



Organic vs. Paid Social Media Marketing

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ABSTRACT

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Organic social media marketing is a digital marketing strategy that allows a company to promote their brand or product without the need to invest money. Paid social media marketing is another strategy a company can use to promote its business and product, but unlike organic social media marketing, paid social media marketing requires an initial investment.

This thesis aims to determine whether paid marketing provides better results when it comes to followers and views per post than organic social media marketing for Cyfin. Cyfin is an online persona of a music creator. The goal of Cyfin is to reach the right audience on the social media platform known as Instagram to engage with the content shared on the account.

To achieve this, both organic and paid social media marketing methods are used on Cyfin's Instagram account. Both social media marketing methods are given 14 days to gather the necessary results, which will be turned into graphs and compared.

This research indicates that paid marketing provides better results in followers, accounts reached, and views per post. The organic social media marketing method can reach the right audience but requires much more time and effort. Meanwhile, the paid social media marketing method provides a higher number of followers and views per post at a faster pace.

A suggestion for future research would be to have a more extended testing period to gather more accurate results. In addition, keeping up with the trends is an essential aspect of this research and should be considered in future research. Furthermore, in future research, the amount of money used to promote the content could be higher, which will play a significant role in the results.

Keywords: organic marketing, paid marketing, Instagram, social media, marketing

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1 INTRODUCTION

Marketing is the process of creating value for goods and services that help a company sell their service or product. Marketing comes in many forms, such as direct marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, etc. Social media marketing is an essential form of marketing that companies must use to promote their products or services, especially in 2023 (Daniel Ku, 2023). Social media is at an all-time high in 2023 with an estimated 4.9 billion people using social media worldwide. (Belle Wong, 2023). Since social media marketing allows companies to reach their target audience worldwide, companies can choose an organic or paid approach.

This thesis aims to investigate whether paid social media marketing can provide higher and faster results than organic social media marketing. The focus is comparing the results gathered from both social media marketing methods and distinguishing the differences. The research was done using the social media platform Instagram. Furthermore, recommendations were provided for future research.

2 THESIS PLAN

The thesis plan clarifies the thesis by highlighting the main goals and why they are being done. The thesis plan will guide the reader through the topic, research questions, concepts, working methods, and data collected for the thesis. By reading the thesis plan, the reader will gain a broad overview and basic understanding of what the thesis is trying to accomplish.

2.1 Thesis topic

The topic of this thesis is to investigate whether paid social media marketing provides better results than organic social media marketing for Cyfin. According to Daniel Ku (2023), social media marketing is a very important form of marketing that companies need to use to promote their products or services. A company can choose two promotion methods: organic and paid. A company can choose to promote its brand for free (organic) or pay a specific price (paid) to boost its posts online to help it reach a wider audience faster.

2.2 Thesis objective, purpose, and research questions

The thesis aims to test both organic and paid promotion options of social media marketing to understand if investing money as a company to promote the content posted is worth the investment or if the same results can be achieved organically.

Since Cyfin is a start-up company with no followers or a fanbase, this research will provide crucial information that can bring the company significant value. In addition, once the research is done, the company can start working on a social media marketing plan based on the research results. The following research questions will clarify the objective of this thesis.

"What is the difference between organic and paid marketing?"

"How does organic marketing compare to paid marketing?"

"What kind of content should the company post on social media?"

"How effective will paid marketing be regardless of the quality and content the company posts?"

The key question from the research questions above is "Does organic marketing have the same results as paid marketing?" since that is the main objective of this thesis. The rest of the questions will be used as sub-questions that will support the thesis's primary research question. These questions will provide the company with crucial information that can then be used to create a social media marketing plan that is best suited for the company.

2.3 Organic marketing

Organic social media marketing is a digital marketing strategy that allows a company to promote their brand or product without the need to invest money. According to BrightEdge (2019), the dominant online source of traffic is organic marketing. In addition, 70-80% of users are inclined towards organic results rather than paid ads. Furthermore, according to BrightEdge (2019), 67.60% of user clicks are usually the first five organic results shown by the search engine results page (SERP). The graph provided by BrightEdge (see Figure 1) showcases that the websites gain most of their traffic from organic search rather than paid ads.

