

MASTER THESIS

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**HOW INFLUENCER MARKETING IS A STRATEGIC ALLY FOR EUROPEAN
COMPANIES IN INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION**

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This thesis should remain confidential as it contains information on operating companies.

SUMMARY

In this study, we will first present the key concept of influencer marketing and give a broad definition of the term. We will also analyse the evolution of influencer marketing over the last years. Moreover, in this thesis, the influencer marketing strategies of two European companies will be analysed. We will see how influencer marketing campaigns helped these companies in their international expansion in Europe but also overseas. Through the analysis of four different influencer marketing campaigns managed in 2018 and 2019 by Upfluence, an international influencer marketing agency, we will draw conclusions regarding the performances of these international influencer marketing strategies in different countries. We will also highlight the benefits of influencer marketing strategies in international markets. Furthermore, we will give some key recommendations for Europe companies when developing and implementing influencer marketing strategies.

SHRNUTÍ

V této práci se nejdříve zaměříme na základní koncept influencer marketingu, vysvětlíme základní definici tohoto termínu a také analyzujeme vývoj influencer marketingu v posledních letech. Mimo jiné se v této práci analyzují strategie dvou společností využívající influencer marketing. Uvidíme, jak tento druh marketingu pomohl společnostem v jejich mezinárodní expanzi po Evropě i v zámorí. Skrze analýzu čtyř různých marketingových kampaní vedených v letech 2018 a 2019 společností Upfluence, zaměřující se na mezinárodní influencer marketing, dojdeme k závěrům ohledně výkonu těchto strategií v mezinárodním influencer marketingu. Poukážeme také na výhody využití influencer marketingu na mezinárodních trzích a dáme klíčová doporučení pro evropské společnosti k implementaci influencer marketingových strategií.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media developed massively over the last decade with the appearance of new platforms where every type of content can be uploaded and shared. From Facebook creation in 2004 until now, the landscape of social media platforms has significantly changed.

First of all, internet users can share content (photos, videos, live videos, GIFs, articles, messages...) on several platforms. They have the choice to share pinned photos on Pinterest, live videos or videos on Twitch and Youtube, stories (photos or videos) on Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and many more.

Moreover, being on social media is not only about sharing content to your relatives or your classmates anymore. Platforms can connect you with people on the other side of the world sharing the same interests. From these connections, networks are created: personal ones but also professional ones. These networks can develop into communities of people in various social media. On LinkedIn, communities share professional advice and help each other to find a job or an internship. On Facebook, communities are created around political movements or MEMEs lovers.

From these communities and networks, some people stand out of the crowd because they are experts in the subject gathering the audience, or they are celebrities or also because they create entertaining content. We called them influencers.

In these networks, interactions play an essential role: to stand out of the crowd the content the influencer is sharing must be seen, liked, commented or shared. With their content, influencers engage their audience and create conversations around it. Influencers also give their opinions on specific or broad subjects. Their communities are then impacted by these opinions and take them into account: influencers can influence their audience.

Noticing this phenomenon of e-influencers and the engagement of the audience, brands also want to play a role in these communities to reach more customers. They are using the influence of influencers to send messages to consumers and promote their products. This use of influencers by brands is called influencer marketing.

Companies developed over the last decade new influencer marketing strategies nationally but also internationally. These international strategies help the expansion of brands to new markets in Europe and overseas.

However, to what extent international influencer marketing strategies help the international expansion of companies in Europe and overseas? How can they measure the impact of their influencer marketing campaigns on international markets?

In this paper, we will analyse how influencer marketing can be a strategic ally of European companies with the analysis of influencer marketing campaigns in foreign markets.

In this master thesis, I chose to focus mainly on practical observations and studies to bring concrete solutions and answers. However, to give a clear and complete definition of influencer marketing, I also added studies and references to the first part of my work. In order to frame this work, I first researched references, theories and academic research to be able to give a broad overview of key subjects of this paper. This secondary data research gave me a theoretical approach to my subject and allowed me to have a framework of my problematic. In the second step, I chose to analyse the influencer marketing strategies of two European companies operating worldwide. I studied the results and performances of two influencer marketing campaigns for each company. The data collected from these analyses supported the development of my answer to the problem. These studies also allowed me to highlight major recommendations in terms of influencer marketing strategies.

In order to be able to understand how influencer marketing is a strategic ally for European companies in their international expansion, we will need first to define influencer marketing, its context and its evolution. The challenges and benefits will also be studied to have a broad overview of the concept. In the second part and with the framework and notions of the first part, we will then go through the analysis of two European companies and their influencer marketing strategies.

PART 1: INFLUENCER MARKETING IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

I - Influencer marketing at a numeric era

1 - Native advertising and influencer marketing

Adblock generation: the expression of a reject

At a time when the online experience is deteriorating, more and more Internet users are now turning to ad blockers to avoid having their browsing polluted by ads considered too intrusive. This is how we see the rapid evolution of extensions, software and plugins that make it possible to block almost all online advertising content such as banners, pre-roll videos and many forms of sponsored content. Mobiles are no exception since devices also exist for smartphones. Among them, we find Adblock / Plus, Collusion, Noscript, or Ghostery. These Ad Blocking methods offer many advantages for Internet users, such as better charging time or battery gain, but above all a better browsing experience.

According to a GlobalWebIndex published in 2019, 47% of worldwide internet users use an Ad Blocking device. The three main motives to use an Ad Blocking device are: "Too many ads", "Annoying or irrelevant ads" and "Intrusive ads" (Malik, April 2019). This figure and motives highlight a worrying observation that underlines the desire of Internet users to protect themselves from harmful advertising formats on the Internet.

This now widespread practice, therefore, forces advertisers to significantly rethink how to reach their consumers and to reconnect with more virtuous experiences.

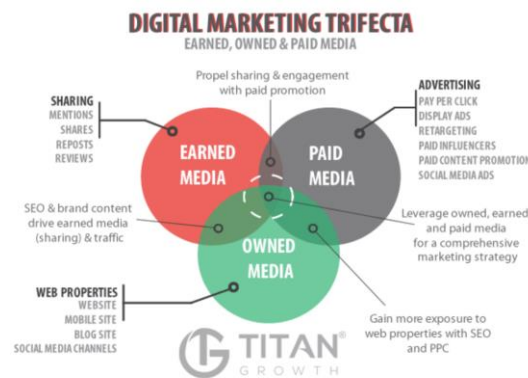
The emergence of Native Advertising

Native advertising is a form of sponsored online advertising with an editorial appearance that naturally integrates into content, is usually delivered in-feed and goes almost unnoticed by the reader. In-feed corresponds to the elements appearing on a flow of information or articles. Unlike more traditional advertising, native advertising

stands out and offers Internet users a less intrusive and therefore more qualitative aspect.

Its appearance on the web dates back to late 2012 in the United States and seems to be the response of professionals to the decline in relevance of traditional advertising formats (Saint Michel, November 2013).

Based on a more behavioural approach, this practice aims to nourish Internet users' interests with increasingly targeted, qualitative and, above all, less disturbing content. Native Advertising offers advertisers the advantage of distributing sponsored content while allowing them to collaborate in its creation, this strategy involves cooperation between Paid and Owned media.



Digital Marketing Trifecta: What is earned, owned & paid media? Titan Growth (No date)

Paid media is by definition paid content, it is the media space purchased: it takes the form of Display ads such as banners or sponsored links. The advertiser has the choice of the message he wishes to broadcast on paid platforms.

Native Advertising content is distributed on platforms that the brand does not own and therefore generally pay for. Examples include articles sponsored on blogs, native retargeting or sponsored posts on influencers' social networks.

2 - The rise of influencer marketing

Concept and definitions

Influencer marketing applied to digital marketing is a form of Native Premium advertising. In the form of social in-feed, editorial or custom formats, this marketing strategy is intended to be disseminated naturally on blogs, social publications, videos and other content, held by people or media with a strong reputation on the web, experts in their field: e-influencers. Unlike Native programmatic ads, content published by influencers manages to bypass ad blockers. The emergence of digital, the explosion of social networks and the decline in the performance of advertising formats have positioned influential marketing at the top of the ranking of brand marketing strategies.

Inspired by the press and public relations, influencer marketing is a strategy in which brands use the recommendation potential of influencers. Unlike marketing directly to a large group of consumers, with influencer marketing brands inspire, recruit and reward influencers or not to become their spokespersons.

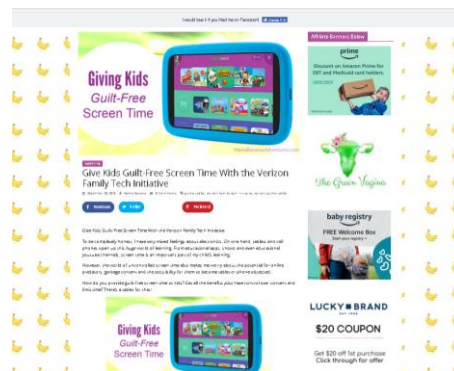
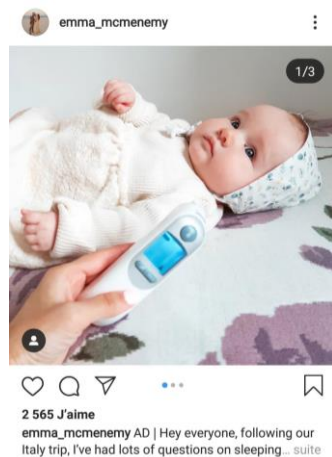
To better address this notion of influencer marketing, it is first necessary to understand what is called "influence". According to Sheldrake definition Influence is "when you think something you wouldn't have thought of, or you do something, you wouldn't have done" (Abbou, 2016). When we talk about influence, it is interesting to look at the psychological aspect that this process can have on a whole. This concept covers many fields: politics, sociology, economics or on the Internet with the emergence of e-influencers.

In the past and long before the advent of the web and social media, many brands have relied on the persuasive power of influencers, a brief retrospective on the mythical "Marlboro Man", the emblematic cowboy of the American brand Marlboro, which was featured in advertisements since 1955. This simple and realistic touch has enabled Philippe Moris to record a dazzling increase in his cigarette sales. Between 1954 and 1957, sales rose from 6.4 billion to more than 20 billion, thanks in particular to the "Marlboro Man", advertising icon of the time (Gaston Breton, August 2016).

