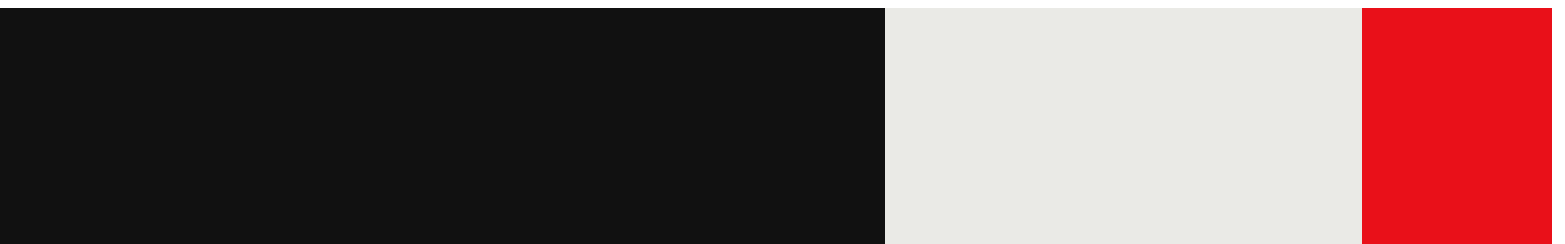# The Daily: Social Media Trends for H2 2024— Faceless influencers, what happens to TikTok this year, and more

Audio

On today's tiny "Shark Tank"-style podcast episode, our contestants pitch their most interesting predictions for the rest of 2024 including faceless influencers, what will happen to TikTok, and more. Tune in to the discussion with vice president and analyst Jasmine Enberg and director of Briefings Jeremy Goldman.

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Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson (00:00):

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Jasmine Enberg (00:20):

They would think about monetizing when they were on track for a billion users, and that's a highly subjective thing to say. It is a tricky balance, of course, deciding when to introduce monetization. If you do it too soon, you might alienate users, but I think in this case, the sooner, the better.

Marcus Johnson (00:43):

Hey gang, it's Thursday, July 11th. Happy anniversary to my parents. I don't know how long they've been married. My mum would say long enough. My dad, he's obsessed with her, so he wouldn't say that. Jasmine, Jeremy, and listeners, welcome to Behind Numbers Daily, an eMarketer podcast. I'm Marcus. Today I'm joined by two people, we'll meet them now. We start with our vice president and principal analyst covering everything social media based in California, it's Jasmine Enberg.

Jasmine Enberg (01:09):

Hello Marcus. Hi everyone.

Marcus Johnson (01:11):

Hello there. And we also are joined by our senior director of briefings. He's on the other coast in New York City, it's Jeremy Goldman.

Jeremy Goldman (01:19):

Hello there, and happy anniversary to Marcus's folks.

Marcus Johnson (01:23):

Ah, thanks. They don't listen. We start with today's fact. Which animal has the strongest bite? Didn't see that coming. According to World Atlas and Live Science, this was a Bruno Venditti piece in Visual Capitalist. This is measured by pounds per square inch, or PSI.

Jeremy Goldman (01:45):

I didn't know that was a thing.

Marcus Johnson (01:45):

Who knows how that works.

Jeremy Goldman (01:46):

But wouldn't it be like alligators or crocodiles, or one of those things?

Marcus Johnson (01:51):

Oh, okay. So you've got hippos in fifth with 1800, alligators with 2000. The great white is in third place with a 4,000, so double that of the alligator. Then it's the Nile crocodile, which is hard to say without laughing, because it rhymes. That's 5,000, so just ahead of the great white. And then the orca, so the killer whale. Jeremy, you were on that episode.

Jeremy Goldman (02:15):

Oh, man, yeah.

Marcus Johnson (02:15):

When we were talking about why they were called killer whales. That was an episode on Tuesday that Jeremy was on. So if you want to know why they're called Killer Whales tune into that episode, but they have a 19,000 PSI, which is-

Jasmine Enberg (02:30):

Jeremy, we should have gotten that. It's in the name.

Marcus Johnson (02:31):

... four times.

Jeremy Goldman (02:32):

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson (02:33):

Four times that of the Nile crocodile.

Jeremy Goldman (02:36):

But you never go to the same well twice, so that's why I didn't even think about that. So well played.

Marcus Johnson (02:40):

Oh, in terms of my facts?

