Instagram: A digital marketplace for independent visual artists

By

Neelam Shahzadi

An exegesis submitted to the
Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Masters of English and New Media Studies
(MENMS)

October 2019

School of Language and Culture
Supervisor: Dr. Darryl Hocking

Abstract

Instagram is now one of the most important spaces for the sale of art, with major auction houses, art dealers and independent visual artists, using the social media site to successfully promote and sell their works. An article in Vogue magazine, for example, recently referred to Instagram as the "World's Most Talked-About New Art Dealer". Using a case study approach, this research will analyse a number of Instagram art marketing accounts to examine how visual artists use Instagram to market their art, with a focus on the techniques and strategies, as well as the linguistic and semiotic resources used to do so. Following this, the study will through a process of reflective practice and the analysis of site data, evaluate whether and how this knowledge can be successfully employed in the development of the researcher's own Instagram art marketing site and to what effect.

Practical component

The practical component of this thesis, an Instagram account titled *artbynilum*, can be found at [https://www.instagram.com/artbynilum/]

Table of content

List of Figures

List of Tables

Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Signed:

Date: 06/04/2020

Acknowledgement

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background and motivation

Ever since I was a child, I always had a compelling passion for art. I used to frequently draw and paint but hid my art works in a secret drawer inside a cupboard. I felt ashamed that they were never perfect, and that people would ridicule my efforts. I ultimately gave up and suppressed my passion to create.

After some years passed, I began to feel that I was not normal and had peculiar behaviours as a child and teenager that did not match those around me. I used to be very reserved and quiet and tended to remain in my room for months without speaking to anyone. On rare occasions my family would ask if something was upsetting me, but I would always deny it and eventually they just accepted me as a quiet and anti-social person. I would never ask my parents for anything, even as I was growing up where it was normal for children to trouble their parents for new toys to play with, or for interesting places to go to.

I spent the golden period of my life living like an elderly person devoid of any deep attachments to this earth and impatiently awaiting the end. I was always deeply agitated and upset throughout my life as I felt disconnected from my surroundings and unable to relate to anyone around me. I believed they were too ignorant and unforgiving to understand my perspective. The earth ended up feeling like a prison from which I could not escape. I foolishly thought I could accept this condition, but my body refused and cursed me with sleepless nights and a restless mind that I had to suffer alone for multiple days, with relentless exhaustion

I once found myself drawing a lonely lifeless girl hanging on the end of a rope that was wrapped around her cold neck. I deeply resonated with this morbid image that reflected the inner turmoil of rejection and neglect which plagued my life, with death slowly becoming the only effective painkiller I could think of taking. These thoughts were very intrusive and focusing on drawing helped give me an escape away from my disturbed

mind. I was unable to express my suffering to anyone as I was the youngest child in a large family of over 20 people. I felt my cries would echo through an empty wilderness where no one understands or cares. The emotional and physical abuse resulted in deep scars that manifested as depression and anxiety.

Drawing quickly became my safe haven whenever I felt broken, alone and depressed. There was no recognition of doing creative work, but rather just drawing diligently to distract myself from negative thoughts. Often the images I drew were Mandala forms, that is, circular images that have spiritual and ritual significance (Tucci, 2001). My situation worsened when I started studying English literature for a master's degree, as it made me a more critical and sensitive observer of everything and everyone around me. Unknowingly, this caused me to become even more misanthropic. I continued to remain isolated in my room with the curtains closed and drew under the dim light of my night lamp to avoid interaction and more importantly my own painful thoughts.

I was eventually diagnosed with depression when my family took me to the medical centre due to their concerns over my health, as I became very pale and lazy. Depression not only made me apathetic towards life but also had caused insomnia and anaemia since my childhood. Unfortunately, I never received any treatment as mental illness carries a very negative stigma in Pakistan. My pain was dismissed as they assumed it was impossible to be depressed when single, young and without responsibilities. My family ended up pressuring me to join a school and work as an English teacher in order to make use of my literature degree. I worked there for a couple of months, but the constant human interaction was torturous, and I ended up quitting since it only enhanced my depression.

As my depression worsened, my attraction towards art increased, and I never imagined it would become so therapeutic. Due to my anti-social tendencies, I was completely detached from social media, although I had once tried Facebook until the constant mental abuse caused me to deactivate it. One night, however, when I was having trouble sleeping again, I decided to browse through different forms of art until I came across an interesting image of a Mandala that had similarities with my own Mandala drawings. I clicked on the image and it led me to an Instagram page which depicted many similar

drawings. This provoked me to download the app where I amazingly found myself on a large platform among likeminded people who shared my passion. I suddenly felt an appeal in wishing to become known in this community, I saw many art pieces being appreciated and I felt my skills were just as good, if not better. However social fear continued to hold me back and prevented me from displaying my work which remained unappreciated. Instead I admired the work of many artists without directly engaging with them and learnt a lot of interesting techniques by simply following their Instagram accounts. It became so intriguing to me that I wished to have followers who would appreciate my work. Eventually I overcame my anxiety and started posting my art. Initially I received around 10 likes but even that made me feel happy and appreciated.

Time continued to move forward, and my family wanted me to get married, as it was Pakistani cultural tradition for females to be wed in their early twenties. By this point I was already in my late twenties and my family was unable to comprehend that I wasn't interested in marriage. Luckily, my brother who lived in Sydney understood my plight and suggested that I apply for a course related to art in Australia. This seemed to be a lifeline to escape from a society where I was pressured to get a husband against my own will. Unfortunately, I had no background in art and found no relevant degree programs that would accept me., Instead I decided to look for programmes in social media marketing which I believed could provide a medium for my art works. After weeks of research, I discovered the website of the New Zealand university AUT, which had the perfect course for me; one that was related to my English literature programme and my teaching background but also had a focus on new media. As a result, I ended up applying for the "Masters of English and New Media study".

Initially, my family was disappointed and unhappy about me going to a new country where I would be on my own. They preferred that I go to Sydney, as my brother and his family were there. However, I considered this as my final option for being independent and after a long difficult discussion that lasted months, my brother finally agreed that I could go to Auckland and study at AUT with his financial and emotional support. I mistakenly thought that the hard times were over, and my life would finally be interesting, as the days drew closer, I began to realise that I was not prepared for the impending lifestyle shock. I had never been outside my own country or thrown into a multicultural western society. Independence also meant that I could no longer avoid

difficult situations like I did at home in Pakistan and I would be completely alone in dealing with daily challenges, such as going to lectures and confronting classmates and professors.

My first semester ended up being the worst period of my life as I struggled to engage with new people and had to confusingly figure out how to travel in trains and buses. I kept thinking that this move was a mistake and I missed my sheltered room back home. However, after some introspection I realised that my past was filled with depression and for the first time I had the opportunity to change my life for the better. This required me to grow and adapt to every situation and fight depression head on. In order to accomplish this, I would need to address my underlying problems that prevented me from focusing at university. I ended up seeking professional help in New Zealand, which came to be the best decision I ever made in my life. I finally started developing the tools that helped me think positively and effectively manage my depression by shifting my perspective on how to react to life's problems. The process was gradual, and I still attend sessions today, but the help I received was very valuable and has given me control over my life that I would never have thought possible. Throughout this turbulent period, my lecturers were very cooperative and supportive, they always encouraged me to engage in something creative and look forward to self-improvement as opposed to giving up and thinking about negative things.

Meanwhile, as I entered the thesis component of the English and New Media Studies programme, I was unable to decide on how to connect my passion for art with new media as a suitable thesis subject, until I reflected on my experience with Instagram where I wished to be recognised and appreciated by others for my creative works on a large media platform. However, given my history, I was unaware of the type of procedures, including language conventions of using Instagram, that might successfully attract viewers, and which might contribute to further interest in my work. I began observing the Instagram captions and language use of successful Instagram artists, as well as the types of posts they used and how they set out their accounts, among other things. This ultimately inspired the research focus of this study which examines the Instagram accounts of a number of successful independent visual artists; that is, artists who are not tied to the professional dealer gallery system, to see how these artists use Instagram to market their art, with a focus particular, on the types of linguistic and

semiotic resources used to do so. I also decided that the research would include a practical and reflective component where through the development of my own Instagram account, I evaluate whether the knowledge learnt from my analyses can be successfully employed and to what effect.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is, firstly, to examine the techniques and strategies, including the language and other semiotic resources, used by independent visual artists to successfully promote and market their art on Instagram.