Influencer Marketing today

Nowadays and at a time when social platforms are at their peak, influencer marketing as we know it is mainly focused on blogs through articles and sponsored links and on influencers' social networks with multimedia content accompanied by hashtags and mentions. Every day, we see a large number of these publications scrolling through our news feeds, some of them are even difficult to distinguish as sponsored because they blend perfectly into the influencer's content.

It is therefore very often easy for us to interact with the publication in question because it does not create cognitive dissonance.



Examples of sponsored posts on Instagram and on blog

Today, more and more influencers are distributing increasingly differentiating publications for branded content, which boost their content strategy. This is a time for originality: it has the advantage of humanizing the relationship and creating proximity with a niche audience. This is how we see the effervescence of creative content such as:

- **Tutorial videos with product placement.** Example: Recipe creation, Do It Yourself tips, videos on using softwares, etc.
- **The MEMEs:** phenomenon taken up and declined in mass. It is a simple concept that spreads across the web.

- **Facebook or Instagram lives:** with the development of this new social functionality, many partnerships with influencers are now being built using this lever.
- **Vlogs:** contraction of videos and blogs. Influencers who use this type of content document their experience in a natural way and comment on their actions, their adventures.
- **Social Takeovers:** an influencer takes control of a brand's social account for a defined time. This type of operation is usually done on Snapchat or Instagram.
- **Discount code operations:** they make it possible to offer the influencer community promotional offers in return or not for encouraging interaction.
- **Unboxings:** these are direct openings of packages received by influencers and simultaneous sharing of experience.

We are even talking about co-creation of content: brands and influencers collaborate to meet the ever-increasing needs of Internet users.

3 - Challenges and interests of influencer marketing for brands

Key figures

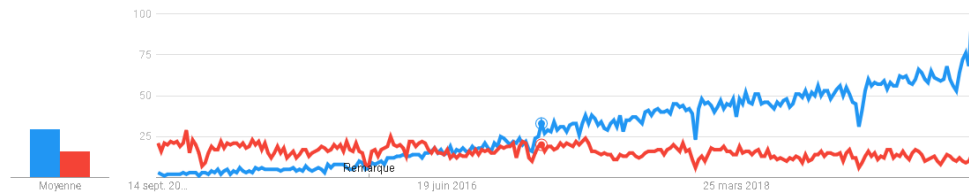
Influencer marketing is now more popular than ever, according to a study conducted in 2019 by Launchmetrics (Launchmetrics, 2019), 89.5% of marketing professionals said that the implementation of influencer marketing strategies was effective in increasing their overall results for digital strategies.

There are many promising signs that communication and marketing professionals are on the right track in setting up influencer campaigns. There is a real desire on the part of brands to increase the budgets allocated to the implementation of influencer operations, as confirmed by the study conducted by Brian Solis (Altimeter) in partnership with Traackr and TopRank Marketing among 102 marketing decision-makers: 55% of them plan to allocate more budget to influencer marketing next year, rising to 67% when they already spent \$250,000.

Another proof that influencer marketing concerns and interests more and more people is the evolution of the search for the term "Influencer Marketing". On Google Trends,

we notice that for the last 5 years, the interest for this research is in strong evolution. In contrast, the search for the term "print advertising" is declining.

Google Trends Graphic: Print advertising VS Influencer Marketing over the last 5 years



Challenges and aspirations of brands

Today, according to the Altimeter and Traackr study conducted by Solis, 43% of professionals are at the experimental stage of influence programs, 28% focus their influence strategies on campaigns, 24% admit to having launched continuous programs and 5% have integrated influence programs.

For many professionals who have or wish to experiment with influencer marketing, some challenges remain. Thus, according to some figures from a Launchmetrics study (Launchmetrics, 2015) conducted in 2015 among 650 marketing professionals 75% of respondents stated that identifying relevant influencers is one of the main challenges in the implementation of a strategy. This is followed by 69% by the correct definition of engagement techniques and 53% by the measurement of influence actions.

If brands rely on this marketing strategy, it is because it has the advantage of offering many business opportunities to companies.

Why moving to influencer marketing?

Influencer marketing increases a brand's reach: partnering with an influencer gives the company direct access to the influencer's audience, in fact, the targeted audiences will be more likely to become potential buyers. Indeed, let's take the example of a blogger with an editorial line focused on Fitness - Well-being, his community loyal to his publications will be able to be interested in a product recommended by the influencer and corresponding to his values and inspirations.

Other means specific to influencer marketing allow brands to benefit from it. For example, the implementation of contests involving the creation, sharing or encouragement to comment to win can help boost commitments.

Also, a company that wishes to open the doors of a new clientele will see its reputation strengthened. The implementation of an influencer strategy also increases credibility: in particular thanks to the word of mouth and the recommendations issued by the influencer.

Besides, it would appear that influencer marketing makes a significant contribution to the generation of highly qualified leads, especially when the strategy is used in niche markets. Indeed, if we take the example of a company wishing to direct its communication towards other professionals, the fact of going through influencers who are experts in their field will make it possible to feed an audience in search of information and encourage them to take action. For brands wishing to reach a mass population, conversions can be greatly boosted by the implementation of promotional codes and ephemeral operations broadcast by influencers to encourage purchases.

A brand that implements an influencer marketing strategy can, if it sends samples to an influencer likely to be interested in its product or service, obtain opinions and comments. This will then allow him to receive relevant feedback.

Other key benefits can be found for influencer marketing campaigns: Shah, when interviewed by Schaefer in his book *Return on Influence* (2012, p. 135-138), noticed through his influencer programs 5 of them.

- **Authentic Advocacy:** Brands can collaborate with influencers that are already using their products or services, the partnership will be seen as highly authentic by the audience.
- **Cost-effective impressions:** When collaborating with profiles with a high degree of influence, brands generate a lot of impressions and the cost per thousand impressions can be low compared to traditional media. Moreover, the content created with influencers is organic and not paid media.

- **Fresh-marketing channel:** Influencer marketing is not only a tool but also a valuable marketing channel that can be used to reach a large qualified audience.
- **Consumer feedback Loop:** By sharing posts on a brand's product or service, influencers create a conversation with their audience. Analysing this discussion and the comments of the audience allow brands to collect useful marketing data and even create personas. This feedback can be obtained more easily than with focus groups and other traditional data gathering.
- **Brand buffer:** Consumers don't usually like when brands are contacting them directly, they see it as annoying and spamming. The influencer is seen as trustworthy by his audience and can then be a qualitative intermediary between brands and consumers so that companies don't contact the audience directly.

It is also worth recalling that the content produced by influencers can be relayed by the brand and used for commercial purposes, so influencer marketing also contributes to enriching the company's content. We can thus allow ourselves to think that influencer marketing and content marketing are proving to be a winning duo, and we notice a natural convergence of these two strategies. These two marketing techniques have now become keystones directly linked to the performance of the companies that employ them.

II - Taking advantage of e-influencers

1 - Typology of influencers

Influencer definition 2.0

E-influencers are Internet users with the ability to capture the attention of an audience through their blogs or social networks. When these influential Internet users cite and approve a brand's product or service, they transfer a part of themselves and their values through their publications. The message, thus broadcast, is very often well accepted by the audience if it is done in a relevant way.

Influencers ensure a continuous presence on social platforms or their blogs. They have the advantage of bringing together a community of loyal readers and subscribers who interact with the content they produce. They are halfway between media, consumer and muse. Over time, being an influencer has become a professional activity.

According to the Augure study conducted in 2014 (Augure, 2014), which is highlighted in the portrait of opinion leaders, influencers have the following attributes: echo (the ability to mobilize and elicit reactions around a subject), exposure (depending on the size of the community and its audience potential) and voice share (which represents its participation in the conversation).

In order to better understand how the implementation of an influencer marketing campaign can be effective for professionals, it is necessary to understand and analyze the different types of influencers.

Classification of influencers

Influencers can be distinguished according to different criteria:

- **The size of the community**

- Celebrities: This type of influencers is the closest to Press Relations. They represent in a way the first use of influence. Unlike macro and micro-influencers, celebrities are known even beyond their market. They remain less accessible than other types of influencers.
- Macro-influencers: They correspond to individuals, business and media with a very large and responsive network and community. In this category, we find influencers with a social audience of between 10,000 and more than one million subscribers. Within this category itself, there are sub-classifications specific to each company.
- Micro-influencers: On average, they have between 1,000 and 10,000 subscribers on their social networks. They, therefore, have a smaller number of subscribers than the "stars". They are generally much more affordable than macro-influencers because they are cheaper and easier to contact. They do not require all the time in remuneration and often agree to publish content in exchange for material compensation. Like

macro-influencers and celebrities, micro-influencers have a higher interaction rate. This is due in part to the fact that they want to be closer to their audience. The cumulative audience of micro-influencers can have the same impact as that of a single macro-influencer.

According to a study carried out by Markerly (April 2016), influencers with more than one million subscribers have a commitment rate of 1.6%, while influencers with less than 10,000 subscribers have a commitment rate of more than 8%.

It is essential to take into account that depending on the strategy, objectives and budgets of an influencer campaign, it may be wise to focus on celebrities, macro or micro-influencers.

- **Influencers per channel**

- Bloggers: Influencers who keep a blog and share their experiences and opinions through thematic articles. The posts written are intended to be qualitative and published irregularly, the content of the blog is very often enriched and innovative. Bloggers are often used in both B2B and B2C. They represent a significant part of influencer partnerships and they can be effective for sales conversion. Indeed, in 2019 according to Patel (Patel, Big Commerce, 2019), 33% of millennials “trust blog reviews for their purchases”.
- Youtubers: They produce videos hosted by the giant Youtube in which they appear. This medium, which is particularly popular with younger generations, allows influencers to generate revenue from sponsored content. These revenues can come directly from Youtube or from advertisers wishing to launch partnerships with this type of influencers.
- Instagrammers: Specialized influencers on the Instagram platform, having a monetizable audience on this social network. They regularly share video or photo content.
- Other social influencers: there are also other types of influencers with a high audience on other social networks such as Snapchat, Twitch, LinkedIn or TikTok.

