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Instagram Engagement in Sweden

A report on Swedish retailers' engagement performances on Instagram

Tunca, Burak

2020

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Tunca, B. (2020). *Instagram Engagement in Sweden: A report on Swedish retailers' engagement performances on Instagram.*

Total number of authors:

1

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PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT IN SWEDEN

RETAILERS ON INSTAGRAM



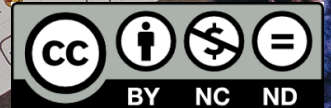
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Burak Tunca, PhD

Senior Lecturer in Marketing

School of Economics and Management

October 2020



INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report is prepared as a part of the post-doctoral research grant awarded to the author by The Swedish Retail and Wholesale Council (Handelsrådet) between 2018-2020.

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Author Bio

Burak Tunca is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at Lund University School of Economics and Management, responsible for graduate level courses in Digital Marketing and Research Strategy.

He can be contacted via burak.tunca@fek.lu.se.

METHODOLOGY

The retailers were selected based on the largestcompanies.se database¹, which ranks the top 100 retailers and daughter companies based on annual revenues. Retailers without an Instagram account dedicated to the Swedish market were excluded (for example H&M), so were the retailers for which statistics were not available (most likely due to the account not being registered as a business/creator account, for example Bolist, Flügger, and Eurocash). In total, 72 largest retailers registered in Sweden (out of the top 100 list) were included in the report.

The data for this report has been collected in Spetember 2020 via SocialBlade², a social media analytics company focusing on user statistics. Using the company's Instagram analytics tool, five relevant statistics were extracted:

- Total number of followers
- Total number of media uploads
- Average likes (calculated from the last 20 uploads)
- Average comments (calculated from the last 20 uploads)
- Overall engagement rate (compares the performance of

Cover Image: [Kate Torline](#), Unsplash

¹ De största företagen efter omsättning i Sverige i branschen Detaljhandel utom med motorfordon och motorcyklar. <https://www.largestcompanies.se/topplistor/sverige/de-storsta-foretagen-efter-omsattning/bransch/detaljhandel-utom-med-motorfordon-och-motorcyklar?includeChildCompanies=True>

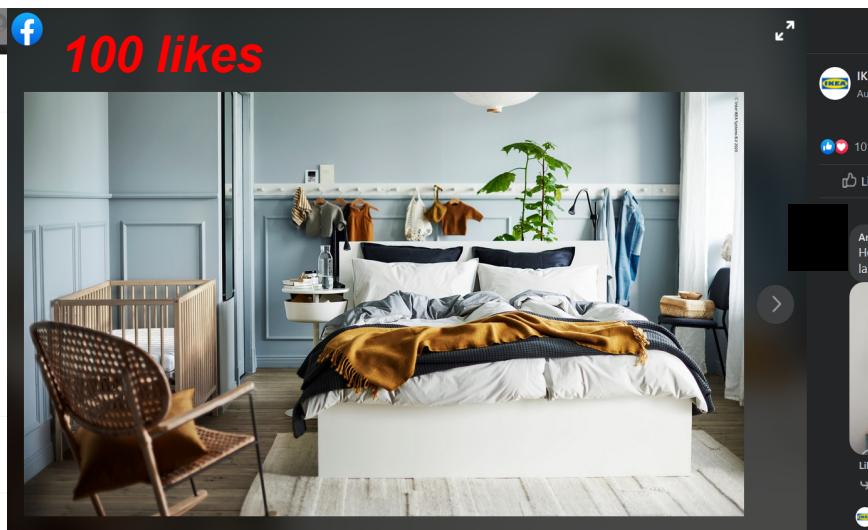
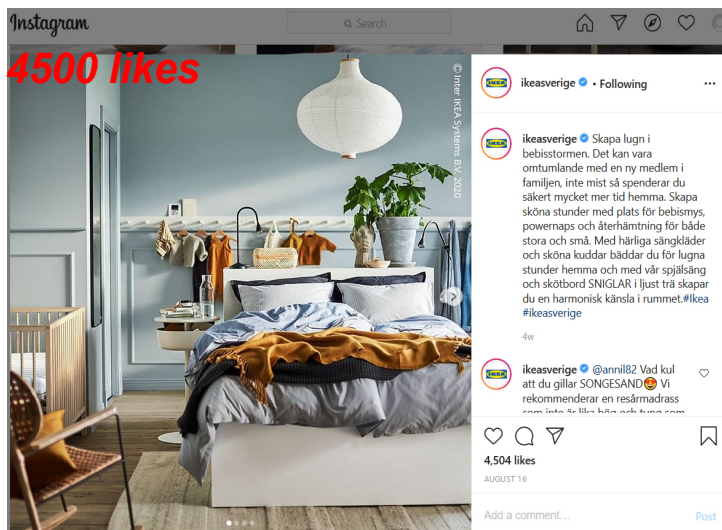
² <https://socialblade.com/>

³ <https://socialblade.com/blog/social-blade-brings-back-instagram-stats-adds-facebook-statistics/>

WHY INSTAGRAM?

Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, and others. There is no shortage of social media platforms today for marketers who would like to connect with their customers. Nonetheless, one platform stands out when engagement matters the most: Instagram. While Facebook and YouTube record over two billion users, Instagram's user base is currently over one billion¹. Yet, Instagram tops 70% higher engagement rates than Facebook². We can illustrate that easily: the same photos below were published by IKEA Sweden both on Instagram and Facebook in August 2020. While the photo received a mere 100 likes on Facebook, engagement was much stronger on Instagram with over 4500 likes.

What else makes Instagram a valuable platform for engagement? 90% of users follow a business on the platform³. 89% of marketers find Instagram to be critical for their influencer marketing strategies, whereas more than 70% say Instagram posts and stories are the most effective content formats⁴. Stories format became so popular that over 500 million accounts use Instagram Stories daily³ and 1/3 of the most viewed stories are posted by business accounts⁵. Another aspect Instagram trumps other platforms is generating sales. While an average order value for a referral from Facebook is \$55, the value is \$65 for Instagram⁶. It is estimated that, in 2020, over 75% of US businesses will use the platform and 200 million Instagram users visit at least one business profile daily⁷.



¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

² <https://locowise.com/blog/instagram-engagement-rate-is-higher-than-facebook>

³ https://business.instagram.com/?locale=en_GB

⁴ <https://mediakix.com/influencer-marketing-resources/influencer-marketing-industry-statistics-survey-benchmarks/>

⁵ https://business.instagram.com/a/stories?ref=igb_carousel

⁶ <https://www.shopify.com/blog/12731545-which-social-media-platforms-drive-the-most-sales-infographic>

⁷ <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-statistics/>

INSTAGRAM IN SWEDEN

As of January 2020, Internet usage reached 96% and social media usage reached 73% in Sweden¹. 98% of active social media users in Sweden access the platforms via mobile¹, thereby making mobile social media marketing a prominent tool for brands.

