Instagram as a social media marketing tool

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This thesis is perfect for someone who has no prior knowledge of social media, Instagram, and how it could be used as a marketing tool. I will analyse the basics of social media marketing and Instagram as a platform, after which an experiment will be presented including framework, processes, execution, analysis and conclusion. The type of this thesis is practice-based, and the research methods used are interviews, discussions, observations and statistics. The purpose of the thesis is to gain insight on social media marketing as a tool in for businesses or any other organization for that matter. This is beneficial to anyone who wants to gain some understanding on this contemporary topic.

I will write about the importance of social media, with a specific focus on the importance of social media marketing for businesses. Some key numbers including references are presented to emphasize this, with the main point being that over the last decade the use of social media has increased exponentially. After this I will give insight on the plan of this thesis and how I came up with the idea, as well as some information regarding the objectives of this so-called experiment.

I focus on the theoretical part by explaining key concept around social media, marketing, Instagram and influencers. This part is particularly important for the laying of the framework of this thesis, including the limitations.

I will explain the methods and measurements used in the thesis, the main one being the experiment, where I start an Instagram account and make 67 posts after which I analyse key metrics, such as reach, likes and comments. The experiment includes an observation period, during which social media is practised, during and after which the key numbers involved are analysed and assessed. Here is also analysed what kind of skills are required in order to perform the experiment.

The main focus on the empirical part of this thesis will be on this experiment - the development of the Instagram account. I will use a variety of articles to support my thesis theoretically and also use the concrete numbers and other measurements drawn from the experiment to find some kind of answer or conclusion.The experiment is all about the results and observation made along the making of this thesis as well as a major analysis on key statistics at the end of the observation period. The numbers are taken from statistics provided by Instagram insights and present statistics of 67 Instagram posts with a variety of data.

conclusions are made based on the results and observations. Some key findings are that it is important to make posts on a regular basis, making constant analysis in order to improve the reach and engagements of posts. The main objectives in this thesis were not met, but otherwise this paper gives an extraordinary insight on things learned during the process as well as provides a kick-start to any social media marketer.

Keywords
Social media marketing, Instagram, Content creation, Influencing, #

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1   Introduction

The main focus of my studies was on marketing, social media marketing specifically. I gained total of 25 credit points from social media marketing courses. I felt this was the right topic for me to write the thesis about. I am interested in social media because of its huge influence on the world today especially businesswise.

1.1   Background

Social media has become one of the dominant things in 21st century daily life. Everyone has a device with internet access, everyone is connected. It is estimated that around 42% of the world´s population, which represents 3,2 billion people, is active on social media. (Tjepkema 3 January 2019.)

Never before have we been so connected as today, sharing pictures, video´s and sending messages all over the world through many different channels and platforms that are out there. This is probably the main reason why it has become crucial for organizations to be present on social media. (Mohsin 7 August 2020.)

Business-wise, if you are not on social media you are missing out on huge opportunities to engage with potential and existing customers. Social media marketing is a growing industry in which a lot of turnover is made, and social media platforms are great tools for business´s to market their products, ideas and messages. Therefore, it has become crucial for business´s to engage with people through social media platforms. (Mohsin 7 August 2020)

It is estimated that investments in social media advertising will grow to roughly 48 billion US dollars in 2021. Compared to 32 billion US dollars in 2017, this means a 50% increase in the industry, thus a huge opportunity for marketeers and content makers. Around 66% percent of marketing professionals are planning to increase their usage of the Instagram platform for marketing purposes. (Guttmann 19 July 2018.)

Companies make their own social media pages to publish advertisements, engage with their customers, or build their brand image. Many of them, especially multinational corporations, have their own teams and tools to do this, but they can also make use of an influencer to promote products. Especially the latter is one of the big new trends in the recent and upcoming years, as influencers have a closer relationship to their followers than any company can have. (Tjepkema 3 January 2019.)

Instagram is definitely dominated by young people, as 67% of 18- 29 year olds use Instagram, compared to 23% of the 50-64 year olds and 8% of the people aged 65 years or older. This trend also confirmed on my following, where 34% of my followers are 18-24 years old and 55% is 25-34 years old, which leaves only 11% of the people being younger than 18 or older than 35. (from the Instagram account peki_jay)

Looking at the top 100 most followed Instagram accounts I start to understand why influencers are the hot topic on Instagram. Only 18 of the 100 topmost followed accounts were not people. In other words, 82 of the 100 most followed Instagram accounts are influencers. Fun fact: Cristiano Ronaldo is the number Instagram influencer with over 200 million followers and all the Kardashian sisters are included in the top 20 most followed Instagram accounts. (Social Book 2020.)

1.2   Objective and limitations

I started wondering, what if I want to use Instagram as a marketing tool? A lot of people, especially my peers, use Instagram daily, but they use it for entertainment purposes, to entertain themselves. However, businesses are for quite some time already using Instagram as a marketing tool, which means people already understand how to use it for this purpose.

In this project I will try to figure out what is needed to learn how to use social media as a marketing tool, particularly Instagram. I will analyse what Instagram is, how it is being used by the consumers and how you could use it as a marketing channel. Alongside I will find out what "influencers" are and what role they play in social media marketing.

The reason for choosing Instagram is because of its relevancy to my own age group and because of the growing influencer activity. Instagram reached one billion users in 2018 and went from 500 million monthly active users, to 1 billion monthly active users in 2018. as of 2020, more than 900 million users are reached through paid Instagram advertisements. I think it is clear why Instagram and social media platforms in general are very attractive for marketing purposes. (Tran 4 February 2020.)

1.3 Thesis type and research methods

As I go on with my research, I realize there is no clear science behind a successful social media marketing strategy, as there isn´t with marketing and advertising in general either, or even running a business for that matter. However, what I started noticing really quickly was that everyone knows at least for themselves what works and what not. From this I got the idea: I will start my own Instagram page, from zero, and figure it out for myself, by looking at what others do and say, what kind of theories and hypothesis there are out there, and then applying it to what I am doing. The type of this thesis is practice-based, and the research methods used are interviews, discussions, observations and statistics.

The main focus on the empirical part of this thesis will be on this experiment - the development of the Instagram account. I will use a variety of articles to support my thesis theoretically and use the concrete numbers and other measurements drawn from the experiment to find some kind of answer or conclusion.

The experiment observation period was from the 1st of May to the 31st of October, which is when I returned the final draft of my thesis. During the observation period, I will simultaneously create, analyse and develop the Instagram account and assess the outcome of the experiment measured in the fulfilment of the goals, as well as, what I observe and learn along the way.

The objective of the observation period will be to:
- post at least five days a week
- become a Nano-influencer (Gain 1000 followers)
- become familiar with Instagram as a consumer
- Learn how to use Instagram as a marketing tool

After the experiment I made a summary of the observations, analysis´ and creations and write the thesis discussion. I also made notes of the feedback I received from other people, articles and other papers I read and an interview I conducted with a nano-influencer The conclusion was written mostly based on the discussion.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In the introduction I look at the importance of social media, with a specific focus on the importance of social media marketing for businesses. Some key numbers including references are presented to emphasize this, with the main point being that over the last decade the use of social media has increased exponentially. After this the author gives insight

on the plan of this thesis and how he came up with the idea, as well as some information regarding the objectives of this so-called experiment.

In the second chapter we focus on the theoretical part by explaining key concept around social media, marketing, Instagram and influencers. This part is particularly important for the laying of the framework of this thesis, including the limitations.

The third chapter focuses on the methods and measurements used in the thesis. The experiment includes an observation period, during which social media is practised, during and after which the key numbers involved are regarding reach and engagements regarding social media posts. Here is also analysed what kid of skills are required to perform the experiment.

The fourth chapter is all about the results and observation made along the making of this thesis as well as a major analysis on key statistics at the end of the observation period. The numbers are taken from statistics provided by Instagram insights and present statistics of 67 Instagram posts with a variety of data.

In the final chapter conclusions are made based on the results and observations. Some key findings are that it is important to make posts on a regular basis, making constant analysis in order to improve the reach and engagements of posts. The thesis is a semi-failure in terms of numbers and objectives not met but gives an extraordinary insight on things learned during the process as well as a provision of a kick-start to any social media marketer.

2   Social media marketing as a concept

Some key concepts should be explained in order for the reader to understand what exactly the framework is of this thesis, what the limitations of the research are, how the experiment was done, as well as, what was accomplished, such as what skills and knowledge I accumulated and how it relates to my education and this thesis.

2.1   Social media marketing

Marketing is defined in the Cambridge English dictionary as: "*the business activity that involves finding out what customers want, using that information to design products and services, and selling them effectively*" (Cambridge dictionary 2020.) Social media marketing, or SMM in short, is therefore a marketing tool utilizing social media, mainly social media platforms, which contribute to the execution of the marketing strategy of an organization. SMM is especially a very used tool in marketing strategies when the aim is to reach the audience digitally rather than physically.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary of the English language social media refers to "*websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone*".(Cambridge dictionary 2020.) Another definition in business English provided by the same website is "*forms of media that allow people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones*". (Cambridge dictionary 2020.)

In order to be more precise and not to leave anything open for interpretation I also checked the definition of media: *"the internet, newspapers, magazines, television, etc., considered as a group"* (Cambridge dictionary 2020.)or *"videos, music, and photographs that are stored as particular types of file on a computer",* (Cambridge dictionary 2020.) both of which are excellent representations of my personal interpretation of the word.

Social media is being mostly practiced on social media platforms, which consists of applications and websites specialized for this purpose. There are many of them, with different purposes and ways of using them, for as long as the internet came into mainstream use. Depending on where you are in the world, there are different platforms in use. For example, where Facebook and LinkedIn are popular in Europe and the Americas, WeChat is dominating the Chinese market. As of 2020 some of the most popular social media platforms based on monthly active users are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, and many many more. From these platforms, Instagram is one of the fastest

growing, which is another reason I chose this platform to be used in my thesis. (Influencer MarketingHub, 2020.)

2.2 Basics of Instagram

Instagram is a rapidly growing platform established in 2010 and bought by Facebook in 2012, reaching one billion users in 2018. People create an Instagram account after which they can follow other accounts, share video´s and pictures and react on other people's content by liking, commenting and sharing. (TechTerms 2020.)

The platform is dominated by young people, which is nicely depicted in Figure 1. From figure 1 we can conclude that more than 70 percent of Instagram users are younger than 35 years of age. Due to its high visual focus the main occupancy on Instagram is the taking, editing and sharing of pictures, GIFs and videos through so called "posts". A post is a picture accompanied by text that appears in peoples "feed" and is saved into the "grid" of the account holder who posted it. Alternatively, pictures and images are shared to "Instagram stories", which appear in the "story feed" and they disappear after 24 hours.
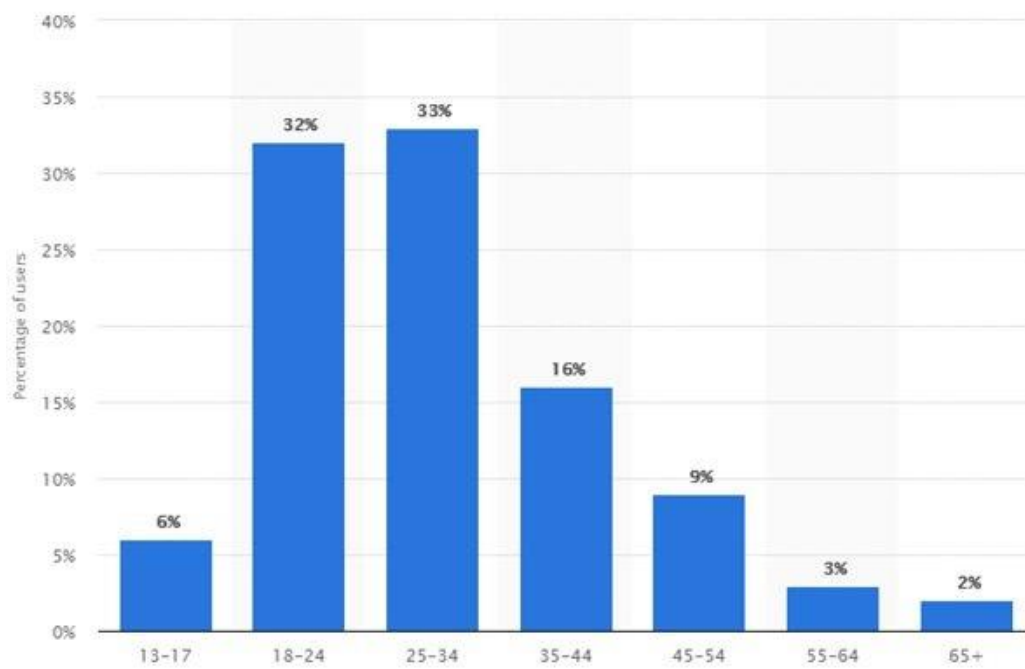
Figure 1. Percentage of users on Instagram by age group. (Influencer MarketingHub 2020.)

