

Brand building on Instagram – case Space Nation

Anni Vaara



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| Author Anni Vaara | |
| Degree programme GLOBBA International Business | |
| Report/thesis title Brand building on Instagram – case Space Nation | Number of pages and appendix pages 41 |
| <p>Space Nation is a Finnish space experience company built for entertainment and educational purposes. The product presented in this thesis is Space Nation's Instagram. The main purpose was to create brand awareness for the company on Instagram and create an online business card representing the company's brand image. Other (ongoing) goals were to gather target audience followers using Instagram platform specific ways. The product was executed together with the marketing team at Space Nation and in close cooperation with Katja Presnal, the Marketing Head of Products at Space Nation.</p> <p>The theoretical framework consists of branding and branding on Instagram. Benchmarking chapter includes successful Instagram brands and explains how their information was used for the benefit of Space Nation. This thesis will exclude other social media channels completely. The research methods used in this thesis were desk top study related to Instagram today and its effects on branding as well as benchmarking successful Instagram brands.</p> <p>This thesis will present the process that lead to the final product, which is Space Nation's Instagram. The product's results will be examined in a small scale as the execution took place during a ten-week period of time, therefore lacking the needed validity to verify whether or not it was a success.</p> <p>The results from benchmarking were used for the benefit of Space Nation. The visuals and the context from other companies were taken into use. The result was that the Instagram platform is a constantly changing product which requires attention and preview of the strategy every now and then. The visual image on Instagram should be clear, photos good quality and Space Nation should be able to provide value for its followers at all times. Engaging in the community in all platform specific ways are a key element in the success on Instagram. In the future, the value creation and engagement will remain as the main goals.</p> | |
| Keywords Brand, branding, brand strategy, brand identity, brand building, benchmarking, Instagram | |

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1 Introduction

This thesis represents the beginning point and the continuing work of Instagram brand building for the case company Space Nation. This thesis has been executed by making an Instagram strategy based on the company's existing brand image. The strategy includes benchmarking successful Instagram brands and explains how this information was transformed into actions for Space Nation.

1.1 Background

Instagram is seen as the business card of 2018. Fewer western companies use traditional business cards made from paper or cardboard itself and even more have begun using Instagram as their official business card. Most, though not all, have done this intentionally. Even if the business, company or organization itself is not aware, their company identity and brand image is being monitored through a square sized business card by people across the globe.

New and upcoming businesses have found the potential of Instagram more than ever. The brands with traditional products such as clothing or accessories, have realized the value of Instagram as a free marketing tool. There are many Instagram successful references available from companies all shapes and sizes for the traditional product brands such as Nike sportswear, BMW, Beluga vodka, Fossil and Letterfolk. But what about the non-traditional product brands?

For non-traditional product and service companies like Google, Redbull, Charity: water, Swiss International Airlines and Space Nation the approach to Instagram must be planned carefully as the products within the company vary across tangible to intangible ones. If the company has more than one product or service to offer, which is often the case, the company has to decide on the approach on Instagram. This can mean anything from the employer perspective to user perspective or a product based account. This thesis takes Space Nation's brand building specifically on Instagram into deeper analysis and tries to solve the challenge of creating a brand image on Instagram for a company which has not revealed all of its products. Nevertheless, the brand image on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, has to be set before the company expands into the market according to strategy.

1.2 Product objective

This thesis aims to provide insight on how a modern-day company, specifically a start-up, can build brand awareness through Instagram. It will open up methods of large to small size companies and go in depth of how Space Nation brand on Instagram was built. The product objective is:

To strengthen Space Nation's brand image through Instagram.

The project tasks are as follows:

PT1 Designing the theoretical framework

PT2 Creating the Instagram branding strategy

PT3 Benchmarking other organizations

PT4 Execution of Instagram strategy

Table 1. Illustration of the theoretical framework

| Project Task (PTs) | Theoretical Framework | Project Management Methods | Outcomes |
|---|---|--|---|
| PT 1: Designing the theoretical framework | Instagram, branding and branding in Instagram | Desktop study of selected literature and online sources | Theoretical framework |
| PT 2: Creating the Instagram branding strategy | Brand and branding strategy in Instagram | Desktop study | Executing the strategy |
| PT 3: Benchmarking organizations on their vision of brand identity on Instagram | Competitor analysis and benchmarking | Gathering and analyzing the methods used by other brands | Guidelines for Instagram strategy |
| PT 4: Execution of Instagram strategy | Benchmarking | Photoshoots, photo gathering, writing captions and hashtags, analyzing, customer relationships, feedback | Basis for review of how customers see brand image |

1.3 Project scope

The project scope includes branding, Instagram branding, strategy building on Instagram and benchmarking successful Instagram brands. The project scope will exclude the examination of the results and gathering of data and feedback as the work on brand building on Instagram for Space Nation will continue after this thesis and ten weeks is not enough to base final decisions on whether or not the work was a success. Other social media marketing channels, brand image and brand building in other channels such as the Space Nation's web page will also be excluded from the project scope.

1.4 International aspect

Although Space Nation is a Finnish company its target audience is situated abroad, mostly in the U.S. Therefore, the Instagram actions made throughout the process have been considered through an international lens. All decisions have been based on the goal of reaching the target audience and examining their ways in the platform. The communication language during the process has been English throughout as the common language in the company and their channels is English. Multiple international partners and influencers on Instagram from all over the world were contacted during the execution of the product as well as the company's own international workforce. The companies with successful Instagram brand images that were benchmarked for the product and this thesis were international.

1.5 Benefits

Space Nation will benefit from the research conducted on benchmarking and the product which has been executed based on the research. This thesis aims to guide Space Nation on their decisions to make adjustments on how to proceed with their Instagram strategy in the future and to examine the results up to this point. What the author hopes to find is that the product itself will have reached its goal in strengthening Space Nation's brand image and that it has created an online business card which reflects the company's own perception of their brand. The product and the processes involved can also be used by other business' as a benchmarking tool and will hopefully be useful for start-ups researching for a strategy on Instagram.

The author will gain from this thesis is the knowledge of branding and Instagram marketing for a start-up. This thesis provides an opportunity to learn from colleagues who have worked in the industry for a much longer time than the author has. The author will learn

about analyzing her own work and about finding improvement opportunities and adjusting her work.

1.6 Key concepts

Brand is immaterial. It is the combination of the images and facts that consumers have about a company. Brand can add monetary value to a company due to its power in building loyalty and long-term relationships with its target group. (Ahto, Kahri, Kahri & Mäkinen (2016, 37.)

Branding is the activity that leads to an image of a product being formed in a consumers mind (Business Dictionary 2017a).

Brand strategy is something an organization needs to reach its long-term goals (Gunelius 2013).

Brand identity holds within the company's own perception of itself. It can include the visual image of a company for e.g. the logo. (McIntyre, Melewar & Dennis 2016, 5.)

Brand building consists of structured work within the company towards achieving the target image (Ahto & al. 2016, 37).

Benchmarking is a method of examining and analyzing other organization procedures for own benefit (Business Dictionary 2017b).

Instagram is a visual community-like social media platform (Moreau 2017).

1.7 Case company

Space Nation is a Finnish space media and space experiences company founded in 2013. Although it was founded a few years back, it is considered a start-up due to the radical changes in funding and employment rate within the past year. Space Nation has employees all over the world, therefore making it a multinational company. The brand itself has gained publicity during the past year with their successful crowdfunding round and celebrity ambassadors such as Peter Vesterbacka (former CEO of Rovio) and Saku Koivu (Finnish ice hockey player for the Anaheim Ducks). Space Nation also got Allison Johnson

(the former Head of Marketing for Apple) to climb aboard the success and formed a collaboration with NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

Up to this point, Space Nation's products have not created revenue. Their products include the Space Nation space seeds, that have been transported to the International Space Station (ISS) and back to Earth to be planted in schools across Finland. This project aimed to gather scientific data on growing plants in space. Another product available is the online magazine Space Nation Orbit, with articles and blogs on space and lifestyle related themes written by authors outside the company and Space Nation employees.