As seen on the map on the left, Instagram usage is particularly popular in Sweden compared with the rest of Europe. As of September 2020, there were over 5 million Instagram users in Sweden², 78% of which access the platform daily and 95% weekly³. More importantly for the purposes of this report, 1 out of 4 Instagram users in Sweden use the platform to follow brands⁴.

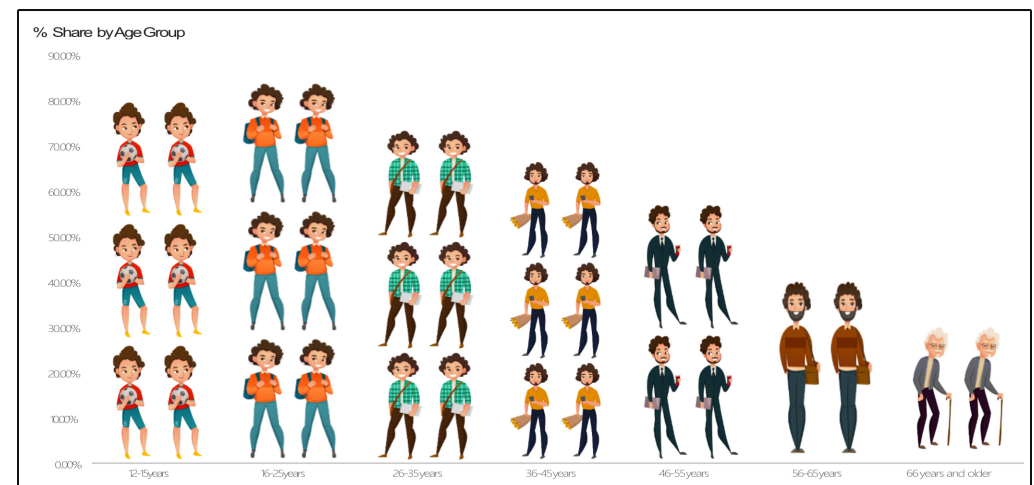
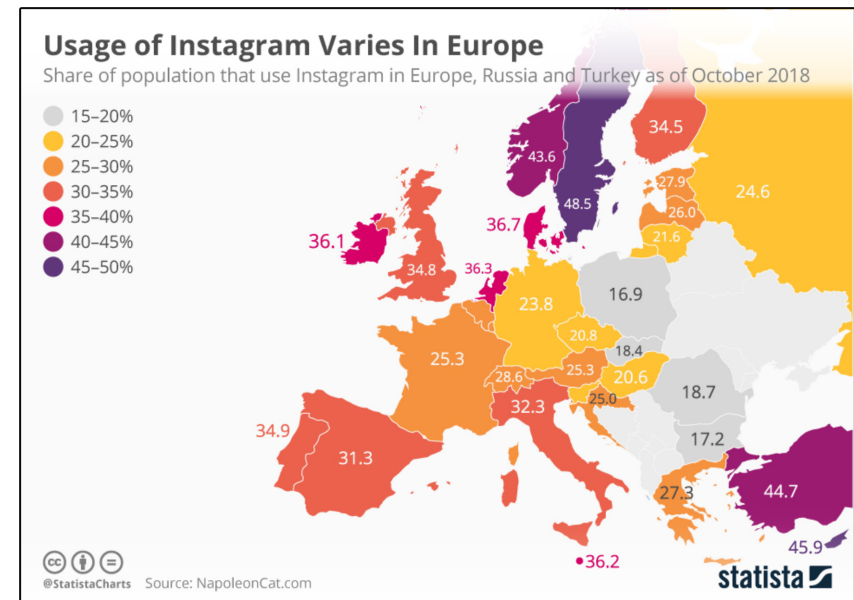
The graph below shows the demographics of Instagram usage in Sweden. 81% of 12-15 years group and 85% of 16-25 years group use Instagram, making those age groups the most popular demographics. These statistics show us that today Instagram is most popular among young consumers, who will most likely continue using the platform through adulthood. We observe that Instagram usage begin to drop for older consumers, but still a substantial portion (74%) of 26-35 group is active on Instagram. To sum, we can conclude that the platform is most viable for targeting 16 to 35 years old consumers.

¹ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-sweden>

² <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/instagram-users-in-sweden/2020/09>

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/656096/instagram-usage-frequency-in-sweden/>

⁴ <https://www.audienceproject.com/blog/key-insights/new-study-instagram-climbs-the-ladder-tiktok-has-a-long-way-to-go/>



Percentage of consumers who use Instagram across different age groups.
Source: <https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/app/uploads/2019/10/svenskarna-och-internet-2019-a4.pdf>

BRANDS IN THE REPORT

IKEA @ikeasverige 487k followers	Kicks @kicks.se 95k followers	COOP @coopsverige 52k followers	Elgiganten @elgiganten_sverige 25k followers	Komplett @komplettse 16k followers	Marqet @marqetstores 12k followers	CircleK @circle_k_sverige 8k followers	Hemköp @hemkop_sverige 4k followers
Ellos @ellosofficial 283k followers	Polar N. Pyret @polarncpyret 91k followers	Plantagen @plantagensverige 48k followers	Adlibris @adlibris.com 25k followers	Nymansur @nymansur1851 14k followers	Brothers @brotherssverige 11k followers	Kjell & Co. @kjellcosverige 8k followers	AJ @aj_produkter 3k followers
Åhlens @ahlens 278k followers	Blomsterlandet @blomsterlandet 87k followers	DinSko @dinsko 43k followers	Biltema @biltemasverige 24k followers	Apoteket @apoteket 13k followers	Teknikmagasinet @teknikmagasinet 11k followers	Pressbyrån @pressbyran 7k followers	Gottebiten @gottebiten 3k followers
Jollyroom @jollyroom 187k followers	JYSK @jysksverige 79k followers	Intersport @intersportsverige 40k followers	XXL @xxl.se 23k followers	Life @lifesverige 13k followers	Inet @inetse 10k followers	CDON @cdon.com 7k followers	Hornbach @hornbachsverige 3k followers
Gekås @gekasullared 174k followers	Nordiska Kompaniet @nordiskakompaniet 76k followers	NetOnNet @netonnet_se 37k followers	Apotek Hjärtat @apotekhjartat 23k followers	Man of a kind @manofakindcom 13k followers	City Gross @citygross 9k followers	Accent @accentofficial 6k followers	Edsbyn @edsbyn 3k followers
MIO @mio_officiell 166k followers	Skincity @skincity.se 71k followers	ÖoB @oobsverige 33k followers	Granngården @granngarden 22k followers	Nilson Shoes @nilsonshoes 13k followers	Jula @julasverige 9k followers	K-Rauta @krautasverige 5k followers	OKQ8 @okq8 2k followers
Rusta @rustasverige 159k followers	Clas Ohlson @clasohlsonsverige 58k followers	Mathem @mathem 32k followers	Trademax @trademax 22k followers	Apotea @apotea.se 12k followers	Kronansapotek @kronansapotek 8k followers	Synoptik @synoptiksweden 5k followers	Middagsfrid @middagsfrid 2k followers
ICA @icasverige 1126k followers	Stadium @stadium_jointhemov ement 54k followers	Skopunkten @skopunkten 28k followers	Scandinavian Photo @scandinavianphoto 17k followers	Linas Matkasse @linasmatkasse 12k followers	Webhallen @webhallen 8k followers	Rizzoshoes @rizzoshoes 5k followers	Lloydsapotek @lloydsapoteksverige 681 followers
Dollarstore @dollarstoresverige 121k followers	Naturkompaniet @naturkompaniet 54k followers	Willy's @willyssverige 26k followers	Lensway @lensway_com 16k followers	System Bolaget @systembolaget 12k followers	Mat.se @matpunktse 8k followers	ByggMax @byggmax_sverige 5k followers	Qstar @qstar_sverige 617 followers