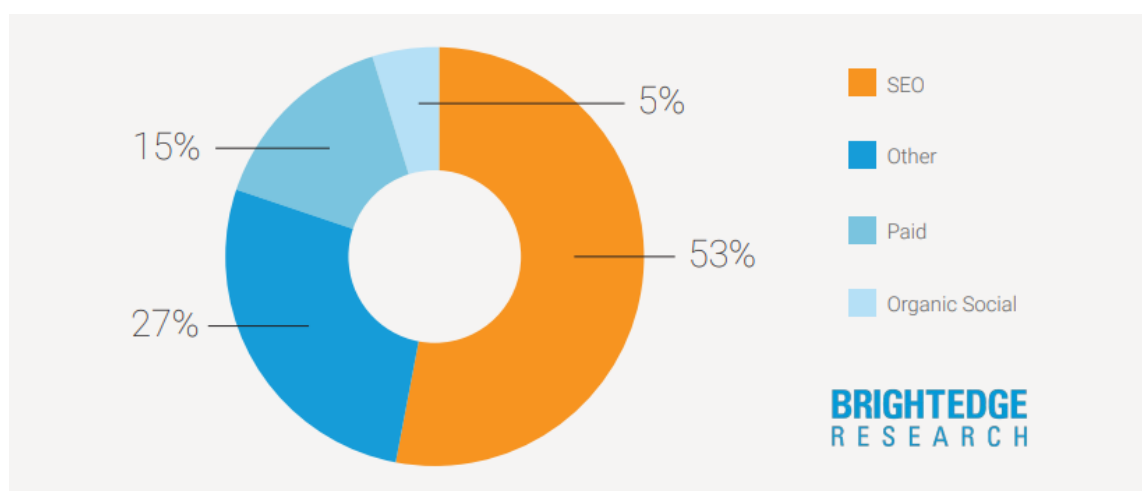


Figure 1. Visualizing Search's Dominant Channel Share (BrightEdge 2019)

Furthermore, since organic marketing does not require the company to invest a certain amount of money to promote its brand and product, it is known to be a slow marketing method and involves a lot of patience. (BrightEdge, 2019)

2.4 Paid Social Media Marketing

Paid social media marketing is another digital marketing strategy a company can use to promote their business and product. Unlike organic marketing, this method is not free and requires the company to invest a certain amount of money to boost its content. According to Basha Coleman (2021), paid social media marketing is one of the least expensive advertising methods when it comes to the traditional and digital market. Furthermore, this marketing method allows the company to only pay for the length of the campaign and the potential number of audiences it will reach, unlike television and radio ads in which the price depends on the length and spot of the ad. Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter (recently re-branded as X) are the platforms that allow paid social media marketing. (Basha Coleman, 2019)

2.5 Thesis process

In the first chapter, the topic of the thesis is briefly introduced. The second chapter of the thesis goes through the thesis's objective, purposes, research questions, and concepts. The case company is introduced in more detail in the third chapter, and the reason for this research is explained in more detail. The tools used for this research are introduced in chapter four, along with the methodology overview. In chapter five, all the results gathered from the research will be presented and compared. Finally, the discussion of this thesis can be found in chapter six.

3 THE CASE COMPANY

3.1 Cyfin

Cyfin is an online persona that an artist uses to identify himself on social media. The name is a blend of Cyprus and Finland's starting letters (Cy-Fin). Cyfin specialises in hip-hop music and has been active in the music industry for over a year, primarily using the online platform BeatStars to sell his music. Cyfin has experienced rapid growth in sales, and with the increase in sales, Cyfin is looking to expand its promotional strategies to the social media platform Instagram.

3.2 Aim

The goal of Cyfin is to upload content on the Instagram account to reach the right audience that will appreciate and engage with the musical content shared on the Instagram account. The content consists of covers of popular songs as well as Cyfin's own written music using instruments such as the ukulele, piano, and guitar. The aim is to bring the audience from Instagram to BeatStars and increase the number of sales even more. For this to be achieved, Cyfin must choose a marketing strategy to help Cyfin reach the desired goal. Two options of marketing strategies face Cyfin: promote the content organically and allow the Instagram account to grow naturally over time, or should Cyfin invest in paid social media promotions so that the content can reach the audience faster?

The decision between organic and paid social media marketing is very crucial for Cyfin since the business is at a start-up point, and the budget for promotion is very tight. The results gathered from this research will showcase the possibility of both marketing strategies. Cyfin can then choose between the two social media marketing options, and which is best for the business.

4 METHODS AND TOOLS

This chapter will go through all the tools that were used for the research, as well as the overview of the methodology.

4.1 FL Studio

FL Studio is a DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) that the world's most famous artists have used. FL Studio was released in 1998 by a company called Image-Line. The DAW was initially called Fruity Loops, which was then changed to FL Studio in 2003. This program is available for both Microsoft Windows and macOS.

Furthermore, FL Studio has many features and can be used for music production, sound engineering and mixing. In addition, FL Studio can be used to record live instruments, which can then be mixed using the tools provided by the DAW. (Image-line, 2023.)

4.2 Instagram

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms. Many content creators and businesses use Instagram daily as a business tool to promote their products and brands in many unique and different ways.

