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Social Media Marketing as a Retailer

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Abstract

Social media is becoming an increasingly important tool to use as a retailer since social media is becoming larger and more important in society. A large proportion of companies today use social media as a tool to market their products and services, as more and more people make their purchasing decisions based on what they have seen advertised on social media.

The purpose of this study was to find out which marketing method on Instagram is the most effective to use as a retailer. How to build a stable network on Instagram as a retailer, how to find one´s target group, and how to find new potential customers by using Instagram.

The study is structured with a theory part containing information about marketing strategies for social media, and statistics that can be measured on Instagram, to find one´s target group and to make a marketing plan. The second part of the thesis consists of a study where my Instagram account has been used to share different types of content and marketed products that I sell in different ways to see what works best with Instagram users. What was analyzed among the content shared during the Instagram study is for example which format, which time, and which type of content gave the best results in the form of, for example, the most engagement and the greatest reach.

The results of the study show that it pays to post content on Instagram regularly to increase one´s reach and get greater engagement, but one should also not forget to be social and interact with other Instagram users.

Language: English
Keywords: social media marketing, social media strategy, Instagram, marketing plan

EXAMENSARBETE

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Abstrakt

Sociala medier blir ett allt viktigare verktyg att använda sig av som återförsäljare eftersom sociala medier blir allt större och viktigare i samhället. En stor del av företagen använder idag sociala medier som verktyg för att marknadsföra sina produkter och tjänster eftersom allt fler människor gör sina köpbeslut på basis av vad de sett reklam om på sociala medier.

Syftet med denna studie var att ta reda på vilket marknadsföringssätt på Instagram som är det effektivaste att använda sig av som återförsäljare. Hur man som återförsäljare bygger upp ett stabilt nätverk på Instagram, hur man hittar sin målgrupp och nya potentiella kunder med hjälp av Instagram.

Studien är uppbyggd med en teoridel innehållandes information om marknadsföringsstrategier för sociala medier, statistik man kan mäta på Instagram, att hitta sin målgrupp och att göra en marknadsföringsplan. Den andra delen av studien består av en undersökning var mitt Instagram konto använts för att dela olika typer av innehåll och marknadsfört produkter som jag säljer på olika vis för att se vad som fungerar bäst hos Instagram användarna. Det som analyserats bland innehållet som delats under Instagram undersökningen är bland annat vilket format, vilken tid och vilken typ av innehåll som gett bäst resultat i form av till exempel mest engagemang och störst räckvidd.

Resultatet av studien visar att det lönar sig att publicera innehåll på Instagram regelbundet för att öka sin räckvidd och få större engagemang men man får heller inte glömma att vara social och interagera med andra Instagram användare.

Språk: Engelska
Nyckelord: marknadsföring i sociala medier, strategi för sociala medier, Instagram, marknadsföringsplan

OPINNÄYTETYÖ

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Tiivistelmä

Sosiaalisesta mediasta on tullut jälleenmyyjälle yhä tärkeämpi työkalu, koska sosiaalinen media on yhä suurempi ja tärkeämpi yhteiskunnassa. Suuri osa yrityksistä käyttää nykyään sosiaalista mediaa työkaluna tuotteidensa ja palveluidensa markkinointia varten, koska yhä useammat ihmiset tekevät ostopäätöksensä sen perusteella, mitä he ovat nähneet mainostettavan sosiaalisessa mediassa.

Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli selvittää, mikä markkinointimenetelmä Instagramissa on tehokkain käyttää jälleenmyyjänä. Kuinka jälleenmyyjänä voi rakentaa vakaa verkosto Instagramissa, kuinka löytää kohderyhmänsä sekä uusia potentiaalisia asiakkaita Instagramin avulla.

Opinnäytetyö koostuu teoreettisesta osasta, joka sisältää tietoa sosiaalisen median markkinointistrategioista, tietoa erilaisista tilastoista joita voi mitata Instagramissa, tietoa kohderyhmän löytämisestä ja markkinointisuunnitelman tekemisestä. Opinnäytetyön toinen osa koostuu tutkimuksesta, missä Instagram-tililläni julkaisin erilaista sisältöä ja markkinoin eri tavoin myymiäni tuotteita, nähdäkseni mikä tapa toimii parhaiten Instagram-käyttäjien kanssa. Instagram-tutkimuksessa, jaetun sisällön joukossa, analysoitiin muun muassa sitä, mikä formaatti, mihin aikaan ja minkä tyyppinen sisältö joka antoi parhaat tulokset esimerkiksi eniten vuorovaikutuksia ja suurin kattavuus.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että kannattaa jakaa sisältöä Instagramiin säännöllisesti, jotta kattavuus ja sisällön vuorovaikutus kasvaa, mutta ei saa unohtaa olla sosiaalinen ja olla vuorovaikutuksessa muiden Instagram-käyttäjien kanssa.

Kieli: Englanti
Avainsanat: sosiaalisen median markkinointi, sosiaalisen median strategia, Instagram, markkinointisuunnitelma

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1 Introduction

The background to why this study has been done regarding marketing on social media from a retailer's perspective is that the industry itself and customers' buying behavior have changed a lot in recent years. Nowadays, retailers need to market themselves and find new customers through social media, which is not so easy and requires planning and follow-up. Therefore, this study has been conducted to find out what kind of marketing it pays to do on social media, and how a retailer finds new customers and builds networks through social media.

Social media is getting bigger and bigger and is becoming more and more important in today's society, even for business owners and retailers. Entrepreneurs are posting more and more advertising on social media instead of advertising in newspapers, for example, which also applies to retailers of products. Retailers of companies' products are increasingly advertising via social media, thus trying to reach out to more potential customers and thus also increase their sales. In the past, it was very common to have viewings at other people's homes where people gathered with their friends and acquaintances to test and hear more about different products that retailers sold. However, this concept has more or less almost stopped completely and instead more advertising is done on social media and retailers contact potential customers directly via social media. (Charlesworth, 2018, pp. 27-29)

In other words, there are several different ways to market products via social media, but which way works best? Is there any marketing strategy that is better than others? In this thesis, the marketing of products via social media, mainly Instagram, will be analyzed and reviewed from the retailers' perspective. In addition, a 6-week study has also been done on Instagram where different types of content have been shared to find out what type of marketing Instagram users are attracted to, what time it pays to publish content, and what brings the most engagement.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is for retailers to get information on how to go about marketing their products or services via social media, how a marketing plan is set up, how retailers find their target group, how a stable network is built, how new potential customers are

found and how the statistics for content that are shared are followed up. The thesis will also, through the study conducted on Instagram, find out how often content should be published, what format and what type of content interests the followers the most, what time of day the Instagram users are most active and why it is important to be social and interact with other Instagram users.

1.2 Problem formulation and delimitation

The thesis will find out how retailers of different types of products should proceed with their marketing in social media to succeed with product sales. No particular type of retailer will be compared or retailer selling any particular type of product, but this thesis will deal with marketing on Instagram for retailers in general. No other social media will be taken into account, but marketing via Instagram will be dealt with mainly. The theory part will consist of different ways that retailers can market themselves via Instagram, how they should go about it, how they build networks, an explanation of different concepts, and how the retailers will finally be able to get products sold through marketing on Instagram. The second part of the thesis will consist of an Instagram study where different types of content will be shared and compared to see what type of content the followers of my Instagram account prefer. The thesis will be delimited so that the different ways in which it is possible to market oneself through Instagram will be from the retailer's perspective, not the consumer's and not from the company's/product manufacturer's perspective, but only the retailer's perspective.

1.3 Research method

The thesis consists of qualitative research with a theoretical part that consists of information about the different types of retailers there are, how retailers should market themselves on Instagram, and how retailers should network and find potential customers. The theory part is the basis for the second part, which consists of the results and analysis of the results from the Instagram study, which is conducted on my Instagram account, to find out what type of content the followers prefer.

2 What is a retailer?

First, we may need to define what a retailer is. There are several different types of retailers, some retailers sell a company's goods directly to end customers, and then there are wholesalers who are also a type of retailer because the goods the wholesalers buy are sold to retailers. (Carter, 2023a) The most common type of retailer in e-commerce and social media is a marketer who is a member of an affiliate program, which means that the retailer advertises for example through blogs, social media, and other digital marketing platforms and earns money through clicks or through the sales generated by the retailer's advertising. (Mullen, 2022)

In cases where the distributor sells a company's products directly to the end customer, the retailer receives a profit that is predetermined for the product being sold. (Carter, 2023a) On the other hand, retailers acting as brand affiliates receive a commission in either the number of clicks they receive on the advertising they have made for the advertiser or they receive a commission on the sales made through the advertisement. Different affiliate programs pay different percentages of commission for the amount that the retailer manages to sell for as the retailer contributes to sales. However, the goal of affiliate programs is for the retailer or brand affiliate to make money and for the company that hired the retailer to increase sales. (Mullen, 2022)

The good thing about being a retailer is that they do not have to spend a large amount of money to buy a large inventory of products, but the only thing that they need to invest in is a sales channel. (Carter, 2023a) Once they have chosen a sales channel, they need to think about a good marketing strategy and make a marketing plan.

2.1 Why is the business structure of retailers becoming more common?

There are quite a few reasons and explanations as to why the business structure used by retailers is becoming increasingly popular.

First of all, it is very easy to start working as a retailer because a retailer does not have to put in any equity, there are no startup costs and a retailer does not have to buy a lot of products and build up a warehouse. This is very good in that new entrepreneurs usually do

not have such a large budget and do not have the opportunity to invest a lot of money in the start-up of a business. (Carter, 2023a)

Advertising and selling products via social media is also one of the winning concepts that retailers have and therefore it is important that retailers market themselves and their products or services in the right way. In addition, retailers do not need to take inventory because they do not need to keep any inventory if they choose to sell products or services online. If the retailers choose to have a small stock from where they sell their products, they will of course need to take stock. (Carter, 2023a)

Since a person (who is thinking about becoming a retailer) does not have to put in any money of their own to become a retailer, money is not a limitation that will slow down the plans from being able to become an entrepreneur. Also, the risk is much lower for retailers than it is for other business models in that a retailer does not have to pay any startup costs or anything else. A retailer can also adjust profit margins, as retailers do not have to follow the manufacturer's recommended price levels completely. Retailers also do not have to pack the goods themselves and deliver them, the company takes care of that, retailers only receive orders, and the goods are sent directly to the end customer from the company. The same applies if customers want to return goods, make a complaint about a product or if refunds are to be made on returned goods, the company will take care of this. (Carter, 2023a)

Although retailers do not have to take care of product deliveries but can concentrate fully on sales, it is important to have a fixed range of products that are of good quality. In addition, it is important that retailers have knowledge of the products and also use the products themselves so that they know how the products work and that the quality is good. (Carter, 2023a)

3 Social Media Marketing Strategy

Since basically anyone can become a retailer and it does not cost anything to become a retailer, it is not that difficult to get started with this type of business. The only challenge is to get sales of the products or services that a retailer sells and to succeed with this, the retailer needs to have a good marketing strategy and plan for how to get in touch with customers and reach out to potential customers.

3.1 Social Media Marketing

Today, it is very common to market products and services via social media and other social channels such as websites. This type of marketing via the Internet can also be referred to as word-of-mouth marketing through the World Wide Web. This type of marketing can also be called e-marketing or digital marketing and for this type of marketing, there are a lot of tools that retailers can use. The tools can be used for retailers to learn how effective their social media marketing methods are and what improvements they could make to increase the effectiveness of their marketing. (Niininen, 2021, pp. 105-106)

However, what a retailer needs to remember is that retailers cannot only publish content, where they promote their products on Instagram, they also need to publish content that gives their followers something that their followers are interested in. This is because a retailer needs to collaborate with their followers and the followers usually hang out on Instagram to be inspired, either by reading or watching content that is educational, inspiring, or entertaining. (Niininen, 2021, pp. 107-108) And also, to be social and interact with other Instagram users as the fact is that companies that are successful interact and engage with their followers on Instagram. This means that if a retailer does not have the time or interest to interact with followers and publish content on Instagram that interests them, Instagram is not the right channel to use. This applies to almost all social channels and is also a reason why retailers should not use this type of platform if they do not have the opportunity to put in the time required. (Starlings, 2020)

By choosing one social channel to focus on, which one´s target group also uses actively, retailers can use both their time and their resources in a much more efficient way than if they have several different platforms to keep track of and create content for. Focusing on one platform also means that retailers can build a good network on the social channel that they have chosen because they have the opportunity to set aside time to discuss and respond to all their followers. It makes a huge difference to a retailer’s business if they respond to all the comments and messages they receive from their followers because they show that customer care is important to their business. (Starlings, 2020)

In the past, people always found out which product or service was recommended by asking others face to face, but nowadays people use social media and other social channels to find out which products and services are the best on the market. Social media is also good for

other things than finding new customers and advertising the products and services being sold, it is a good tool to use to keep in touch with existing customers and help them if they have any problems or questions about the product. (Niininen, 2021, p. 108)

On social media, it is also common for companies and retailers to do marketing campaigns because they reach a lot of people and appeal to a large audience. By doing a campaign on social media, a retailer can reach both current customers but also new potential customers. In social media campaigns, it is also a good idea to analyze the effectiveness of the campaign through various metrics that measure reach, customer response, the return on investment generated by the campaign, and more. Although social media can bring great benefits, it can also contribute negative things. Examples of this could be if information is shared on social media or false facts that can harm the company. Even if this type of negative information is remedied immediately and it turns out that the information is false, it can still have negative consequences for the company in the long run. In a case like this, a social media campaign can be a great marketing strategy to rebuild faith in the company. (Carter, 2023b)

When it comes to social media marketing, there are probably more ideas that are inventive and creative than there are skilled marketers who can implement these ideas. When reading this, the first thing that comes to mind is some incredible commercial or a PR stunt that a popular brand has been seen doing on social media. Honestly, these commercials work and are remembered because they are complicated and very creatively made. But simple, methodical, and regular commercials can also be used in social media. The reason why simple and regular commercials work so well in social media is because regular publishing is necessary in social media, and it does not work to publish a few times now as then. The winning concept is the main activity carried out, which can be repeated to achieve even better results and systematically expand the business in a creative way. A good strategy to start from to understand the concept is the social media strategy cycle. (Apsis, 2023)

3.1.1 Marketing on Instagram

Marketing on Instagram is very common today and many people use Instagram as a tool to promote their products and services as well as to build their brand. (Åkerberg Gonzalez, 2023) Instagram has a whopping 2.4 billion monthly active users and the users are both

men and women of all different ages, ranging from 18 years old to users over the age of 65. (Jo Dixon, 2024)

On Instagram, mainly photos and videos are shared in different formats, which can be stories (which are visible to followers only for 24 hours), posts, and reels. In addition, Instagram can also broadcast live broadcasts and interact with other users, create networks, and find new contacts and potential customers. (Åkerberg Gonzalez, 2023) Initially, Instagram was created as a social platform where users could be social and share special and precious moments in their lives. However, Instagram adapted to new trends, which has made the app today a platform where users around the world share their messages and their lifestyles. (Mladenov, 2022) In addition, Instagram is among the best platforms to make money through, which means that there are several companies, marketers, and influencers who use Instagram as a tool where they promote the products they sell, create relationships with new potential customers or build their brand. (Mladenov, 2022)

Therefore, Instagram was also chosen as a marketing channel for this study because it is a very popular platform with users of all different ages and it is a good platform to use both when marketing products and to find new potential customers.

