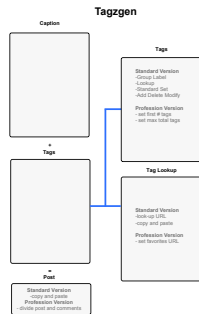
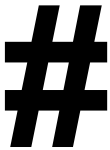


One Big Database



Instagram is one big database.

Delineate Data



Chaos is organized into hashtag categories and indexing.

Ever wonder what goes into a Instagram algorithm ?

Who decides what you see ?

How are posts ranked ?

What variables have more weight than others ?

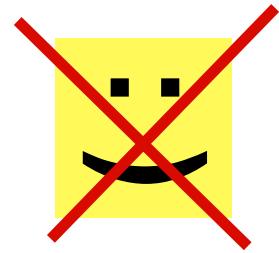
Does IG care how I post or how frequently ?

How do I attract followers like bugs to a light ?

If you are like me, you wonder the above questions, and more. The following article looks into the basics of the metrics of Instagram, and why they do it. Greed. The purpose of the app is to generate huge mountains of data, which can be purchased, used, sliced and diced to make money for IG shareholders. Like FaceBook, IG has development teams that want to get you hooked and reward quality content over quantity.

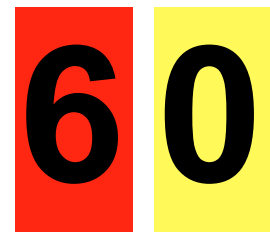
Observe and strategize. Organize your content, and you can master the IG chess game, one post at a time. By studying popular posts, you can determine better engagement with viewers, and improve your ranking.

Emojis



You may love your emojis, but to IG, they're just clutter.

Attention



Law of 60 Seconds: Instagram has figured out that your attention span is 60 seconds or less.

THE ALGORITHM

Organized Chaos: Like Google, Instagram organizes and classifies data into one big number crunching game, called a database.

Structure: IG has fewer variables than a Google spidered website, and it's perfectly formed with database ready hashtags. Media is limited to static photos, and movies less than 60 seconds.

Forced Compliance: Posts cannot exceed 30 tags, which forces the author to focus on more meaningful tags (which may be divided up in to caption and comments).

Tags: The most ingenious part of IG is its use of tags to organize data. Data is already pre-formed.

HASHTAG DEVELOPMENT

Caption Hashtags: Could you pick a easier way to set up a data mining database ? Well, you could, but then you'd be Google. It's brilliant that they've developed a way to categorize and index content, and makes your relevancy easier to find.

Observe: Spend time studying hashtags as they pertain to your goals, organize them and rank them (highest to lowest meaning) so that you can copy and paste into your posts.

Effectiveness vs. Quantity: Using a popular hashtag will result in your post being buried quickly. Search out more effective tags, that bring in more views and comments.

UNDERSTAND THE GAME

Psy Ops Reinvented: Instagram had its engineers study and determine viewer addictions and ways to manipulate both authoring and engagement. The average attention span of viewers has been determined to be 60 seconds or less. Your scroll rate, click (like) rate, and other variables are all part of your ranking. It all boils down to your attention span, and how IG can use that to sell you advertising and coagulate your data manners and behavior which is crafted in a nice package to data buyers.

Ranking: Your ranking will determine how, where, and how often you're seen. The more you understand how you are ranked, will ultimately help you achieve your goals with IG.



The Instagram Algorithm

The Instagram algorithm has been developed by a team of developers (probably much smarter than you or I) over the years. They've taken lessons learned by Facebook (their owner) and Google that data mining is where the riches lie.

Advertising: You've probably seen influxes of sponsored ads over the past few months from a high of ad placement every 4 posts in December, to maybe one every 10-20 posts now.

Algorithm:

Here is a partial list of elements of the Instagram Algorithm which are weighted factors:

A. Initial Authored Post:

- post caption
- call to action (typically signed by a question mark ?)
- hashtags (tags)
- referrals
- references (urls which are not actually made active links)
- personal or business
- time to post original caption
- time to post additional comment tags
- frequency of posts per day, per week, per month, per year
- time of post

B. Reaction to Post (Engagement):

- views
- likes
- comments (active engagement)
- comments (active engagement)
- changes by viewers (i.e. deleted comments)
- viewer latency (how much time is spent loitering on the post, commenting, or links)
- scroll rate and latency

C. Follow-up Authored Post:

- reaction to comments (like or actual authored comments)
- post editing or modifying tags or @ referrals
- time to react to comments

D. Penalty Box Actions From Instagram:

- too many hashtags
- too many @ referrals
- too many edits (changes to post caption, tags, or referrals)
- too many deleted comments
- slow reaction time to comments
- duplication of captions, hashtags, and posts
- scroll rate and latency
- bot recognition or bot-like characteristics
- code of conduct infringements

E. Hashtag Top Posts and Recent:

- views
- likes
- comments
- edits
- bot recognition or bot-like characteristics
- code of conduct infringements

F. Pi

- the simple pi constant is usually in all algorithms which involve any type of chance

G. War of the Bots: Bots are becoming mainstream, and eventually, will take over the system (as

we have seen in day trader programs on Wall Street). Automatic manipulation via robots are becoming the norm, and there are active algorithms to try and weed out the sometimes very camouflaged warriors and spies.

