

# Original Research Article Driving Customer Engagement on Instagram in Present Things by EthneeQ

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## ABSTRACT

This report was created with the aim of finding out what Instagram marketing strategies are implemented by a company named Present Things and which of these strategies are effective in bringing engagement and reach or increasing the percentage of insights for their Instagram accounts. The method used is a qualitative approach in the form of observation in order to discover what the company's methods are, and a quantitative method in the form of a professional dashboard provided by Instagram. The results state that post content encourages getting a lot of engagement, while post reels are useful for increasing reach. Other than that, the follow-for-follow strategy is also effective to increase followers in the short term. The conclusion of this report is that it is important to post and keep the Instagram account as active as possible in order to boost audience awareness of the brand online. One of the strategies that can be implemented is by creating creative reels and posts that can attract viewers.

*Keywords: Social media marketing; Instagram marketing; Instagram dashboard; customer engagement; Instagram engagement; content marketing.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many people use Instagram as their social media. Many use it for entertainment, communication with distant relatives, personal branding, and much more. It is not just individuals, many groups or organizations are starting to use Instagram for promotion, and businesses are no exception. So many businesses use Instagram as their marketing platform because it has been proven to be able to build an effective business. Instagram is a platform used by almost everyone in the world. Each month, over one billion users access Instagram and 90% of them follow at least one business account (Newberry & Sehl, 2021). Research from Aslam (2022) also said that 70% of people would use Instagram to search for a product to buy. These statistics demonstrate Instagram's influence as a vital tool for business in the digital era. Following these trends, Instagram also supports businesses with different kinds of systems and tools like insights, ads, hashtags, reels, live, and many others.

Instagram can be a good platform, especially for small businesses to get brand recognition and become one of their marketing strategies. However, along with many businesses successfully implementing Instagram marketing, many also struggle. Wess (2021) stated that out of 500 small businesses in the US, 93% of them struggle with social media marketing on different platforms, and 19% of them struggle with Instagram. Wess also mentioned that most of them struggle to get more leads and engagement, making it harder for them to get audiences and followers. In addition, having interaction like commenting,

liking, saving, sharing, tap on profiles by the audience is also crucial so that the content can reach new audiences. This interaction is called engagement which may help to boost the content to new audiences. Warren (2022) stated that engagement is the key factor in Instagram's algorithm to prioritize the content to more relevant customers. If the company's engagement is low, then their post will not even appear on people's feeds and the Instagram marketing will be failed.

One of the small businesses that struggle to implement an effective Instagram marketing is Present Things. Present Things is a sub-brand of EthneeQ that specifically accepts mass custom orders. The materials and designs vary based on what customers want. It can be a tote bag, wallet, hat, and other types of souvenirs or merchandise that are made from canvas, batik, burlap, and/or others. They started promoting in Instagram in the 2021 and has just started to become active in 2022. Therefore, the audience of this account is very few.

Other than content strategy, there are many more strategies that can give the company more followers, engagement, and even sales. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to find out strategies that can help a company named Present Things to get recognition on Instagram. Recognition on Instagram is about the number of followers they have and the engagement they get for their content. If the company has an increase in the number of followers and engagement, this means that it gets more awareness or recognition from the audience. This paper may hopefully also help the company recognize the best way for their marketing strategy, especially on Instagram.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INSTAGRAM MARKETING

Instagram is not only a social media platform, but it is also a platform with various features that can help businesses grow and sell their goods and/or services. With visual support, it makes it easier for customers to be attracted to and respond to brands they are interested in. Moreover, Instagram has more than 1.15 billion active users, so it can help the brands to reach out to new consumers through special features (Bagadiya, 2022). Instagram created a professional dashboard for business accounts that can help the creators to track their Instagram account performances using metrics. It is essential for business accounts to track their metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign or content and to identify what types of content the audience like as input to create a marketing strategy that can support the objectives of the company (West, 2022). Some metrics that Instagram provides are impression, reach, engagement, posts and stories metrics, traffic, etc.

