

AN INFLUENCER STUDY BY
JUNGvMATT Brandnew
SPORTS

FOREWORD

“BEHIND THE HYPE”

Without any doubt, there's one topic ruling the marketing scene for quite a while now and yes, you know what it is: influencer marketing - the hottest yet most mysterious marketing phenomenon! So, developing influencer campaigns has become a modern challenge for marketers! Hence, we asked ourselves: What are top influencers' secrets that make their posts and thus brand campaigns successful? For finding answers, we set up the most comprehensive and most enormous big-data influencer study to date, analyzing every single post from about 700 top influencers on Instagram, published in a time span of two years. Our aim was to identify common patterns in their behavior and putting these into context with user behavior. To get through these massive amounts, it was necessary to apply techniques that go beyond your usual statistics – which we did. And what we found out is quite surprising. For brands, for marketers, for agencies – but maybe also for upcoming and ambitious influencers! So, what is it that top influencers have in common? And what are the learnings that we can derive from the data?

THE ULTIMATE GOAL: EXPLORING THE SECRETS OF TOP INFLUENCERS.



Partner Jung von Matt/SPORTS & STARS



Founder and CEO Brandnew IO

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THE SECRETS BEHIND COPIES

The more successful the post, the longer the caption.

1 LENGTH

The more successful an influencer is on Instagram, the longer are his or her post captions. Why? People love to get as many insights as possible about their idols, as it makes them feel more connected. And telling stories needs some additional words. Exactly how many?

35 WORDS

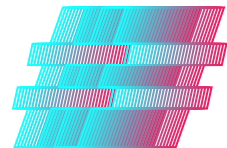
2 PUNCTUATION

Posts with question marks achieve statistically significant higher engagement rates than ones without. To be precise, 16% more. Asking followers questions, showing interest in their opinion, weekend plans or anything else boosts interaction. Obviously, one should not put a question mark in every post, but here & there.



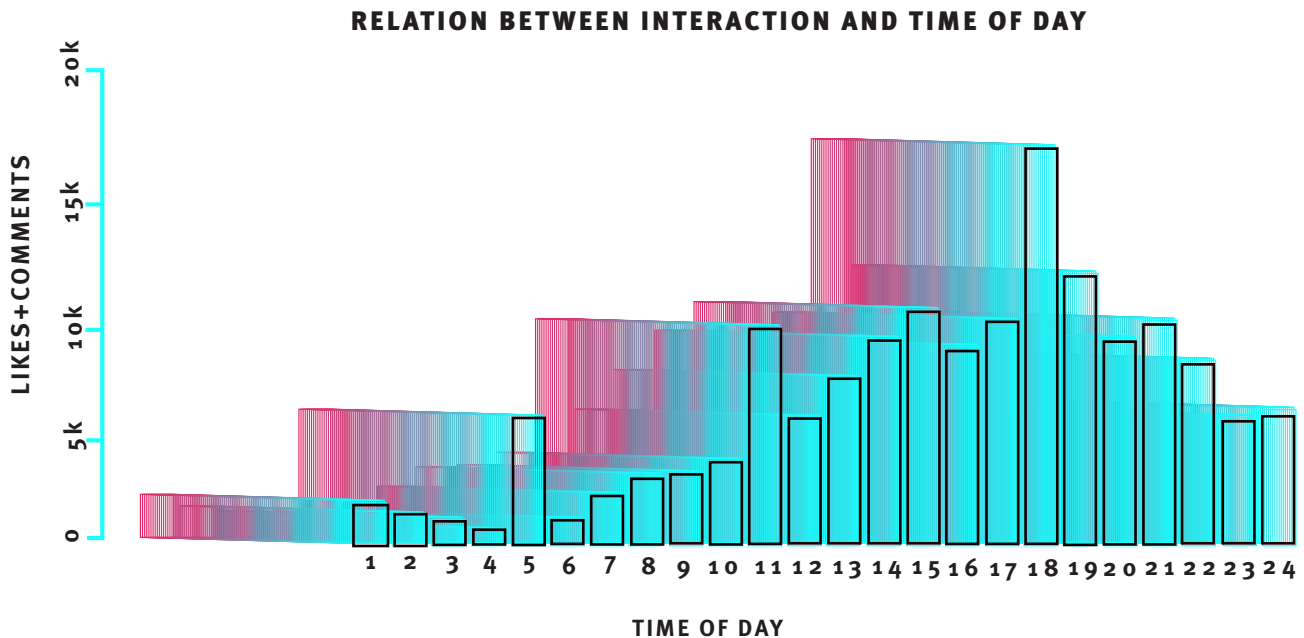
3 HASHTAGS

The more successful influencers get, the less hashtags they use. Typically, two or three are enough. Only if you are just building your audience, a few more make sense. Also, it does no harm at all to declare your post as an #ad. So, state the obvious, it can actually help you!



THE SECRETS BEHIND TIMING

Timing matters
and 6.30 pm is the magic time.



