# THESIS

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2023

BUDAPEST BUSINESS SCHOOL
FACULTY OF INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ECONOMICS
FULL TIME
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIZATION


THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS ON CUSTOMERS
IN HUNGARY

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Budapest, 2023

NYILATKOZAT

Alulírott _KISS ALEXANDRA_ ..................................... büntetőjogi felelősségem tudatában nyilatkozom, hogy a szakdolgozatomban foglalt tények és adatok a valóságnak megfelelnek, és az abban leírtak a saját, önálló munkám eredményei.

A szakdolgozatban felhasznált adatokat a szerzői jogvédelem figyelembevételével alkalmaztam.

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Tudomásul veszem, hogy a szakdolgozatomat az intézmény plágiumellenőrzésnek veti alá.

Budapest, 2023 év _május_ hónap _5_ nap

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hallgató aláírása

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US – United States

EMT – emergency medical technician

# INTRODUCTION

Greetings Reader! It is a pleasure for me that you decided to read my thesis work. My name is Alexandra Kiss, and I am a fourth-year full time student at Budapest Business School with International Business Development major. I wrote this thesis in the hope of passing my final exams, with a lot of passion and interest. So let me begin with the introduction of my topic.

Social media is with us every minute of our life now, but this was not the case all the time. Although for me it is considered relatively old, depending on what we consider old, but social media of any kind is with us since 1997 when a profile uploading service, called Six Degree, appeared. After this site there were different platforms going around that attracted and connected millions of users. Blogs were a main type that attracted many people and it even arouse the interest of Google and they bought a company dealing with blogs in 2003. For me it was jaw-dropping that even LinkedIn was originally created at the beginning of the 2000s and its main purpose is still the same, it is a social media site for job seekers and companies Human Resource managers to be able to connect with each other. Alongside of LinkedIn there were other not so job-related social media platforms created for instance Myspace, Tumblr, iWiW, Instagram, Reddit and Facebook were also created during the first decade of the 2000s together with many more. As a Hungarian I used iWiW as my first ever social media site. It was similar to Facebook, and surprisingly I just found out that it was a platform with Hungarian origins. Since the appearance of these platforms a few of them were terminated like iWiW or Myspace but others we use every day like Facebook or Instagram. (The evolution of social media, n.d.)

## Research objectives

As for my research objectives I tried to find something that is relating to my topic that I will be able answer and give a deeper view on social media's influence on our everyday life. Social media is a huge part of our everyday life and most of us do not even think about it, but people are basically attached to their favourite platforms. As a free-time activity most people just get their phone and scroll a bit while waiting for the bus or when they take a break during work, instead of going for a walk or chatting with colleagues they just on their phones. The companies were also smart enough to realize that potential so this could be why there are a growing number of advertisements on the platforms.

With my questionnaire I will try to gather as much information as possible on the relation of Hungarians and social media and influencers on social media. In the first section I will build up a stable ground for the analysis of my questionnaire, so at the beginning my goal is to clear

the basics about generally social media, and then I will try to focus on the five social media platforms that I will be working with throughout my questionnaire. During this overview on each platforms, I will try to look into a few rumours that has been going around regarding the ban of TikTok in multiple countries and I will see whether they are true or not and should we expect a change soon. I will find out which is the most used and most popular app together with their possible influence in the background. Then I will try to focus on the advertising strategy of the platforms and what people think about it. Another significant part of my questionnaire is in connection with social media influencers and their advertising strategy, I will analyse whether people are willing to trust in complete strangers on the internet just because X amount of people are following them on social media. At the end of my research, the responders will get a previously chosen ad and it will be a small case study type of thing maybe. I hope from these questions I would be able to see a pattern whether the influencer marketing is working on people or not.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

If we hear the term "social media" we all know what it means because the impact on our environment, including both humans and the Earth itself, has always been momentous. With the appearance of technological development in the IT sector, social media being the part of it, has seriously impacted people's lives in our fast-moving world. The existence and general usage of social media platforms are now an inseparable part of our everyday lives that we could not imagine the possibility of living without these platforms. It is an easy way to interact friends, family, even connect with the other part of Earth. There are an extreme amount of information going on every single minute, and with social media we can be a little more up-to-date. Businesses also realized that they need to open up to social media because it can be an effective way of communication and can reach more of their target group. It is a powerful tool, but we have to use it wisely because it can be dangerous. Once something goes out there it stays there forever.

As everything, social media has its own advantages and disadvantages people should be considering when posting and "living their life there". In the following part I would like to list and explain a few of them that I think affect most of us.

### Advantages in general

Based on an article published on DigitalScholar.in social media has many advantages and disadvantages from the very beginning of their introduction. As the platforms developed, their

role became more and more important in the society, so I collected the main pros and cons for it in the hope of bringing a greater understanding of social media. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Companies needed to realize in the last decade that TV and radio advertisements are starting to fade away as less and less people are watching or listening to them. This trend with the increased amount of social media use, companies started to apply social media platforms for promotion and advertising. For companies', creating a social media user account it is as easy as it is for an everyday person. That could be another possible reason for most of them to go ahead and create business platforms where they can share their information, product, promotions and so on. The most used platforms for companies are Facebook and Instagram. In promotion and advertising social media has helped a lot in the last few years. Entrepreneurs are able to distribute significant information on their goods and services with every country possible due to global connectivity that is going hand in hand with the use of social media. All businesses in the need of promotions and advertising their goods and services so the general public is aware of them. On social media, there is a possibility that companies pay for chosen platforms to put their ads into the algorithm of the platform so it would pop up for the users. Brand ambassadors of the future are influencer marketers. About the topic of influencers and their role on social media I will elaborate later on. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

One of the most advantageous part of social networking platforms is that with the use of them people can reach extreme amount of people. This feature allows companies to be able to promote themselves and it is an excellent way for boosting brand awareness. But this is not only beneficial for the companies, but it is also helpful to potential customers who are browsing through social media and then find a company's ad that she was looking for, so it creates a possibility for these groups to reach each other. For companies promotion is also essential to be able to target their audience within a specific range of customers and social media is a perfect place this purpose as well. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

When listing up benefits for social media, the ability to connect with people is its pure beauty and benefit. People can connect with anyone from anywhere you point in the globe they only need an account on any of the social media platforms available. The "follow" feature is an essential tool for people to save profiles because people can get up-to date information about those creators they decided to follow. In real life it could be challenging to find people who share the same interests as you but with social media it is easier than ever. There are certain groups (e.g., on Facebook) just for this purpose, people to find friends with the same interests as they are. Most people prefer those platforms which have direct messaging functions, so they

do not need a separate app just to be able to keep in touch with their family and friends anytime and anywhere. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

With the general use of internet and social media, these became the main source of information because they are immediately and directly spreading information about everything constantly. But back then when people do not have internet at all because people were not even aware of its existence and it was so rare that everyday people do not had access to it, they only had newspapers, TV and radio news shows daily at certain times of the day and that was it. That is why it is a huge change for humanity that people have instant updates and new available at arm's length on every social network platform and news portals. People can share and create content on social media without much censorship due to our basic right to freedom of speech. However, there are certain community guidelines on every social media platform that is closely monitored by the platforms so before posting it is advised to look into these guidelines to avoid any misunderstandings. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Social networking also can be beneficial to education because social media platforms allow students to learn from each other more easily. Social media also provides so many learning opportunities accessible for everyone all the time. YouTube can be the most popular social media platform which is used for educational purposes because there are countless videos of lecturers and professors who are teaching and explaining different topics and materials. People can follow these creators, and they can receive professional advice without having to pay them because the use of these platforms and the access to information is completely free. Fortunately, students not only use social media to entertain themselves and keep in touch with their friends but also to discuss educational issues like upcoming tests, assignments and deadlines. It can save the students extreme amount of stress before a test because they arrive prepared, and it is less likely that they get a mark they do not want. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Social media has also an essential role in building of communities. A significant amount of people uses social media with the intention of forming groups with others who have similar interests, religions, or beliefs. People gather here to discuss anything and everything about their common interest which allows them to learn a lot more about it. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Social media can also help to the governmental administration. It might be a trustworthy tool for the governments to keep in touch with the public, as well as a great too for communication and pleasure. Companies can constantly monitor what individuals are doing by using social media. The reason why governments decided to be active on social media is because the general public can be found on these platforms, so it becomes easier to get in touch with them and for the purpose of raising public awareness. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

People have an enormous number of possibilities when it comes to pass time and entertain themselves, yet they rather pass time with scrolling through social media platforms. People crave for social interactions, so they want to communicate with other people and start dialogues about diverse issues with people from different parts of the world. They can send and receive photographs and videos, and even post them in their profile to share with others. They can also enjoy viewing other people's images, comments, and videos. The high number of received likes and positive comments can cause these people to be thrilled and feel loved by totally unknown people, and they like it. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

## Disadvantages in general

After quite a few advantage we should not forget about the possible threats, dangers, or side effects of the use of social media.

It is widely known that technology has numerous benefits, but when people overuse anything let it be a video game or social media it certainly has negative effects of people's lives not just physically but also mentally which is often overseen. Being struck with a mental illness is draining and serious, but mostly people do not see it as an illness they think it is just stress and it will pass but it will not pass until the root cause is eliminated.

Unfortunately, most users already have experience with hacking which is a huge problem of each social media platforms. "*Hacking is a prohibited action, and it is the act of gaining access to another person's personal and limited information.*" (Digital Scholar, 2023). Hackers easiest and mostly attacked targets are the teenagers because they are unaware of the danger.

Generally what hackers do is they hack a platform or account specifically and gather personal information on certain people to use it as leverage, so the hacker is able to demand money if the person wants their data back. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Unfortunately, bullying is always has been a huge problem but before social media people always had the option to just simply move away to a different city and it is most of the time could solve the problem. Social media only made things worse because now people not only bullied in school or work, but on social media as well. The problem with social media is that it is everywhere and essential to have one otherwise that person would look like as an outsider. Anyone can delete their profile or register with a fake name bot those who wants to bully will do it just maybe find another victim. In the case of social media there is the constant fear of a bullied victim that the bullies will find them again and it could lead to paranoia as well.

This type of bullying is often referred to as cyberbullying. It is an extremely dangerous risk of using social media. Cyberbullying's most vulnerable targets are teenagers and children because

they are innocent and only see the good in people so for bullies, they are the easiest targets. Victims of cyberbullying could experience despair, different levels of anxiety, depression, and stress-like symptoms. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Social media is an extensively used tool for communication nowadays because the majority of people use it to keep in touch with each other. The ability to manage properly face-to-face interactions is definitely decreasing because people are so used to just chatting and writing and they have time to react and think through but in a face-to face interaction people cannot run away to just think through everything. This type of communication could be extremely challenging if someone did not learn how to interact properly in a face-to-face interaction. Additionally, exclusively using social media for interaction is putting those people in a risk of developing bipolar disorder or social phobia, which is extreme shyness, and other mental illnesses. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

On social media, not just true actual news travels quickly, but also fake ones. This is undeniably another significant disadvantage of the social media system. The problem with social media platforms is that it could be a benefit to be able to just register with an email address and give your name and date of birth it is also a great opportunity for creating fake accounts that no one monitors. The same thing applies to making posts. It is easy but that is why people need to be careful what to believe or not because it is easy to come up with a fake news and just distribute it in a few group chats and it is spreading like an illness. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Although technology offers numerous benefits, when used excessively, it negatively affects a person's life. Anything that is utilized for an extended period of time, whether it be technology or social media, can lead to mental strain, concern, an inability to think, and other issues.

Globally, mental illnesses caused by social media is serious drawback. People can become addicted to social media pretty easily especially if they are posting and there is a certain amount of people who is currently following them. These addicts are dependent on the likes and comments that is why they are constantly checking on it. Possibly teenagers are the most vulnerable and they have the most potential to become a social media addict. Since social media is existing people rather choose to scroll on social media platforms than to go out for a walk or living a life of a balanced person who has found the balance between social media and the world outside of social media. Not to mention that this addiction is similar to any type of addiction because it can also cause mental health problems like anxiety, sleep deprivation or even depression if they are not able to get their daily "dose". And this terrible trend got even worse after Covid-19 hit the world and there were serious quarantine situations for months.