- **Influencers by type**

- Experts: They are specialized in a specific field and are considered as essential references because of their experience or their profession. They are generally attracted to companies oriented towards the sale of products and services to other companies. Passionate people are the subtle notion of this category because they are halfway between experts and specialists and have created a loyal community through their expertise.
- Ambassadors: In terms of influencer relationships, they represent the highest level that a brand can build with an influencer. They are the brand's representatives. Professionals are called upon to call on them when setting up long-term operations.
- Customers and employees: If we focus on organization-centric individuals, employees and customers are an integral part of influencer marketing strategies (see below the graph from Solis), they also have a power of conviction and a weight in influencer relationships in a cross-functional environment.



The cross-functional influence model (Solis, Traackr)

- **Influencers by sector or industry**: It is essential, in addition to the size, type of the influencer, to focus on its industry and key sector. Indeed, depending on the needs and audience that the brand wishes to target, there is a multitude of influencers addressing various themes. These include fashion, beauty, lifestyle, cooking, moms, home automation, cybersecurity, technology, e-health, etc.

Managing different types of influencers requires the implementation of specific activation programs depending on the business sector and the company's marketing objectives.

2 - Creating value

For the audience

For an influential marketing partnership to be well perceived by the community, it must meet the expectations of the reader. It is, therefore, necessary to first understand the motivations of Internet users but also and above all the attitudes and behaviours that result from them.

Influencer marketing must make it possible to inspire consumer behaviour, and consistency of actions is essential: both in terms of content and choice of influencer and brand positioning. Brands, therefore, have every interest in focusing their choices on more qualitative than quantitative criteria. The choice of the activation period of the influencers is also taken into account, it could be counterproductive to shoot the web with publications of too many influencers for the promotion of the same product.

Moreover, it seems wise to remember that the content broadcast must not be in total opposition to the content that is usually published by the influencer. Negative opinions following a collaboration with an influencer can have negative impacts on the brand as well as on the credibility of the influencer. Advertising will then not have the desired effect and will even be repulsive.

For the influencer

In the context of collaboration, the partnership must be seen as creating value for the influencer. Many brands are mistaken in thinking that simply sending a product sample to the influencer or inviting him to an event is enough to get a relay from him.

The reality is quite different. Indeed, influencers' expectations have changed considerably in recent years. For example, 31.2% of experts surveyed in the 2019 "The State of Influencer Marketing" (Lauchmetrics) study of 600 marketing

professionals acknowledged that financial compensation is the primary motivation for influencers when working with a brand.

On the influencer side, according to the same study and based on the survey of 200 influencers, the most important criterion for accepting a partnership is the monetary compensation with 69.4% respondents mentioning money as their first motivation when accepting a partnership with a brand. The second motivation is the value brought from the collaboration to their community with 59%.

Same observation as for the audience, soliciting an influencer requires in-depth work beforehand to avoid that the partnership request is misunderstood. Influencers like personalization, which is the key to a constructive relationship. The objective here remains to convince him to make him want to talk about the brand, he must find an interest for him corresponding to his expectations and those of his community and be in adequacy with his universe.

III - Investment and profitability of influencer marketing actions

It is certain that depending on the size of the company and its objectives, the budgets to be allocated to influencer marketing will vary. We can distinguish the cost of an influencer but also the cost of implementing the campaign. The influencer's price is set according to several criteria:

- **Affinity with the brand or subject:** the stronger the influencer's appeal for the brand and the product, the more decisive it will be for the price he will advertise
- **The type of content:** the difficulty of creating content is of course taken into account when setting the price. For example, a video requires more time and investment than a photograph.
- **The size of the community:** the influencer's price increases according to his audience, the more subscribers he has on his social networks or visitors on his blog, the higher the price will be. According to the study conducted by Activate

(Activate, 2016) among 350 influencers questioned on the rates per piece of content, 87% of them having less than 5,000 monthly visits on their blog charge for the article less than 500€, the figure rises to 5% when they have more than 100,000 monthly visits. On average, the price of a blog article is 700€. However, it is still quite difficult to get a fixed idea of the exact price charged by influencers.

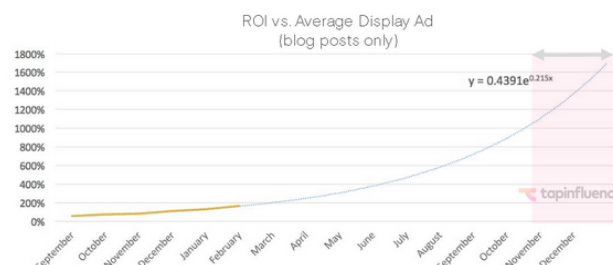
- **Engagement rate:** More than the size of the audience, the engagement rate plays an important role when pricing an influencer marketing campaign. For the same number of followers, a higher price will be set for the influencer with a higher engagement rate.

What are the impacts?

Because measuring the success of an influencer campaign is a real challenge for brands that use this strategy today, it is interesting to look at the return on investment generated by an influence campaign.

ROMI or Return on Marketing Investment corresponds to the real impact of an influencer campaign depending on the budgets invested.

In its report, TapInfluence sets out the ROI of influencer marketing: the ROI generated by blog articles alone would be 11 times higher than that of Display advertising banners after 12 months.

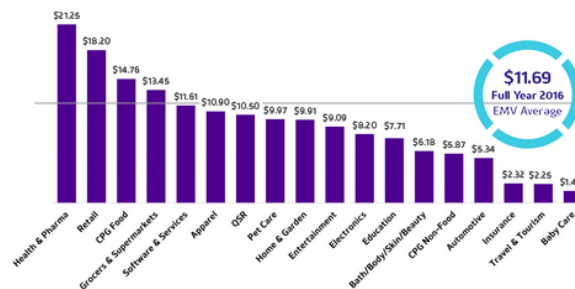


Sales effect study: TapInfluence Stats and Nielsa Catalina Solutions 2016

According to a report from RhythmOne (2017), which highlights the key figures of influence marketing according to the industry, it turns out that influence marketing

generates a strong EMV or Earned Media Value. This refers to the dollar value that can be attributed to advertising, social sharing but also partnerships with influencers.

Earned Media Value represents the value given to the impact of a marketing campaign. On average and across sectors, the average EMV for influencer marketing in 2016 is \$11.69 for every \$1 spent.



Distribution of EMV by sector - RhythmOne 2016

Key performance indicators

It is important to understand which KPIs to consider when evaluating the success of an influencer marketing campaign. The following key performance indicators are suitable for all international companies.

- **Engagements:** they include the number of likes, shares, comments. These are interactions as well as user-generated content. They make it possible to determine the relevance of a product or service. They demonstrate the audience's interest in the content broadcast by the influencer.
- **Impressions:** applied to influencer marketing, they correspond to the number of times the content is displayed. They are strongly linked to the objective of notoriety and visibility. The impressions differ from the reach, which corresponds to the number of people reached by the publication.
- **The number of readings:** it represents the number of visits to an article. The number of frames represents the number of times a video content is viewed.
- **The number of clicks:** it represents the number of times the audience has clicked on a link to a web page that the brand wanted to highlight. They can be easily analysed, in particular by building tracked links, using UTM, Bitly or internal analysis tools.

- **Conversions:** they are linked to the click rate because they define the number of times an essential objective for the company has been achieved. They can be direct sales, registrations, downloads or application installations.
- **The click-through rate:** it corresponds to the number of clicks divided by the number of readings or the number of impressions. This is a very important statistic to determine the quality of content and the real interest of the audience for the latter. On the Display network and according to Google's aggregate data (Chaffey, Smart Insights, 2019), the average click rate is between 0.46%. In contrast, for influencer marketing according to a study of the last 30 influencer campaigns conducted at Upfluence, the average click rate is around 5%.

The success of an influencer campaign depends on different key statistics but also on mastering the approach and management of partnerships with influencers. Many brands wishing to collaborate with influencers may have difficulty assessing whether a price is reasonable and estimating the value of the service they offer. They may also encounter difficulties in identifying the "good influencer" or in accompanying him in writing or creating the content they want to see displayed.

It is quite possible for an advertiser who has a communication department to carry out an influencer campaign but setting up an influencer marketing strategy can be complicated when you have little knowledge on the subject. As a result, a large number of brands nowadays use agencies specialising in influencer marketing, especially in foreign markets.

Even if using companies specialized in influencer marketing involves significant costs that are generally invoiced in management fees, outsourcing this task to agencies that are experts in the field saves time and allows you to be guided by the expertise of dedicated teams.

PART 2: INFLUENCER MARKETING - A STRATEGIC ALLY

I - Upfluence: A multi-sector technology agency

1 - The company and its offer

Its identity

Upfluence, a simplified joint-stock company, is a technology company specialized in influencer marketing and content marketing. Founded in 2013 by four entrepreneurs (Kevin Creusy, Vivien Garnès, Alexis Montagne and Yann Metz-Pasquier), it has gradually succeeded in becoming a specialized technology agency for several years now. The company has three entities based in Lyon, New York and Neuchâtel.

With several years of experience, Upfluence's uniqueness lies in the personalized offer and short or long term support it offers to its many clients.

The agency's business model is twofold. Indeed, on the one hand, Upfluence supports brands in connecting and managing relationships with influencers and on the other hand, it is based on a proprietary influence marketing technology that takes the form of a Software As a Service. Upfluence's offer meets the needs of companies to turn to digital agencies for the implementation of their international influencer marketing strategies.

Its products

The company owns two internally developed software products:

- **Upfluence Software:** As a real IRM or Influencer Relationship Management tool, the software makes it possible to establish lists of qualitative influencers, contact a very large number of profiles with personalized emails, manage marketing campaigns from contact to payment and monitor the performance of publications on many social networks. The software provides a wide choice of profiles and media with the following features: advanced keyword and field

search, country, location and country search, channel targeting (Blog, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube and Pinterest) and community size targeting.

The indexing of profiles found on the Internet in the software is done after checking the relevance of the profile by the algorithms. The entry point being the URL of the blog, these bots analyse the content to extract several data such as the influencer's language, its location, the recurring topics on its site and the size of its communities. The software database is also regularly updated by internal teams, thanks in particular to a Google Chrome extension that allows you to import a selected profile directly into it. Currently, the database contains more than 2.7 million influencers located around the world.