In figure 2 we see an example of a video post on Instagram. A post consists either of a picture or a video. Figure 2 is a video, hence the play triangle button. The picture or video

can be accompanied by a writing called a caption, which you can see in the top right corner of figure 2. The caption is optional and has no restrictions in terms of what to write there, but it is usually related to the content of the picture or video.
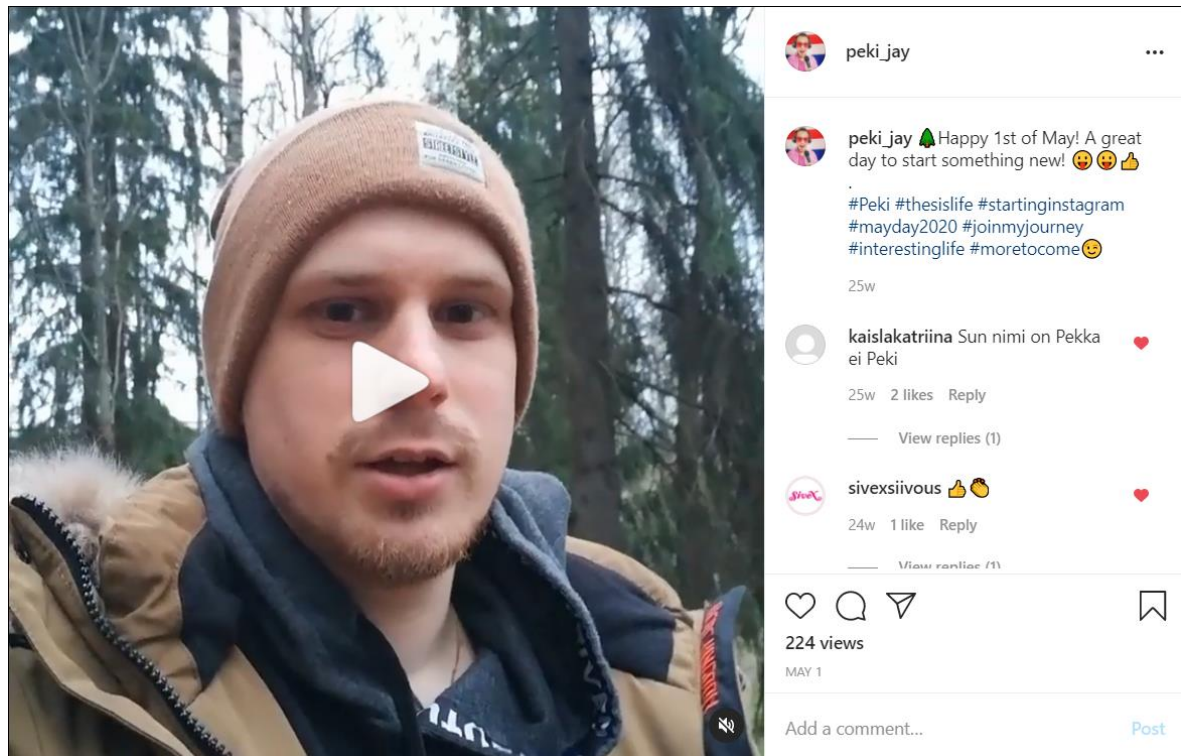
Figure 2. Example of a video post on Instagram. (peki_jay 1 May 2020.)

As seen in the right bottom corner of figure 2, other account holders can like the post by clicking on the heart symbol, comment by clicking on the speech bubble and then writing, share the post with someone by clicking on the double triangle and saving the post to one´s profile by clicking on the ribbon symbol. Figure 3 and Figure 4 are examples of picture posts.

Figure 3. An example of a picture post on Instagram (peki_jay 3 May 2020.)

Figure 4. An example of an illustration post categorized as a picture by Instagram. (peki_jay 6 May 2020.)

The caption is often companied with hashtags, which is a "#" sign accompanied with a keyword. This is an alternative way to make people land on your posts, as some users

browse Instagram by searching hashtags. In figure 2 and figure 3 you can see the hashtags marked in the caption in a blue color. When browsing on Instagram on your home page, other people´s post appear one after another. This is what is called a "feed". In your feed you will see posts from people you follow, hashtags you follow and sponsored posts, which are basically advertisements and other types of posts suggested to you by Instagram itself through its algorithm.
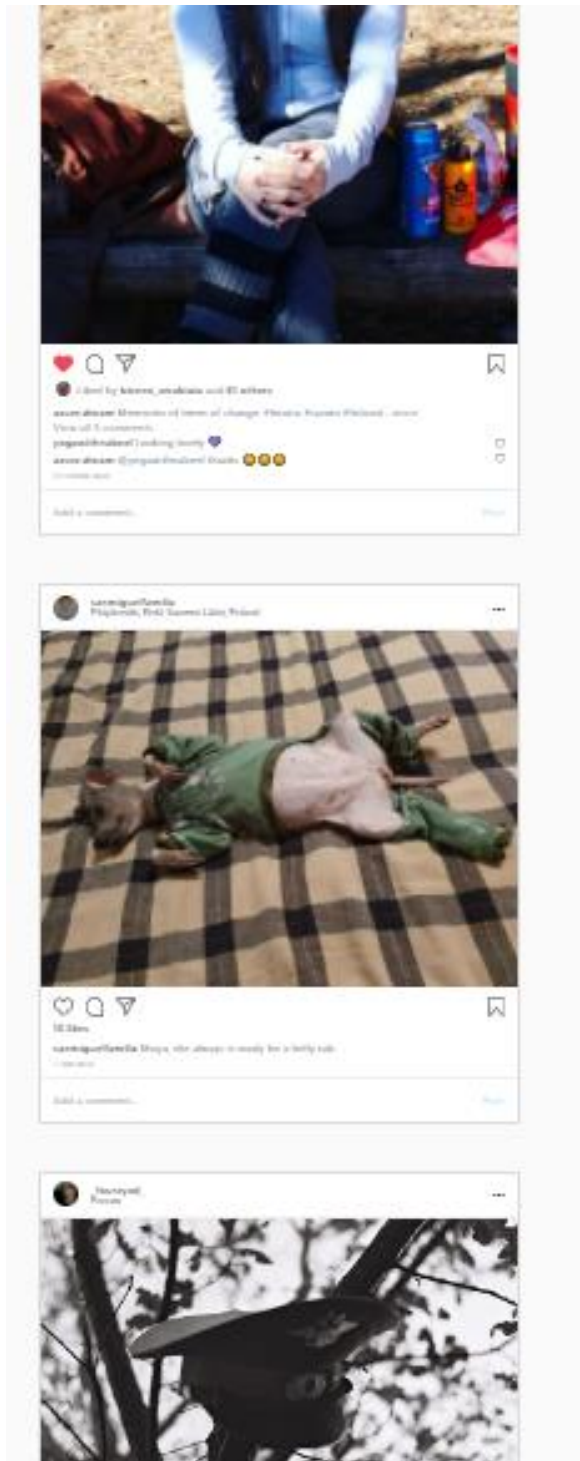
Figure 5. An example of the feed from the Instagram account peki_jay containing three different posts.

A grid is where all the posted content of your account is saved. When people land on your profile, they can browse to your grid to see all of the posts. It is below the profile information. Sometimes people get really creative with these and make them interact with each other. In Figure 6 we see the profile and grid of peki_jay.
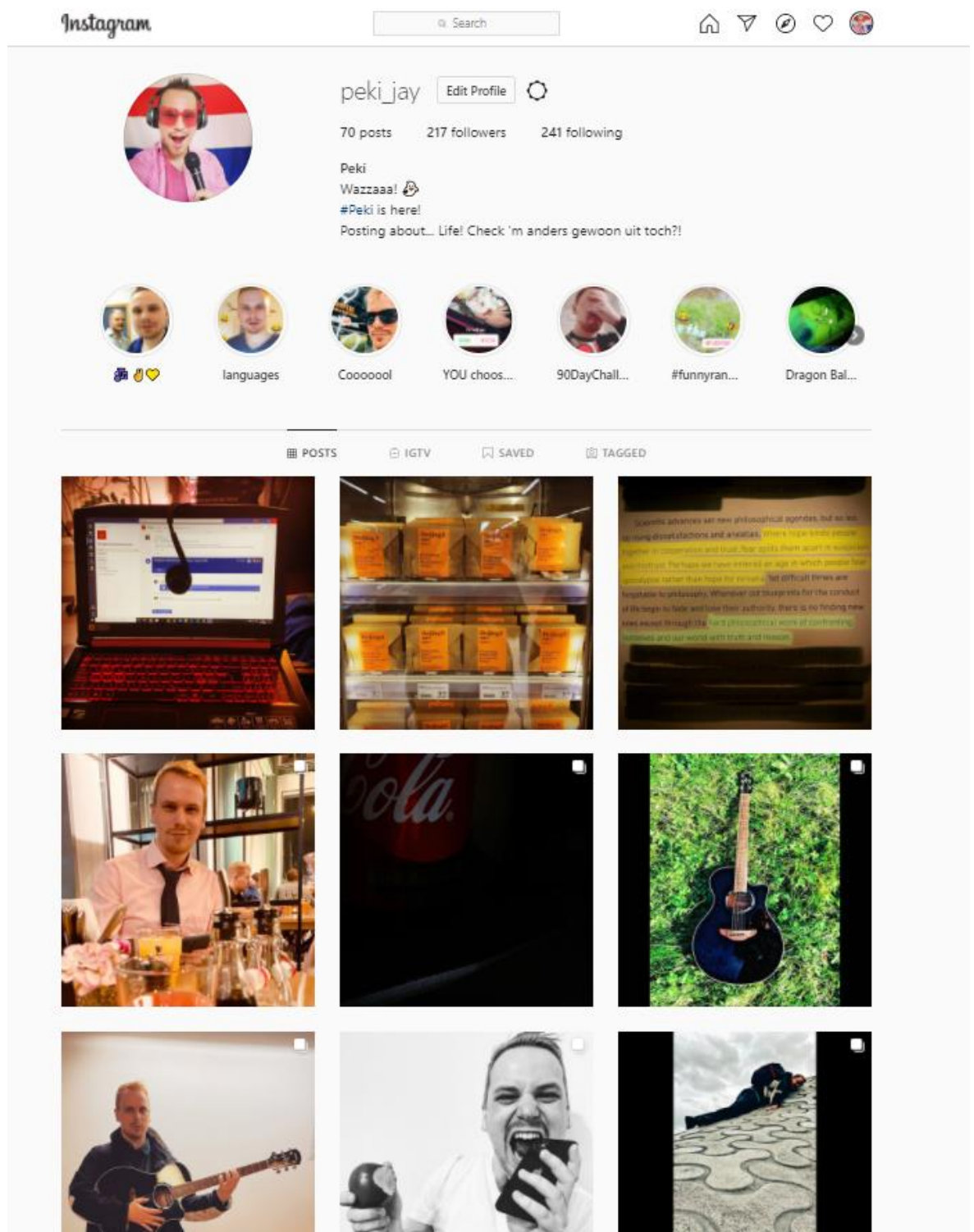
Figure 6. The profile and grid of peki_jay.