1 HOUR OF THE DAY

On its own, it is hard to say what specific hour of the day or day of the week works best. Though, in combination, along with the super-imposition of the supporting volume of interactions some interesting patterns are unearthed. You can see that 6:30 rules supreme!

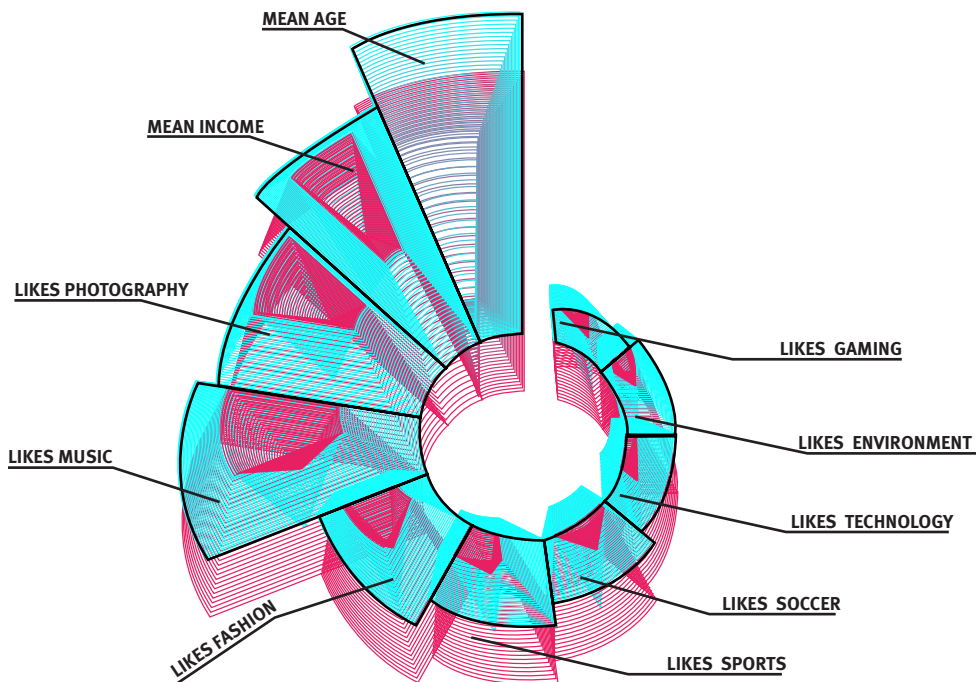
2 THE 45MIN RULE

Why is timing so important? The answer is this: The first minutes after a post has been released are having massive impact on its overall success. The more people interact with your post in the first few minutes, the bigger the audience that gets to see it. It's the first 45 minutes that are decisive, whether a post is going to perform successfully or not so much.

THE SECRETS BEHIND AUDIENCES

Finding the right audience
and the right themes matter.

INFLUENCING FACTORS ON ENGAGEMENT



1 AGE

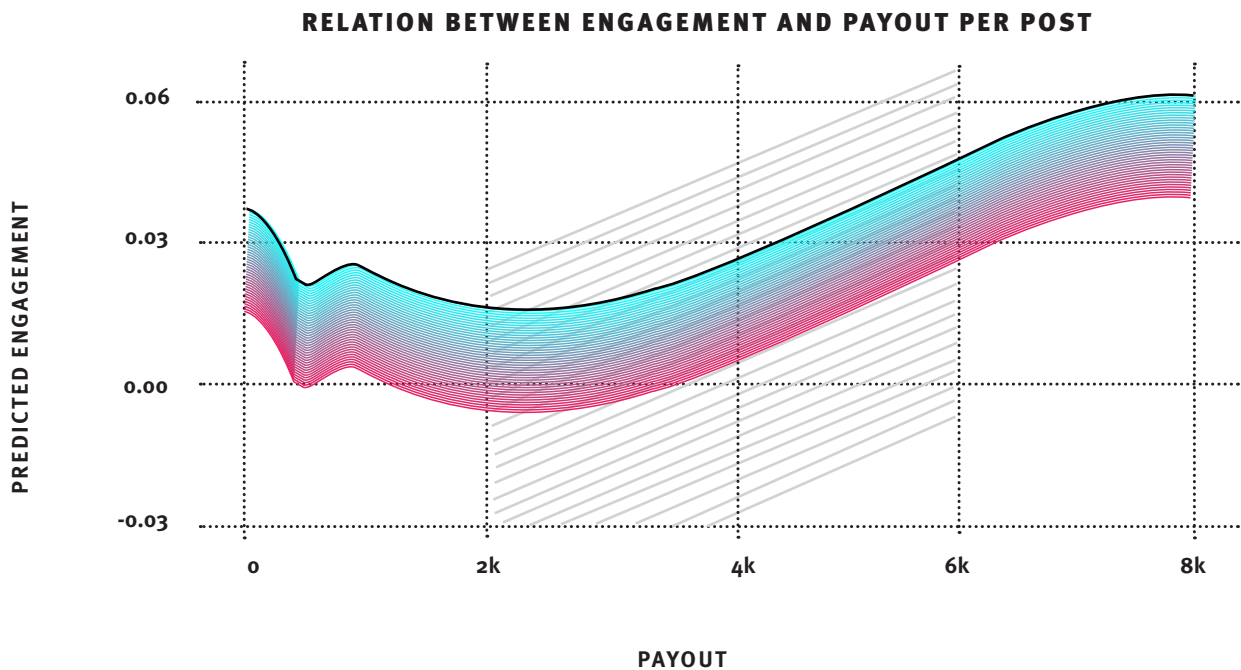
Taking a closer look at audiences uncovers some interesting patterns: The younger an influencer's followers, the more engagement his or her posts get. Mid-late teenagers engage 70% more than their adult counterparts.