TOP 10 RETAILERS

The tables below show the leading retailers under different engagement metrics. We can immediately see that there are no retailers dominating each and every metric. Here are some observations and takeaways:

- IKEA, which has by far the largest follower base, is not uploading media on Instagram as frequently as the other retailers.
- When we look at the number of media uploads, which show the more frequent posters, we see only four retailers (Jollyroom, Ellos, Kicks, and ICA) who are on top 10 on the number of followers statistics.
- A larger follower base will certainly bring more likes and comments, but we see some exceptions. For example, Blomsterlandet and Naturkompaniet are two companies that receive great amounts of likes on their posts despite not being on top 10 on the follower board. When it comes to amount of received comments, NetOnNet, Coop, Synoptik, and OoB rise on the chart, indicating they are successful in creating content that creates interaction with their smaller follower bases.
- The engagement score, which compares the performance of posts (likes and comments) with respect to the total follower count, paints a different picture. When adjusted for the follower base, we see several new retailers appearing on this list. The scores may be biased for retailers with very small follower bases (e.g., Qstar, OKQ8, Edsbyn), yet we see retailers like NetOnNet, Biltema, and Blomsterlandet with substantial follower base and high engagement rates.

Handle	# Followers	Handle	# Media Upload	Handle	Avg. Likes	Handle	Avg. Comments	Handle	Engagement
@ikeasverige	486938	@jollyroom	6470	@ikeasverige	3959	@jollyroom	904	@qstar_sverige	4.43
@ellosofficial	283839	@skincity.se	4786	@gekasullared	2388	@netonnet_se	651	@netonnet_se	4.18
@ahlens	277590	@ellosofficial	4303	@ellosofficial	2372	@rustasverige	105	@scandinavianphoto	3.26
@jollyroom	187353	@kicks.se	2991	@rustasverige	2315	@ellosofficial	65	@synoptiksweden	2.89
@gekasullared	173906	@nordiskakompaniet	2923	@blomsterlandet	1972	@gekasullared	41	@okq8	2.82
@mio_officiell	166294	@polarnopyret	2575	@dollarstoresverige	1566	@kicks.se	37	@biltemasverige	2.63
@rustasverige	158522	@blomsterlandet	2530	@naturkompaniet	1138	@coopsverige	35	@marqetstores	2.62
@icasverige	125527	@icasverige	2385	@icasverige	1128	@ikeasverige	30	@blomsterlandet	2.30
@dollarstoresverige	120864	@intersportsverige	2030	@mio_officiell	1062	@synoptiksweden	30	@webhallen	2.27
@kicks.se	94686	@stadium_jointhemovement	2028	@jollyroom	1014	@oobsverige	29	@edsbyn	2.21