People only could entertain themselves with social media. Since then, social media is even more in the centre of every single step of our lives. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Social media is also causing damage on people's overall health because when it is used excessively it can be connected to the formation of different physical and mental health problems. People's bad habit of using these platforms both day and night could cause people to become sedentary. There is a high chance that those who become inactive physically that inactivity cause obesity, hearth problems or even diabetes if they only eat junk food most of the time. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Social media is a convenient and cheap way of relaxation and passing time but for the people it could consume extreme amount of time of each day and those are adding up. At the end of the week or month if someone looks back, they just realize that how many of tasks were missed during that time. It is a threat for especially the younger generations, most likely students. Altogether it is a waste of time for them to just be on social media all the time because they get nothing for scrolling through their feed and posting videos and photos and instead, they could be with friends, family, or just to be outside. It is also a concern when it comes to students being on social media all the time that they have no intentions to work hard for their future to be better because they are so hung upon what other people do and think. They may ignore the lessons in school, not learning for tests so there is a possibility of them not performing well, and they have no intention to make it to collage. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Sleep problems are not rare among those who are excessively scrolling on social media not just during the day but also at night as well. The human body is not taking well when people are scrolling on social media at night because it thinks that it is not time to sleep and in the long run it can cause sleep deprivation and other sleep disorders. That is the main reason why most students and teenagers are tired all the time because they are not getting enough sleep and their brain is always overstimulated with the tons of information in school and in social media. Sleep related issues are most likely to develop around this age. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Another serious issue people could develop if they are spending too much time on social media is depression, anxiety and loneliness as mental health issues but it also affects our physical health in the form of headaches. As social media is tending more towards being the main form of communication and there is a noticeable amount of people who are becoming addicted to social media. There is a potential that they develop depressions because they only care about other people's business instead of their own and in the process, they lose their own interests and family and friends. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

Social networks can cause people to neglect their aims and objectives in life and the usage is constantly growing. These platforms have a constantly growing number of users, but they are unaware of the fact that their focus is turning towards social media so their goals and ambitions for a future career and home take a back seat instead of thriving. It is an extreme amount of distraction but not just for students, it is affecting more and more adults. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

## Overall

The world's movement is greatly accelerated due to the existence of social media, but we cannot oversee the fact that it that quite a few advantages and disadvantages as well. Most people probably familiar with the saying "Knowledge is power" and it is only partly valid for this aspect because even if people have access to extreme amounts of information if they are not able to utilize it properly it does not even matter anything. As long as people have a need for information it is always beneficial for anybody let it be companies or individuals to use social media as a source of constant information. (Digital Scholar, 2023)

# MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

There are so many different social media platforms that it is hard to even guess the number of them. In my research I only used altogether five of them which were in my opinion quite known and used here in Hungary. Those ones are Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube. I know there are many more like WhatsApp, Pinterest, Snapchat and so on. But I think these are less likely to be as popular as the ones I chose. Although I was hesitant about Snapchat because it was pretty popular a few years back, I also used it for like 2-3 years, but I just got bored of it. Not to mention that in my environment I do not know anybody who is still using actively this platform, so I ended up not including it in my survey. However, these platforms are popular and well known, I would like to introduce them just in case if anyone is not familiar with any of them. Just for aesthetic reasons I introduced them in grammatical order.

## Facebook

On Facebook you can interact and exchange photos, videos and messages with loved ones online using Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg is the father of Facebook because the founded it in 2004, during his school year on Harvard University. Originally Facebook was only created for college students to be able to interact with each other. By 2006, Facebook grew out of its smaller target group and since then the age limit became 13 and if they have a valid email address can have an account. Facebook is considered as the largest platform in user number, with over 1 billion users. A question could arise asking why Facebook when we have so many

other tools for online communication. The feature that sets it apart from other platforms is that Facebook has an amazing capability to connect with people they care about. Having a Facebook account is now just as necessary as the physical letters were at their time and a Facebook account could be a necessary component of being online. It is also starting to spread that if someone is buying something online, it is most likely that the website will ask to create and account, but there is the possibility for them to just log in with Facebook and that would be the account used for that exact website. The same method applies to Gmal account as well. (Facebook, n.d.)

## Instagram

Instagram is originated from San Francisco where Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger founded the platform. Creating this was with the intention to build a platform which is solely focusing on sharing photos. The name of Instagram was created with merging of the two words "instant camera" and "telegram." In 2010, the iOS app was made available through the iTunes App Store, and in 2012, the Android app followed the pattern. Just two years after inception, the network had a meteoric rise in popularity, with the firm boasting more than 40 million active users. Facebook took notice of this and in the summer of 2012 officially acquired Instagram for $1 billion. (Holak & McLaughlin, 2017)

Instagram is a social media platform with the photo editing and sharing features. With the help of a mobile app, the users can edit and upload pictures and even shorter or longer videos. In addition to adding a caption to each post, users may utilize geotags and hashtags to index their content and make it searchable by other app users. When tagged with hashtags or geotags, a user's posts are visible to the public and show up on their followers' Instagram feeds. Users can also choose to make their profiles private in order to be able to select who can see their posts. With the tool of Instagram Direct, users can send private messages, as well as like, comment on, and put other people's posts in their favourites. With a single click people can post photos to one or more other social networking platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. Instagram is a platform that is suitable for both individuals and companies. Companies have the option to create a free business account on the photo-sharing app to advertise their name and goods. More than 1 million advertisers exploit Instagram globally for the purpose of communicating their narratives and improve company outcomes. (Holak & McLaughlin, 2017)

## TikTok

TikTok is a software mainly for Android and iOS in the form of an app, with the purpose of sharing short videos. This platform is somewhat similar to YouTube, with the difference of the length of videos that can be posted but within the app, people are able to use filters, stickers, voiceovers, sound effects, and background music so it is easy to edit the videos. At the moment, the app is used every day by more than 700 million individuals all over the world. Originally, Musical.ly, with Chinese ownership, was the name of the app before it was changed to TikTok. It was a short-form video program that was mostly used for lip-syncing videos at the time and became very successful. The name was changed to TikTok in 2018, and since then, its popularity and user base have increased dramatically. Based on my experience here in Hungary TikTok became popular during the pandemic quarantine when everyone was at home, and they needed some distraction and connection with the world. At the beginning of the appearance of this app, I did not know what it is good for and how can it be entertaining. I started to use it later on, around 2022 and I unintentionally became an everyday user. Other than lip-syncing and dancing videos, the creators are getting more inventive, producing witty sketches and educational movies. The dancing and fun videos are still the most popular ones but there is also a ton of educational content available on subjects like investment and health. (Geyser, 2022)

For those who use TikTok and follow creators from the US it might not be a new information that countries (including US, Canada, and Europe also) are trying to ban TikTok in the first step from their government devices. The US started this wave on 27th of February, then it was followed by Britain, Canada, France, New Zealand and even by the executive arm of European Union, and lastly Australia on 4th of April. The reason governments are so concerned about TikTok being available on government devices is that TikTok has Chinese ownership. Legislators outside of China assume that TikTok may share personal information, like location, of its users with the Chinese government. The government already has some interesting laws like they can demand data from Chinese companies and citizens wrapped in a reasoning that they need those information "for intelligence-gathering operations". (Maheswari & Holpuch, 2023)

TikTok's owners were offered the option to sell the company's ownership to another country otherwise they could potentially face with a ban. In response "*on March 23, a spokeswoman for China's commerce ministry said China would "firmly oppose" the sale of the app.*" (Maheswari & Holpuch, 2023). This can lead to a potential ban in the US first. But can a government legally do that? The answer is no or rather not yet. Legally it would ban free speech or expression but without any serious reason. That is against the basis of democratic governments so right now none of modern democratic governments are legally allowed to

eliminate TikTok from their countries. As soon as for example the US has enough information and can present strong enough information and evidence against the Chinese owners of TikTok they will be able to ban TikTok. Although TikTok states and is trying to convince others that they are as independent as any other company but with not much success. Right now, TikTok's future presence is a question but until then we can still enjoy its content. (Maheswari & Holpuch, 2023)

## Twitter

Probably in Hungary Twitter is the least popular comparing to the other 4 mentioned in my survey. Those who use Twitter, a free social networking platform where people can publish brief summary of their emotions, problems, successes or anything, known as tweets. These tweets may include text, audio, video, pictures, or links. Users must have a smartphone and internet available be able to use the Twitter app or website, Twitter.com. It is a microblogging service that enables registered users to post, share, like, and reply to tweets with brief messages. Microblogging is a blend of blogging and instant messaging. Users who are not registered can just view tweets but for the registration people only need a valid e-mail address. Twitter is generally used following politicians, businessmen, and celebrities in addition to receiving the most recent news and brand advertising. Additionally, they use it to stay up to date on news and events. For example, the news of US Airways Flight 549's water landing in the Hudson River in New York City initially surfaced on Twitter. With Twitter the information was quickly disseminated. Because tweets can be sent in real time to followers, a new user might mistake them for instant messages (IM). Tweets, however, are also published on the Twitter website, unlike IMs, which vanish after the user leaves the application. They are public, permanent, and searchable. Additionally, tweets can be protected so that only followers can read them. (Hetler, 2023)

## YouTube

For most of the social media platforms it is obvious that they are meant to be social media platforms. But when I collected the platforms to use in my research, I totally missed YouTube because I did not think of it as a social media platform. Probably this is why people would assume it is not considered as a social media platform. "*In its most basic form, a social media platform can be defined as an online service that allows users to share information or interests with other users in an interactive manner.*" (Awa-Abuon, 2021). There has been debate on whether YouTube should be categorized as a social media site for some time. Because it lacks immediate messaging features that other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter or

TikTok have. Because of this, people can argue that YouTube does not fit the definition of a social media network. However, it may also be claimed that YouTube meets the criteria for social media because it offers some user interaction through its community postings, comments, likes, and shares. In the following points we will see the broad division of social media platforms to better grasp whether YouTube is social media. (Awa-Abuon, 2021)

Social media platforms can be divided into five main groups based on Awa-Abuon J.'s writing. (2021)

- "*Social networking sites, such as LinkedIn.*
- *Image sharing & messaging sites, such as Facebook and Instagram.*
- *Video-sharing sites like TikTok.*
- *Social blogging, such as Twitter.*
- *Social community and discussion sites, for example, Quora and Reddit.*"

But does YouTube count as social media? YouTube has a variety of features that make it deserving of being regarded as a social media platform. (Awa-Abuon, 2021)

Subscriptions to YouTube channels provide a platform for communication between creators and viewers. This resembles how following operates on Facebook and Twitter in several ways. A YouTube channel subscription indicates that you are interested in the creator's updates and wish to keep up with their content. Likes and comments are other ways that creators and their fans can communicate because on YouTube, some individuals use the comment section as a messaging system. (Awa-Abuon, 2021)

YouTube was mostly utilized in its early years for watching videos. However, this is no longer the case because the site now offers a wide variety of information. Creators with more than 1,000 subscribers can make conventional social media posts on YouTube, such as photographs, text, GIFs, playlists, and polls, using the Community Post function. The adoption of this function alone demonstrates that the website considers itself a social media platform. (Awa-Abuon, 2021)

YouTube is sometimes lumped in with online video providers like Netflix or Amazon. YouTube, however, differs from conventional video streaming services since its material is created by the users themselves. The site allows registered users to upload any videos. Anyone can watch them for free and it does not even matter if they are registered or not. Another justification for considering YouTube to be a social media platform is its capability to exchange information, in the form of videos, with a large audience. (Awa-Abuon, 2021)

The income model of YouTube is another factor in its classification as a social media site. Users receive a free platform to exchange and access material, and the platform makes money by selling advertisements. (Awa-Abuon, 2021)

## SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

What is the first sentence when people hear this phrase "Social media influencer"? Based on my experience a lot of people in Hungary think that influencers just making money making with a minimal effort and they chose the easier path and they started to call it their "job".

