

THE INFLUENCER'S ROLE
IN AN ARMENIAN CLOTHING COMPANY'S
BRANDING AND MARKETING

By

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>Literature Review</i>	6
<i>Creative and Business Goals</i>	11
<i>Methodology</i>	12
<i>KARKATAN Before Campaign</i>	14
<i>Campaign</i>	18
<i>Challenges</i>	20
<i>First Campaign with Susi Nikoghosyan</i>	21
<i>Second campaign with Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan</i>	25
<i>Managerial Reactions and Reflections on the Impact of the Campaign</i>	32
<i>Conclusion</i>	36
<i>Bibliography</i>	37

Abstract

This capstone will be the study of strategically using influencer marketing to build brand awareness and consumer engagement for an Armenian local clothing company. Centering around KARKATAN—a Yerevan-based label that has built a reputation for premium products that reflect the culture—the initiative explores partnerships with social media influencers to enhance brand perception and introduce the brand to new audiences.

The focus of the project is the creation and execution on a social media campaign with a travel influencer. Social media channels including Instagram and TikTok used to create visually arresting, modern content that showcases the brand's distinct style and Armenian lineage. The campaign was conceptualized with a story-centric angle in order to drive a sense of authenticity and connection through content, with all output appealing to the strengths of the relevant platforms and user behaviors.

Based on the related literature in the field of influencer marketing, specifically its application in the field of hospitality and fashion industry, this project covers a research gap regarding influencer strategies from international markets such as Armenia. Aim of the conference is to offer practical knowledge on how local brands can make use of digital to compete in the local, regional and the global market.

The success of the campaign was measured through social media metrics: engagement, followers' development, tone of audience and spread of content. Implications: The findings provide important implications for SMEs (small-to-medium enterprises), which are trying to engage influencer collaborations to their respective marketing-mix strategies.

Key Words: Influencer marketing, Armenian fashion, social media campaign, Instagram, TikTok.

Introduction

The connecting campaign not only strategically branded KARKATAN but acted as a blueprint for other Armenian fashion houses looking to enter or grow within the digital space. The research will reveal the best methods for influencer identification, content development, and platform-optimized play. It will also measure the effects of such campaigns on consumer attitude, engagement metrics and potential sales effectiveness.

Influencer marketing has revolutionized the fashion and retail industries, and it has revolutionized the way your brand engages with the modern consumer. Social media has in turn made it easier for customers to make style choices and product purchases online. Influencers – especially, loyal and engaged influencers – are trusted sources of information and lifestyle advice. Unlike typical Hollywood endorsements, which come off as cold and disconnected, influencers provide something valuable: a sense of connection, legitimacy, and personalization — something contemporary audiences crave. It is quite telling of much of how branding exists today, particularly in fashion, where visual storytelling and identity are paramount, highlighting the ever-increasing significance of influencer partnerships in contemporary branding.

For example, international fashion houses have utilized influencer practices for years, but in less developed markets they are still largely untapped. Globally, fashion and textile production is proving a renaissance in places such as Armenia, driven by local creativity, entrepreneurship and a new taste for authentic and culturally grounded goods. But many local brands have not caught up this point, not fully embracing the digital toolkit and influencer approach applied in other countries.

A good example would be the KARKATAN brand (part of the Taraz textile factory). The brand was launched in 2019 and offers premium casual and sportswear for men, women and

kids. Karktan runs a clothing factory from 16 Tigran Mets Avenue, and its store is in one of the major Yerevan malls. The factory has contemporary Italian, Japanese and German machinery to support retail or bulk production. Although the brand has kept its pricing roughly in range with other competitive Armenian labels of the same high quality, the entire marketing aspect has not been approached completely.

This capstone plan is centered around launching an influencer marketing campaign to raise awareness and improve KARKATAN's brand and bring in new customers, especially a younger demographic and those outside of the country. Utilizing tools such as Instagram and TikTok, the campaign focuses on minimalist aesthetics, cultural symbolism and ease of use — attributes that lend themselves well to digital storytelling. In so doing, the project will also help to fill a void in Armenian marketing, providing an example for other brands as they make the leap into the digital economy.

Literature Review

The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Fashion Branding within Small-Medium Sized Local Businesses

In recent years, influencer marketing has become a potent element in the fashion industry, reshaping the way that brands connect with consumers, influence identity and drive sales. For a local Armenian fashion brand that is KARKATAN, to know the theoretical and practical approaches to influencer marketing is crucial for shaping and implementing an efficient PR campaign. The paper offers a comprehensive review of extant academic and practical research on influencer marketing in fashion, focusing on how this kind of marketing activity integrates into the marketing mix, contributes to the creation of brand identity, and engages/convince consumers. It also discusses innovative and strategic tools that are especially beneficial for emerging markets and culturally oriented brands.

Influence on Influencer Marketing as a Strategic Communication Tool

Influencer marketing was quickly adopted by the fashion industry as a part of its integrated marketing communication (IMC). Dalstam, Holmgren & Nordlöf (2018) add that brands could use influencers in their IMC strategy, meaning that influencer partnerships present an opportunity for integrating traditional and digital marketing tools. They believe that influencers are authentic and genuine and are providers of content that is emotionally resonant and persuasive to audiences (Brand and Content, 2020). Influencer marketing is behind the six pillars of IMC: advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and social media engagement.

Equally, Rai (2019) notes that influencers allow brands to build themselves as relatable entities through customized personalized content leading to greater authenticity. This is

particularly useful for fashion brands who rely heavily on visual storytelling and lifestyle congruence. Influencer marketing is easily integrated with user-generated content and the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and contributes to spread and integrate brand stories in terms of reach and emotional engagement.

Influencer Characteristics and Consumer Response

There is an increasing amount of literature discussing the psychological factors that make influencer marketing work. Rajput & Gandhi (2024) propose a model that recognizes three major characteristics of successful fashion influencers: physical attractiveness, social presence, and homophily. These personalities create affinity, trust and loyalty among consumers and subsequently influence consumer purchase intention. They draw on attachment theory and social identity theory to demonstrate that followers engage with influencers who are similar to them or who represent aspirational identities, leading to increased brand-related emotional attachment.

The work by Rajput and Gandhi (2020) also exposes the moderator effect of emotional attachment in the association between characteristics of influencer and behavior of consumer. This is an important lesson for Armenian identity based brands such as KARKATAN who have a strong rooted to minimalistic design; the selection of influencers whose ideas and way of life resonate with the brand, can take this relationship between the brand and consumer to the next level. And it also reflects KARKATAN's values of realness and cultural representation.

Developing Brand Identity with the Help of Influencers

Brand identity is one of the greatest of the benefits available with influencer marketing. Dalstam et al. (2018) argue that the influencer can act as an embodiment of a brand, thereby complementing its values, aesthetics and style. Incorporating influencers into the DNA of a brand allows companies to communicate to its audience in an authentic and authentic way. For

fashion labels, that means co-creating visually appealing content that reflects your brand's personality and cultural touchpoints.

For KARKATAN, influencer partnerships that flash the brand's Armenian textile heritage along with its ethical production and minimal design can help brand it as modern and culturally rooted. This double identity has the makings of an irresistible story line for digital audiences, especially on visually oriented platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

Influencer Campaign Measurements and Metrics

Effective influencer marketing measurement is critical for optimizing programs and justifying investment. Rai (2019) provides quantitative and qualitative measurements to evaluate campaign performance, namely reach, impressions, engagement rate, CTR (click-through rate) and conversion rate. These are practical indications to what extent content is resonating with readers. Just as important are qualitative measures such as authenticity of content, sentiment analysis, and accordance with brand voice.

To measure a KARKATAN campaign, these metrics used together can indicate whether influencer partners are increasing consumer brand awareness, engagement and action.