3.2 Social Media Strategy Cycle

The social media strategy cycle can be explained as a process that helps in the development and implementation of an effective social media strategy. (Apsis, 2023)

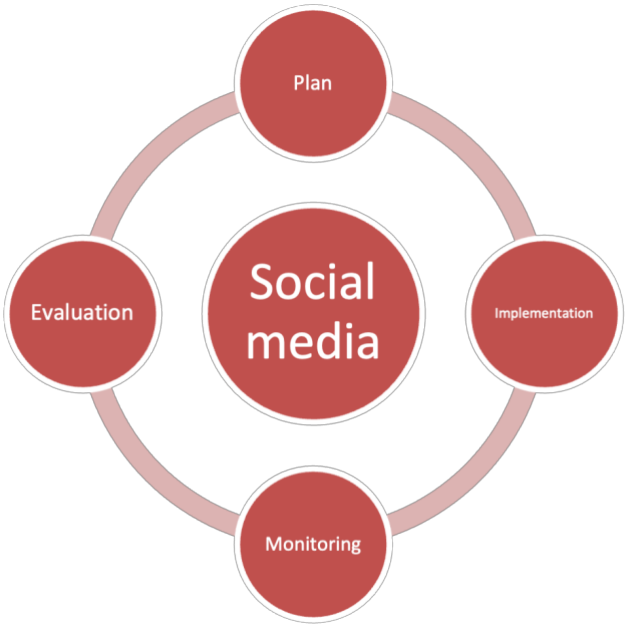


Figure 1. Social Media Strategy Cycle

The strategy cycle is a process that includes four steps: planning, implementation, monitoring, and finally evaluation. If this process is followed, it applies to both business owners and retailers, then a retailer can expect that social media is in line with the business goals and the goals that have been set. (Apsis, 2023)

3.2.1 Step 1: Planning

The first step in the strategy cycle is planning, which is required if success is to be achieved within social media. In this phase, the goals that a retailer has for social media are clearly mapped out and defined, i.e. what do they want to achieve? In addition to mapping the goals, a retailer also needs to identify the target group they want to reach on social media and what content they will share on social media. (Apsis, 2023)

Normally, it is usually the case that retailers or companies decide that now we also need to be on social media and then they start an account and publish some posts from time to time. Most of the time, these accounts are created without a plan for how to work with social media, which rarely works out well because there is a complete lack of direction and target group. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Before creating a social media account, it is important to think in advance about what the goal of the channel is and what is to be achieved with social media. If a goal has not been

set, it is very difficult to know if one has been successful in social media or not. The goals that have been set need to be measurable so that retailers can measure and see how successful they have been, and the goals need to be reasonable to reach. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Both companies and retailers usually set strategic goals for how they want the company or their business to develop and produce the results they strive for. The marketing goals that are set up for social media therefore need to be based on the overall business goals that have been set and complement them. The goals that are set for the business should not be set up for one's own sake, but they are set up to benefit the business and therefore the goals should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Accepted
- Realistic
- Timed

Common and good goals that a retailer can have are, for example:

- To generate more sales
- To increase awareness of one´s brand and to reach out to new markets or new target groups
- To create a community where one can integrate and discuss with one´s followers (Starlings, 2020)

When marketing goals are set, it also needs to be possible to measure when they have been achieved. Therefore, it needs to be determined which metrics are to be used to see if the goals have been achieved. Examples of different metrics a retailer can use are, for example, reach which can be measured if the goal is to increase brand awareness. If the goal is for one´s followers to act in a certain way, the number of clicks needs to be monitored. For example, a retailer can track the number of clicks for each campaign they do because it

gives a good indication of what makes their followers buy products or act and do things in a certain way. To see how much the content published on social media engages, one can look at the number of likes, comments, shares, and saved content. (Starlings, 2020)

Once the business goals and marketing goals have been set up and which metrics are to be used, one also needs to review which target group they want to reach out to in social media. To determine who one´s target group is, it is again necessary to go through and look at what the goals are that have been set because a retailer wants followers who help achieve the set goals. The target group should be of the same type as one´s potential customers and this is especially important if a retailer sells products in specific geographic markets such as only locally, throughout the country, in several countries, or all over the world. (Starlings, 2020)

Since social media today is a bit like a jungle where there are a lot of different actors who are all fighting for visibility and attention on social media, it is important to prioritize which channel is most important for oneself and one´s future followers. This is important because if a retailer wants to achieve their goals, they need to use the same social channels as their followers and thus they also need to know a little more about their target group. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Many times it is assumed that one´s followers use the same channels as oneself, whether it is Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or any completely different channel, but one cannot know for sure. Everyone likes different types of content, and it is hard to know what kind of content one´s target group likes. Do they like posts that inspire and encourage them or do they want posts that give them new knowledge? In other words, the target group's behavior on social media needs to be found out in order to find this out. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

If a retailer knows their customers, they may have some idea of which social channels they use and if they do not, they can always do a customer survey where they ask customers about which social channels they use the most. To start somewhere, retailers can try to reach customers through their favorite channel, such as Instagram. After that, one can expand and start using more social channels where a sufficiently large proportion of customers have an active account. Retailers can also think about whether they want to have only one business account in a single social channel or if they want to open several

accounts on different social media channels where they target a certain niche audience. In this way, retailers also reach the right audience better with the right content on the various social channels. (Starlings, 2020)

A good way to start is to see how one´s closest competitors, such as retailers in the same industry or companies that sell similar products, act on social media. By checking and comparing what kind of posts they publish, what kind of content they publish, and think about what oneself can learn from them. In addition to analyzing the content that one´s competitors publish, the form should also be analyzed, i.e. do they mostly publish videos or images in their feed? Also, analyze what tone of voice they use, what social channels they use, and how often they post. Also, analyze their followers' engagement, can any pattern be seen, and does the engagement change according to what channel is used or what type of post is published? This analysis and comparison of how the competitors do will probably give some answers to how one can do in one´s own social channels. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Something that is also important for success on social media is that one needs to share content that is of high quality. One of the most common mistakes that businesses and retailers often make on social media is sharing content that consists of way too much advertising. Social media is created and made to be social, it has not been created as a marketplace for the sale of products and services. Therefore, it is important to share informative and entertaining content interspersed with only a small amount of marketing material. A good rule of thumb that is usually used is that 80% of the content that is shared should be entertaining, informative, and fun, while the remaining 20% can be sales posts with marketing of products or services. In addition to sharing content in one´s own social channels, retailers also need to like, comment, and share other people's content. (Starlings, 2020)

A retailer also needs to be aware of their own limitations when it comes to creating content for social channels. If, for example, one does not have the equipment, knowledge, people, and time to create high-quality videos, it is completely pointless to invest in just such social channels where this is required. As an example, if a retailer starts a YouTube channel where they publish only a couple of blurry videos where a couple of people are standing and talking to each other, they will not get any views, no one wants to watch videos with poor

quality on Youtube. The same also applies to articles written from the inside out instead of telling and informing about something that the target group wants to read about and has a use for. When working with a business account on social media, retailers should only think about what content their target group wants. In other words, they need to create content that interests the target group and entertain and educate them. (Starlings, 2020)

Before creating an account on social media and getting started, one thing should be done, regardless of whether a retailer has one or more social channels for the company, and that is to have a consistent visual appearance across all social channels. This means that the right colors, language, tone of voice, and logo should be used in the social channels. Retailers should also not waste their own information space that is available in each social channel, but need to take the time and fill in bios and profiles, link to pages that are relevant to the business, link to a possible webshop and possibly specific pages on the webshop for those who click in via their social channels. (Starlings, 2020)

After following all these steps and making a good plan for one´s social channels, one can move on to the next step in the strategy cycle, which is implementation.

3.2.2 Step 2: Implementation

The second step in the strategy cycle is implementation, and here a social media plan needs to be created and implemented. This plan needs to include a schedule for when to publish content on social media as well as an engagement strategy. It is also necessary to think about how to measure the success of the posts published on social media to be able to determine whether the post has done well and given any return in the form of sales. (Apsis, 2023)

When a retailer is going to develop a plan for their social media, they can start by looking at what they came up with in the analysis of how the competitors are doing. Did the competitors have any patterns in their social media and is it something that one can use in one´s own channels? (Moderskeppet, n.d.) In addition, when a marketing plan is made, a retailer needs to think quite carefully about what target group they want to reach, and to facilitate this, a Persona can be used as a starting point. A Persona is a fictitious person for whom the marketing plan is created and a little later on the marketing plan will be reviewed and how to develop a Persona. (Dolbec, 2021, p. 24) What always needs to be remembered

is that the content created and published on social channels should be created for one´s followers and not for oneself. Followers want to gain more knowledge or inspiration and are not as interested in hard selling, especially if there are new people who have started following one´s channels. A retailer always needs to start by building trust with their followers and then they can start selling through their social channels. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

When publishing content on social channels, one also needs to think about when it is best to publish on social media. Although in theory one can create a post and publish it manually as soon as it is finished, it is an inefficient way to work. Instead, a tool should be used where posts can be scheduled. This means that several different posts can be completed at the same time and set which day and time the content should be published. In this way, a retailer can work more efficiently and create content for several days ahead that is published automatically. That way, the content is not forgotten to be shared if everyday life gets in the way and one does not have the opportunity to create content, and in addition, the communication is kept together on social channels. (Starlings, 2020)

In addition to posting regularly and setting up a plan for when to publish, the algorithms also need to be considered for the channel in which content is published. Later, Instagram's algorithms will be reviewed to see how they affect when one posts on Instagram. Most social media use algorithms of some kind to filter the result that is achieved when content is published in the feed, i.e. when for example a post, a video, or a reel is published. This means that if content is published at the wrong time, it may not reach one´s target group and a large portion of one´s followers will not see the content shared. (Starlings, 2020)

What is also included in the implementation is to measure the success of the content in the social channel chosen to publish content in, because no matter how much a retailer plans and publishes in their social channels, there is no guarantee that the posts will go as well as intended. Therefore, the success of the content needs to be measured and different measurement tools used to see how the content has gone and if it has generated any sales. If the development of the content is not followed up at all and it is also not measured how well the content has gone, then one has no idea if the content is developing or stagnating in place. A retailer needs to constantly keep track of how the goals and metrics they have

set are developing. Different metrics that can be used on Instagram to track the success of one´s content will be covered a bit further. (Starlings, 2020)

3.2.3 Step 3: Monitoring

The third step in the strategy cycle is monitoring, where to track and follow up on social media metrics and see how social media marketing has performed. Once one has come this far in the strategy cycle, the plan that has been made for social media needs to be regularly reviewed to ensure that it is still compliant and effective. In addition, any negative comments and negative feedback received via social media also need to be responded to. (Apsis, 2023)

As mentioned earlier, one´s business's presence on social media is based on two different things, what the target group's needs are and what business goals one has set for one´s business. The value that is given to one´s target group via social media should also contribute to the business goals that have been set. But in order for this to succeed, the business's goals and KPIs need to be followed up at regular intervals because it helps to follow up on one´s presence on social media. For social media, a retailer also needs to set up communication goals and various key figures that should be followed up over time to see how the content of one´s social media develops and progresses. To follow up and monitor these, there are a lot of different KPIs that can be used, which will be reviewed more thoroughly later on, but in short, a retailer can use these KPIs if they have the following type of communication goals: (Digitalsnack, 2023)

- If one´s communication goal is for the target group to know and be aware of or easily be able to find out information about one´s business, then these key figures can be used to measure it:
    - Reach, number of shares, and number of clicks on links, as well as a decrease in the number of questions to the business.
- If one wants the target group to be attracted by the content published on social media and that they should be touched and curious by the content that is shared, then it can be measured through these key figures:

  - The engagement rate of the posts, the number of comments on the posts shared, and the quality of the discussions in the comments section.

- If the goal is for the target group to feel seen and feel that their comments, questions, and views are properly answered, this KPI can be used:

  - Compare the number of discussions and comments per post and analyze the quality of the discussions. In addition to comparing the number of comments and discussions per post, it is also important to answer all the questions that one´s followers send and to answer negative comments as well as this adds value to one´s followers and at the same time builds trust with one´s followers. (Digitalsnack, 2023)

There are of course a lot of other KPIs that one can use on Instagram, but these will be reviewed later in more detail, and which KPIs can be used for what purpose.

3.2.4 Step 4: Evaluation

The fourth step in the strategy cycle is evaluation, and in this phase, the results achieved through one´s efforts in social media will be evaluated. One also needs to go through and check if there are any special areas that should be reworked or improved if the result has been less good in any part of the posts. (Apsis, 2023)

Evaluating the results and seeing if one´s presence in social media has had any effect is made much easier when one´s communication goals and KPIs are linked to the business goals that have been set up. Of course, it is not always completely certain that the effect can be proven to be due to social media, but if one measures systematically and regularly over a longer period of time, it is more likely to see that the effects come from social media. (Digitalsnack, 2023)

If a retailer also does questionnaires or surveys among its customers and followers on social media, these can also give a hint of how well the retailer has succeeded with its social media presence. (Digitalsnack, 2023)

The most important thing is to measure the results at regular intervals and follow up on what content has gone well and what content has gone worse so one can see what pattern

should be followed and what one´s followers are interested in. This way, a retailer knows what kind of content one´s followers want to see.

4 Marketing plan

When using social media as a tool to promote one´s products or services as a retailer, it is important to make a marketing plan that one follows. The social media strategy cycle is good to use for the regular follow-up of marketing, but the marketing plan is like a pillar that one can fall back on to see how the plan was set up in the first place. A marketing plan is important to set up for one´s business so that the retailer has a common thread in their marketing, that the retailer has a plan for the marketing and has a plan for how to follow up the marketing and see how the results and goals are progressing. (Apsis, 2023)

Below, we will step by step go through how to make a marketing plan for social media in general and what needs to be included in the marketing plan. Later on, when the different steps are explained more thoroughly, the focus will be on how to set up the different steps for Instagram.

4.1 What should a social media marketing plan include?

When making a social media marketing plan, the following points need to be included:

- Content strategy
- KPIs and performance tracking
- Optimal customer profile
- Social media channels, if the retailer will use more than one channel
- Mapping one's competitors
- Content marketing calendar
- Commitment
- Trends in social media or trends in the channel that the retailer chooses to use

- Influencer Marketing
- Crisis management

All these points need to be thoroughly reviewed and thought about in order to have a good, comprehensive, and safe marketing plan for one´s business as a retailer. Below are explanations of what the different points mean, what needs to be included in each point, and how they should be adapted to Instagram, which is the social channel that will be based on. (Apsis, 2023)

4.2 Content strategy

When making a social media marketing plan, the first thing that needs to be made is a content strategy, which means making a strategy for how to use one´s social media to achieve the business goals. The content strategy needs to be based on an understanding of one's target group, the goals that have been set, and the unique strengths that each individual social media channel has, which in this case is Instagram. (Apsis, 2023)

The purpose of the content strategy is for it to function as a handbook, it should be a tool that is used internally for planning content for Instagram as well as for producing and publishing content. The content strategy should make it easier for both oneself as a retailer, and also for everyone else in the organization if one were to work for a company, to understand what type of content to create and in what format the content should be shared. The format in which the content is to be shared is also divided according to which format is relevant for which target group and what content is to be published in which social media channel if several different social channels are used. So, what needs to be considered when making a content strategy and before a retailer starts posting content on Instagram is: (Andersson, 2023)

- What is the purpose of the content that is created?
- What message does one want to convey and communicate?
- Who does the retailer want to reach out to on Instagram and why?
- What does the retailer want their followers to do when they have seen the content shared? (Andersson, 2023)

The content strategy that is set up usually interacts with a content plan that has been made. A content plan is usually very diverse and changes all the time with a mix of content that is seasonal, focuses on different campaigns, spontaneous posts, and content about ongoing and current things. (Andersson, 2023) Making a content plan will be discussed later in the chapter on 'Create a content plan'.

The idea of a content strategy is not that it should be set in stone because society and the world are constantly changing and moving fast, which means that, both as a retailer and as a team within a company, one needs to be flexible and able to adapt to changes when needed. (Andersson, 2023)

The content published on Instagram then needs to be based on the content strategy that has been posted. In order to get the attention needed to build a stable target group and get stable followers who continue to follow one´s account, content needs to be created and shared regularly on the social media channel. The content shared on Instagram can be anything from posts that are fact-based and give followers knowledge and information, it can be videos or a reel in the form of an explainer video or a funny video such as a blooper. It can also be a story about current things or everyday material or one can run a live broadcast on Instagram. There are several different ways to choose from when the material is published on Instagram, but the content that is published needs to be relevant to the account. (Apsis, 2023)

In addition to creating content for one´s social media, one also needs to think about what type of content is published. For example, it does not work to publish a lot of posts and content on Instagram where one´s own company is praised or to only publish sales posts. No one wants to interact with such posts and has neither the energy nor the interest to read such posts that do not give the followers anything. Instead, the content shared on Instagram needs to be expanded so that it also includes other topics that are of interest to one´s followers and target group. This means that there is also a need to publish content that is not sales posts but is more fact-based or tips and ideas. For instance, a retailer specializing in hair care products might consistently publish content highlighting the benefits of various products. This could include posts praising the effectiveness of these products or announcing promotional pricing during campaigns. One's followers get tired of such content pretty quickly because they want to learn something new, get tips and ideas,

and new knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to publish content that offers value to the followers. This could include sharing interesting facts about hair, explaining the importance of using conditioner, or conducting polls about how often followers wash their hair compared to recommended practices. Such content not only engages the followers but also enhances their understanding, creating a perceived need for the products. (Apsis, 2023)

So when a retailer has thought about the content strategy and figured out how social media should be used to achieve the business goals, the retailer has come a long way.

4.3 Various KPIs and performance tracking

When developing a strategy and marketing plan, the goals that have been set need to be described, and the KPIs that will be used specified in order to be able to measure the progress that is being made. (Apsis, 2023) KPI stands for Key Performance Indicator and is used to measure the efficiency and performance of one's business. KPIs, or key figures that are also commonly talked about, can be used in almost all industries, and in social media, KPIs are used to measure, among other things, how many people the content reaches and how much engagement there is on the content in social media. (Palm, n.d.)

Social media is a very valuable tool for building relationships, reaching out with one´s message, increasing the company's revenue, increasing the reach of the posts that are published, and generating a higher turnover. Therefore, KPIs are very good to use to measure and ensure that the content published on Instagram gives a good result. There are several different metrics to use on Instagram to measure how well the published content has performed. And to know which metrics to use, one needs to focus on the metrics that answer the following questions: (Björck, 2019)

- Does the content reach the right people, i.e. the target group?
- Does one engage with the people who belong to one´s target group?
- How many of the followers on Instagram ask about the products or services being sold?

- How many of those who ask about the products or services actually become customers?