The next and biggest step for Space Nation will be the launch of the Astronaut Training Program app in February 2018. This app has been developed to mimic the training of real astronauts the best way possible, including body, mind and social aspects needed on space travels. Anyone with an Android or iOS phone will be able to download the free app and complete trainings and missions. These missions have been developed together with current astronauts in Houston and other Space Nation partners. During a 12-week-period, the app players will collect points and compete for the qualification to an astronaut training boot camp, which will be organized for the top players by Space Nation and its partners. Together with its partners, Space Nation is planning to produce a TV-series based on the boot camp.

Space Nation is considered a start-up and has gathered itself a fresh marketing team to support the lift-off of the app. There have been many marketing related tasks to complete and not all marketing channels have had the attention they could have required. All social media channels, including Instagram, have been running constantly, although lacking a unified and clear structure. The Instagram strategy was started, but it had not yet been executed according to plan. The company saw a clear need for improvement and focus on the platform to bring out a clear brand image visible to the consumers.

2 Brand, branding and Instagram

This chapter focuses on the theory of branding in general and the correlation of branding on the multidimensional Instagram platform. The relationship of modern day business branding through Instagram will be explained in more detail and it will be compared to the theory on branding in general.

2.1 Brand

Brand is important due to several facts:

- A good brand is the key to higher prices.
- It works as a shield during bad times.
- Cuts costs.
- Enables recruiting best workforce. (Ahto & al. 2016, 49.)

A good brand is the key to set higher prices and compete in the market. When the consumer feels that they have gained something valuable from purchasing the product, they will want to pay more. By establishing a good brand, when times get rough, the brand will protect the company against some of the harm that will be thrown its way. Cutting costs refers to how a good brand attracts better partners in all business fields and how the brand will almost automatically be given better sales positions for e.g. in supermarket shelves and therefore create more profits with less effort. Best brands also draw best workforce. These brands are the ones, people will return to and will look for jobs later in the future. One remarkable cost saving aspect in attracting work force naturally is having dedicated and committed employees who in return will have less sick leaves. (Ahto & al. 2016, 49-55.)

Certain aspects make a brand stronger than others. These aspects include for instance the relevancy of the original idea that has been created. It is important to not only have a different feature, but to own your personal brand idea. The idea needs to be relevant and consumers need to see it as a necessity in their future. (Adamson 2013, 22.)

A brand can start investigating its identity by asking itself the questions who and why. It can be from company's heritage or the leader who has formed the identity of the brand. An example of this is Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook. This investigation also consists looking deeper in the core of the company, to be more specific, in the employees and how they perceive the company and its actions within. This can be done by asking questions and getting to know people on a deeper level. The people within the brand will help to

identify the brand. Another important aspect for the company is to search for its purpose in creating whatever it is creating. Rather than answering the question what, companies should start with the question why. Next step for the brand is to benchmark what is going on in the market, meaning investigating what others are doing and how can the brand become better than the competition at what they are doing. The final step is to be authentic and to bring forth the competitive advantage in whatever the subject is. (Adamson 2013, 52.)

A well-known brand is a safe way to introduce new products and services to the consumers as the consumers feel protected by the brand. It can also be a factor in encouraging and motivating partners to work more efficiently and give their best in cooperation as they want to be a part of the success of the brand (McIntyre, Melewar & Dennis 2016, 5).

2.2 Branding

Branding is a combination of brand building and brand image. The word branding can be assimilated to creating an illusion of an image of a company to a consumer's mind. The image that the consumer has is called brand and this image is always the truth, as every person has the right to create their own image of a brand into their head. (Ahto & al. 2016, 43.) Brand is the perception including the visual image, the feeling, the scent and the sounds the customer relates the company to. It is often uncontrollable by the company itself and whether or not the company recognizes it, brand image will be formed. Brand can even be fighting against its own company policy. (Ahto & al. 2016, 37.)

This is what makes branding, the process of creating the brand important. Even if a company cannot see the need for branding, it is important as the brand image will be created. This image will guide the future of the company and the profitability in the long run and it is because all purchase decisions are made based on the brand. (Ahto & al. 2016, 37.) The company has the power to plan a target image, the way it would like its brand to be viewed by others. This target image is what branding aims to achieve. There are many examples of how valuable branding can be. Some examples are Facebook buying WhatsApp for 19 billion dollars, Google buying YouTube for 1,65 billion or Facebook buying Instagram for 1 billion. These purchases were not made due to a lack of money- there was something more. The brand image was built and the big buyers knew they should not compete with the brands but rather get in on the success. (Ahto & al. 2016, 36.)

A good brand can rise the value of a company. It is also possible to calculate the value of a brand by measuring the effectiveness of work completed at a company. (Ahto & al.

2016, 37.) As stated by Adamson (2013, 4), branding includes all of the actions signaling outside from the company. Companies that understand this and work according to the principle have an advantage as they can set the course for creating the experience for the consumer. Logos, videos, social media, customer service and the product itself are all a part of branding. (Adamson 2013, 4.) McIntyre & al. (2016, 8.) suggests that design of a product or logo is in close linkage to having an emotional attachment to a brand.

Understanding the use of branding is not enough for any brand. In addition, a brand needs to be aware of the recommendations brands face today. A brand needs to have extra energy and personality, and it needs to establish a brand persona. Being fair and honest is not enough, as the competition is fierce. A brand should have a unique persona to bring into the market. It can almost be compared to a human, as it needs to have aspects that consumers can closely relate to. A brand cannot hide behind corporation walls, as all information is accessible online, which makes transparency count. (Adamson 2013, 9-11.)

An important aspect Adamson (2013, 11) brings up, is the relationship between people which can be mirrored into the relationship between a brand and its consumer. These relationships, just like any relationships, are built on common interest and trust. If a brand has been able to create a credible, trustworthy brand persona for itself, its customers will be following throughout its journey through the good and the bad. This will lead to a long-lasting customer relationship which is important in the long-term success of any company. (Adamson 2013, 11.) What is important to understand also is that building a brand takes time just like building any relationship (Ahto & al. 2016, 115).

A key to creating a strong brand persona is simplicity. The shorter and simpler the message of a brand is, the clearer it is to the target audience. Whether the message is a word or phrase, it is something that represents the brand identity. (Adamson 2013, 13.) This is the brand driver, which is used to create the rest of branding activities in the company. This brand driver is simple and effective and needs to be understandable without explanations. An example of an effective brand driver is that of IBM – building a smarter planet. This message is the core action of the employees in the company and everyone is working towards the common goal. (Adamson 2013, 13.) One way to look at branding and the brand driver is to use the three C model in marketing. These three C's are continuity, consistency and credibility. (Ahto & al. (2016, 119.)

2.3 Instagram

Instagram is a free inspirational social networking app for sharing pictures and videos on a community like platform. It was launched in 2010 and has been growing ever since. The monthly active user base has grown from 2013's 90 million to 2017's 800 million users. Instagram is popular especially amongst the teens and millennials in the U.S, where the active Instagram user base is estimated to grow up to 111 million in 2019. In the U.S. 59% of the user base is between the age of 18 and 29. (Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to September 2017 (in millions) 2017). According to Mark Zuckerberg and Vatu (2017), the actual number of everyday users is 400 million.

Globally speaking, the U.S holds 16.91% of the traffic on Instagram.com, with Russia (8.08%) and Brazil (5.77%) behind (Regional distribution of desktop traffic to Instagram.com as of September 2017, by country 2017). According to Lister (2017), female internet users dominate on Instagram, 32% of Instagram users attended college, and 26% of the users make more than 75,000\$.

The people using Instagram have a profile and a news feed. A person who has created an Instagram profile will be found with the nickname they have created for themselves with the symbol @ in front- for example: @nike. A person following another Instagram user is called a "follower" and the number of followers is one of the measurements of the success of an Instagram profile. A person can follow up to 7500 profiles. Instagram works on iOS and Android devices, as photos can only be downloaded through the phone. Nevertheless, photos and profiles can be viewed through the web browser. (Moreau 2017.)

The leading brands on Instagram in August 2017 were:

1. National Geographic: @natgeo with 80.3M followers.
2. Nike: @nike with 73.9M followers.
3. Victoria's Secret: @victoriasecret with 56.8M followers.
4. Real Madrid C.F.: @realmadrid with 52.1M followers.
5. FC Barcelona: @fcbarcelona with 51.7M followers. (Leading brands ranked by number of Instagram followers as of August 2017 (in millions) 2017).