Cultural and Contextual Issues

Existing literature is largely based on global brands, but it is necessary to interpret the findings in relation to local and emerging markets. Armenia's fashion ecosystem is relatively new, and many brands have not been exposed to global best practices around digital marketing. This nascent phase is a double-edged sword for a company like KARKATAN. The lack of local saturation in the influencer market means this has an extremely effective reach, right down at the grassroots level.

Culturally specific branding has several advantages. They want to have products that remind them of their culture, language and traditions every time they do the shopping. Working with influencers who were either born in Armenia or have strong Armenian roots the feeling of unity and emotion can be invoked. Influencers attracting both old and new generations of clients by wearing classical Armenian designs with a contemporary aesthetic, or by posting stories about the brand's local production traditions, and more, can successfully connect people distanced by generations and location as well and attract wider clientele.

Furthermore, the Armenian diaspora is a significant market segment. Having a big follower base in Russia, U.S., France, Middle East, KARKATAN can actually extend its reach on a cross-cultural basis and reach out to influencers to make it more recognized in Foreign. Such Diaspora influencers may act as cultural brokers, interpreting local Armenian narratives for a global audience and at the same time maintaining and shifting towards authentic storytelling.

Rajput and Gandhi (2024) and Dalstam et al. (2018) note the challenge of authentic content for niche and heritage brands in influencer campaigns. From KARKATAN's standpoint, having the influencer's content relate to regional identity or a minimalist style could set the brand apart in the competition while having a loyal customer following. An ad that shows Armenian textile/individual crafters/traditions will likely work out better than another cookie cutter Western ad.

To maximize these cultural shifts, KARKATAN's influencer strategy should focus on long term partnerships based on shared values and not individual post mentions. And this takes us to the second level of relations between brand and audience which are built with this way of doing marketing, sustainable to serve and also to generate stronger connections between them, in order

to make possible that marketing relates to the company mission and also with the cultural expectations from the audience.

Conclusion

This background review shows the disruptive impact of influencer marketing to contemporary fashion communication. Whether it is the promotion of integrated marketing communication strategies, the strengthening of brand image, building consumer relationships, influencers are dynamic collaborators in the way brand stories will be told. This analysis gives the Armenian fashion brand, KARKATAN, a great starting point for creating an influencer marketing campaign that is in tune with their values, aesthetics, and target consumers. As influencer marketing takes new shape, driving global mindset, local culture combination will drive successful and impactful brand relationships.

Creative and Business Goals

This capstone project has two main objectives creative impact and business.

Creative Goals:

ENGAGEMENTS: The key creative challenge is to create a compelling influencer marketing proposal that is a true barometer of the KARKATAN brand. The campaign will showcase visual storytelling; with a minimalist design, cultural and everyday wearable elements. Content will also be adapted across Instagram and TikTok to maximize the strengths of each platform — such as leveraging reels, stories and short-form videos to create a continuous narrative around the brand. The creative goal is to add “a human touch to the brand” through authentic, lifestyle editorial that will provoke thought among a digital audience.

Business Goals: On a business side the campaign aims to:

- Grow the KARKATAN’s brand image both at domestic and global level
- Drive traffic to its retail establishment, and online engagement.
- Promote short-term sales growth by paying for a direct influencer promotion
- Foster long-term customer loyalty: create brand trust and recognition

Target Audiences: There are 2 main segments being targeted in the campaign:

- **Local Armenian youth (aged 18-30):** Fashion-conscious and heavy social-media users, they care about price, cultural relevance and modern design.
- **Diaspora and international:** And especially those aiming to support ethical, sustainable and culturally significant fashion from Armenia.

By combining high-quality storytelling with quantifiable success, this initiative aims to provide a replicable model for influencer-led branding in the Armenian fashion industry.

Methodology

The research will adopt a creative practice-based strategy that measures engagement and brand identity, through the execution of influencer marketing campaigns alongside data analysis.

Data collection and analysis.

To examine influencer marketing performance, we followed a methodological procedure for data collection and analysis. That way, we would have quantitative engagement and qualitative audience sentiment results and get a broad picture of the campaign's impact on the brand's awareness and perception.

Engagement Metrics:

For every piece of content, the influencer posted (posts, stories, videos), we monitored their metrics on likes, shares, comments, saves, video views, views, and KARKATAN CTR -click through rate to KARKATAN's site/Social. Metrics were selected as they directly reflect audience interaction and engagement. The high engagement indicates that the content resonated very well, and people found it fascinating. In contrast, comparisons between the different types of content (eg, video vs static posts) also revealed what format worked best for the brand. We measured the campaign's potential for bringing traffic and, therefore, potential sales by tracking click-through rates.

Audience Sentiment Analysis:

Aside from the number of engagements, seeing how consumers saw the brand proved valuable in measuring brand identity and reputation changes. Consumer response was collected from comments on posts, replies to stories, and DMs during the campaign. The analysis of this qualitative data focused on familiar themes, tone, and keywords that expressed

the public's views regarding KARKATAN's product quality, price, style, and local relevance. Positive sentiment (e.g., positive excitement, brand loyalty, or product satisfaction) and negative sentiment (e.g., criticisms, concerns) were also reported, allowing an overall impression of the brand to be measured.

The goal in measuring both engagement metrics and audience sentiment was to understand better how many people engaged with the campaign and what the resultant brand sentiment was. This combination of analyses identified the strengths of the brand message and the elements to target as they addressed new marketing strategies and partnerships with influencers.

KARKATAN Before Campaign

Before initiating their first influencer marketing campaign, KARKATAN had a modest and dormant social media presence. The brand's Instagram following stood at only 389 followers; it was following 14 accounts, predominantly the relatives of the store manager. This absence of professional strategy helped me understand the real problem: the "account" was nothing more than a gallery of products, not a strategic marketing tool, with little to no content plan nor audience interest or commitment. High-quality, tailored outreach was as non-existent as high-level workshops or relevant networking, and posts looked like parroting the image format and messaging of others' categories and products.

Despite offering well-made, locally produced attire at reasonable prices, KARKATAN was an enigma to many in the younger, social media-mad generation. The few videos that were posted (by the SMM specialist) barely got any engagement due to low followers and low engagement. Posts lacked more engaging visual storytelling, hashtags, or platform-tailored formats that would have made them stand out.

Internal resistance was another major obstacle. But that all changed when the store manager, a believer of the old-school Armenian business approach, initially did not see the value in social media marketing, at least on the likes of Instagram and TikTok. He was unconvinced influencer partnerships would provide actual returns and loath to pour resources into what he considered a fickle marketing trend.

This mix of low engagement, unprofessional profile setup, and managerial doubt made running a successful influencer campaign very hard. The brand required a significant digital overhaul to be in line with current marketing practices and reach a wider and more engaged audience Speaking of UX.

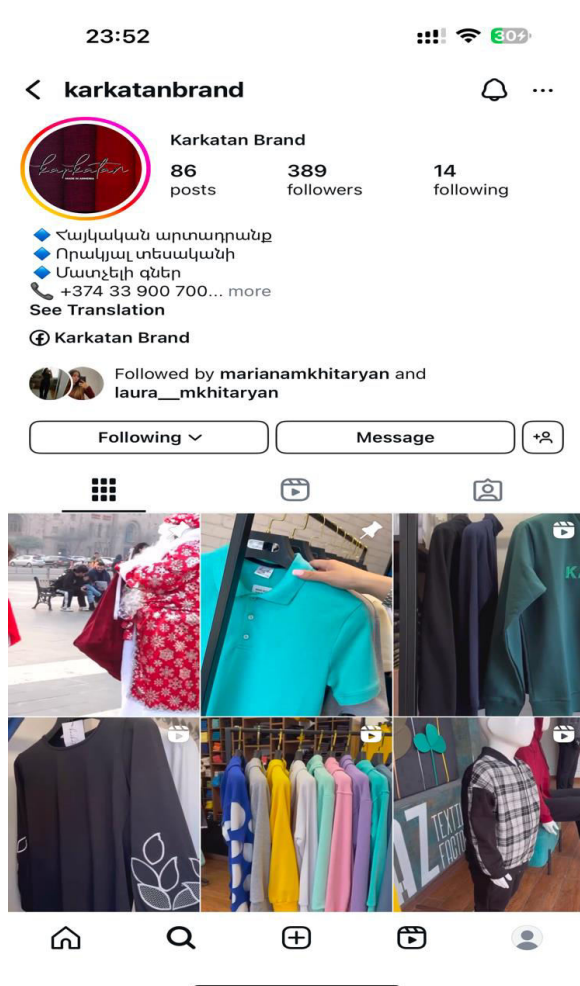


Image 1.

