

Successful social media marketing on Instagram.

Case: @minoshoes

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<p>The subject of this thesis is successful social media marketing on Instagram, and how to effectively use Instagram to build a strong brand and reach more customers. As a part of this study a case study of MI.NO shoes was conducted. The objective here was to deepen the company's understanding of Instagram marketing and how the company can use it to improve its sales and customer communication.</p> <p>The theoretical part of this study consists of general information about social media and social media for business followed by more detailed findings about Instagram marketing. The section also covers building a social brand, creating a promotional campaign and marketing internationally as a part of a social media marketing strategy. The theoretical part utilizes articles, theses, and academic literature to present the findings. Other social media platforms were also researched for comparison. Some figures were used to illustrate and visualise the findings</p> <p>The empirical part analyses the current situation and success of MI.NO shoes' Instagram profile and outlines new ideas for how the company can develop its Instagram strategy and communicate with its customers more effectively online.</p> <p>The thesis concludes with discussion on the current status of Instagram marketing and makes suggestions for MI.NO shoes in order to develop their Instagram marketing strategy in the future.</p> <p>MINO shoes has been present on Instagram for a couple of years. In general, it is using good content and getting good feedback. However there is room for improvement. The Instagram profile's level of engagement and number of followers is still quite low. This is mainly because the company is not as active on Instagram as on its other social media platforms.</p> <p>According to the analysis the company could improve its profile, by following other users, commenting and liking other users content, posting its own content more often, using a greater variation in content, using hashtags more effectively, starting to post videos, and creating more integration with the other marketing channels. Above all the company should build a well-planned Instagram marketing strategy.</p> <p>All in all there are great opportunities for the company in Instagram marketing and, when used efficiently, it can help the company raise its brand awareness and create a more loyal customer base.</p>	
Keywords Social Media, Social media marketing, Instagram, Instagram Marketing, Content, Engagement, Visual communication, Branding, MI.NO shoes	

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1 Introduction

The Internet is increasing its role in the consumer's daily life. People are using the Internet for their information search, which has also become a vital part of their purchasing process. In terms of marketing and advertising, this has created many possibilities for companies to communicate with their customers. Being present in social media has become an important part of the whole customer communication process for all companies. The new technologies and social media network have enabled companies to market its products and brand in a totally new way. However there are some challenges too. What makes social marketing different from traditional marketing is that the role of the consumers is getting more and more significant. Companies cannot only create the kind of content they want but they must take into consideration what their followers want to see. Also, users can freely express both their negative and positive experiences on social media platforms. This forces companies to actively interact with its costumers. (Trong 2015.)

Social media is fundamentally about connecting with people and companies. Over the past few years, more and more companies have joined social networking and people have become overwhelmed with the content. This in turn has lead to increased competition to gain the user's attention. People are trying to find new ways to filter the feed and receive only the content and information they truly want. For marketers this means that they have to be more strategic about creating interesting content that people really want. Otherwise they will not be noticed. (Neher 2013, 1-2.)

Images are playing an important role in social media marketing and especially on Instagram. Images and visual content are increasingly what people want online. The phrase *a picture is worth a thousand words* relates to the fact that our brains can consume, process and understand more information way faster through images than text. In terms of marketing this means that the consumers' attention is easier to get by using images or videos as opposed to using other types of content. Furthermore, it is visual content that is most consumed, viewed and clicked on by social consumers today. (Neher 2013, 1-3.)

Instagram is one just of the many social media platforms that exist. It is a mobile application that allows users to take and share photos from their mobile devices (Neher 2013, 64). Instagram has increased its popularity faster than any other social media platform, and this is what makes Instagram so special (Klie 2015). In addition, Instagram is the first significant social network built specifically for mobile usage (Miles 2014, 4.) On Instagram there are 100 million active monthly users worldwide to be reached and this is what makes Instagram such an effective marketing tool for companies (Wood 2015).

MI.NO shoes is a start-up company founded by Johanna Keltto in 2013. It is a women's shoe store that sells brands from various designers. In addition to the physical store in Helsinki, the company has an online store. The company uses social media as a part of its marketing strategy. The company has been present on Instagram for couple of years already; however, it is still looking for the right way to communicate to its followers. The company hopes to better understand of its work on Instagram. The company is interested in finding ways to improve its Instagram account in order to market more effectively to its target audience.

The theoretical part of this thesis is collected to serve as a handbook for marketing on Instagram. Hence it is important that the reader also reads through the theoretical part in order to get a better understanding of the analytics and suggestions for the case company in the empirical part of the thesis. Additionally other companies can easily adapt the theoretical part and use it to improve their own Instagram profile to raise brand awareness.

1.1 The purpose of this thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the current situation and trends of Instagram marketing and use this information to analyse the case company's Instagram account as a part of their social media marketing strategy. The main idea is to learn to understand customer behaviour on social media sites and what customers are looking for when they are following a company's Instagram account or similar accounts specifically in the fashion industry.

The goal is to provide the case company with useful tips to improve their Instagram profile and customer communication, as well as help them recognise the strengths and areas for improvement in its current strategy in order to get more followers and engagement. It is also important to understand how to create a solid Instagram strategy and understand how to manage it along the way. The reasons behind this research is the desire to get more customers, increase the sales in both the store in Helsinki and the MI.NO shoes web store and to build a social brand with a loyal customer base.

1.2 Case company information

MI.NO shoes is a multi brand women's shoe store founded in 2013 by Johanna Keltto. It is located at Galleria Esplanad (MI-NO shop Oy) and it also has an online store: www.minoshoes.com (MI-NO webshop Oy).

The company offers a handpicked selection of women's shoes and accessories from the top contemporary brands, well-know designers and much-heralded newcomers. Their mission is to provide women shoes that are simplistic pure design, high quality and fuctional. (Keltto 2015.)

The company uses both traditional marketing and digital marketing in their marketing strategy. In traditional marketing the company uses ads in magazines and in digital marketing it uses SEO, paid advertising, email marketing and social media marketing (Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram). (Keltto 2015.)

Instagram is the fastest growing social media platform at the moment and provides new innovative ways, especially for fashion industry companies, to advertise and communicate to their customers. The company is very eager to understand the possibilities to advertise in this particular platform and learn how to engage more people on their Instagram profile. Also the company is interested to know what kind of content and marketing strategies the other companies are using. The company has been present on Instagram for couple of years already. Their user account is called @minoshoes. (Keltto 2015.)

1.3 The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of the introduction, theoretical background, research methods, empirical study and discussion. The introduction describes the current situation of social media marketing and Instagram marketing in general. The theoretical background will delve deeper in the subject and provide different ways to both advertise and communicate in Instagram as well as provide the basic knowledge of creating and managing the user account. The empirical part will analyse the current situation of MI.NO shoes Instagram account in relation to the theoretical findings and other companies using Instagram. The discussion part summarizes the main findings and provides future ideas and development suggestions for the company.

1.4 Key concepts

Social media – Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideologies and technological foundations. These applications allow the users to create and exchange content. (Kaplan, Haenlein 2010.)

Social media marketing – social media marketing is the use of social media by marketers to increase brand awareness and build relationships with customers (Foulger 2014).

Instagram – Instagram is a visual content sharing network for mainly mobile devices, focused on the taking and sharing of photos with friends. The application is free to use and owned by Facebook. (Instagram 2015.)

Visual Communication – visual communication is information transferred through images, where the creator of the image has created an image specifically to communicate something through which the viewer of the image then interprets and understands through personal filters which are made up of personal experiences, cultural and social backgrounds as well as attitudes (Jamieson 2007).

Content marketing – content marketing is a marketing strategy based on attracting and retaining customers through the creation and distribution of valuable content, such as videos, white papers, guides and infographics (Foulger 2014).

Content – content in this study is understood as the photos and videos and other posts the user updates on their account on social media platform.

Users – In this study the term users will refer to people who use a specific social media platform.

Follower – A social media user who has subscribed to another social media account so they can receive their news feed (Foulger 2014).

Unfollow – unfollowing is the action of unsubscribing from another user's account in social media platform (Foulger 2014).

Liking – like on social media is an intention that is developed into an understood expression of support for content (Foulger 2014).

Engagement – engagement in this study is understood as liking, commenting, sharing or following another social media platform profile and their posts.

Hashtag – The hashtag is a word presented by the #-sign. Hashtags are a simple way to mark the topic of social media messages and make them discoverable to people with shared interests (Foulger 2014).

Analytics – Analytics, in, general involves using technology to gather data, which analysts can study. The goal is to examine the patterns in behaviour. The data is most com-

monly gathering information about the pages visited, actions completed, interactions and performance (Foulger 2014).

1.5 Research problem

Social media marketing plays an integral role in a business' marketing communication today. It is an entirely new way to reach your main audience and communicate to your customers. There are many success stories for marketing in social media. However, as it is a fairly new type of marketing it is important to learn how to use it effectively in business. The main purpose for this thesis is to give the case company a better understanding of how to use Instagram in marketing efficiently as a part of their social media marketing strategy. It will analyse the case company's Instagram account's current situation and help it to understand what it has done right and what it could do better. The findings will provide the company with future ideas as well as suggestions for improvement.

1.6 Research objectives

The research objectives for the Thesis are as follows:

- Research the importance of social media marketing for today's businesses
- Explore the possibilities in Instagram marketing
- Analyse the approaches and practises used on Instagram marketing
- Outline the characteristics of successful Instagram marketing

1.7 Research questions

- How to use Instagram effectively as a part of the social media marketing strategy?
- How can @minoshoes use Instagram effectively in their brand communication and marketing?

By answering these questions the thesis will provide the case company with a better understanding of how to market itself on Instagram and allow it to increase its brand awareness. This in turn will help the company grow their sales and business as a whole.

2 Social media marketing

This chapter will concentrate on the importance of social media for businesses and what are the changes it has brought about in terms of customer communication. The chapter also discusses how to use social media to build a strong brand and to reach more customers.

2.1 Social media is growing its importance

In past, the only ways for a company to communicate and to market to its customers was through traditional marketing channels. These channels consisted of print, TV and radio. After the advent of online marketing this approach has changed radically. (Kabani 2010, 1.) In traditional marketing companies talked more or less at the consumers and there was no real way for the customers to talk back. In contrast, in the digital channels, and social media especially, the customers are more interactive. They are asking questions and commenting on the content the company is posting; meaning that the company has to answer back. Another change is that companies need a more multipronged approach than before. It is no longer possible to reach the customers through one channel nor is it possible for companies to choose the channels they prefer but rather companies need to find the channels their target audience are using and use those channels to communicate to them. (Evans, McKee 2010, 4-5.)

This does not, however, mean that marketers do not still value traditional marketing but its prominence has changed (Kabani 2010, 2-3). Consumers are now spending more and more time on the Internet, often accessing via their smartphones and tablets. Below is a diagram showing the daily average of time spent social networking by the average person last year.