Stories are short clips of pictures or videos of maximum 15 seconds, that people share like posts, but with the difference that stories have their separate feed and they disappear after 24 hours. Stories have become immensely popular over the past few years. In Figure 7 we see the example of a story feed and in Figure 8 we see an example of a story.
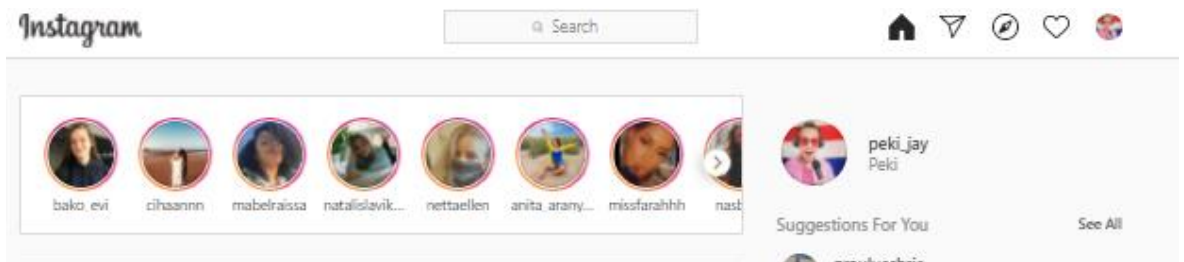
Figure 7. An example of a story feed.
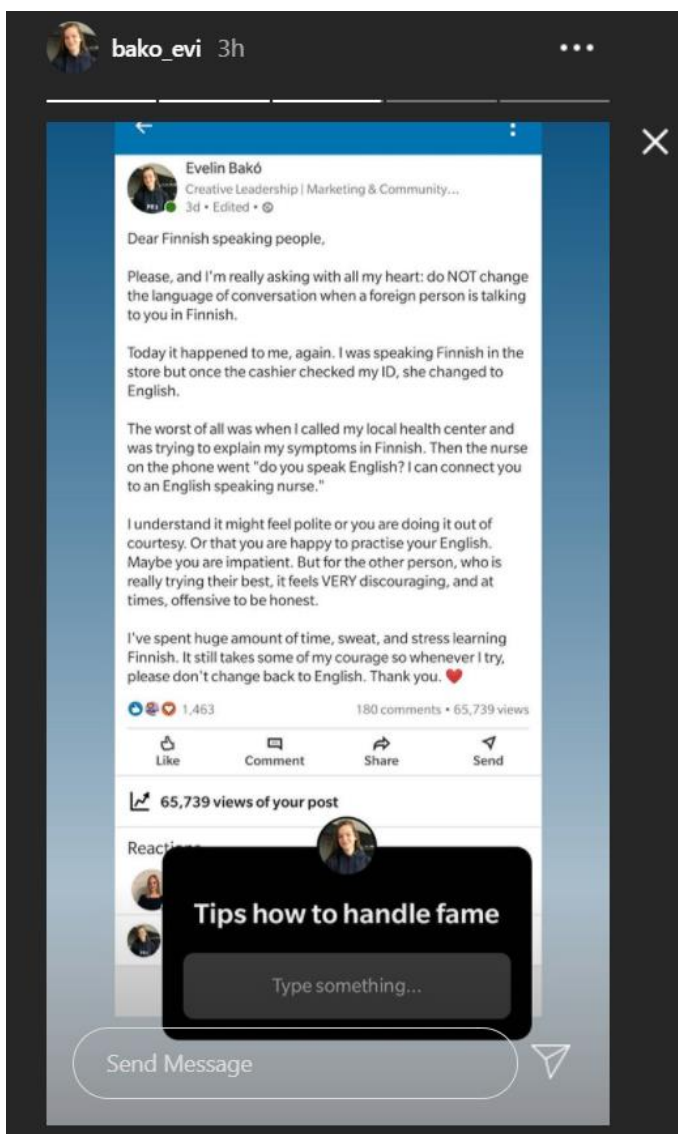
Figure 8. An example of an Instagram Story.

Businesses utilize posts and stories as a platform to convey their messages including mission and vision, values and especially advertisements. When browsing through stories every other story is an advertisement for a product or service. Oftentimes influencer accounts are used to convey messages. Luckily, Instagram let´s you know which posts and stories have been sponsored with money.

2.3   Influencer marketing

One point of view we are going to look at in this thesis is the influencer aspect. Basically, anyone who is well-known such as celebrities, politicians and digital content creators could be considered an influencer as we can conclude from the following definitions: *"someone who affects or changes the way that other people behave"* or *"a person or group that has the ability to influence the behaviour or opinions of others".* (Cambridge Dictionary 2020.)

When talking about marketing, an influencer could be described as *"a person who is paid by a company to show and describe its products and services on social media, encouraging other people to buy them"* (Cambridge Dictionary 2020.). Especially this last definition is interesting to me. I mentioned in the preface that I want this thesis to be useful to me in my later career. Becoming an influencer through digital content creation is momentarily the career path I strive for.

2.3.1   Influencers as a marketing tool

From the business point of view, influencers are essentially marketing tools for organizations to spread their mission & vision, interact with their audience and of course most importantly, to promote their services or products. The importance of influencers in marketing also translates into numbers. The influencer marketing industry was around two billion dollars in 2017 and is expected to reach 10 billion dollars in 2020. Businesspeople are always going along with the trends, so it isn´t surprising organizations are looking to make some room in their marketing budget to spend on influencers. (Digital Marketing Institute 2020.)

Influencers usually have a closer relationship with their followers and can therefore literally influence their audience´s point of view. It is estimated that 49% of consumers claim dependency on influencer recommendations. A consumer is more prone to purchasing a product when an influencer they follow recommend it. Influencers are thus considered important when talking about building brand trust. (Digital Marketing Institute. 2020)

Influencers are also a very cheap way to invest the marketing budget, as the return of investment is on average 6,50 dollars for every dollar spent. Instagram is one of the preferred platforms for people to take recommendations from, as 40% purchased a product after they had seen a recommendation from an influencer (Digital Marketing Institute 2020.)

2.3.2 Instagram influencer

Around two thirds of marketers are planning to increase their budget on influencer marketing over the next 12 months, especially on Instagram. For many marketers it is even becoming the key channel for the social media marketing overall. (Digital Marketing Institute. 2020)

An Instagram influencer is thus a person who is doing influencer marketing on Instagram. These influencers gain followers and interact with them, making them engage with the content that the influencer posts on their Instagram account. Influencers can be categorized into Nano-, Micro-, Mid-tier-, Macr- and Mega-influencers as depicted in figure 9.
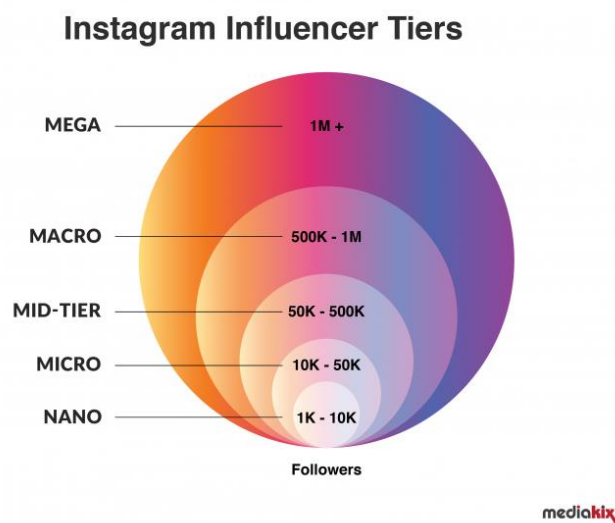
Figure 9. Instagram influencers categorized by number of followers. (Mediakix 2020.)

A Nano-influencer is someone who has 1000+ followers on their Instagram account. This means that this type of influencer, will have direct access to 1000+ people via their account on Instagram. (Figure 9 Mediakix 2020.) One example of a nano-influencer is @gobemoreco with 3807 followers and an example of a mega-influencer is @Cristiano Ronaldo with 241 million followers.

Influencers are usually people who already have a significant amount (minimum of 1000) followers, when they are approached by organizations for collaboration. The organizations pay the influencer to make content in the form of pictures and videos, where they promote the product or anything the organization wishes to promote.

The content is then posted after which people can see it in their personal feed. The content is most likely available in people´s personal feeds if the person has followed the influencer´s page. It is crucial for the influencer to gain as many followers as possible in order for their content to be seen by as many people as possible. In turn, in order to gain followers, it is crucial to create content that the follower would like to see from the influencer.

2.4 Instagram marketing as a skill

If I am able to gain a lot of followers and on top of that understand how I gained these followers I will have a skill that I can use in social media marketing. The limitations of this thesis apply to the Instagram platform and to gaining 1000 followers, or in other words, become an Instagram Nano-influencer. This might seem like the bar is being set really high, especially when considering how little time there is to achieve this goal of gaining 1000 followers. However, as my cousin Tatu pointed out to me once: "if you set the bar high enough, you will never fail, as most likely you will have always made progress". For me this means: "I aim for 1000, but I start from zero so if I gain ten, I already won".

If I learn about Instagram, how it works, and how to gain followers for my Instagram page, I will have a concrete social media marketing skill: Instagram marketing. In turn, I can sell this expertise or try to find a job based on this expertise, or possibly further practice my Instagram account to become a bigger influencer with more followers, thus become more attractive for business´s to invest in my account. Now that we have defined what exactly I am planning to do, to become a nano-influencer on Instagram and master social media marketing on Instagram, let´s take a look on how I am planning to do that.

2.5 Understanding the numbers is key

As we can see I am a beginner at this whole Instagram marketing. This shows in many ways. First of all, the low level of followers, which are mostly people I know from life, and it shows in the quality of my content. The quality of content is actually a very subjective term as for example, a simple picture can mean nothing for someone and everything for another person. However, engagement towards my posts can be measured in numbers,

which are objective. Almost all the important numbers have to do with engagement. The engagement of the posts is measured by Instagram insights, which is a powerful tool to check statistics regarding posts.

Engagement here is measured in reach, impressions, likes and comments. These are all quantitative measurements and numbers. The number of reach tells you how many unique Instagram accounts your posts reached. Instagram insights further details this number into accounts reach through homepage and hashtags. For example, say one post has a reach of 200 and 50% are accounts that follow your profile, then it means 100 unique accounts were reached through their own homepage and 100 unique accounts were reached through hashtags or searches.

The number of impressions tells you how many times your post was viewed for at least 1 second. The number of likes and comments tell of course how many likes and comments your post gained. Especially from comments you can gain some crucial qualitative information that don´t show in numbers. Analysing and understanding the numbers are key in this whole social media marketing. If you are able to figure out a connection between the growth in numbers and the content, then you have found a formula with which you can work. This is exactly what I am planning to do.

3 Methods and measurements

Now that we have defined what the purpose of this thesis is as well as the framework, let´s take a concrete look at how to execute this experiment. Step 1 obviously is to create the Instagram account. I created the Instagram account on 1.5.2020 under the nickname "peki_jay". This is the first time ever that I use Instagram, even as a consumer.

The purpose of the experiment is, as said earlier, to figure out how to use Instagram, for marketing purposes specifically. The concrete aim in this case study is to gain followers by creating content compelling to the audience. We measure the success by tracking the number of followers gained, and by measuring the engagements of the posts through reached accounts, likes, comments and the engagement rate.

There are two ways to learn through experimenting. You can at first get acquainted with the theory and based on that make a plan and then execute the plan. The other option, is to straight make a plan, execute it after which you reflect on the results and get acquainted with the theory to see if you can find a connection. I will do the latter, as my hypothesis is that for content creation, it is better to just start doing and afterwards analyse what was done and how to improve.

Concrete end-products of this project and thesis will be the influencer Instagram account "peki_jay" including its contents and a diary reflecting on the working process, progress and results on a daily basis during the period of 1.5.2020 to 28.7.2020. In terms of skill, I will be able to use the Instagram platform, my account included, as a concrete SMM tool.

3.1 Profile creation

This account is created by inventing a username, usually an e-mail, and a password. After this you will have a profile in which you can add a profile picture and profile description. These are already good elements to invest some time in as better and completer profiles, attract more followers. (Instagram Help center 2020.)
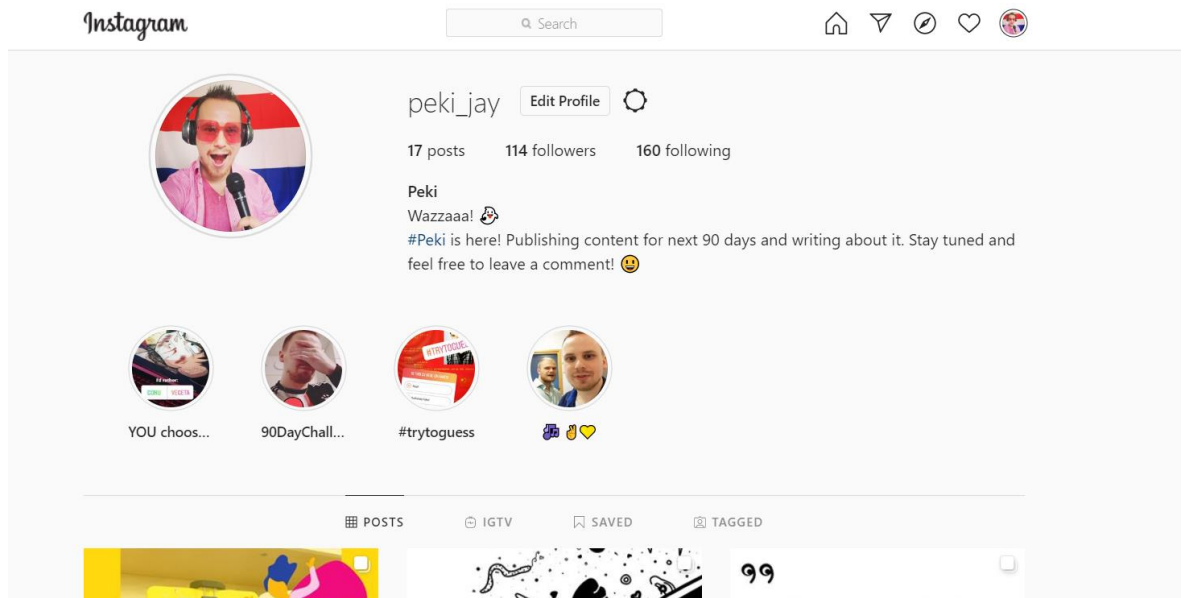
Figure 10. A caption of my profile on the 11th day of Instagramming.