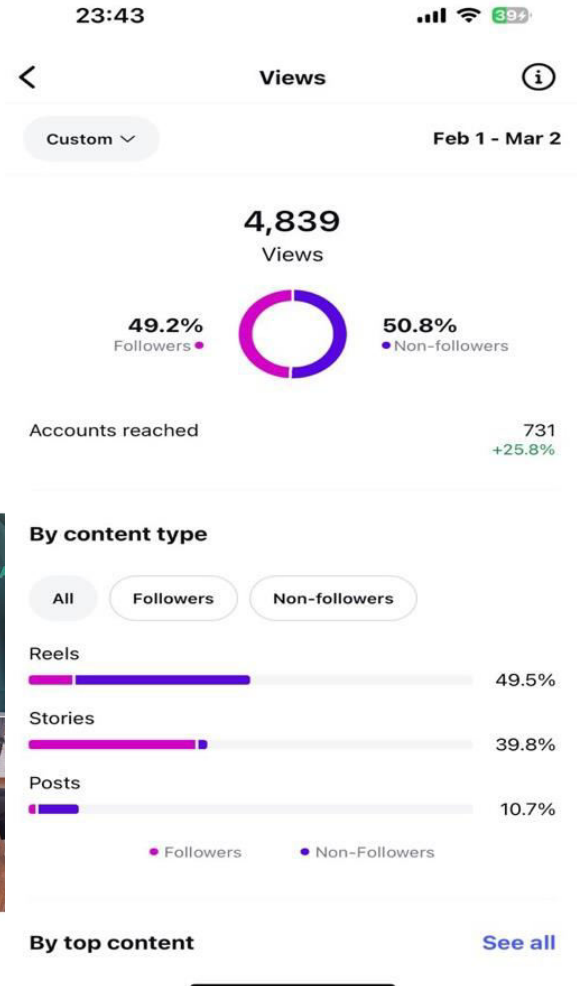


Image 2.

In the image 1., we can see that the preliminary amount of the followers before the campaign are 389. The post numbers are 86. The image 2., is the chart with the Instagram views insights from Feb. 1 through March 2, for a total of 4,839 views almost exactly evenly split between followers (49.2%) and non-followers (50.8%). Reels was the most-watched type of content with 49.5%, followed by stories (39.8%) and posts (10.7%). In addition, 731 accounts were contacted, an increase of 25.8 percent.

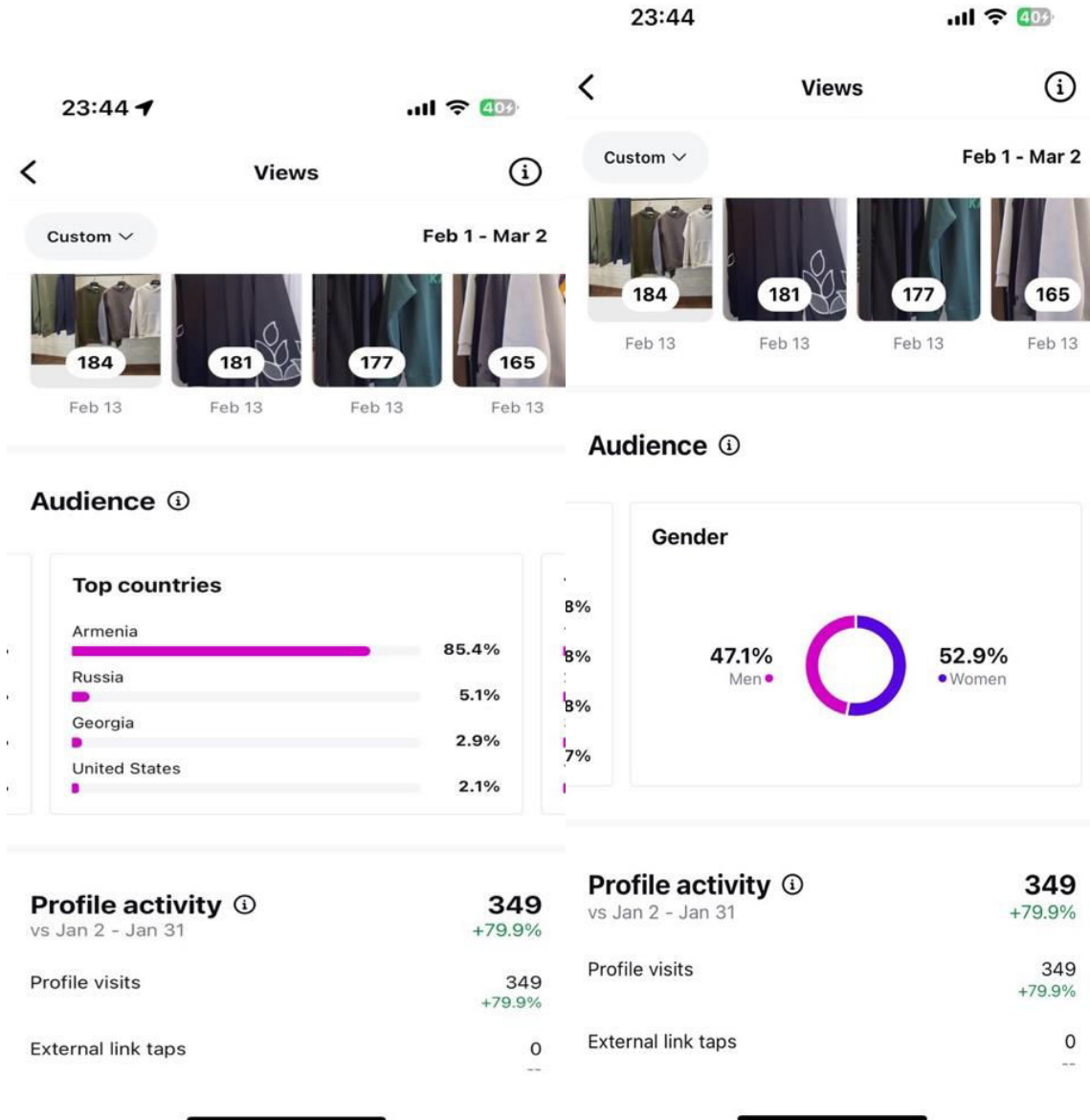


Image 3.

Image 4.

Image 3.- This graph indicates that the overwhelming majority of those engaging with the content between 1 February and 2 March in this audience came from Armenia (85.4%), followed by low proportions from Russia (5.1%), Georgia (2.9%) and the United States (2.1%). Profile activity had also increased dramatically to 349 views (a 79.9% increase compared to the week before). There were no taps between external links.

Image 4.- The period from February 1 to March 2 was a significant time for Visits, the Instagram Account experienced 349 profile visits – up 79.9% compared to the last four-week period. Gender distribution The audience consisted of slightly more women (52.9%) than men (47.1%). It means the content is going to appeal to a general targeted demographic (overall

trending female). Although, with the spike in profile visits but no clicks to external links, we can observe that users are indeed curious about the account but haven't been incentivized to venture outside of the Instagram platform. This knowledge might be used for tweaking the call-to-actions or outside promotions.