Instagram allows creators and businesses to upload pictures, videos, and reels. Reels or videos are the best content to upload on Instagram to promote the business. Pictures on Instagram used to be the go-to way to promote a product or a company, but now Instagram's algorithm promotes reels over photos by a massive percentage. (Meta, 2023)

4.3 DaVinci Resolve

DaVinci Resolve is a video editing software that offers professional editing tools such as visual effects, motion graphics and colour correction. This software allows the user to create, cut, and edit a video, which can then be exported and uploaded to the desired application. DaVinci Resolve has been used by high-end professionals working in the Hollywood industry. In addition, what makes this software even better is that there is a free version that any user can use to create videos free of charge. (Rohan Mishra n.d.)

4.4 Overview of methodology

The overview of the methodology for this research can be seen in Figure 2. This research begins with recording the instrument and mixing the raw audio, followed by filming, and editing the video. The content was then posted on the social media account, leading to the gathering of results.

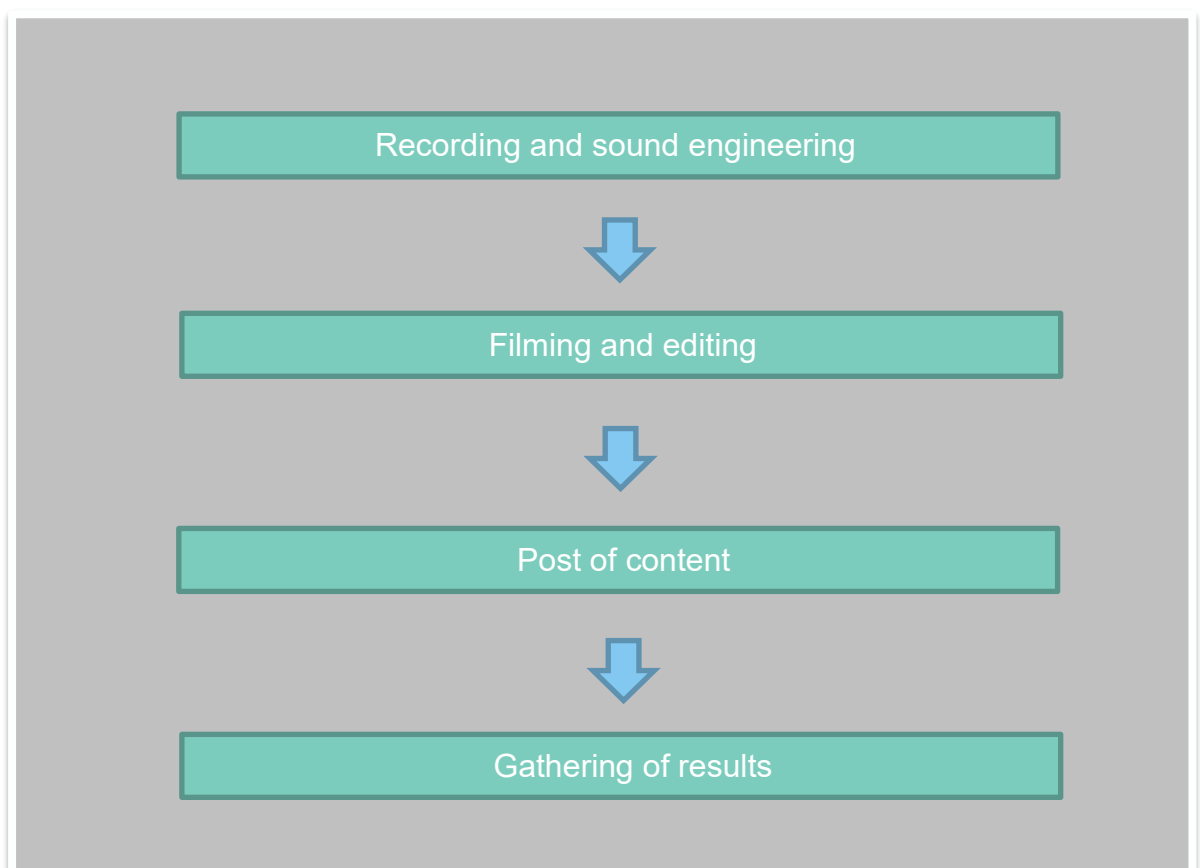


Figure 2. Overview of the methodology.

4.4.1 Recording and sound engineering

The first step of the methodology is the recording and sound engineering. The instrument first needs to be recorded in FL Studio. A high-quality microphone is crucial for this step since the audio recording needs to capture all the instrument's details.