Metrics that answer these questions are the most relevant to measure because all the other metrics are ones that sound good and show high numbers but are not that important. (Björck, 2019)

For Instagram, there are 4 different main areas that one's KPI should focus on:

- Engagement
- Reach
- Leads
- Conversions

Below, these different main areas will be covered in more detail and explained what they mean. (Björck, 2019)

4.3.1 Engagement

Engagement is an area that one needs to be interested in on Instagram because this area is the way to improve one´s social media and is thus a very important KPI. Engagement can simply be explained as measuring and comparing how many people have liked one´s content on Instagram and how many have shared and commented on the posts published. For example, it is not a good sign if the content shared has a high reach and low engagement because it means that the content published is not of interest to the target group. Reaching thousands or millions of people means nothing if they are not interested in the products and services offered. As long as a retailer has engaged followers, no matter how few the followers are, the number of followers will increase by itself and they will generate more leads. (Björck, 2019)

On Instagram, engagement is important because it affects how many people see the content that is shared and thus one gets a greater reach. Engagement is a sign that the content is of good quality and popular, which means that if none of the followers interact with the content shared, one will essentially get no reach at all. The more interaction

received on the content shared, the more Instagram shows one´s content in the feed when sharing a post or a reel. (Björck, 2019)

As mentioned, there are several different KPIs that can be measured, but the most common are:

- Clicks: The number of clicks on links reflects the quality of a post's title and image. Of course, one´s best fans and unique followers will click on all the links one shares, but most of one´s followers, especially new followers, will click only on the posts that they are interested in. If a retailer gets a lot of clicks on their content on Instagram but few likes and shares, it means that the content got attention but did not deliver the unique quality that one´s followers require to engage with the content. If a retailer has a high level of general engagement but only a small number of clicks on their content, it indicates that they need to work on how to share the content by trying to use different headlines, images, or videos in their feed. (Björck, 2019)

- Likes: The number of likes often results in content getting more attention because people are drawn to things and content that are popular. If one has several likes, it also signals to Instagram's algorithms that the content is good and deserves to be seen more, and the content thus climbs higher up in the search results. (Björck, 2019)

- Shares: Likes are of course something that one wants to get when content is shared on Instagram and are also good to get, but it is easy for followers to like and can be an act that is both passive and thoughtless. On the other hand, if a follower shares one´s post, it is a conscious decision because they recommend one´s post to their friends, colleagues, and all other followers, i.e. their entire network. Thus, shares are a good indicator of the quality of the content shared. (Björck, 2019)

- Comments: Social media is from the very beginning created for us to be social and that is why it is called social media. Content that is interesting and relevant creates discussions and conversations, and even if negative and critical comments are received from followers, it is better than not receiving any comments on one´s posts at all. Whether comments are received in the form of praise, criticism, or a general

conversation, they are all good and useful for improving marketing on Instagram, because if there are no comments at all and it is completely silent, the marketing does not improve. In addition, if the followers also comment on the comments that one oneself publishes, it is a sure sign that the content that has been shared has hit one´s target group just right. (Björck, 2019)

- Mentions: On Instagram, one can be mentioned in other people's posts, which is called being tagged by other people and if one is tagged in a post or in someone's content, it shows that people are talking about one´s brand even if one is not in place or in the same room. Being mentioned in someone's content is also an important KPI for Instagram users because this KPI clearly shows one's relevance and that one's brand is getting attention. (Björck, 2019)

- Profile visits: Not all social media shows how many people have visited one´s profile, but on Instagram, the number of profile visits can be seen, and this is good to follow and pay attention to. A large part of today's social media, including Instagram, is used as a search engine for people to find out more information about one's brand or company. And even if one has a lot of followers on one´s Instagram account, there is a large part of the followers who may never have visited or will visit one´s profile. (Björck, 2019)

  However, people who are just starting to take an interest in one's company will undoubtedly visit the profile because they are new to the account and want to get more info about the business and the company. Profile visits are not as important a KPI as the previous ones because it is not possible to directly set a goal for the followers' buying interest, but it is of course still good to follow the number of profile visits because it shows that there is interest in the brand through the content shared. (Björck, 2019)

- Active followers: Active followers are people who have interacted with the content shared in the last 30 days. Unfortunately, for most brands, it is usually very unlikely that the majority of one´s followers or the people who like one´s content, visit one´s profile regularly or watch the content being shared. It can be a challenge to measure the number of active followers on Instagram because there is no direct tool to use

on Instagram, but there are external tools that can be used if one wants to get statistics for one´s followers. (Björck, 2019)

4.3.2 Reach

Reach is a metric that has been around for a long time and is still important in Instagram marketing. Reach indicates how many users the shared content has reached. Measuring reach on Instagram and social media in general can be very misleading because reach only shows how many people have potentially seen one´s post or that the post has appeared in people's feeds. It does not show how many people have actually taken an interest in the content as engagement does who have an exact number of likes, the reach is only an estimated amount of how many people the post reaches. (Björck, 2019)

Most often, the reach is measured automatically in social media and on Instagram the number of the reach is visible directly in the app, but the reach can also be measured by tracking these KPIs:

- Followers or Fans
- Views

The total number of followers one has on one´s Instagram account shows the reach of the content without engagement. This is the total number of people who can see the content that is shared and have actively made the decision to follow and want to see one´s content. (Björck, 2019)

The number of views on the shared content means how many times the content has been viewed in someone's feed or timeline by those who already follow one´s account or that someone they know has shared or interacted with the content. Views do not mean that people have actually viewed the content or that they have even seen the content, it just means that they have had a chance to see the content. Although the number of views is a very unclear and diffuse measurement result, a higher number of views is of course always better. (Björck, 2019)

If retailers have a website or online store where they sell their products, traffic to the online store is hugely important. And if a retailer has an Instagram account and spends a lot of

time and energy creating and sharing content on Instagram, then, of course, one wants this metric to reflect that. It can be a good idea to check what percentage of the traffic on the website that comes from Instagram to see if the content shared has any effect or increases traffic. This can be easily checked by using external tools such as Google Analytics, where one can see under traffic sources how much of the traffic comes from social media. Of course, the traffic that comes from social media is wanted to be as large as possible if content is actively shared on Instagram. If the traffic from social media is very small, then the reach of the posts that are shared would need to be increased, which can be done by making better content, trying to publish content in some other format, on another day or at other time, or one can, of course, advertise on Instagram and pay for the reach. (Björck, 2019)

4.3.3 Leads

When noticing that the account on Instagram is starting to get more followers and more attention, it is very easy to get caught up in the comparison of how many likes and shares have been received. It usually feels good and fun when people like the content one shares, but it is also important to see how it looks with sales. In order to get the best possible return on the time spent on Instagram, one should consider how many of one´s followers and fans are actually interested in buying products or services from one´s business. (Björck, 2019)

A retailer may have a large number of followers on the Instagram account who love the photos shared, but do the followers regularly generate new leads? (Björck, 2019) Lead generation means attracting visitors to one´s Instagram account and converting those visits into leads, i.e. the visitor shows an interest of some kind in one´s company and the products or services that are sold. In order to answer the question of whether the followers are interested in buying the products that are sold, the lead generation from Instagram needs to be measured. (Dolbec, 2021, pp. 161-162) To be able to measure the number of leads, the conversion rate needs to be calculated, i.e. how many of the Instagram followers actually do what is strived for, i.e. buy products or services that one sell. (Björck, 2019)

If a retailer does not generate any leads at all, one reason could be that one is on the wrong platform or the wrong social channel, or the reason could be that the content that is shared does not interest or engage one´s target group. The sooner this problem is discovered the

better because one can then change the content that is shared and make it more interesting for the target group and thus see if it helps to get more leads. (Björck, 2019)

4.3.4 Customers

No marketing plan is complete if one does not measure and track the number of newly acquired customers. On Instagram, the focus needs to be on giving followers content that they are interested in and discussing and having conversations with them. But at the stage when one asks for something in exchange, one wants to know how many of one´s followers are really potential customers and who will buy one´s products or services. (Björck, 2019)

Measuring how many of one´s followers, both new and old, become customers is the best measurement of how successful one´s marketing through Instagram has been. If the right people have been found and one has managed to keep them interested and engaged through the content shared on Instagram, they will most likely be interested in buying the products or services one is selling, if they have not already bought one´s products or services. However, what needs to be remembered is not to have too high expectations of new customers from Instagram because some of the followers will be customers while a large part will only be interested in the content shared, which of course is also important. (Björck, 2019)

One might think that it is not that important to follow the conversion rate and the number of new customers one gets through Instagram, but if this is not followed, the ROI (Return on Investment) cannot be measured from Instagram either. Measuring engagement and reach is perhaps more fun to measure because it shows how well the brand is doing, but one also needs to remember to measure other KPIs that show an overall picture. The idea of comparing and tracking different KPIs on Instagram is not to maintain the marketing strategy, but the idea is to be able to improve it. (Björck, 2019)

What needs to be remembered when measuring KPIs is that one needs to focus on the measurement points that are most relevant to Instagram or the platform used for marketing. This is because all followers are different and some may not press the like button when sharing content, but the follower still buys the products that are being sold, which of course is good. A retailer needs to measure what is relevant and what actually describes the success of the business on Instagram. (Björck, 2019)

4.4 Optimal customer profile

In a marketing plan, retailers also need to review their target group because different products suit different target groups. For example, a retailer that sells golf clubs needs to target more middle-aged adults, while a retailer that sells skateboards needs to target more teenagers in order for the profitability to be as great as possible. When marketing on social media, it is very important that one´s target group is identified. In addition to the target group, it is also important to check if Instagram is the right social channel to market in to reach one´s target group or if another social channel should be used if the target group is more active in another channel. (Apsis, 2023)

An optimal customer profile is created based on the product or service being sold and depending on the types of people who are one's potential customers. Developing a target group for one´s products or services is very important so that the right target group is reached and to know how one´s business is made visible to one´s ideal customers. Since there are a lot of competing brands and marketing today on social media, it can be very challenging to create personalized content on Instagram. But if retailers create an overall picture and understanding of what the ideal customer for one´s products or services looks like, they can adapt the marketing on Instagram. (McGruer, 2020, pp. 4-7)

The target group can be defined with several different factors, such as the age, gender, and origin of the ideal customer, as well as their income, where they live, and what their interests are. These are just examples of different factors that one can use, but it is of course possible to use several other factors if one wants, but the important thing is to keep the right focus. If a retailer has the right focus, it is easier to reach the customers who are actually interested in the products or services that one has to offer. (McGruer, 2020, pp. 4-7)

4.5 Various social media channels

Today, there are a lot of different social media channels that a retailer can market themselves in, but one cannot use every single social media channel that exists. Instead, retailers need to compare the different social media channels and determine which of them one´s target group is most likely to use. In this way, a retailer can better reach out to one´s target group and make oneself recognized on a certain social media channel because if one

were to use several different channels, it would be very difficult to reach out to the right people and also it is difficult to share content that is interesting to the users of the different channels. (Niininen, 2021, pp. 106-107)

4.6 Mapping one´s competitors

When making a marketing plan, it is also important to map out one´s competitors, as everyone, at least most companies, are now on social media. Therefore, it is a very important part of the marketing plan to map one´s competitors and analyze their business and how they market themselves on social media. When the competitors´ marketing on social media is analyzed and the activity on their channels is followed, one can see what works and what the competitors are doing right. In this way, a retailer can take advantage of the competitors´ marketing and do the same in one´s own channel or one can do it in a better way and become even better than one´s competitors. In addition, one can find gaps in the competitors' strategy that can be tailored to one´s own strategy, which means that one can gain a clear competitive advantage. (Apsis, 2023)

4.7 Create a content plan

In a marketing plan, it helps a lot if a content plan has been made or a so-called content marketing calendar. In fact, when it comes to content creation and sharing, planning is the biggest factor for success. A retailer can have the best marketing strategy for one´s Instagram account, but if one does not have a well-done content plan, the marketing strategy will not be that successful either. (Björck, 2023) Of course, the content plan needs to be adapted to the content strategy and the content should be linked to one of the marketing objectives that one has, preferably several of them. In addition, for example holidays, various events and upcoming product launches should also be taken into account. (Apsis, 2023)

When content is published on Instagram regularly, awareness of the brand and the products or services one sells can increase among one´s followers. In addition, followers react more positively and are more engaged if one posts content regularly and follows a pattern. In addition, followers are often more active during certain periods of time, so it is worth checking which days and times one´s optimal target group is active and making the

content plan and planning the sharing of content on Instagram accordingly. Followers' activity on Instagram can easily be checked in the Instagram app so that one knows when it is worthwhile to publish content so that as many people as possible see what one shares. (Apsis, 2023)

Making a content plan for one´s Instagram account involves much more than writing text for the content, choosing which images to use, and scheduling the content to be shared. Effective content planning should focus on the big picture, the strategy of the business, and the goals set for marketing. To create an effective content plan that drives success, a retailer needs:

- Plan different recurring themes for the content shared
- Plan and list ideas for upcoming campaigns
- Deciding which days to publish posts
- Write texts for posts in advance
- Scheduling posts in advance

In this way, a retailer saves a lot of time, gets a good overview of the content, and does not have to panic about what to publish if one has no inspiration or anything current to share on Instagram. (Björck, 2023)

4.7.1 Different themes for the content

To create a content plan with a good structure and that is as effective as possible, the steps above need to be followed and first up are different themes for the content on Instagram. Before content starts to be created for Instagram, a retailer needs to choose themes and different categories that the posts will be about. The number of themes and which themes one should have depends entirely on what type of business one has, but a maximum of 6 different themes is usually a good rule so that there are not too many. Another way is to start with content pillars, which means that content is created based on the main topics that are to be talked about. However, a survey conducted by SmartBizz has shown that more than half do not know what to talk about in their content on social media, which makes it very challenging to create content. And if a post is made that has nothing to do

with any of the themes one has chosen, then the post should not be published. Alternatively, the retailer may need to go through the marketing strategy and possibly add a new theme or replace one of their themes. (Björck, 2023)

4.7.2 Plan and list ideas

The next step is to brainstorm different ideas and start creating content for the Instagram account, i.e. writing texts for content, recording videos, and taking photos. When one starts creating content, it is a good idea to write down all the ideas and plans that come to mind, as long as the ideas meet these criteria:

- That the content is about one of the topics that has been selected and
- That the content supports the marketing goals that have been set. (Björck, 2023)

Many times it can be very difficult to come up with ideas and content for Instagram, but then there are a couple of simple ways that one can get inspiration from. One way is to check what the competitors are publishing and from there try to think about one´s own version of their content. Another way is to go through one´s own content and look at older posts that have been published. Here one can compare and see which posts have had the most success and engagement in terms of likes, comments, and reach. Once the posts that have had the most success have been found, one can think about how these posts could be reused to make new posts and new content on Instagram. (Dolbec, 2021, pp. 133-134)

4.7.3 When and how often should content be published?

After deciding on themes for content and creating content for Instagram, it is time to think about when and how often to post content. Here one must think and test oneself to see how many posts per week is sustainable for oneself so that it works in the long run. It should be avoided that one week three posts are published and the next week nothing. All social media are also changing their algorithms all the time, so what is a working concept now will probably not work in a month or so. Each social media channel has its own recommendations on when it is best to share content and how often. (Björck, 2023)

Regarding what time it is best to publish posts, it depends entirely on one´s followers and one´s target group, but if thinking about how society is structured, it has proven to be best

to publish in the evening after 8 pm or early in the morning. This is because society is structured according to the hours of 8-16 or 8-17, which means that most people are at work during these time intervals and therefore it is most profitable to publish either early in the morning or after 8 p.m. between Sunday and Thursday. On Fridays and Saturdays, the times are a little different, and usually, people have a lot of other programs then so these days it is not as profitable to publish content. But of course, this depends entirely on one´s followers and it is easy to check what times one´s followers are most active under the statistics tool on Instagram. (Björck, 2023)

On Instagram, the algorithms have changed a lot over the years and right now it is video material that Instagram's algorithms like the most and therefore it is quite easy to get a lot of views on one´s Reels. To get as many views, likes, and new followers as possible, one now needs to focus mainly on Reels and regular posts on Instagram. And if a regular post is published, the recommendation is to publish in a so-called "carousel" which means that several photos are published in the same post. This is because the followers then stay longer on the post when they look through all the photos that have been published for Instagram wants the users to stay as long as possible in the app. (KMR Studios, 2022)

Regarding the number of posts on Instagram, at least 2 posts need to be published per week. Of course, Instagram's algorithms would prefer one to publish posts every day but at least 2 a week. Being continuous and current with the posts or Reels that one publishes is most important because it is very effective if one wants to grow quickly on Instagram. (KMR Studios, 2022)

In addition to publishing posts and Reels, stories on Instagram are also a very good tool to create a relationship with one´s followers and connect with them. In stories, one can be more personal and honest, show more everyday things and "behind the scenes" so that the followers get to know one better. The recommendation here is that 3-5 stories are posted a day and preferably as spread out as possible so that all 5 stories are not posted in a row. Posting stories throughout the day makes one more visible and does not spam one´s followers with stories. (KMR Studios, 2022)

It is also important to follow up on the statistics on Instagram for the content that is published so that one knows what one´s followers like. Different posts and Reels that have been shared should also be compared to check if there is a post or a Reel that has given

many views, then one can post more similar posts. If a post has received very few views, one does not need to post similar content again but adapt the content according to what the followers like and what gives the most views. (KMR Studios, 2022)

In addition to publishing content that one´s followers like and following the statistics for the content published on Instagram, it is also good to know a little about how Instagram's algorithms work. Instagram's algorithm looks at a lot of different factors, which affects how well one´s content is visaged. One factor that affects the algorithms is one's followers on Instagram. Here, the algorithm checks which people interact with the content that is published and what other posts the same people usually interact with. In this way, Instagram, through one's followers, can match the content that one shares on one's account with the content of others. The way it works is that when a post is published, it is first shown to a smaller group that usually consists mainly of one´s followers. Depending on how followers react to the content and whether they interact with the content, Instagram decides who the post will reach next and how many people will be able to see the post. (KMR Studios, 2022) Since Instagram algorithms are designed to prioritize content shared according to its relevance, it ranks content according to its level of engagement. Hence, engagement is very important and should be part of the Instagram marketing plan. One can increase and spark engagement instantly by asking one´s followers to share and comment on one´s posts. This can be achieved by, for example, asking a question in the post or asking the followers to comment and tell their own story if the followers have experienced something similar to what they wrote about in the post. If people comment on the post, one needs to both like the comments and respond to them, because it tells the algorithms that the engagement that continues in the post is healthy. (Apsis, 2023)

This means that the more people who interact with the post, the more people the post will reach. Since Instagram wants to have a clear picture of what one as a user contributes to this social platform, it is important to have a clear direction and purpose for the account so that one does not change topics all the time. (KMR Studios, 2022)

Another factor that affects the algorithms is watch time, i.e. how long do users stay on the post that has been shared? Instagram wants users to stay in the app for as long as possible, and if one gets users to look at a post that has been shared for a long time, the post will be shown to more people. Therefore, it is recommended that several photos are posted in the

same post in a so-called carousel because one photo per post is among the worst thing one can post on Instagram considering the algorithm. (KMR Studios, 2022)

In addition, hashtags and location can be added to the posts to help Instagram understand what the shared content is about, but that is not what determines how many people will see the post. What is popular right now and what makes it very easy to go viral on Instagram is Reels. This is because Instagram wants to try and bring back the attention when it comes to short clips from the new platform TikTok. Reels that are published need to be short and have a clear hook i.e. an introduction that captures the viewers immediately and then they also need to provide added value in the form of entertainment or education for the viewers. This is what makes videos on Instagram go viral and get a lot of views and interactions. (KMR Studios, 2022)

