

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
Faculty of Business Administration, Lappeenranta  
Degree Programme in International Business

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# **Influencer Marketing on YouTube: How to Collaborate with Russian Video Bloggers**

Thesis 2017

## **Abstract**

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Influencer Marketing on YouTube: How to Collaborate with Russian Video Bloggers, 72 pages, 3 appendices

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The purpose of this research was to develop a step-by-step guide for implementing influencer marketing on Russian YouTube. Firstly, the phenomenon of influencer marketing is explained with fundamental marketing theories. Afterwards, the whole process of cooperation with a video blogger is presented, including initiation, carrying out and closing the project.

The information was gathered from literature, articles, magazines, infographics, case studies, reports, online blogs, videos and conferences. The author's proficiency in the field complemented the findings as well. The empirical research included interviews with an experienced advertiser and top video bloggers from Russia. In addition, an online survey for YouTube viewers was held. More than 1 500 people participated the survey.

The author identified some of the most innovative collaboration techniques and provided practical advice together with real life examples. As a result, an influencer marketing strategy on Russian YouTube was suggested. This thesis can be used by any foreign company as a pattern for formulating an own promotion plan for approaching Russian audience online.

Keywords: digital marketing, online advertising, influencer marketing, YouTube, video bloggers

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### Appendices

Appendix 1	Results of the online survey
Appendix 2	Self-completion interview form for influencers
Appendix 3	Guide for interviewing advertisers

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## **Glossary**

**Video blogger** – a person who owns a YouTube channel and uploads self-made videos on it. Also referred to as YouTuber, influencer, creator, blogger, opinion leader.

**Subscribers of a video blogger** – people who are subscribed to a video blogger and watch his or her videos regularly. Also referred to as audience, followers, viewers, fans.

**Description box** – a text field under a YouTube video, which is filled in by the creator.

**Google Analytics** – a group of automatically generated reports, which is available to any YouTube user and contains various metrics about the channel.

**Marketing message** – a piece of information developed by a brand to be communicated to public with promotional purposes.

**eWOM** – online communication between two or more persons, during which one is sharing information about a company on a non-commercial basis.

**Conversion** – the extent to which an advertisement is persuading the audience to take an action, expressed in percentage.

**CTR (click-through rate)** – the percentage of viewers who clicked on the company's link in the description box.

**Engagement rate (ER)** – percentage which reflects the level of activity of viewers.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Marketing discipline has been existing for decades, constantly progressing with new tools and techniques in order to adapt to the tendencies in the society. One of the principal questions for marketers is how to reach the customer's mind so the marketing message is grasped. In today's digital era the leading trend is social networks, which have proved themselves as an extremely effective touchpoint with clients. The majority of forward-looking companies have already been exploiting social media advertising for years to be on the same wavelength with their customers.

From a number of all social networks, YouTube stands out particularly. The video sharing web site appears to be an attractive place for a marketing campaign since it has caught attention of millions of people from all over the globe and continues to grow further. One of the ways to use YouTube for promotion purposes is to cooperate with creators. They are influencers who have gained countless audiences and hold a position of opinion leaders for them. Partnership with a YouTuber is regarded as a powerful, perfectly targeted and engaging marketing tool. As a result, companies have all the chances to get loyal clients, who admire and most importantly - advocate the brand.

The author aims to open the minds of the readers to innovative thinking in social media marketing, and prove collaborations to be worth considering as a part of online promotion strategy. The principal idea behind this paper was to create a guide, which can help companies to design own YouTube campaign in cooperation with a Russian video blogger, using the most unconventional techniques.

A collaboration with YouTube creators is effective and interesting, yet there is one more detail that makes the topic special for the author. Actually, video marketing takes a significant place in her life. First of all, the author herself has been a YouTube blogger for over four years now and

she can tell from behind the scenes how influencer campaigns are organized. In addition, she knows what it takes to work with a blogger from the brand's position as at her work place it is a common practice to cooperate with Russian YouTubers. As can be seen, the field of digital marketing has always been interesting for the author. Now she is willing to share own expertise and findings, which are based on real life experience.

## **1.2 Purposes of the study**

The researcher is driven by several purposes, divided into primary and accompanying ones.

Primary objectives are the following:

- Develop a guide, which can help any company in formulating own influencer marketing strategy.
- Share valuable experience and knowledge from the field.
- Open the minds of the readers to a new marketing tool.

Accompanying objectives include:

- Determine the specifics of collaborating with Russian YouTube bloggers.
- Define the most fruitful and innovative formats of YouTube collaborations.
- Explain the value of YouTube campaigns with fundamental marketing theories.

## **1.3 Delimitations of the study**

The present study was conducted according to certain boundaries established by the author. First of all, the subject was researched within the framework of marketing discipline, concentrating on social media. YouTube website was studied because it is recognized as a top social network as well as important for the author personally. There are a lot of ways to use YouTube for promotional purposes. However, the research is focused solely on cooperating with a video blogger as it appears to be

one of the most effective advertising methods in social networks. It also has to be noted that the paper investigates a single collaboration, not a multiple one, when companies are simultaneously working with more than one blogger. The study is limited further by Russian YouTube community since the author possesses expertise only in Russian segment of the web site. Certainly, the global scope of YouTube is an interesting topic, yet it is too large to be covered in a bachelor's thesis. Also, the paper does not examine collaborations involving video production done at the company as it is a rather wide theme, which deserves a separate research.

The guidelines are intended to be universal, so implementing influencer marketing in any specific field of business (e.g. beauty, travel, gadgets) is not examined. The size of the company is not taken into consideration as well. The study is focused on general concepts and applications, which are to be adjusted by the reader to a particular situation. The thesis can be used by both organizations which are only at the beginning of entering or already operating on Russian market.

#### **1.4 Limitations**

There are a couple of weak points of the current study to be mentioned. Firstly, one should keep in mind that there are no formulas for certainly successful YouTube campaigns. Each organization learns how to work with influencers by practice. In the majority of cases, methods of one company will not work for the other. Thus, a downside of this thesis is its limited generalization. Nevertheless, the researcher attempts to define universal recommendations based on a combination of real life experience and theories. Furthermore, due to rapid development of digital marketing and technologies, the guidelines might be relevant only for the next several years from the date of publishing. So, the readers are advised to additionally look for the latest trends on the Internet.

## **1.5 Research questions**

The principal research question guiding the whole study is the following:

- How to cooperate with a Russian YouTube influencer using the most innovative and effective techniques to attract Russian customers?

However, the main research question cannot be answered completely without considering the following sub-questions:

- Does every company need a collaboration with a YouTube blogger as a part of marketing strategy?
- What makes a YouTube marketing campaign successful?
- What are advantages and disadvantages of YouTube marketing campaigns?

## **1.6 Research design**

In this section the procedure of conducting the research is explained. After studying methodological literature, it was decided to organize the research in two stages. The first is named exploratory, which included pre-investigations on the topic as well as establishing clear research directions. When the exploration was completed, the stage of descriptive study arrived, which is the actual thesis writing process (Cooper & Schindler 2003). It comprised integrating primary data, collected through interviews and a survey, with secondary data, gathered from books and reliable online sources. So, both deductive and inductive logic was employed. This approach is often called iterative, meaning that the researcher is working with empirical data and theory at once (Bryman & Bell 2011).

Concerning the empirical part, the objective was to find out the most common mistakes in collaborations from the advertiser's side, which can jeopardize or even destroy a potentially successful campaign. As the researcher was seeking for deep understanding of the issue, qualitative

approach was needed (Bryman & Bell 2011). The idea was to ascertain the opinions of all parties engaged in collaboration process, which are: a blogger, an advertiser, the target audience.

Written interviews were arranged for the bloggers, while for the audience an online questionnaire was organized. An oral interview online with one professional advertiser was held as well. The goal was to obtain detailed answers as well as appreciate various perspectives on the phenomenon. There was no principle according to which the respondents were chosen. The only prerequisite was possessing experience in collaborations for the purpose of receiving reliable information. Respondents' opinions were determined as variables to trace the variation or similarity between them. Accordingly, cross-sectional design was suitable for the research. Lastly, the variables were assembled, and the patterns of undesirable behaviour were defined. Both the interviews and the questionnaire were conducted in Russian language and then carefully translated to English language by the author. There were no difficulties in translation since the author understands the sociocultural background of the respondents as well as linguistic differences. (Bryman & Bell 2011.)

The author aimed to achieve such important research qualities as credibility and validity. Reliability, which is concerned with the consistency of the results, is limited in this research due to a couple of reasons. As it was already mentioned, the findings might be relevant only during the next few years owing to constant technological development. Thus, if conducting an identical empirical research, the discoveries will not be the same as soon as new YouTube collaboration techniques will be invented. As a consequence, there is also no need for replicability of the findings because the author suggests exploring new information on the topic rather than trying to receive the same results. As for credibility, which indicates if the findings reflect what they actually mean, careful execution enabled establishing credible results. Speaking of validity, it represents how useful the findings are for real life, meaning that they are not merely a part of a scientific process. The research has limited ecological validity

since questionnaires and interviews were used. Nevertheless, those were designed to create as much natural and not-biased setting as possible in order to receive true opinions. (Bryman & Bell 2011.)

### **1.6.1 Interviews**

YouTube creators Tatyana Rybakova (<https://www.youtube.com/user/tanyarybakova>), Max Brandt (<https://www.youtube.com/user/LizzzTV>), Anastacia Kay (<https://www.youtube.com/user/funastacia>) and Uliana Petrukhina (<https://www.youtube.com/user/ulielie>) have participated the research. Speaking of the interviewed advertiser, who is Tatiana Magera, the author met with her at on one of social media marketing conferences in Saint Petersburg. Ms Magera is the head of department of working with blogosphere at PJSC Sberbank.

Since the bloggers were not able to take part in spoken interviews due to their busy lifestyle, a self-completion form with open-ended questions was sent via email (Appendix 2). The interview with Ms Magera was semi-structured, meaning that the author had a guide which shortly defined topics and questions. As a result, it enabled creating a unique dialogue, and the interviewee could bring up any topics she considers important (Appendix 3). Audio recording of the conversation allowed precise and in-depth examination afterwards. The analysis of the answers was done in a way similar to grounded theory approach. The received data was reviewed and compared with theories several times to detect repeating patterns which can be generalized. (Bryman & Bell 2011.)

### **1.6.2 The survey**

It was important to involve the viewers in the research as they are the object of the whole collaboration process. An online multiple choice survey with closed questions concerning attitudes of the viewers to commercial videos was conducted using Google Forms. This method allowed collecting data from a big group of people as well as easier administrating and processing of the answers. An essential part of holding a

survey was piloting. A small group of 20 respondents was invited to try out the survey before publishing. This helped to find out whether the questions were providing with the data desired and assess how well the instructions were formulated, which in turn eliminated missing responses. Questions with short open answers were included in the pilot version, which suggested ideas for fixed choice answers for the final questionnaire. Even though the results were gathered in numerical format, they are still representing people's attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, the figures were approached from the qualitative point of view, which implied becoming sensitive to the meanings the figures provide (Bryman & Bell 2011). A full report of the survey results is attached in Appendix 1.

### **1.7 Review of the sources**

In the following paragraphs already existing intelligence in the field is briefly reviewed, including literature, websites and other sources. The review was useful in developing good understanding of the subject and defining the knowledge gap to be filled in (Cooper & Schindler 2003). After exploring available information, it appeared that the knowledge base about the subject is rather small, especially in the academic world.

Speaking of literature, it provided with core marketing theories, which are the roots of recently developed concepts. Without studying those, the understanding of the topic would not be profound. Online sources comprised written blogs, reports, infographics, case studies, news as well as videos on Russian and global markets. In general, the Web provided with the latest information, which is not available in books or articles. Only reliable online pages were used, which are either written by specialists or marketing organizations. Works supporting various stances on the topic were studied to apply critical thinking and stay objective throughout the research process. The main controversies were detected in pricing and evaluation methods, discussed on pages 30 and 54 respectively. In addition, the author has been invited as a special guest to a few very informative conferences dedicated to social media marketing in Saint



Petersburg. Knowledge obtained at these events was used for the theoretical part.