As Collins dictionary says: "*An influencer is someone who is able to persuade a lot of other people, for example their followers on social media, to do, buy, or use the same things that they do. They are often paid or given free products in exchange for doing this.*" (Influencer, n.d.)

People with loyal and active social media followings are considered social media influencers on different platforms. They have readers/viewers who are interested in the same subjects as they are and post about their particular interests and issues. Mostly influencers have a group of followers who are ready to hear what they have to say, which gives them the power to influence others. Because they potentially invested a lot of time and effort in growing their fan base and developing their personal brands, their followers trust them. Most of the cases they are loyal to their followers and genuine people therefore, it makes sense that followers of influencers have high opinions of them. (What do consumers think of social influencers?, n.d.)

Unfortunately, not all the influencers are good at their job and there were and still are influencers who does not care about any of their followers, and they are a 100 percent money oriented. Hopefully people are able to realize this behaviour in time before they get scammed or lied to about serious issues.

The general public has lost faith in the average long-used advertising types like TV ads or billboards that is why people use ad blockers of some form. Ad blockers can appear in many forms but most of the time they are separate apps or extensions for browsers.

The original reason of inventing ad-blocker technology was to protect its users from serious viruses that are going around and lower the possibility of theft of personal information through those viruses. Nowadays, people mostly use ad-blockers to make their experiences better, so it is used rather as a convenience service. "*Blockers try to examine the original domain of an ad, determine whether or not it is advertising, and (if the AI perceives it to be an ad) prevents the graphic from loading.*" (Edwards, 2022)

YouTube even made an option for its users to be able to block advertisements with YT Premium. It is a subscription that people can pay every month, it is around 2000 HUF, and with

that function they will never see any advertisements in the future. People use it because no one wants to be sold to and repeatedly feel forced to buy something like we feel in the case of TV channels. Customers are frequently more disturbed by it than they are entertained, and it is nearly regarded as a violation of their privacy. But if no one is interested in advertisements then how do businesses advertise their goods without offending potential customers? That is what they use social influencers for. Social influencers and their followers share a unique bond. They are a reliable source of data in a more entertaining and informal way. Influencers' followers are more likely to investigate and purchase things when those are promoted by them. This is perhaps the reason why so many companies are working with social media influencers to promote their brands rather than relying on conventional advertising. But social influencers are only useful if they share the same values as the company. Finding the appropriate influencers to promote their brand is so crucial. (What do consumers think of social influencers?, n.d.)

The Internet has changed the role that consumers play in the purchasing process. They are able to identify companies and items that appeal to them. They also have the ability to silence brands and products that don't interest them. Up until the rising of the Internet, consumers relied on businesses to inform them about products. This is not the situation today. Consumers can now participate in the purchasing process considerably more actively thanks to this shift in power. It gives them the driving seat while putting corporations in the backseat. That means people became more aware of their place and importance and they are able to rise or completely destroy a brand. Customers only willing to pay attention to topics that interest them, thus it is now the responsibility of the company to be able to pique their interest. Influencers can help companies establish a strong social media presence if they do not already have one. (What do consumers think of social influencers?, n.d.)

Nowadays, trust is the deciding factor in sales. In general, consumers do not trust large corporations because people believe that businesses are just concerned with their bottom line at the end of a period. They think that businesses only perceive them as numbers and not as actual individuals. With a social influencer, though, that is not the case. Customers believe in them. But why can it be? The answer is easy. They are actual people with real life problems, tips, and tricks they are not salespeople attempting to promote and shove down their goods on customers' throat. Although social influencers technically have a stake in increasing sales for a brand, people respect their advice more than a salesperson's advice. Customers most likely believe what social influencers have to say and the things they are endorsing if they feel like they know them personally. Then, businesses can employ social media influencers to help promote their goods to their following. In order to win over customers and develop brand

legitimacy, they can also make use of influencers to publish reviews and blog articles about their goods. Many companies employ this tactic, sending their goods to influencers who then give candid product reviews. (What do consumers think of social influencers?, n.d.)

## METHODOLOGY

Due to the fact that social media is a broad topic and easy to talk about there are a lot of questionnaires, articles, books, blogs, videos and many more on the internet. Unfortunately, there are too many of these information already and it is hard to find that little piece of information that I would need for my work. That is why I decided to get my own primary quantitative data. I created my own questionnaire with the help of Google Forms. I chose Google Forms as a tool because I have used it for several school assignments or group projects already. It worked well as it is not complicated to create a questionnaire and for those who answers, it is obvious how to use and answer the question given to them. I even got to use this platform as an exam sheet in one of my classes. We just sat in a room with our phones, tablets or laptops and with internet connection and the link provided by the professor we were able to write the exam. Not many professors use it, they rather prefer either paper based tests or tests created on CooSpace because it is the safest and easiest option for professors.

My goal was to have around 100 answers, and I am glad that I was able to find enough people within a few days. With that much information I was be able to see a few patterns. Although it is obvious that it is not enough to be able to draw any serious conclusions because this sample is not representative comparing to the population. I made my questionnaire in Hungarian because my target group is not necessarily speaking English, so it seemed more logical for me to create it in my native language. This way it was easier to avoid any misunderstandings.

Among this research and analysis of findings the other half of this paper is about the basics of social media and a few platforms that were also included in the research. Necessarily for this part I needed to use different sources to be able to build up every section as it is. For this part I mainly used secondary data like articles, blogs, even dictionaries when I was not sure what did a word mean exactly.

## DATA ANALYSIS

My questionnaire consists of 13 questions that everyone had to answer and based on one of the answers it depended on if they would get 2 or 4 more questions to answer. I had two main limitations for those who wanted to fill out my questionnaire. They had to be above the age of 16. I chose 16 because from this age teenagers are able to work and earn their own pocket

money and they are not exclusively dependent on their parents' money, but they do not earn that much, so they need to think about what they spend it on. The other limitation I set, is that they need to use at least one social media platform daily. It is simply because if they do not use any social media platforms then their information would be irrelevant in a questionnaire that is focusing on frequent social media users and their experiences and preferences.

All together I managed to collect 103 answers which is still not considered a representative sample compared to the 7.49 millions of Hungarian people (shown in Figure 1 below) that are considered as my population. (Medve, 2022)
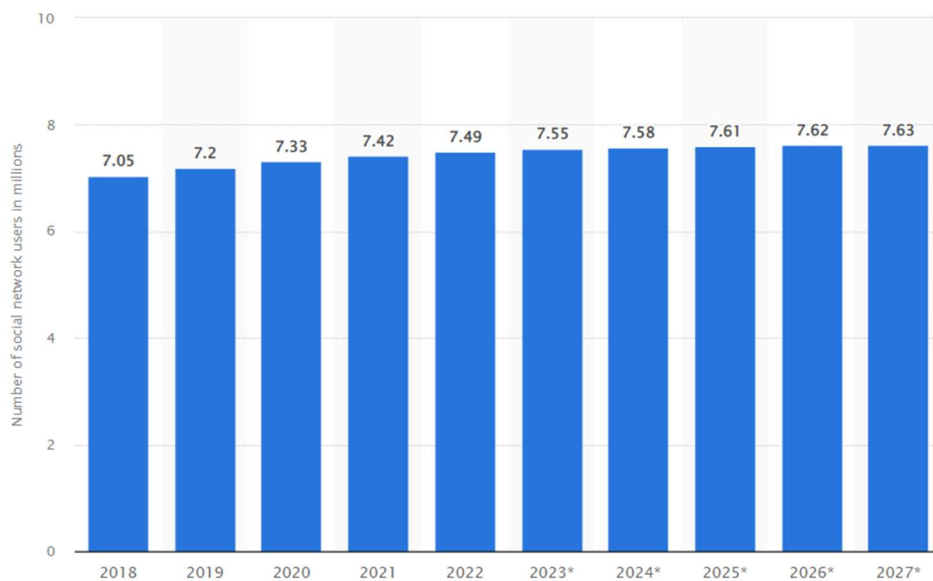


*Figure 1 Number of social media network users in Hungary from 2018 to 2027 in millions (Source: Medve, 2022)*

As Figure 1 shows, the number of social media users grow each year and based on this tendency it is expected to continue its growth and by 2027 it can possibly reach 7.63 million people in Hungary who uses social media. Considering that the total population is decreasing year by year, it seems an even bigger change than we can think of. (Medve, 2022)

## Demography of respondents

The questions were mainly focused on the social media usage, and their point of view on social media influencers but the questionnaire started with some basic demographic type of questions like age, gender, and place of living.
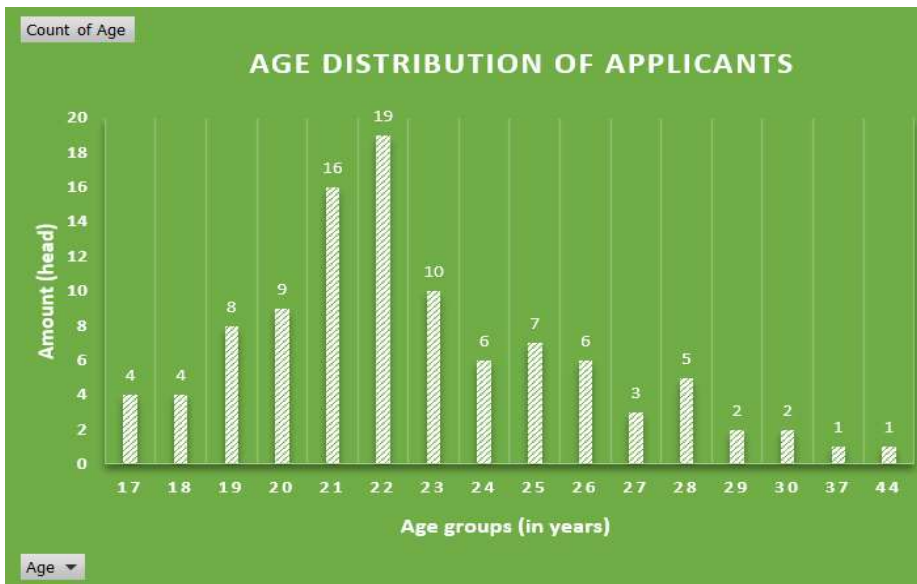
*Figure 2 Age distribution of applicants (Source: self-edited)*

Most of my applicants were between the ages of 19 and 26 but I had below and above of this range as Figure 2 illustrates above. Due to my current age, which is 24, it was more likely that I would be able to find applicants around my age. For my research this outcome was somewhat predictable because this generation, called Gen Z, is the most active on social media platforms and this questionnaire was spread through these platforms mainly.

A question could rise in some people on what it means to be the part of Generation Z. Researchers set up a kind of generational table and gave each one different names (see in Figure 3 below) based on one of their traits or peculiarities like Boomers, or Baby Boomers. They were born right after the World War 2 and this generation had many children because during the war there were an extreme decrease in population all over the world so to be able to compensate it people started to rebuild or reproduce the population to be thriving again. (Dimock, 2019)
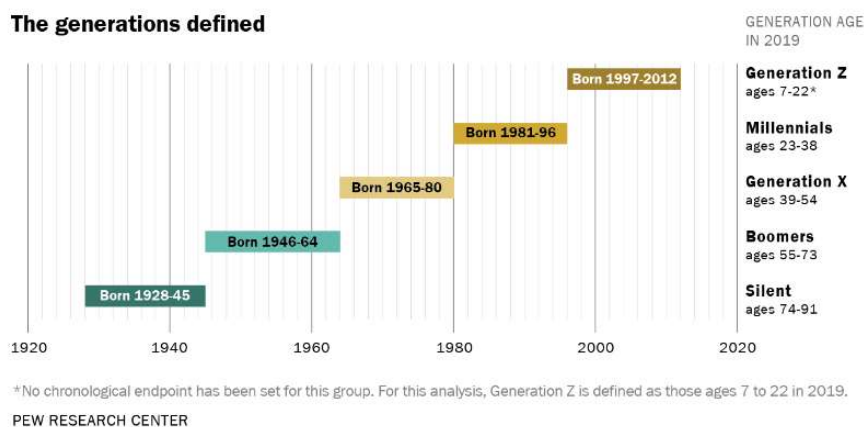


*Figure 3 The generations defined Source: (Dimock, 2019)*

Gen Z being the first generation ever that was born during a specific time when internet and social media both were already existing so it is not surprising that this generation is highly dependent on social media and could not imagine the life without it. Because of the extreme dependence on social media most of the social interactions of this generation is happening through social media. Not to mention the generation that is following Gen Z, called Gen Alpha, they are heavily impacted social media since their birth. (How much time does Gen Z spend on social media?, n.d.)

