Marketing and PR in Social Media

How the utilization of Instagram builds and maintains customer relationships

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of social media and the emergence of smartphones, new possibilities have arisen for companies to create and maintain customer relations. Today, customers expect companies to be represented on social media platforms. Customers today will discuss companies and products on social media, regardless of whether the companies are represented on the platforms or not. Therefore, it is important for companies to be present on these platforms in order to be a part of the discussion. On Instagram, a company can share content that would perhaps be unfitting for any other medium. This thesis researches how the top five Interbrand companies on Instagram have worked with marketing and PR, and how their posted content affects the users' level of interaction.

Two methods of analysis have been used in the writing of this thesis. In the first one, content analysis, the content and level of interaction of 200 Instagram posts were examined. Furthermore, a survey was conducted, with the aim of investigating Instagram users' motivations for using the platform and of following a company profile on Instagram.

The material has been researched with an overall marketing and public relations perspective. Other theories that have been used concern customer relationship management, self-representation and self-disclosure, back stage and front stage and word-of-mouth theories.

The results show strong indicators that different kinds of posts evoke different levels of user interaction. The companies mainly use Instagram to market their products and to share information about events and new releases. These kinds of posts mainly receive a low level of interaction, with as little as one percent of the companies' followers liking, and two in 10 000 commenting on the pictures. However, when the companies utilized Instagram's co-creative features, for example by encouraging the users to use company specific hashtags, the level of interaction increased by as much as five times. Other interesting results concern back stage sharing and how interaction affects trust in a company's message.

Keywords: Instagram, marketing, public relations, PR, customer relationships, social media, social media marketing, mobile social media, smartphone, photo sharing,

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to give a brief introduction to the thesis, as well as to describe its main purpose. This chapter will also present the research questions and material upon which this thesis is constructed.

For many people, social networking has become a significant part of life and thanks to smartphones we are now in the era of mobile social networking. With features such as camera and GPS built into the device, even the most casual tech user can easily create their own media content. The high-speed 3G Internet and social apps give people the opportunity to share their content easily with other people.[1] Studies show that 63% of the time people spend on mobile Internet is spent on using social media.[2] However, people do more than just creating and sharing content on social media, it is also used to create and maintain connections. Social media helps people to stay in touch with friends and families, as well as to help discover new contacts and build communities based on shared interest, hobby, religion or political opinion, just to mention a few.[3]

With social media taking such a crucial part in people's lives and so many people being represented on social media, it provides an ideal platform for companies to connect with their current and potential customers. This thesis will further investigate how companies can utilize social media to create and maintain customer relationships. The focus will lie on Instagram, a photo-sharing mobile app that in a short time has gained major popularity amongst private users as well as amongst companies.

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[1] M Peters, *Why the Future of Social Is in the Palm of Your Hand,* 2012-05-05
[2] Nielsen, *The State of Social Media: The Social Media Report,* 2012
[3] M Peters, op. cit.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to research how marketing and PR has been implemented in the usage of social media and what effects the material posted by the top Interbrand companies on Instagram has on their users. By observing the activity on five selected companies' Instagram accounts, we want to see how these companies create and maintain customer relationships, as well as to research what factors affect the level of interaction from users. By analyzing the content of the selected companies' Instagram posts, we want to create an understanding of how customer relations and user interaction can be created through the usage of Instagram. Additionally, we want to investigate the users' motifs behind their actions on a company's Instagram page.

1.2 Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of this thesis, the following questions will be examined:

- *What kinds of posts do the top companies on Instagram post?*
- *What effects do selected posts have on people's level of interaction?*
- *Why do people choose to follow a company on Instagram?*

1.3 Material and limitations

Nowadays, using social media as a marketing tool is almost mandatory for companies of any size. The new techniques associated with social media marketing have changed the marketing industry and created new opportunities for connecting with customers. With social media platforms available to millions of people around the world, companies can interact with customers from a wide range of nationalities and vice versa.[4] Interaction is a main theme in this thesis. We see the opportunities of interaction between a company profile page and their users as one of the fundamental aspects that puts social media marketing apart from traditional marketing methods.

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[4] D Evans, *Social media marketing: The next generation of business engagement*, Hoboken, 2010, p. 3

The world of social media is growing rapidly and there are many interesting platforms to research. However, because of the limited extent of this thesis it has been deemed necessary to focus only on one platform, namely Instagram. Instagram is one of the fastest growing social networks today and has since its launch in 2010 reached 100 million monthly active users.[5] Since its launch, many companies have recognized the possibilities of using Instagram for marketing purposes. The companies chosen for the content analysis are MTV, Starbucks, Nike, Burberry and Tiffany & Co., which according to Simply Measured[6] are the top five Interbrand 100 companies represented on Instagram.[7] The first company, MTV, is a television channel, which focuses on music and broadcasts a range of television programs mainly aimed at a young audience.[8] Number two, Starbucks, is one of the largest coffeehouse companies in the world, with over 20 000 cafés in a variety of countries.[9] The third company, Nike, develops and sells sports equipment to athletes around the world.[10] Burberry, the fourth company, is a British fashion house, which sells luxury items such as clothes, bags and fragrances.[11] Tiffany and Co., the fifth company, is an American company, which also focuses on luxury items, such as jewelry and silverware.[12] The companies all work on an international market and are from a wide range of industries that are all connected to the daily lives of many people. They all have an excellent level of presence on Instagram and are well known around the world. In addition to the coded pictures, the number of followers of each company has been used in some parts of the analysis.

The amount of posts that will be coded has been limited to 40 per company, due to lack of time and human resources. The content of the first 10 comments of every post will be coded from the variables "positive", "negative", "neutral" or "spam". Comments with an equal distribution between the categories will be coded as indeterminable. Ideally, the content of every comment would be coded. However, one post can have over 400 comments and if every comment were to be coded, the number would amount to 80 000 comments, which lies far outside the reach of this thesis.

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[5] Instagram, *Instagram Press Center,* 2013
[6] A website that specializes in analyzing social media usage
[7] Simply Measured, *Instagram Brand Adoption Study: A Study of the Interbrand Top 100 Brands on Instagram*, 2013, Statigram, *mtv, nike, burberry, starbucks, tiffanyandco.* 2013
[8] Wikipedia, *MTV,* 2013
[9] Wikipedia, *Starbucks,* 2013
[10] Wikipedia, *Nike,* 2013
[11] Wikipedia, *Burberry,* 2013
[12] Wikipedia, *Tiffany & Co.,* 2013

The other method chosen for the analysis is the conducting of a survey. The survey consists of 15 questions, which serve to answer the third research question, regarding why people choose to follow a company on Instagram. The 200 respondents are university students, who were reached by posting the survey on the websites of Stockholm University and Södertörn University College.

Regarding the literary works discussed in this thesis, material on basic marketing research, classical communication theory and recent publications on social media research have been used. Since the chosen field of research is quite new, finding books that reach the required academic level has been somewhat difficult. Therefore, classical research of communication has been complemented with handbooks and recent articles on social media marketing. This thesis does not seek to find answers to which factors increase sales, but focuses on how relationships between customer and company are created and maintained through the utilization of social media.

2. BACKGROUND

This chapter aims to present the technological development that has contributed to the rise of social media, as well as to present the chosen social medium, Instagram, more thoroughly.

2.1 The era of smartphones

In 2007, the world's first advanced touch screen mobile phone entered the market and marked a new era of both mobile technology and mobile phone usage; the era of smartphones.[13] Compared to its predecessors, the device has a high-resolution touch screen, faster processor, bigger memory, a QWERTY keyboard and a web browser that displays standard webpages. Today, it is as common to use this device to take photos, listen to music, play games, send e-mails, download maps and watch videos as it is to text and talk.[14] 741 million mobile phones are equipped with some type of photo-taking capability and taking pictures is one of the most common usages of the phone. 54% of smartphone users share their photos with others.[15]

Faster networks enabled the usage of smartphones. Even though Internet is accessed mainly through broadband, studies show that the amount of people connecting to the Internet through handheld devices, such as smartphones, is increasing. In Sweden, 42,1% of the Internet users access Internet through handheld devices.[16] Time spent on mobile Internet has doubled between 2011 and 2012 amongst Swedes. The most common activity on the Internet is social networking.[17]

On social networks, people use the medium to update status, share pictures, view pictures, find people and information and to send instant messages. People can easily share their content with other people. However, people do more than just creating and sharing content on social media, social media is also used for connections. People use social media to stay in touch with friends and family, as well as to create new connections. Social media has become

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[13] R Chowdhury, E*volution Of Mobile Phones 1995-2012*
[14] M Warmar, op. cit.
[15] S Bistro, *The Mobile Photo Explosion*, 2012-11-19
[16] World Internet Project, *International Report,* 2012
[17] O Findahl, *Swedes and the Internet,* Ödeshög, 2012, p. 10

a crucial part of many people's lives, which makes it an attractive advertising medium for companies. As social media is inherently built to share and spread content virally, the more users consume the content the more likely it is that they will share the content with their networks, by recommending and promoting products. Great experiences lead to the spread of brand awareness, which ultimately leads to sales.[18] Although smartphones have a challengingly small screen size for the kind of multitasking possibilities they possess, they hold the capability and flexibility of a computer.[19]

2.2 The web and social media

The development of the Internet as we know it today started in 1993 with the birth of the browser Mosaic.[20] With its successors, for example Firefox and Netscape, the computers' capability changed, which opened up a new gateway for communication and interaction. Thomas Friedman called Netscape a *world flattener*[21] because of its ability to give people the opportunity to interact, play and do business with each other from opposite sides of the world. Friedman claims that the flattening of the world is a positive change since it wires the whole world together and connects all knowledge centers into one global network.[22]

Netscape marked the era of Web 1.0, which is characterized by one-way communication. According to O'Reilly, in the era of Web 1.0 the majority of Internet users were passive receivers of Internet content, with only a few users actively participating in the creation of the content. The focus in Web 1.0 lay on receiving information rather than creating information. In contrast to Web 1.0, Web 2.0 is characterized by two-way communication and user participation.[23] The ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 are perfect for utilization in social media. What differentiates social media from traditional media[24] lies in the traditional media's concentration on one-way communication while social media

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[18] D Sloan, *Exploring Best Practices for Building and Monetizing Mobile Social Networks*, 2008-10-03
[19] Law Firm Mobile Website, *History of Mobile Internet*
[20] Nationalencyklopedin, *World Wide Web,* 2013-03-13
[21] T L Friedman, *The world is flat: a brief history of the globalized world in the twenty-first century*, London, 2005, p. 63.
[22] Ibid., p. 63ff
[23] T O'Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0, Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software*, 2005.
[24] By traditional media we mean TV, radio, print and press

emphasizes on two-way communication. [25] Social media is defined as a group of Internet-based applications. The term is a collective name for communication channels over the Internet that allow users to communicate with each other directly through texts, images or sounds. [26]