After the audio was recorded, it was then processed using FL Studio's tools. These FL Studio tools were used to remove any background noise in the room besides the instrument that the microphone could have captured during the recording. Furthermore, a reverb sound effect was added to make the instrument audio sound better and more professional. Reverb is an audio effect that is used to recreate the reflection of a sound in an environment.

After removing the unnecessary background noise and adding reverb to the audio, it was then exported from FL Studio and used for the video.

4.4.2 Filming and editing

The second step of the methodology was filming and editing the videos shared on the Instagram account. One of the most essential details when recording a video that will be posted on social media is the filming quality, according to Natasha Samuel (2021). When recording a video for social media, it is crucial to have a strong lighting source by using a ring light or recording next to a bright window. This will ensure that the video will be bright and clear enough. Furthermore, when recording a video, a tripod can be used so that the video is stable instead of shaky, which looks more professional.

After filming the video, it was imported into DaVinci Resolve for the final edit. DaVinci Resolve's tools enhanced the video's colours, and the audio pre-recorded using FL Studio was also added. Finally, the video was exported from DaVinci Resolve and uploaded on Instagram.

4.4.3 Post of content

The third step of the methodology was posting the content. After the video was exported from DaVinci Resolve, it was then uploaded to the Instagram account. Instagram offers the owner of the account the option to change the resolution and colour of the video directly from Instagram, but since this was already done using DaVinci Resolve, this step was skipped. While uploading the post, a small piece of text was added as a description, along with several hashtags that categorized or labelled the content to make it more discoverable by other users on Instagram. For the paid social media marketing, each post was promoted through the Instagram advertising tool. The paid amount of each post to be promoted was €2.

4.4.4 Gathering results

The fourth step of the methodology was to gather the results from each post that was uploaded on the Instagram account. At the end of the research, the owner of the Instagram account can look at the followers gained, views per post, and accounts reached from both the organic and paid social media marketing methods. Once those results were gathered, they were then analyzed individually using graphs and then both organic and paid social media marketing methods results were compared.

5 RESULTS

The organic and paid social media marketing results are thoroughly analysed in this chapter.

5.1 Organic social media marketing results

The organic social media marketing results can be seen in Figures 3 and 4. No paid promotion methods or strategies were used for the posts. Each post was promoted organically using daily uploads and hashtags, which helped the Instagram algorithm place the video uploaded to the correct category. Figure 3 shows the number of organic views each post has gathered since the day of upload.