Secondly, the study aims is to establish whether this knowledge can be successfully employed in the promotion and marketing of my own independent visual art on Instagram. Ultimately, I would like to develop my independent visual art practice into a fulfilling career rather than a therapeutic hobby, where its potential has never truly been realised. The outcomes of the thesis may help other struggling, independent and aspiring visual artists to market their work online. A number of scholars have carried out research on Instagram and marketing in different contexts, but little work has been carried out on independent visual artists who use Instagram as a platform for art marketing.

1.3 Exegesis overview

The study is organised in seven chapters. Chapter one outlines the background, importance and aim of the study. Chapter two provides a review of the existing literature that discusses the role of Instagram as an online art gallery for independent visual artists and the types of semiotic resources and language that successful practicing artists use to engage with people to promote their art.

Chapter three identifies the methods used to carry out the study including the process of data collection and analysis. These methods include a case study of three independent visual artists' Instagram accounts, an online questionnaire, the practical development of

an Instagram account to promote independent visual art, and the ongoing reflection on this practice. Chapter four provides the results of three case studies examining the accounts of three independent Instagram artists. It looks at the techniques used by these three participants to successfully market their art on Instagram. The case studies also include a corpus analysis of their captions (the text that accompanies their images) of their most recent 200 posts.

Chapter five provides the results of an online questionnaire that asked 10 independent visual artists questions about their use of Instagram to market their art. The questions focus on their choice of Instagram as their preferred online platform and their methods for art promotion and the strategies they use to increase followers.

Chapter six involves reflective comments on the development of my own Instagram account and the artwork that I created for this account. It discusses my attempts to follow the practices of the artists in the case study and draw upon the finding of my online questionnaire. Chapter seven will provide an overall discussion that considers the findings of the case studies, interviews and reflective practice.

The final component of this thesis is my Instagram account itself. This can be found at [https://www.instagram.com/artbynilum/]Throughout the thesis, I created 70 art works, and 250 posts. By the conclusion of the thesis period I had amassed 6700 followers, with an average of 500 likes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction: marketing on social media

The literature review begins by introducing the impact of social media on marketing, and ultimately how social media platforms have provided opportunities for independent visual artists to successfully promote and market their art online. Instagram, in particular, is the primary focus of this literature review due to its capacity for photo sharing. This capacity differentiates it from many other platforms and it is more pertinent to independent visual artists whose works are based around visual display and consumption. The importance of creating a brand and an associated image as an essential marketing strategy for social media influencers is also explored in this literature review.

It is important to understand the two key elements being discussed throughout this study, the concept of the independent visual artist and the digital marketplace. An independent visual artist in the context of this thesis is an individual who has complete control and jurisdiction over their creative artistic content and the direction of their career. As such, independent visual artists are not typically associated with a professional dealer gallery. The digital marketplace is essentially an online venue or platform that mediates the sales of digital goods and services. Independent visual artists are able to promote and sell their work through the digital marketplace due to the widespread adoption of digital platforms by the general public, which is able to provide a large customer base.

2.1 Marketing on social media

Social media has increasingly become the most popular communications and marketing tool for businesses, as they recognise the ability for social media to connect with consumers on a much more personal level. Using social media, businesses are better able to carry out marketing techniques and escalate their brand. In the world of connectivity and social engagement, many popular brands are using the platform of social media to both engage their current customers and attract new customers by sharing relevant content daily (Lavoie, 2015).

Nowadays companies hire social media analysts and community managers to work in digital marketing departments which are very different from conventional advertising and marketing departments. This is because social media is increasingly becoming an accepted communication mode for the internet audience as each day more and more users are connecting to social platforms. Facebook is amongst the oldest of these platforms which came into existence in 2004 and is present in over 70 countries and has over 600 million users (Fowdar, 2013). According to Facebook Newsroom, Facebook had 2.38 billion users as of 31st March 2019.

Fowdar (2013) discusses the different powerful resources Facebook allows for organisations to use in marketing purposes and communicate with its users. These include Facebook communities, profiles, groups, fan/business pages, and events, etc. which have both positive (lower marketing cost that's direct, quick and constant targeting millions of customers) and negative (violation of private information given to third parties and sellers) implications. As a result, Facebook enables companies to connect with many more people than they could with emails, calls, or meetings (Luke, 2009). Furthermore, the cost of social media marketing is reduced in personnel and monetary terms compared to traditional marketing (Mize, 2009; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009). Facebook, which has grown immensely in popularity throughout the 15 years since its creation (2004) has opened a new era of marketing which focuses specifically on directed and personalised advertising.

The invention of targeted ads on Facebook, those which are directed towards demographics such as education, sex, age etc. has also led to increased traffic on the website (Yang et al., 2008). Strict restrictions on the quality of advertisements have also made Facebook a great advertising option for both large and small size businesses (Francisco, 2006). Facebook also offers a competitive and thorough tariff system which charges advertisers for per-impression and per-click model (Fowdar, 2013).

However, some studies show that advertising on Facebook is not effective for all businesses. One research shows that while 62% of the Generation Y has joined a fan or brand community on Facebook and 48% have joined communities to check on sales

promotions, opinions, and releases, only 19% of these people actually checked out advertisements and 39% of the people never paid any attention to any ads (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009). Most people only log on to Facebook to socialize with family and friends and hardly pay any attention to buying anything. According to another study, unless organizations do not spend $10,000 a month on Facebook Marketing and work with their own Facebook sales representative, they don't gain much via advertising on Facebook. Additionally, other expenses are linked to both time and cost of developing the strategy and continuous management of Facebook site (Duncan-Durst, 2009).

2.2 Instagram

Another major social media platform currently used for marketing purposes is Instagram. Instagram (IG) is a social media application which was developed in October 2010 and later, in 2012, merged with Facebook (Lavoie, 2015). It is a free online platform that was specifically designed for users of smartphones to take and share their photographs, and later videos (Alexander, 2018). Instagram also launched another standalone smartphone app called IGTV to post longer videos than are possible on Instagram. They announced IGTV on the 20th June 2018, at the same time when Instagram reached one billion users (Instagram 2018). A distinctive feature used by Instagram is the 'hashtag' which permits users to attach meanings to their photographs or videos which can lead the user to other videos and images that are closely linked to the hashtag (Lim, Sook & Yazdanifard, 2014). Instagram also readily connects with different platforms such as Blogger.com, Twitter and

Facebook additionally in 2017, Instagram introduced a new feature *story* which is now widely used by other social media platforms as well (Becker, 2017).

According to (Peres & Mesquita, 2015) Instagram performs a major role in making this world into a unified entity with communications across borders and traditional language barriers. The people who follow a user become his or her followers and then can view the pictures and videos shared wherever they are located globally. Instagram was able to achieve 1 million users within the first month and gained 300 million active monthly users by December 2014 (Systrom, 2014; Costill, 2014).

On 17th July 2019, Instagram removed the function from posts that indicated to followers the total number of 'likes' a post had received. They announced it through Twitter (Figure 2.2a) and stated the reason for removing the function was that they wanted people to focus on the content of the post rather than its 'likes' count. (Figure 2.2b), now only account holder can see how many 'likes' their post has received.

Figure 2.2a: Instagram's tweet screenshot (17th July, 2019)

Figure 2.2b: Instagram's comment's (on their tweet) screenshot (17th July, 2019)

2.2.1 Instagram and marketing

Instagram is a distinctive way to reach out to a target audience, digitally market a service or product, and enhance brand recognition. It allows a business to tell the unique story about its brand in a highly engaging and visual way (Alexander, 2018). With the passage of time, Instagram has developed into an important tool for people who are trying to promote their respective brands, while at the same time permitting users to build a bond with their clients (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). Instagram has long been a popular

platform for beauty and fashion bloggers who are in a quest to build and showcase their identities, and it also helps them maintain a blogging career (Davies, 2017). Most of these bloggers are young females who represent growth and expansion of cultures making use of a social media platform to showcase elements of beauty and fashion. (Duffy & Hund, 2015) state that this emphasises a post-feminist identity where women are profoundly able to express their consumer choices by using their free sense of self.

