Brand building on Instagram - Case Magisso

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The subject of this thesis is brand building on Instagram. The study will focus on how to effectively use Instagram, in order to build a strong brand and reach more customers. As a part of this study, a case study of Magisso was conducted. The objective was to deepen the company’s understanding of Instagram marketing and create an Instagram strategy, which the company can use to improve its marketing, sales and customer communication.

The theoretical part of this study consists of general information about social media and Instagram marketing for business, followed by instructions on how to create a successful Instagram strategy. The theoretical part utilizes articles and academic literature to present the findings. Other social media platforms were also researched for comparison. Some figures were used to illustrate and visualize the findings.

The empirical part analyses the current situation and success of Magisso’s Instagram profile. The part outlines new ideas of how the company can develop its Instagram strategy, and communicate better with its target audience. The thesis concludes to discussion on the current status of Instagram marketing. The thesis will provide development ideas for the case company.

Even though Magisso has already good content on Instagram and the company has started to put more efforts on social media marketing, there is still room for improvement. The level of the case company’s Instagram engagement is still quite low. This is due to the lack of structured Instagram marketing strategy.

According to the analysis, the company could improve its profile by following similar kind of accounts and commenting and liking another users content. Magisso should focus on finding the right audience, using a greater variation in content and using hashtags more effectively. All of the actions above require a well-planned Instagram marketing strategy. When the company is following the strategy and ready to make the needed changes, it will raise its brand awareness and create a loyal customer base.

Keywords: Social media, Social media marketing, Instagram, Instagram marketing, Instagram strategy
Table of Contents

1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 6
   1.1 The purpose of the thesis............................................................................................ 7
   1.2 Case company information....................................................................................... 8
   1.3 The structure of the thesis.......................................................................................... 8
   1.4 Target of the research ............................................................................................... 9

2 Instagram and design industry ......................................................................................... 9
   2.1 Social media marketing ............................................................................................ 10
       2.1.1 Instagram Marketing ......................................................................................... 11
   2.2 Design industry and social media............................................................................ 13
       2.2.1 Why Instagram is important for design brands ................................................ 14

3 Building a strategy .......................................................................................................... 15
   3.1 Determination of the content strategy....................................................................... 17

4 Components of the Instagram strategy .......................................................................... 18
   4.1 Content scheduling .................................................................................................. 18
   4.2 High-quality images ............................................................................................... 18
   4.3 Content creation .................................................................................................... 19
   4.4 Optimizing for monetization .................................................................................. 20
   4.5 Contests ................................................................................................................ 20
   4.6 Ads ....................................................................................................................... 21
   4.7 Storytelling .......................................................................................................... 23
       4.7.1 How to create interesting stories? ........................................................................ 23
   4.8 Right audience ....................................................................................................... 24
   4.9 Collaborations and influencer marketing ............................................................... 25
   4.10 Mistakes to avoid .................................................................................................. 27

5 Summary of the importance of Instagram ......................................................................... 28

6 Methodology .................................................................................................................... 30
   6.1 Methods ................................................................................................................ 30
   6.2 Validity and reliability ............................................................................................ 31

7 Empirical part .................................................................................................................. 31
   7.1 Current situation of Magisso’s Instagram ............................................................... 32
   7.2 Target of the interviews ......................................................................................... 33
   7.3 Results of the interviews ....................................................................................... 33
       7.3.1 Strategy theme questions ................................................................................ 34
       7.3.2 Actions theme questions ................................................................................. 36
       7.3.3 Summary of the results .................................................................................. 37
   7.4 New Instagram strategy for the case company ....................................................... 38
7.4.1 Increasing the engagement ................................................. 38
7.4.2 Content creation for target audience ....................................... 39
7.4.3 Use of Instagram ads ............................................................... 39
7.4.4 The efficient use of hashtags ...................................................... 40
7.4.5 Collaborations with influencers .................................................. 41
7.4.6 Summary ........................................................................... 41

8 Conclusion and discussion .............................................................. 42
8.1 Main findings ........................................................................ 42
8.2 Suggestions for further research ................................................ 43
   References ............................................................................ 44
   Figures .................................................................................. 48
   Appendices ............................................................................ 49
1 Introduction

Social media is a new marketing method in our society. Social media channels have opened an entirely new way for companies to reach their audience and communicate with their customers. Because of its affordability and effectiveness, the environment of social media is competitive.

In today’s world marketing, especially social media marketing, is a term which is used in various contexts and its baseline understanding is essential. The world is constantly changing, and the traditional marketing is becoming less effective. Today large and small firms are competing for the same market, and the most innovative companies will succeed the best. Marketing is a continuous process. Marketing is a process to analyze and monitor the customers and fulfill their needs.

With 500 million active users, Instagram is currently the second most popular social media. 50% of Instagram users follow at least one business and 75% of the users take action, such as visiting a website or store, after looking at the post (Leonard 2017). These numbers summarize the power of Instagram in today’s marketing.

Visual marketing is playing a pivotal role in the design companies. Instagram is a great platform to show beautiful and innovative design products to large audiences around the world. Reflecting DeMers (2017), Instagram has changed the world of marketing.

This thesis study is going to include precise research regarding the importance of Instagram as a social media channel. Thesis will include guideline on how to build a successful Instagram strategy. The case company needs a well-planned strategy to improve its Instagram marketing. Although the case company is already developing different actions on Instagram, the company lacks a clear and organized Instagram strategy. Different parts of the new strategy will include all the functions of which the case company should focus more on. These steps of the strategy are intended to help to reaching the strategic goals of the company.
1.1 The purpose of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to give the case company a better understanding, of how to use Instagram marketing efficiently with a structured Instagram strategy and how to analyze the current situation and trends of Instagram marketing.

The aim is to build an Instagram strategy, which would increase the case company’s brand image and the sales. The main idea is to learn to understand how design companies use Instagram in their marketing and what are the key concepts of well-planned Instagram strategy.

The goal of the new strategy is to provide useful tips on how the case company can improve their Instagram profile. The new strategy will help to recognize the strengths and weaknesses in the current strategy. The reason behind this research, is an urge to increase the brand awareness of the case company.

As a result of this thesis, the case company will receive a new Instagram strategy and deeper understanding of the changing marketing trends and customer behaviors on Instagram.
1.2 Case company information

Magisso is a small to medium-size design company from Finland. The company creates functional design products for everyday life. Magisso focuses on b2b sales. Their mission is to create innovational products, which will make the customers smile (Magisso website 2018).

The company uses both traditional and digital marketing in their strategy. Magisso has decided to put more focus and effort to digital marketing to be up to date on continuously changing environment. Even though the traditional marketing is not the main focus area, Magisso uses printed catalogues and flyers which work well in trade fairs. Drip campaigns, SEO marketing and social media (Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn) are part of Magisso’s digital marketing strategy. Instagram is the fastest growing social media platform at the moment (figure 2, 13), and therefore it is the company’s most used social media platform. Magisso, as many other design company, wants to be part of the innovative and visual platform, where it is possible to create content to engage with the customers.

Magisso is eager to understand the possibilities of Instagram marketing, and how to create a connection with the customers through the platform. The company is also interested to learn how other similar kind of companies use Instagram, and which kind of strategy does they have. Magisso has been on Instagram already couple of years. The account is called @magissofinland.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

This thesis includes the introduction, theoretical background, research methods, empirical study, discussion and the conclusion. The introduction describes the current situation of social media marketing and Instagram marketing. The introduction also gives an insight of the thesis purpose and the subject of the thesis.

The theoretical background will give a deeper understanding about the subject and the different parts of the Instagram strategy. Strategy parts will help companies to understand how to communicate in Instagram and how to create good content. The empirical part will analyze the current situation of Magisso’s Instagram account and the research findings. The discussion summarizes the main findings and provides future development suggestions for the company.
1.4 Target of the research

This case study was conducted in order of the CEO of Magisso, to build the company a new Instagram strategy. The aim of the new strategy is to receive a deeper understanding of the Instagram marketing, and its affections to sales.