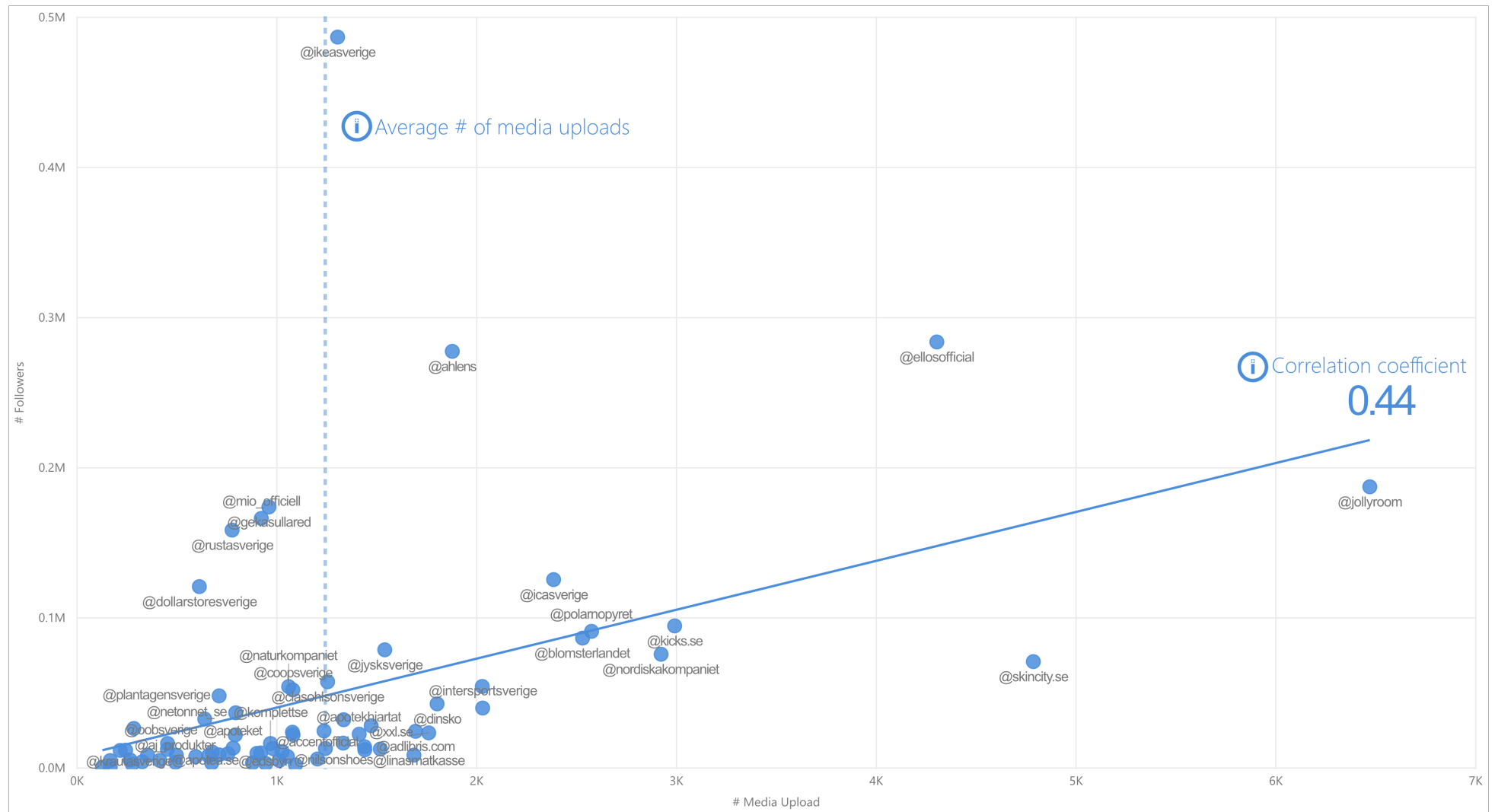
THE LARGEST FOLLOWER BASES

The visualization below shows the follower base for each retailer. Top 3 retailers, IKEA, Ellos, and Åhléns, account for 30% of all followers, highlighting that strong brands are dominating Instagram in Sweden.

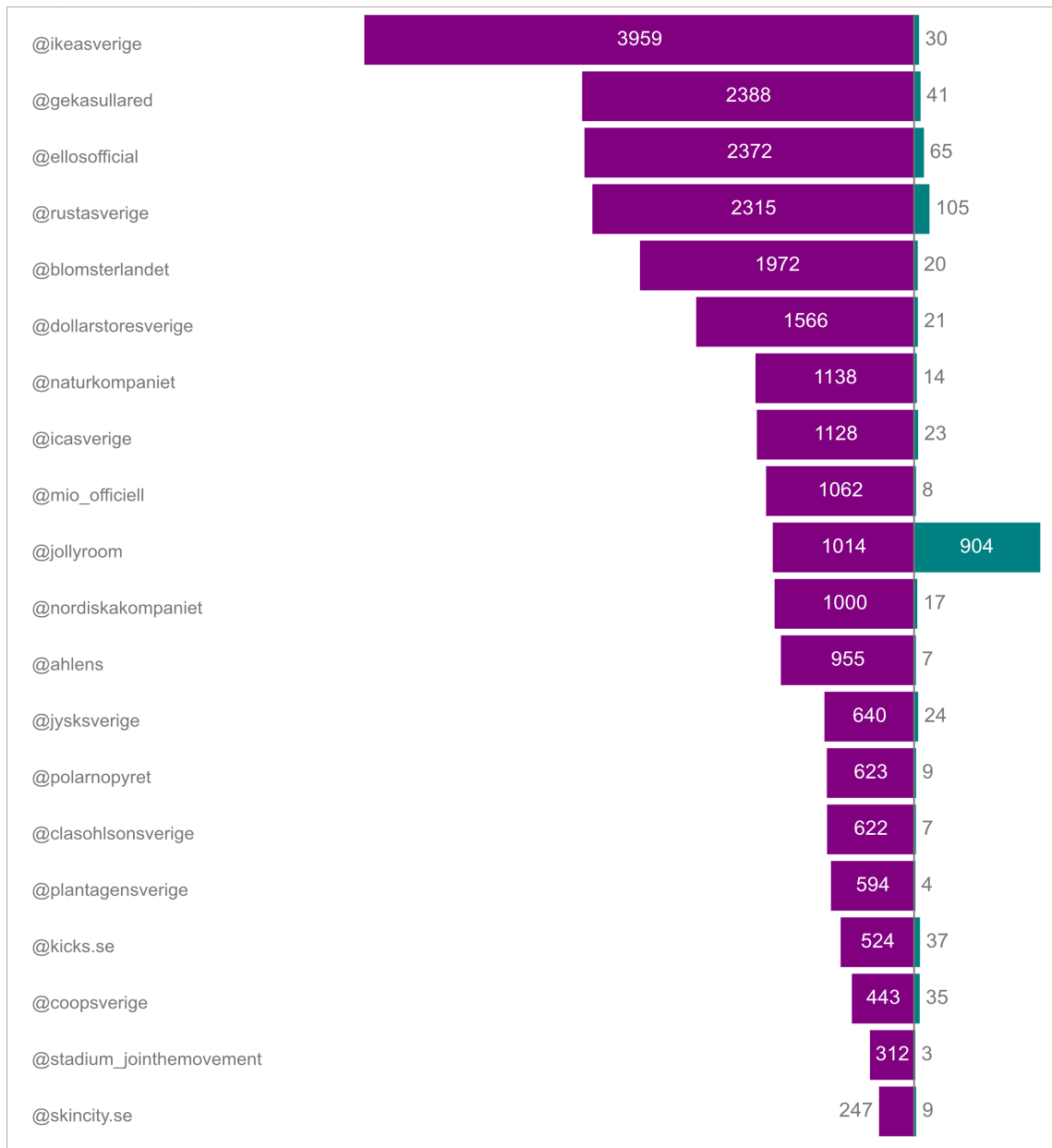


MEDIA UPLOADS vs. FOLLOWERS

Do more frequent posting bring more followers on Instagram? We can see a clear relationship between number of media uploads and number of followers, with IKEA as an exception. IKEA post number is very close to the average (~1250 uploads), yet the brand gets a huge follower base, in part due to its brand strength. However other retailers, especially those who post above average, reach a larger follower base. To what degree the follower base engage with posts is, however, another important question.



LIKES vs. COMMENTS



Likes and comments are two important metrics for engagement, because Instagram's algorithm evaluate posts (among other aspects) based on the received likes and comments. In other words, the amounts of likes and comments of your posts can prioritize your post's ranking in users' feeds.

Comments are particularly important, for they signal an ongoing relationship and engagement to Instagram, thereby indicating the post's importance to the algorithm. While it is easy to like a post, comments require more effort from the followers, making comments harder to get for brands.

The chart on the left compares average likes (in purple) and average comments (in green) per post for the top 20 retailers with the largest follower base.

