

# Instagram is not just about the image

By [Felix Erken](#)

28 Sep 2016

Instagram has grown exponentially over the last few years and brands are adopting ways to utilise this social media platform to tell a visual brand story and sell products or services through appealing imagery.

In fact, Instagram has seen the fastest growth of any social network in South Africa over the past year, according to the [South African Social Media Landscape 2016 study](#). It grew an impressive 133 percent, from 1.1- million to 2.68-million users.

Taking our own experiences with the platform into consideration, and we have some experience as our communities range from motorheads to job-seekers and enthusiasts of just about everything-you-can-think-of that is second-hand, Instagram enables us to communicate our stories. Image by image we ensure that our brands' personalities come across authentically, yet much more visually. It also allows us to reach a younger audience and we keep this in mind when we create content and engage with them.



That said, the content approach for service and product-orientated brands are quite different. Brands in the services industry with a wide general appeal can engage their audiences by sharing humorous videos, trending topics and memes while product brands use it to showcase their products in a highly stylised and artistic fashion.

For marketers in the business-to-business services space, Instagram may seem an insurmountable social media obstacle, but this need not be the case. A services brand can successfully provide tips, do's and don'ts, motivational quotes and, for customers already using the service, advice relating to performance, optimisation and maintenance to gain and retain followers. Marketers just need to think in pictures and images, instead of only text.

While posting light-hearted content results in engagement, business Instagram pages have to stay true to themselves. It is important to jump onto current trends as they unfold and create relevant and shareable content to ensure a brand is part of topical discussions. However, it is equally important to balance serious current affairs and entertaining posts with content about the brand's product or service. A good social media content specialist is able to subtly link third party content back to the brand.

With Instagram's rapid growth rate locally, it is the opportune time for marketers to start an Instagram feed. Using relevant and smart hashtags is mandatory so that Instagram users, including those in other countries, can find content that has been posted and for the brand to gain new followers.

Social media managers need not take this platform or themselves too seriously, it is a tool where brands can have a bit of fun and actively interact with their community. This synergy will result in a long lasting relationship between the brand and its audience.

The South African Social Media Landscape 2016 study states that Instagram shows the highest planned use for social networks not currently in use, meaning some of the major brands are already investing or plan to invest in the platform this year.

This visual channel allows a brand to reach a sometimes younger audience that can become its core target audience in the near future.

Businesses who haven't yet taken advantage of Instagram as a marketing and positioning platform need to seriously consider it as its audience is growing exponentially and the time is now to tap into that excitement.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Felix Erken is the managing director and co-owner of [[[www.junkmail.co.za](http://www.junkmail.co.za) Junk Mail Digital Media]]

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>