TIME SPENT SOCIAL NETWORKING

Daily Average (Hours)

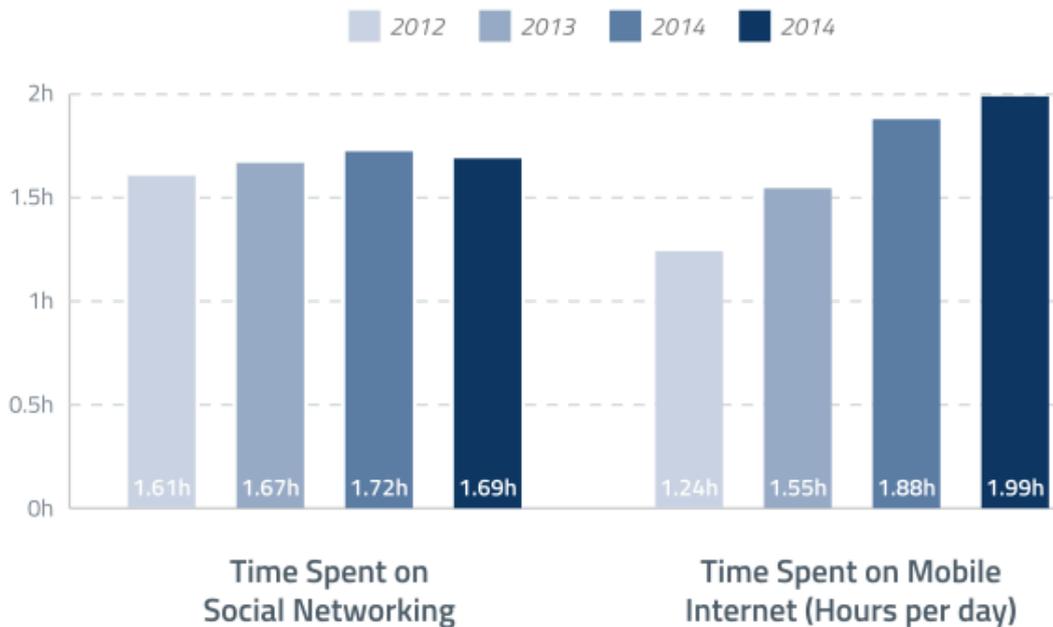


Figure 1 Daily average of time spent social networking (Globalwebindex 2015)

As the diagram shows, consumers no longer seek news and information from traditional channels, but increasingly from social networks. (Young 2015, Trong 2014.) They also use social networks to look for information about new products and services. On the social media channels consumers are sharing their own experiences with brands, products and services. Likewise, customers are more likely to investigate the feedback from other customers online before making a purchasing decision. This is why the social media is sometimes referred as *digital word-of-mouth*. (Kabani 2010, 1.) Today the whole purchasing process, that starts from expectations and information search and ends at sharing the actual experience, most often happens online on social media networks. (Evans, McKee 2010, 4-5, Kabani 2010, 1-2).

Social media is definitely the key channel for reaching customers in the 21st century. The Internet has created lot of opportunities for companies to communicate to their customers but at the same time it has made the whole process more complex. And without the right kind of strategy and knowledge of online marketing, it is often used ineffectively. (Kabani 2010, 2-3.) Through social media channels companies are seeking customer engagement and increasing in brand awareness. It provides a fast and efficient way to reach their target audience. More and more companies have also seen the possibility of social media as a channel for customer service. (Evans, McKee 2010, 4.)

Today, there are many different types of social networking sites including Facebook, Linked In, Pinterest and Twitter. From all these different networks, brands are usually choosing one or more as a part of their social media marketing strategy. (Hellberg 2015.) Each social media platform has its own unique way of functioning and they provide different possibilities for companies to communicate to their target audience (Evans, McKee 2010, 4). Below is a representation of the most popular social media platforms in 2014.

TOP SOCIAL PLATFORMS: GROWTH IN ACTIVE USERS DURING LAST YEAR

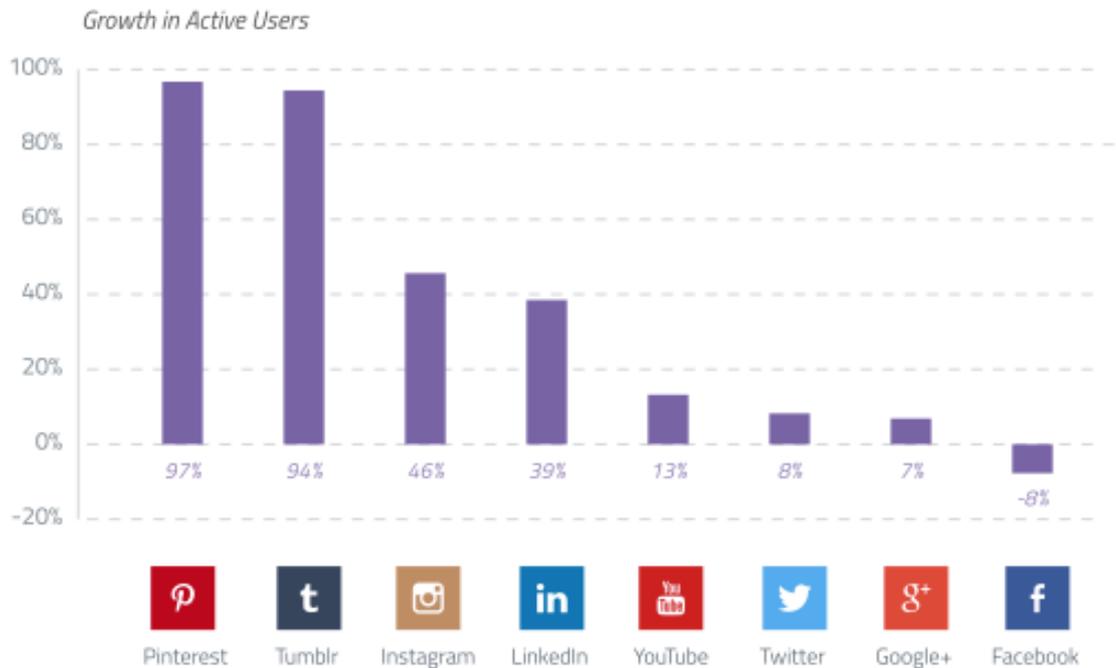


Figure 2 Top social platforms, growth in active users during 2014 (Globalwebindex 2015)

2.2 Social media for business

As the way people are buying and doing research online about the brands and products is changing, it is important to understand how to use social media and how companies can benefit from it. (Rouhiainen 2015.) Business-to-consumer markets are changing due to the commercial development and this has made consumers easier to reach for companies, even on a global scale. Yearly there are more than 800 million shoppers online. The Internet provides access to a totally new environment in which there are different ways to sell and communicate to consumers all over the world. (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, Johnston 2009, 619.)

Marketing and operations are the core elements that support the selling process in social media (Evans, McKee 2010, 62-63). However the company also needs to understand how

its customers or stakeholders connect to its business. By understanding and actively listening to its customers, stakeholders and employees the company may gain significant promotional value, as the business will respond better to marketplace dynamics and competitive opportunities. (Dave, McKee 2010, 4-5.)

Most businesses can benefit from a social media plan and use social media as a key part of their sales cycle. However, if the company does not have the resources, knowledge or time to be active on the social media sites they should not be doing it. (Miles 2014, 39.)

Social media is a relatively inexpensive way of marketing. With social media marketing companies can promote its products and services for a fraction of the cost, compared to the traditional medias. With the right strategy a company can reach more customers and build awareness regionally, nationally and even globally. Thus, an effective approach requires commitment, planning and persistence. (Sedrati 2015.)

2.3 Content planning

According to Miles (2014, 39) most types of businesses can benefit from a social media plan and use social media as a key part of their sales cycle. Being effective does not, however, mean that it has to take a lot of time. The social media content can easily be planned and scheduled beforehand. The company can create a content calendar in order to plan ahead their next days, weeks or even months posts for their social media platforms. Scheduling part of the social media content can be really worth it and save a lot of time but not everything can be planned beforehand. Thus, planning content gives flexibility to the schedule and the new and curated real-time content can be added as the week progresses. (Lee 2014.)

The Golden Ratio

Create balance in the social media content you share

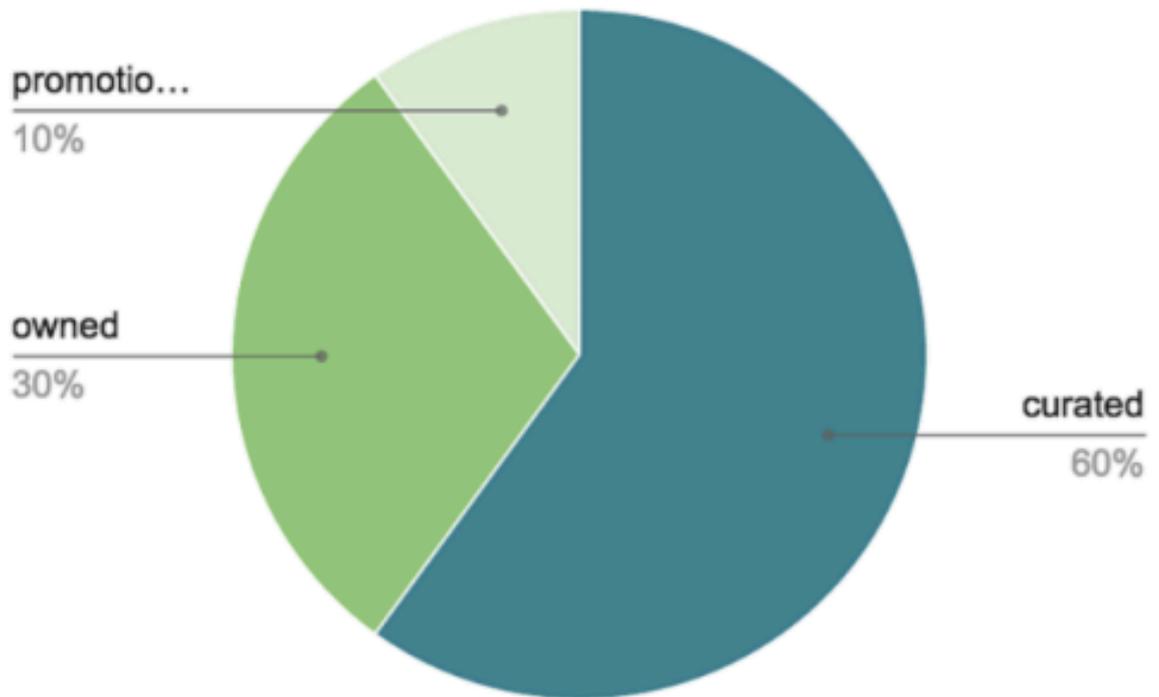


Figure 3 The Golden Ratio - 30/60/10 by Kevin Lee (2014)

According to 'Golden Ratio' -ratio there should be a balance in the content that is shared on social media. The figure shows that 30% of the content should be owned, 60% curated and 10% promotional in order to create the right kind of variety to the content. To sum up, when doing a social media plan it is important to find the right times and right kind of content. When planning the content the marketer should think about the upcoming events, product launches, posts scheduled on other marketing channels, how much content is needed and what images can be created beforehand. (Lee 2014.)

3 Instagram marketing

This chapter will concentrate more deeply to Instagram and how it can be used effectively as a part of the company's social media marketing strategy. The chapter will present the different objectives of Instagram marketing and how to use them efficiently in business communication and marketing. The following chapter will also discuss what not to do and what to avoid when creating content and communicating on Instagram.

3.1 Instagram in a nutshell

The cofounders Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom launched Instagram in October 2010. Instagram was the first social networking site born mobile. While other social media sites have a mobile application, Instagram was exclusively created for mobile usage. This new application became a hit instantly. After only one month it had a million users. (Bertoni, 2012, Malin 2014, Miles 2014.) In April 2012, another social networking site Facebook bought Instagram and is now the parent company of the application (Klie 2015).

In general, Instagram is a free app that allows you to post pictures and videos (Wood, C. 2015). Like Pinterest, Instagram is not based on conversation, which makes it "social media lite". This makes it much more achievable compared with a conversation-intensive platform like Facebook or Twitter. (Miles 2014, 11.)

Anyone can create an account on Instagram to start sharing content and follow other individuals, celebrities, companies and brands (Trong, 2014). Instagram has two primary features; it allows users to edit their photos and create beautiful images and it functions as a social network for image sharing. (Neher 2013, 64). Instagram allows users to (Trong, 2014, Rohrs 2014, 164):

- take a picture or a video
- change the look and feel of the media by choosing filters
- add a description
- add a hashtag
- tag people in their photos and videos,
- geotag their photos and videos,
- search and browse other people's images and videos,
- like, comment, or share other people's images and videos, and

- share their content on other social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and other followers.

In the recent years Instagram's user number has gone up rapidly, in March 2014 there were 150 million active monthly users on Instagram and in early December 2014, Instagram had already surpassed 300 million registered users. (Malin 2014, Klie 2015.) Compared to Twitter, Instagram is only four years younger, yet it has already surpassed Twitter in the number of users. At the same time Instagram is beating Facebook in the number of posts and representing a 49 percent year-over-year jump. Furthermore Instagram is getting new users faster than any other social media platform before. In addition, 2014, Instagram had the highest growth rate in the audience engagement than any social media platform. It delivers 58 times more engagement to brands than Facebook and 120 times more engagement than Twitter. For brands looking to market themselves, Instagram also presents an enormous consumer audience. This audience does not only search for content, but also shares photos of their experiences with brands and their products. (Klie 2015.)