2.3.1 Photos and videos

Instagram is about sharing photo and video content as well as liking and commenting on other user's posts. "Likes" can be done by double tapping a picture or a video or by pressing the heart image on

at the bottom of the photo. It is easy to save photos by pressing “a letter icon” at the bottom right hand corner of any photo. It is also possible to share a photo with any other profile user by direct private message (DM). Exploring photos can be done using the search window by pressing the magnifying glass icon. By pressing the search bar user’s recent searches appear, and a user may look for new people, hashtags or places. (Moreau 2017.)

Photos and videos can be added through the application or adding them from the camera roll. There is an option to add a single photo or a carousel, which means adding several photos in a row where the user swipes to see each of the photos separately. The carousel affects the engagement rate and therefore the algorithm. Instagram has its own filters and other editing tools which can be used to alter the photo. (Moreau 2017.)

It is useful to add a location on the photo when publishing it, therefore allowing users to find each other from the same area or similar interest. This creates engagement within the community. Tagging another profile user is also possible on a photo. Whilst posting a photo on Instagram, one can publish the photo on other social media channels simultaneously. (Moreau 2017.) Up to 95 million photos per day are published today according Lister (2017).

A caption is added below the photo at the publishing phase. These captions vary from meaningful stories of users to inspirational quotes and even news on current events. It is a part of determining the tone of the profile. A caption is important as it raises the engagement rate of the image. People comment and like more on posts with inspiring and engaging captions, therefore showing the post to a wider audience. A call-to-action (CTA) is important on an Instagram caption, which can be asking followers to tag a friend on a post or clicking the link in the bio on the profile. A specific tone of voice reflecting the brand is recommended when writing Instagram captions. Captions are often filled with emoji’s to create a unique and personal appearance. (Loren 2017b.)

Tagging other users on a post is common on the Instagram community. This creates relationships and opens up new and wider audiences. The most common way is to place the users handle (e.g. @nike) into the caption and on the photo therefore creating a double effect. When teaming up with another Instagrammer for advertising purposes, a caption must always reveal that the content is sponsored (Loren 2017b.)

2.3.2 Hashtags

Hashtags are a way of sharing photos of the same subject or category with other users. They are an essential way of communicating on the Instagram community. Hashtags are a way to make photos available to other users but also to find other similar content and to engage with users. Hashtags can be added either on the caption or on the comments. Having hashtags as a part of the caption, bring contrast to the caption as they are different colour (blue) than the regular text (black). (Loren 2017b.)

Even the use of hashtags has its strategy. As they are a way of gathering audience, likes and followers, it's important to think which hashtags to use. An example of a popular hashtag, with over 1 billion pictures published is #love. This number of pictures under a hashtag does not generate growth on an Instagram account. The smaller the audience for a hashtag, the better the results generally are. (Loren 2017b.)

According to Loren (2017b), 3-4 hashtags is the maximum number to have on a caption, and more can be added on the comments if needed (the maximum hashtags is 30 on a caption or comment). By adding the hashtags separately on the comments, the caption and the photo appears neater (Loren 2017b). Based on Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram study (2014), Instagram posts with at least one hashtag average 12.6% more engagement than posts without a hashtag. According to Lazazzera (2017), the two most important things on Instagram for a brand is to engage and grow, and this can only be done with the use of right hashtags.

2.3.3 Engagement

In 2014, 1.6 billion likes were shared on Instagram per day (Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram study 2014). Liking and commenting on other user's photos is vital for engagement as it is the way to interact with people on Instagram. Instagram changed its feed of photos and videos to algorithmic ranking from a chronological ranking in June 2016. Algorithmic ranking means that the order of the photos and videos a user sees, is based on engagement data from Instagram and Facebook. Even though a user is following someone on Instagram the user might never see the followed persons published photos if their engagement rate of the profile is low. (Perry 2017.)

Engagement is the key to success on Instagram. According to Forer (2017) on average people spend 25 minutes daily on the platform. Engaging means actively liking, commenting and interacting with other users online by asking questions and engaging in dialogue

(Perry 2017). The average Instagram engagement rate is 4.3% (Forer 2017). Replying to users Instagram stories and live videos is also important aside from creating them. Examining the posts that worked best during the past month can prove to be a good idea, as a brand may want to use the same features again to reach a wider audience. A good example is how Instagram stories can now be used for marketing purposes as a user can link a page on the bottom of the Instagram story (only available to some users). (Perry 2017.)

Being strategic about Instagram ads is important as a brand needs the right target audience to see the post. Partnering with influencers has also brought engagement rates up for brands. Timing posts according to most engaging times of the day and week is important as well as sharing user-generated content. (Chen 2017.)

A few years back users used bots to buy likes and followers on Instagram and gained huge follower numbers partly due to this and the numbers of ghost followers on Instagram. Instagram has started monitoring accounts using bots and is either taking pictures off hashtags or banning accounts that use bots. This is not the only reason buying followers is not suggested. Unauthentic followers create an untrustworthy atmosphere where it is difficult to build trust amongst true fans. (Chen 2017.)

2.3.4 Instagram stories and Instagram live

Instagram stories is a way of sharing photos or videos for a short period of time on the profile (up to 24 hours) without disturbing the Instagram feed. Instagram stories has not been around for long, as it was launched in August 2016. (Perry 2017.) This was long after Snapchat (2011), with its active 178 million daily users (Number of daily active Snapchat users from 1st quarter 2014 to 3rd quarter 2017 (in millions) 2017). Instagram live allows a profile user to podcast live-footage. Instagram stories and Instagram live has opened up a whole new life in Instagram, as users share their raw and unedited content, unlike on their feed's. (Perry 2017.)

2.3.5 Advertisement

According to Lister (2017), this year only, Instagram has had 1 million monthly active advertisers. Advertising on Instagram is fairly new (available in 2015). Advertisement is a part of a user's feed, and is shown always with a heading of sponsored content. There are different types of advertisement available for users. These are photo, video and carousel advertisement. Photos works as a visual marketing tool and they can be implemented as

single photos or as carousels. Video advertisement limit is 30 seconds. A user is then able to click on the advertisement and afterwards is guided to the advertiser's web browser. Instagram algorithm works on the advertising as well. The more people click or engage with the advertisement, the wider audience sees it. (Long 2015.)

Before Instagram advertising became possible, it was difficult for businesses to create revenue or get users to engage with their online browsers, as the only place to have a web address visible was the biography (bio) on the Instagram profile. Publishing a link was not possible on the captions or comments of the photos. An estimation of 1.53 billion \$ in global mobile ad revenue was made for 2016 on Instagram. (Lister 2017.) According to Worldwide mobile internet advertising revenue of Instagram from 2015 to 2018 (in billion U.S. dollars) (2017), 2017, this figure was 3.64 billion and in 2018 it will rise up to 6.84 billion. In 2017, 70.7% of U.S. companies have been estimated to use Instagram for marketing and 50% of Instagram users follow one or more business profiles on the platform (Lister 2017).

2.4 Branding on Instagram

According to Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram study (2014), in 2014 already 86% of top brands had an Instagram account. In 2015 this figure was 90%, with 82% of the brands posting at least once a month (Shively 2015). As social media channels require a platform specific approach to branding, Instagram too has its own way of communicating a brand message. Creating a clear profile is a key element in branding on Instagram. (Conner 2017.) As more brands are becoming active on Instagram, users are getting used to branded content (Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram study 2014).

