

The Good Fortune of Online Influencers

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The good fortune of Online Influencer's

Chapter 1: Research Proposal

1.1 Proposed Journal

This research paper aims to investigate the evolution of consumer relationships and consumer behaviour within the domain of the online community and social media, it would therefore, be fitting that this study be found in the Journal of Consumer Research. This journal covers a variety of topics surrounding the behaviour of consumers; articles pertaining to user generated content as well as social media influencer's can be found in this journal.

Examples of such articles is one written by McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, titled 'The megaphone effect: Taste and Audience in Fashion Blogging'. The article is a significant reference point as it explores a number of the themes explored in this research paper.

The journal of Consumer Research is thus, the right journal for this particular research paper.

1.2 Introduction

The introduction of the internet has created a whole new dimension of opportunity and connectivity for people around the world (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman & Robinson, 2001). The number of people gaining access to and using the internet increased exponentially over time. In 1995 there were less than 20 000 live web sites on the internet, in under six years, it grew to over ten million (DiMaggio et al. 2001). The internet allowed for people all over the world to not only communicate and share but to also converse and learn. It also created a new platform of communication for brands. Media, in a traditional sense has always involved press and television, now, brands are able to communicate to their audiences on a more personalised, specified level, talking directly and more promptly to conversations people are having about their brand. Brands started seeing this platform as an additional channel through which brands can speak to their audiences (DiMaggio et al. 2001).

While big brands were developing strategies to talk to their audiences through the digital platform, another phenomenon was developing. The phenomenon of social media, where individuals all over the world were sharing and conversing about topics of interest as well as themselves, it became an opportunity for people to connect with each other and communicate without necessarily being in each other's presence (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). Social media gave users an opportunity to stay connected to each other without having to physically be in contact with

each other; soon enough, activity on social media became a form of self-expression (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Never before was it this easy to communicate with individuals on a global platform, people in China where learning about and communicating with people in Brazil. People who had formed friendships from travelling the world, were able to stay in contact and maintain their friendships, the term globalisation had never been more relevant (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Social media was here to stay. Social media has changed the landscape of communication; it would only make sense to investigate the phenomenon's that have arisen from it.

One of the phenomenon born from the digital age is the creation of the social media influencer. A social media influencer, otherwise referred to as an SMI is an individual who is able to influence communities of people by using the social media platform as a means of self-expression that these communities of people relate to, admire or aspire to (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey and Freberg, 2010). Bigger brands have recognised this phenomenon and have approached social media influencers to gain access to their audiences and use them as a way of promoting their brands (Freberg et al. 2010). This strategy has been used so often that it has become a business model, it is another digital channel through which brands are communicating with audiences (Freberg et al. 2010). This relationship is particularly interesting in that it has created opportunity for influencers in a financial way. In the past, users used to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences for the sake of sharing and experiencing how others relate to it, now it has become a business opportunity for influencers to actually make an income.

This research paper aims to investigate the business opportunities that have arisen from social media practices. Influencers have been able to travel the world, visit hotels, attend events and wear clothing in exchange for opening their respective audiences up to their experience of the brand providing them with the experience. A Russian photographer by the name of Murad Os-
mann, used the social media platform called Instagram to document his exploration of the world (Pemberton, 2015). What started as an act of impatience where his girlfriend pulled him along while he stopped to take a picture, turned into a visual formula of his hand holding the hand of his girlfriend who would be standing in front of something that is usually iconic and recognisable. This formula became a photography project for Murad, together with a memorable hashtag called "follow me to", Murad began to travel around the world with his girlfriend where she would use the same pose in front of iconic places that functioned as a backdrop. These photographs gained a lot of attention, Murad gained thousands of fans (Pemberton, 2015). Soon enough, he gained a large audience worth 2.3 million followers; locations started using him as a means through which to advertise their attractions (Pemberton, 2015). These photoshoots became large scale productions, they travelled to Hong Kong, the Taj Mahal in India, Big Ben in London, Christ the Redeemer in Brazil; almost every iconic place imaginable (Pemberton, 2015). Murad is but one example of the opportunities people have gained, the avenues are endless, travel, sport, fashion and lifestyle are

but a few facets through which influencers have been able to gain an audience in and subsequently make an income from. One has to then start wondering about the power of social media, not just for brands but for a relatively normal person who can become an influencer.

One of the themes this essay will explore to gain insight into the opportunities of social media influencers is social media, social media acts as landscape within which influencers are able to connect with their audiences, without social media, influencers would not be able to connect. Another theme is the influencer itself, this paper will explore and explain the influencer phenomenon. The third theme is the influencer model, this model developed because of the influencer phenomenon. The fourth theme this paper will discuss is opportunity recognition, an important strategy that influencers adopt to not only increase their audience size but also gain monetary opportunity. The last theme this paper will discuss is the theory of cultural capital, this theory is relevant in that it makes reference to the act of exchange which is an inherent part of the influencer phenomenon. This paper will then conduct research into the phenomenon by looking at key influencer's in the South African market and analyse the results of the research conducted. This paper will then conclude by confirming that this phenomenon is as real and lucrative as a business model for people living in the digital age.

1.3 Research Problem

The purpose of this study is based on the theory that social media influencers are able to make a significant amount of money by using their strong online presence to attract large audiences and ultimately, brands that want to tap into their audiences. This paper thus, aims to investigate and explore the relationship between social media influencers in South Africa and increased opportunities that have monetary value.

1.4 Rationale

Social media has become a platform for people to not only share their stories, tastes and experiences, but to also capitalise on the content that they create. This content acts as a function of their personal brand that others both recognise and engage with. Social media is a network generated by the ordinary person, for the ordinary person; where ordinary people can document their lives and turn their ordinary lives into exciting ones. Through the use of creative expression and storytelling in an ever growing global network, people have developed their own personal brands. There is an entirely new entrepreneurial practice supported by the growing power of online social media presence whereby users are able to become influencers and generate an income.

1.5 Research Question

Primary Research Question:

Have social media platforms such as Instagram, twitter and blogs, become a springboard for business opportunities for social media influencers in South Africa?

Secondary Research Question:

If social media influencers in South Africa have used the above mentioned social media platforms, how have they utilised these platforms to generate income?

1.6 Research Objective

The primary objective of this research paper is to aim to prove that social media has created an opportunity for influencers to make money by using their online presence to attract large audiences and thus brands. This research paper wants to validate this theory. The secondary objective of this paper is to explain how influencers are utilising social media platforms in a way that results in them gaining an income.

In conclusion, this study aims to investigate the business opportunities and entrepreneurial behaviour that has arisen for the online influencer, from the online influencer phenomenon.

This paper will first have to establish if the phenomenon exists, thereafter the paper will investigate and explain the forms of business opportunities these influencer's are experiencing. This paper will aim to discover a new form digital entrepreneurship developing, that is far more personalised and individualised than developing an application for consumers to use. Consumers are taking the platform and using it for themselves, to their benefit and growth and are in fact creating careers out of it. Influencers are able to branch off and find independence in something that started off as a hobby or form of self-expression, but has now grown into a reliable, viable means of income and or making a living.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

This study will be using the mixed-method approach referred to as triangulation to conduct the research. Triangulation is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, where quantitative research is used to support qualitative findings (Bryman & Bell, 2014). The qualitative method, supported by an explanatory case study research design, will explain the phenomenon while the quantitative methods will provide the statistics to substantiate the arguments in the study. Design and methodology will be discussed further in chapter 3.

1.8 Limitations

The first limitation to this study that must be considered, is the lack of literature regarding the negative effects of social media influencer's. Social media influencer's have been studied as a positive influence on consumers and thus most of the cases studied have been successful ones.

The second limitation this paper will have to consider is that this topic is relatively new and has not been studied broadly by many researchers.

The third limitation that must be considered is the lack of control a research has over the environment they are testing, there is no control over the social media landscape, thus result may be entirely accurate.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A literature review is an analysis of existing literature written about the chosen topic or field of study (Bryman & Bell, 2014). A literature review is important to the research in that it demonstrates a critical understanding of the field of study, what has been said about the topic, the theories surrounding the topic as well as the methodologies and or strategies used to study the topic (Bryman & Bell, 2014). A literature review is important in that it demonstrates that the context of the topic has been carefully investigated and properly engaged with. The study must recognise previous information collected on the research in order to progress with the topic being studied.

This study will investigate four important themes in order to gain an understanding of the social media influencer context. Each of these themes will be defined in greater detail further on in the literature review. The first theme is social media as the landscape within which this phenomenon takes place. The second theme is social media influencers (SMI's), these are the people that have managed to become influential in the social media landscape. The third theme is personal branding, as it is through the management of these influencers as a brand that has enabled them to gain large audiences. The last theme is the theory of cultural capital, as it is a strategy influencers use

to grow and perpetuate their reputation and presence online as well as their relationship with their followers.

2.1 Social media

According to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre (2011) social media is the use of mobile and web-based technologies to create platforms on which individuals and communities can communicate, create, discuss and share content. According to Mangold and Faulds (2009) social media includes a number of online platforms such as chatrooms, consumer-to-consumer email, blogs, company based websites, forums, social networking websites, applications and so on. These outlets have become a primary source of communication for individuals and later became an important messaging channel for companies and or brands; and thus, a big factor in the influencing of consumer behaviour such as awareness, attitudes, purchase behaviour and information acquisition to name a few. Social media is therefore, an entirely new landscape in which communication takes place.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) provides a framework through which the functionality of social media can be explained. There are seven functional building blocks this framework explores. The first of the seven is identity, this refers to the degree to which a user is prepared to disclose his or her identity such as personal information, the information that the user decides to disclose is a representation of the user's identity. Users can choose to be known by their real names or by their nicknames or what is referred to in the social media space as their "handles". How a user decides to identify or name themselves is important in that it is the first line of contact for other users to either identify with the user or not (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

The second block is conversation. This refers to the degree of conversation that happens between users. Conversation is one of the primary reasons behind social media being as influential as it is, because it can facilitate conversation between many users about many different topics (Kietzmann et al, 2011). The third block in this framework is sharing, this refers to the sharing of content that happens between users. Sharing is also important in that the content being shared acts as a reflection of the user's identity.