Some disadvantages for Instagram are that the use of the app is fairly limited and the user cannot update their account from a computer without third-party apps. Also Instagram does not yet offer many possibilities for advertisers, like for example Facebook does. This may, however, be expected to change in the near future (Rouhiainen 2015). Unlike Facebook and Twitter, for example, Instagram does not offer analytics for its users nor it allows the user to share the content they liked. In addition, it is not possible to make a text-only post and it is primarily for phone-quality pictures. (Wood 2015, 48, Miles 2014, 9.) Furthermore, adding "clickable" URL in the description or adding a clickable URL in a comment is not possible on Instagram.

3.2 Instagram marketing

Marketers have been fast to leverage the new social media site, as more than 50 percent of top brands are using Instagram. Instagram is definitely a valuable tool for marketers who want to get their brand known. (Miles 2014). All businesses, both small and large, can find value in creating and using an Instagram. This platform particular can give customers a personal view into the company and can create a sense of community among the followers. On Instagram is easy to share the company story and give a behind the scenes look at how the company is managed. (Zimmerman 2013, 293.) The use of the photo sharing for business differentiates from personal uses. For instance, the images the company creates, the frequency of the posts, the messages attached to the images and

possible images you will share from other accounts will be very different from the content the individual users are sharing. (Asad 2014, 2-6.)

Moreover, Instagram is different from other social media sites. Instagram users tend to be a little more selective in what they post. As Instagram is entirely visual it allows brands to promote their products in a totally new way. Not only can marketers use Instagram to publish their own photos and videos, but also to highlight what consumers are doing with their products. (Klie 2015.) The followers on Instagram also appreciate when their content is liked or commented on (Miles 2014, 42).

Instagram demonstrated the trend towards visual storytelling and shift from sharing images rather than text (Neher 2013, 63). Instagram highlights also another trend. Instagram makes business and brand owners more relatable. Customers like to do business with people they know, like and trust and Instagram gives you the opportunity to show consumers who the people are working behind the company. (Wood 2015, 71, Zimmerman 2013, 82.) It is important for the company to understand and know their target users. Without knowing the user preferences and attitudes that the company cannot necessarily communicate to their audience in a way they are understood correctly (Hellberg 2015).

There are different reasons behind the social media use. The different social media sites can be divided into five different categories which are information seeking, focused entertainment, purpose driven, socially-driven fun and in the middle. Instagram belongs to the category of mostly socially driven fun where social media is used for entertainment and to share life experiences. This kind of social media usage is low-content-specific and high-fun-focused which means that the content is more relatable, personal and playful. (Malin 2014.)

According to Rouhiainen 2015, successful Instagram marketing comes simply from being active, posting great content, following interesting people and leaving comments and questions to those people and starting to build relationships with the followers and influential people on your business sector. Starting the connection with the customers online helps to create a loyal following, and allows for constant word-of-mouth promotion to help to continue growing of the customer base. Instagram also allows the companies to have free market research. By looking at what the customers are sharing the company can learn what is most interesting content to their followers. Having an insight to what the customers share can help to make design decisions, and help shape the content created. (Zimmerman 2013, 301.)

3.2.1 Branding on Instagram

Instagram is an ideal tool for brand building, since the company can effectively compete with the other companies on Instagram by leveraging the brand attributes. In order to effectively manage a brand on Instagram the company has to effectively manage it off Instagram. According to Miles, brand is the sum of the thoughts and emotions that individuals have about a product or company. When the brand is well designed and managed it has a real power to drive sales. Its power comes from a combination of the invisible aspects, the visible aspects and the prospect's experienced with the brand. (Miles 2014, 105, 110, 114.)

The skilful use of words and images woven together to tell an interesting story about the company is the key to successful branding on Instagram. According to Miles, people tend to like images that connect with them emotionally. Such pictures to raise emotions are for example vacation destinations, sandy beaches, gourmet cuisine, sunsets, shoes, dresses, pretty places and pretty faces. Unlike some would think, people are not responding to the technical brilliance of an image but they want to see more relatable content. The images on Instagram provoke the thoughts and feelings of consumers that are the basis for buying decisions. There are dozens of emotional triggers that marketers have discovered throughout the time of marketing. (Miles 2014, 71, 83, 85.)

Miles (2014, 85-87) presents the 12 triggers that seem to be particularly prominent in Instagram marketing efforts, which are:

1. Love
2. Desire
3. Involvement of ownership
4. Justifying the purchase
5. Desire to belong
6. Desire to collect
7. Curiosity
8. Storytelling
9. Greed
10. Urgency
11. Instant gratification, and
12. Exclusivity

The easiest way to get enthusiastic response to the use of emotional buying triggers is to have followers that are raving fans. Taking the time to build the follower strategy and identifying the common buying triggers leads to followers feeling upbeat and passionate towards the brand. (Miles 2014, 91.)

Furthermore, Instagram is not conversationally intensive, but still requires social actions. Being proactive and not falling into the habit of just posting pictures without engaging socially it can lead to the risk of having very low results even though the content itself would be decent. (Miles 2014, 60.)

3.2.2 Visual communication

Due to the visual element of Instagram, it is relevant to understand the concept of visual communication. This helps to gain an understanding of how images work and how they affect the viewer. (Hellberg 2015.) In essence, visual communication is information transferred through images, where the creator of the image has created an image specifically to communicate something through which the viewer of the image then interprets and understands through personal filters which are made up of personal experiences, cultural and social backgrounds as well as attitudes (Jamieson 2007).

In using images as a tool for brand communication, the visual comprehension means consumers can process brand messages much faster than through textual approaches (Jamieson 2007). Visual communication can affect a person, both emotionally and logically. Viewing, purely visual advertisements may affect viewer's perceptions and attitudes toward a brand that can turn into beliefs about that brand. In the relation to marketing the visual communication is an effective tool when it comes to communicating with the consumers. However, it does not guarantee or specify the nature of the beliefs created in the viewers mind. By learning to understand the meaning of visual communication the brand can use the different aspects of visual marketing as a benefit in their brand communication. (Hellberg 2015.)

In terms of Instagram brand posts, for example Nike posts pictures of people and celebrities doing sports, with the caption "just do it". In this case, the represented aspect to the image are the people in the picture, the products they are wearing, the action happening, and the caption of the brand slogan whereas the hidden aspect is the viewers mind and the beliefs the pictures will create, like being part of a community or wanting to adopt the similar lifestyle. (Hellberg 2015.) To illustrate the discussion above, below are screenshots taken from Nike's official account in September 2015.

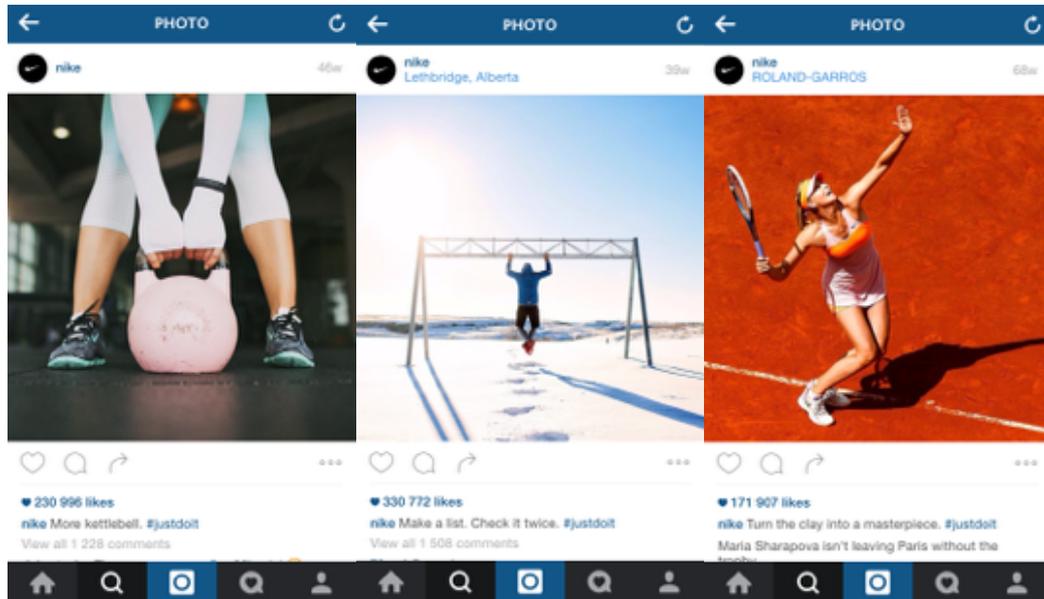


Figure 4 Screenshots from Nike's Instagram account (@nike)

Both the swift from traditional medias to digital medias and globalization is creating new challenges and requirements for marketers. Due to the world getting smaller the companies can easily reach the people around the world, even little and middle size companies can go international faster and with lower costs. Instagram is based on networking and it will suggest content to its users that share similar interests. This creates a connection among people that they otherwise do not know. Also the liking and commenting is supporting the profile surfing. Many feel that Instagram is bringing the people around the world closer to each other and this applies also between companies and consumers. If the story and content attracts the consumer they want to engage with the brand and they might start ordering the products around the world. However, the social media marketing channels forces the companies to act faster and in real-time. (Vaartimo 2015.)

3.3 Attractive Instagram profile

Similar to most social networks, a company user on Instagram can create a profile with basic information about the company (Neher 2013). The Instagram profile must express the brand values for a business to get the most value out of. The profile needs to have all the necessary information and also additional information that makes the profile interesting. (Zimmerman 2013, 176: Wood 2015, 189).

Adding the right images to the Instagram account is extremely important but if the basic information on the account profile is not properly set up it can greatly reduce the number of visitors as well as the number of followers. There are some restrictions as well. These restrictions include the limited characters to use for headline and the size of an on the

main page of the profile. Understanding the restrictions, knowing what limits are in place and understanding what can be done, are a few things to keep in mind when developing your page. (Asad. 2014, 2-6.)

The company profile picture should support the business values, mission and vision. The customers should easily recognise these already on the profile page. The profile picture for the account should either be a professional photo or a logo of the company to accurately represent the brand. (Asad. 2014, 2-6.)

The user name should be easy to recognise and it should include brand name. The name should be either the same or as similar as possible than on the other social media platforms. (Asad 2014, 1-2.)

Notification section allows followers to find site from anywhere and allow them to receive information about when something new is posted, or new images are being uploaded to the company's Instagram account page (Asad. 2014, 2-6).

The site URL that leads to the company's web page must be clearly visible. If a visitor does not know where to find the company outside of Instagram, the link between marketing on Instagram and growing the business by attracting new visitors to the web page will break. (Asad. 2014, 2-6.)

In concluding the profile, the company should include the relevant information a customer might need in order to get in contact with the company. This includes a company phone number, email address, location and URL to the web page. Additionally a company can add a site link or the usernames to the other social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, in the description. The more ways is give to the customers to reach the company, the more likely it is they are going to contact them, to visit the online store or to visit the physical store. (Asad. 2014, 1-6.) For the description the user has 150 characters to create an interesting text. It should be snappy, to the point and explain what your company does and represents. (Zimmerman 2013, 184.)

Furthermore the company should make sure that is not profile is not set to private. Instagram allows making a profile private, however, for companies this is not an effective way to go. To get as many followers and engagement as possible, the privacy settings need to be turned off. (Wood, C. 2015, 98.)

The company needs to follow the community guidelines, which are laid out when signing up for an account. Adding images of new product lines, future product releases or events will enhance the presence on Instagram. It will also allow the customers to connect with the company in a visual manner rather than simply reading about what the company does from other sources. (Asad 2014,1-2.)

In terms of Instagram brand posts, for example H&M is very active on Instagram and posts a great variety of different content like; videos, pictures, campaigns etc. To illustrate the discussion above, below are screenshots taken from H&M's official account in October 2015.