Jeremy Goldman (02:42):

Yeah, like Marcus isn't going to talk about Killer Wells two weeks in a row.

Marcus Johnson (02:45):

Well, yeah, no, we're running low on facts of the day. For context, crushing a car is 2,500 PSI. So crushing a car is like an alligator bite, so just don't get close to that. Humans, 160. So the orcas bite is 120 times stronger than a human. So if you've been bit by a human, the baby's bite?

Jeremy Goldman (03:09):

Yes.

Jasmine Enberg (03:10):

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson (03:10):

If you've been bit by a baby, then Orca would be a lot worse. So consider yourself lucky, I think is the story there.

Jeremy Goldman (03:16):

The quote of the week. Definitely.

Marcus Johnson (03:20):

Anyway, today's real topic, social media predictions, of course, for the rest of the year. In today's episode, personal league, we'll cover some predictions, [inaudible 00:03:34] other news. How does this episode work? Glad you ask.

(03:36):

Jeremy and Jasmine will pitch two predictions each that they expect to happen before the end of the year. Jasmine's going first, and then me and Jeremy and the listeners will decide if we're going to "invest in this prediction." Now we have one investment point to give away. Invest means, do we believe in it? Then Jeremy will go, and so on and so forth. Two predictions each, let's do it. Jasmine's up first. I don't really know what she's predicting, so she'll explain to everyone. What have you got for us?

Jasmine Enberg (04:09):

So my prediction is that faceless influencer marketing will have a moment. Faceless influencers aren't new. They have been on YouTube for many years, but they're starting to spread on Facebook and TikTok. And if you're wondering what a faceless influencer is, it's exactly what it sounds like. It's people who create content and don't show their face.

(04:29):

There's one big reason why this is starting to spread now, and that's because we're starting to move from personality driven to content driven on social media, meaning that you don't need to have a big engaging online persona, just an eye for content to be able to be a faceless creator. It's also because creators want to scale their operations. Burnout is real, and this is a good way for them to be able to continue creating more content. And there are a lot of benefits for brands as well. There's 650,000 posts on Instagram right now with hashtag faceless marketing attached to it.

Marcus Johnson (05:06):

So define "have a moment."

Jasmine Enberg (05:08):

Well, what I mean by having a moment is I think that marketers are going to start leaning into this because like I said at the end of the "pitch," they have a benefit for brands too because brands are in this moment now where the need for content is at an all-time high. There's also a

lot more focus on the product rather than the person in these types of videos. And that kind of anonymity can really help with brand safety concerns that you still hear a lot of times from brands. It's also less expensive, likely, to create, it's more easily scalable, and those are things that creators are looking for, but brands as well.

Marcus Johnson (05:44):

How do I get into this business of faceless influencers? Finally, a market.

Jasmine Enberg (05:49):

You need to join social media first, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson (05:52):

Yeah, that'd be a good start.

Jeremy Goldman (05:53):

Not a bad first step, yeah. What's really interesting to me about this trend just in general, and less of a criticism, but more of like a... The creator space has gotten so big that I think increasingly people realize that there are a lot of different ways to succeed, and you don't have to try to aspire to be a version of somebody else. You can be a different type of a creator in creating, essentially your own lane. And I think the scalability of this approach is really interesting. I guess my only kind of question is does it decrease your odds of building a real strong relationship with the audience if you are faceless, right? Does the scalability work against you in one way also?

Jasmine Enberg (06:36):

I think it's a fair point, and I do agree with you though that the creator economy has gotten so big now that it's really hard to talk about it as a whole. And there is huge differences between how creators are making money, the kind of money that they're actually making, and the type of content that they're creating on these platforms, and we don't really hear a lot about it. And I think this is a low barrier to entry for a lot of people who want to create content and monetize that content, and maybe aren't comfortable showing their face or their full personality, or just really make beautiful videos and want to share those with the world.

Marcus Johnson (07:13):

And what are they, these faceless people, most likely to be influencing us to do? What area is this going to spill into the most?

Jasmine Enberg (07:22):

Yeah, so I've seen content across the board. A lot of what I, just because of what I watch, tend to be a lot of home decoration or renovation. You see people decorating their living rooms or redecorating their living rooms. So I think that's an opportunity for a lot of brands in that space, but I can imagine it being really for pretty much anything.