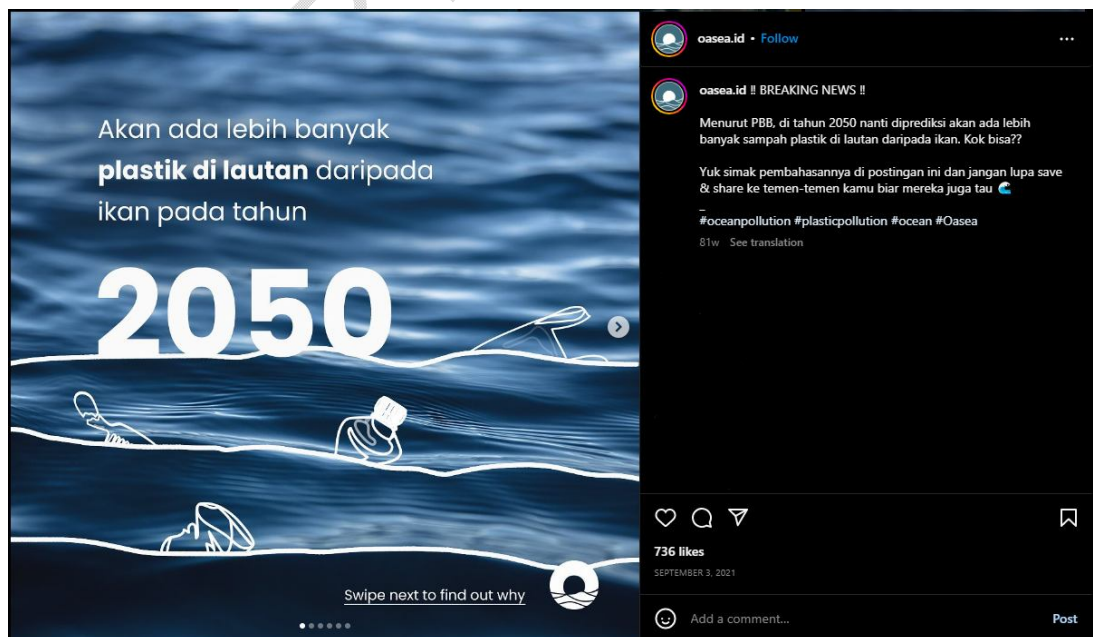
Instagram can be a strong marketing tool for businesses to connect with their target market through the usage of images and videos. Instagram is not only enabling the brands to visually express their brand but also gives users the opportunity to swiftly learn more about the products. It can be very useful for a company as it allows them to engage their audience in a more direct manner. Singh (2020) mentioned several options that the company can implement in creating a successful Instagram marketing strategy. One of them is by selecting a simple purpose to express a deep message. The purpose of an Instagram brand should be clearly communicated through its Instagram presence. It can be done by providing their followers with images and videos that have an emotional connection with their brand. This aims to describe the company's image and show that the company has the ability to achieve their goals in terms of knowledge medium. Other than that, it is also crucial to develop a distinctive visual narrative that balances several themes while maintaining consistency in order to keep customers engaged in the brand.

## 2.2 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON INSTAGRAM

Many companies have started social media marketing as it gives the company opportunities to interact with their customers and make them engaged with the brand. In addition, by using social media marketing, companies can also reduce costs and do marketing analysis much easier than traditional marketing. There are several tools in social media marketing that can help facilitate the company's marketing process, one of which is customer engagement. Customer engagement is the relationship between the company and the customer in the form of interaction given for content on the company's social media platform (Murray, 2022). Examples of engagement can be comments, likes, shares, and saves.

The *Comment* is when the audience leaves a message under the content. While *Likes* is when the audience double-taps the content or taps a heart symbol on the bottom left of the content and *Share* is when the audience taps the arrow sign on the button left of the content and shares them with their friends or groups. Lastly, *Save* is when people click the symbol on the bottom right of the content and save it so they later can find it again easier. Beukelaer (2021) mentioned that those actions of engagement have different levels of importance to algorithms. *Save* is the most important action that can boost the content on Instagram. Following *save*, there are *share* and *comment*. While the least important one is *like*.

Understanding and having good customer engagement may give positive outcomes for the company, especially in terms of marketing and financial impact. Engagement can help the company understand the attractiveness of its content and recognize which type of content the audiences prefer which can lead to more people recognize the brand and even proceed to transactions. Those outcomes should also be followed by a good marketing strategy that can attract audiences and be able to make more people visit the account. Research from Rietveld et al. (2020), mentioned that having content that has emotional appeals can make the audience interact more with the content which leads to customer engagement. This is also supported by Santini et al. (2020) that said the company's customer engagement can become stronger if the audiences receive a positive emotion from the content, especially the emotion of satisfaction. This can be concluded that having good quality content is important to drive customer engagement in the visual aspect that has emotional appeals for its audiences.



### **Fig. 1. Example of Content with Emotional Appeals**

*Sources: Instagram account @oasea.id*

Based on Figure 1 above, that content is one example that creates content with emotional appeals. The caption mentions that there will be more plastic waste than fish in the ocean in 2050. This can bring people to be more aware of the negative impact that plastic waste has on the oceans in particular and people will be interested in the brand as they are attracted to them emotionally.

Besides that, one of the other strategies which can be used to drive customer engagement on Instagram is by gaining many followers. Research from Agam (2017) compared two accounts that differ in the number of their followers. From that research, it is proved that the number of followers has an impact on product awareness and increases the sales of the product. The account that has more followers receives more likes and comments and has higher sales as much as 10%. This report can also shows that having more followers not only brings more people to recognize the brand but can also boost sales.

Instagram originally stood for the purpose of being a social media platform to connect various people in various parts of the world. But now Instagram has turned into a platform that supports business, especially in terms of marketing. To better support businesses on Instagram, in 2016 Instagram implemented an algorithm feature (Hackett, 2023). This feature monitors engagement activities carried out by users and places some content that matches the content that has been engaged on the users' page. Algorithms can help make it easier to match content with each user's interests.

In 2021, Instagram created a Professional Dashboard that helps users, especially business accounts, to monitor insights from account performance. This dashboard can help users implement their marketing strategies more effectively and grow their accounts on Instagram. Instagram will rank content according to an algorithm that can be determined based on information from the content, history of interaction with other accounts, user activity, and interaction information obtained by the account that created the content (Mosseri, 2021).