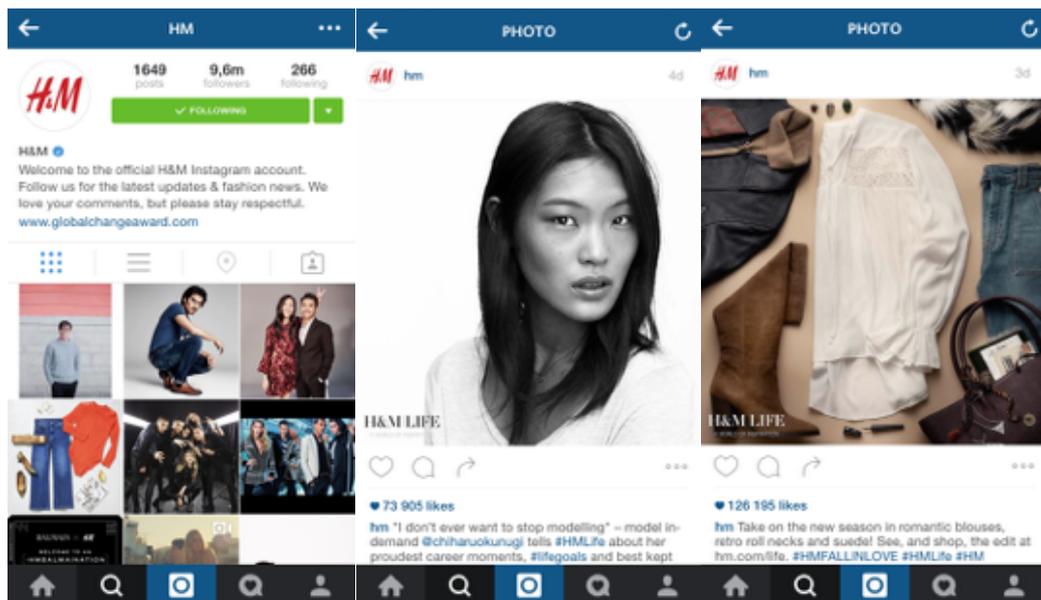


Figure 5 Screenshots from H&M Instagram account (@hm)

Even though Instagram is mainly focused on the visual the language used on the descriptions is an important tool in explaining the photos and referring them to their connections. Many brands choose to use English on Instagram. Also the language used on hastags is heavily English centred. The reasons for using English instead of native language are both to maximise visibility and to attract multilingual users. (Malin 2014.)

3.4 Anatomy of posts

The first step in creating a post on Instagram is capturing an interesting image. It is important to have quality images with great focus, as well as relevant content for your business and your brand. The best images are the once that will have some emotional connection with the viewer. (Zimmerman 2013,198-206.)

After taking the image for the post the user can increase the quality of the image with 20 filters and 4 manipulation features. These features also allow rotating the image, adding a border, adding water dew effects and changing exposure on the picture. There are also some third-party applications that can also be used to change elements of your images. Some examples will be presented in the chapter 3.7. (Zimmerman 2013, 211.)

Next step is to add a description. Description is an important part of the post. There are some elements that can help getting the most reach. Firstly, @mention “tags” the user in the post and allows them to be notified about the mention. Tagging other users is a great way of sharing the posted content. (Zimmerman 2013 p. 211.) Secondly, #hashtags are used to curate images that have the same hashtag in their descriptions. Using the correct hashtag on images can mean getting the most reach. Hashtags will be discussed more deeply in the chapter 3.4.4. A good description guides more traffic to your account. An effective way to catch attention and enhance engagement among followers is by asking questions and starting conversations. Starting a conversation can also help create a sense of community for the followers. All of these elements bring value to the Instagram account and increase traffic. (Zimmerman 2013, 223-224.)

A company can easily connect with their followers by sharing pictures that interest their customers. An image of a new product will be far more descriptive than any paragraph. People can see colour, the fabric, the texture and the details – all within few seconds. When deciding which images to add it is important to always tell a story. By adding both fun and personal photos in connection to the brand a company can make the brand stand out and to get people to connect with them on a human level. There are many to do this. The posts can be about; product lines, employees, events or other interesting phenomena. With the right mix of content about the business, the product or service and the type of clients that engage with the business the story is complete. “*The more you can connect with people and the more you can connect to those who are seeing these photos you add over time, the easier it is going to be to build your brand*” (Asad 2014, 7-11.) According to Neher (2013, 115) posting 3-5 times a week on Instagram is more than sufficient. Hence there should be a variety in content and in addition the company is expected to be proactive in liking and commenting other users content.

In terms of Instagram brand posts, for example Tiffany & Co., Starbucks and Coca Cola uses storytelling in many of their posts. The companies want to create content that anyone can relate to and the goal is to create connection between the product and the viewer’s personal life. To illustrate the discussion above, below are screenshots taken from Tiffany & Co.’s, Starbucks’ and Coca Cola’s official account in October 2015.

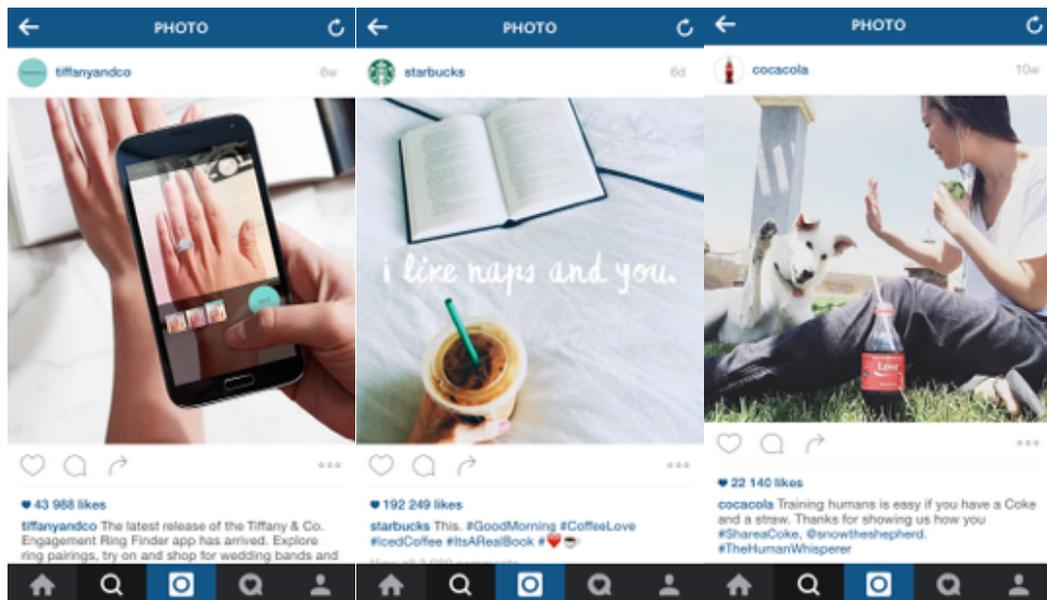


Figure 6 Screenshots from Coca Cola's, Starbucks's and Tiffany & Co.'s Instagram accounts (@tiffanyandco, @starbucks, @cocacola)

3.4.1 Instagram contests, coupons, and giveaways

By giving discounts or even by giving away something for free is a great way for the company to promote engagement on Instagram. This works in every industry and in various situations. Below is presented three very different monetization strategies for Instagram. (Miles 2014, 129.)

Contests work well on Instagram and an effective contest is a great device to generate a stream of interest and enthusiasm. There are many types of contests for the company to choose from, and the company should consider the best one to support their brand. As Instagram is mainly based on the visual content also the contests focused on images are found the most effective. (Miles 2014, 134-135.)

Another great way to enhance engagement are posting coupons on Instagram. Coupons usually include a special offer or a discount such as "20 % off today only". In addition a great form of special offer is to provide free shipping for limited time. (Miles 2014, 130, 134.)

Another way to get attention are giveaways. This tool is not used as commonly as the other two but by offering giveaways the company can easily energise prospective as well as existing customers. There are different variations of this theme and the company needs to find the best one that fits to their business. (Miles 2014, 131.)

3.4.2 Who to follow

When it comes to Instagram, it is not enough to get followers but it is important to follow others too. If someone follows you and you don't follow back, they may unfollow. Furthermore when the company is active by commenting and liking others content the followers are more incentive. The interaction with the followers gives a reason to engage with the company and visit their web page. (Wood 2015, 129, 205.)

"Explore" page on Instagram shows images currently trending on Instagram. By looking in for the page the company can easily find other interesting profiles to follow. The company should select to follow the profiles are relevant to their business and the leaders in their industry. The company can find the other companies by typing the company name into the search bar. (Zimmerman 2013, 266.)

When users start interacting with the company and like and comment on the photos, also the company should follow them back. It is easily identified who is interacting with the posts on the "news" tab. The company should learn if the users liking the photos could be valuable to their network. The company can always unfollow the other users if their content does not end up being relevant to their account. (Zimmerman 2013, 276.)

3.4.3 How to get followers and engagement

On Instagram, everybody has to start with no followers, but one can work through that quickly by adding value for existing customers. In the beginning, the time should be strategically engaged with the right prospects, not just random people. Also there are some negative catalysts that may slow down the growth. (Miles 2014, 70.)

To get followers on Instagram the easiest way to start is by leveraging the networks on other platforms. The company can do this for example by simply sharing the Instagram posts on their other social media sites and invite people to follow them on Instagram. Furthermore, the company can inform their customers through other channels like newsletter or printed advertisement that they are present on Instagram. (Zimmerman 2013, 288.)

The key characteristic of followers is that they're seeking for curate information and they often want the social attention that comes from sharing it. All the followers do not necessarily have a passionate relationship towards the brand but are looking for information, insights or other content that interests them. (Rohrs 2014, 52.)

Engagement is the key metric to provide information about the audience development. Engaged audience is active and responsive (Rohrs 2014, 77). The active audience is liking, commenting and sharing the posted content (Miles 2014, 8). Interacting with the followers and amplifying their content can increase the level of engagement. In contrast, by overwhelming them with irrelevant or unrequested messages they may as well be provoked. (Rohrs 2014, 77.) There are many ways to get more followers and more engagement. This can be done by:

Sharing interesting content. With better content that inspires the followers to like, comment and share the content the followers will be more responsive. This in turn, increases the likelihood that the followers will also view the upcoming posts. (Rohrs 2014, 77.) The same pictures should never be posted again. The content should be different every time. Also, the images should be contextually relevant to the content that they link to. (Neher 2013, 40.)

Promoting other people. A company can comment and like other users content. In addition the company can ask for permission to post a image of their own products or events taken by the other users and then giving the credit by tagging them to the post. This in return will promote their profile. (Wood 2015, 231.)

Asking questions. To get the audience commenting and participating more the post description should include an open-ended question(s). The company can for example ask questions about their products, about suggestions for improvement or for example which of the presented products they would like to have or liked the most. (Wood, C. 2015, 239, Neher 2013, 40, Rohrs, 78.)

Blending both branding and fun. It is not preferable to just post high quality look book pictures of the products. The company should also post pictures just for fun, or videos of their employees having a good time at work for example. By being a little playful and posting more about what is happening behind the scene makes the brand more relatable and easier to confront. (Wood 2015, 239, Neher 2013, 40.)

Talking to the followers directly. By listening to the feedback and actively responding to the comments left by the viewers gives the assumption that the company really cares about their customers. The customers can also ask questions about the problems they may have with a product and get a response faster than by sending an email. (Wood, C. 2015, 248, 259.)

Using good photography. As Instagram is managed with a mobile device it is difficult to get pictures with great quality. However, the quality of the images can easily be enhanced for example by using filters, shooting the photos from different angles or shooting them in better lighting. In addition, there are third-party applications available that allows the user to transfer the pictures from other devices, like a computer, to Instagram. (Wood 2015, 259.)

Using third-party apps. There are countless of apps that will help the user to enhance the Instagram experience as was mentioned on the previous paragraph. In addition to the third-party apps for making the images and videos look better there are some apps that allow you to post more conveniently, schedule your posts and some will check on current trends or provide analytics about your Instagram account. (Wood 2015, 268.)

