



## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND THE EFFECTS ON YOUTH- THE CASE OF INSTAGRAM

### SOSYAL MEDYA PAZARLAMASINDA YAPAY ZEKA VE GENÇLER ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ - INSTAGRAM ÖRNEĞİ

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#### Abstract

In today's society, online marketing has become essential for almost every business. As digitalization accelerates, companies are increasingly compelled to strengthen their online presence and strategically position themselves within the digital space. Younger consumers, in particular, actively use social media platforms to inform their purchasing decisions. As a result, it is critical for brands to boost their visibility on these platforms and develop effective marketing strategies. With consumers becoming more mobile, they expect personalized experiences and seamless interactions across all touchpoints when engaging with a company. To address these challenges, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing, alongside collaborations with influencers, has gained significant traction in recent years. AI plays a pivotal role in crafting personalized customer experiences, while influencers have considerable sway over young consumers. Social media campaigns are especially effective in shaping the consumption habits of adolescents, who tend to trust the recommendations and experiences shared by influencers. This trust significantly influences their purchasing behavior. In particular, influencer marketing strategies on platforms like Instagram enable brands to effectively connect with younger audiences. This study aims to explore how businesses utilize AI to enhance their online marketing efforts within the realm of social media, and to analyze the influence of influencers on the consumption patterns of young people. In this context, the growing impact of influencer marketing is increasingly shaping brand loyalty among young consumers, leaving a lasting effect in today's digital age.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Communication, Marketing, Artificial Intelligence.

#### Öz

Günümüzde çevrimiçi pazarlama, hemen hemen her işletme için vazgeçilmez bir hale gelmiştir. Dijitalleşmenin hızla ilerlediği bu dönemde, şirketler çevrimiçi varlıklarını güçlendirmek ve dijital dünyada kendilerini etkili bir şekilde konumlandırmak zorundadırlar. Özellikle genç tüketiciler, sosyal medya platformlarını aktif bir şekilde kullanarak alışveriş yapma eğilimindedirler. Bu nedenle, markaların bu platformlardaki görünürlüklerini artırmaları ve etkili bir pazarlama stratejisi geliştirmeleri kritik öneme sahiptir. Giderek daha mobil hale gelen tüketiciler, bir şirketle etkileşime geçtiklerinde kişiselleştirilmiş deneyimler ve tüm temas noktalarında kesintisiz erişim talep etmektedir. Bu zorluklara yanıt olarak, pazarlamada yapay zeka (YZ) kullanımının yanı sıra Influencerlarla yapılan pazarlama işbirlikleri son yıllarda büyük ilgi görmüştür. Yapay zeka, kişiselleştirilmiş müşteri deneyimlerinin tasarımı ve oluşturulması açısından önemli bir rol üstlenirken, Influencerlar özellikle genç tüketiciler üzerinde ciddi bir etki yaratmaktadır. Sosyal medya platformları aracılığıyla yürütülen kampanyalar, gençlerin tüketim alışkanlıklarını şekillendirmede oldukça etkili olmaktadır. Gençler, Influencerların önerilerine ve deneyimlerine daha fazla güvenmekte, bu da onların satın alma kararlarını önemli ölçüde etkilemektedir. Özellikle Instagram'da yapılan Influencer pazarlama stratejileri, markaların genç kitlelerle etkileşim kurmasına olanak tanımaktadır. Bu çalışma bir yandan yapay zekanın sosyal medya alanında çevrimiçi pazarlama çabalarını artırmak için işletmeler tarafından nasıl kullanıldığını araştırmayı, diğer yandan ise Influencerların gençlerin tüketim alışkanlıkları üzerindeki etkilerini derinlemesine irdelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Influencer pazarlamanın etkisi, günümüzün dijital çağında giderek artan bir önem kazanmaktadır ve genç tüketicilerin marka sadakati üzerinde kalıcı bir iz bırakmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Medya, İletişim, Pazarlama, Yapay Zeka.



## **INTRODUCTION**

Social media is now part of the fabric of business, driven by the growth of digital and the connected consumer. In a digital world, platforms like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube have changed the way businesses talk to consumers, offering brands unprecedented visibility, engagement and personalisation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). They have grown in importance not just because of their reach but also because they allow businesses to talk to audiences in real-time, get data driven insights and build brand loyalty (Tuten, Solomon, 2017). The growth of social media has also meant more competition for businesses to get and keep consumer attention in a world full of content. As a result, marketers are turning to advanced technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) to make their campaigns more effective. AI can transform social media marketing by automating, personalising and analysing large data sets for consumer behaviour (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). AI in social media allows for more targeted and engaged marketing which in turn means more efficient customer acquisition and retention strategies (Davenport et al., 2020). This intersection of AI and social media marketing has been well researched. Researchers have looked at how AI driven tools such as machine learning algorithms, natural language processing and data analytics can help marketing (Jarek & Mazurek, 2019). For example AI can help businesses deliver more relevant content to users, predict consumer preferences and improve decision making by analysing social media data (Barger, Labrecque, 2013). AI driven chatbots and virtual assistants are also being adopted by businesses to provide seamless customer service and engagement (Van Esch et al., 2019). However AI has its challenges. Data privacy, algorithmic bias and AI replacing human creativity in marketing are hot topics in both academic and industry circles (Paschen et al., 2020). Plus the effectiveness of AI in social media marketing will vary by platform and audience so more research is needed on platform specific strategies. Social media platforms are an extension of online marketing which is now essential for businesses to reach and engage with digital audiences. Like social media marketing, online marketing as a whole has benefited from the advances in artificial intelligence to target more, personalise advertising and data driven decision making across multiple digital channels including websites, email and search engines (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

## **ONLINE MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

Kreutzer defines online marketing as the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling all market-oriented activities that utilize mobile and/or stationary devices with internet access to achieve marketing objectives (Kreutzer, 2019). The internet, which became increasingly accessible to the public in the early 1990s, provided the foundation for today's online marketing through its ability to transfer data. In the mid-1990s, online marketing primarily referred to online public relations, banner advertising, and email marketing. However, in the years that followed, numerous sub-disciplines emerged, and the boundaries between different areas of online marketing became increasingly blurred (Lammenett, 2019).

