Can I be viral? Personal branding on Instagram

Kan jag bli viral? Personlig marknadsföring på Instagram

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Abstract

The integration of social media in today's society has largely contributed to the development of a more accessible and global world. Even if this evolution raises countless possibilities it also creates challenges, one of those is how to become positively distinguished in the increasingly competitive employment market. This study addresses this challenge by investigating how the new and popular social application Instagram can be used as a tool for personal branding. The findings, which are based on a combination of literature reviews, qualitatively oriented interviews and content analysis, concludes that Instagram can be used a personal branding tool. The recommended way to do this is by first clarify one's unique brandable attributes, values and goals by constructing a personal brand. This brand can then be communicated through Instagram by the use of a captivating strategy, which are evaluated and reviewed after some time. This in order to gradually develop the value offered so that the brand remains contemporary and competitive. To increase the chances of succeeding with the strategy, it should be authentic, clear, consistent and appealing for prospective employers. Findings also show that it is important to use e.g. hashtags and comments to create positive interactions and buzz around one's brand/Instagram account.

Keyword

Instagram, personal branding, self-branding, personal marketing, marketing, visual marketing, social media marketing, social media
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Foreword

I like to take this opportunity and fill this section with words of gratitude. I am deeply thankful to all people that have been a part of this study. Without the respondent, this piece of paper would still be a dream. Without my tutor, it would be a blurry dream. Without my friends, it would be been a lonely dream. Without my girlfriend, I would still be counting sheep.
1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction of the chosen topic and to describe the purpose, research questions, delimitations and target audience in the study. At the end of this chapter, there will also be an explanation of how the study is structured and what type of information the following chapters contains.

1.1 Background

In less than one decade, internet and social media have penetrated the consciousness of society to such extent that it have become an integrated part of most people`s everyday life (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 210 ff.). In Sweden as an example, 94% of the population uses internet and 45% of them visit social network sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, every day (Findahl, 2013, p. 33, 65). This digital lifestyle has largely contributed to the emergence of internet as one of the most important marketplaces in modern time. A marketplace full of enterprises who has seen the potential of using a two-way interaction with their customers to optimize their products as well as generate positive word-of-mouth (WOM)1, which hopefully influence brand preferences and generates sales. (Kumar & Mirchandan, 2012, p.55; Svatošová, 2013, p. 1 ff.)

However, enterprises are not only using internet and SNSs for interaction and marketing. By studying the growing amount of personal information available online, managers and human resource professionals (HR) hope to improve hiring decisions. (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009, p.567; Brown & Vaughn, 2011, p. 219) Yet due to rapid evolution of the web, many people remain unaware of how accessible their personal information may be online, or don’t realize the long-run implications it may cause their reputation (Solove, 2007, p. 189 ff.). This is a big problem according to Mitch Joel, expert on digital branding. He states that “Everyone is an individual brand - the 'you' brand. If managed incorrectly, this can have negative consequences when it comes to getting a job, advancing your career or maintaining a positive reputation”. (Marketwired, 2007, paragraph 5) It is a statement that actualizes what Pamela A Kaul (1992, p. 32) quoted in her article “Getting the job” from 1992 as she wrote “it’s not the one who can do the job who necessarily gets hired. It’s the one who knows the most about getting hired”. In today’s digital and competitive society, knowledge about getting hired includes knowledge about how to articulate, express and brand oneself online.

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1 This study will use Westbrook’s (1987, p. 61) definition of WOM as “informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers”.
Arruda (2003, p. 6) describe personal branding as “a way of clarifying and communicating what makes you different and special—and using those qualities to guide your career or business decisions.” It is a description similar to Shepherd’s (2005, p. 602) definition of personal branding as an “inside-out process that serves to encapsulate the current strengths and uniqueness of the individual in relation to a targeted market.” Activities that may be included in the process of online personal branding is according to Labrecque, Markos, and Milne (2010, p. 39), search optimization and maintenance of both personal webpages and SNSs profiles. The phenomenon of personal branding on different SNSs platforms is however a generally unexplored area in the academic literature (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2010, p. 49; Karaduman, 2013, p. 472). This study will address this research gap by investigating how the new and popular SNS application Instagram can be used as a tool for personal branding.

The choice of addressing Instagram as a personal branding tool is based up on three reasons. Firstly, Instagram is the fastest growing social network in the world according to the international research firm GlobalWebIndex’s quarterly report (Jason Mander, 2014, p. 3). Findings regarding personal branding on Instagram might therefore be useful to a large amount of people. Secondly, mobile phones outnumber the amount of computers in the world and mobile devices are estimated to become the primary tool used for internet connection in the future (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 67 f.). Since Instagram is a mobile first application, research within the area may be interesting from a future perspective. Lastly, according to a report from the research firm L2 Think Tank, commonly known brands on Instagram have up to 15 times higher engagement than they do at Facebook (L2, 2013). These statistics can’t be generalized to apply personal branding, but the results implies that Instagram can be successfully used to reach and connect with an audience. The question for this study is how it can be done from a personal perspective.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify personal branding strategies which can be implemented in the usage of the social application Instagram to promote the personal brand against current and/or future employers.
1.2.1 Research questions

The following three questions will be examined to fulfil the purpose of this study.

• How can Instagram be utilized to function as a personal branding tool against current and/or future employers?

• Are a high number of likes and comments an indication of successful personal branding?

• How can personal branding through Instagram be evaluated?

1.3 Delimitations

The study will be concentrated to Instagram as a communication and marketing channel. Other social media channels will therefore only be used in an illustrative purpose to highlight Instagrams characteristics. Furthermore, as the field of marketing theory is huge, this study will limit itself to only use theory which addresses personal marketing or facilitates an efficient use of Instagrams technical features, in the purpose of promoting the personal brand against current and/or future employers.

One factor that may play a major role when it comes to marketing is economic capital. Despite that, economy will not be discussed in this study since the focus lies on the technical and strategic marketing area. Instagram is also an application that is free of charge; the findings presented are therefore focused on marketing techniques that do not require payment.

This study is also limited in time and should be completed within 10 weeks of fulltime studies. Due to this, the study has been focused against how people related to the advertising and media industry perceive Instagram as a personal branding tool. The reason for choosing people in the advertising and media industry is because they possess knowledge within both social media and marketing techniques. By focusing on an industry that is the social-technological front edge, the study also hopes to give an indication of how the future might develop in other types of industries.
1.4 Target audience

The primary audience for this study is private individuals, career coaches and employment services who want to deepen their understanding of how Instagram can be managed to promote the personal brand, and thereby enhance the chances of getting hired.

1.5 Disposition

This study is organized to answer the questions on the basis of theoretical approaches and empirical findings. To achieve this in a structured way, the work has been divided into five chapters: theory, method, results, discussion and conclusions. Below is a more detailed presentation of each chapter.

1. Method: this chapter presents the methods used to collect the necessary theoretical and empirical material for the study. Focus lies in replication and critical evaluation of the selected methods.

2. Theory: presentation of previous research and theory regarding personal branding, marketing techniques and Instagram's technical features.

3. Results: this chapter contains the results of the empirical investigation.

4. Discussion: this chapter discusses and analyzes the results of the study by relating it to the theoretical framework presented earlier.

5. Conclusions: in this chapter the answer to the research questions is clarified by a summary of the discussion. Suggestions to further research are also presented.
Method

This chapter presents the methodological choices made in order to collect relevant information for the study. The chapter has been divided into different sections, starting with a systematically explanation of the research perspective, -approach, -strategy, -design and method. All sections contain theoretical explanations that underpin the choices made. The method section also consists of several sub-headings to facilitate replication and critical evaluation of the study. Lastly, the chapter is concluded with a methodology discussion which critically addresses the quality of this study and the sources used.

2.1 Research perspective

Positivism and hermeneutics are two common research perspectives and theories about how science can be understood and created. It is important to define which of these, or any other, perspectives to adopt in a study because the choice indicates which type of methods to use during the gathering and analyzing of research materials. (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 26)

The positivistic perspective is rooted in the science of physics and nature. Positivism therefore strives to build knowledge through the creation of general laws with a cause and effect relationship. Ideally, these laws are formulated in a neutral and formalized language where the researcher has adopted an objective and invisible position. (Ramírez, 2002, p. 23 ff.; Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 26 ff.) A result of this approach is that positivistic researchers within the behavioral and social sciences often apply quantitative methods to mathematically validate their theories (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 27 ff.). This is in contrary to the hermeneutic perspectives, which don’t take as much interest in the formulation of neutral regularities. Instead they are focusing on the understanding of humans by an interpretation of language, intentions, actions and expressions in different situation. (Ramírez, 2002, p. 11 ff., 32 ff.; Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 29 ff.; Bryman, 2001, p. 26f.) A result of this approach is that the hermeneutic perspectives adopt a more subjective position than the positivistic perspective. This is because the researcher's understanding, pre-knowledge and thoughts about the subject are seen as important assets, not risks as it would in a positivistic perspective. Qualitative research methods are therefore more common within the hermeneutic perspectives in the social science. (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 29 f.)
This study have used a hermeneutic perspective as it enables the researcher to gather opinions and experiences from people using or working with Instagram in a close and personal way, as well as using personal knowledge within the topic to retrieve relevant generalizable data from similar fields.