In addition to case study research, the author gathered the information from other Finnish design companies, by using the qualitative research method. Snowball sampling was used to gather some of the researched companies. Author decided to use exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling method. In this method, the first interviewee recruited to the sample group can provide multiple referrals. Each new referral is explored until primary data from sufficient number of interviewees are collected.

The theoretical findings provide the foundation for the empirical analysis of the case company and for the researched design companies. Primary focus is on the company’s need to build a new Instagram strategy. The base of the Instagram strategy has been built by using different literature sources. By examining how other design companies do their Instagram marketing, the case company will receive a broader to understanding of the design companies’ environment on Instagram.

2 Instagram and design industry

This chapter will concentrate to the importance of Instagram for design companies. Chapter will give explain the terms social media marketing and Instagram marketing. Many design companies are nowadays focusing on Instagram instead of other social media channels. This is an interesting observation, which will be covered in this chapter.
2.1 Social media marketing

There are various ways to describe what is social media. According to Agresta (2010, 5), social media is an act of creating and posting content online. The key concept of social media is to share a content with those who you identify as your friends or followers. Social media involves a natural conversation between people about something of mutual interest (Evans 2008).

Social media has changed traditional marketing strategies. Because of social media, we have now more choices on how we want to spend our time (Agresta 2010, 6). Before the appearance of social media, brands and companies announced the news through the printed world and the broadcast television. These methods do not give a consumer chance to communicate with the companies.

Nowadays it is much easier to get a direct contact with a company. Social media provides new ways for marketers to listen their consumers (Agresta 2010, 6). Consumers are interacting with different networks and reading reviews and recommendations. Other peoples’ opinions have an influence on individual’s purchasing decision. For the marketers’ point of view, one of the most valuable aspects of social media is building and maintaining a feedback loop. (Evans 2008, 10).

The purchase funnel for traditional media normally builds up with three different stages. These stages are awareness, consideration and purchase. This same purchase funnel can be applied to social media, for moving the potential customers towards the ultimate goal, the sale. (Evans 2008, 10).

There are three other stages which can be added to the classic purchase funnel model. The user generated funnel stages are use, form opinion and talk (Figure 1, 12). The last two stages of user generated funnel are strongly involved to the last two stages in the classic model. In order to create effective social media marketing strategy, the company needs to understand all parts of the purchase funnel, and how these parts are interacting with each other.
2.1.1 Instagram Marketing

Instagram is a unique platform, unlike any other social media site (Miles 2014, 2). Many marketers face the question, why should they start using Instagram as part of the company’s social media marketing strategy.

There are significant reasons why Instagram is on the top of the social media platforms. One significant reason is, that Instagram is the only platform where brand posts will show up in the followers feed without requirement to boost the post. Instagram is also the only mobile-focused social media platform. This gives the app a competitive advantage compared to other social media platforms.
The purpose of Instagram is the visual aspect of the app. 83% of all human learning is obtained through visual processes, mainly because visuals are highly memorable (Scissons, Vo, Sim 2015, 10). This creates a great chance for brands to build an emotional tie with their consumers, through visual effects.

Instagram has not always been this popular among the marketers. Only a few years back, Instagram was seen more as a photo editing app with fun and artsy filters. (Miles 2014, 50). After the Facebook purchased Instagram on 2012, the app started to change. Facebook’s purchase gave the app more relevancy among advertisers and marketers. Although Instagram has mostly remained its own brand, its parent company has made a few changes. One of the latest changes has been the use of algorithm for presenting the photos (Miles 2014, 51).

Companies need to have specific objectives for each post and for every hashtag. Whether the company wants to lead prospects to their website or ask them to sign up for an event, each post should serve a purpose and work in conjunction with the rest of the posts.

There is no set of prices for advertising in Instagram. The companies create a bid for their ad’s placement. Instagram will publish the ad of the company, which makes the highest bid. Even though the companies do not necessarily have to invest a lot of money on Instagram, they might face the challenges with publishing their adverts.
Instagram’s algorithm is changing frequently. Carbone (2018), pointed out a few important aspects of how Instagram’s algorithm has changed during 2018. The first notable change that companies should focus on, is to spend more time on posting the stories. The stories are a great way to connect with the followers. According to Carbone (2018), companies posts will show in the follower’s feeds if they have first interacted with the followers through the stories. Other important factor is to find out when the audience is most active. One efficient way is to use different platforms, which will automatically calculate the best posting times. The other option is to look Instagram’s own analytics and find out the most popular posts, and the best posting days.

2.2 Design industry and social media

The word design is usually described as the creation of a plan or convention for the construction of an object, system or measurable human interaction. The purpose of design is to create innovative and creative inventions. There are different types of design, such as graphic design, industrial design and interior design. The different specification areas include interaction design (“UI”), user experience design (“UX”), customer experience design (“CXD”) and service design. (Medium 2017).

Design world used to be extremely exclusive. Durmaz (2014, 1) stated that traditional media has further created this exclusiveness by displaying the design products as part of luxury lifestyle, what only few can afford. Traditional media has not either encouraged to two-way communication between design brands and the consumers. Interior blogs and social media have made the elitist design industry more accessible, and relatable for everyone who are interested in design. Design bloggers are encouraging the design companies to communicate more with their customers.

Even though Durmaz (2014) researched the fashion Industry, the research has a lot of similarities with design industry. Design and fashion are both influenced by cultural and social attitudes, which have varied over time and place. Design and fashion enthusiasts used to search their inspiration from expensive luxury magazines. Today the inspiration search is effortless and affordable with sites as Instagram and Pinterest.

Social media channels are extremely important for designers. Many designers are using Instagram to showcase their work. (Blake 2016). Geo-tagging is a good way to attract local clients and companies. If the designer is interested on a certain brand, commenting and tagging the brand to the posts is a good way to receive the attention. Video tends to get more engagement than static image (Blake 2016). It is no wonder, why many creative professionals want to showcase their creative innovations or portfolios through videos.
Social media differs from traditional marketing, because it places the company in the position where they can directly interact with their audience. That is why social media is more effective, but also more difficult to implement.

2.2.1 Why Instagram is important for design brands

Many design companies have found Instagram marketing as an effective marketing strategy. Design companies want to create innovations which sell. Plattner, Meiner and Leifer (2010, 4) are pointing out that it is easy to create an innovative product, but it is much more challenging to start think about the possible sales, distribution and marketing channels.

The competition between design companies has increased, and companies are putting more and more effort and resources to social media channels (The Recipe for Success 2013, 5). Interior design brands are focusing on the uniqueness of their products. Because of Instagram and other similar apps, there is an increasing number of photos available online. This is the reason why design companies want to put more effort and focus on visual marketing, and how they want to be seen as a brand.

“With the explosion of digital marketing, the modern landscape for the interior design industry has grown to be a complex and technology-dependent system. Operating a firm in the current market requires finesse in areas far more in-depth and time-consuming than those required of designers past” (The Recipe for Success 2017, 2). Marketing methods and strategies have always been time-consuming. The companies are able to reach global audiences fast and effortlessly via Instagram. Targeting the message to right focus groups can be challenging on Instagram, although finding the right audience can be equally challenging in any other marketing channel.
In the Recipe for Success: “The good news is that social media, in terms of marketing, is extremely affordable. Unfortunately, it requires a strong strategy and can take a lot of time” (The Recipe for Success 2013, 3). It is true that social media is very affordable compared to other marketing tools. Most commonly used apps and platforms are free to download. Every organization should have a well-prepared social media marketing strategy, in order to achieve their goals.

Instagram is creating sales. Over \( \frac{1}{3} \) of Instagram users have used the app to purchase a product in online. This shows the power of Instagram. Many people might not yet understand how important channel Instagram is for sales. (Life Marketing, 2018.)

3 Building a strategy

Instagram, as any other marketing channel, needs a well-organized strategy. This chapter will give information about the importance of a good Instagram strategy and how to build a winning strategy.