Applied to social media, the medium possesses a high degree of richness and allows a high degree of social presence; the medium allows an emergence between two communication partners. Many companies use social media platforms to support the development of their brand. It allows companies to engage with customers at a lower cost and to a higher efficiency compared to traditional media. The utility makes social media an effective and powerful tool for large, medium and small-sized companies, and it is especially beneficial for multinational companies. [27]

2.3 Instagram

Instagram is an American company founded in 2010. Instagram is a mobile application for smartphones, available on App Store and Google Play free of charge. Instagram is a social network that offers its users the opportunity to share their lives through a series of pictures. Since 2010, Instagram has obtained 100 million active monthly users. 40 million pictures are being uploaded daily and there are 8500 likes generated per second. [28]

Instagram is simply constructed and consists of five main buttons. [29] Firstly, to be able to use Instagram the user needs to create an account. The user can then follow other users and be followed back. When a user follows another user's account that user's photos will appear on the *home* page. The user can like or comment on other user's photos. By liking the photo, the user shows that they admire the post. The 15 most liked photos can be seen under the *explore* page. The *explore* page can also be used to search for other users or hashtags. On the *activities* page, the user can see recent activities, exempli gratia if the user has a new follower

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[25] A M Kaplan and M Haenlein, 'Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media'*, Business Horizon*, 2010, p. 61
[26] Nationalencyklopedin, *Sociala Medier*, 2013-03-26
[27] A M Kaplan and M Haenlein, op. cit., p. 60ff
[28] Instagram, *press*
[29] See app. 8.1, functions.

or who has commented or liked the user's photos. On the *share* page, the user can share a picture taken with the help of the mobile camera and can then enhance the photo with the help of 19 pre-modified filters. The user can also add a caption or hashtags to the photo. Hashtags categorize the photo with other photos with the same hashtag. Another option is to geotag the photo. By geotagging the photo, users share the location of where the photo was taken, and the photo will then be categorized based on that specific location.[30]

For companies, Instagram can be used as a tool to connect and communicate with customers and potential customers. The company can present a more personal picture of their brand, and by doing so the company conveys a more honest picture of itself. The idea of Instagram pictures lies on on-the-go, a sense that the event is happening right now, and that adds another layer to the personal and honest picture of the company. Another option Instagram provides is the opportunity for companies to reflect a picture of the brand through the eyes of the customers, using hashtag encouragement.[31]

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[30] E Moreu, *What Is Instagram? Using Instagram as a Mobile Photo App and as a Social Network,* About.com
[31] C Björkgren, *Kommunicera rätt med Instagram (Communicate right on Instagram)*, Internetworld, 2012-06-21

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims to present the relevant theories, which will lay the foundation of the empirical data analysis.

3.1 Marketing and PR

Marketing and PR are two fields with many similarities. Both fields focus on external areas and deal with messages and media. Furthermore, both fields deal with public opinions and communication, persuasion and relationships. Marketing's interest in public relations is a natural part of the evolution process. Marketing has its origin in economics, and focus laid on product, price, place and promotion, which are also known as the 4 P's of marketing. However, as the process progressed, the concept of selling became a focus point and the focus shifted from the previous 4 P's to product branding and customer needs, which is the end of the consumption process. To accommodate this development, the concept of marketing broadened and two additional P's where added. One of the P's stands for public relations, which had now become an integrated part of marketing.[32]

This thesis aims to examine the evolvement of customer-company relationships by researching what effects published material have on the customers' level of interaction on Instagram. Since this thesis focuses on the creation and maintenance of relationships, rather than the products and sales of the examined companies, we have chosen to focus on one of the latest P's in the marketing field, namely public relations.

3.2 Grunig and Hunt's four models of Public Relations

Grunig and Hunt's influential conception of PR distinguishes between four models of public relations.[33] The first is called the press agency/publicity model, which uses persuasion techniques to influence the audience to behave in a desired way. The second model is the

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[32] J G Hutton, 'Defining the Relationship Between Public Relations and Marketing: Public Relations' Most Important Challenge.' *Handbook of Public Relations*, 2001, p. 205ff

[33] J Fawkes, "*Public Relations and Communications*" in ed. A Theaker, *The Public Relations Handbook,* New York, 2001, p. 5ff. We did not have access to Grunig's original text and therefore needed to use a secondary source in this section.

public information model, where information is distributed to the audience without the aim of changing attitudes. The third model is called two-way asymmetric PR, where the notion of two-way communication is introduced. However, the model is asymmetric since the intended change lies more in the audiences' behavior than in a change in the mediated message. The fourth model, which is the most applicable to the research conducted in this thesis, is called two-way symmetric PR. In this model, sender and receiver collaborate, which could possibly lead to a balanced power structure.[34] Johanna Fawkes discusses Grunig and Hunt's models and states that the fourth model of public relations can only exist when both parties have an equal measure of authority to influence the other but that this equality almost never occurs. However, with the rise of social media as a platform for the creation of public relations, the fourth model is gaining ground. On Instagram, the networking qualities give the users some power to influence companies, by making their opinions of the company visible to other users. Additionally, users can seek out and follow companies from their own free will, which further emphasizes the symmetry of the model and gives opportunities for dialogue.[35]

3.3 The era of interactivity

Peppers and Rogers call our time the *"era of interactivity"*, in which new technology has changed the way brands and customers connect.[36] On their social media page, a company can create and develop brand recognition by posting content that appeals to their customers. Additionally, social media provides a platform where user and company can communicate publicly and directly, which gives the posts large penetrating power, since they can be seen by all of the users. Customer Relationships Management (CRM) focuses on setting a brand apart from its competitors by personalizing communication with customers, for example by targeting the right customer with relevant information at the right time, or establishing a personal connection with a specific customer.[37]

With customer relationships evolving on the social web, CRM has had to evolve with it. *Social CRM* focuses on managing customer relationships on the social web, where conditions

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[34] J Fawkes, op. cit., p. 5ff
[35] Ibid., p. 11
[36] D Peppers and M Rogers, *Managing customer relationships*, Hoboken, 2004, p. 15
[37] Ibid., p. 16

differ from those of more traditional offline and online marketing. Customers today expect companies to be present on social networking sites, just as they expect them to appear on their television or in their mailboxes. Social networks provide customers with a platform on which they can evolve their relationship with a company. [38]

According to Evans in *Social Media Marketing: The Next Generation of Business Engagement:*

> *"On the Social Web, participants form relationships for specific*
> *purposes: fun, discovery, or other uses of collective knowledge*
> *to better accomplish their own goals."[39]*

He further goes on to state that people will discuss brands on social networks regardless if the company itself is active or not.[40] A quick search on Instagram for the hashtag "McDonalds" brings up a result of almost two million pictures. However, McDonald's has no official Instagram account, which means that they are missing out on being a part of the already ongoing conversation. Hence, they have no means of managing or influencing what is being said about their company on Instagram. Scott argues, in his book *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*, that *"marketing is not only about your products".*[41] In utilizing social media as a marketing tool, companies should focus less on selling their products, and instead focus their attention on the needs and desires of their customers. On Instagram, companies can show scenes that give a wider perspective to the use of their products or services, for example by uploading images of people using their products to maintain an attractive life style.[42] By utilizing Instagram's inherent qualities, a company can adapt their published material to suit the expectations of their customers and thus influence their opinion of the company in the desired way.

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[38] D Evans. *Social media marketing: The next generation of business engagement*, Hoboken, 2010, p. 4
[39] Ibid., p. 37
[40] Ibid., p. 232
[41] D Meerman Scott, *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*. Hoboken, 2011, p. 137
[42] Ibid., p. 137

3.4 Engagement on social media

The key elements in social media lie in the field of media research. Amongst the elements are theories concerning social presence, self-presentation and self-disclosure. The concept of self-representation states that in any type of social interaction people have, on the one hand, the desire to control the impressions other people form of them and, on the other hand, it is driven with the objective of influencing others. Such representation is done through self-disclosure, a conscious or unconscious revelation of personal information. Self-disclosure is a critical step in development of a relationship. Social presence is influenced by the intimacy, interpersonal as well as mediated, of the medium. The higher social presence, the larger social influence the communicating partners have on each other's behavior. Applied to social media, the medium allows a high degree of social presence. The medium allows emergence between two communication partners and allows companies to engage with customers at a lower cost and to a higher efficiency compared to traditional media. Therefore, many companies use social media to support the development of their brand. Social media has shown to be powerful in generating viral marketing phenomenon.[43]

However, this communication form requires a sender who is willing to share information and a receiver who is willing to listen. From a consumer perspective, the concept of self-presentation and self-disclosure states that people share information about themselves in a way they would like to be perceived by others. For example, a trendsetter would happily share information with others about shopping at Saks Fifth Avenue in New York but will less likely share information about going grocery shopping at Wal-Mart on Staten Island. For the receiver of this information, the explanation lies in the concept of ambient awareness, meaning that knowing what a person has been through throughout the day, combined with a comment here and there, tells more about the person than a long descriptive letter. For people of today, sharing short information frequently has become a way of building relationships with each other.[44]

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[43] A M Kaplan and M Haenlein, op. cit., p. 60ff
[44] A M Kaplan, 'If you love something, let it go mobile: Mobile marketing and mobile social media 4x4', *Business Horizons*, 2012, p. 132ff

According to Laroche et al., the creation of brand communities on social media greatly influences brand loyalty and brand trust. Brand communities *foster engagement* and appeal to the customers' need of *belongingness*.[45] Furthermore, they argue that building brand communities on social media is a good tool to further evolve trust in a brand since users sharing information and experiences of the products or services and aiding each other in answering questions *"reduces uncertainty and information asymmetry, and increases predictability of brand actions"*.[46] Laroche et al. further quote Schau et al. who defined *"four categories of practices through which customers co-create value in brand communities: social networking, impression management, community engagement, and brand use"*.[47] These practices are user-created and develop as a result of the interactive possibilities associated with social media.[48]

Compared to engagement in traditional media, engagement on social media can take place almost instantly. From their own free will, users can become active participants, rather than passive viewers. Getting users to show interest in the company is one of the main objectives of marketing on social media.[49] In this thesis, the effects of engagement on Instagram concerns the responses given from users on the uploaded posts, counted in likes, comments and hashtag penetration.

With the shifting of the view of customers as dependent on a company, to that of customers being "equal partners", the level of engagement a company can evoke becomes ever more important. The evolvement of social media networking sites has led to a change in company-customer relationships, as the structures have shifted from being top-down to horizontal.[50] Evans defines four terms that make up the factors that create engagement: consumption, curation, creation and collaboration.[51] Consumption is void of interaction and concerns only the activity a consumer engages in online, i.e. reading, downloading, watching or listening.