### 2.2 Research approach

When choosing a research approach it is important to consider whether it is suitable for the study to be derived from a base of theory or start directly to generate theory, which later can be linked to other findings within the field. The chosen approach will determine whether the study is more deductive, inductive or abductive to its nature. (Bryman, 2001, p. 20 ff.; Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 23)

The deductive approach has its starting point in existing theory. The researcher uses this theory to deduce, which means derive, a hypothesis which then can be validated in the study. The theory and the hypothesis are also used to control the process of collecting research data. (Bryman, 2001, p. 20f.) By using this approach the investigation becomes relatively objective from the researcher's own perceptions. However, the strong connection to previous research may also limit the research area, which can be seen as a disadvantage in some cases. (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 23)

In the inductive approach, which can be seen as the opposite of the deductive approach, the study can begin without necessarily examining existing theory. In this case, the generated result becomes the basis for theory building. One risk with the inductive approach is that the study becomes influenced by the researcher's own ideas and thoughts. The inductive approach also tends to be used for the investigation of contextualized situations, which may affect the generalizability. The researcher can therefore choose to link the result to other findings or use them as a basis for additional investigations to validate the result. (Bryman, 2001, p. 22 ff.)

If the inductive- or deductive approach doesn’t feel suitable for the study, there is a third option, the abductive approach which is a combination of both induction and deduction. In the abductive approach, the researcher generally operates by first adopting an inductive approach where the generation of theory is in focus. This theory and the hypotheses that can be derived from it are then developed by applying a more deductive workflow where the generated theory is compared with existing theory from previous research. An advantage of using the abductive approach is that the researcher doesn’t become fixed with an exclusively deductive or inductive
approach. However, as the researcher uses an inductive workflow in the beginning, there’s still a risk that the study becomes influenced by the researcher's own ideas and thoughts. (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 23 f.)

This study has applied an abductive approach since it according to Patel & Davidson (2003, p. 30) is an approach which are largely rooted in the hermeneutic perspective, and because it allows an alternation between the whole and the part or subject and object to develop a hypothetical pattern that can answer the research questions. It is possible that the inductive - as well as the deductive approach would have generated interesting results. However, the theory developing nature of the abductive approach is seen as a better way to answer the research questions in this study.

2.3 Research strategy

Research within social science can generally be divided into two strategic approaches, a quantitative strategy which emphasizes measurable and quantifiable data where statistical processing and analysis is normal. And a qualitative strategy which is focused on more interpretable data as experience, descriptions and opinions. (Bryman, 2001, p. 14; Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 33 ff.)

A distinction that can be made between a quantitative and qualitative strategy is that they are suitable for different research purposes. While a quantitative strategy tend to be more suitable for researchers that are focusing on data which can be generalized to a relevant population, a qualitative strategy is more suitable for researchers who strives to understand behaviors, values and opinions in the context of which the research takes place. Quantitative research also tends to be very structured as the researcher should be able to study a well-defined area with distinct variables and questions. This is in contrast to qualitative research which tends to be unstructured for the sake of giving more flexibility to the participant’s perspectives and what they perceive as important about the study area. (Bryman, 2001, p. 272 f.) A result of these focus differences is that qualitative research tends to have a smaller number of respondents than quantitative research since generalization to a larger population is no primary goal. (Harboe, 2013 p. 36)

As seen, the choice of research strategy is largely linked to the choice of research perspective and research approach. Bryman (2001, p. 34 f., 252, 371) writes that a quantitative strategy generally has a deductive approach and a positivistic perspective while a qualitative strategy generally has an inductive approach and a more hermeneutic perspective. As this study had a
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hermeneutic perspective and an abductive approach with the goal to generate new information about how the content of an Instagram account can be strategically managed. It fell natural to adopt a qualitative research strategy where the focus lays on how and what is perceive as good personal branding on Instagram.

2.4 Research design

The research design works as a guiding framework for how to collect and analyze data in a study, some examples of common research design are experiment, survey- or cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, case studies and comparative studies (Bryman, 2001, p. 42).

Experiment generally involves a comparison between how different manipulations of an independent variable influence a dependent variable (which is what is examined). Within social science, a more concrete way to describe it would be that the researcher influences the situation in order to determine how it will affect what happens to the subject. The challenge with experimental design in social science is that the independent variable rarely can be manipulated. (Bryman, 2001, p. 46 ff.) Survey- or cross-sectional studies are used to study the relationship between variables in more than one case and at a specific time. Within qualitative research, focus groups, interviews and content analysis are examples of methods that can be part of a survey- or cross-sectional study. (Bryman, 2001, p. 56 f., 73) Longitudinal studies are an extension of the cross-sectional design with the addition of a temporal variable, which makes it possible to investigate how the relationship between variables changes over time (Bryman, 2001, p. 62 f.). A case study is a detailed in-depth study of one specific case (Stake, 1995, reproduced in Bryman 2001, p. 64). Qualitative interviews are one example of a research method that can be used in case studies (Bryman, 2001, p. 73). In a comparative study the researcher uses the same method on two or more contrasting cases. The results are then compared to find similarities and differences that may give a better understanding of a particular phenomenon. (Bryman, 2001, p. 69 f.)

This study has applied a cross-sectional research design, because the design enables the collection of information from a selected group of people at a specific point of time. The choice has been made on the basis of four main factors. Firstly, this study has no intent to investigate how personal branding on Instagram changes over time. Longitudinal studies are therefore not a choice. Secondly, examining a specific case would not contribute with any general understanding of the study area. Other research designs may therefore be more appropriate. Thirdly, even if it would be interesting to conduct an experiment with a fake Instagram account
to see how different posts are perceived by various employers, it would be difficult in practice. Experiments are therefore possible, but difficult. Fourthly, a comparative design is both possible and would likely deliver interesting result, however the cross-sectional design is seen as more favorable in relation to the purpose. This is because it allows the use of qualitative interviews to get an understanding of what type of content and activity that makes employers positively set against an Instagram account, as well as content analysis to examine traits of Instagram accounts belonging to people who are seen as successful marketers of their personal brand.

2.5 Research method

Research method refers to the techniques used for the collection of research data (Bryman, 2001, p. 42). This data can also be divided into two parts, primary- and secondary data. Primary data consists of material collected for a particular study through primary reporting by the researcher, while secondary data are all other sources, like previously research, articles and literature. (Svenning, 1999, p. 97, Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 65)

2.5.1 Primary data

As mentioned earlier, qualitative research which has adopted a cross-sectional design often uses focus groups, interviews and/or content analysis for the collection of primary data. The initial thoughts were to only use oral interviews and content analysis due to the restricted time limitations of this study. However, as two respondents with extensive knowledge within the research area didn’t have the possibility to participate in an oral interview, the decision was made to conduct email interview with them instead. This was done by sending them an email containing the same questions that were used in the oral interviews. Methods used in the collection of primary data are therefore oral interviews, email interviews and content analysis. As the study has adopted a qualitative strategy, all methods have been qualitative in their execution.

2.5.1.1 Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews are, in opposite to quantitative interviews, characterized by a low degree of standardization. This means that the research questions generally can be reformulated to encourage the respondents to use their own words and interpretations in the answer, as the overall goal of the interviews is to access the respondents perception about the topic examined. (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 78; Bryman, 2001, p. 300 f.; Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 104 f.; Trost,
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2010, p. 13, 133; Harboe, 2013, p. 58) Bloor and Wood (2006, p. 104 f.) describes how the interviewer can use various techniques such as open-ended questions or pauses with follow-up questions to get in-depth answers during the interview. This is in line with Patel and Davidson’s (2003, p. 78) thoughts that the interviewer should be active and help the respondent to build a meaningful discussion of what is studied. However, the interviewer must be careful not to steer the conversation too much. As it is the respondent's thoughts of what is relevant that should be at the center. (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 78 ff.) This possibility for the interviewer to steer the interview also underpins much of the criticism directed toward qualitative interviews. Other areas that receive criticism are the high level of contextuality, which affect the generalizability, and the lack of perspectives due to the generally low number of respondents, in comparison with quantitative interviews. (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 105)

Four qualitative interviews were conducted in total for this study, two of them were oral and two were email interviews. One of the oral interviews was made face to face in the respondent’s workplace and one was made through the use of the IP telephone service Skype. In the beginning of the oral interviews both respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights as a respondent to not answer or stop participating at any time. Both interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were conducted in Swedish with the support of an interview-guide (Appendix 1). The interviews were also recorded with the permission of the respondents. One advantage of recording the interviews is that the researcher can be more focused on the respondents since there is no need for keeping extensive notes. However, Bryman (2001, p. 310) imply that some respondents may feel uncomfortable with the knowledge that their words are recorded and saved. Thankfully, no such tendencies were observed during the interviews and both were successfully completed. After the interviews had been conducted the recordings were transcribed to facilitate a structured in-depth analysis where no part is left out.

The email interviews were conducted by sending the respondent an email containing the same questions that were used in the oral interviews. One of the respondents did receive the interview questions in Swedish (Appendix 1) and one did receive the interview questions in English (Appendix 2). According to Edwards and Holland (2013, p. 49), one advantage of using email interviews is that it directly results in written text, eliminating the need for transcription which is a common and time-consuming part in oral interviews. Another advantage is that answers in email interviews tend to be descriptive and more thoughtfully constructed as respondents generally don’t have the same pressure to answer directly. However, Edwards and Holland (2013, p. 49) warns that the lack of pressure to answer directly in email interviews may cause less spontaneous answers in comparison with oral interviews. This is something that also was
observed in this study as the email responses were more descriptive and well composed while the responses in the oral interviews were more spontaneous.

2.5.1.2 Degree of standardization and structure

In an interview situation, two aspects are important to consider when formulating questions. The first is the degree of standardization, which controls how much responsibility the interviewer is given regarding the formulation and order of the research questions. High standardization equals no responsibility and prescribed questions in a specific order are used. Low standardization equals great responsibility as the interviewer can reformulate preexisting questions or construct new. The second aspect is the degree of structure which determines how open the questions are, or how much space that is given to the respondents own interpretations. High degree of structure (fully structured) facilitates specific answers, while low degree of structure (open questions) facilitates comprehensive answers. (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 71 f.)

