Insta-story for Personal Branding and Product Promotion

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Abstract: *Social media represents a space of online communication, where a big community of people share thoughts and experiences and communicate with texts, photos or videos. Moreover, social media is the preferred way for sharing advertising messages, allowing the development of influencers. There are people who have a community developed around them and their platforms (blogs, Youtube accounts, Facebook accounts, Instagram accounts) on which they have a strong impact. Through their content, they demonstrate their knowledge in a certain field and influence the attitude and the behaviour of their followers. Lately, the influencers started to have a big audience on Instagram due to the content shared on the feed or using the Insta stories. These stories last for 24 hours and allow users to share moments and ideas during the day without having to keep them permanently. They present a way of interacting online for personal branding and for products promotion, by capturing the attention of the followers. This paper presents the relevance and the fame of influencers and shows how they use the insta-stories for promoting.*

Keywords: *content creators, influencers, Instagram, personal branding, product promotion, social media*

1. Introduction

Social media creates a virtual space that allows us to evolve and to assimilate what is beneficial to us. We are influenced by the things we see in this virtual space, which share common values or interests with us. Whether we talk about celebrities, bloggers, vloggers or influencers from Facebook and Instagram, our attention is captured. We read what we find interesting, we see what is topical and what brings new and exciting information.

The main purpose of my research is to find out how personal and product promotion are achieved through insta-stories. Using this Instagram platform tool, the influencers promote themselves and other brands. Therefore, I have decided to do some research to emphasise the reasons for using Instagram; the public's opinion on the concept of influencer; the influencers' level of fame; the reasons they have a big audience and the style used for promoting and inspiring others.

2. Methodology

My intention was to connect with the theoretical information by using two quantitative research methods: the online questionnaire and the content analysis. They helped me achieve the goals that I have established from the very beginning.

I have created a questionnaire through which I wanted to find out why people use Instagram and whether they feel influenced by what they see on this platform. At the same time, I wanted to see what people understand when using the term *influencer* and to find out who their favourite influencers are and the reasons for following them.

Regarding the way the questionnaire was applied, I have used www.isondaje.ro/; it was based on 17 questions, consisting of 9 closed questions with ordinal scaled answers, 3 open questions and 5 factual questions. The questionnaire was distributed across various social networks (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) and it was applied to a total of 82 respondents.

Some of the questions used in this questionnaire were:

Q6: How often do you follow the insta-stories posted by others?
1. *Never;*
2. *Rarely;*
3. *Sometimes;*
4. *Quite often;*
5. *Often;*
6. *Regularly.*

Q7: To what extent do you feel you are influenced by what you see on Instagram?
1. *To a very large extent;*
2. *To a large extent;*
3. *To the right extent;*
4. *To a lesser extent;*
5. *To a very lesser extent.*

Q8: What do you mean by the word "influencer"?

Q12: List three reasons why you chose to follow your favourite influencer.

After having completed this stage, I have moved on to the content analysis, which is the extension of the questionnaire. The purpose was to confirm and to complete the conclusions obtained before. The fields chosen by the respondents were Beauty, Fashion, Travel, Lifestyle. Alina Ceusan, Ioana Grama and Sinziana Iacob were in top 3 of the influencers appreciated by the public. Therefore, I have analysed 12 insta-stories of these influencers with the purpose of highlighting the way they build their posts, they promote themselves or they advertise other brands. Some of the chosen criteria were:

1. Type of content

Content	Fig 4.2.1	Fig 4.2.2	Fig 4.2.3	Fig 4.2.4	Fig 4.2.5	Fig 4.2.6	Fig 4.2.7	Fig 4.2.8	Fig 4.2.9	Fig 4.2.10	Fig 4.2.11	Fig 4.2.12
Text	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Image	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Video												
Live												

2. Promoting type

Promoting type	Fig 4.2.1	Fig 4.2.2	Fig 4.2.3	Fig 4.2.4	Fig 4.2.5	Fig 4.2.6	Fig 4.2.7	Fig 4.2.8	Fig 4.2.9	Fig 4.2.10	Fig 4.2.11	Fig 4.2.12
Personal	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓	✓
Promoting	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

3. Field

Field	Fig 4.2.1	Fig 4.2.2	Fig 4.2.3	Fig 4.2.4	Fig 4.2.5	Fig 4.2.6	Fig 4.2.7	Fig 4.2.8	Fig 4.2.9	Fig 4.2.10	Fig 4.2.11	Fig 4.2.12
Beauty					✓	✓						✓
Fashion		✓	✓									
Lifestyle							✓					
Travel				✓								
Promoting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cultural								✓	✓		✓	