2 THEMES

Next to age, there are some other factors having impact on engagement. People that have an affinity to photography and music generally interact way more than others. So, whatever type of influencer you are, make sure to put focus on high quality and creativity of photography and try to put in connections to music whenever possible and applicable.

THE SECRETS BEHIND BUDGETS

Avoid the “death valley” of budgets:
Pay a lot or nothing at all!



1 ENGAGEMENT

When it comes to campaign costs, our recommendation for brands is this: Either you pay a lot for your influencer campaign or you pay nothing at all. Mid-range posts in terms of monetary cost do not provide any evidence that are delivering in terms of engagement. The engagement rate goes up after 4,000 USD and keeps increasing until the maximum recorded payout per post of 8,000 USD.

2 FREE POSTS

Free posts generally fare much better than cheap posts. In most cases, free posts are accompanied by a material reward. This material reward seems to motivate influencers more than mere monetary benefits. Of course, this proves once again that brands need to select influencers that have a natural affinity to their products.

THE SAMPLE:

Popularity meets sponsored posts over two years!

With the help of brandnew's as well as third party providers' data, 655 popular Instagram influencers (creators) and their content of two years have been analyzed. Brandnew.io delivered all creator data, which was then complemented by aggregate audience data provided by DemographicsPro.

Hence, the study focuses on creators and influencers who were engaged by brands in their marketing campaigns via brandnew's platform: The campaigns comprise of paid-for Instagram posts that promoted either the brand as an entity or particular products and services on offer. The sample is thus not entirely random and presents a self-selection bias.

Decision-making within a social marketing context is a multi-faceted process, sponsored posts being only one of these facts. Data analysis is an indispensable part of the process, yet only a part. Experience, intuition, subject-matter expertise, operational discipline and often luck are all ingredients of successful social media engagements.

THE METHOD:

The madness behind data.

The study has been much tougher than it seems. Social networks virtually encompass all the aspects of human activity within the cultural sphere. And the largely uncoordinated thoughts and actions of billions of people form an ultra-complex network of interactions that comprise a dynamic system of near-infinite intricacy and near-zero predictability. As a result, the traditional closed-formula, cause-and-effect scientific paradigm, even in the form of advanced modern mathematics, fails to cut through this convolution.

But there is method in this madness!

The current study has employed a tree ensemble technique widely used in the data industry and in academia, called Random Forests. An under-the-hood description of the method is beyond the scope of this document. Though, if interested, Strobl, Malley, and Tutz (2009) offer an excellent introduction to the topic that is worth being recommended.

The technique has been chosen due to the shape of the underlying 3 data, which featured multiple dimensions, considerable departures from normality, inter-correlations, strong skewness and non-linear dependencies. This data misbehavior caused least squares models, developed and applied to the data as a preamble for benchmarking, to yield poor results when applied to the entire feature space. The results will not be reported in this paper. However, a few binary interactions did exhibit partial linearity, so simple regression results have been leveraged and displayed for the virtue of their easy interpretability.

The models were built using the post-level data as a predominant base because that was the lowest level of aggregation provided. In data modeling in general, there exist two types of variables:

- the response: the business KPI we are interested in; e.g. engagement rate or number of likes per post.
- the predictors: the factors, metrics or dimensions that we aim to investigate in order to understand whether they have any impact on the response; e.g. age of poster, average income of audience, or the day of week the post went live.

Essentially, what Random Forests does is to break down the universe of creator posts into close affinity groups with respect to the response, following a divisive approach. In the process it marks the predictors that are the most important contributors to the splitting process, and as such it ranks them in descending importance order.

This is how the analyst can then answer business questions on the most critical factors that influence the KPI of interest. In other words the top dimensions have predictive power over the KPI.

It's only the beginning.

Taken together, our process aimed at identifying predictors and correlations with respect to their engagement performance. Yet, it's a post hoc analysis of data. The findings represent patterns and common denominators taken from the historic data. Nevertheless, it is often important to understand where we come from in order to understand where we want to go. The true power of this study will certainly unfold through the continuous tracking of data within a longer time-span-period. So, this may only be the beginning.

IMPRINT

The rights to this study are with Brandnew IO and Jung von Matt/SPORTS.
The study as well as detailed results can be requested by the study direction.

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