The fourth block is presence, this refers to the extent to which user allow themselves to be accessible to other users, this functionality closes the gap between virtual space and reality (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Applications like Foursquare allows for people to virtually "check-in" to locations they arrive at, giving context to other users they engage with (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

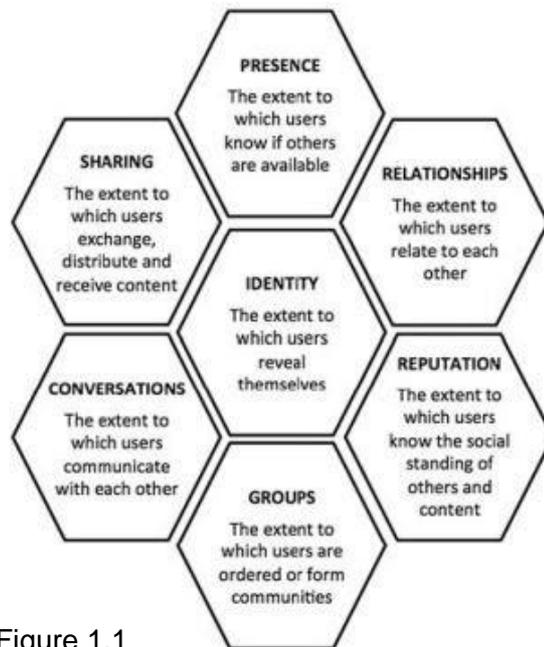


Figure 1.1

The fifth block to the model of social media functionality is relationships. This function refers to how relatable users are to one another in order to build relationships with each other. Relationships can range from being relatively formal to being very informal, relationships on social media can even materialize in the real world (Kietzmann et al. 2011). The sixth block is reputation. Reputation refers to the degree to which users are able to trust one another as well as relate to each other, this can be identified through the kind of content the user shares and the manner in which the user shares that content. The last block of social media functionality is groups. Groups refers to the kinds of communities users are able to establish using social media. The bigger a community becomes, the more of a network it is and thus, the more influential it is (Kietzmann et al. 2011). See figure 1.1 above for a visual reference of the functional building blocks.

This section defined and discussed the functionality and influence of social media. Social media is an internet based communication landscape that enables users to create influential communities that share, inform and discuss with one another.

2.2 Social Media Influencers

According to Freberg, Graham, McGaughey and Freberg (2010) social media influencers have become powerful forces in the social media landscape, as they have the ability to shape their audience's attitudes through what they communicate and or share. Social media influencers are independent users who have managed to leverage the blocks of social media functionality so successfully that they have their own audiences. Influencers have become so powerful that technologies have been created in order to help identify who they are and which brands they can be associated with (Freberg et al. 2010). The criteria by which an influencer is identified is through the amounts of hits on the user's blog a day, the amount of times their content is shared and or the number of followers the user has.

Consumers consider the influencers opinion to be a credible and trustworthy, thus, making an influencer a key facilitator between brands and consumers because they can change the attitude of a consumer (Bakshy, Mason, Hoffman & Watts, 2011). "Word-of-mouth diffusion" is a term used to explain the procedure of information reaching large communities where of people are influenced, innovation is announced, products are launched or brand awareness is gained (Bakshy et al. 2011). Influencers are different to ambassadors in that their relationship with brands is specific to the digital landscape, also, the degree to which the influencer needs to have a relationship with the brand is not as stringent as the terms set out in contracts between brands and ambassadors. Baer (2014) however, argues that although influencers are important, they are not necessarily able to drive purchase, they are only able to drive awareness. He also believes that although influencers may be credible to many users they will not be seen as true advocates of the brand because they lack passion for the brand.

Bakshy et al (2011) also argue that there are two difficulties a study must consider when evaluating the power of an influencer. The first of these is the fact that the network that we assume is being influenced is unobservable in terms of a controlled environment. We therefore, cannot say with precision how much influence an influencer has (Bakshy et al. 2011). The second of these challenges is that only successful diffusion has been heavily studied and researched which creates a bias (Bakshy et al. 2011).

The influencer relationship can be explained by the influencer model. Forester research divides the category of influencers into two groups. The first of these two groups is the mass connector. The mass connectors have a large network of "friends", mass connectors are driven to know others and connect with people/users. Mass mavens are people who have experience in their field of expertise, they use their expertise as the context within which they communicate. Mavens are driven to collect and share facts and information (Ray, 2010).

In Davoult's article he explains that content that is image-based, will create better engagement (Davoult, 2015). Original content is key in creating reach and visibility. Davoult brought an additional theme to the fore, that was not covered in much detail with the respondents of this paper. The exercise of being mentioned in the photographs of another user will also increase one's audience in size (Davoult, 2015). When someone with a large audience feature's another on their account, the other is likely to gain more followers.

In this section, the theory of social media influencer's was defined and discussed. This section is important to the paper as the definition of an influencer will form part of the criteria through which the study's participants will be selected.

2.3 Personal Brand

With reference to Dan Schawbel's personal branding framework, the personal branding model consists of four key factors or phases that an individual needs to consider when building and managing their personal brand (Antonios, 2010). The first of these four being, to discover your brand, this involves an evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It also involves identifying your talents and differentiators, what you stand for, how you are perceived and how you would like to be perceived by others. The second phase of this model is crafting your brand. Here, one needs to consider how to best sell themselves. This is where visuals as well as mantras or slogans representing the individual as a brand, is important. The third phase of this model is connecting your brand. Once an individual has established who they are, what they stand for and how they would like to present themselves to others, then they are able to connect themselves to others. The last phase in this model is the management of the brand now that it is engaging with others. This is otherwise referred to as reputation management. There are two strategies in reputation management, the first is to act which results in opportunities, the second, is to react which results in feedback. Your reputation as a brand needs to be carefully monitored to ensure the message that was intended to send out is being received correctly (Antonios, 2010).

For the purposes of this study personal brand is an important framework to measure the success of online influencers by in that influencers treat themselves as brands in the online community. It is due to the correct management of their identity, conversation, sharing and presence on social media as personal brands - as explained by the social media model discussed earlier in the literature review - that allows them to progress and develop as brands that are eventually approached by bigger brands. Personal brand thus, plays a vital role in the study of online leaders.

2.4 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's theory on cultural capital suggested that non-economic and economic entities work in unison or against one another in the functioning of social groups or spaces (Priour, Orsenland & Skjott-Larsen, 2008). Cultural capital is one of the non-economic entities, where certain cultural acquisitions would deem certain groups within society advantaged, certain social groups would participate in cultural activities or display favoured mannerisms that would allow them to gain status that would put them at an advantage compared to others and which would result in their success (Priour et al. 2008). This form of capital was perceived as an asset that could be traded for another asset in a social space (Priour et al. 2008).

There are however, many criticisms to Bourdieu's theory. Kingston (2001) argued that cultural capital is too big of an umbrella to attribute success to. Kingston argues that there is no plausible effect between cultural capital learned from parent and cultural capital learned through individual experiences and career success. There has been far too little evidence to support his theory and far too many additional elements that can affect a child's academic performance (Kingston, 2001). Priour and his collaborator's agreed with this argument and further argued that not only is the umbrella too large but also, that, patterns of consumption and social background has changed since. The biggest criticism against the theory is that cultural capital cannot be seen as a universal entity, the characteristics of cultural capital is relative to numerous factors such as time and location (Priour et al. 2008) Many authors have also cautioned against the use of the term capital as it suggests a social force, however, what is perceived as a social force is relative to that society (Priour et al. 2008).

Bourdieu's theory may not have been a favourite in the past, but as the world changes and new trends arise, Bourdieu's theory may have a place yet. Priour et al. (2008) discovered a number of cultural distinctions in their study. They argue that although the distinctions are not as exact as the ones Bourdieu makes, their findings suggest that cultural distinctions exist. In an increasingly polarised and globalised society, people are finding more ways to differentiate themselves, thus there is relevance in his argument so long as the theory is utilised as an analytical tool rather than a theoretical one and is used in relation to specific social spaces (Munk & Krarup, 2011). The content of cultural capital may change but the structure of the theory can still be applied to societies today. As the world is becoming more and more globalised, there is a need to be and feel distinct.

This study will be using two elements of the theory to illustrate distinction leading to financial opportunity and social admiration rather than class distinction and isolation. The two elements being the accumulation of cultural capital and its value in social spaces. Bourdieu speaks of cultural capital as having a direct relationship to higher success rates, this study aims to apply that theory to the online social space. Cultural capital is no longer just an entity in the living world, but in the online world as well. The value of cultural capital in the online community has as much value in today's society as the real world if not even more, as it connects people from all corners of the world. It will be interesting to see how Bourdieu's theory can transcend live society and exist in online soci-

ety. Social media influencers have become masters of cultural capital so much so that they are able to use their online presence as a currency.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Methodology/Design

The purpose of this section is to discuss the framework against which the research will be conducted. Data needs to be collected in order for this theory or phenomenon to be proven. Research design, informs the collection of the data so that it is valid and sound (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, a mixed-method approach has been used. Here, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to validate this paper's theory. This will allow for the qualitative findings to be supported by the quantitative data. There are a number of approaches regarding the mixed-method approach. Triangulation, for example, refers to the use of quantitative methods to substantiate the qualitative findings and vice versa. Facilitation is when one research strategy is used to assist another. Complementarity methods are used when different research strategies are used to answer different sections of the research. Triangulation will be the mixed-method approach used in this study and will be defined in greater detail in the research design section (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

3.2 Research design

This study has adopted a mixed method approach in the collection of data pertaining to the research question. The research will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and substantiate findings for this paper.

This paper will be using triangulation as a mixed-method approach. In this particular paper, qualitative methods will be used to gather primary data and quantitative methods will be used to substantiate the findings gathered through the qualitative research. Triangulation is used to ensure confidence in one's results, when the use of two methods are used and result in the same findings (Bryman & Bell, 2014). In other words, results are reinforced when using both methods to arrive at the same results.