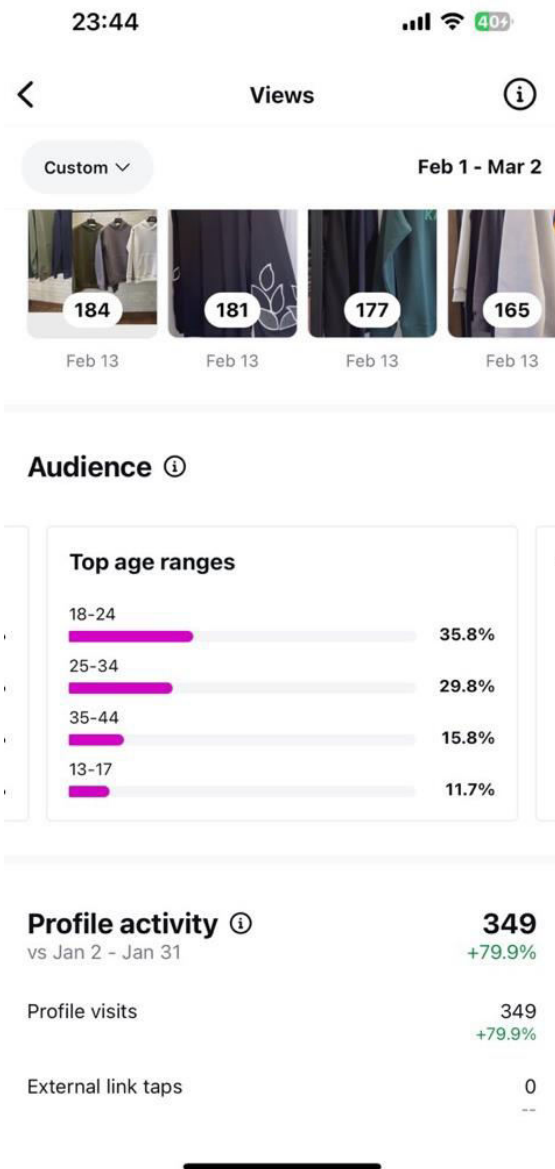


Image 5.

Image 5.- The average number of visitors to the profile also increased significantly (79.9%) from 194 in the previous period to 349 for the period February 1 to March 2. Most of audience was 18–24 years old (35.8%), followed by 25–34 years (29.8%). This was for the period of time where I also was not logging external link taps.

Campaign

For the final project, a strategic influencer marketing campaign with an Armenian fashion brand KARKATAN was performed. The main objective here was increasing brand awareness and the reach of the shop, specifically through social media interactions and footfall.

When choosing the most suitable influencer, I met a major difficulty: the influencers I would have been interested in initially were completely out of my budget, and the owner of the store did not offer me any funds. One of my favorites was the large, popular family account HaykTatev, a couple and a child with about 175,000 followers, and a child who is a focus of and participant in its content. They wanted 400,000 AMD for a single Instagram reel with only the woman, 500,000 AMD for a reel with both spouses and 550,000 AMD to produce a reel as well as an Instagram story. Although very expensive, I wanted to work with this influencer – they have much engagement from their child, especially from mothers/grandmothers who closely follow their lifestyle. This made them a great match to help us promote KARKATAN's kids' range and increase brand exposure. I also considered working with another influencer couple, who are travelling a lot outside of Armenia and who charged a lesser price—some 100K AMD cheaper—with the benefit of their regular visits to expand our brand outside our borders, since we get additional recognition not only from the homeland audience but also from foreigners, but again they were out of my budget. As I searched for someone who could offer me a mix of

quality and a decent price, I found Susi Nikoghosyan. Our SMM expert contacted her manager and set the meeting, and we discussed our collaboration thoroughly. And a few days later she came into the store where we managed to shoot to campaign video. Two weeks later, I was devising yet another campaign, this time with the additional support of a new type of influencer that was lower cost, and had a more relatable, on-the-street persona, and turned out to be way more intimate and relatable.

The pair of local influencers—**Susi Nikoghosyan** and **Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan**—were chosen due to their active Instagram presence and compatibility with KARKATAN’s aesthetic and brand values.

Work with Susi Nikoghosyan involved the creation of one branded video uploaded to Instagram. The messaging featured some of KARKATAN’s main value drivers: quality casual wear, minimalistic design, and cultural significance. Not long after posting the video, KARKATAN saw a spike in Instagram followers, possibly as a result of increased interest and brand awareness.

We had a longer-term relationship with Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan. Within one month, she put out 3 clips presenting various product ranges and styles right out of the store, KARKATAN. This activation was set to not only strengthen the brand, but encourage consumer interaction, driving traffic to the store and to Instagram. The tactic was effective in adding customers and increasing engagement with the brand.

Challenges

One of the toughest parts about getting the influencer marketing campaign for KARKATAN off the ground was trying to convey the significance of digital promotion to a physical store owner. A traditional Armenian businessman, he was at first skeptical about platforms like Instagram and TikTok, considering them being of little help in promoting serious business. Persuading him about the potential of social media had to be exercised with patience, demonstrated and examples of good campaigns.

Another major challenge was locating the right influencers that reflected the brand sensibility, had a strong local following (between 50-100k) and fell within a small budget, given the campaign's limited resources. First influencer co-op with Susi Nikoghosyan was worth 180k AMD and second one with Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan cost 20000 AMD plus approximately 90,000 AMD worth of clothing. Finding the balance of good pricing and working out the fair deal, but also doing so within budget, required thought and nerves.

Budget constraints also affected other parts of the campaign, including content development and increases in post boosts for wider exposure. These financial limitations required creative solutions that placed emphasis on organic reach and the partnerships with influencers willing to participate for lower cost, or product exchange.

The campaign got low response at first. The initial blog posts were not met with the reaction that was hoped for, and thoughts turned towards their expectation of their readers. At first the campaign met with light success. The initial posts did not receive the likes, comments, and shares the manager and the owner were hoping for. This result led to some reflection of the

reasons why the audience was not as excited as we expected. It was obvious that the influencer's followers did not quite overlap with the target audience of the brand or that the format and messaging of the content was failing to engage their interest. These early successes underscored how crucial it is to consider audience behavior and expectations when working with influencers, as well as to modify tactics to serve the brand—and the audience—best. But engagement had slowly risen as more content went out, in particular after Shushanik began posting videos. Followers started engaging more with the content, visits to the store increased and KARKATAN's Instagram following expanded. This was proof that when the audience was at first skeptical, a regular stream of genuine content by influencers gradually built trust and interest.

First Campaign with Susi Nikoghosyan

The initial influencer campaign for KARKATAN was produced with popular Armenian lifestyle and fashion content creator Susi Nikoghosyan, 67.8k followers on Instagram. The aim of this collaboration was to raise brand awareness for the young, style-conscious Armenian audience and further develop followers for KARKATAN on Instagram.

This campaign was KARKATAN's foray into influencer marketing and therefore a key testing ground for how we would handle this approach going forward. Because of Susi's potent engagement rate and sharing of the aesthetic—yet modern and clean, and rooted in Armenian culture—the brand decided to leverage her to introduce the brand to a wider digital audience.

A brief promotional video was shot with Susi, styling herself with several pieces from KARKATAN's most recent collection. It was shared to her Instagram page with a caption

praising the brand's local production, accessibility and cultural cred. The content was made to look natural and impromptu, not too commercial, in efforts to resonate with her fans.