Instagram strategy is a part of both marketing and the communication strategy. Marketing strategy helps to shape the company’s image and to differentiate the company from its competitors, while the communication strategy helps crafting messages to internal and external audiences (Walsh 2016).

Social media strategy is a summary of everything the company wants to achieve on social media. It is one part of marketing strategy. The purpose of social media strategy is to guide the actions in different social media channels. Every post, reply, like and comment should have a purpose (LePage & Newberry 2018). Instagram strategy is one part of social media strategy.

Figure 4 is a framework of a general strategic planning cycle. This can be also implemented to Instagram strategy. There are five key steps of strategic planning which need to be followed (figure 4, 17).

Chapter 4 will determine the mission, goals, desired outcomes and strategies of the new Instagram strategy. Measures and results will be further determined and explained in chapter five.
Figure 4: Framework for operational planning (IIBM, 2018)

The strategic planning cycle begins with understanding the mission of the unit. (Chicago State University 2012). Perhaps the best way to define the mission, is to start thinking the answers to the questions of what should be done differently and why.

Every strategy needs a set of goals which will determine what the company wants to achieve with the strategy. The main goals of the case company are showcasing the products, increasing the sales, increasing brand awareness and creating a loyal customer base. The different parts of the Instagram strategy will help the case company to achieve these goals. With a well-planned and structured strategy, the case company is able to strengthen their brand and receive more visibility.

After the goals and desired outcomes have been defined, the company should have a clear understanding why the strategy exists, and how the strategy will meet the stated goals and outcomes. Companies need to think about the different parts of the strategy, and how each of the part of the strategy moves the organization towards the stated goals (Chicago State University 2012).

It is important to define and explain, how the success of the strategy is being measured. All the outcomes should be measured. It is recommended that the company will set criteria for their success. The criteria can be for example a certain group of people, who are somehow showing an improvement over previous terms. (Chicago State University 2012).

At the end of the planning cycle, is the results part. Results usually includes a discussion of what went well, what was accomplished and what changes need to be done. If the results have been gathered carefully in time, the company will get a clear vision of the whole process.
The key steps of Instagram strategy include choosing a simple promise, visual storytelling and associating the message with the right occasions. Instagram posts should support the brand image. The posts should provide content which would capture the audience closer to brand’s culture. The best brand promises deliver a simple and sophisticated message (Scissons et al. 2015, 12).

3.1 Determination of the content strategy

Content strategy is the core of Instagram strategy. In order to become successful on Instagram, the posts have to be engaging or relevant to the target market. This is why it is crucial, that companies plan and determine carefully the type of content they want to post.

According to Pacis (2017), there are at least four categories which the companies can use in their social media marketing. The first category is Product-centric. This is perhaps the most commonly used Instagram marketing strategy. In the product-centric strategy, posts are focused to feature the company’s products. It is a straightforward way to show the followers what kind of products company have, and what excites the customers for the final purchase decision. Product-centric strategy has worked well for many companies. For example, Marimekko has built their product-centric strategy well by inspiring their followers and showing them the newest products in a creative way.

Culture-centric strategy is a good choice, if the brand has a strong culture, and the brand is able to establish its identity on social media. This strategy works also well for companies who have a lot of competitors with the similar kind of products. Companies like Nike have implemented their strong company culture to their Instagram feed. Nike is posting photos of famous athletes representing Nike’s culture and the values.

Some of the companies are also mixing these two strategies. If the culture-centric and product-centric strategies are mixed right, the company can create consistent Instagram feed.

As Pacis (2017) stated, user-generated content works for brands who have enough loyal fans and customers. In this strategy, the followers are posting the photos which include the brand’s products. Daniel Wellington has got a lot of variety to their feed by using this strategy. This strategy is not recommended for new brands, as new brands does not usually yet have a loyal customer-base.
4 Components of the Instagram strategy

This chapter will give an insight of the key strategic components. All of these components are important when building an effective Instagram strategy. In addition to important strategic components, this chapter will also explain the most common mistakes on Instagram marketing, and how these mistakes can be avoided. The summary at the end of the chapter will sum all the main points which need to be considered, when building an Instagram strategy.

4.1 Content scheduling

After determining the content strategy, the company needs to plan the content schedule. Instagram’s feed is not chronologic. It rewards the engagement by putting the posts in order, based on the content from accounts that are often interacted with (Cooper 2017).

Constant and ongoing posting time increases the visibility of the posts. There are tools to help the companies to schedule their posts in advance. Scheduling is especially important for small companies, as they do not normally have a single person who is only responsible for social media.

It is important to create the posting plan regarding to the amount of posts which the company is willing and able to post at a certain time. According to Pacis (2017), it is better to post every week for three days, than to post one week every day and next week nothing. Companies need to follow their target audience to understand the best posing times.

It is difficult to learn the best posting times immediately. Companies need to be active in social media and test different posting times, in order to understand which works the best for them.

4.2 High-quality images

People are paying a lot of attention to the integrity of the Instagram feed. Instagram users want to engage with media and accounts that they experience interesting. It is crucial that companies are providing high-quality pictures, especially because it is effortless to take high-quality photos even with the smartphone.

People want to follow accounts with nice pictures. It is easy to draw attention to a beautiful picture. That is why it is no wonder, why professional photographers have so many followers on Instagram. Composition, lighting, style and post production are all important parts of photo editing (Sharma 2018).

Lighting is one of the key elements in a photo. It is easy to spot, if the photo has a good or bad lighting. The image with a natural lighting usually stands out the most, as it makes the photo more authentic (Sharma 2018). Many photographers also use HDR images which are a mixture of underexposed, overexposed, and normal-exposure images.
Composition is also an important element in the image because it frames the whole image. There is a “rule of thirds”, which can help to layout the picture. (Sharma 2018). According to the rule, the composition should be divided into a grid and the most important elements should be lined up along the lines, or the intersections of the grid. This will create more interest and tension to the picture.

It is no wonder, why the Instagram accounts with a cohesive theme are highly popular. The order in the cohesive accounts satisfies the viewer’s eye. One way to have a cohesive theme is through colors (Sharma 2018). There can be a plenty of different color themes, for example neutral, warm or cold tone.

In photography, half of the work comes from post production. The feeling and the look of the image will change a lot by using different filters, it is possible to use the Instagram’s in-built filters, or edit the image manually. (Sharma 2018).

There are multiple great editing programs, where you can make your own filters and then apply them to all the photos. As Pacis (2017) stated, the best edits are barely noticeable.

4.3 Content creation

Instagram is continuously making large strides. One of the most important update, has been the ability to add stories to Instagram. (Khan 2018) Even though the stories are a lot like Snapchat’s stories, Instagram’s stories provide a huge opportunity to interact with the target audience in a genuine way. As stories are meant to be seen only for 24 hours, it gives the companies’ chance to post also content, that do not have to be extra polished.

Stories are a great way to increase the engagement because they go on the top of followers’ feed. Quick updates or product discounts in the stories, can boost the exposure with the followers.

There is also the option to use Instagram live videos. However, it is important to understand that live videos are only functioning well if the company has a legion of loyal followers. Similar to normal stories, live videos also show up in front of the followers’ feed. The Instagram Live is an excellent way to preview a new product or to host a Q&A (Questions & Answers) with the fans (Khan 2018). Live videos are a great way to establish the brand’s identity and connect directly with people.

Another important factor in content creation is the well-written captions. Especially when promoting the products on Instagram, the captions need to be action-orientated. Perhaps the easiest and most efficient way, is to put a link to the website to monetize the Instagram efforts.
Hashtags are very effective on Instagram. Pacis (2017) stated, that hashtags are a great way to reach untapped partitions of the target audience who are searching for new content by using hashtags. It is more effective research to use the hashtags that are commonly used in the specific niche and industry, than just use the most popular hashtags (Miles 2014, 46). Displaypurposes.com is a great tool for searching product and industry related hashtags. Hashtags will both increase the exposure and the engagement.