Even if qualitative interviews, in comparison with quantitative interviews, are characterized by a low degree of standardization and structure, there are several varieties. Bryman (2001, p. 301 f) presents the two most common. The first is the unstructured interview, which tends to be like a conversation where the interviewer at most uses a PM with prescribed themes to keep the interview within the examined area. The second is the semi-structured interview which often includes an interview guide with specified themes and prescribed questions. However, the interviewer still has the flexibility to remove or rephrase questions if it facilitates a comprehensive answer. (Bryman, 2001, p. 301 f)

The interviews conducted in this study should be seen as semi-structured. Fourteen open-ended questions (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 depending on language) where prepared in an interview-guide before the interviews. Both interviews did begin with the same question but depending on how wide and comprehensive the subsequent answer was, some questions were removed or rephrased. Follow-up questions were also used to facilitate comprehensive answers and/or steer the conversation back toward the fourteen main questions.

Because the email interviews contain fixed questions, they should be seen as fully structured rather than semi-structured. Both respondents gave comprehensive answers to the questions and were open to follow up questions. However, due to the comprehensive answers, follow-up-questions were not likely to provide any new useful information and were therefore not used.
2.5.1.3 Data analysis

According to Bryman (2008, p. 538 f.) there are few strategies of qualitative data analysis that is well established and generally accepted, however variations of analytic induction and grounded theory are commonly used.

Analytic induction aims to generate universal explanations by pursuing the gathering of research data and altering of hypothesis until no distinguishing cases is found. One criticism directed toward this approach addresses the lack of guidelines for how many cases that has to be examined before it is possible to assume that there are no distinguishing cases left. (Bryman, 2008, p. 539 ff.) According to Bryman (2008, p. 451 f.), there’s no consensual definition of what grounded theory is, what it includes or how to use it since several different ideas exist. However, a recent definition made by Strass and Corbin (cited in Bryman, 2008, p. 541) explain grounded theory as;

“theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis and eventually theory stand in a close relationship to another”.

According to Bryman (2008, p. 454) grounded theory starts with theoretical sampling based on a general research question. During the theoretical sampling the researcher collects, codes and analyses data. The theory that emerges from the analyses then serves as a starting point for the collection of additional data, which makes it into a constantly ongoing process. When separate phenomenons are discovered in the analysis, they are labeled as concepts. To measure these concepts the researcher also searches for indicators. If the researcher found an indicator that fit with a concept, they are labeled as a category. By subsequently analyzing the relationship between different categories, the researcher can develop hypotheses which can be tested with additional data. When the research reaches a point were additional data no longer affect the hypotheses, it can be presented as formal theory. (Bryman, 2008, p. 145, 415, 542 ff.)

The analysis in this study has largely followed the structure described by Bryman. After the oral interviews had been transcribed, the transcripts and the text from the email interviews were reread and coded (parts with theoretical significance were marked). When codes and notes from the interviews were compared with each other, concepts and indicators that occurred were marked. As some concepts were strengthened or weakened by analysis of additional code, categories which provided a likely explanation to different phenomenons were created. These categories were then compared with categories from the secondary data and the content
analysis. Hypotheses were then drawn from the comparison of categories. These hypotheses were then developed and presented as conclusions (formal theory) after testing against additional code from the interviews and secondary data.

2.5.1.4 Content analysis

Content analysis is a research method with quantitative origin concerning the study of texts, documents and images. According to Holsti (1969, reproduced in Bryman, 2001, p. 190) the purpose of content analysis is to draw conclusions based on an objective and systematic description and specification of the characteristics in different types of messages. This specification is according to Bryman (2001, p. 191 f.) usually done by quantification in different predetermined categories. However, as this study has adopted a qualitative strategy, it also uses a more qualitative content analysis.

What separates a qualitative content analysis from the traditional quantitative is that the researcher is given a more influential role as the main focus is to find underlying themes in the material being analyzed. The search also tends to be done in an alternating way, where the researcher constantly is trying to revise the themes or categories found by moving back and forward between conceptualization and data collection. (Bryman 2001, p. 192, 368)

The content analysis used in this study was conducted on the posts of four personal Instagram accounts, belonging to people who are considered to be good personal marketers by the respondents. Due to time limitations, only the first 100 posts, of each account, that were made before May 1, 2014, were included in the analysis. Since some accounts post more frequently than other, the time period for when the analyzed posts were published, differ between the accounts. This is not seen a disadvantage as the study has no intent to investigate changes in content over a given time span, which would have been the case in a longitudinal study. The purpose of making the content analysis is rather to discover recurring themes that can assist in the understanding of what makes these accounts to be perceived as good on personal marketing.

As an Instagram post consists of a main image with an additional text messages, the analyses were done by first analyzing the image and text separately, and then analyzing them together. This procedure makes it possible to separate what is clearly visible in the image (denotation) from the feelings and meaning associated with it (connotation). To do this in a structured way, each post was analyzed on the basis of five questions which were derived from an image analyzing method recommended by Bergström (2009, p. 210 ff.). However, the questions, which can be seen below, have been slightly altered to better fit with the purpose of this study.
• What is portrayed in the picture?
• What is the purpose of the text message?
• Are hashtags used? If used, how many?
• Who is the intended recipient of the post?
• What is the contextual purpose of the post?

One content analysis was conducted for each Instagram account. The answers were kept short and concise to serve as a base for the construction of recurring themes and measuring points. These are presented accompanied by a summarized description, containing both denotation and connotation, in the results chapter.

2.5.1.5 Selection of respondents

Bryman (2001, p. 312 f.) presents several methods that can be used for the selection of respondents in qualitative interviews. One method is convenience sample, which means that the researcher select peoples who are available and seen as appropriate for the study. The method isn’t optimal to use in quantitative studies as it is linked to a low level of generalizability, however it can be useful in qualitative studies which seek values and opinions in a specific context. Another reason for using convenience sample in qualitative studies may be due to difficulties in finding relevant respondents. (Bryman 2001, p. 114, 313)

This study has used a convenience sample in the selection of interview respondents. The main reason for that were difficulties in finding people with relevant knowledge who also were willing to be interviewed. In total, sixteen potential respondents were asked to participate in the study of which four did choose to participate. The most common reply why not to participate where lack of time or lack of experience within the subject of the study. People that were asked to participate in the interviews did either work with or use Instagram in a marketing purpose and/or had experiences from using Instagram to evaluate jobseekers and/or had several years of experiences from working professionally with personal branding. The four respondents who did choose to participate in the study were Kajsa Bengtson, who work within communication, PR and strategy, Peter Martinsson who work within career advising, event management and social media, Pia Lanneberg who work as a business coach, educator and lecturer within personal branding and Thibaut Davoult who work as a director of content at a company who specialize in Instagram marketing.
A Snowball sample was used for selection of Instagram accounts to the content analysis. This means that all respondents were asked if they could suggest one or more Instagram accounts, belonging to people which they perceive as good personal marketers. There was no demand that the accounts which were suggested by the respondents should be directed towards a specific employer in the purpose of obtaining a job. The accounts should therefore be seen as generally good at personal marketing. Twelve suggestions were received in total from the respondents. From these twelve, four accounts was randomly selected for the content analysis. The reason for only analyzing four accounts was the time limitations of the study as well as a smaller sample allow for a deeper analysis of each account. The selected accounts did belong to @pieraluisa who is creative director at the fashion, style and beauty website Refinery29, @designermartinbjornson who is a freelance designer with a specialty in furniture design, @elektronista who is a blogger and editor in chief at the online magazine elektronista.dk which is focused at new technology, and @gflandre who is a web developer and photographer.

2.5.1.6 Ethical considerations

Even if the subject of this study can’t be seen as highly sensitive or have an emotive nature, it is important to consider ethical principles to prevent misunderstandings which can have unfortunate outputs, such as stress or loss of self-esteem.

According to Bryman (2008, p. 118 ff.), the ethical issues that might occur when one is conducting sociological studies frequently revolves around four areas; harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. These areas can be compared with the four principles of; information requirement, requirement of consent, confidentiality obligations and utilization requirement, presented by the Swedish science council, Vetenskapsrådet, in their CODEX for research within humanities and social sciences (Vetenskapsrådet, p. 6).

To achieve a high ethical levels in the areas presented by Bryman, and fulfill the principals outlined by Swedish science council, this study has through email or oral conversation informed all respondents about the purpose of the study, the purpose of their participation, the possibility to be anonymous, the possibility to not- or stop participating at any time and that the collected material only would be used for the purpose of the study. The respondents were also informed that if they did choose to be anonymous, all data that could reveal their identity would be kept confidential.

When it comes to the content analysis, most Instagram accounts are public and therefore open and accessible for research and analysis. However, according to Bryman (2008, p. 129 f.) it is
debateable whether it is ethically right to use this material if the participant’s haven’t agreed to have their posts analyzed. One side would argue that it is unnecessary to seek consent as public postings belong to the public domain, while others would see it as a violation of the informed consent principle. (Bryman, 2008 p. 29) Pace and Livingstone (cited in Bryman, 2008, p. 130) balance between the two approaches and presents four points that must be satisfied if informed consent shouldn’t be seen as necessary in a study;

- the information is publically archived and readily available;
- no password is required to access the information;
- the material is not sensitive in nature;
- no stated site policy prohibits the use of the material.”

As all Instagram accounts analyzed in this study are public, the analysis isn’t sensitive in nature and Instagram doesn’t have any policy that prohibits analytic use of public posts, the demands presented by Pace and Livingstone are seen as fulfilled. The owners of the accounts have therefore not been informed about the analysis before it was conducted. The reason for this is primarily because if the owner was informed, he or she could react by changing or deleting the content of the account, which would affect the credibility of the analysis. However, it is important to note that this decision is made in an ethical grey area.