Using Videos. Videos are getting more and more popular in social media marketing and so also on Instagram (Heinerth 2014). However, even though the Instagram videos are getting very popular also in the means of advertising, the environment is still fairly different from other video streaming (Delo 2013). Similar to another video sharing app, Vine, the videos are limited in length. Instagram allows you to share videos that are only 15 seconds long. (Wood 2015, 41, Zimmerman 2013, 82, 55.)

Learning from others. There are many successful companies marketing on Instagram. By looking at their profile and trying to learn from them can bring out new ideas. By studying what they post, how frequently they do it, and what type of hashtags they do the company can save time from doing all that work themselves. The best sources for learning are the successful companies that are similar to the company's brand. (Wood 2015, 295.)

Experimenting. Even though learning from others is a good way to get new ideas, however, not everything works for everyone. Sometimes it is worth it to try something new. The only way to really know what works well to a one brand is by experimenting different content and finding the most successful ways to communicate to the followers. (Wood 2015, 311.)

3.4.4 Best time for engagement

Since Instagram is mainly managed through mobile phones it is easy for the user to go and check their Instagram feed basically at any time of the day. Normally by using analytics the company can easily find out the right times to post content on their social media platforms. However, the posting, viewing and interaction habits on Instagram are quite different compared to other social media sites. On Instagram it is more difficult to determine a

certain time or date when the users are most active. When a business wants to find the best time to post content on their Instagram account they need to think about factors such as, the age and lifestyle of the target follower as well as the demographics and time zone differences. The adults working from 9 to 5 tend to be the most active in the morning and during lunchtime. On the other hand, the young adults usually check their phone later in the evening. According to some analytics the most popular day to post photos is on Thursday and the highest level of interaction happens on Wednesday and Sunday. Videos on the other hand should be posted after work/school hours. (Moreau 2015.) Furthermore if the company has followers all over the world the process is much more complex and posting at specific times of the day may not get the same results. The best way to find out the best time to post content is simply by experimenting the habits of the target audience. (Wood 2015, 214.)

3.4.5 How to use hashtags

Hashtags are an essential part of Instagram marketing. Similarly to Twitter, Google+ and Pinterest, also Instagram uses the hashtag system of categorization (Miles 2014, 12.) In other words, Instagram allows the user to post hashtags and make their content searchable (Wood, 2015). The images can then be search on the feed by using hashtags. By picking up a very popular hashtag with the image, it will likely be at the top of that hashtags fees for just a few seconds, but many people might still see it. In contrast by picking a less popular hashtag, it will stay on the first page of the feed for a longer period of time, but fewer people may see it. (Miles 2014, 27.)

Miles (2014, 27) states five powerful ways for business marketers to leverage the hashtag system:

1. Creating hashtags and using them creatively in the relation of the business
2. Using hashtags to research popular trends in the business niche.
3. Using hashtags to participate in conversations within the business industry or niche.
4. Identifying new prospects by using hastags.
5. Sharing images with a much broader group of people than just the followers.

Furthermore, business' can use hashtags to indicate a campaign. A business should use hastags that are relevant to their brand. (Asad 2014, 12-14, Wood, 2015, 181.) They may also make up a new hashtag especially made and that can be used when referencing to the company itself. This can be for example the company name or one made for their campaign. Miles (2014, 29) presents tips for marketers for creating and utilizing hastags:

1. the hashtag should be brief – either one word or a short phrase
2. the hashtag should be memorable and easily understood
3. the hashtag should not be open to multiple interpretations, or else it runs a risk of being used for the wrong purpose
4. the hashtag should not already be broadly used
5. the hashtag should not include another company's brand or product name
6. after the creation the hashtag will become a communication tool for anyone to use and this cannot be controlled by the creator.

When the customised hashtags are used consistently it will support the growth in brand awareness. For example, a company name should be included in every post the company makes. The followers can also reuse the hashtag to connect their post to the brand. (Asad 2014, 12-14, Wood 2015, 115, 181.)

A great way to get attention with hashtags is running a contest that has a hashtag specially made for it. With a contest the company can encourage the followers to share their photos on Instagram using company's own hashtags. Another effective way to promote the company hashtag is to promote it among employees, customers and partners. (Neher, 2013, 115-116.)

In terms of Instagram brand posts, for example Mango uses the #hashtags effectively in their campaigns. For spring 2015 they have a campaign called #SOMETHINGINCOMMON and they use the hashtag on every related post and also use it on their other marketing channels. To illustrate the discussion above, below are screenshots taken from Mango's official account in October 2015.

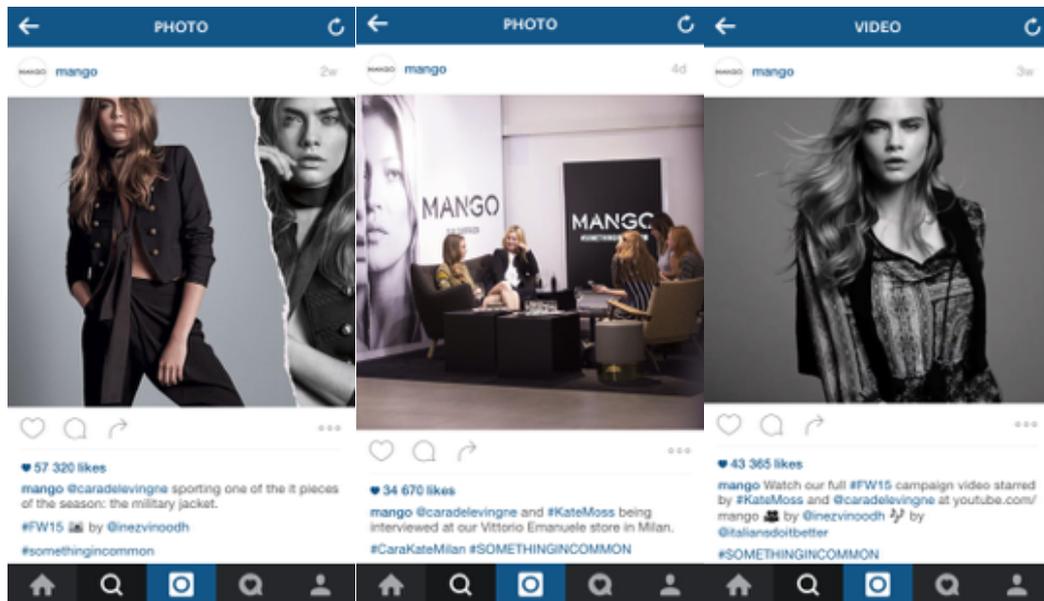


Figure 7 Screenshots from Mango’s FALL15 #SOMETHINGINCOMMON campaign on Instagram (@mango)

Instagram has its own trends and frequently used hashtags, As such; the companies should use the trendy hashtags in the posts if they are relevant to the content. While popular hashtags change, there are few that have been huge for many years, like #tbt, #instamood, #photooftheday, #follow #tagforlikes, #nofilter. Another popular hashtags are the ones that are related to your location, like country, town or building. (Wood, 2015, 167.) According to #TopHashtags 2015, the three most popular hashtags currently are #fashion, #friends and #smile.

When company uses the trendy hashtags they are likely to get more attention. More visitors are more likely to look at images that have a catchy headline and hashtags. In addition the visitors are more likely to share these with other potential followers. All of this is going to come as free publicity for the company and it is a great way for the company to engage with their followers. The more attention the company can get the more the people will see the brand and are going to learn about the company and the products. (Asad 2014, 12-14.)

In comparison, Miles (2014, 30) presents an idea that instead of simply using popular hashtags, the company may research hashtags that are commonly used in their industry and use them rather than the most commonly used hashtags in general. Miles says that it is better to attract prospective customers that are interested in that industry than random people.

In terms of Instagram brand posts, for example Perfectly Basics is posting relevant pictures of their products and also effectively using business related hastags. Even though it is a fairly small business and only based on the Internet it has been able to raise awareness and get a loyal customer base in a fast and cost-efficient way. Mainly they have done this by effective social media marketing and communication. To illustrate the discussion above, below are screenshots taken from Perfectly Basics' official account in October 2015.

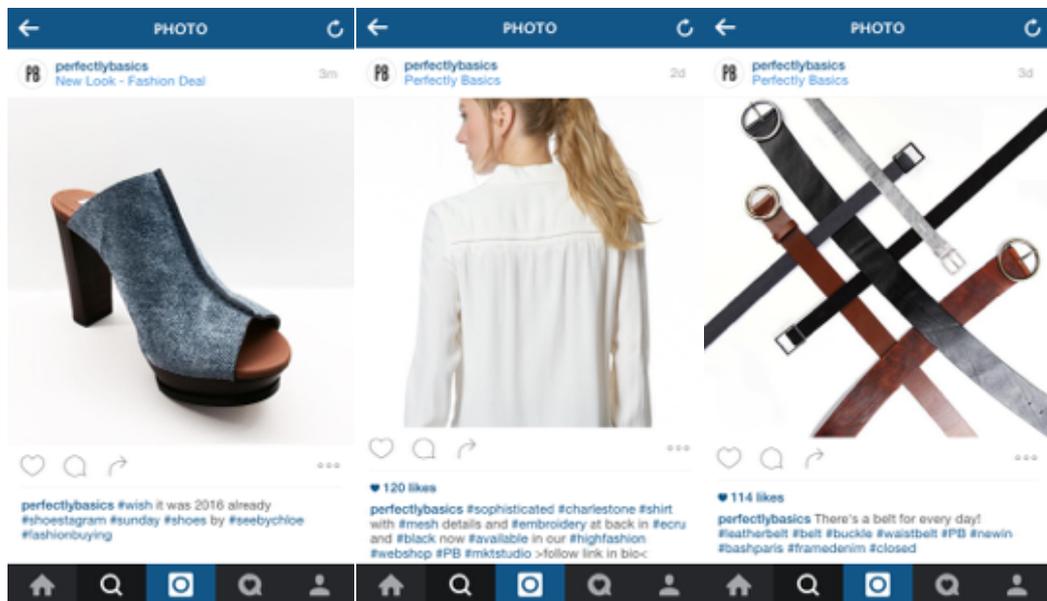


Figure 8 Screenshots from Perfectly Basics' Instagram account (@perfectlybasics)

There are also couple of things to avoid when using hastags. For example if you use hastags that are too broad or general your content will not be found among the other user's content in the search. Another thing to note is that some hastags are banned, meaning they don't show up in the search at all. And these are not always the most obvious ones either. Some to mention are #iphone, #photography, and #loseweight. It is also possible to use too many hastags. Too many hastags makes the profile look sloppy, and it ends up being distracting. Most people suggest using between 2 and 10 hastags in one post, but no more. (Wood 2015, 104, 174, Miles 2014, 35.)

3.5 Mistakes to avoid

According to Rouhiainen (2015), the biggest mistake for Instagram marketers is probably not having a clear strategy. Moreover, it is very important to understand the etiquette of Instagram and use the different features correctly in order to attract the right followers and share the right content (Zimmerman 2013, 240).

Zimmerman (2013) gives helpful tips to successful marketing on Instagram. Firstly, there should not be too much of the same content. By flooding followers feed with the same content may just annoy and overwhelm them. Secondly, to get attention on Instagram the content needs to be interesting and creative. If a company is sharing the same content as everyone else they will not be noticed. (Zimmerman 2013, 230.) Instead of using clichés the company should post something with that will make them stand out (Wood 2015, 123). Do not use too many hashtags and clutter user's feeds with an excess number of hashtags (Zimmerman 2013). Thirdly, the content should be shared in regular basis, once a week at the very least. Yet, too much content sharing is not good either. If the company posts photos of every single thing it is just making followers wanting to unfollow the account. (Wood 2015, 123, 135.)

Stealing others images and not remembering to give the credit is not good for the company image. When sharing another users content credit can be given to the creator by @mentioning them in the description of the post. Using the images from other users and reposting them can be a great way to meet other users on Instagram, however the permission for use should first be asked from the person owning the copyright to that image. (Zimmerman 2013, 249.)