Marcus Johnson (07:45):

Okay. I'm half in. Half an investment point from me. Jeremy?

Jeremy Goldman (07:50):

I think half as well.

Marcus Johnson (07:52):

You too?

Jeremy Goldman (07:52):

Yeah, I think it's a strong idea.

Marcus Johnson (07:54):

All right, very nice. So a full point in total, out of a potential two. Good start. Jeremy, you're up, your first social media prediction for the rest of the year.

Jeremy Goldman (08:06):

So my prediction is that TikTok, which is sort of, kind of banned, but has a lot of different things that are up in the air about its future, a lot of people are wondering about where it's going to be. And by the time that the second half of the year has completely passed us, it will still exist in the US.

(08:26):

So maybe depending on how closely you follow the space, this is not the most bold prediction admittedly, but for some people they say, well, it has a nine-month period to get out of the

market, so I guess it's getting out of the market. The reality is there are a lot of different, particularly from a legal standpoint, things that are going to stop the US from pushing the platform out of the market. And ultimately I think that TikTok is on a mission to show how indispensable it is to the creator economy, and it's making a lot of moves that show that it doesn't believe that it's going to be out of the market come December 31st.

Marcus Johnson (09:04):

So the tiny history is Congress very quickly passed a law to ban TikTok saying, because US government's nervous about all that data being collected by a company that's owned by a Chinese company, and the Chinese government getting hold of the said data. And so they passed the bill and then Biden signed it, and so technically TikTok's banned, but it's got nine months to what Jeremy was saying, to get out of the country, or to sell to a US-based buyer. And I think in September they've got a hearing to appeal against this, so we'll see what happens there. But Jasmine, I'm curious to know what you make of this one.

Jasmine Enberg (09:39):

Well, technically it's not banned yet. They have those nine months to either divest or leave the United States.

Jeremy Goldman (09:47):

Just to clarify, and I'm saying specifically, neither of those two things will come to fruition by the end of this period. Yeah.

Jasmine Enberg (09:55):

Yeah, and I agree with you, Jeremy, it won't come to fruition by the end of this period. What I'm curious to know is what you think will happen come January when that deadline is up, which by the way if you don't know, coincides very dramatically with the presidential inauguration here in the US. So if you've been following any of Donald Trump's backtracking on whether or not he's going to "ban TikTok," it's going to be a very interesting couple of days in January for sure.

Jeremy Goldman (10:23):

Ultimately, I think that TikTok will eventually almost be classified as too big to fail, and this divestiture initiative won't, it'll have a whole number of legal challenges that we haven't even

foreseen yet that will certainly stretch this thing out for the foreseeable future.

Jasmine Enberg (10:43):

I am not convinced that the too big to fail is the right strategy for TikTok, and I've been saying that from the very beginning, because there's a lot more at play here than just the data concerns. I mean, it's all about that kind of soft influence that can also, according to lawmakers who want to see TikTok banned, exerted through the app, and that's not going to be solved through data privacy and security. And if you're arguing that TikTok is so vital to the American economy, then you're kind of proving the point that there is a potential for influence of a soft kind from the Chinese government.

Marcus Johnson (11:24):

What I find so fascinating is, what's going to happen to TikTok from now until the ban would go into effect? Because Trisha Ostwal of AdWeek wrote a piece looking at what has happened to TikTok's numbers since the "ban" was signed into law, but hasn't taken effect yet.

(11:43):

And she said, TikTok's ad spend in March, the month the potential ban was announced, was up 19% year-on-year according to Media Radar. In the months following the announcement, that slightly cooled, with ad spending growing by 11% in April, and then 6% in May. As she also noted, 4 of the top 10 advertisers on TikTok reduced their spending in April versus May. So interesting to see how that plays out in the next couple of months, even if it doesn't get banned, just being slowed down, being dragged back as they try to run on the treadmill, someone holding them at the waistband so they can't run as fast as they might like to. That might be bad or detrimental enough potentially.

Jasmine Enberg (12:23):

And I think fluctuations and ad spending are normal. I do think that there is some uncertainty that can cause advertisers to pull back somewhat, but the reality is is that as long as there are consumers to reach on TikTok, advertisers aren't going to leave. And I don't believe that consumers are going to leave TikTok of their free will. And so at least until the end of this year, I don't foresee any big changes to most brands in terms of how their budgets are set for TikTok.