2.5.2 Secondary data

The secondary data presented in the theory chapter comes from both peer-reviewed articles and popular science articles. Articles were found by using Google or Summon and a combination of keywords: Instagram, marketing, personal marketing, personal branding, self-promotion, career development, social media marketing, online marketing, word of mouth, WOM, and self-marking. The articles that appear in this work have been selected by a review based on how relevant the articles were in relation to the purpose, when they were published, how many and which sources they used. Articles that were cited by many, close to the study area and came from a validated source were prioritized.

The peer-reviewed articles were primarily found using the search service Summon, which is accessible through Malmö University. A similar search service which is more accessible to others would be Google Scholar. One advantage of using Summon instead of Google Scholar is the possibility to limit the search to only peer-reviewed material. It is an opportunity that has been utilized as much as possible. However, due to Instagrams young age, it is still an
unexplored social medium and few articles which have been peer-reviewed broach the subject. Most of what is written specifically about Instagram therefore comes from popular scientific journals within social media and computer science. These articles do not enjoy the same credibility as peer-reviewed articles, but they contribute with contemporary insights within the study area and are therefore essential for the study.

2.6 Methodological discussion

Reliability and validity are important measuring points when it comes to examining the quality of a study (Bryman, 2008, p. 376; Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 102). Bryman (2008, p. 376 ff.) divides these two terms into four parts: External reliability which refers to how easy it is to follow and replicate the research process, internal reliability which refers to how well one's measurements are consistent with those of others, internal validity which refers to if one's conclusions are clearly derived from the research data, and external validity which refers to the transferability of the findings.

It is always hard to perfectly replicate a study. However, the qualitative nature of this study creates additional challenges when it comes to replication as qualitative studies always are more or less affected by the researcher's prior knowledge and opinions. This implies that the external reliability should be low. However, due to the extensive methodological explanations that have been outlined in this chapter, I would argue that the external reliability should be seen as relatively high from a qualitative perspective. It is difficult to judge the internal reliability since no other researcher has been involved in the investigations and therefore can’t strengthen the presented result. However, it has been my intention to be as objective as possible in my assessments, to increase the chances that a replicating study would yield the same result. It has also been my intention to describe and present the interviews and content analysis in a way which makes it easy for other researcher to determine whether the internal reliability should be seen as high or low.

I have in the discussion sought to clearly substantiate all arguments with references to both previous theory and the result from the interviews. I therefore consider that I reached a high level of congruence between the presented findings and data from which it was derived, and the level of internal validity is thereby considered to be high. The external validity and thereby the transferability of this study can’t be seen as significantly high due to the low number of respondents. However, since the findings of this study are based on a combination of multiple perspectives from people using Instagram for different purposes, content analysis of different
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types of Instagram accounts, as well as a comprehensive theory regarding personal branding and Instagram. I consider the conclusions of this study to be of high value for all people who are considering the use Instagram as a personal branding tool.

To facilitate the creation of a study where it is easy to assess the relevance and credibility of the used secondary data, page references has been used on all documents which have pages. This method implies that Internet sources don’t receive any page reference by default (since there are no pages to reference), which may lead to a graphical unevenness in the body text. However, this is considered to be a minor loss in comparison with the rapid source examination which is obtained through the use of page references where it’s possible. Paragraph info is also used on quotes from webpages to facilitate a fast localization. The reason for not using paragraph information on all web pages which are referenced is that the subject often stretches over several paragraphs, and that many web pages don’t use traditional paragraphing.

2.6.1 Source criticism

The contemporary concepts of personal branding do not exist without criticism. Lair, Sullivan and Cheney (2005, 308 ff.) as an example, criticize advocates of personal branding for offering concepts which almost solely focus on personal fulfillment and thus lack aspects of ethical self-evaluation or social responsibility. Shepherd (2010, p. 596 ff.) also imply some practical difficulties when transferring existing theory regarding personal branding into reality. One of these difficulties concerns the idea that every action should go in line with the personal brand. This is easy in theory but can create tension in reality since it may be hard to transfer a business-related brand identity into every day social situations. Shepherd (2010, p. 602) also critically address the fact that most theories within personal branding have arisen from the thoughts of professional marketer, authors of self-help books and career advisors and therefor often lack scientific evidence. This study recognizes the importance of this criticism, and an attempt has been made to find and include theory which addresses some of the presented problems. However, as this study is limited in both time and scope, not all possible difficulties have been presented or discussed.

Several popular science articles within social media and computer science have been used in the theory section to give a contemporary view of how Instagram can be utilized as a personal marketing tool. These articles are not scientifically based and may therefore affect the credibility of the study in a negative way. To prevent this, data from several independent sources have been used to support the presented theory.
3 Theory

This chapter aims to clarify the functionalities of Instagram as well as provide a theoretical framework to support the discussion of the results. The chapter begins with a description of what Instagram is and how it works. The chapter then presents the idea of personal branding before it moves on to describing theories of how it can be marketed. To conclude, the chapter outlines contemporary thoughts of how an Instagram account could be managed to build a strong personal brand and how the success of an account could be measured.

3.1 Instagram

Instagram is a free social network application (app) for smart mobile phones that allows members to take a photo or record a video and edit it with digital filters before uploading and sharing it with other members, who then can reconnect through the use of comments and likes (Instagram[a], 2013). Instagram describe itself as a;

“fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever. We're building Instagram to allow you to experience moments in your friends' lives through pictures as they happen. We imagine a world more connected through photos.”

(Instagram[b], 2014, paragraph 2)

The app was launched on October 6, 2010 and has since then reached an audience of over 200 million users around the world (Instagram[c], 2014), making Instagram the fastest growing social network in the world according to the international research firm GlobalWebIndex’s quarterly report (Mander, 2014, p. 3).

From a technical view, Instagram is available for iPhone, Android and Windows Phone (Instagram[d], 2014). The service is mobile exclusive, which mean that photos and videos only can be uploaded through the app (Instagram[e], 2013). When uploading a post, a user has the possibility to simultaneously share content on multiple platforms by connecting their Instagram account to e.g. a Twitter or Facebook account, or embed a post feed on their website (Instagram[f], 2013).

Even if Instagram is mobile exclusive when it comes to uploading pictures, it isn’t the only way to view pictures. All Instagram profiles have a web profile and their photos are visible to
everybody, if the account is public, through instagram.com/username. However, it is notable from a marketing perspective that Google and other search services do not index Instagram profiles and pictures. (Instagram[g], 2013) To make an account searchable, it needs to be connected to a third-part services or program which allows indexing. Depending on service, various settings may also be needed to facilitate a high ranked result. (Elwell, 2012)

A technique used by Instagram to make posts searchable is hashtags. Hashtags are a word or a phrase, in the post caption or in comments, which are preceded by a # symbol. The functionality of hashtags is that it allows users to access all photos on Instagram that are associated with a specific # tagged word. (Instagram[h], 2013) It is also possible to tag a friend in comments or in the post caption by adding a @ symbol before his or hers username. Two other technical possibilities are to add the name of a person directly in the image or highlight the geographic position of the post through tagging in a photo map. (Instagram[i], 2013)

### 3.1.1 Application Breakdown

Instagram is simply constructed with five main buttons. The first button from the left side is the Home tab (figure 1) where you can see posts from the users you follow. Posts are liked by double-clicking on the image or pressing the heart shaped like-button at the end of the post. Next to the like-button is the comment-button which allows you to respond to posts. When someone comments on your post you will receive a comment notification in the News tab, which is the second button from the right. (Instagram[j], 2013).

![Figure 1. Home tab. (Photo by researcher)](image)
The second button from the left is the *Explore tab* (figure 2) where you can search for other users and hashtags. The tab also shows a number of photos, which have been highlighted by Instagram to facilitate the discovery of new accounts. (Instagram[k], 2013).

![Figure 2. Explore tab. (Photo by researcher)](image)

The middle button is the camera (figure 3), from which you upload and share new posts. By default, all photos and videos on Instagram are rectangular. Pictures that are not rectangular when captured need to be cropped before posting. (Instagram[h], 2014).

![Figure 3. Camera. (Photo by researcher)](image)
The second button from the right side is the *News tab* (figure 4) where you can see interactions relating to your account, like who is following you, @-mentions of you and likes and comments on your photos. You also have the possibility to see interactions of the users you follow by switching between the “Follow” and “News” button at the top. (Instagram[1], 2013).

![Figure 4. News tab, showing followers interaction. (Photo by researcher)](image)

The first button from the right side is the *Profile page* (figure 5) where you and your followers can see all of your posts, people following you, people you are following, your profile picture and your general biography, which may include 150 characters. (Instagram[m], 2013).

![Figure 5. Profile page. (Photo by researcher)](image)
The *web profile* (figure 6) is similar to the Profile page on mobile devices except that you have a header were large pictures from your posts interchange in and out. From the web profile it is also possible to alter the general user information. (Instagram[n], 2013)

![Web profile](image)

Figure 6. Web profile. (Instagram[q], 2014)

### 3.2 Personal branding

Tom Peters article “The brand called you” which appeared 1997 in Fast Company magazine, are by many seen as the article that popularized the contemporary market orientated notion of personal branding. (e.g. Labrecque, et.al, 2010, p. 38; Shepherd, 2005, p. 590; Chen, 2013, p. 334) At the beginning of the article, Peters states that;

> “Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You.”