Released under license since 2017, the Software is growing and evolving rapidly. Initially used only internally to allow operations teams to identify a large number of influencers, its functionalities are now open to customers from all sectors and industries. Upfluence Software evolves every month to always adapt to the needs of its customers.

- **Publishr.io:** this interface allows you to manage the uploading of campaign briefs to the platform and the import of influencer content drafts.

The two technologies developed by Upfluence cooperate in the monitoring of influencer campaigns by teams and customers: from profile identification and management to performance analysis.

Its services

Upfluence operates in two complementary areas: Influencer Marketing and Content Marketing. It combines a global offer composed of its products and services. Thus, the company works with separate teams specialized in content or influencer marketing.

In terms of influencer marketing, Upfluence offers several services:

- **The management of influencer marketing campaigns** in their entirety. The offer is intended to be premium because it is based on the expertise of campaign managers.
- **Outreach offer:** since December 2016, Upfluence has been offering this service for companies wishing to manage influencer relationships themselves. In this case, the Upfluence teams are only responsible for identifying the influencers and sending the first contact email. The customer then manages the rest of the campaign himself.
- **Customer Services:** the offer is more recent because it has been available since February 2017. It is closely linked to the use of Upfluence Software by customers. Indeed, this campaign management offer is sold to customers with a software license.

In terms of content marketing, the Content team helps companies build a relevant editorial content strategy that is generally long-term. It thus offers its services in the writing of specialized articles, computer graphics, data visualization, newsletter creations or in terms of media optimization.

2 - Figures and markets

Turnover figures

In the first quarter of 2019, the revenues generated by Upfluence's influencer marketing team were \$653,000. This revenue is the result of the 9 influencer marketing campaigns signed in the first 4 months of the year. The average basket per campaign was \$70,000.

In total, Upfluence achieved a turnover of nearly \$4 million in 2018.

Typology of clients

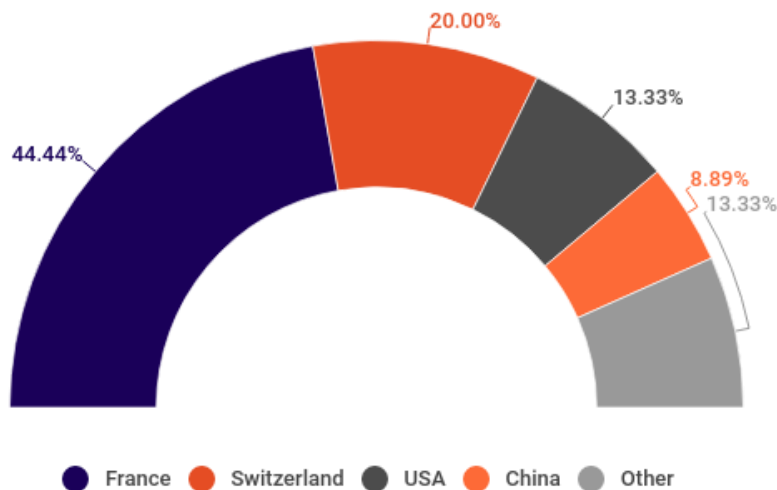
Today, 15% of the campaigns carried out by Upfluence since September 2018 come from companies that wish to address professionals, 75% of the campaigns come from customers who wish to reach individuals.

In terms of customer distribution by type of product or service, the most popular service is the one concerning the Customer Services offer with 23 customers (51% of all

campaigns). Next comes the Premium offer at 38% and then the Outreach offer at 11%.

Among its clients, Upfluence also includes agencies that outsource their influencer marketing operations. The company is therefore also a subcontractor. These agencies represent 33% of the client portfolio since September 2018.

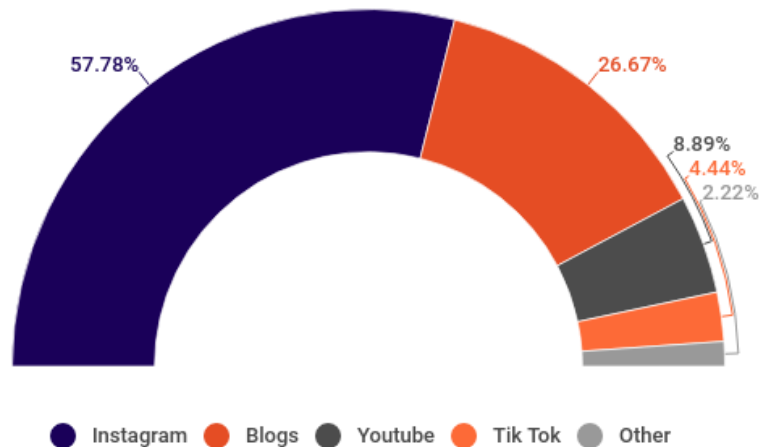
Finally, in terms of geographical distribution, 44% of customers are French, the remaining 66% come from other countries, mainly Switzerland and the United States.



Geographical distributions of Upfluence campaigns since September 2018

Distribution of campaigns by social network

If we break down the media on which Upfluence supports its customers in influencer marketing, we see that Instagram takes the first position in influence strategies with 58% of the campaigns sold and carried out on this channel since September 2018.



Distribution of Upfluence campaigns by social media since September 2018

Influencer classification at Upfluence

To name the influencers with whom Upfluence works, the company maintains a classification that gives visibility to the customer in pre-sales and allows teams to identify influencers according to their size.

The classification is as follows:

- **Power middle:** these are micro-influencers with between 10,000 and 20,000 monthly visits to their blog and between 1,000 and 10,000 followers on their social networks.
- **The Top 20%:** they have between 20,000 and 40,000 monthly visits on their blog and between 10,000 and 30,000 subscribers on their social networks.
- **Top 10%:** for these influencers, monthly visits are between 40,000 and 100,000. On social networks, they have between 30,000 and 60,000 subscribers.
- **The Top 5%:** they have between 100,000 and 250,000 visits per month on their blog and between 60,000 and 100,000 subscribers on their social networks.
- **The Top 1%:** they are the biggest influencers in terms of size at Upfluence, have more than 250,000 monthly visits to their blog and have more than 100,000 subscribers on their social networks.

3 - Influencing Marketing Strategist: my role at Upfluence

The mission

The influencer marketing strategist is a project manager; he is assigned campaigns based on his customer portfolio. He must link between brands and their expectations and influencers. He must make the needs expressed by clients understood by the influencers with whom he collaborates as part of an influencer project. Before signing the project, the strategist is also in support of sales representatives to establish influencer strategies for customers who are interested in an influencer marketing project.

Its role

The IMS at Upfluence operates on both the client and influencer sides:

- **On the customer side:** The campaign manager guides the customer and acts as a relay and point of contact during the campaign. He helps him in his strategic choices and proposes creative ideas and axes to be implemented according to what has been signed with the sales representative. This gathering of needs is generally done at the beginning of the operation with the organization of a kickoff call. Throughout the campaign, he organizes various meetings with the client to give him regular feedback on the progress of the project. The customer must be informed and his expectations are at the centre of attention. Indeed, he is systematically involved in the key stages of the campaign and takes an important place in the validation process: influencers selected by the campaign manager and content pieces created by them. The person in charge of the project creates a retro schedule reminding the campaign deadlines and shares follow-up documents containing project data. When the IMS identifies influencers, its mission is to present them to the client through a shortlist highlighting recommendations as to the final choice of influencers.
- **On the influencer side:** the IMS is in charge of identifying, managing the relationship and supporting them throughout the campaign. This includes creating precise lists according to the type of influencers sought by the customer, contacting influencers, negotiating prices, creating campaign briefs

and monitoring the publication of content. The IMS also supports influencers during their payment by sharing with them the procedures for creating invoices and necessary documents. The campaign manager must develop a personalized relationship with the influencer and should be able to supervise him in the implementation of the campaign while listening to his expectations.

At the end of the campaign, the influencer strategist builds complete reports that he distributes to clients a few weeks after the end of the influencers' publications. These reviews include the performance of the campaign and recommendations for future projects both creatively and in terms of campaign implementation.

For each campaign, the IMS adapts to the needs and expectations of its client. He remains flexible to align himself with his processes while providing him with his expertise in influencer marketing.

The adaptation is also cultural: according to the nationality of the client and the internal culture of the company. A client from an SME or a multinational company, or a client from Taiwan or the United States, will not have the same processes both in terms of relationships and project operations.

This role as Influencer Marketing Strategist allowed me to observe and analyse the functioning and benefits of influencer marketing for companies of different sizes and from different countries.

II - Analysis: International campaigns at Upfluence

In order to highlight the benefits of influencer marketing in international expansion, I decided to analyse the results of two companies: Mercedes-Benz Parfums and Mayoral.

1 - Mercedes-Benz Parfums campaigns

Presentation of Mercedes-Benz Parfums

Mercedes-Benz Parfums was created in 2013 to broaden Mercedes-Benz product portfolio and leverage its brand name. They launched their fragrance line for men, women and home.

Mercedes-Benz Parfums is held by INCC Parfums, a French company. They have been developing their product range since the creation of the line and now have more than 15 perfumes. The company is distributing its fragrances overseas in various markets: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Poland, Germany, UK, Mexico, Chile, etc. All their products are manufactured in France and their headquarters are based in Versailles, next to Paris.

Their business model is based on a distributor network. They work with established distributors in every market. In some markets, such as France for example, they have exclusive contracts with a distributor.

The company has been working with Upfluence since 2017 in order to develop their brand presence and brand recognition in different countries in Europe and overseas. All campaigns implemented with Upfluence and that will be mentioned below were implemented for men's perfume and not for any other perfume range of the brand.

Campaigns and key indicators

- **Father's day 2018**

This campaign was the first influencer marketing campaign implemented by INCC and managed by Upfluence. The company never did an influencer project before and thus had high expectations in terms of audience engagement and content quality. They estimated around 380,000 impressions and 30,000 engagements for the content created. We will see through our study how these expectations were met.