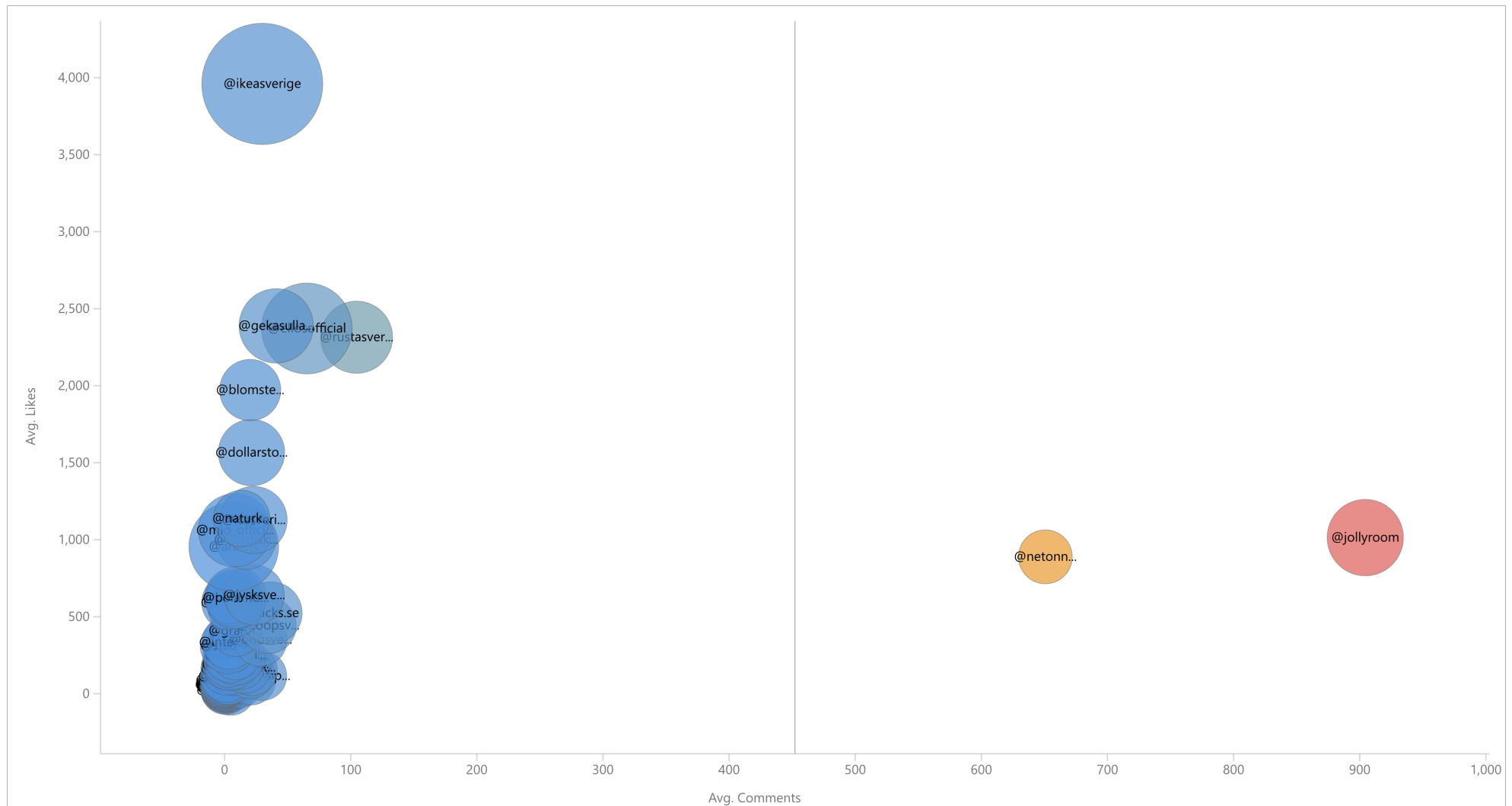
We can immediately see that more followers bring more likes, but the picture is not so clear for comments. We also do not observe a clear relationship between likes and comments; in fact, even the biggest retailers struggle getting comments.

One obvious exception is Jollyroom, which gets significantly more comments than other retailers. What is going on here? We will come back to that.

LIKES vs. COMMENTS

The visualization below clearly shows that likes do not bring comments (bubble size indicate follower base). We can see that most retailers get somewhere between 0 and 30 comments per post, few can reach 50 to 100 comments. Yet, there are two outliers: NetOnNet and Jollyroom, which can get way more comments per post than any other retailer.

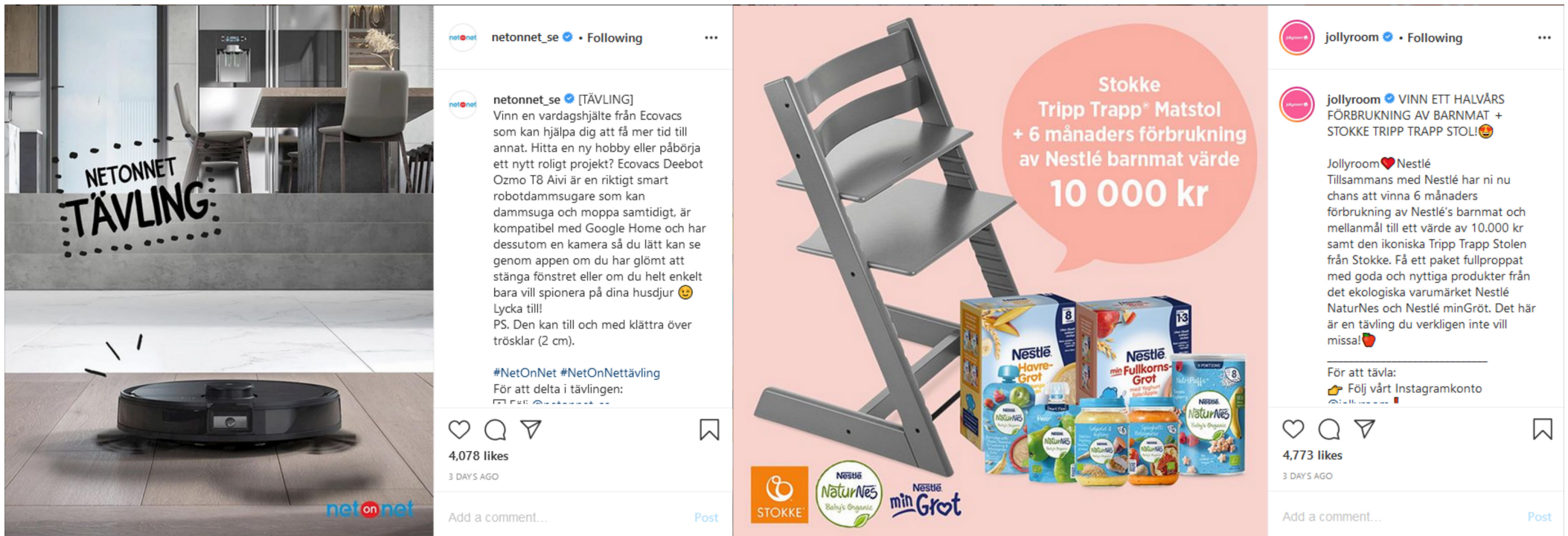
How do they do that?