(Peters, 1997, paragraph 4)

A recurring point in Peters further reasoning about how to develop and manage this "you" brand so that it becomes strong and competitive, is the importance of consciously taking action to stand out and become positively differentiated from competitors, or colleagues. (Peters, 1997) This is a central point in most theories about personal branding since the “you” brand isn’t you, it’s the synthesis of the images, perceptions and expectations created in the consciousness of
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others when they see or hear your name. An essential part of personal branding is therefore to take control over one's own image, and the message it sends. (Hubert, 2008, p. 34)

### 3.2.1 Developing brand identity

The development of a personal brand is commonly described as an evolving process with different phases (e.g. Shepherd, 2005, p. 602; Khedher, 2014, p. 33; Hubert, 2008, p. 35; Labrecque et.al, 2011, p. 44). The first phase typically begins with the establishment of a brand identity, which briefly is a clarification of one's unique features of value. To do this, it is necessary to first figure out which traits, skills, goals and values that characterize one's true personality and best qualities. These attributes should then be evaluated against the needs and expectations that exist on the targeted market, to determine unique brandable features, which deliver value to employers and differentiate one from other competitive individuals. (Khedher, 2014, p. 33; Arruda[a], 2009) A method that can be used to facilitate this process is personal SWOT² analysis (McCorkle & McCorkle, 2012, p. 159; Hubert, 2008, p. 35). McCorkle and McCorkle (2012, p. 159) show an example of this in a study where they describe how senior marketing students have used SWOT analysis to specify their experiences and skills on a LinkedIn profile. Questions used in their SWOT analysis were:

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“(1) What are you current personal strengths? (2) What are your current personal weaknesses? (3) What are the market demand/trends for your preferred entry level marketing jobs and preferred industries? (4) What are the major external threats (including competitors) to your specific job search?”
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(McCorkle & McCorkle, 2012, p. 159)

According to Adlén (2007, p. 14 f.), it is important to keep the brand authentic through this phase and the entire branding process because it is hard to convincingly play or copy an archetype of how individuals are expected to be within a specific profession. Labrecque et al. (2011, p. 45 ff.) show this in a study where respondents who were asked to evaluate different SNS profiles did give negative judgments to profiles which they perceived as unauthentic due to ingenuous content, such as staged photos or biased text. To minimize the risk of being misinterpreted and improperly judged due to material SNSs, Labrecque et al. (2011, p. 49) suggest that an authentic brand identity should transcend both professional and social context. This is a suggestion which is in line with Peters thoughts that when one is promoting the

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² SWOT is an analytical model which aims to highlight strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
personal brand, every email, every post, literally everything one chooses to do, or not do, affect people’s perception about the brand. (Peters, 1997).

### 3.2.2 Communicating the brand

After establishing a brand identity, one has to create and implement a marketing strategy for how to communicate the identity in an effective and appealing way so that current and/or future employers perceive the unique values of the brand. The strategy may include identification of key communication tools and themes, setting up milestones and creating intriguing brand statements. (Arruda [b], 2009; Hubert, 2008, p. 35 f.) When creating and applying the strategy, Arruda ([c], 2009) recommend one to follow the three c’s of branding, which is clarity, consistency and constancy. This means being clear about one's key attributes, deliver the same value multiple times and be constantly visible to prospective employers or clients.

When using social media for personal branding, it is necessary to create a visual profile that communicates one's unique values in a way that is appealing to prospective employers (Khedher, 2010, p. 3). However, an appealing surface isn’t enough. The purpose of having a social profile is to foster connections and build engagement so that the audience becomes promoters of the brand. (Yan, 2011, p. 689 ff.) To do this, Harris and Rae (2011, p. 20) recommend one to share experiences and high quality content as this is a good way of showing expertise and build reputation. According to Peters (1997), the best way to create attention and build engagement around one's brand is to facilitate the emergence of positive WOM. He state:

"The key to any personal branding campaign is "word-of-mouth marketing." Your network of friends, colleagues, clients, and customers is the most important marketing vehicle you've got; what they say about you and your contributions is what the market will ultimately gauge as the value of your brand. So the big trick to building your brand is to find ways to nurture your network of colleagues - consciously."

(Peters, 1997, paragraph 33)

To improve the chances of successful WOM marketing, research indicates that specific information, high level of expertise and high level of reliability are factors that positively influence the efficiency of WOM communication (Jun, Cha, & Praveen, 2011, p. 269 ff.). As Peters implies in the quote above, how others speak about one affect how the market perceives one. It is therefore important to not just promote the personal brand but also protect it from content that can be harmful. (Ward & Yates, 2013, p. 102; Khedher, 2010, p. 3).
3.2.3  **Maintaining and evaluating the brand**

When the marketing strategy is in motion, the final step in the personal branding process is to maintain and gradually develop the value offered by the brand so that it remains contemporary and competitive (Hubert, 2008, p. 36 f.). To achieve this, one must evaluate the brand to see if desirable goals have been met and reputation obtained (Khedher, 2010, p. 3 f.). According to Peters (1997) the best way to do this is to put together an evaluation group and ask them for honest feedback about one's performance, progress and value. This suggestion is strengthened by Labrecque, et.al (2010, p. 38) who state that “self-branding practices require feedback mechanisms to succeed and be meaningful”. Dutta (2010, p. 5) also highlight the importance of evaluating one's branding efforts to see if progress is being made. To do this, Dutta recommends the use social monitoring tools as well as counting the number of useful social interaction made each month. A similar model offered by Hoffman and Fodor (2010, p. 44) evaluate the level of brand awareness, brand engagement and WOM on different SNSs applications by counting e.g. number of views, comments, follower, links and times republished on other SNSs.

3.3  **Personal branding within an organization**

In an interview by Bernadette (2009, p. 419), Arruda describes that personal branding inside an organization is about using one's unique attributes to increase the value of the company brand. For this to happen, alignment between the personal brand and company brand is necessary. The process of doing this is two-ended, meaning that both the company and employees need to actively engage themselves to form shared values and goals (Hubert, 2011, p. 15 ff.). This is usually no problem since people with strong personal brands generally use their influence and power to facilitate the development of the company and thereby their career. However, it is notable that personal branding within an organization may create tension as others can feel threatened by the rising competition. (Harris. and Rae, 2011, p. 21) Depending on how well the alignment process develops, it is therefore necessary to decide whether it is worth to stay or if it is time to leave for a new job which better fits one's goals and beliefs (Hubert, 2011, p. 17.).

3.4  **Branding on Instagram**

When it comes to content strategy for brands on Instagram, Instagram itself gives three primary advices on their business oriented website. The first advice is to set clear goals, which can be to increase awareness or reach a new audience. The second advice is to choose content themes that can be used to express a clear, authentic and cohesive story about one's brand through the use of
appealing imagery. The third advice is to not rush it, as it is better to focus on the creation of high-quality content. Additional tips are to: choose an appropriate account name that reflects one's brand, have a simple profile photo which looks good when cropped into a 150 x 150 pixel circle image, use short and simple captions with a maximum of three hashtags, and create engagement by asking questions in the captions and commenting or liking posts. Two further tips are to tag people or the location in posts if it helps to communicate the brand story and to use filter on photos to give them a desired feel. (Instagram[0], 2014).

3.4.1 The use of hashtags

In The Fortune 500 Instagram Report, TrackMaven (2013, p. 17) state that there is “a strong correlation between the number of hashtags that brands use on their content and the effectiveness of their content, underscoring that Instagram is a discovery platform”. According to TrackMaven (2013, p. 17), this implies that hashtags should be seen as a fundamental part of every marketing campaign on Instagram.

As mentioned before, Instagram recommends a use of maximum three hashtags (Instagram[0], 2014). This is in contrast with the statistics presented in the research agency Track Maven’s (2013, p. 15) Instagram report, which instead indicates that small brands can benefit from using up to 11 hashtags in their posts. According to Track Maven, this is probably because a high number of hashtags increases the chance of being discovered by new followers. However, one should be aware that some users perceive a high number of hashtags as disruptive spam. A high number of hashtags can therefore affect the engagement level negatively, especially if one already has a relatively large number of followers. (TrackMaven, 2013, p. 14 f.)

One advice when using hashtags is to be specific and use relevant tags, as this will increase the chances of attracting more like-minded followers (Instagram[p], 2012). However, this doesn’t mean that hashtags need to be directly related to the photo. According to a study by Schlesselman-Tarango (2013, p.11 ff.), using hashtags which relate to one's thoughts and values may be a successful way to communicate an authentic personality or connecting with a specific Instagram community. As Instagram is a discovery platform, one can also search for different hashtags that are common in one's industry to be inspired by and find new content to interact with (Davoult, 2013).
3.4.2 Posting strategies

According to TrackMaven (2013, p. 8 f.) there is no specific day of the week where posts receive significantly higher interactions, neither is there any specific time of the day where posts generally generate a significantly higher interaction. However, some authors argue that it may exist ideal peak hours for posting on Instagram and that it varies from user to user, making it meaningful to utilize different analysis tools to find and optimize the posts against these peak hours. (Davoult, 2013; Titlow, 2012) When it comes to the number of times one should post each day, Davoult, (2013) recommend one to post often. However, if the content isn’t relevant for one's brand, it is better to wait. (Davoult, 2013)

3.4.3 Measure Instagram development

It is important to measure and evaluate the development of one's Instagram account since it is the only way to see if one is engaging the intended audience as well as understand what type of content that is receiving the most appreciation. Regular measurement therefore makes it possible to continuously develop and improve the efficiency of one's communication efforts. To facilitate Instagram measurements, there are several tools available online that provide statistics about the development of e.g. likes, comments, hashtags, followers and different community interactions. (Seda, 2013; Hubert, 2014)
4 Results

This chapter presents the essential findings from the interview and content analysis. The chapter begins by outlining the results of the interviews in subheads compiled from the interview questions, which can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. Quotes are extensively used to reflect both dominant and distinguishing opinions. The chapter is concluded with a presentation of the finding derived from the content analysis.