Other forms of online marketing include search engine marketing, search engine optimization, affiliate marketing, and keyword advertising (Lammenett, 2019), although these will not be further explored in this paper.

Online marketing is closely linked to e-commerce, where one of the key features is the vast availability of almost every product worldwide, along with extensive information about them. Consumers can easily compare prices and consult reviews (Heinemann, 2019). In e-commerce, traditional market boundaries are dissolved, and information can be transmitted rapidly (Kollmann, 2013).

The emergence of Web 2.0 can be attributed to the active involvement and co-creation of internet users, characterized by user-generated content. This shift allowed individuals to upload their own materials, such as photos, videos, blogs, reviews, and comments, transforming passive consumers of Web 1.0 into active producers. Another significant driver of online marketing has been the development and proliferation of mobile devices with internet access. This evolution has given rise to mobile marketing, while social media marketing has increasingly become a central tool in marketing strategies. In particular, Instagram has evolved from a photo-sharing platform to a "shopping



destination," which, when utilized effectively, provides businesses with excellent opportunities for marketing and customer engagement (Grabs, 2022).

According to the Global Digital Report 2022 by We Are Social and Hootsuite, by early 2022, approximately 4.95 billion people were using the internet. This rapid growth in the online audience makes online marketing increasingly important (Kemp, 2022).

### **Social Media Marketing**

A specific form of online marketing is social media marketing, where businesses leverage social media platforms to promote their products or services. According to Kreutzer, the term "social media" encompasses online media and technologies that enable users to engage in information exchange beyond traditional email communication (Kreutzer, 2020). Social media includes not only social networking sites and media-sharing platforms but also blogs, online forums, and online communities.

This approach emphasizes online interaction, information exchange, and the creation of user-generated content, all rooted in Web 2.0 applications. It facilitates communication between individuals and between companies, allowing for peer-to-peer interactions that foster social relationships. Additionally, this environment gives rise to "influencer-follower" dynamics, which are reflected in the realm of influencer marketing.

Influencer marketing involves the use of individuals who have a substantial following on social media platforms, such as Instagram, to achieve significant outreach. Companies leverage these influencers to assist in meeting their communication and sales objectives through their influence within their respective communities (Kreutzer, 2020, p. 5).

The growing significance of social media marketing is evident from recent studies. According to Statista, in 2024, 5.04 billion people around the world used social media. Furthermore, a recent study by Hootsuite and We Are Social reveals that 80% of individuals aged 13 and older engage with social media platforms. This substantial figure clearly illustrates the immense potential that social media holds for business marketing strategies (Statista.com, 2024).

### **Customer Journey/ Customer Centric Marketing**

The decisions and actions involved in marketing products or services are collectively referred to as the marketing mix. According to E. Jerome McCarthy, the tools used to achieve marketing strategy are encapsulated in the so-called 4 P's of marketing: Product Policy, Price Policy, Place Policy, and Promotion Policy (Kollmann, 2013). Traditional marketing emphasizes the offered product and primarily aligns processes around the company itself. However, due to recent digital trends, including the rise of social media and mobile devices, customer expectations and purchasing processes have undergone significant transformation. Today, the focus has shifted to the customer. Companies must concentrate on understanding customer needs and designing their processes to be as customer-centric as possible. Customer orientation has become a crucial competitive factor. With customers increasingly engaging through mobile means, they expect experiences that are fully tailored to them and seamless access across all touchpoints. Consequently, it is essential to accurately understand customer concerns. Today's consumers desire personalized information that is readily available, regardless of their location, time, or the device they are using (Schüller, 2018). There exists a process comprising several steps between the intention to make a purchase and the actual acquisition of a product. When an individual searches for a product or offer online, the first step typically involves entering a search term into a search engine. The location from which this search is conducted and the device used are irrelevant. During their decision-making process, potential new customers are influenced by reviews and ratings from other customers, or their needs for specific products may be triggered, often through social media influencers. Even when a product is ultimately purchased in a physical store, the internet frequently serves as the initial point of reference for selecting the appropriate offer and provider. Consequently, it is crucial for potential customers to receive the right information at the right time, necessitating automated processes within the company.



Additionally, support during the online decision-making process is vital. If a customer opts to proceed with a purchase, it is advisable to reduce their uncertainty by providing positive impressions. This is often achieved through social media, where influencers and other users share their positive experiences with a product, encouraging others to buy. The goal is to convert this buyer into a loyal customer by continuing the customer service experience. Ideally, this customer will become a multiplier, attracting new clients to the company. The following touchpoints are crucial in this process:

*Earned Touchpoints:* These are generated through customer reviews, recommendations, and similar means.

*Paid Touchpoints:* These are purchased by the company, such as advertisements or banner ads.

*Owned Touchpoints:* These are owned by the company, including its website, online store, and customer magazines.

*Managed Touchpoints:* These are located on third-party platforms.

*Shared Touchpoints:* These are shared by users based on their experiences with others.

When capturing the so-called customer journey, it is essential for companies to adopt a comprehensive view of both digital and analog touchpoints from the customer's perspective to gain an optimal understanding of their needs (Schüller, 2018).