## 1.8 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into five main chapters, which are further segmented into more specific sections. “Introduction” chapter gives an overview on the whole study, describing its procedures and methods applied. Then comes “Theoretical framework” chapter, which provides the basic knowledge needed for understanding the topic. Following that, the key chapter “Guidelines” arrives, which represents three stages of any YouTube influencer campaign: initiation, carrying out and closing. Results of the empirical study are included in this chapter, too. The “Conclusion” summarizes the whole work and presents further research suggestions. The last section, “List of references”, consists of the list of sources accompanied by lists of figures and appendices. The structure of the thesis is illustrated on the mind map below:

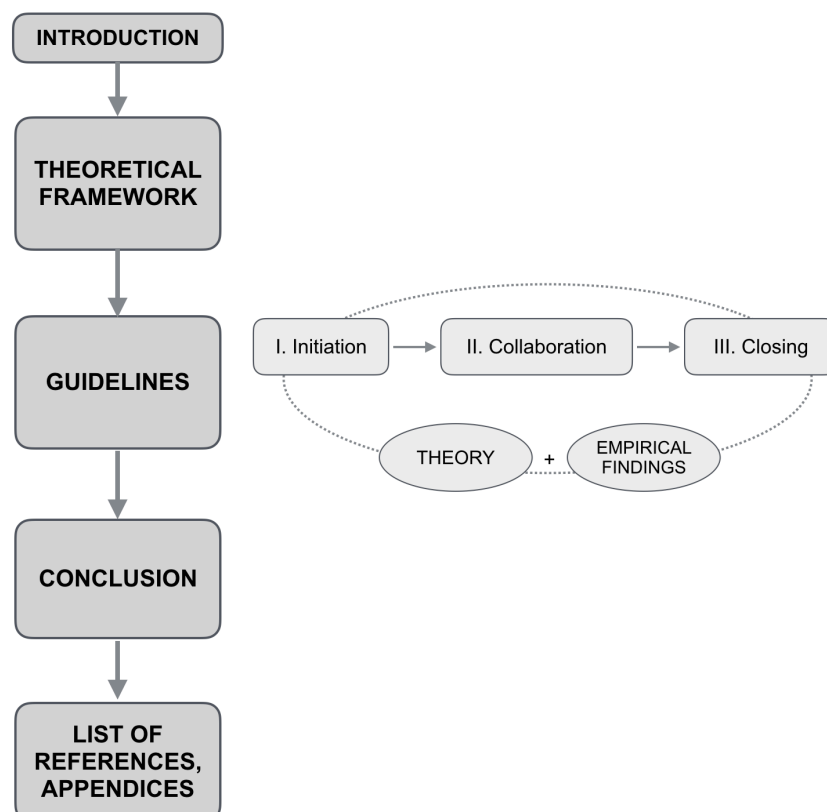


Figure 1. Structure of the thesis.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

When working with online marketing it is essential to understand its underlying base to creatively operate with the knowledge. The following sections review the core concepts of marketing and its digital branch. Firstly, the author refers to the very fundamentals of marketing and its main functions. Then, emphasising the meaning of the Internet in business, social media is presented. Afterwards, the value of partnership with a video blogger from the perspectives of public relations (PR), customer relationships management (CRM), promotion of customer loyalty and sales is illustrated. Finally, the nature of influencer marketing on YouTube is explained with the help of theoretical knowledge. The question of whether all companies need YouTube promotion and what are disadvantages of it is discussed at the end of the chapter as well.

### **2.1 Marketing discipline**

Marketing is a complex process of managing profitable relationships with the customers, as defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2010). Apart from product development and competitor analysis, marketing also deals with communications mix (or promotion mix), needed for delivering value propositions as well as maintaining long-lasting customer relationships. One of the main traits of marketing is that it cannot be separated from the social environment. Marketers always follow tendencies in the society to find out how to effectively approach the consumers. Thus, adapting to ever-changing social environment is considered as an important competitive advantage, which allows to survive the rivalry. Beyond a doubt, nowadays the Internet is a huge trend that should not be overlooked by any forward-looking company. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010.)

#### **2.1.1 Digitalization of the world**

Adoption of the Internet has immensely influenced the way people do business, providing with innovatory solutions for marketing, logistics, customer service and other activities. Nowadays a company's presence

on the web is a standard. The Internet has already passed a couple of development phases. The first one, Web 1.0, is characterized as the early beginning of utilizing Internet for quite specific purposes, whereas Web 2.0 introduced networking and sharing of user-generated content. At the moment Web 3.0 era is taking place. New technologies and social tools available now are shaping consumer behaviour on the Internet, especially social networks and online video. (Tasner 2010.)

Social networks can be defined as web sites, which allow users to communicate, interact and share content. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Vkontakte, YouTube, Instagram and other platforms. The number of social networks users is constantly increasing; and there is no reason for this tendency to stop. A fast-growing branch of marketing specialised in management of social platforms for promotional purposes is Social Media Marketing (SMM).

Social networks have determined the way marketing is applied, introducing new creative techniques of approaching the customers. Influencer marketing, podcasts, forums, blogs and other innovative instruments are now at the marketers' disposal. A well-developed SMM strategy brings numerous competitive advantages, including loyal clients, better company's image as well as overall promotion. Thus, businesses should learn how to make the most from social media, especially if the target audience is present on the web. There are many social networks which can be used as a communication channel, but nowadays YouTube is especially striking.

### **2.1.2 About YouTube**

YouTube is a global video sharing platform, which allows to watch and upload self-made content. Also, users can interact with each other using comments and likes.



Figure 2. Logo of YouTube (YouTube 2017).

YouTube was launched in May 2005, and in one year it was purchased by Google. Now YouTube users count for over one third of Internet population, which generate billions of views daily. Interestingly, in the U.S. people in the age group 18 - 49 watch YouTube more than any other cable network (YouTube 2016). Yet it is not the peak of YouTube's success, as predicted by many marketing specialists. According to the forecast by CISCO, global video consumption will reach 82 percent of consumer Internet traffic by 2020 (CISCO 2016). Furthermore, advertisers spend on average 85 percent more money on digital video than before, as observed by IAB in the U.S. (IAB 2016). Another interesting fact is that video creators PewDiePie, Zoella and Alfie Deyes were listed among 500 most influential people in the UK in 2015 (Haymarket Business Publications 2015). The author would like to give the following example: in January 2016, the White House invited three popular American video bloggers to interview Barack Obama about the matters bothering them and their audiences. Such impressive facts remind that companies should be where the customers are; and it seems that now people's attention is on YouTube.

Especially in Russia, YouTube has reached high positions. In 2016 it became the fifth largest website in terms of daily reach, namely as 15 percent of the whole population aged 12 - 64 years in Russia visits YouTube every day (TNS 2016). In addition, YouTube is the most popular web site among other video properties in Russia (comScore 2015). Hence, it appears that online video is a good way to address Russian audience as so many top organizations and influential people believe in the power of YouTube community.

Such companies as Maybelline, Coca-Cola, Nike, Disney, Samsung and Microsoft have already been working with Russian YouTubers for years. Maybelline is especially active in collaborations. They use various techniques such as filming projects together with bloggers or sending makeup products to them for free. As an example, the author suggests watching a fun music video featuring famous influencers (MaybellineNYRussia 2016a) or a makeup tutorial (MaybellineNYRussia 2016b).

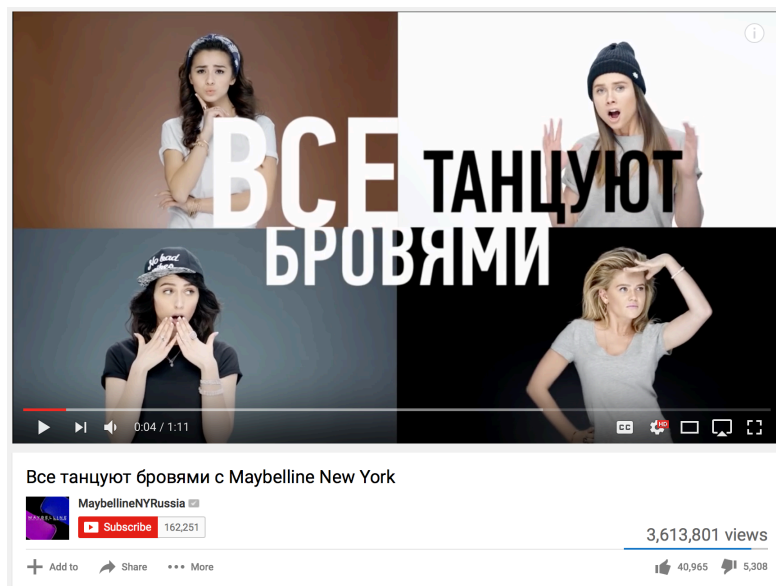


Figure 3. Music video on Maybelline’s channel (MaybellineNYRussia 2016).

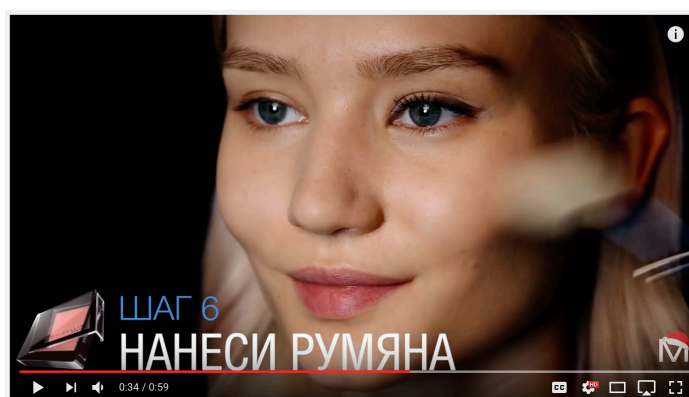


Figure 4. Makeup tutorial on Maybelline’s channel (MaybellineNYRussia 2016).

Also, video bloggers make reviews and makeup tutorials on their channels featuring Maybelline's products (MaybellineNYRussia n.d.).

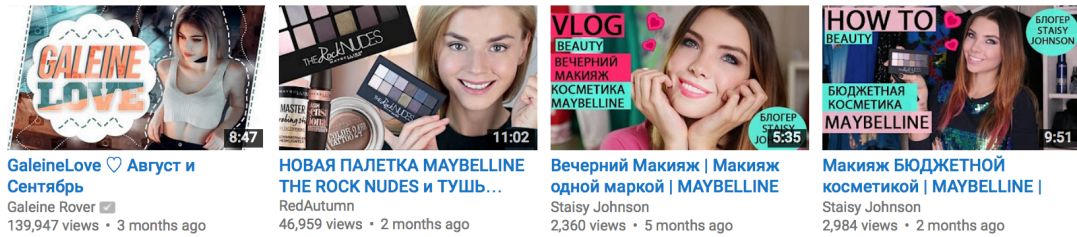


Figure 5. Playlist with videos about Maybelline (MaybellineNYRussia n.d.).

Likewise, Disney collaborated with Maria Way, who is one of the most famous beauty bloggers in Russia. She made a makeup tutorial video, in which she transformed herself into the White Queen, a character from Disney's "Alice in Wonderland" movie (Way 2016).

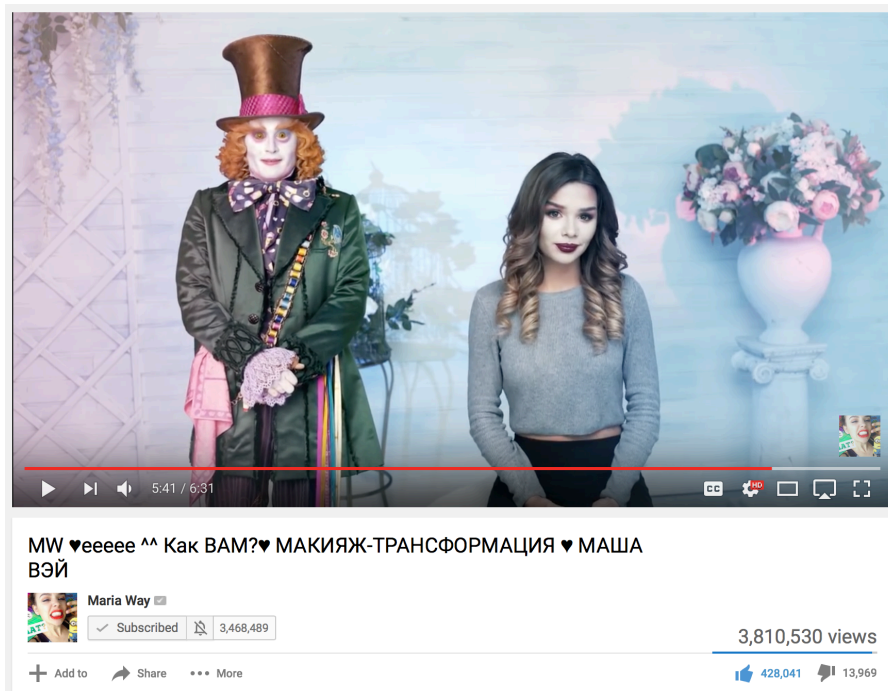


Figure 6. Collaboration of Disney with Maria Way (Way 2016).

One more example is a collaboration of Samsung with Wylsacom, whose channel is dedicated to technology and Apple devices. Wylsacom filmed an entertaining video, in which he is telling about seven unique features

of Galaxy S7 smartphone that are not available in iPhone (Wylsacom 2016a).



Figure 7. Collaboration of Samsung with Wylsacom (Wylsacom 2016a).

Finally, in 2017 for the first time on Russian YouTube a car giveaway was held. It was a cooperation of Wylsacom and other popular bloggers “Ro-zetked” and “Ai, Kak Prosto!” with LetyShops, a cash back service. Together they conducted a giveaway of Toyota Land Cruiser Prado (Wylsacom 2016b).



