

KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Business Economics

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CONTENT MARKETING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION ON  
INSTAGRAM FOR FASHION BRANDS

Thesis

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Sisältömarkkinointi ja sen implementointi Instagramissa muotibrändeille.

Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö analysoi sisältömarkkinoinnin tärkeyttä Instagramissa liikevaihdon, bränditietoisuuden ja asiakas uskollisuuden kasvattamiseksi. Opinnäytetyö tarjoaa tilastotietoa yritys X:n asiakaskunnasta ja asiakaskäyttäytymisestä Instagramissa antaen näyttöä siitä, kuinka sisältömarkkinoinnin teoriapohjaa voidaan implementoida yritys X:n Instagramin markkinointistrategiaan, käyttäen Instagramia täyden potentiaalinsa mukaisesti.

Aluksi opinnäytetyö kattaa yleistietoa sosiaalisesta mediasta, Instagramista ja niiden synnystä. Tämän jälkeen opinnäytetyö avaa sisältömarkkinoinnin määritelmän ja tarkoituksen ja ideaalin toteutuksen. Sisältömarkkinoinnin määritelmän jälkeen opinnäytetyö käsittelee keskeisiä sisältömarkkinointistrategioita keskittyen siihen, kuinka sisältömarkkinoinnilla voi kasvattaa brändin ja asiakkaan välistä suhdetta ja mitä vaikutuksia kyseisellä suhteella on. Yritys X:n kohde asiakaskunta käyttää päivittäin suuren osan ajastaan sosiaalisen median parissa, vain tylsyyden vuoksi. Siksi brändeille on äärimmäisen tärkeää olla aktiivisia juuri siellä, missä kohde asiakaskunta on ja käyttää hyväkseen laajaa seuraajamäärää, implementoiden sisältömarkkinoinnin strategioita, joita tämä opinnäytetyö tarjoaa.

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Content Marketing and Its Implementation on Instagram for Fashion Brands

Abstract

This paper critically analyzes the importance of content marketing on Instagram in order to increase sales, brand awareness and customer loyalty. This paper provides statistical information about Company X's customer base and customer behavior, providing insights on how content marketing could be implemented in its Instagram marketing strategy, and developing its social media marketing strategy on Instagram to realize its full potential.

Firstly, this paper covers some background information about social media and Instagram. This is followed by the definitions and theories of content marketing. After this, the paper discusses central marketing activities, focusing on how content marketing could increase brand loyalty, the relationship between the brand and the customer and what effects this could have.

Company X's target group spends a substantial number of hours on social media daily. The reason for this is boredom and the need for entertainment. It is therefore important for a brand to be active where its target group is and take advantage of the vast existing follower base it already has, using relevant content marketing strategies provided in this paper.

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Social media, content marketing, Instagram, fashion, customer contacts, marketing, digital fashion marketing

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is created in order to critically analyze the importance and outcomes of content marketing when implementing its strategies for a fashion company on Instagram. The theory of this thesis is based on the observations and statements made by many authors and some case studies, examining pros and cons of the implementation of content marketing. Observing social media, Instagram, customer motivations and behavior and analyzing the importance of content marketing when taking these factors into consideration also serve as the basis. Moreover, the thesis considers how to take advantage of these factors in order to increase sales and the connection between the brand and the customer. This is followed by the implementation of said statements to Company X's Instagram customer base and customer behavior. These are then paired with the statistics found using Instagram's company tool and analyzing its adequacy for this brand.

## 1.1 Social media and Instagram

Social media was developed when Bruce and Susan Abelson created an early social networking site which brought online diary writers into one big community. The increasing availability of high-speed Internet access added popularity to the concept leading to the creation of MySpace (in 2003) and Facebook (in 2004). This became social media. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 1.) Alt (2015, 112) describes social media as follows: "Social media allows individuals to share information, events, and happenings that take place in real time over different network platforms. It can be anything from status updates and profile information to news." According to Carroll and Ramachandran (2014) cited in Hansson & Eriksson (2016, 7), the Internet has fundamentally changed the way people communicate with each other and it has become an increasingly important tool for communication. Not only do people use social media, but large and smaller companies also do as well. (Enginkaya & Yilmaz 2014, 2). Being active on social media channels eases the process of creating strong brand images and gaining competitive advantages on the market (Pulizzi 2013). The efforts a brand puts

into its digital marketing strategy should aim to increase engagement and stronger relationships (Tiago & Veríssimo 2014).

According to Forrester Research 75% of Internet surfers used Social Media in the second quarter of 2008 by joining social networks, reading blogs, or contributing reviews to shopping sites; this represents a significant rise from 56% in 2007. The growth is not limited to teenagers, either; members of Generation X, now 35—44 years old's, increasingly populate the ranks of joiners, spectators, and critics. It is therefore reasonable to say that Social Media represents a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to companies operating in online space—or any space for that matter. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 1.)

In today's advanced digital environment, the competition for interaction and available resources for knowledge are more crucial than ever for fashion brands. Together with other social media platforms, networks such as Instagram allow consumers to interact and connect with each other and brands in a more collective way than ever before. This allows businesses to deepen their relationships with customers even more. (Killian & McManus 2015, 3.) Moreover, Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014, 1) state, "User-generated content and experience dominates the marketing communication implementations over social networks." Social media does not only allow companies to connect and communicate with customers with a positive outcome, but also there is a possibility that something might have a negative impact on a brand's equity and profitability, depending on what is being written on its social platforms (Killian & McManus 2015, 7). Social media allows more effective and direct connection and communication with the customers at the right time with a small expense (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 3). A brand's engagement in social media performs as a marketing activity in order to build relations with customers and therefore increase corporate profits (Kim & Ko 2012, 3). Furthermore, by providing successful content marketing, social media provides an opportunity to build a relationship with the customers and increase sales (Kim & Ko 2012, 3).

A study made by DEI Worldwide (2008) provides the following statistics:

70% of consumers have visited social media sites to get information;  
49% of these consumers have made a purchase decision based on

the information they found through the social media sites; 60% said they were likely to use social media sites to pass along information to others online; and 45% of those who searched for information via social media sites engaged in word-of-mouth.” (Kim & Ko 2012, 2.)