The post went live during optimal engagement hours and just a few days after that, the campaign started bringing in results. KARKATAN got a noticeable Instagram follower boost, and there was a clear update in profile visits and direct messages inquiring about the clothes in the video. With little pre-existing digital footprint for the brand, the campaign was instrumental to establish a precedence for future online expansion.

The video hit Instagram on March 14, and was a far cry from the company's last interaction. A mere 10 minutes after it went live, it already had 10,000 views, and was becoming a sensation. Prior to the campaign, KARKATAN's Instagram account had a measly 389 followers and followed 14 accounts — the majority family members of the manager, leaving the page looking unprofessional and lacking in reach. The content posted by the store's SMM specialist barely got any views at all, which was mainly because of the SMM specialist's small audience and bad engagement. However, by March 19th, only five days later, the account had swollen to 434 followers, and the video itself had managed 92 views. 4K. Perhaps more significantly, there was not even so much as a drop of hate in the comments of the video, and so many positive comments that experiencing the song was just like experiencing the taste of success and popular opinion. It was a small success, but for me it was a small win that showed promise in engaging influencers to expand reach and visibility.

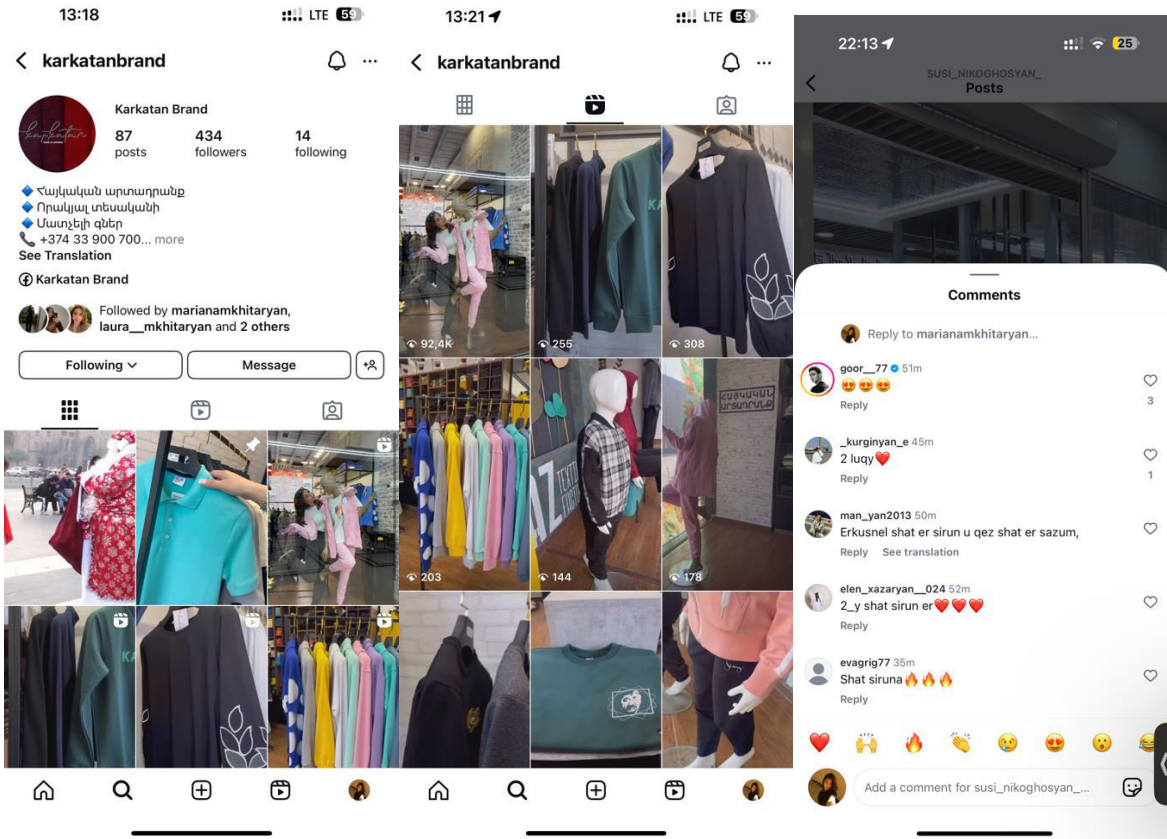


Image 6.

Image 7.

image 8.

Image 6.7.8.- the followers amount reached to 434 after the first video. The views reached to 92k, and the comments were mostly positive.

Although the campaign was in many ways effective, it also was a lesson learned. We realized that to keep people engaged, writing a few good long form pieces of content was not going to cut it. The relationship also illustrated the importance of tracking data and analyzing the audience, elements which were consciously incorporated into the subsequent campaign.

The opening campaign video of KARKATAN was based on a "Get Ready With Me" (GRWM) format -the style of an influencer trend, which promotes a casual and relatable relationship between one and its audience. Shot inside KARKATAN's store, the video shows the influencer as she lives an exhilarating moment because she just received that call all women

secretly fear: the one from the unknown person who calls and asks you for a date, an invitation from an anonymous male that, as he said, want to see you in a sporty mood, relaxed. Acting on impulse, and to underscore the organic nature of the evening, she reaches for some KARKATAN for her outfit, promoting the brand's "cheap, amazing quality" and Armenian pride. The influencer is seen trying on two looks from KARKATAN's most recent collection and asks her fans to help her decide what to wear to the date. At the conclusion of the video, she lightheartedly proposes grabbing a gift — a pair of socks from KARKATAN's "Gulpa" line — for the person who invited her. Humor, storytelling, and natural product appearance also play heavily in the video, boosting brand presence and engagement on a platform where non usual for Armenians content like this is the norm and running with the underlying humor in the message is both a must and a current digital trend – all while staying true to its roots as an Armenian-focused narrative.

In general, this first influencer cooperation with Susi Nikoghosyan showed the power of social media marketing for a brand like KARKATAN and also internally changed the mindset for more modern branding tools. It proved that with the right influencer and the right message, even a classical brand can get the ball rolling in a digital bazaar.

Second campaign with Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan

The success of the initial campaign led to a second collaboration with an influencer, Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan with an approximately 100,000 follower count, took place about two weeks later. She is a cozy and down-to-earth Armenian influencer focused on simple, non-glamorous style. The engagement included 7 videos and multiple Instagram stories to be shared over the span of a month to increase brand awareness and in-store/Instagram customer engagement.

Contrary to other social media bloggers who are about fine luxury things or extreme stylization of looks, Shushanik has spent years developing her account on the principles of genuineness, naturalness and contact with reality. She frequently posts the little moments of her life: walking (with her husband, her children), cooking at home, tidying up around the house. These peeks into her personal life have caused many to call her a “cozy” or average media creator. Her material is easily digestible and unrefined and makes her a kind of every mom persona for her fans — who are mostly women (and fellow mothers) who recognize some of their own lived experiences in hers. With her husband Edgar, she regularly features in videos, and the couple have two children, 14-year-old daughter Anahit and a 10-year-old son called Noy. She may be plain and unpretentious, but she is still inspirational to her fans. Unanimous brand and messaging fit This second influencer campaign was a perfect marriage of brand and messaging for KARKATAN, which wanted to underscore the comfort, quality, and affordability of its apparel in the context of everyday life in Armenia. Her content is a great fit with KARKATAN’s brand’s ethics, which are local, affordable, for real people.

The first video came on March 29, featuring Shushanik’s husband in a men’s sporty set by KARKATAN. Her response was about how comfortable and perfectly sized the apparel was.

Even with 11 comments on the video (only 3–4 were positive, while the others were harsher towards the influencer and her husband), it was actually still a massive driver of brand growth. The video was shared on TikTok, as well. The number of followers increased by a few hours after the KARKATAN Instagram followers was already 445 and after 2 days, reached 597.