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[45] M Laroche, et al., 'The effects of social media based brand communities on brand community markers, value creation practices, brand trust and brand loyalty', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2012, p. 1756ff
[46] Ibid., p. 1759
[47] J H Schau et al., 'How brand community practices create value', *Journal of Marketing*, 2009 cited in Laroche et al., 'The effects of social media based brand communities on brand community markers, value creation practices, brand trust and brand loyalty', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2012, p. 1758
[48] M Laroche, op. cit., p. 1756
[49] D Peppers and M Rogers, op. cit., p. 11
[50] D Padua, *Trust, social relations and engagement*, Basingstoke, 2012, p. xiii, R Lusch,' Marketing's Evolving Identity: Defining our Future', *Communication & Mass Media Complete,* 2007, p. 261
[51] D Evans, op. cit., p. 15

This is the most common kind of social media usage since only about 42% of Internet users actively interact and engage on social media platforms.[52] The second term, curation, describes the move from passive to more active usage, where the consumer actively engages in content by commenting, rating, hashtagging etcetera. Content creation, the third term, requires users to upload their own content onto a platform. Instagram makes it simple to upload your own pictures and to interact with other users, which facilitates the users' means of engagement. Evans states: *"By creating activities that connect to lifestyles, passions and causes, the brand, product or service takes on a new relevance for the customer"*.[53] Company pages on Instagram can provide numerous examples of this, for example by encouraging users to tag their Instagram photos with hashtags provided by the company, or by posting content that is strongly connected to their target group. The fourth term, collaboration, describes the process in which content can be co-created, for example by users commenting on news articles on net-based magazines or uploading hashtagged pictures on Instagram. [54]

3.5 Word-of-Mouth

With the two-way communication, the interaction of word-of-mouth communication enriches the communication process. According to Dichter people like to talk about their experiences, a phenomenon which he explains by describing people's wish for involvement by categorizing the motivations into four categories, *product involvement, self-involvement, other involvement* and *message involvement*.[55] *Product involvement* refers the fact that people like to discuss their experiences, whether they are pleasurable or un-pleasurable. *The self-involvement* category refers to the receiver's wish to accomplish levels of prestige and status. *Other involvement* and *message involvement* revolves around products and messages that surround products. This phenomenon is known as word-of-mouth communication. Customers use word-of-mouth to, for example, provide information and to support and reinforce their decision. Using ordinary people to express positive opinion about a company or brand is a

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[52] O Findahl, *Svenskarna och Internet* (*Swedes and the Internet*)*,* Ödeshög, 2011, p. 55
[53] Ibid., p. 204
[54] D Evans, op. cit., p. 16-17
[55] E Dichter, 'How word-of-mouth advertising works', *Harvard Business Review*, 1996 cited in C Fill, *Marketing communications: contexts, strategies and applications*, Harlow, 2001, p. 40

very well used advertising technique, in fact, as many as 70% of all sales are generated through recommendations.[56]

Word-of-mouth processes have always been important in marketing. However, the processes have been limited, due to the fact that human interaction previously has been limited. Social media has removed that limitation and given new power to customers, making word-of-mouth an ever more powerful communication process. Customers around the world are using social media to learn about other customers' experiences.[57] On Instagram, companies can utilize the word-of-mouth process by reposting the users pictures or encourage them to tag their pictures with hashtags provided by the company, thus making their message visible to the extended network of the users' followers.

Kaplan talks about the *four I* model and how the utilization of this model would help companies adapt to the social media environment. The *four I* model talks about integration, individualization, involvement and initiative. Companies should try to *integrate* their social media activities into the lives of the users. Such integration should be *individualized*, meaning when the content is created the target user's interests and preferences should be taken in account. Moreover, companies should *involve* users through engaging in conversations and companies should *initiate* the creation of user-generated content and word-of-mouth. The most effective campaigns have often involved users participating in the content creation. [58]

3.6 Back stage and front stage on social media

Instagram provides companies with the opportunity to display an image of them that would perhaps be unfitting for any other medium, like images of preparations for an event or of a movie set. On Instagram, companies can show scenes that let their users come closer to the core of the brand, which can create a stronger bond between the company and customer. Ervin Goffman defines human life as having two spheres, front stage and back stage. On the front stage sphere, people act with the knowledge that others, who are themselves playing a

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[56] C Fill, op. cit., p. 39-41
[57] Nielsen, op. cit.
[58] A M Kaplan, op.cit., p. 134

role, are judging them. Parts of human life considered unfit for public display is kept back stage, hidden from the view of critical onlookers.[59]

Goffman's theories on human life on the social scene can be adapted to company usage of social media. As with perhaps all other marketing, companies strive to display the most favorable image possible. Social media can be seen as either having diminished the distance between front stage and back stage, or as having redefined which aspects belong to which sphere. On social media platforms, a company, with every post they upload, steps out on a scene in front of millions of possible viewers, who, additionally, are on their home ground. The power on the sphere of social media mainly belongs to the customers, and it is therefore up to the companies to adapt to the structures within.[60]

One way of adapting to the structures on social media is to invite users to work on the company's behalf, a process that Fawkes calls *"leveraging the web 2.0 interconnectedness"*.[61] Companies sharing control of their marketing with their customers can be seen as a merger between front stage and back stage since customers usually only get to take part of the end product, without gaining insight to the underlying process. On Instagram, companies can let their users create material for them, by for example urging them to use a specific hashtag. One clear example of this is Ben & Jerry's Instagram campaign "Capture Euphoria". The hashtag captureeuphoria has almost 18 000 uploaded photos, from which Ben & Jerry's regularly chose one, which is displayed on billboards in the uploader's hometown.[62] However, letting customers in on the marketing process is not without risk. There are numerous examples of customers turning a company's material against it, for example in the case of McDonald's hashtag "McDStories" on Twitter, which uses a similar system of hashtagging. Instead of the hashtag being used to share good memories of experiences at McDonald's it resulted in tweets like "My brother finding a fake fingernail in his fries #McDStories".[63] This kind of usage is called "hashtag hijacking", which means that users take a company specific hashtag and use it for their own purposes, often to spread

[59] B Hogan, 'The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online'*, Bulletin of Science*, 2010, p. 377
[60] J Fawkes, op. cit., p. 195
[61] Ibid., p. 195
[62] Instagram, *Ben and Jerry's,* 2013
[63] L Dugan, *How Not To Get Your Hashtag Hijacked (Like McDonald's Did) [INFOGRAPHIC]*. Mediabistro, 2012-03-27.

negative information about a brand.[64] Negative comments of this kind would, preferably, be kept backstage, hidden from view. However, on social media, even the slightest mistake can be seen by millions of people.

Instagram has changed the rules of what is being displayed on the front stage in two major ways. Firstly, a company can choose to display images of them that go beyond the material usually displayed by a company, for example by posting behind the scenes content. Secondly, from a customer perspective, Instagram can be used to share and spread negative information about a company. Before the age of social media, such information would, to a larger extent, have been possible to keep back stage. Nowadays, such information can spread rapidly and damage a company's reputation deeply.

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[64] L Dugan, op. cit.

4. METHOD

In this chapter the methods chosen for the analysis, survey and content analysis will be presented and discussed more thoroughly.

4.1 Selection of method

Selecting a method fit for analyzing the proposed subject is vital for reaching the aim of a study. Our chosen field is often studied through qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups.[65] In his book *Quantity and Quality in Social Research,* Alan Bryman discusses the implications of the words qualitative and quantitative, stating that the word quantitative denotes an over-confidence in quantifiable numbers, which would imply that qualitative research is lacking in that regard. Other scholars have attempted to establish other terms for the two methods of research. One example of this is Evered's and Louis' terms *"inquiry from the outside"* for quantitative methods, and *"inquiry from the inside"* for qualitative methods. Inquiry from the outside captures the theme of this thesis, since we want to take the perspective of an outsider and analyze the chosen material void of input from the creators.[66]

The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative or quantitative research methods can be discussed. Quantitative researchers often claim that their methods hold a more scientific focus than those of qualitative research, as they are similar to those of the natural sciences. As opposed to qualitative methods, content analysis and survey results are usually more generalizable. The use of quantitative, numerical methods has also been criticized for giving the researchers overconfidence in the relevance of the results.[67] Nevertheless, it is to our belief that using quantitative methods such as content analysis and surveys in a study of this kind gives a view that is less painted by subjectivity than qualitative methods. Quantitative content analysis is unobtrusive and nonreactive, and analyses the messages separate from the sender. Furthermore, it gives the opportunity to draw conclusions from content without the approval or collaboration of the creators.[68] In the words of Riffe et al.:

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[65] A Bryman, op. cit., p. 1
[66] Ibid. p. 3
[67] K Neuendorf, *The content analysis guidebook.* Thousand Oaks, 2002, p. 15
[68] D Riffe et al., *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research,* Mahwah, 1998
p. 30

"Content analysis is crucial to any theory dealing with the impact or antecedents of content. It is not essential to every study conducted, but in the long run, one cannot study mass communications without studying content"[69]

4.2 Content analysis

Kimberly Neuendorf defines content analysis as *"the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics"* and defines the common aspect of the analyzed units as all being conveyors of a message.[70] Content analysis, being a quantitative method, gives the opportunity to see correlations between different factors of analysis. Since the aim of this thesis is to determine which factors in the published content affect customer relations, content analysis can be seen as a suitable method.[71]

4.2.1 The codebook

At the beginning of the process, a codebook was constructed, with the aim of covering all possible aspects of an Instagram post. The codebook focuses on coding the content of the posted pictures from a range of different factors, for example if the picture is of a nature or urban scene, or if the post encourages interaction by asking a question or encourages users to like or hashtag.[72] If the post encourages the usage of company specific hashtags, the penetration of such hashtags is noted in number of uploaded pictures. Since individual posts can hold elements from more than one category, all categories are coded separately. The aim of using content analysis is to statistically determine which factors affect customer relationships positively or negatively, in terms of user interaction**.**

4.2.2 The analysis

We have used the program SPSS to code the material gathered in the content analysis. The results will be shown in cross tables, tables of frequency and correlation and in simple variance analysis.