4.4 Optimizing for monetization

Traditional marketers and business owners may have the difficulties to understand that social media is functioning as a real business driver.

There are few ways to implement monetization on Instagram. One efficient way is to use CTA’s (Call to Action strategy). Prospects need to see immediately where they can buy the product. The Instagram bio needs to direct the followers straight to the company’s website. Good CTA caption could be: Fancy this dress? Link to our website in bio (Laurence 2017).

Another campaign method is the AIDA marketing formula (attention, interest, desire and action). The marketer’s aim is to receive new customers by capturing the attention, piquing an interest, creating a desire to buy and finally call the customer to action. (Miles 2014, 32). AIDA is an effective campaign model, although it has more steps than a normal CTA model.

One of the challenges in Instagram, is the difficulty to find the right prospects and get them into active mode to make the purchase decision. One alternative is to get the followers more active by featuring a limited-time offer, for example a coupon or a discount code. Discount codes and vouchers are a great way to activate the followers to make quick purchasing decisions.

4.5 Contests

Competitions are working in many channels, and Instagram is no different. The main point of Instagram contest is to make the followers more excited about the company’s products or services. Instagram accounts that organize contents, can achieve 70% faster follower growth compared to those who are not holding contests (Patel 2016).

The most efficient competitions are the ones that help the business to generate sales. The best way achieve sales is through lead generation. If companies are able to receive the contact information from the people entering to the competition, it will be easier to market the products for the attendees through email.

Comment-to-enter is perhaps the most common Instagram contest type. These kinds of competitions maximize the number of participants, as they are so easy to enter. Normally these
contests require that the participants have to like the photo of the contest, follow the hosting account / accounts and tag two or more friends in the comment section. This action helps to boost the hosting account and spread the word (Pacis 2017).

Other popular contest types are sweepstakes and the photo contest. If the company decides to use a third-party Sweepstakes app, it can turn its Instagram traffic into new leads for the business. (Pacis 2017). It is challenging to enter to sweepstakes competition, but it is also very effective in the long run.

It is easy to participate in photo contest. Companies need to get the participants to post a photo with a certain theme and get them to use a specific hashtag. This method is simple to proceed, and it also helps to spread the word about your business.

4.6 Ads

As part of the other marketing actions, ads are the best way to guarantee that the Instagram marketing efforts are really reaching the target audience. Many companies hesitate to pay for ads on a platform, that is hard to monetize. As Pacis (2017) stated, ads are nevertheless the best way to reach the right people and potential customers. Instagram is a great platform to display and share product information in a compelling way. Companies can convey a powerful call to action, by combining an effective copy write and appealing image (Miles 2014, 44).

![Screenshot from H&M’s ad on Instagram](image-url)
Instagram ads can appear in four different ways. There are photo ads, video ads, carousel ads and story ads (Instagram Business 2017).

Photo ad is the most common ad (figure 5, 23). The company can tell its story with a simple and beautiful photo. It is also easy to add the buy button into the photo. Companies can easily follow how many users have clicked the buy button. The photos can be either square photos or horizontal photos.

Video ads are visually compelling. Companies can share 60-second-long videos with a sound. This is a functional advertising method which creates a chance to stand out from the competitors. (Instagram Business 2017)

If the company wants to add other photos to the same ad, it should use a carousel ad. In the carousel ad the users can swipe to see the other products of the brand. This ad method is good if the company has multiple products, or a product line that they want to advertise in the same ad.

One advertising option is to create story ads. Story ads look different, because they appear in the Instagram’s story function. Businesses can share photos and videos that immerse Instagrammers in the content. With story ads, there is an ability to target the ads by the reach, video views and app installs, while driving the business results at the same time. (Instagram Business 2017).

Pacis (2017), has assembled some of the best practices regarding the Instagram advertising. Eye-catching imagery can be easily created on Instagram, especially because the ads look like normal posts. Although ad posts might look like a normal post, they are easy to spot. You can spot the ads from the sponsored text above the ad, and from the buy now button below the app. (Figure 5, 23). This is why it is crucial that companies are creating ads, which will draw people’s attention.

It is also important to understand how to target precisely. Targeting is the biggest selling point in Instagram ads. The best way is to identify different segments and create targeted ads to those segments, rather than try to catch all the potential customers with the same ad.

Creating a separate landing page, is also a good way to direct the people to the company’s website. This will give an extra push for achieving the conversion goal.
4.7 Storytelling

The best brands are storytellers. Stories are powerful tool in human communication. People want to share good stories with each other’s. Instagram is a great platform to share stories. The app’s visual context allows the user to share authentic and captivate visual stories through photos.

Occasions are the tangible building blocks, that are supporting the storytelling themes. Brands need to have a clear vision of how to express their occasions in a large picture. (Pearce 2017). For example, many Finnish design companies are using Finnish countryside as part of their stories.

Creating stories which will strengthen the company’s brand image, is more challenging than usually imagined. The following tips in the next section, will help the company to get started in storytelling.

4.7.1 How to create interesting stories?

Go back to the beginning. Most of the customers are interested in the brand’s history (Wildbloom 2016). It is always interesting to hear the inspiration behind the brand’s products or services.

Although it might feel challenging to share the vision with the consumers, it can be very rewarding. There are companies who have loyal customers, who want to help the company to achieve their vision.

It is always clever to talk about the people behind the brand. This is especially important for small businesses, who can grow their audience by telling about their collaboration partners (Wildbloom 2016). Companies need to show their audience, how the different processes are moving forward.

Many people start to follow a certain company, because of the company’s values. People want to follow those companies, who are sharing the same values with them. It is important to share the values with the audience and explain what these values means to the company.

Stories can bring more sales than testimonials (Wildbloom 2016). Especially, if the company has a customer story. People want to hear other people’s opinions. Companies might be interesting to share stories about their customers, who have used their product in an innovative way.

People remember how a certain story made them feel. That is why it is much more valuable to focus on building the connection in Instagram, rather than trying to increase the number of followers (Wildbloom 2016).
4.8 Right audience

Rohrs (2013), describes well the consumers right to choose which ads and brands they are interested in. As Rohrs (2013, 7) stated, we decide to follow, like and subscribe whatever or whoever we want to. The attention has to be earned.

Companies have to be aware of their audience and put effort to their content. But mostly, companies have to find their own audience. When the audience has been found and the attention has been earned, it is time to produce interesting content. Only after this, the consumer might like, follow and subscribe.

The social behavior needs to be intentional and targeted. It is important that the company follows people who could be their possible prospects, rather than just beautiful accounts (Miles 2014, 46). The easiest way to find the prospects is through the Instagram accounts, who are already following the company or the similar companies.

The engagement of the audience plays crucial role on Instagram. If the company is not able to post continuously good content, it will be left behind. Design companies have to be capable of creating content which shows the innovations in a way, that customer can understand how the products actually work.

Companies need to understand their brand personality, to be able to create amazing content. One challenge that design industries are facing, is how to explain the product idea with only one picture. Design products have often functions that are impossible to show in just one picture. Instagram attracts mostly because of the photos, and that is why the captions are usually very short under the picture. If the functions cannot be shown in a picture mode, the company should think alternative ways to present their product. The image will create an idea into the viewer’s mind, and the copy text creates a deeper connection (Scissons, Vo, Sim 2015, 16).

A strong Instagram copy will increase the engagement of the audience. A short message of inspiration, a lengthy description of the subject matter or a call to action, can create a deeper connection with the viewer by establishing an emotional bond. Although the image is in the primary focus, supplementary text supplies additional value for the viewer.
4.9 Collaborations and influencer marketing

Collaborations with similar brands and influencers are important part of Instagram marketing. Influencers are individuals with whom prospective customers are engaging at the time a purchase decision is being made. Influencers are also described as “individuals within a consumer’s social graph, whose commentary, based on the personal nature of their relationship and communications, has a direct impact on the behavior of that consumer.” (Brown & Fiorella 2013, 73)

It is important that companies are reaching the type of influencers who have the same target audience with the company (Quan 2017). Company has to plan what do they want to achieve with the influencer.