With the rise of online shopping consumers are increasingly reluctant to spend time in traditional 'walk-in' stores, and as a result online marketing and branding on social media platforms such as Instagram has become a crucial tool for dispersing and creating online visual brands due to its image sharing function (Kotler and Keller, 2012). In the case study Understanding Digital Reputation on Instagram: A Case Study of Social Media Mavens[1], (Alshawaf & Wen 2015) discuss both the negative and positive aspects of marketing on Instagram. They suggest that Instagram marketing is not only about visual appearances but is also about the 'likes' and 'dislikes' a specific post receives, additionally 'Engagement' and 'likability' are the two more important aspects of Instagram which are generally shown through the comments on a specific post. They also argue that visual based social media platforms have image power, where we as human beings are visual creatures and can analyse pictures at an alarming speed. A post on social media accompanied by an image is 10 times more likely to receive engagement than a post consisting of words. As such images tend to have more power than words and since Instagram is basically a photo capturing and sharing app, it plays with this image power on a grand level as visual-based platforms are easily digestible. Instagram also creates marketing and research value because of its feature items such as tags, friends/followers, and comments stories. Today brand publicity is not only in the hands of companies but is also in the hands of online customers and consumers. Social media creates consumer-to-consumer interactions where people can comment and review products, it takes trends away from marketers' controls (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

However, there are also challenges with Instagram marketing as discussed by (Wen & Alshawaf, 2015) where all the posts can be deleted and permanently eliminated. The

---

[1] Alshawaf and Wen (2015) define a Social Media Maven as a celebrity, who through social media and a large number of followers, develops a strong and powerful online presence, which is valuable to companies and brands. It is similar to the term 'influencer' used throughout this literature review.

comments which the followers write can also be removed by the person owning the account. Furthermore, followers can control existing data by 'Unliking','Liking' and 'Commenting' on the dated posts.

2.2.2 The use of visuals for social media marketing

Understanding the messages conveyed through advertising including those of social media is important for any given society or culture. This includes understanding the message that the advertiser is attempting to convey to the potential consumer and how the semiotic resources employed are interpreted by their target audience. Most organizations use a promotional message involving certain cultural codes to target and connect with their audience and to distinguish their brand, this process often involves logos, slogans, and recognisable packaging and these elements are valuable for creating a strong identity (Keller, 2003)

Visuals including images, signs, emojis and stickers make communication easier to understand and usage of these visuals in messaging or posting something on social media develops a deep connection between brands and buyers, social media influencers and their fans, and also between Instagram account holders and their followers these visuals and images have strong effects and nurture an emotional connection with the audience (Iyer, Webster, Hornsey &Vanman, 2014)

As a result, sharing images on Facebook is the best way to get more attention from followers and friends because images are easy to understand and convey messages than text (Maranga, 2014). According to (Rogers, 2014), adding a photo to a tweet can boost retweets by an impressive 35% and a video by 28%.

(Thurlow & Aiello, 2007) carried out an analysis on tailfin designs for airlines by analysing their visual semiotics and how the airlines branding targeted its social media audience. Their study found that only twelve percent of ads showed the company's name, while the rest used simple designs which only featured a blue bird. The designs focused on the company's cultural links and used a global understanding of geometric patterns. (Ferguson & Greer, 2018) show how a commercial radio station in the United

States used the language and visuals of Instagram to reach out to its listeners. According to Ferguson and Greer the visuals used by the station provided audiences with a real-life glance into both their broadcast operations and talent, and in doing so improved their audience's interaction with their station.

2.2.3 Social media and Instagram influencers

The rapidly growing social media has a effected a considerable change in consumer's opinions and decisions in buying (Jones, Borgman & Ulusoy, 2015). One major area of change involves Influencers and users of platforms such as Instagram, who develop huge followings by posting inspirational photos often of products they are surreptitiously marketing (Dewey, 2014).

Social media Influencers create content for their followers in order to influence their perceptions and understanding about their daily/personal life, products, brands, organisations and events etc. and they get paid (or they receive free products/services) for establishing positive images of particular businesses or brands, called influencer marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Hence, the conventional way of advertising has now been taken over by social media mavens, who unlike celebrities are considered as plausible, authentic, convincing and approachable (Abidin, 2016; Jensen Schau & Gilly, 2003).

Conventional brands often collaborate with Instagram influencers, through sharing posts, developing sponsored content, documenting experiences and hosting events (MediaKix, 2016). For instance, a clothing brand Old Navy announced in 2016 that Megan Rienks (a social media influencer) would appear on many of their brand posts on Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. In these posts, she entertained fans on how to style the Old Navy outfits for many occasions, such as for a holiday party or a date, leading to a positive electronic word-of-mouth communication or eWOM (Cook, 2017). According to recent research, 81% of influencer marketing is effective; with 37% believing that customer retention is related to their trust of the influencers rather than through conventional ads (Burgess 2016)

2.2.4 Instagram and marketing of art

One area of marketing that has recently become popular on Instagram is the marketing of art. Major auction houses, independent visual artists and art dealers are increasingly using Instagram to help them sell their works (Huff, n.d.). A recent study in Vogue magazine referred to Instagram as the 'World's Most Talked-About New Art Dealer' (Fleming, 2014). Instagram provides a platform for young artists who are not represented by a dealer gallery to exhibit their work. It can help these independent visual artists reach wider audiences and enables them to display and promote their work in the way they prefer (Fleming, 2014). Interestingly, the increasing normalisation of online shopping has also seen an acceptance for the practice of viewing and purchasing art online, particularly among younger buyers of art. A recent survey done by (Blattmann 2017), found that approximately 56% of consumers in United States between the ages of 18-24 would buy art online and 45% believed that the best way to find and purchase art is through social media platforms.

2.3 Art marketing & independent visual artists

As the concept of art marketing by independent visual artists via social media platforms, specifically Instagram is relatively new, there is a lack of scholarly articles in this area. However, there are several popular texts that provide marketing strategies for independent visual artists, some of which refer to social media. These include *How to Survive and Prosper as an Artist: Selling Yourself Without Selling Your Soul* (Michels, 2018) and *I'd Rather Be in the Studio* (Stanfield, 2011). Some online sites have also focused on the needs of independent visual artists, which include Alyson Stanfield's *Artbizcoach.com* (2002) which cater the needs of independent visual artists and showcase their work online. They provide everything from advice and guidance on building a webpage, different ways to develop self-promotional podcasts, online courses and newsletters to help them build their business of selling art online (Stanfield, 2012).

In summary, while there are numerous studies on social media marketing, there are only a limited number of mostly non-scholarly publications and websites that discuss the use of social media marketing for art. There is less research done that approaches the nature

of independent visual art production and promotion on Instagram. This study will shine a light on the Instagram approached strategies and techniques used by practicing independent visual artists to promote and sell their work and examine whether these can be successfully employed by the researcher on the social media app Instagram. As a result, this study (exegesis and accompanying practice) seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How do practicing independent visual artists promote and market their work on Instagram?

RQ2: Can this knowledge be successfully employed in the development of the researchers own Instagram art marketing site and to what effect?

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study explains the methodological frameworks used in this study to develop a response to the research questions: To answer the research questions, four different research instruments have been used.

i) Case studies of the Instagram accounts (and accompanying websites) of independent visual artists. This method was employed, as according to Yin (2012), case studies are able to provide close and in-depth understanding of real-world behaviour, resulting in the development of new knowledge. Case studies are increasingly popular for research into social media (Kapoor, Tamilmani, Rana, et al., 2017) and have increasingly been used for Instagram based research (e.g. Budge, 2017; Green, Martinez, Kadja, et al., 2018).

ii) Questionnaires with independent visual artists about their use of Instagram to market their art, practice. A questionnaire which asked a number of independent visual artists, already selling their work on Instagram, about their reasons for using Instagram, as well as their specific process and strategies, was employed to compliment the more specific case study data, in order to provide a richer and more complete response to the first research questions. Questionnaires are an accessible, common, easy and low-budget method for collecting statistical data about a large group of people (Afolayan & Oniyinde, 2019; Sahu 2013).

iii) Creation and marketing of my own artwork on Instagram as reflective practice. This method was used to explore the findings from the case studies and online questionnaire. Candy (2006) is of the view that practice-based research and the findings of that practice can provide a better understanding of the creative phenomenon being studied.

iv) Finally, a reflection on this practice in the form of a reflective journal.