Figure 8. Collaboration of LetyShops with Wylsacom, Rozetked, “Ai, Kak Prosto!” (Wylsacom 2016b).

## **2.2 Influencer marketing on YouTube**

### **2.2.1 Definition**

Among millions of YouTube users, there are video creators, who have their own channels. From the very beginning of their YouTube career, creators have been developing trustful relationships with the viewers. Now companies can address their loyal audiences utilizing a mutually beneficial cooperation for delivering marketing messages. The author defines influencer marketing on YouTube as a form of online advertising, which involves a paid collaboration with one or more YouTube influencers with the purpose of promoting a brand and its products or services to consumers. Also, influencer marketing can be thought of as an earned media channel, which implies reaching the audience through influential individuals to increase brand awareness (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012).

A YouTube collaboration can facilitate achieving the following marketing objectives:

- sales promotion
- increasing traffic on the company's website
- creating awareness and brand recognition
- obtaining new customers
- reaching niche audience
- maintaining good relationships with the public
- creating good corporate image and reputation
- gaining a competitive advantage over the other companies
- maintaining lasting relationships with existing customers
- communicating information to the public.

Globally, interest in influencer marketing has been growing steadily during the last five years, as can be seen on the graph below. In 2016 it has reached its highest point.



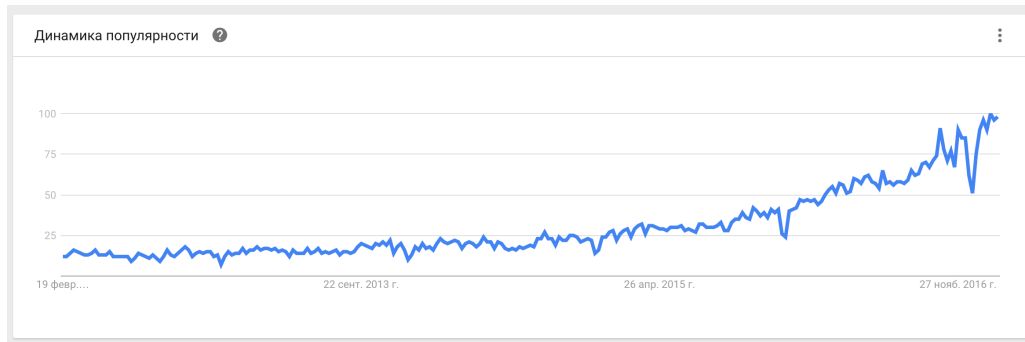


Figure 9. Interest in “influencer marketing” during the last 5 years (Google Trends 2017).

### 2.2.2 Unique benefits of influencer marketing

If applied properly, influencer marketing on Russian YouTube offers a number of unique benefits:

- **Reach.** People choose to pay attention to YouTube bloggers by themselves. Therefore, when placing an advertisement in a YouTube video, a company can reach the viewers at the highest point of their attention, which increases efficacy of the campaign.
- **Emotions.** Emotional attachment of the viewers strengthens the bloggers’ ability to influence.
- **Precise targeting.** Availability of detailed analytics of the audience allows creating precisely targeted and highly effective campaigns.
- **Trust.** Subscribers do trust the opinion of favourite YouTubers due to the feeling of peer-to-peer communication and friendship.
- **Friendly advertising.** Together with a YouTuber, a company can create an enjoyable advertisement, which is not only promoting goods or ideas, but also delivering value to the viewers. As a result, the audience will be pleased to watch a creative commercial video instead of being irritated by it. The viewers might even be waiting for the next campaigns. According to the empirical findings, in general young viewers feel neutral about sponsored videos, which suggests that now influencer marketing is not hated by teenagers if well implemented.

- **Rich content.** Video is the most saturated way of presenting information, which enables companies to tell more than in other media.
- **Longevity.** YouTube video advertising has a prolonged effect, since creators usually keep their videos for a very long time if not forever. So, a paid video can stay effective even after years from the publication date.
- **Cross-platform.** When collaborating with a YouTuber, it is possible to involve his or her other social media platforms for a wider coverage.
- **Transparency and analysis.** Special tools and reports are available on YouTube for evaluation of the campaign results.
- **Future relationships.** One successful YouTube collaboration can lead to long-term business relationships with a blogger.

### 2.2.3 Theoretical explanation of influencer marketing on YouTube

In order to design excellent YouTube campaigns, one should understand the essence of YouTubers' influence. The author has gathered several theoretical concepts, which can clarify the topic. First of all, it might be weird for one to understand that people who have never seen each other in real life can have relationships. However, Social Information Processing Theory (SIP) admits that people can build genuine and long-lasting relationships online, without traditional aspects of communication (Dahl 2015). Indeed, with time viewers become emotionally attached to their favourite YouTubers due to the feeling of friendship, inspiration and trust. Watching online videos might already be considered as a form of socializing.

By forming a strong community around, a video blogger acts as an opinion leader or a peer, who can influence the opinion followers and effectively promote ideas, brands or products (Dahl 2015). Indeed, the nature of authority has changed. Nowadays, both young and older consumers tend to trust their peers more than traditional media (Haymarket Business Publications 2015).

The author suggests watching a video, which demonstrates how passionate the fans are about their favourite YouTubers - <https://youtu.be/2ppiu0gDivs>. As can be seen, subscribers are ready to support the blogger and any of his or her undertakings. For that reason, it is common to produce fan merchandise together with a YouTuber, which might be clothing, accessories or small souvenirs. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) can explain why such merchandise usually becomes successful. Actually, consumers are seeking for expressing their identity and culture in purchases instead of buying utilitarian functions (Dahl 2015). Hence, fans will most probably buy items related to favourite bloggers, looking for expressing their belonging to the fandom.

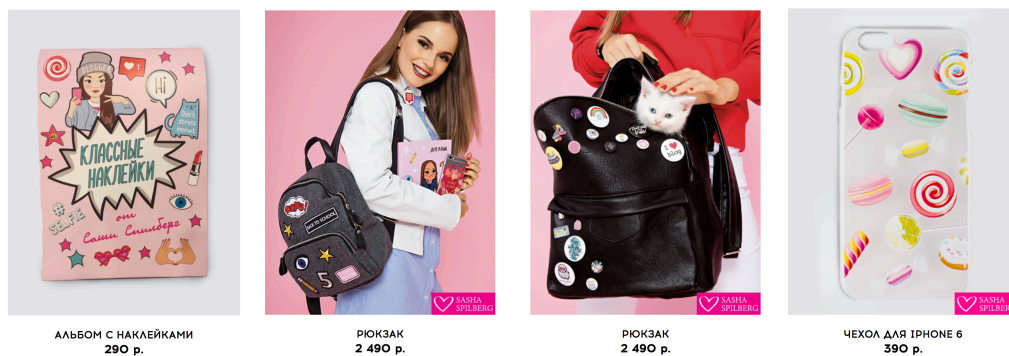


Figure 10. Merchandise by Sasha Spilberg (Marmalato n.d.).

To illustrate the point, the author provides a real-life example. Sasha Spilberg is one of the most popular YouTube creators in Russia with over 4.6 million subscribers. Together with Spilberg, fashion brand Marmalato has created a collection of various accessories for girls, including hats, iPhone cases, school supplies and shoes - [http://marmalato.ru/catalog/kollektsiya\\_sashi\\_spilberg/](http://marmalato.ru/catalog/kollektsiya_sashi_spilberg/). Even though only 4.3 percent of the survey participants say that they have bought merchandise for fans, it seems that Marmalato's campaign turned out to be rather successful. The collection by Spilberg has been selling in stores across Russia and online for over 8 months now, and new items are being added.

Another concept explaining bloggers' influence is Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). Traditional WOM is defined as communication between two persons, one of which is naturally telling about a brand or a product to the other on a non-commercial (not paid to be doing so) basis. WOM was recognized as a powerful marketing instrument much earlier than the Internet even appeared. With the rise of social networks, WOM has progressed; now it reaches bigger audiences and can be purchased. Cooperation with video bloggers is exactly the case of paid eWOM or referral marketing, which is a connected term. Referral marketing implies offering a reward (money, free products or other compensations) to a person in exchange for referring to the company. Moreover, a research by van Noort and colleagues (2012) suggests that marketing messages are better spread in societies with strong personal ties, such as a video blogger and subscribers. (Dahl 2015.)

Two-step Flow Theory (TSFT), developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (2006), complements the research by van Noort and colleagues (2012). The main idea of this theory is that messages sent right by media to the public are not as effective as messages mediated through reputable individuals. Therefore, communicating a marketing message via opinion leaders to the audience is more effective. The reason for that is the personal ties bloggers have with the audience (Dahl 2015). Especially among younger audience, YouTubers have strong authority. According to the survey held in the U.S. by Variety, emotional attachment of teenagers toward favourite bloggers is seven times higher than toward traditional stars such as singers or actors. In addition, YouTubers are 17 times more engaging for youths (Variety Media 2015).

#### **2.2.4 Challenges and risks**

Despite of all unique benefits offered by influencer marketing on YouTube, it undoubtedly has some challenges. In this section the main disadvantages together with possible risks are discussed in order to provide the readers with a fair view on collaborations.

The first disadvantage to be mentioned is **uncertainty**. As with any other advertising instrument, it is not possible to guarantee that the influencer campaign will be successful. Therefore, certain principles should be followed in order to minimize the risk of failure, which are discussed throughout the thesis. Further, since collaborations imply working with a person outside the company, it requires **control, attentiveness and commitment**. A YouTuber not be interested in mutual success, but be caring only about his or her own benefit. For that reason, it is necessary to not be naive and scrutinize the blogger. Moreover, misunderstandings, disagreements or distrust might take place, so good communication and team working skills are needed as well. Another minor disadvantage is that for the most part **internet users in Russia are young**, from 12 to 30 years old (TNS 2016). Hence, a company aiming to reach older audience might find cooperation with YouTubers useless. Finally, the results of a commercial video are perfectly measurable with the help of Google Analytics reports, yet **it is still problematic to understand what those figures mean in terms of sales**. The campaign might not generate new customers straight away. As a consequence, when cooperating with video bloggers, organizations normally hope for future increases in sales based on investment in the relationships with the subscribers today (Chen 2016).

Above all, **media inflation** must be remembered, which has been taking place for the last few years. It means that people do not react to traditional advertising as easily as they did before. Now even the blogging sphere suffers from media inflation because more YouTubers are selling their services to advertisers. As a result, the audience does not notice marketing messages placed in the videos (Markova 2016). In general, collaborating with YouTubers is not a traditional marketing tactic. Though, it already has rather typical approaches such as basic product placements (a mention of a product or service in a video) or pre-rolls (a short advertising video clip inserted at the beginning of a video). Thus, companies need to learn how to stand out in the age of abundant online advertising, using unconventional influencer marketing techniques.

Regarding risks, the author has identified several ones. For example, a **failure to properly analyse the audience** and meet their consumption habits. However, it does not rely only on the skills of the task executor; **faked data** is a major risk, too. A YouTuber might provide falsified Google Analytics reports or other information in order to match the company's needs and earn from the campaign. Therefore, the Google Analytics received should be compared with real numbers under the videos. If they seem to diverge much, then trust to the YouTuber must be questioned. Lastly, **video bloggers might be not following the contract**, even though the provisions were discussed beforehand. Tatiana Magera (2016) in her interview admits that YouTubers can ignore deadlines or advertise the product not in a way that was initially agreed. Each company resolves such conflicts individually, depending on its politics. The author advises to include the case of neglecting of the provisions and a resolution to it in the contract.

### 2.3 Key learning points

In this section a short list of the main learnings about influencer marketing in Russia from the theory is presented.

- In Russia YouTube has already become a common marketing practice, which aids promotion and spreading of marketing messages.
- Video bloggers are considered to be an effective method for approaching Russian audience since they appear to be active users of YouTube.
- YouTube is not an ultimate solution for online marketing, but an additional practice. Hence, a company should ensure expenditures to be worth the profits.
- Social Information Processing Theory, Two-step Flow Theory, Opinion leader, peer-to-peer communication, Consumer Culture Theory, eWOM are the main theoretical concepts explaining how influencer marketing on YouTube works.

- In the conditions of media inflation, using innovative collaboration techniques is required.
- Influencer marketing might be quite difficult and time-consuming task due to its special requirements and challenges.

### 3 Guidelines

This is the main chapter of the thesis, which suggests a step-by-step instruction on how to proceed with influencer campaign on Russian YouTube. The scheme below displays the main stages to be completed.



Figure 11. The order of steps in a YouTube collaboration.

### 3.1 Initiation

A YouTube collaboration begins with several preparatory stages inside the firm. Since influencer marketing is a form of online advertising, the author suggests using a pattern similar to normal advertising planning, developed by Kotler and Armstrong (2010), with digital considerations added.