3.3 Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research methods are more descriptive in that they describe experiences in human terms as opposed to numerical terms, findings are more subjective and more easily explored (Terre Blanche, Durheim & Painter, 2006). Qualitative methods make use of constructionism and interpretivism to make inductions ((Bryman & Bell, 2014). Qualitative research is inductive in that it collects data first and then starts theorising. Qualitative research uses non numerical data to make conclusions on the topic. The qualitative method that this study will be using is explanatory case study research. In this form of research, a phenomenon in an existing context is studied. Semi-structured or un-structured interviews are conducted to collect insight into the data (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Reliability, validating and generalisability are important indicators of quality (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Qualitative research is often difficult to generalise as the findings are subjective. However, qualitative research can be reliable and valid. There are two types of reliability, external and internal. External reliability refers to the extent to which the research can be copied. Internal reliability refers to the consistency in observation between researchers. There are also two types of validity. Internal validity refers to the correlation between the researcher's findings and the developed theory. External validity refers to the generalisability of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2014). These are the main criteria by which to evaluate the quality of the study.

3.4 Quantitative Research Methods

Quantitative methods rely more on numerical data to draw conclusions on questions and topics, with such data we are able to quantify results, in other words, percentages can be applied support statements or arguments. The relationship between what is theorised and what is researched is a deductive one, where theories are made first and data is collected to support the theory. This way, results remain objective and generalisable. These are the advantages of using quantitative methods. The disadvantage however, is that the findings lack insight, results remain surface level and answers can never be explored or further investigated (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Quantitative research will assist this study in the selection of people that will be used as case studies. This study will also make use of data in the selected cases that can substantiate the hypothesis.

These research methods are most suitable for this study because it is a relatively new phenomenon that cannot be explored or explained in isolation. There needs to be qualitative data to explain the phenomenon and quantitative data to explore its value.

3.5 Population and Sampling

Population refers to the community of people in question, the community of people that is being researched or theorised on (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). The community may be fairly large, thus, a sample is needed. A sample, refers to a portion of people that represents the population or community. This sample will be used to conduct the research and any conclusions made on the sample can be generalised to the population (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Because the findings will be generalised, the sample size needs to be big enough to properly represent the population.

There are many ways in which to go about selecting a sample, one should avoid sampling bias and sampling error when doing so (Bryman & Bell, 2014). A biased sample, is a sample that does not represent the population correctly due to personal judgements. Sampling error occurs when the population is not correctly represented due to a mismatch in sample selection (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

There are two classifications in sampling methodology, probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2014). In probability sampling each member of the population has an equal chance or probability of being selected. Such methods include stratified sampling, systematic sampling and random sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Whereas, in non-probability sampling methods, samples are selected in a way that is not random. Such methods include quota sampling, judgement sampling, snowball sampling and convenience sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, quota sampling will be used. Quota sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where the researcher identifies the relevant groups in the population, thereafter, convenience and judgement sampling is used to select participants or cases in each group (Bryman & Bell, 2014). This study's population includes social media influencers in South Africa specifically. The social media groups/facets that this study will be investigating is blogging, twitter and Instagram. The study will thus, look at successful influencers in each of these groups and identify the most successful cases based on the criteria discussed earlier in the paper. The criteria by which a member of the population would be considered successful, will be based on the amount of followers and business opportunities the member has accumulated.

3.6 Data Collection

This study aims to both establish and explain the phenomenon of social media influencers and will therefore have to illustrate what a successful influencer looks like by using quantitative data. The collection of data will therefore, consist of a semi-structured interview as a primary source of data collection and an investigation into the online activity of each case as a secondary source of information. The interview will be relatively close-ended and factual, this will quantify the success of each case. In addition, the interview will explain how each case came to be successful. Both methods leading to the research question.

3.7 Data Analysis

Once the data has been collected, the researcher must analyse the data and discuss what all the collected data means (Bryman & Bell, 2014). The data could possibly support the claims of the research, alternatively, the data may reveal new information about the topic, or, the data could dispel the researcher's theory entirely (Bryman & Bell, 2014). This is where the research being conducted starts gaining meaning, where patterns and themes start emerging and stories, ideas and theories come to life. There are many ways within which to analyse quantitative research, one can plot results, find commonalities, look at averages and frequencies, all to identify patterns and themes that will prove the argument of the research right (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Qualitative data is much harder to analyse as the answers are very subjective and could differ amongst each respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2014). The researcher will have to code the data or find themes that emerge from the data gathered, qualitative data can help identify patterns and insights that quantitative data otherwise would not be able to (Bryman & Bell, 2014). In this particular study we will be looking to qualitative data to find themes and commonalities amongst the cases.

Secondary Research

Secondary research will also be used to gather qualitative and quantitative information on the chosen participants/subjects. Secondary research is also known as desktop research, secondary research involves collecting information from third part sources such as articles already written about the participants, or analysing their activity on their accounts and so on (Bryman & Bell, 2014). The social media activity of each participant will be carefully investigated in order to identify themes, patterns and commonalities amongst the participants. Secondary research is important in that it provides an objective view of the subjects investigated and creates more validity for the research as all the information gathered is not coming from the subject itself.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

The subject of reliability and validity was briefly discussed in the sections above. This refers to the quality of the study and whether the results can be generalised to similar populations (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Reliability in a quantitative sense refers to the consistency of the research, this can be tested through the test-retest method, where the results are tested a second time to see if they're the same as the first (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Validity refers to whether the research is actually valid, in other words, does the research test what it set out to test (Bryman & Bell, 2014). If a study is valid, then it is most likely reliable. These are important indicators of quality and generalisability, if a study is valid and reliable, then it can be applied to the population and sometimes even other populations.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Every researcher needs to make ethical considerations when conducting research. One needs to consider whether the study will cause harm to the participant, whether the research is an invasion of the participant's privacy. It is also important to ensure the study has the respondent's consent before collecting data from the subject (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, privacy may become a factor in that subjects may not want to disclose their circumstance's before their success or how they went about achieving their success. This study must therefore, be considerate when formulating questions concerning their success. Fortunately the purpose of this study can be fully disclosed without jeopardising the reliability of the data.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study will employ a mixed-method approach called triangulation to explore the topics and questions of this study. In triangulation, both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to gather data. Quantitative methods will be used to identify cases and support findings made in the qualitative research. The study will have case studies from which it will be collecting data from. In the qualitative part of the study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted and in the quantitative part of the study. Some secondary research will be conducted on the chosen subjects/participants social media activities over the past three years. This study will investigate the developments of their profiles/accounts and attempt to identify patterns and themes. In this study, non-probability sampling will be used to gather a sample from the population. The study will make use of quota sampling methods where cases will be specifically identified based on their online

success over a period of time. It is important to note that the research is only limited to the South African population, however, social media is a global culture and it is very likely that the data can be generalised to a number of markets outside of South Africa.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Data Collection

Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews with three South African social media influencers that represent three prominent social media platforms in South Africa: Twitter, Instagram and Blogging. The three respondents are recognised as influencers on their respective platforms based on the size of their audience and the fact that they have been approached by brands to promote them. This paper looked at three cases to explain the opportunities of social media influencers. All three cases are influencers in their respective platforms.

Khaya Dlanga has a Twitter following of 229 thousand and an Instagram following of 51 thousand. Khaya started his social media journey with YouTube, he posted funny video content for fun, he also used this particular platform out of fear of being judged by people who know him locally. His content was mostly viewed by Americans and Australians. When Khaya started Twitter he described his experience as arduous, he didn't quite understand its purpose until he started developing his tone. Khaya has since been mentioned by other celebrities, his tweets have been published in international newspapers and he has been given numerous opportunities to promote brands for money.

I See A Different You is a group of three young men who have an Instagram following of 22 thousand and a Tumblr blog that has exposed them to numerous opportunities such as exhibiting their photography in Tokyo and ideating and featuring in photo shoots for brands like Diesel. They had the advantage of having three members who were able to share their entity's content on their individual profiles, increasing their audience growth at an abnormal rate. One of their members started a Tumblr page when it was popular overseas, they were thus, approached by brands or creatives outside of South Africa which acted as a huge opportunity that catapulted their audience size.

Anna-Belle is the host of the She Said blog with an Instagram following of 10 thousand. At first Anna-Belle described her first blog to be immensely copy heavy, driven by her own personal experiences, much like a diary entry. Later, she used the She Said blog as a channel through which to showcase her experience of Johannesburg. Her blog has become well-recognised by brands, so much so, that she has promoted clothing brands like Top Shop, Mango and Forever New as well

as feature in campaigns done by the sneaker brand Puma. She was also on Instagram's suggested users list. All three cases have benefited tremendously from their activity on social media platforms, however, their social media behaviour differs from the behaviour of a typical platform user. The difference between their behaviour and an average user's behaviour is what makes them a social media influencer; and the content gathered from this research paper will unpack the behaviour of these influencers and exhibit which elements are key in turning social media activity into a business that one can benefit from, through identifying key similarities and information in each respondents interview.

4.2 Research Findings - Primary Research

Of the questions asked in the three interviews, the following questions related most to the primary research question - have social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and blogs, become a springboard for business opportunities for social media influencers in South Africa?

When did you first get a business opportunity based on the content you were posting? Did any other opportunities present themselves after your first one?

I See A Different You's opportunities began with their Tumblr page, their photography received much attention from creatives outside of South Africa. They were offered an opportunity to exhibit their photography in Tokyo. Soon after, they were contacted by Diesel to feature in and art direct a campaign that they were shooting in Senegal. While preparing for their trip to Senegal, they were also contacted by Markhams (clothing label owned by the Foschini Group) and were asked to model for and art direct a fashion shoot for their brand. Much recently they've gone into a partnership with the camera brand called Nikon. Nikon supplies them with equipment and has absorbed them into their network, while they continue to showcase Nikon on their various platforms. They've also consulted on and featured in a VISA campaign called My Everywhere and a DSTV campaign called This Is Africa. Two of the members of the team resigned from their creative jobs at an advertising agency to commit themselves full time to the opportunities they are getting. They mentioned that they've been booked for work for the next six months.

Khaya was first approached by Newspaper's such as News24 and The Mail and Guardian, they offered him an opportunity to write columns for their newspapers based on his interesting point of view expressed on his twitter platform. Since his growth, he's been approached by brands such as Caltex as well as Range Rover, where he was given an opportunity to and was paid for, to drive their latest model for a week. Khaya expressed an appreciation of an even greater opportunity aside from promoting brands, he mentioned how influential people have now contacted him, to make his life easier. Khaya spoke of being directly messaged by the CEO of the First National

Bank after he complained about his then banking service on twitter. He found opportunities such as these of great value.