Connecting and communicating in social media is something that can have a negative or positive effect on a company, depending on what is being published (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 7). It is important to post applicable content in an appropriate way, at the right time and in the right platform in order to encourage customers to engage with the brand and grow brand equity. Giving relevant information to a targeted audience consistently- this is called content marketing (Zailskaite- Jakste & Kuvykaite 2016, 2; Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 4).

All things considered, companies that use social media as a marketing tool have a significant advantage compared to the companies that do not. With a large number of people passing on information through social media, in the end, the value of one customer is far more significant than what they initially spend. Kumar & George (2007, 1) agree that “the value a customer brings to a firm is not limited to the profit from each transaction, but the total profit the customer may provide over the duration of the relationship with the firm.” A customer’s purchase intention is a combination of their interest and the possibility of buying a product. Multiple studies show that purchase intention relates to the attitudes and preferences toward a product or a brand. (Kim & Ko 2012, 2.)

Jessica Westin (Head of Communications at Social Media Bureau United Screens and a former Social Media Manager at Zalando) states in an interview made by Hansson & Eriksson that the reason why Instagram has grown to be as big as it is today, is because of fashion. (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 35). A lot of consumers search for inspiration there, and it is a great place to share and express oneself fast (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 35). “Before Instagram existed, fashion blogs were the source of inspiration and Instagram grew in the same pace as fashion bloggers entered the platform.” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 35.)

Lee et al. (2015 cited in Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 37) characterize Instagram as a “social media platform with focus on archiving images.” Anna Wickham (Content Marketing Specialist and the founder of Charm House, LLC) agrees with Åkerlund (2015) in an interview made by Hansson & Eriksson stating that Instagram and fashion walk hand in hand since they both have one thing in common; “Instagram is a visual platform and -- fashion is a visual industry.” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 37). Wickham adds that “the fashion audience cares more about visuals than written content.” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 37.)

## **1.2 Company X**

Company X was purchased by Corporation Y in 1991 and its intention was to create a fashion jeans brand for young girls. It rapidly became a popular brand and was sold in several stores throughout Norway and Sweden. Later, Company X had created an entire collection, and in 1978 it opened its first store in Oslo. Today, the company has 200 stores across Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria. The company describes itself as “The international fashion destination for young women who love and live fashion and fast trends. Women who aspire to inspire others with their personal style and impeccable taste.” (Company X 2018.) Company X does a lot of collaborations with the biggest names in Scandinavia and in the world. They drive the initiative towards the more sustainable fast fashion practice called “Better Fashion Future”. (Company X 2018.) In addition to Company X’s main Instagram page (which has 401 thousand followers), every Company X store has its own Instagram account. This paper will discuss Company X’s Instagram marketing strategies and finding places for improvements. Company X has over 3200 followers on Instagram. Company X’s target audience age varies from people in their 30s, 20s and teenagers. A large number of people in this target group are addicted to social media and portable devices. It is therefore important to take advantage of these circumstances in order to increase brand awareness and more importantly sales.



## 2 WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

“Content marketing is the marketing and business process for creating and distributing valuable and compelling content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience—with the objective of driving profitable customer action” (Pulizzi 2013).

Content marketing differs from simple content in that content marketing must do something for the business. Namely, this is to inform, engage or entertain customers and lead to purchases (Pulizzi 2013). According to an interview with Brendan Cournoyer (content marketing manager for Brainshark), most of the time customers go through their buying process online by browsing products and doing research on their own. Therefore, it is notably important that a brand is easy to find, and content marketing is a tool to make this happen. (Cramer 2013, 3.) In content marketing the goal is to “make customers behave differently by making them stop, read, and think about the content provided”. (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 19). “Content marketing is the process of developing and sharing relevant, valuable, and engaging content to a target audience with the goal of acquiring new customers or increasing business from existing customers”. (Pulizzi 2013). This strategy aims at providing information that will engage customers in order to give them a valuable experience and an emotional connection with the brand without convincing advertising. “The key to succeed with content marketing is to create and deliver a value that no other brand can”. (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 17-19). Thanks to the created emotional connection and grown brand loyalty, the consumer is more likely to choose a brand when it is time to make a purchase (Pulizzi 2013). Moreover, content marketing creates a need for the customer that they did not know even existed. If content marketing does not fulfill a customer's practical need, their emotional need could still be satisfied (Hudson & Hudson 2008, 1).

## **Content marketing on Instagram**

“The main reason for the use of Instagram is the possibility to have social interactions with other users, achieving memorable moments through pictures, express yourself, escape the reality for a while, or take a look at what other people are posting” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 11). Instagram is a very popular platform for fashion brands, since it reaches a lot of people and it is free. Instagram is a great platform to find inspiration, carry out self-expression and escape reality. (Hansson & Eriksson 2016 11). Additionally, as stated earlier fashion is one of the main reasons Instagram is so popular these days.

Hansson & Eriksson (2016, 32) argue that brands need to be in front of the people that are addicted to social networks. “If you don’t exist where there is a demand from the consumers, your products will never be bought” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 34.) Moreover, Wickham and Westin both agree that if a brand wants to be a consumer brand, it needs to be active where the target group is. (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 34,38). Wickham adds that the two relevant requirements for a brand to be on Instagram are to have a visual product and a relatively young audience, who are addicted to social media and portable phones (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 35-38). Wickham states that “content marketing is applicable for fashion brands, as for any other industry” and that content marketing is “more than relevant to apply on Instagram.” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 37). Giving these statements it is clear that to be visible on Instagram is extremely important for a fashion brand.

Just about anyone can create interesting content on Instagram, but the most challenging part is to make sure it is relevant. In order to create interesting and inspiring content, a brand must put time into it and aim towards realistic goals. When creating a content creating strategy, a brand should know how active it is and should be, its target group, the perfect time to upload content, what kind of pictures to post and what hashtags to use. (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 34-35.) Kerpen (2015) states that a company’s entire social media marketing strategy can be summed up in two words: “being useful”. With every picture or text, a company posts it needs to ask itself: do clients find value from this post or do they find it annoying? The most important thing is to think like the customer. There is

no point in spending resources and energy on something that in the end brings no value to the company or then something that the customer does not want or need to begin with. (Kerpen 2015.)