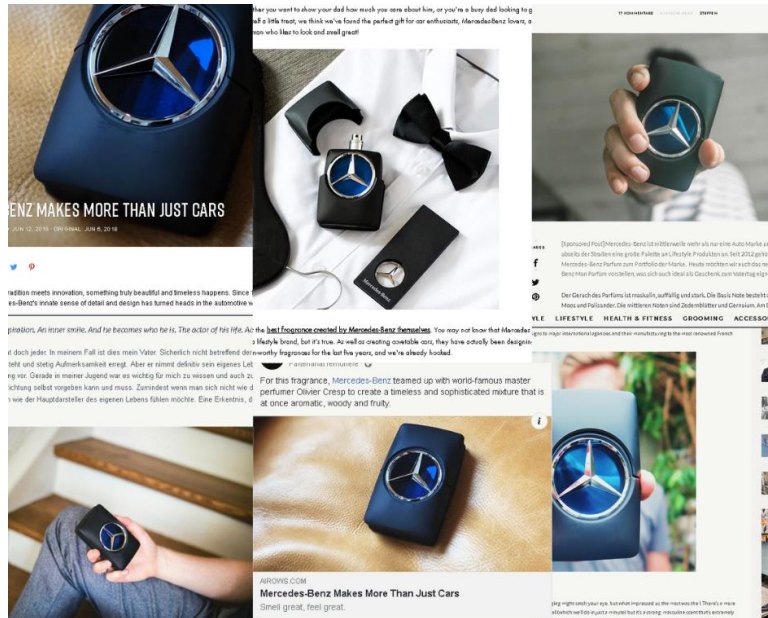
In order to have the context and analyse in-depth the results of the campaign, we will first go through the key elements of the project:

- Objectives: INCC had two main objectives regarding the campaign. First, they wanted to increase their brand recognition and awareness at a key

sales moment of the year: Father's day. They also wanted to disassociate their image from the car's brand: Mercedes-Benz, to be seen as a product with its own values. The campaign presented their first and most classic perfume: Mercedes-Benz Man.

- Location: This project took place in 3 countries: USA, Germany and France. For the relevance of this study, France results will not be included in the overall results. Mercedes-Benz had already a network of retailers in Germany and the USA.
- Typology of influencers: The brand worked with 24 influencers in the Beauty / Luxury / Fashion sectors. They collaborated with 5 Bloggers and 12 Instagrammers, which had an average following base of 30,000 people. In the USA, 3 bloggers and 5 Instagrammers published a sponsored post and in Germany, 2 bloggers and 7 Instagrammers.
- Creative strategy: The content must present the perfume as a perfect gift for Father's day. It must showcase the perfume as part of an elegant morning routine.
- Content specifications: Bloggers had to post one article on their blog and to share it on their social media. It could be Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. The influencers had to introduce the brand and the perfume mentioning some keywords related to the values of the product (Iconic, Innovative, Timeless, Glamorous, Perfection, Fascination, Differentiation, Creativity, and Quality) and add some pictures of the perfume to the article. To maximise engagement, bloggers encouraged their audience to comment and participate in a contest to win a perfume. Also, a tracked link redirecting the audience to the retailer's website was included in their article to analyse click-through rate and sales conversion.

How influencer marketing is a strategic ally for European companies in international expansion



Examples of blog posts and social shares in the USA and Germany

Instagrammers had to publish one post on their feed. The photo had to showcase the perfume and the influencer. In the caption, influencers were inviting their audience to participate in the contest as well to encourage engagements.

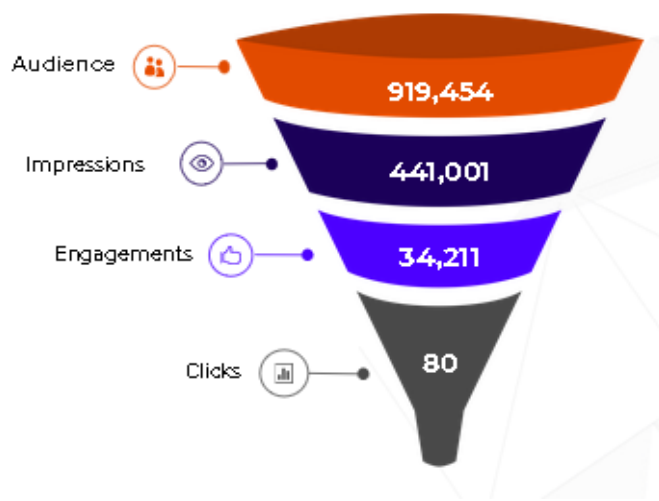


Examples of Instagram posts in the USA and Germany

- **Budget:** For this campaign, INCC spent overall €17,800 for both countries and including all management costs. Regarding influencer payment, each blogger was paid around €1,000 an article and each Instagrammer was paid around €600 a post.

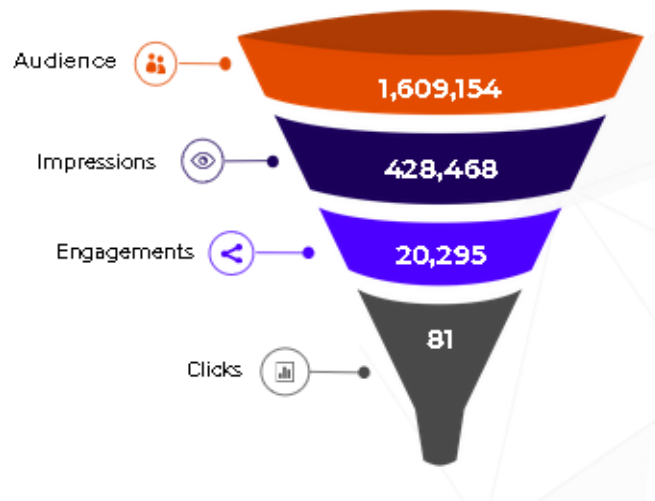
Now that we have presented the context of the campaign, we will focus on the main results of the project (for complete results, see Appendix 2).

For Germany, you can find below the performance funnel of the campaign:



Adding to these key indicators, the campaign in Germany reached more than 325,000 people through articles and Instagram posts. Also, the content generated more than 34,000 engagements (shares, comments, likes...) and thus an engagement rate of 10%.

For the USA, you can find below the performance funnel for the campaign:



Moreover, the campaign in the USA reached more than 175,000 people and generated an engagement rate of 11%.

Overall, in terms of numbers, the campaign outperformed the estimated KPIs. In Germany, the engagement rate is slightly lower than the one in the USA. This difference can be explained by a lot of different factors: interest in the product, quality of the content, publication times, influencers' selection...

The qualitative content in both markets allowed to engage more than 10% of the followers reached. This engagement rate shows that the targeted audience was interested in the content published and in the perfume. The implementation of contests also boosted the performances and engagements.

This campaign allowed Mercedes-Benz Parfums to reach more than 500,000 people in two key foreign markets. This audience is highly qualified as they have shown interest in beauty, fashion and luxury and are following influencers in these sectors.

- **Father's day 2019**

The Father's day campaign 2019 was the first campaign of 2019 implemented by INCC. As the Father's day 2018 exceeded their expectations, the brand decided to test other key markets to develop their international recognition and awareness. The campaign aimed to introduce the new perfume of the Mercedes-Benz Parfums: a perfume created for millennials The Move.

To better analyse the results and performances, we will first present the key elements of the campaign:

- Objectives: For this new campaign, INCC had more specific goals. First, the company was seeking to increase its brand recognition in foreign markets. Moreover, the brand was looking to create consideration and drive sales for its new perfume.
- Location: The campaign took place in 3 different countries: France, Poland and Mexico. For the relevance of the study, we won't take into account the results of France. INCC already implemented a first campaign in Poland during the Christmas period. However, they never developed an influencer marketing strategy in Mexico.
- Typology of influencers: As the brand targeted millennials, the type of influencers selected was different. The campaign took place only on Instagram as it is the first social media platform for millennials. The brand collaborated with 9 Instagrammers in Poland and 3 Instagrammers in Mexico. These Instagrammers were influencers in 3 different sectors: Travel, Lifestyle and Sports in order to maximize the reach of the campaign. In average, these influencers had 75,000 followers.
- Creative strategy: For each sector, a different creative strategy was elaborated. Travel influencers had to symbolize adventure and escape. Sports influencers had to represent pushing oneself limits and human performances. Finally, lifestyle influencers had to create content symbolizing energy, freedom and movement.
- Content specifications: Each influencer had to publish 3 Instagram stories and 1 Instagram post. The first story was an unboxing of the perfume with a survey for the audience. It had to be published 5 days before the rest of the content. The two other stories were: 1 survey story asking a question to the audience and 1 story with a swipe-up link redirecting to the retailer's sales website. The link was tracked in order to analyse the number of clicks to purchase the perfume.

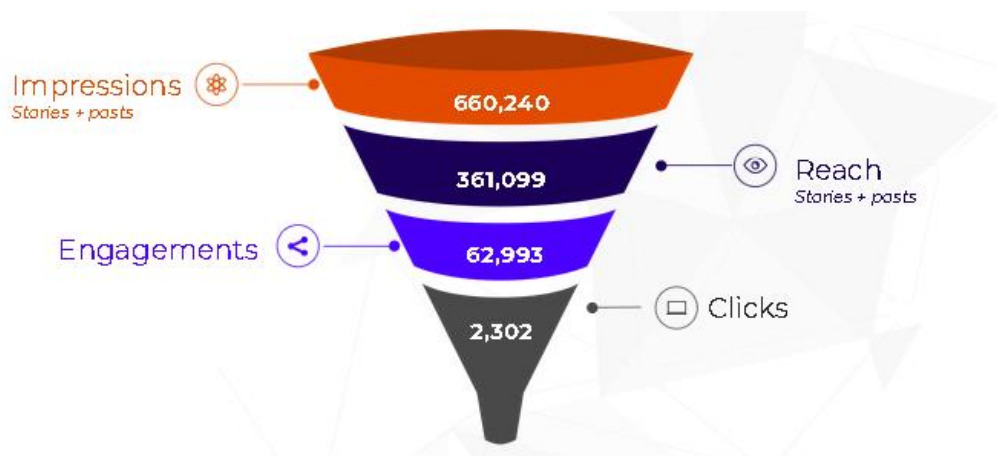


Examples of influencers' content in Poland and Mexico

- **Budget:** For this campaign, the brand spent €14,125 in both countries. In average, Polish influencers were paid €658 for their content. On the other hand, Mexican influencers were paid €485 for their publications.