Anna-Belle was first approached by the clothing brand called Top Shop. Post being approached by them, she was also approached by other labels such as Mango and Forever New. She's been asked to feature in Campaign's done by VISA, as well as influencer campaigns for the shoe brand Puma which was conceptualised by her agency.

All three cases have exhibited an immense amount of opportunity that has resulted from their activity on social media. Social media platforms have therefore become a springboard for business opportunities for SMI's.

Of the questions asked in the three interviews, the following questions related most to the secondary research question - If social media influencers in South Africa have used the above mentioned social media platforms, how have they utilised these platforms to generate income?

Do you remember when the size of your audience spiked/increased?

Both Khaya and Anna-Belle referred to the growth of their audience as a steady one. Anna-Belle explained that it happened gradually. However, when she was listed as a suggested user on Instagram, her audience increased dramatically. Khaya mentioned that his audience grew exponentially, he explained that he had the opportunity for his Twitter account to be analysed and the analysis explained that normally, a user would get a new follower for the same amount of mentions, but in Khaya's case, he was getting a third more followers than mentions. I See A Different You's case was also interesting in that they had an audience they could pool, so while as individuals they had their own audience's, they would share any ISADY content on their individual pages, directing their audiences to the ISADY page.

What was your posting behaviour like?

Both Khaya and Anna-Belle admitted to posting random content when they first started using social media. But once they developed an understanding of what their audience liked, their posts were a lot more strategised "curated" was the word that Anna-Belle used - specifically chosen. She explained that posting in the morning was important because that's when users are most active, that is when they wake up. Khaya admitted to posting on his Twitter feed often, he enjoyed making silly comments and engaging wit people. I See A Different You always had a vision in mind, and so, their behaviour was always in line with their vision. Their images were especially curated, they spoke about picking three images out of thousands of images taken over a period of six hours.

Did you develop a strategy to increase your visibility and or audience size?

None of the respondents developed a strategy to increase their audience or visibility with the exception of Anna-Belle, Anna-Belle set out to make a business out of her social media presence, however ISADY had a message to spread, an agenda to push and Khaya was conducting what seemed like a social experiment of engagement, he wanted people to “talk about what he was saying, not about him”. Khaya started thinking about his Twitter account strategically when he began monitoring the amount of mentions he got per day “it’s a good day if by noon, I’ve had 30 mentions”. He developed a strategy when he recognised his audience was only “observing” he wanted to find a way for his audience to engage with him and one another. Thus, he started asking his audience questions that anybody could answer, questions that wouldn’t intimidate them, like “do you remember your school song” for example. This strategy created huge interaction between him and his followers and so his audience increased.

ISADY developed a strategy to carry out the message of their entity, which was to showcase African South Africans in a “cool” light. ISADY explained that they had always gone on photography expeditions, social media platforms just emerged as platforms for them to plug in to. Their strategy was to shoot every weekend, choose three beautiful images from the stock of images they took that weekend and would post one photograph on Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning’s which would create anticipation for their next campaign, they explained. In addition to choosing when they posted, they would also share their posts on their individual accounts on other platforms to create visibility. Anna-Belle’s strategy was to post regularly and to maintain a consistent tone with her content, she explained that the content should be what her audience expects, this builds one’s brand she explained. Anna-Belle also took on photography so that she could generate content faster. She was also proactive in approaching brands, Anna-Belle would find out who the PR agency of a brand she wanted to work with is and would approach them.

How did you and the brands you promoted get in touch?

In Khaya and ISADY’s case, brands or creatives contacted them. On their respective platforms there was a way to either direct message or email them. Their contact details were available on their accounts. Brand’s would mail them and ask to work with them, they would brief them on the job that needed to be done and ask them for a quote, once an agreement has been made, the campaign would be executed. Anna-Belle’s contact details were also available on her account, there were occasions where she would contact brands or brands would contact her. The process however was still the same, a trade exchange of sorts or a paid promotion.

All three cases documented their opportunities as they came along, with each post, their audience grew, posting one's successes/work is an important element in gaining an audience, people want to see what kinds of opportunities the user is getting, any kind of opportunity makes for great content.

4.3 Themes and Patterns

While analysing the data collecting, six interesting themes emerged with all three respondents:

Engagement

Influencers become influencers because they engage with their audience. Khaya's social media strategy was not necessarily to gain more followers, rather, it was to engage with his followers and in doing so, he gained more followers. He engaged with his audience on topics that everyone could relate to, like a school song for example. Khaya also re-tweets his followers' tweets, this strengthens his relationship with them, creating even more content for people to engage with and making them feel significant to him. Refer to figure 2.1, Khaya asked his audience an easy question that his audience would relate to and engage with him on. He received many responses and re-tweeted most of them.

I See A Different you engage with their audience and their commentary, when people compliment their work and asked for more information, they respond promptly which allows for an opportunity to engage further. Anna-Belle explained that the success of her blog depended on interaction, she explained that she would post content that she knew her audience would respond well to. It is important for the influencer to maintain the connection they have with their audience, engaging with them regularly.

Another interesting similarity identified amongst each respondent was their ability to recognise social media as a platform that was not just about themselves. They recognised these platform as an opportunity to either engage others or showcase others or something. ISADY for example, wanted to showcase South African townships and their people. Anna-Belle started with wanting to showcase the city of Johannesburg; and Khaya wanted to get to know his audience. All cases used their respective platforms as a way of engagement that went beyond themselves. This may have also contributed to their growth as influencers.

Quality of Content

Khaya referred to the quality of his content as relevant content that will resonate with people, if Khaya was able to capture a human truth in a short sentence then he knew he would get a big response from his followers, whether he executed his content in a humorous, spiritual or inspirational way, if it is written in a way that resonated with his audience, it is considered quality. Refer to figure 2.2, this tweet was re-tweeted 523 times because it is a tweet that many people can relate to and thus is a tweet that resonates with his audience. Khaya also referred to a tweet he posted about the Vuvuzela being “the only sound that is heard from outer space”, the post was published in numerous publications across the world, the New York times for example, because it was a tweet that almost everyone could relate to, captured in a short sentence.

Figure 2.1

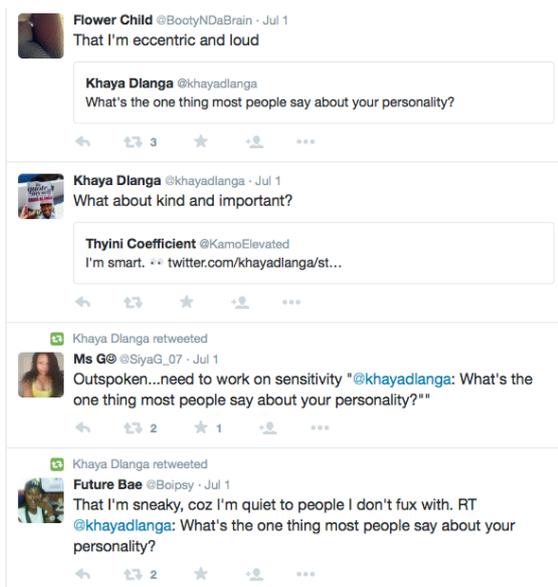


Figure 2.2



Being the photographers that they are, I See A Different You punted the importance of quality of their images. They described quality images as images that are crisp, that have no filter, good composition and that have a message, that tell a story. They also explained that fashion is a large portion of what their followers enjoy seeing from them, thus it is important that their content consists of good fashion and meets all the requirements of good quality. Refer to figure 2.3, this image received 825 likes, the image reflects the elements of quality that the team identified, crisp - no filter, fashion, composition and message/tone. When these elements are met, users are likely to get a larger more positive response. Both I See A Different you and Anna-Belle mentioned how important good quality content is, they explained that one's next post must be better than their last

post. Anna-Belle explained that if one's post on their blog was their only post, they need to ensure that the post is the best post they've ever posted, as quality images promises brands that they will get quality content from this user.



Figure 2.3

Anna-Belle spoke of curated images, images that “look pretty” and are specially chosen based on aesthetics. She recognised that her audience likes images that look “pretty”, images that look pretty get a far bigger response than ones that her audience doesn't quite understand. Refer to figure 2.4. Anna-Belle explained that the image taken in figure 2.4 did far better than the image taken in figure 2.5, the image in figure 2.4 received 300 likes, while the image in figure 2.5 received 100 likes. Anne-Belle explained that the reason behind this is that people like images of people, people who are aesthetically pleasing, and colours that make the picture pretty. Whereas in figure 2.5, the colours are bland and there are no people in the image, she believes that this is why the second image did not do as well as the first.



Figure 2.4



Figure 2.5

With regards to her blog, she explained that her blog needs to be less copy heavy and have more beautiful imagery, that beautiful imagery coupled with good writing often gets good responses. Quality of the image is a key feature of an influencer.

Tone of content and influencer

Tone was a recurring topic in each interview. Tone is crucial when engaging with one's audience. In order to grow ones following, an aspiring influencer needs to be consistent in his or her tone, once their audience has an understanding of what kind of content the user posts, they expect to see the same kind of content. This is the tone of the content as well as the influencer. ISADY mentioned that their audience anticipates their next post because they know what to expect and are excited about it. They are consistent with their tone, they explained that their goal in the content they post was to exhibit black south africans in a new light, in a "cool", "fashionable", "authentic" light. The group was tired of townships being photographed in a "poor", "sad" light, they wanted to show how beautiful townships and their people are. Their content exhibited this message repeatedly, so much so that TV directors would reference their images when showing their treatments to clients. Khaya explained that his audiences were looking forward to his commentary on some political events. Anna-Belle mentioned the surprise her audience would experience if she posted something that is out of character. "You can't be schizophrenic" she explained, thus tone is important, once again, tone must resonate with audiences, they must be able to identify with and identify the user by the tone of their content as well as remaining consistent with it. Tone can also differentiate a user from another, if a user is constantly posting the content with the same tone, one can almost guess that the content belongs to that user without looking.

Frequency

Frequency was one of the most important themes emerging from the research. All three respondents spoke about constant presence. I See A Different you explained that one has to post regularly to stay top of mind, so that when an opportunity arises, the person offering the opportunity will remember the user and approach them instead of someone else. Anna-Belle also mentioned constant presence, she explained that going for months without posting is like going for months without showing up at work, she explained that she wouldn't trust someone who doesn't show up to work. The user's value to their followers and to potential brands is lost. A user's online presence and or activity acts as their digital CV. If a user is constantly posting images of good quality, the user will stay top of mind to many, brands included and is bound to be remembered when an opportunity arises.