The customer journey can be divided into several phases, each requiring the provision of precise stimuli to engage potential customers effectively (Mehner, 2019).

1. The first phase is the *Awareness Phase*, where the customer's interest in a specific product or service is sparked. This interest may arise from an incidental event, such as losing or damaging a personal item, or it could be triggered directly through advertising or indirectly through recommendations from others. During this phase, awareness and attention are established. On Instagram, this can be achieved through personalized ads or targeted promotions by influencers.
2. The next phase is the *Consideration Phase*, during which the customer actively seeks information about the product or service and compares various options.
3. The third phase is the *Conversion Phase*, where the customer makes a purchase or avails themselves of the service offered by the company.
4. Following this is the *Retention Phase*, which represents the after-sales phase. This phase focuses on customer support post-purchase. If questions arise, they need to be addressed, as this phase significantly impacts customer satisfaction and determines whether the customer will return to the company in the future.
5. The fifth phase is the *Advocacy Phase*. If customers are highly satisfied, they become advocates for the company, sharing their positive experiences online and acting as multipliers for the brand.

### **Instagram as Online Marketing Tool**

Founded in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and acquired by Mark Zuckerberg in 2012, Instagram has since experienced a growing popularity. A study conducted by Forrester in 2014 highlighted that leading brands on Instagram achieved an engagement rate per follower that was 58 times higher than that on Facebook (Elliott, 2014).

Although Instagram can be accessed via desktop, its most common usage is through the mobile app. In 2020, over 1 billion people worldwide used Instagram, with half of them engaging with Instagram Stories daily (approximately 500 million users). These statistics are particularly compelling for businesses, as Instagram users frequently visit at least one business profile each day, and a third of the most viewed Instagram Stories originate from companies. Given the various consumption and



interaction options that Instagram offers, the app has a significant potential for addiction (Grabs, 2022).

In the United States, 63% of users check the Instagram app at least once a day, while 42% log in multiple times throughout the day.<sup>1</sup> Instagram has become the preferred platform for Millennials (Generation Y) and Generation Z, with approximately 60% of the global Instagram user base being under the age of 35. Notably, 90% of users follow at least one business account, and half of the users utilize the platform to discover new brands, products, or services. Furthermore, two-thirds of respondents indicate that the network fosters meaningful interactions with brands (McLachlan, 2022).

As early as 2018, a KPMG study revealed that 50% of CEOs believed their companies were increasingly meeting customer expectations; however, they acknowledged that the growing influence of Millennials needed to be more adequately addressed. Additionally, 54% identified capturing Millennials' attention as the primary challenge, while 45% saw significant difficulties in effectively engaging this demographic through digital channels.

On Instagram, companies can either share information, products, or promotions directly or allow individuals to create posts in which they express their experiences or opinions about the company. These users may also highlight events, releases, or similar content (Kreutzer, 2020).

However, the goal is not merely to accumulate as many clicks or likes as possible. Instead, marketers must focus on fully leveraging the potential of social media to provide customers with a distinctive experience (Hootsuit Inc., 2021).

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MARKETING**

### **Foundations of AI**

With the widespread adoption of the internet, mobile usage, the rise of social networks, the digitization of business processes, and the Internet of Things, data volumes have increased dramatically. Additionally, the speed at which this data is generated, stored, and processed has also grown significantly. This phenomenon is referred to as "Big Data." (Gentsch, 2019).

The availability of vast amounts of data (Big Data), coupled with recent advancements in virtually unlimited data storage and the immense computing power of modern IT systems, enables real-time data analysis. These developments have laid the groundwork for the rapid emergence of new AI techniques (Age.).

However, data only becomes valuable when it can be processed and refined. This is where algorithms come into play. An algorithm is a precise sequence of steps required to solve a problem, and thus, computer algorithms consist of instructions in the form of code based on data (Iafate, 2018).

While simple algorithms manage structured processes, such as workflows, through predefined rules, algorithms based on knowledge-based systems can tackle more complex and less structured tasks. Furthermore, algorithms within AI systems can analyze large volumes of unstructured data and address intricate challenges. By converting this data into precise insights through AI, decisions can be made in real time and with a high degree of automation (Gentsch, 2019).

Another crucial component of artificial intelligence is machine learning (ML). Machine learning enables machines to learn from experience and solve tasks autonomously. This means that it is no longer necessary for humans to define features for pattern recognition. Through targeted training, algorithms can independently identify patterns (Buxmann, Schmidt, 2019).

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There are several types of learning methods:

1. *Supervised Learning*

In this approach, both the dataset and the correct responses are known. The system learns to recognize the relationship between input and output through targeted training (Iafrate, 2018).

2. *Unsupervised Learning*

In this method, no outcomes are provided to the system. It autonomously identifies patterns within the data and independently forms groups or clusters, which can reveal features that may not be discernible to humans (Buxmann, Schmidt, 2019).

3. *Reinforcement Learning*

Through incentives, the system learns to determine the best possible actions and, consequently, the optimal strategy on its own.

4. *Deep Learning*

Deep learning is a specialized form of machine learning that relies on neural networks. AI systems are designed to process data in parallel and autonomously identify nonlinear dependencies. These systems can expand their knowledge independently and continue to evolve (Gentsch, 2019).

### **Imitation of Human Thinking and Behavior**

When computers can comprehend human language in both written and spoken forms, or even produce coherent and grammatically correct texts, this is referred to as Natural Language Processing (NLP). A key aspect of NLP involves understanding semantics, which can vary significantly across different languages. Therefore, it is essential for the system to accurately associate various meanings of words. Various machine learning techniques are employed to achieve this. The advancements in increasingly faster hardware, alongside the phenomenon of Big Data, further facilitate this process. To ensure effective language comprehension, the system must be trained on a vast amount of data. One application of NLP is chatbots, which are utilized in marketing for customer service purposes (Gentsch, 2019).

