The Rise of Triller: A Case Study on Persuasive Technology

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ABSTRACT

During the initial stages of the pandemic in the United States, millions of people discovered the power of social media platforms. In 2020, President Donald Trump announced plans to take steps to ban TikTok, a Chinese based-business. As a result of this threat to ban TikTok, many users retreated to a video app called Triller. Today, Triller has over 65 million active users on its platform. This case study examines Triller as a persuasive technology and how it can improve its positioning strategy as a mobile app for businesses and consumers. By serving its customers' needs for curated and concise video content, Triller has created digital marketing opportunities, including branding, reach, sponsorships and influencer capabilities. This study has significance for researchers and practitioners and broadens contemporary assumptions about strategic planning for social media platforms.

KEYWORDS: *Thriller, social media, Persuasive Technology, Social Media Influencers*

INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of new video apps, the accessibility of information has sky-rocketed to new heights. In the past two years, this brand of apps has flourished with the COVID-19 pandemic. With so many people quarantined, the demand has not only revolutionized the market, but increased the technology and its availability. One of these apps, Triller, has seen a significant boost in usage, and has since risen with popularity and persuasiveness. During the initial stages of the pandemic in the United States, millions of people discovered the power of social media platforms. This AI-driven music video app allows users to create professional level videos in seconds; like TikTok, Triller creates music and lip sync videos to share with followers (Santora, 2021). Today, Triller has over 65 million active users on its platform (Cox, 2020). Does this platform act as a persuasive technology for end-users? BJ Fogg (2001) argued that technology designed to change attitudes or behaviors of the users can induce persuasion and social influence; however, this reality does not necessarily produce coercion. Therefore, technology that generates these traits above would be considered persuasive technology. This case study examines Triller as a persuasive technology and how it can improve its positioning strategy as a mobile app for businesses and consumers.

METHODS

In this research, case study analysis was utilized because this approach encourages critical thinking and creativity for complex problems. In implementing case study analysis, educators present students with real business situations to develop skills to effectively analyze these situations and generate new ideas and/or solutions (Envick & Mullen, 2020). Trillers mission states that their aim is "to provide a service that is suitable for all types of users, that values freedom of expression and the acceptance of a diverse range of ideas and opinions, and that enables its users to "share, create and connect" in a lawful, safe, inclusive, and supportive manner (Triller, 2021)." Case studies can enhance understanding of contexts, communities, and individuals (Hamilton, Whittier, 2013). Therefore, a case study analysis can be an effective tool for understanding Triller.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Triller has emerged as a key player on social media platforms due to the demise of other popular social media platforms. In 2020, President Donald Trump announced plans to take steps to ban TikTok due to privacy concerns for American citizens (Cox, 2020). At the time, some U.S. government officials felt that Chinese company TikTok data generated from U.S. citizens might be unfairly used by the Chinese government (Cox, 2020). As a result of this threat to ban TikTok, many users retreated to a video app called Triller. Developers David Leiberman, Sammy Rubin (creators of Disney's Frozen), and Colin Tilley (award-winning music video director) launched Triller in 2015 (McIntrye, 2015; Viner, 2020). The developer's initial objective was to help musicians generate mobile video content. Since then, Triller

has expanded into live streaming, live entertainment, and television (Blake, 2021). Triller and TikTok apps have similarities; Triller has persistently created strategies that directly compete with TikTok (Bossi, 2020). See Table #1.

Table 1. A Comparison Analysis of Tiktok and Triller

FEATURES	TIKTOK	TRILLER
PLACE OF ORIGIN	CHINA	UNITED STATES(LOS ANGELES)
USERS	800 MILLION ACTIVE USERS	65 MILLION ACTIVE USERS
DOWNLOADS	MORE THAN 2 BILLION DOWNLOADS	MORE THAN 250 MILLION DOWNLOADS
GENRE	Users can make videos on any topic, regardless of the genre	Users prefer electronic dance music and hip-hop
VIDEO DURATION	Users can make videos of 15 seconds only	Users can make full music videos to whole tracks
VIDEO EDITING CAPABILITIES	User-based ability to add text in particular parts of the clips, range of speeds, effects, overlays, etc.	A.I.-based, fast motion/slow motion, text (basic), overlays
MUSIC	Only allows listening to 15-seconds of a song, only lets you use music that is ingested in the app in the videos	Only allows listen to full songs, can use music that is Triller, Spotify, or Apple Music
AI DEPLOYMENT	Analyzes the users' preferences and interests through engagement and displays a personalized feed to every user	Analyzes biometric movements of videos and adapts them to a song's beat
SHARABILITY	Can download videos to share to other social networking sites	Can download videos to share to other social networking sites

Source: "Triller vs. TikTok – Similarities & Differences – A Complete Guide" by Shannon Cox