In addition, with the presence of Reels, the Instagram algorithm system has also changed. Until now, Instagram pushed reels as their main app experience. Therefore, one reel alone can generate more than 67% engagement than any other type of content (Clara, 2023). Therefore, it can be concluded that the current marketing strategy that can encourage engagement is to constantly upload reels that attract the audience.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 APPROACH**

In this research, the approach being used is the qualitative approach. Such an approach is used to understand the Instagram marketing strategies that are implemented by Present Things of EthneeQ or PT Lima Menara Sejahtera. The qualitative approach is a method that consists of examining people's experiences in depth (Hennink et al., 2020). This method is usually used to describe how things happened during that time and why it happened which can be done by interview, observation, group discussion, etc (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). The qualitative approach that is used in this paper is observation. Observation is used to find out what strategies the company implemented during the writer internship there.

Other than that, another approach is also used for this study. The quantitative approach is also used to determine the effectiveness of the Instagram marketing implementation to its reach and engagement for Present Thing's Instagram account. A quantitative approach is a research methodology that emphasizes the collection and analysis of numerical data which is usually used in biology, economics, marketing, psychology, etc (Bhandari, 2022). This approach relies on statistical analysis to examine the situation from the collected sample (Fleetwood, 2023). The quantitative approach is used in this paper because there is statistical data from the Instagram professional dashboard which can find out how a company's Instagram is performing during strategy implementation. Data from the professional dashboard is then summarized and analyzed about the increase or decrease that has occurred.

### **3.2 UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

This research is a case study research that analyzes and solves a particular case, which is customer engagement on Present Thing's Instagram. The unit of analysis is used at the marketing division level because it requires input about the marketing strategy implemented by the company. In addition, information from the insight tools owned by the marketing division is also needed to know the number of reach and engagement that the brand gets for each content post then can determine which type of content is the most effective to promote the brand. Any other information regarding the strategy and Instagram marketing can also be obtained from the supervisor or manager responsible and understand the marketing issues in Present Things. That decision was chosen because of the relationship between Instagram marketing and the marketing department which hopefully will be able to give significant information and give a solution to the problem.

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

In order to obtain data, it is necessary to collect data that can provide input evidence about existing problems. In the qualitative method, the data is collected through observations that were carried out during the internship to find out the Instagram marketing strategy that was implemented. Author collected observations while working in the marketing sector as Instagram content management. The activities involved during work become a conclusion about the various strategies implemented by the company for Instagram marketing. It is intended that by doing so, we will be able to acquire statistics on the numerous techniques used by Present Things to attract an audience through brand values delivered through content. In addition, in the quantitative method, observations were done by examining the insight tools that can be found on the professional dashboard on the Instagram Present Things account. The professional dashboard contains information about the engagement rate and reaches in the form of likes, comments, saves, and shares as well as the number of accounts engage with the content.

#### **3.3.1 Observation**

Observations were made by researchers who, during the data collection process, worked in the marketing division, especially in Instagram content management. The activities include dividing the content schedule each week with a certain theme, finding material for content, writing captions and hashtags, designing content, and posting. Through this, it is hoped that we will be able to obtain data on the various strategies implemented by Present Things and which can attract an audience through brand values that are shared through content. The conclusion obtained from observation is the list of Instagram marketing strategies that Present Things implemented. The strategies include educational content, entertaining content, product photo content, Instagram reels, hashtags, and follow-for-follow strategy.

### 3.3.2 Professional Dashboard

This method uses a quantitative approach that examines the data that has been listed on the professional dashboard of the Present Things Instagram account. These data are compared with their performance every month to determine whether there is progress or not. Apart from that, the data from the professional dashboard also look for information about what types of content can increase engagement and reach as well as attract more audience in Present Things. This method is carried out to determine what strategies should be emphasized which can increase the engagement and reach of the Present Things Instagram account. The conclusion obtained from professional dashboard is the total number of engagements, reach, and followers growth for the month.

### 3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis that is used in this study is descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is a method to describe a result from observation and measurement of a situation or phenomenon (McCombes, 2022). Based on this study, descriptive analysis is used to explain the conditions of engagement and reach that occur during the implementation of the Instagram marketing strategy. In order to know the Instagram marketing strategy carried out by Present Things, this type of analysis is needed to describe the various strategies carried out while working and the reasons and objectives for these strategies being implemented. In addition, descriptive analysis can also help describe the data insights contained in the professional dashboard.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 INSTAGRAM MARKETING STRATEGIES OF PRESENT THINGS

In order to increase the reach and customer engagement of Present Things' Instagram account, there are many strategies created especially in terms of contents posting. There are several types of content that must be included every week, those are educational content, entertaining content, and product photo. The frequency of each type of content is also regulated on the schedule. In a week, there should be two pieces of educational content, two pieces of entertainment content, and three product photos. Special occasions such as holidays, big days, and other important dates also will be posted to celebrate the day and might also be included in the content plan.



