrity of their

initial answers. Once any required changes were made, the survey was ready to be distributed to students.

The survey was created using the Qualtrics software, made available to University of Arkansas students. It was sent out to students by word-of-mouth and through the Listserv for Walton College of Business undergraduate students.

Results

Once the survey was closed, I had a total of 209 responses. Of these responses, 96.9% came from students in the Sam M. Walton College of Business. The remaining responses were split between the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design and the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences. Furthermore, 65.4% of the respondents were female and 34% were male, as shown in **Figure 1**. One respondent identified as non-binary/third gender.

From first glance at the data, many responses show the prevalence of social media usage among college-aged students. Approximately 90% of respondents stated they spend at least some time on TikTok every single day, with 37.9% stating they are active for an hour or longer. Comparatively, approximately 97% of respondents stated they spend at least some time on Instagram every single day. The results of respondents' time spent on both platform is seen in **Figure 2**.

There was also a strong knowledge of the term *influencer* as 98% of respondents were aware of the term. The respondents were also asked to provide their definition of an *influencer*, and many of them were consistent with the Merriam-Webster definition¹ I provided for those unaware of the term. Some of the responses included:

- “A person who gains enough popularity to influence consumer behavior”
- “A person whose job is to influence people online to buy certain products or take up certain activities”
- “A social media personality who gets paid to use their platform to promote people, products, and places”

There were many repeated words and phrases throughout the responses. The most common words and phrases were “social media” (55 instances), “products” (38 instances), “brand” (24 instances), and “large following” (9 instances). The most common words and phrases have been displayed in a word cloud in **Figure 3**.

Respondents were asked to think of the first product that comes to mind when thinking of brands on TikTok and Instagram. Responses included many types of products/brands ranging in clothing, beauty, food, and technology. The top five most common responses are as follows:

TikTok

- Amazon
- Bang
- Duolingo
- Halara
- Taco Bell

Instagram

- Nike
- Revolve
- SHEIN
- Amazon
- Fashion Nova

Statistical Analysis

I began my analysis by calculating the correlation between the questions in the survey. Many correlations were significant at the 0.01 level, however, there were a few correlations that stood out:

- “When I see a company/brand post on TikTok – it makes me want to follow their account” and “When I see a company/brand post on TikTok – it makes me want to purchase a product from them” ($r = 0.692$)
- “How many products have you purchased from TikTok?” and “I am likely to purchase a product promoted by an influencer” ($r = 5.28$)
- “I am likely to purchase a product promoted by an influencer” and “I am likely to use a promotional code given by an influencer to purchase a product” ($r = .655$)

There were also strong correlations between similar questions that were asked for both TikTok and Instagram:

- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok – the user that posted the product” and “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram – the user that posted the product” ($r = .723$)
- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok – the product” and “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram –the product” ($r = .601$)
- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok – the company who makes the product” and “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram –the company who makes the product” ($r = .592$)
- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok – previous knowledge of the product” and “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram – previous knowledge of the product” ($r = .675$)

After reading through the correlations, there were a few hypotheses that I wanted to investigate. These hypotheses are as follows:

- H1:** *There is a difference in purchasing habits on TikTok and Instagram between those who follow influencers and those who do not.*
- H2:** *There is a difference in purchasing habits on TikTok between those who have posted on TikTok and those who have not.*
- H3:** *There is a difference in purchasing habits from social media between females and males.*

To test the first hypothesis (H1), I performed a t-test for Equality of Means to test if there is a difference in social media engagement and purchasing behavior between those who follow influencers and those who do not. The first question I tested was “In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using TikTok?” I concluded that at a 90% significance ($p\text{-value} = 0.069$), there is a difference in the approximate time per day on TikTok between those who follow influencers and those who do not. Furthermore, those who followed influencers had a higher average answer than those who do not, showing they spent more time actively on TikTok every day. There was not a significant difference in time spent

actively using Instagram. I then ran tests on the factors that might influence the respondent to purchase a product from TikTok and Instagram. These were posed as four separate Likert scale questions ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The questions for TikTok are as follows:

- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The user that posted the product”
- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The product”
- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The company that makes the product”
- “What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – Previous knowledge of the product”

From these statistical tests, only “the user that posted the product” showed a significant difference at a 90% significance (p -value = 0.053) between those who followed influencers and those who do not. This shows that those who followed influencers had a higher influence from “the user that posted the product” on TikTok than those who did not, as shown in **Figure 4**. The other factors did not show a significant difference. Furthermore, when respondents were asked the same questions for Instagram, only “the user that posted the product” and “the product” showed significant differences. However, both differences were at a 95% significance, as “the user that posted the product” and “the product” were at 0.015 and 0.027 p -values, respectively. Those who followed influencers showed a higher average answer showing they also had a higher influence from “the user that posted the product” and “the product” on Instagram, as shown in **Figure 4**. Finally, I performed a test on the difference in how many products were purchased on TikTok and Instagram between those who follow influencers and those who do not. I posed the question in the survey as “How many products have you purchased from TikTok?” The same question was asked for Instagram. From the statistical test, with a 95% significance (p -value = .033), those who follow influencers purchase more products on TikTok than those who do not. Comparatively, with a 90% significance (p -value = .076), those who follow influencers purchase more products on Instagram than those who do not. The mean response value for each platform is shown in **Figure 4**. After seeing that those who follow influencers purchase more products on both Instagram and TikTok, I decided to test which platform sells more products. However, there is not a significant difference between the number of products purchased on Instagram and TikTok within my sample.

To test the second hypothesis (H2), I performed a t-test for Equality of Means to test if there was a difference between the social media engagement and purchasing behavior between those who have posted a TikTok video within the past year and those who have not. I decided to perform tests on the same questions as H1, beginning with “In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using TikTok?” From this test, with a 99% significance (p -value = 0.007), those who have posted a TikTok within the past year spend more time actively using TikTok every day than those who have not. There was not a significant difference in the amount of time spent actively using Instagram. The mean response for each platform is shown in **Figure 5**. I then tested the factors that might influence the respondent to purchase a product from TikTok and Instagram. With a 99% significance, there is a difference in the influence of both the user that posted the product (p -value = 0.0002) and the product (p -value = 0.0003) has on the respondent when purchasing products on TikTok between

those who have posted a TikTok and those who haven't. There also is a difference with 95% significance (p-value = 0.039) in the influence of the company that makes the product. The results of the statistical test for Instagram proved similar, as there was a difference with 99% significance in the influence of both the user that posted the product (p-value = 0.0005) and the product (p-value = 0.008). The other factors did not show a significant difference for either TikTok or Instagram. For each platform, "the user that posted the product", "the product", and "the company that posted the product" showed a higher influence for those who have posted TikTok videos than for those who have not, as shown by the mean response in **Figure 5**. After running statistical tests to see if there was a difference in the number of products purchased on TikTok and Instagram between those who have posted on TikTok within the past year and those who have not, there was a difference with 99% significance (p-value = 0.0001) in the number of products purchased on TikTok and with 95% significance (p-value = 0.041) in the number of products purchased on Instagram. From this test, those who posted TikTok videos purchased more products on TikTok and Instagram than those who did not, as shown by the means in **Figure 5**.

To test my final hypothesis (H3), I performed a t-test for Equality of Means to test if there was a difference the social media engagement and purchasing behavior between males and females. Once again, I tested the same questions as H1 to provide consistency across my findings. I began with "In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using TikTok?" With 99% significance (p-value = 0.002), there is a difference between the number of times females and males spend actively using TikTok, as women spent more time on the platform. There was once again no significant difference in the amount of time actively using Instagram. The mean response for both groups is provided in **Figure 6**. When asked about the factors that might influence the respondent to purchase a product from TikTok, there was a difference with 99% significance (p-value = 0.00001) in the influence of the user that posted the product between males and females. Instagram also showed a difference with 99% significance (p-value = 0.0002) in the influence of the "user that posted the product". The other factors did not show a significant difference in either TikTok or Instagram. Women, from these tests, admitted to showing more influence from "the user that posted the product" than men, as shown by their mean responses shown in **Figure 6**. After running statistical tests to see if there was a difference between the number of products purchased on TikTok and Instagram between males and females, there was a difference with 99% significance (p-value < 0.00001) in the number of products purchased on TikTok. Similarly, there was a difference with 95% significance (p-value = 0.013) between males and females in the number of products purchased on Instagram. Women purchased more products on both platforms based on the mean response from both groups shown in **Figure 6**. As a final test, I wanted to see if there was a difference in the likeliness of purchasing a product from an influencer and using a promotional code given by an influencer. The survey posed these two questions on a Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree to the respondent:

- "I am likely to purchase a product promoted by an influencer."
- "I am likely to use a promotional code given by an influencer to purchase a product."

The statistical tests showed that with 99% significance (p-value < 0.00001) that there is a difference between males and females and the likeliness to purchase a product promoted by an influencer and use a promotional code given by an influencer. From these results, women were

more likely to purchase a product promoted by an influencer and use a promotional code given by an influencer, as shown by the mean response provided in **Figure 6**. **Figures 7 and 8** show the results of these questions between males and females.

Discussion

There are a few conclusions that can be made based on the statistical tests performed on the sample. The first, and most prominent, is that there is a drastic difference between males and females in the number of products purchased on TikTok and Instagram, the amount of time spent on TikTok, the influence of the user that posted the product when purchasing products on TikTok and Instagram, and the likeliness to purchase products and use promotional codes from influencers. While this was not very surprising, it is still intriguing to see the drastic difference between the two groups. However, while influencers can use their talents to appeal to many niche audiences, most influencers are women and have a wider female audience. From a study by Statista, 84% of influencers identified as women and only 16% were men (2021). Furthermore, an additional study showed that women of all age groups followed more influencers than men on social media in 2021 (Dopson, 2021). With this knowledge, marketing companies can implement marketing strategies that would appeal to men, such as working with influencers in the athletic and comedy genres to increase sales.

The next conclusion that can be made is that there is a large difference between those who have posted on TikTok within the past year and those who have not in the number of products purchased on TikTok and Instagram, the amount of time spent on TikTok, and the influence of the user that posted the product when purchasing products on TikTok and Instagram. This could be due to the increased level of engagement than those who have posted on TikTok have compared to those who haven't. Viewing and creating content on social media, while designed to be intertwined, require two separate levels of engagement. Those who are creating TikTok videos are often searching for popular sounds, dances, and trends to recreate, which will increase their time spent on the app and make them more knowledgeable about popular trends. Also, their influence on the user that posts the product could be increased because of a level of respect for the influencer. Those who have posted a TikTok have a better understanding of the time and effort it takes to get the correct angle, say the correct lines, and use the perfect sound. This respect could in turn lead to influence using the concept of mimicry discussed earlier.

The third conclusion that can be made is that there is a difference between those who follow influencers and those who do not in the number of products purchased on TikTok and Instagram, the amount of time spent on TikTok, and the influence of the user that posted the product when purchasing products on TikTok and Instagram. These conclusions were not surprising, given the studies discussed earlier including the Social Influence Theory. Influencers have become very popular and well-known to social media users of all ages, and they are a strong asset to brands to successfully market their products beyond traditional outlets such as magazines and television. However, influencers are not always seen in such a positive light. Some of the responses when asked to define influencers were quite negative. Those responses included:

- “*Annoying. Talentless. Not a fan*”
- “*Person with many followers that shallow, gullible people value their opinion for no good reason.*”

- “Someone who got their fame from social media alone and doesn't really have *any other actual talent in the real world.*”
- “*Very flawed.* Everyone thinks they’re an influencer nowadays.”

While influencers have shown through increased sales and brand awareness that they are positively contributing to brand revenue, many people do not see their value or purpose. However, brands have seen their value, and see the potential to reach a much wider audience through social media platforms.