Writing a reflective journal is a common practice in qualitative and reflexive research (Etherington, 2004). A reflective journal can be used to create transparency in the research process and it helps to discover a suitable theoretical lens for the research (Ortlipp, 2008).

3.2 The case study method

Answers to the first of the two research questions will be approached using the case study method. Most people believe that a case study is a clinical description of people with unique characteristics and symptoms who need treatment and help. In fact, a case study is a much broader category of analysis, which often involves conducting an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2013). For (Bromley, 1986), case study research begins with the researcher's "desire to derive a(n) (up-) close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of 'cases' set in their real-world contexts" (p. 1)

A case study seeks to develop a thorough understanding of the context in which the phenomena being studied is located (Yin, 2003b). Furthermore, the size of the phenomenon being studied is relatively broad; a case study might investigate a person, a group, an institution or a community (Stake, 1995, 2005). Case study research is a "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand it's activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995; p, xi).

According to (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000), a case study refers to research that investigates a few cases in considerable depth. A case study is also often viewed as a strategy rather than a method and can employ both quantitative and qualitative methods (Stoecker, 1991, Yin 1994).

3.2.1 Types of case studies

There are many types of case studies, but the categorisations identified by Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) are the most prominent. Stake categorises case studies as *intrinsic*, *instrumental* and *collective* or *multiple*. An intrinsic case study is carried out to understand the nature of a particular case, not because it represents other cases, traits or problems but because the case itself is special and interesting. An instrumental case study is undertaken to provide insight into a wider issue that is external to the case but helps in understanding something else rather than the case itself. A collective or multiple case study refers several cases that are studied jointly to investigate a remarkable development or condition and is an extended form of instrumental case study (Stake 1995, 2005).

Yin (1994) distinguished three types of case studies, *exploratory*, *descriptive* and *explanatory*, and states that the choice of which type to employ is dependent on the research questions asked. For Yin, an exploratory study is carried out to answer all the 'what' questions, while the explanatory is used to answer 'how' and 'why' questions. The descriptive case study deals mostly with background information and answers questions about the conceptual review of theories. It can also be reckoned as an instrumental or explanatory case study because it helps to answer how relative theories play out in the real-life context.

3.2.2 What is a case

The first step involves defining the 'case' that is intended to be studied. Anything (people, institution, organization or a community) can be identified as a case, which should be a finite entity and have delimited boundaries (Dornyei, 2007). However, often, the boundary between case and its context might be unclear, and although the main unit in a case study analysis is definitely the case itself but sometime case studies also have subcases.

3.2.3 Case study design

There are many ways to conduct case studies, however the perfect case study design is determined by understanding the type or characteristics of different cases. Case studies

may be founded in ethnographic, historical, psychological or sociological orientations. Furthermore, when identifying a design, case study researchers must attend to issues of validity and reliability as they establish procedures and select instruments for their studies (Yin, 2009)

In order to examine the way that independent visual artists promote and market their work on Instagram, I carried out three case studies of three independent visual artists' Instagram accounts. The case studies examined the techniques, strategies and approaches that are being used by successful and practicing independent visual artists on Instagram. To achieve this, I first applied for ethics approval and sent the consent form to seven independent visual artists in order to get their signed consent for examining and using their Instagram data. Only three of them agreed and sent back their signed consent forms. Afterwards, I started regularly observing and taking notes about their online (Instagram) activities. This included observing when and what they posted, how they communicate with their followers and what kind of language, expression and hashtags they used to increase their engagement and interaction with their followers. At the same time, I applied these techniques, strategies and approaches (used by three of my case study artists) in the development of my own Instagram account to see whether I might replicate the success they had achieved.

The three independent visual artists selected for the case studies were Fortyonehundred (Lizzie Snow), Macromicroart (Mike Pethig), and Messyeverafter (Kelly Marie). These three particular individuals were selected because they are independent artists who have all become successful through the marketing of their work on of Instagram. None of the three were connected with art galleries when they started. I also selected these three artists to provide a degree of geographical representation to the study. Mike Pethig lives in New Zealand, Kelly Marie lives in America, and Lizzie Snow lives in Canada. I contacted them via email to ask if I can use their Instagram accounts and Instagram data as case studies for my exegeses. Once they gave their initial agreement, they were sent formal consent forms, which they signed and returned.

Corpus analysis

I also collected the language data from the captions of 200 of each of the three independent visual artists' posts for the purpose of carrying out a corpus analysis to look for the keywords used regarding their successful art promotion and sales. Corpus analysis involves the use of computers to quickly search and analyse databases containing collections of real language. Such databases are referred to as *corpora* and they can contain any principled collection of transcribed spoken or written language (Vaughan and O'Keeffe, 2015), in this case the artists Instagram captions. A keyword analysis compares the relative frequencies of words in the target corpus (i.e. the Instagram captions) to the frequency of words in a larger (and appropriate) reference corpus[2] in order to identify those words which are statistically significant. Keywords can provide some indication of the 'aboutness', or salience of a collection of a corpus. To carry out the corpus analysis I used the freely available corpus software AntConc.

3.3 Questionnaire as a research method

The second method used to collect data, to answer the research questions is the online questionnaire. A questionnaire can be defined as a set of questions designed for multiple respondents, mostly sent by post or email with an appeal for response (Sahu, 2013). Questionnaires can involve both qualitative and quantitative methods. This is dependent on the types of questions used, i.e. structured or closed-ended, unstructured or open-ended; telephonic, in-house, mail and online, etc. The online questionnaire is a faster, cheaper and easier way to collect data than conducting an interview in person or printing a hard copy to be completed by the interviewee (Mckee, 2015).

For this study, I conducted an open-ended online questionnaire. 50 Independent visual artists from Instagram were invited to take part in the questionnaire and were approached using their email addresses listed on their Instagram sites. 11 responded and were sent the questionnaire to complete. Through the questionnaire, the respondents were allowed to express their views in a free floating manner and they were asked to give suggestions for struggling independent visual artists to be successful marketers of their art on

---

2 A reference corpus is a balanced corpus designed to represent the nature of a broad speech community (e.g. New Zealand).

Instagram. There was a total of 13 questions in the online questionnaire and it was conducted using Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool that allows researchers to build a questionnaire online. A brief introduction about this study and the questionnaire link was sent to the respondents through email and an Instagram direct message. A list of the questions included in the online questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

3.4 Practice as research

The primary method used to answer the second research question is practice. According to (Candy, 2006), "Research that takes the nature of practice as its central focus is called 'practice-based' or 'practice-led' research. It is carried out by practitioners, such as artists, designers, curators, writers, musicians, teachers and others" (p. 2). According to (Nelson, 2013) practice-based research (PBR), involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry. Nelson states that PBR is a recognised method for medical science, design and engineering (Skains, 2018) where it is frequently referred to as action research (Bradbury & Reason, 2001). Nowadays, however, it has become an important component of art and humanity related studies and is recognised as leading to new knowledge (Skains, 2018). Skains goes on to suggest that creative practice is an empirical practice that, particularly in art-based settings, produces knowledge which is not possible to attain using other methods. Similarly, for Candy, practice-based research "is undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice" (Candy, 2006, p, 1).

In this study, and as outlined in Chapter 1, the practice involves both the creation of visual artwork and the promotion and marketing of that artwork independently through an Instagram account. The scope of the practice considered for this study also necessarily involves the interactions, commissions and other works that resulted from the Instagram marketing practice. The development of the Instagram account involved employing the findings emerging from the case studies and online questionnaire. A website was also developed to connect with the Instagram account.

The Instagram account used for the study is titled *artbynilum* [https://www.instagram.com/artbynilum/] It was an old Instagram account created on 1st September 2016 and had 307 followers when I began this study in August 2018. I

intentionally used an old Instagram account, so I could compare the different results and IG metrics prior to starting this study and during the study.

3.5 Reflective journal

A reflective journal is also used as a method to respond to the research questions. According to (Dornyei, 2007), a reflective journal is a dairy kept by the researcher during the process of a research project about the research and its topics of investigation. He states that the reflective journal is quite like field notes used in ethnographic research, in that it requires the documentations of experiences and observations as a researcher, (Brennen, 2017), in the context of new media research states that:

It's Important for new media researchers who do ethnography in virtual settings and online observing social media, chat rooms, blogs and websites to keep field notes. While many of these online interactions and recorded and archived electronically, field notes help media researchers to capture their own descriptions and perceptions of the interactions and they also reinforce the research function for participant observer (Brennen, 2017, p. 169).