Natural Image Processing refers to the analysis of photographs and videos. When this process results in a dataset that captures the features of an image, it is termed Image Recognition. The information extracted from the image is then utilized to make decisions or trigger subsequent processes. One application of image analysis is tagging, where individuals in photos are automatically identified. This allows for the collection of data regarding the connections between people and their activities. However, a significant issue with current AI-driven image recognition systems is that they primarily focus on visual patterns without understanding the underlying significance of these patterns, often leading to errors. In contrast, humans can compare objects based on stored sensory impressions and experiences, enabling them to categorize and interpret these objects more accurately (Kreutzer, Sirrenberg, 2019).

### **The Use of AI in Marketing- Customer Data Platform**

For Generation Y (Millennials), smartphones have become an indispensable part of life. Their purchasing behavior not only shapes the future of retail but also significantly influences the buying habits of other generations. Furthermore, the even younger Generation Z is often inclined to make spontaneous purchases when a product appeals to them (Sarıkaya, 2023). Consequently, it is imperative for today's retailers to focus on fostering strong customer loyalty and enhancing the digital shopping experience.

In the current competitive landscape, companies face immense pressure due to the increasing interchangeability of products. Thus, investing in customer loyalty is crucial for brands to maintain their market position and avoid being pushed out. To tailor marketing efforts to individual customers effectively, detailed information about customer preferences is essential for timely identification of their needs, which in turn strengthens customer loyalty and reduces churn (Heinemann, 2019).

A global survey conducted by Accenture in 2017, which included 26,000 participants, revealed that many consumers are open to using AI-driven services and sharing personal data, as long as their privacy is properly protected. The study highlighted the importance of mobile services, with 84% of



individuals aged 14 to 17 expressing willingness to engage with AI-based applications. For a growing number of consumers, these services are becoming a routine part of daily life and are gaining increasing significance. Accenture identified AI as a crucial technology for understanding consumer needs, offering personalized services, and driving demand (Sovie, Curran, Schoelwer et al., 2017). A key requirement for effectively implementing AI-driven marketing strategies is the development of a robust data infrastructure built on comprehensive customer data. A fundamental prerequisite for the implementation of marketing strategies is the establishment of a comprehensive data foundation comprising extensive customer data. Recent advancements in Big Data technology have opened up numerous new opportunities for marketing. Big Data enables the consolidation of existing customer information, for instance, from Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems or a data warehouse, into a Customer Data Platform (CDP). Furthermore, through the utilization of artificial intelligence techniques in online marketing, additional customer data can be collected in real-time and assigned to individual customers—data that was not accessible to companies just a few years ago. Throughout the entire customer journey, further customer data is continuously gathered in the CDP, resulting in vast data volumes that can only be effectively utilized with the help of Big Data (Zacharias, 2019).

The substantial data repositories within a Customer Data Platform (CDP) can be analyzed using artificial intelligence (AI)-driven analytical techniques. AI aids in segmenting customers and assigning data to individual customer profiles, known as buyer personas. Ideally, AI support enables the identification of specific customers and the association of their data with a unique customer ID.

Based on these customer profiles, additional AI techniques can be employed to provide personalized offers to both prospects and existing customers in real-time, thereby enhancing customer experiences and increasing conversion rates. The conversion rate indicates the proportion of online visitors who complete a desired action after being directed to the company's website (eg. Kreutzer, 2018).

### **Targeting/Retargeting on Instagram**

When digital marketing strategies are automated and directed toward specific customer groups or individual customers based on existing data, this process is referred to as targeting. Targeting takes into account various factors for personalizing customer communication, including the user's hardware and software environment, geographic location, temporal aspects, search terms, and browsing behavior. This approach benefits both customers, who receive tailored offers, and providers, who can significantly enhance the efficiency of their marketing efforts (eg. Bundesverband Digitale Wirtschaft (BVDW) e.V. (2014).

Retargeting refers to the strategic implementation of marketing initiatives aimed at users or user groups who have previously engaged with the company in some manner. The purpose of retargeting includes maintaining contact with existing customers and encouraging them to take subsequent actions. Additionally, it serves as a reminder for registered prospects or in cases of abandoned purchases (ebd.).

The foundation for both targeting and retargeting lies in comprehensive data about individual customers or customer segments. Successful campaigns must be developed based on actual data, which encompasses both online and offline information (ebd.).

There are three types of data:

*First-Party Data*, which is collected directly by the advertiser; *Second-Party Data*, which is gathered by one advertiser and then shared with other partners; and *Third-Party Data*, which is provided to the advertiser by external sources. Among these, First-Party Data is considered the most valuable for a company's personalized marketing efforts (eg. Bundesverband Digitale Wirtschaft (BVDW) e.V. (2015), p. 7).

### **AI ON INSTAGRAM: THE INSTAGRAM ALGORITHM**

Instagram currently offers a wide range of functionalities, each of which can also serve as an advertising format. These include photos and videos in users' feeds (personal profiles), Stories (images



or videos that disappear after 24 hours), the Explore page, Reels (short entertaining videos lasting up to 90 seconds), Live videos, Shopping features, and Guides (curated content similar to a blog), among others.

The Instagram algorithm, or rather the various algorithms, dictates which content is displayed to users based on a set of rules. This influences, for instance, the order in which posts appear in the news feed and which contributions show up on the Explore page. Each user is presented with tailored content across different sections, taking into account their relationships with other users, such as interactions (comments, likes, page views, etc.), the relevance of the content to the user, and the recency of the posts.