Instagram is constantly evolving and adapting the platform according to what the competitors are doing, such as when Snapchat introduced Stories and they became big, Instagram also implemented Stories. Then TikTok's rampage with short video clips has also influenced Instagram to make big changes as Instagram previously only focused on photos, but now they have introduced Reels. Therefore, it is also easy to get a lot of views on one´s Reels and everything indicates that a lot of changes will be made on Instagram in order for them to be able to compete with other platforms such as TikTok. Therefore, news and changes that take place in the app need to be followed and every time Instagram launches a new feature, one should use it, because the algorithm values it. (KMR Studios, 2022)

However, what always needs to be remembered, no matter which social media channel is used, is that one should not "post & ghost", in other words, one share content and then disappear from the platform. Every time content is published on a social media channel, one needs to set aside time to stay on the social media platform and respond to any comments. It is usually said that when a post or a Reel is published on Instagram, one should stay in the app for about 15 minutes and not just disappear from the platform. (Björck, 2023)

4.7.4 Write texts for posts in advance

When posts are made to Instagram, it is good to write texts and take photos for all posts for a week at the same time because it is much more time-efficient than if one post is

written per day. Usually, it is better to first write the post one intends to publish and then choose an image for the post. Writing the text before choosing an image has some advantages that are very important:

- Context is better
- The understanding of the structure and the goal becomes higher
- While writing one post, one can come up with ideas for several other posts
- In addition to saving a lot of time, the posts can also be published earlier and at the time when one´s followers are most active. (Björck, 2023)

4.7.5 Schedule content in advance

The whole point of a content plan is to schedule content ahead of time in a way that is both organized and strategic. If all the content one intends to share is scheduled in advance, one works much more efficiently than if one were to publish each post manually. In addition, one gets a good overview of the content and one can see what is to be published, in what format the content is and at the same time one can follow along and make sure that one keeps the plan that has been set up. (Björck, 2023)

4.7.6 Gather everything in one place

It is often at this stage that content plans get stuck and can become very unstructured and messy. Many times, one can get ideas for posts and take notes somewhere but then one does not remember where the ideas were noted and in the end, one has notes and photos and videos saved everywhere. That is why it is very important that when one gets ideas for content or takes photos or makes videos that are going to be used on Instagram, everything is saved in one place. In this way, a lot of time is saved, and one has it more structured among all one´s material. If one also has a clear calendar where all the content has been written down and planned, one can quickly see if there is any missing content for any of the posts. (Björck, 2023)

The most important key to a successful presence on Instagram is to plan content and plan ahead. This means that one does not have to panic about what to publish, and one can easily see what posts are coming up. In addition, it is easy to follow how the content goes

and how well it is performing, which means that one can quickly reuse the material that has been successful. (Björck, 2023)

4.8 Social Media Trends

There are also a lot of trends on social media and it is important to take note of these trends and participate in them when they come. The trends on social media can be very different and some can be socially or politically sensitive such as LGBTQ or minority rights, while other trends can be more everyday things and jokes in the form of memes. Trends can rarely be predicted when they will happen and what the trends will consist of, but one should always follow the trends when they come. (Apsis, 2023)

When it comes to trends that have to do with, for example, LGBTQ rights, for example the pride flag can be placed somewhere in the profile on Instagram and one can also reiterate one´s business's commitment to equal rights. And if the trend is about everyday things, it is important to join the trend and create one´s own funny videos or memes that one shares in one´s Instagram feed. When following trends, one needs to keep in mind that the content should not contain a marketing message because if any type of marketing is forced in, it is very obvious and can be perceived as embarrassing and inappropriate. Instead, the focus should be on generating a laugh from the followers because it often tends to resolve itself accordingly in terms of engagement on the content. If the followers share one´s content further, the content gets a wider spread, which in turn is also publicity and many times when the followers see some fun or good content, they share the content further. (Apsis, 2023)

4.9 Marketing through an influencer

Even if a retailer is good at social media and has followed one´s marketing plan, it can sometimes be difficult to increase attention and engagement on the Instagram account by only posting content on one´s own account. Therefore, this type of marketing, where influencers promote one's business, has become increasingly common and important in the planning of one's social media. (Apsis, 2023)

By paying a couple of people, which are usually different social media celebrities or influencers, to pass on one´s message in their channels to their followers, one can

strengthen one´s brand. However, one needs to keep in mind not to hire just any influencer who has a few thousand followers on their account, but one needs to do some research before deciding who to hire. When choosing an influencer, it needs to be ensured that the influencer one chooses has acquired their followers naturally and has not bought their followers. This can easily be checked by seeing how the influencer's followers interact with their content. (Apsis, 2023)

Another thing that also needs to be considered when doing one´s research is that people can be very skeptical and sensitive to being sold on a product, which results in them becoming defensive and distancing. Therefore, an influencer needs to be chosen whose content on Instagram is in the same niche or in the same line as the product being sold. Then the message will spread to the influencer's followers in a way that is more natural and thus also received by the followers in a more positive and engaging way, which will have a positive impact on one's brand. (Apsis, 2023)

4.10 Crisis management

Sometimes mistakes can happen on social media as well, we are all human and mistakes happen. For example, it may be content that is considered offensive by some followers, or the timing may be bad for sharing a certain type of content, which may cause some of the followers to become angry. There can also be bad reviews from customers that pour in, which also affects one's brand and therefore it is very important that a plan has been developed on how to handle these types of situations in order for the damage to be as small as possible. And even if there are negative and bad comments, one should respond to them in a factual way because it is perceived as much more serious than if one ignores negative comments or deletes them. (Apsis, 2023)

By making a well-thought-out marketing plan for Instagram, one can get a lot of attention and achieve a much higher conversion rate for a much smaller amount of money compared to if a regular advertisement were to be made. Of course, it is a little more difficult with Instagram, and social media in general, to get paid compared to a TV commercial where one gets paid according to the broadcast time. This is because marketing done on Instagram can easily get lost in the crowd if one does not have the right strategy. Therefore, a marketing plan for Instagram is very important, and that one have the right strategies

when sharing one´s marketing message. It increases the chances of success with marketing on Instagram a lot. (Apsis, 2023)

5 Finding the target group

In addition to having a good strategy and a good marketing plan, it is very important to identify one´s target group as well. Developing one´s target group is one of the most important things when it comes to marketing on Instagram because the marketing message needs to be adapted to the target group. So how does a retailer know who belongs to one´s target group and what should be considered when developing one´s target group? All of this will be covered in this chapter as well as the benefits it provides when creating marketing materials for one´s target group on Instagram.

5.1 What is a target group?

Before a retailer starts to identify who one´s target group is, one needs to know what a target group is and what it means. In other words, a target group is a group of people who are most likely to be interested in the product or service that one is selling and who sooner or later will hopefully make a purchase. (Generaxion, 2022) The target group for one´s company or business is people who want to hear about what offers one has, they want to receive messages from one, and want to know about different campaigns. (Rindfleisch & Malter, 2019)

A target group can be divided and identified on the basis of several different factors, such as the age and gender of the target group, their income, and origin. Other factors can also be the interests of the target group and where they live, but there are of course many more factors that one can use. By focusing on the right factors for a target group, it is easier to reach out to the people who are actually interested in the products or services being sold and are thus more likely to become one´s customers. (Generaxion, 2022)

In addition to identifying the target group, understanding it is also very important. However, there are a lot of companies that hire a marketing agency and think that they take care of everything and that the job will be done. These companies believe that when professional help is hired for the company's marketing, it automatically attracts new customers, but unfortunately it is not quite that simple. Regardless of the industry in which

the company operates, in cases like this, we usually talk about waste. As an example of this type of waste, a whopping $37 billion is wasted every year on marketing and advertising that does not appeal to and engage the audience for which the ad is intended. These kinds of ads are completely unnecessary to pay for because they will not generate any new customers and also will not generate any sales. (Generaxion, 2022)

5.2 Should one have a broader or more niche target group?

Depending on the type of product or service one is selling, one needs to think about whether the social media marketing should be more general so that a larger and broader target group can be reached or if one should niche oneself and try to focus on reaching a smaller and narrower target group. For example, if one runs a business that sells bicycles, one has a fairly broad target group because most people need a bike. This type of product means that social media marketing should have a broader focus and should be tailored to a wider target group. (Generaxion, 2022)

Whether a retailer chooses a broad or narrow target group, it is imperative to define and consider who belongs to that group. The target group needs to be defined in order to be able to make the kind of marketing material on social media that appeals to and engages the people who belong to the target group. If the example of bicycles is taken again and this time a sportier variant of bicycles manufactured for men is sold, then the product one sells directly has a much narrower target group and the marketing needs to be adapted to this niche target group. If this example were to be developed even further and one would instead want to sell these sporty bikes to men aged 18-40 who enjoy racing and who would need a bike that could gain seconds for them during the race round. Then the target group has been broken down even more and become even narrower and more niche, which means that the marketing is created around these people and targeted to them. Regardless of what type of products or services are sold, of course, the target group can be broken down in a similar way, one chooses how broad or narrow and niche target group one wants. (Generaxion, 2022)

5.3 Getting to know one´s target group

For successful social media marketing, it is not only crucial to define the target group but also to understand them thoroughly. One needs to think about and find out what the target group wants and what type of marketing they find interesting. By understanding one´s target group, strategies and a marketing plan can be created that is tailored to the target group. (Generaxion, 2022)

Should the time not be invested in defining and understanding the target group, the alternative could be to hire a marketing agency to manage the company's marketing efforts. However, this is not a cost-effective way to market oneself because this type of ads and advertising usually costs more than what they provide. One can be sure that this type of advertising gives good exposure and that people notice the product or service being advertised. But the fact is that only 25% of all viewers remain and watch the entire commercial video during commercial breaks. So in the end, one pays a lot of money for an ad that reaches very few new potential customers. This example can be compared to, for example, a final match in the Hockey World Cup, where there are probably very few who stay and watch the commercial breaks. (Generaxion, 2022)

Therefore, Instagram and social media in general, is a very good tool to use for marketing one´s products and services, even if the content reaches a significantly smaller audience than, for example, an advertisement on TV. One reaches out much better to one´s target group and can adapt the material so that it attracts and engages people who belong to the target group, which means that the chances of finding new potential customers increase. Depending on the type of product or service being sold, a marketing channel needs to be chosen that one´s target group uses in order to reach the target group. However, Instagram has users of all different ages, so in that sense, Instagram is a very good platform to use for marketing. (Generaxion, 2022)

The goal of marketing is that the investment one makes in terms of both time and money should give a return. As mentioned earlier, this type of return can be measured through the key figure ROI (return on investment) and the goal is of course for the return to be as large as possible. Identifying and understanding the target group enhances communication with followers and fosters the development of long-term relationships. (Generaxion, 2022) One can also use something called personas, which will be discussed later on what they are

and how they work. But in short, with the help of personas, one can develop one´s own brand in such a way that different interests that a persona has are brought out, which then also correspond to the values that one´s target group has. (Dolbec, 2021, p. 25) The reason why this is important and why it works is because as many as 80% of today's consumers expect ads that are more personal and targeted just to them where they can recognize themselves. This means that it arouses the interest of consumers and they are more likely to make a purchase if the brand interacts with its consumers in a way that feels personal to them. (Generaxion, 2022)

5.4 Different types of target groups

There are several different methods that can be used to delimit and divide target groups into different types. Below are some examples that show how to divide and define one´s target group:

- Interests of the target group: by dividing one´s target group according to their interests and hobbies, marketing and messages can be created that are more personalized. Segmenting the target group and crafting more personalized content creates brand loyalty among customers and followers. This makes customers and followers feel that one´s company is important and significant to them. (Generaxion, 2022)

- Buying needs: means finding and defining people who need a specific product and who have a need to find, for example, new training clothes, new golf clubs, or a new computer. By finding these people, one can identify their so-called pain points, i.e. their buying needs, and based on them, content and messages can be customized for them. By adapting the material according to the person's needs and partially meeting them, an interest is aroused in the person, which can lead to a purchase. (Generaxion, 2022)

- Subculture: a subculture is people, usually young people, who meet either physically or online around a common interest. It can be anything from, for example, a specific style of music, a hobby or sport such as football or it can be for example gaming and computer games. Subcultures always have a very clear motivation and drive within the group and if one is passionate about the same

interest, one understands with whom one communicates and how to do it, subcultures have a communication that people with the same interests and drive understand. (Generaxion, 2022)

5.5 The target group consists of different roles

Another important aspect of understanding the target group involves gathering demographic information about them. Of course, this is not what matters most when it comes to defining one´s target group, but it has some value in knowing what role the person has in making a purchase. The roles are divided into two categories and can be described as follows:

1. Decision-maker: this means who actually makes the decision to make the purchase. Most often, one thinks that it is the same person who both buys the product and uses the product, but reality shows a different one. A few years ago, the company Old Spice conducted a survey where it was found that in most cases it was the case that the men used the product while the buyer was usually the woman. This caused Old Spice to change their marketing and they instead began to direct their marketing to women who turned out to be buyers and thus acted as decision-makers. By changing their marketing and targeting it more to the decision-maker, their sales also increased. (Generaxion, 2022)

2. The cheerleader or supporter: In addition to a decision-maker who decides to make a purchase, there are also people who cheer or support to make a purchase, which could be a child, for example. An example of a purchase decision made and implemented through a cheerleader could be that a child says what they want for Christmas or birthday and most likely the child's desire affects the buying behavior of the parents. (Generaxion, 2022)

This means that if one manages to find a language and manage to market one´s product or service in a way that appeals to both roles, i.e. both the decision-maker and the cheerleader, one´s company will make very good sales. (Generaxion, 2022)

5.6 Reaching out to one´s target group

To find and map one´s own target group, solid work is required, and a lot of time needs to be devoted to analyzing different surveys. Maintaining contact with existing customers and engaging in discussions with them is crucial, and different buying trends also need to be followed and evaluated. Additionally, keeping track of developments to identify any changes in the target group is necessary, which may require adjustments in marketing strategies or other business operations. This is in order to adapt the business according to different trends and developments in the market so that one lives up to the needs of the target group. (Generaxion, 2022)

To find and reach out to the target group, the following things need to be done regularly:

- Analyze the customer base and discuss with one´s existing customers: a retailer needs to follow and check who buys the products or services that one sells, what is unique about the people who buy the products, what age they are, where they live, and if they have interests that connect them to what one sell. By doing these surveys and follow-ups continuously and increasing one´s engagement on Instagram, one gets an insight into who the buyers are, and one learns more about them, which means that one can find and identify a target group that should be focused on. (Generaxion, 2022)

- Do market research and follow different trends in the industry: here one can check if any gaps are found in the industry one operates in that can be filled with the help of the products or services one sells. These gaps can be identified by doing or looking at various market research. A retailer also needs to follow the industry as a whole, i.e. follow what the competitors are investing in, and whether there is anything that one can do better than them. (Christensen, 2016, pp. 10-11)

- Monitor what one´s competitors are doing: it is very important to also monitor how one´s competitors market themselves, through which channels they market themselves, and how they act. For instance, if a successful competitor is seen to be targeting their marketing more towards cheerleaders rather than the actual decision-makers who make the purchases, it might be worthwhile to adopt a similar strategy. However, the idea could be refined and enhanced to outperform the

competitor. In the same way, it is also necessary to monitor the channels that competitors use, where they publish content, and evaluate if your company can begin marketing on the same platforms. (McGruer, 2020, pp. 16-17)

- Develop different personas: as mentioned earlier, personas are a very good tool to reach the target group better and to understand and get to know one´s target group in a unique way. Targeting one´s content only to the target group is very important because if content is created that suits all different types of people, it ends up with no one wanting to watch the content, which of course is not one´s goal when posting content on Instagram. In this way, a persona helps to create content for Instagram because based on the persona, one can decide what and how to write and make content and when to publish the content. When creating content for Instagram, one should always ask oneself would one´s persona be interested in reading this post or watching this reel? If the answer is no, then the content intended to be published should be deleted or changed so that it interests that persona. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

  Personas can be said to be a person that one creates oneself and decides how they are and what they look like. It is an imaginary person and thus not a copy of, for example, a best friend or some other acquaintance, but a completely imaginary person is created based on what personality and characteristics the person has in the target group. (Dolbec, 2021, p. 25) However, it should be remembered that a persona is not a cartoon character or a person based on a whole series of different facts, but a completely human person who has goals and dreams in life and who can both fail at things and who can also succeed. (Moderskeppet, n.d.) Personas are created through different types of data and market research, through engagement on Instagram and other relevant information that marketers can use to get a holistic view of the consumer and find out what they value. (Generaxion, 2022)

  When developing a persona, it is good to determine as many details as possible such as what gender and age they are, what their education and profession are. Also, marital status and whether they have any children, what income they have, and where they live. In addition, it is also decided what interests one´s persona has, what kind of books, magazines, and TV shows they prefer, and whether they use

Instagram and how often. One basically knows everything about a persona and one can also decide what future plans and dreams the persona has. (Dolbec, 2021, p. 26) When a persona is created, a lot of time needs to be set aside so that as good and comprehensive an overall picture as possible can be obtained of the persona. The more detailed and thorough persona one makes, the better, as this persona will be of great help every day and the chances of success in the set goals of the business increase significantly. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

The recommendation is that at least three different personas are created, preferably more, but no more than six different personas. (Generaxion, 2022) The persona process itself involves a number of steps, which will be briefly presented below. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Step 1 is to think about what and why. This is where one starts by brainstorming and thinking about the different types of people who might be interested in the products or services one sells and who could be interested in following one´s account on Instagram. Step 1 usually starts with three different questions that need to be thought about and considered carefully. The questions deliberately overlap with each other in order to think about the answer from different points of view and get as concrete and clear an answer as possible during the brainstorming. The questions are: (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

1. What do people gain by following one´s account on Instagram?

2. The people who do not follow one on Instagram, what difficulties and problems do they have?

3. What types of people will be interested in the content created for Instagram?

By thinking about these 3 different questions with thought, one will get a good start to the persona one is developing, and above all, one will get answers to the questions of what and why. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