From your profile you can also see how many posts you published and how many follow-ers you have and how many people you follow yourself. The round circles are compila-tions of Instagram stories saved to your profile. Instagram stories disappear from the Story feed after 24 hours, but you can save them to your profile in these compilations. (Figure 10)

3.2   Let´s post something!

The next step was to create content for a minimum of five days a week over the next 90 days (1.5.2020 – 28.7.2020). The content published will be posted individually with a dif-ferent topic for each post, rather than a strict plan of posting with a continuing theme or topic of some sorts, as most popular Instagram accounts do.

This is because we want to find out what is natural for the content maker to create and the audience´s perception of the content created. The best is when the content creator is able to post content with relative ease with the best amount of results, measured in followers gained and the engagement rate of the posts. The content posted will include but are not limited to monologues in form of blogs and vlogs, pictures with friends, illustrations and many other things. After 90 days of posting we will analyse statistics of important actions taken, such as how many profiles did a post reach, how many likes did it get and how many comments were left at the post.

After 90 days, there will be a bigger analysis on all the posts, as well as, the profile over-all, how many posts were created, how many people are following and the analysis on

processes executed. A diary will be written to cover the process and progress of the project in detail in the form of observations and reflections.

3.3 The posting cycle

After creating an Instagram account and updating the profile the next thing to do is simple: start posting! From here I will go to work according a cycle: the daily posting cycle The daily posting cycle consists of the following steps in chronological order planning, creating, editing, uploading, promoting, planning and so on.

In the planning phase I decide what I want to post. This can be anything from a blog post, illustration, quote, video, audio or a mix of these. In the beginning I will be focused more on getting posts done rather than spending time on thinking what I want to post, a sort of quantity over quality philosophy. Later, the planning phase will gain more importance when I start to make the transition to the quality over quantity phase.

After planning what kind of post I want to make, it is time to make it happen. Depending on the type of post, I need to record an audio/video, write a text or draw an illustration. In the editing phase I will make the content in such a format that we can post in Instagram. In case of a ready-made video or picture there is little to edit, mostly resizing it to fit the Instagram platform, maybe using some filters or emojis to stylize and characterize it, after which it´s ready to post. In the case of an audio or text post, we also need to create an additional picture or video for it to be posted.

After editing we move on to the uploading phase. Here we prepare the post with the content, accompanying it with a text usually commenting on the content and trying to trigger the viewer into interaction by making a call to action in the form of a question, rating and so on. We also put hashtags so that the post can be found by other people who are searching for content containing this hashtag. This is one of the best ways to gain more viewers for your content and reach a bigger audience than only your follower base. (Chacon 21 February 2020)

After uploading the post I will spend some time to promote the post, by chatting with other people, sharing a post on Instagram stories or sharing it on other social media platforms. This closes the cycle and will repeat on a daily basis for the 90-day observation period.

3.4 Required skillset

In order to perform these tasks, a variety of skillset is needed. At first, time management and planning skills come in very handy, especially when creating and following a schedule. Many skills related to project management such as prioritization and monitoring are also good to have, in order to get a broad overall understanding of what is being done.

Artistic creativity is especially useful when creating content for posts. You may have some idea what you want your post to contain, but how to make it happen and in what way to express the message are heavily depicted by the author as an artistic person. Some editing skills are also good to have for smooth content creation, especially video and image editing. When making vlogs or audios, presentation skills are also crucial, with what energy you bring the video, use of voice and body, how to speak etc.

Observational and analytical skills are important at the moment of analysing statistics. These are maybe the most important ones in terms of trying to understand the posting platform, in this project the Instagram platform of course. Social skills should also not be forgotten as you are interacting with other people. The most compelling influencers and celebrities are liked, because they communicate in such a way that they make you feel like their friend.

All with all in order to succeed in this project even on a primitive level you need to have consistency and determination and together with all the aforementioned skills you have a very colourful range of skillset which will be valuable in almost anything you do especially when doing project like work. The nice thing about this project (for me that is) is that as you start from zero. This implies that you have no earlier knowledge of anything. Due to the nature of this project, (learning by doing, analysing and reflecting) the information needed to become better is obtained by doing and learning from your doings.

3.5 Some tips and tricks to gain followers

During the whole process, it is nice to know some concrete steps, especially as a beginner, to know and understand how to gain followers. The following are some concrete tips and tricks that help to gain and retain 100 followers by actively posting and engaging with the community.

Liking and commenting: It is estimated that for every 100 photos you like, you gain six followers. The same sort of effect may be reached by commenting other people´s post and even concretely following other people´s pages. (Lloyd 9 September 2020)

Posting at least once a day: this way followers will keep busy and entertained as well as Instagram algorithm prefers active accounts over inactive accounts. This will be really challenging in terms of time management. (Social Book 2020.)

Responding to comments: this is very time consuming, but people like replies to their comments and might easily unfollow, if you are not engaging with them. Linking your Instagram account to other social media accounts help extend your posts availability, especially since Instagram posts are visible for example in Facebook. This way you can reach even people who don´t use Instagram. (Lloyd 9 September 2020.)

Enter into contests and challenges. If you win a contest or participate in a challenge, especially with a hashtag assigned to it, this will increase your visibility. It also helps you to get inspired if you have a flat day and don´t know what to post. This way you also help to ensure that you make high-quality posts. (Tran 4 February 2020.)

Using hashtags. Hashtags are a very good way for people to find your content. Some people even follow certain hashtags. You can try to compete with the most popular hashtags or simply experiment with a couple ans try out to see what works or not. Adding a location to your content. Just like with hashtags, people might check out what kind of posts are related to certain marked locations. This way your posts could be found and it is very simple and easy and quick to add an location. (Social Book 2020.)

Posting during popular times. Through Instagram insights you can see at what time most of your followers are active on Instagram and post accordingly. On average the best times to post are 2 AM and 5 PM to ensure that a large number of people see your post. (Lloyd 9 September 2020.)

4 Observations and reflection

We have defined the concepts, limitations, and framework of this thesis. In this chapter we will take a look at the concrete processes performed as well as the observations made throughout them. The focus here is on the 90-day posting period from 1.5.2020 to 28.7.2020. and the posts made until the 8.10.2020

4.1 Diary entries

1.5.2020: 1 Post, 12 followers, 28 following
My first day ever on Instagram and I only posted one video in which I was telling a little about who I am and what I was about to do. After day 6 it had been viewed 122 times.

2.5.2020: 2 Posts, 24 followers, 50 following
In this day we started the real work on the schedule and ideating different ideas and post. At the same time, I was learning the basic functionalities of Instagram. After a whole day of ideating and filling papers with thoughts, I made 1 video in which I reflected on the day. The point of it was not to overthink.

3.5.2020: 6 Posts, 39 Followers, 75 following
This day we started to explore the functionalities of Instagram regarding posting things. We also noticed we were not going according to schedule, and that many ideas were just left on paper.One of the 4 posts was a picture about my first summer job place in which we asked people to comment about their first summer job. Also learned how to refer to other users.

4.5.2020. 8 Posts, 48 followers, 80 following
The fourth day we were still busy with more random posting and experimenting with the app as well started to engage with people more by commenting their profiles etc. 2 posts were published, 1 small animation of 4 slides and 1 video with answer of earlier days challenge, hear the sounds.

5.5.2020. 10 Posts, 64 followers, 93 following
Fifth day made a webinar about podcasting for school and we used Instagram livestream for the first time. Took some nice pictures, and the engagement level was pretty high too. The other post was a video using inshot, a good video editing tool. So far the highest quality content was made on this day. Random people started to engage with my profile.

6.5.2020 12 Posts, 81 followers, 131 following

This is the first day a random profile engaged directly by commenting and sending a message. One post was engaging a lot, I posted my CV in Chinese, a project for Chinese course and asked people to guess the validity, also my comments in Chinese engaged people. The other post was the first written blog which also had a relative high engagement level, as people were asked to comment about their own experiences.

7.5.2020

Day 7 was a lazy day, made one silly post saying, this is my post for today. Despite minimum activity som5.e people still put a like on it.

8.5.2020

Have been uploading and playing around with Instagram stories. Figured out how to find and analyse statistics regarding both regular posts and stories post. Also found that polling and quizzing was raising the engagement rate. In other stories people just watch it and never commented or reacted in any other way even if there was a question related, but polling and quizzing got about 33% response rates. One follower posted a story singing and asking for a "collab" I reacted on it with a video.

date	description	type	what is inside	Reach	Profile visits	views	Likes	comments
1/05	Introduction vide	vlog	1 video			138	25	14
2/05	Don´t overthink	vlog	1 pic + 1 video				17	4
3/05	Hear the sounds	Audio	1Audio + 1 picture			72	10	5
3/05	First summer job	Picture	1 Picture				20	26
3/05	Famous people c	Selfie video	1 video	114	2	105	16	3
3/05	Day 3 Insta insigh	vlog	1 Picture+2video	112	12		22	14
4/05	I will get better	Illustration	4 pic.	105	0		18	2
4/05	Hear the sounds	Video	1 video	110	9	97	15	4
5/05	Podcast Pic	selfie	1 Pic	106	8		31	13
5/05	Day 5 Insta insigh	Vlog	1 vid	108	8	114	22	5
6/05	Chinese Resumé.	Picture	1 pic	99	4		20	11
6/05	Swallovers	Blog + illustration	1 pic	104	3		20	12
7/05	Lazy post	Illustration	1 pic	92	12		22	0
8/05	First week Insta i	Vlog	1 pic + 1 video	150	15		21	5

Figure 11. Some numbers after the first full week of posting.

By using Instagram insights you can track some numbers and statistics of your account. In Figure 11 we see that the amount of accounts reached was around 100. Profile visits happened almost through every post and likes were approximately around 20. Comments were also quite frequent.
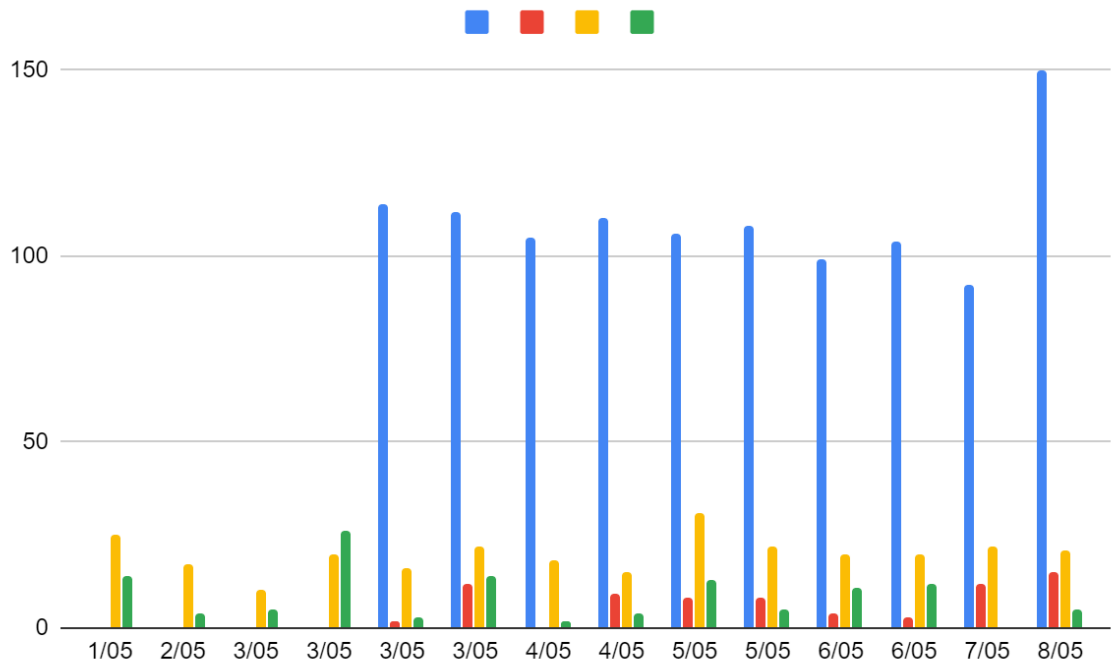
Figure 12. The numbers from figure 11 put in a chart. Blue: reach, yellow: likes, green: comments, red: profile visits.