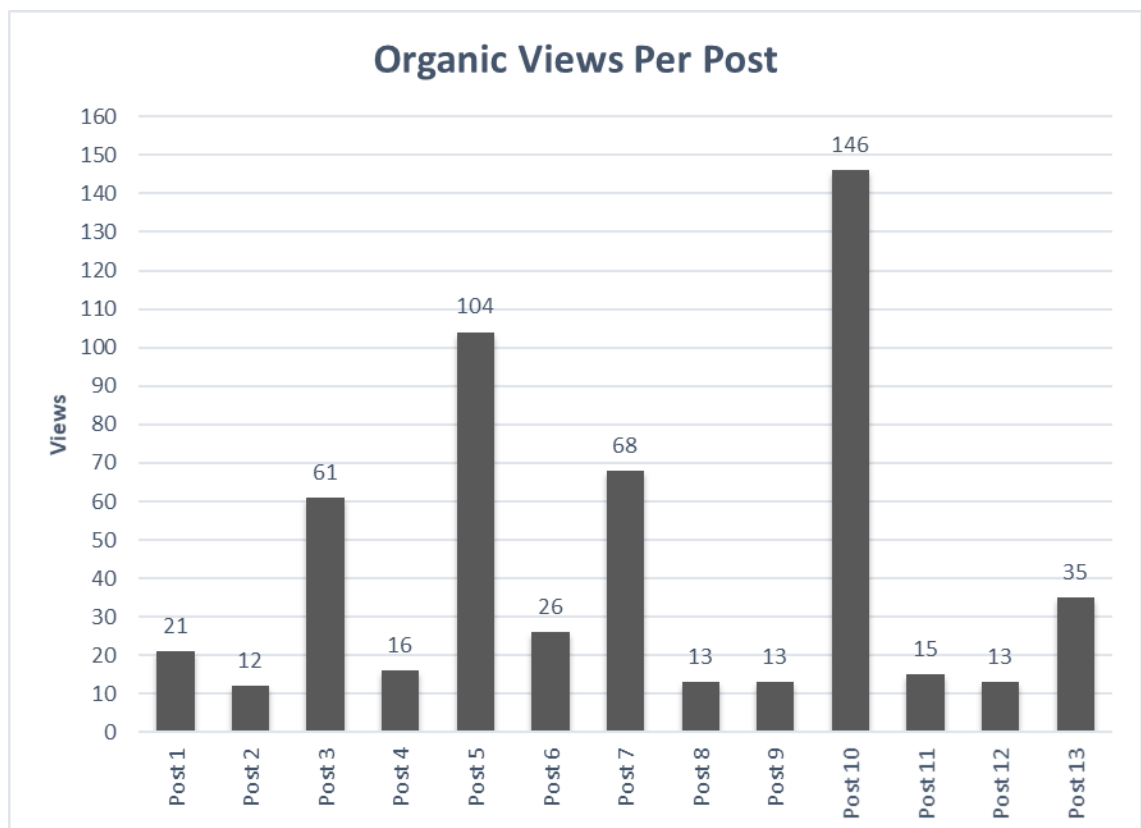


Figure 3. Organic Views Gathered Per Post

In total, 13 posts were uploaded on the Instagram account and gathered a count of 543 views in a total of 14 days. Each video was uploaded using the same method. One upload per day using only hashtags and a small description on each

post. The quality of the content was the same, yet 4 out of 13 posts had received a lot more views than the rest. According to Alyssa Hirose (2023), the Instagram algorithm follows the user's history and activity on the social media platform. For example, the Instagram algorithm uses any posts that were liked, accounts that were followed, and posts that the owner of the account uploaded. The algorithm then takes this information and categorises the Instagram account under the category to which it belongs. Hence, this is the reason why some of the posts received more organic views than the rest, even though the quality of the posts was the same. The algorithm had started to understand the account's content and started pushing it to the right audience group. (Alyssa Hirose, 2023)

Furthermore, the number of followers gained, and accounts reached can be seen in Figure 4.

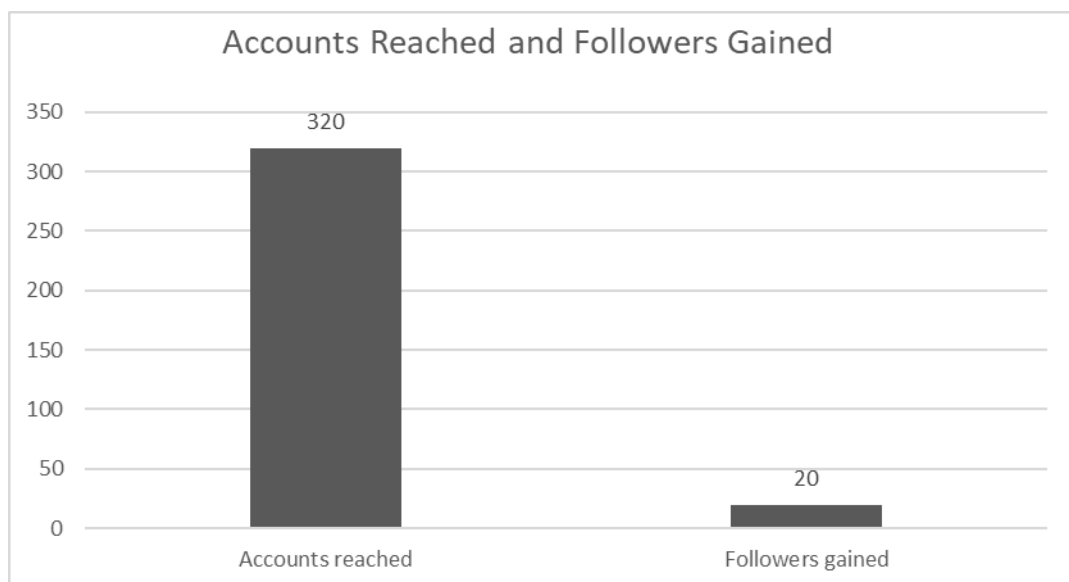


Figure 4. Accounts Reached and Followers Gained.

By the end of the 14-day organic research, the Instagram account reached a total of 320 accounts and gained a total of 20 followers. This means that the Instagram account posts had reached 320 different users worldwide, and only 20 were interested enough in the content to follow the account. That is only 6.25% of the users reached. The reason could be that the content was not interesting enough to the users it had reached. Then again, considering that the account was brand new and promoted organically while the Instagram algorithm was still trying to

understand what audience to target, 6.25% is not a bad result as a starting percentage of users attracted to the account.

5.2 Paid social media marketing results

After the organic social media marketing results were concluded, the research for paid social media marketing began. This time, money was used to promote each post uploaded to the Instagram account. The paid social media marketing results can be seen in Figures 5 and 6.