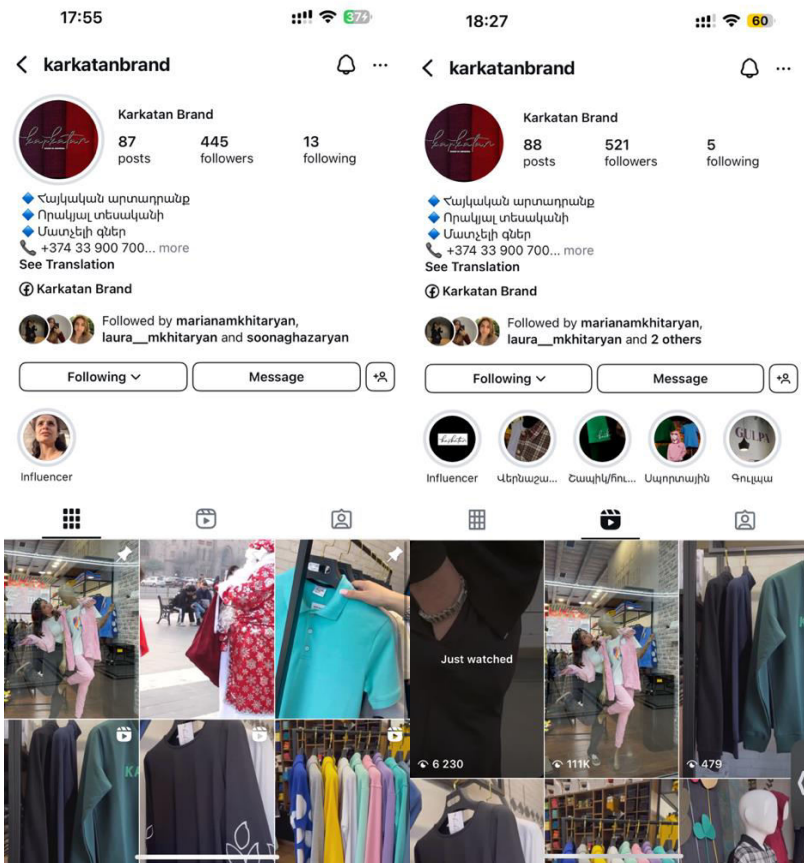


Image 9.

Image 10.

Image 9.10.11.- After launching the second campaign and we shared the first video and a couple of Instagram Stories, the followers just started trickling in. The account initially had 445 followers, that number being raised to 521 shortly after the campaign was launched and to 597 afterwards. The slow steady climb indicates the content engaged the audience and promoted visibility and exposure.

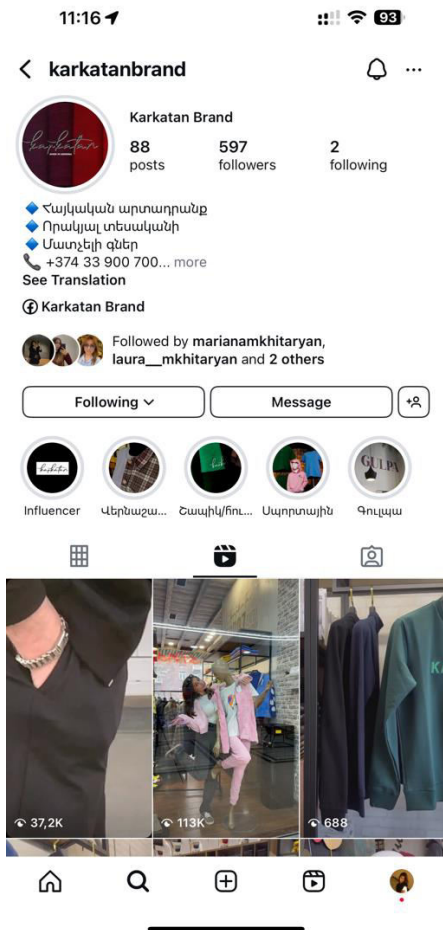


Image 11.

As for the first video of the second campaign — one showing the husband of one half of the couple’s duo, Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan, in a KARKATAN men’s sporty set — comments were few (just 11) but fairly emphatic. Although some of the comments on photos were positive about the comfort and sex appeal of the look, the responses tended to err toward the negative. A few viewers’ comments paid less attention to the advertised product and more attention to Shushanik’s husband: Many of these were ironic, sarcastic comments like, “The set may be high quality, but the husband is not,” implying a disconnection between the product’s hard sell message and the audience’s actual center of attention (*Image 12.*).

The criticism aimed at Shushanik's husband was mainly concerned with the fact that he appeared in the video drinking from a beer bottle and smoking, with many viewers feeling that it seemed unprofessional and unsightly for a brand promo. Also, most of the hate comments authors are used to seeing him draw flak and sarcastic attention for acting like a normal person in an ad. His casual look was at odds with the squeaky-clean image commonly associated with influencer marketing, and the response from people online, who were more interested in his actions than the product he was endorsing, was not exactly glowing.

But in digital marketing, even the ugly or controversial comments may have a significant role to play. Social media algorithms prioritize more engaged posts, regardless of sentiment, because high activity levels are an indicator of relevance and because the platforms use that signal to show the content to more users. These off-topic or personal comments simply helped in making the video trend, a fact that was reflected in substantial increase in the number of followers of KARKATAN a few hours after the post. "First of all, we risk damaging our reputation, but we need to moderate ourselves strategically and we need to teach you to be more indifferent, or else, like these clowns accuse me of being, or we will fall apart," Shushanik commented in our conversation.

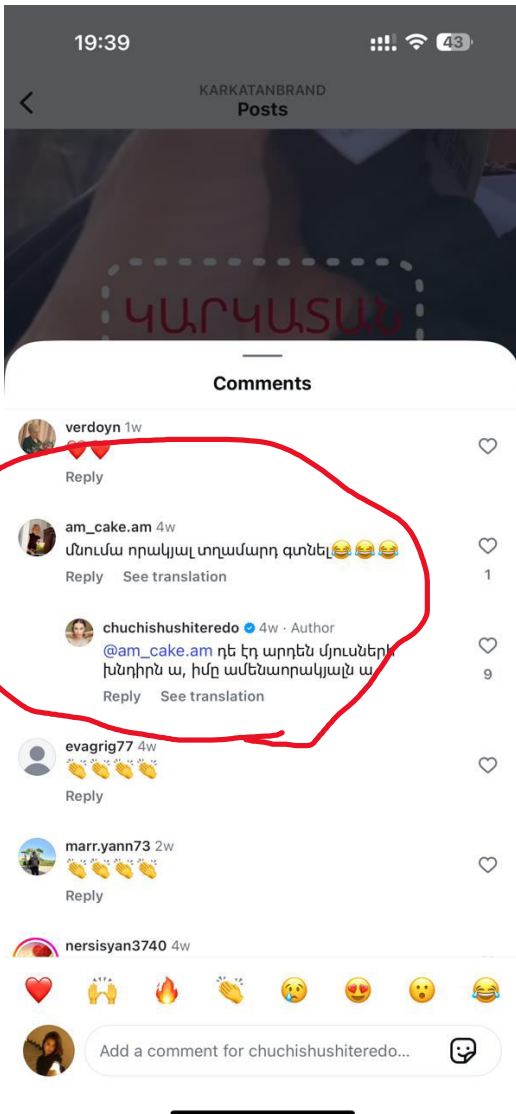


Image 12.

Image 12.- Hater commented under the first video about Shushanik's husband.