From figure 12 we can see that the reach had a downwards trend until the 7th of May. On the 8th it made a significant jump reaching a new high score. This is the key to growing: you need to keep posting as you never know when the breakthrough post will come through which you might gain a lot of followers.

9.5.2020.

Did some research by watching a video on the Instagram algorithm. Some main points were that relationship with followers should be good, as a content producer should like other pages with similar content. The main point I get out of this is to well define your audience. As this Instagram account hasn´t a specific topic, there isn´t yet a well-defined target audience. Instead we will just focus on creating random content and see what type of posts are liked better etc. In a way we want our audience to tell us what we should focus on.

Notes of the video (Ward 14 February 2020.):

Instagram´s business model is based on revenue from advertisements. The longer people stay on Instagram, more advertisements they will see, more profit for the platform. As a content creator on Instagram it is also important to show interest in other profiles and hashtags, this way you are more likely to show your content in these specific interest groups. This is determined e.g. by posts you like, comments you leave, who and what you

tag in your posts, whom you message directly and in what frequency, who you are following and stories that you watch. People like to feel the dopamine rush. When seeing content, they like a small amount of dopamine is released into their brain as a reward. To keep on producing content that people keep on liking consistency is important, because people like to know what they expect, but at the same time the content must stay innovative and reinvent itself as to not become boring.

3 main factors that define the Instagram algorithm: Defining your own interests, relationship with your followers, newer content over older content. Some tips on how to post according to the Instagram algorithm:

- o Work on quality of individual posts, especially visually
- o Work on your grid, focus on cohesion of style and subject between your individual posts. Consistency on topic and visuals
- o Engage with your audience by asking questions, ratings, opinions, experiences, hashtags etc.
- o Time your uploads, usually best when followers are most active due to Instagram favouring recent posts over older. This can be verified by checking your accounts insights, a section of your page where you can monitor statistics regarding engagement with your profile.
- o Try to make users use a hashtag related to your profile somehow.
- o Join an Instagram course, they are also for free.

10.5.2020.

Today I recorded and posted a sketch made in the form of an interview. This was so far the most fun I have had making any content. At the same time I noticed from my Instagram Insights that the follower base stopped growing almost completely, but the reach of the posts has gone up dramatically, resulting also in likes and comments from people that don´t follow me and found my posts through hashtags. The algorithm seems to favour active Instagram accounts, so I think my own engagement on Instagram also contributes to the wider range of reach.

10-Day reflection

During these first 10 days I feel really exhausted. I uploaded content, and the content doesn´t relate to a specific topic or even to each other. The first 100 followers came really easy, as they almost all are people whom I at some point in time met in my life.

The reach of the posts was low in the first ones, but steadily started to grow and by the 10th post, we reached over 200 unique Instagram accounts. The quality of the posts is also getting better, I received feedback from several persons that the posts felt smoother. I also feel that planning and sticking to the plan is important, especially when thinking about organizing my other aspects in life as well. The things I most learned about where:

- How to navigate on Instagram
- How to post something and add Instagrams filters and emojis
- How to check the statistics regarding my posts
- How to engage with other people through comments and chatting

Some of the things I will focus on during the next 10 days:

- Planning and posting according to the schedule
- Learn about hashtags and how people navigate them
- Post higher-quality content in terms of reach
- Learn how to melt Instagram life with the normal day-to-day life

11.5.2020.

Today I gained our first organic human follower which wasn´t a familiar face in my life before. The post today was a funny unpacking video made by my partner. The routine of posting is starting to form, although I have problems with keeping a good sleeping rhythm. My head still feels overwhelmed of the digital world. Now the follower base and reach of the posts seem to have stabilized.

Next, we are aiming for a breakthrough in either of these, although I understand this could take a while. If nothing else, I am finding my comfort zone with this platform and will just keep on posting. I also started to repeat hashtags, so as to try if this will somehow affect the following.

16.5.2020.

On this day we posted a simple funny video where I am teaching one Chinese character. This post gained a lot of likes from pages focused on Chinese learning and a couple of them started to follow me.

18.5.2020.

Today I made a post about my birthday. A somewhat satirical and comical post about how I felt about turning 25 years. This video gained some more comments than usual, with 2 people not so close to me expressing that it was a funny post, in other words, my first organic compliment.

I also went live, but that turned out to be just a practice round. I also received some qualitative insight from a spectator, female 50+ years. She liked one post in particular, which was the post about the tripod. She said it made her feel like she wanted to buy it as well.

19.5.2020

The aftermath birthday posts and stories made from several pictures from the cake and how I am unpacking presents. It received a fare share of likes. Today also I want to make a change in the way of working. Posting content has become a habit that is being fulfilled. However, other habits are not receiving the necessary attention required for either the thesis project or proper targeting of the marketing aims. I am planning to read more theoretical stuff regarding social media marketing and be more consistent when it comes to hashtags. Also, I will plan the post more ahead, instead of more random free posting.

20.5.2020.

Today I posted a picture of the Chinese character for child with a drawing of a child. Also, received first comment of someone, which isn´t a close friend, that they look forward to future post which is another first timer and at least to me a sign of progress.

25.5.2020.

First workday was a difficult day because of the start of my summer job. I recorded a post explaining what I do. Received feedback from several people asking what the point is of my posts. I tried to counter this with the question: "Does there need to be a point in life?"

26.5.2020.

Today I participated in a webinar about growth marketing and growth hacking. According to what the presenter was saying I feel I am on the right way as a lot was emphasized on experimenting.

4.2 Concrete results after 67 posts

After the first month of posting I switched from making notes in a diary to writing down the results from Instagram insights and put some comments (Appendix). The diary notes were just to give an idea of what the process is like, but the real questions and interesting data came only after I collected the results which can be seen in Appendix.

4.2.1   Reach & impressions
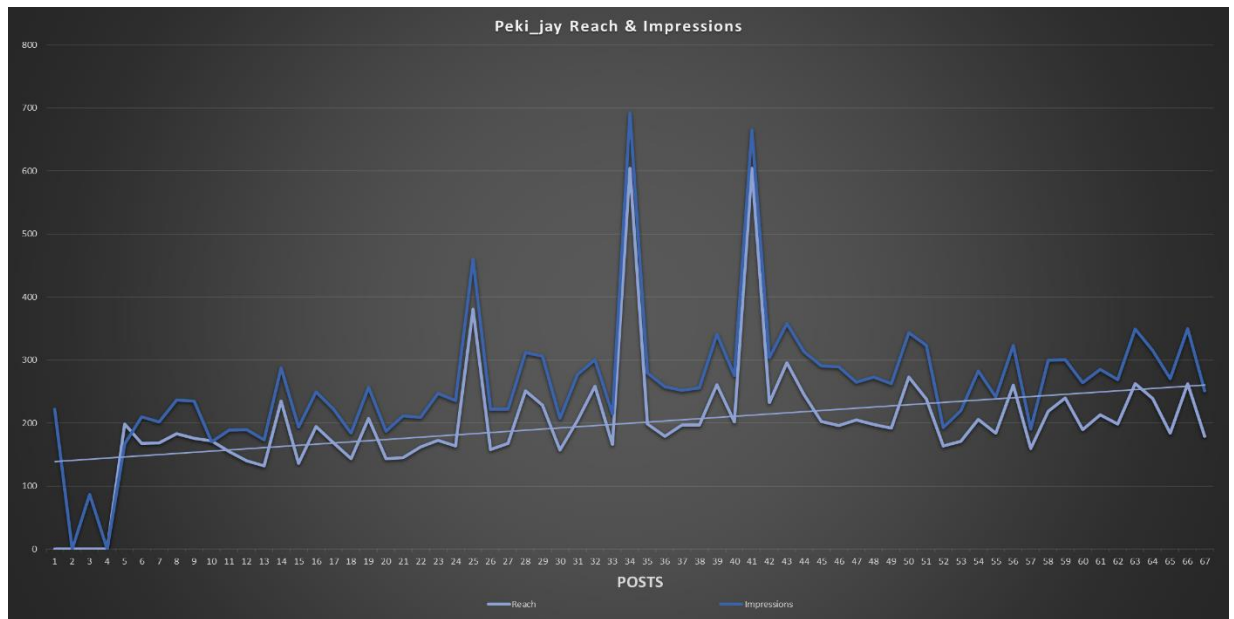
Figure 13. Reach and impressions of the posts on the Instagram account peki_jay

Figure 13 is a chart based on the numbers in appendix 1, taking into account the posts reach and impressions. Reach is the amount of unique accounts where the post has been shown and impressions are the number of times the post was seen.

In the beginning there were some technical difficulties with the Instagram insights, and therefore the reach wasn´t measured at all in the first four posts. Starting the fifth post it measured the reach number. We can see from this graph and conclude that there are usually a little more impressions than reach and that they basically walk hand in hand.

In figure 13 we see three peaks standing out which represent the reach for posts number 25, 34 and 41 respectively. The overall trendline of the reach we can see as slightly rais-ing, which means that in the 67 posts, on average, I was able to increase the amount of unique accounts reached on the longer run.

Figure 14. Post number 25, 381 accounts reached.

In figure 14 we see the post that had an exceptional amount of reach 381, 69% of which were not following the peki_jay account. The post was shared 2 times and 254 accounts found this post through hashtags. This is a great example of how the use of hashtags help to increase the reach of your post to a wider audience, even though this post didn´t get an exceptional amount of likes, comments or profile visits.

Figure 15. Post number 34, 604 unique accounts reached

In figure 15 we see post number 34 that reached 604 unique accounts, 75% of which were not following peki_jay and 422 accounts found this post through hashtags. This post as a response to the #quemaltefuechallenge, which was a challenge launched by the reggaeton artist Natti Natasha to promote her new song. Also 12 of the 32 likes came from accounts not following. We can conclude from this that in order to increase the reach and likes for your post it is useful to participate in a challenge made by a Instagram influencer.
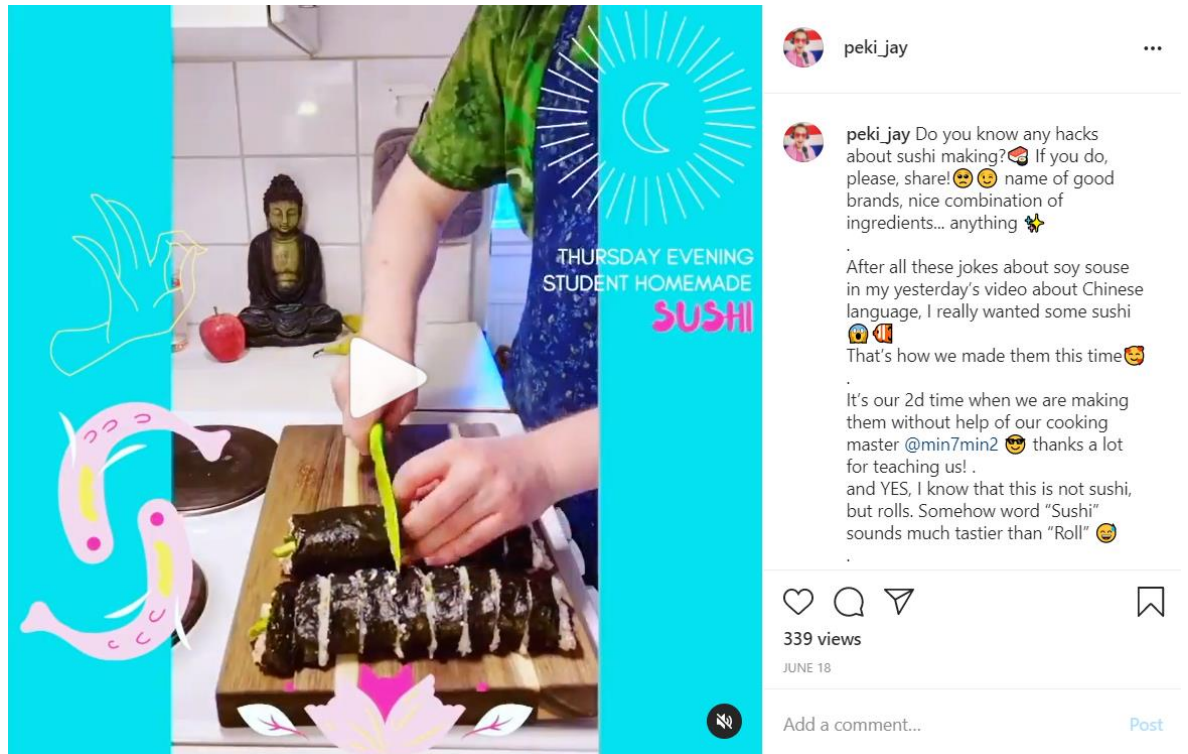
Figure 16. Post 41, 604 unique accounts reached, 37 likes.