Influencer collaborations can be divided into six different categories (Barker 2018). These categories are sponsored social media content, gifting, sponsored blog posts, guest blogging, takeovers and brand ambassador programs.

The most common type of influencer collaboration, is to partner up with influencers in exchange for sponsored posts. A company need to provide clear content guideline for the influencer. The influencer will then create and post content, to promote the brand in the influencer’s own social media account. The content is an exchange for the fee, that the influencer is receiving from the company. For example, 59% of the micro-influencer have reported that Instagram is the most effective platform to engage their followers. (Barker 2018).

Gifting is one way to collaborate with an influencer. Gifting is also a sponsored partnership but instead of giving money to the influencer, the company will give a gift. A gift can be, for example, a new product that you would like to be tested and posted by an influencer. Gifting can be a bit risky because without a legal sponsor agreement, the influencer is not obligated to post anything (Barker 2018). On the other hand, if the influencer gets excited about the product, it can create positive brand image.

In addition to popular social platforms, many blogs are also experienced as a trusted information source. There are two types of sponsored blog posts. One is a dedicated post, where the blogger writes a whole post about the brand’s products and services. The other choice for sponsored blog post, is to get a mention on one of the bloggers post. In this case, the blogger normally mentions a number of businesses in the same post (Barker 2018).

Guest blogging is a unique way to collaborate with influencers. The brands need to identify a set of influencers, who own blogs with a high domain authority. These influencers should belong to brand’s niche market. The main point of this strategy, is that the brands create content to
the influencer’s site (Barker 2018). This way the influencer’s audience will become aware of the brand. Usually it also brings more traffic to the brand’s website.

Another popular collaboration format, is takeover. In takeover collaboration, the brand’s Instagram is completely in control of the influencer. All the brand’s content if posted by an influencer. Takeovers are usually very beneficial since the influencer content is more effective than the brand’s original content (Barker 2018).

Some of the brands want to take the influencer collaboration to the next level, by asking some of their most trusted influencer to become their brand ambassadors. (Barker 2018). Brand ambassadors use the brand’s products and promote them in online. Influencers share posts on day-to-day experiences of using the brand’s products. Brand ambassador works as a face of the brand, for enchased promotion.

Jenni Pupulandia is one of the most famous influencer in Finland. She is doing different types of collaborations, but mostly the sponsored collaborations with different brands, for example with Marimekko (Figure 6, 28).

Figure 6: Screenshot from Jenni Pupulandia’s Instagram account (@jennipupulandia)
Many potential customers base their purchasing decisions to third party reviews, rather than company’s own reviews. This is one of the main reason why it is important to connect with other brands and try to get them to write good reviews.

4.10 Mistakes to avoid

Understanding, estimating and avoiding mistakes are important part of any research. In order to be able to avoid common mistakes, it is important first to think all the possible mistakes that can happen during the process.

Patel (2017) notes, that one of the most common mistakes on Instagram, is the lack of strategy. Without goal-driven strategy, a company will most likely fail their whole Instagram. Before doing anything else, a company should define their strategic goals. After that, they can start to plan the Instagram strategy.

According to Hart (2017), one of the biggest mistakes on Instagram is leaving the link out. Unlike other social media channels, it is not possible to add link to posts on Instagram. This is why almost all the companies are using “Link in Bio” option. Companies can put their website link to their Instagram account description and lead the prospects to click the link. Without having the visible purchasing link, it is hard to guide the customers to make a purchase.

One of the other common mistake, is the failure to engage with the followers (Hart 2017). Social media is designed for communicating with others. In order to build the trust between the consumers, companies should provoke discussion and be ready to respond to the comments. By reading the comments, companies can learn more about their customers and their buying habits.

In addition to the mistakes mentioned above, there is one common mistake that many marketers do not realize to think as a mistake. That is the lack of consistency. Some brands post content continuously without thinking too much of the post’s purpose. Instagram is a channel for presenting the visual image of the brand. This is why it is crucial that all the photos and posts are relevant, and that they fit well to the brand’s visual image.
5 Summary of the importance of Instagram

Instagram is one of the most interesting social media channel at the moment. It has started as a mobile app and became popular almost immediately after it had been launched. Instagram is a valuable tool for any marketer, who want to increase their brand’s visibility. It is especially important tool for design brands, who want their prospects to experience their products through images. By the end of the 2017, there were already over 20 million active brands on Instagram (figure 7, 29).

One of the first things that companies should think about when creating an Instagram account is, how to build an effective strategy. There are many interactions to take care of, in order to become a successful Instagram marketer.

The magic in Instagram happens through photos and videos shared with followers. Engagement refers to interaction of the shared content. Likes, comments and followers are all part of the engagement. To provoke the level of the engagement, the company needs to understand all the affecting factors. These factors include for example, content creation, ads, audience targeting and influencers. Instagram can be integrated with other social media channels. This helps companies to measure the outcomes of their posts. There are also some third-party tools which can help with the measurement and the analytics.

The author will present the interview questions in the empirical part of the research. These questions are merged to the theoretical part. Although nine different components of an Instagram strategy were mentioned in the theoretical part, the author decided to bring up only five of these components into the interviews. Even though the author wanted to receive the answers for the certain five questions, all the components are important parts of the strategy. The
theoretical findings are supporting the interview questions. Through interviews, the author wants to find out how the various parts of the strategy are reflected in the company's activities.

Key concepts

**Social media marketing** - Social media marketing is a form of internet marketing that involves creating and sharing content on social media networks, in order to achieve the marketing goals of a company (Word stream 2017).

**Instagram** - Instagram is a social networking app made for sharing photos and videos from smartphone. The application is owned by Facebook (Moreau, E. 2018).

**Strategy** - Strategy is a high-level plan to achieve the set goals and aims. It is usually a long-term plan, which intends to increase company's resources (Business case studies 2017).

**Prospect** - Prospect is a marketing term, which usually describes a potential customer. (Prospect.io 2018)

**Visual Communication** - Visual communication is the transmission of information and ideas, by using symbols and imagery. It is one of three main types of communication (Miles 2014).

**Content marketing** - Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach, focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience. (Content marketing institute 2016).

**Follower** - A social media user who has subscribed to another social media account, so that they can receive their news (Miles 2014).

**Engagement** - Engagement can be understood as the result of liking, commenting, sharing or following another social media platform profile and their posts (Miles 2014).

**Hashtag** - A hashtag is represented by the “#”, preceding a word or several words without spaces between them. It allows simple categorization to be applied to an image. Anyone can create a hashtag (Miles 2014).

**Social media analytics** - Social media analytics is the practice of gathering information from social media, in order to make business decisions based on the information (Rouse 2017).

**Geolocation** - Geolocation is the practice of determining the physical, real world location of a person or device by using digital information (Miles 2014).

**Influencer** - An influencer is defined as someone who produces highly engaging, organic content for a large audience. Influencer often has an expertise in a particular domain, for example food, fashion, design. An influencer has usually thousands of followers and a high engagement rate and can also be referred as content creator (Miles 2014).
6 Methodology

The chapter 6 will give information about the used research methods and the validity and reliability of the research.

6.1 Methods

The theoretical part of the thesis consists of the concepts and theories from relevant academic literature. The purpose of the data collection, was to collect the answers for the research objective. The study is a case study research. The author decided to use interviews as a data collection method. This method was suitable, considering the research topic and the objective.

The research methodology includes four sections; designing a case study, collecting the data, analyzing the data and presenting the results (Research Methodology 2016). The theories and concepts reviewed, will be used to analyze the Instagram account of the case company. This thesis is providing a clear Instagram guideline for the case company.

Interview is a flexible research method, which fits well for many research purposes. In qualitative research the interviews can be divided into structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. (Research Methodology 2016).