Authenticity

None of the influencers interviewed looked to become anything they weren't. Whatever their activity/strategy/content was, it was an extension of who they are. Khaya spoke about what he was interested in on Twitter. Anna-Belle photographed the city, which was a passion of hers and I See A Different You's imagery carried messages they believed in, that they were passionate about. Au-

thenticity resonates far more with followers. Whichever tone a user decides to use it must be authentic, for two reasons, so that it resonates with their audience and so that they're able to make as much content needed to gain the kind of traction that keeps them top of mind. If a user is trying to be or do something that they are not, it will be difficult for them to generate content frequently.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

In summary, social media platforms have become a springboard for business opportunities. Social media influencers have found a way to utilise these platforms in a way that's allowed them to engage with brands on a monetary level. Certain influencers have even resigned from their day jobs to pursue a career in promoting brands, others have switched day jobs because of the opportunities their content and presence has given them. Platforms must be utilised in a certain way if it is to be maximised to a level where one has a large audience and thus attention from brands. There were similarities found in all three cases. The first of these is that content must be posted regularly to remain top of mind for audiences and brands. Secondly, content must be of a certain quality that will be appealing to audiences and brands. The third similarity identified is that the user must ensure their presence and content has a consistent tone so that audiences can identify with them. The fourth similarity is that the content must be engaging and the user must engage with their audience when being engaged with. Lastly, the user must be authentic if they are to achieve consistency.

There is however, an element of luck and talent that cannot be quantified, as much as there are similarities amongst successful SMI's, there is still no one way to do it. For example, none of these SMI's set out to become a brand, they just did. Not many SMI's set out to promote brands like Range Rover, the opportunity followed a deeper ambition. ISADY referred to it as "blessings" Khaya referred to it as "perks". Not all of the content SMI's post is always winning content, many times it's a hit and miss. Thus, there may not be a specific formula, however, there is a pattern in the behaviour of SMI's. The way in which they have managed their activity on social media platforms has granted them good fortune. Influencers have identified and tapped into a market that is beneficial for both the influencer and the brand, influencers are cheaper ways for brands to communicate to large audiences. Anna-Belle explained in her response to a question on value, that in her market - fashion - influencers provide a human element to brands and products, she explained that models can pose in the same jersey, however, they cannot tell people how comfortable or warm the jersey is. Adding a human element to a product is communication on much more deeper level than above the line advertising, these are real people documenting their experiences of different products and brands. By using influencer characteristics and treating themselves as a personal brand and their content as capital that can be exchanged, SMI's have created a business out of their social media presence.

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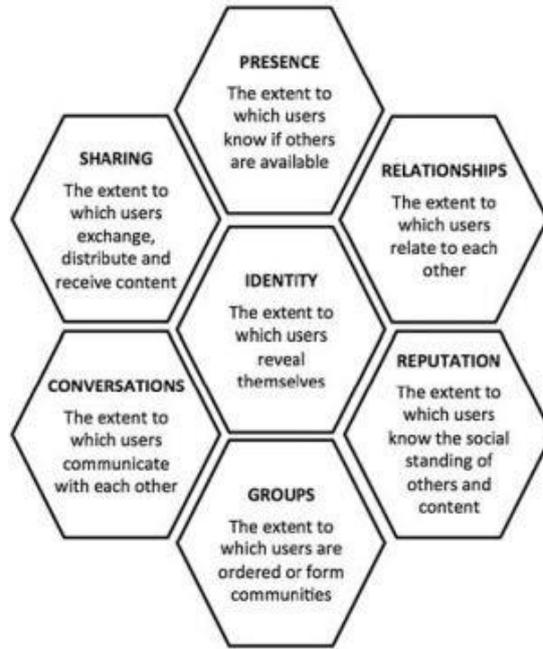


Figure 1.1

Figure 2.1

Figure 2.2



Flower Child @BootyNDaBrain · Jul 1
That I'm eccentric and loud

Khaya Dlanga @khayadlanga
What's the one thing most people say about your personality?

← ↻ 3 ★ 👤 ⋮



Khaya Dlanga @khayadlanga · Jul 1
What about kind and important?

Thyini Coefficient @KamoElevated
I'm smart. **+ twitter.com/khayadlanga/st...

← ↻ ★ 👤 ⋮



Khaya Dlanga retweeted



Ms G @Siyag_07 · Jul 1
Outspoken...need to work on sensitivity *[@khayadlanga](#): What's the one thing most people say about your personality?""

← ↻ 2 ★ 1 👤 ⋮



Khaya Dlanga retweeted



Future Bae @Boipsy · Jul 1
That I'm sneaky, coz I'm quiet to people I don't fux with. RT [@khayadlanga](#): What's the one thing most people say about your personality?

← ↻ 2 ★ 👤 ⋮



Khaya Dlanga @khayadlanga · Jul 1

Mother:

Typing...

Typing...

Typing...

Typing...

Typing...

Me: *panics*

Mother:

Typing...

Typing...

Mother: How are you my child?

Me: 😞

← ↻ 534 ★ 146 👤 ⋮



Figure 2.3

Figure 2.4

Figure 2.5



 **shesaida**
Wolven

300 likes

shesaida This is @idoucha, she sings in a flipping amazing band called [sbybeneco](#) if you haven't heard their music you definitely should check them out. I took this photo of her yesterday at [@wolvesafe Fun Day](#) just after she bought her rad [@romanticatory hat](#).

[#SheSaidPortraits](#) [#WolvenFunDay](#)
[#MakePortraits](#) [#vscocoin](#) [#CommunityFirst](#)
[#Color6D](#) [#ycstyle](#)
[#teenstagram](#) I love Bye Beneco 🥰

bybeneco 🥰🥰🥰🥰
rsibnakihi 🥰🥰🥰🥰
matthewkannah That's 👏 and Bye Beneco 🥰

madameinthemirror Great look
william_atridge27 st
blas @idoucha ah Len looking great! My gf was there too! Going to visit Keri at [Brookwood tonight](#)! Will check on ur flat :)

Log in to like or comment.



 **shesaida**

117 likes

shesaida Celebrating love [@hrose](#), [Conor's](#) kitchen tea! How rad is this little snack?

[#SheSaidHolds](#)
robymarie [@shesaida](#) love your pic's
thenakedginger Damn that looks tasty, love those fancy cases! [@](#)
allisonstelmuder Pett Four still one of your favourites.

Log in to like or comment.

Appendix B

Khaya Dlanga Interview

Subject Background

Tell me a bit about yourself

What is your name?

What do you do?

Do you see yourself as a creative person? If so why?

I don't think that one has a reason I think that it's something that you either are or you harness, I don't know why I see myself as a creative person I just always felt that I was, I've never tried to be for any particular reason I think it's something that's in me, it's just there.

Social media Activity

1. What do you think of social media?

It's really transformed how people get exposure, it's made, the great thing about it is that it gives everybody access to say what they want to say and express their views and that's also the bad thing about it is that anybody can express their views. and that's a bad or a good thing about it but I really appreciate it because it gives people who wouldn't have had an opportunity for exposure, exposure, especially creatives whether it's your thoughts, your pictures, your humour, it just exposes, it opens up so much of the world but at the same time it's this constant stream of information and I think there's just too much information and we don't spend enough processing and understanding the information and I think that's another drawback to social media, there's just so much going on and it's impossible...

2. When did you start using social media platforms?

I started in 2006 with youtube, that was the first platform I ever used and I think that people didn't know it was a platform and I made these stupid and random videos which became hugely popular in the states, Australia and all the other countries and the only reason I got onto it is because I didn't want South Africans to know I was doing this thing and so it actually became pretty big I was in the top one percent of the subscribers. I didn't want people I know to know because I was self-conscious and I didn't want them to judge.

3. Which platform did you start with? Why that platform?

4. Why did you relate to that platform?

What was weird for me about it what was also interesting was how I saw normal ordinary everyday people just talking or creating things and putting them out there and people responding to them and what was weird was that I'd put up something and people would comment on the thing that I said, someone from the states, someone from Germany, and you develop relationships with people and just by seeing their comments and if you haven't posted in a while it's like why haven't you posted and at the time there were extremely popular YouTube discoverers discovering my videos and then they started talking about them and I gained lots of followers because of them.

5. When did you start using other platforms?

I started using Facebook first I think as soon as it was open to the public and that's when I joined it and then there was Myspace which I never really got into and then Twitter 2008 but I didn't under-

stand it, it was confusing, i didn't understand it's purpose or why anyone would be interested in the statement you're making, how people are responding and who's saying...it was confusing.

Looking back now at your relationship with twitter

The reason I got to understand was that eight months into having it I thought I'd give myself a week to understand this thing, I'll keep posting and if I don't understand then I'll give up on it,

What changed?

The interaction, it was the fun I was having saying things to others, so if someone like, people were very popular back then, like Ko Jo and all those and I would just make silly comments on the things that they were saying and they thought i was funny and I really enjoyed the cheeky interactions I had with people, they were not malicious they were just entertaining and so much fun, I enjoyed that.

6. Which other platforms did you start using? Why?

7. What was your posting behaviour like when you first started posting?

With youtube you have to set everything up and then edit the video and then upload it so there is quite a lot of time spent posting a video, for me, my first time, I got this horrible phone and it had it was an LG and had a big camera that could twist, so id record my videos there and upload them and then my, it was really more comedic videos on youtube and then twitter for me it was whenever I felt like saying something, commentary on what was going on and id put up one liners cause I thought that I was not bad at making a statement in a brief sentence and I think its because I did attribute it to the fact that maybe I was a copy writer so I was able to distill a thought into a simple short sentence that can resonate but on Facebook I started lots of debates, I even created a whole bunch of groups, that had lots of people following in the groups, I'm not sure what my pattern was, I know there is one.