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[69] D Riffe, op. cit., p. 32
[70] K Neuendorf, op.cit., p. 1
[71] Ibid., p. 1
[72] See app. 8.2

4.3 Survey

To conduct a survey is to attempt to formulate questions to which meaningful answers can be given. By formulating the survey questions, the researcher assumes that the respondent has both the capability to understand the questions and the knowledge required to answer them.[73] In this thesis, the method of survey analysis was chosen to give a wider perspective to the analysis of the data collected in the content analysis. The aim of the survey is to represent the users' thought process behind their actions on a company page. Surveys are good for collecting large amounts of quantifiable data on a large number of people who can be seen as representative for a target group at a specific point of time.[74]

The target group has been set to Swedish university students. The respondents were found by posting the survey on Stockholm University and Södertörn University College's websites with the aim of having an equal distribution between male and female respondents. In the report *Swedes and the Internet* statistics show that the usage of social media amongst Swedish people is 91% between the ages of 12-20, 83% between the ages of 21-35 and 56% and between the ages of 36-65.[75] These numbers can be seen as serving to fulfill the criteria of the respondents' having the knowledge required to give meaningful answers.[76] The survey was opened on March 22nd 2013, with the goal of gathering 200 responses, a goal that was met on April 24th 2013.

The survey was opened with general questions concerning the respondents' age and gender. To begin with general questions is good to introduce the respondents to the research format, and also creates possibilities for further analysis.[77] The general questions of the respondents' Internet and social media usage were followed by questions about if, and for what purpose they like company pages on Instagram, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' underlying behavior and opinions. The concluding questions concern interaction between the respondent and the companies and how social media marketing in general affects them.[78] To ascertain that the respondents were comfortable in sharing information about themselves, the survey was opened with a short text explaining the purpose of the study and

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[73] W Foddy, *Constructing questions for interviews and questionnaires*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 12f
[74] A Bryman, *Quantity and quality in social research*, London, 1992, p. 11
[75] O Findahl, 2011, op. cit.
[76] W Foddy, op. cit., p. 12f
[77] M Saunders et al. *Research methods for business students,* Harlow, 2003, p. 388
[78] See app. 8.3, survey

that all responses would be treated anonymously. Closed questions were used to facilitate the analysis.[79]

4.4 Method discussion

For a sample to be generalizable, it must be randomly selected.[80] To reach generalizability, 40 posts each from the Instagram profiles of the five companies mentioned above, for a total of 200 posts, were chosen, based on an individually calculated skip interval.[81] The reason for adapting the skip interval to each company is to give each post the same opportunity of being chosen for the analysis.[82]

In order to establish validity and coder reliability, a pilot study was conducted. After the pilot study, the codebook was revised before being used in the actual collection of material. Since all content was manifest, coding the material was relatively simple and coder reliability was therefore good.[83] On the few occasions when questions arose, the coders came to mutual agreement. All variables are clearly defined in the codebook, to minimize the occurrence of disagreements during the coding.

As previously stated, the initial aim of the creation of the codebook was to cover all possible aspects of an Instagram post. However, when the analysis commenced, it quickly became apparent that not all factors were relevant. For example, we were not able to draw any conclusions based on whether the content showed nature or urban scenes, people or animals, if the brand name was visible or if a post was geotagged or not. Therefore, these factors will not be further analyzed.

The other method of analysis chosen is the conducting of a survey. In his book *Constructing Questions for Interviews and questionnaires* William Foddy quotes Brown and Gilmartin, who state that analysis based on verbal accounts, such as interviews *"are limited to the expressions of attitudes, feelings and opinions rather than to factual accounts of past*

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[79] W Foddy, op. cit., p. 127
[68] K Neuendorf, op. cit., p. 82f
[81] See app. 8.2
[82] K Neuendorf, op. cit., p. 82f
[83] K Neuendorf, op. cit., p. 146

behaviour and interactions".[84] However, non-verbal accounts, such as surveys, are not without disadvantages**.** The respondents' ability or willingness to answer survey questions truthfully can strongly affect the answers, and subsequently, the analysis. Questions that are prone to attract untruthful answers could for example be such concerning age or ownership. Other common problems are respondents misunderstanding the questions, use of weighted words in the question formulation and the respondents' answers being influenced by previous questions. In formulating the survey questions, the goal was to keep the questions as simple as possible, to ascertain that they would be understood correctly. Although the pilot study indicated that the questions were suitable, it is not possible to know for certain that they were interpreted as intended. Furthermore, using closed questions can influence the answers and make respondents give answers they would not have thought of if the alternative were not presented to them.[85] However, the opportunities of analysis associated with closed questions lead us to believe that closed questions are better suited than open questions in this particular case.

As previously stated, the aim was to reach an equal distribution between male and female respondents. However, about 75% of the respondents were female. It is to our belief that the reason for the respondents being predominantly female may lie in the fact that both Stockholm University and Södertörn University College have more female than male students (62% versus 70%).[86] Another negative factor with our chosen method of distribution was that 33% of the respondents never use Instagram. If all respondents had been Instagram users, the results might have been different. These factors show two negative aspects of distributing the survey over the Internet since we had little to no control over who could respond. Furthermore, it was not possible to determine the non-response rate.

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[84] J Brown and B G Gilmartin, *Sociology Today*, 1969 quoted in W Foddy, *Constructing questions for interviews and questionnaires*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 1
[85] W Foddy, op. cit. p. 3ff
[86] Stockholm University, *Sifferfakta 2012 (Facts in Numbers 2012)*, 2012, Södertörn University College, *Högskolan i siffror (The University College in Numbers)*, 2012

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to present our findings based on the empirical material. To answer the research questions, a continuously reasoning and reflexive approach has been taken. The results will be presented in charts and graphs.

5.1 Summary of data

5.1.1 The companies

Follower count
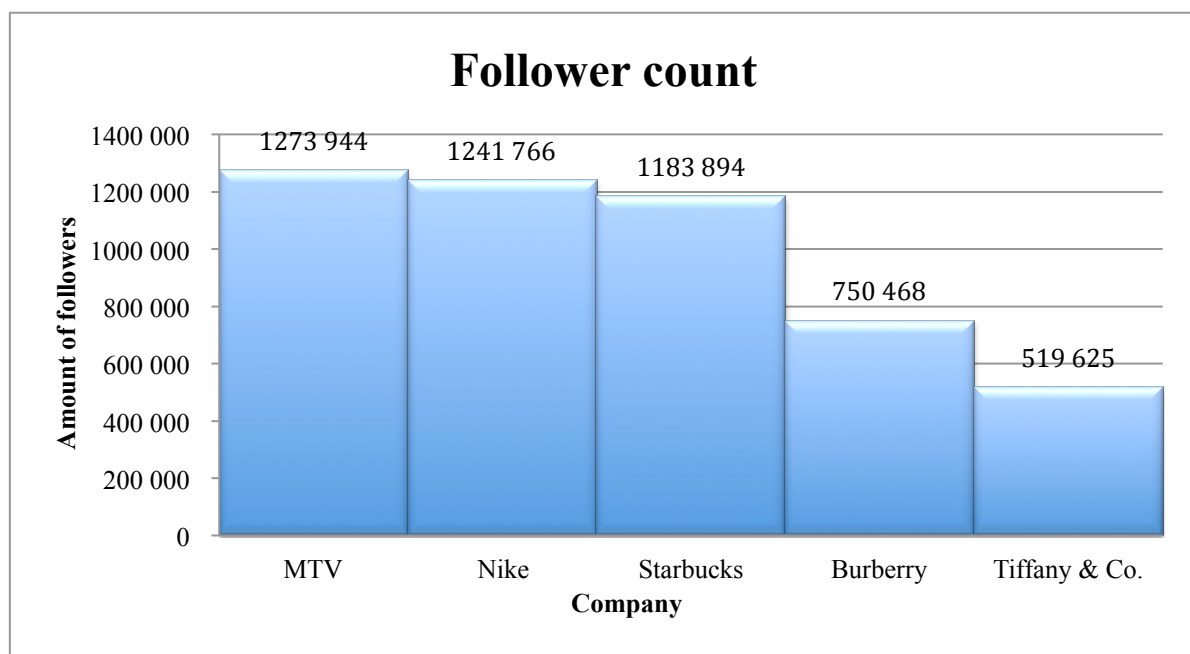
Figure 1

As mentioned in the introduction, the companies chosen for the analysis are the top five companies with the most followers, based on Simply Measured's Instagram Brand Adoption Study.[87] The number of followers of the top five companies on Instagram at the time of coding can be seen in figure 1. As the figure shows, the distribution of followers between the top three companies is of a small difference while the following two, Burberry and Tiffany & Co., have a significantly lower amount of followers.

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[87] Simply Measured, op. cit.

Mean of likes per coded post

Company	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
MTV	40	9 479	32	41 953
Nike	40	17 413	311	65 512
Starbucks	40	11 913	110	65 380
Burberry	40	5 124	43	25 094
Tiffany & Co.	40	13 420	102	38 862
Total	200	11 470	32	65 512

Table 1

We have chosen to code 40 posts from each company, for a total of 200 posts, which is represented as *N* in table 1. Furthermore, table 1 shows that while the minimum amount of likes on a post has a spread variety amongst the companies, the maximum amount of likes on a post follows the structure of the number of followers of the companies. The top three companies have the three highest amounts of likes on a single post. Burberry and Tiffany & Co., which have the lowest amount of followers, also have the lowest numbers of maximum likes on a post. However, due to the varieties between the least amount of likes and the most amounts of likes on a post the means vary between the companies. Tiffany & Co. has the least amount of followers but has the second highest mean, while MTV, which has more than twice as many followers, has the second lowest mean. This thesis will further investigate the underlying reasons to why the companies show these numbers.

5.1.2 The posts

Representation of post elements

Post elements*	N	Yes	No	Representation in %
Information	200	127	73	64%
Own product	200	109	91	55%
Behind the scenes	200	67	133	34%
Own event	200	47	153	24%
Celebrity	200	47	153	24%
Object	200	37	163	19%
Other event	200	23	177	12%
Other product	200	6	194	3%
Contest	200	0	200	0%

*Table 2 *see codebook in app. 8.2*

Regarding the different elements of the 200 coded posts, the divisions between the posts can be seen above, in table 2. Since one post can contain elements from multiple categories, the total percentage exceeds 100%. The table shows that the most common kinds of posts are in direct relation to the company. 64% versus 55% of the posts contain information about the company or are related to the company's products. This shows how the companies use Instagram as a channel to communicate information to their customers, as well as to market themselves by showing their products. As Björkgren suggests, Instagram is a great tool for companies to connect and communicate with customers.[88]

Comparison between perspectives and likes

Perspective	N	Mean of likes	Sig.
Close-up	73	14 097	
Wide-shot	111	9 724	
Total	184	11 459	0,028

Table 3

Furthermore, of the 200 coded posts 184[89] of the posts were taken from a perspective of wide-shot or close-up. Examples of wide-shot pictures could be a landscape, skyline or group picture of people while a close-up showed details, such as a body part, for example, a face or hand, or could show a close-up picture of a product or a detail of the product. According to the collected data, wide-shots are more frequent than close-ups. Wide-shots appeared 60% and close-ups 40% of the time. However, table 3 shows that close-ups have a higher mean of likes than wide-shots. Close-ups have nearly 45% higher mean of likes compared to wide-shots.