4.1 Instagram as a personal branding tool

One of the first questions that all respondents received was if they believe that Instagram is a good tool for personal branding. The overall answer was that it can be. However, to succeed it is necessary to reflect about how to use Instagram as a personal branding tool and create a strategy for how to do it in an interesting way. Bengtson (2014) also adds that even if Instagram can be used as a successful personal branding tool, it isn’t without limitations. One of the problems she mentioned is that Instagram not allow search services like Google index photos or profiles by default, thereby making it difficult to find specific people. Another difficulty is that there is no easy way to switch between different accounts. (Bengtson, 2010)

When the respondents received a question regarding if they believe that Instagram is going to be a long lasting social medium, the answers did differ a bit. Martinsson (2014) did answer that it is a question of generation. Instagram is a popular medium within the new technological generation. There is therefore a chance that they will leave for something new when older generations catch up. However, Martinsson (2014) also mentions that Instagram probably will remain strong in the next coming years. Bengtson (2014) states that Instagram probably will continue to be strong the coming years, but that the adoption rate will decline as early adopters leave for something new. Lanneberg (2014) says that it’s difficult to predict, however there’s nothing right now which suggest that the interest for Instagram, or photos sharing in general, will decrease the forthcoming years. Davoult (2014) is the most positive, stating that:

With 200m active users and still on the rise, it would be shocking to see Instagram go away any time soon. That's especially true with Facebook's backing now. I think the Instagram team is dedicated to its community and tries to make the best choices to remain leaders in the photo sharing space.
4.2 Personal branding

All respondents believe that social media have played an important part in making personal branding to a contemporary and important subject. Bengtson (2014) and Lanneberg (2014) also describe how the working environment is shifting towards more project-based employments, making it even more important to be visible and master the message one sends out, so that others interpret one in a desirable way.

Lanneberg (2014) describe the personal brand as “the expectations and associations which others connect to your name”. She further states that the essence of personal branding is to be relevant, appealing and visible for people who have the ability to affect one's career. It is also important to be authentic since a fake personality is easy revealed and thus not sustainable over time. (Lanneberg, 2014)

4.3 Branding strategies

When communicating the brand, Bengtson (2014) recommend one to use personal as well as work related photos to build an authentic story around how it is to be, for example, an entrepreneur in ups and downs. Bengtson (2014) further highlight the importance of achieving “some kind of continuity in the posts”, where one consciously continues to build and develop a story while simultaneously using comments to interact and reconnect with other users. When Bengtson (2014) gets the question what she would do to brand herself against an advertising agency through Instagram, she replies:

“I would come up with a fun concept which one can run for some time, like a week, 10 days. Then I would come up with a smart hashtag that works on both Twitter and Instagram to communicate the concept. It’s kind of the best job application in the world. It shows that you can communicate, one can use it to show one's design language. And if one succeeds to create some buzz around it, it would be genius.”

Martinsson (2014) also describes that it can be beneficial to come up with some sort of hook that captures the employer’s attention and start some kind of interaction. To do this, Martinsson (2014) further recommends one to use a subject which is relevant to the employer and show how one think around that subject, through e.g. visualization on Instagram. He further states that it may be beneficial to post at the right time so that one appears high in the employers feed. Lanneberg (2014), describes Instagram as visual networking, and highlight the use of relevant
hashtags to get noticed. She also recommends one to use the same hashtags as the company one aims to work at does, as it increases the chances of being discovered by them. Bengtson (2014) agrees, stating that Instagram is a discovery medium where hashtags are the main way to get noticed. When Davoult (2014) is asked about marketing strategies on Instagram, he states:

“I don't think you should overthink it unless you have a very specific idea behind using Instagram (ie: doing an Instagram resumé). It may work, but it's tricky and frankly, when it comes to social media resumés, we've seen it all... and their success isn't proven.

I'll say just stick to showing a positive attitude and personality on Instagram, re-share that on relevant networks (fb and twitter) and you'll be fine.

Actually, come to think of it, in some cases, mentioning a company on Instagram (which will notify them) can be a good idea. That's especially true for startups and small companies which usually have less than 1k followers on Instagram: they'll notice your post for sure. If you have a good idea behind doing that, it may work!”

All respondents recommend one to re-share Instagram content on other social media channels, as it increases the chances of being discovered. Bengtson (2014) also describes that different social channels are suitable for different types of interactions. Twitter is described as a channel suitable for the creation of discussions and personal interactions while LinkedIn is mentioned as a good way to showcase a more formal resume. However, when one has succeeded to attract the attention of potential employers, both Bengtson (2014) and Davoult (2014) recommend one to use to use more professional channels, as emails, for work-related conversations.

When it comes to present one's professional skills on Instagram, Lanneberg (2014) presents several tips which may be beneficial to use, three of these are:

“● Create a specific account for your job search, use your name or your name and profession. Create a short biography of who you are and what you can and what you stand for. Link to your LinkedIn profile. Make sure you use a good-looking profile picture.

● Upload pictures of you when you are working and / do what you think is the most fun to do (and do best).

● Upload a 15 second video where you are demonstrating something you are really good at.”
All the respondents also recommended one to be, genuine, consistent and clear about what one is trying to communicate as that is more important than the quality of the photos.

### 4.4 Risks with the use of Instagram as a personal branding tool

According to Martinsson (2014), one risk of using images in a job searching process is that it always creates expectations that need to be fulfilled, however he also adds that it may be risk worth taking since it can create a positive expression. Davoult (2014) highlight the importance of always having in mind that the viewers of one's Instagram feed often don’t know in which context the photo was captured. Something that seemed like a good idea at the time one took the photo, may look terrible to other viewers who weren't there. It is therefore important to think carefully about what to post. Another risk presented by Davoult (2014) is oversharing, he state:

> "Oversharing can be a risk in and of itself. If you have nothing interesting to show or say, simply don't. But of course, sharing images that put yourself in a negative light (drunk pictures, entering feuds with others...) is worse. It's so quick to snap a photo and share it on Instagram that some just have no filter of what to share, which is a mistake."

Lanneberg (2014) also addresses the issue of oversharing as she states that “being visible should not be an end in itself when working with personal branding. [Instead] you should be visible, relevant and interesting for those who are important to your career”. A basic rule according to Lanneberg (2014) is that everything one chooses to post on Instagram should be in line with the brand image one is trying to communicate.

### 4.5 Measure Instagram success

When Lanneberg (2014) get the questions if likes and comments are important, she answers that likes and comments mainly has an important psychological effect as they fulfill a human need of being appreciated and recognized. She also mentions that the number of likes gives an indication of how many people who appreciate and have confidence in a brand. Martinsson (2014) agree with Lanneberg that likes and comments have a psychological importance, he also describes that from an employer’s perspective, the content are generally more important than the number of likes it receive. However, Martinsson (2014) ad that if one is aiming for a position which involves social media communication, a high number of likes can be important
as it indicates that one knows how to communicate content in an appealing way. Bengtson (2014) recommends one to not exclusively use the number of likes as an indicator of success since it usually is more people who see and register the content of a post, than it is who presses the like button. Davoult (2014) also recommends one to think about if it’s the intended people who like one's photos. To evaluate the success of one's Instagram account, Lanneberg (2014) encourage one to find out what one is aiming to accomplish with the Instagram account. This is necessary because when one knows this, it is easy to create goals which can be measured. Examples of measurable goals are: “I want this many likes, this many contacts from recruiters or potential clients or this many new interesting people in my network”. (Lanneberg, 2014)

4.6 Content analysis

To present the content analysis in a structured way, every account has its own subheading containing a summarized description of the account which includes both denotation and connotation, as well as statistics regarding the subject of the post and number of hashtags.

4.6.1 @pieraluisa

On 1 May 2014, @pieraluisa had published 1,584 posts and was followed by 36,314 people. Her biography states: “Piera Gelardi Creative Director @Refinery29. Visual bric-a-brac and other whatnot. http://www.creative.r29.com”. (Instagram[q], 2014)

When analyzing the photos it is notable that most of them have a thought-out composition and contain strong color which gives the account a cohesive design and art related feel. Except for the strong colors and thought out composition, there is no recurring theme when it comes to the content of the posts and work situations are mixed with everyday situations like an unmade bed or a pair of shoes. No obvious filter is used in the photos and they feel like genuine captured moments where one as a follower finds out what's happening right now. This feeling is strengthened by the captions which usually are formulated like a short and slightly humoristic diary. All posts have several comments and @pieraluisa often interacts with followers by answering questions or making follow-up comments. Geotags are also frequently used to display the position of where the photo was taken. After looking at the creative.r29 website as well as the Instagram profile of Refinery29, @pieraluisa Instagram account feels like a genuine personal extension of the more commercial design content one can find at Refinery29. Figure 7 below shows how the content of the 100 analyzed posts was distributed. Further statistics show that @pieraluisa in average did use 0.51 hashtags in the captions of every post.
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4.6.2 @designermartinbjornson

On 1 May 2014, @designermartinbjornson had published 113 posts and was followed by 555 people. His biography states: “Designer living and working in Malmö, Sweden. facebook.com/designermartinbjornson. http://martinbjornson.com”. (Instagram[r], 2014)

When analyzing the posts it is obvious that this is an account owned by a furniture and pattern designer. Nearly all posts are work related and the whole process from sketch to final result is shown. There are also a lot of backstage photos from various exhibitions and events as well as photos from newspaper articles featuring his work. Many photos have a slight blue tint, which indicate the use of some filter. This filter is used in a subtle way on most photos and contributes to the creation of a coherent feel. Captions are used to give in-depth explanations of what is visible in the photo as well as encourage follower to attend different events where the work is featured. Nearly all posts have several comments and @designermartinbjornson does interact with followers by answering questions or make follow-up comments. Figure 8 below shows how the content of the 100 analyzed the posts was distributed. Further statistics show that @designermartinbjornson in average did use 10.42 hashtags in the captions of every post.
4.6.3 @elektronista

On 1 May 2014, @elektronista had published 1,402 posts and was followed by 2,820 people. Her biography states: “Christiane Vejlø Turning it on. Writing: Elektronista.dk Consulting: Elektronista.dk/Consulting Talking: Radio24syv.dk http://Elektronista.dk”. (Instagram[s], 2014)

Approximately one third of the posts are work related and two thirds are personal not work related. One recurring theme in the posts is backstage photos of people she meets at work during e.g. interviews. There are also some recurring photos of technical equipment she tests at work. However, most of the posts don’t follow any special theme, instead they appear to be spontaneous updates about what's happening right now in her everyday life. This feeling is strengthened by the captions which usually are short, informative and slightly humoristic. There is no clear strategy behind the selection of material to post and the posts seems to be spontaneously made. After looking at the websites mentioned in @elektronista’s biography, her Instagram account feels like a personal extension of the more professional site Elektronista.dk. All posts have several comments and @elektronista reply to most of them. Several photos also have filters which give the images a soft contemporary effect. Figure 9 below shows how the content of the 100 analyzed the posts was distributed. Further statistics show that @elektronista in average did use 1.86 hashtags in the captions of every post.