The author decided to use semi-structured theme interviews as the research method. The semi-structured method is a qualitative research method, that combines pre-determined set of open questions. (Statistic Solutions 2014). The author observed that this is the best method for this research, as it gives the interviewer the opportunity to explore particular themes and responses furthermore. The snowball sampling was selected as a one method to gather the interviewees.

Author decided to use snowball sampling method also in the data collection. Snowball sampling method involves primary data sources, nominating other potential primary data sources which could be used in the research. It is based on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects (Research Methodology 2016). This method allows the author to collect information more freely, as the interviewed people and the interview questions are allowed change during the research process. Author wants to interview people who are working in the same industry. The first interviewees might have contacts with persons in the same field, who could add more value to the research.

Author decided to divide the interview questions into two different themes, to make the analyzing process clearer. Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) is a type of inductive analysis of qualitative data (Guest et al. 2012, 11). It can involve several analytic methods, which can be applied on interviews, transcripts from focus groups or even field observations. The aim of the
thematic analysis is to identify the essential themes which are forming the data. Thematic analysis is proceeding a closer and more detailed exploration, by identifying and categorizing the research into different themes (Koppa JYU 2010).

6.2 Validity and reliability

In the research process, the quality of research is assessed by the validity and reliability of the used sources in the data collection. It is important to remain the quality of the data sources, both in data collection and in data analysis.

Even though the qualitative research has been critiqued by the lack of consensus for assessing its quality and robustness (Leung 2015), it is the best research method for receiving a deeper understanding of the research objective. It is also suitable method for this particular research, as there were only a few interviewed companies, in addition to the case company.

Interviews must satisfy the criterion of using low-inference descriptions (Silverman 1993, 302). It is easier to satisfy this criterion in the e-mail interviews, because participants are doing their own transcribing. When reporting interviews, it is possible to satisfy the need for low-inference descriptions by tape-recording face-to-face interview and presenting long extracts in the research report.

There are different ways to support the validity in qualitative research. For example, validity can be supported with analytic induction, comparative method, deviant-case analysis, comprehensive data treatment and by using appropriate tabulations (Silverman 1993, 293).

The case study and the interviews are the primary research of this thesis. The theoretical research is used to support the findings. Information in the theoretical section was collected through primary and secondary sources. The sources included books, articles, blogs and companies’ websites. To gather enough information for the study to be reliable, a few design companies were interviewed to support the theoretical background and the case company study.

7 Empirical part

The empirical part of the research describes the findings of the case company research, and the findings of the interviews. This chapter will include the research process from interview questions to the analysing of the results. The last part is the discussion part, which will sum the results.
7.1 Current situation of Magisso’s Instagram

This chapter will analyze the current situation of Magisso’s Instagram account, by referring to the theoretical section. The chapter will also come up with further suggestions on how Magisso can improve its actions on Instagram. The improvements will focus especially on increasing the engagement and the number of followers with well-structured strategy.

Magisso’s main social media channels are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Instagram is Magisso’s most important social media channel. It is important that all the channels are linked to each other. Magisso’s PR actions are supporting its marketing actions and other way around. PR actions include journalist contacting in company’s target countries: USA, Germany and Finland. Instagram supports the PR contacts, especially because many freelance journalists, stylists and photographers have popular Instagram accounts, where they post design photos.

The case company is currently using product-centric strategy on its Instagram. This strategy model works best for the case company. Although Magisso is focusing to B2B customers on its Instagram, the company wants to show the products in an attractive way and guide the customers to purchase. The case company does not yet have as strong customer base as for example Daniel Wellington has. Therefore, the product-centric strategy is the best strategy for the case company, and for the other companies who have less followers. The parts of the strategy, starting from the chapter 4.4.1 and ending to 4.4.9, are applied to product-centric strategy the company has used and will continue to use.

As mentioned in the chapter 3, Instagram is extremely valuable tool for marketers and brands who want to increase their brand knowledge. Instagram is also a great tool for creating a loyal customer base. Brand knowledge and loyal customer base are important especially for smaller companies and start-up, like Magisso. Magisso is able to communicate with innovative and inspirational images through Instagram.

In reflection to chapter 3, Magisso has already thought about its the strategy, although it is not ready yet. Magisso uses product-centric strategy in its Instagram. The purpose of the account, is to inform B2B customers about company’s new products and show the company’s brand identity. Magisso does not have an own online store, which creates some difficulties. For example, Magisso cannot put its own purchase link to bio. Magisso has used affiliate-marketing with some of its main retailers. This has created a chance to give discount codes for Magisso’s products.

For a Finnish design company, Magisso has alright number of followers. Perhaps the main problem in increasing the number of followers, is that people need to become familiar with Magisso as a brand. Without the third-party testimonials, new people are not going to find Magisso’s account. Although Magisso has already good images and material, the company needs to find other Instagram accounts who to collaborate with. These accounts do not have to have many
followers. The most important factor, is that the style of the photos matches to Magisso’s style. Magisso can increase its’ own follower base, by being more active in commenting and liking the followers’ posts.

7.2 Target of the interviews

The interviewed companies have been selected due to the industry of the company. The interview was executed with email interviews. The answers of the interviews will be analyzed with theme analysis. At the end, the interviewer provides a solid conclusion on the results of the interviews.

The author wanted to interview other design companies, who are similar to the case company. When deciding the researched companies, the important factors were that the company is thriving and epitomizes the concept of Finnish design.

The author wanted to choose different size of companies with a different number of Instagram followers, to make the research process more interesting. One of the companies is bigger than the case company or the other researched companies. One company is almost the same size as the case company. The third company is smaller than the case company. Even though the Instagram actions have different influence depending on the size of the company, the author thought that by receiving answers from different size of companies could create a positive variation to the answers. The idea was to adapt the answers for the case company’s needs.

The researched companies have different ways of doing Instagram marketing. The aim of the interviews is to find out how other companies are using Instagram, and do they have a structured Instagram strategy. The author will analyze the answers of the interviews in the results chapter.

The qualitative marketing research of the thesis is focusing primarily on Finnish design companies. Even though the primary focus is Finland, the research aspects of the Instagram strategy are valid on a global level.

7.3 Results of the interviews

The goal of the interviews was to gather information of how Finnish design companies are using Instagram in their marketing. The interviews were conducted with theme interviews, to give a deeper insight of the topic. All three interviewees were in charge of their organization’s social media channels. The interviewed companies were selected due to the industry of the company, and due to their companies influence on Finnish design. The size of the organizations varied within the interviewed companies.
The interview questions were designed to collect improvement ideas for the case company. The questions are related to the key elements of the Instagram strategy, which are mentioned in the theoretical part of the research. The author decided to divide the questions into two different themes. The themes are Instagram strategy and actions on Instagram. Instagram strategy theme includes four questions. The actions theme includes five questions about Instagram actions, which have a strong influence on company’s business activities on Instagram.

All of the interviewees understood the idea of the interviews. All of them thought that the topic of the thesis was interesting, and they were willing to help the research process by answering to the questions. One of the interviewed companies was changing their personnel at the same time when the interviews were conducted. The person who used to be responsible for the company’s social media had just left and because of that, the interviewee was not able to answer to all the questions. This created some challenges in the interview process.

7.3.1 Strategy theme questions

All three companies are using efficiently Instagram as one part of their marketing strategy. The wrap-up of the strategic theme answers is expressed in the figure 8. The figure shows the answers to the three questions of the strategic theme questions. The author thought that these answers would help in creating the new Instagram strategy for the case company. The three parts of the figure consists of a written Instagram strategy, 5 key points of the strategy and the companies’ strategy improvement. These elements helped the author to understand furthermore, which are the strategic key points for design companies.

![Figure 8: Wrap-up of strategy theme answers](image)
Two of the interviewed companies answered that they don’t have a written or documented Instagram strategy. Nevertheless, both of the companies are using Instagram as one of their top social media channels. Structured strategy would help the companies to follow their actions on Instagram and improve the things which are not working so well. By having a structured strategy, the companies are able to increase their brand awareness furthermore.