An interesting result from my analysis showed that between all three groups in my hypotheses, there was not a statistical difference in the amount of time spent actively on Instagram per day. There could be several reasons behind this result, but a logical explanation could be the fact that TikTok is still a much newer social media platform than Instagram. Instagram was created in 2010, while TikTok was created in 2016 (McFadden, 2020). This allowed more time for Instagram to increase the number of users and build an engaged, consistent audience.

Another interesting takeaway from my survey results was the top brands that came to mind to the respondents. Amazon was the only brand that was in the Top 5 responses for both TikTok and Instagram. Amazon has utilized the approach to place advertisements between TikTok videos and Instagram Stories, and through personal experience, I have seen them quite frequently. Due to the repetitive nature and consistency of their advertisements across multiple platforms, I was not surprised to see Amazon in both Top 5 responses. Duolingo, a language-learning web and mobile application, appeared in the Top 5 responses for TikTok. The marketing team for Duolingo has put a large focus on content creation on TikTok. Rather than posting promotional content, they participate in popular trends such as dancing and comedy using their green owl mascot, Duo. They have gained a large following, so I was expecting their brand to be a common response.

Limitations of Work and Future Research

Although I tried to prohibit limitations in my research, they are inevitable in any study. The biggest limitation I found in my research was the significant number of respondents in the Sam M. Walton College of Business compared to students in other colleges at the University of Arkansas. For example, I was not able to sample any students from the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, College of Education and Health Professions, or College of Engineering. Furthermore, there was not an equal distribution of genders within my sample, as approximately 65% identified as female.

I do not think this research should end here. Social media is constantly evolving, so research needs to be continual to have a better understanding of the role it plays in marketing strategies. A similar survey with a broader sample of all ages would be beneficial, as college-aged students are only a percentage of the entire population of active social media users. I also believe a study that involves influencers themselves to discover how they believe their role impacts marketing strategies would add another perspective.

Conclusion

With the knowledge gained from this study, brands and marketing agencies should continue to utilize social media marketing and influencers to market their products. Those who are following influencers are becoming more likely to purchase products from them, and this

sales trend does not appear to be vanishing soon. It is also an ever-expanding market, for it takes just one viral video to make an active social media user into an influencer. However, this is still a new strategy, so studies on this topic should still be conducted to maximize profitability as we enter a new age of marketing.