When brainstorming and thinking about these different types of people, it has been shown that it is beneficial to do the brainstorming together with others who are also going to develop personas. This is because others in the team most likely have

ideas that one has not thought of oneself, but step 1 can of course be done all by oneself as well if wanted. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Step 2 is about thinking about what types of people to focus on. Here one needs to sift and group the answers that were produced in Step 1. The answers to questions 1 and 2 need to be divided and moved into two different areas that are grouped according to topics that should be included in the content created on Instagram and topics that should not be included in the content on Instagram. After this grouping, one moves on to question 3 in step 1 and thinks about which of the people could be interested in and would like to take part in the content that will be created on Instagram. Step 2 can also be done together with others if one wants to start breaking down and sorting out everything that has been thought about and come up with in Step 1. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Step 3 is about figuring out who one´s persona is and what the persona looks like. Here one thinks about what the persona is called, what age the persona is, what their profession and family status are, and more. One simply brings out everything about the persona, everything from appearance and lifestyle to what characteristics, dreams, and goals the persona has. All the characteristics are chosen entirely by oneself, and the persona is developed completely according to how one thinks one´s persona should look like and what qualities it should have. (McGruer, 2020, pp. 4-6)

Step 4 in the process of developing a persona is about making the persona come alive, which means that it should feel like the persona is just like a living person. In this step, one develops and supplements step 3 with details of the persona that make it feel more lifelike and one can do this by looking for an image that matches one´s persona. For example, an image can be Googled that matches one´s persona and that, in terms of appearance, looks like the persona created should look like. When a picture has been found that matches one´s persona, it is good to print the picture so that one can look at the picture and be reminded of who one´s persona is. The picture can be framed or put in a place where one sees it on a daily basis and can look one´s persona in the eyes because it makes the persona more alive and real. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Then one needs to fill in more facts about the persona's life that can either be written in bullet points or in free text and these facts should be presented in a way that feels true to reality but which at the same time can be a little humorous. An example of such a text could be "He loves coffee, has a big, overweight dog that he feeds ham every day and he reads the paper every day". As said, this fact about the persona should by no means be perfect, but should be made as real as possible and can look just like anything. In addition, facts need to be found out about where and how the persona lives, what interests the persona has, if they have any goals and dreams, does the persona has a lot of free time, do they read any magazines or books, does the persona watch TV or listen to music? This is part of all the facts that can be found out about one´s persona, one can develop and extract as many and as comprehensive facts as one wants. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

In addition, one can think about what relationship the persona has to one´s company, is the persona very familiar with the area in which one´s company operates, or does the persona need more background information about one´s business? Then it can also be decided how good the persona is at using Instagram and whether the persona uses Instagram regularly or less often. In other words, one should write down everything that comes to mind about what one´s persona is like and what they look like so that the persona is as realistic as possible. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Step 5 is about developing a key sentence that can be connected directly to one´s persona that describes and summarizes a very important part of the personality of the persona. To clarify what a key sentence might look like, an example could be "I have neither the time nor the energy to read long posts". Through a key sentence like this, one quickly gets a picture of what the persona is like and how the content should be built on Instagram for it to interest the persona. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Step 6 is to compile all the facts about the persona that have been developed through the above 5 steps on an A4 sheet of paper with a picture of the persona and a text that summarizes the persona so that everything is gathered in one place. The finished persona should not be left on a hard drive or left lying around in a desk drawer, but it should be printed so that it can be next to one´s self. For example,

one can frame the paper with the picture and facts about the persona or pin it to a bulletin board so that the persona is easily accessible and can be used every day. The persona should be used every time something is to be created for Instagram, because on the basis of the persona, decisions are made about what kind of content to create, how the content should be created so that it interests the persona and when in the day the content should be shared. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

Questions to ask oneself when creating content based on one´s persona are, for example, is this something that they like, and does the persona benefit from this, do they understand what is meant by the content and do they have the time to read and take part in the content? By asking these types of questions, it is easier to develop engaging content, strategies that work, and content that the persona is interested in. (Moderskeppet, n.d.)

- Who does not belong to one´s target group? This is at least as important to identify as it is to identify which people actually belong to one´s target group. One also needs to identify the people who do not completely belong to one´s target group but who are very close to belonging to the target group. By identifying these people, a lot of money can be saved as one can make the marketing even more targeted and a bit sharper. For example, it may be that one´s target group is men, but if one instead targets men in their 50s who have a certain need and who may have a beard, the people who do not fit into one´s target group can be left out. In this way, one gets more targeted marketing and better reach the people who belong to the target group and for whom the product or service one is selling is suitable. (Generaxion, 2022)

- Continuous work: one needs to work with one´s target group continuously, and collect different types of information and data at regular intervals because the picture of who and which people belong to the target group becomes clearer the more information and data one has. Of course, producing this information requires some work and all the information and data needs to be processed and optimized to be able to create new personas that match the target group, which in turn in the long run will generate more sales and better results. (Generaxion, 2022)

- Different analytics tools: Instagram has very good analytics tools in the app where a lot of information is obtained about one´s followers and those who have interacted with the content shared. For example, one gets information about what gender, age, and which country the followers are, which means that a clearer picture can be obtained of who one´s followers and visitors are, what they look like, and what they are looking for. Based on all the information that can be obtained through Instagram's analytics tools, a lot of decisions can be made regarding the content that is shared on one´s account. One can clearly see what type of content engages the most and what type of content gets almost no engagement at all and goes almost completely unnoticed. (Generaxion, 2022)

In addition to doing these follow-ups and analyses regularly, one also needs to identify and find out what time of day one reaches the target group best. All followers and Instagram users are active on Instagram at different times of the day and therefore it is very important to also identify what time of day one´s target group is most active. By posting content on Instagram at the right time when one´s target group is most active on Instagram, the content will get a lot of engagement and it will also have a positive impact on sales. (Generaxion, 2022)

If a retailer does not want to or does not have the opportunity to do the work required to reach out with their content to their target group, it is of course also possible on Instagram to use paid marketing. It works in such a way that one buys traffic and targets one´s ads to a certain type of target group, which means that the ad is only visible to the desired target group. By using paid marketing, one can better reach target groups that are relevant to one´s products or services that one sells, which can usually be difficult to reach through marketing on one´s own Instagram account. By using paid marketing, brand awareness can be created for one´s target group, one can choose to promote certain selected posts or videos that are shared, or simply sell one´s products or services. (Starlings, 2020)

But by doing these follow-ups and analyses regularly and finding out what time of day one´s followers are most active on Instagram, one will reach out to one´s target group much better. Trust will also be built up for one´s followers, which means that one will get more loyal customers and thus will increase sales in the long run.

5.7 Can there be disadvantages to having target groups?

In general, it is only an advantage to identify and develop a target group that one target and that the marketing is adapted to, but there are of course also disadvantages to this. A disadvantage is that one can often get stuck in old routines and go on in old ways without seeing other possibilities and considering changing something regarding one´s way of working. We humans usually work in such a way that we like routines and would rather not change something that already works because it requires a little extra time and energy from us. The same thing also applies if something breaks, one usually does not fix anything that is about to break until it is completely broken and can no longer be used, and one has to fix it. We humans usually do not like to go out of our comfort zone and usually take the easiest route. (Generaxion, 2022)

In the times we live in, however, one needs to be quick and keep up with developments, and be open to changes and new opportunities. It happens very often that small details are missed that can have a big impact and that can be very profitable. But by combining the follow-up of one´s identified target group with the analytics tools available in Instagram's app, one can easily find these small details, make small changes, and correct the details to develop and get to the next level. (Generaxion, 2022)

So, before a retailer starts marketing their products or services via social media, it is very important to go through the above steps, i.e. to first and foremost choose a social media platform, to make a marketing plan, to identify the target group, and to set aside time for planning and following up on the development of the content. The above steps have also been applied in the Instagram study that has been conducted and in the following chapters the structure of the study will be reviewed and what the starting point looked like before the study compared to after the conducted study where these steps were applied.

6 Instagram Study

In this part of the thesis, the Instagram study (which is a quasi-experimental study) will be reviewed that has been conducted on my Instagram account where I, as a retailer, shared different types of content on my Instagram account to see what engages the most, what gives the most reach and if there is content that generates sales. I am a retailer of skin care products and have a separate Instagram account where I share content about the products

that I am a retailer of. The Instagram study was conducted over a 6-week period (12.12.2023 - 25.1.2024) where content was published daily in different types of formats and at different times of the day.

This study is classified as a quasi-experimental study in that they have compared different types of content and publication times, which means that the result does not give a 100% guarantee that another person would try the same thing. A quasi-experiment is an experiment that is not controlled, in other words, there has either not a specific experimental group and control group selected, or the respondents do not receive equal treatment, or the results are not linked to any time sequence. Time sequence means that it has not been possible to link a change in, for example, sales increase to an increase in the size of the advertisement. Hence, this study is classified as a quasi-experiment in that the result depends on several different random causes that cannot be influenced or controlled, which for example can be the recipient's situation, i.e. the Instagram follower's life. (Christensen, 2016, pp. 207-208) However, different types of content, publication times and more will try to be compared as well as possible in order to give an indicative result.

6.1 Starting point of the study

The purpose of this study on my Instagram account was to find out what type of content the followers like the most and what type of format engages and interests the followers the most so that the content will reach out to new potential customers and eventually possibly generate sales. The goal of the study was to try to get more engagement, get a greater reach, get more followers, and thus also get a larger clientele and more sales. However, the last mentioned about getting more followers has not completely succeeded with this study that has been conducted, so there is a slightly different way of working to increase the number of followers, but it will be reviewed a little later.

The starting point on my Instagram account was a follower count of 95 followers and the content shared on the Instagram account before this study has been mainly about campaigns and news. In addition, content has been shared very sporadically on the Instagram account, one week I may have shared content 2-3 days while sometimes it may have been a month or more between content that has been shared so it has been very varied. But the format of the content has varied between stories and posts as well as the

occasional reel, but mainly it has of course been stories that have been shared and the content has mainly been about campaigns and news products.

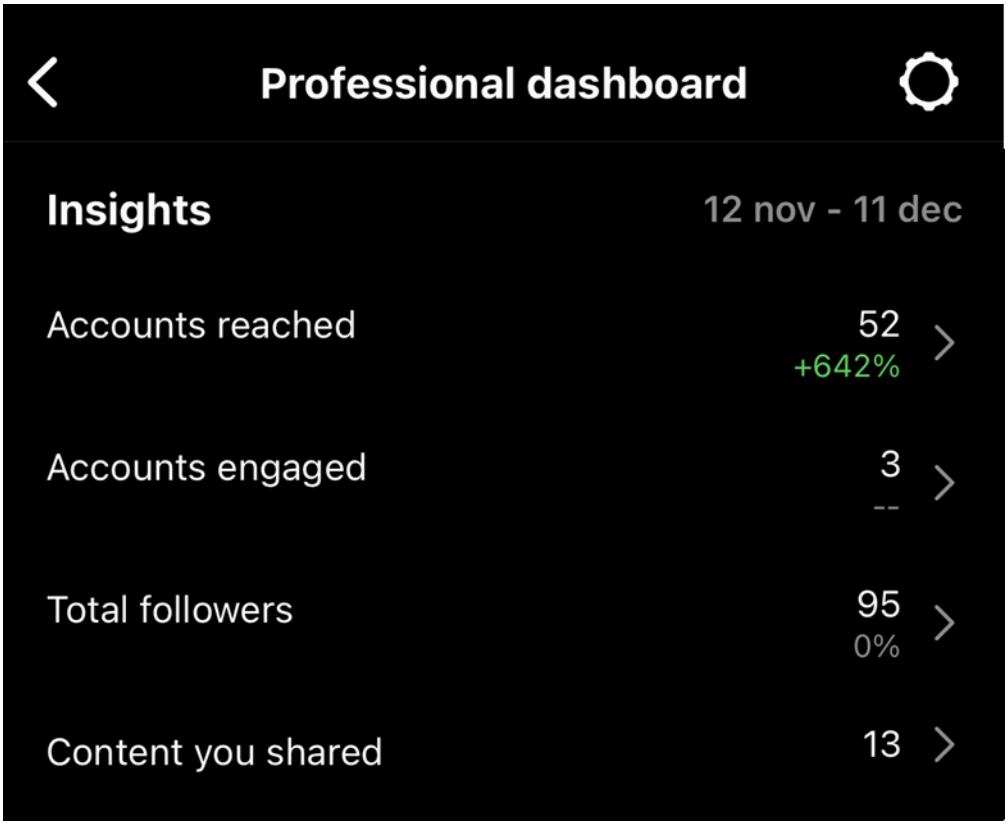


Figure 2. Starting point before the Instagram study

The Instagram study started on 12.12.2023 and ended on 25.1.2024 and Figure 2 shows the starting position of the Instagram study, i.e. what the numbers looked like one month before the study began. In Figure 2, it can be seen that between the time period 14.11 – 11.12.2023, the amount of content shared has only been 13 in number, which is an average of 0.46 shares per day during this time period of 28 days. In addition, the content shared during this time period happened to be stories only, not a single post and no reel had been shared before the Instagram study began.

As mentioned, the number of followers was 95 when the Instagram study began, which can also be seen in Figure 2 and during the time period 14.11 – 11.12.2023, that is, before the study began, the number of accounts that interacted with the content was only 3. The number of accounts reached was 52, which was still an increase of 642% compared to the previous corresponding period.

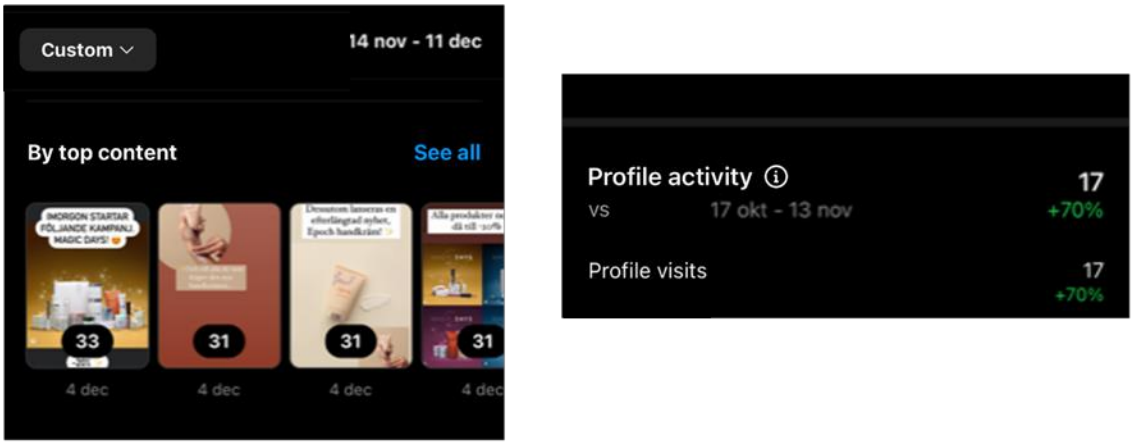


Figure 3. Popular content and the number of profile visits

Among Instagram's statistics tools, there is also information about which content has been most popular during the specified period of time, which of course is very important to follow so one knows what one´s followers like to watch or read about. In Figure 3 (to the left) it can be seen that the content that has been most popular on my account during the time period 14.11 – 11.12.2023, the maximum was reached by 33 accounts. However, these are very misleading statistics because the content shared during this time period has only been stories and also content that has been linked to different types of campaigns, offers, and new products. This makes it very difficult to know what type of content the followers like the most because most of the content shared has been selling content.

If we then move on to statistics on profile activity, it can be seen in Figure 3 (to the right) that the number of profile visits has been 17, which means that during this time period, Instagram users, who also saw the content I shared, have visited my profile a total of 17 times. It does not have to be 17 different accounts that visited my profile, but the same account can have visited my profile several times. But if the number of profile visits during this time period (14.11 – 11.12.2023) is compared with the previous period (17.10 – 13.11.2023), profile visits have increased by as much as 70%, which is very positive.

The number of profile visits shows that these people are interested in the business one runs because they themselves have taken an active action and clicked through to the profile. If the profile visits are compared with the reach of a post, which may be that the post was only quickly displayed on the Instagram user's screen, the number of profile visits shows that these people have seen one´s content, have reacted to the content and want to know more about what one has to offer. Usually, one also has a link to one´s website

where one wants to drive traffic with the help of Instagram and the more profile visits one has, the greater the probability that someone clicks through to one´s website. If content is actively shared on Instagram and a lot of time is spent on creating content, then of course one wants it to give results and the goal of marketing and sharing content about the products being sold is that it will ultimately generate sales. (Leander, 2023)

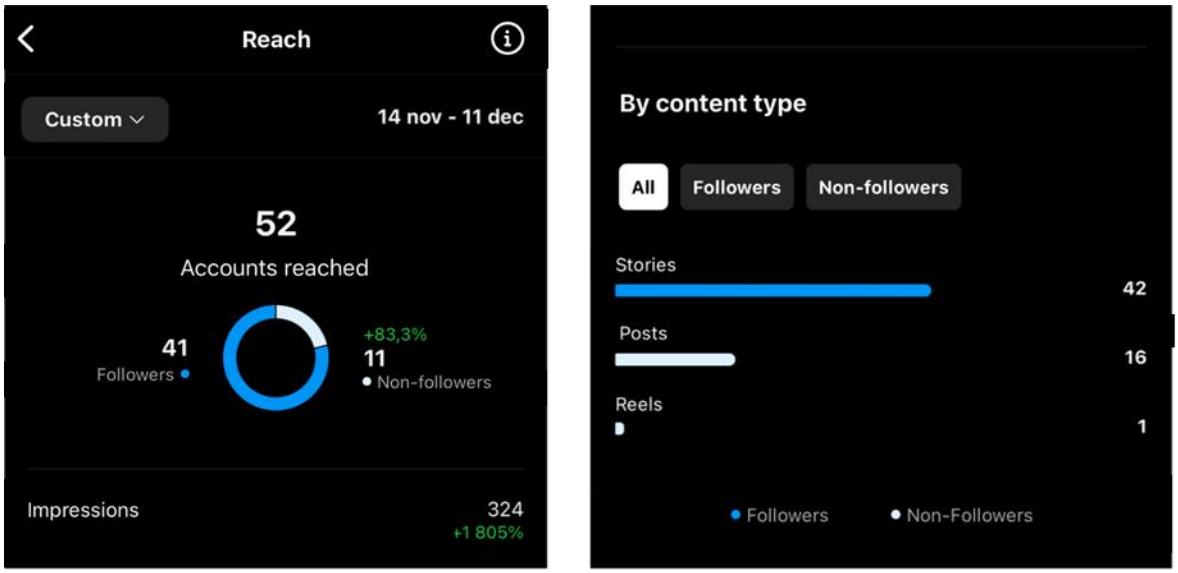


Figure 4. Reach and reach by format

Figure 4 shows the distribution of how many of the accounts that have been reached have been my followers and how many of the accounts have not been my followers. During the time period before the Instagram study began, i.e. between 14.11 – 11.12.2023, the total number of accounts reached was 52, and 41 of them were my followers while 11 were non-followers. In Figure 4 (to the right) it can be seen that the accounts that have not followed me have been reached mainly through posts that I shared and through reels. As mentioned earlier, during this time period, no other format than stories had been shared, so these accounts reached through posts and reels are older content accessed by non-followers during this time period.