As previously mentioned, smartphones hold a challengingly small screen size and to display a wide-shot picture might therefore not be optimal. However, the small screen size proves to be effective in displaying details, as table 3 suggests. We believe that the reason for close-ups being more popular is closely connected to the fact that smartphones have small screens, compared to other technical devices.

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[88] C Björkgren, op. cit.
[89] The remaining 16 pictures could not be coded due to their character; for example, a picture could be a text or collage consisting of several pictures.
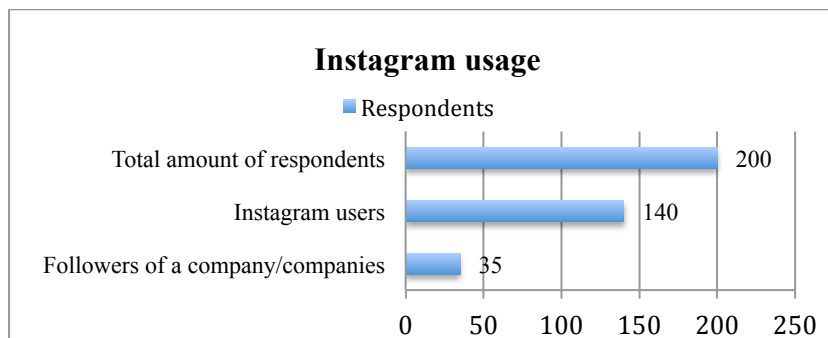
5.1.3 The users

Figure 2

Since Instagram has only been in existence for about two and a half years, the marketing strategies applied on the platform are still developing. Furthermore, Instagram's users are still developing their usage of the platform. From the conducted survey, it can be seen that out of the 200 respondents, 140 are users of Instagram. Out of these 140, only 25%, 35 people, follow brands on Instagram. Out of the respondents' who are Instagram users, 43% log in daily, which can be seen as indicative of Instagram's capability of creating active users.[90]

Although the number of people who follow companies on Instagram is quite low, all respondents were additionally asked for which three reasons they would follow a company on Instagram, which gives us an inclination of what factors would persuade a user to start following a company.

For which three reasons would you follow a company profile on Instagram?

Reason	N	Yes	No	%
Find information	200	120	80	60%
Show positive opinion	200	104	96	52%
Access to interesting/entertaining content	200	79	121	40%
Access to promotions and discounts	200	65	135	34%
Show engagement in a company	200	55	145	28%
Enter a contest and win prizes	200	29	171	15%
Give feedback to the company	200	19	181	10%
Evolve business contacts	200	18	182	9%
Interact on posts	200	9	191	5%

Table 4

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[90] See figure 10 in app. 8.4

The most common reasons of wanting to follow a company on Instagram are, as shown in table 4, to show a positive opinion of a company, to get information about a company and/or because the company shares interesting or entertaining content. From these numbers, we deem it safe to make an assumption that the users who are not followers of any companies on Instagram today could be persuaded to become followers, if they either develop strong feelings about a company or find a company that publishes content that strongly appeals to them. The second largest reason for following a company on Instagram seems to imply that most users of companies' Instagram profiles already have a preconceived positive opinion about the company that has been forged outside of the sphere of Instagram.

Since the possibilities of reaching a company's followers' extended networks on Instagram are limited, gaining more users through Instagram alone might prove to be an obstacle, since people are unlikely to come upon the companies' Instagram pages by chance, compared to exempli gratia Facebook, where a users contacts' likes come up in the news feed for everyone to see. Mostly, potential Instagram users must be directed to a companies' Instagram page through other channels, such as through Facebook or websites.

5.1.4 Expectations and gratifications

As seen in table 2, none of the companies posted any content related to contests. Before the coding commenced, it was to our belief that contests would play a large part in both the users' motivations of following a company and in the companies' efforts to engage their users. However, as seen from table 4, only 15% of the respondents to the survey ranked "to enter contests and win prizes" as one of their greatest motivations of following a company. Instead, as previously stated, they mostly use company profiles on Instagram to show their positive opinion of a company, to get information about a company or followed a company because they shared interesting/entertaining content. Apparently, the motivation of following company pages on Instagram lies outside materialistic, personal gain for the followers. We believe that the main objective in following a company on Instagram to a large part lies in the gaining of an elevated sense of community with other users, as well as with the company. Another contributory factor to follow a company can be seen in the companies' successful usage of Kaplan's four I's.[91]

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[91] A M Kaplan, op. cit., p. 134

5.2 The level of engagement

Using social media as a marketing tool can lead a further development of customer relationships and brand recognition. However, merely uploading content that follows the structures of traditional marketing strategies is not enough. The goal of utilizing social media for marketing purposes should be to create active and engaged users, who interact with the company from their own free will.[92] Therefore, the material posted on companies' Instagram profiles must be carefully adapted to the medium and the target group.[93]

It is important to note that it is not possible to ascertain whether the Instagram users who interact by liking, commenting and hashtagging pictures related to the analyzed companies are actually followers of the companies, since a user can like and comment on posted pictures without following the company in question. However, for this part of the analysis we have chosen to base our analysis on the numbers of followers of the individual companies, since checking every comment, like or hashtag for the posters' affiliations with the companies would be too time consuming for the extent of this thesis.

Average follower interaction in likes and comments

Company	Followers (March 18, 2013)	Average number of likes	Average number of comments	Interaction likes %	Interaction comments %
MTV	1 273 944	9 480	186	0,7%	0,001%
Nike	1 241 766	17 413	234	1,4%	0,002%
Starbucks	1 183 894	11 914	182	1,0%	0,002%
Burberry	750 468	5 125	68	0,9%	0,0009%
Tiffany & Co.	519 625	13 421	215	2,5%	0,004%
Average	993 939	11 220	184	1,0%	0,002%

Table 5

As previously stated, a majority of people do not actively engage and interact on social media, but are content with only consuming what is being posted.[94] The level of interaction from the companies' followers on Instagram follows the same structure, but to an even lesser

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[92] D Meerman Scott, op. cit., p. 137
[93] D Peppers and M Rogers op. cit., p. 15
[94] D Evans, op. cit., p. 16, O Findahl op. cit., 2011, p. 55

degree of engagement: only on average 1% of the companies' followers actively interact by liking the posted pictures. The level of followers who comment on the pictures is even lower, with only in average two in 10 000 actively engaging. The company that engages their followers to the highest extent is Tiffany & Co., with 2,5 times more likes and two times more comments than the average. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find a significant reason for Tiffany's popularity in the coded material, but we believe that the underlying reason lies in the fact that Tiffany & Co. has a continuously strong connection to their target group, and, in a majority of times, post relevant content of good quality.

The low numbers of interaction poses the question of how a company can work to engage their followers in their posted material. One possibility in evoking a higher level of engagement lies in encouraging users to use company-specific hashtags, thus involving them in the creation of content.[95] Nike and Starbucks both utilize this opportunity. Nike encourages their followers to use the hashtag *makeitcount.* Their followers can upload pictures of themselves using Nike products or of themselves "making it count", for example by working out. Starbucks asks their followers to post pictures of themselves having a Frappucino, one of Starbucks' beverages.

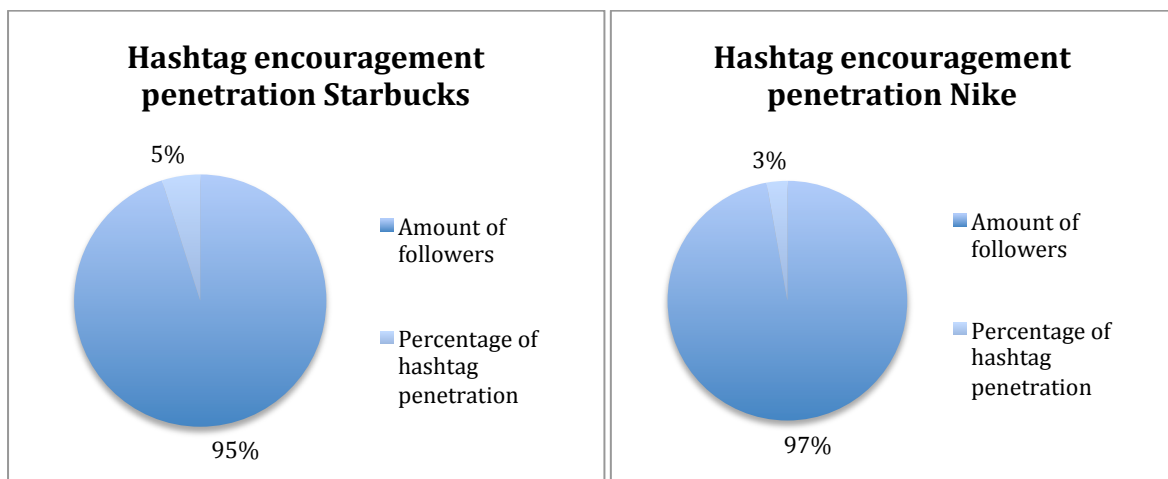**Hashtag penetration counted in percentage of uploaded pictures/amount of followers**

Figure 3 & Figure 4

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[95] A M Kaplan op. cit., p. 134

As of March 18, 2013, the hashtag *makeitcount* has 35 656 uploaded pictures, which gives a level of penetration of 3% of Nike's followers.[96] The hashtag *frappucino* had 61 180 uploaded pictures, which gives a level of penetration of 5% of Starbucks' followers.[97] By encouraging their users to use their hashtag, Nike and Starbucks have made their followers collaborate and co-create material, which make their followers engage to a higher extent than they normally do (as seen in table 3).[98] Nike features some of the pictures hashtagged with *makeitcount* on their Instagram profile, thus *"leveraging the web 2.0 interconnectedness"* by making their followers voluntarily contribute to the company's marketing in return of getting exposure.[99] Users uploading pictures with company-specific hashtags can also be seen as part of a word-of-mouth process, since the hashtagged picture can be seen by all of the users' followers. A company that has successfully engaged their followers in using their hashtag can therefore reach a widely extended network, and thus extend their own fan-base. By encouraging users to publicly co-create material directly associated with a company, the company can form a closer bond with their customers. Pictures that display Instagram users using a company's products can be used to associate a product with a particular lifestyle. By reposting the best pictures, a company can create a closer connection to their customers and evolve their brand recognition.[100] As for the users, they can develop their feeling of self-involvement by posting pictures of products, which contributes to their feelings of prestige and status.[101] Pictures of a company's customers using their products to maintain an attractive lifestyle can also be seen as positive word-of-mouth sharing and as a manifestation of a company integrating into their customers' lives.[102]

It is important to note that it is not possible to ascertain if all photographs uploaded under the hashtags *makeitcount* and *frappucino* are uploaded with the purpose of connecting with Nike or Starbucks as a company. However, we have seen no examples of hashtag-hijacking under this hashtag, which would imply that even pictures uploaded for other purposes than the companies' own should help spread the their message and evolve their brand-recognition.