8. What kind of content did you first post?

For me its because I engaged a lot with others and I think because I was engaging with them then they too would engage with me. But also on twitter it was really about being relevant its about what is the relevant thing you are talking about and discussing and that moment in time does it resonate with the people you are talking to? For example and when I say relevant its not necessarily something thats happening in the news, it could be about my thoughts on relationships and have a stream of consciousness about what you're thinking and you're relationship cycle, you're point of view and when people feel like they can relate and understand what you're saying, you're saying things that everyone is thinking but no one is saying and that was the thing that I found a lot of people would say that my, that I say things that they are thinking but are too afraid to say and that was the engagement for me i never thought that I was saying anything different or anything nobody else would say I was just saying it because I felt like saying and I felt like it was true to me. Human truths, so when people see that they and what was interesting was how when events started happening and political situations, what was so odd was how people would say that they're waiting to see what Khaya has to say about it, and I found it quite interesting that you almost become this trusted source, it's like its just me but why are you waiting to see what I have to say about it before you start to think about it.

At what point did you recognise that people actually started valuing your commentary?

I was expressing whatever I thought at that time and id also start debates and sometimes its something funny, I felt that I was saying funny things, I think I started realising when a lot of people started interacting with me, they followed me for many different reasons some were saying that I say really funny things and others ere saying I was saying provocative political things? So there was no one particular reason but I think, I don't know If I changed, there was a point when I would look at my twitter feed and I'd be like its a good day if by 12 o clock I've had 30 mentioned so that

was a thing that I started noticing is that people do engage, what I also did was I started asking questions that anybody could answer because I understood how intimidating it was for me when I started, I didn't know what to say or what to do and a lot of people I started talking to people and I realised that they were observing a lot and not participating and what I decided to do was to start drawing the observers to force them to engage without them knowing that that's what I'm doing, so I would ask a question like, what was your, do you remember your school song? What was it? Everybody has a school song, there's no right or wrong answer to that and it forces you to say something without worrying about judgement and then when I retweet you, someone sees that they went to the same school, you creating connections with different people and for me I started seeing it as a tool to kind of force interaction with people without them being self-conscious and I think that's how I gained a lot of following because I just made it easy for people to communicate on the platform.

9. How often did you post?

I was probably posting five to ten tweets and that increased to twenty a day which increased to about 40, 50 a day, I retweet what people are saying to me a lot which also counts as a tweet, but it's still engagement.

10. What kind of responses did you get?

Kimora Lee was like ladies, don't let anyone tell you you can't have everything, you can have it all, and then I responded you can't have everything where would you put it and people laughed at that and she just went off on me and I was like it's a joke and what happens is that sometimes people can completely miss the joke.

11. Do you remember when the amount of likes and followers you got spiked/increased?

It seemed like a steady, faster than normal growth but for me it was normal because it just kept happening. Back then I had five new followers a day and now it's like 50 to 100 but it has been a steady but steep increase. There was some Twitter analytics done on my account and the guy was shocked at my graph, he was saying he's never seen it with anyone, so with every mention I get, I get a follower, so say last month I had about 9000 mentions and I got out of the 9000 I had about 10 or 12 thousand new followers so the ratio of followers is greater than the number of mentions which is quite interesting so I feel that my growth rate has been very

12. Why do you think your following/audience increased?

13. What kind of content were you getting serious recognition for?

When there were live events, the Grammys, the Samosa, Intersections, so when I say what I think about what I'm seeing at the time, lots of retweets, lots of favourites and it's because it's happening at the same time and I think what people appreciate is the fact that you're able to see something very quickly, observe it, make a comment about it and they're like oh damn I didn't look at it that way you're right, or very funny and I think that that's what people appreciate. When the World Cup was here in 2010, again, relevance, so I said, the sound of the vuvuzela is the only sound that can be heard from out of space and I was playing on the Chinese Wall being seen from out of space caption, and that tweet went viral, it was ridiculous about three thousand retweets globally, worldwide, next thing I see it's in the New York Times, LA Times it's been translated to Portuguese, that tweet went everywhere, again, it was that I captured a moment about what people were experiencing.

14. Did you change your posting behaviour when your followers increased?

15. Did you develop a strategy to increase the amount of likes and visibility when posting content? Explain your strategy? What kind of strategy? Did you implement it?

Not really, I mean you know like sometimes when it's like flirting with a celebrity and everybody wants to see what you're doing, but I don't think I had a deliberate strategy except for that one, but also another one was that I would never be mean because I thought being mean is very easy, attacking others, how they'd start being vicious and mean and I just decided that I will be honest and a normal human being to others, I will say something funny sometimes and maybe they'll find it mean but for me I didn't want to be mean, it's exhausting and I also thought that people like positive-

ty and optimism so my posts were silly, funny and inspiring sometimes but I also did notice that people were almost hungry for a spiritual thing or for someone to tell them that its okay that its going to be fine, however cheesy it was they too like to be motivated and I would say these things and I saw that people were moved so that might have been another strategy, to help and let people know that its okay things are hard work etc things like the more talented you are the harder you should work.

16. Did you get recognition for your content, and if so which content?

17. Did you start posting for recognition and or opportunity/brand building developing of your personal brand? Elaborate?

Sometimes you post to provoke a discussion because you want people to say something, I want them to say stuff about the things that I'm saying, I want recognition for those things not for me, because for me the important thing is the output not me.

18. In your opinion, which elements are important when posting for recognition/exposure?

So its capturing the moment and about the moment that everyone recognises and says oh actually I didn't think about it like that or that captures it precisely and it think for me thats how you're able to get traction out of anything, being that precise.

19. When did you first get a business opportunity based on the content you were posting? What was the opportunity?

I'd say writing columns thats when I start getting paid to write columns, that would be in 2010, I got approached to write a column for news24 and the mail and guardian and cape times as well, so thats when it started.

20. Did any other opportunities present themselves after your first one? What other kinds of opportunities were you getting after that?

I've done stuff for caltex, shell asked me to go to the spanish grand prix last year, they were going to take me to holland and spain so I said fantastic, how much are you paying me, they said no its for the experience and i said I'm not interested if you're not paying me because its my time i have to book leave and ill never get that time back at least compensate me for it and they were like okay so we're not doing it. Now people do ask because I don't want to flood my timeline to promote stuff so what i ask for is not going to be low so that I don't flood my timeline with brands basically.

For me what's more powerful than money is the influential people who have followed me, who recognise me for the things that I say, so I think for me its not like this is how I ended up being close acquaintances with minister, I remember complaining about my bank and then the CEO of fn. DM's me, a year later he reminds me again, I send my personal email address and he sorts it out for me those interactions are far more valuable than money from a brand, the financial aspect is okay and thats why I post a lot less for money than for the influence you're able to gain, real influence.

Do you specifically pick your brands?

Yes for me, do I believe in the brand, what it stands for or am I indifferent to it. If they're boring, I will ask them for quite a bit of money because they're trying to be cool using me.

Do you see it as a business now?

I think it can be a business for people who want it to be one, but it does bring opportunities?

21. Tell me more about the opportunities? Can you talk me through the process? For example, how does it work? How did they approach you, through which channel? What happens after they do etc?

22. Do you follow a process to attract and secure new opportunities?

For me its the non financial currency thats important, I've turned down a lot of people but its not a thing that I depend on. I will not actively seek opportunities.

23. How do you guarantee or provide return on investment for the brands that invest in your personal brand? Do you think this exchange is beneficial for brands.

For brands who understand it yes, there are a lot of brands that just want to attach themselves to who they think are cool and influencers but they don't understand why they are doing it and they don't understand how its gonna benefit and help them and for what is worse is that every single company uses the same influencers all the time, today you're at an event for this vodka and then tomorrow you're at an event for another vodka so you dilute the whole reason you wanted influencers, pay them better so that theres no parity. Brands see influencers as a cheap and quick easy way to get their brands out.

Social Media broader comments

24. In your opinion, what constitutes a social media influencer?

Someone who almost curates, they're a curator and people like what they curate.

25. What do you think the power of an influencer is? And the responsibility?

Do they have a power? I think the difference with me and Durban is that people wanted to do something, I was just tapping into what people, it was about giving people a platform to do something they wanted to do. I didn't think it would work, it was short notice, people had to pay to get on the bus, you were gonna skip work, the bus was leaving at night, it was going to be uncomfortable, I did;t know that it was going to work , I did not expect it to be as big as it was, the attention from the media was insane! And i think its because it was people who are usually activists behind the desktop deciding to do something physically and i think that was the reason for the interest.

It says something about your influence.

But i think it was just people who wanted a platform and I provided it.

26. What do you think about the kinds of opportunities influencers are getting today? The landscape.

I think its a brave new world and people are trying to figure out how to use it and maximise it and I think very few brands have got it if any.

Which brands have gotten it right?

What woolies is doing is interesting, how they're using instagram people to be their fashion models, putting them on the main streams but, we did it very well with coca cola and the share a coke campaign and we gave people names and we gave celebrities a can with their name on it and it was because the thing itself was so amazing and desirable that they would tell people about it. A lot of brands should be smart about how they do that, where you feel compelled to talk about the thing they've given you as opposed to okay the content isn't that great but ill post because they're paying me.

27. Do you think these opportunities add value to the influencer and society? or What role do you think influencers have to play in society today?

28. Anything you'd like to add?

No

I See A Different You Interview

Subject Background

Tell me a bit about yourself

What is your name?

What do you do?

Justice: I think it's simple, we are creatives, we offer our creative services and creative solutions to business problems and we are mostly or commercially known as photographers and commercial directors and amongst that we've got our personal projects that we do that are kind of aligned with the services that we give to the likes of agencies and different types of clients and photography creative solutions, film or commercial film, directing.

Do you see yourself as a creative person? If so why?

Innocent: We live off ideas, we love ideas, we love creating, we enjoy seeing things happen and we live in a world of opportunity where we see a gap and what to fill that gap with our ideas, we don't have boundaries or limits, we do what we want to do and we have fun doing it.

Social media Activity

1. What do you think of social media?

Vuyo: Social media is dope it's so cool, because what it does is that it connects people from different places all around the world when you think of someone from africa connecting with someone from europe, its not like back then when you need to write a letter, now it's easy, if you want to get connected with someone from new york you get connected on Facebook, twitter on instagram, it just connects people.

2. When did you start using social media platforms?

Brief background, we've always been a collective since we were eight or whatever and we've always had missions that we do together and obviously as time goes things change and social media became the biggest social thing amongst the youth even older, and it was at that time where blogging was right at its peak here in south africa, that's when we started being bloggers or being social media driven with what we do as a collective, there isn't a difference from the missions we used to do when we were young just that at the time Facebook and instagram and twitter were not existing, it just made more sense later in life when we made our missions, those things were relevant and we could plug in our activities with it, it was december 2012, and Innocent was in kenya at that time. and we just had a Skype call discussing this idea, we've got this idea, we want to do it and what's the approach what are the names. When we were skipping we were like wow guys we can agree that this is exactly what we want.