Even though Cramer (2013, 1) states that content marketing should be stretched into several different platforms, Bourgeois (2014, 2) argues that at first it is hard for a brand to execute well in multiple channels. It is therefore better to focus on a few channels in order to provide successful content marketing. Several authors agree that the strategy of content marketing on Instagram should be planned in advance (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 38). Moreover Bourgeois (2014, 4) argues that there should be only one person leading social media updates. To give an illustration, if there are multiple people updating a brand's Instagram account, the overall look of the feed could be unaesthetic. One person's visual preferences may differ from others, so it would be wise to assign only one person to oversee managing the account. Moreover, this person should be educated and briefed about content marketing strategies on Instagram and on how to keep the content professional, inspiring, interesting and relevant. It has been stated by an employee of Company X that every Company X store have one person responsible of social media updates, which is preferable. But the main question is: are they educated and motivated enough to carry out this task and given worth their while when it's time to receive their paycheck? It is clear that the company profits from extraordinary content on Instagram, but what does this responsibility give back to the employees?

As earlier stated, this is an important factor on Instagram since it is a visual platform. Feed is the term to use when discussing the landing page on someone's account. There one sees how many followers they have, who follows them, who and how many they in turn follow, their bio (which is used to insert information about the account), and lastly the uploaded content. Compelling, content marketing strategy is vital for a brand, so that customers find motivation to interact (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 38).

### 3 MOTIVATIONS FOR CONSUMING BRAND RELATED CONTENT

According to (Muntinga, Moorman & Smith 2011, 15) there are few different types of motivation for consumers to consume brand related content:

- Surveillance: Unprompted information retrieval, i.e. observing, getting updated, knowing what is new.
- Knowledge: Learning more about the brand from other consumers' knowledge of the brand, for example looking up information in columns that they cannot find anywhere else.
- Pre-purchase information: Reading product reviews to support the buying decision.
- Inspiration: i.e. looking at images of other people's clothes for ideas about what someone might want to wear.
- Entertainment: Covers the motivations enjoyment, relaxation and pastime.

In conclusion information is the most common motivation for people to consume brand related content. Another substantial motivation is entertainment, the intention to unwind from everyday life. Young adults especially tend to spend hours a day on social media in order to be entertained and to kill time. Muntinga, Moorman & Smith (2011, 15-18) state that most people browse through social media mainly because they are bored. Additionally, there are sub-motivations when contributing to brand-related content: presentation, self-expression and self-assurance. "The self-presentation motivation refers to people contributing to brand related content in order to provide others with an image of their personality" (Muntinga, Moorman & Smith 2011, 15-18). Moreover, the possibility to meet like-minded others with a common passion towards a brand can create a strong connection with another. This creates a bond. Additionally, they can help each other when a bond has been created. To illustrate, this could be two people sharing information on a particular stores' location, tips and tricks regarding the product or a brand and so on (Muntinga, Moorman & Smith 2011, 21). Moreover, educational information is considered more interesting rather than informative content, for instance when a brand only talks about its products and services. The

key element in successful content marketing is to “create and deliver value that no other brand can” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 18). When a brand’s story lines up with the provided content and it uses it continuously throughout its marketing, customers can “identify themselves with the brand” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 18). According to Westin, the major challenge of content marketing on Instagram is to attract consumers to the brand. As earlier mentioned, one major challenge is that despite the regular multiple updates, they still need to be inspiring. It is not just solving certain needs; it is more about fulfilling dreams. To that end, it is not enough to just start the account; a brand needs to “fill their ambition level”. (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 34). In addition to knowing its target group’s behavior, a brand must acknowledge where their target group is and what purpose does the brand fulfil by existing on Instagram. To illustrate, Pulizzi (2013) states that Coca-Cola is a content marketing powerhouse. “They have to create amazing content that affects people’s lives, that people talk about and share.”

Additionally, in November 2012, the company relaunched its website as Coca-Cola Journey, an online magazine where journalists and freelancers create content with the goal of making an emotional connection with Coca-Cola products through their storytelling.

In an interview made by PR News with Ashley Callahan, manager of digital and social media for Coca-Cola, Callahan stated that “we seek out compelling stories to delight and engage our readers so that they enjoyed the time they spend with us” (Pulizzi 2013). The effect and importance of an emotional connection between a brand and the customer will be discussed further in this paper.

### **The dopamine effect**

In an article made by Eames Yates (2017) in Business Insider New York University, professor Adam Alter, author of *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked* explains the effects of getting a like or seeing a new post on Instagram on the brain. He compares the production of dopamine, a chemical linked with pleasure, to drugs or alcohol:

When someone likes an Instagram post, or any content that you share, it's a little bit like taking a drug. As far as your brain is concerned, it's a very similar experience. Now the reason why is because it's not guaranteed that you're going to get likes on your posts. And it's the unpredictability of that process that makes it so addictive. If you knew that every time you posted something, you would get 100 likes, it would become boring really fast.

This is the same thing that happens on Instagram. One never knows what type of content will be encountered every time the app is opened. New experiences happen every single time, and this- the production of dopamine and the unpredictability- gets people hooked on social media and mobile phones. If a brand is not in front of the target audience, consumers will not have the chance to get attached to the brand.

#### **4 CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT**

Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek (2013, 3) define customer engagement "as the level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organization." Consumer engagement is seen both as a strategic imperative for establishing and sustaining a competitive advantage, and as a valuable predictor of future business performance (Sedley, 2008 cited in Brodie ET A.L (2011, 1)). Specifically, Neff (2007, 1) views consumer engagement as a primary driver of sales growth, while Voyles (2007 cited in Brodie et al. 2011, 1) suggests consumer engagement enhances profitability.

Several authors agree that customer engagement increases corporate performance, including sales growth. It gives a significant competitive advantage and so increases profitability (Neff 2007, 1; Brodie et al. 2013, 1). Brodie et al. (2013, 1) state that by consumer engagement, not only does customer loyalty but also awareness grows. Kao & Winston (2016, 4) add that with a grown brand loyalty and trust between the brand and the consumer, brand equity increases as well. The theory behind this is that "loyalty leads to competitive advantages generated from brand equity" (Hansson & Eriksson, 2016 41). A website named

Lexico, which is provided by Dictionary.com and Oxford University Press (OUP), describes brand equity as follows: “The commercial value that derives from consumer perception of the brand name of a particular product or service, rather than from the product or service itself” (Lexico 2020). It has been stated that customers who are more aware of a brand are more likely to buy the branded products, since the brand is familiar and “play(s) a role in the consumer’s decision-making process” (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 41).