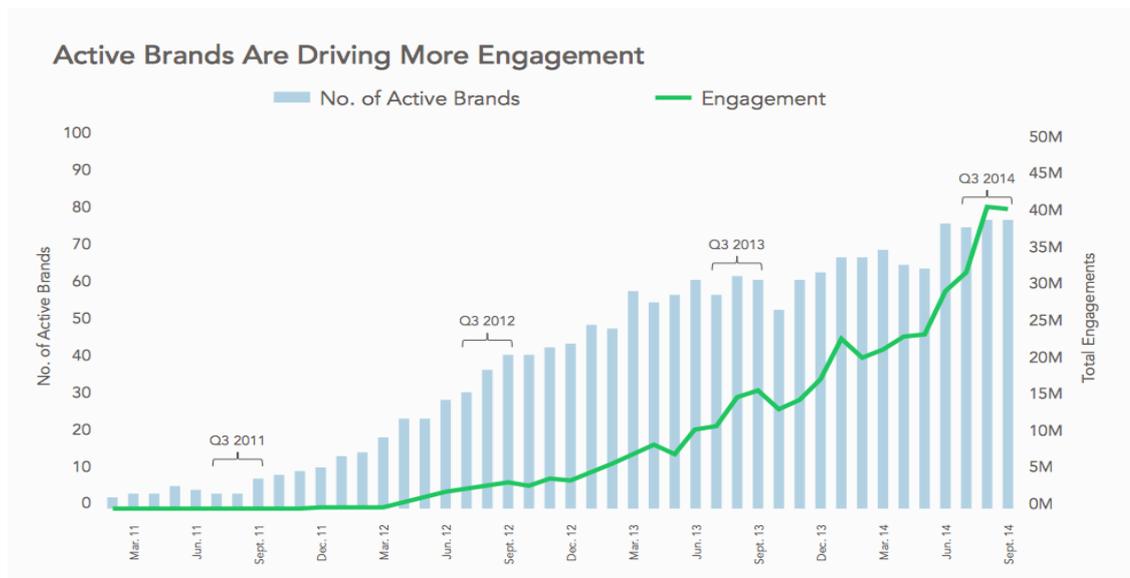


Figure 1. Active Brands Are Driving More Engagement (Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram study 2014)

An idea is that a brand should focus on the people close to the company at the current time to help build the brand on social media. This includes staff members, partners, current customers and vendors. They will be the ones building the engagement as they will be the first fans. These people need to know why they should engage in the company's social media. Building an engaged community doesn't happen overnight. (Kerpen 2011, 52.)

Kerpen (2011, 95-101) suggests building a brand on social media based on authenticity, which creates a trusting environment for communication. On the same lines Kerpen (2011, 109) calls for honesty and transparency which are both also in close contact with trust. Opening up the brand with real stories bring the company to life, therefore creating an authentic experience to the follower (Kerpen 2011, 144).

2.5 Creating a strategy on Instagram

Just like any Social Media platform, Instagram too needs a strategy. The strategy should be aligned with the general marketing strategy of the brand. With 8 million business profile accounts and nearly 60% of Instagram users between the ages of 18-29, Instagram is the place to be. (Johnson 2017.)

It is important to know the brand identity and to know how to enter onto the platform. A brand needs to start with its objectives:

- What does it want to achieve on Instagram?

- What is the purpose of the brand using Instagram?
 - What part of the target audience is active on Instagram?
 - How will Instagram integrate with the other social media networks of the brand?
- (Johnson 2017.)

As Instagram is a visual platform, it allows a brand to share company culture in addition to the products. It is a personal and more relaxed way to communicate the brand to the audience and fans. (Johnson 2017.) According to Johnson (2017), a brand should look in depth into one or more of the following factors in their Instagram strategy: increasing brand awareness, demonstrating company culture, showcasing the team and recruitment, increasing customer engagement and loyalty, demonstrating products and services, sharing company news, building an engaged community, connecting with influencers and driving sales.

The content of publications defines brands Instagram presence. A theme should be chosen and followed throughout the profile therefore opening up a brand's story. The theme consists of colours and the brand image itself. Images of people and their faces tend to engage most followers, so planning brand content with this in mind is suggested. Using video content for engagement and planning a posting schedule is important as it will help to plan the work. For this, it is useful to use Instagram planning tools (see chapter 2.6). Company events and other happenings are worth posting about, therefore keeping the schedule flexible is also important in order to keep the profile lively. (Johnson 2017.)

Clear visuals and consistency in regards of other social media channels is the key to success on Instagram. Instagram has to be a part of the brand experience as a whole. The Instagram visuals of a brand should start from viewing the brand logo, website, graphics and photographs. The colour theme on Instagram should correlate with the existing colour theme of the brand. If the brand does not have resources for a professional photographer, visual simplicity is what counts. This can mean objects placed in front of white canvas or on a simple background. The colours and visual image can be chosen using specific filters. Finding the right ones for use is important (see chapter 2.6). (Johnson 2017.)

The strategy on social media according to Kerpen (2011, 138), should consist examining ways to create value for the customer without selling the brand itself. Testing the ideas of valuable content with friends and family is recommended in order to see the results in advance (Kerpen 2011, 138).

Creating meaningful captions is vital for the brand as the captions bring out the brand identity. A visually beautiful image together with a good story is the best combination on Instagram. Using hashtags on the posts is important as they bring brand awareness, also listed as one of the most important aspects to look into when creating the brand strategy. Fans and followers can start sharing their content using the same hashtags and therefore engage in the community the brand has created. Setting the location for the post is important for the engagement and allows for more users to access the content. (Johnson 2017.)

The bio and link on the Instagram profile is important as they guide followers on what is important to the brand. The bio is a place for the brand to introduce itself and share ideas. For a brand, it is also important to engage by following other accounts and Instagram influencers. These should be industry-related and in some way useful to the strategy. Setting examples of who the brand does not want to follow is also good. Taking care of follower comments and direct messages is important. Customer feedback can be handled on Instagram or by guiding followers to contact the company through other means easily visible on the profile (for example email). (Johnson 2017.)

Testing the content on Instagram stories is a good idea, as the content disappears after a while. There the brand can get insight on what material works and what does poorly. Analyzing the results and tracking the performance of the work is important in order to be able to adjust the work. (Johnson 2017.)

A key term on Instagram appears to be user-generated content. User-generated content is good because it is an authentic way to promote a brand. Other people from around the world share their images, thus making your brand seem more genuine in the eyes of others. (Pacis 2017.) According to Johnson (2017), user-generated content is considered content “gold”. The most popular profiles such as National Geographic’s @natgeo, shares only user-generated content. National Geographic introduces the photographer and then shares the story behind the image. These photographers are ambassadors of National Geographic, meaning they are photographers for the brand. (Calvo 2015.)

2.6 Tools for Instagram

Instagram tools help a brand attract more followers. As Instagram is a visual platform, photos and their quality is the most important thing. One of the most popular photo editing tool is VSCO with a large variety of features in its free version. Placing these images on an Instagram account is easier with a planning tool such as Later or Planoly. In these

tools images can be planned ahead of time by scheduling post (although each post has to be manually published). For hosting a contest WooBox can help plan the contest and examine contestants. (Chacon 2017.)

Instagram has a few of its own tools. Instagram insights is a tool to help user's track data on the profile, one of the most important ones being the time the followers are active. Instagram stories use is important as more viewers generate more followers and engagement. (Chacon 2017.)

2.7 Summary of theoretical framework

Instagram is a visual art platform, where content sharing has been made easy for everyone. It is easy to understand and people can be reached globally (Revanzi 2014). Instagram has opened up a social media platform where basically anyone can build a brand. Not all know how to build a successful one. For a brand to be successful on Instagram it has to know the target audience and create value for that audience. The most important element is in value creation. This value can change during time, but it needs to be at the fore front of the development. (Beall 2017.)

Instagram success is about developing the brand behaviour according to the results. The strategy a brand has made on Instagram should be evaluated and then altered as an ongoing process. Instagram world changes each year, which means that the brand needs to be willing to change its methods on a constant basis. Development is the key word, which can be translated for example into the way photos are being edited or how captions are written. (Beall 2017.)

Engaging with the followers with the means available at the current time on Instagram is linked to the success a brand can have on the platform. As Instagram develops, so do the engaging methods. It is important for the brand to interact and develop the community feel. (Beall 2017.) Unlike other social media platforms, Instagram needs constant care and attention (Revanzi 2014).

According to Baranovska (2017), Instagram has 58% more engagement per follower than Facebook and users interact with brands more than double the amount than on Facebook. During the past four years, Instagram's organic marketing reach is up 115% and statistic say that brands on Instagram reach 100% of their followers compared to Facebook reaching only a margin of theirs. This statistic guide brands to taking bigger steps into the world of Instagram. (Baranovska 2017.)

3 Benchmarking successful Instagram brands

This chapter introduces benchmarking as a research method for this thesis. Further, this chapter will introduce the benchmarked companies as well as the reasons why these companies were chosen. Benchmarking was chosen together with the Marketing Head of Space Nation, Katja Presnal. The decision was made based on the knowledge of successful Instagram branding by many different size companies from all over the world. Presnal and the author wanted to take a closer look at some Instagram accounts and use the same methods these brands use in building their successful Instagram presence. It was a hands-on method, that the author could then use for execution of the final product – Space Nation’s Instagram. The goal of benchmarking in this thesis is to find out what are the key elements of successful Instagram accounts that could be used on Space Nation’s Instagram.