Jeremy Goldman (12:52):

Agreed.

Marcus Johnson (12:53):

TikTok not leaving the US in H2, full point. Jasmine?

Jasmine Enberg (12:59):

Yeah, full point for me too.

Marcus Johnson (13:00):

Full point too. All right, very good. We move to Jasmine's second prediction, and that is?

Jasmine Enberg (13:08):

My second prediction is that Threads will start monetizing in H2. I know there's been this 1 billion user threshold that people have been pointing to, and with 175 million monthly users, we're not really even close to that, even though that is pretty impressive growth in less than a year of Thread's existence.

(13:27):

But if you actually think about what Zuckerberg said, he said that it would think about monetizing when they were on track for a billion users. And that's a highly subjective thing to say. It is a tricky balance, of course, deciding when to introduce monetization. If you do it too soon, you might alienate users, but I think in this case, the sooner, the better. I've been saying it's a make it or break it year for Threads. It really needs content creators to start posting more, and post original content, and teach other users how you're supposed to be using Threads. And in order for them to make that a priority, Threads has to provide them with a way to make money, and I think monetization is the key to that.

Marcus Johnson (14:07):

Threads folks probably know what it is, but it's the X, formerly Twitter competitor app that Meta launched basically a year ago.

Jasmine Enberg (14:14):

And the fact that you introduced it as that says so much about Threads, right? It's, one of the things I've been saying with the one-year anniversary just last week is that we know what

Threads isn't, but we don't know what it is. Its primary identity is still the X competitor, and we know that it's not X.

Marcus Johnson (14:31):

Yeah, it's not a huge audience. And so, I mean you don't have to have hundreds and hundreds of billions of billions of users to throw ads on there. But Jasmine, I'm curious to know what you make of the size of the audience, and the appeal there for marketers. Because our forecasting team estimates that around 30, 3-0 million Americans will use Threads this year each month, around 34 million next year.

(14:56):

Instagram, for context has 150 monthly users in the US, but Twitter, Thread's rival, X, only has just about 54 million compared to 30 for Threads, is what we estimate. And theirs is falling as well. Meta, they say that they have 175 million monthly actives, but that's worldwide and it's active accounts, not individual people. So looking at the US numbers, what do you make of the size of the audience to this point?

Jasmine Enberg (15:22):

Yeah, I mean it's much smaller than X. It's much smaller than many of the, all of the other social platforms that we track. But even so, I do think that we're getting to a point where Meta has to be thinking about monetization.

(15:34):

And I don't necessarily think that they're going to go in with sort of the types of ads and the ad load that you see on an Instagram or a Facebook. I think they're going to be a little bit smarter about it, introduce them a little bit more thoughtfully. One of the things that I've been hearing a lot about is the potential to introduce branded content or partnership ads, which is basically just brands using creator content in a paid way, and it's available on Instagram and Facebook. And I think this would be a really smart way for Meta to entice content creators to start posting more to the app, start to boost its engagement numbers, maybe even its user account numbers, and also start paving the way for more monetization in the future.

Jeremy Goldman (16:17):

You talked about the relatively, this is a small number, but it's a small number for Meta. It's a very big number for just about anybody else as an independent company. And therefore I think in order to justify continued development in it, well then certainly they have to look at the monetization aspects. And some of it might just be not just what it makes for them, but how it puts other players on the defensive. I think that hopefully if they do it, they'll look at it strategically from that front as well. So I think it makes a lot of sense, certainly.

Marcus Johnson (16:47):

Full point. Jeremy?

Jeremy Goldman (16:49):

Same. Really good.

Marcus Johnson (16:50):

Just dishing them out. I've got to stop. We've got to stop doing this format. We're too generous. We need Ross [inaudible 00:16:56] back on the show.

Jeremy Goldman (16:57):

You need to give us, let us do a quarter of a point, you know-

Marcus Johnson (16:59):

No quarters.

Jeremy Goldman (17:02):

Fractions, come on.

Marcus Johnson (17:03):

Enough, Jeremy.

Jeremy Goldman (17:04):

We like precision. Fine.

Jasmine Enberg (17:07):

I didn't even know you could give a half point.

Jeremy Goldman (17:09):

Yeah-

Marcus Johnson (17:09):

Susie invented it.

Jeremy Goldman (17:11):

Susie did it, and then I did it, Marcus did it, and then I tried to give a three-quarters point, and he wouldn't let me.