The reflective journal used in this study involves recording the ongoing progress of my own Instagram account. I focused on the effects of applying the techniques, strategies and processes identified in the three case studies and online questionnaire to my own posts. These effects included the level of engagement with my viewers and followers, how many the particular post reached, how many likes it achieved, as well as the number and type of comment shares and saves my posts received. I also documented the changes I made to my Instagram processes as a result of this ongoing information. A summary of some of the entries from my journal are included in Chapter 6, along with evidence in the form of screenshots. The reflective journal was updated regularly.

My study received ethics approval on 29th April 2018, by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (Ethics number 19/92).

Chapter 4: Case Studies

4.0 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on describing three case studies of independent visual artists Instagram accounts. Screenshots from the case study artists' Instagram accounts are also included in this chapter.

Case Study 1

4.1 Introduction

Lizzie Snow is a 23 years old independent New Zealand artist, who is better known by her Instagram artist name *fortyonehundred*. She was born in Vancouver, Canada, brought up in New Zealand and has recently moved to Tofino BC Canada to open an art gallery (Snow, 2019). The name of the gallery is *The Fortyonehundred Art Gallery*. Snow started as a young independent visual artist in 2014 and primarily due to her use of Instagram continues to flourish today. She received a Bachelor of Design Innovation from Victoria University of Wellington and graduated with a master's degree in Fine Arts from the same university in 2018. As indicated on her website, her work is inspired by fractals:

My artwork is characterised by intricate patterns inspired by fractals in nature, exploring ideas surrounding interconnection and the human experience. (Snow, 2019, para. 1)

Drawing upon ideas inspired by the fractal, Snow largely develops contemporary explorations of the Hindu and Buddhist spiritual symbol. In doing so she creates original artworks, paints large scale murals, and releases limited edition prints and stickers, her painted murals can be found in in Canada, America and New Zealand.

Snow has also worked with many brands, and she mentions that collaboration is a core part of her experience and practice as an artist (Snow, 2019). She has collaborated with brands such as Lululemon, Peugeot, Converse, Topshop, 3WiseMen, All Birds, TEDx, Victoria University, Garage Project, DENIK, The Paper Rain Project, LaVilla, AllBirds & SkillShare. She has also been a brand ambassador for Lululemon, New Zealand. Recently she created an art piece *Earth Spirit* in collaboration with *Roy Henry Vickers*, a world-renowned Canadian First Nation-artist.

Snow has also supported non-profit organisations including ThinkLadder, YouthLine, InsideOut, the Cameron Wilson Trust, Shakti Wellington Women's refuge, Wellington Women's Refuge, Kapiti Youth Support and Rainbow Youth.

4.1.1 Instagram account (fortyoneundred)
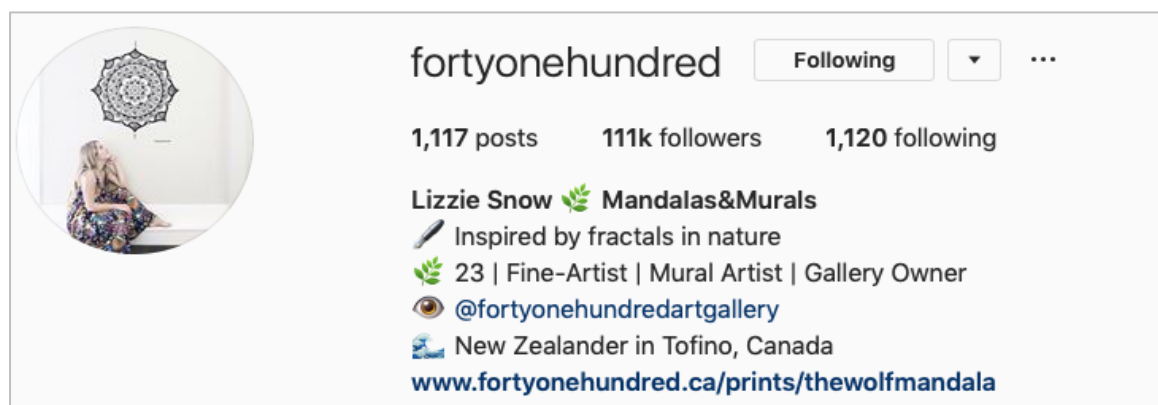
Figure 4.1.1a: Fortyonehundred Instagram bio screenshot. Copyright (2019) by Lizzie Snow. Reproduced with permission.

Fortyonehundred's (Lizzie Snow) is particularly active on Instagram and posts almost daily. On the 21st November 2018, when I first began the case study of her Instagram (IG) account, she had 107,000 followers, followed 1182 people, and had posted 997 times. Approximately 8 months later, on the 8th of July 2019 (Figure 4.1.1b), she has unfollowed 62 people, but received 4000 more followers herself. We can also see a significant rise in her posts, that is, 1117.
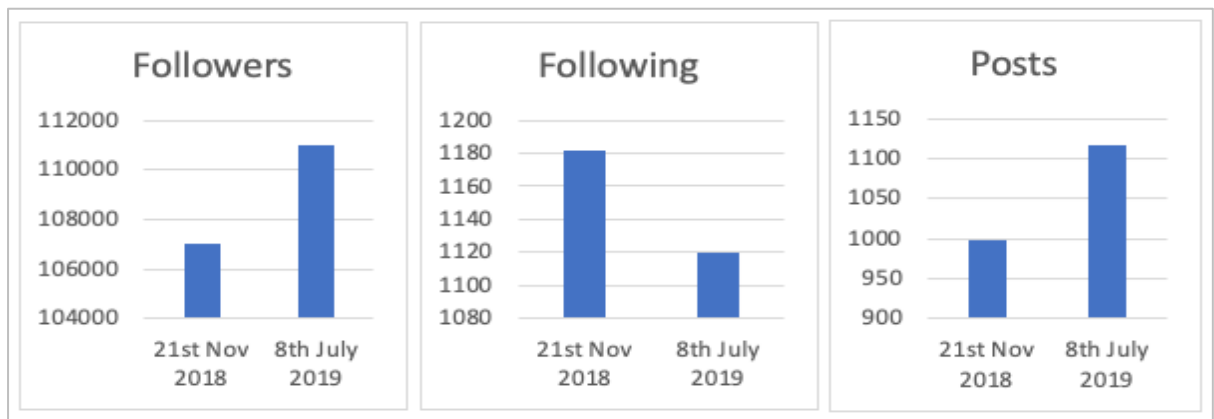
Figure 4.1.1b: Fortyonehundred followers and posts graphs. Copyright (2019) by Lizzie Snow. Reproduced with permission.

These graphs (Figure 4.1.1b) compare the number of followers, the number being followed and the number of posts on Snow's Instagram account for two different dates, 21st November 2018 and 8th July 2019. We can see a considerable increase in her number of followers and posts. The unusual thing is that she also unfollowed 62 Instagram accounts herself across these two dates. This indicates that Snow carefully manages her account and engages in regular cleansing and updates.