**Fig. 2. Educational Content**  
Sources: Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_\_\_

Educational contents consist of materials that are able to educate the audiences also promoting the advantages of the brand. Present Things' main advantage is using sustainable raw materials for its products, such as jute. Therefore, most of the educational content for Present Things is about sustainable lifestyles, sustainable materials, and other sustainability topics. This strategy is used in order to share the advantages and benefits of the brand by also educating the audience and followers. Joseph (n.d.) explained that educational content can attract the audience by providing solutions to the problem they face and can attract larger audiences. Sources of educational content are usually obtained through news, current problems, or unique facts about product excellence.



**Fig. 3. Entertainment Content**

Sources: Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_

Entertaining content consists of content that can entertain the audience. Some examples of such content include quotes, song recommendations, holiday commemoration, etc. This type of content aims to attract audiences to interact, such as comment, like, and share. Entertaining content for Instagram comes from the audience's interest and what kind of content they like to see. Other than that, the content can also be from aspects that make the brand unique and come up with creative ideas to showcase it. This also has to be supported by engaging visuals in order to attract followers to interact more with the content.



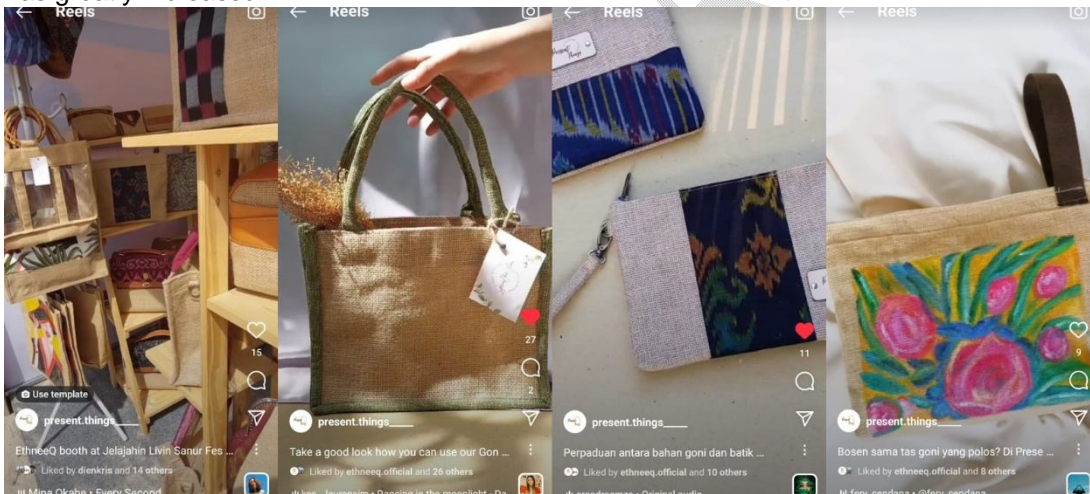
**Fig. 4. Product Photo Content**

Sources: Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_

Another type of content shared is product photo content. Product photo content is shared with the aim of providing references or an overview to potential buyers of the various

products that have been made at Present Things. some of the things shared in this post include product images, product categories, product materials, contacts who can be contacted to order, as well as information that the design and type of product can be ordered according to the wishes and requests of the customer. Some examples of products that have been shared and promoted are pouches, tote bags, cloth masks, and hats. Apart from being a reference, uploading product photos also provides information about any projects that have collaborated with Present Things. One example is the collaboration with the Coral Triangle Center (CTC) which makes products with the quote to protect marine ecosystems.

Apart from contents via posts and stories, Present Things also posts content in the form of reels. Instagram Reels are short-form videos that can be up to 90 seconds long, allowing users to create videos with multiple clips, filters, captions, and stickers. The Instagram algorithm favors Instagram Reels because they create a more engaging experience for users (Kutuchief, 2023). For this reason, Instagram promotes Reels more heavily on the Explore page, allowing users to discover new creators and contents. Reels are shown more prominently in the feed, often appearing as the main story at the top of the page. This helps maximize engagement and encourages users to keep coming back to the platform. Based on Present Things' experience, the use of Reels is very helpful in terms of reach and engagement. Although during the internship only succeeded in creating four Reels for Present Things, these Reels greatly impacted engagement and reach. It can also be seen from the comparison of engagement and reach rates on reels and on regular content which has greatly increased.



**Fig. 5. Instagram Reels**

*Sources: Instagram account @present.things*

Apart from sharing various types of content as a digital marketing strategy, another strategy used is to include hashtags in every uploaded post. The number of hashtags in each post is around ten. The use of hashtags aims to reach more and more audiences, especially those who are not followers. The hashtags used are also adjusted to the keywords that describe the company and the type of content shared to make it easier for the content to reach the appropriate audience. Some of the hashtags that companies always use are tasgani, hampers, goodie bags, brand local, etc. These keywords are included because they describe Present Things and are hoped to make it easier for brands to spread to the right audience.