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[96] Statigram, *#makeitcount*
[97] Statigram, *#frappucino*
[98] D Evans, op. cit., p. 16f
[99] S Fournier and J Avery, op. cit., p. 195
[100] D Meerman Scott, op. cit., p. 134
[101] C Fill op. cit., 39-41
[102] Ibid., p. 39-41, A M Kaplan, op. cit., p. 134

5.3 Back stage sharing

By sharing pictures that are not directly related to the sale of products, but instead show a wider perspective of a company's purposes and values, a company can evolve their image in the eyes of their customers. Two examples of this are companies sharing pictures from behind the scenes or of celebrities in situations they are normally not seen in.

5.3.1 Behind the scenes

In this thesis, "behind the scenes" is defined as pictures of scenes that would normally not reach the eyes of anyone outside the inner circle of a company. During the coding we have seen examples such as pictures from the set of the MTV television series "Teen Wolf", images from the back stage of the Burberry spring fashion show and pictures of the Tiffany props used in the filming of the movie "The Great Gatsby". We believe that access to behind the scenes-photography is one of the features, which makes following a company page on Instagram attractive to users. These kinds of images can further be seen as a display of a shift between what is kept back stage versus front stage.[103] On Instagram, users can get access to material that they would not reach through any other platform, which could make following a company that display these scenes attractive to users. Getting access to these kinds of images can also be seen as being related to the "*world flattening*" capacities of the World Wide Web, since users instantly can interact in and take part in an event that may take place hundreds of miles away from them.[104]

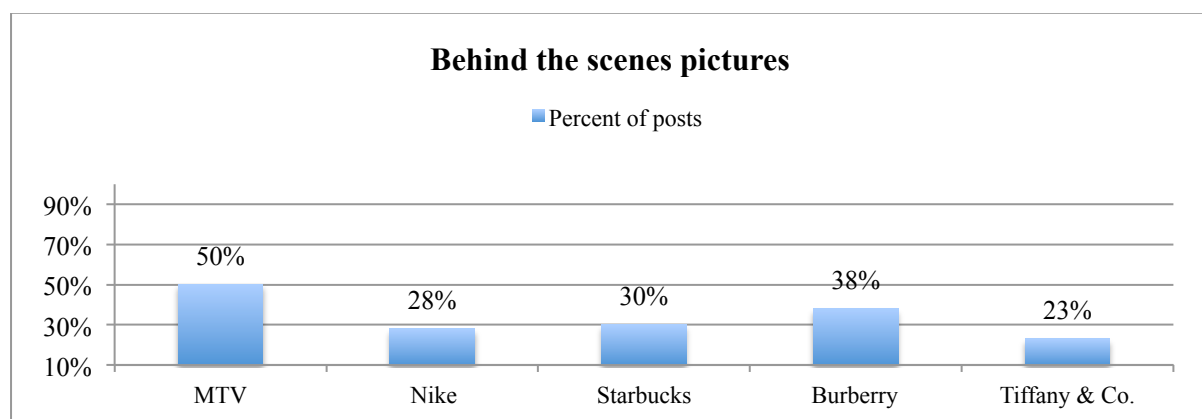**Behind the scenes pictures**

Percent of posts

	MTV	Nike	Starbucks	Burberry	Tiffany & Co.
	50%	28%	30%	38%	23%

Figure 5

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[103] J Fawkes, op. cit., p. 195
[104] T L Friedman, op. cit., p. 63

Of the companies studied in this thesis, all five displayed examples of behind the scenes photography to some degree, frequently from events, such as MTV's Movie Awards or Burberry's fashion shows. 50% of the content uploaded by MTV, which is the company with the highest amount of followers, displayed behind the scenes images.

Average number of likes for pictures with or without behind the scenes elements

Behind the scenes	N	Mean	Sig.
No	133	12 812	
Yes	67	8 807	
Total	200	11 470	0,040

Table 6

Even though we believe that behind the scenes photographs are attractive to users, images that were coded as behind the scenes generally received a lower amount of likes than pictures of other categories, as seen from the table above. One reason for this may lie in the fact that behind the scenes images were often a part of a flow of pictures, where companies use Instagram to live stream their events. A clear example is MTV's updates from the Movie Awards on April 15, 2013. Between 2:00 PM and 7:09 PM MTV uploaded 14 pictures an hour on Instagram, for a total of 72 pictures, mainly of celebrities back stage and of preparations for the event.[105] These scenes would probably not be displayed on television, which is where the event is normally broadcast. By following MTV on Instagram, people can thus see an extra dimension of what is going on back stage, images which would normally not be displayed on television or in magazines. However, with such a steady flow of pictures, each picture gets less exposure time before disappearing down the feed, which could be an explanation of why behind the scenes pictures reach a lower level of likes than other pictures. The access to instant updates of the happenings back stage at a major event, such as the Movie Awards, can be seen as a largely contributory feature, which attracts over 1,2 million people to follow MTV on Instagram. Furthermore, it can be seen as a feature that appeals to the users' sense of belongingness and involvement in a company's affairs, which can lead to an evolved brand community, where customer and company co-create value.[106]

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[105] Statigram, *MTV, 2013*
[106] M Laroche, op. cit., p. 1756ff

5.3.2 Celebrities

Nike: average number of comments for pictures with/without celebrity elements

Celebrities	N	Mean	Sig
No	35	188	
Yes	5	550	
Total	40	234	0,00

Table 7

Pictures of celebrities create another dimension of back stage photography. Nike, on average, receives 188 comments on posts without celebrity content. However, for pictures that contained celebrities, the average amount of comments was 551, which is an increase of 293% compared to pictures without this feature. We believe that the reason for this huge increase yet again lies in the elevated sense of belongingness that arises from getting instant access to images, which are normally not available.

By using Instagram, a company can create a culture around their brand, for example by displaying their products in environments that are attractive to their customers or by, as previously stated, giving their users an insight into what goes on back stage in a company. The fact that the companies found at the top list of companies that use Instagram all upload behind the scenes photographs may be seen as one of the underlying reasons of their elevated status.[107]

5.4 The positive climate on Instagram

Even though the level of interaction is somewhat low on Instagram, users do engage in the companies' posts. Of the 2 000 coded comments 70% received positive feedback, which indicates that the prevailing climate on Instagram is positive. As stated by Grunig and Hunt in Fawkes, the networking qualities give the users power to influence companies by making their opinions heard.[108] As in this case, by giving positive or negative feedback the companies get an instant update of the users' opinions and by acknowledging the opinion of the users the company can easily adapt their content to fit the taste of the users.

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[107] M Laroche, op. cit., p. 1757
[108] J Fawkes, op. cit., p. 5ff

Feedback in comments
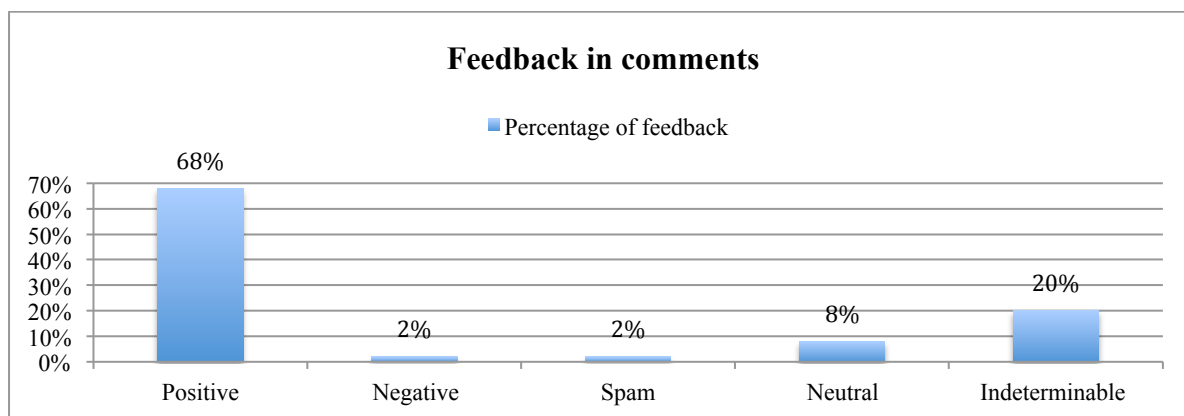
■ Percentage of feedback

Figure 6

However, 2% of the comments were negative feedback. Amongst these were two posts by MTV and Starbucks.[109] In the post by MTV, the users seem to be disappointed by the quality of the post. The post shows one of MTV's events, Movie Awards, and, as mentioned in section 5.3, MTV shared a total of 72 pictures from the event. Many of the pictures show celebrities backstage and preparation of the event, ergo things the audiences do not normally get to see. However, this post shows a simple snapshot of a TV screen, which does not live up to the standard that MTV has previously set by sharing the backstage pictures.

The post by Starbucks shows a failed attempt to show a backstage picture. Starbucks normally promotes a lifestyle around their brand; the rest of coded posts show their coffee cups in a nice environment or the happy faces of their staff. Just like in the case of MTV, Starbucks has previously set a standard and, in this case, they did not live up the users' expectations.

As Peppers and Rogers state, getting users to show interest in a company is one of the main objectives of the company.[110] The prevailing positive climate on Instagram and the easiness to engage consumers, through commenting, reposting, re-hashtagging and liking, provides an ideal platform for companies to build loyalty to their brand. In contrast to, for example, Facebook and Twitter, Instagram is not an ideal platform for criticism. Both Facebook and Twitter better utilize written texts, while photos better utilize Instagram's qualities. As in the example of hashtag hijacking that occurred on Twitter (as described in section 3.5), people could easily join in the discussion by browsing the hashtag and the discussion could therefore

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[109] See figure 8 in app. 8.4
[110] D Peppers and M Rogers, op. cit., p. 11

continue. However, this kind of action would be more difficult to implement on Instagram. As previously mentioned, when searching for a hashtag on Twitter, the user can see all the discussions in the subject. However when searching for a hashtag on Instagram, the user will find pictures with the specific hashtag. Each picture has its own separate comments, which limits their exposure.[111] Furthermore, as previously stated users can only see what pictures the people they follow like, and only the activities that have occurred in the past hour. Therefore, a negative comment would not have as much penetration and not give as much effect as it would on, for example, Twitter. In conclusion, because of Instagram's limited means of penetration, it might not be the right platform for users to direct their criticism to a company. For this kind of activity people might use other social network sites, where their opinion will get more penetration, and the climate on Instagram is therefore mainly positive.