3. Which platform did you start with? Why that platform?

Innocent: We started on tumblr and we gained momentum on tumblr through our personal Facebook pages. we shared our tumblr there and people respnded well and we saw a need to open a Facebook page, it got a good response but tumblr was the first thing that kicked us off and it opened more doors internationally.

4. Why did you relate to that platform?

Vuyo: Justice had a tumblr,

Justice: it's easier to work around tumblr because blogspot was too complicated for an average joe like me to understand, it's so driven by codes and stuff and I had a tumblr for a year before we had a collective tumblr and I said to the guys, guys I think, lets just use tumblr because interaction is easier and you can track it, it wasn't so popular at that time, it was popular overseas, it was taking off and we rode that bandwagon with the guys that were being popular then and we kind of squeezed our way up.

We related with it because it simplifies social media interactions, they simplified the engagement, they simplified how to work it, it was as simple as facebook, Facebook is straight forward, as boring as it is, blogspot is not, I don;t think I could crack it still, so it was easy because you could pick people who you'd want to follow and block people and you had more control over your content and

through that, that was easier it made it easier for us to work on tumblr, its' cutting edge, its the best.

How did you connect with the guys overseas?

Vuyo: through social media, connecting with people, you post things and tumblr and and then we had our personal accounts and our account so we'd post on this one and then we started re-blogging, justice had a few followers at the time and then we re-blogged then from there it's a ripple and we went all over the place.

5. When did you start using other platforms?

Innocent: I can't pinpoint a date, Justice and myself were super proactive on just having all these social media things and then we had an opportunity with Diesel when we took our instagram and converted it to our brand, we had a sponsor and the sponsor knew about is, and then they wanted to run a campaign on instagram and one of us had a lot of followers like three or four thousand and then we decided we were going to convert that account to I see a different you, and then we did a campaign with ford where we did an insta ride with ford fiesta. Ford found us through our Facebook and tumblr they just emailed us, and then we did the campaign and just started having more followers, people liked it and then we used the same strategy we used on tumblr sharing it on social media which is like going on my Facebook and saying hey guys check out tumblr or our instagram and people wanted to check out our instagram because its faster, you post everyday, things that you see, and people started following us on instagram which blew up as well.

6. Which other platforms did you start using? Why?

7. What was your posting behaviour like when you first started posting?

Vuyo: Tumblr was very, we were acting very agency like where everything was reviewed before posting, so if we go out and we shoot something, we'd go out for three hours, six hours and then we've got lots of pictures but only three can make it and then we started doing that and then when instagram came out we could post lifestyle and everything so we said the tumblrs going to be for nice pictures only and then instamgrm is going to be for lifestyle and everything else and then now its shifted just a bit, well tumblr is still no nonsense.

Innocent: The strategy of instagram is different cause you can theres a lot of opportunity where, we can have via post his outfit, do an outfit greed and then post then because we realise that a lot of our followers like that they like how we plan our outfits and we now we haven't been doing it in a while and just today I met this random guy who said guys I really enjoy your instagram but when are you posting your outfit greeds, they really help me and I felt that this was really cool so the strategy of instagram is really different and we've, if you can see from a month or two or ago we've changed the way things are on our instagram like the photos we post are better quality we try not to use filters anymore we try to make them as crisp as we can.

8. What kind of content did you first post?

Justice: There isn't a difference in the content we're posting, if there is a difference, it would be at that time our interest and where we spent most of our time would be featured more and now, maybe lets say we used to hang out in kilpsruit more, we would have more content from klipsspruit, and now because we have more travels we've got more travel images and more images in different locations depending on where we are based most of the time but the message of the content is still the same, we're still showing pride and fighting misconceptions of what africans south africa is, same thing just different setting, different scenario based on where we are.

Is there a strategy in how often you post?

There is a strategy but fortunately our social media is always running our followings are always up, we've got followers in new york who are waking up now we've got followers here which is almost night and then vice versa, so on our instagram we just, what we make sure of is good quality images and they still have the same voice as what we believe in, the main strategy is to show emotions, what we feel in our images, we don't have times with our instagram, we just make sure we don;t keep quiet for too long. We don;t have times but we post things that we make sure our followers would appreciate, things that have meaning and a feeling.

When you started to build your following did you have a more stringent strat?

Vuyo: we had passion for where we come from and africa as whole.

9. How often did you post?

10. What kind of responses did you get?

After a month or two of posting, when we started we had a rollout plan of how many images to post a day and what times, on tumblr, we'd have a photo for the morning, we had morning only, we uploaded three photos a week, monday wednesday and friday, then that created anticipation for what's coming and everyone in advertising used to ask us if there was a campaign coming and we'd say no it's just our blog and they wouldn't believe us, then id think that was weird, then after a month or two after that we got called by diesel. We got a mail from them in Jan, they wanted to work with us in June. They wanted to work with us on a campaign called diesel eden and the campaign was for June to go shoot and collaborate and in-between that we got to shoot markham, that was the wake up call telling us that this could be a business. Before we even went to Sinegal for diesel we shot a campaign with markham, and they emailed us the same way diesel did.

Innocent: remember we were flying to paris and then we had to confirm dates and we only had two days to relax and then we shot another one.

It was when we going to do that exhibition in Japan they wanted us to quote for a campaign for these days, were we available and we weren't and they said cool they can move so we came back from paris, had two days to pre-prod thats when we worked with Sisco and those guys. And there was too much pressure.

11. Do you remember when the amount of likes and followers you got spiked/increased? Did you guys recognise a relationship between that strategy and followers increasing?

The biggest thing that gave us followers was the travels, when we posted pictures saying we're going to Sinegal, everyone that knew us was like wow they're going to Sinegal, we came back and then in four months we went to Paris and then those things gave us more hits beyond us just posting, every time we posted a banner saying I see a different you Tokyo, Paris, Berlin, we just got more and more followers and it also gave us believability, a lot of people wanted to give us business because they felt that okay these guys they're international, they're working with international brands which means they must be good so we want to work with them and it opened a lot of door beyond just following.

12. Why do you think your following/audience increased?

13. What kind of content were you posting at that stage?

14. Did you change your posting behaviour when your followers increased?

Our pattern changed, because we now had loyal followers and the biggest thing that made things change for us was how things changed, we had a lot of work to deal with, a lot of paying stuff we had to worry about, instead of worrying about what people would like so responsibility shifted and I was like okay cool we have to deal with this treatment that ford wants or this campaign that ford wants, Markhams, it was no longer about shooting the leather range, we had to worry about what matters, that's where the pattern changed, we are swamped we have work for the next 6 months. Now we work as a business, we get booked, our producer schedules the work. VISA, SAT's, Kings, we have to create ideas for our exhibition in London, every thing is on a schedule, every bit and piece of space we find in our work and activities that's where we create stuff to please ourselves and everyone and that helps change the perceptions.

When did you realise that you had to start posting for opportunities?

By the responses we got on our social media, we'd post something and someone would say this is great and immediately they'll ask for our email and then they get an idea from the idea we posted and then we'd send the email and then they'd send us a brief "Im from London I'm working on this brand, we really like your ideas, are you keen to work with us" That's the biggest thing with what

we do, every photo we take or campaign, you'll see the Lesotho thing we did, when we post that it sparks ideas for others, they contact us, give us a brief and then we work together.

How important is it to think of yourselves as a brand? How important is it?

It's everything, especially it grows all the time, when it starts it starts off, we started as pack and as it grows there'll be people that calls one person, they'll be like hey man, you know so its very important to always move in a pack.

15. Did you develop a strategy to increase the amount of likes and visibility when posting content? Explain your strategy? What kind of strategy? Did you implement it?

16. Did you get recognition for your content, and if so which content?

17. Did you start posting for recognition and or opportunity/brand building developing of your personal brand? Elaborate?

18. In your opinion, which elements are important when posting for recognition/exposure?

All elements, the photo must be really good, the fashion must be really good, the mood must be good cause we are fortunately known for our photography and our fashion and the creative stuff is just on the stuff so the fashion must be strong, the photo must be strong and the idea of the image must be strong.

19. When did you first get a business opportunity based on the content you were posting? What was the opportunity?

When we started the biggest thing that happened was being contacted by diesel and there was an opportunity there and just before we left we got an opportunity with markham, and finally the diesel time came and we went to single and spent two weeks there and with amazing african artists that are based everywhere else in the world, we made friends with the likes of petite noir, laurence airlines, les sai, writers and everyone and whilst we were there our social media was telling people what we were up to, we were taking photos, and at the time it was very different, that sparked interest from the like so advertising agencies and everybody was using our images as reference to how black people are when they were doing treatments and there was opportunity there, people would want to buy our images, we'd sell the image sometimes we didn't know about usage, they don't buy to own, and we came back from there, shot this campaign and told our followers on instagram Facebook and tumblr that we were shooting this and more brands got excited, they thought okay these guys look really cool and deliver good work, advertising class work and we got more briefs and as time went and our body of work grew, we saw a pattern, when we briefed photographers and directors for them to shoot black people or south african people, they'd come back with our references and our images, so we thought wait, if these guys are trying to do our stuff and still aren't as good then theres a business gap here and then we were like okay cool maybe we can tick that box and then we started a business.

20. Did any other opportunities present themselves after your first one? What other kinds of opportunities were you getting after that?

Nikon is a pro photography brand that approached us to affiliate with us and support us and it's a relationship that we have started with them thats beneficial to both parties, they gave us cameras and we use those cameras and showcase those cameras on all our platforms, our audiences see that. they see the quality, nikon put us in their network, we get to do panel talks at the expo and we will be affiliated with other great photographers.

21. Tell me more about the opportunities? Can you talk me through the process? For example, how does it work? How did they approach you, through which channel? What happens after they do etc?

22. Do you follow a process to attract and secure new opportunities?

If you always post people don't forget you, if you're top of mind, cause people have said, we want to work with you, we just don't know what, so we always need to keep them, there so when they come they've got a cool brief so we always need to keep posting.