#### 1) Review of the current situation

Cooperation with video bloggers might be attractive, yet it is necessary to understand whether a business truly needs it. The following aspects should be considered before making any decisions:

**Demand.** A firm has to make sure that the customers or prospects use YouTube, otherwise an influencer campaign is pointless. The author suggests doing a digital market analysis with the help of tools listed down below.

- TNS - <http://www.tnsglobal.com>
- Comscore - <http://www.comscore.com>
- Interactive Advertising Bureau - <https://www.iab.com>
- CISCO - <https://newsroom.cisco.com/home>

The sphere of operations has to be remembered, too. Unfortunately, some types of businesses such as metallurgy or mining are not suitable yet for promoting on YouTube due to deficiency of the right audience. The results of the empirical study suggest that young viewers tend to buy mostly cosmetics, personal care, office supplies, books, apps, software, clothing and accessories advertised by a YouTuber.

**Marketing objectives.** Not all marketing objectives can be realized by collaborating with video bloggers. For that reason, a company should check whether the desired outcomes are achievable using influencer



marketing on YouTube. The list of objectives that can be set for a YouTube campaign is presented on page 20.

**Resources.** Collaborations are not a vital part of online marketing, even though it becomes more widespread. Hence, a company should evaluate whether it is rational to invest in influencer marketing. Accomplishment of primary marketing plan should be secured at first before spending money on YouTube bloggers. Moreover, expenditures have to be worth the results. Forecasting of the outcomes is discussed on page 49.

**Competition.** A firm is advised to make a digital competitor benchmarking within its industry and learn about the approaches of others. In other words, a company can study how competitors collaborate with video bloggers in order to develop an original and competitive influencer marketing strategy. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012.)

## 2) Setting the objective

First and foremost, the objectives of an influencer campaign must be built on previous marketing choices of a company such as promotion mix, target consumers, value proposition, pricing and other aspects. In general, advertising can serve several main purposes, which are to inform, persuade or remind (Kotler & Armstrong 2010). Those can be applied to influencer marketing, too.

**Informative advertising** in YouTube videos is relevant when a company needs to create demand, brand awareness, reach new or niche customers, promote sales or attract new followers to its social media profiles. Through videos it is possible to communicate customer value, build good brand image, inform about new products and their uses or announce special offerings. As for **persuasive advertising**, it is convincing to favour one brand over the other. Direct juxtaposition of brands in a YouTube video should be avoided as it is a rather dull trick that would also provoke an endless advertising war between companies. Yet persuasive style might be used to unobtrusively encourage switching to the brand, instantly make a purchase or demonstrate the brand's superiority.

Finally, **reminder advertising** contributes to supporting lasting customer relationships. Such type of advertising is especially useful if a client base in Russia already exists and livening the relationships up is desired. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010.)

### **3) Setting the budget**

As it was already discussed, influencer campaigns are not fundamental in marketing strategy. If deciding on collaboration method straight away, there is a risk of irrational decisions, leading to financial miscarriage. Clearly, budgeting is individual for all firms. Nonetheless, the author suggests considering affordable and percentage-of-sales methods. Affordable method means setting the budget that can be afforded without too hard efforts. It starts with looking at total revenues and deducting all operating expenses. Then a reasonable portion of the resources is allocated for a YouTube campaign. Percentage-of-sales method can be appropriate when a company has already had experience of collaborating with a video blogger. In this case, forecasted amount of sales or other benefits is the base for allocating financial resources. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010.)

### **4) Understanding the pricing methods**

There are still no established norms of how the pricing is formed. In Russia there are two common reward methods, which are barter and money. The influencer is either given the company's products or services for free or paid a salary. It might be a combination of the two as well. Another way is to fix the blogger's salary to a certain measurable outcome such as sales from the campaign or clicks on the link in the description box. Thus, the blogger becomes a partner interested in achieving excellent results (Tolmacheva 2015). Normally, salaries are paid with 100 percent pre-payment or after the video was uploaded and checked before publishing.

To get a rough idea of what the price of a collaboration might be, the author provides examples from personal experience. As a rule, the more subscribers and views a blogger has, the bigger the prices for advertising

are. Pricing also depends on the audience and collaboration method used. For instance, a cooperation with a YouTuber with over 1 000 000 subscribers and 300 000 views under each video might cost from 200 000 Russian rubles. As for less popular video bloggers with under 1 000 000 subscribers, the price usually starts from 50 000 Russian rubles. An example of advertising practices and rates on “Wylsacom” channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/Wylsacom>) is shown on the figure down below. The audience of “Wylsacom” YouTube channel is adult, solvent and engaged, so the prices were established accordingly.

Прайс-лист на размещение рекламы на медиа-площадках Wylsacom – Февраль 2017			
Тип размещения	Цена руб.	Показатели	Краткое описание
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/wylsacom">youtube.com/wylsacom</a> – 1-ый канал о технологиях в СНГ			
Спецпроект	650 000	от 300 000 просмотров	Полноценный видеопроект.
Пре-ролл статика	150 000	от 300 000 просмотров	Рекламная вставка в течении первой минуты авторского видео 7-15 секунд. Статичная картинка, авторский голос. Ссылка в описании первой строкой.
Пре-ролл динамика	200 000	от 300 000 просмотров	Рекламная вставка в течении первой минуты авторского видео 7-15 секунд. Динамичная авторская картинка, авторский голос. Ссылка в описании первой строкой.
Интеграция	350 000	от 300 000 просмотров	Рекламная интеграция в авторском исполнении в тематическое авторское видео, до 1 минуты. Ссылка в описании первой строкой.
Конкурс	800 000	от 20 000 участников	Анонс конкурса на канале Wylsacom, который может включать краткий обзор продукта или сервиса рекламодателя, проведение конкурса и подведение итогов «Live» на канале WylsaLive. Призы предоставляет рекламодатель.

Figure 12. Price list of “Wylsacom” channel (Wylsa.com 2017).

## 5) How to deliver marketing messages on YouTube

When working with influencers was only emerging in Russia, simple product placement was the only collaboration format. Companies sent their products to bloggers and asked to tell about them in a video. Nobody was concerned about organic integrations and creativity. With time the technique has been developed. Now there are more considerations about the ways to incorporate products into a video, which are presented in the following paragraphs.

**Intercultural communication.** When a company has decided to extend its marketing activity to the Russian market, intercultural communication must be remembered. Without knowledge of the country’s cultural environment, it is not possible to reach the consumers effectively. The author recommends studying cultural and communication nuances in Russia and consider adapting marketing messages before proceeding with YouTube collaborations.

**Respect for relationships.** As a matter of fact, marketers and creators share many common goals. For instance, YouTubers aim to build genuine and long-lasting relationships with the audience, too. So, companies must respect the community and by no means interrupt the relationships between the blogger and the viewers (YouTube Advertisers 2016a). The empirical findings show that 26 percent of the respondents have unsubscribed from a YouTuber because of unsuccessful commercial video at least once, while 27 percent say that they have probably done it. Hence, it is essential to investigate the cultural environment of the channel. Otherwise, the brand will damage its own and the blogger's image as well as cause loss of followers. Pre-investigation can include:

- Exploring the interests of the audience.
- Studying the communication style between the blogger and the audience.
- Identifying the values, beliefs and other cultural details such as common jokes or stories.

**Organic collaborations.** The rule for businesses is to organically fit into the content and even enhance it by providing the YouTuber with new creative opportunities. Companies should not teach bloggers how to present products, yet it is necessary to set the main idea to be delivered to the audience. Allowing YouTubers to act in original and natural for them style initiates creative freedom. As an outcome, fans accept the company and a win-win situation is achieved (YouTube Advertisers 2016c). Also, Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) supports the concept of organic collaborations. The main idea is that people make media choices according to their personal motives and goals. If the content changes significantly, then it becomes not corresponding to what the audience have initially subscribed for. As a result, the viewers do not respond to the campaign (Dahl 2015). So, in addition to keeping the blogger's individuality, the company's industry must be matching the main topics of the channel. Clearly, a beauty blogger is not recommended for advertising smartphones. Referring to the empirical findings, 62 percent

of the participants say that they tend to like a sponsored video if the advertisement fits the topic of the video or the channel.

**The content.** As a matter of fact, the topic of content marketing is too broad to be covered in the current paper. Yet it is important to think what the video will provide to the viewers. Official YouTube's recommendations suggest that videos which are either entertaining, educational, inspirational are liked by the audience. (YouTube Advertisers 2016b.)

**Credibility of the message.** The viewers are sensitive to the content and can easily recognize an advertisement. As a general rule, marketing message is most effective when it is communicated in a natural manner (Dahl 2015). The YouTuber should not pretend that the video is not sponsored, but at the same time there is no place for direct persuasion or pressure. Besides, In Russia it becomes more common to affirm that the video is made on commercial basis due to respect for the viewers. 68 percent of the survey participants say that the blogger must state in the description box that the video is sponsored.

**No copying TV.** Even though TV has influenced online videos in a way or another, suggesting a blogger to create a video similar to TV commercials is rather useless. YouTube is a separate media platform with its own culture and practices to be followed, otherwise the campaign might have no effect. Yet it is also the matter of execution. In 2015 Samsung launched a big project on its channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/samsungRuTV>) together with Russian top video bloggers, which was called "Bloggers' Fight". The idea was to take the bloggers to Bali and organize a competition between them, filming it in a reality show format (Samsung Russia 2015). At a glance, the project appears to be successful as it has captured a huge number of total views together with likes.

### **3.1.1 Collaboration techniques**

With clear understanding of the campaign objectives, the method of implementation can be selected. The firm can either choose an option from

the YouTuber's price list or suggest a video idea. The latter method might be more beneficial as it takes into account specific marketing needs of the company. Besides, the it can always be adjusted to the blogger's requirements. Possible collaboration ideas and their description are presented in the following paragraphs. Beyond a doubt, there are no limits or strict rules for influencer campaigns. Cooperation is always a unique joint project. Companies can even devise own original formats using product placement as a basis. Even though it was said that it is a rather ordinary method, it is still the core of all collaboration types.

**1) Viral video** – a video that has gained extremely high amount of views, likes as well as shares due to its engaging content.

Firstly, a shareable idea for a video has to be created. Afterwards, a reference to the company's products or services is organically placed in such viral video. As a result, it is possible to achieve high brand recognition along with good image. Besides, empirical study shows that 45 percent of the respondents appreciate creativeness and originality of sponsored videos.

**Example.** The cooperation of "Sienduk" channel with food delivery service Delivery Club is a good example of highly successful product integration into a viral video. It is a fun animated movie about super turtles, who decided to order a pizza from Delivery Club (Sienduk 2014). The audience commented this collaboration as one of the best commercial video they have ever seen on YouTube because it is entertaining and suits well "Sienduk" channel. After receiving positive feedback, "Sienduk" continued with the series of three videos about the turtles. Each of the videos has gained more than 1 400 000 views and acceptance from the audience.

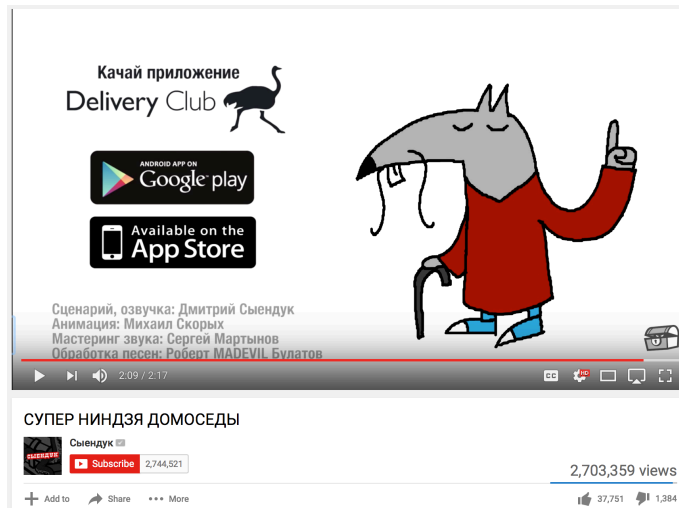


Figure 13. Collaboration of Delivery Club with “Sienduk” channel (Sienduk 2014).

**Advantages.** Successful viral videos contribute to promotion of the blogger’s channel, while also provide bigger information coverage for the company than if using another collaboration technique. Thus, viral videos are highly beneficial for both parties.

**Challenges.** To begin with, creating viral videos is difficult; it requires creativity together with open-minded thinking. The study held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2015 revealed that emotional stimuli such as novelty, incongruity and hyperbole are likely to make a video popular. In other words, if a video provides new experiences, or compares side by side incompatible objects, or applies exaggeration excessively it will more probably engage the viewers, even causing them to share the link further (Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2015). Apart from that, it is impossible to predict whether a video will become viral. Hence, uncertainty is associated with this technique.

**2) Test drive** – a company provides a video blogger with a product for testing it out and sharing the experience with the viewers.