Figure 4 (to the left) also shows the number of exposures during this time period, which has been 324, which means that the content that has been shared has been viewed a total of 324 times. The fact that the content has been viewed 324 times does not mean that it has reached so many accounts, but the number of accounts reached is still 52, but the content has been viewed by the same account several times. However, this number is only

an indicative number and not an exact number, so what needs to be more focused on is measuring the reach and engagement of the content shared, as it is an exact number.

Regarding the target group reached with the content shared during the time period 14.11 – 11.12.2023, there was a very even distribution between both genders and different age groups, which made it difficult to distinguish a specific target group based on these factors. The figures below show more detailed statistics about the target group that has been reached and from which countries the accounts have been that have seen the content shared on my Instagram account.

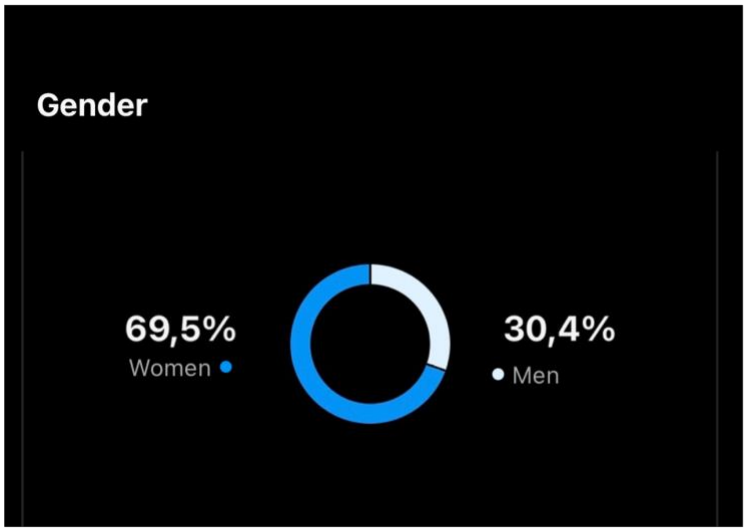


Figure 5. Gender distribution of accounts reached

If we start with statistics regarding the distribution between the genders, we can see that of the 52 accounts reached during the time period 14.11 – 11.12.2023, 69.5% were women and 30.4% were men, which is good to keep in mind when creating content to share. Even though the majority of the accounts reached are women, it is good to share content on Instagram that can interest both men and women and to occasionally also share content that is more aimed at men so that they also feel seen. Since the distribution between men and women was this even, it also needs to be considered when developing one´s target group and one´s personas. The products that are sold can be used by both women and men, so the content also needs to interest and engage both genders.

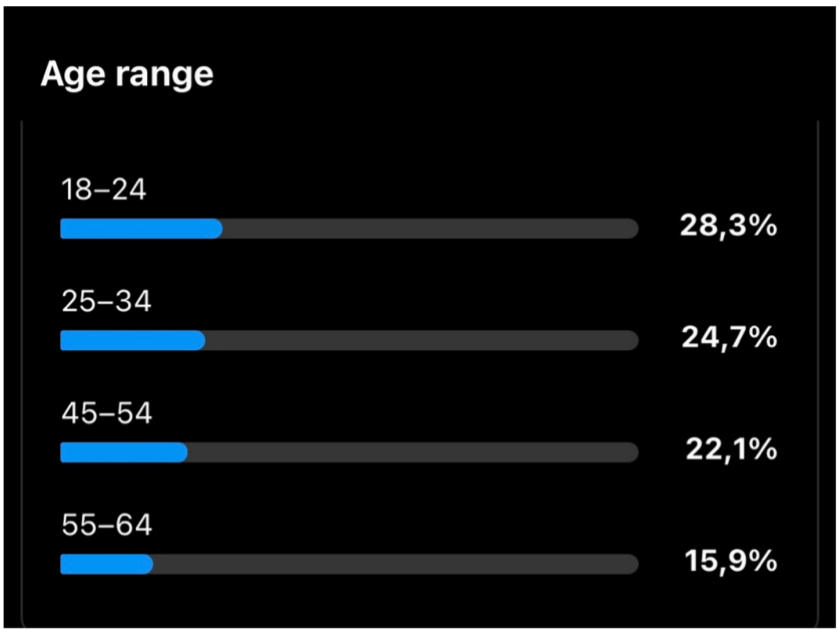


Figure 6. Distribution between different age ranges

If we then move on to the following statistics about the accounts reached before the Instagram study, Figure 6 shows the distribution between different age ranges. Here we can see that of the 52 accounts that have been reached, there has been a very even distribution between different ages, but the majority of the accounts that have been reached have been in the age group 18 – 24 while the smallest proportion belonged to the age group 55 – 64 years. However, the age range 35 – 44 is not included and the percentages do not amount to a total of 100% but only 91%, which means that 9% of the accounts reached, which in number corresponds to 4.68 accounts, belong to other age ranges. However, this percentage of accounts that are not included in these statistics is so small that it does not have much significance even if it is not visible. It can be assumed that these 4-5 accounts that are not included in the statistics either belong to the age range 35 – 44 or there are only a few that belong to this range and some are even older than 64 years. But as said, it is such a small proportion so it does not matter much, even if we do not know exactly which age group they belong to, although it would be interesting to know.

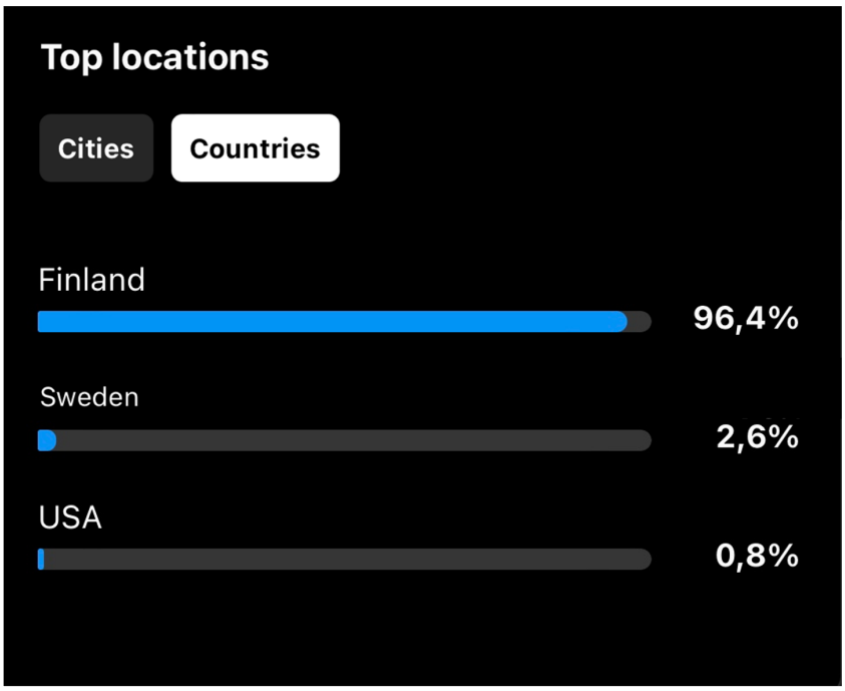


Figure 7. Distribution between different countries

In addition to statistics on gender distribution and different age ranges, Instagram's statistics tool also includes statistics on which countries have been reached. In Figure 7 it can be seen that of the 52 accounts reached during the time period 14.11 – 11.12.2023, the majority (96.4%) have been from Finland and the remaining part of the accounts have been from Sweden and the United States. The content shared on my Instagram account has been in Swedish, which I could see, based on these statistics, that I can continue with since most of the accounts are from Finland and some from Sweden. Of course, there may be accounts from Finland that are Finnish-speaking as well, which there are no statistics on, so it is difficult to know how many of the accounts from Finland are Swedish-speaking. But since the content had only been in Swedish before, I continued with Swedish in the Instagram study as well.

If a very large proportion of the accounts reached would have been from, for example, the United States, it might have been necessary to consider whether to focus more on creating content in English. Then, of course, even Finnish speakers would have understood the text in the content that was shared if a large part of the accounts from Finland were Finnish. However, today on Instagram it is possible to translate the texts on posts and reels into one´s own mother tongue if the content is in another language. On each post and reel one can click on "show translation" and Instagram will translate the text of the post into one´s

own mother tongue so in that way it is still no obstacle to reach out to other countries even if the content is made in one´s own mother tongue.

However, the translation tool is not so important in this context, as the target group that interests and focuses on is Swedish-speaking people from Finland. Hence, the content that is shared in Swedish is also made so that it reaches the right target group and is not directed to other countries that do not belong to one's target group.

6.2 Statistics of followers' activity and content shared before the Instagram study

The goal of this Instagram study was to try to find out what type of content my followers prefer and what format, i.e. if they like stories, posts, or reels the most. This is to get increased engagement on the content being shared and to get greater reach, which in turn would lead to more followers and more new potential customers. By building a network on Instagram and building trust with one´s followers, a retailer can make new contacts and thus find new customers.

What has become increasingly important when marketing one´s products on Instagram, or really in general when publishing content on Instagram, is that one should be personal. Followers want to get to know the person behind an Instagram account and like content that is more personal and content where their own experiences are shared, which will also be noticeable in the results of this Instagram study.

What has been reviewed in the theory part is the basis for this Instagram study to, among other things, find out how a marketing plan is set up, what is trending at the moment on Instagram, what is the recommendation regarding the amount of content that is shared and what the different metrics among Instagram's statistics tools measure. The structure of the Instagram study was to create and share content regularly in different types of formats and at different times of the day. Before the study began, some older statistics were reviewed to see if there was any pattern in what time of day the followers were most active and what type of content previously provided the most engagement and reach. Instagram has a great tool where one can see what time of day one´s followers are most active on Instagram and how the activity differs depending on what day of the week it is. Figure 8 shows statistics on which day of the week most of my followers are active:

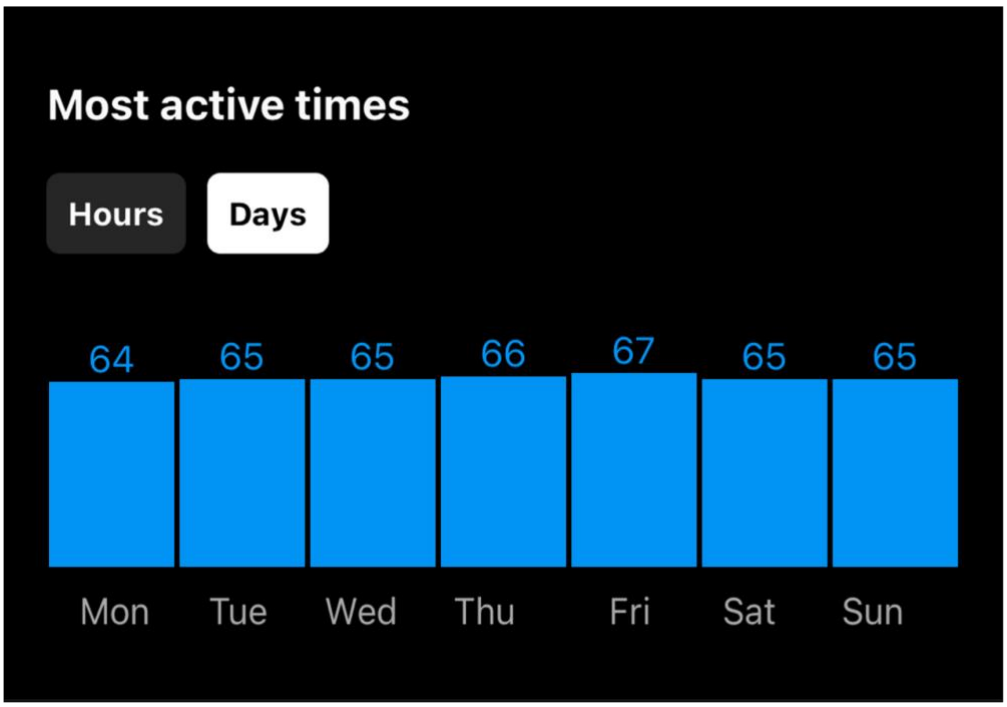


Figure 8. Activity per day

It is clearly visible that of my followers, most people are active on Instagram on Thursdays and Fridays, then the number of active people decreases a bit on Saturdays and on Sundays, it can be seen that the number of active followers is at its lowest. This means that in order for the content that is shared to reach as many people as possible, it can be an advantage to publish on the days when most followers are active. However, the difference in the number of active followers on a Sunday compared to a Friday is very small, only about 6%, so in the end it does not really matter which day the content is published. But if the difference in the number of active followers is greater, it could be a good idea to think about which day the content is published.

In addition to seeing which day the largest number of followers are active, Instagram's statistics tool also shows what time of day the followers are most active. So when content is published, it also pays to check what time of day the most followers are active so that the content that is shared reaches as many people as possible. Figure 9 shows statistics on how the activity looks among my followers day by day during a week.

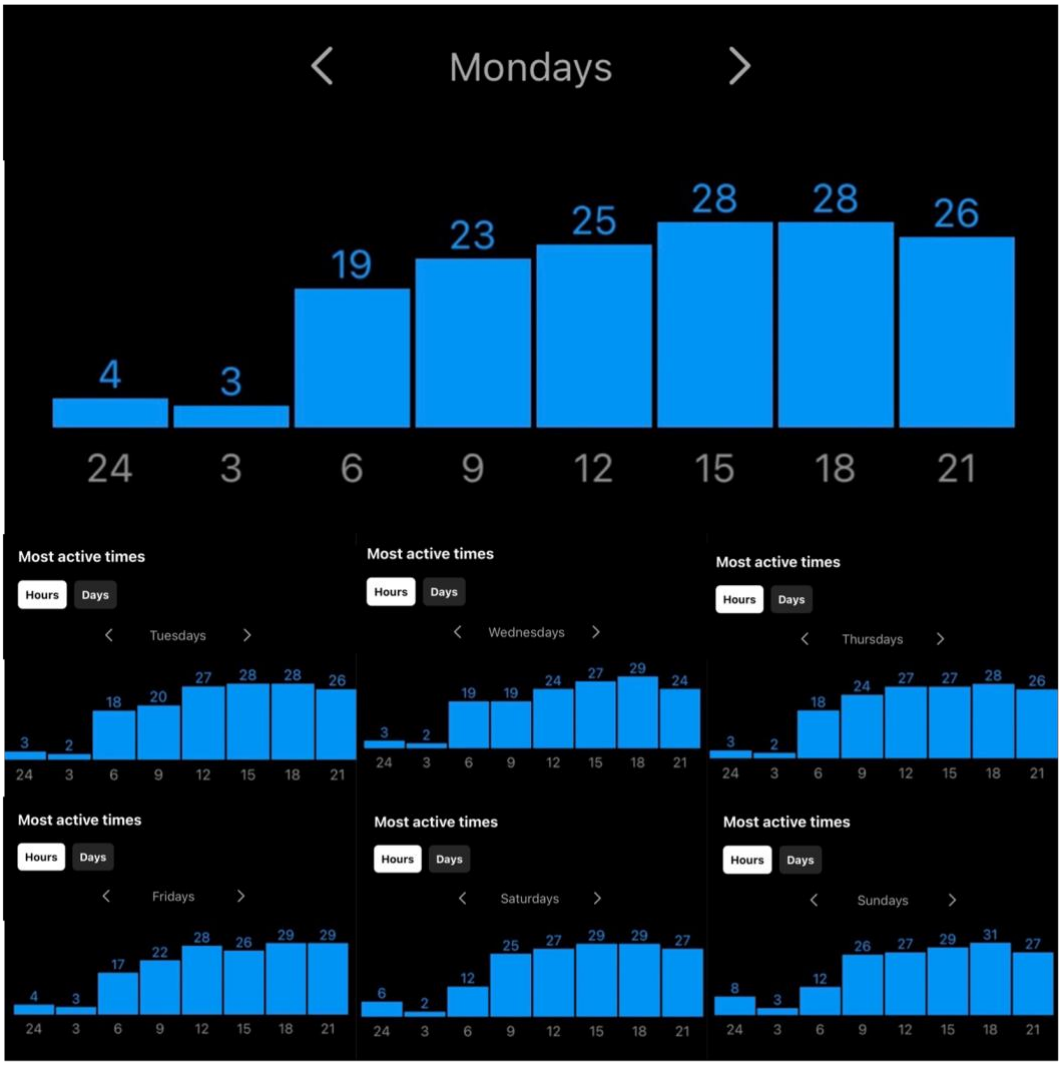


Figure 9. Active times per day

As can be seen from the above statistics, most followers are active daily in the afternoon and during the evening, between 3 and 9 p.m. The greatest activity is from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m., it is only on Fridays that most of the followers are active even after 9 p.m. So if the statistics are compared between activity per day and activity during the day, it can be seen that in order to reach as many people as possible when publishing content, a good day seems to be Fridays from 6 pm. The reason why one wants to publish content at the time of day when most of one´s followers are also active is because Instagram's algorithms like if a post gets a lot of engagement in the next few hours after publication. This is because the algorithms then interpret it as the Instagram users liking the content which makes the users spend more time on Instagram and this is of course what Instagram wants, for the users to spend as much time as possible on the platform. Thus, the content shared also gets more visibility because Instagram's algorithms make the content appear in many other

of one´s followers' feeds, which gives the content greater reach and also the opportunity to be seen by accounts that are not one´s followers.