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Appendix

Figures

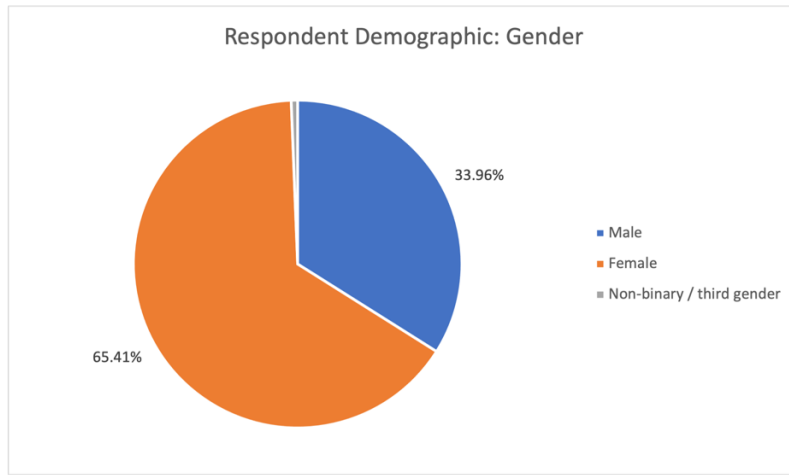


Figure 1

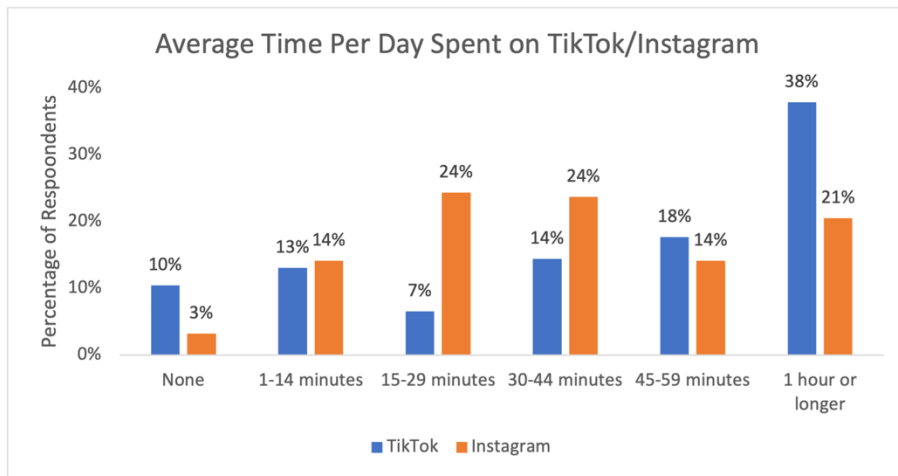


Figure 2



Figure 3

<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>Does not follow influencers (mean)</i>	<i>Follows influencers (mean)</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using TikTok?	3.33	4.35	0.069	90%
How many products have you purchased from TikTok?	1.28	1.58	0.033	95%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The user that posted the product	2.06	2.72	0.053	90%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The product”	3.11	3.64	0.205	-
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The company that makes the product	2.71	2.78	0.847	-
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – Previous knowledge of the product	2.89	2.99	0.774	
In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using Instagram?	3.78	3.95	0.594	-
How many products have your purchased from Instagram?	1.41	1.70	0.031	95%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The user that posted the product	2.15	2.86	0.013	95%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The product”	3.04	3.64	0.052	90%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The company that makes the product	2.63	2.96	0.255	-
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – Previous knowledge of the product	2.81	2.98	0.561	-

Figure 4

<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>Has not posted a TikTok in the past year (mean)</i>	<i>Has posted a TikTok in the past year (mean)</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using TikTok?	3.92	4.69	0.007	99%
How many products have you purchased from TikTok?	1.30	1.74	0.0009	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The user that posted the product	2.15	3.00	0.0002	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The product?	3.11	3.85	0.0003	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The company that makes the product	2.49	2.92	0.039	95%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – Previous knowledge of the product	2.84	3.12	0.164	-
In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using Instagram?	3.88	4.08	0.429	-
How many products have your purchased from Instagram?	1.57	1.85	0.041	95%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The user that posted the product	2.49	3.29	0.0005	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The product?	3.28	3.86	0.008	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The company that makes the product	2.79	3.24	0.041	95%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – Previous knowledge of the product	2.82	3.20	0.080	90%

Figure 5

<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>Males (mean)</i>	<i>Females (mean)</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using TikTok?	3.38	4.51	0.002	99%
How many products have you purchased from TikTok?	1.08	1.73	< 0.00001	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The user that posted the product	1.87	2.94	0.00001	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The product”	3.36	3.63	0.296	-
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – The company that makes the product	2.59	2.76	0.485	-
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok? – Previous knowledge of the product	2.79	3.07	0.249	-
In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using Instagram?	3.90	3.99	0.709	-
How many products have your purchased from Instagram?	1.47	1.76	0.013	95%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The user that posted the product	2.22	3.01	0.0003	99%
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The product”	3.57	3.57	0.995	-
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – The company that makes the product	2.88	2.97	0.668	-
What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram? – Previous knowledge of the product	2.86	3.04	0.411	-
I am likely to purchase a product promoted by an influencer.	2.37	3.34	< 0.00001	99%
I am likely to use a promotional code given by an influencer to purchase a product.	2.65	3.77	< 0.00001	99%