Test drives are typical for companies selling vehicles, electronics and other kinds of expensive goods, which are not gifted to the blogger but given for filming. In a test drive the objective is to demonstrate the brand

from the best sides as well as tell about usages and advantages of its products. Accordingly, a company can deliver its value proposition and vision.

**Example.** BMW Group Russia gave Wylsacom a BMW X5 2016 for a two-week test drive. Then, he shared his thoughts about the car in a video review. Worthy of note that Wylsacom critically evaluated the car, drawing attention to the drawbacks of the car, too. (Wylsacom 2016c).

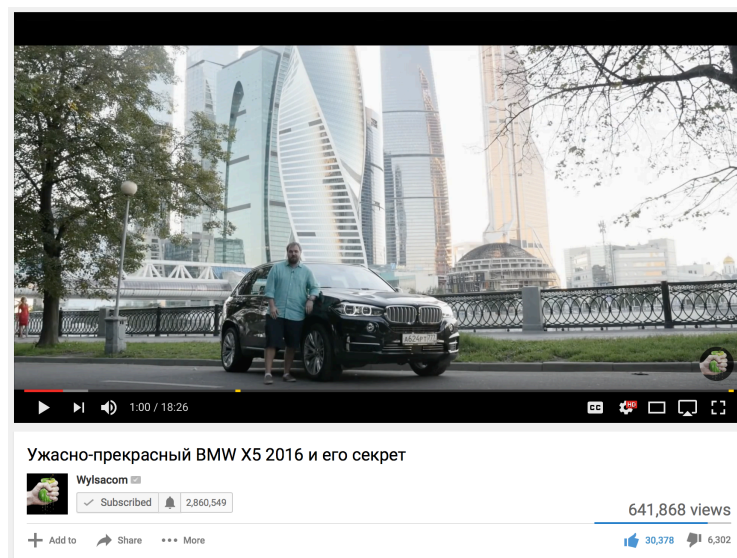


Figure 14. Collaboration of BMW with Wylsacom (Wylsacom 2016c).

**Advantages.** Test drive is an informative way to present all important features of a product or service in real-life conditions that might result in inspiring the viewers for a purchase. Moreover, if a company produces an interesting and exclusive product, the video can get to be viral.

**Challenges.** It appears that test drives are not suitable for all types of products or services. Suggesting a video blogger to test out pencils would be at least ridiculous. Besides, there is a risk that the YouTuber will not present the company in an adequate manner. He or she might be either artificially satisfied with the product or mistreat it. It is important for the blogger to speak naturally and present real opinion. Otherwise, excessively high expectations of the viewers about the product will lead to disappointment. Therefore, it must be agreed in the contract what is ac-



ceptable for the blogger to say in order to create a fair video review. Lastly, test drive would require delivery and recalling the product, which causes additional costs.

**3) Reportage** – a separate video report from a place, event or trip.

A YouTuber can be invited to the company’s factory or other interesting premises to create exclusive content about the working environment or production process. It might be done in a format of an excursion or tour.

**Example.** Microsoft and Kate Clapp created a video about one working day at the fashion magazine Glamour. Kate shared her experience of being an errand girl in the manner of “The Devil Wears Prada” movie (TheKateClapp 2016). The video has captured more than 2 490 000 views and 124 000 likes, which indicates acceptance from the audience.

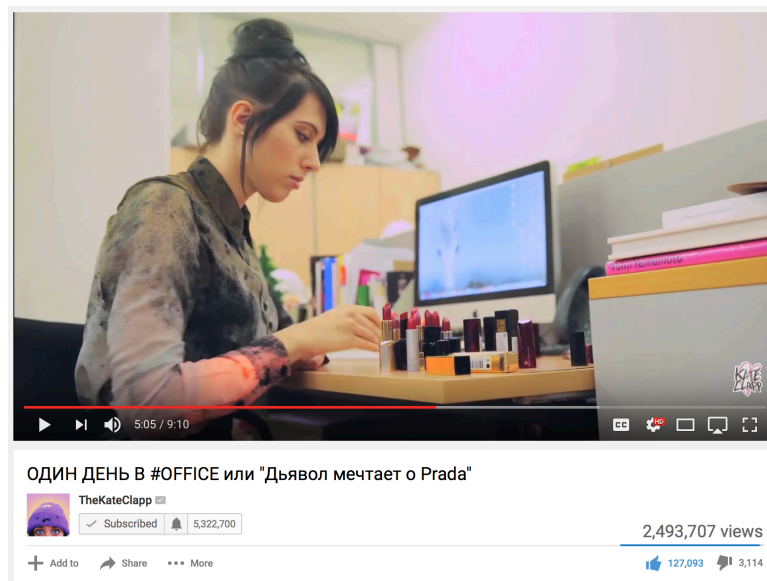


Figure 15. Collaboration of Microsoft with Kate Clapp (TheKateClapp 2016).

**Advantages.** Through the eyes of a video blogger it is possible to express the company’s spirit and values. In addition, revealing exclusive information might contribute to virality of the video. A reportage can also help the company to connect with the viewers and begin the relation-

ships. Furthermore, being a special guest would please the blogger and encourage him or her to favour the brand in future.

**Challenges.** First of all, reportages are appropriate for companies which have information worthy of sharing on YouTube. Further, a good reportage requires such preparations as planning what to be demonstrated as well as ensuring every part of the company is in excellent condition. Also, transportation costs of the blogger to the premises must be remembered.

**4) Educational video** – a video providing valuable knowledge for the viewers. The examples are tutorials, DIYs, lessons, life advices and other types of informative content.

First and foremost, people watch tutorials because they want to learn. Therefore, brands must find the way to fit the educational idea of the video and even contribute to learning process. The company can share professional knowledge of a topic. To give an instance, a pasta producer together with a food blogger can tell how to cook pasta properly. Or, the company's product can play the key role in achieving excellent result. For example, a YouTuber can use a curling iron from a certain brand in a video instruction on how to curl hair.

**Advantages.** A video which is bringing value and being useful will be appreciated by the viewers. 50 percent of the online survey participants say that they tend to like a commercial video that is informative. Thus, by helping the audience a company can enhance own and the blogger's image. Also, an educational video can suggest usages of the products or services.

**Challenges.** An educational video might be time consuming to prepare. However, it is necessary to ensure its usefulness. Matching the interests of the audience is essential, too.

**Example.** Marie Novosad filmed a video about DIY spa procedures at home (Novosad 2016a). In this video she mentions Garnier face masks, which can be added to a home spa routine. Another video by Novosad,

where she is sharing her advice about going to the first date, was sponsored by Cacharel (Novosad 2016b). While she was discussing the details of a girl's appearance on the date, she mentioned her favourite perfume by Cacharel. One more interesting format was used by La Roche-Posay (tanyarybakova 2016). Tatyana Rybakova made an interview with a dermatologist concerning skin problems, asking him questions sent by the followers.



Figure 16. Collaboration of La Roche-Posay with Tatyana Rybakova (tanyarybakova 2016).

**5) Brand ambassador** – an influential person, who is actively advocating a brand.

A company can suggest a blogger to become its advocate. Moreover, by studying videos and social network posts, it might be possible to find a YouTuber already interested in the brand. Speaking of the main purpose for a brand ambassador, it is to let the brand penetrate his or her content, including regular mentioning and information sharing. In addition, branding can be done to the blogger's channel, meaning adding corporate design and logos to YouTube channel art or video thumbnails.

**Example.** Tornado, producer of energy drinks, cooperates with Konstantin from one of the largest Russian gaming channels "Jove". As can be seen from the figure below, the channel art is branded with the logo of Tornado (Jove n.d.).



Figure 17. Collaboration of Tornado with “Jove” channel (Jove n.d.).

**Advantages.** In fact, ambassadors are a constant online marketing channel, which is not limited with one video collaboration. A cross-platform approach can be included, meaning involving other social networks for a wider coverage. Thus, a company can achieve strong online presence along with loyalty of the blogger’s audience.

**Challenges.** An ambassador is part of the company’s image. For that reason, it is essential to ensure that the blogger is a trustworthy and reliable person. Moreover, the author recommends to regularly observe the YouTuber’s activity across all social networks to check whether he or she is still desired as the brand’s advocate. As was already discussed, continuous communication with the video blogger is needed in any type of collaboration. Yet for a brand ambassador it is especially important. Providing him or her with the latest news, marketing materials and support is essential. Lastly, partnership with an ambassador will most likely be more expensive than any other collaboration type.

**6) Producing merchandise** – designing and manufacturing goods together with a video blogger, which might be anything depending on the company’s specialisation. Examples include clothing, accessories, beauty products, office supplies, home decorations and other types of small souvenirs.

The goods can have illustrations related to the blogger’s identity on it. Or, offering a YouTuber to realize his or her ideas concerning some product not necessarily connected with the fandom, is excellent as well. Even creating merchandise together with the fans is possible by way of involving them in development stages. Afterwards, the merchandise can

become an important element of the blogger's brand, which regularly appears in the videos and on other social media platforms.

**Example.** YouTube show "This Is Horosho" has an own online store with branded merchandise (ZILE SHOP 2017). As can be seen, an intermediary company works for the show.



Figure 18. Merchandise of "This Is Horosho" (ZILE SHOP 2017).

**Advantages.** Depending on the quality of the relationships between the creator and the viewers, good sales level is expected from the merchandise. In addition to that, the company can offer the creator a percent from sales to encourage his or her promotional efforts. Besides, the company's contribution to actualization of the YouTuber's dreams will be appreciated by the fans. Consequently, building relationships and achieving loyalty from the viewers is possible. Last but not least, successful merchandise can support promotion of other company's products.

**Challenges.** First, producing merchandise relies on the company's industry. For example, electronics is not a type of products that is easily modified. In also has to be noted that the blogger's merchandise works by the principle of derived demand. To put it another way, if the YouTuber becomes not interesting for the audience, then there will be no demand for the merchandise. Moreover, an analysis of the viewers' demographics must be held to understand their interests and purchasing power. The company's financial and operating capabilities must be carefully revised, too. Lastly, manufacturing is a complex process, which implies responsibility for the blogger's reputation.

**7) Freebies** – free products or services provided for a YouTuber with hope of mentioning.

A company can send free samples of its products to a YouTuber as a gift. In fact, it is not a proper collaboration, but a friendly gesture. Some influencers leave their postal addresses either in the description box under the videos or in the channel's "About" page. If the postal address cannot be found, it is fine to ask it from the blogger. Also, a company can decide whether the YouTuber will be notified about the parcel, so the gift can be a pleasant surprise. Sending freebies is aimed at natural eWOM, generated by the influencer in exchange for the gifts. Most likely, the YouTuber will not make a separate video dedicated to the freebies. Nevertheless, it is a matter of good fortune.

**Example.** In this video an influencer Vladlena Varlamova shares what has she got for New Year's Eve (Varlamova 2017). While speaking about gifts from relatives, she shows products which were sent to her by brands. Another example is Marie Novosad's video about new interesting products she has got (Novosad 2016c). Even though she stated that the video is not sponsored, she shows appreciation to her partner brands.

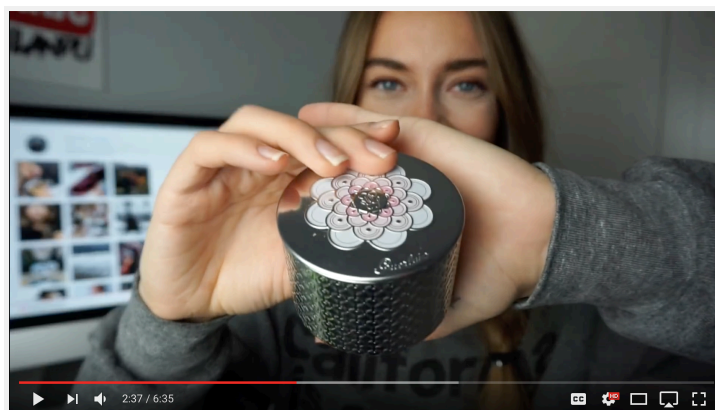


Figure 19. Vladlena Varlamova shows gifts from brands (Varlamova 2017).

**Advantages.** Sending gifts is a relatively simple and quick procedure, which might cost less than other collaboration techniques. Also, it can be a friendly initiation of relationships with the blogger.

**Challenges.** A company is advised to evaluate beforehand whether its products might be interesting for the blogger. Besides, it is essential to make sure that the products to be sent are in the best condition to avoid negative eWOM. However, the main issue is that there is no guarantee the YouTuber will tell about the gifts in a video.

To summarize the information, the author developed a couple of tables. The first one briefly presents specific objectives for each of the techniques discussed.

<b>Collaboration technique</b>	<b>Objective</b>
Viral video	Capturing attention to the brand, sharing value proposition and customer promise.
Test drive	Demonstrating superiority of the brand and its products, suggesting usages of the product, communicating information.
Reportage	Sharing spirit and values, connecting and starting relationships with the audience, communicating information.
Educational video	Providing valuable knowledge to the audience, increasing brand loyalty, creating good image.
Brand ambassador	Continuous promotion and communication of information, building lasting relationships with the blogger's audience.
Producing merchandise	Building lasting relationships with the blogger's audience, promotion of other company's products, continuous promotion, wider information coverage due to involving of other social media platforms.
Freebies	Starting relationships with the blogger's audience, communicating information, creating good image.