![Figure 9. Content statistics @elektronista. (Processed by the researcher)](image)

4.6.4 @gflandre

On 1 May 2014, @gflandre had published 842 posts and was followed by 21,630 people. His biography states that: “Guillaume Flandre • Life in Paris and around • iPhone only • guillaume.flandre@gmail.com http://gflandre.com/photos”. (Instagram[t], 2014)
@gflandre’s website it states that he is a web developer with a passion and knowledge about photography. His Instagram account is solely focused on photography, where skillfully composed landscape and city photos are the most common types of photos. Several photos also use subtle filters, which contribute to a cohesive feeling. Post captions are generally held short and informative, which gives much attention to the photos. However, longer captions are sometimes used to describe a situation or push for an event/exhibition. One interesting aspect when analyzing the photos is that @gflandre was featured on Instagram blog the 29 of Mars, resulting in an enormous increase of likes and comments. Another interesting aspect is that he does not use many hashtags in the captions, instead he tags most post by commenting it and use hashtags in the comment. The overall feeling is that this is an Instagram account where the main goal is to show inspiring photos, and thus also demonstrate his skills as a photographer in an easy to access way. Figure 10 below shows how the content of the 100 analyzed the posts was distributed. Because the account is focused on photography, information about wok-related happenings is information about different photographic happenings related to @gflandre. Further statistics show that @gflandre in average did use 0.53 hashtags in the captions of every post. However, as mentioned above, @gflandre do often use comments to link several hashtags to a post.

Figure 10. Content statistics @gflandre. (Processed by the researcher)
5 Discussion

This chapter discusses and analyzes the results of the study by relating it to the theoretical framework presented earlier. To facilitate a structured and easy-to-follow discussion where conclusions are clearly related to the purpose of the study, this chapter is built up on three subheadings, one for each research question.

5.1 Instagram as a personal branding tool

Since Peters (1997) popularized the market oriented notion of personal branding in 1997, the development of social media, together with higher demands on visibility in the working environment, has actualized personal branding and made it to a contemporary and important subject according to the respondents.

Instagram, which has managed to reach an audience of over 200 million users (Instagram[c], 2014) in less than four years are currently the fastest growing social network in the world (Mander, 2014, p. 3). According to most interview responses, it is also likely that Instagram continues its growth in the next coming years. However, as the social media market is in constant change, Martinsson (2014) and Bengtson (2014) mention that there is a risk that some of the early adopters may leave Instagram for something new when the great mass starts to utilize it. This could imply that Instagram slowly becomes harder to use as a personal branding tool against employers within industries with a lot of early adopters, as e.g. the advertising and media industry. Personally, I consider this to be a nearly inevitable market development which affects most social platforms after some time. If and how quickly this developments affect Instagram is as mentioned by Lanneberg (2014), difficult to predict. A way to decide whether to use Instagram as a personal branding tool or not, are therefore to investigate if one’s targeted audience is currently using Instagram.

All respondents agree that Instagram can be used as a personal branding tool. However, Bengtson (2014) add that even if it’s possible, Instagram has some technical limitations which can make it difficult to use as an autonomously branding tool. One thing that is seen as a limitation by both Bengtson (2014) and Elwell (2012) is that Instagram not allow search services like Google index photos or profiles by default, making it difficult to e.g. find specific people if you don’t know their exact username. Another difficulty presented by Bengtson (2014) is that there’s no easy way to switch between different accounts. This makes it hard and
time consuming to e.g. follow one of Lanneberg’s (2014) advices which included the creation of a specific Instagram account for job search. However, if one aims to overcome these limitations and successfully utilize Instagram as a personal branding tool, all respondents recommend the use of some sort of captivating branding strategy.

In the theory chapter, the development of a branding strategy is described as a part of a three phase branding process, where the first phase revolves around the development of a brand identity, which briefly is a determination of one’s unique brandable attributes. The second phase concerns the communication of the brand, which involves the creation and implementation of a marketing strategy. And the third phase revolves around the maintenance and evaluation of the brand, so that it remains contemporary and competitive. When one is in the phase of creating and applying a marketing strategy, Arruda ([c], 2009) recommend one o follow the three c’s of branding, which are clarity, consistency and constancy. Lanneberg (2014) give a comparable advice as she emphasizes the importance of being relevant, appealing and visible for people who have the ability to affect one's career. All respondents also give the general advice to be genuine, consistent and clear about what one is trying to communicate. The great similarity between these advices imply that being clear about one's key attributes, deliver the same value multiple times and being constantly authentic and appealing for prospective employers, could be seen as general advices in the creation of a personal branding strategy.

A more specific advice regarding personal branding on Instagram is to build a cohesive story. Both Bengtson (2014) and Instagram ([o], 2014) highlight this process, Bengtson (2014) also recommend that the story should include both personal as well as work related posts. This is an advice similar to the one given by Instagram ([o], 2014) as they recommend the use of a content theme. It is also a type of strategy which I think is observable in the content analysis. @designermartinbjorson and @gflandre are clear examples of how it’s possible to specialize an Instagram profile against specific content, in this case design and photography, to express a clear and cohesive story. I would also argue that even if the posts of @pieraluisa and @elektronista aren’t specifically directed against a specific content. This because they both deliver an authentic and coherent story about their life and how it is to work as fashion creative director or lifestyle writer. All accounts in the content analysis also have descriptive biographies of who they are and what they work with, which also is recommended by Lanneberg (2014).

An important part in a branding strategy is to catch the attention of the intended audience. According to Martinsson (2014), a strategy for doing this on Instagram is to target a subject which is relevant to the employer, and visualize how one thinks around that subject. Bengtson
(2014) and Lanneberg (2014) also highlight the use of relevant hashtags to higher the likability of being discovered. These thoughts are strengthened by TrackMaven (2013, p. 14f.) and Instagram ([p], 2012) who both imply that hashtags should be seen as a fundamental part of every marketing campaign on Instagram. A further recommendation made by all respondents is to choose hashtags which work on several social medium, as it increase the chances of being discovered. I consider this advice to be of high importance since multi-channel publishing is an effective way to engage people who otherwise would have missed the information. Bengtson (2014) also describe how different social mediums are suitable for different types of interactions. This implies that it may be helpful to think about which type of content that should be reposted on which types of social medium. Twitter, as an example, may be more suitable for content that encourages discussions about how it can be developed further, while Facebook may be more suitable for showing sneak peaks or the final result.

According to Peter (1997, paragraph 33), “the key to any personal branding campaign is word-of-mouth marketing”. This implies that just catching the attention of prospective employers isn’t enough, one must also work to create and maintain a positive interaction. According to Bengtson (2014) and Instagram ([o], 2014), one way of facilitating this is by using comments. This is a recommendation which is strengthened by the result of the content analysis as all the account frequently uses comments to answer questions or deliver follow-up information. According to Jun, Cha, and Praveen (2011, p. 269 ff.), the chances of achieving successful WOM marketing is raised when one is perceived as trustworthy and deliver specific information which display a high level of expertise. This statement is strengthened by Harris and Rae (2011, p. 20) who recommend one to share experiences and high quality content as this is a good way of showing expertise and build reputation. Davoult (2014) are on the same line as he explain that there is no reason to post on Instagram if one doesn’t have anything interesting to contribute with.

When it comes to posting strategies, Martinsson (2014), Davoult (2013) and Titlow (2012) state that it may be beneficial to think about when one's targeted audience is watching their Instagram feed to increase the chances of becoming one of the top post they see when opening the Instagram application. However, statistics from TrackMaven (2013, p. 8 f.) suggests that it might not matter so much. The reason why it doesn’t matter isn’t discussed by TrackMaven. However, one reason might be that people scroll their feed so far that they will see all posts. The difference between Davoult (2013) and Titlow (2012) advice and TrackMaven statistics might arise from the fact that Davoult (2013) and Titlow (2012) uses Instagram services which deliver information about when a post get the most likes. However, it is also possible that they focus on
different audiences. Meaning that if it is the general mass, it probably doesn’t matter what time to post. But if it is an audience with relatively scheduled behavior, it might generate some extra attention to post at a specific time. The question here is if it is worth the extra effort?

It is important to note that using Instagram as a personal branding tool also implies some challenges or risks. According to Harris and Rae (2011, p. 21), a general risk that might occur inside an organization is that other can feel threatened by the rising competition. In this case, I think it is extra important to display a high level of expertise and of reliability so it is clear that one strive for what is best for the company. I also think it is important that if one use Instagram in a more work related propose, post should not contain ingredients which run the risk of being negatively perceived. A way of succeeding with this is, besides follow the advices outlined above, to think about the post from the observer’s perspective. If one doesn’t find the post intriguing, chances that others will do so are probably low.