According to her brief Instagram bio (Snow, 2019), she is a New Zealander, who is now based in Tofino, Canada. She provides her email address (lizzie@fortyonehundred.ca) on her Instagram site to enable business inquiries, and there is also a link to her web page (https://www.fortyonehundred.co.nz/). Every sentence of her bio starts with an emoji representative of nature. In her Instagram profile picture, she can be seen sitting down in front of one of her completed wall murals, looking art her art and smiling. This perhaps depicts her joy after accomplishing something which she views as personally important and valuable. On her webpage, she answers the question about the meaning of fortyonehundred, by saying that:

Fortyonehundred is my artist name! 41 is the latitude coordinate of Wellington, New Zealand - the place where I started my career as an artist. 100 is a number that represents wholeness - linking back to my contemporary exploration of the mandala, where wholeness and completion are strong themes within the artwork. (Snow, 2019, para. 1)

If we look through her Instagram posts, we see a world of mostly black and white art drawings and murals, although on rare occasions she includes a touch of gold.
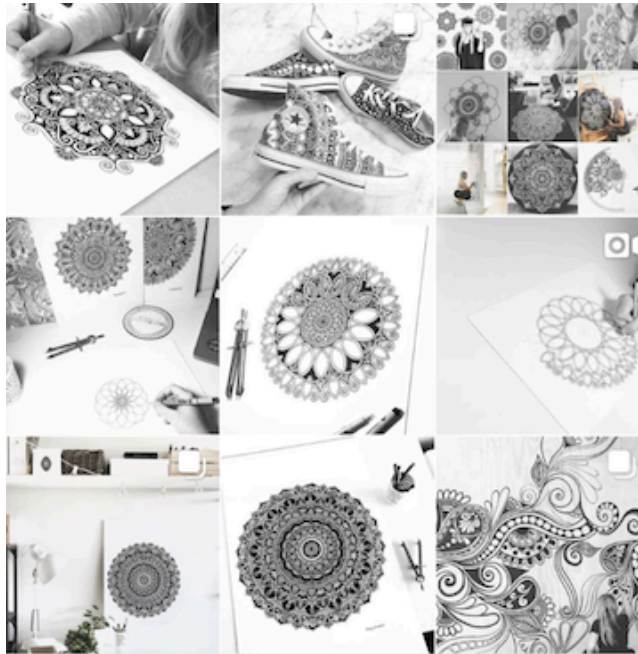
Figure 4.1.1c: Fortyonehundred Instagram wall screenshot. Copyright (2019) by Lizzie Snow. Reproduced with permission.

Many of Snow's Instagram posts are videos of the development of her work, suggesting that she wants to share the experience of creating her art with her followers. They mostly show only her hands working on a project or though sometimes they include herself in the full painting murals. However, Snow also includes some images of completed works. Whether the post shows either a work in progress or a completed work has an impact on the likes that the post receives. Posts showing a completed work typically receive about 3000 likes in average, while significantly the videos of Snow creating her work receive 15 to 20k likes on average. This suggests that her followers are more interested in seeing her working processes. Given that many of her followers are independent visual artists and self-learners, this is not surprising. Table 4.1a provides a more specific statistical breakdown of Snow's last 100 Instagram posts (until 21st November 2018).

Table 4.1a: Analysis of fortyonehundred's one hundred Instagram posts until 21st Nov, 2018

Type of work	posts	Average number of likes	Average number of comments
Time-laps videos	11	15000	40
Videos real time	14	15000	30
Work and herself	24	4000	40
Closeups	23	4000	30
Incomplete work	28	3500	30
Working on beech	3	3500	35
Mandala on paper	46	3200	25
Wall-Mural free-flow	6	3000	50
Wall Mural mandala	14	3000	50
Wood Panel	15	3000	35
Work and dog	9	2500	30
Complete work	29	2500	35
Free-flowing art on paper	14	2500	22
Digital art	1	1300	20

Table one suggests that her video posts receive a considerably higher number of likes than her other posts, with 15 thousand likes on average (although some of her individual video posts received more than 30 thousand likes). The second most liked posts are those where she is showing herself working on her artwork, and third most liked posts are her incomplete works and the posts showing her working on a beach. Interestingly, her Wall murals received a significantly higher number of comments than all the other posts, followed by her videos. In total she posted 46 mandalas drawn on paper. She posted only one digital work, which received the lowest number of likes and comments. (Note: These statistics were generated on 21st November 2018)

4.1.2 Instagram Stories and highlights

Most of the time Snow works in her studio, but her *Instagram Stories* and posts show that she loves to draw on beaches as well, indicating her love of nature but also semiotically enhancing her fractals in nature thematic. Instagram stories allows users to share more than one photos/video into one story, disappearing after 24 hours, although the user can save any story indefinitely as a 'highlight' that appears on their Instagram account beneath their bio. Instagram Stories Highlights are useful tools for businesses to showcase and promote their brand to new visitors by allowing them to discover what a company is all about.

Snow has saved many of the stories that show her creating art on the beach or in her studio with her dog and her friends as highlights and has categorised them as *Inspirations, Thank u, Prints, Mugs Bags, Mural Pens, Q&A, George* (her dog), *Gallery* etc. This makes it easy for her new and existing followers to learn more about her and her work. She mostly appears with her dog, which shows her love for animals and that she enjoys company of her dog and friends, one of her highlights is a kiss emoticon where all the photos are of her and her boyfriend Paul Levy. There are also many stories of her exhibitions, studio and her own art gallery. Overall, her highlights combined, comprehensively construct her identity as an artist. This has been further enhanced by the question and answer sessions carried out by Snow, using the *Ask me questions* feature of Instagram stories. These sessions have also been added to the highlights for the perusal of future followers. This is possibly also because followers repeatedly ask her the same questions, for example, about her inspirations, or her choice of material and pens, etc. By doing this *Ask me a question* session she is not only answering her follower's questions, but marketing her art, and promoting her own range of *mural pens* and *glass bottles*. Images of the latter are frequently added to the background of the question and answer sessions (Figure 4.1.2).
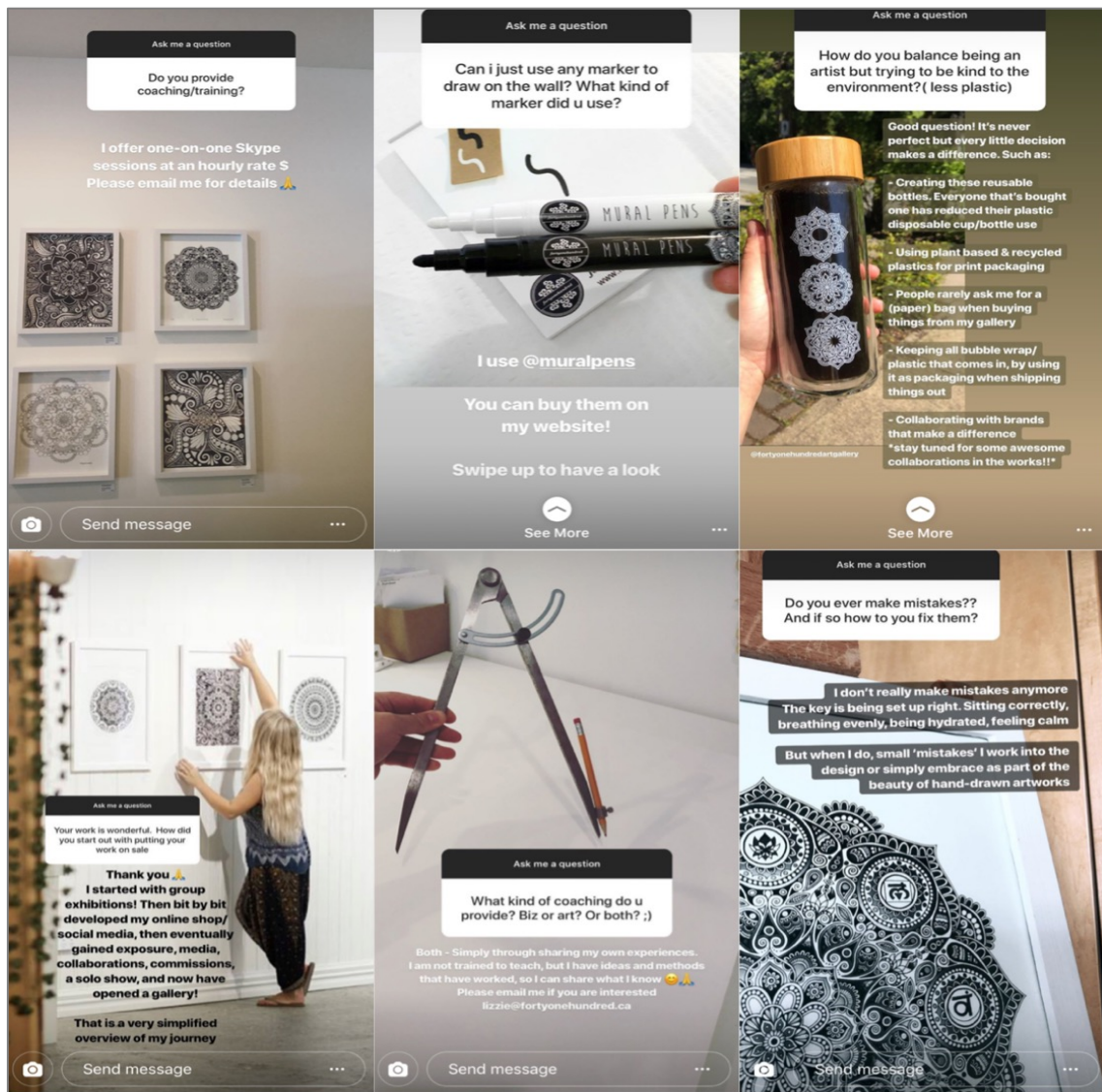
Figure 4.1.2: Fortyonehundred story (ask me a question) screenshot Collage. Copyright (2019) by Lizzie Snow. Reproduced with permission.