In conclusion, Bruhn & Manfred et al. (2012, 1) agree that social media can have significant positive influence on brand equity. Compellingly, Dijkmans et al. (2015, 59) agree, adding that positive corporate reputations can increase the number of purchases. “By delivering content that is vital and relevant to your target market, you will begin to take on an important role in your customers’ lives” (Pulizzi 2013). This is something that content marketing aims to do in order to create corporate profits.

#### **4.1 Relevant marketing activities**

#### **4.2 Online advertising**

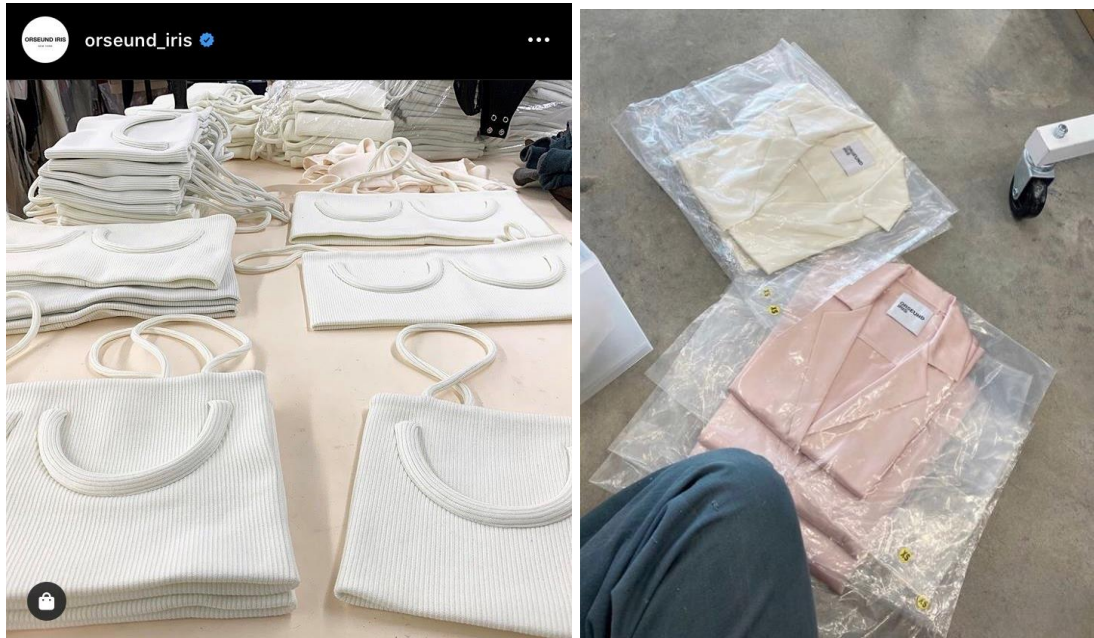
A study made by Smith showed that millennial’s favorite forms of online advertising are rewards and free gifts. Competitive pricing motivated 71% of millennials to visit a website again. This was the strongest indicator and was followed by professional layout, bright colors and interactivity. (Smith 2011, 2-3.) Additionally, Smith (2011, 2) argues that the usage of graphics is another feature that catches millennial’s eyes and is considered to positively impact their purchasing behavior. These factors alone do not guarantee an immediate visit, but the combination of promoting rewards and visual content can increase this probability. In comparison, poor digital marketing, such as irritating ads, can create a negative view of the brand (Smith 2011, 2). When a company succeeds in online marketing, customers are more likely to visit its pages again.

### 4.3 Content, a way of motivating people

A quantitative pilot study by Hansson & Eriksson (2016, 29) shows that most respondents considered a brand more attractive when it provides offers and competitions. Today, Company X has a Company X Life Membership program, which provides personal discounts and weekly membership offers and more for consumers if they join. These offers initially came from time to time (to give consumers the feeling that the offer is exclusive and valid only for a short period of time), but it did not get the popularity that was desired. Instead, Company X is now providing these member offers on a weekly basis. An instance of this is a 20% discount on shirts and blouses valid only for a short period of a time (a week for instance) and for Company X Life members only. This encourages consumers to join as a member and it increases sales. However, weekly discounts can create an illusion that there is always some kind of discount available. Consumers may get the idea that there is no point in buying normal priced items since they can have a discount of the desired item some other week. This may also possibly create a cheaper illusion of the brand. Normally priced items may not sell as intended so the brand has to continuously provide discount offers. On the other hand, these weekly membership offers can lure consumers to visit the store and then walk out with more than they originally intended to spend. As stated, members tend to spend more than non-members. There are pros and cons when it comes to membership programs.

Hansson & Eriksson (2016, 29) also state that by providing behind-the-scene-footage and an opportunity to follow the people behind the brand makes a brand more attractive. This seems to engage a feeling of friendship and trust between the brand and the people behind it. To give an example on how this could be executed, Images (2,3,4 and 5) are from a female clothing brand named Orseund Iris, which is quite a small but well respected and popular brand based in New York. These posts are from the company's Instagram account and taken from its warehouse, showing followers the manufacturing process of the pieces for their new collection release and restock.





Images 2 & 3. Pictures from Orseund Iri's Instagram.



Images 4 & 5. Pictures from Orseund Iri's Instagram.

This company is open to who works for it and provides an opportunity to follow people behind the brand, as Images 2, 3, 4 and 5 illustrate. Image 6 is from an employee's personal public Instagram account. The caption states how touched the employee is to have the ability to ship the orders from her home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This kind of transparency of an employee's personal life is not mandatory, of course, but as stated, this has a tremendous effect on the brand-customer relationship.