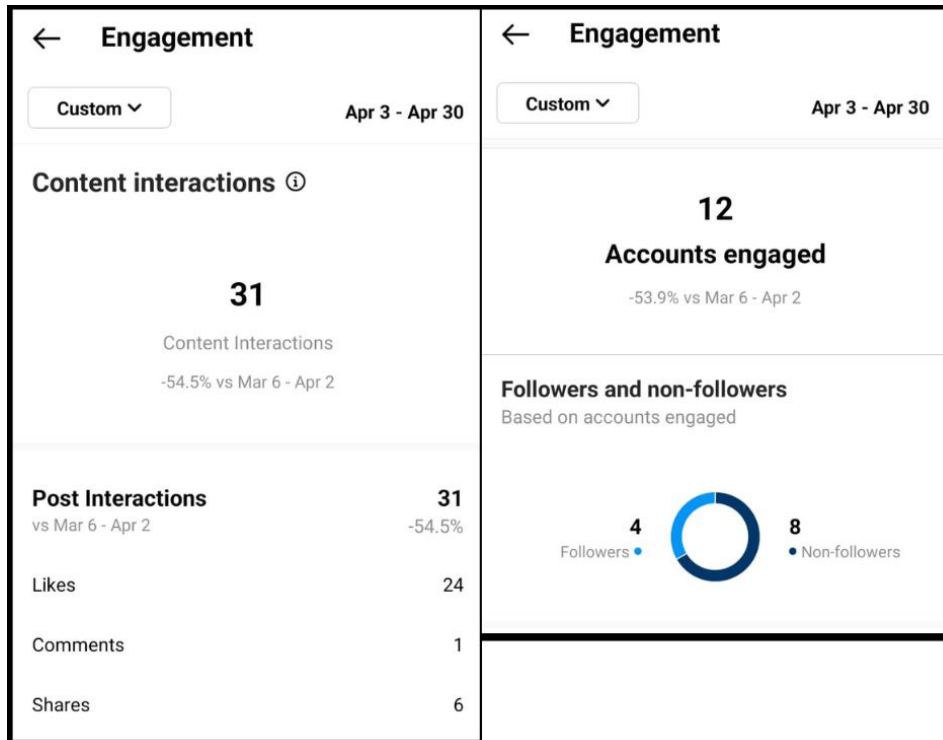
Those are the strategies that were implemented in order to increase engagement and reach in the Present Things Instagram account. However, these strategies have no impact on the number of followers. During the several months it was implemented, the number of followers increased by only about two accounts. Therefore, a follow-for-follow strategy is implemented in order to increase the number of followers and make more people aware of the brand. The follow-for-follow strategy is a strategy in which companies follow accounts that are interested in the products offered with the hope of being followed back. The selection of accounts to follow is also not arbitrary but looking at the history of accounts that they followed before. Present Things selects several accounts that are similar to the company or are the target market. Examples of accounts that are similar to companies are accounts for jute bag sellers, custom orders for jute-based products, and others. Meanwhile, an example of an account that is the target market is a wedding organizer account or an event organizer account that needs hampers or goodie bags. The number of accounts that are followed every day is a minimum of thirty followers. In addition, the company also leaves a digital footprint on every account it follows. The digital footprint provided is in the form of spam likes, comments, interactions with stories, and direct messages about the products offered by Present Things. This strategy is proven to be able to increase the number of followers from previously only two every few months to around ten in a month. However, this strategy has had a negative impact as many have become irritated by being spammed with accounts they are not interested in. The big impact is damaging the company's image, especially to people who feel disturbed.

In order to make the whole strategy run every day, the strategy used is a daily huddle. A daily huddle is an activity that is carried out every weekday and contains a list of what activities have been carried out on that day. This helps align employee activities with company goals. This strategy also makes it easier for supervisors to find out what activities have been carried out every day because the work process is online.

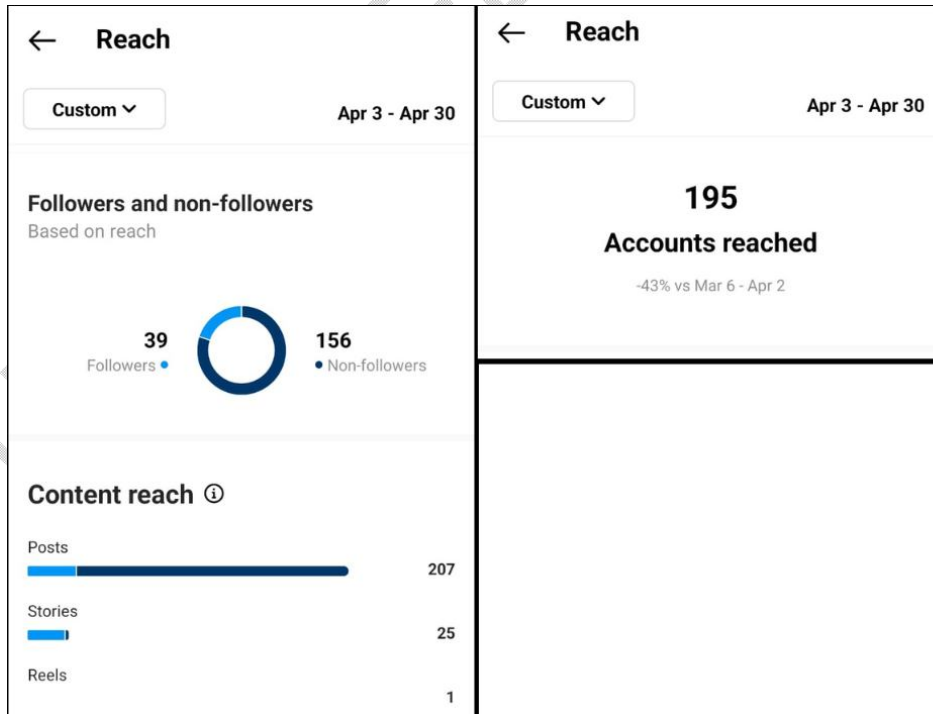
#### **4.2 PROFESSIONAL DASHBOARD METRICS**

The dashboard section here will be divided into three different data based on the time of strategy implementation because it changes each month. From the start of the internship, which was in February, content marketing was divided into several fields. The work field is divided into three, the search for content material, writing captions and hashtags, and post design. The things posted are constant in the form of feeds and several stories which are uploaded simultaneously.