The Explore feed presents content from accounts that the user does not yet follow. The determining factor for which posts appear in the Explore feed is the user's previous interactions with content they have shown interest in or engaged with. Based on these interactions, a collection of posts from similar accounts that the user hasn't followed is generated. The performance of these posts—such as the number of likes, comments, and saves—also plays a significant role in their visibility.

Although most of the posts displayed come from unfamiliar accounts, the feed can also feature accounts with which the user has already interacted, for instance, by visiting their profiles. The user's behavior in the Explore feed, including which content they engage with, influences the future Explore feed to ensure it aligns with their preferences. Additionally, the activity of the person who created the post is crucial; significant interactions with other accounts signal to the algorithm that the content might also be appealing to others.

The Reels section features videos from both followed and unfollowed accounts. The algorithm prioritizes content that is anticipated to be watched in its entirety. In this context, not only the user's own activities—such as liking, commenting on, saving, or interacting with Reels—but also the level of recent engagement between the content creator and other users are significant factors. Alongside Reels from accounts the user does not follow, videos from profiles with which the user has previously interacted may also be displayed. The algorithm utilizes audio tracks, pixel analysis, and frame analysis to determine the content's context. Additionally, it considers whether the content creator has a large following and whether their posts receive regular likes or shares (McLachlan, 2022).

Another tool that enhances reach is the hashtag feature. Selecting the appropriate hashtags is crucial; when they align with the content of the image, it becomes easier for the algorithm to understand the nature of the post and recommend it to the right audience. It's important to note that some hashtags may be banned by Instagram if they have been associated with inappropriate content. Using these banned hashtags not only prevents the post from appearing when the hashtag is clicked, but it can also diminish the visibility of valid hashtags employed in the post. Additionally, hashtags aimed solely at gaining likes (such as *tagsforlikes* or *like4like*) may attract bots that have minimal interaction with the brand, potentially damaging its reputation. Therefore, hashtags should be used strategically to reach the appropriate audience rather than to gain visibility among individuals who offer no value to the company (eg. Newberry, 2021).

### **Instagram Ad's**

To enhance the visibility or reach of posts or one's profile, it is also possible to actively promote content through Instagram Ads. The advertisement is created using the Facebook Ads Manager. After defining the campaign objective (such as interactions or lead generation) and setting the budget, the target audience is specified, which involves selecting targeting parameters. This includes determining factors such as location, age, gender, and interests, as well as identifying the interests of the desired audience. Based on specific actions, "Custom Audiences, Website Custom Audiences, and Lookalike Audiences" can be created. These might consist of users who have interacted with the profile, visited it, responded to an advertisement, clicked on the website, or completed actions there, as well as users who share similarities with the target group (Grabs, 2022).

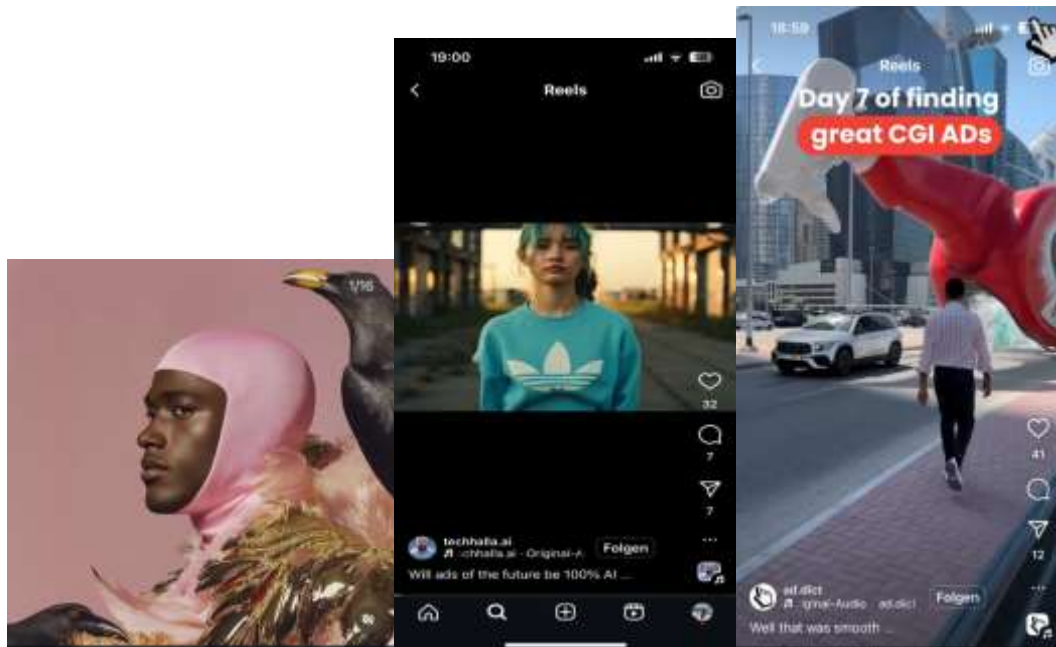




Custom Audiences focus on retargeting interested groups, meaning individuals who have previously engaged with the business on Instagram or were close to making a purchase. At this juncture, an effective Instagram content strategy plays a significant role, ensuring a steady stream of content and community engagement. For visitors to the website or online shop who were on the verge of completing a purchase, Website Custom Audiences can be utilized to remind them of their intent to buy (ebd.).