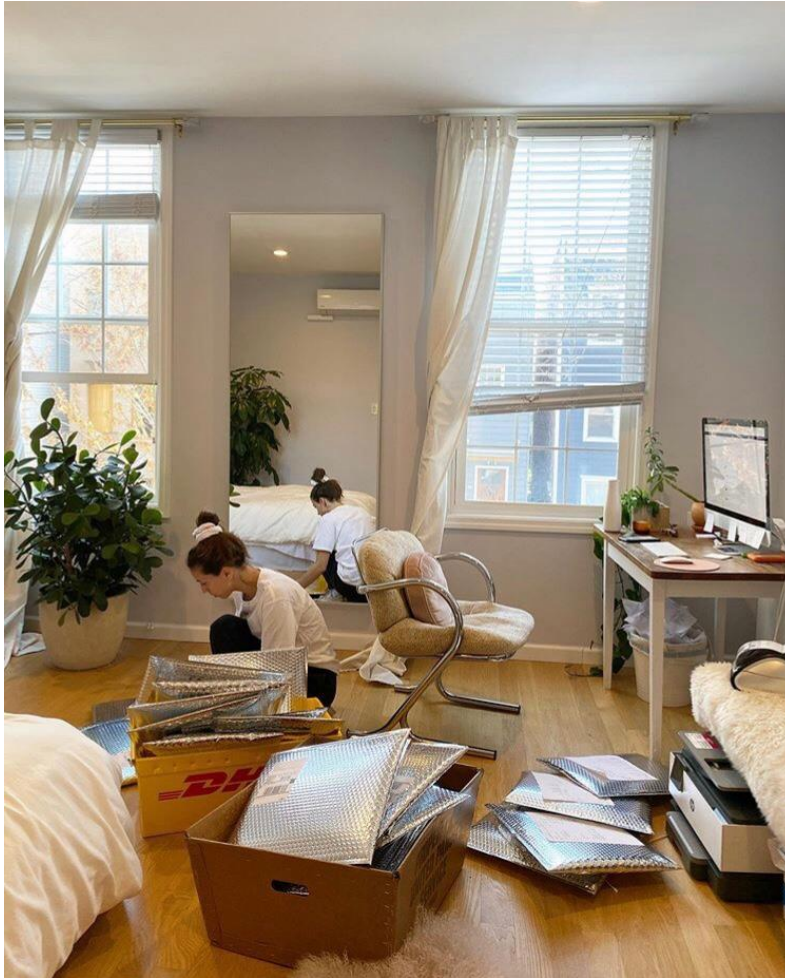


Image 6. An image from Orseund Iris employee's personal Instagram account.

Enginkaya & Yilmaz (2014, 220) describe the following two main motivations for a customer to join a brand community. One of them is the interest in experiencing enjoyment, being entertained and learning more about a brand in addition to gaining more self-confidence. The second involves socially-related motivations, such as the joy of joining a community, which triggers feelings of belonging. Wickham argues that a relevant way to motivate people to engage with a brand is to ask questions from them- given that the brand answers and reacts fast (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 38).

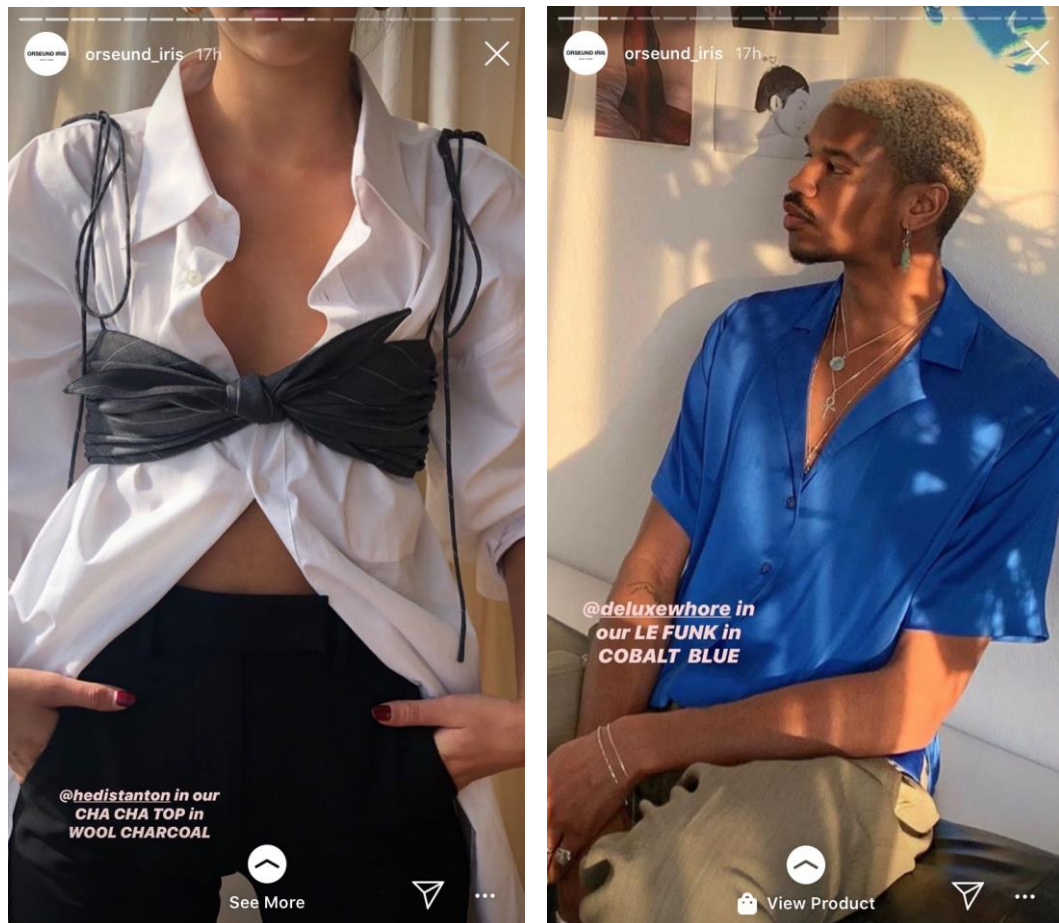
In addition to the previously stated important social media marketing content means, a notable way to activate customers could be for example providing videos. These can be styling tips or promoting some individual pieces. Then again, it is extremely important to keep in mind that the videos need to be short, efficient, professionally executed and visually pleasing. These days people do not have the time or interest to watch videos that are 20 seconds long. Diamond and

Singh (2020, 168) state that the first few seconds of a viewed video will determine whether it will be watched fully so it is vital to spark interest. Kallas (2018) argues that video content ignites emotions and is more likely to engage consumers. Studies show that adding a product video to a landing page can directly lead to increased sales by an immense 80%. Moreover, “studies show that 74% of users who watched an explainer-video about a product subsequently bought it”. (Kallas, 2018.) As the popular saying goes “a picture says more than a thousand words”. By providing both videos and images, this kind of content could be a significant factor in order to increase sales. Customers seeing certain products being worn individualizes them. Customers can see themselves wearing such products, and this increases their urge to buy them. Images 7, 8 and 9 will demonstrate this effect provided by Orseund Iris. Image 7. is from a video on their Instagram feed. There, the model is walking back and forth wearing the brand’s piece and giving consumers a chance to see the garment in movement and from different angles. Images 8 and 9 are screenshots from the company’s Instagram stories, where pictures from other consumers and influencers wearing the company’s pieces are shared, giving styling tips and in the case of Image 9, promoting that their pieces can be worn by both male and females.