Unlike in traditional marketing, in social media the customers actually does not want the companies to brand too much. The consumers on Instagram want to see what is happening behind the scenes rather than getting posts just about the brand and the products. Personalised content also makes the brand much more relatable. (Wood 2015, 142.)

3.6 Social Analytics

On Instagram the followers may like or comment on your photos, or both. If customers like the post they will tell this by commenting or linking the photo. If, on the other hand, the followers dislike the image or seem to be upset or otherwise insulted by certain images they either are not engaging or they will tell this by commenting. This will guide the company as to which type of content they should be sharing. To make sure that the visitors are getting the most out of the shared content the company needs to listen to the feedback they get. It is important to read into the likes and dislikes for the images, as well as the comments. This information is not only going to help a company to determine which type of content the visitors enjoy, but also allow them to modify it in the future. (Asad 2014, 7-11.)

The engagement happening on Instagram also starts discussions about the brand and the products. By keeping up with the comments and interaction between followers is great

way to learn about what they think about the brand and the content posted on Instagram. By analysing the outcomes the company will get the advantage to post interesting content and so to stand out from their competitors. (Asad 2014, 7-11.)

Instagram does not have its own analytics tool. Yet, there are many third party applications providing analytics for Instagram. By using analytical tools that the company can optimize their work on Instagram. The analytic tool will help the company to dial in the Instagram sharing so that they can accomplish more in less time. (Miles 2014, 201.) The analytic tools can provide the answer to the following questions (Miles 2014, 201):

1. How to increase the number of followers more quickly
2. What time of the day should the content be posted
3. What day of the week should the content be posted
4. What type of content should be posted
5. How many people are coming from Instagram to the company website
6. Which are the most effective hashtags

3.7 Useful third-party tools for Instagram

There are a lot of tools available for Instagram users to manage their posts. These tools can substantially improve the Instagram content and help to work according to the company's strategy. They can be used for example to edit the images, manage the account, an integrate Instagram into website and other social media accounts. (Miles 2014, 199.) Just to give few examples, below there are few of the popular tools presented and their main idea explained.

Iconosquare - Iconosquare gives the user the key metrics about their Instagram account. The tool gives the user information about the total number of likes received, your most liked photos ever, the average number of likes and comments per photo, the growth charts and more advantaged analytics. (Iconosquare 2015.)

Simply Measured - Simply Measured offers marketers analytics tools for social media platforms, also Instagram. It offers full reports on web, excel and power point (Simply Measured 2015).

Latergramme - Latergramme allows a user to manage and schedule their posts. This enables them to make sure that the posts receive the most engagement as possible. The tool also enables the user to add team members to collaborate on Instagram. (Latergram.)

Splitpic 2.0 – Splitpic is used to create creative pictures. It provides the user the ability to divide their camera into several sections allowing them to take some interesting shots (Google 2015).

Instasize – Instasize allows the user to edit and post entire photos and videos. It offers also professional film inspired filters, localized creative stickers and borders, perfect touch-up adjustments and unique collage frames (Apple Inc. 2015).

#TopHahtags – shows the current most popular hashtags on Instagram (#TopHashtags 2015).

InstaFollow – lets the user to see who is following them, who they follow that is not following them and who is following them but they are not following (Miles 2014, 197).

3.8 Intellectual property rights on Instagram

Intellectual property rights apply also on Instagram. Instagram is helping their users to protect their intellectual property rights. *The Instagram Terms of Use* do not allow posting content that violates someone else's intellectual property rights. This includes both copyrights and trademark. (Instagram 2015.)

Copyright protects the original works of authorship, like books, music, film and art. Generally, copyright protects original expression such as words or images. In addition trademark protects work, slogan, symbol and design that distinguishes the products or services offered. Instagram allows users to inform in case the notice that there is a violation of one of the two on the site. (Instagram 2015.)

Instagram does not claim ownership rights of any content posted through the service. Instead, the user grants a non-exclusive, fully paid and royalty-free, transferable, sub-licensable, worldwide license to use the content to Instagram. (Instagram 2015.) This means that the photos posted on Instagram is still owned by the user who posted them. When user posts a photo to Instagram they are not giving up ownership for most uses outside of Instagram, any third party should be obtaining permission from photo owner. (Harris 2015.)

3.9 Summary

After online marketing and social media marketing came along the approach has changed radically. Consumers are using more and more time on the social media sites. This means

the companies need to adapt this new way of communication as fast as possible in order to keep up with the competition.

Today, social media is definitely the key channel for reaching customers. The Internet has opened many new possibilities but also challenges for companies to market to their target audience. Hence it is important to understand how to use the social media and how the company can benefit from it as a part of their marketing strategy. The process includes planning and testing.

There are many different types of social networking sites for companies to choose the most suitable ones for their business strategy. Instagram is definitely one of the most interesting social media sites at this time. Instagram was the first site that was “born mobile” and it became a hit instantly.

Instagram is a valuable tool for marketers who want to get their brand known. Its secret lies on the fact that it is mainly based on the visual elements. The consumers can process brand messages much faster through images than through textual approaches. This does not only make Instagram very effective but also time-efficient and easy to manage.

Already more than half of the biggest brands are present on Instagram. The Instagram account should be created to support the brand and it should be easily recognised. The profile needs to have all the necessary information and also additional information that makes the profile interesting.

The actual magic on Instagram happens with the images and videos that it shared with the followers and other users. Engagement refers to the interaction that is posted on content shared on Instagram. This can be understood as likes, comments or people following the profile. All these interactions are important for the overall Instagram marketing and they are metrics that show how the company is doing their work. To provoke the level of engagement the company needs to understand the different factors that are affecting the shift. The main factors to enhance engagement are: creating great content, following other interesting users, being proactive, and using industry related hashtags. Instagram can also easily be integrated with the other social media sites that a company uses.

Social analytics helps the company to understand the results of their work. Instagram does not have its own analytic tools but there are many third-party apps available for that. The third party tools help the company to make their Instagram account function better and according to their strategy.

4 Empirical part

4.1 Target of research

This study was conducted in order for the owner of MI.NO shoes, Johanna Keltto, to improve the company's understanding of its customers' behaviour online and also to understand the significance of Instagram as a part of their social media marketing strategy.

For MI.NO shoes, social media offers an effective and cost-efficient way to market to its customers and raise brand awareness. Instagram is one of the most popular channels and as such is a great channel for MI-NO shoes to get to know and interact with its customers. It offers the company the opportunity to share creative and personal content to attract more followers.

The theoretical findings provide the foundation for the empirical analysis of the case company. Primary focus is given to the company's need to create the strategy for its Instagram account as well as tips on how to manage it and how to use it effectively in brand communication, as well as common pitfalls to avoid.

4.2 Methodology

The theoretical part is based on the concepts and theories from relevant academic and other literature. The data was collected in order to answer the four objectives and the two investigative questions of the thesis.

The methodology used in the research is case study research. This served as a suitable method considering the research topic and questions. The methodology includes three tasks; designing a case study, collecting the study's data, analysing the data, and presenting and reporting the results (Yin 2012, 3). The case study research was used for the start-up fashion retail store, MI.NO shoes. Fashion businesses have especially found Instagram marketing as a very effective marketing tool and this makes MI.NO shoes a good case candidate for this type of research.

The theoretical background has set the foundation for conducting the case study. The theories and concepts reviewed will be used to analyse the Instagram account of the case study company. The case study is of primary research and the theoretical research will be used to support the findings. Certain information and data was collected through secondary sources such as blogs, company websites and popular literature.

4.3 Research process

The research process of this thesis included the following steps:

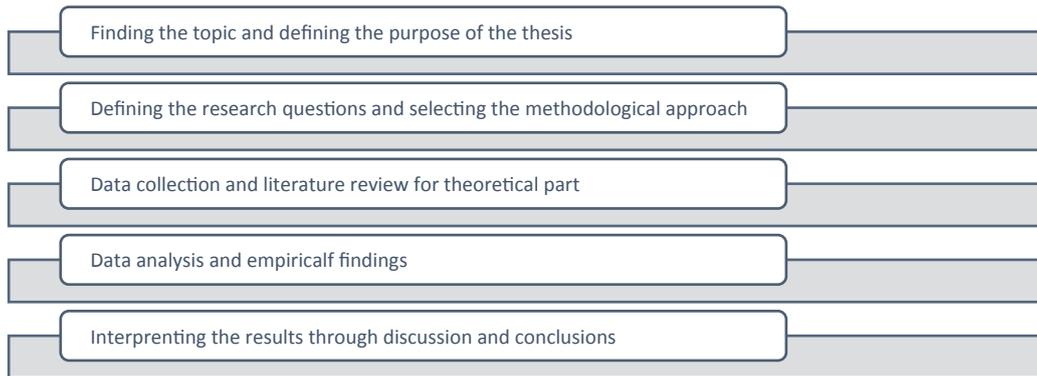


Figure 9 Research process flowchart

The research process started with finding an interesting topic to investigate. After finding the topic and a case company the purpose of the thesis was outlined. The research questions were defined according to the desired outcome. Case study was chosen as the most suitable methodological approach for the subject. The data collection and literature review was conducted to provide the information to the theoretical part. The data analysis was done on the basis of this research for the case company. Lastly, the results were interpreted through discussion and findings.

4.4 Validity and reliability

The quality of the research is typically assessed by the reliability and validity of the sources used in the data collection. Case study design needs to maximise the quality through four critical conditions related to the quality identification: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. The investigators can deal with these aspects of quality control in doing case studies with different case study tactics. (Yin 2009, 3.) Also, it is important to keep in mind the quality of the data sources during both data collection and data analysis. To ensure the reliability of the research data in this study, collecting and reviewing documentation that was relevant to the background of the thesis topic was carried out.

Secondary data sources such as books, articles and reputable blogs were used to support the empirical findings allowing for comprehensive findings in connection with the research objectives. To increase the validity, the relevant concepts of the theoretical section were reviewed during both data collection and analysis. A challenge in data analysis was the fact that the case company had recently cleared its Instagram account of some content,

meaning that there was not as much content to be reviewed as initially thought out. This hurdle was eventually overcome as the company released more content.

4.5 Current situation of MI.NO shoes Instagram account

The following chapters will analyse the current situation of MI.NO shoes' Instagram account and making further suggestions for improvement in light of the theoretical background.

As discussed in the chapter 2.1 and 2.3, today, it is very important for any company to be present on social media. Even though the traditional marketing still plays a role in the marketing world, digital marketing and social media marketing provides marketers a much more cost-efficient and timesaving option. Social media sites like Instagram have been found very effective especially for smaller companies like MI.NO shoes.

The best is to use the right mix of the different medias. The company should create a marketing strategy that also includes the social media channels it uses currently or what channels would it like to use. The company should choose the social media sites it wants to use according to the business and brand. Being present on only couple of the social media sites and doing it well is much more effective than using them all but not really having the right knowledge or time to manage them. Also the integration between sites should be done to create a link between the different sites and the contents. MI.NO shoes is currently present on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest which suits its business well as it works in the fashion industry. The company should create a solid plan and schedule to manage all the different sites but still keeping them connected.

Instagram provides MI.NO shoes not only the opportunity to communicate to its consumers but also following other brands and designer in the same industry. As discussed on the chapters 3.2 Instagram is a valuable tool for marketers who want to get their brand known. In addition, the interaction with the customers online helps the company to create loyal following, and allows for constant word-of-mouth promotion to help growing the customer base. For, MI.NO shoes it is vital to grow the customer base as fast as possible in order to compete with the other start-up companies sharing the same market. With Instagram the company can communicate with innovative and inspirational images and videos rather. It is much faster to get the brand message across by using the visual elements of Instagram than through textual approaches.