23. How do you guarantee or provide return on investment for the brands that invest in your personal brand?

We have our producer whos our suit, he makes sure we meet our deadlines, he makes sure we make profit. For the brands, apparently theres now money per follower, thats where they get there money from and from the images we take.

Social Media broader comments

24. In your opinion, what constitutes a social media influencer?

People make social media influencers, or they make themselves, everyone has a following for what ever kind of person they are, a soccer player whos a mid fielder will have followers for his soccer, there is no formula, people follow what they like and if you post things that people like you will be an influencer. our strategy was to showcase south africa, it wasn't to gain followers.

Money, being friends with influencers someone who works at the sunday times friends with bloggers, people who already have what you're doing, people are putting each other on. When you get put on, you must put on.

25. What do you think the power of an influencer is? And the responsibility?

To influence. Be it negative or positive

26. What do you think about the kinds of opportunities influencers are getting today?

27. Do you think these opportunities add value to the influencer and society? or What role do you think influencers have to play in society today?

28. Anything you'd like to add?

Talent is not enough, you can be as talented as you want its not enough there are a lot of influencing factors that need to accompany your talent to make a living, like being professional, answering your phone, delivering, being reliable and realistic, if you want to be a business as an artist, your arrogance and your ego must be put aside and the first thing should be being professional and that constitutes all the other things.

I think justice really summed it up if you take yourself serious, you will take your work serious, being creative doesn't mean you're clumsy and you go around pissing people off, your creative ability should be its your worth, its your money and you must take it and yourself seriously.

Anna-Belle - SheSaidSA Interview

Subject Background

Tell me a bit about yourself

What is your name?

What do you do?

Do you see yourself as a creative person? If so why?

I dont think you can be a blogger or influencer without being creative

Social media Activity

1. What do you think of social media?

In terms of what its doing for the world and exposing stuff and connecting people its amazing but then on the other side its disconnecting people, sometimes you're obsessed with your instagram feed, social media is amazing its just how you use it.

2. When did you start using social media platforms?

I started, the first time I heard about Facebook was in varsity, but I had myspace before but I think I started using it properly for business when I was in my first job which was like 6 years ago, I was a travel journalist, my editor was the first one in the industry that started looking at social and digital realm and understanding and she forced us to go on this course and from there I got hooked and every job I've had since has been in social media.

3. Which platform did you start with? Why that platform?

4. Why did you relate to that platform?

Facebook, I think why everyone started it you want to start this new thing, we didn't have anything like that, everyone was on it, it was like this revolution, you get to share your life, you want to be seen in a certain life, you get to spy on other people, so I started with Facebook because of that feeling and then the business side came as a I learned what it was, what it can do and the idea and psychology behind social media.

What do you mean by psychology behind social media?

Fundamentally, people want to say what they think and share what they're feeling, people want to know stuff, its a voyeuristic side of looking into other peoples lives, people want an opinion, they want to say stuff and before our parents would pick up the phone and chat to each other now its just that we have this huge platform.

5. When did you start using other platforms?

I started with myspace and facebook, I got linked in and Twitter at the same time and then I obviously got instigate. I had two blogs I had another blog before she said and then when I met Craig I had a new chapter in my life I thought it would be nice to start all over again and make it more fun and less copy heavy, two and half years ago.

6. Which other platforms did you start using? Why?

7. What was your posting behaviour like when you first started posting?

When I first started posting on Facebook it was random crap, like a glass of wine, a remote, no one cares if you're drinking wine, they care if its a pretty picture of wine, so I didn't curate things then , now I curate a lot more, the same with my blog I'd just write how I was feeling but I now know what stuff works and what doesn't. So for instance I'd change my hair every two weeks, if I posted that people would lose their shit, but if i posted one of the most beautiful photos, it would get half the response, its just what people are there for so I like to post a balance of whats important to me because it is an online diary but theres also the business side of it and people want to know what colour my is. I'm even interested to see Kim Kardashians hair colour, so a lot more curated now, I taught myself photography so its a lot prettier

8. What kind of content did you first post?

So I do lots of fashion, places, travel, and then I do design pretty things, I try to do recipes. Most of the photography is stuff I've done. Like when someone sent me a press release of a band I was like cool, no one wants to read a press release so I suggested we meet and take photos which people will read more. There are certain things that I get paid for but these guys are like a two man guitar, they don't have money.

9. How often did you post?

10. What kind of responses did you get?

Generally good responses, people are pretty amped.

11. Do you remember when the amount of likes and followers you got spiked/increased?

With instagram I was put on the suggested user list so I definitely saw a spike there, and then Facebook it grew steadily, when brands start recognising you it just builds.

Why do you think brands recognised you?

It's a lot of things, its like, they probably recognize me now cause my website design is really nice, my content isn't amateur I can write, I can take photos because I understand what brands and ad agencies want and I understand that I can give that to them, I don't post press releases but I can go cool pay me R4000 you'll reach a shit load of people and it'll be content for your brand. I think its just also consistent posting, if you don't post on your blog for months its like not showing up for work for months, I wouldn't trust someone who just disappears.

12. Why do you think your following/audience increased?

13. What kind of content were you posting at that stage?

14. Did you change your posting behaviour when your followers increased?

With my blog, the success of my blog depends on interaction, so I would post content that I know would do well, but on my instagram I'd post what i want, there no point in changing who I am because people follow me because of who I am. So I haven't changed it but Im aware of it like I can recognise when a photos going to do well or not. I knew this particular picture would do well because people like people, she's beautiful etc, and then when I post his just cause I liked it, the colours are different, its not the most exciting picture and posting times have something to do with it as well. So the first thing people do when they wake up in the morning is check their instagram, so its better to post in the morning and in the evening. So if you're point is for as many people to see your post as possible then post in the mornings or evenings.

15. Did you develop a strategy to increase the amount of likes and visibility when posting content? Explain your strategy? What kind of strategy? Did you implement it?

A month into starting she said I was like cool I want to start making money off of this and I was watching what was happening overseas and I was like cool I want to make a living off of this. So I've always had a strategy in mind, I don't do things for the sake of doing things there has to be a reason for me and for a brand. Its regular posting and making sure its consistent in terms of tone and things like that and also as hard as it is, so if I start tweeting racist stuff or venting on my blog it's not what its there for, thats not its service to my followers, you cant tweet about whatever you want, brands may not want to use you and people get confused, you become a brand, you cant be schizophrenic, you have to have a certain tone. Building a set of skills, bloggers have to be photographers or you have to have a photographer boyfriend or best friend so you need to have those kind of skills you need to be able to put in the work if it means emailing 30 pr agencies, putting yourself out there, its vert time consuming, if you're make one blog post make sure its the best post you'll ever post.

So did you email pr agencies?

Well if i really like levis jeans I find out who their pr agency is and ask them to do something, I did that with cotton on, but it was a one sided relationship which is what a lot of brands to, they dont understand why they need to pay some influencers its like walking up to cosmopolitan and ask for the front cover for free, bloggers aren't cosmo but they could be. So them, I just mailed them and proposed a trade exchange and a giveaway promo and they said fine which was awesome but I was going them so much exposure and then one day I quoted them on it and they said they dont pay influencers and I asked why not, I'm literally giving you thousands of rands of pr.

16. Did you get recognition for your content, and if so which content?

17. Did you start posting for recognition and or opportunity/brand building developing of your personal brand? Elaborate?

18. In your opinion, which elements are important when posting for recognition/exposure?

Look and feel

19. When did you first get a business opportunity based on the content you were posting? What was the opportunity?

It might have been TopShop, I ended up getting paid when they approached me offering me free clothes, but instead I proposed a banner and social posts for money and they agreed, so it wasn't them coming outright and saying we'll pay you. They emailed me originally, and then they agreed to my proposal.

20. Did any other opportunities present themselves after your first one? What other kinds of opportunities were you getting after that?

I've recently done stuff with Mango and Forever New, and Volvo I actually helped organise the event, Volvo was rebranding and we were part of the campaign. I've done stuff with SA tourism now, I did one with Grootbos, SA tourism we did a thing called Stellenblog, did a thing with Cannon, Nespresso a few weekends ago, we were at the Saxon, we were in Hartebeest, we also did a Puma Insta walk. If I'm relevant I'll be in the campaign, but my agency specialises in influencer campaigns.

21. Tell me more about the opportunities? Can you talk me through the process? For example, how does it work? How did they approach you, through which channel? What happens after they do etc?

22. Do you follow a process to attract and secure new opportunities?

I think the process would be the strategy, your entire blog and online brand is like a big reference to you, it's like an online CV, so when people see I did that thing with Mango, she shot her own photos, the pics look good, the response was good and then for each thing I do a report and I'll send that to the brand, like the Mango campaign, I'd take screenshots to show them how many people they reached in total, what were the top comments, what findings I had, people like this and hate that which gives them something tangible for them to report back on, so that's probably a good thing but again it's just consistency and how you are as a personality online.

23. How do you guarantee or provide return on investment for the brands that invest in your personal brand?

Social Media broader comments

24. In your opinion, what constitutes a social media influencer?

Someone who has an opinion that people value, technically everyone's an influencer. And then monetising that power.

25. What do you think the power of an influencer is? And the responsibility?

26. What do you think about the kinds of opportunities influencers are getting today?

Opportunities for Gareth have been incredible, he has a lot of opportunities, he should diversify his platforms though and with Lebo, he is where he is now because of Instagram, no he's doing actual shoots and campaigns

27. Do you think these opportunities add value to the influencer and society? or What role do you think influencers have to play in society today?

Reach, but on a philosophical level people are sick of brands advertising to them, like who looks at billboards and when was the last time you bought anything because of a billboard, almost everyone has a PVR, we don't get to see many TV ads, you could have seen everything you saw on me on a model, but no one actually looks like a model, it's not real, the model can't tell you about the sweater, what it's nice to pair with, it adds a human element.

The influencer needs to keep their integrity when it comes to brands, if I've just been promoting Puma I can't pick up another sneaker brand the following week. You stand the risk of losing your authen-

ticity. But for example everyone has something from Top Shop, Mango and Forever New, but if I punt cannon one week and nikon the other week the reason to believe is lost, so theres a very thin line.

28. Anything you'd like to add?

Like anything, theres dangers around influencers, eventually influencers will die out, everyone is going to become an influencer, but whos doing blogging the right way or in a way that adds value? Anyone can start a blog but are they adding value or bettering lives?