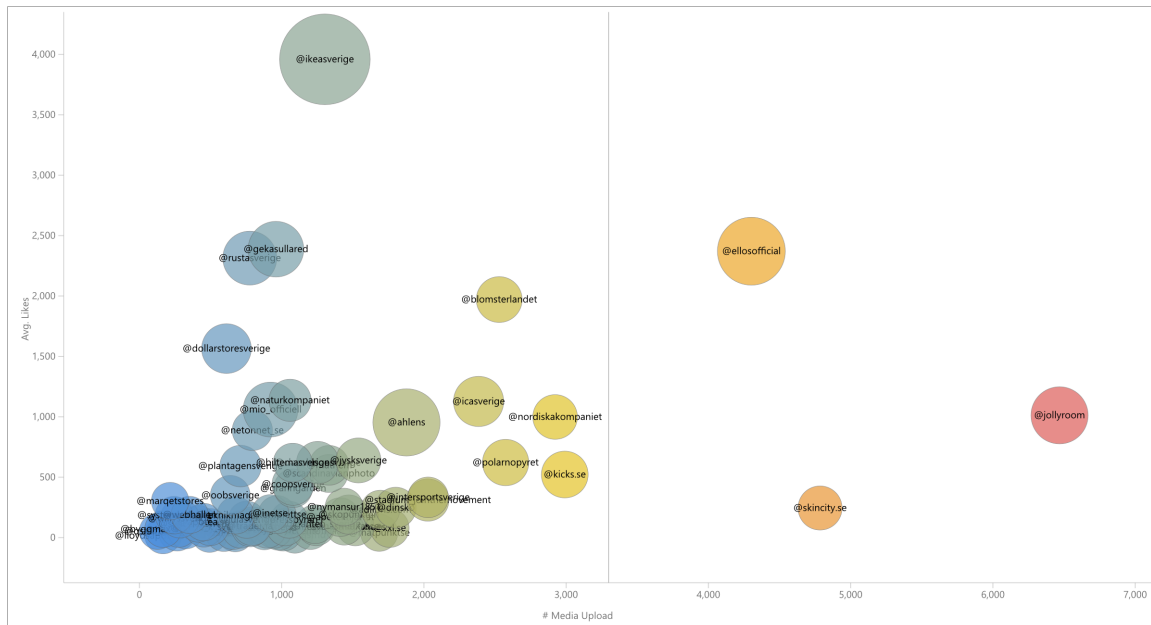
COMPETITION-FOCUSED POSTS

Both NetOnNet and Jollyroom frequently create Instagram contests where customers can win products. Two recent examples are presented below. The contest to win a robot vacuum cleaner generated more than 3500 comments for NetOnNet, and the contest to win a chair and baby food generated more than 7000 comments for Jollyroom. Such posts therefore increase the comments per post score for these retailers. Nevertheless, when we look at the other regular posts, we see that neither NetOnNet nor Jollyroom does any better than the other retailers.

Thus, we can conclude that occasional contest posts can increase received comments, but might not be the best option if the overall strategy focuses on receiving a steady stream of comments for each post and creating long-term relationships with customers.

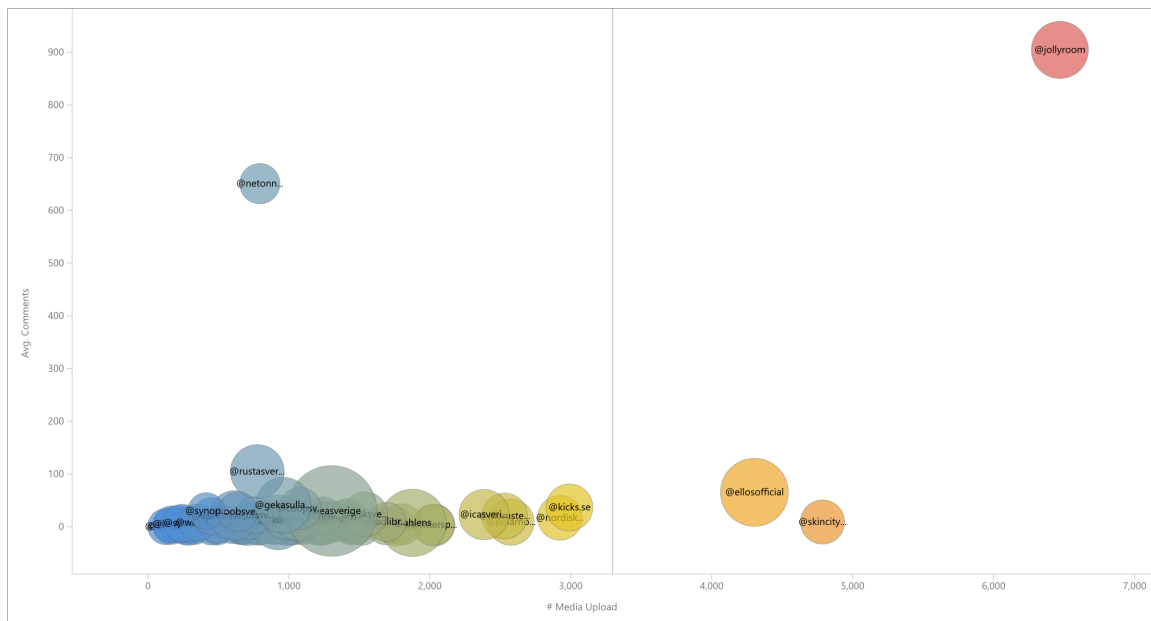


MEDIA UPLOADS vs. LIKES / COMMENTS



Do more media uploads bring more likes and comments? Looking at the visualizations on the left (likes on top and comments at the bottom, bubble sizes indicate follower base), we do not observe a straightforward positive relationship.

For average likes, again we observe the positive influence of large follower bases. Nonetheless, looking at the chart for average likes, we can see that five brands with similar follower numbers and media uploads (Blomsterlandet, ICA, Nordiska Kompaniet, Polarn O. Pyret, and Kicks) score differently on average likes, with Blomsterlandet receiving the most likes in this group. Thus we can infer that post content quality might matter more than posting frequency.