Lookalike Audiences are generated based on Custom Audiences and share similar characteristics with them, often referred to as "twin target audiences." For instance, a Custom Audience may be created from individuals who have recently purchased products through the online shop. This Custom Audience is then used to define the Lookalike Audience, comprising individuals who closely resemble those in the original group. Consequently, the algorithm identifies individuals who align well with the brand, significantly increasing the likelihood of attracting new prospects or achieving a purchase.

Thus, the various Audience Ads represent different strategies for converting interested individuals into buyers or followers, and they can be employed in the targeting or retargeting phases depending on the campaign objectives.



**Figure 1.** *AI generated Ad's on Instagram.*

These three different images are visible on Instagram when searching for images with the hashtag #AIgeneratedAd's. An AI-driven Instagram ad showcasing a fashion brand, where the AI analyzes a user's browsing behavior and suggests personalized outfits. For example, if someone has recently searched for winter jackets, the ad will display a selection of jackets that match their style preferences. AI-powered video ads that automatically adjust the content based on the user's location, preferences, and past interactions. For instance, a travel brand might create a dynamic video ad that highlights different destinations based on the viewer's location. An ad featuring an AI-generated influencer who appears to endorse a beauty product. The influencer is entirely virtual, created using AI technologies, and can interact with viewers in a way that seems authentic. This approach is becoming popular for brands that want to avoid paying high fees to human influencers.

### **Chatbots on Instagram**

Another application of artificial intelligence and algorithms is the direct communication with customers through messaging systems, specifically via chatbots. This approach addresses the drawback of customers having to fill out emails or contact forms for inquiries during online shopping,

which often leads to lengthy wait times. Today's consumers demand prompt and competent responses to their queries. Chatbots offer the advantage of being available around the clock. Ideally, this interaction provides potential customers with the necessary information, facilitating conversions, such as purchasing a product. The content of these conversations can include product consultations, sales processes, and customer support (eg. Gentsch, 2019).

A successful Instagram profile that reaches a large audience tends to receive an increased volume of direct messages, as it provides an easy way for interested individuals or customers to ask questions and expect quick responses. For initial interactions with the company, it is possible to implement so-called conversation starters, which can proactively address frequently asked questions by allowing users to click on built-in buttons that guide them to the relevant content. Additionally, automated responses can be generated for comments on posts (Riehle, 2021).

Bots have advanced to the point where they can respond to more complex inquiries, not just standard questions. The goal is to convince customers that they are engaging in a conversation with a human rather than a machine. To achieve this, a bot must be capable of mimicking a human-like dialogue. Powered by AI, bots can access online data, learn independently from it, and recognize question-and-answer patterns, which are then utilized in their communication with consumers (Gentsch, 2019). Additionally, these intelligent bots learn from customer reactions to refine their future interactions. By using chatbots, customer satisfaction can be enhanced, which in turn leads to increased recommendations on social networks and higher conversion rates (Agrawal, 2016).

Chatbots on Instagram are becoming increasingly popular as businesses look for ways to automate customer interactions, drive engagement, and improve service efficiency on the platform. These AI-powered bots can assist with a variety of tasks, from answering customer inquiries to helping with sales and providing personalized recommendations. A fashion retailer like ASOS uses a chatbot to answer frequently asked questions (FAQs) about order status, delivery times, or sizing. When a customer sends a direct message (DM), the chatbot automatically responds with relevant information without the need for human intervention. It can also escalate the conversation to a human representative if needed.

Sephora, a cosmetics retailer, uses an Instagram chatbot to guide users through a product discovery process. Users can interact with the bot to receive personalized product recommendations based on their skin type, preferences, or even the type of makeup they're interested in.

Domino's Pizza uses a chatbot on Instagram to allow customers to place orders directly through the platform. By sending a direct message, users can select their pizza, customize it, and complete the order, all without leaving Instagram.

H&M uses a chatbot to engage with potential customers on Instagram. The bot asks questions to qualify leads, such as what type of clothing they are looking for, their budget, or preferred colors. Based on the responses, the bot can either provide product suggestions or direct them to a sales representative.

A company like Red Bull might use a chatbot to promote an upcoming event or campaign. When users send a message, the bot could provide details, answer questions, and even allow users to register or purchase tickets directly through Instagram.

Nike uses an Instagram chatbot to run giveaways and contests. Participants can enter by engaging with the chatbot, following instructions, and providing their contact information. The chatbot can also automatically send updates about contest winners or ongoing promotions.

Overall, Instagram chatbots are a powerful tool for enhancing customer experience, streamlining communication, and driving conversions directly within the Instagram platform.



## **Social Media Monitoring on Instagram**

To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies, AI-based social media monitoring tools scan all posts on social networks for specific hashtags, company names, or competitor names. These tools can identify sentiments (positive, negative, or neutral), key discussion topics, trends, and influential influencers. In addition to analyzing text, they also assess images and videos. This analysis provides insights into how users interact with specific products, which brands they prefer, where they use these products, and the context in which they are discussed on social networks. Furthermore, it can determine who is likely to purchase a product soon and who may be hesitant. When combined with predictive analytics, these insights help identify emerging trends (Sentence, 2018).

Applications of social media monitoring include (Perakakis, Mastorakis, Kopanakis, 2019).

### *1. Response to Negative Reviews*

AI analyzes online activity and identifies posts related to the company's products, including negative customer reviews. This enables the detection of dissatisfaction causes and facilitates direct responses. Since potential buyers often rely on the evaluations of other users, it is crucial for the company to take proactive measures by providing helpful replies to complaints. This not only assists dissatisfied customers but also discourages potential buyers from opting out of a purchase due to negative feedback.