All of the benchmarked companies have succeeded in creating an exemplary brand image on Instagram. A challenge was to find companies somewhat similar to Space Nation in the sense of the multimedia aspect, consisting of not only gaming, but also entertainment, learning and space experiences. The accounts found were either multimedia brands or inspiring in otherwise. These exemplary accounts were used as the reference when introducing an idea to Presnal about a way to execute Space Nation’s Instagram. It is difficult to say if the successful brand image of the benchmarked companies was the result of Instagram branding rather than other marketing efforts. The research was conducted on other multimedia companies like Space Nation and the goal was to see if comparison could be found.

3.1 Benchmarking

Benchmarking as a research method means comparing similar work to one another (Cambridge Dictionary 2017). There are two different types of benchmarking: internal benchmarking, which is when work or practices are compared within an organization in small or large groups and external benchmarking which is comparing organizations or industry competitors to one another (Best Practices 2017).

The benchmarking method used in this thesis, is external benchmarking and the companies used in benchmarking are Google, Red Bull and Swiss International Air Lines. The examined subjects on the Instagram brands start from the profiles of the companies, the general appearance on the Instagram profile and the biography text. The follower numbers are examined as an indicator of the success and the engagement numbers of photos

and videos. The visual aspects and the quality of the photos published is also viewed, as well as the caption and hashtag use.

3.2 Google

Google Inc., an American search engine company, was founded in 1998 by two University friends Larry Page and Sergey Brin in the garage of Susan Wojcicki - current CEO of YouTube (Our story: from the garage to the Googleplex 2017). Besides the search engine, Google provides over 50 Internet services and products. These products vary from e-mail to mobile phones. In 2015, Google became the subsidiary of Alphabet Inc. Nevertheless, Google kept a hold of Internet search, advertising etc., and the mobile operating system Android and YouTube. (Hosch & Hall 2017.)

Google (@google) is chosen for benchmarking due to their inspiring Instagram presence with 5,2 million followers and because they have a strong position internationally as a company operating in several business areas. Google presents themselves on Instagram as an Arts & Entertainment company with the slogan "Google unfiltered – sometimes with filters." The brand image that Google has on Instagram represents Space Nation's Instagram brand image goals. The image of Google that appeals to Space Nation is its colourful, playful, humane and descriptive appearance in the theme.

Although the visual look of @google does not seem to be very thought out, due to the variety of themes including pictures of pets, Google's logo and even landscapes, somehow it all comes together in the colours as a joyful combination. All of the pictures come together with a story. One of Google's prides is in its employee's pets, under the hashtag #Dooglers, which appear often on the feed, therefore bringing playfulness into the visuals. The Google logos show up repeatedly on the feed and are made up of different ornaments, fruits, or are drawn by an artist. The logos are perfectly executed and photographed. On its account, Google likes to present people and tell their stories in depth, therefore showcasing a large corporation with a humane touch. Google publishes a photo or a video only 1-2 times a week, therefore lacking a continuous presence.

Likes on Google's pictures vary between 22,300-111,700, with the average of 67,000 likes on a picture. The likes rate is calculated from this average and compared to the 5,2M followers, adding up to a 1.18% likes rate. Comments on the pictures vary from 101 to 508, with an average of 305 comments. The engagement rate based on this result is 0.006%. Views on videos are between 76,000-390,000, with an average of 233,000 views. The en-

engagement rate on the views is therefore 4.09%. These engagement rates are then compared to Space Nation's figures. Space Nation's figures are calculated from the 1502 followers. Space Nation's picture likes vary from 85-226 with an average of 156 likes. Therefore, the likes rate is 10.39%. Comments range from 1-16, with the average of 9, which makes the engagement rate 0.6%. Table 2 below represents the comparison of these figures between Google's Instagram account and Space Nation's Instagram account.

Table 2. Likes and engagement rate comparison of Google and Space Nation.

| | Google @google | Space Nation @spacenationorg |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Likes rate | 1.18% | 10.39% |
| Engagement rate comments | 0.006% | 0.6% |
| Engagement rate Views on video | 4.09% | - |

3.3 Red Bull

Red Bull is a multimedia company, that has its wings spread out not only in the Red Bull Energy Drink but widely elsewhere. Red Bull was founded in the 1980's and sold its first energy drink in Austria in 1987. Red Bull Media House is a Red Bull branch that holds within the company's sports, culture and lifestyle business operations. The media products and services offered at the Red Bull Media House are not limited, but rather offer a variety of services from TV-stations to magazines. Some of the largest branches of Red Bull is its sports team ownerships, which consist of sponsoring athletes and hosting sports events. (Red Bull Media House 2017.) Red Bull was chosen to be one of the benchmarked companies for its power statue in the multimedia operational field.

Red Bull has divided its different operations into separate Instagram accounts. It's main operational account is called @redbull, with 8 million followers. Red Bull has titled this account as Media/News Company and it consists of sports videos from all over the world of a variety of sports. A continuous flow of sports action videos can be seen through the feed all the way from dancing to skiing and wakeboarding with music or voice effects included.

The likes on the pictures vary between 41,000-165,000 and comments between 120-1400. The videos have a range of 200,000-1,465,000 views. The pictures have very minimalistic captions from a few words to a laid-back sentence or two – “Don’t hold back, make some moves.” The account uses minimal hashtags. This example of @redbull shows, how people are interested in viewing action and even homemade sports-action videos. The account shows how the engagement rate can vary significantly throughout the material, even though the quality stays approximately the same.

Red Bull Racing (@redbullracing), with 1,7 million followers, is another account of Red Bull, which describes itself as “Sports Team – Passionate about racing, our fans and we love what we do!”. This account is revolving around the Formula 1 racing and everything related to it, as Red Bull has its own F1 car which is driven by Max Verstappen. The account shows all the action Red Bull does behind the scenes of F1 including the F1 team with the car builders, the driver and the settings for the competition. It is also a sneak peek into the preparations of Max Verstappen, the face of the team. The account is a combination of videos and pictures, with very easy-going captions. It’s publishing rate is 1-3 photos a day. The use of hashtags is limited and topics are restricted to Red Bull and F1.

Likes on the photos vary from 15,000-52,000 with the average amount of 33,500 likes. This adds up to an equal of 1,97% likes rate out of the 1,7M follower base. Comments range from 19 to 392. There is an average of 206 comments per picture, making the engagement rate 0.012%. The views on videos vary from 65,000-165,000 with the average of 115,000, therefore making the video view engagement rate 6.76%. Table 3 below compares these results to Space Nation’s Instagram account figures.

Table 3. Likes and engagement rate comparison of Red Bull Racing and Space Nation

| | Red Bull Racing @redbullracing | Space Nation @spacenationorg |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Likes rate | 1.97% | 10.39% |
| Engagement rate comments | 0.012% | 0.6% |
| Engagement rate video views | 6.76% | - |

@redbullphotography account with 7900 followers is for Red Bull's photography, titled "Media/News Company – The best images in the world of Red Bull". This Instagram account has making-of videos and pictures of sports events hosted by Red Bull, as well as inspirational pictures related to sports. The account is significantly smaller than the other accounts mentioned. In addition, the different sports Red Bull has taken under its wings, such as surfing, biking and cliff diving also have their own accounts with hundreds of thousands of followers. In these accounts, photos and videos are shared originally by Red Bull but also by its followers on Instagram. These are just a few examples of the tens of Instagram accounts held by Red Bull.

Red Bull's Instagram approach proves, that a company can successfully hold several accounts. Each account has its own unique approach to a specific theme and continues with the theme throughout each post. The followers can choose which field of business from Red Bull they enjoy and follow that specific account effortlessly. Having different business operations appear in one single Instagram account could prove be difficult, and might not attract followers, as there would not be a specific theme. According to the Red Bull example, a multimedia company of any type could take a similar approach and divide different operations strictly to different accounts with different approaches from one another. Another thing that Red Bull shows is how videos on Instagram can be a successful way of marketing and brand building.

3.4 Swiss International Air Lines

Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS), is an airline under the Lufthansa Group, the world's largest airline grouping. It is the official airline of Switzerland, with routes to over 100 destinations and 43 countries. The company also provides logistic services under the name Swiss WorldCargo in 80 countries. (SWISS 2017.)