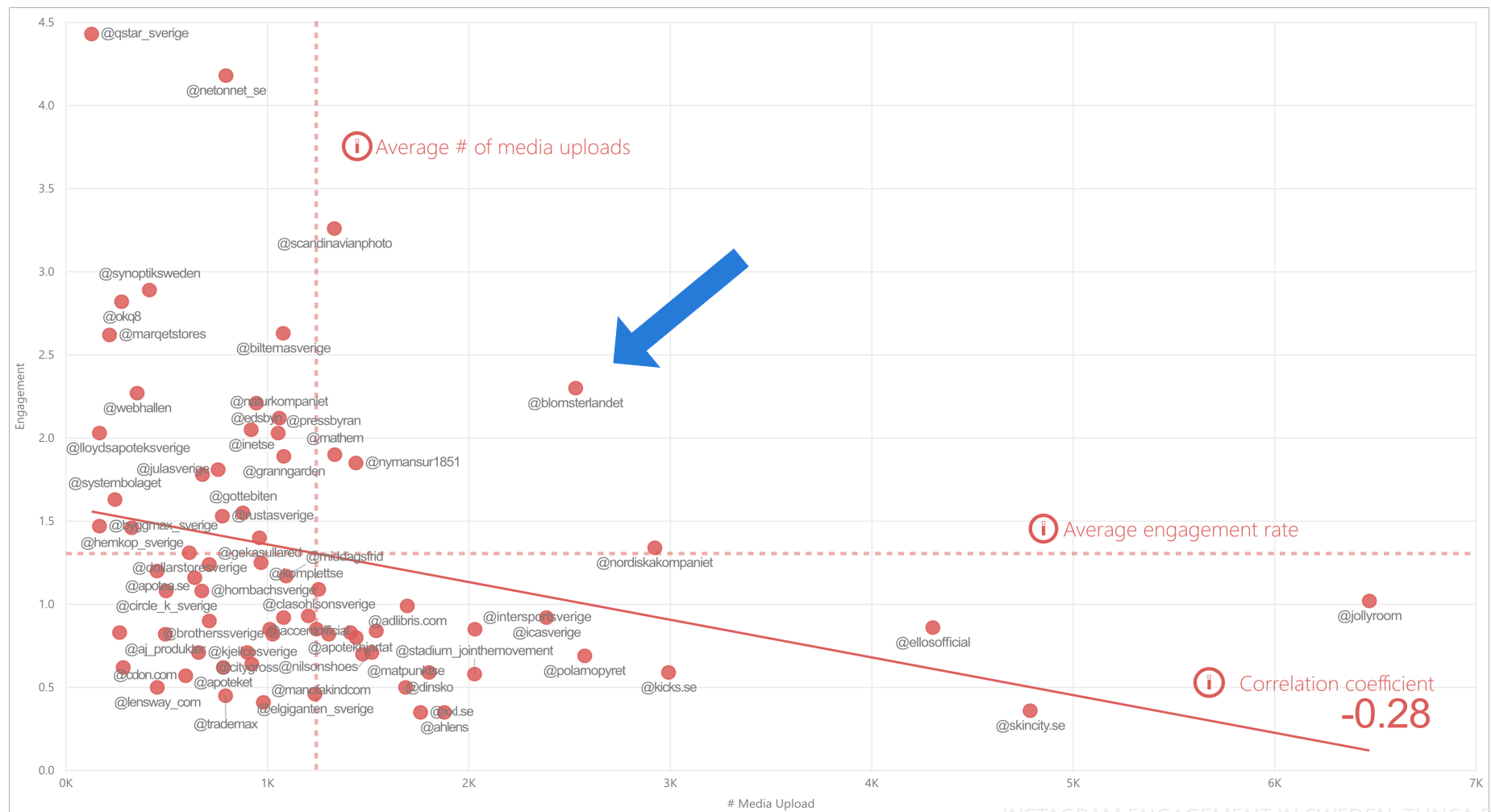


For average comments, there is certainly no impact of number of media uploads. As we discussed earlier, comments require extra effort from customers, and is therefore linked more closely to post content quality.

An interesting data point is Skincity, which is very active on the platform as we can see in the number of media uploads, yet the brand is failing to reach large numbers of comments and likes despite its efforts.

MEDIA UPLOADS vs. ENGAGEMENT

Because the size of the follower base influences average likes and comments per post, the engagement rate score, which takes follower numbers into account, is a better metric to examine the influence of number of media uploads. As seen in the chart below, we actually observe a negative trend, such that more posts hurt overall engagement rates. Nevertheless, brands need to be active on Instagram with scheduled posts so that they remain relevant to consumers, while creating engagement at the same time. Looking at the chart we can observe that this is no easy task. One retailer that stands out, with above average media uploads and engagement rate, is Blomsterlandet. So what is it that they do right?



CASE IN POINT: BLOMSTERLANDET

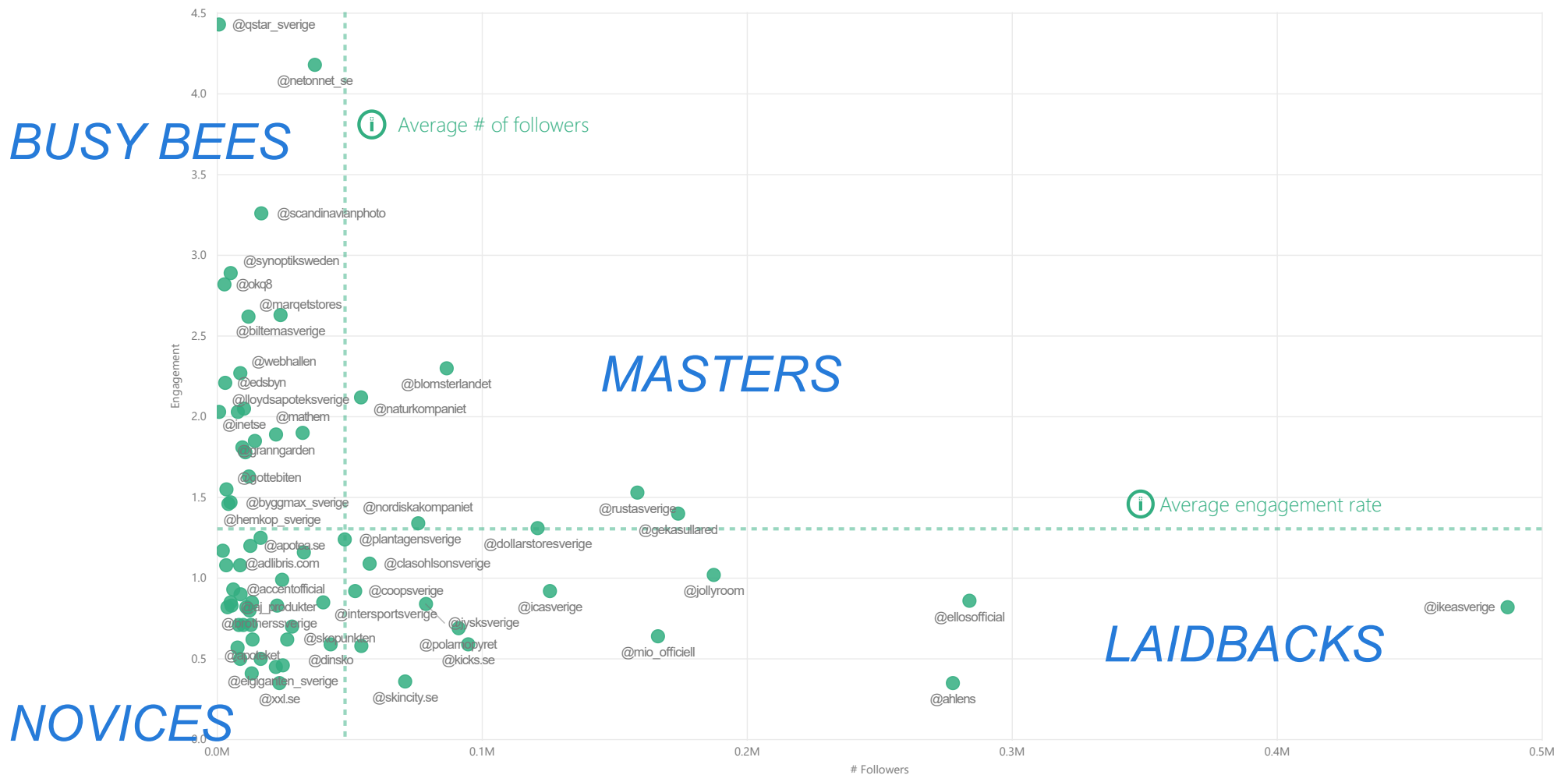
As on any other platform, what matters most on Instagram is the content quality. And content quality begins with understanding the needs and wants of the audience, then proceeds with creating content that can entertain, inspire, or educate, and concludes with genuine interactions with consumers on the platform. Examining Instagram posts from Blomsterlandet reveals that the brand does the basics really well: first, posts are inspiring, educational, and relevant to the audience who are consumers interested in plants and gardening, and second, the brand consistently and competently responds to consumer comments in a way that is sincere and friendly.