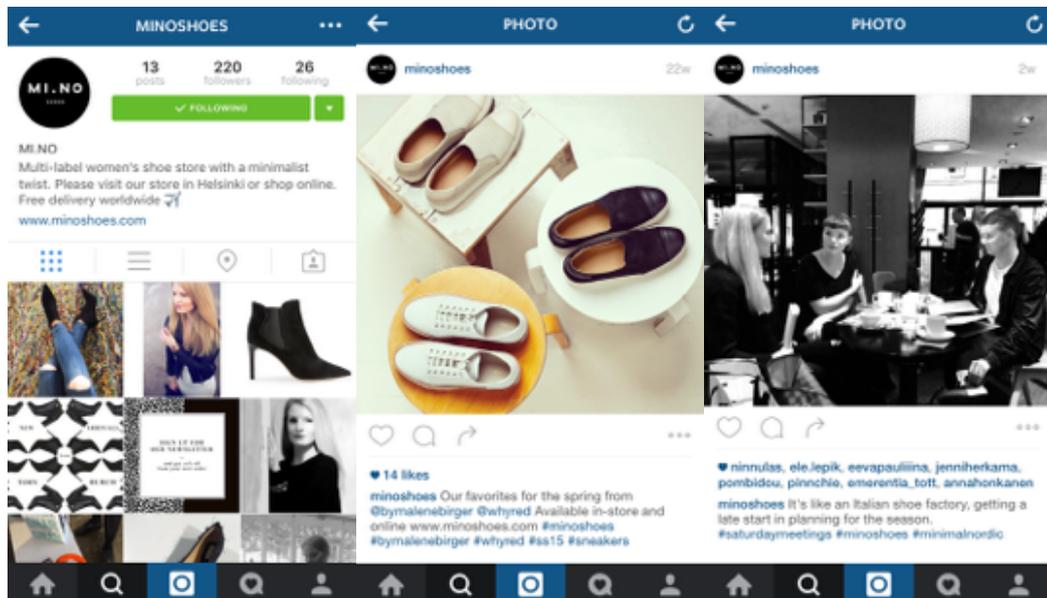


Figure 10 Screenshots from MI.NO shoes Instagram account in October 2015 (@minoshoes)

In reflection to the chapter 3.3 MI.NO shoes Instagram account’s profile is informative and clear. The company has its logo as a profile picture, which makes it easy for the customers to recognise the brand. The description includes the company brand name as well as simple sentence of what it does. The description also includes an offer “free delivery worldwide”- to catch ones attention. There is also the link to MI.NO shoes website so that the viewer can visit their online store and find their products on sale with just one click.

The company’s Instagram account does not seem to have very many followers compared to how long it has been present on Instagram. Also the number of users it is following could be increased. By following interesting users and being more active also on its behalf it is more likely to attract new followers to the account. To conclude, MI.NO shoes has created an attractive Instagram account but there is room for improvement. This analysis will provide the company the knowledge it needs to understand how to improve in order to become successful marketer on Instagram.

4.5.1 Content

In the chapter 3.4 there are presented the subjects related to the content on Instagram. It is important for a marketers to create interesting and powerful content on Instagram to boost the level of engagement. The content can be about products, employees, events etc. In addition, special offers, contest and giveaways are a great way to create content that gets a lot of attention.

MI.NO shoes has shared only few pictures after their “makeover”. The company cleared out the previous posts and started fresh with new content. The company is now sharing content about their products, employees, people and events. There has also been one post offering a discount for their web store.

The pictures are good quality but also personalized. Especially, the product pictures support the high quality and high-end product kind of image also the brand is all about. In contrast, the pictures of the employees and events is creating the more friendly-kind-of feeling and making also the brand more relatable for the viewers. These types of pictures let the viewer to know that there is a person behind the brand and that often makes the other users more willing to comment and engage with the brand.

The descriptions in the pictures are relevant and inspirational. Also, in general, the hashtags are used effectively and there are not too many of them. According to the suggestions on chapter 3.4.4 the suggested number of hastags are between 2 and 10. The hashtags will be discussed more in the chapter 4.3.4.

According to the chapter 3.4 posting 3-5 times a week on Instagram is more than sufficient. Moreover, being active on Instagram does not mean the company needs to spend hours every day to plan their post. As presented in the chapter 2.2.1 the content for social media sites can easily be planned beforehand. The company can for example plan the content for the Instagram account in one day for the whole week or even the whole month. This way it does not have to spend too much time for it but it seems that they are actively involved. Here, the third party tools like Latergramme become handy as the content can be scheduled beforehand.

Here is an example of a monthly content calendar for Instagram made according to the theoretical research about content planning and scheduling:

Monthly Content Calendar - December							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 48	Instagram Contest		Christmas feeling picture from the store		Special offer for Christmas shoppers		Happy Independence Day - post
Week 49		Christmas present ideas		Product picture		Inspirational picture	

Week 50	Campaign picture		Free delivery-post		Picture from the company Christmas event		Product picture/Present ideas
Week 51		Picture from the store		Merry Christmas-post		Inspirational picture	
Week 52		Post about the upcoming season		Happy New Year-post		New products	

Figure 11 Example of a monthly content calendar for Instagram

The content calendar should consist of a balanced mix of promotional, owned and curated content. Taking into account the seasonal events provides ideas for campaigns and other content. In relation to the content calendar the company should also find the best time for engagement. Chapter 3.4.1 presents some suggestions for the best time to post the content based on analytics. In connection to the company’s target audience the best time to post the content would probably be either in the morning or during lunchtime. However, the best way to find the best time(s) for the company to connect with their followers can be done simply by experimenting.

4.5.2 Engagement

The following chapter will analyse engagement, tagging, hashtags, integration with other social media site as well as the possibility of videos more detailed and point out the things the company is doing well but also discussing the parts where there is room for improvement. In addition the chapter will provide suggestions how to manage the different factors even better. The analysis is based on the theoretical framework in chapter 3.4 and its subchapters.

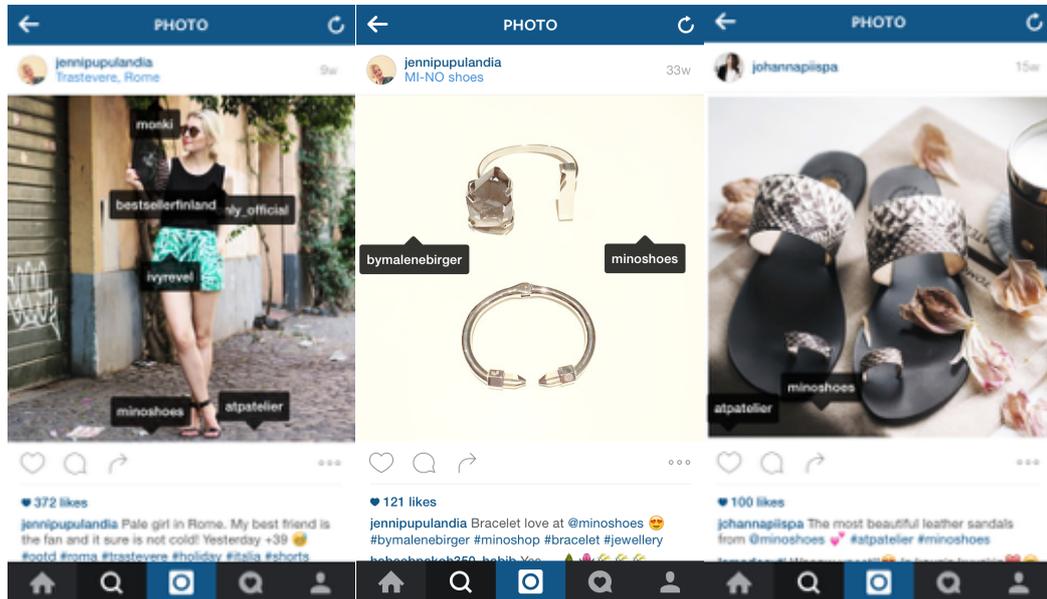


Figure 12 Screenshots from photos of MI-NO shoes posted by the other users on Instagram (@minoshoes)

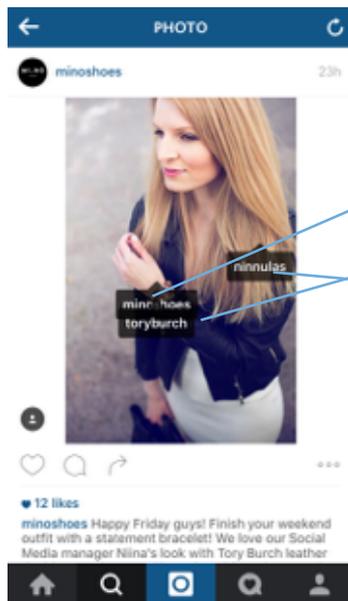
The engagement is a critical metric to provide information of how successful the company is on Instagram. There are many ways that the level of engagement can be improved, like sharing interesting content, promoting other people, asking questions, including both branding and fun, talking to the followers directly, using quality images, using third-party apps and analysing the outcomes and finding the content that is the most successful for bringing in engagement. MI.NO shoes account has yet gained about 200 followers, no naturally the engagement is still very little. However, what the company, in my opinion, has been very successful in is that it gets many tags on other users pictures. The other users like bloggers and customers are sharing the images of the products and tagging them to their pictures. They also most often mention the username @minoshoes on their description that will guide the viewer to access the company's own account as well. The tagging will be discussed more in chapter 4.3.3.

People seem to quite actively like the content (in comparison to the number of followers) but they are not leaving many comments. Maybe the company is not active themselves or the viewer does not feel comfortable enough to leave a comment. The company should encourage the viewers to leave comments by commenting themselves and being social active. It is very important that the consumers on Instagram see that there is a person behind the brand. This makes them much more comfortable to engage with the brand.

The engagement does not only important in the company point of view but also for the consumers. Many use Instagram to learn about the company's products and the experi-

ences of the previous customers about the brand at their product. More engagement often tells that the brand is trustworthy and shows that it has a loyal customer base.

4.5.3 Tagging



- Brand (@minoshoes)
- Designer (@toryburch)
- Model (@ninnulas)

Figure 13: Screenshot from @minoshoes Instagram account: tagging

Tagging other users on the photos is not only useful for marking the brand and people but it shows that the company care about the other users too. Being social on Instagram is very important for a company. As the theoretical framework shows, being a company and being an individual on Instagram is not so different from one another. Tagging other users to pictures also make the content more informative as it pinpoints the objects and tells the viewer what they are or who are they from. Similarly the other users may tag @minoshoes to their pictures of their products or events.

4.5.4 Hashtags

In chapter 3.4.4 of the theoretical framework questions like: What is a hashtag? How to use them to make the content searchable? How can one make own hashtags?, are reviewed. Hashtags really play an important role on Instagram. When the company finds the right hashtags to use it can really enhance the number of visitors to its Instagram profile. The hashtags can be about the brand, location, product, quote, event, designer etc. as mentioned before the

In general, MI.NO shoes has found suitable hashtags to use in its posts as well as it is using its own brand hashtag. Below there are two posts selected from @minoshoes pro-

file. The use of hashtags as well as the relativity to their business is analysed. In addition there are presented suggestions and tips for future improvement.

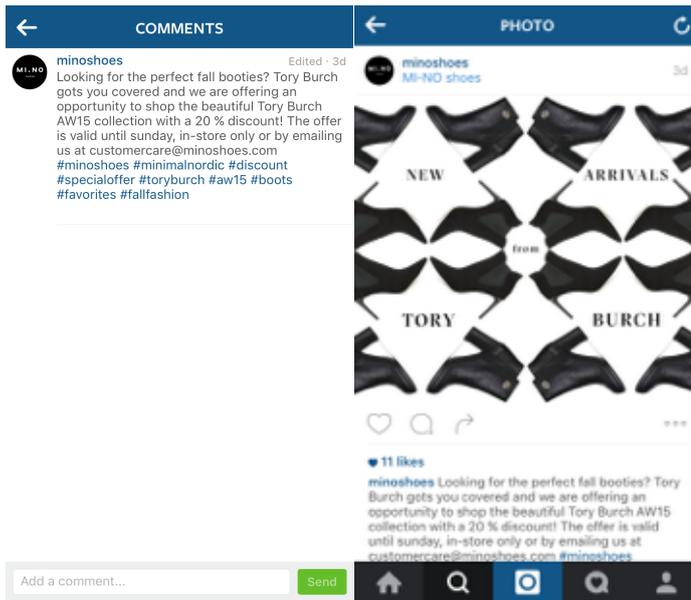


Figure 14 Screenshots from @minoshoes Instagram account: hashtags 1

Hashtags used in the post are #minoshoes #minimalnordic #discount #specialoffer #tory-burch #aw15 #boots #favorites #fallfashion. There is a hashtag for example of the brand, purpose, designer, season, campaign, product and other related hashtags. The hashtags are used effectively and the number of them does not exceed the suggested maximum number of 10. Hence there is a great possibility for both that more people visit the profile and that the right type of visitors will find it.