Swiss International Air Lines has taken an employee perspective on its Instagram account. With 371,000 followers, the account is hosted by Swiss International Air Lines employees from pilots to flight attendants, whom each get to present the company and their work routines from their own perspective. The captions on the photos are very personal and invite passengers aboard with a humane touch. The quality of the photos varies quite significantly from poor to high quality, yet the feed of the account has managed to keep a unified image. Most of the pictures consist of an airplane or an engine at the airport. Hashtag usage includes hashtags of #flyswiss, #airline and other Switzerland and aircraft related hashtags. The brand image of Swiss International Air Lines on Instagram is

homely and inviting with customer feedback suggested through other social media channels (Facebook and Twitter).

Likes on the pictures vary from 6,000 to 15,400 with an average of 10,700. The likes engagement rate therefore equals to 2.88%. Comments range between 10-127 with an average of 69 comments which creates an engagement rate of 0.019%. Views on the videos vary from 47,000 to 50,000 with an average of 48,500. The video view engagement rate is therefore 13.07%. The likes rate and the comments and views engagement rate has been calculated from the average numbers and are compared to the follower amount of @flyswiss and @spacenationorg in table 4.

Table 4. Likes and engagement rate comparison of Swiss International Air Lines and Space Nation

| | Swiss International Air Lines @flyswiss | Space Nation @spacenationorg |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Likes rate | 2.88% | 10.39% |
| Engagement rate comments | 0.019% | 0.6% |
| Engagement rate video views | 13.07% | - |

3.5 The results of benchmarking

Table 5. Likes and engagement rate comparison of Google, Red Bull Racing, Swiss International Air Lines and Space Nation

| | Google @google 5,2MF | Red Bull Racing @redbullracing 1,7MF | Swiss International Air Lines @flyswiss 371,000F | Space Nation @spacenationorg 1502F |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Likes rate | 1.18% | 1.97% | 2.88% | 10.39% |
| Engagement rate on Comments | 0.006% | 0.012% | 0.019% | 0.6% |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|---|
| Engagement rate on video views | 4.09% | 6.76% | 13.07% | - |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|---|

Benchmarking different corporate accounts on Instagram gave a different approach to how Space Nation's Instagram strategy should be planned and executed. Moreover, each account gave something unique to building the strategy. Table 5 shows the comparison between different size benchmarked companies and their engagement rates. The results indicate, that the larger the company, the smaller the engagement rates are. The video engagement rates appear to be much higher than those of likes and comments engagement rates. The difference between the likes rate of Google's account with over 5 million followers and Space Nation's account with just 1500, is huge. This provides insight on the follower base that larger brands hold on Instagram. Questions arise on the matter as to if the followers are not engaged or if they are so called ghost followers, purchased followers, followers not interested in the brand or followers who have quit using Instagram over the years.

What is interesting in Table 5 is how Space Nation has the largest engagement rate in both likes and comments and how the difference is quite significant to the benchmarked companies. This proves how important the small figures at the starting point can be. The results also reveal that the difference between the smallest comment amount of a large account and the highest comment amount of a small account is not that big. The highest engagement percentage proves to be the video contents engagement of the second smallest Instagram account of Swiss International Air Lines with 13.07%. This brings insight on how Space Nation should consider using video material on Instagram to rise engagement percentage.

Google's visual brand image appeals to Space Nation with its colourful theme. The logo-theme is an aspect Space Nation will look in depth into. The people Google showcases on their account is inspirational and will be used on Space Nation's Instagram. The video content shown every once in a while, is something that Space Nation will see if it will work for them.

Red Bull case brought up the possibility of dividing Space Nation's different products under separate Instagram accounts, thus making it clearer to the followers and allowing the accounts to have their own voice in communicating the product or service. This was discussed with Presnal, as the different products require different marketing actions. The

products and their target groups vary slightly, which is also the reason why the Red Bull approach for Space Nation could work better. The fact that Red Bull uses other users' photos and videos could also be a good tactic for Space Nation in the future, since it does not have resources for its own photo material.

The overall concept of @flyswiss seems to work well and it is very approachable from the customer point of view. The easy going way of talking seems to appeal to users, the comments rate is quite high and comments seem to be focused pleasantly to the hostess of the account at each specific time. What Space Nation could consider is how to keep the engagement rate up while the follower amounts continue rising. Swiss International Air Lines account works as an inspirational example of an account hosted by different employees. The comments rate of the account is impressive and proves that every account does not need to be perfectly polished.

4 Space Nation's Instagram

This chapter presents the main product of the thesis – Space Nation's Instagram account. Moreover, the why and how of Space Nation's (@spacenationorg) Instagram identity. This chapter will explain how Instagram was used to make Space Nation stronger as a brand and the concepts included in deciding the visual image. The planning and strategy of Space Nation's Instagram was made partly in collaboration with the Marketing Head of Space Nation Katja Presnal and executed by the author during approximately a ten-week long period. The main goal of this thesis and the Instagram account was to improve the brand awareness of Space Nation.

4.1 Space Nation as a brand

As a relatively new brand, Space Nation's brand building on its social media channels is an ongoing process. It is still in the making, due to the transformation of its products in the development phases and the company's constantly evolving strategy. The brand identity of Space Nation had been built prior to this thesis. This brand identity can be described with the following words: visionary, global, positive and scientific. The brand values include discovery, working together, caring and educating. The message and concepts that Space Nation wants to spread are pioneering, liberating astronaut skills for everyone, accelerating human advancement and space discovery, including wellness, lifestyle and learning. Space Nation is a space media and space experiences company with the brand message of "no borders". The core message is "sky is not the limit and space is in each and every one of us as a part of our everyday lives".

4.2 Instagram strategy of Space Nation

The marketing team had begun to plan a strategy before the author started the work at the company. The existing strategy was used as the starting point for the Instagram strategy. This plan had a visual identity and content that Space Nation wanted to show on Instagram. The initial plan is shown in Figure 2. It consisted of the colour palette blue, turquoise and peach, as those colours were included in Space Nation's brand guidelines. This nine image feed (the mood board) was executed by Space Nation's design team. It consisted of the main concepts that Space Nation wanted to showcase on its Instagram: astronauts, people, space, stars, circle shapes, landscape, logo, flag and sunset/sunrise image.

On Instagram, it's common to publish photos from the past on Thursday's using the phrase throwback Thursday (#tbt), therefore the plan included black and white photos from the past. An important aspect was to share photos of space and stars, which were a part of the theme related to the business concept. The middle photo on Figure 2 represented the idea of the circular form that would continue throughout the feed in one way or another. This was planned to be executed in taking photos of basically anything circular shaped.

The landscape picture on the right-hand side middle on Figure 2, represented a view on earth, that resembled outer space. This was planned to be used to get followers to share their own perception of outer space with Space Nation to be shared on their feed with the hashtag #spaceonearth. The Space Nation logo was also planned to be photographed in different locations around urban views and the Space Nation flag to be taken to outdoor settings. Sunrise and sunset pictures were planned to be used, as the colour scheme represented that of Space Nation's ideal palette.