5.5 Trust on Instagram
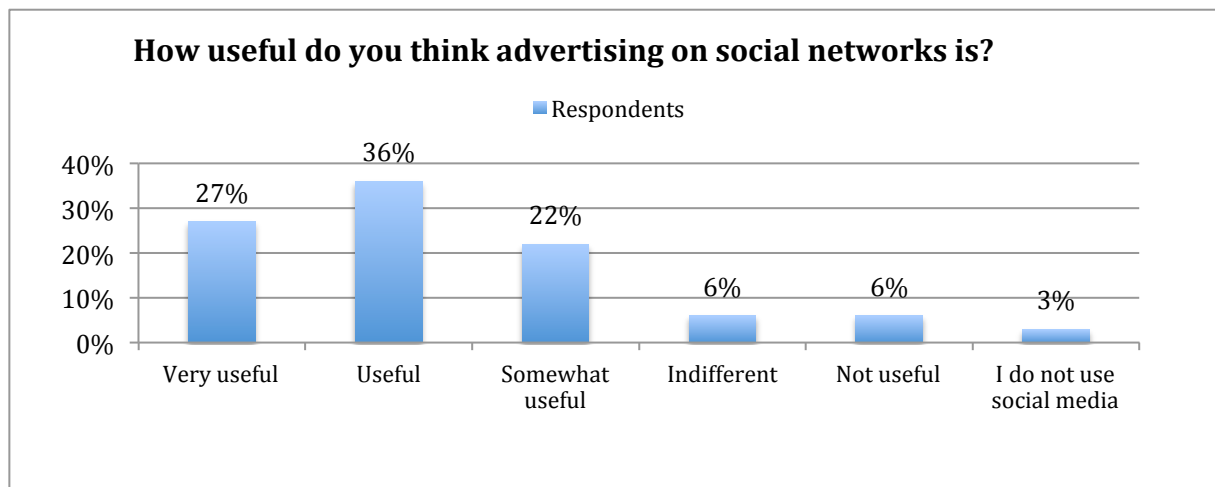

Figure 7

Amongst the respondents of the survey, 85%, a clear majority, found advertising on social networks useful to some degree, shown as very useful, useful and somewhat useful in the figure above.
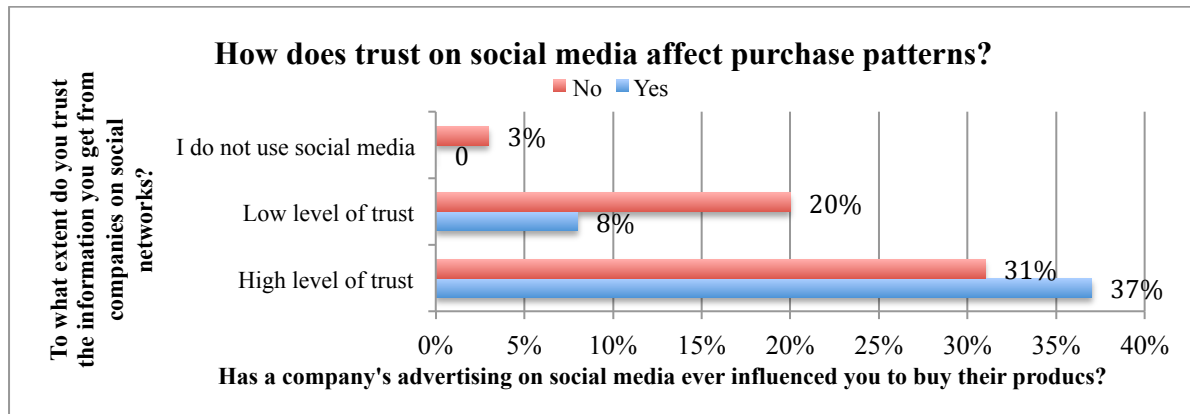
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[111] See figure 8 in app. 8.4

Figure 8, Sig: 0,00, Cramer's V: 0,283

From the figure above, we can see that the level of trust in the information provided by companies on social media pages seems to influence purchase patterns. People who have a high degree of trust were more likely to have purchased a product based on advertising on social media than those with a low degree of trust. Trust is an essential part in creating loyal customers, and can be evolved by, for example, involving users in conversations amongst themselves and with the company.[112]

Correlation between users who engage by liking posts and trust on social networks

		Engage by liking the posted material	Level of trust in the information given from companies on social networks
Engage by liking the posted material	Pearson Correlation	1	0,416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000
	N	200	200
Level of trust in the information given from companies on social networks	Pearson Correlation	0,416**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	
	N	200	200

*Table 8, **.* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Laroche et al. argue that in order to create a trustworthy brand, users must be involved in a process of engagement and feel as if they are personally integrated in the community.[113] The table above shows that users who engaged by liking the posted material (defined as 1: engage by liking, 0: do not engage by liking) were more likely to have a stronger sense of trust in the

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[112] M Laroche, op. cit., p. 1756ff
[113] M Laroche, op. cit., p. 1756ff

material posted by companies on social media, than those who do not engage. The Pearson Correlation of 0,416 indicates that people with a high value on the question of on their level of trust in company's given information on social networks (defined as 5: to a high extent to 1: not at all) are positively correlated with people who have a high value (i.e. 1) on the question of engagement, which suggests one or both of the following possible scenarios:

1. That people who have a preconceived higher degree of trust in a company are more likely to interact with said company.

Or that:

2. Interaction leads to a higher degree of trust in a company.

Either way, this result can be seen as evidence that interaction is a main factor in creating loyal and engaged users, who are trustful of a companies' messages. If scenario one is correct, it can be assumed that, as previously discussed, relationships are not created on Instagram, but are rather maintained and evolved on the platform. Users who already have a positive opinion of a company are more likely to show their appreciation by interacting on posts than people who have less strong feelings for the company.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aims to sum up our findings and to draw conclusions based on the analysis. Furthermore, this chapter will propose suggestions for further research.

The purpose of this thesis has been to research how marketing and public relations have been implemented in the usage of Instagram. We have analyzed the posted pictures of five companies to see what kind of content they have posted and what effects the posted content have had on the users' level of interaction. Furthermore, we have studied why people choose to follow a company on Instagram.

From the analysis, we have seen evidence of the fact that the companies mainly use Instagram as an evolved marketing channel, in which they can display their products and present further information about their company, in much the same way as in other communication channels. However, Instagram usage differs in some important aspects that are worthy of pointing out.

The companies have all well adapted their posted content to the medium. Since smartphones have small screens, seeing details in wide-shot photographs is difficult. As seen in the analysis, close-ups received a higher level of interaction from the users, a fact that is most likely related to the limited size of the screen.

We believe that the selected companies on Instagram are utilizing Instagram fairly well. However, we believe that by fully maximizing the qualities present on Instagram, such as co-creation of content and giving access to back stage material, the companies could reach a higher level of interaction from the users, as well as to further develop brand communities.

To the largest part, the posted content consists of pictures and information related to company products or events. Even though the users can interact by commenting on and liking such pictures, such pictures do not fully utilize Instagram's features. Furthermore, as previously stated, Instagram is a platform where companies can create a deeper image of themselves, and post content that is strongly connected to their target group. As seen in the analysis, users usually only interact on the posted pictures to a low extent. However, by encouraging the

users to co-create material, the companies can increase the level of interaction by as much as five times. We believe that utilizing Instagram in a way that the users become co-creators of material is one of Instagram's greatest strengths and that it is one of the best ways of implementing Kaplan's four I's.[114] In the analysis, we saw evidence of the fact that the users are not mostly motivated by getting access to material gain, by for example participating in contests, but that they choose to follow a company on Instagram based on the quality of the posted content or to show their appreciation of the company. We believe that the users follow a company to feel involved, and that co-creation of content is one of the main contributory factors in the creation of this feeling.

Another factor, which can serve to elevate the users' feelings of involvement, is back stage sharing, as in the examples of images of behind the scenes and celebrities, through which the users can get an insight into what goes on behind the scenes of a company. We believe that gaining access to such content serves as an evolvement of Friedman's term *world flattener*. Through the content posted by companies on Instagram, users can not only interact with people from different parts of the world, but also gain access to content that would normally be kept back stage. Televisions have made it possible to follow events from around the world for about 80 years, but the possibility of instantly following what goes on behind the scenes of such events can be seen as having been limited before the rise of internet and social media.[115]

The climate on Instagram is predominantly positive; only four posts out of two hundred received negative feedback. Since pictures have a limited exposure time on Instagram, expressing criticism does not have the same impact as for example on Facebook and Twitter. We believe that the positive climate on Instagram has been influential in the platform's rise to popularity and that it makes Instagram a good platform in the forming of brand communities.

Instagram's positive climate can be seen as being influenced by the platform's relatively limited networking qualities. On Instagram, users can feel as if they interact directly with a company, which can serve to extend their sense of belongingness in being a part of a brand

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[114] Kaplan, op. cit., p. 134
[115] Nationalencyklopedin, *Television*

community.[116] These brand communities are not limited in space, but can form regardless of where in the world the users are situated.[117] By posting content that is strongly connected to their target group, and by utilizing the different features available on Instagram, a company can affect the users' level of user interaction and trust.

Instagram, being a social media platform, gives opportunities of two-way communication, which would imply that the customers have equal power to the companies. However, compared to Twitter, Instagram is relatively limited in terms of giving customers power, since posts cannot be as easily shared on Instagram. For users to be able to exert power over a company, they need to unite, and, by sheer number, force a company to change. To achieve this, a post needs to be seen by as many people as possible, which is hard to achieve on Instagram. We believe that customer power on Instagram lie outside single posts, and that it can instead be manifested in user generated content, by the use of hashtags or hashtag hijacking. By using a companies' hashtags against them, the users can intercept a company's intended marketing message. By posting content that is negative or embarrassing for a company, the users can publicly shame a company into changing. However, as previously stated, reaching these high levels of user engagement is rare on Instagram, since the platform's networking qualities are less powerful compared to those of Twitter's. Nevertheless, seen in a wider perspective, however small the level of influence a user can exert on Instagram is, it is still larger than the level of influence a person had before the rise of social media. For a person, Instagram alone might not be a highly powerful tool in influencing the world around them, but combined with other social media it can serve as to influence companies and the world around us.

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[116] Laroche op. cit. p. 1756-1759
[117] Ibid. p. 1756

6.1 Proposal for further research

Researching which factors affect the users' level of interaction with companies and brands on Instagram has been a truly interesting journey. Since a bachelor thesis is quite small to its extent, naturally we have not been able to study all possible aspects of marketing on Instagram. We believe that using content analysis and survey has been a good way of gaining access to different aspects of Instagram usage. However, for future research, we suggest that an even larger sample size is selected, to extend the possibilities of different factors that affect interaction and engagement being present.