Two of three companies told their 5 key points of their strategy, although one of these companies had answered that they do not have a documented Instagram strategy. Even though the companies had different key points, most of the points were connected to the same aspect. The companies experienced that the most important points of a strategy were increasing brand knowledge, growing sales and setting the guidelines for the future actions (figure 8, 36). In addition to these, showcasing the products, inspiring followers, outlining the objectives and setting the future goals were kept as important reasons why strategy exists. The author was able to collect these information from only two interviewees. One of the interviewee left this answer blank, because the company did not have a documented strategy.

Two of the companies answered that they should improve their strategy furthermore, and they mentioned examples of the actions they want to execute. The only company that had a documented strategy also answered that they should do some improvements to their existing strategy. The interviewee of this company agreed that because social media is changing rapidly, what was relevant a year ago, is no longer relevant today. The interviewee also agreed that their company should revise their strategy on a regular basis, and that their targets and actions should be updated and improved.

The other interviewed company who answered that their strategy should be improved, answered they should start thinking the main points of their strategy more carefully, and how to bring the strategy points into action. The interviewee also told that they should investigate the possible analytic tools more and take some of these tools into use. The company wants also to start using sponsored posts more. The last interviewed company did not answer anything about the strategy improvements. This is mostly due to the company’s lack documented-strategy.
7.3.2 Actions theme questions

The actions theme includes five questions about Instagram actions, which have a strong influence on company’s business activities on Instagram.

![Diagram of actions theme questions]

Figure 9: Wrap-up of Instagram actions theme answers

Two of the interviewed companies are using Instagram ads, but neither of them is using ads on a regular basis. One of these two companies answered, that they sometimes use Instagram’s shoppable posts, but they have not found them very effective. The interviewee from this company also told, that they should put more effort to the ads and think about including the ads as part of their social media strategy.

The other company, who answered that they are using ads, told that they mostly use ads as part of the bigger campaigns. Nevertheless, the interviewee said that the company wants to reduce campaign ads and plan the sponsored posts more towards brand building and concrete leads.

All of the interviewed companies had something that they wanted to improve in their Instagram performance. According to the answers, all of the companies seemed to understand the importance of Instagram’s engagement, and two of them was already analyzing the engagement. These two companies also answered that they should put more effort on the engagement analyzing. By commenting, liking and sharing the followers’ posts, the companies are able to grow their engagement.
Hashtags are a big part of organizations’ Instagram actions. Whether the company is using targeted hashtags, can have a lot of influence on the company’s business success on Instagram. One of the questions was, how the company chooses the hashtags they decide to use in their accounts. The answers to this question varied quite a lot and according to the answers, it can be established that different brands have different needs for using the hashtags. For example, the bigger brands do not usually need the most common hashtags in order to increase their audience.

One of the interviewee could not answer to the hashtag question, as the company’s hashtags were decided by the previous employee. The second interviewee answered, that they use mostly hashtags to present the designers behind their products and the companies they are collaborating with. In addition to these, they are also using their own hashtags and some of the popular interior and design hashtags, which have millions of followers. The last respondent answered, that they use hashtags more with the “less is more” way and that they are avoiding the overuse of hashtags. They are only using “in-house” hashtags, which are strongly connected to the brand.

Influencer marketing is a big part of marketing strategy for many brands. Nevertheless, two of the interviewed companies answered that they are not using any kind of influencer marketing at the moment. One of these two companies are planning to try influencer marketing at some point. The third of the interviewed companies answered that they are using influencer marketing collectively. They have done influencer marketing with a few Finnish influencers, who are working in the media field.

Scheduling the posts beforehand is important but can be challenging on Instagram, because the app does not have a scheduling option, like for example Facebook has. None of the interviewed companies are concretely scheduling their posts beforehand. One of the respondents answered that they have tried scheduling, but they have not found any good application for scheduling the posts on Instagram. The second respondent answered that they do have a preliminary timetable for posts, but they do not use a concrete tool for scheduling. The last respondent answered that they do not schedule the post in any way.

7.3.3 Summary of the results

It is important to point out, that the interviewees were from design companies, who are eager to improve the impression of Finnish design, by creating beautiful and functional design products. All of the interviewed companies understand the importance of social media marketing and want to attract new customers by using social media.
All the interviewees answered that Instagram is their most used social media channel. This strengthens the authors hypothesis, that Instagram is the best social media platform for design companies. If the author would have selected some other design companies, the answers could have varied a lot.

7.4 New Instagram strategy for the case company

The purpose of this thesis was to create a new Instagram strategy for the case company, because the company does not have a written or documented Instagram strategy at the moment. Different elements of an Instagram strategy were researched in the theoretical part and with the interviews. The intention of the research process was to collect information from the most important elements of a well-planned and structured Instagram strategy.

Nine different elements of an Instagram strategy were described in theoretical part of the research. The author decided to choose five of these components to the interviews. The author experienced that these were the key elements, which could help to create a new Instagram strategy for the case company. The new strategy will include the use of Instagram ads, increasing the engagement, efficient use of hashtags, content creation for the targeted audience and the influencer marketing.

7.4.1 Increasing the engagement

The case company is currently analysing the engagement with Instagram’s own analytical tool. The problem is that the case company does not have concrete actions to improve its engagement.

Instagram’s engagement is understood as a communication between the company and the customer (Miles 2014, 18). Engagement is one of the most important factors on Instagram. According to the interview results and the literature sources, many companies are measuring the engagement of their posts with simple analytical tools, such as google analytics or Instagram’s own analytics. Although the interviewed companies are analyzing the engagement, they want to put more focus on the engagement.

The case company should like, comment and share the followers’ posts every day. When one of the company’s followers share a photo or an update which is strongly connected to the brand, the company should immediately react to it. This will create added value for the company.

In addition to liking, commenting and sharing, the case company needs to start posting more Instagram stories. At the moment, the case company is posting only a few stories in a week. In order to achieve a bigger engagement rate, the case company has to plan and post at least one Instagram story in a day. The case company will create an active and positive brand image, by communicating actively with the followers.
7.4.2 Content creation for target audience

It is crucial, that the case company understand its target audience. As the case company is focusing on b2b markets, all of their content is intended for other businesses and partners, such as retailers and corporate gift houses.

Captions, videos and photos are all part of the content. In order to be able to stand out from the competitors, the content has to be outstanding. Case company should focus on captions. The company’s target group includes mostly businesses and companies who are already somehow familiar with the case company’s products and services. They might already know how the products look like and what are their functions. Therefore, its more useful to focus on captions and direct the audience to make more orders.

The captions have to be thought carefully. They should include third-party reviews, or exciting facts about the products. Because the case company’s products are innovational and functional, this content strategy would work well for them. As mentioned in the theoretical part, the captions need to be action-orientated. The case company has to carefully think what they want to achieve with every caption. In addition to well-written captions, the photos also have to be high-quality.

7.4.3 Use of Instagram ads

The case company has tried to use Instagram ads couple of times. These ads reached large audiences in the target locations. Even though the reach was good, the case company was not able to see the ads’ influence on the purchasing decisions. This is one of the main reasons, why the case company is not using ads actively at the moment.

Instagram ads are affordable, compared to other advertisements. It is easy to target the ads with the right audience. Those companies who are willing to post ads more often, will also receive more attention on social media. Two of the interviewed companies also answered that they should start using more ads. Even though the ads would not convert to straight to sales, the case company is able to increase its recognisability in the desired markets. When people recognise the brand, they are more willing to purchase the brand’s products or services.

Case company’s target audiences are in different locations, mostly in USA and Europe. The company wants to market the different products for different target groups and locations. Therefore, it is important that the case company is targeting each ad for the right audience. The case company can start by putting less money to the ads and if the ads work well, the company can put more capital and make sure that larger audiences will see the ad. The case company can start with two ads in a week and then increase the amount of the ads, if the they seem to work.
7.4.4 The efficient use of hashtags

Hashtags are very effective on Instagram. The aim of the hashtags is to draw attention, organize and to promote. With the hashtags, it is easier for people to find, follow and contribute conversation of their interest (Brooks, 2014). As stated in the theoretical part, it is more effective to use hashtags that are commonly used in the specific niche. The case company is currently using mostly design related hashtags. Design industry is huge on Instagram and there are millions of designers and design brands, who are using the same hashtags. This is why the case company is not able to achieve a lot of visibility by using these kinds of hashtags.