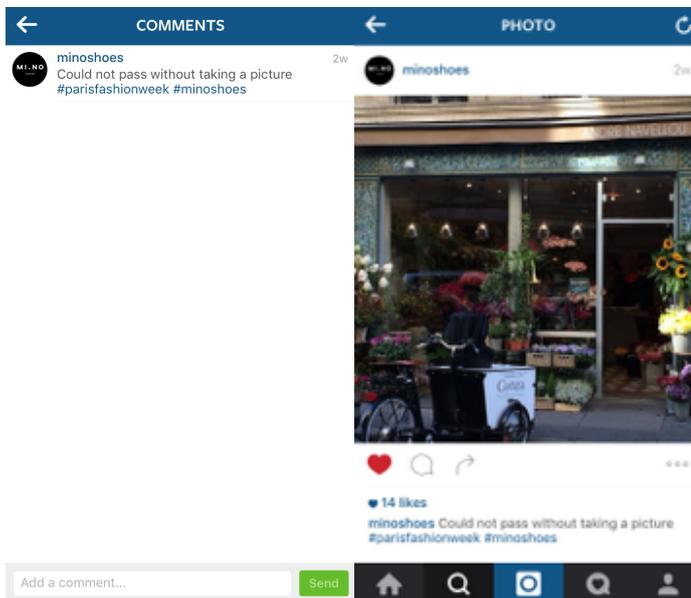


Figure 15 Screenshots from @minoshoes Instagram account: hashtags 2

Hashtags used in the picture are #parisfashionweek and #minoshoes. In this picture the company is using only the minimum number of hashtags. Even though, it is more of a situational picture it does not mean this could not attract people to visit the profile. With creative use of hashtags even in this type of content the hashtags can result more visitors to the profile. Moreover, when visiting one picture the visitors often visit the other content from the same user as well.

Sometimes it might be difficult to come up with the hashtags, especially good ones. One good tip is to split the already taken hashtags, like in this case in addition to #parisfashionweek the user could use hashtags like #paris and #fashion. Also, as it is a situational picture the hashtags could relate to that moment, like in this case #flowershop #flowers #spring. However, the majority of the hashtags should have a strong connection to the business.

4.5.5 Integration with other channels



Figure 16 Screenshot from @minoshoes Instagram account: integration with other channels

As stated in the theoretical framework, the integration with other marketing channels is very important. On Instagram it is easy to share content that will attract the followers to visit and to join the other marketing channels as well. In the picture above, the company is trying to get people to sign up for its newsletter. To attract the visitors they offer a voucher as a gift for signing up. Also, there are some Integration between Instagram and Facebook. The company could also try sharing some picture straight from their Instagram account. Also, there is not so much Integration between Pinterest and the other platforms.

The company could use some creative tools to make a connection to Pinterest. When the different social media sites are linked together also the communications towards the customers is much more effective. It also creates consistency when the content is similar to between all the company's social media sites.

4.5.6 Videos

Videos are fairly new on Instagram and the marketers are just learning how to use them effectively. As it is stated on the chapter 3.4.3 videos are getting more and more popular in social media marketing and also on Instagram. MI.NO shoes has not yet used any videos on their Instagram. As video marketing is growing its popularity especially in fashion world; also MI-NO shoes' should start posting this type of content. Instagram offers a great way to get started because of the short length of the videos. Instagram allows users to post videos that are 15seconds long. To get started, the company could analyse other successful brands and learn what type of videos they are posting. Like for example @hm, @zara and @topshop posts popular videos on their Instagram accounts. Here are few examples from which MI.NO shoes could get some inspiration to produce their own Instagram videos:

Product picture with movement by @hm: https://instagram.com/p/85_l0ugUX3/?taken-by=hm.

Slideshow by @hm: https://instagram.com/p/8di6rZgUa_/?taken-by=hm.

Only the background or parts of it is moving by @hm:
<https://instagram.com/p/7c5AQbAUW7/?taken-by=hm>.

Adding music by @topshop: https://instagram.com/p/8s_0OlhSuQ/?taken-by=topshop.

Behind the scenes by @topshop: <https://instagram.com/p/8AZdJOhSjW/?taken-by=topshop>.

Integration with other social media platforms (Blog&Pinterest) by @topshop:
<https://instagram.com/p/7ngz7mhSih/?taken-by=topshop> &
<https://instagram.com/p/7sqiDyhSqD/?taken-by=topshop>.

"Key pieces" by @zara: https://instagram.com/p/8TKDbrC_el/?taken-by=zara.

Campaign videos by @zara: https://instagram.com/p/6XOJq7i_TP/?taken-by=zara.

Chapter 3.8 discussed the problem with intellectual copyrights on Instagram. Similarly to picture copyrights the same rules also apply to videos. It is important to remember the copyright restrictions before posting the video and for example adding music to. Many would probably not think a 15 second long clip of their video or music as an infringement of copyright, but to avoid any risks the permission of use should always be asked or bought.

4.6 Summary

It seems that the company has already done many things right on Instagram. The company has a good and informative profile page that will lead the visitor to their website. The brand is easy to identify as it uses a logo as the profile picture and also states its mission below. This way the visitor will within no time learn what the company is all about.

In general, the content is good and as is the use of hashtags, tags and descriptions. However, the number of the followers as well as the engagement should be increased. In order to do this, there are some suggestions for improvement. The company should build a plan for all their social media platforms, including Instagram. This helps them find the time to be more active but also by not using too much time to do so. If the company does not have enough time to post new current content everyday they could use a scheduling plan. Also, being active does not only mean posting content everyday but also the company should actively socialise on Instagram. Responding to the comments, liking others pictures as well as finding the right users to follow is as important.

The company has already used different types of content but they could still be even more creative and try something new. Especially for many other companies in the fashion industry the 15-second long videos have been found very effective tools for marketing on Instagram.

Lastly, it is important to create a connection between the other social media sites. The company has already some content that encourages the viewer to visit other social media platform(s), however they could do more on this front. Also by taking pictures of press releases or ads in magazines creates a link between the social media and the traditional channels as well.

5 Discussion

The discussion presents the results of the thesis. The discussion offers conclusions on the basis of the results and presents development ideas and suggestions for further research.

Social media is definitely an important tool for marketers today. It has created a totally new way for them to reach their customers, which has brought some difficulties with it. Instagram is a good example of this because user behaviour is not very different whether you are acting as a company or an individual.

MI.NO shoes is a fashion start-up company that has already used social media quite efficiently in its digital marketing strategy and also in supporting it's the other marketing tools. On Instagram the company has been present for sometime already but they are still looking for the right approach.

Generally the company is doing well and you can see they are constantly looking for new creative ways to market on Instagram. However, there is still a lot of room for improvement and more importantly the company needs to come up with a clear and solid strategy for Instagram. This would make the content more consistent and effective. But then again this is why they presumably wanted to clear the content from their profile a few months ago and start from scratch.

The empirical part analysed the current situation and the content the company is currently posting. It seems that the company is on the right track and actually a lot of the time using very good content. There are, however, many small things that could be done even better. The biggest issue is that the profile has not yet attained proper engagement and still has a small number of followers. This is actually the main goal and with those little improvements the company might be able to gain a lot more attention.

According to the analysis the main points for improvement for @minoshoes are:

- Being more active; responding, being present and rewarding their loyal followers
- Following more of others; both individuals and other brands
- Commenting and liking other users photos
- Posting content more often
- Using a greater variety of content
- Using hashtags more effectively
- Start posting videos

- Creating more integration with the other channels

With Instagram MI.NO shoes can communicate to their customers and raise their brand awareness effectively. If the company will keep on learning and activate more socially it will be extremely beneficial for the company. Also, the fashion industry loves Instagram and its visual approach. There are many companies coming up with new ideas to market and communicate. Social media is something where learning from others is not actually so bad but is actually worthwhile and will save a lot of resources and time.

The company should build a strategy and start testing it. Even though there are many good tips for communicating on Instagram only by testing can the company know what really works for itself. This requires time and analysis. The company could utilize some third-party tool, like Iconosquare, for the Instagram analytics to learn the best ways to get engagement and the most popular content. With the use of analytic tools it is also easy to learn the best time for posting, most popular hashtags and also who are its followers and where they come from. It is important to know all this in order to produce the best content the company can. Only by understanding their audience and knowing what they want, can the company use Instagram effectively.

When acting on social media there are also some ethical and legal viewpoints that should be considered. Even though the limitations of using pictures are fairly minimal, it does not mean that using other people's pictures without asking them or giving them the credit they deserve makes the company look good. By tagging people to photos or sharing the information about who originally took the pictures is only fair and in the worst case the company avoids any possible copyright violations. Another thing that should be considered is when the company is posting photos taken at stores, events or other public places it is polite to inform the people in the photos that they are posted on the company's social media site. If it seems a lot of work one can also make a note that tells the people entering the place that there are pictures taken to the purpose of posting them on the social media sites. This is not necessary, however, acting ethically and thinking about others makes the company more likable among the customers.

The thesis process went well. Thus, some of the assumptions made in the beginning were changed during the data collection. In the beginning it was a little difficult to find valid sources for the data collection since the topic still has fairly little research done on it. Eventually as the right portals were used the available sources were easier to find. Also as the process went further the sources and the new knowledge raised new ideas to improve the structure of the thesis. The findings deepened the knowledge about the subject

of social media marketing and about Instagram in specific. Moreover it raised new questions and ideas for further studies. The findings will most certainly come in handy in both personal and business use of Instagram. The gained knowledge can also be shared to guide others and adapted to other Instagram accounts.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Main Findings

For any company, Instagram can be found very useful when used right. At first, it might seem simple and easy to use but in fact it needs a well-planned and solid strategy to work for the benefit of the company. In addition Instagram provides room for creativity and innovation for marketers to create interesting and personalised content.

As Instagram is predominantly based on communication through visual elements like images and videos it creates a totally new way for marketers to communicate to customers. On Instagram also the approach is much more relaxed and the communication between the customer and the company is done on more friendly basis.

The most critical metric to measure on the success of Instagram is the level of engagement. Engagement can be understood as the liking, commenting and following by the other users. To enhance engagement the company should not only understand the environment on Instagram but also learn what are the most effective ways to communicate to their followers.

Another thing that makes Instagram stand out from other marketing channels is that the involvement goes both ways; the users that follow the company expect the company to follow them back, as well as like and comment their content.

According to the findings the main characteristics for successful Instagram marketing are:

- Be active; comment, like and share other user's content
- Follow selected users; both individuals and other brands
- Using interesting and personalised content
- Posting content at least once a day
- High variety of content
- Use Instagram videos
- Using brand related hashtags
- Creating integration between the other social media channels

When a company has successfully adapted Instagram as a part of their social media plan and learned how to use it in the most efficient way, the company can get a competitive advantage towards the other brands. Marketing on Instagram can both increase the company sales and raise brand awareness rapidly.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

Instagram marketing as well as social media marketing is still at its early stages of development and is constantly evolving. Businesses have started to increasingly put importance on social media marketing. Yet, very little research has been conducted on Instagram marketing for business purposes. In terms of the future there is no doubt that having a successful and strong social media marketing strategy will get tougher. The new players and digital development forces companies to be more innovative than ever at both a human and technical level. This means that the most creative marketers that are producing new and innovative content will be getting tons of attention.

Furthermore an interesting aspect for further research is the copyright violations on Instagram and also on the other social media sites. According to the research there is still a lot of misunderstanding and confusion among this subject. Hence this would be both interesting and important to investigate more deeply and the findings would be extremely valuable for companies that want to avoid any risks for misuse or copyright violation.

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