Figure 4 below shows the gender distribution that came out almost equal. My goal was to find the same number of males and females for my questionnaire because they think differently, and I wanted to see both sides equally. So, I ended up consciously collecting people at the end so this result would come out, but it was not easy at all. In my circle of acquaintances most of them are females because I am female as well so I needed to be creative and spread this questionnaire in groups where I knew there would be males as well so they would be able to fill it out for me.
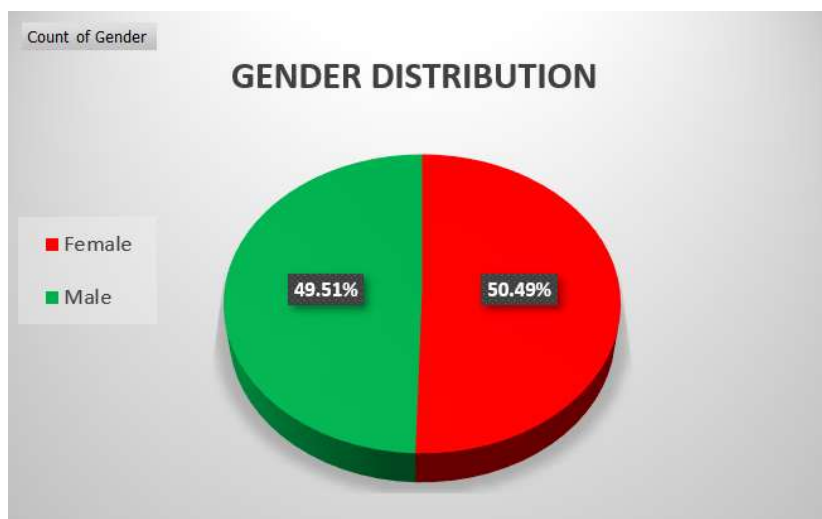


*Figure 4 Gender distribution (Source: self-edited)*

The last demographic related question was about their place of living, where I got the result that most of my responders are living in Budapest, and the other significant group lives in a town. There was also 3% of the sample, as Figure 5 shows, who wrote in that they are Hungarians, but they live abroad. Unfortunately, they did not specify the country, yet it was not asked so I cannot blame them. To be honest I did not think if I would have anyone from abroad that is why I did not include this option in my questionnaire. Another interesting answer was that 1 person is living on a farm and was even answering my questions, so it got that far. I was surprised when I went through the answers, but I am happy that I also could reach that person.
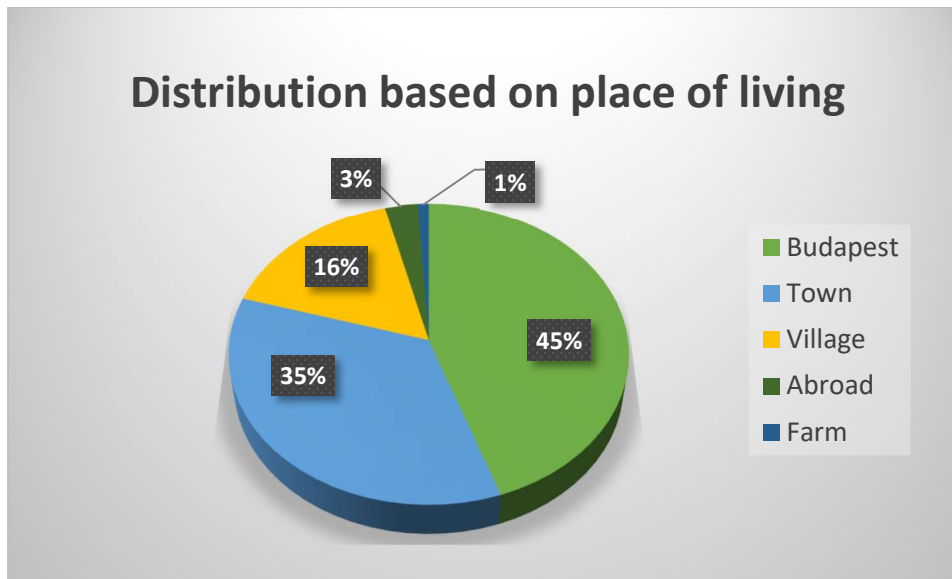
*Figure 5 Distribution based on place of living (Source: self-edited)*

## Social media usage and advertising

After the demographic data the following questions were about the frequency of using social media sites, first in general (Figure 6), then I asked them to specify a bit more which platform they use more frequently than others (Figure 7 below).

From Figure 6 it is obvious that the majority of applicants use social media between 1 and 3 hours daily which is interesting because I had an assumption that people generally use social media more, and most of the answers would be in the between 3 and 6 hours especially among teenagers and young adults. What was even more interesting to find out that there are still more people who uses social media less than 1 hour a day that those who uses it more than 6 hours a day. Honestly, if I think about myself and my surroundings a lot of people uses their phones all the time, checking messages, videos, scrolling through platforms. It also may be a possibility for this overall result that there are people who do not count certain platforms as social media, or they actually use it more than they would think. Either way, this is the outcome I got so that is what I am working with.
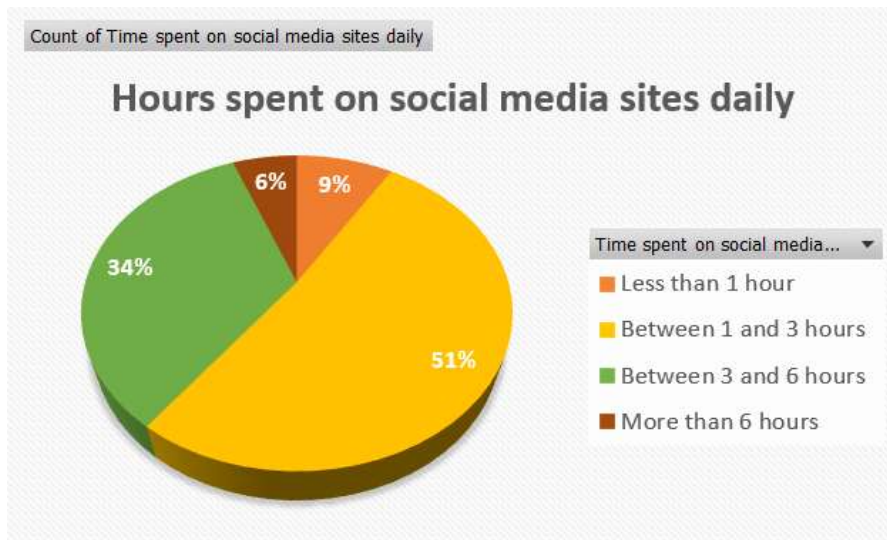
*Figure 6 Hours spent on social media sites daily (Source: self-edited)*

As for Figure 7, it shows the frequency of social media usage by platforms. It means that everyone needed to rate each platform based on how much they use them. They had the option to rank each one on a 0 to 5 scale where 0 means they do not use it at all, 1 is for the least used one, and 5 is for the most used platform. The meanings of the number were indicated in the questionnaire but for the figure I found it difficult to include it because that would have made the chart even more crowded, so I only explained it here.

This question gave back the result that I was expecting. The platform most of the people do not even use is Twitter. Here in Hungary, it is not that popular as the other ones observed. I was sure it is not as popular here as it is in the US or western part of the European Union, but I did not think that the difference would be this significant. 74 people out of 103 asked stated they do not even use it at all which is 71,8% of my sample. We can clearly see in the bar chart that it is far the highest number in the whole chart.

The second one that not many people use in Hungary is TikTok and it is not new for me. So many people do not use it because it is too hyped up and overused by some of us that the others do not need to have an account, they get tons of videos either way and they do not feel the urge to be on it all the time. It can be pretty addictive just scrolling through it could take like 30 minutes even if you just wanted to check something, so people need to be careful when using it and paying attention to taking breaks. Although it is still used and those who use it love scrolling and watching fun short videos and this is proven with numbers because altogether 42,7% of respondents use TikTok the most or it is the second used app for them.

It is not surprising that Facebook came out as the most popular social media platform, but I think it is mostly because especially here in Hungary we do not have anything that would be

used for a really long time. It basically became a general platform to use for chatting and keeping in contact with other people it is even used in schools as the main communication platform between students and their form teacher not to mention it is the main channel between students. It is understandable because it is easy to use and basically everyone has an account already, on the other hand, according to current social expectations, people can be considered strange and outsider if they do not have a Facebook profile. This mainly appears in the form that social networking sites have now become the main channel for maintaining communication.

After Facebook, YouTube came out as the second most popular one with 34 votes. YouTube got so close I thought it would come first but this way it makes more sense. YouTube has its traditional users, it is used by almost all of the responders, except for 1 person. The frequency varies but more than 62% of my respondents use it frequently. YouTube has a lot of potential and extreme amount of content can be found on this platform like movies, trailers, music videos, gaming content, podcasts, funny videos, educational content and so many more. So, no questions asked why I think it is one of the most famous one among social media platforms not just in Hungary.

My last one to analyse is Instagram. This platform has given me intention that it would end up with mixed results because what you can do with Instagram you already have it in Facebook so there is nothing new. On the other hand, I found it easier and for me logical in a way to just create a random account that no one knows so people can hide or show a different side that they show on Facebook. Obviously on Facebook you have your close and not so close family as a friend together with co-workers, ex classmates or ex teachers. So, with of Facebook being in the front I think some people use Instagram as a venting platform where they can be whoever they want and just post anything with a close group of friends which could be the reason why people are using it oftentimes.
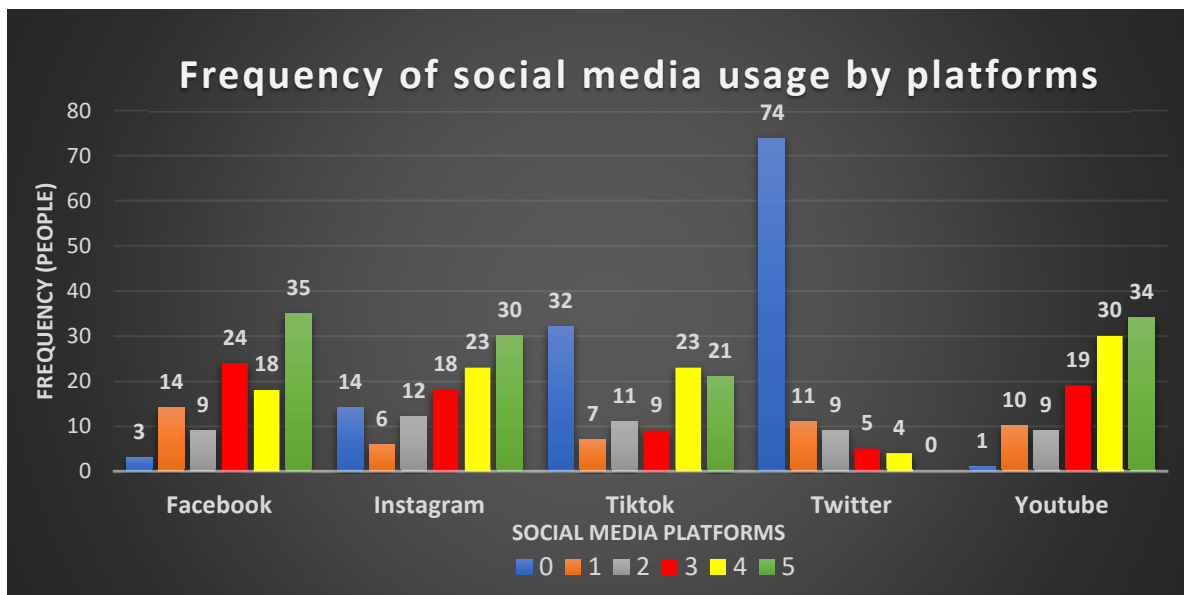
*Figure 7 Frequency of social media usage by platforms (Source: self-edited)*

The following section in my questionnaire was about advertisements and influencers. I wanted to see how people approach advertisements on certain social media platforms and influencers trying to sell them something. Do they believe them or just completely ignore those who is promoted by companies? The next few figures are about these topics.