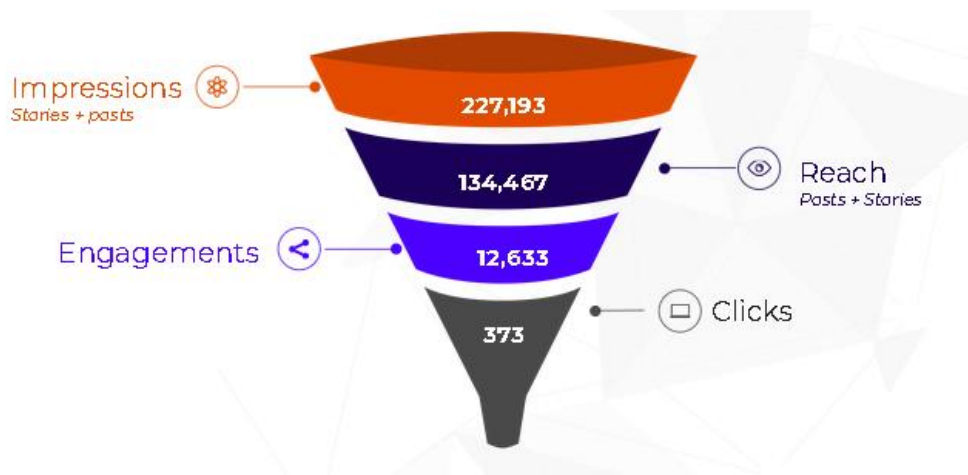
Now that we have presented the key elements of the campaign, we will focus on the main results of the project (for complete results, see Appendix 2).

For Poland, you can find below the performance funnel of the campaign:



Overall, Polish influencers generated an engagement rate of 17% thanks to their qualitative content. Moreover, more than 6,500 followers replied to the surveys added to their stories.

For Mexico, you can find below the performance funnel of the campaign:



Overall, the campaign in Mexico engaged 9% of the reached audience through stories and posts. However, influencers did not gather any data from the surveys as they did not respect the guidelines and did not ask any questions to their audience.

The campaign of 2019 exceeded the brand's expectations one more time. Thanks to a creative and impactful strategy, the published content generated a high engagement rate of 13%. These results demonstrate the interest of the audience for the campaign and the perfume. Also, the brand reached more than 495,000 potential consumers in 2 key foreign markets.

With more than 2,500 clicks on tracked links, Mercedes-Benz Parfums manage to target buyers that would be interested in purchasing the perfume later for themselves or as a gift.

2 - Mayoral campaigns

Presentation of Mayoral

Mayoral is a Spanish clothing company created 83 years ago in Malaga. In the 1975s, Mayoral became a children clothing brand: Mayoral Moda Infantil. The company has been a family company since the beginning even throughout its international expansion.

Nowadays, Mayoral operates in more than 100 countries on every continent.

Their headquarters are based in Malaga, in Spain. However, they have subsidiaries in 18 different countries, especially in Europe (France, Italy, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Portugal, the UK, Poland, and Greece).

The company is currently developing its e-commerce sales in more than 20 countries. Alongside this development and in order to support it, the brand is also implementing influencer marketing strategies in various countries.

Mayoral started to collaborate with Upfluence in 2018, with their first campaign starting in December 2018. They are now a highly valued client with a software license and ongoing premium management.

Campaign and key indicators

- **Mayoral Winter 2018**

The 2018 winter campaign took place in January. Mayoral implemented influencer marketing strategies in Europe and the US for the first time.

To be able to analyse the results of this first campaign, we need to first study the context of the project:

- Objectives: With this campaign, Mayoral was seeking to increase its online visibility and develop its digital brand image. They were also looking to drive conversion to their e-commerce website.
- Location: The campaign took place in Europe (Germany and Poland) and the US (NY, New Jersey, California and Miami).
- Typology of influencers: The brand collaborated with 1 Youtuber and 5 Instagrammers in each country. The Instagrammers had 30,000 followers on average and the Youtubers 10,000 views on average on their videos. All of them were parents between 25 and 40 years old with an interest in lifestyle, family and fashion.
- Creative strategy: Through their content, influencers had to show the values of the brand: high-quality clothing at an affordable price. The photos had also to represent winter spirit and atmosphere.

- Content specifications: Instagrammers had to publish 3 stories with a swipe-link redirecting to Mayoral e-commerce website and 1 post. On the other hand, Youtubers published 1 integrated or dedicated video on their profile. In an integrated video, the brand is only mentioned in the first part of the video for at least 30 seconds. On the other hand, in a dedicated video, the brand is presented in the whole video and the influencer only focuses on the product presented. In the description of the video, Youtubers included a tracked link redirecting to Mayoral website. All publications included a contest to win a discount on the brand e-commerce website.

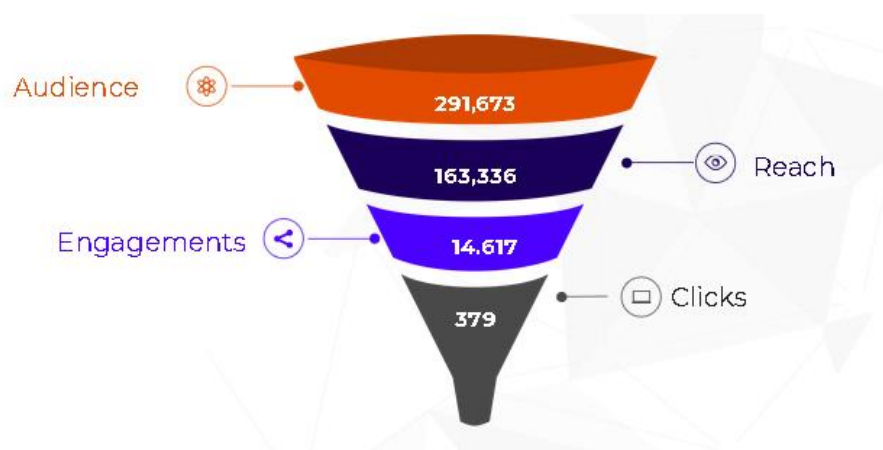


Examples of Instagram posts published in the US, Poland and Germany

- Budget: The brand spent €21,650 on the campaign including influencer payment and management costs. The budget spent per Youtuber was €1,000 on average and €600 for Instagrammers.

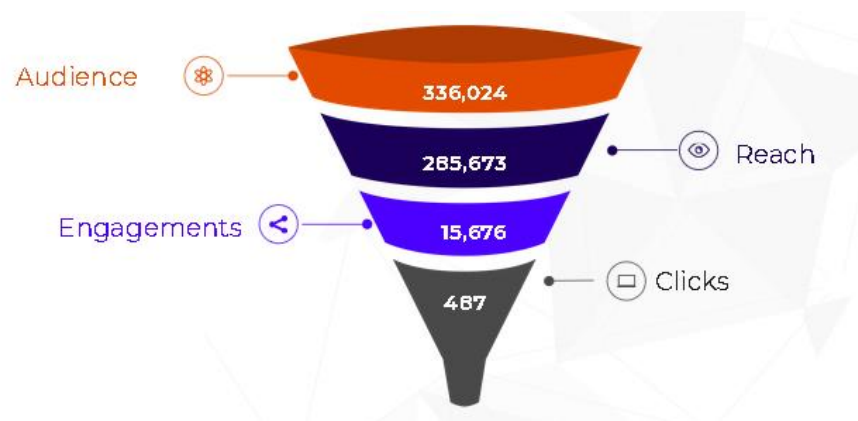
Now, to be able to draw conclusions on the results, we will have a look at key performances (see overall results in Appendix 3) of the campaign.

For Germany, you can find below the performance funnel of the project:



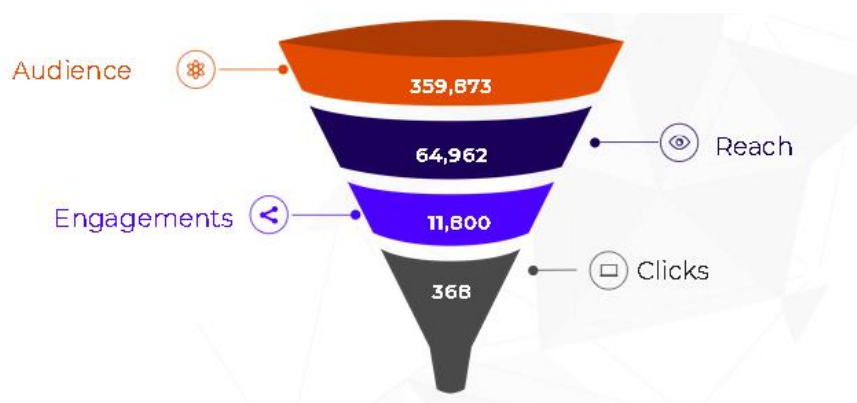
Overall, in Germany, the campaign generated more than 170,000 impressions for the Instagram content and a global engagement rate of 9% for all publications.

For Poland, you can find below the performance funnel of the campaign:



In Poland, influencers' content reached a global engagement rate of 5% and Instagram content generated more than 340,000.

For the USA, you can find below the performance funnel of the campaign:



In the USA, we can observe a high engagement rate of 18%. In comparison to Germany and Poland, influencers reached less audience but were more able to engage their followers with their publications.

In this campaign, the results show a disparity between countries in terms of reach and performance. Germany and Poland reached a higher number of consumers, but generated a lower global engagement rate than the USA. This difference can be explained by the number of additional posts published by influencers. Indeed, in Germany, influencers published 4 additional Instagram stories, thus the impressions and the reach increased. Moreover, in Poland, influencers published 5 additional Instagram stories and 5 additional Instagram posts. These publications increased results, especially impressions and reach.

Mayoral was able to reach more than 500,000 potential buyers of its targeted audience in key markets and areas for its digital development. Moreover, the campaign drove more than 1,200 qualified leads to the brand e-commerce website.