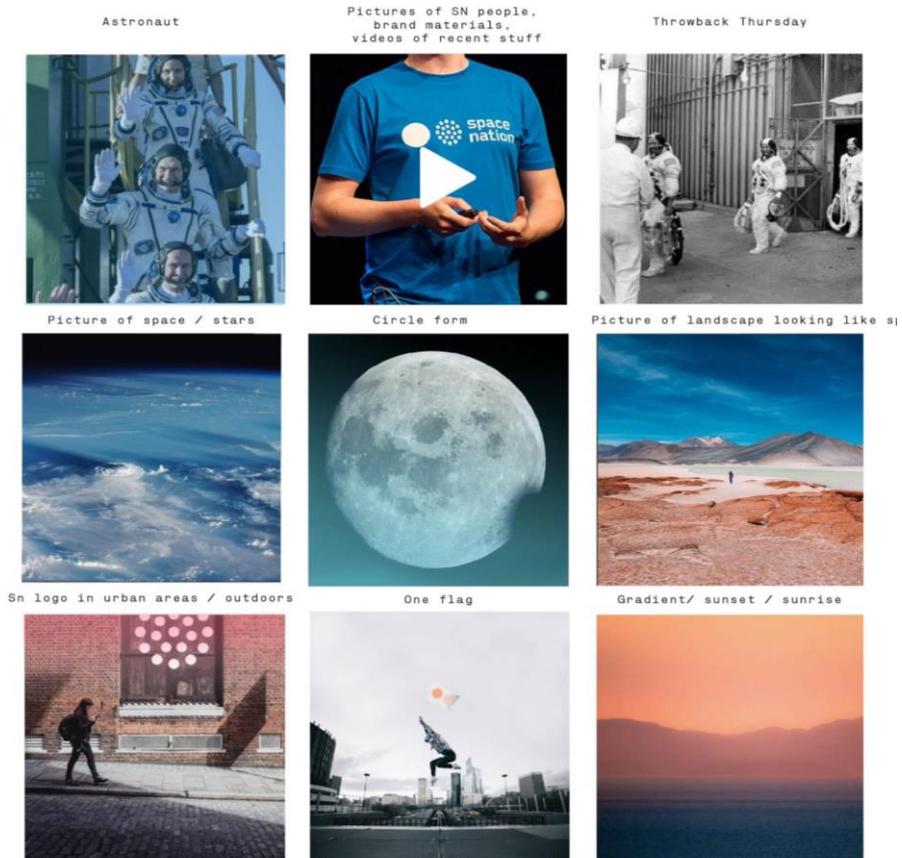


Figure 2. The initial nine image feed representation for Space Nation's Instagram (mood board)

4.3 Phases of brand building on Instagram

The Marketing Head and the author examined the initial plan and altered it to get started on the process. It was discovered that executing the plan could prove to be difficult with the given resources as the author would be the only one working on Instagram for the coming 10 weeks. There were several steps to be completed before the execution could begin and it took two weeks of preparing before making the first “strategic” post. Before any work could start, the author needed to get familiar with the brand, the concept of Space Nation, the Astronaut Training and the idea of space in general.

The objective of Space Nation’s Instagram account from the beginning was to create brand awareness and to bring the brand values of Space Nation visible to its followers. Space Nation wanted to create value to their followers on Instagram by educating. The purpose of the Instagram account was to motivate people as well as educating followers on self-improvement and lifelong learning in many different fields related to bringing the astronaut lifestyle as part of everyday life of all people.

The Marketing Head and the author determined the target audience on Instagram and the plan for reaching them. This target audience would be mainly U.S. citizens between the age range of 20-30 year olds, according to the demographics of Instagram. The attempt was to attract the target audience by using the right hashtags from the geographical areas in the United States and set a calendar for posts according to the most popular post times on the East-coast of the United States. The calendar tool used was Planoly from the beginning, which turned out to work well. Instagram posts were planned there and all posts had to be proved by Presnal before the author published them. The strategy also consisted commenting and liking photos from users in North America to increase engagement from that geographical location.

The tone of voice was set according to the brand guidelines and it was to be the friendly yet scientific and educational, as Space Nation wanted to pursue a respected status amongst the space Instagrammers as well as travellers. As the subject of space in itself was difficult, it was not an easy task to combine it with a scientific language trying to educate and inspire users at the same time. The author used hours preparing and searching for information to use on writing captions. The best tool was benchmarking the successful companies and modeling the scientific data and writing style on captions of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, @nasa) and its numerous Instagram accounts.

One of the purposes for Instagram was to create engagement, which has happened, especially through Instagram direct messaging, where followers have asked detailed information about the company and its mission. Direct messaging has also been a platform for showcasing the product and it has worked as a community builder.

4.3.1 Photos

In the beginning, the execution started more or less according to the plan. The colour scheme stayed the same with the orange, blue and turquoise palette, although the visual image was not exactly according to the initial plan. The colours were more visible throughout the whole feed and moved in a wave-like formation. The company logo photos were almost instantly dropped out of the strategy. It was agreed that text and marketing in this manner would be too straight forward for Instagram and would not benefit the brand. Figure 3 shows the first weeks of the executed Instagram. During this time, it was decided, that no videos would be used, as there were no resources for it.

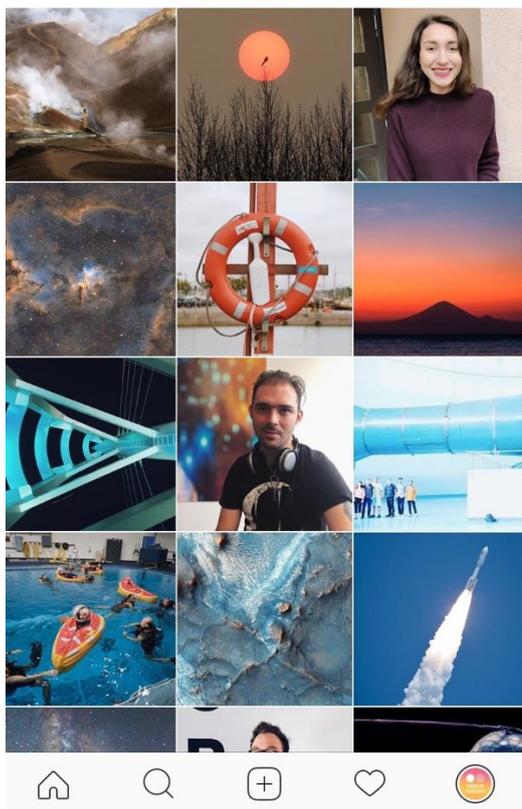


Figure 3. Screenshot of Space Nation's Instagram feed and authors interpretation of the initial mood board

The execution continued according to the plan and photos were searched of astronauts, spacecraft's and other space related images on NASA's online photo portals. Space news

for captions were also available on NASA's Internet site, which proved to be a valuable resource for creating valuable captions on the images.

Moreover, it was decided that Space Nation would introduce company employees on Instagram on a regular basis to strengthen the company culture. This was based on benchmarking Google. Employee photography was executed by the author taking pictures of the employees and creating captions with the assistance of co-workers. An amateur photographer took also part in this work by assisting in taking photos for the Instagram account. Sharing images of the employees was also a way of showcasing the team and was considered as a possible way to build relationships between the company's employees. Co-workers, also called crew-members, were in other words showcasing each other.

The author partnered up with an amateur photographer and Instagrammer, whom she worked closely with and gathered the initial photos for the Instagram account during the first weeks of executing the strategy. These photos would then form the initial mood board (Figure 2). The photographer and the author had photoshoots and gathered street/urban photos with the Space Nation flag and images of circular objects for the feed. Space Nation owned the rights to these first images (later these photos were used on other Space Nation channels). The Marketing Head and the author soon realized that this would not work in the long run, as the photographer could not be hired for everyday use, and the photoshoots took a long time to prepare and execute. It was then decided that all photos, except the employee images, would be user-generated. Figure 4 shows Space Nation's own photo content, except for the two sunset pictures in the middle, and the Milky Way image in the bottom left hand corner.

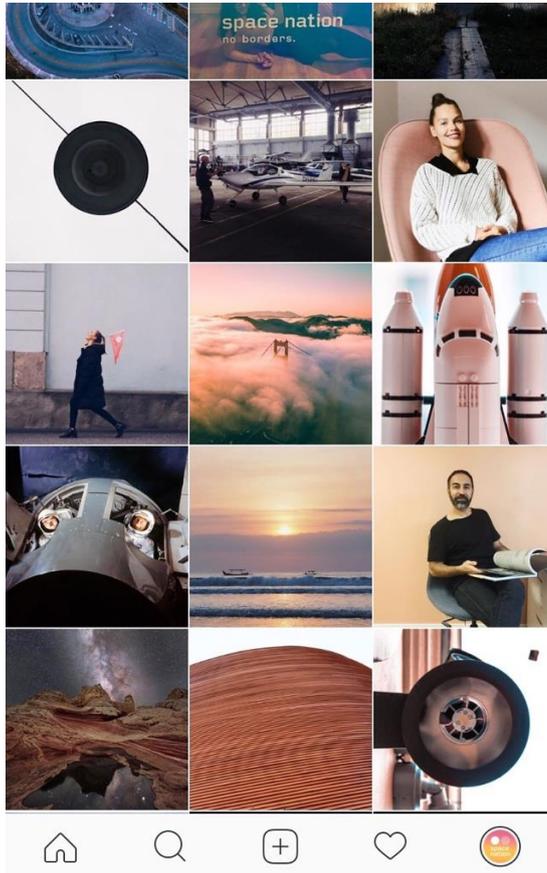


Figure 4. Screenshot of Space Nation’s Instagram

4.3.2 Captions

Creating meaningful yet educating captions Space Nation’s case was a difficult part in the execution of the strategy. The author gathered space data, specifically data from different sources online and internally that was aimed for inspiring, educating and training followers on space topics. Building an actual story behind every image, especially revolving around space topics, was difficult as the author was not familiar to them.