The first one in this section was about advertisements. I asked people which platform has the highest number of advertisements to get a general picture about the platforms' advertisability. It is represented in Figure 8 below that the platform which has the most advertisements on is YouTube with 45 people out of the total of 103 and it means 43,69%. It is not surprising because this platform can be shaped well, and they put advertisements everywhere possible. Most of the videos, especially the longer ones, have advertisements that interrupt the videos. The most typical time for ads to appear is right before the video can start, but they often occur during the video. YouTube has extreme amount of content, and it does not matter if you click on a music clip or a gaming video the ads are there. There was 1 person who could not decide and wrote in that all of the platforms have the most ads but I did not know how to insert this answer into the numbers of the platforms without messing with the whole picture so I thought I would just include this one person with the individual opinion. As for the other platforms, in my opinion they at least try to build those advertisements into an environment that is not that pushing as YouTube.

It may have caught your attention that no one marked Twitter as the site with the most advertising. As I was scrolling through my feed, I realized that Twitter does not have advertisements at all, at least I did not find any. We see ads everywhere and all the time and I

did not even know that there is a platform that is not full of advertisements, and that in today's day and age is not ordinary.

Altogether Facebook, Instagram and TikTok achieved 55,34% of respondents to choose one of those that has the most ads. Out of these three Facebook got the most and I think it is because it is obvious when you see an advertisement there but not so obvious on Instagram. As for TikTok, it has ads, quite a few if you scroll for a longer time at once. Usually for me an ad shows up right after I open the app, and after that the next ad shows up after like five to eight videos so I have time to enjoy those uninterrupted. For me the ad that shows up is either a Wolt ad or some beauty thing, and I do not care about any of that but at least it is consistent.

Instagram does not have customized ads or at least not that obvious, I feel the same as in the case of TikTok that it has quite a few ads when I am scrolling through my feed, but they are not disturbing they are just there. As I observed I think they are not super customized but there is a wider variety of ads I usually get and sometimes I even click on them when I see something interesting.

The thing about Facebook is that it feels somewhat sketchy, and I just realized it recently. Somehow it collects data from IP addresses or from our Wi-Fi. I do not know how it is possible, but it is. For example, in our household, there are altogether four people, mother, father, younger sibling and me. Two of us have Facebook accounts, me, and mother. Let's state that father is looking for a new fishing rod alongside other fishing gear to update his stash for this year's season. He is using Google as everyone else in this household. After a few days I notice that on Facebook I get a few ads from fishing stores to get their special rods or fishing reel etc. At first, I do think much of it, and I do not know that father is looking websites related to fishing. Another couple of days later my Facebook feed is just filled with these advertisements and I ask father about it, and he confirms that he is looking for fishing gear, and not just I get those ads mother gets them also. She has never opened any site related to fishing, it is totally out of her league and yet it is appearing on her Facebook page as well. I found it weird, and we even changed browser, but we are still getting those ads that is why I think Google has a role in this.
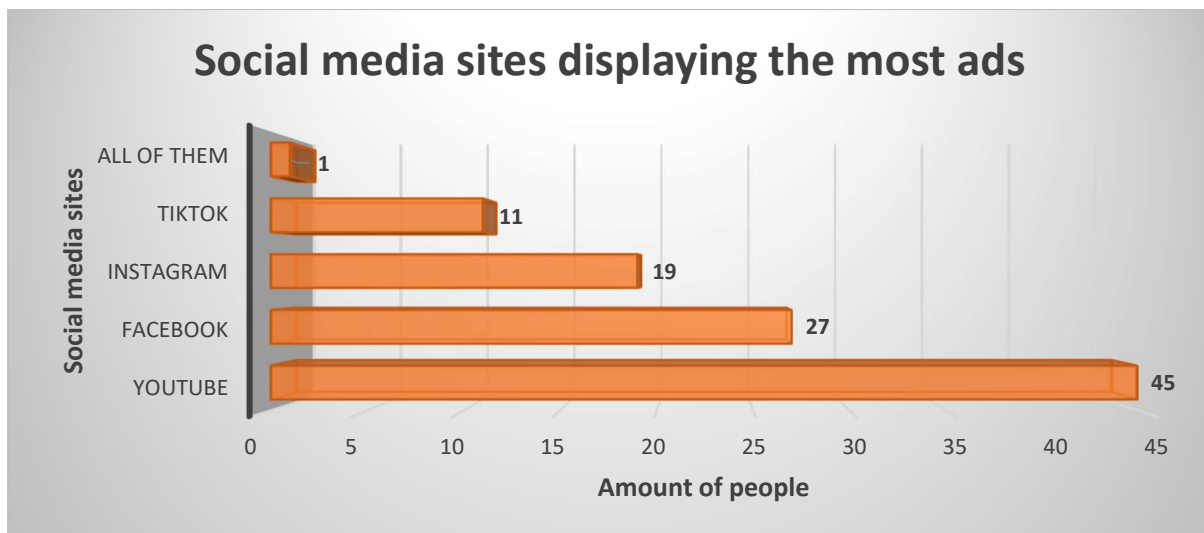
*Figure 8 Social media sites displaying the most ads (Source: self-edited)*

In Figure 9 the topic was similar as in Figure 8 with the difference that I asked on which platform do they find the most annoying ads as opposed to the most ads found on platforms. And for this question I also got YouTube as the highest ranked one but this time it is a significantly higher number than it was previously. Previously YouTube got on the first place with 43,69% but for this question it got 69,90% which is quite a difference. To be honest, as a frequent YouTube user I also get frustrated when I am listening to music while doing something else and I get an advertisement in the middle of the best part obviously and it can totally kill the vibe. YouTube has by far the most annoying method for advertising possible. Ads here not just pop up and you can simply scroll away you are forced to wait and watch at least some of the ad if not the full. YouTube has this feature that you can skip some ads after like 5 seconds, and this is also annoying but those ads which are about 25-30ish seconds long you cannot even skip you have to wait until it is over. And it is not rare that before starting a video you get two ads right after each other not to mention those that interrupts the whole video. I am grateful that I am not the only one dealing with this issue every time I am trying to watch something on YouTube. For this question I also got an answer stating that all the platforms have the most annoying ads so as in the previous case I included it separately and did not count into the other numbers I got.

As I stated previously TikTok, Instagram and Facebook all have quite a few advertisement on but as the figure shows below, they are not as disturbing as YouTube. They all have around the same numbers which means that they are annoying but, on those platforms, it is way more built in the flow of the feed and does not interfere with the casual experience.
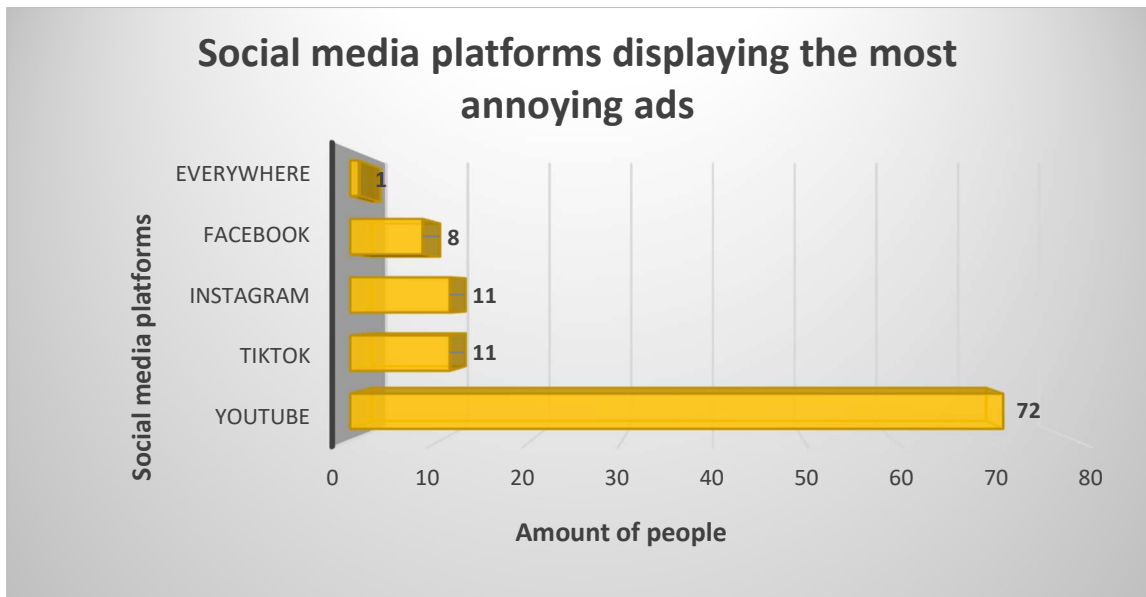
*Figure 9 Social media platforms displaying the most annoying ads (Source: self-edited)*

## Influencer following habits

The following section includes the analysis of two questions about people's habit of following influencers. Starting with Figure 10 that depicts the distribution of a simple Yes or No question about influencers if they follow any or not. For my surprise 59% of respondents follow influencers. Although from this number I cannot state if this 59% is actually influenced to buy anything, this only means that there are quite a few people who likes and follows influencers for a reason. This could be caused by many reasons but most likely the case is that those influencers are popular for some reason and brands started to pay influencers to promote their products and from a guy who is playing video games became a real influencer who gets video games or gaming equipment for promotion.
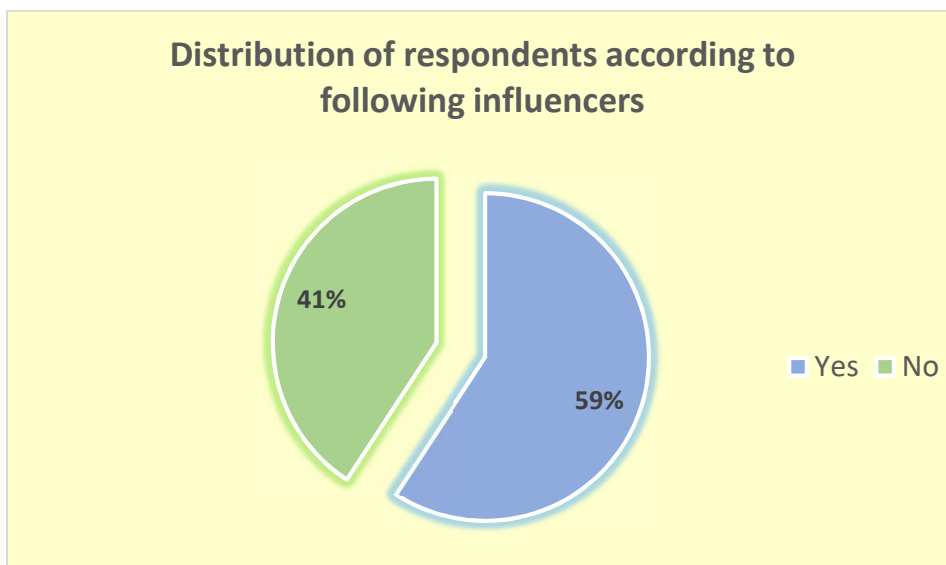


*Figure 10 Distribution of respondents according to following influencers (Source: self-edited)*