- **Spring 2019**

As the first met the expectations of Mayoral, the brand decided to implement influencer in new key target markets for its digital expansion.

In order to better analyse results and performances of the campaign, we will first have an overview of the project key elements:

- Objectives: As for the first campaign, the company was seeking to increase its digital presence and develop its brand digital image. Furthermore, the brand was looking to drive traffic to its e-commerce website in each targeted country.
- Location: The influencer marketing strategy was implemented in the UK and Italy.
- Typology of influencers: The brand collaborated with 7 Instagrammers and 1 Youtuber in each country. The influencers were parents between 25 and 40 years interested in lifestyle, family and fashion. On average, Instagrammers had 30,000 followers and Youtubers 10,000 views on their videos.

- Creative strategy: The content created showcased the spring and summer collection of the brand. Influencers presented their “perfect outfit for the summer for their kids”.
- Content specifications: Instagrammers published 3 stories with a swipe-up link redirecting to Mayoral website and 1 post. Youtubers posted 1 integrated and dedicated video on their profile, with a tracked link in their description redirecting to Mayoral e-commerce site. Influencers had the choice to offer a contest to their audience or not.

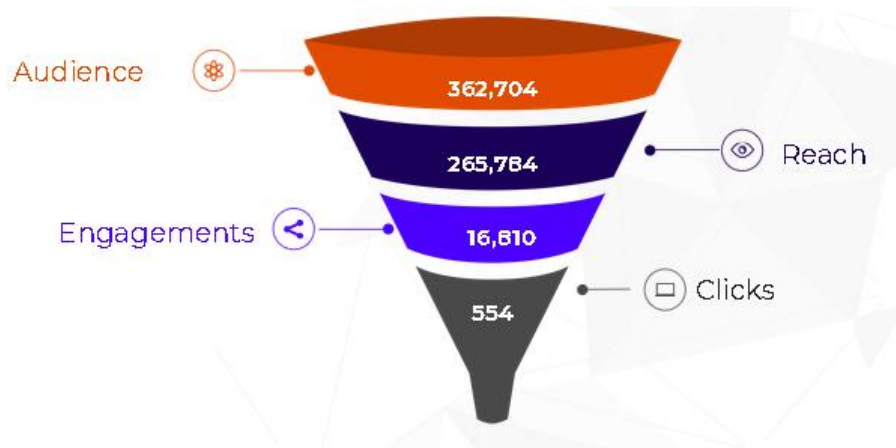


Examples of Instagram posts published in the UK and Italy

- Budget: The brand spent €19,248 for this campaign. Instagrammers were paid on average €792 for their content and Youtubers €1,075.

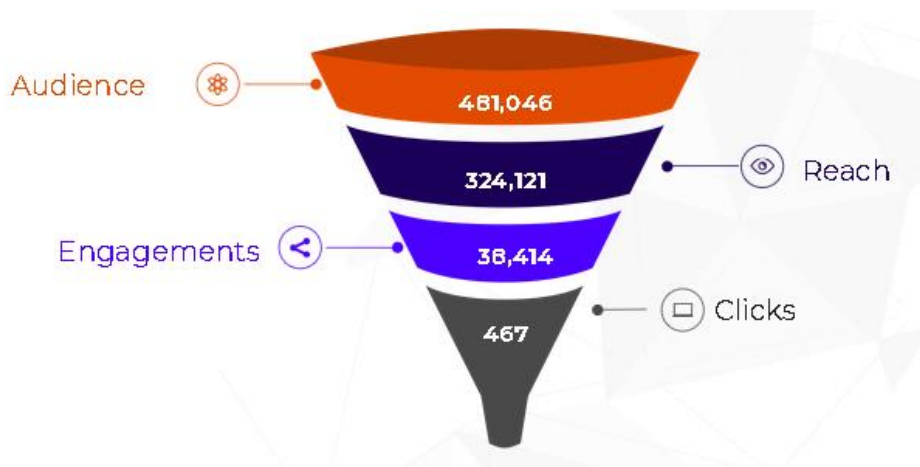
With this context, we are now able to analyse the results of these campaigns in both countries. Below, we will highlight some key performances (see overall results in Appendix 3).

For the UK, you can find below the performance funnel of the campaign:



In the UK, influencers' content generated an engagement rate of 6% and Instagram content triggered more than 345,000 impressions.

For Italy, you can find below the performance funnel of the campaign:



In Italy, the campaign generated a high engagement rate of 12% and Instagram content was seen more than 445,000 times by the audience.

We can observe that the reach and the engagement rate were higher in Italy. However, the UK generated more clicks. As the number of clicks for both Youtube videos is similar (135 in UK and 160 in Italy), the difference can be explained by a lot of different factors: influencers quality content, post time, digital cultural habits (call-to-actions can be more effective in some countries), brand image of Mayoral in these countries, interest in the product.

The engagement rate of 9% of this project shows the interest of the audience for Mayoral products and brand. The targeted markets were engaged through qualitative content and high-quality influencers.

For this campaign, Mayoral reached almost 590,000 potential buyers interested in families and fashion. Influencers' content also drove 1,021 consumers to the brand e-commerce website in both countries.

3 - Results and performance: conclusion

From the different campaigns and results we studied, we can draw some conclusions regarding international influencer marketing strategies for European companies.

The studies we conducted on different international campaigns highlighted different benefits of influencer marketing strategies when expanding internationally.

Reach a qualified audience

In every campaign, both brands had a clear targeted audience in the foreign markets. By selecting qualitative and engaging influencers that are followed by their target audience, brands were able to reach a highly qualified audience.

Indeed, for example, Mayoral is looking to communicate to parents between 25 and 40 years old interested in fashion. The influencers the brand collaborated met the characteristics of its target market and thus the audience engaged in the campaign was the one targeted by the company. The million of people reached during both campaigns was part of the target market and had already shown interest in fashion and family lifestyle.

Moreover, influencer marketing when it comes to international expansion can target a really precise region. For its first campaign, Mayoral was looking to target only some states or some cities in the USA: NY, New Jersey, California and Miami. These areas being key markets in terms of sales and brand recognition, Mayoral is seeking to expand furthermore its presence. By collaborating with influencers from these areas

which have a high percentage of their audience in the same state or city, Mayoral was able to reach local people and thus increase its brand recognition in these target areas.

This contact with target markets is one of the main strengths of influencer marketing. Influencers are opinion leaders and by choosing qualified influencers, Mayoral and Mercedes-Benz Parfums were able to reach their target audience through their profiles.

Increase brand recognition and brand awareness

Both Mayoral and Mercedes-Benz Parfums are looking to increase their brand recognition and brand awareness internationally. Thanks to their influencer marketing strategies, we could observe that they reached 500,000 people on average on every campaign.

These 500,000 people are not just local consumers, they are loyal followers of an influencer that is part of the target market because of his interests, demographics and lifestyle. More than just loyal followers, they trust influencers they are following for their opinions and lifestyle choices.

When it comes to brand recognition and image, the mistrust that could be felt for a consumer towards a foreign brand that he does not know will be highly reduced with the opinion the influencer is giving.

As the follower is trusting the influencer (or at least follows him for his lifestyle or expertise in some sectors), the trust towards the brand promoted by the influencer will increase significantly and thus influencer marketing helps to overcome this challenge of mistrust. Both brands were then able to develop their brand recognition and awareness in key international markets.

Moreover, on average for each campaign, both brands generated 25,000 engagements in each country. These 25,000 engagements show interest of the audience for the product and the brand thanks to the authenticity of the posts. It should be noted that engagements are more difficult to be generated for an influencer on a sponsored post than on an organic post. Posts seem authentic as the brand targeted

influencers that were already interested in their products and thus generated engagements from the audience.

Besides, the results we observed here were collected within one year after the start of the campaign. Performances of influencer marketing are long-term and the publications of each influencer (except stories) are still available on each profile. Even if the impact on the target audience of these publications reduces significantly after the first week of publication, the posts are still living on social media. Thus, the brand image will be developed over the years thanks to these publications.

Drive traffic and increase potential buyers

When analysing all the campaigns, the content created drove the audience to the sales website of both brands, especially thanks to Instagram stories. Indeed, when observing performances, we can see that Mercedes-Benz Parfums only generated 161 clicks to their retailers' websites, as they did not use Instagram stories but only blog articles with tracked links. The next year, with swipe-up Instagram stories, the brand generated more than 2,000 clicks to their sales websites. Mayoral also generated more than 1,000 clicks for both campaigns in its local e-commerce website.

These clicks show the interest of the audience in the brand and eventually in buying the product. Even if no purchase was made from these clicks, the audience visited the sales website and show an interest in purchasing the product now or later. Indeed, consumers might buy the product later when they need it: for themselves or as a gift. Thanks to the influencer and his content, the brand developed its brand recognition in key foreign markets and the audience knows now the product and its values.

Moreover, the contests implemented in the first campaign of Mercedes-Benz Parfums and Mayoral campaigns allowed the brands to drive traffic on their social media and increase their following base. The contests asked the audience to like and comment on the posts and follow the brand's Instagram account to confirm their participation. Mercedes-Benz Parfums earned 2,500 followers during the campaign thanks to these contests. Even without the contests, each influencer has to mention the brand's account in its posts and stories. These mentions increased the number of visits and also followers of Mayoral and Mercedes-Benz Parfums international accounts.

Thanks to engaging content, both brands were able to drive traffic to their local sales websites and their social media account and thus increase the number of potential buyers in key foreign markets.

Collect insightful consumer data

For its second campaign, Mercedes-Benz Parfums decided to maximize engagement and interactions with the audience by publishing Instagram survey stories. The first survey with the unboxing of the product asked if the audience knew the perfume or heard of it before. The second survey asked if followers were willing to try or buy the perfume.

Thanks to these surveys and their results, the brand collected useful and insightful data on their Polish market. As they work through retailers and a distributor network, the company does not always manage to gather marketing data on consumers. With these surveys, they were able to confirm the high awareness of their new product among millennials consumers (50% of them already knew the perfume) and the desirability of their product for this audience (70% of them were willing to try the perfume).

The main benefit of these survey tools compared to traditional marketing data gathering such as questionnaires is that consumers do not talk directly to the brand and thus have no barriers to answer. Moreover, they are replying to someone (the influencer) that they follow every day and that they already know. Their answer is then more sincere as they trust the influencer.