Table 1. Objectives of each collaboration technique.

Furthermore, the collaboration techniques differ in their application, which can be integration, separate videos or cross-platform activity. The author suggests possible combinations in the table below.

Integration	Separate video	Cross-platform activity
Educational content, reportage, test drive, freebies	Educational video, reportage, test drive, viral video	Brand ambassador, freebies, producing merchandise

Table 2. Collaboration techniques and implementation methods.

Similar to product placement, **integration** implies incorporating commercial content into a video. For example, company can suggest a blogger to include a reportage or a test drive in one of the videos. As for **separate videos**, they are dedicated to the brand from the beginning to the end and higher in price. They might be more fruitful because attention of the viewers is on the brand throughout the entire video. Paradoxically, separate videos can also be useless because of media inflation, which was discussed on page 25. Concerning **cross-platform** activity, it is a complex approach which involves usage of the YouTuber’s other social media profiles (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Vkontakte). Cross-platform method is the most expensive way of collaborating, though it is the most extensive.

### 3.1.2 Finding an influencer

There are several methods of searching for influencers on Russian YouTube. First of all, a company can explore YouTube manually by typing in suitable key words into “Search” field. For instance, if one is interested in cooperating with beauty bloggers, then “makeup tutorial” or “favourites of the month” can be used. Clearly, basic knowledge of Russian language or a translator would be handy. Also, searching for channels can be done from “Browse channels” page - <https://www.youtube.com/channels?gl=RU>. The second method is using various databases and ratings of video bloggers in Russia.

- SocialBlade (2017) offers a brief summary and rankings of YouTube channels and their comparison in terms of viewer’s en-



agement, number of views, growth rate and other important metrics.

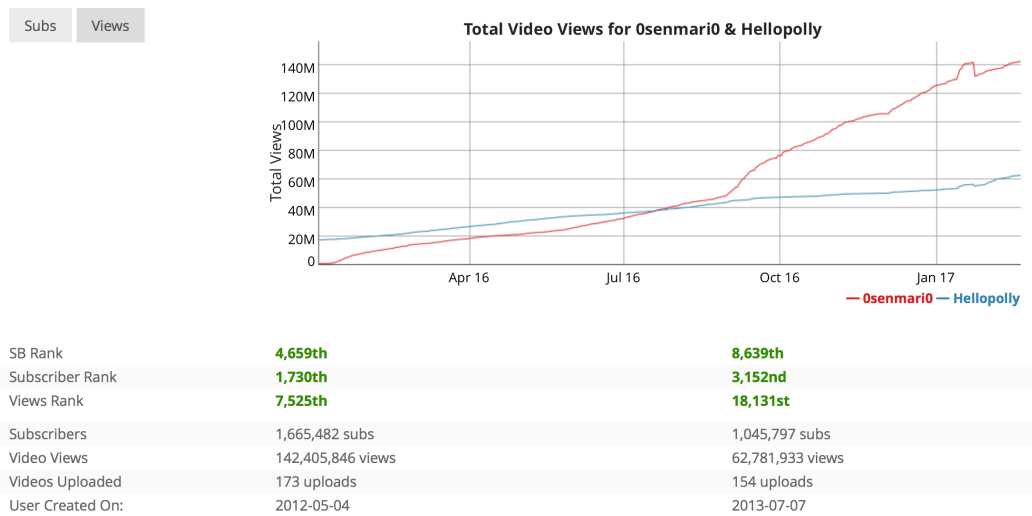


Figure 20. Comparison of two channels (SocialBlade 2017).

- LiveDune (2017) provides with a list of top viewed YouTubers as well as a more comprehensive analysis of a channel’s activity.

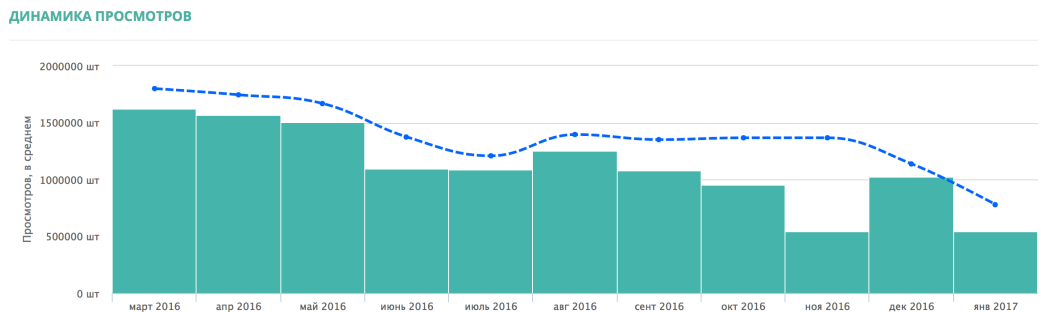


Figure 21. Statistics of views on “AdamThomasMoran” channel (LiveDune 2017).

- Vlogster (2017) helps to browse Russian video bloggers applying different filters such as forecasted views count and even politeness.

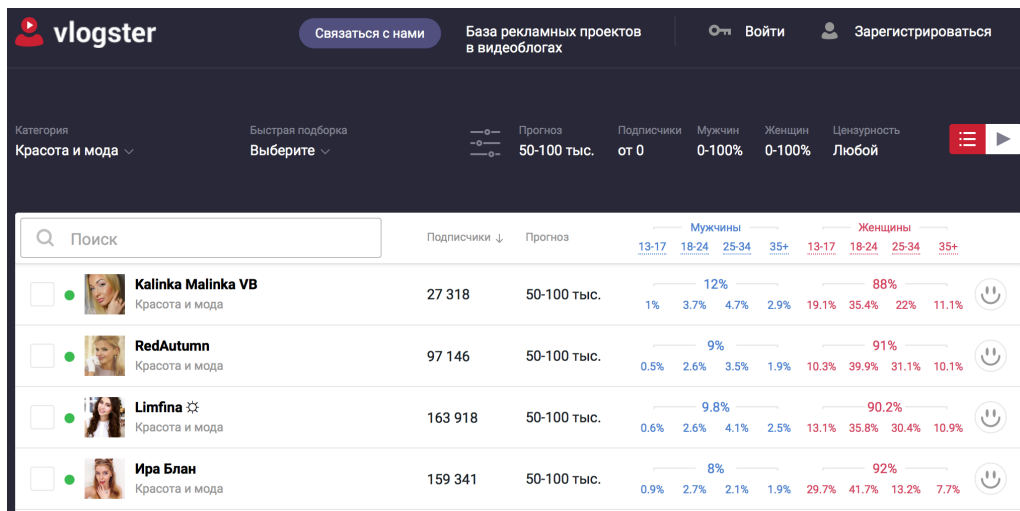


Figure 22. Examples of beauty and fashion channels (Vlogster 2017).

- Epicstars (2017) is a platform which connects creators and advertisers. After posting a task description, a brand can either wait for responds or search the blogger data base manually.

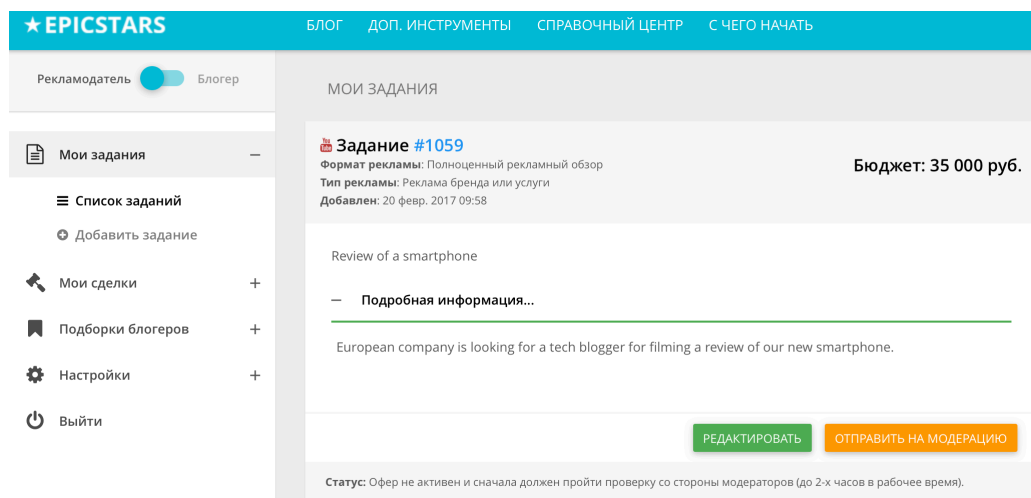


Figure 23. Example of a task description (Epicstars 2017).

Another method of connecting with video bloggers is to work with intermediaries. There are various media agencies in Russia that are specialized in organizing collaborations with YouTubers. For instance, Prolog.yt (2017) or Videobaker (2017). By using such services, a company only needs to pay and watch how the campaign is going.

Finally, some YouTubers initiate collaborations by themselves if they like the brand and wish to promote it. So, the author advises to leave an email address or other contacts on the company's website and social media profiles. It would also be appropriate to put a small note announcing that the brand is looking forward to working with influencers.

While browsing numerous YouTube channels, a few potential video bloggers to cooperate with can be selected by handling a quick preliminary analysis of available information. The websites mentioned earlier can be particularly helpful. It is recommended to look at the main topic of the channel, number of subscribers, average views amount, likes and comments. Also, if a YouTuber uploads videos regularly, it is more likely that he or she has good contact with the viewers. However, YouTube metrics will be studied more profoundly on the following stages.

### **3.1.3 Formulating a business offer**

A good cooperation starts with clearly defined tasks and conditions communicated to an influencer in an individual business request. Firstly, a company needs to understand the main goal of the request, which might be either to ask for a pricelist or suggest a collaboration idea. In the latter case, the message can contain the following parts:

- 1) Greetings and introduction.** It is polite to begin the message with a small company description to present it to the influencer.
- 2) The task.** The collaboration technique and objectives can be introduced in one short sentence. If it is possible, the author recommends providing the YouTuber with an example video.
- 3) Detailed description.** Now a full and clear description of the collaboration idea and requirements can be provided. As a rule, companies always ask influencers to put a link to their website in the description box. Also, it is wise to agree with the YouTuber about a check before publishing the video. Lastly, a reward method should be mentioned.

- 4) **Requesting information.** It is necessary to enquire the influencer about already completed collaborations as well as Google Analytics data. In addition, estimated dates of publishing the video can be asked for.
- 5) **Polite closing** contributes to creating a good first impression of the company and predisposes the YouTuber to further communication. For instance, expressing readiness to answer questions or providing other type of support is suitable. Invitation to the company's premises for a meeting is fine as well. In general, an influencer should be delighted as much as the company's best partners. Under promising and over delivering the value is appropriate during cooperation.

Even though basic understanding of the collaboration was already established, a company should always adjust its offer. Each single creator has own original content that deserves an individual approach. So, by adding a few personalized solutions in the collaboration, the company can get the influencer interested in maximizing the campaign's effectiveness. According to specialist Tatiana Magera (2016), the following aspects should be emphasized in the business request:

**Personal interests.** As a rule, YouTubers greatly care about their video works. It is important to highlight that the blogger is creatively free and allowed to create video in own original style. It will be appreciated by both the blogger and the audience (Magera 2016). Creative freedom is a vital part of organic collaborations, which were discussed on page 32.

**Uniqueness of the offer.** The company should try to make the offer extraordinary. In other words, provide the YouTuber with unusual opportunities, which would not be offered by any other company. For instance, providing new emotions and adrenaline might be attractive for the blogger. (Magera 2016.)

#### 3.1.4 Reaching the influencer

After preparing a clear business offer, a company has to decide how to reach the blogger. There are a few possible methods:

- **Email.** Usually, bloggers leave their email addresses in the description box under videos or in the channel's "About" page. It is quite typical for YouTube not to reply immediately, so the author advises to be patient. If the blogger is not answering for more than a week, sending the message once again is fine. He or she can also be reminded about the message in social networks. Besides, some bloggers have a PR manager, who leads all negotiations.
- **Direct messages (DM).** Companies quite often communicate their business offers via DM in social networks such as Instagram, Vkontakte, or Facebook. Such method is rather controversial. On one hand, some bloggers check their DM regularly, and a quicker respond is possible. On the other hand, popular bloggers typically already have their DM full of messages from fans, so such contacting method might not be reliable.
- **Phone or online call.** It is not common for Russian video bloggers to publish phone numbers or Skype user names. However, after first contact by email or DM, the blogger can be suggested to discuss the collaboration in a call.
- **Personal meeting.** Once again, after contacting the video blogger by email or other means, it would be friendly to invite him or her for a meeting in real life. It can promote building relationships and trust. After the meeting, highlights of the discussion can be sent to the blogger by email.