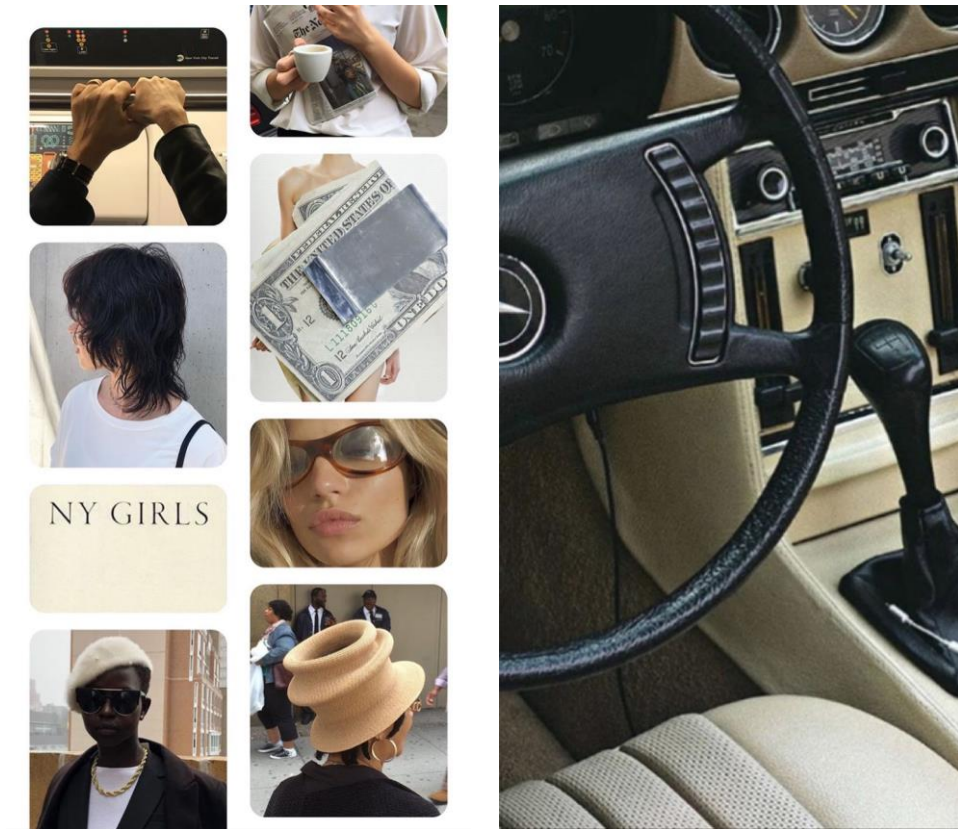


Image 7. An image from Orseund Iri's video on their Instagram feed.



Images 8 & 9. Images from Orseund Iri's Instagram story.

By delivering styling tips creates inspiration, and when showing more than one product on a post the probability that some customers like at least one product is increased. On the other hand, these videos were published on Instagram stories, and as previously stated, are only available for 24 hours if they are not pinned on as a memory (which in this case is probably not the best strategy). So, in order to reach as many views as possible, some of the videos should be published on the main feed. Not all, but some. The marketing on Instagram stories should alternate pictures and videos, the same thing goes for the feed. In this way the content can be interesting, ignite emotions, trust and trigger the dopamine flow on consumers. As they do not know what type of content they will see when they open Instagram or view a brand's Instagram story. No illustrate, Orseud Iris uploads mood boards on their feed and Instagram story, which creates a story and gives their followers an opportunity to feel more in touch of their collections and brand image (see images 10 through 12).



Images 10 & 11. Images from Orseund Iri's Instagram story.



Image 12. Image from Orseund Iri's Instagram story.

However, if Company X would publish these types of videos on its feed, it is crucial that the videos are professionally executed and visually pleasing.

#### **4.4 Emotional connection and engagement**

According to Brodie et al. (2013, 1) empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust and commitment and lastly consumer loyalty are some of the outcomes of consumer engagement. This takes shape from consumers' experience with online brands.

There are five different definitions for customer brand engagement: It is defined as "the level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organization," (Patterson, Yu & de Ruyter 2006, cited in Brodie et al. 2013, 106) and "behavioral activity in brand interactions" (Brodie et al. 2011, 6). Vivek, Beatty & Morgan (2012, 7) define it as "the intensity of an individual's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and activities initiated by either the customer or the organization." In order to reach all these different types of factors in a customer, a marketing strategy needs to be thought through. For instance, to reach a customer's emotional presence, Instagram captions should be relatable, friendly, fun and inspiring and emotion triggering.

The following is from the fashion brand Envii's website product description and supports the statements of the previous paragraph: "Work a hand-woven look with this super soft cardigan. With a long, relaxed shape in a special fiber blend that contains alpaca for extra texture and softness, the loose, thick weave creates a cozy hand-knitted vibe just like grandma used to knit." (Envii.com 2020.) This type of an emotionally triggering description makes the product immediately more attractive and makes the consumer more likely to want to buy the piece. The brand implanted a warm, happy, emotional story (that does not even exist) in the reader's brain and made the product the center of it. Hudson & Hudson (2008, 1) state that, "branded products are no longer just 'placed'; they are woven into

entertainment content making a stronger emotional connection with the customer". Cramer (2013, 4) agrees, stating that by providing storytelling content the emotional connection within the consumer is engaged. As stated earlier in the Coca-Cola case, an emotional connection is important. This kind of social media marketing is - as earlier mentioned - a great way to increase consumer engagement.