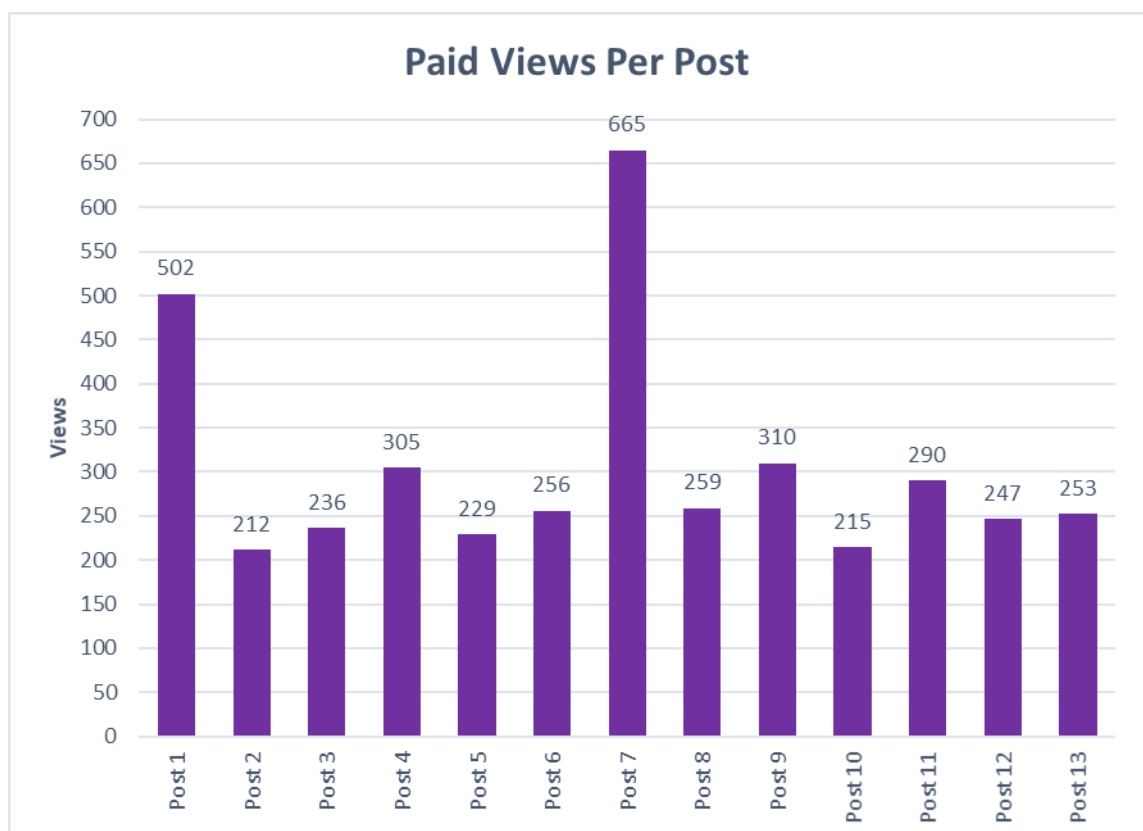


Figure 5. Paid Views Per Post.

The 13 posts gathered a total of 3,979 views in 14 days. The hashtags and descriptions of the posts remained the same since the research aimed to test the difference between organic vs. paid social media marketing. Two out of the 13 posts received much more views than the rest. Post number 1 received 502 views, and post 7 reached 665 views. As mentioned earlier, the spike in posts 1 and 7 was because of the Instagram algorithm. From the posts that were liked, accounts that were followed, and posts that the owner of the account uploaded,

the Instagram algorithm pushed the content to what it believed was the target audience. In addition, post 7 had the highest view count because the video covered a number 1 hit song, which is why many people engaged with the post enough to make the Instagram algorithm push the specific post to even more people.

Furthermore, the number of followers gained, and accounts reached can be seen in Figure 5.