### *2. Development of Individual Customer Profiles*

AI assists marketers in identifying posts on social media where individuals have shared content related to the company's products, such as images featuring the product. By analyzing these posts, along with additional contributions from the consumer using AI, relevant information can be gathered to create tailored customer profiles.

### *3. Determining the Optimal Timing for Posts*

The timing of a company's social media posts plays a significant role in determining their reach, as certain days and times are more effective for audience engagement. By analyzing customer data, AI can help identify optimal posting times to enhance interaction with the campaign's content. Moreover, AI can recommend the best moments to reshare content, thereby increasing its visibility to a broader audience. Instagram Insights is a valuable resource for business accounts, providing metrics that allow companies to monitor the performance of individual posts and refine their strategies accordingly.

### *4. Hashtag Analysis*

Another way to utilize AI in social media marketing is through the analysis of hashtags, which are keywords used to categorize and make posts discoverable on specific topics. AI can identify the most successful hashtags and leverage them for personalized marketing strategies.

### *5. Identifying Suitable Influencers*

In the realm of influencer marketing, AI can assist in locating the most appropriate influencer for a company by analyzing the content and interests of the influencer's followers.

## **SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON YOUTH**

The rise of social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has fundamentally transformed the marketing landscape, offering brands direct access to their target audiences. Young people, who are particularly active on these platforms, are frequently exposed to influencers who act as both brand ambassadors and role models (Sarikaya, 2023). This exposure can profoundly shape their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, highlighting the need to understand how influencer marketing affects this demographic. Adolescence is a pivotal stage for identity development, during which individuals explore various aspects of themselves and seek social validation. Influencers often present highly curated and aesthetically appealing lifestyles that resonate with adolescents, offering aspirational content that can influence their self-perception. Research shows that adolescents are especially susceptible to internalizing the ideals promoted by influencers, which may lead them to



adopt similar behaviors, fashion choices, and consumption patterns (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). This effect is particularly noticeable in the beauty, fashion, and lifestyle sectors, where influencers often set trends that align with their young followers' interests. By curating specific appearances, values, and lifestyles, influencers provide adolescents with templates for self-expression. This exposure can have both positive and negative effects on identity formation, influencing how young people perceive themselves and navigate their developing sense of self:

*1. Aspirational Identity:* Influencers frequently portray an idealized lifestyle that adolescents may aspire to emulate. As young people engage with influencer content, they may begin to adopt the influencers' styles, preferences, and values. Research by Marwick and Boyd (2011) emphasizes that adolescents often view social media as a platform for identity experimentation, where they can explore various facets of themselves before settling on a more stable self-concept. Influencers facilitate this process by offering examples of diverse lifestyles, allowing adolescents to explore areas such as fashion, hobbies, and social roles.

*2. Social Comparison:* The natural tendency to compare oneself to others is heightened by influencer marketing. Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954) suggests that individuals are driven to evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities and qualities to those of others. Adolescents may compare their appearance, lifestyle, and experiences with those of influencers, leading to feelings of inadequacy when there is a perceived gap between their reality and the curated lives displayed online. Research by Tiggemann and Slater (2013) indicates that girls who engage more frequently with social media are more prone to body dissatisfaction and appearance-based comparisons, negatively impacting their self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

*3. Identity Affirmation:* On the other hand, influencers can also promote positive identity affirmation by championing diversity and inclusivity. Many influencers advocate for self-acceptance and body positivity, which can empower adolescents to embrace their unique identities. Perloff's (2014) research highlights that exposure to a variety of body types and representations can enhance body image and foster self-acceptance among young people. When influencers share personal stories and challenges, this fosters a sense of connection and validation, making adolescents feel less isolated in their experiences.

*4. Peer Influence and Validation:* Influencers also serve as social validators, with the engagement they receive- through likes, comments, and shares- reinforcing certain behaviors and identities. This aligns with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which posits that individuals learn by observing and imitating others. Adolescents may feel compelled to conform to influencer-endorsed trends to gain acceptance from their peers, affecting their self-identity and social interactions.

Influencer marketing also influences adolescents' peer relationships. Influencer content often emphasizes themes such as social status, popularity, and acceptance- concepts that resonate strongly with adolescents seeking a sense of belonging. Engaging with influencer content can create pressure to align with these ideals, potentially altering social interactions. Research shows that adolescents who are highly engaged with influencers may experience shifts in their social circles as they seek out peers with similar values and interests (Smith et al., 2019). Adolescence is a critical stage for social development, marked by the formation and maintenance of peer relationships. Influencer marketing plays a significant role in shaping these relationships through mechanisms such as social comparison, community building, and peer validation. Social comparison, an essential aspect of adolescent peer relationships, is often intensified by influencer marketing. As suggested by Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954), individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their qualities to others, potentially leading to feelings of inferiority or superiority.

*Influencer Impact on Comparisons:* Influencers often depict idealized lifestyles, appearances, and behaviors that adolescents aspire to emulate. This can lead to upward comparisons, where adolescents measure themselves against influencers, potentially diminishing their self-esteem and self-image. Research by Tiggemann and Slater (2013) shows that girls who frequently engage with social media report heightened body dissatisfaction due to comparisons with online images. These feelings of



inadequacy can also impact peer relationships, as adolescents may feel pressured to conform to unrealistic standards.

*Group Dynamics:* Peer groups often mirror influencer trends, as adolescents adopt behaviors and styles promoted by their favorite influencers. This can create an environment where conformity is valued, and deviations from influencer-endorsed norms are met with scrutiny. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) suggest that adolescents who engage in frequent social comparison are more likely to seek peer acceptance, leading to shifts in behavior, interests, and social dynamics within friend groups.

Influencer marketing also cultivates a sense of community among followers, which can have significant effects on peer relationships.