#### **4.5 Newsletters**

Both Wickham (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 18) and Pulizzi (2013) claim that encouraging consumers to sign up for a newsletter is one way to reach brand awareness in the pursuit of increasing loyalty between the customer and the brand. However, despite the large reach of social media, it is important to state the obvious- signed up customers are easier to reach than non-customers (Dijkmans et al. 2015, 60). This applies also with members. Several authors confirm this argument by claiming that fashion brands can increase brand equity on Instagram by being "top of mind", which means providing inspiring yet relevant content regularly (Pulizzi, 2013; Westin cited in Hansson & Eriksson, 2016, 34; Cramer 2013, 6). This is what content marketing is all about. Brands become irresistible and irreplaceable when they gain positive and exclusive meaning in a large number of consumers' minds and then, gain consumers' loyalty (Erdoğan & Çiçek 2012, 1354). As the popular saying goes: out of sight out of mind.

#### **4.6 Frequency**

Both Cramer (2013, 6) and Hansson and Eriksson (2016, 38) agree that the frequency of delivered content will determine whether consumers will engage with the brand or not. To illustrate, people do most of their research online by themselves before making a purchase decision. In order to make a purchasing decision, they need information. To get information they need content, and the more relevant the content, the more likely the purchase is, according to Cournoyer (the content marketing manager for Brainshark) (Cramer 2013, 3).

Therefore, one of the main strategies of content marketing is frequency- but as earlier stated, it needs to be relevant. Businesses who succeed in Instagram do not post only one time a day, they post five times a day (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 32). However, when a brand posts several times a day it can be considered annoying. Then again, according to Hansson & Eriksson (2016, 33) millennials have a high tolerance to advertising because they grew up with the internet. "For example, when advertising came to Instagram - the outcry fell quite soon because of their acceptance, something has to pay for the platform to be free." (Hansson & Eriksson 2016, 33). So, in a way, posting five times a day is not necessarily such a bad influence. However, Pulizzi (2013), cited in Cramer (2013, 3), states that just blindly filling a quota ("filling buckets", as he called it) of updates every week is not a good strategy for businesses either.

#### **4.7 The importance of timing**

As earlier mentioned, it is important to focus on what type of content to upload; however Kerpen (2014) argues that another thing to focus on is timing- when to upload content. Company X needs to think about its target audience. As shown in Figure 10, Instagram business insights show that most people who follow Company X's activity are 18-24 and 25-34-year olds. This demonstrates that most likely these people are at school or at work during the day so this needs to be taken into consideration when uploading content. Moreover, as Figure 11 indicates, most people are online at 9 pm, and the number of viewers is starting to grow from 12 pm forward. Lastly, Figure 12 shows that the most important days to unload content are Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. This makes sense: on Mondays the store gets the week's first shipment of product, on Wednesdays people are looking for something to spice up their wardrobe and mind, and on Fridays the viewers are looking for pieces for the weekend.



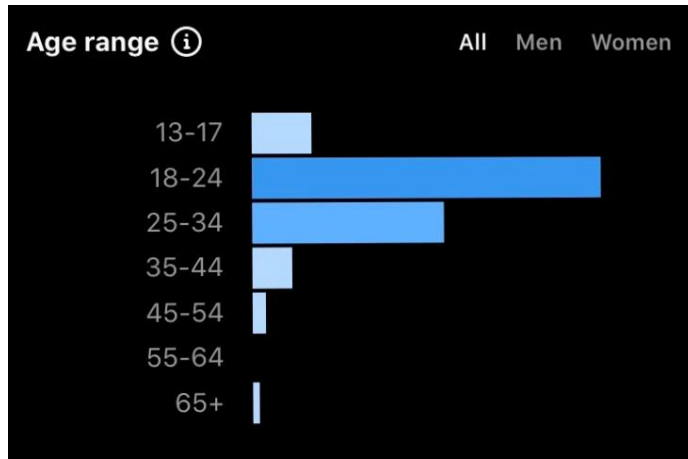


Figure 1. Company X's followers age range.

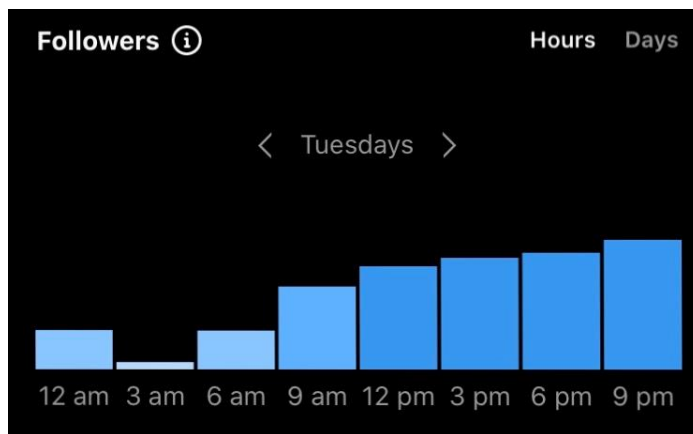


Figure 2. Company X's follower's hourly activity in one day.

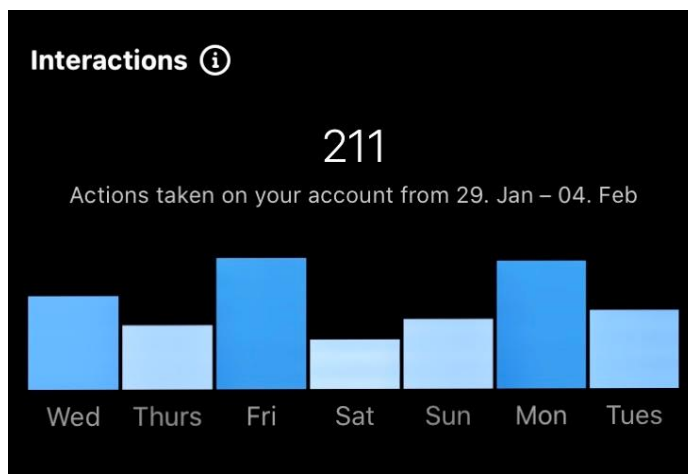


Figure 3. Company X's followers interactions in one week.

## 5 ANALYSIS

By providing successful content marketing strategies mentioned here, Company X can increase its brand awareness, customer loyalty and the number of visits in store and so inspire consumers to buy more. This leads to increased turnover. Additionally, professionally executed content marketing on Instagram perfects its current brand equity.