The force of Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyany's work is not in the high-budget aesthetics, the aspirational luxury, but rather in the ability to mirror the daily lives of regular people. Her content consistently reverts back to the real moments, whether she is cooking the simplest meals for her family, cleaning her home, sharing budgeting tips, or simply vlogging in her home

without makeup or filters. As opposed to other influencers who create a facade of reality, Shushanik's earnest honesty makes her highly relatable, particularly to Armenian women who are navigating family life on a low budget. The tone is friendly and inviting which creates authenticity. Her recommendations (of products including KARKATAN) do not feel like your standard sponsored link at the bottom of a blog post, they feel like genuine usage recommendations. This trust also comes from consistency: she often shares updates, engaging with fans and featuring her family in posts just enough (but not too much) so she has a comfortable, welcoming online presence. In presenting KARKATAN's products in everyday scenarios — doing housework, dressing her daughter in matching pajamas — she sends the message that the KARKATAN brand is not merely stylish, but practical, family-friendly, and, importantly, authentically Armenian. In doing so Shushanik is not only growing her own personal brand but also extending emotional credibility to the brands that seek out her for the same—making her a smart long-term asset for value-addicted brands like KARKATAN.

Shushanik shared the second video on April 4, where she was seen doing house chores and preparing herself for the day in a yellow sporty set by KARKATAN. Comments on this video were overwhelmingly positive, and the brand gained additional followers, starting at 624 and growing to 724 within three days.

KARKATAN's Instagram following was at 791 before he posted the third video. After the third video, in which Shushanik and her daughter were dressed in matching pajamas from KARKATAN, it gained another 806 followers and then eventually reached 830 during the fourth video release. In this video, Shushanik highlighted the KARKATAN pajama collection as being well-made but still affordable and how rare this level of quality vs price is in Armenian brands!

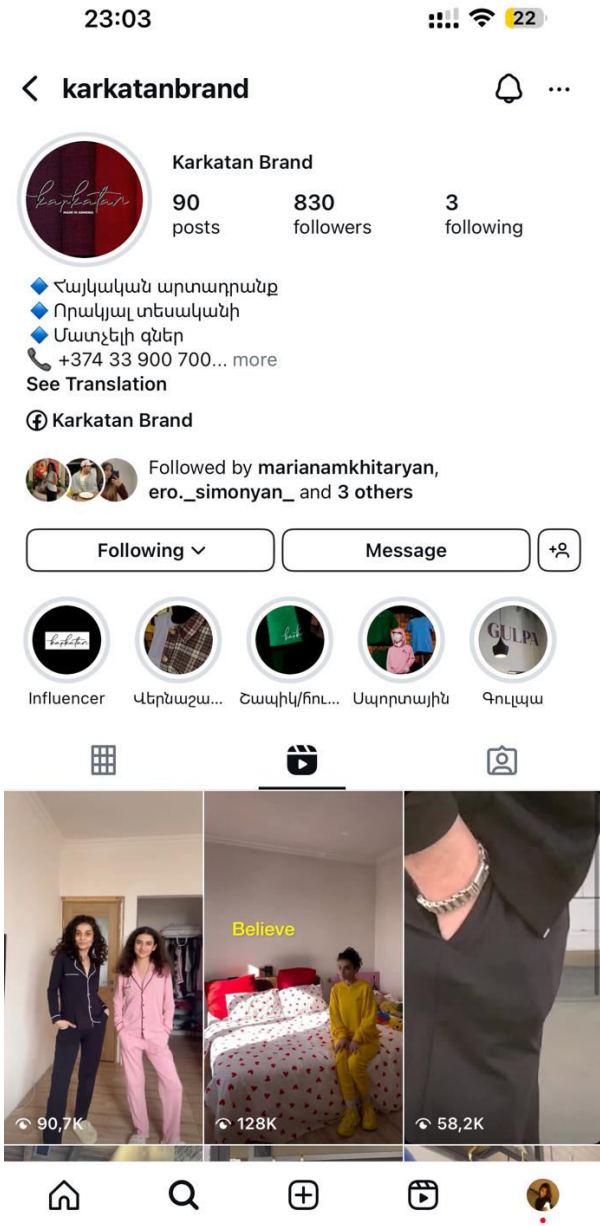


Image 13.

Image 13.- The followers amount reached to 830 after two videos. And the views were 128k and 90k. which means that the followers were interested in.

All in all, this collaboration with Shushanik showed the power of connecting with influencers your customer base can relate to — the result was not only a genuine brand image that consumers can trust, but real growth in audience size.

Managerial Reactions and Reflections on the Impact of the Campaign

At first, the manager at KARKATAN hesitated at the thought of launching an influencer marketing campaign. He wondered if social media influencers — particularly those on networks such as Instagram and TikTok — could really drive purchasing decision, or even concrete results, for a small fashion house. It was for that very reason that he was hesitant to get behind the first campaign financially and said that if it did not work, the money would be wasted pointless. I took it alone and I financed everything during the campaign. The manager was somewhat dissatisfied after the initial run, expressing that the number of followers were growing slower than he was hoping for and not strong enough evidence of success. In spite of his ongoing skepticism, I pressed on with a second campaign, once again having no budget behind me. However, this time he accepted product gifting from the store, so that the influencer could receive clothing without paying for it and I paid only 20000 AMD for the advertisement.

The second campaign with influencer Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan swiftly saw more powerful results. Follower numbers improved and customer engagement with the products grew, with overall brand exposure also improving across the networks. A few days after Shushanik published her first video, I was personally reached out to by the manager who told me he was very happy with the quality of them and that results for the second campaign were extremely good. He even claimed the store owner was happy with the outcome. The manager for the first

time asked if I had campaign ideas, a clear sign that his view had changed. I declined, as I still did not wish to participate in another paid influencer campaign because of the ongoing lack of financial support. But I suggested a cost-effective solution: setting up a store TikTok and having a model regularly upload “Get Ready With Me” videos in which she would feature KARKATAN clothes over popular (and on-trend) audio clips. I saw this suggestion as a tactical move - one that could keep the momentum but did not cost much. The experience not only confirmed the possibility of influencer marketing in the local scene but also highlighted the need to take creative risks – although well calculated ones and, sometimes alone.