The work format runs from February to April. The data obtained from February to April is not too different, therefore it can be seen from the insight data in April. In April, 195 accounts were reached, of which 39 were followers and 156 were non-followers. The most reach is obtained by posts which are 207, this is in contrast to the reach obtained by stories which are only 25. Posts with the most reach are obtained by product photo content. Meanwhile, for engaged accounts totaling 12, 4 are followers and 8 are non-followers. With a total of 31 interactions with 24 likes, 1 comment, and 6 shares. In addition, in April there was an increase in followers by 1 account. Previously there were 3 new followers and 2 accounts unfollowed, so the total increase in followers was 1 account.

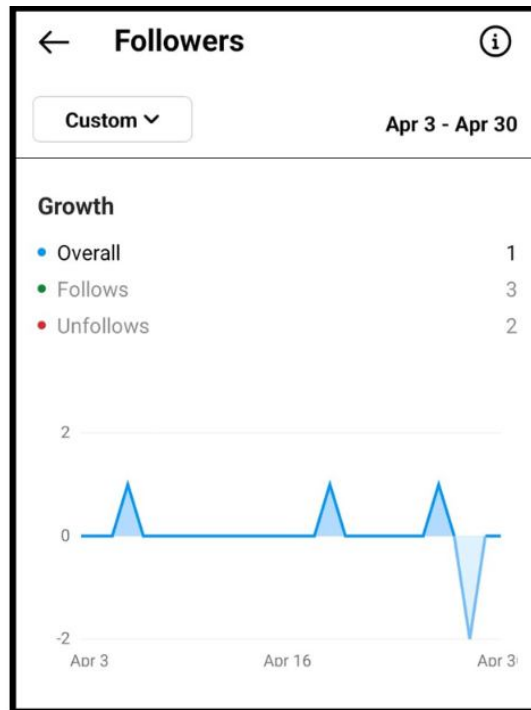


**Fig. 6. Engagement in April**  
Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_



**Fig. 7. Reach in April**

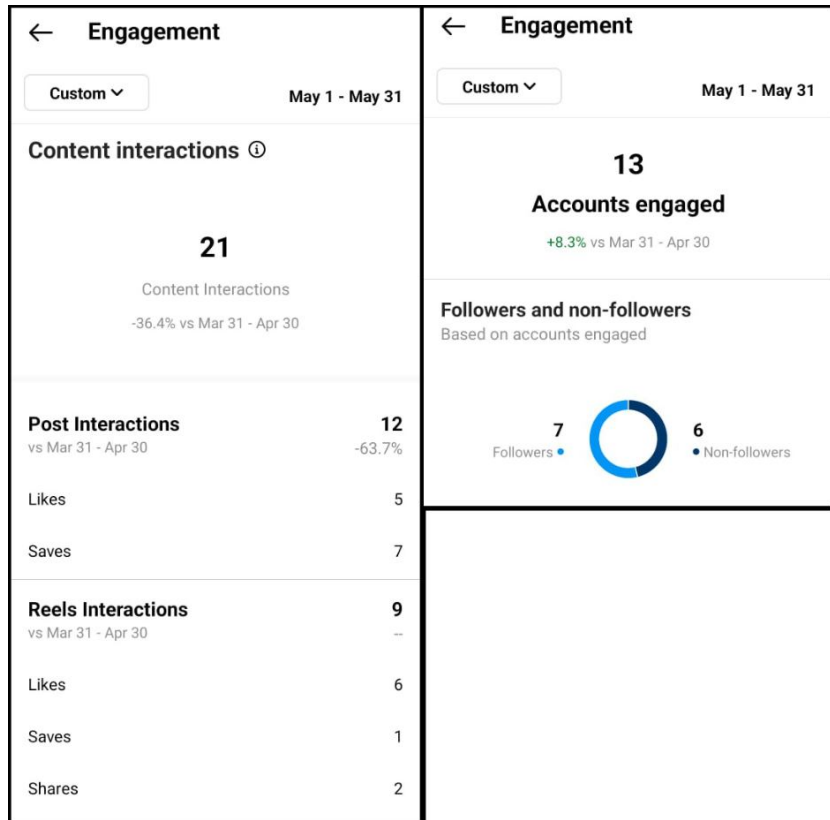
Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_