Figure 6

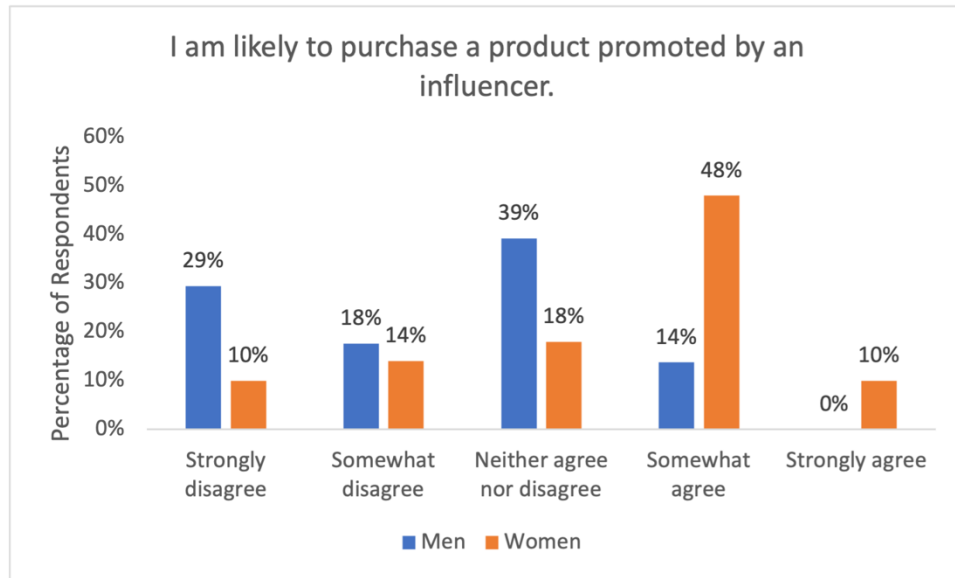


Figure 7

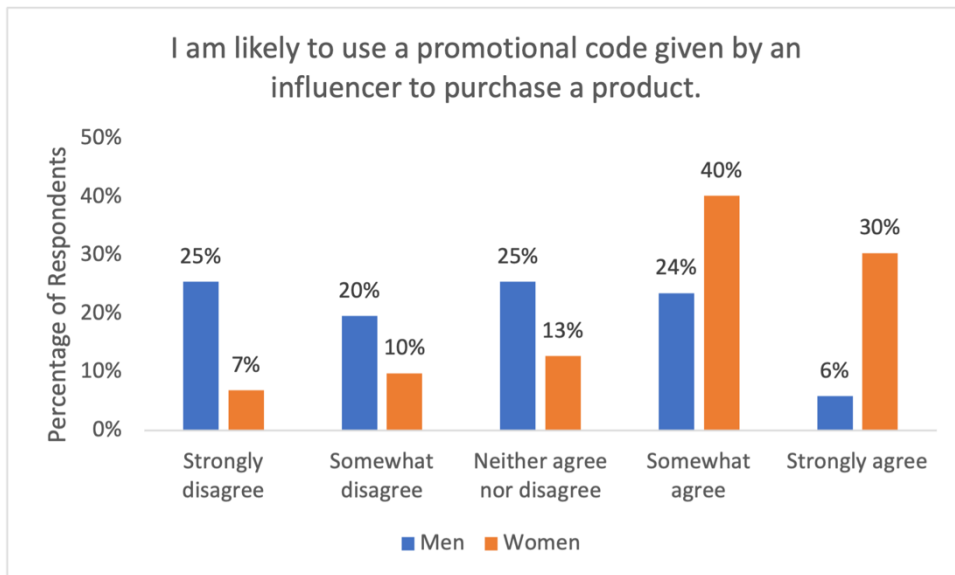


Figure 8

Definitions

¹**Influencer** – a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media

²**Instagram Story** – an in-app feature that allows users to post photos or videos that automatically disappear within 24 hours.

³**Meme** – an element of a culture or system of behavior that may be considered to be passed from one individual to another by nongenetic means, especially imitation.

⁴**Story Time** – a common trend on TikTok where users request more context to a post they see

Survey Questions

Block 1

Do you use any type of social media?

- Yes (this answer will proceed with the rest of the survey questions)
- No (this answer will redirect the respondent to the end of the survey)

Block 2 (TikTok)

- Do you currently have or have ever had TikTok installed on your mobile device?
 - Yes
 - No (will redirect them to the next block)
- TikTok is a part of my everyday activity.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using TikTok?
 - None
 - 1-14 minutes
 - 15-29 minutes
 - 30-44 minutes
 - 45-59 minutes
 - 1 hour or longer
- I have posted a TikTok video within the past year.
 - Yes
 - No
- What type of TikTok videos do you normally see?