To illustrate, on the left we see a post about how to preserve Mediterranean plants during winter, which resonates with the brand and consumers. On the right we see examples of how Blomsterlandet is reacting to consumers' questions about plants and gardening. The brand's responses are professional and competent, yet at the same time friendly, making the interaction personal and social. We also observe that Blomsterlandet consistently reacts with a "like" to any other comments that do not include a question or require a response from the brand, thereby assuring customers that the brand is listening.



CATEGORIZING RETAILERS

To evaluate retailers' Instagram engagement performances, we can plot them on a 2 x 2 matrix focusing on follower base size and engagement rates. Using the average number of followers and average engagement rates as thresholds, we can categorize the retailers as **MASTERS** (high number of followers and engagement rate), **NOVICES** (low number of followers and engagement rate), **BUSY BEES** (low number of followers, high engagement rate) and **LAIDBACKS** (high number of followers, low engagement rate). The matrix is visualized below:



CATEGORIZING RETAILERS

The table below shows all 72 retailers in the report under their corresponding category. **MASTERS** enjoy both a large follower base and high engagement rates. Given the difficulty of being successful in both metrics, we see only 6 retailers in this category. **BUSY BEES** also enjoy high engagement thanks to their active Instagram efforts, but lack a large base. These retailers (21 out of 72) should focus on increasing number of followers without compromising content quality and engagement rates. **LAIDBACKS**, which consist of 13 out of 72 retailers, are mainly the strongest retailer brands in Sweden (e.g., IKEA, ICA, ELLOS, COOP) who have large follower bases but lag in engagement rates. Main recommendation for those retailers is to concentrate on content quality and aim at enhancing engagement. It is possible that large number of followers gives the false impression that the brand is doing well on Instagram, but engagement metrics indicate that there is room for growth. Last, **NOVICES** are behind in Instagram marketing, both in number of followers and engagement rates. Interestingly, the largest number of retailers are in this category (32 out of 72), showing that most retailers are underperforming on Instagram. Novices should first decide whether Instagram is relevant for their brand - if not, efforts can be directed to other social media channels. However, if Instagram is at the core of the brand's digital marketing strategy and engagement is critical, these retailers must address their shortcomings.

	LOW # OF FOLLOWERS	HIGH # OF FOLLOWERS
HIGH ENGAGEMENT RATE	<p>BUSY BEES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> @qstar_sverige @netonnet_se @scandinavianphoto @synoptiksweden @okq8 @biltemasverige @marqetstores @webhallen @edsbyn @inetse @pressbyran 	<p>MASTERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> @blomsterlandet @naturkompaniet @rustasverige @gekasullared @nordiskakompaniet @dollarstoresverige
LOW ENGAGEMENT RATE	<p>NOVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> @komplettse @plantagensverige @apotea.se @middagsfrid @oobsverige @circle_k_sverige @hornbachsverige @adlibris.com @accentofficial @kronansapotek @intersportsverige @lifesverige @rizzoshoes @apotekhjärtat @krautasverige @brotherssverige 	<p>LAIDBACKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> @clasohlsonsverige @jollyroom @icasverige @coopsverige @ellosofficial @jysksverige @ikeasverige @polarnopyret @mio_officiell @kicks.se @stadium_jointhemovement @skincity.se @ahlens

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

In this report, we analyzed Instagram engagement performances of 72 retailer brands which use an Instagram account dedicated to Swedish consumers. To conclude the report, we can review our main takeaways:

- Instagram is a particularly popular social media platform in Sweden, with young users (16-35 years old) dominating usage statistics.
- Many strong fashion retailer brands do not have an Instagram account dedicated to the Swedish market, for example, H&M, KappAhl, and Boozt.
- In terms of number of followers, strong brands like IKEA, Ellos, and Åhlens are dominant.
- More media uploads tend to bring more followers - but do not guarantee engagement!
- Retailers in Sweden are struggling to get comments on their posts. Retailers that run competition-based posts enjoy a burst of comments, but it is unclear whether this strategy brings long-term engagement.
- More media uploads tend to hurt overall engagement rates. This is an interesting dilemma for marketing managers for brands need to stay relevant with frequent social media updates. These results indicate that brands that enjoy frequent posting might be sacrificing content quality. When it comes to frequency of posting, social media marketers should not lose the focus on content quality. As we see in the analyses, only few brands can strike that balance at the moment.
- When we plot the retailers based on number of followers and engagement rates, we see that a large follower base does not guarantee engagement. It is striking that only 6 out of 72 brands score above average in both metrics. Instagram strategies of those 6 brands can inform us about best practices in the Swedish market. We also observe that many strong brands have reached large follower bases, but lag in creating engagement. These brands should not take number of followers as the main sign of success on Instagram, and try to identify ways that would enhance engagement and long-term relationships with consumers.

Thank you for reading this report. Feel free to contact burak.tunca@fek.lu.se should you have any questions or comments.

/ Burak Tunca, PhD