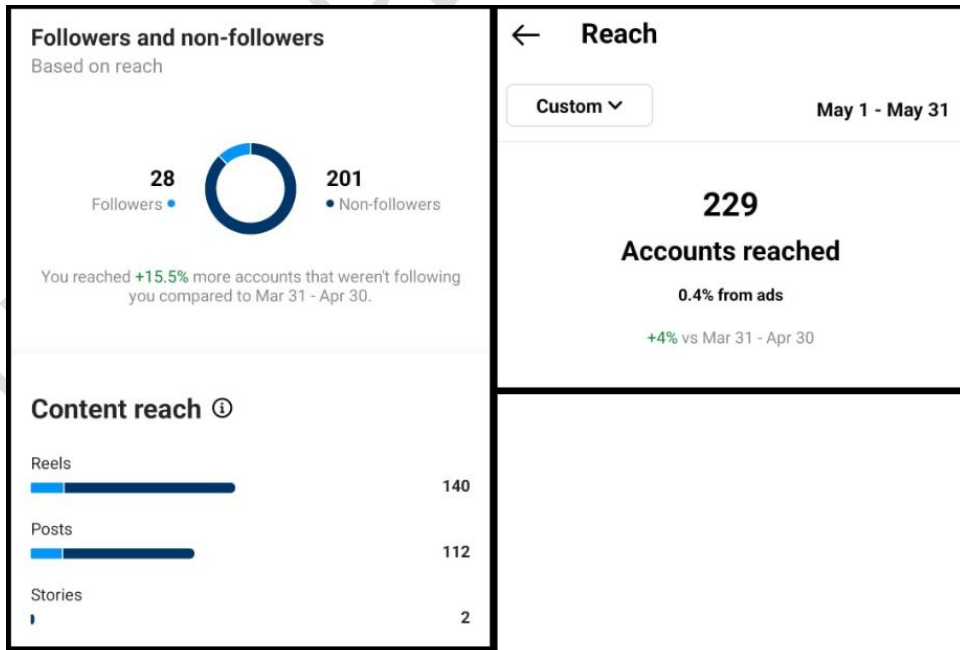
**Fig. 8. Followers Growth in April**

Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_

Then, in May, work assignments were no longer divided into three different fields. Rather, the theory and design are carried out by one person and the writing of captions, hashtags, and publications are carried out by a supervisor. In May, there were 229 accounts that were reached. This is highly supported by reels which got 140 reaches, while below that the feed content got 112 reaches. While the total engagement amounted to 21 interactions. However, unlike the reach results, the post-feed type gets a higher value than the reels. Posts have 12 engagements, while reels total 9. In addition, the number of engaged accounts is 13, of which 7 are followers and 6 are non-followers. In addition, in this month's data there is no increment in term of followers.