5.2 Likes and comments as an indicator of successful personal branding

Setting goals is according to Khedher, (2014, p. 33) and Arruda ([a], 2009) an essential part of personal branding, as it helps to concretize what to strive for. According to Khedher (2010, p. 3 f.), goals also has an important function as measuring points when evaluating personal branding efforts. These thoughts strengthen Lanneberg (2014) advice to create goals which can be measured, as e.g. a specific number of likes or business contacts, in order to evaluate the success of an Instagram account. One of Instagrams main advices on their business orientated website is also to set clear goals, as e.g. increase awareness or reach a new audience (Instagram[o], 2014). Even if Instagram doesn´t explain the importance of goals from an evaluating context, the similarity between their and Lanneberg’s (2014) explanation as well as the evaluation opportunity arising from the use of clear goals, makes the degree of goal fulfillment to an important aspect in determining the success of an Instagram account.

If the goal with one's Instagram profile is to higher the chances of getting a job or advance in career by increase the awareness about one's work and abilities, i.e. to brand oneself, likes can according to Lanneberg (2014) give an indication of how many people who appreciate and have confidence in one's brand. However, according to Davoult (2014), likes doesn’t have much value if it isn’t the intended people who likes one's photos. Lanneberg (2014) and Martinsson (2014) also underlines that the importance of likes as well as comments is mainly psychological as they fulfill a human need of being appreciated and recognized. Martinsson (2014) adds that
from an employer’s perspective, the content is generally more important than the number of likes it receives. This imply that likes could be an indicator of successful personal branding as it indicates that many people appreciates what one is posting. However, as it is difficult to control why likes is given, it may not be the best way to measure personal branding success on Instagram.

According to Peters (1997), the best way to evaluate one's personal branding efforts is to put together an evaluation group and ask them for honest feedback about one's performance, progress and perceived value. In an Instagram context, this could be done by engaging followers through comments and ask for their opinion. Comments and questions are also recommended by both Bengtson (2014) and Instagram ([o], 2014) as a way of interacting and discover how to develop the content one is offering. This implies that comments can be used as an important indicator of successful personal branding on Instagram. However, if one is aiming to make the most accurate evaluation possible, I would recommend one to investigate as many variables as possible, as e.g. likes, comments, gained followers within a specific time and/or if interaction on other social medium has increased due to reposting of Instagram content. The reason for looking at many variables is because it’s easier to determine the level of brand engagement and WOM spread, which according to both Hoffman and Fodor (2010, p. 44) and Peters (1997) indicates if the brand is developing successfully.

5.3 Evaluating personal branding on Instagram

As mentioned earlier, when evaluating the success of one's personal branding efforts it is important to have specific goals which can be measured, for example an exact number of likes or new business contacts. This is important because the degree of goal fulfillment indicates if the right personal branding strategy is used.

Both Labrecque, et.al (2010, p. 38) and Peters (1997) recommend the use of some feedback mechanisms to evaluate the success, progress and value of one's personal branding efforts. Comments have already been mentioned as one way of receiving feedback information. Likes can, as mentioned above, also be seen as a sort of feedback mechanism, even though it serves more as an indicator regarding what type of content followers appreciates. However, according to Martinsson (2014) likes can be of high branding value if one is searching for a job which involves social media communication. This is because likes traditionally are used as a benchmark for communication success, and a high number of likes therefore indicates that one can communicate in an appealing and successful way.
As mentioned earlier, in order to make such a profound evaluation as possible, it may be beneficial to look at several variables. This technique is used by Hoffman and Fodor (2010, p. 44) who evaluate the level of brand awareness, brand engagement and WOM by counting e.g. number of views, comments, follower, links and times republished on other SNSs. Dutta (2010, p. 5) also recommend the use of social monitoring tools to evaluate one's branding efforts. On Instagram these tools can according to Seda (2013) and Hubert (2014) deliver information about e.g. likes, comments, hashtags, followers and different community interactions. Even if most of the information is statistical, it reveal trends which can help one to understand how and in which direction the brand strategy may be developed to remain contemporary and competitive.
6 Conclusions

This study was conducted with the purpose to identify personal branding strategies which can be implemented in the usage of the social application Instagram to promote the personal brand against current and/or future employers. Three research questions have been used as basis to achieve this purpose. The first question was: how can Instagram be utilized to function as a personal branding tool against current and/or future employers? This study shows that a good way to start is to clarify one's unique brandable attributes, values and goals by constructing a personal brand. The brand should then be communicated through the use of a captivating strategy, which after some time are evaluated and reviewed in order to gradually develop the value offered so that the brand remains contemporary and competitive. To higher the chances that the strategy should succeed, it should be authentic, clear, consistent and appealing for prospective employers. One way of doing this is by showing expertise and build reputation within a field that is relevant to the employer. This could be done by posting photos of one's working process, tagging them with relevant hashtags, repost them on other social mediums and use comments to reconnect and communicate.

The second research question was: are a high number of likes and comments an indication of successful personal branding? The study show that likes could be an indicator of successful personal branding as it indicates that many people appreciates what one is posting. However, as it is hard to control why likes is given, it may not be the best way to measure personal branding success on Instagram. Comments are seen a better indication of successful personal branding as they offer the possibility to interact and ask for honest feedback regarding one's performance, progress and perceived value.

The third and last question was: how can personal branding through Instagram be evaluated? The study shows one of the most important things to have when evaluation ones branding efforts is specific goals which can be measured, for example an exact number of likes or new business contacts. This is important because the degree of goal fulfillment indicates if the right personal branding strategy is used. However, to make a more accurate evaluation, it is profitable to investigate several variables, for example the development of likes, comments, gained followers within a specific time and different community interactions, to gain a more holistic perspective of one's brand development.
6.1 Further research

Since the findings of this study only are derived from a small sample of qualitatively oriented interviews and content analysis, it would be relevant to conduct further interviews and content analysis to validate the results and achieve a higher generalizability. It would also be interesting for further studies to evaluate the findings through a real world experimental application. This can preferably be conducted by the use of two experimental groups where all participants have the task to promote themselves against future employers, through the use of Instagram. The differential variable is that one group gain access to the strategies presented in this study, while the second group must fend for themselves. Which group who has the highest perceived personal branding success rate could then be determined by HR-professionals.

Future qualitative studies regarding Instagram could also focus on investigating which type of content that has the highest adoption rate. From a business and marketing perspective it would also be interesting to look on how gender differences and geographical position affect the type of content that is published and liked.
References


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Appendix 1 – Interview questions on Swedish

1. Vad är personlig marknadsföring för dig?

2. Har behovet av personlig marknadsföring ökad i och med de sociala mediernas framväxt?
   - Om ja, varför?
   - Om nej, varför?

3. Är Instagram ett bra verktyg för att personlig marknadsföring?
   - Om ja, varför?
   - Om nej, varför?

4. Vilka är de största riskerna associerade med användande av bilder, som man gör på Instagram, vid personlig marknadsföring?

5. Tror du att Instagram kommer bli ett långlivet social medium?
   - Om ja, varför?
   - Om nej, varför?

6. Vad anser du är bra personlig marknadsföring på Instagram?
   - Har du något exempel?

7. Vad anser du är dålig personlig marknadsföring på Instagram?
   - Har du något exempel?

8. Hur kan man visa upp sin yrkeskompetens på Instagram, och är det nödvändigt för att kontot skall kunna fungera som en personlig markandsföringskanal mot framtida arbetsgivare?

9. Om man vill använda Instagram som ett verktyg i jakt på ett nytt jobb, vad är viktigt att tänka på för att öka sina chanser?
   9.1. Finns det några markandsföringstekniker som kan vara hjälpsamma?
- Om ja; kan du ge några exempel på marknadsföringstekniker som möjligtvis kan användas?

- Om nej, varför?

9.2 Hur tror du att word-of-mouth(WOM) och viral marknadsföring är länkat till Instagram, och är det något som man skulle kunna utnyttja i sin personliga marknadsföring?

9.3 Hur kan man via Instagram få kontakt med, och interagera med potentiella arbetsgivare på ett effektivt sätt?

10. Hur kan man mäta om ens personliga marknadsföring har någon effekt?

11. Är likes kommentarer viktiga?

- Om ja, varför?

- Om nej, varför?

12. Kan man säga att det finns en perfekt Instagramprofil?

- Om ja, hur ser profilen ut och vilket budskap sänder den ut?

- Om nej, varför?

13. Kan du rekommendera en Instagramprofil som utmärker sig positivt när det kommer till personlig marknadsföring?

14. Kan du komma på något att tillägga om du tänker helt fritt kring Instagram och/eller personlig marknadsföring?
Appendix 2 – Interview questions

1. What is personal branding to you?

2. Has the need for personal branding become more important with the growth of social media?
   - If YES; why?
   - If NO; why?

3. Is Instagram a good tool for personal branding?
   - If YES; why?
   - If NO; why?

4. What are the biggest risks associated with the use of pictures, like one do at Instagram, when it comes to personal branding?

5. Do you think that Instagram is going to be a lasting social medium?
   - If YES; why?
   - If NO; why?

6. What do you perceive as good personal branding on Instagram?
   - Do you have any example?

7. What do you perceive as bad personal branding on Instagram?
   - Do you have any example?

8. How do you show your professional skills on Instagram, and is it necessary if you want to use the account as a tool for personal branding against existing and future employers?

9. If you want to use Instagram in a job hunting purpose, what can you do to increase your chances?
   9.1. Can different marketing techniques be a way to increase the chances?
   - If YES; can you give any examples of marketing techniques that can be used?
- If NO; why?

9.2 How do you think WOM and viral marketing is linked to Instagram and is it something you could take advantage of and use in the way you brand yourself?

9.3 How do you connect and interact with potential employees in the most efficient way?

10. How can you measure whether your personal branding has any effect?

11. Are likes and comments important?
   - If YES; why?
   - If NO; why?

12. Does a perfect personal Instagram profile exist?
   - If YES; how does it look and what type of messages is it sending?
   - If NO; why?

13. Can you recommend any Instagram account that can be seen as good within personal branding?

14. Can you come up with anything to add to this interview if you think freely about Instagram and/or personal branding?