Information from Figure 4.1.2 always indicates that Snow is doing one-on-one training and coaching sessions related to art and business through skype and that her reusable bottles are environmentally friendly. We also find information about her own range of black and white mural pens, her gradual success from group exhibitions to gallery owner and that she learns through practice. These images which use both text and pictures indicate the multimodal nature of the communication she has with her followers. Through this use of multimodal communication, she is not only providing training and coaching to other people, but she herself is developing new ways to create and sell her creative work through her IG account.

4.1.3 Instagram post Captions

When Lizzie snow posts images of her art on Instagram, she uses the accompanying text *caption* to build a connection with her followers. To do this she gives a detailed account of the size and material of her artwork, she also tells her followers about the place it was created, and the time taken to produce the work. She mentions whether she will make limited-edition prints or open edition prints and discusses future plans about work and travel events. For example, at the beginning of 2017, she told her followers about a solo exhibition which was going to take place in February 2018. She also describes the details, progress and feelings she has for a specific piece of art while it is being developed.

2 days till I can share my massive news with you all. Can't wait to tell you what's going on! (Snow, 4th Feb 2009).

Snow posted this caption along with images of her art and her dog, in order to create a degree of suspense for her viewers. Two days later on 6th of February, she announced that she is going to open her own art gallery in Canada. This kind of post encourages her followers' interest in her future posts and her IG account.

I'm excited to release this artwork "One Universe" as a Limited-Edition print! Fine-art Giclée prints, A3, edition of 50. Signed, numbered, unframed. Printed on archival paper: 310gsm Hanhemuhle German Etching Cotton Rag. Printed with archival inks: Epson Ultrachrome K3 This artwork was originally a 3-metre mural that I painted for my First Solo Exhibition in February. Read about the artwork concept on my website - link in bio I ship worldwide, and for the first 5 orders I would love to offer you free shipping with the code "OneUniverse" (Snow, 10th April 2019).

Snow also discusses her boyfriend as well as her dog George. She regularly introduces her dog as an 'assistant' in many of her posts. For Instance:

"George has been assisting with quality control" (Snow, 29th March, 2019). "🖤 My dog George is the best gallery assistant 🖤" (Snow, 22nd June, 2019). "Helpful art assistant 😍🌿💭🖌" (Snow, 24th June, 2018). "Happy birthday to my favourite art assistant ever!!! 8 years and the puppy novelty hasn't worn off 😆 So cute how he loves hanging out & napping on my desk 🐾🌿💭🖌 Please tell me about your dogs! 😍" (Snow, 29th June, 2018). "😍 Love this photo of my boy George helping me paint a mural 🖤" (Snow, 4th Feb, 2019). George arrived safe & happy in Canada! 🖤 So good to have this little hot water bottle / art assistant / mini wolf back on my lap while I work. He's loving the daily beach walks, couch access & constant attention (4th March, 2019).

Her discussion about her dog in her captions indicates that she is very close to her him and the way she regularly refers to him as her *assistant* and *boy* generates a degree of emotional attachment between Snow and her followers. She also not only updates her followers about her dog's activities. Many people love pets, so when she posts her art with her dog there is most often an increase in engagement level. Many social media marketers and influencers include their pets in their posts. Annie Pilon explains it as:

"Pets have pretty universal appeal. So using your own pet in marketing materials working with other cute animals can help you make your brand more appealing to people in general, which can be beneficial when included with the rest of your marketing strategy that is more carefully niched." (Pilon, 2018, para 4)
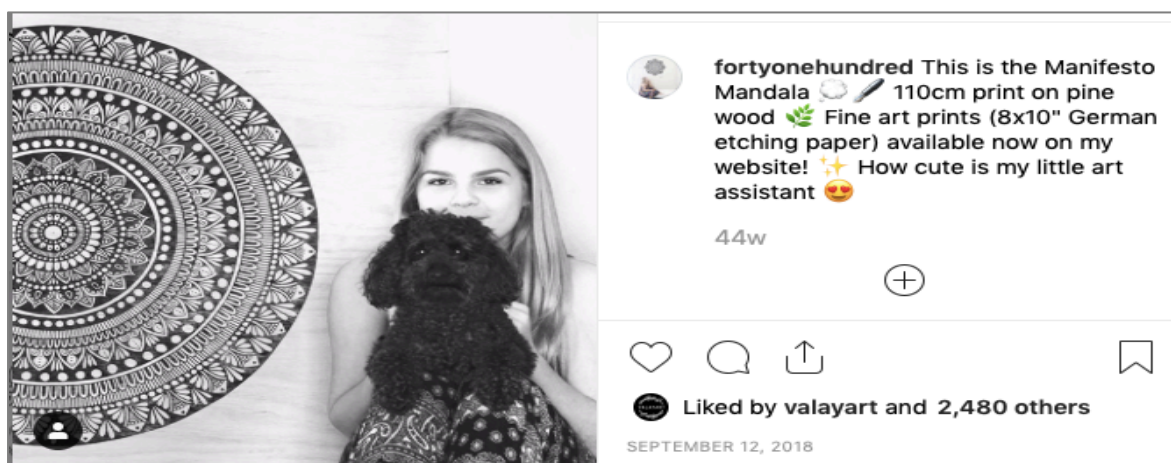
Figure 4.1.3: Fortyonehundred's Instagram post with caption (12th Sep, 2018). Copyright (2019) by Lizzie Snow. Reproduced with permission.

4.1.4 Comments

By communicating with her followers by posting about her future plans and by giving details about her projects, she succeeds in making a meaningful connection with them. She also replies to most of the comments posted by her followers. This works to further enhance the connection already created between herself and her followers through the detailed information offered about her works and through the unfolding narratives about her life.
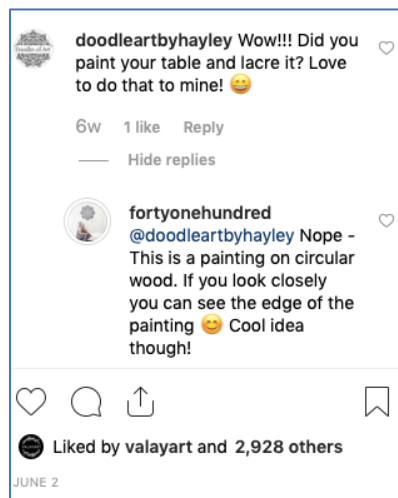
Figure 4.1.4a: Fortyonehundred's comment Screenshot (2nd June, 2019). Copyright (2019) by Lizzie Snow. Reproduced with permission.
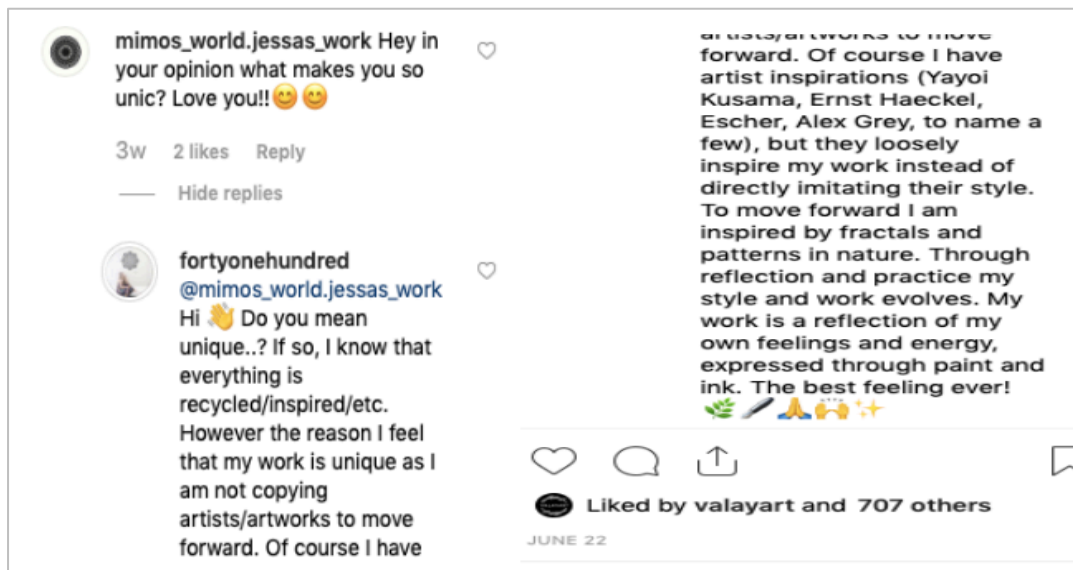
Figure 4.1.4b: Fortyonehundred's comment Screenshot. Copyright (2019) by Lizzie Snow. Reproduced with permission.