The captions consisted relevant information on topics related to space and the image in hand. Captions of the images on landscapes on earth that looked like outer space (#spaceonearth) were tricky, as educating information related to either the location or the target on the picture e.g. a volcano had to be found for every picture. Captions related to neutron stars or astronomy such as black holes were also challenging as it took time to understand what the subject in hand was and because the information needed backing up from several sources to validate it. The same validity issue was also with spacecraft-related captions, which then required even more time for double checking the facts. Sources used in captions were usually from proven valid sources, such as NASA or National Geographic.

4.3.3 Hashtags

The hashtags required a lot of planning and researching. Each photo had its own category and according to Instagram's algorithms, it is important that each hashtag suits the picture and the audience. Space Nation had two hashtags #spacenation and #noborders, which had to be used on every image. These were based on the plan that later on people would share their images under these hashtags.

In addition to #spacenation and #noborders, the author investigated through benchmarking which hashtags would work for each category of photos on the mood board. This benchmarking meant using Instagram's discovery section to search for similar images and then seeing what hashtags these images use. 30 hashtags were then used in the comment section varying according to photo.

4.3.4 Engagement

Engagement was one of the most important tasks for the author to focus on, and this meant liking and commenting on other user's photos. The comments were planned in beforehand, as they needed to be according to brand image as well. The author investigated different accounts, mainly in the U.S. and commented in space theme related style.

Direct messaging became an important tool in the communication. Especially during the beta-testing phase of the execution, followers used direct messaging to ask testing related questions. It became an important channel in communication and opened up a new portal for interaction with the consumers.

4.3.5 User-generated content

A popular approach on Instagram is to create a profile or a community on Instagram such as that of Earth Focus @earthfocus (with 2,9M followers), and get people to share their own images under the hashtag #earthfocus. The incentive is that the photo shared under the hashtag will then get a chance to be featured in the @earthfocus profile feed. Therefore, the creator of this community can create a massive follower base from user-generated content and has a chance to promote their own products or materials. This is what Space Nation aimed to do with its two hashtags #spacenation and #noborders and the work will continue in the future.

The author started contacting Instagrammers regarding the use of their photos according to the mood board topics such as the sunrise/sunset pictures. Fortunately, it turned out that followers of Space Nation and users not yet following Space Nation were more than willing to share their images with the company in exchange for visibility. Sunset/sunrise photos and space themed photos started flooding in the direct messages by request, and their usage has been vital for Space Nation. However, the initial plan of Space Nation teaming up with influencers holding the Space Nation flag all around the world and sharing their images was moved to the future.

4.3.6 Instagram stories and Instagram live

The author begun publishing Instagram stories and Instagram live videos, which gathered engaged audience. These videos consisted usually something Astronaut- related and created conversation amongst followers, whom then contacted the company through Instagram direct messaging. This turned out to be an excellent community builder.

4.3.7 Instagram tools

The author used the Instagram planning tool Planoly to plan posts in advance. This was necessary, due to the demands of the publishing as each post had to be reviewed by Presnal before being published. For the photos that were Space Nation's own property, the author used the photo editing tool VSCO, where the author purchased the premium version of the app. This was later on used only to edit the employee photos, as other photos were user generated.

4.3.8 Summary

In conclusion, the benchmarking worked as an excellent tool in creating and executing the Instagram strategy for Space Nation. The successful brands on Instagram gave good insight on the things working on the platform currently and what visuals Space Nation likes. It was a good way to get started on the concept.

It was important that a plan was made before the execution, however it turned out that on Instagram, the plan can change a lot in a short amount of time. A good idea for any brand on the verge of starting their branding on Instagram is to acknowledge the changing environment and try it out. A long planning time wastes resources. The Instagram of Space Nation is a continuous process and it changes on a weekly basis, as new information is

gathered. The main principles stay the same, but as of now, the author together with the Marketing Head is trying to collect data on how to reach the target audience better and what are the ways to attract them more efficiently.

5 Discussion

This chapter introduces the results and conclusions of the thesis and the future suggestions for Space Nation and its Instagram. It will also present the author's own learnings during the process.

5.1 Key findings and results

Benchmarking companies can be difficult, if a brand can't identify a suitable company to benchmark its action to. It can also be challenging to find companies that operate in the same business field, which could then be used in benchmarking. Benchmarking proved to be a good tool to use for Instagram. This is because Instagram is a visual platform and brands can be of any size, and operate in any field and even small companies can have massive Instagram follower numbers.

The author found out important details from the benchmarked companies on how they use Instagram as a platform for branding and engaging. Google's brand image is very clear on Instagram, yet their engagement rate is low, and they have stopped engaging with their followers using comments on the photos. The visual aspects, such as colour of the images, the photo content and captions are high quality, and will be used as an example for Space Nation. Red Bull's idea of all of its actions on separate accounts will be viewed as a strategic mark for Space Nation as well as the video content for bringing engagement numbers up. Swiss International Air Lines unique touch to the captions will be kept as an inspiration for future reference.

All of the benchmarked information was then taken into use for Space Nation and proved to be helpful by saving time and money from the planning process. What is good, is that any company can take working parts from benchmarked companies and alter it to look like its own. The initial steps planned for Space Nation's Instagram have changed towards the end of the ten-week period in time and therefore it will be hard to determine which plan has been the one bringing in the results.

As the product has been executed for only 10 weeks, it still remains to be seen what are the final results of the process and if it is possible to examine them fully. With one photo a day, 70 photos have been published up until this point according to this strategy. The work needs to be examined continuously and the strategy altered. What needs to stay the same is the authenticity and the value creation for the followers.

5.2 Future suggestions

In the future, it is important for Space Nation to keep the quality of the photos as they are. High quality photos are a key element in the success and they are easily accessible by user-generated content. This strategy needs to be measured on a constant basis. If the concept does not bring in the wanted results and raise the follower amounts (with the target audience followers), the concept should be changed. However, this doesn't happen overnight, and the decision should not be made hastily. The author and the Marketing Head of Space Nation should keep on hosting Instagram workshops, where the strategy is being examined.

In the future, bringing value to the followers will still be in the forefront on Space Nation's Instagram. This value creation should be reviewed, and taken into consideration if there are better steps yet to take in regard to it. The strategy should be closely viewed in the beginning of the year when the launch of the app is on the verge. This is when it could be discussed if changes need to be made, as an actual product will be out in the market. At this point in January 2018, when the Instagram has been ongoing for several months, the results can perhaps be closer looked at.

5.3 Own learning

This thesis provided several different learning points. The product in itself required a lot of work beginning with the benchmarking and researching of space related topics and getting introduced to the company to be able to bring the brand visible on Instagram. Working together with the Marketing Head of Space Nation was a learning point for myself, as Katja Persnal has years of experience and knowledge in many Marketing related areas. This knowledge and an existing demand for an Instagram presence created pressure for me to deliver a product the best way I possibly could.

I learned about gathering data from relevant sources, and also that it is challenging to find up to date information from valid sources on a constantly changing subject. Online sources are available from various locations, but the reliability and validity of these sources are not the best. Many of the books available covered social media in general and research studies about Instagram were already several years old, which would not be a problem if the subject was different.

Time management is something I learned a lot about. I could have handled my time better. The product, Space Nation's Instagram, felt very big at the very beginning (it still partly

does), due to the nature of the company. This then took most of my time to get used to and then start the planning of the Instagram. Making a more structured calendar for myself, could have helped me in the writing process.

I started with a work placement at Space Nation, where my job soon was guided into the direction of Instagram marketing. I got excited about the subject, as I had previously worked with Instagram and I took the responsibility with pride. It became instantly evident, that I would then write my thesis about the product I would work on and do the research at the company. I learnt that writing a thesis and working at the same time is not an easy task and should be taken into consideration at an early stage. However, in this case, there was no question about it.

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