4. Use of tags

Use of tags	Fig 4.2.1	Fig 4.2.2	Fig 4.2.3	Fig 4.2.4	Fig 4.2.5	Fig 4.2.6	Fig 4.2.7	Fig 4.2.8	Fig 4.2.9	Fig 4.2.10	Fig 4.2.11	Fig 4.2.12
Yes	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
No		✓				✓	✓		✓			

5. Swipe-up option

Swipe-up	Fig 4.2.1	Fig 4.2.2	Fig 4.2.3	Fig 4.2.4	Fig 4.2.5	Fig 4.2.6	Fig 4.2.7	Fig 4.2.8	Fig 4.2.9	Fig 4.2.10	Fig 4.2.11	Fig 4.2.12
Yes			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
No	✓	✓			✓						✓	

3. Results

After having applied the questionnaire regarding the influencers on social media, I have obtained the following results:

1. The respondents use the internet regularly in proportion of 75,6%.

2. 43.9% of the respondents spend more than 5 hours on the internet.

3. 61% of the respondents spend between 3-5 hours on Instagram.

4. 63.4% of the respondents watch insta-stories regularly.

5. 58.5% of the respondents feel influenced by what they see on Instagram

6. Most respondents use Instagram for entertainment, for following public figures, for being aware of the current trends or for inspiration.

7. Many the respondents think that an influencer is a person who influences the audience through what they post on social media.

8. The fields preferred by the respondents are Beauty, Fashion, Lifestyle, Entertainment and Travel.

9. The most watched influencers are Alina Ceusan, Ioana Grama and Sinziana Iacob.

10. They are appreciated for the inspirational content, for the original posts, for the inspirational advice and for the way of empathising with the followers.

Some of the results obtained after having applied the second method, the content analysis of insta-instories, were the following:

1. The stories are uploaded daily.

2. The stories are created in an informal style.

3. The influencers interact with the fans by replying to the messages and by using questions.
4. All the analysed stories contain texts and images and use a colourful design.
5. The insta-stories show the way the influencers empathise with the public.
6. These stories are meant for personal branding or for product, place and event promotion.
7. The influencers use tags for a qualitative promotion.
8. The influencers use the Swipe-up option. By clicking this button, the followers are redirected to different links where they can find more details.
9. The purpose of the stories can be informative, persuasive, emotional and cultural.
10. The influencers organise contests and give-aways.

4. Conclusions

Social media help the users to create and share content, to express opinions and experiences. There are groups, forums, blogs and social networks which offer the possibility of communicating and of developing a personal brand. We live in a digital world which is designed to facilitate our activities and to help us gain benefits from this virtual environment. The phenomenon of influence in the virtual environment is frequently encountered in the society in which we all live together, and there is a big chance that it will continue to exist in the foreseeable future.

People are already used with the concept of influencer, which is a person that can influence people in the online environment by informing, inspiring or persuading them to join an event or to buy a product.

They want someone who can help them transmit creative and authentic content.

They appreciate a coherent influencer who can interact and emphasise with the public. People need a strong mentor who gives a good piece of advice. Also, it is important for an influencer to know how to promote his/her personal image or to know how to promote other brands. People want an influencer they can trust when it comes to choosing a product or a place. They also need tips and tricks for the basic activities. They want to be inspired by the influencers who promote beauty products, fashion outfits and places to go.

Therefore, it is important to be aware of the existing relationship between the influencers and their followers and to accept the importance of the influencers in the virtual space. The society we live in constantly offers us the opportunity to develop and to use more and more innovative means of development. We can follow people who share the same interests and opinions with us and who inform and educate us.

So, can insta-stories be used as a way of personal branding and product promotion? Well, at the end of the paper, I have concluded. It is obvious that they can be used for these purposes. Firstly, the influencers became content creators. They started to write blog posts and to share different things on Facebook and Instagram. Then, they began to inspire people and to share creative content. They started to be recruited by different people and companies to promote their brand. The product promotion helped the influencers to create their own brand by promoting their own image. The personal branding and the product promotion go hand in hand, being linked to each other. Once they became famous, people could gain the public confidence. The followers listen more to the people who are close to their interests because they trust them, and they appreciate their interaction style.

Based on what I have discovered from the theoretical and applicative parts, I have proposed 10 steps for improving the influence through insta-stories:

1. *Choose a brand aesthetic.*
2. *Start discussions to find out what is relevant to your community.*

3. Create the type of content that people want.

4. Announce news about events and contests that you organise.

5. Use the right hashtags for every subject you share.

6. Constantly use links to your blog or website.

7. Always mention other influencers and other brands.

8. Use "Tap for more" tactics.

9. Encourage your followers to send you private messages.

10. Keep your best stories on your Instagram account by using the Highlight option.

After reading about all the features that a insta-story should contain, I have created an example which is useful because it shows a part of the things that I have presented before:

Fig. 1 Example of insta-story

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