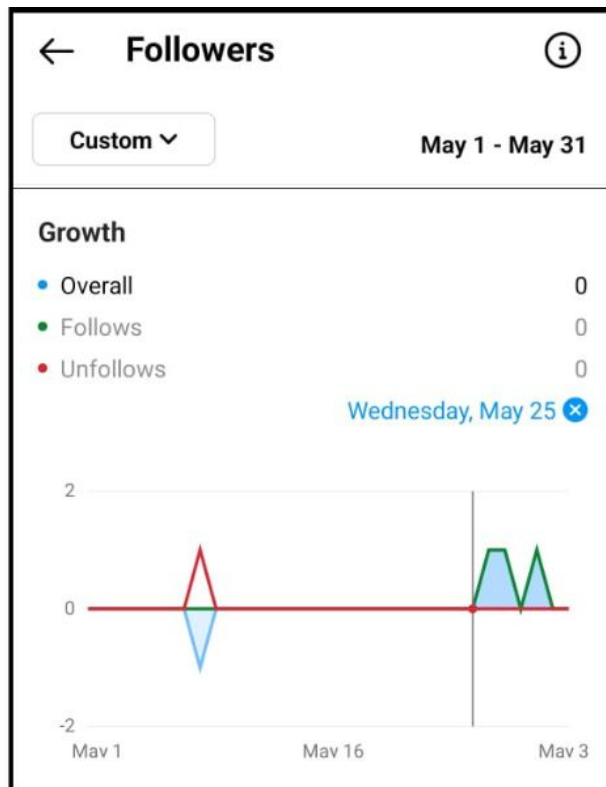


**Fig. 9. Engagement in May**  
Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_



**Fig. 10. Reach in May**

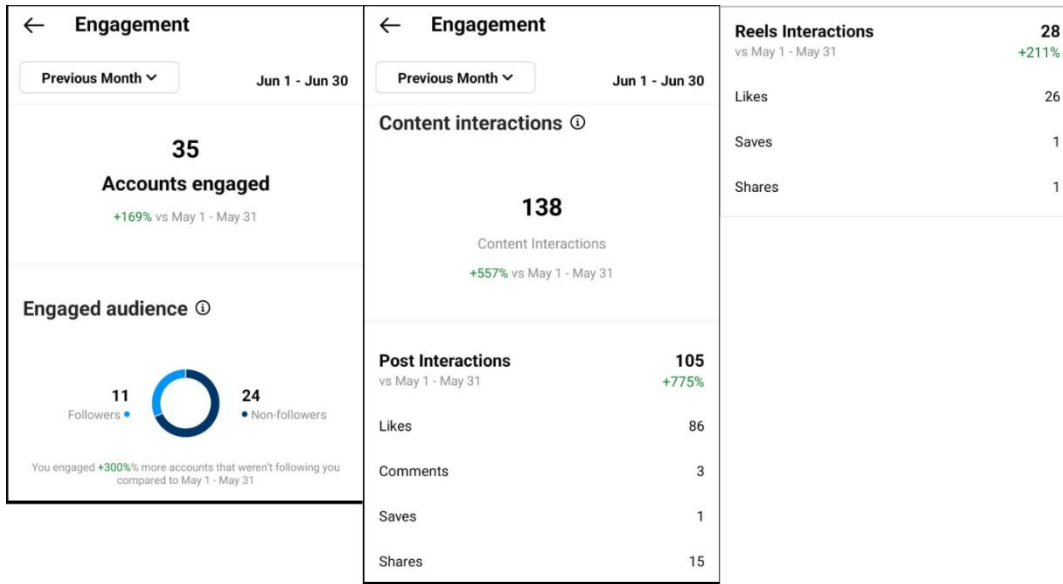
Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_\_



**Fig. 11. Followers Growth in May**

Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_\_

In June, more strategies were implemented. The one who takes care all content activities on Instagram carried out by one person. This month also have more opportunities to make some reels. Apart from that, it also applies the follow-for-follow strategy to increase the number of followers. With this strategy, the Present Things account managed to reach 1,597 which included 98 followers and 1,499 non-followers. The amount of reach was obtained thanks to the posting of reels, with the total reach of the three reels posted this month being 1,349. Meanwhile, this month's engagement is 138 interactions. Post feeds have the most interactions 105, while reels are 28. The engaged accounts are 35 accounts, 11 are followers and 24 are non-followers. This month also succeeded in increasing the number of followers with a growth of 41 accounts, with the breakdown of 50 followers account and 9 unfollowers account.



**Fig. 12. Engagement in June**  
Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_



**Fig. 13. Reach in June**  
Sources: Insights on Instagram account @present.things\_\_\_



**Fig. 14. Followers Growth in June**

Sources: *Insights on Instagram account @present.things*

Based on the data from the professional dashboard metrics above, consistent posting of reels is required. This is because after posting several reels, even if only three reels in a month, there is an increase in the number of reaches up to 597% compared to the previous month. With the reels alone, there are up to 1,349 accounts reached. Most of the reach obtained also comes from accounts that have not followed the Present Things account. There are also 645% more reached accounts that were not following compared to data in May.

However, for engagement, the highest score is still obtained by feeds posting with the most interactions of 105 interactions. In contrast, the reels got the highest score in reach, the highest score for engagement only reached 28 interactions. More interactions are obtained in the form of likes. However, the acquisition of engagement has also increased from the increase in the number of reaches, especially from accounts that have not yet followed Present Things. So it can be concluded that an increase in the number of reaches can have an impact on increasing engagement later. In addition, post-feeds are one of the highest contributors to increase engagement.

Another thing that has a good impact thanks to increased reach is the number of followers. The highest increment in followers was 41 accounts. Continuous improvement is obtained because of the follow-for-follow strategy implemented in the last month. This strategy is proven to be able to increase the number of followers little by little. Even when compared to the number of accounts which have been followed with accounts that have successfully followed back, the numbers are in large proportion. The number of followers who are successfully followed in a day is around 30 accounts. It means that there are around 600

accounts that have been successfully followed. This is in contrast to accounts that successfully follow back. So it can be concluded that the follow-for-follow strategy can help increase the number of followers, but only a little. The implementation of this strategy can also increase the possibility of damaging the company's image because some people don't like being spammed with reasons to promote business.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Posting and making the company account as active as possible is one of the essential ways to increase audience awareness of the business online. In particular, creating reels will really help the company account get a lot of reaches and push to audiences who have never known the business before. It is also important to make interesting and informative posts to attract followers or audiences to interact with the content to increase engagement. Higher engagement can be a great way to get content promoted. With the increase in engagement and reach, the number of followers will also increase. The more promotion on the interesting content is, the more people who were previously not interested in the business will be interested. In addition, the follow-for-follow strategy can help increase the number of followers even with a small amount. This strategy is also not suitable for long-term implementation because it will have a negative impact on the company's image.

The recommendation that may be a benefit for this company is by posting and making the company account as active as possible is one of the essential ways to increase audience awareness of the business online. In particular, creating reels will really help the company account get a lot of reaches and boost to audiences who have never known the business before. It is also important to make interesting and informative posts to attract followers or audiences to interact with the content to increase engagement. Higher engagement can be a great way to get content promoted. With the increase in engagement and reach, the number of followers will also increase. The more promotion on the interesting content is, the more people who were previously not interested in the business will be interested. In addition, the follow-for-follow strategy can help increase the number of followers even with a small amount. This strategy is also not suitable for long-term implementation because it will have a negative impact on the company's image.

The limitation in this paper is the lack of coordination with supervisors, especially in May, because supervisors took part in the implementation of content publication. Supervisors themselves already have many responsibilities in running a business so that a lot of content is not published because it is not in their control. This problem was given a solution the following month, which then the author took full control of the Instagram marketing implementation.

### **COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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