In figure 16 we see post 41 which gained an exceptional amount of reach of which 75 % of accounts reached were not following. 11 of the 37 likes were not following, 239 of the reached accounts were found through hashtags and 185 of the accounts found this post through explore, which where Instagram suggests posts that might interest the user.

As of why this post became more popular than others remains a mystery. Instagram insights is able to tell me that people landed through hashtags, but what exact hashtags remains unknown. Although it is known that food and hashtags related to food are very popular, as well as videos that captures processes in the making.

4.2.2 Likes, comments & profile visits
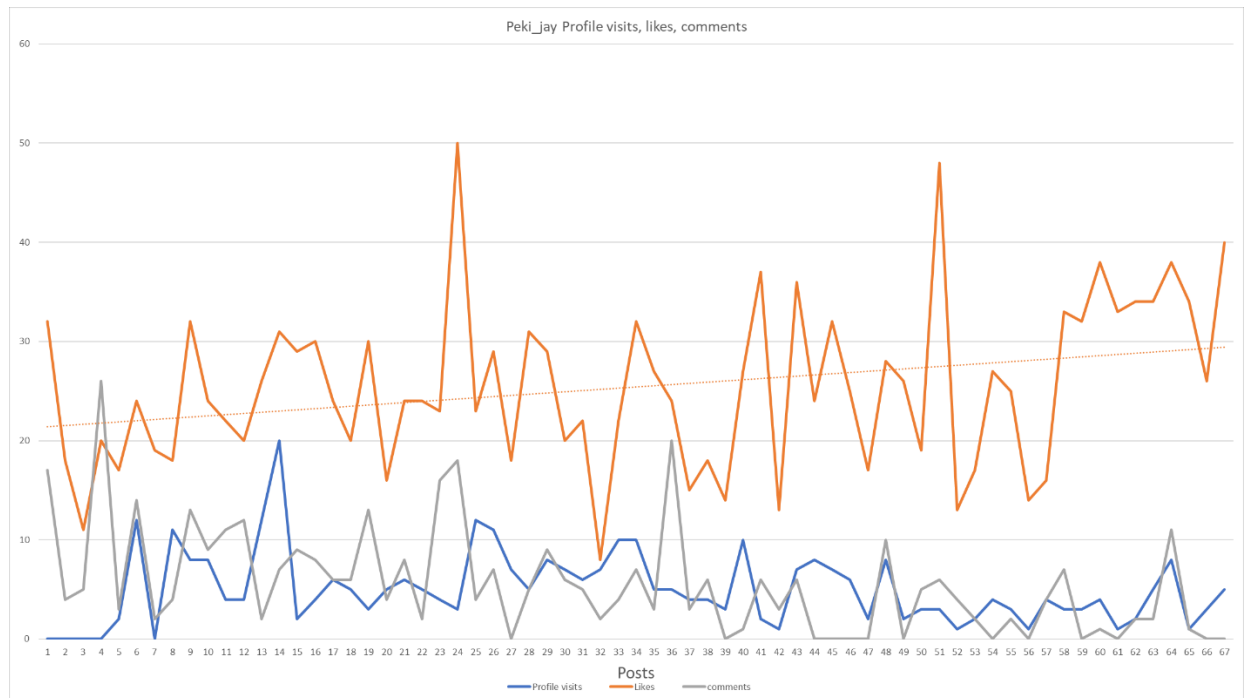
Figure 17. Likes, comments and profile visits of the posts on the Instagram account peki_jay.

Figure 17 is a chart based on the numbers in appendix 1, measuring the amount of likes, comments and profile visits. The trendline for likes is slightly rising over the course of the 67 posts whereas comments and profile visits started to become less frequent over time.

From figure 17 we see that posts 4 and 36 gained an exceptional amount of comments with 26 and 20 comments each. In many different posts I try to engage with the audience by asking questions in the captions. This had little effect as only in posts 4 and 26 I got a decent response rate.

In post 4 I asked about people´s first summer jobs and in post number 36 I asked about how long it takes for people to go to work. In both posts I had pictures explaining about my situation regarding the questions asked, but they were taken just on the go.

It is difficult to understand what kind of questions are good to ask people, but these two are concrete experiences in one´s live and are easy to share as well as interesting to know from another as you can reflect it easily on your own life.

As for profile visits, the account landed a lot in the beginning and not too many later on. This is probably because the first 100 followers were gained in one week and the first 200

followers only a couple of months after the start of the account. Mostly only new followers take a look at the new profile they are following.

Although the differences in likes are not all too big, any post that gained over 30 likes did a relative good job. In posts 57 to 66 we see posts consistently gaining 30 or more likes as compared to the heavy ups and downs of the rest of the posts. I contribute this to the participation of another challenge #30photosinseptember by influencer kutovakika, as in all these posts 7-10 likes were of people not following.

Three posts, post 24, 51 and 67, stand out with 40 or more likes, let´s take a look at them.

Figure 18. Post 24, Reach 164, likes 50 and engagement rate 43%.

Post 24 was about my birthday. it consists of pictures and video clips of me getting my presents. It got the most likes and highest engagement rate of any post, even though the reach was relatively low.

This is a great example that reach and likes don´t go hand in hand, reach being the quantitative measurement and likes and engagement rate being the qualitative measurements. You need both for making good posts and a good social media marketing campaign therefore as well.

Figure 19. Post 51. Reach 238, likes 48 and engagement rate 24%.

In figure 19 we see another post that got an exceptional amount of likes and engagement rate compared to the other posts. It contains pictures of me at the hair dresser bleaching my hair and a couple of pictures with the end results.

Again, it is hard to say, why exactly this post is more popular in terms of likes, but again like with the sushi post, people like to see processes and end results. Also, I am not known for dying my hair so this is somewhat revolutionary, which is also interesting to people who you know when they go through changes in their life.

In figure 20, we see post 67, which was posted after a long 4 week break of posting and it still had the 3rd highest amount of likes and engagement rate. This seems to discourage the idea that you need to post often and consistently in order to get more likes on the short run. However, I do am of the opinion that in order to grow your reach you need to post a lot.

Figure 20. Post 67. Reach 179, likes 40 and 25 % engagement rate.

4.2.3 Reach vs Actions

One question I started asking myself along the way was whether or not actions taken from each post correlated to the reach of the post. Actions taken include likes, comments shares, saves, profile visits and clicks on links and buttons.
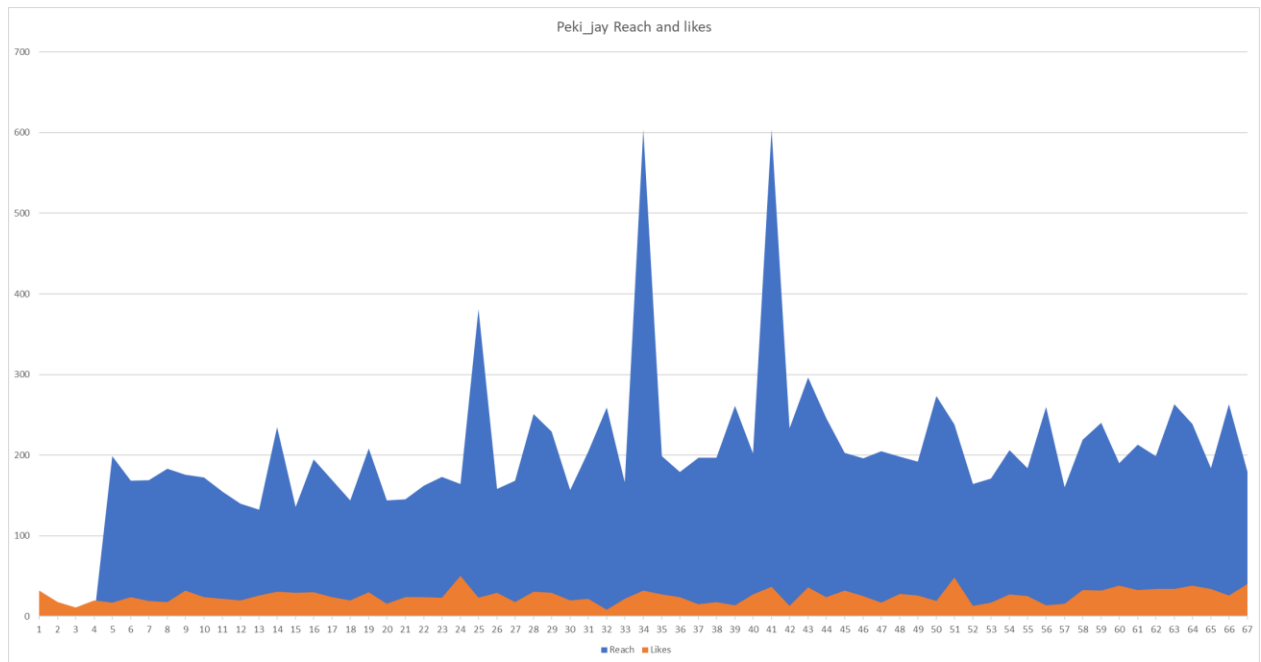
Figure 21. Blue represents the reach, and orange area the amount of likes from post 1 to 67 on @peki_jay

We can see from figure 22 that a higher reach in fact doesn´t translate into a higher engagement in the form of actions taken per post. I would say that "qualitatively successful posts" and "quantitatively successful posts" live their own lives. They might come together and help each other, I have no doubt that the higher the reach, the more likes, it is just that the engagement rate is different per post, but that would be more because of chance rather than meant to be kind of thing.
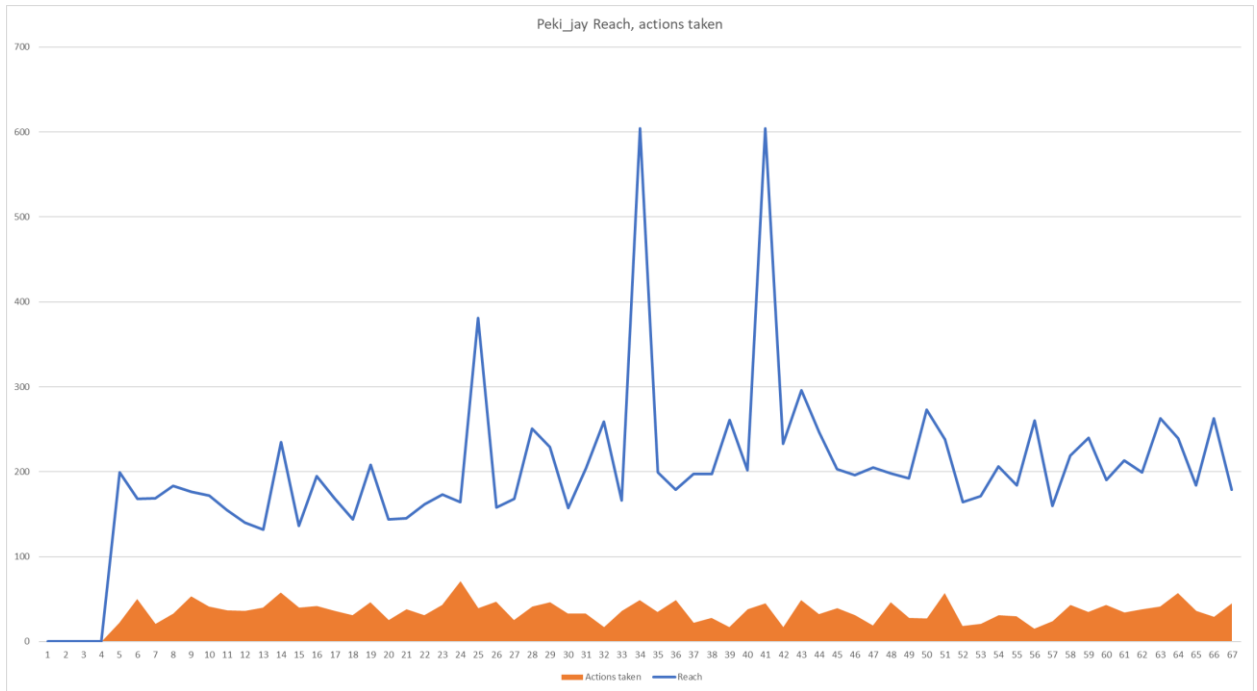
Figure 22. Blue represents the reach, and orange area the amount of actions taken on each post on @peki_jay

Just like that one old friend you meet on the streets after a long time. You get along very well and you don´t really understand why you don´t see each other more often, but you just live too different lives. It is almost as if the reach and likes are filled in at random. Especially "the Three Peaks" are prove of this, as they enjoy a fair amount of reach, but the actions taken on these posts didn´t grow with them. Figure 21 shows us that likes make up at least 50% of the actions taken, which proves that other actions also live their own lives compared to likes.