This data gathering can also be done by collecting the comments and replies to influencers' posts. The audience usually reacts to the product and the brand and as mentioned before, they will tend to give more honest feedback than when it is directly transmitted to the brand.

These insights of the audience are really valuable when it comes to the international market. Indeed, the marketer has usually less knowledge on a foreign country than on

its own as it is more difficult to gather consumer data overseas with cultural and language barriers.

III - Recommendations: How to optimise international influencer marketing campaigns?

In order to profit from the benefits of influencer marketing, brands should build a precise strategy and not only use it as a complementary tool of their “traditional” marketing strategies to generate more sales.

1 - Research and study

As in traditional marketing strategies, every campaign should be implemented after an in-depth study of the market in terms of audience but also in terms of influencers.

Indeed, every country has a different evolution and different trends regarding influencer marketing. To have a good overview of a country’s influencers marketing trends, some research should be done on:

- **The typology of influencers:** For example, I could observe that influencers, through my position as Influencer Strategist, can be defined and seen differently in some countries or regions of the world. In France and all western countries, influencer marketing is highly developed. Influencers are mostly experts in their domains, such as beauty, fashion or food. However, in some South American countries, such as Mexico or in the Middle East, influencers tend to be celebrities: actors, singers or sportsmen. When a brand is implementing an influencer marketing strategy, it should study carefully the typology of influencers in order to select the ones that will fit its brand values and reach its target audience.
- **Communication channels:** communication is a key element of an influencer marketing campaign. In order to be able to reach the right influencers in some countries, the brand will need to research which communication channels are

mostly used by influencers. For example, in most Asian countries such as China or Indonesia, influencers do not get contacted by emails. They would prefer to communicate through WhatsApp or Wechat.

- **Audience social media engagement and behaviour:** Every brand should analyse in-depth the behaviour of its target audience on social media to be able to engage this audience on content created by influencers for the brand. Also, the company should study on which platform its audience engages most, social media platform use can be different from a country to another.
- **Pricing:** Between two countries, prices for a post on social media can be highly different. This difference can be explained by the GDP, the minimum wage of the country but also by some cultural aspects. For example, French influencers are usually paid more than American influencers for the same work. One reason could be that American influencers accept more easily paid partnerships as culturally the society has a less negative judgement on advertising.
- **Cultural differences and language:** As in traditional marketing strategy, cultural differences and language play an important part when elaborating an influencer marketing strategy. It plays an important role at two levels:
 - When establishing a partnership with the influencer: In some countries, influencers do not speak and working with a professional translator can be useful. Furthermore, cultural differences can be a challenge when collaborating with the influencer. For example, in the Middle-East, some men dress only with traditional outfits and would disagree to change their habits for a photo. The relation to time and delays can also be a problem in a partnership. Mercedes-Benz Parfums, for example, did not take into account this cultural aspect when collaborating with Mexican influencers and only 3 influencers over 10 published in time for Father's day. The rest of the publications had to be cancelled which created frustration for influencers and the brand.
 - When developing the creative strategy of the campaign: The strategy has to be adapted according to cultural aspects.

This research on influencer marketing trends can be done through secondary research data, by analysing influencer marketing strategies already done in the country by other brands or competitors and by collecting data on local influencers' profiles.

2 - Define objectives

As for every strategy, the objectives of an influencer marketing campaign should be clear and precise. Companies can aim different goals based on their positioning on the target market, their product, their brand recognition and awareness:

- **Brand recognition and awareness:** The company is seeking to develop its international recognition and awareness in key markets.
- **Brand image:** The company wants to change its brand image or develop it in some foreign markets in order to increase sales.
- **Reach VS Frequency:** As in traditional media strategy, companies can be either looking to reach the maximum of people of their audience or try to reach multiple times in a defined time the same audience. To be able to reach a large number of people in an influencer marketing strategy, companies collaborate with influencers which have similar followers but the lowest number of followers in common. On the other hand, to reach multiple times the same audience and maximize the repetition of the message, companies work with influencers that have a large number of followers in common.
- **Sales:** Companies are looking to increase their sales at a specific period of the year. To be able to reach this goal, brands should implement incentives for the consumer to purchase the product. These incentives could be limited-in-time discount codes, call-to-actions, etc.

When defining clear objectives, brands must choose KPIs that correspond to their goals. These KPIs can be engagements, clicks, sales conversion, views...

3 - Analyse social media and tools

Depending on the target audience and target market, the choice of social media will be essential for the brand. Indeed, social media platforms tend to attract different audiences. For example, TikTok has a younger audience than Instagram, but blogs attract older generations than Instagram. Also, a product or a service that would need explanations for using it can be more easily promoted on Instagram stories or Youtube. Moreover, brands can target a category of audience depending on the chosen

platform. For example, beauty addicts tend to watch a lot of Youtube videos whereas gamers will be mostly connected and engaged on Twitch.

The tools of every platform should also be studied before an influencer marketing campaign. For example, in the last year, Instagram has developed several tools in order to maximize brands presence on their platform. If an influencer mentions a brand with the sponsored tool, the company can know, without the permission of the influencer, use the content of the Instagrammer for sponsored ads on the platform. Smaller tools can be used in influencer marketing strategies to optimise the performances: use of survey tools in Instagram stories, live content on Facebook Youtube, quizzes in Instagram stories...

Overall, the brand should remain up-to-date to upcoming changes in social media in order to be reactive and to adapt quickly to these changes and be able to run successful influencer marketing campaigns.

4 - Use experts or agencies in new markets

When implementing a first influencer marketing strategy in a foreign market, using international or local influencer marketing agencies can be useful.

Even if these agencies include management fees in their budgets, they can help companies to get into contact with the right influencers more quickly. They will also be useful to create a creative and adapted strategy according to the company goals and its target audience. Their insights on the market will allow the brand to avoid cultural mistakes and overcome local challenges.

5 - Influencers as partners and not publicity makers

Brands tend to forget that influencers are not marketing professionals and grow their followers' base by sharing their expertise on some subject or sharing their lifestyle. They are creators and their audience appreciates their original and authentic content.

When contacting influencers, some companies tend to think that they will present the product as if they were a model or an ambassador in an advertisement, repeating word by word what the brand would like them to say. This approach does not leverage the creation and influence of the influencer nor using the benefits of influencer marketing. The audience will be more engaged with authentic and creative content than with a photo that looks like publicity and does not fit the profile of the influencer.

To better leverage the influencer, brands should see partnerships as co-creations. For some influencer marketing campaigns, the co-creation will remain low with the influencer taking a photo or shooting helped by some guidelines from the brand.

In more creative and innovative influencer marketing campaigns, influencers can become a real co-creator of the brand. For example, some influencers co-created their own clothing collection with recognized brands. Gaming influencers can also help in reviewing and assessing the new technologies of a computer brand.

Furthermore, brands should be opened to influencers' ideas, propositions and feedbacks: they should keep in mind that they know better their audience than any brand. For example, during the 2019 Mercedes-Benz campaign, influencers mentioned that the brand asked for too many hashtags in the caption and thus the audience would be less likely to find the content authentic. For their next campaign, the brand took this feedback into account to optimize engagements on influencers' posts.

Influencers usually know how to add value to a partnership and brands should see collaborations as co-creations in order to profit from all influencer marketing benefits.

6 - Be flexible

Influencer marketing is a new marketing tool and it is changing really fast. Influencers can win or lose one thousand followers in two days, social platforms can take a significant part of the market in a few months, and social media tools are appearing every month. In order to adapt to these new trends and stay innovative, companies

should stay flexible. Every change can be an opportunity or a threat to influencer marketing campaigns.

When starting a campaign, companies should stay open to opportunities and remain careful of possible threats in every target market. For example, INCC wanted to collaborate with some influencers in Hong Kong on August 2019. However, with the current political situation with the Chinese government, the campaign had to be cancelled and postponed to an indefinite date. On the other hand, as mentioned before, influencers are usually bringing creative and useful ideas. The brand could take this opportunity to adapt his ongoing or upcoming campaigns taking into account these creative ideas, as influencers have more insights on their audience habits and interests in foreign and national markets.

In terms of culture, collaborating with influencers with a different cultural background and a different approach towards time, hierarchy or any other element that impacts a partnership can be a real challenge for brands. The company needs to adapt its communication and strategy to run successful campaigns.

On a more project level, every campaign can face challenges in terms of delays, shipments, drop-outs of influencers, etc. These challenges can be easily overcome when anticipated as much as possible and when the company remains flexible in order to adapt and find quick solutions.

Flexibility is one of the keys to run a successful influencer marketing campaign. Influencers are human and usually not marketing professionals, anticipating any challenge and remaining flexible in case of an issue or opportunity will allow the brand to create valuable and long-term partnerships with qualitative profiles.

CONCLUSION

Influencer marketing strategies take more and more place in international marketing strategies in European and overseas companies.

Even if companies are facing challenges in developing these strategies, such as identifying relevant influencers or the tracking of their performances, they measure a beneficial impact of influencer marketing on their overall digital results.

By analysing the campaigns of two European brands, Mayoral and Mercedes-Benz Parfums, we stated that influencer marketing has indeed many benefits that companies can use in their international marketing strategies. Thanks to qualitative influencer marketing campaigns, companies can reach a qualified audience, increase brand awareness and recognition, drive traffic and increase sales as well as collect useful marketing data. Influencer marketing proves itself as a strategic ally in the international expansion of these European companies.

To profit from the benefits of influencer marketing on an international level, companies still have to build clear and precise strategy following several major steps: analyse and study their market, define objectives, analyse social media and tools and build a collaboration with the influencer and not a publicity contract. Throughout their campaigns, brands should stay flexible and open to new opportunities. Moreover, they can use influencer marketing agencies in new markets to overcome challenges.

This paper has proven that influencer marketing is a strategic ally for European companies by studying four campaigns and two companies. However, the analysis, in order to be complete, could be extended to all international companies. Furthermore, in-depth research could be done to see to what extent influencer marketing is a strategic ally of multinational companies with high brand recognition in comparison to smaller international companies in Europe and overseas.

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