Yet, social media sharing platforms are very competitive. For example, London-based Centricus and investors partnered with the U.S.-based **Triller** Inc. to secure a minority stake in a newly proposed joint entity. Centricus submitted a bid to Beijing-based ByteDance, for TikTok's assets in the United States (Nair, 2020). While both apps are social video-sharing platforms, Triller automatically edits user videos using AI-powered software" (Bossi, 2020, para. 5). Much of Triller's popularity is due to the monetization of content and global engagement (P.R. Newswire, 2022). By August 2020, Triller overtook TikTok and ranked as the number one top free app by the App Store across 85 countries (Bossi, 2020).In April 2021, Mahi de Silva took over as CEO, and Mike Lu was named president (Blake, 2021). Under their supervision, Triller has evolved into a complete entertainment enterprise called Triller Network (TrillerNet). TrillerNet combines influencers with music, sports, fashion, and entertainment culture, providing a comprehensive view of content and technology (P.R. Newswire, 2022). With the initial success of the video app, Triller seeks to be a major player within the social media platforms in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW: PERSUASIVE TECHNOLOGY

Many social media platforms have been successful in getting people's messages heard so that these individuals become influencers. Thus, persuasive technologies become a critical factor in the digital economy. The term persuasive technology was created by B.J. Fogg, a Stanford researcher. Fogg summarized that computers, marketing, product design, and psychology influence people's habits and beliefs

(Rozenfeld, 2018; Kosner, 2012). Computers have outpaced their original purpose of handling data. Instead, computers have emerged as everyday companions and key persuaders. Through ecommerce and social media, brands can do more than process purchases. Instead, they offer suggestions, allow for feedback, and present promotional materials that compel people to act. This interactivity influences physical and psychological changes (Fogg, 2003).

Popular apps Instagram, Snapchat, Triller, TikTok, and Facebook, employ persuasive technology. Social media apps have eased photo and video sharing, which increased users' ability and motivation to engage with others online (Kosner, 2012). Contrary to TikTok, "Triller's commercial model revolves around working directly with social media influencers. It allows them to raise money from fans, advertisers and partnerships with music labels" (Brett, 2021, para. 7). Solely providing information does not change behaviors. Lasting change necessitates a change of environment or habits (Fogg, 2019). Persuasive technology utilizes both. Persuasive technology requires that three components are consistently present: motivation, ability, and a trigger (Fogg, 2003; Kosner, 2012). Fogg's Behavior Model suggests that achieving "purple path" behavior is vital to the success of social media apps. The "purple path" involves the addition of triggers that influence desirable behaviors, an improved ability to execute behaviors, and strengthened motivation with intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli (Kosner, 2012). Persuasive technology is dynamic. Social media apps' simplicity and innovation have changed attitudes and dispositions towards technology, making them

effective persuasion tools. Triller extensively uses persuasive technology to propel the business. Triller allows brands to utilize personification to become more humanly relevant through persuasive technology, giving companies and other content creators a new and exciting way to interact with users (Tittel, 2013).

ANALYSIS

To better evaluate the internal and external factors are impacting Triller, this case study utilized SWOT Analysis (See Table #2). Good performance within a company is the result of an ideal interaction of business management with its internal and external environments (Houben, Lenie, & Vanhoof, 1999). Triller's mission states that their aim is "to provide a service that is suitable for all types of users, that values freedom of expression and the acceptance of a diverse range of ideas and opinions, and that enables its users to "share, create and connect" in a lawful, safe, inclusive, and supportive manner (Triller, 2021)." The SWOT analysis means identifying and taking advantage of a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). This analysis identifies the changes and the effects of the external macro environment on a company's competitive position (Bonnici, Galea, 2015). Furthermore, Oster (1999) argued that a modern competitive analysis is a fundamental resource to the managers of today and tomorrow. Companies that are informed and aware of their competitive surroundings are more likely to be successful.