The next question seems to be a bit more exciting because here in Figure 11 I was looking for the nationality of influencers people follow. I was not expecting that the results would be this close to each other. I gave people three option to choose from regarding this question whether they follow "foreign", "Hungarian" or "none of them". I included the "none of them" option because of the previous question, and I thought it would be obvious for everyone that if they chose that they do not follow influencers previously here they would choose the "none of them" option. After a few quick division I soon had to realize that it is not the case because when I counted those who wrote "No" and those who wrote "None of them" they are not equal. 41% of 103 is 42 but only 35 people wrote "None of them" so that is interesting. As for the distribution of those who follow either Hungarian or foreign influencers it is clear that more people follow foreign influencers. Only 30% of respondents follow Hungarian creators and 35,92% follow foreign influencers. The reason behind it could be anything probably a preference but it can be a simple learning opportunity because they can learn languages with watching videos of native speakers of the target language. For me English is the target language and among those who I follow around 90% of them are making videos in English. Most of them are from the US but there are influencers from Scotland and Australia also. I really like the different dialects and I often challenge myself to try understanding them without subtitles. It can be also against Hungarian influencers that for me I just feel overwhelmed, I see them every platform and I think they are too much sometimes.
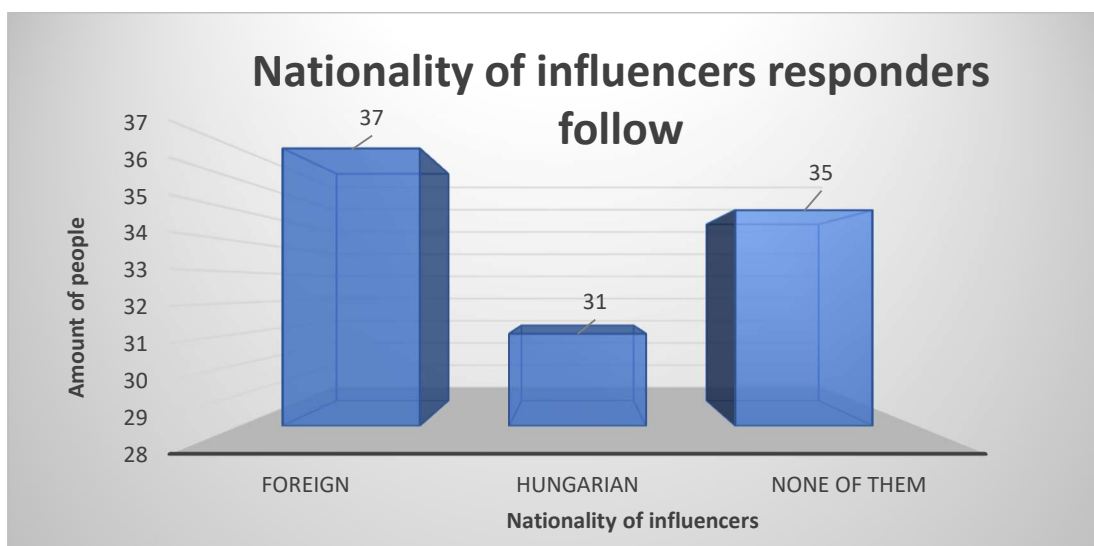


*Figure 11 Nationality of influencers responders follow (Source: self-edited)*

## Purchase after advertisements from influencers

The next question was made in a way that they could get one out of two possible list of questions. According to the answer options, the orientation of the respondents was split in two. It was a simple "Yes" or "No" type of question where I sought the answer whether people purchase anything based on an advertisement coming from an influencer. The result is clearly shown in Figure 12. 70,87% of the respondents said they have never bought anything this way but almost one third of them actually have done it. I was surprised because I only have discovered the term "influencer" about 2-3 years ago and I still do not have much of a confidence towards them.
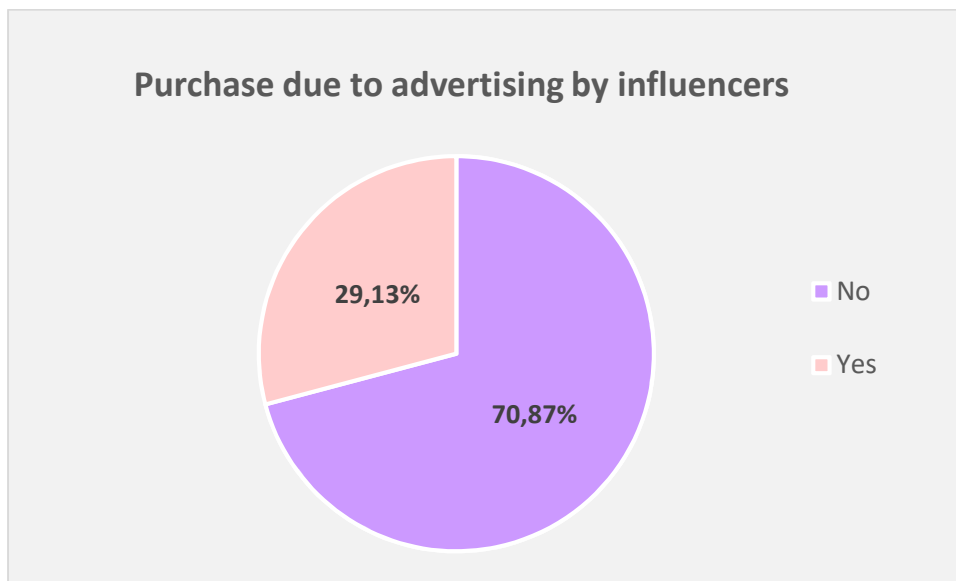


*Figure 12 Purchase due to advertising by influencers (Source: self-edited)*

### No purchase happened

In the next six questions I will go into details what people think about buying under the influence of these creators on social media. Firstly, I would start with the bigger group's questions and answers. They got altogether two simple question. Their first question was asking to specify why they decided to not to buy anything based on an influencer's advertisements. The answers were kind of in balance, none of the reasons peeked out extremely as shown in Figure 13. The main reasons picked were regarding the style of the ads and the influencers themselves because they picked this option because they think that they should not believe in influencers when it comes to ads, they got paid to say those information so it is no way that it would be true. This answer was the most picked and I think I may know the reason for this. Being an influencer, especially as a full-time job, is a relatively new area and people are pretty sceptical when it comes to trusting in people who "do not work, just making videos all day". Especially it is new for the Hungarians, as for my knowledge there are only a few Hungarian

influencer who is doing it for at least 7 years, not even a decade. Most influencers appeared during the pandemic and right before that, that means between 3 to 5 years. For general people to be able to understand and accept this new type of sector I think need more time than that. The world is changing so fast around us we cannot even catch up there is a new technology already that needs acceptance and understanding so it is extremely hard but with time I think people will accept them as real workers.

About the advertisements people think that they are too pushy, and they want to sell this product no matter what and I might take their side on this one because I feel it too sometimes that no matter which video I am clicking on, they are just saying the same thing over and over again, even if they talk about different brands. One week they love and adore one brand and two weeks later they push another brand into my face that now they love this brand etc. They can be very inconsistent regarding their ads, and it can be confusing also.

I was not expecting that I would get 15 answers stating that they are not sure what to think about influencers' advertisement, to like them or not. Probably they are the ones who are not that sceptical as most of my respondents and soon they would be the ones who start believing in influencers and giving them credit for their work.

I left an open space for responders to give me examples and I got 6, they differed from each other in some way, so I just displayed them as "Other" in Figure 13 below. Different types of individual responses arose. Some people mentioned the uninterestingness of the products, some simply pointed out that they don't like anyone. Mainly, they highlighted that they are completely ignorant towards the influencers and the products they make ads about. So, anything that comes through and get to them they just ignore and sometimes even block those influencers they see an ad from.
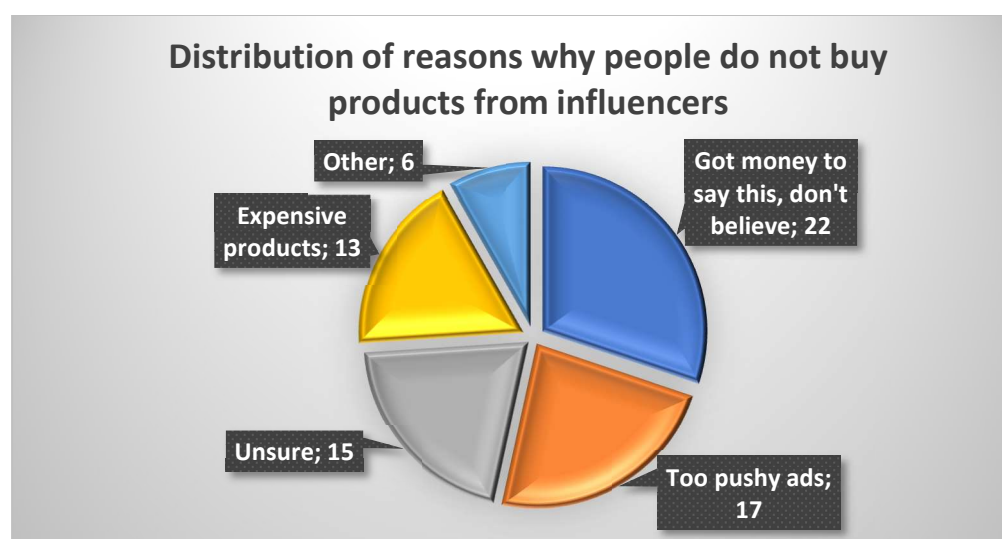


*Figure 13 Distribution of reasons why people do not buy products from influencers (Source: self-edited)*

The last question for this group was a hypothetical question and I hoped it would help me understand them a bit more. My question was the following: "If you got to know and understood an influencer better, do you think you would be more confident about such ads?". Based off the previous pattern it is not surprising that the positive and hopeful ones are in minority. Only 10 people, which is illustrated in Figure 14, have total faith in influencers and stated that they would be more confident when it comes to trusting an influencer. The pessimistic part of the group is also represented by 19 people who would never change their mind regarding influencers and their marketing strategies. They will be, at least for the time being, those who send all the influencers into elsewhere and throw hateful comments like "This is not even a real job", "Just making videos/posts all day and just get money from companies", "Tricking people to get money out of them" and so on. We can see so many of these hateful comments on any platform that is why I found interesting the high number of "Maybe" because I was pretty confident that there would be less uncertain people and more pessimistic one. The 44 votes for "Maybe" means 60,27% of those who were included in this question, and I think uncertainty means change because something is definitely changing with the current generation being exposed to so many different technologies and developments. A kind of openness can be observed in the current generations, this may also have developed because of the effect of higher trust in influencers. Considering this theory further, individual forms of opinion can encourage people to think, thus their mistrust and questioning of life basically has a positive effect. Because in this way they can also gain experience regarding the world of their age, they learn to form opinions, and their critical values.
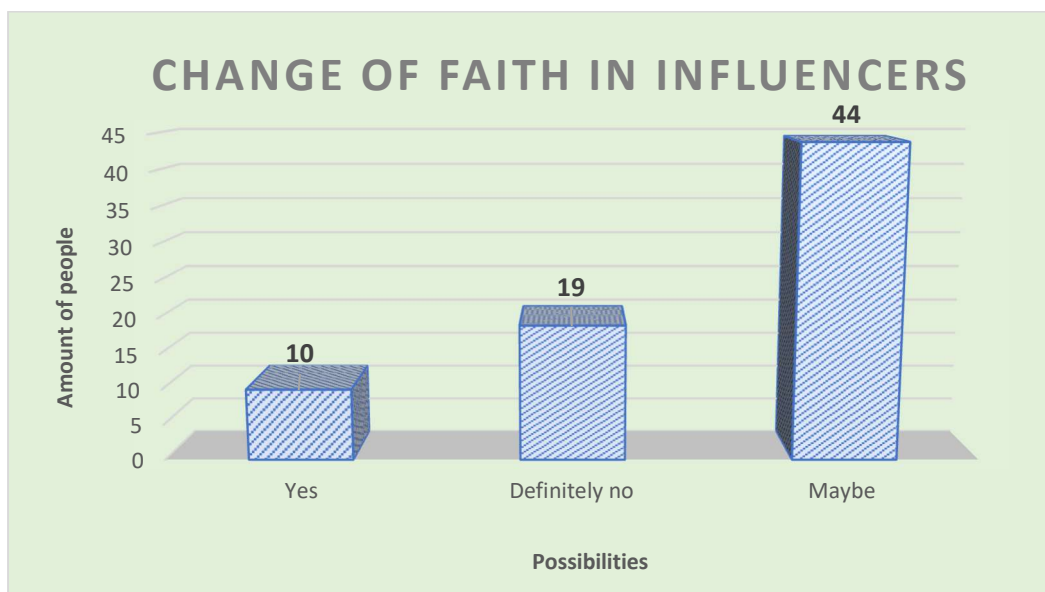