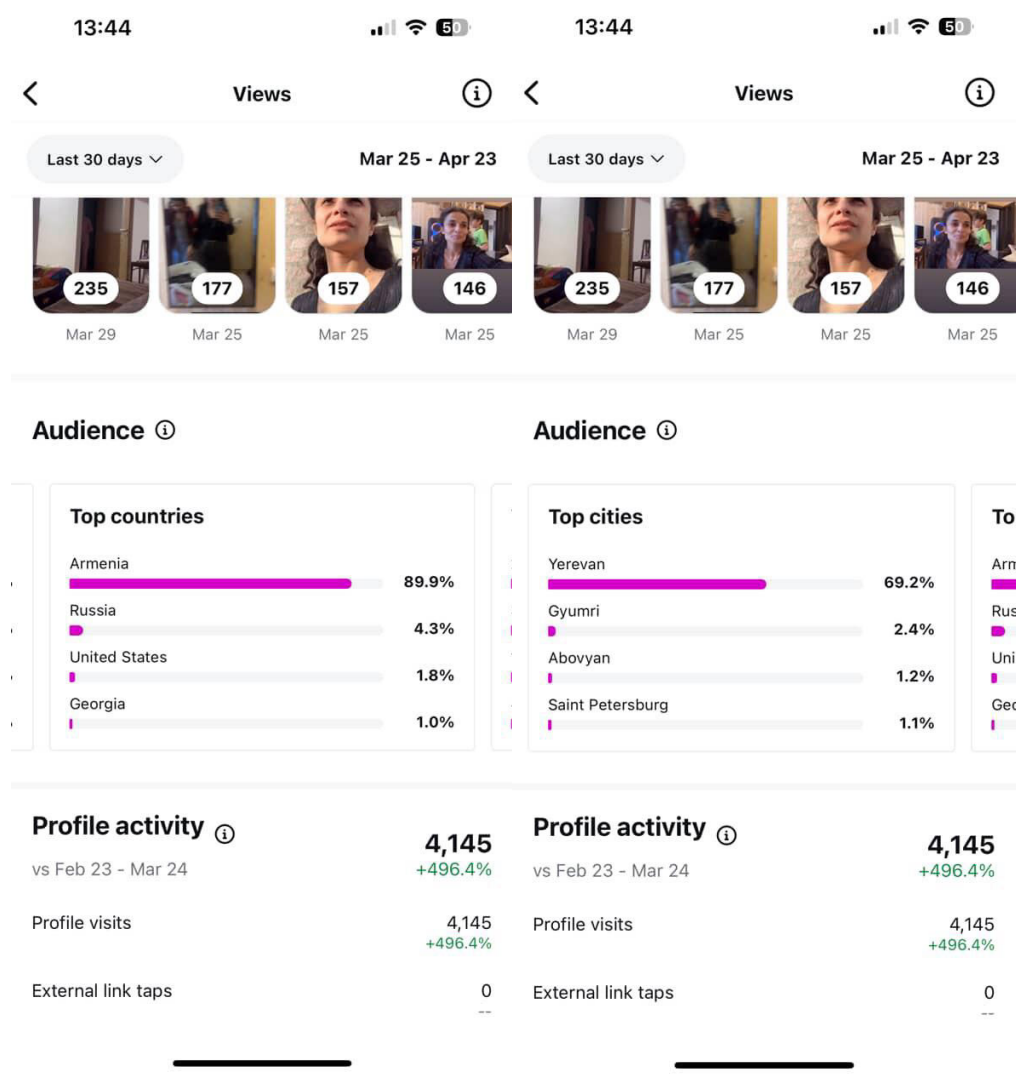


Image 14.

Image 15.

Image 14. 15.- From 25th March to 23rd April, the activity on the profile appeared to be at an all-time high with profile visits increasing by 496.4% to a total of 4,145 compared to last period. Its viewership was largely concentrated in Armenia, where 89.9% of viewers resided, with 69.2% in Yerevan. Minor audience originated from Russia (4.3 percent), the U.S. (1.8 percent), Georgia (1.0 percent), and various cities including Gyumri (2.4 percent), Abovyan (1.2 percent) and St. Petersburg (1.1 percent). Despite the increased visibility there were no external link hits.

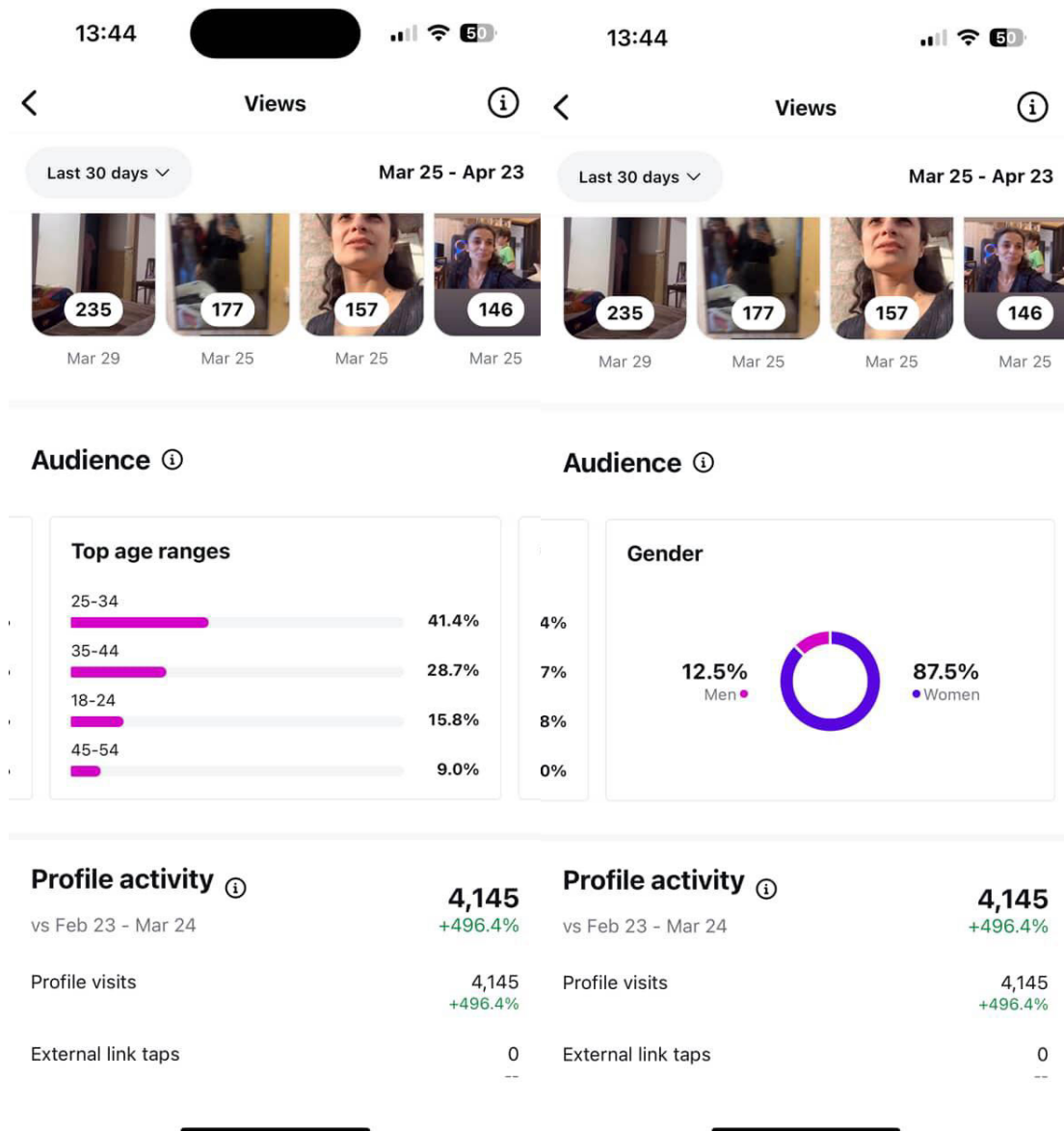


Image 16.

Image 17.

Image 16. 17.- From March 25 to April 23, the account saw growth in impressions and engagement, amassing 4,145 profile visits (up 496.4 percent from the previous reporting period. The audience composition is largely female (87.5%) and skewed towards 25–34 (41.4%) and 35–44 (28.7%) year olds. This is indicative of very strong resonance with older women.

Conclusion

This capstone project illustrates the influence influencer marketing can have on brand identity, consumer activation, and visibility, for big and small (locally centered) companies like KARKATAN. By organizing and managing two influencer campaigns, this task gave me hands-on experience and unique insights into digital branding and audience behavior. The underlying work of the first campaign established the new brand by intersecting the brand with audience-relevant social media trends and telling emotionally engaging brand stories, while the second initiative with Shushanik Ter-Hovhannisyan showed how authenticity and relatability made it a powerful trust-builder and engine for growth.

Although management was skeptical when the campaigns began, and did not offer any financial support, the results were apparent: brand recognition increased, the company grew its social media following, and consumers engaged more online and when visiting the stores. The fact that decision-makers at KARKATAN went from a bit of skepticism to being open-minded, certainly shows the success of the campaign and the potential of the influencer marketing strategy in Armenia's evolving fashion industry.

The initiative also taught key lessons: the importance of adapting global marketing strategies to local realities, the power of grass-roots content, the value of cultural relevance. By adding new digital routes such as Instagram and trend-driven content development, this capstone project provides a blueprint not only for KARKATAN's branding initiatives but also a replicable example for other Armenian brands in need of contemporary, efficient marketing. And perhaps most important, this initiative demonstrates that through ingenuity, know-how, and perseverance, even scarce resources can deliver tangible, lasting results.

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