The statistics regarding followers' activity can of course differ a lot between different Instagram accounts because we all have different types of followers who are active at different times of the day, so these statistics are good to check for one´s own account and not just assume that all followers follow the same pattern. During the Instagram study, I tried to share content on different days and at different times of the day to see if there was any difference and if parallels could be drawn to the above statistics regarding the activity of the followers.

Regarding formats that previously provided the best reach and the greatest engagement, some older content needed to be compared because only stories had been shared in the month before the study began. Older content refers to content from the whole of 2023 because no posts or reels were shared in the last 6 months before the Instagram study began, so to have something to compare with, the entire year 2023 needed to be taken into account. As for content shared in 2023, it has only been stories and regular posts, no reels were shared in 2023 before the study began. When it comes to reach, of course, the posts have given more reach than stories have given and of these posts, the posts that have been about business opportunities, tips and ideas, free skincare consultations, and general information about skincare that is not directly related to any product, have given the most reach. These posts have also generated the most interactions, i.e. the most number of likes, comments, and shares. There was only one post that had given more interactions (which was not included in the posts that gave the most reach) and there was one post where I wished the followers Happy Easter and some of the followers wished Happy Easter back in the comments.

In 2023, as I said, no reel had been shared, so to compare how the posts performed in comparison to the reels that I shared, content from 2 years ago needed to be compared. During these 2 years, a total of 2 reels had been shared and they of course had by far the greatest reach, which can also be seen in Figure 10 (to the left).

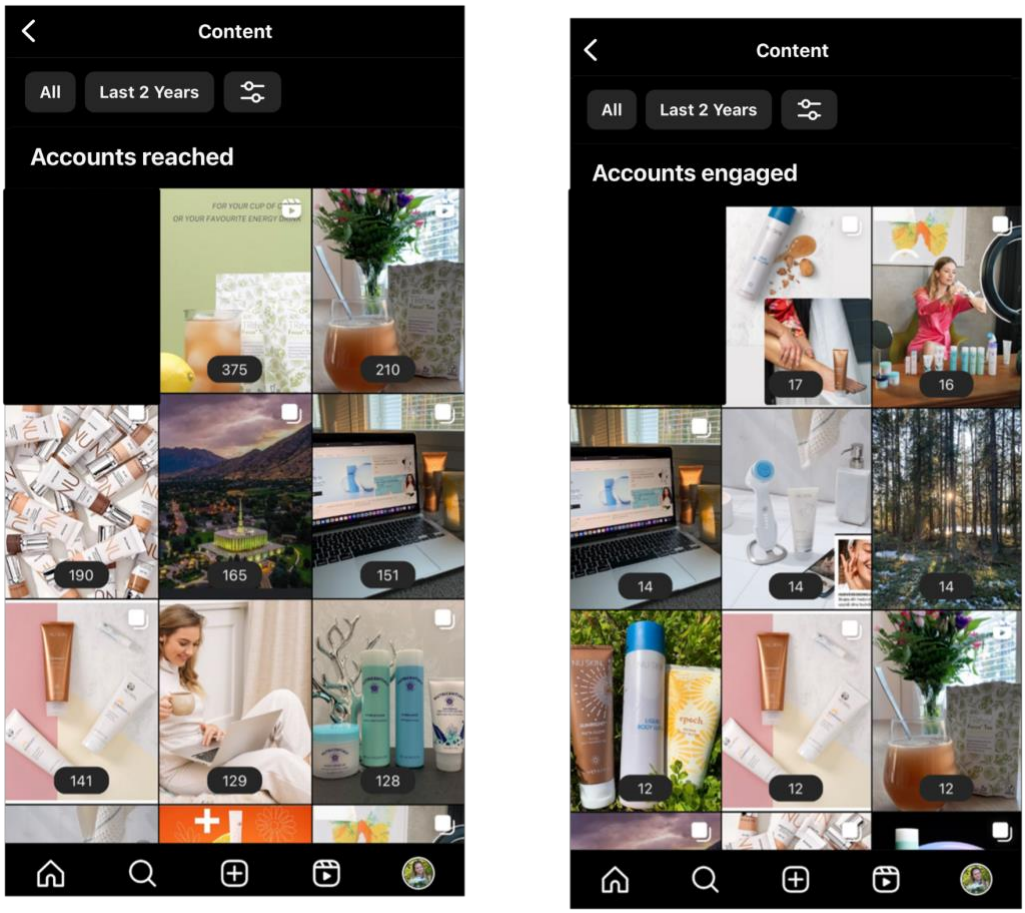


Figure 10. Content with the most reach and content with the most interactions

As can be seen in Figure 10 (to the left), the reel with the most reach has reached 375 accounts and the other 210 while the post with the most reach has reached 190 accounts. So, just by this comparison, one can clearly see that Instagram users appreciate and are most interested in reels. As mentioned earlier in the theory part, reels and content in video format are most popular at the moment, which of course means that Instagram's algorithms prioritize and show this type of content to more users, which in turn gives greater reach.

If we then move on to the image to the right, in Figure 10, where the number of interactions per post is visible, it can be seen that even though these 2 reels have reached by far the most accounts, they do not have the most number of interactions. The reel that reached the second most accounts has only received 12 interactions, while the second reel that has reached the most accounts does not even fit into the top 10 of content shared. And if looking at the number of interactions on the reel that has received the second largest reach, it is not a large percentage of the number of accounts reached that have interacted

with this reel, only 12 interactions out of the 210 accounts that have been reached. So based on this, it could be concluded (even before the Instagram study began) that reels are what Instagram prioritizes and gives the greatest reach even if the number of interactions is not that many.

6.3 Execution of the Instagram study

As said, the Instagram study has been conducted on my Instagram account where I, as a retailer of skin care products, market and share content about the products that I am a retailer of. The goal of this study was, as mentioned earlier, to try to find out what type of content generates the most engagement, what type of content gives the most reach, and if there is content that generates sales of products. The goal of this study was also to try to find out what time of the day it pays to publish content in order to get as much engagement as possible and as much reach as possible. In addition, different types of content formats, i.e. images and videos, have also been compared with each other to find out which type of format the followers prefer and like the most.

The very idea of the Instagram study was to publish content almost daily, in different types of formats and at different times, over a certain period of time. The goal was to publish 3 – 5 stories per day, preferably as spread out as possible and not all 5 stories at the same time, and to publish at least 2 posts per week and one reel per week. These numbers were also reviewed in the theory part where it was also mentioned that Instagram would prefer that one publish a post every day but that the recommendation is that at least 2 posts is published per week. The content shared on Instagram has also been divided into different types of categories to see if there is a certain type of topic that followers are more interested in than others. The categories into which the content is divided are as follows:

- Product news
- Promotions/Offers
- Tips & Ideas
- Information about products
- Award-winning products

- Content during holidays, for example, wishing followers Merry Christmas
- Business-related content
- Products I use myself
- Questions and polls

The Instagram study started on 12.12.2023 and ended on 25.1.2024 and during this time period, the number of content shared was a total of 129. The content shared during this time period has mainly been stories as stories have been shared almost daily while posts and reels have been shared less often. The number of stories during this time period was 116 while the number of posts was 11 and the number of reels was 2, which means that the goal posted regarding the amount of content to be shared per day was almost reached. The number of days between 12.12.2023 and 25.1.2024 was 45 days, which corresponds to approximately 6.5 weeks, but the number of days on which content was shared was 40 in total, as no content was shared for 5 days. Content was not shared during these 5 days as they were holidays, such as Christmas and New Year, when people usually are much less active on social media.

So, if the amount of content is calculated on the basis of the number of days during the time period, the average number of stories is 2.58 per day (goal 3 – 5) while the total number of posts was 1.7 per week (goal 2 per week) and the number of reels was 0.3 per week (goal 1 per week), so the goals were not fully achieved when looking at the number of days during this time period. However, if looking at the number of days that content has actually been shared, i.e. 40 days which corresponds to approximately 5.7 weeks, the number of stories is 2.9 on average per day and the total number of posts is 1.9 per week while the number of reels is 0.35 per week. This almost achieves the number of stories per day and the number of posts per week, while the number of reels is a bit short of the goal of one reel per week.

The content shared during the time period when the Instagram study was conducted, was divided into 9 different categories. Content in the categories "Tips & Ideas" and "Information about products" has been shared the most number of days during this Instagram study, which is a full 11 days each during this 45-day time period. The category in which content has been shared the second most days is "Questions and Polls", which has

been shared for a total of 9 days, and content in the category "Products I use" has been shared for a total of 3 days. In the results report, content from different categories will be compared more closely to see if there is a certain type of category that the followers prefer and that has given the most engagement.

When it comes to the time of day when the content was shared during this Instagram study, most of the content was published in the evening between 18:30 – 20:30. In cases where the content was shared in the morning, the content was shared between 7:00 a.m. and 7:45 a.m., as some of the followers had time to see the content before they left for work. Of course, this depends entirely on what type of job they have and what time they start work, which is why it has not given such good results either when publishing in the morning, which will also be seen in the results report. A few stories have also been published in the middle of the day between 10:00 – 14:00 but this has been during Saturdays and Sundays and the Christmas holidays when many of the followers can usually be more active in the middle of the day than they are in the evening if they have some program planned in the evening.

The results from this Instagram study will, as said, be reviewed in the following chapter, where the starting point, i.e. what the statistics looked like before the Instagram study, will be compared with how the statistics looked after the Instagram study. The content that has been shared will also be reviewed and compared to see what type of content and which format worked best during the Instagram study.

7 Reporting of results

In this chapter, the results of the Instagram study will be presented and in addition to comparing the statistics on how it looked before and after the Instagram study, the content that was shared will also be compared.

Let's start by comparing some statistics from what it looked like before the Instagram study, that is, the starting point, with how it looked after the Instagram study. The starting point was that during the time period 12.11 – 11.12.2023, which is one month before the Instagram study began, content was shared a total of 13 times (13 stories), the number of accounts reached was 52 and the number of interacting accounts was 3, which can also be seen in Figure 2. During the Instagram study, content was shared a total of 129 times,

including 116 stories, 11 posts and 2 reels, which is almost 10 times more than what had been shared before the study began.

If we then move on to the reach and compare how many accounts were reached, 52 accounts had been reached the month before the Instagram study began, of which 41 were followers and 11 were non-followers. The format that had reached the most accounts before the Instagram study was stories, which of course is due to the fact that the content shared during this time was only stories. The number of impressions had been 324, which means that the content shared has been viewed a total of 324 times, and as mentioned earlier, the same account may have seen the content multiple times, so therefore the number of impressions is significantly higher than the number of accounts reached. If we then look at what the reach looked like after the Instagram study, Figure 11 shows statistics on the number of accounts reached during the time period 12.12.2023 – 25.1.2024 and the number of impressions.

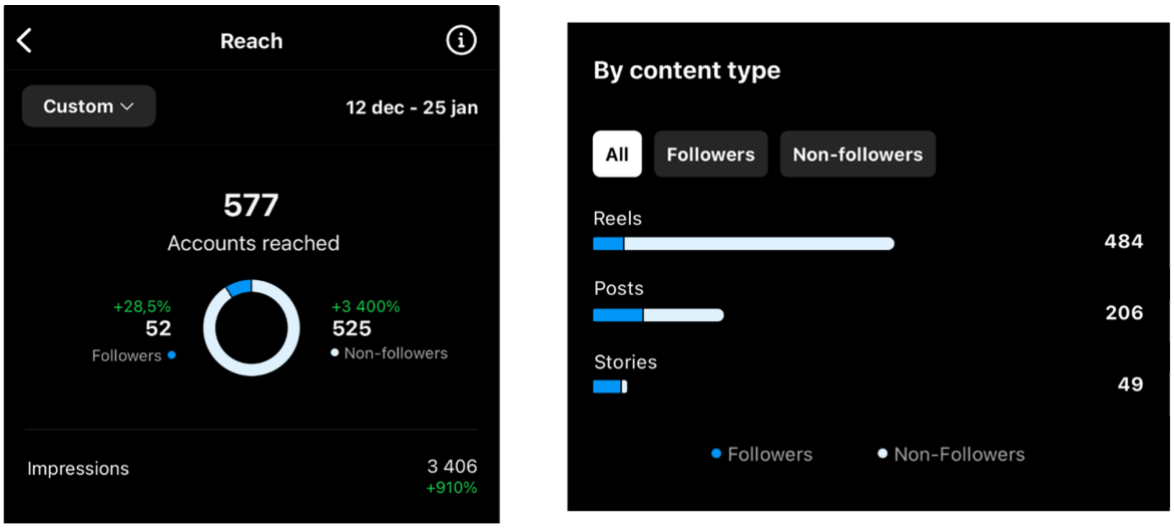


Figure 11. Reach and reach by format after the Instagram study

As can be seen, the number of accounts reached during the Instagram study was a whopping 577 accounts, of which only 52 accounts were followers and the remaining 525 were non-followers. This means that the number of accounts reached during the Instagram study was more than 10 times more accounts than before the study. This is of course due to the fact that a lot more content has been shared and that content has been shared regularly, in addition to reels that often provide very good reach and many views. If the number of reached accounts is put in relation to the amount of content shared, it can also be seen that the number of reached accounts per content shared has increased after the

Instagram study was conducted. Before the Instagram study, the number of reached accounts per content shared was an average of 4, while after the Instagram study, it was an average of 4.47.

The impressions have also increased a lot, from 324 to a whopping 3,406 impressions, which is also more than 10 times more than before the Instagram study. And if the number of impressions is put in relation to the number of content shared, an increase can be seen here as well. The number of impressions per content was 24.9 before the Instagram study, while after the Instagram study, it was 26.4 impressions per content that was shared. When comparing the different formats that have been shared, the most accounts have been reached through reels and posts, while the least number of accounts have been reached through stories. Before the Instagram study, most accounts had been reached through stories, but that is of course because only stories had been shared then.

If we move on to the number of interacting accounts, which before the Instagram study was only 3 accounts, it can in Figure 12 (to the left) be seen that the number of interacting accounts during the Instagram study was a total of 45 accounts.

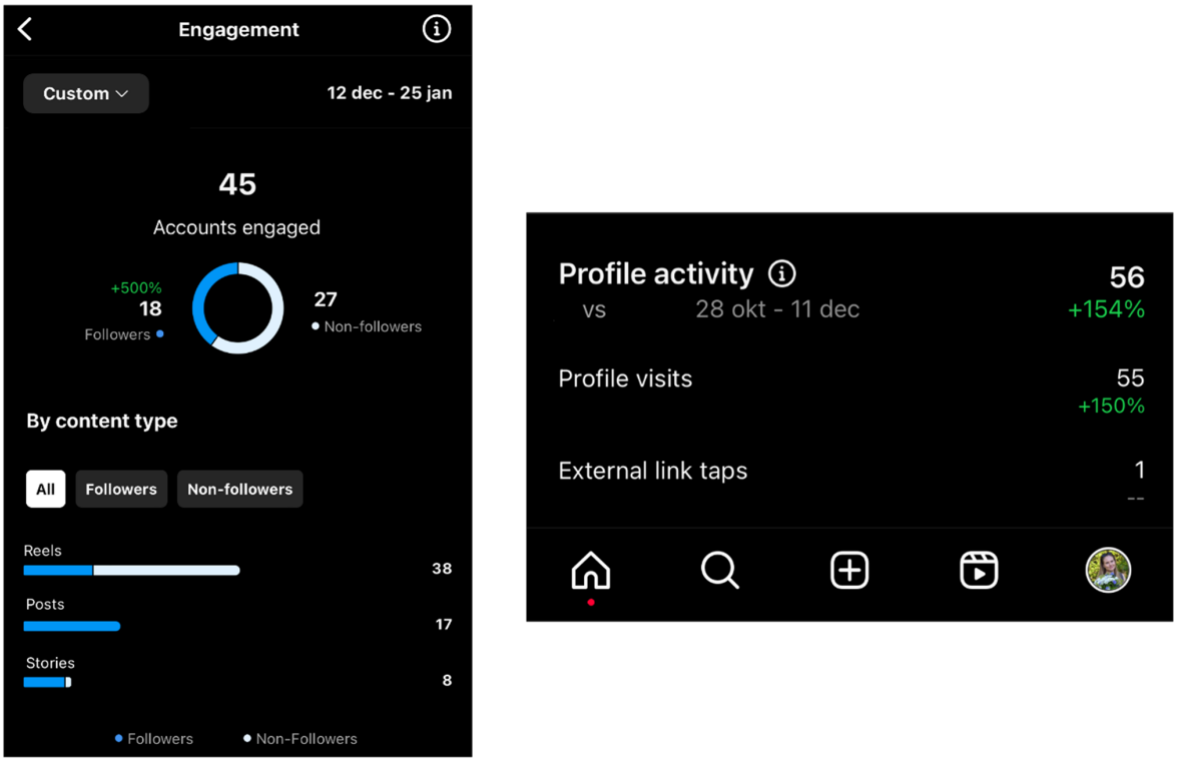
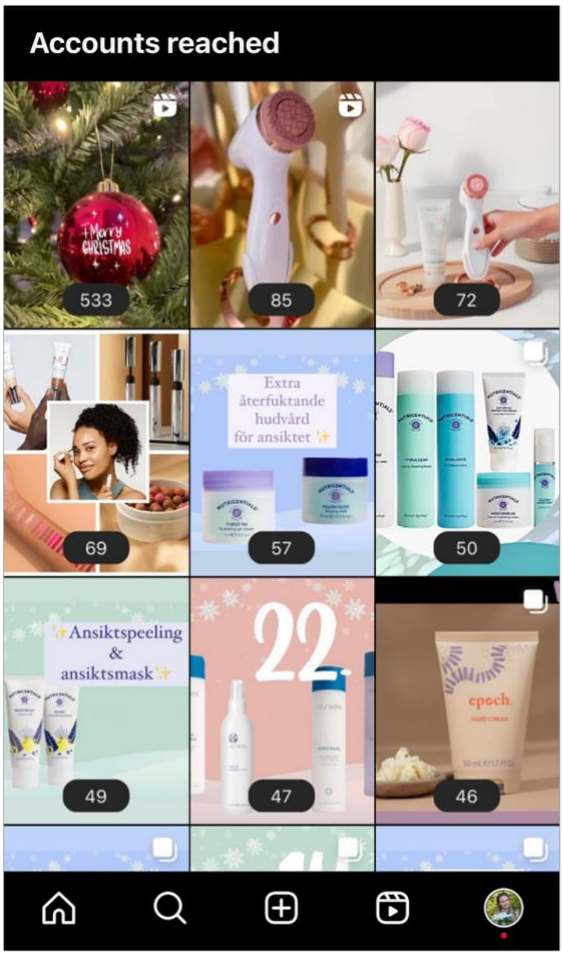


Figure 12. The number of interacting accounts and profile visits after the Instagram study

Of these 45 accounts, 27 accounts, which is more than half, were people who did not follow my account while 18 accounts were people who were already followers. And if looking at which format has received the most interactions, it is also reels that are at the top with 38 interacting accounts, while the posts have a total of 17 interacting accounts and stories have 8 interacting accounts.