Yes	No
○ Dancing	
○ Cooking	
○ Comedy	
○ Fashion	
○ Gaming	
○ Beauty	
○ Video blogs (Vlogs)	
- Have you ever seen a TikTok post that promotes a product/brand within the past year?
 - Yes
 - No
- What is the first brand that comes to mind when thinking of promotional content on TikTok?
 - *Text response*

- What type of products/brands do you see commonly promoted?

Yes	No
-----	----

 - Food/Restaurants
 - Beauty/Skincare
 - Technology
 - Clothes
 - Home Décor/Furniture
- How many products have you purchased from TikTok?
 - None
 - 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - More than 20
- Have you used a promotional code to purchase a product from TikTok?
 - Yes
 - No
- What factors might influence you to purchase a product from TikTok?
 - The user that posted the product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced
 - The product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced
 - The company who makes the product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced
 - Previous knowledge of the product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced

- When I see a company/brand post on TikTok...
 - It makes me want to purchase a product from them.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
 - It makes me want to follow their account
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- I am likely to purchase a product from a brand on TikTok when...
 - They post promotional content on their page.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
 - They post non-promotional content on their page.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree They comment on other users' posts
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree

Block 3 (Instagram)

- Do you currently have or have ever had Instagram installed on your mobile device?
 - Yes
 - No (will redirect them to the next block)
- Instagram is a part of my everyday activity.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

- In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using Instagram?
 - None
 - 1-14 minutes
 - 15-29 minutes
 - 30-44 minutes
 - 45-59 minutes
 - 1 hour or longer
- Have you ever seen an Instagram post that promotes a product/brand within the past year?
 - Yes
 - No
- What is the first brand that comes to mind when thinking of promotional content on Instagram?
 - *Text response*
- What type of products/brands do you see commonly promoted?

	Yes	No
○ Food/Restaurants		
○ Beauty/Skincare		
○ Technology		
○ Clothes		
○ Home Décor/Furniture		
- How many products have you purchased from Instagram?
 - None
 - 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - More than 20
- Have you used a promotional code to purchase a product from Instagram?
 - Yes
 - No
- What factors might influence you to purchase a product from Instagram?
 - The user that posted the product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced
 - The product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced

- The company who makes the product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced
- Previous knowledge of the product
 - Not at all influenced
 - Slightly influenced
 - Somewhat influenced
 - Moderately influenced
 - Extremely influenced

Block 4 (Influencers)

- What other social media platforms, if any, do you use?

	Yes	No
--	-----	----

 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Snapchat
 - LinkedIn
 - YouTube
- Are you aware of the term **influencer**?
 - Yes
 - No (will provide the definition of “influencer”)
- How would you describe the term influencer?
 - *Test response*
- Do you follow an **influencer** on any social media platforms?
 - Yes
 - No
- What platforms do you follow an **influencer** on?

	Yes	No
--	-----	----

 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - Snapchat
 - TikTok
 - LinkedIn
 - YouTube
- I am likely to purchase a product promoted by an **influencer**.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

- I am likely to use a promotional code given by an **influencer** to purchase a product.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

Block 6 (Income)

- **Disposable income** is defined as the amount of money an individual has after taxes, rent, utilities, groceries, and any other necessities.
- Would you consider any part of your income disposable?
 - Yes
 - No
- What are you likely to spend your disposable income on?

	Yes	No
○ Clothes		
○ Social Events (restaurants/bars, movies, concerts, etc.)		
○ Technology		
○ Beauty/Skincare		
○ Travel		
○ Other:		

Block 7 (Demographics)

- What is your age?
 - *Text response*
- What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary/Third Gender
 - Prefer not to say
- Are you involved in a Registered Student Organization (RSO) on campus?
 - Yes
 - No
- In what college is your primary major at the University of Arkansas?
 - Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences
 - Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design
 - Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
 - Sam M. Walton College of Business
 - College of Education and Health Professions
 - College of Engineering