*Figure 14 Change of faith in influencers (Source: self-edited)*

## Purchase was made after an influencer's ad

This section includes four questions that were given to those respondents who made at least one purchase based on an influencer's advertisement. The first question was focusing on people's reasons for purchasing, why did they choose to buy a product that was advertised by an influencer. Altogether there were 30 people who have already made a purchase based on an influencers' ad and Table 1 shows below the distribution of each category. Table 1 also shows that the most popular answer was "Faith in influencer" which means that people chose to buy after seeing an advertisement from an influencer because they believe them that they are not scammers or just wanting to get money out of them. 40% is just a little less than half of the group although, it is not a huge group of people, but it is still significant compared to the total. Another answer that was marked by several people was the regarding the advertisements' style that influencers make, because people thing that those are way more direct and personal than an ad from the TV. I totally agree with them because for me the TV ads bring back so much annoyance from the time when I was solely reliant on TV programmes. I absolutely could not stand that all the movies and series were cut into 10 to 15ish-minute-sections and after every section there was a 10 minutes with solely advertisements. On top of that in those 10 minutes it did not matter which channel was I watching because every other channel also had and a block of ads at that exact time. The only "funny" fact about those ads is that after a few days of watching my series at the exact time every day, I knew which ad was coming after which because they were broadcasting the same few ads on repeat for at least a week with the twist of a few trailer.

As for the other answers I got, I am delighted by the fact that there were people who decided to support influencers, there were not many people with 13,33% but at least there are already people who are willing to support influencers. In the section of "Other" I got 6 answers which were tended towards that they were solely interested in the product, and it did not have anything to do with the influencer making that ad, they just saw the product and bought it.

*Table 1 Reasons for purchasing product(s) from an influencer and their distribution (Source: self-edited)*

| Reasons for purchase | Amount of people | Distribution (%) |
|---|---|---|
| More direct ads | 8 | 26.67% |
| Faith in influencer | 12 | 40.00% |
| Supporting the influencer | 4 | 13.33% |
| Other | 6 | 20.00% |
| **Grand Total** | **30** | **100%** |

The upcoming question was about their experience with said purchase. It was one of a few questions where people could mark in multiple answers, that is why I got 34 answers for this question instead of 30. It is interesting to see in Figure 15 that exactly half of the answers stated that they were satisfied with their purchase. For me it seems legit because I believe in influencers and that they are not just gold diggers. The part that I can absolutely grasp is where people stated that they are not satisfied with the price-value ration of the advertised product which means that in price it was higher than its worth for people. Unfortunately, most of the time influencers advertise pretty expensive products because large enterprises find them usually to promote their newest products for example and even if with a promotion code that the influencer got it can be still pretty expensive. These two answers basically cover most of the answers there are four more that I got. There was a case with quality problems, there was a scam and a case where the buyer regretted the purchase because the product was not needed. There were also two cases where people did not get what influencers promised them to get so they were pretty dissatisfied by that purchase.



*Figure 15 Respondents' experience with purchase (Source: self-edited)*

This small table below (Table 2) presents the frequency of purchases encouraged by influencers' advertisements. I was not amazed by the outcome of this question I expected something similar to this. Majority of the group only made purchase once or twice and it could be caused by several reasons. Most likely those who had not the best experience with the acquisition did not buy anything other than that one experience. However, it is also a possibility that some of them were satisfied yet they did not make any more purchases. The answers I was not expecting that there were 4 people who indicated that they are buying those products over

and over again because they are so in love with those products. There was a person who also included in the answer the category the products were in. This person usually buys makeup related products and books based on these advertisements.

*Table 2 Frequency of purchase happened (Source: self-edited)*

| Frequency | Answers |
|---|---:|
| Once | 12 |
| Twice | 10 |
| Three times | 4 |
| Many times | 4 |
| Grand Total | 30 |

My last question in this section was related to the potential future purchases visualized in Figure 16 below. For this question I got a pretty balanced result with the distribution of 40%-40%-20%. By the answer option "Unsure" I meant that they are not sure whether they would buy anything in the future based on an ad of an influencer and the option "Absolutely" means that they are 90% sure that it will happen in the future as well. It suggests confidence and even with unsure, as I explained earlier it is not a bad thing if people are not that certain about their future decisions because influencers can easily win those people rather than those who clearly state they will not buy anything ever based on an influencer's opinion.
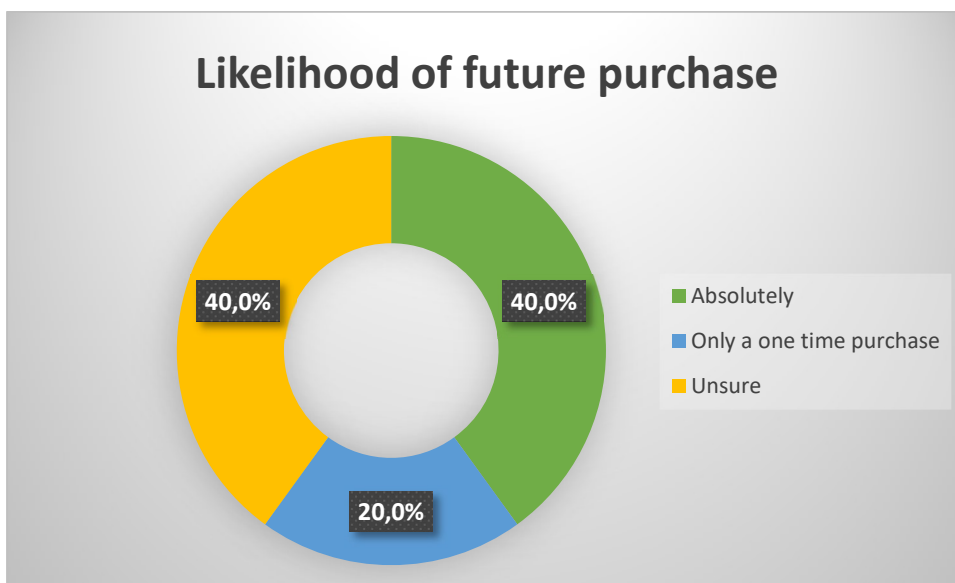


*Figure 16 Likelihood of future purchase (Source: self-edited)*

## Rossmann's advertising strategy with an influencer

The last section of my questionnaire was given to all of my respondents. For this part, I chose a short advertisement video from Rossmann Magyarország's YouTube channel where the influencer and TV host, Bence Istenes, plays as a fictional character Richyke. With this short, 30-second-long, advertisement the intention was to create something fun and short with a clear message. The message was that Rossmann has a new type of membership, called Rossmann+ VIP, and if you are a member of this you can get even more discounts than those who just casually shopping in Rossmann. (Rossmann Magyarország, 2022)

This video is just one of those that were made with the contribution of Bence Istenes, and since then, Rossmann has became a constant sponsor of him along with Samsung and others. Before I can dive into the analysis, I would like to mention a few things about Bence Istenes for the sake of those who do not know him. He has been working at RTL KLUB since 2012 as a TV host, and he had multiple TV programs where most of could see him, like *X-Factor* or *Szombat esti láz* or *Álarcos énekes* is the most recent one. Alongside his career in the TV, he is also operating on several social networking platforms, like Facebook and YouTube. On YouTube he has an independent podcast series, called *IstenEst*, where he invites other Hungarian public figures, and they talk about recent issues in different topics. (Istenes Bence, n.d.)

In connection with Bence Istenes, his wife, Adél Csobot, is also deserves a few words because she is also a famous public figure and together with Bence she is also got the role of being an influencer. She always had a talent for singing from a young age and together with dancing, so she took lessons. It is not surprising that she was in X-Factor in 2012 and that was the time and place where she met with Bence. After X-Factor both her career and personal life were on the rise she got asked to be a permanent singer in the Orpheum and in 2013 her album, *"Ami a szívemen a számon"* was released. In 2015 she was in "*Sztárban Sztár*" and at the end she managed to finish in the 4$^{th}$ place. In 2016 their first son was born, his name is Nátán, and 2 years later in 2018 their second son was born as well and his name is Ádin. Since then, she is a mother a successful public figure in TV shows, the most recent show she is a jury in is called "*Álarcos énekes*". She also takes her part in managing a YouTube channel together and she also appears in magazines as an influencer and model. (Csobot Adél, 2019)

After this small detour, there is nothing left but to analyse the received answers. Figure 17 below clearly shows that most of my responders (59,22%) have not seen this advertisement anywhere. At first, I found that strange because I have seen it multiple times already mainly on YouTube and Facebook, and I could not imagine why I am "the only one" who has to watch it

multiple times a week. As I was keeping an eye on my research progress and watching all the numbers changing, I found an answer that I got for the next question what opened my eyes, namely, people use YouTube Premium, which I totally forget about although I have already mentioned it at the beginning of the research paper. In connection with the next question, I will elaborate on this topic there.
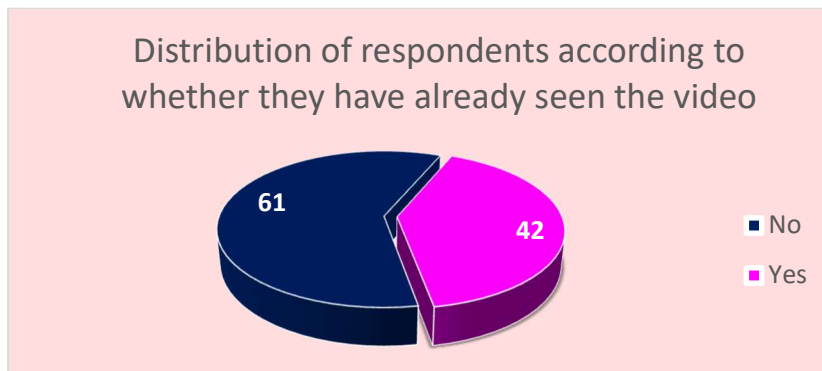


*Figure 17 Distribution of respondents according to whether they have already seen the video (Source: self-edited)*

My next question was in connection with the visibility of Rossmann's ads on platforms. I asked them to choose the platform where they see the most of these ads and YouTube won again. Unfortunately, it is not an award for ranking high in multiple questions I would say it is rather a disappointment than an achievement. Although this question was specifically asking about Rossmann's advertisements but there were previous questions where YouTube came out as the negative figure and full of advertisements.