The case company is already using the hashtag platform called Displaypurposes. This platform has helped the company to use industry related hashtags more efficiently.

Two of the interviewed companies mentioned, that they are mostly using their own hashtags. The case company has also tried this, but because the case company’s own hashtags has had only few users, they have not brought more followers for the company.

According to Bunskoe (2014), the most effect hashtags are related to trends, products, location or events. The new hashtag strategy will include the use of these hashtags.

A trending hashtag is a hashtag, that is normally related to a current worldwide topic. Trending hashtags are continuously changing. Twitter is the best platform to find the current trending hashtags (Bunskoe 2014). Whenever, the case company sees a trending hashtag related to design and innovations, they should add it on the company’s hashtag list. Therefore, the followers will know that the case company is interested about what is happening in the design world.

People search products by using product-related hashtags. The case company has to remember to use hashtags, which are strongly connected to the company’s products. These hashtags can lead to direct sales.

As previously stated, the company has different products for different target audiences. That is why it is crucial, that the case company is using the location hashtags in a right way. Whenever the case company wants to bring up a local retailer, it should use specific geo-targeted hashtag to receive more attention in a certain city or town. This is a great way to interact with potential customers.

When a case company is participating to local event, they should always include the event’s hashtags to their posts. It is important that the case company spreads a word about the event and show their activity for their followers.
7.4.5 Collaborations with influencers

Influencer collaborations can bring a lot of visibility for the brand. Brand’s visibility is especially important for smaller brands. The case company should have two or three influencers, who are committed to the brand. For example, one of the interviewed company mentioned that they are using a couple of famous Finnish media influencers in their brands’ posts.

The reason why the case company have not been using influencer marketing that much, is that it can be quite expensive. Especially the most famous influencers are asking a lot of money for one post on their Instagram account. These posts are sponsored posts.

There is an option to collaborate with influencers without the payment. These influencers often have the similar kind of values as the company. The influencers are very interested in the brand, and therefore they are willing to help the brand without getting paid.

The best option for the case company, is to collaborate with smaller accounts. The case company needs to look for influencers, who have a similar kind of posting style with the company. The influencers who have a bit smaller number of followers, are usually more likely to start unpaid collaborations with the brands they are interested in. These influencers can post a content, of which the case company can influence on. The case company is able to receive good connections from the influencers.

7.4.6 Summary

The purpose behind these specific Instagram actions is that by focusing especially to these 5 actions, the company is able to grow its recognizably and increase its sales. Case company has to write these new strategy parts down and remember to update the actions and results continuously.

Updating and following the Instagram strategy has to become as a part of the company’s marketing routine. When the strategy has been followed and updated continuously, the company no longer needs to do huge changes on Instagram. If some strategy part is not working as planned, the company should change its actions and come up with new ideas. The aim of this Instagram strategy is to make the operations more secure ad considered, both in Instagram and in other business operations.
Conclusion and discussion

In the conclusion and discussion part, the author sums up the main findings of the research, describes whether the thesis process proceeded as planned and gives suggestions for further research about the topic.

8.1 Main findings

Today purchasing need is created through branding, marketing and influencers. This is why Instagram is a great platform for marketing. Many companies, especially bigger organizations, are experiencing Influencer collaborations as one of their most valuable marketing methods. Due to the influencer collaborations, organizations are able to bring their brand visible for larger audiences.

Instagram, as any part of marketing, needs a well-planned and solid strategy. The benefit of Instagram is the creativity of the platform, which allows for marketers to create interesting and personalized content. As Instagram is mostly based on communication through visual elements, it is especially important platform for design companies.

The communication between the customer and the company is easy and effortless on Instagram. One of the most critical metric to measure the success on Instagram, is the level of engagement. Engagement is understood as liking, commenting and following of the other user accounts. In order to increase the engagement, the company has to understand the environment on Instagram and what are their most effective ways to communicate with the followers.

According to the findings, the key elements of a successful Instagram marketing are:

- A written or documented Instagram strategy, which will be followed and updated constantly
- Posting interesting and personalized content
- Using brand related hashtags
- Increasing engagement by commenting, liking and sharing another users content
- Posting content continuously

When a company has successfully adapted Instagram strategy as part of their social media plan, company can get a high competitive advantage towards other brands. Marketing on Instagram can both increase the company’s sales, and also raise the brand awareness.

For the most parts, the thesis process went as planned. Some of the assumptions were changed during the data collection. The most challenging part was to find relevant literature sources, as the topic does not yet have a lot of research. Approaching the interviewed companies was also one of the challenges in the thesis process.
Receiving enough high-quality content, remained as one of the risks. When the main articles were found, it was easier to collect the information from similar kind of sources. The new sources raised new ideas to the structure of the thesis. The findings deepened the authors knowledge about Instagram marketing and strategy planning. The gained knowledge can be shared to guide other organizations.

It is important that the conducted interviews will produce relevant and interesting information about the topic. During the thesis process, the author noticed that finding successful design companies for the interviews, was quite challenging. Autumn is busy time for design companies, as they have many projects and Christmas is getting closer. The author had planned to interview different companies, but those companies did not want to be part of the research. Luckily, the author was able to gather other companies who were willing to answer the questions. Interviews with the new companies did not changed the overall purpose, or the results of the thesis.

The author was pleased with the results of the interviews, although it was challenging to reach one of the interviewees. The author was able to gather interesting literature sources to support the findings. All in all, the thesis process went well, and it followed the schedule.

8.2 Suggestions for further research

Social media marketing, especially Instagram marketing, is still in the early stage of development. Although businesses are putting more focus on social media marketing, there is still quite little literature about the subject.

The competition inside the Instagram and other platforms is tough, especially because the high-technical digital marketing companies are increasing. Creative marketers are producing interesting content, which is receiving a lot of attention. Other marketers are aiming for the same level in their digital marketing.

There are quit many interesting articles about the copyright violations on Instagram. This subject has become relevant in all of the social media sites. There is still a lot of misunderstanding and confusion about the subject. Copyright violations are important, and they should be investigated more. The literature about this subject is especially valuable for companies, who are not already familiar with the topic.
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Figures

Figure 1: Classic Purchase Funnel vs. the “New” Social Media Purchase (Friendly Voice Media, 2016) ......................................................................................................................... 12

Figure 2: Social networks ranked by the number of monthly active users (Business Insider, 2018) ................................................................................................................................. 13

Figure 3: Screenshot from Hay’s Instagram account (@haydesign) ........................................ 15

Figure 4: Framework for operational planning (IIBM, 2018) .................................................. 17

Figure 5: Screenshot from H&M’s ad on Instagram ............................................................... 23

Figure 6: Screenshot from Jenni Pupulandia’s Instagram account (@jennipupulandia) ....... 28

Figure 7: Brands are flocking to Instagram (Business Insider, 2017) ................................. 29

Figure 8: Wrap-up of strategy theme answers ...................................................................... 36

Figure 9: Wrap-up of Instagram actions theme answers ...................................................... 38
Appendices

Appendix 1. Theme interview

General information about the business

What is your position in the company?

Instagram strategy

What are the company’s three most used social media channels?

Does the company have a written / documented Instagram strategy? If yes, please answer the following two questions. If not, you do not have to answer the following two questions.

What are the five key points of the strategy?

Should the company improve their strategy furthermore? If yes, which actions they should execute?

Actions on Instagram

Is the company using Instagram ads in their marketing?

How does the company choose the hashtags they use?

Is the company using Influencer marketing?

Does the company schedule the posts beforehand?

Is the company analyzing the engagement of the posts? If yes, does the company use any program in the analyzing process?