*Shared Interests and Engagement:* Influencers frequently foster niche communities based on shared interests, values, or lifestyles. Adolescents who follow influencers with similar tastes may develop bonds with peers who share those interests, strengthening their social connections. Zhao et al. (2018) found that social media platforms allow adolescents to connect with like-minded individuals, facilitating friendships based on common passions.

*Inclusion and Exclusion:* However, influencer marketing can also create social divides within peer groups. Adolescents who do not align with influencer-driven trends may feel excluded or marginalized. Research by Chen and Lee (2013) suggests that adolescents who fail to meet social media-driven standards may experience social isolation, leading to strained relationships with peers who are more engaged in influencer culture.

While influencer marketing can positively shape peer relationships by fostering shared interests, it also poses risks.

*Peer Pressure and Risky Behaviors:* Adolescents may feel pressured to engage in behaviors promoted by influencers, including substance use, unhealthy consumption patterns, or participation in risky challenges. Wang et al. (2019) found that exposure to influencer content may increase the likelihood of risk-taking behaviors among adolescents, particularly within peer group settings where social influence is strong.

*Mental Health Implications:* The pressure to conform to influencer-driven standards can also have negative implications for mental health. Adolescents who feel inadequate due to social comparisons may develop anxiety or depression, which can strain peer relationships. Research by Nesi and Prinstein (2015) highlights that peer relationships can be both a source of support and a trigger for mental health challenges, particularly in the context of social media use.

Influencers also shape adolescents' purchasing decisions, with young people increasingly viewing influencers as trusted sources for product recommendations (Sarıkaya, 2023). Adolescents perceive influencers as more relatable than traditional celebrities, and this trust often translates into purchasing behavior. According to De Veirman et al. (2017), the perceived authenticity and relatability of influencers significantly impact adolescents' purchasing intentions, underscoring the effectiveness of influencer marketing in engaging this demographic.

## CONCLUSION

Results from the social influence of influencer marketing among adolescents imply that there is a more complicated conglomerate at play between influencers, social media and peer relationships among youth, which combines both negative and positive effects. Given the important role that adolescence plays in identity formation and establishing cultural norms, this group is essential to examine when assessing the role of influencers as model figures who can change social standards. While the internalization of those beliefs can potentially foster shared values and identities, they may also subject adolescents to increased pressure to meet established societal norms. One key finding across all literature in this field knows that when adolescents participate in social comparisons, it typically



results in a more distorted view of the self. Research has demonstrated, for example, that exposure to idealized images in the media can lead to reduced body satisfaction and increased psychological distress, especially among young girls (e.g., Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). In a feedback loop the negative effects may go back onto the quality of peer relationships, as the more one is not happy with his/her body, then less are interactions with peers. Nevertheless, the influence of influencers in building and sustaining communities must not be underestimated. They build community and promote social capital in teens, particularly when formed around shared interest or values. Zhao et al. Similarly, Ferguson and Stojanov (2018) argue that influencers play an essential role as a bridge between the influencer and other adolescents belonging to others of similar interests. Still, influencer marketing is a powerful tool in generating and preserving community. This sort of thing has the ability to instill a sense of community and builds social capital in adolescents, particularly with groups formed around common interests, or value systems. Zhao et al. In their own study, Choi et al. (2018) argue that influencers serve as facilitators that connect adolescents with each other, which in turn fosters positive networks. Although the replication of weight control-related behaviors and norms carries possible benefits, such a fire has its risks. Because they feel pressure to follow influencers and the things that are happening, following this could lead people into risky behaviors, especially about consumer behavior (such as; dieting or lifestyle), contriving an unhealthy body image from those who can be at risk even further (Wang et al., 2019). One more important part in this era is use of artificial intelligence (AI) in social media marketing. Analyzing user behaviour with the help of AI-driven tools, will further enable you to customize content in a way that would strengthen your engagement with the influencers. These technologies enable businesses to more accurately analyze the tastes and inclinations of teenagers and target marketing campaigns to suit the same. Along with that, the personalized ads and targeted influencer campaigns can add even more demand for teens to fit into the archetypes of beauty demonstrated. Such intensity of self-perception can promote social comparison and encourage a negative effects on the mental status and peer relationships with teenagers. Nevertheless, to maximize the positive aspects of influencer marketing while minimizing negative impacts, several measures should be considered. Media education programs should be integrated into schools to equip adolescents with critical analysis skills for influencer content. By cultivating the ability to critically reflect on media content, adolescents can better navigate idealized portrayals and maintain a stable sense of self. Brands and companies should prioritize partnerships with influencers who promote authentic and realistic representations of themselves and their lifestyles. These collaborations could play a pivotal role in encouraging positive body image and healthy behaviors. Additionally, companies using AI in influencer marketing must adhere to ethical standards, ensuring transparency about the use of AI-driven algorithms and being mindful of potential risks, such as increased feelings of isolation or dissatisfaction among adolescents. Future research should focus on understanding the long-term effects of influencer marketing on adolescents' social behavior and mental health. In particular, longitudinal studies are needed to examine how self-perception and peer relationships evolve over time. Developing peer intervention programs that help adolescents foster healthy relationships and support each other in coping with social media pressures may also be beneficial. Such programs could enhance social support and community building among young people.

In conclusion, influencer marketing significantly shapes adolescents' peer relationships, with this impact being further intensified by the integration of artificial intelligence in marketing strategies. The findings underscore the importance of a balanced approach, addressing the challenges of social media use while promoting its positive role in networking and identity formation. It is vital for parents, educators, and policymakers to collaborate in creating a supportive environment where adolescents feel secure in their interactions with both influencers and their peers.

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