Figure 18 depicts the score of each platform that people chose. After YouTube, Facebook ranked as second with 29 votes then Instagram with 16. As for TikTok I can state that Rossmann is not a significant brand on that app because it is rarely appearing for users. At first the option "TV" was not included but respondents included it themselves as an "Other" option and because there were altogether 5 people who wrote in "TV", I thought it would be appropriate to include it also in my bar graph. There were 2 people who I could not fit into any of these groups, so I left them as "Other", one of them only wrote a minus sign, it could mean either this person did not want to answer or did not see any Rossmann ad. I can only speculate on this one, at least the other one wrote in that he/she did not see any ads from Rossmann.
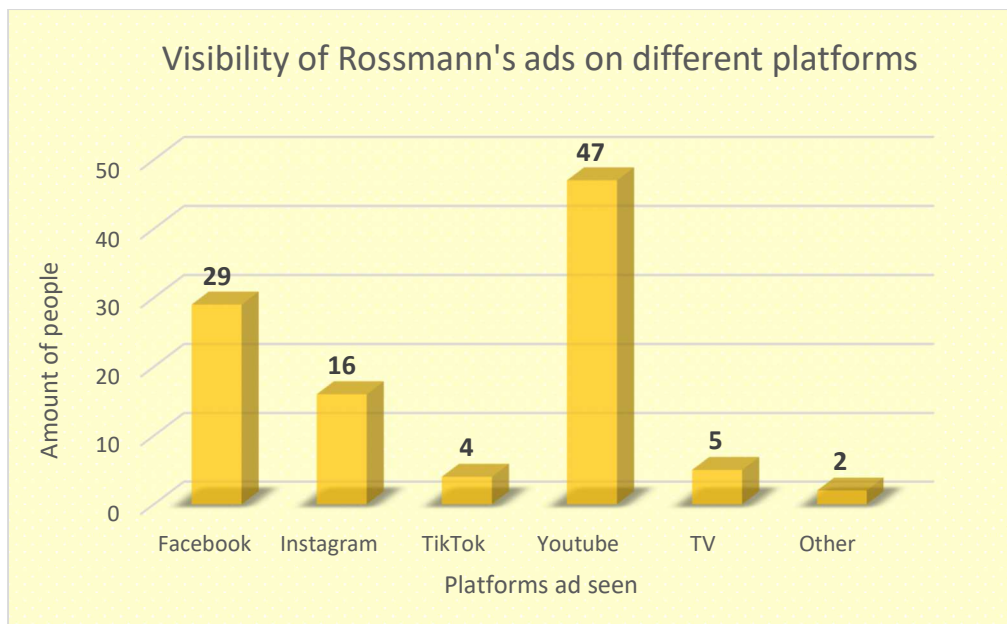
*Figure 18 Visibility of Rossmann's ads on different platforms (Source: self-edited)*

As I mentioned together with the previous question, one of those who wrote in the "Other" section in the questionnaire opened my eyes in connection with YouTube. This person wrote that she/he only sees Rossmann ads on TV because she/he pays YouTube Premium and that is when it finally made sense for me, that the reason why most of my respondents have not seen this Rossmann advertisement is because they have YouTube Premium. In case if someone is not familiar with this service, I do a quick overview of the topic.

YouTube Premium overview and personal observations

By far, YouTube has the most irritating way of displaying ads, so users absolutely needed a solution. After years of pressure from the fans YouTube finally came up with a monthly membership program for users to be able to enjoy every content uninterrupted. Originally, the YouTube Premium's name was YouTube Red which was introduced in October 2015. YouTube also included other features into this membership like people can save videos and watch them offline or put YouTube in the background on a phone without stopping the video. People can have as many devices as they like, and this feature is account base, so it does not matter where people log in if they have the membership, they have access to these features. At the beginning of 2016 YouTube also included member-only access to original shows and films. Together with YouTube Red, they announced new apps called YouTube Music, Gaming and Kinds which are basically certain part of YouTube concentrated into different apps, so people can have designated apps directly from YouTube to be able to watch only those part of YouTube that is in their interest. (Leske, 2015)

As 2018 came around YouTube decided to rename YouTube Red, that is when it became YouTube Premium. The basics stayed the same, it is still an ad-free membership with monthly payment, but they added more member-only content, and they were trying to open up to even more countries like "*Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.*" (YouTube Team, 2018). YouTube now includes YouTube Music so if people use both they do not have to pay twice and there is a lower price if someone only wants YouTube Music. In Hungary, this membership programme was introduced in 2019, with a fairly affordable price (see the price table in Appendix 1). (YouTube Team, 2018)

In my opinion, as a frequent user of YouTube, this was a much-needed step to take. Since the pandemic and lockdowns in 2020 the amount of advertising jumped, and based off my experiences it could even be twice as much than it was before. During the pandemic it was also bothering that 70 percent of the advertisements seen here in Hungary was about the Covid-19. It was and still is a serious topic but when I watched cartoons with my, at that time, 7 years old brother and all we got was about the amount of deaths and symptoms and dangers and for a 7-year-old I do not think it was healthy, so we decided later to cut him off for a period of time to avoid him watching these all the time. There is a now famous Hungarian emergency medical technician (EMT) and spokesperson of the National Ambulance Service called Pál Győrfi, and he was the one who narrated and performed in most of these pandemic related videos or ads. Later on, around mid-2021 a new type of advertisement flooded social media platforms, especially YouTube and the TV as well because in 2022 in Hungary we had parliamentary elections, so all the parties came up with several different ads and these were circulating around for months. Most of the people around me who has now YouTube premium started their membership around this time because they had enough of all these political parties pointing at each other together with the pandemic themed ads, so for many of them that was the point when they decided to give up 1800 HUF each month for their piece of mind. I can totally understand them because I was on the edge of investing in it as well, but I found a browser, called Brave, where I do not get any advertisements at least on my laptop so I ended up with this option for now. Unfortunately, I did not manage to find any written proof or studies that could confirm my observations, so it is solely based on my experiences and opinion.

## Opinion of Rossmann's ad

The questionnaire's last and final question was asking about the opinion of the previously seen advertisement. This question was set in such a way that any number of answer options could

be ticked, thus providing the respondents with the opportunity for maximum self-expression. As it is illustrated in Figure 19 below, most of the answers are pretty close to each other in number of votes but there is one that was the most picked and this one it the option "Annoying". It could be because of the probable repetition of this ad especially in YouTube and in TV. To be honest, after seeing like a hundred times I do not how I would describe this ad at this point. When I was in the process of creating the possible answers for this question, I was hardly able to find positive traits that I could include as an option. The positive or I would rather say not negative options all earned pretty high scores like "Creative" and "Not bad, but not good". The answer options include the option "Long", which does not indicate that a 30-second ad would be long, but that this is exactly the length that YouTube can play all the way without giving us the option to skip. Oftentimes it can cause annoyance in people because they have to wait 30 seconds and even after that they usually have to wait for another 5 to 10 second because especially at the beginning of videos, it is pretty common to get at least two ads right after each other. So, this length in the case of a YouTube ad for users it can be a nightmare, but for the TV or Facebook I think it would fit there better. There were 5 people who stated that this ad is stating false information but to be honest I do not think for Rossmann that would be profitable to advertise something like a VIP membership and those facts were not even true. In the long run they would lose extremely high number of customers and their goal is the exact opposite, to gain more customers with those extra discounts. It would have been interesting to see their reasoning behind this statement but this way I can only speculate on this.
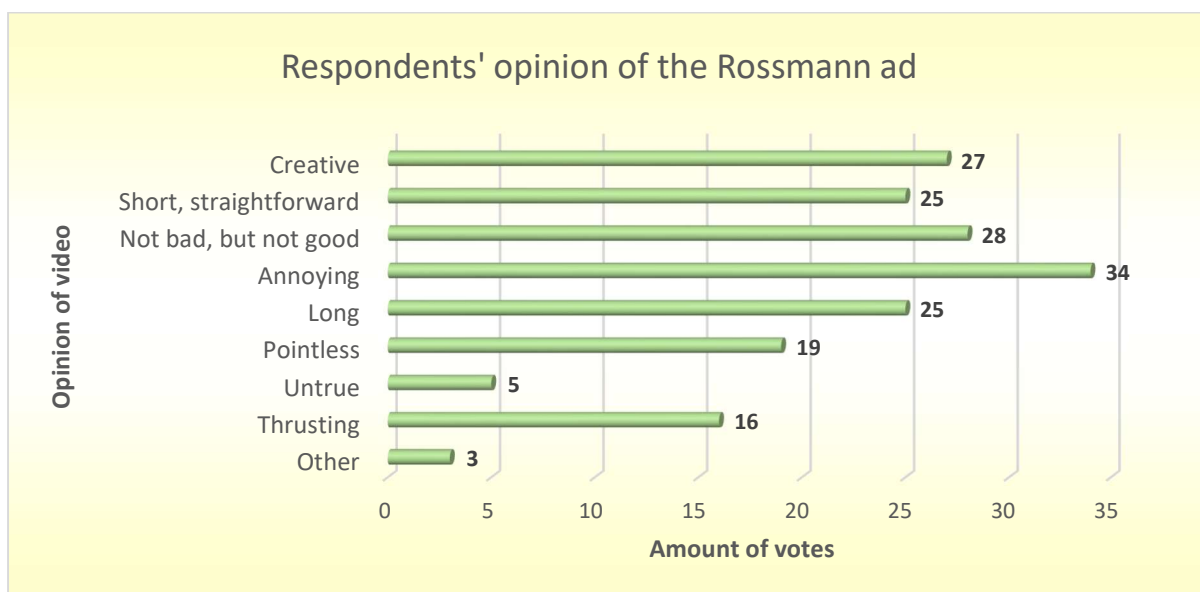


*Figure 19 Respondents' opinion of the Rossmann ad (Source: self-edited)*

# CONCLUSION

At last, I have arrived at the last section of this research paper. In this part I try to collect and summarize the main points and connections that were made throughout this work. I am also trying to compare my research objectives and expectations stated at the beginning of the paper with my end results to see whether I was able to cover everything that I wanted to.

Starting with my research objectives in my opinion I managed to introduce and explain the main features of social media in general and for the five main platforms that were the basis for my questionnaire. Also, I was able to see the background story of the intention of banning TikTok and I managed to clear that with the help of different articles that as of right now, governments do not have enough evidence to be able to legally ban an app from a country, it would be against our general right of Free Speech.

The questionnaire clearly showed that Facebook is the most used app on the other hand the competition between Facebook and YouTube is close with only a small difference. However, I was not able to draw conclusion between the popularity of each platform and their influence in the background. But I was able to discover a pattern regarding YouTube which is in connection with its advertising strategy. Based on the answers I got for my questionnaire YouTube has earned three "titles" which are for the most ads, the most annoying ads, and the visibility of Rossmann's ads. Unfortunately, it is not an award for ranking high in multiple questions I would say it is rather a disappointment than an achievement. Although the question where YouTube earned many votes was actually a positive result for the company of Rossmann, but it is not convenient for the users who are dumped with the extreme number of advertisements all the time. As the saying says, "Every coin has two sides", and the positivity in YouTube's advertising strategy is that they offer a solution for those who had enough of the constant advertisement tsunami which is YouTube Premium. An affordable monthly subscription which makes peoples YouTube completely ad-free, and together with this they have included several useful features for users and that was a smart business decision.

My research gave back the result that most people follow influencers on social media but only less than a third of them was willing to believe that the influencers are just like any other businessman or salesperson in shops. Among those who have not tried to make a purchase there are a significant amount of people who are unsure about the whole influencer marketing. I would like to emphasise that, in my opinion, working with uncertain people have better chances to be able to influence and guide them in the direction of certainty than it would have with a pessimistic group of people.

All in all, from this research it is clear most people are only starting to open up and get used to the new technologies and a way of thinking which is new for the world. The success of these innovations takes time and willpower to be able to get the best out of these innovations but as every innovation these also have drawbacks like the decreased quantity and quality of social interactions. Unfortunately, the aspect of social interactions seems to be not emphasised enough and overshadowed by the recent technologies that are already starting to be smarter than us, like ChatGPT and self-driving cars and so on. These technologies also have countless research potential, but this is not the research that is about them, maybe a future thesis of mine will be about one of these recent technologies.

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# APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Prices and benefits of YouTube Premium and YouTube Music (Source: *(Juhász, 2019)*)

| ▶ Music | YouTube Premium 1 790 Ft / hónap | YouTube Music Premium 1 490 Ft / hónap |
|---|---|---|
| Reklámmentes zenehallgatás | ✓ | ✓ |
| Zenehallgatás a háttérben | ✓ | ✓ |
| Letöltések | ✓ | ✓ |
| ▶ YouTube | | |
| Reklámmentes videó | ✓ | |
| Videólejátszás a háttérben | ✓ | |
| Letöltések | ✓ | |
| YouTube Originals | ✓ | |