H. Story:

Same subset of all the above. Just a unique angle to solidify the addiction, and dependency.

Purpose of Algorithm: Why does Instagram have an algorithm at all? The purpose of any algorithm is to provide a few key elements, such as order, categorizing chaos, and forming data which can be used or sold. Some of the developers (as seen on Facebook) study addictions and try to get you to spend more time on IG (i.e. messenger) so you are a ripe audience for ads. Manipulating authors and viewers gives IG purpose and data, which can be sold. Your behavior is closely watched, and trends are the results which gives more stamina to sponsored ad prices, or selling of data. Categorically, this is the purpose for any social media site and program. The name of the game is tracking. Any social media app (site) is basically a complex database, which is a vast holy grail of data. Some of it is mined, all of it is stored, for later retrieval. The background motivational force is *greed*. IG needs to make profits for its parent company, and public shareholders. For the viewer, IG is peddling hope. Yes, hope. Hope that you'll get views and likes, and recognition for what you do. For the business account, that hope is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Retaliation: As seen on Facebook, once the lambs saw the wolf in sheep's fur, they left in droves. The immediate reaction from IG was to back off on sponsored ads. What about the bot posts which are actually ads? Ever wonder if a seemingly innocent post, was actually an ad? Yup, they've already done that. While the IG social engineers try to feed your addiction, there's a tipping point where the audience will leave the room. Finely tuning that tipping point is what a good algorithm will do. It will bring you to the edge, then back off, so you want more. It's the classic definition of addiction. In many aspects, it's a dependency relationship. That's why they have the *story*. The story keeps your addiction fed on a daily, sometimes hourly basis.

It's all about Control: IG and other social media is focussed on control. The basic human instinct of ego, is front and center. Who doesn't want a bunch of views, likes, and comments? It validates who we are (from a manipulator standpoint). Beauty is skin deep, and it shows on social media. IG can easily sell this as you become an Influencer, and learn how to monetize your audience.

Mind Boggling Stats and Control: If you try to grasp the breadth of it all, it's quite mind boggling. So break it down into parts, and figure out what you get out of IG, if anything at all. Compartmentalize what you want to do, and how you're going to do it. Read the book, ***Extreme Ownership*** to get an idea of how to strategize, and organize your ambition.

What's Your Goal? Sounds simple, until you mix in IG manipulation, but overall, what do you want to get out of your IG program? Many just want to post photos, but many want to monetize their posts and make some money.

Set a Strategy: Whether it's more views, comments (call to action), selling a product, or awareness, write down a strategy so you can outline how to achieve it.

Algorithm Myth: Many Influencers (including myself) experiment which test the boundaries of the penalty box (i.e. too many hashtags, multiple content edits, etc.). As mere mortals, we can't even begin to do battle with the development teams, but there are ways to help conform to their nifty little algorithm, to give you better placement.

Ranking: Similar to Google, IG has a ranking system for its content authors. It's one of the many algorithms in its quiver to have organized broadcasting and controlling of the masses. Prioritize the stream of outgoing great content from the authors, and stream in lots of fantastic data. In this case, spell check your post, and try to author your caption and tags with some degree of organization. Organize more important hashtags first. I've developed my own Filemaker database app to do this. Don't duplicate captions or posts.

Organize and Dominate: Organize your posts so that they have some degree of fun, wit, and clarity. Keep in the back of your mind that IG likes to see user engagement, since the name of the game is keeping viewers interested and loitering on the posts (i.e. more opportunity for sponsored ads). Author a caption to get better ranking.

Make Your Time Efficient: There's no penalty for efficiency. The most valued component here is time - your time. I use a Filemaker database in a simple app solution on my iPhone, called Tagzgen. It boosts my productivity, allows me to focus on caption content, and not on structuring the caption post. Many IG'ers get too caught up (and bogged down) in the time it takes to actually form a post, and then post it.

Reality Check: So will you bulk post, or post for quality ? I've seen people post 1-3 times per day for their follower entertainment (including story), but the reality is that your quality will fall if you don't have fresh content for each post. Sometimes too many posts end up with feeble content, and you leave altogether (poor user experience).

Perceived Value: Does IG do product shorting ? You bet. In this case, it means that because of the ranking algorithm, you may not be seeing what you want to see. For example, the top posts on a hashtag may be based on a formula that benefits IG (data harvesting or sponsored ads), and not what you want. Just compare Top Post versus Recent and see how they differ.

Posting Time: It's 3 o'clock somewhere. I've seen some recent blogs on what time to post (i.e. post at 3pm). Well, that doesn't take into account that the world is round, and full of time-zones. I would suggest posting to the time zone where your audience is located. If it's worldwide, then it makes zero difference.

In the End: If this makes your head spin, take a step back. I now have social-media-free-Sunday. If all this gives you a headache, then bail. If you were to die today, and you asked yourself if the time spent on social media made any difference in your life, the answer might surprise you. Your life is a beautiful story, build it, keep it close, and share it if you think it has a message. This may or may not be on IG, or any other social media. Time is your worst enemy, but also your closest confidant. Don't let others hijack your most valuable asset.