Marcus Johnson (17:17):

So did Paul. That's why Paul's on the show anymore.

Jasmine Enberg (17:20):

That's where you draw the line?

Marcus Johnson (17:21):

Yeah, too much.

Jeremy Goldman (17:21):

If you let Paul and you didn't let me, then I would take umbrage. But other than that, you're a very fair-

Marcus Johnson (17:25):

No, he's banned from the show.

Jeremy Goldman (17:26):

You're a fair host.

Marcus Johnson (17:27):

Six month ban. Jeremy, you're up.

Jeremy Goldman (17:32):

I believe that come October or November we will be talking about a major AI deepfake-related scandal on a major social platform. I'm not going to predict which one, but I think that we will likely see one tied to the US presidential election that will put content moderation squarely at the front of consumer's minds in a way that we haven't seen in a few years.

Jasmine Enberg (17:59):

What a diplomatically-phrased prediction, Jeremy.

Marcus Johnson (18:04):

Well, talk me through the fallout of said incident.

Jeremy Goldman (18:09):

Yeah, I mean, well one of the main things is we've certainly seen that there is a diminished level of consumer interest, in some ways, about this election, in part based off of the numbers that we saw for CNN being 30% down versus four years prior for the first debate, which means that you start to see a lot more dollars in political advertising.

(18:33):

And obviously the US political advertising ecosystem is big enough that every four years it throws the year-over-year for the entire planet out of whack. That's how big it is. And what I think is that if you're seeing less interest in a debate, then you have to find other ways to reach people, including through ads, and a lot of that is through social.

(18:54):

And coupled with the fact that there's a lot of AI tools out there to do deep fakes, we saw some fake robocalls earlier this year and a lot of other controversies, it seems pretty reasonable to think that there's going to be something that slips through the cracks that is a major controversial promoted piece of content in some way, shape or form that then puts content moderation on everybody's lips.

Jasmine Enberg (19:18):

So it's a promoted piece of content. So you mean a paid ad that you're talking about?

Jeremy Goldman (19:25):

Yeah, I think that... And I said promoted content versus ad in the sense that there's essentially lo-fi content that could easily be promoted and not necessarily in the way that we used to think of a highly produced ad, but there's just so much content out there and there's so much... It's easier than ever before to just have a small spend by a political action committee that a candidate doesn't necessarily approve.

Marcus Johnson (19:49):

I'm half in. Dammit, Susie. Jasmine?

Jasmine Enberg (19:56):

I mean, I have no argument against AI, misinformation around the election being a big issue this year, and that content moderation will be in the spotlight more so than ever before. But I don't really know what shape or form that's going to take, nor what impact that will eventually have on election outcomes, so I think I'm going to say half in as well.

Marcus Johnson (20:15):

So let me ask you this, Jasmine. I mean, how much of an impact can something like this have on the said social platform? Is it-

Jasmine Enberg (20:21):

On the social platform, or on the election outcome?

Marcus Johnson (20:25):

On the social platform itself, because I feel like regardless of what it is, it's going to be a news story in the moment, and then everyone will move on with their lives, and the social platform won't really take... We haven't seen any social platform really take the kind of hit that we've been expecting from whatever scandal you want to pick of the last however long social media has been around.

Jasmine Enberg (20:44):

I mean, if you think about previous brand safety scandals, you saw Twitter's business be much more disrupted than Meta's. And the big reason for that is that Twitter's ad business and ad platform just didn't perform as well as Meta's. It wasn't as essential or integral to advertiser

strategies. And as long as Meta is so integral to digital marketing strategies, it's really hard to imagine an advertiser pullback.

Marcus Johnson (21:10):

Yeah. Excellent predictions, folks. That's where we have to leave the episode, unfortunately. But thank you so much for your time today, thank you to Jasmine.

Jasmine Enberg (21:17):

Thank you, Marcus. Thank you everyone.

Marcus Johnson (21:19):

And to Jeremy.

Jeremy Goldman (21:19):

Thank you. Great as always.

Marcus Johnson (21:21):

Yes indeed. Thank you to Victoria, she edits the show, Stuart runs the team, and Sophie does our social media. Thanks everyone for listening in. We hope to see you tomorrow for the Behind the Numbers Weekly Listen and e-Marketer podcast.