### 3.1.5 Studying Google Analytics

Google Analytics data is needed to evaluate whether the blogger is suitable for the campaign, forecast results and assess the given pricing. Success of the collaboration largely depends on how well Google Analytics was examined and related to the marketing objectives. The main task at this stage is to understand the quality of relationships between the influencer and the audience, which defines effectiveness of the cam-

paign; it is done by studying YouTube Analytics reports, available for all creators in “Analytics” section of “Creator Studio” menu. The main metrics that a company should be interested in is:

- views
- watch time
- audience retention
- demographics
- likes and dislikes
- comments
- regularity of uploads.

Nowadays, the number of subscribers is considered as a not sufficient measure since it is not always corresponding to the average views count due to various reasons (Shmakov 2016). Thus, a YouTuber with 5 000 subscribers might have more influence than one with 30 000 subscribers.

Speaking of views, its average amount per one video affects such metrics as conversion rate or click-through rate (CTR). Conversion means the percentage of viewers who took an action after watching an advertisement, while CTR shows the percentage of viewers who clicked on the company’s link in the description box. The bigger the average number of views per one video is, the higher CTR and conversion might be. For that reason, average views count per one video is used to estimate promises of the campaign, not the number of subscribers. (Shmakov 2016.)

As a rule, a steady positive increase in “Watch time”, “Audience retention” for the last 365 days is a good sign. Retention of the audience is measured in average view duration and average percentage viewed. The higher those figures are, the more likely that the advertisement will reach the audience. Also, average view duration can suggest the timing for a product placement or calling for an action.

“Demographics” is alike a customer base, it reflects who the viewers are, their gender, age and geographical location. It is compared with the portrait of existing customer base or prospects to be reached in Russia.

Especially, one should pay attention to the age of the subscribers. Obviously, the older the subscribers are, the higher their purchasing power is. (Epicstars.com 2016.)

In “Likes and dislikes” section, likes must be exceeding dislikes, meaning that the audience is interested in the content. The number of comments under videos should be stable, which indicates that the audience is engaged and supports the blogger. Engagement rate (ER) summarizes the activity of the subscribers. It can be calculated for a single video by using the following formula:

$$ER \text{ for a video} = \frac{\text{Likes} + \text{Comments}}{\text{Views}} \quad (1)$$

Or, for the channel as a whole:

$$ER \text{ for a channel} = \frac{\text{Total likes} + \text{total comments}}{\text{Total views on the channel}} \quad (2)$$

Calculating ER for several different videos helps to define the type of content that is the most interesting for the subscribers and a collaboration technique to be used (Epicstars.com 2016). However, if the viewers seem to be quite engaged, it does not necessarily mean that each one of them will buy an advertised product. Their online support for the blogger does not cost anything, while making a purchase involves bigger considerations. Empirical findings show that 41 percent of the respondents have bought products advertised by a YouTuber at least once, while 36 percent have not and 22 percent are not sure.

### 3.1.6 Decision making

The list of final advice for deciding on which YouTuber to involve in the campaign is presented below:

- **Flexibility.** Dates of publishing the commercial video vary from one video blogger to another. The company should consider the one who offers the most suitable timing as well as able to carry out the desired format.

- **Language barrier.** Certainly, if the YouTuber speaks English language on an appropriate level, the collaboration proceeds smoother.
- **Communicability.** A blogger who communicates scantily and does not reply timely is problematic to negotiate with. The company should prefer the one who aims to always be in touch.
- **Personal characteristics.** An attempt to evaluate personal qualities of the YouTuber should be made since he or she will represent the brand and become almost a part of its face.
- **Leader.** It is recommended to choose the blogger who is an expert in the topic of the commercial video (Magera 2016). For example, a beauty blogger discussing new lipsticks would sound more convincing than one talking about a new motorcycle model.
- **Opportunities.** A video blogger who possesses better technological capabilities such as good cameras, a studio or other equipment can produce a commercial video of finest quality and should be preferred.
- **Portfolio.** A company can evaluate the campaigns' quality the creator has already done by studying previous collaborations and select the one with the best cases.
- **Commercial activity.** Brands are advised to examine the proportion of commercial and non-commercial videos on the channel because dominance of paid content is not appreciated by the viewers, damaging their trust (Magera 2016). 34 percent of the survey participants state that they would not like a sponsored video if the YouTuber already have many sponsored videos.

## 3.2 Collaboration

### 3.2.1 Contract

Before the influencer starts working on the video, a contract must be signed. It is not necessarily a serious settlement, but a simple contract between two parties, needed for registering agreements as well as conflict resolutions. In addition, a contract would contribute to more



convenient and trouble-free campaign execution for both the blogger and the company. It can be made using the company's official letterhead as a template and include the following aspects:

- Time schedule and dates of checking and publishing the video.
- Reward method described in detail and payment dates.
- Full task description.
- Requirements such as placing a link to the company's website or social media profiles in the description box.
- Conflict management. The methods of solving disputes should be agreed.
- Signatures of both parties.

If the company neglects the provisions, it might cause the influencer to start negative eWOM activity. Disappointment with the level of services, quality of products can be the reason, too. Therefore, a company should make every effort to provide the blogger with pleasant collaborating experience. The author suggests to even exceed the promises by surprising with an extra gift or other friendly gesture.

### **3.2.2 Launching**

The last step before official kick-off is to watch the commercial video and check whether all conditions were fulfilled. Usually, after uploading the YouTuber sets "Unlisted" access to the video and sends a private link to the advertiser. Afterwards, the video is published for the public. At this point, the company can monitor the viewers' reaction and comments about the video.

### **3.3 Closing the project**

The following paragraphs discuss the end of the campaign, which includes evaluation of the results as well as certain considerations for the future. After at least ten days from the publication date, the results are gathered by asking the influencer to make screenshots of Google Analyt-

ics of the commercial video. Other metrics can be used to evaluate the campaign, too.

First of all, the author recommends examining Google Analytics in order to find out the viewer's characteristics and reaction. How to understand "Views", "Demographics", "Audience retention" and "Likes and dislikes" was already explained on page 50. "Sharing" from "Engagement report" section shows how many people have shared the video with someone else. Absence of shares is not bad for the campaign, yet the bigger the amount of those the more likely that the collaboration idea fitted well. Finally, "Comments" section should be studied to see what the subscribers write about the video. Google Translate (Google 2017) should be enough for understanding what the comments are about.

In addition to Google Analytics, brands utilize such metrics as CTR or conversion rate, already introduced on page 50. CTR is computed using the following formula:

$$CTR = \frac{Clicks}{Views} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

On Russian YouTube CTR can range from 0.4 to 4.0 percent. So, for 10 000 views there can be 40 or 400 people clicked the link under the blogger's video. Companies select what link to put in the description depending on the campaign's objectives (Mirolyubov 2016). In order to increase sales, a web page with product catalogue can be inserted. Also, digital marketers calculate price per click (PPC) as follows:

$$Price\ per\ click = \frac{Costs}{Clicks} \quad (4)$$

PPC shows how much does one click to the company's link cost. Normally, it is computed after the campaign has been completed. The lower it is, the more advantageous the pricing was for the company. For a single video PPC can vary from 1.75 to 17.5 Russian rubles (Mirolyubov 2016). PPC helps to evaluate rationality of the collaboration and decide whether to continue working with the YouTuber in future.

Concerning conversion, it is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Conversion rate} = \frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Views}} \quad (5)$$

For some, an increase in followers on social media is the goal to be achieved. Accordingly, the number of new followers is divided by the number of views to find out the conversion. Unfortunately, there is no yardstick for conversion since each organization interprets it differently. Therefore, the rate itself does not provide any useful information, yet it can be used when comparing the results of two campaigns.

Clicks or new followers do not necessarily mean sales, though. Unluckily, linking online metrics to sales is still rather hard, and there is no agreed way to do it. So, when collaborating with influencers companies mostly rely on building relationships with the audience and increasing brand awareness (Chen 2016). However, the author recommends generating an affiliate promo code for the blogger. Based on the number of codes used at checkout, the company can see how many viewers have made a purchase after watching the video.

After evaluation, the author suggests several concluding activities, which are listed below:

- Writing a **gratitude letter** to the influencer, showing appreciation of the job done.
- Asking the influencer for writing **feedback** concerning the collaboration process with the company.
- Considering **further cooperation** depending on the results and personal qualities of the blogger.
- Creating a rough **profile of an influencer** needed for future collaborations, which can comprise the audience's characteristics, the channel's topic and statistical data. With more cooperations, the profile will be gradually refining.
- Creating a **portfolio of completed collaborations** with influencers and saving the case. It can include an analysis of the blogger's

channel and audience, description of the conditions and all collaboration events happened. A portfolio can help to avoid past mistakes and master influencer marketing.

### **3.4 Empirical research: the most common mistakes in collaborations.**

In this section inferences from the empirical study are provided in a list of the most common mistakes companies make while collaborating with influencers. The findings did not reveal much new information, but confirmed the theories and the author's knowledge.

**Mistake 1 – Attempting to control the influencer.** Anastacia Kay (2017) states that asking the blogger to present a specified opinion about the products is unacceptable. In addition, the survey results show that a sponsored video can be disliked if the blogger is advertising too pushy, which agrees with the concept of credibility of the message. Tatiana Magera (2016) also agrees that direct advertisement does not work. Therefore, companies are advised to let the blogger speak naturally and share true viewpoints in order to ensure delivery of the marketing message.

*“The quality of the contents is always above all” – Tatyana Rybakova (2016).*

**Mistake 2 – Communication delays.** Long communication as well as not timely payments harm the collaboration, as was pointed out by Max Brandt (2016). So, companies must be responsible and reply to the influencers in a timely manner.

**Mistake 3 – Lack of education.** Tatyana Rybakova (2016) finds it demotivating to communicate with advertisers who are not well educated in the sphere of influencer marketing. Moreover, some companies do not recognize how hard it might be for the blogger to organically integrate advertisement into the content, as was mentioned by Uliana Petrukhina

(2017). Thus, good knowledge base about YouTube and its culture is needed in order to design high quality collaborations.

*“The market is growing. Keep up and develop” – Max Brandt (2016).*

**Mistake 4 – Too many collaborations.** 35.5 percent of the survey respondents tend to dislike a sponsored video if the advertised brand has already been promoted on many other YouTube channels. Hence, the companies are advised to do not collaborate too often and with more than three video bloggers at once.

**Mistake 5 - Long videos.** Tatiana Magera (2016) observes that videos which last around 15 minutes are not effective. She recommends using short and dynamic videos.

**Mistake 6 – Poor research.** As was already discussed in this thesis, it is essential to study the influencer’s content before offering a collaboration. Otherwise, a refusal is likely to be received. For example, Anastacia Kay (2017) says that she often disagrees to cooperate with companies because the products or services were not interesting to her audience. Uliana Petrukhina (2017) also advises to study the blogger before proceeding with negotiations.

*“Often companies' way of thinking about the world or cooperations disagrees with the interests of my audience” - Uliana Petrukhina (2017).*

## 4 Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to design a step-by-step guide for using one of the most innovative marketing tools for reaching Russian consumers – a cooperation with YouTube bloggers. By combining various information sources, the author could cover all research questions and achieve initial objectives. Basic marketing theories from books allowed understanding the foundation of influencer campaigns, while online sources provided the author with the latest knowledge from the field. The empirical study was essential for confirming the theories and developing recommendations. Aside from that, real life experience of the author complemented the study. As the final outcome, an influencer marketing strategy for Russian YouTube has been suggested.

Speaking of the research process, the author would like to highlight what could have been done differently. Unfortunately, empirical study was rather problematic since not as many advertisers were involved as it was originally planned due to their busy lifestyles. So, more practical knowledge from specialists could have been obtained. The author recommends setting more realistic goals for empirical research of a bachelor's thesis. As for further research suggestions, the study could either be extended or narrowed down. The topic can be covered more globally, investigating YouTube marketing on international level, not only in Russia. Alternatively, focusing on application of influencer marketing in a specific industry such as makeup or software would be interesting as well.

To conclude, it must be acknowledged that the online world is rapidly developing. New technologies that can be utilized as marketing tools are being introduced each year. Constant learning and following trends in digital marketing is necessary to stay ahead of competitors. The author wishes the best of luck and success in applying such a creative promotion tool as influencer marketing on YouTube in Russia.

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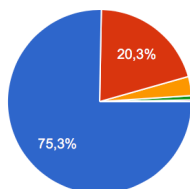
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Results of the online survey.

(How old are you?)

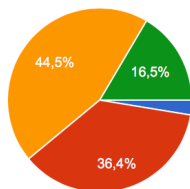
1. Сколько Вам лет?



10-18	1012	67.2%
19-24	273	18.1%
25-33	45	3%
34-42	10	0.7%
43-51	4	0.3%
52-60	0	0%
(Younger) Младше	0	0%
(Older) Старше	0	0%

(For how long have you been watching YouTubers from Russia?)