Table 2. Swot Analysis of the Triller Platform
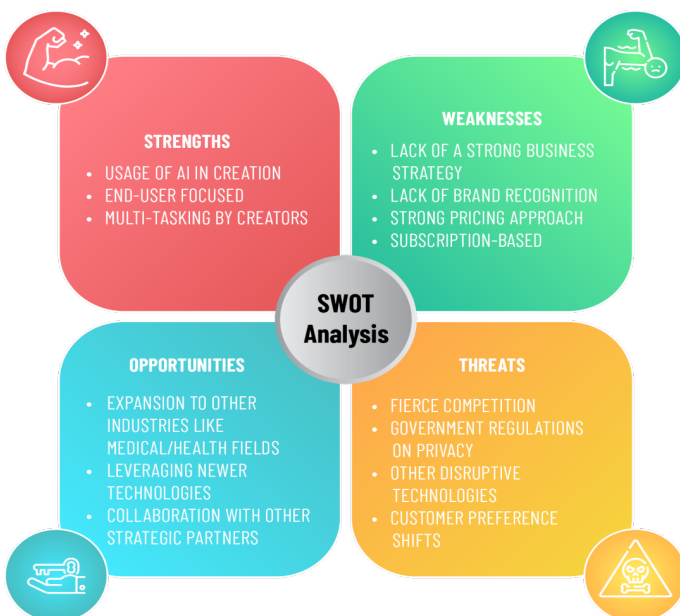
Strengths: Triller aims to narrow the gap between music streams and viral videos (Brett, 2021). Unlike its competitors, Triller enables users to "film multiple takes of themselves and using artificial intelligence, the app will automatically compile together the best clips to create a music video" (Viner, 2020, para. 2). Additionally, the Triller app enables users to play full songs, not short snippets, which contrasts with TikTok. Moreover, Triller has surpassed its direct

competitors by broadcasting pay-per-view boxing, music, and entertainment events (Brett, 2021).

Weaknesses: Although the offering of live music, sports, and fashion events through social media is unique, the concept of paying for social media is in stark contrast to Triller's direct competitors. Triller was inundated with disapproving messages from users. Continuing to charge fees may create user disinterest and a loss of content creators. In 2021, Triller launched TrillerPass, a yearly all-access subscription service. TrillerPass permits access to Triller's music, sports, fashion, and other live events. TrillerPass is $299.95 annually and $29.99 monthly (Accesswire, 2021). In 2022, Triller attempted to charge customers $2.99 a month for the once-free Verzuz music live stream service (Mendez, 2022).

Opportunities: Since 2020, Snapchat has collaborated with Triller. Snapchat's popular feature, Stories (videos), is now syndicated, making it possible for users to move Snapchat Stories to the Triller app. (Sloane, 2020). In 2021, Triller partnered with SoundCloud, a music streaming service. The alliance allows Triller to integrate SoundCloud's curated programs, playlists, and platform. Triller has unique opportunities to cultivate even more collaborations with competitors.

Threats: The popularity of direct competitors, Tiktok, Snapchat, and Instagram will force Triller to become more innovative and adjust revenue models. As reported by CBNC, in Spring 2020, Snapchat was the favorite app for North American teenagers, and TikTok the second favorite app. In third place was Instagram (Salvador, 2020). Triller must keep its current momentum and be proactive in leading technology innovations.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Triller is an emerging social media platform with market potential. To date, Triller has gotten more than 23 million downloads (Santora, 2021). Based on this analysis, Triller's current success and popularity are expected to increase, widening the gap between Triller and its direct competitors, Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok.

Several strategic implications were noted:

A. Triller should leverage TrillerNet services to gain new viewers and content creators.

Developing more partnerships with music labels, television show writers and producers, sports associations, fashion designers, and independent artists will create more exciting content and services for TrillerNet. The availability of exclusive content may ease consumers' concern of purchasing TrillerPass and pay-per-view events.

B. Triller should adopt a collaborative design model to leverage persuasive technologies.

Adopting a collaborative design model will require Triller to adjust how they approach content creators, live services,

and user features. TrillerNet's influence on persuasive technologies can influence industry behaviors and attitudes while obtaining new users and content creators. Triller's persuasive technology, combined with a collaborative design model, allows the company to personify its brand, becoming more humanly relevant.

C. Triller must use Artificial Intelligence to improve their brand and assist branding for users.

"Artificial intelligence (AI) represents the future. In fact, AI has the potential to transform how brands market across social networks" (Kenyon, 2021, para. 2). Triller uses AI to compile video clips to create music videos on the app. However, Triller can further use artificial intelligence to assist social media marketers learn more about their audiences, enhance ad targeting, and improve content creation. This assistance will garner more business for the company.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic has created a new normal across the globe. Today social media platforms are part of the American way of life. The world is no different in this mindset. Triller's persuasive technology is far-reaching and influential. The behavior and attitudes of current users have propelled the company's popularity. Triller's cutting-edge service offerings have piqued the interest of musicians, fashion designers, sports associations, and individuals. This case study examined how Triller has changed the social media industry through persuasive technology and artificial intelligence. By serving its customers' needs for curated and concise video content, Triller has created digital marketing opportunities, including branding, reach, sponsorships and influencer capabilities. This study has significance for researchers and practitioners and broadens contemporary assumptions about strategic planning for social media platforms. Triller has elevated social media service offerings, content creator features and expanded the limits of branding and marketing. This case study is relevant and noteworthy to researchers and marketing practitioners as it grows the modern-day beliefs about using social media platforms as marketing tools.

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