Figure 23 shows us that from the 67 posts, 41 had a reach of under 200 unique accounts and 28 posts reached over 200 accounts, which account for roughly 60 and 40 percent respectively. Only 3 of 67 posts reach 300 or more accounts. No post reached 1000.

34
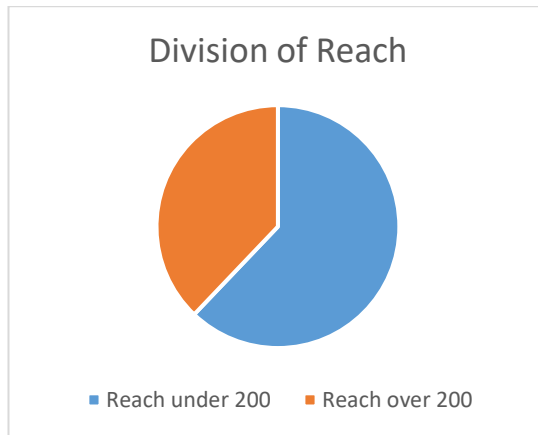
Figure 23. Division of reach of all posts in Appendix 1 on @peki_jay.

4.3   Interview with Nano-influencer James Zheng

As we can already conclude from figure 24, I failed to gain 1000 followers on Instagram and become a Nano-Influencer. Was it not possible? No! But I could have definitely done something differently! In the end, in my point of view, that is what a thesis should be about – To learn something so you can apply it in real life.
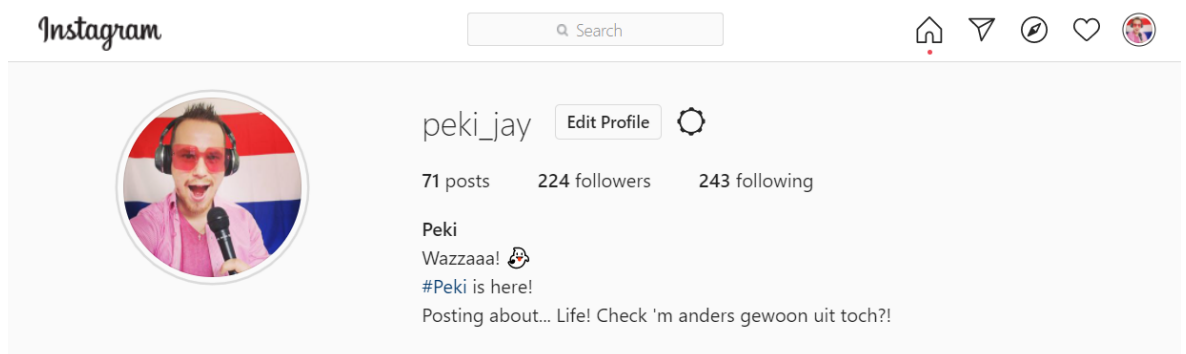
Figure 24. Profile of peki:jay on the last observation day 31st of October 2020.

I met James Zheng, a tour guide based in Finland who started posting videos on different social media channels about his occupations. within three months he gained a following of over 1000 on several of his social media accounts. I interviewed him to find out how he did that, as I didn´t. The first question I asked James was, when he had started his social media accounts. He told me that he started to post videos on social media in July 2020, amidst the pandemic, which as a major set-back for the tour-guide business. He is particularly interested in Instagram and TikTok, because of the younger audience.

The purpose of these videos he started making was to do virtual tour guiding, as people were not coming anymore on physical occasions. On top of this he promotes Finland very

specifically regarding the education system. He also did it for educational purposes, to learn from making videos and become a more professional tour guide.

The main target group of James was the people in China, particularly the ones with a keen interest in Finland and the educational system here. He noticed that he started to have two main target groups, his potential customers, and in terms of social media marketing, potential followers.

The first group are people who are planning to go study abroad and consider Finland as a serious option, because of the relatively small tuition fees. Another group he identifies, are the parents of children, as they aim to send their children to have a good education.

James talks about how he was wondering how to attract viewers for his videos. In the beginning he was just shooting long videos, doing the tour-guiding thing. He concluded however, that people were not really watching his videos. He then started to watch other people, how they made videos, especially people who are also tour guides.

He noticed that other people had good videos, because they were good at storytelling. The second observation he made was that you need to choose the right platform, Instagram and TikTok for short videos of maximum 1 minute, and YouTube for longer ones. James started to make these shorter videos and put focus on the first five seconds of the video, in order to catch the attention of the viewer, clearly stating the main point of the video and do something interesting.

He also started to put focus on the title of the video, making them intriguing. For example, instead of writing "Suomenlinna" he would now write "The Famous Global Heritage in Finland" or instead of writing "Finnish Education" he would now write "Why I Chose the Finnish Vocational Education".

After making these adjustments he started to get more response to his videos and started to gain a little more followers as well. However, it was not until one specific video of his son going to school wearing a mask that blew up, so to speak, and gained a lot of views and through that, a lot of followers.

James explains this phenomenon:

On the first school day, I filmed my son with a mask on his face. I posted the video on the exact same day as when the Finnish schools started. I catch people´s attention, because people wanted to know how the Finnish kids go to school on their first day. The second thing is that not everyone wears a mask. But my son did.

People are eager to know what it is like to go to school. How is it different from before. Also, people are interested in how the Finnish schools look like and how these schools reacted to COVID-19. So in the right time, the right material and the right content get a good response. And of course the right platform.

He had another successful video, because he reacted on some braking news. This very much shows that timing is of importance as well.

James continues explaining, that it is of no use to "wait" for the video to blow up, as you never know what exact video will do that. Sometimes you work hard on a video with little result, and sometimes you just post half spontaneously and people like it more than you would expect like with peki_jay and the sushi video. James however said that this doesn´t mean that you should work, but rather keep on working, so that shooting videos becomes more fluent and that way seem more natural to people.

When asked about his opinion regarding quantity vs. quantity James answered very inspiringly:

I always focus on both. I would say quality is very important. If your quality is too low, image is of low quality or you are not clearly stating the point of your video, then you will not get people´s attention. But you also need to keep posting, therefore quantity is also really needed. If you have only 10 videos, you cannot grow, because you need to keep learning, what is a better shooting angle, how to edit, or which part is more interesting. Only after you have posted 20 or 30 videos, you will really understand what content is good.

Without quantity you cannot have high quality. Maybe your image is of high quality, but your content may be not. Quantity will support you, sooner or later you will know which part I need to do better. Now I am much better than three months ago. My videos are shorter, image is clearer, I know how to catch the attention in five seconds and so on.

Lastly, James said that in his opinion it is very important to keep on studying and analysing your content and try to figure out a reason as to why some videos are more popular

than others. He also says that it is a good idea to find your own unique niche of topics to post about as he explains:

> *Well, I would say, for me as a video maker, you need to watch a lot of videos and study them. You get to learn a lot from others. Why people like that? Why people like this? Also, according to you capability and personality, what are you good at? what do you like? What is likeable about you?*
>
> *For instance, food videos. People like them or you like them. Then you can do it! And also keep learning from others. Maybe you can find something others haven´t ever touched yet. Then you can get followers, because you do something unique. For example, I am the only Chinese person to promote Finnish education for the Chinese people through the different social media channels. Nobody does what I do, so I gain the followers.*
>
> *So keep posting and try something nobody has ever done or try from a new aspect nobody has ever tried. Then you will get new followers.*

This is clearly where James way of posting was somewhat different as to what I did with peki_jay. He started to make a solid formula regarding making videos (1 minute max, good title, first five seconds etc.) and the topic of his videos are always about the same thing which is tour guiding in Finland, with focus on Finnish lifestyle and education. Watching other people's videos also seemed to be an effective way of learning how to become a better content creator for James.

5 Discussion

So. Here we are then! The challenge is completed. I have walked you through the process and the results, but now comes the most important thing: What do we learn from all this?

5.1 The Original Objectives

What was the objective again?
"The objective of the observation period will be to:

- *post at least five days a week*
- *become a Nano-influencer (Gain 1000 followers)*
- *become familiar with Instagram as a consumer*
- *Learn how to use Instagram as a marketing tool"*

On the first objective I failed miserably. I managed to post 5 days a week for the first month, after which it didn´t happen again. Creating content on social media takes a lot more effort than I initially thought, let alone quality content on a regular basis. With trying to balance life overall, saying that you will post something everyday is a very big commitment. I started to work in a new job on a part-time contract, and almost all of my time is consumed by doing marketing on social media. Lately, we started using automatic posting applications where we can plan the posts in advance. This is already helping a lot, especially when posting the same posts more than once.

I also didn't become a Nano-influencer, as I didn't gain 1000 followers. This is also what I overlooked a bit. On the other hand, it is quite logical, since every single post was random, and didn´t relate to each other. As we learned from James example, it is good to have a specific topic you post about, so people know what you are about. During this half a year that I worked on this thesis, I heard from several sides the same question "What is this all about?" I tried to counter this confusion by saying "Does it matter?" and although in terms of my personal life it doesn´t, in terms of marketing the answer would be: "It most definitely matters".

By doing the experiment the way I did, I however gained very deep knowledge and inside on Instagram as an application. When I started the account on 1.5.2020 I had never used it before and the beginning was very confusing, especially visually. I now manage it really well, know about all features and possibilities the app can provide for the consumer, which is great insight when planning to use it as a marketing tool.

Which is the main point here: Learn how to use Instagram as a marketing tool. Technically I did, but the most important thing is not about how fluent you are with the application, but more, what kind of content you are to make, for whom to make and with what purpose. I also didn´t go through some important features such as paid advertisement, which is a great way to boost the reach of your posts, although a somewhat expensive one. And as we learned, reach is not everything.

5.2   What mattered and what didn´t

Two types of posts that required a fair amount of work but had little results were blogs and vlogs. Even though Instagram gives you up unto 2000 characters to fill your caption with, rarely anyone seemed to read them, as the response rate to the long captions was very low. Also, vlogs were not a success, although after talking with James I realized I could have stepped up game easily on that one, for example by focusing on the first five seconds and making neater videos.

One thing that seemed to matter a lot was the "purpose" of the Instagram account. People follow Cristiano Ronaldo because he is a famous footballer and entrepreneur, so people interest in football and entrepreneurship follow him. These same people wouldn´t likely to follow one of the Kardashian sisters as they are more in the beauty, fashion and celebrity industry. On the other hand, this is exactly what I wanted to find out and if I had never done this the way I did, I wouldn't have learned it.

5.3   Access your success

The success in this thesis doesn´t lie in the fulfilment of the numbers, but rather to move on from here. I had a couple of questions in the beginning when I started on this thesis, but the more I found out, the more questions arose: "Why do we like birthday posts? What makes people want to share posts? Why did people like this post, even though I didn´t think it was good?" and so on.

Even though the concrete results were not impressive, I learned a huge amount about how social media marketing works on the grassroot level. From here on, I know how to move on and how to improve this skill, when in the beginning I had no clue as to how to become even better at all.