It would also be interesting to further research how, and why a user finds and follows a company on Instagram, and what underlying factors make these pages attractive. In our study, we have started discussing the reasons for following a company, but to gain an even deeper sense of the users' motivations we propose the use of qualitative interviews, in which the answers can be more deeply developed.

We further think that a comparative study of interaction on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram would be of high interest, since the utilization of Instagram differs in some vital ways to those of Facebook and Twitter. For example, studying how networks are created and maintained on the different platforms would be an interesting field of research.

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8. APPENDIX

8.1 Definitions

App
App is the everyday language for application, which is software that can be run on the Internet, computers, smart phones or other electronic devices.

Comments
A comment is a message that a user can leave on other users' photo.

Feed
Feed is the automatic photo fetching of the user's subscribed profiles. The photos will be shown on the user's home page.

Functions

| Home | Explore | Share | Activities | Profile |

Filter
Filter refers to the 19 pre-modified color modifications Instagram offers its users for an instant photo enhancement. The filter adjusts the photo's color, light and/or contrast.

Follower
A follower is a user who subscribes to another users update. The followed person's update will then show up on the subscriber's feed.

Geotag
Geotagging is the process of adding geographical data to a photo. This data can consist of the name and address of the location.

Hashtags
Hashtags are used as a means to create groupings. By the use of the symbol # followed by a word users can easily track other posts related to desired group or subject.

Like
If a user likes another user's photo he/she can press the like button in the app and that will generate a like for that picture. This action shows appreciation of the post.

Tag
The user can either tag something by the use of hashtags or tag another user by the use of the symbol @ in front of the other user's username. By doing so the other user will receive a message that he/she has been tagged in a picture or comment.

Spam
Spam is a comment that is not related to the picture and has been posted in the purpose of promoting an advertising message or in advertisement to follow a specific user.

8.2 Codebook

Coder ID
1. Lisa
2. Thamwika

Date
Mm/dd/yy

Company
1. MTV
2. Nike
3. Starbucks
4. Burberry
5. Tiffany & Co

Contest
0. No
1. Yes

Information
0. No
1. Yes

Product
0. No
1. Own brand
2. Other brand

Object
0. No
1. Yes

People
0. No
1. Part of person
2. One person
3. More than one person

Animal
0. No
1. Part of animal
2. One animal
3. More than one animal

Urban
0. No
1. Yes

Nature
0. No
1. Yes

Own brand
0. No
1. Own brand
2. Other brand

Behind the scenes
0. No
1. Yes

Celebrity
0. No
1. Yes

Other
0. No
1. Yes

Perspective
1. Close-up
2. Wide shot
3. Other

Brand name visible
0. No
1. Yes

Hashtags
0. No
1. Yes

Geotags
0. No
1. Yes

Link
0. No
1. Yes

Likes
Number of likes

Comments
Number of comments

Content of comments
1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Spam
4. Neutral

Question
0. No
1. Yes

Like
0. No
1. Yes

Comment
0. No
1. Yes

Hashtag
0. No
1. Yes

Hashtag name
Name of hashtag
encouragement

Hashtag penetration
Amount of tagged photos of the
hashtag encouragement

Coding information

Unit of analysis
200 posts on Instagram by the companies MTV (mtv), Starbucks (starbucks), Nike (nike), Burberry (burberry) and Tiffany & Co (tiffanyandco).

Selection
40 posts per company, calculated from an individual skip interval of each company.

Skip intervals
Calculated from the total amount of posts uploaded on 18 March 2013
MTV: 1024/40 = 26
Nike: 568/40 = 14
Starbucks: 251/40 = 6
Burberry: 792/40 = 20
Tiffany & Co: 309/40=8

Followers
Amount of followers as of 18 March 2013
MTV: 1 273 944
Nike: 1 241 766
Starbucks: 1 183 894
Burberry: 750 468
Tiffany & Co.: 519 625

Coder ID
Indicate the ID-number of the person who has coded the material.

Date
mm/dd/yy

Company: Indicates which company is being coded.

Post elements
Contest: is the post related to a contest?
Information about brand: does it contain information about the company's product or event?
Product: does the post show a product? Is it the company's own brand or other products?
Object: other than product
People: part of a person, one person, more than one person
Animal: part of animal, one animal, more than one animal
Urban: scenes from urban environments, for example cities, buildings
Nature: scenes from nature
Event is the post related to an event? Is it the company's own event or other events?
Behind the scenes: scenes that would normally not reach the public. For example from a movie set or back stage at a fashion show
Celebrity: picture of a celebrity
Other: posts that don't belong to any of the above

Perspective: indicate if a picture is a close-up, wide shot or other. Close up is defined as a picture where the object fills most of the frame, and/or where its contours are not clearly visible.

Brand name: indicate if the brand name, logo or signature color is visible in the picture.

Hashtags: indicate if the post contains hashtags.

Geotags: indicate if the post is geotagged.

Link: indicate if the post contains a link or referral to a website.

Follower interaction: indicate number of likes and comments.

Content of comments: indicate whether the first ten comments are predominantly positive, negative, spam or neutral. If the amount of comments is equally distributed between positive and negative, they are coded as indeterminable. If the amount of comments is equally distributed between any other factors, they are coded as indeterminable. Posts with less than 10 comments are coded as indeterminable.

Interaction encouragement: indicate whether the post encourages follower interaction by asking a question or encouraging followers to comment, hashtag or like.

Hashtag name: state the hashtag encouraged by the company

Hashtag penetration: indicate amount of pictures uploaded with the company-specific hashtag noted in the previous variable.

8.3 Survey

Instagram usage

What is your age?
9 or younger	0%
10-15	0%
16-20	7.8%
21-25	49.27%
26-30	24.39%
31-35	8.29%
36-40	4.88%
41-45	0.49%
46-50	2.93%
51-55	0.98%
56-60	0.98%
61 or older	0%

What is your gender?
Male	22,93%
Female	77,07%

How often do you use Instagram?
Daily	44,12%
Several times a week	10,29%
Once a week	2,94%
More seldom	8,82%
Never	33,82%

Do you hashtag your Instagram pictures?
Yes	30,05%
No	35,45%
I do not use Instagram	34,48%

Do you browse hashtags on Instagram?
Yes	26,96%
No	39,22%
I do not use Instagram	33,82%

Are you a follower of any brands on Instagram?
Yes	18,91%
No	48,26%

For which reasons would you follow a company page on Instagram? Choose the three options that best apply to you.
To find information about the company and their products	22,92%
To show your positive opinion of the brand/product	19,41%
To enter contest to win prizes	5,55%
To evolve professional/business contacts	3,33%
To share feedback about brands and products with other customers	4,07%
To get access to promotions and discounts	12,38%
To comment on the companies' publications	1,66%
Because they share entertaining/interesting content	14,6%
To show your engagement in the company	10,17%
I do not use Instagram	32,47%
Other	2,22%

Could a good review on a company's Instagram picture affect your view of the company positively?
To a large extent	1,03%
To a moderate extent	7,22%
To some extent	15,98%
To little extent	23,71%
Not at all	19,59%
I do not use Instagram	32,47%

Could a bad review on a company's Instagram picture affect your view of the company negatively?

To a large extent	2,05%
To a moderate extent	8,21%
To some extent	22,56%
To little extent	18,46%
Not at all	15,38%
I do not use Instagram	33,33%

Have you ever written a review on a company's Instagram post?

Yes, several times	0,51%
Yes, a couple of times	1,53%
Yes, once	1,02%
No, never	64,29%
I do not use Instagram	32,65%

If yes on the previous question, for what purpose did you write the review? Chose all that apply to you.

To recommend a product/service	30,77%
To warn others of a product/service	15,38%
To give feedback to the company/brand	46,15%
Other	7,69%

Have you ever used a hashtag based on the encouragement of a company? For example, to enter a competition.

Yes	9,95%
No	46,77%
I do not use hashtags	8,96%
I do not use Instagram	32,33%

How do you engage in a company's posted material? Choose all that apply to you.

Like a post	70,69%
Comment on the post	11,21%
Repost the material	6,03%
Use company-specific hashtags	12,07%

How useful do you think advertising on social networks is?

Very useful	27,45%
Useful	36,25%
Indifferent	5,88%
Somewhat useful	21,08%
Not useful	5,88%
I do not use Instagram	3,43%

Has a company's advertising on social media ever influenced you to purchase their products?

Yes	46,31%
No	53,69%

To what extent do you trust the information you get from companies on social media networks?

To a large extent	6,3%
To a moderate extent	23,9%
To some extent	37,56%
To little extent	21,46%
Not at all	6,34%
I do not use social media	3,9%

8.4 Tables and figures

MTV	Starbucks
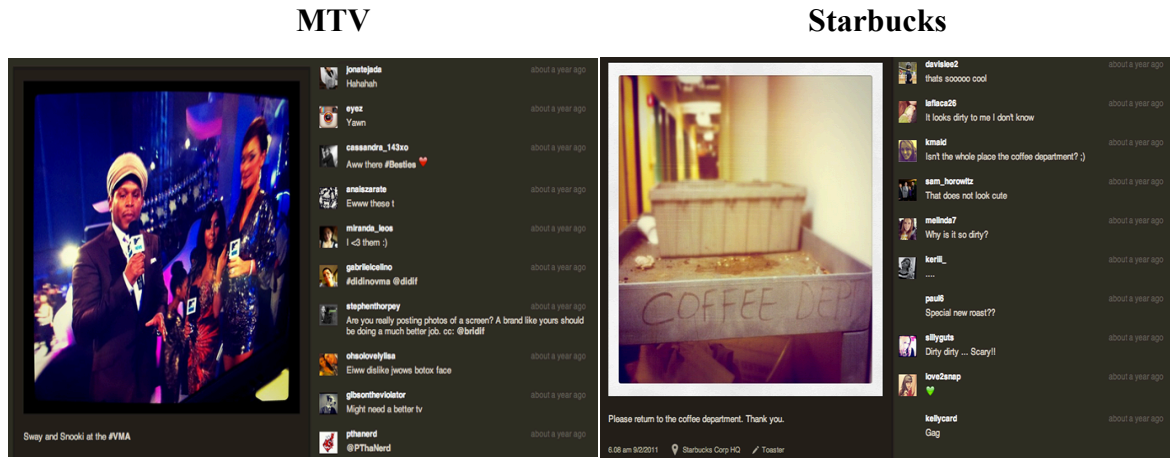
Figure 8

How often do you use Instagram?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Daily	87	43,5	43,7	43,7
	Several times a week	21	10,5	10,6	54,3
Valid	Once a week	6	3,0	3,0	57,3
	More seldom	17	8,5	8,5	65,8
	Never	68	34,0	34,2	100,0
	Total	199	99,5	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,5		
Total		200	100,0		

Table 8