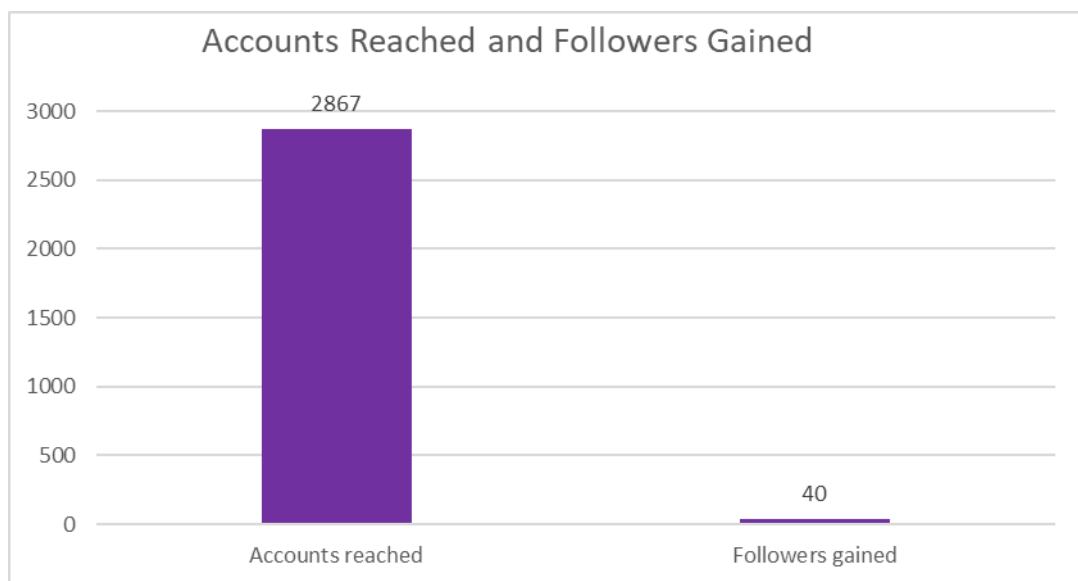


Figure 6. Accounts Reached and Followers Gained

By the end of the 14-day paid research, the Instagram account reached a total of 2867 accounts and gained a total of 40 followers. The Instagram account posts had reached 2867 people worldwide, and only 40 of them found the content interesting enough to follow the account. That is only 1.7% of the users reached.

5.3 Comparison of organic vs. paid marketing results

After the results from social media marketing were collected, the organic and paid social media marketing results were compared. The organic and paid social media marketing comparison results can be seen in Figures 7, 8, and 9 for followers, views per post and average views.

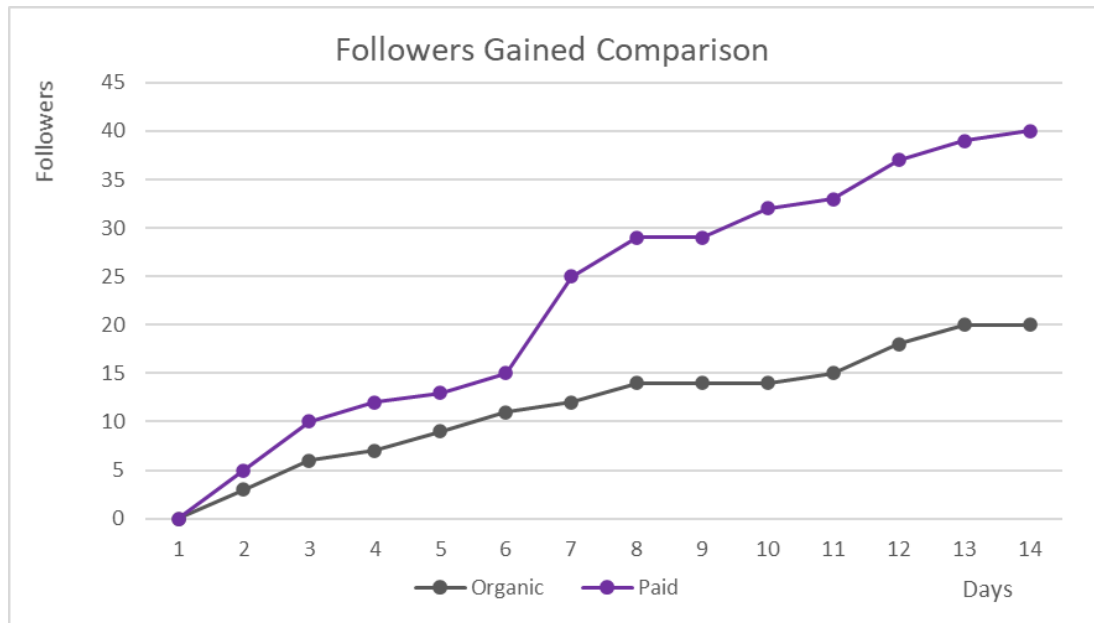


Figure 7. Followers Gained Comparison.

The organic and paid social media marketing method had a difference of 20 followers. Over 14 days, the paid method managed to bring in 40 new followers to the Instagram account, while the organic method collected 20 followers.

Furthermore, the comparison of views between organic and paid social media marketing can be seen in Figure 8.