As in terms of trustworthiness, the numbers don´t lie and the conclusions are made from the observations, but when talking about how to apply this knowledge directly, it is probably not possible, as different Instagram accounts have different needs. But I learned how to use and practice with the tool.

This thesis is perfect for anyone who wants to have a nice read and look into an average student's life when it comes to creating a thesis. On a professional level, it is the perfect starting point for social media marketing, as you will gain insight on the very basics of Instagram and social media marketing and with a view from zero point. The success in this thesis doesn´t lie in the fulfilment of the numbers, but rather how to move on from here. This thesis is a great place to get a kickstart, and an awesome experience for me.

5.4   Social media marketing is more of an artform

It is not enough that you have a wide base of theoretical knowledge, in order to succeed in social media marketing. You need to post on your account, you need to make practical effort in order to develop. A parallel could be made with music; you may know in theory exactly how to sing or how to play an instrument, but it doesn´t mean that you actually can sing or play the instrument.

Instagram is like my instrument that I am learned how to play. The more I play it and try different things, the more I learn. Just like music, social media marketing, and marketing at all, is more of an artform than science. In science you try to figure out absolute truths objectively by theorizing formulas and trying them out. If one of these truths is found, we know how the formula works and apply it to our lives.

Art and marketing are about figuring out opinions subjectively, also by theorizing formulas and trying them out, but the difference is that different formulas may give the same result and vice versa: the same formula might give different results. I am on my way to figure out a formula with which I can gain followers and understand how and why I gained these followers.

When taking my knowledge and skills into the job market, the environment depicts the job. A company defines the target group and posting needs to happen in such a way that it also suits the company's values.

For myself it is easy to create Instagram content as I am not restricted to any particular values or even grammar. A company who wants to look professional and sells a specific

product with specific values puts more limits when it comes to content creation as the content may not contain sloppy language, the content must relate somehow to the product and so on.

It is like with music, if you just make music for yourself you can just randomly play something, but if you play in a rock-band you need to make music that at least sounds like rock-music. But, this doesn´t take away the fact that you know how to play the instrument, the techniques, reading notes and so on.

The same with this social media marketing. I first learn how to play the Instagram platform after which I can join a company (the band) and from there I just need to adjust to the genre they want to play (their restrictions). From a marketing point of view I gained an understanding of how to create an audience and maintain a relationship with this audience. In my opinion, this is exactly what marketing is about.

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Appendix Results of 67 posts

date	description	Type of content	Type of insta post	Reach	Impressions	Profile visits	Likes	comments	Engagement rate %	Actions taken	Comments
1.5.2020	Introduction video	vlog	1 video	0	**222**	0	**32**	**17**	0 %	0	A lot of comments, people cheering me on.
2.5.2020	Don´t overthink (Insta insights)	vlog	1 pic + 1 video	0	0	0	18	4	0 %	0	
3.5.2020	Hear the sounds	Audio	1Audio + 1 picture	0	87	0	11	5	0 %	0	
3.5.2020	First summer job	Picture	1 Picture	0	0	0	20	**26**	0 %	0	A lot of comments, I asked for the people´s experience
3.5.2020	Famous people on couch	Selfie video	1 video	199	167	2	17	3	11 %	22	61% was not following
3.5.2020	Day 3 Insta insights	vlog	1 Picture+2 videos	168	210	**12**	24	**14**	30 %	50	52% was not following, a lot of comments, I announced my thesis project. A lot of Profile visits
4.5.2020	I will get better	Illustration	4 pic.	169	202	0	19	2	12 %	21	52% was not following
4.5.2020	Hear the sounds answer 3.5	Video	1 video	183	237	**11**	18	4	18 %	33	49% was not following, a lot of Profile visits.
5.5.2020	Podcast Pic	selfie	1 Pic	176	235	8	**32**	13	30 %	53	
5.5.2020	Day 5 Insta insights	Vlog	1 vid	172	170	8	24	9	24 %	41	
6.5.2020	Chinese Resumé. fake or real	Picture	1 pic	155	189	4	22	**11**	24 %	37	
6.5.2020	Swallovers	Blog + illustration	1 pic	140	190	4	20	**12**	26 %	36	People were actually talking about this post! (Ville and suvisanna)
7.5.2020	Lazy post	Illustration	1 pic	132	174	**12**	26	2	30 %	40	
8.5.2020	First week Insta insights	Vlog	1 pic + 1 video	235	288	**20**	**31**	7	25 %	58	
9.5.2020	Social media quote	Text	2 pics	136	194	2	29	9	29 %	40	
10.5.2020	Random shit content uploader	Vlog	pics and videoclips	195	250	4	**30**	8	22 %	42	47% was not following
11.5.2020	Unpacking tripod	Vlog	pics and videoclips	169	222	6	24	6	21 %	36	
12.5.2020	Beautiful picture+ random quote	Picture	1 pic	144	184	5	20	6	22 %	31	
13.5.2020	Iron man	Video	video	208	257	3	**30**	13	22 %	46	45 %
15.5.2020	Woman chinese character	Picture	pic	144	187	5	16	4	17 %	25	
16.5.2020	Chinese character woman	Video	video	145	212	6	24	8	26 %	38	
17.5.2020	Neck pain	Illustration	pic	162	209	5	24	2	19 %	31	
18.5.2020	Crazy birthday video	vlog	video	173	247	4	23	**16**	25 %	43	People congratulating in comments and a person expressing laughter

Date	Title	Type	Format								Notes	Questions
19.5.2020	Post birthday post	vlog	pics and videoclips	164	236	3	50	18	43 %	71	People congratulating in comments	Why do people like birthdays?
20.5.2020	Chinese character child	Illustration	pic	381	460	12	23	4	10 %	39	Shared 2 times, 69% not following, 254/460 found this post through hashtags	What makes people wanna share posts? Because famous people?
24.5.2020	video character child	IGTV	video	158	222	11	29	7	30 %	47		
25.5.2020	I always love my boobs	Illustration	pic	168	222	7	18	0	15 %	25		
26.5.2020	Music video ft Friend	Video	Video	251	312	5	31	5	16 %	41	Connection ith friend helps engagement	
28.5.2020	It doesn´t make sense	Vlog	3 videos	229	306	8	29	9	20 %	46		
28.5.2020	What am I doing?	Vlog	IGTV	157	208	7	20	6	21 %	33		
29.5.2020	Keep it simple	quote	2 pics	204	277	6	22	5	16 %	33		
29.5.2020	Post link sivex interview	Gif	1 video	259	301	7	8	2	7 %	17	Relative good reach, poor engagement	Reach vs engagement, maybe an article?
31.5.2020	Link´s awakening	IGTV	IGTV	166	215	10	22	4	22 %	36	video was watched only 5% on average. Approx 85% stopped looking after max 30 sec. Under 5% watched until the end	How to make people watch your content? Analyze IGTV stats and compare to what is said on innernet. Maybe funnel theory?
31.5.2020	#quemaltefuechallenge	Challenge answer	video	604	692	10	32	7	8 %	49	75% wasn´t following. Participated in challenge, 422/692 found this post via the hashtags, prolly the challenge hashtag	It´s good to participate in challenges.
1.6.2020	Playing in the mirror	Collage	1 pic	199	280	5	27	3	18 %	35		
3.6.2020	How much time you spend to go to work?	Picture	2 pics	179	258	5	24	20	27 %	49	A lot of comments, probably because it is easy to talk about relatable stuff	How to get people to comment on posts?
5.6.2020	Instaworld	Blog + illustration	1 pic	197	252	4	15	3	11 %	22		
9.6.2020	Instaworld 2	Blog + illustration	1 pic	197	256	4	18	6	14 %	28	engaged in a more profound conversation	
10.6.2020	Chinese character good	Illustration	1 pic	261	341	3	14	0	7 %	17	44% not following	
17.6.2020	Chinese character good video	IGTV	1 video	202	276	10	27	1	19 %	38	98/276 impressions from profile	
18.6.2020	Sushi post	video	1 video	604	665	2	37	6	7 %	45	11/37 likes are not following, 75 % of accounts reached ere not following. 239/665 impressions through hashtags and 185/665 through explore	People like to watch processes and food is a popular theme
20.6.2020	What are you thinking about today?	Illustration	1 pic	233	304	1	13	3	7 %	17		
27.6.2020	Onnibus/Tampere picture	picture	1 pic	296	358	7	36	6	17 %	49	Shared once, 49% weren´t following. 9/36 likes not following.	How to make people ant to share your content? Do people favour only already popular content?

Date	Title	Type	Format								Notes	Notes 2
30.6.2020	Tampere back and forth	high quality video	1 video	246	314	8	24	0	13 %	32	42% weren´t following. 1 website click (onnibus.com) , didnt recieve more reach/engagement so it´s not about video vs picture or even high quality vs low quality. 8/24 likes not following	
1.7.2020	one day trip	Blog + pictures	several pictures	203	291	7	32	0	19 %	39	14/203 found this post through location!	
3.7.2020	Music on a road trip	Pictures	1 pic	196	289	6	25	0	16 %	31		People not really reading and reacting to posts, but to insta stories some reaction is applicable. You need to make it as easy as possible
11.7.2020	Slow and rainy morning	picture	1 pic	205	265	2	17	0	9 %	19	Extremely lazy post, still some normal reach, engagement. 29% were not following. Picture is semi-interesting	
14.7.2020	Moving furniture	Pictures HQ	several pictures	198	273	8	28	**10**	23 %	46	High quality pictures, but nothing out of the normal happened. 24% weren´t following.	When do people visit your profile?
31.7.2020	Blueberry pie	pictures	2 pics	192	263	2	26	0	15 %	28		
3.8.2020	Shanghai 35 graden bewolkt	blog + Screenshot	1 pic	273	344	3	19	5	10 %	27	45% weren´t following, 7/19 likes weren´t following,	
11.8.2020	Bleaching hair post	blog + pictures	several pictures	238	323	3	**48**	6	24 %	57	High engagement rate. Maybe because something revolutionary happened in my life. And ofc nice pictures of the process and result.	
15.8.2020	Beatbox event	IGTV	live video	164	193	1	13	4	11 %	18	Shares and saves didn´t result in higher reach or engagement. Poor quality video, only interesting for people ho were there?	Video´s of live event not helping, maybe need better quality?
	beatbox event 2	IGTV	live video	171	220	2	17	2	12 %	21		
	Pizzahut post	Pictures	4 pics	206	283	4	27	0	15 %	31	3 posts in a day, but very different results.	
20.8.2020	Post with geese and dead mosquito	Blog + pics and videoclip	pics and videoclips	184	242	3	25	2	16 %	30		
23.8.2020	Overwhalemed	1 illustation + 1 pic	2 pics	260	323	1	14	0	6 %	15		

Date	Title	Type	Format								Notes
1.9.2020	They broke into our storage	IGTV	1 video	160	191	4	16	4	15 %	24	
	Kutovakikachallenge day 1	pics	3 pics	219	300	3	**33**	7	20 %	43	9/33 likes ere not following. Probably from the challenge
2.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 2	1 pic of 2 pics	1 pic	240	301	3	**32**	0	15 %	35	7/32 likes were not following
3.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 3	Pics	3 pics	190	264	4	**38**	1	23 %	43	10/38 likes ere not following
4.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 4	2 same pics, different filter	2 pics	213	285	1	**33**	0	16 %	34	9/33 likes were not following. Little by little starting to conclude that pictures are the best for insta posts.
5.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 5	1 pic 1 videoclip	1 pic + 1 video	199	269	2	**34**	2	19 %	38	9/34 likes were not following.
6.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 6	1 pic + 1 vlog	1 pic + 1 vid	263	349	5	**34**	2	16 %	41	7/34 likes were not following.
7.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 7	pics	2 pics	239	315	8	**38**	11	24 %	57	9/38 likes ere not following. Some commenting ith the person I tagged, a random person expressing his appreciation and a small conversation with an old friend.
8.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 8	pics	2 pics	184	271	1	**34**	1	20 %	36	11/34 likes were not following.
9.9.2020	Kutovakikachallenge day 9	pics	2 pics	263	350	3	26	0	11 %	29	Lazy post, very bad pictures. Reach was still good, 41% werent following. 10/26 likes were not following. This kutovakikachallenge also brought me some followers. Also got some beatbox followers.
8.10.2020	Random post since a long time!	quote with picture in restaurant	4 pics	179	251	5	**40**	0	25 %	45	Lower reach, higher engagement. Need to figure out some follower stats. Tagged the restaurant I was in.