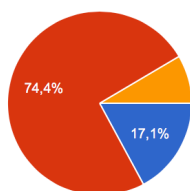
2. Как давно вы смотрите видеоблоггеров из России?



(Less than 1 year) Менее 1 года	39	2.6%
(1-3 years) 1-3 года	549	36.4%
(3-5 years) 3-5 лет	671	44.5%
(More than 5 years) Более 5 лет	249	16.5%

(What is your attitude to sponsored videos in general?)

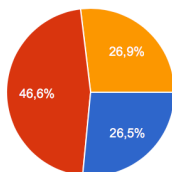
3. Как в большинстве случаев Вы относитесь к спонсируемым видео?



(Positively) Положительно	258	17.1%
(Neutrally) Нейтрально	1122	74.4%
(Negatively) Негативно	128	8.5%

(Have you ever unsubscribed from a Russian YouTuber because of an unsuccessful commercial video?)

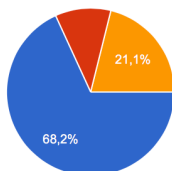
6. Случалось ли такое, что Вы отписывались от Российского блоггера из-за неудачного коммерческого видео?



(Yes) Да	400	26.5%
(No) Нет	702	46.6%
(Maybe) Возможно	406	26.9%

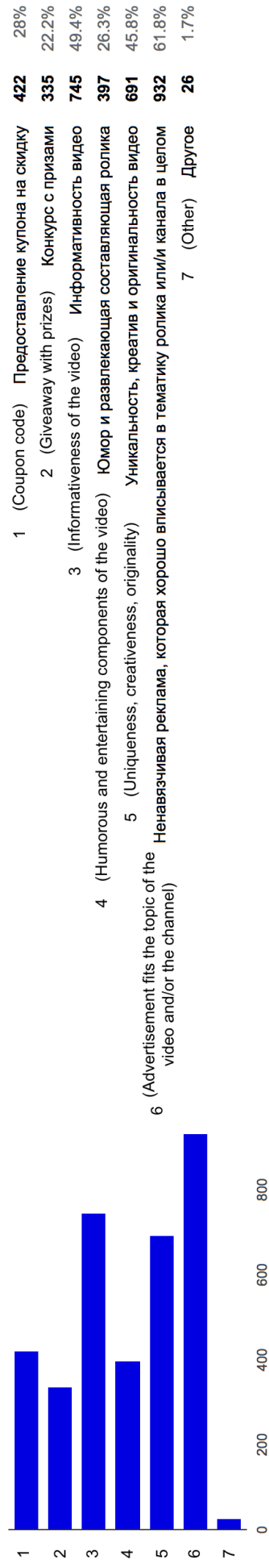
(Do you agree that the YouTuber has to state in the description that the video is sponsored?)

7. Согласны ли Вы, что блоггер обязан отмечать в описании, что видео спонсировано?

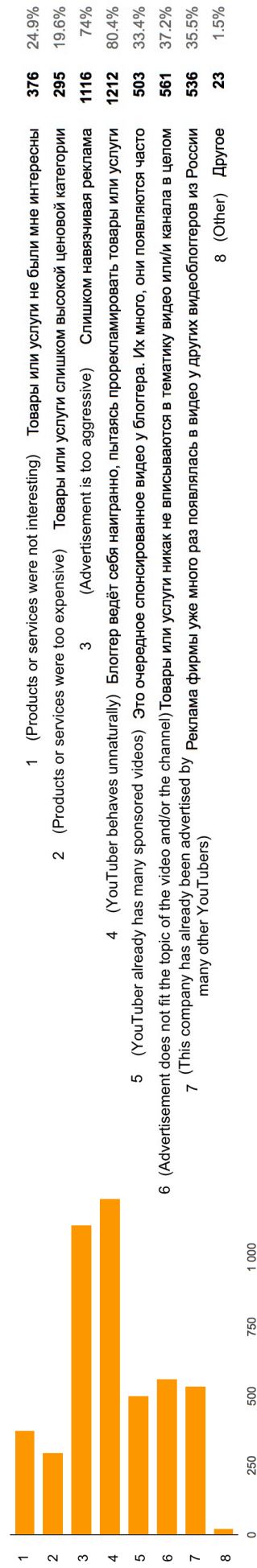


(Yes) Да	1023	68.2%
(No) Нет	161	10.7%
(Maybe) Возможно	317	21.1%

**(Why would you like a commercial video?)**  
**4. Почему Вам может понравиться коммерческое видео?**



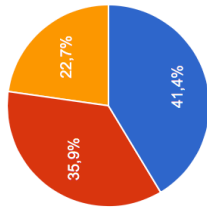
**(Why would you dislike a commercial video?)**  
**5. Почему Вам может НЕ понравится коммерческое видео?**



(Have you ever bought products or services advertised by a Russian YouTuber?)

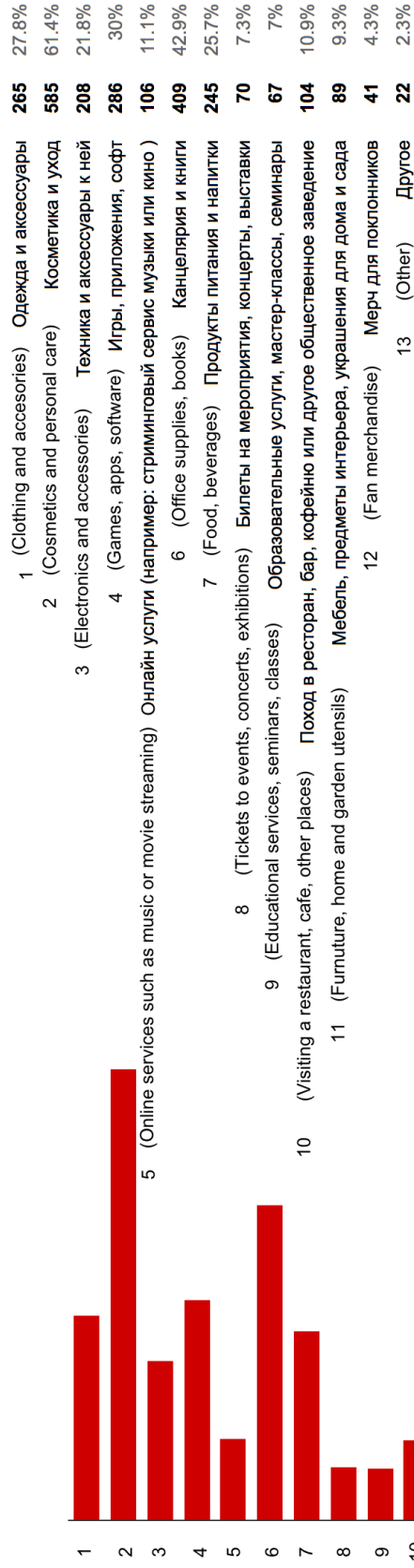
8. Покупали ли Вы когда-либо продукты или услуги, которые были прорекламированы Российским видеоблоггером?

(Yes) Да **624** 41.4%  
 (No) Нет **541** 35.9%  
 (Maybe) Возможно **343** 22.7%



(If yes, what exactly?)

9. Если да, то что именно?





Appendix 2. Self-completion interview form for influencers.

## **INTERVIEW FOR YOUTUBE INFLUENCERS (ИНТЕРВЬЮ ДЛЯ АВТОРОВ YOUTUBE)**

### **Instructions (Инструкция)**

The interview objective is to find out what are the most common mistakes in YouTube collaborations from the brand's side by discussing your personal views and experiences. So, focus on what you think should be avoided in order to have a mutually-beneficial campaign.

The interview consists of 14 open-ended questions. Obtaining rich and informative answers is desired. However, you are free to write as much information as you wish. You can miss any questions you do not want to answer. Remember to respond according to your personal opinion. Take as much time as you need answering the interview.

After the researcher has analyzed the results, you will be asked to confirm whether the inferences from your responses were made correctly in order to ensure credible findings.

Hopefully, you will enjoy participating in this research!

(Задачей интервью является выяснить, каковы наиболее распространенные ошибки в YouTube коллаборациях со стороны бренда, обсуждая Ваши личные взгляды и опыт. Поэтому, сосредоточьте внимание на том, чего Вы считаете следует избегать, чтобы создать взаимовыгодную кампанию.

Интервью состоит из 14 открытых вопросов. Исследователь стремится к получению информативных, обширных ответов. Тем не менее, Вы можете написать столько информации, сколько хотите. Вы можете пропустить любые вопросы, на которые не хотите отвечать. Не забудьте отвечать только в соответствии с Вашим личным мнением. Используйте столько времени, сколько Вам потребуется.

После того, как исследователь проанализирует результаты, Вам будет предложено подтвердить, были ли сделаны выводы из Ваших ответов правильно. Это нужно для обеспечения надёжных результатов.

Исследователь надеется, что Вам понравится участвовать в этом интервью!)

## Questions (Вопросы)

1. For how long have you been collaborating with brands? (Как давно Вы сотрудничаете с компаниями?)
2. How often do you receive business requests from abroad? For instance, a foreign company sent you an email, interested in promoting its products on your channel. (Как часто Вы получаете бизнес запросы из заграницы? К примеру, иностранная компания, заинтересованная в рекламе на Вашем канале, присылает Вам сообщение)
3. What are disadvantages of collaborations for you? (Каковы минусы сотрудничеств для Вас?)
4. If you wish, tell whether you have a manager. If yes, what is his or her role? (Если хотите, расскажите, есть ли у Вас менеджер. Если да, то каковы её или его задачи?)

### Starting a collaboration (Начало сотрудничества)

5. What is an essential part of starting a collaboration for you? Explain why, if you wish. (Что является неотъемлемой частью начала сотрудничества для Вас? Если хотите, объясните почему)
6. Do you work with contracts? If yes, what is the most important in the contract for you and why? (Работаете ли Вы по контрактам? Если да, то какой пункт является для Вас самым важным в контракте и почему?)

### Rejection of a business offer (Отказ от сотрудничества)

7. Why would you disagree to collaborate with a brand? Provide examples from your experience, if you wish. (По какой причине Вы бы отказались сотрудничать с брендом? Если хотите, приведите пример из жизни)
8. Have you ever suddenly ceased the collaboration? If yes, why? (Приходилось ли Вам когда-либо внезапно прекратить сотрудничество? Если хотите, то расскажите причины)

### Communication ethics (Общение)

9. What you think is unacceptable in communication between you and the brand and why? Provide examples from your experience, if you wish. (Что является недопустимым в общении между Вами и

брендом? Какие действия со стороны бренда могут навредить отношениям между вами? Если хотите, приведите пример из жизни)

### **End of the collaboration (Завершение сотрудничества)**

10. What would make you unsatisfied with the collaboration? Provide examples from your experience, if you wish. (Что заставило бы Вас быть неудовлетворенным проведенным сотрудничеством и почему? Если хотите, приведите пример из жизни)
11. What is the most stressful or problematic part of collaboration for you and why? (Что является самым проблематичным или сложным в процессе сотрудничества для Вас и почему?)

### **Finalizing questions (Заключительные вопросы)**

12. If you wish, briefly describe the worst collaboration case and why it was so? No need to give any names. (Если хотите, вкратце опишите самый худший кейс сотрудничества и почему он был таким? Нет необходимости называть имена)
13. What would be your ultimate advice to never do when collaborating? (Что бы Вы посоветовали никогда не делать в сотрудничествах?)
14. Any other thoughts concerning the topic you want to share? (Какие-либо другие мысли по теме, которыми Вы хотели бы поделиться?)

Thank you for your time! ☺ (Спасибо за Ваше время! ☺)

## Appendix 3. Guide for interviewing advertisers.

### **1) Opening questions.**

Example questions:

- Briefly describe your experience in influencer marketing
- For how long have you been collaborating with bloggers?
- What are disadvantages of collaborating for your company?

### **2) Topic: Starting a collaboration.**

Example questions:

- Are there any “old-fashioned” formats of collaboration to never use anymore? What formats of collaboration proved themselves to be ineffective for your brand?
- Have you ever poorly formulated contract? If yes, what were the consequences? What cannot be omitted from the contract?

### **3) Topic: Difficulties in the process of collaborating.**

Example questions:

- What is the most difficult part of collaboration for you? At what point of collaboration it is very easy to make mistakes?
- If you wish, tell what was the worst case of collaboration and why?
- Can you name any specific characteristics of Russian influencers that brands should pay attention to?

### **4) Topic: Communication ethics.**

Example questions:

- What do you find important in communication and why?
- What actions from the blogger’s side can harm business relationships? Provide examples from your experience, if you wish.

### **5) Topic: Closing the collaboration.**

Example questions:

- Have you ever wrongly chosen a blogger? How did you understand that?
- How do you decide whether to collaborate with the blogger in future?

### **6) Finalizing questions.**

Example questions:

- What would be your ultimate advice to never do when collaborating?
- Any other thoughts concerning the topic you want to share?