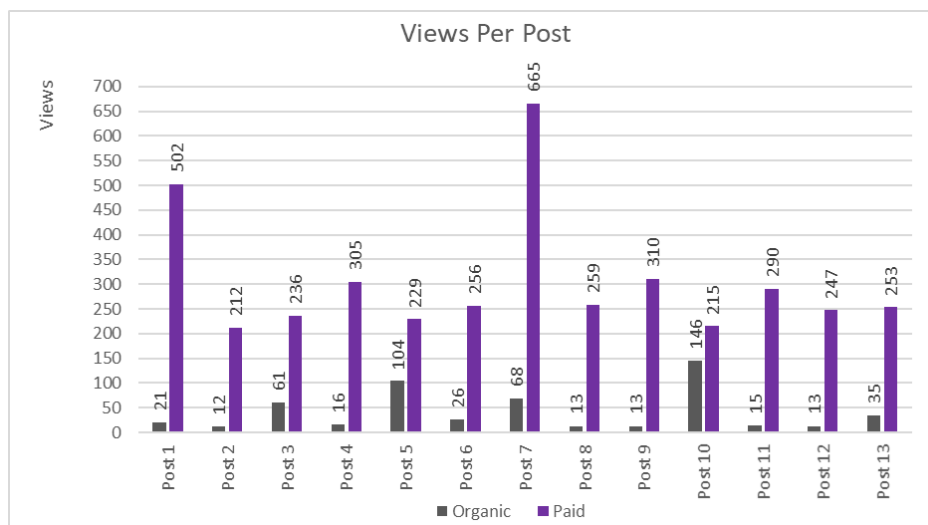


Figure 8. Views Per Post.

The number of views gathered on each post by the organic social media marketing method was nowhere near the number of views gathered by the paid social

media marketing method. The highest-viewed post from the organic method was 146 total views, while the paid method's highest-viewed post reached 665 total views. The average number of views gathered by the organic social media marketing method was 41, and the average paid social media marketing method gathered an average of 306 views. The comparison between the average views of organic and paid social media marketing can be seen in Figure 9.

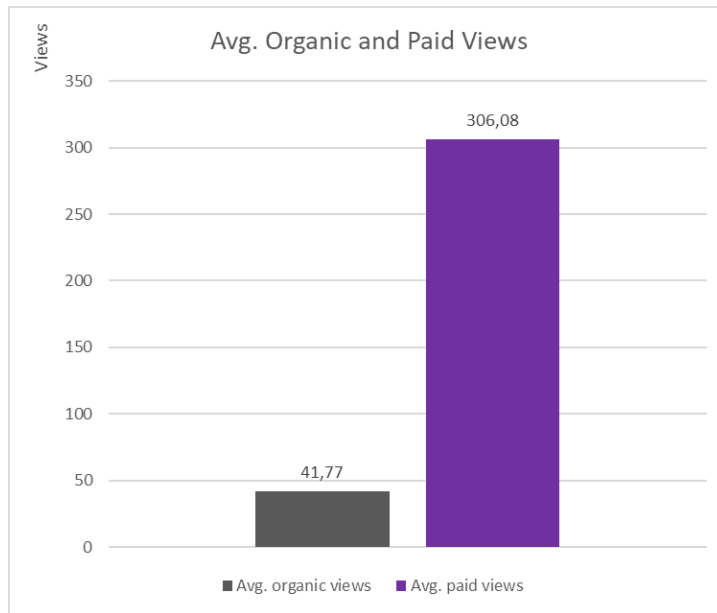


Figure 9. Avg. Organic and Paid Views.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Summary of results

Both organic and paid marketing methods started at a similar pace until day 7. From day seven and a head, the paid social media marketing method had a massive spike of 10 followers in one day. After the follower spike on day 7, the paid social media marketing method continued slowly and steadily. At the same time, the organic social media marketing method had a steady and slower rise until the end without any follower spikes.

While the follower's gained results were not too far apart, the view count on the posts from both organic and paid social media marketing methods was noticeably different. All the paid posts received more than 200 views per post, whereas the organic posts struggled to reach even 50 views. Posts 1 and 7 were the most successful in terms of views, with post one reaching 502 views and post seven reaching 665 views with the paid social media marketing method. Meanwhile, with the organic social media marketing method, post 1 reached 21 views, and post 7 reached 68. The rest of the posts in both organic and paid marketing methods were averaging around the same views.

With both organic and paid social media marketing results gathered, it is clear that paid social media marketing can provide a higher number of results in the same period of time as organic social media marketing. Paid social media marketing can be considered a faster marketing method to reach the target audience and the company's goals.

6.2 Future recommendations

An extended period of time is highly recommended for this research. The more time each social media marketing method is given, the more accurate the results will be. Furthermore, the amount of money used to promote each post significantly affects the results. Depending on how big the Instagram account is, more

money can be invested in each post, providing better and more accurate results. In addition, it is highly recommended that the company follows what is trending. By doing so, the company can create content based on what is trending, which results in attracting more users to the Instagram account.

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