Figure 12 (to the right) shows statistics of the profile activity during the Instagram study and also the profile activity has increased a lot compared to the profile activity before the study began. During the time period 12.11 – 11.12.2023, i.e. before the Instagram study, the number of profile visits was 17 while there were 55 during the Instagram study. In addition, a person has also clicked on the link to the webshop that is in the profile, so the total profile activity is 56 in number.

In addition to comparing statistics in numbers from the Instagram study, the content that was shared will also be compared and Figure 13 shows what type of content has reached the most accounts and received the most interactions during the Instagram study.



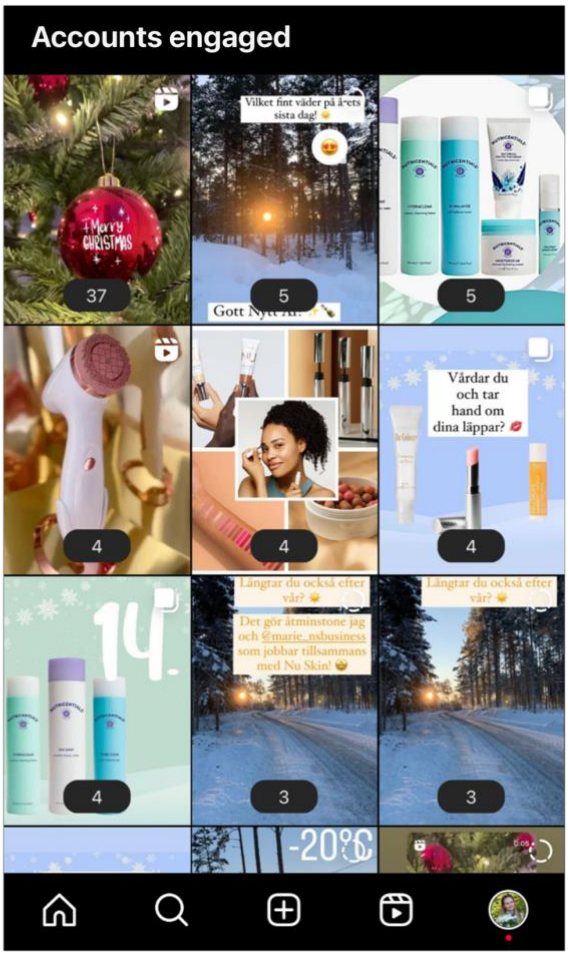


Figure 13. Content with the most reach and interactions during the Instagram study

In Figure 13, the left image shows the number of accounts that the content has reached and the image on the right shows the content that has received the most number of interactions. In addition, the majority of the content seen in Figure 13, has been published between 7 pm – 8:30 pm, which indicates that it is a good time to publish content. As it can be seen, the same reel has reached the most number of accounts and received the most number of interactions and it is a reel that was shared on Christmas Eve where the followers were wished Merry Christmas. So in this case, the content that reached the most accounts also had the most interactions, but if moving on to the content that reached the second most accounts (which is also a reel), it can be seen that this reel has not received the second most interactions without ranks fourth among the most interacted content. So even after the Instagram study, it can be concluded that even though the content reaches many accounts, it is not said that it is precisely the content that has the most number of interactions. And of course, one wants to have interactions on the content that is shared because it then shows that the followers like the content one shares, which in turn gives even greater engagement and even greater reach.

So, what can be concluded even after the Instagram study is that reels reach the most accounts as the 2 reels shared during the Instagram study are the content that reached the most accounts. The remaining part of the content that has reached the most accounts is posts and here it can be seen that the category that most of these posts belong to is the category tips & ideas, which is the 3 posts after each other that have reached between 47 – 50 accounts while the post that has reached the most accounts (72) belongs to the category campaigns / Offers. The post that reached 69 accounts belongs to business-related content and the post that reached 57 accounts belongs to the category information about products, so there is quite a good spread on different categories.

If a conclusion is to be drawn on the basis of this, many people still seem to have been interested in the post about campaigns and offers, but if looking at the category that most posts belong to, the majority of one's followers still seem to be interested in tips and ideas as the 3 posts that belonged to this category had a very even distribution between the number of accounts reached. If comparing the content that received the most interactions, it can be seen in Figure 13 (to the right) that the content that received the second most

interactions is a story where the followers were wished Happy New Year and also a sticker that the followers could click on was included. In addition, the last 2 are also stories, so here it can be seen that the number of interactions has been very good among stories even if stories do not reach so many accounts. Among the content that has received the most number of interactions, the majority of the content has belonged to the category tips and ideas, which also had between 4-5 interactions, while the other content that has been shared belonged to different categories.

So in summary, it can be stated that the category tips & ideas is what the followers seem to like the most and that gives both great reach and the most interactions (if disregarding the reel where the followers wished Merry Christmas) so content in this category should be invested more in, as well as reels of course. During the Instagram study, some sales were also achieved and the category and format that generated the best sales have been stories, where my own experiences have been shared and where I have told about products that I use myself. In addition, on these stories there has also been a sticker to react/click on or a poll has been made where the followers have been able to click in the answer that suited them best and then these people have been contacted on the basis of their answers.

During the Instagram study, however, the number of followers on my account has not increased, but the number of followers remained at the same level, 95 followers, even after the Instagram study. So even though all other statistics such as reach, exposure, interactions, and profile activity have increased a lot, it still has not given any more followers. The purpose of this study was of course not to increase the number of followers, but the purpose was to find out which format and what type of content one's target group likes the most. The fact that the number of followers would have increased during the Instagram study would of course only have been positive, so therefore, a shorter study was also conducted on Instagram to test a different strategy and see if it would generate any more followers.

This shorter study was conducted over a 2-week period where the goal was to interact with other Instagram users, i.e. like and comment on other Instagram users' content. This 2-week study was conducted during the time period 12.2 – 25.2.2024 and during this time period, I commented and liked other people's content on a daily basis, which was both current followers' content and non-followers’ content. By commenting and liking the

content of Instagram users who were not one´s followers before, an interest could be aroused in them. This, in turn, could lead to them going to one´s profile, looking through the content shared, and in the best case, leading to a new follower.

In Figure 14 it can be seen that even though only 3 stories have been shared in one day during these two weeks (image to the left) and the number of accounts reached has been 86, the number of followers has still increased by 8 followers during this time period, which can be seen in Figure 14 (to the right).

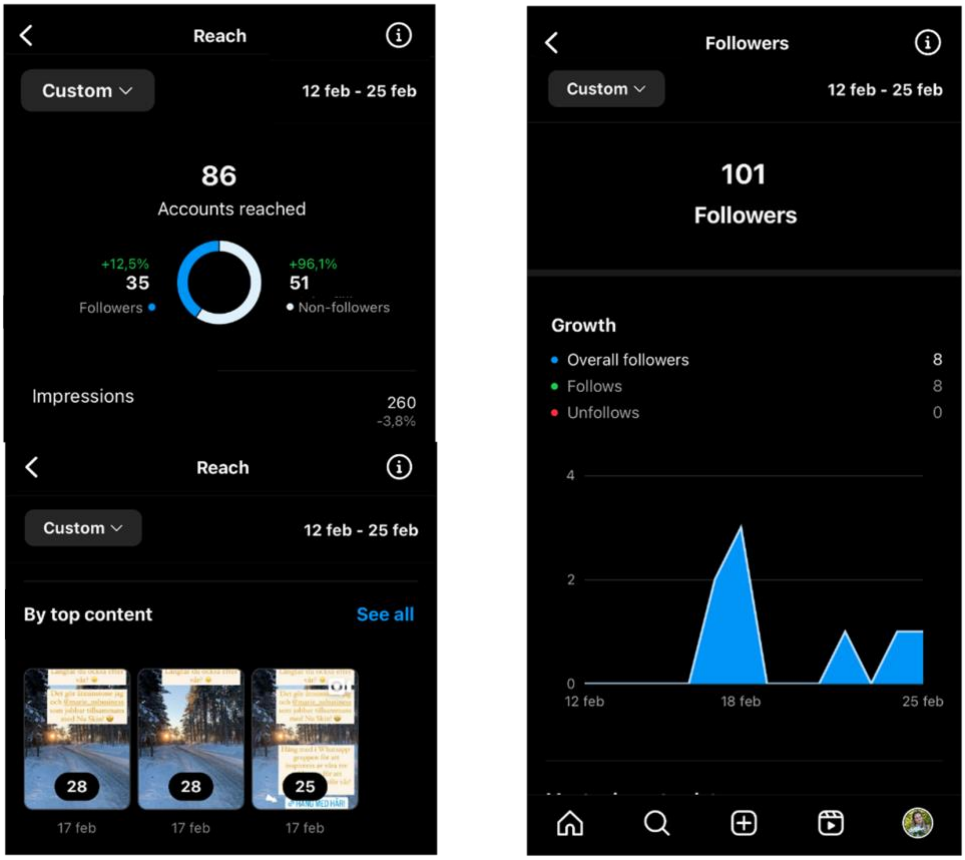


Figure 14. Reach and the number of new followers during the shorter study

So, through this short study, it can be concluded that in addition to sharing content regularly that one's followers like, it is also important to interact with other Instagram users in order to increase the number of followers.

In summary, the results of the Instagram study show that regular sharing of content on Instagram has increased reach, increased the number of impressions, and increased the number of interacting accounts. The number of profile visits is the only thing that has not increased during the Instagram study when comparing the number of profile visits with the

amount of content shared. It is difficult to say what the reason may be for the decrease in the number of profile visits because it can be due to several different factors, but usually, the number of profile visits increases if the followers are encouraged to go to one´s profile to, for example, find the link to the website. If the content that has been shared reaches new accounts that do not follow one´s Instagram account before, they can also go to one´s profile to check out the account and see if it is something that interests them. During the Instagram study, followers have not been encouraged to go to the profile, which may be a reason for the decrease in the number of profile visits.

Figure 15 shows a comparison of what the statistics looked like before the Instagram study and what the statistics looked like after the study. All statistics have also been put in relation to the number of content shared during the time period before and after the Instagram study to get a clearer overview of the results.

	Before the study	**In relation to the number of content**	**After the study**	**In relation to the number of content**
Number of content shared	13		129	
Reach	52 accounts	4 accounts	577 accounts	4.47 accounts
Impressions	324 pcs	24.9 pcs	3406 pcs	26.4 pcs
Interacting Accounts	3 accounts	0.23 accounts	45 accounts	0.35 accounts
Profile visits	17	1.31 pcs	56	0.43 pcs

Figure 15. Summary of the results of the Instagram study

So in summary, after the Instagram study, it can be concluded that in order to get a greater reach and increased engagement, it pays to share content regularly and to increase the number of profile visits, the followers would need to be encouraged or enticed to click further into the profile. In addition, it is also important to be social and interact with other Instagram users to increase the number of followers on the Instagram account.

8 Conclusion

When performing the Instagram study, the theory part has been applied and the study has been built up according to the recommendations and what according to the theory works best when publishing content on Instagram. This is to find out if the theory works in reality and if it is possible to apply the theory also in the marketing of products as a retailer. After the conducted study, it can be concluded that the theory corresponds very well with reality and worked well to apply in this study that has been conducted.

According to the study that has been conducted and reported in this thesis, it can be stated that it pays to publish content regularly to get increased engagement, but one must also not forget to interact and be social with other Instagram users. As Mladenov notes in the theory section, Instagram was originally created as a platform where users could be social and share memorable moments with each other. Even though Instagram has evolved a lot and does not work in the same way as before, it is still very important to interact and socialize with other Instagram users.

In addition to publishing content regularly, the study has also found that the format that seems to work best to get a large reach is to share reels that are entertaining. Of course, it depends on what kind of account one has and what kind of content is shared, but video formats seem to be popular among Instagram users, which is also mentioned in the theory section by KMR Studios. However, what needs to be remembered, as Niininen also mentions, when publishing content regularly and using Instagram as a tool to market what one sells, is that one cannot publish only content where marketing one´s products or services. Followers often use Instagram to be inspired, learn something new or to be entertained, so it does not work to have an Instagram account where only one´s products or services are promoted because people today are very tired of all types of advertising. This can also be seen in the Instagram study that was conducted, where it was found that

the content that interested the followers the most is content in the category tips and ideas as well as content in video format such as reels. So in this case, the theory is consistent with the results of the study, the followers want to be inspired, learn new things, and be entertained. In addition, followers want to get to know the person behind the Instagram account and just as KMR Studios mentions, stories are a very good tool to use to create a relationship with one´s followers and share more everyday things. In the Instagram study, this was also noticeable in that when content, which was more personal, was shared, the engagement and number of interactions became more for that particular story and the sales were significantly better.

The best time to publish content depends entirely on one´s followers, so it is a good idea to check the statistics on one´s Instagram account when the followers are most active, but Björck mentions that a large part of the followers are active on Instagram after 8 pm. This may be true for my followers as most of my followers are active between 6 pm – 9 pm and much of the content shared during the Instagram study has also been published around 8 pm. But as mentioned earlier, it is not enough to only post content regularly and publish reels that get a large reach, but one also needs to interact with other Instagram users in order to grow and get more followers on Instagram, especially if not so many interactions are obtained on the content shared. This could also be found in the Instagram study where content was shared daily for 6 weeks, but even if content was shared every day, the number of followers did not increase with a single follower. Hence, a shorter study of 2 weeks was made where the goal was to interact with other Instagram users daily and in this study, the number of followers increased almost daily. So even in this case, it can be confirmed that the theory is consistent with the results of the Instagram study.

8.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity describe the reliability and quality of the research and also show the extent to which a research method measures what is meant in the study. Reliability describes how reliable a measurement is, and validity is about how relevant the measurement is, in other words how well the technology measures what one wants to measure. (Christensen, 2016, pp. 213-214) Since this study is a qualitative study, the focus is on the whole study and not just certain parts or numbers in the study. (Christensen, 2016, p. 293)

This thesis shows adequate reliability and validity, the theory part answers the question of how retailers should market themselves on Instagram, and already in the theory part it is stated that all Instagram accounts' followers are different. In addition, the study that has been conducted is classified as a quasi-experimental study, which means that a direct conclusion cannot be drawn about, for example, what type of content and what times are best to publish content, but this is individual for each Instagram account and needs to be checked among the statistics tools available on Instagram. The theory part and the study are valid in that they follow current information about how Instagram is structured, how Instagram's algorithms work, and how one should market one´s products on Instagram, while the study is conducted on the basis of how Instagram works. The sources in this thesis are many and reliable, the sources that have been of the older kind have easily been updated with current information about Instagram via several other reliable sources.

8.2 Managerial implications and suggestions for further research

When marketing on Instagram as a retailer, the focus needs to be on publishing qualitative content regularly, which means that content cannot be published just for the sake of publishing, but the content that is shared needs to have some meaning as well and needs to be interesting to the followers. Retailers who market themselves on Instagram need to focus on sharing 3-5 stories daily and publishing content in the form of posts and reels, preferably at least 3 times a week, of which one reel per week. In addition to publishing content, a marketing plan also needs to be made and statistics from previous months need to be reviewed regularly to follow up on what time the followers are most active, what type of content and format they like the most, which post and reel has performed best and so on. This is to make it easier to make a marketing plan and to monitor if the followers' behavior changes and one´s marketing therefore also needs to be changed. Planning is very important as a lot of time is saved by making a good marketing plan and planning content in advance. The most important thing is to set aside time for Instagram, both for the creation and publication of content, but also to interact with other Instagram users and to respond to any comments received on the content shared.

Suggestions for further research would be to further develop this study that has been conducted in this thesis by trying to share both more reels and more of the type of content that the followers seemed to like the most. Then more time could also be spent on

interacting with other Instagram users to see how many new followers one would get and how much reach could be achieved by interacting with others and sharing more reels. It could also be interesting to interview a retailer in the same industry who has succeeded with their marketing on social media to hear how the person marketed themselves and used social media to succeed with their business.

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