To give an illustration, if Instagram is used to its full potential consumers could consume content including the “hottest new products”, styling tips and behind the scenes footage. The company could alternate video and image content on its Instagram stories and feed, posting frequently at the right time. It should also consider exclusive membership offers.

In conclusion these kinds of marketing strategies answer the consumers’ motives of why they browse on Instagram: for observing and getting updated, trying to learn more about a brand and the products, searching for information before purchasing such as styling tips and materials used in making garments. This further includes the enjoyment of entertainment, relaxation and the chance to pass time. With content marketing, consumers can familiarize themselves with the brand, be more aware of it and its products and create trust and connect with it. With these strategies consumers can feel inspired and intrigued to come and see the sold pieces in person.

As mentioned earlier, branded products are woven/placed into the feeling of entertainment with storytelling, this allows the consumer to feel being a part of something. This can be aligned with the same principles as subliminal advertising; the viewers are not fully aware of a product being placed on the viewed content. To illustrate, the garment making process and therefore be emotionally attached to the product. The viewer is interested on how to the garment is made and how visually pleasing the video itself is, little do they know

that this creates numerous emotions which in the best-case scenario will in the end lead to purchasing said item. For example, the feeling of being a part of something, suspense, excitement and interest. What will the finished product look like? When will the product be released and ready to purchase? When creating this kind of mindset, the product will more likely be bought. In the eyes of the consumer, a long awaited product is emotionally more important than impulse buys.

Having said that, Company X alone cannot carry out this kind of storytelling entertainment factor so far, since the firm only receives the products and hangs them up in the store. This kind of footage could be created by the social media team and then sent to the stores for publishing. The collection design team could for example create behind the scenes footage on the design procedure and so on. In 2020 Company X has used more video content in its campaign shoots and on Instagram. This is a promising sign for the future, but there is more room for improvement.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

As stated earlier, the internet has become an important tool for communication, and every day more and more people are using social media and Instagram. Using social media as a marketing tool gives brands significant advantages when creating a strong brand image and building relationships and trust with customers. In conclusion content marketing is a great strategy to increase brand loyalty, awareness, equity and most importantly- company profits.

Content marketing should be implemented to Company X's Instagram marketing strategy immediately. With it, there is an emotional connection being made between the brand and the customer and therefore, customers are more likely to choose Company X when it is time to make a purchase. Content marketing allows

businesses to provide relevant information about a product and brand without convincing advertising. It provides behind the scenes footage, styling tips and entertainment in order to tell a story within the brand to promote products in order to increase the relationship between the brand and the customer and most importantly increase sales.

Company X's target group spends a substantial number of hours on social media on a daily basis just because they are bored. It is therefore important for a brand to be active where its target group is and take advantage of the vast existing follower base it already has. Providing a chance for customers to join in a community and to get weekly discounts is an excellent way to reach more members and stay connected with already existing ones. Being given the chance to be a part of the Company X family triggers the feeling of belonging, which increases brand loyalty and equity. To provide relevant content frequently is the definition of content marketing, but the challenge of it is whether consumers would get value from it or if they would find it annoying. The most important factor is to think like the customers and try to see things from their perspectives.

This brings us to timing- when to post content. As seen by the statistics of Company X follower's activity, the ideal time to post would be during the afternoon and evenings. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are the ideal days to upload content. This is the time when most people are on Instagram and therefore, the most likely to consume content. Company X members receive weekly discounts and membership offers if allowed. Sales assistants are advised to try and persuade members to allow these marketing emails from Company X in order to keep personal contact with them. In addition this encourages consumers to join the membership program.

As earlier mentioned, every Company X store has its own Instagram account (in addition to the main Company X account), and store employees oversee managing these accounts. According to a Company X employee there has been more social media content available for stores made by the Company X social media team in 2020. This has mostly been for upcoming campaigns, but

occasionally Company X's main Instagram account publishes videos which can then be screen recorded and added to anyone's account. Then again, in this case the quality of the content is not high. The increase of alternative content is a promising sign for the future; however, the content seems predictable and monotonous so there is room for improvement. To illustrate share visions, behind the scenes footage and mood boards (see Orseund Iris as reference). Even though content marketing is a profitable way to ignite emotions and so increase urges to purchase, to provide professional content marketing on Instagram is a very time-consuming and challenging task that should be acknowledged.

Having said that it is unreasonable to assume that every Company X store could provide professional content with minimal equipment and environment. In light of this, it is crucial that in order to carry out meaningful, professional content marketing, the social media team of Company X should provide more of this kind of content for stores to upload and then publish on their own accounts. However, as stated earlier, basic campaign content is made and is available for stores to upload on their feed- with instructions stating what and when to post. On the other hand, this gives stores an opportunity to alter their feed as they seem appropriate and upload content that seems the best for their customer base and provides a chance to be creative. However, the most important factor here is that the education of content marketing is provided to the employees. Good content marketing includes knowledge of consumer behavior psychology and good basic knowledge of social media marketing theories and strategies, not to mention the meaning of content marketing and how to carry it out.

Finally, Company X should provide appropriate wages for the hours and energy spent on planning and executing these important marketing strategies. In this way employees can carry out worthwhile tasks and feel motivated to continue this important responsibility, and content marketing could be implemented to each individual Company X store correctly. It has been stated by previous Company X store managers that Instagram posts can be uploaded during work hours. However today, most employees plan and edit Instagram posts during their free time without getting paid since it is more efficient. Work hours at the store are planned for other meaningful tasks within the store and not for sitting in the break

room and uploading Instagram content. Additionally, the environment in the store may not be the most ideal place when creating inspirational content for a brand, which can be considered as an art form.

This paper has successfully proved content marketing to be an important strategy for Company X to gain the ability to deepen customer-brand relationships and so to increase sales. More interesting literature on this topic can be found for example regarding the psychology behind content marketing; however, this thesis successfully provides improvements and critical knowledge for Company X not to mention the most important factors to take into consideration when implementing content marketing to Instagram. The method used in this thesis provides results on how to successfully implement and perform the strategies mentioned to reach consumers' specific needs. This in turn gives Company X an easy start on the implementation process and more knowledge when continuing to reach its goal of offering consumers entertainment, education, knowledge, friendship and self-confidence through fashion.

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