Figures 4.1.4a and 4.1.4b are examples of Snow's detailed replies to her followers' comments. They indicate that Snow invests much time constructing a level of genuine engagement with her followers. Her choice of words in Figure 4.1.4b when she discusses the difference between inspiration and imitation indicates how confident she is when she talks about her work's originality.

Snow also repeatedly uses emoticons and emojis in her bio, captions and comments. These are often employed to indicate empathy and emotion. According to (Churches, Nicholls, Thiessen et al. 2014), when we look at a smiley, the same part of the brain is activated, as when we look at the real human face. We read these messages as emotional communication, rather than words.

4.1.5 Hashtags

The use of hashtags plays an important role for Snow and can be seen in almost all her posts. Interestingly, she doesn't add all hashtags to her captions, but adds them as comment to her posts. She also repeatedly uses her own hashtag (#fortyonehundred) in her posts so that her brand remains prominent. If she is collaborating with someone or

paying gratitude to someone, she mentions their name and hashtag in the caption accompanying the post.

Some of her most used hashtags are:

#fortyonehundred #thefortyonehundredartgallery #fortyonehundredartgaller #lizziesnow #lizziesnowartist #tofinoartist #canada #tofinobc #tofinoartgallery #newzealander #inspiredbynature #natureinspired #artgallery #fractals #mandalas #mandalaart #mandaladrawing #murals #wallmurals #zentangle #geometry #sacredgeometry #blackandwhite

Most of the hashtags are for her self-promotion i.e. her name (#lizziesnow), IG (#fortyonehundred), art gallery (#fortyonehundredartgallery), location (#tofinobc, #canada), nationality (#newzealander), inspiration (#natureinspired), her IG theme (#blackandwhite) and rest of them are artforms (#mandalas, #murals #zentangle) and techniques (#sacredgeometry).She wisely use these hashtags to reach maximum accounts for publicity and marketing. Adding hashtags to IG captions is the most effective way to get discovered by new people, to receive more engagement, followers and customers for your business (Chacon, 2019).

4.1.6 Corpus Analysis

Table 4.1b shows the top 25 keywords of Lizzie Snow's 200 captions collected from 23rd June 2019 to 9th July 2019. This corpus of captions involved 1010 words in total. As indicated in Chapter 3, key words are identified by comparing the frequencies of words in a target corpus, such as Snow's captions, with their relative frequencies in a larger reference corpus of more general language use. Based on their comparative relative frequencies each word is given a keyness score. The higher a keyness score, the more key a word is to a particular corpus.

Table: 4.1b Keyword list created by AntConc

Rank	Keyword	Frequency	Keyness
1	artwork	57	553.53

2	mandala	47	464.67
3	my	166	427.93
4	mural	34	306.29
5	fortyonehundredartgallery	27	266.87
6	prints	26	229.66
7	i	213	222.26
8	website	28	202.34
9	fortyonehundred	18	177.89
10	painting	27	168.67
11	this	122	150.54
12	nz	13	128.47
13	drawing	22	127.42
14	thank	23	127.14
15	amazing	18	119.78
16	bio	14	119.34
17	favourite	12	111.55
18	available	24	101.47
19	m	42	97.97
20	photos	15	97.58
21	converse	11	97.57
22	original	21	96.57
23	link	16	92.35
24	print	15	89.08
25	excited	9	88.93

What is clear in the table that that references to the different types of works that she produces are key in the comments of Snow (*artwork, mandala, mural, prints, painting, drawing, photos*). She also repeatedly uses the personal pronouns *I, my and I'm* (m) and her Instagram names *fortyonehundred* and *fortyonehundredartgallery*. Furthermore with much marketing discourse, positive modifiers are also key in her comments, for example, *amazing*, *favourite*, *original* and *excited*.

4.1.7 Website

Importantly Snow integrates her Instagram account with other social media platforms. A link to her website, which sells not only original artworks (priced from $350 to $3200), but also prints of her art and pens, tapestries, stickers and enamel pins appears at the top of her Instagram account. Her webpage includes her portfolio, videos, photography and a blog as well as her artist CV with details. On her website she states:

I am honoured to have over 120,000 people following my artwork across social media. I work with businesses for social media promotions if their product aligns with my brand and my values. Get in touch to see if we're a good fit!
(Snow, 2019, para. 1)

Her statement reveals that she is not only an artist with her own brand, but that she also works as an *influencer* for other brands by collaborating with them for promotions. Snow changes her website link whenever she adds something new to her website. For example, if she writes a blog post, or she's collaborating with a brand or people, she will add a direct link to her Instagram website link section. Additionally, she has done many blog/vlog posts where she explains about the material she uses, how she packs her online orders including vlogs of her studio and art gallery. Her website also has her artist CV with all the details of her exhibitions, collaborations and experiences as an artist.

Case Study 2

4.2 Introduction

Mike Pethig is an independent New Zealand artist, based in Wellington. He is better known by his Instagram artist name, *macromicroart*. He chose this name due to his focus on drawing micro-level details of the mandala, which he slowly builds to full works, sometimes using video to show this process (Pethig, 2019). Even though Pethig's main content involves mandalas, he also likes to draw cityscapes. He tells his followers in the '*about'* section on his website:

I had a short-lived career as street-artist, until I got caught and ended up painting a large part of my local school's walls. … I was spending too many afternoons watching my daughters go through swimming lessons. I generally had a work pad and pen with me, so I started doodling. What began as a doodle has grown into a real Passion for cityscapes and mandalas (Pethig, 2019, para. 1-2)

4.2.1 Instagram account (macromicroart)

Pethig's Instagram bio is written very simply, reflecting on what he does as hand crafted ink art. He mentions the types of pens he uses and gives a description of the paper he uses to draw on. His Instagram account has 65.3 thousand followers and he himself follows 91 Instagram accounts himself. He posted 848 times from Nov 20th 2015 to July 20th 2019.

The link to his website where his prints or original artwork can be bought, is on the URL box in his Instagram bio. He has used this very strategically as the exact link he puts up, 'www.macromicro.co.nz/shop' goes straight to his 'shop' page. His goal to use his Instagram account as a means to sell his artwork to his followers is clear.

Figure 4.2.1a: Macromicroart's Instagram bio screenshot. Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

Pethig's profile image on his account is black and white, just like all his artwork. In the image it shows his hand holding a drawing pen, in the process of drawing a mandala. The image clearly indicates that this is an artist's account.

When Pethig first created his Instagram account on the 20th of November, 2015 he posted twice in November and in December. These occasional posts contained random drawings. It wasn't until June 2016, that Pethig began posting regularly and these post primarily involved cityscapes, rather than mandalas. Throughout this time, he mainly received between 10-20 likes per post. Figure 4.2.1b show one of Pethig's cityscape drawings posted on November 7th, 2017, which only received 25 likes and 2 comments.

Figure 4.2.1b: Macromicroart's cityscape drawing (7th Nov, 2016). Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

His posts typically received less than 50 likes until the first week of March, 2017. After a year and four months of being on Instagram, the number of likes Pethig received started to increase as his posts began to focus more on his mandala works, rather than the cityscapes. This was another strategic move, as it was clear that his followers had a greater appreciation for his mandalas. The following graph shows the number of posts Pethig made by category from Jan 2016 to 20 July 2019
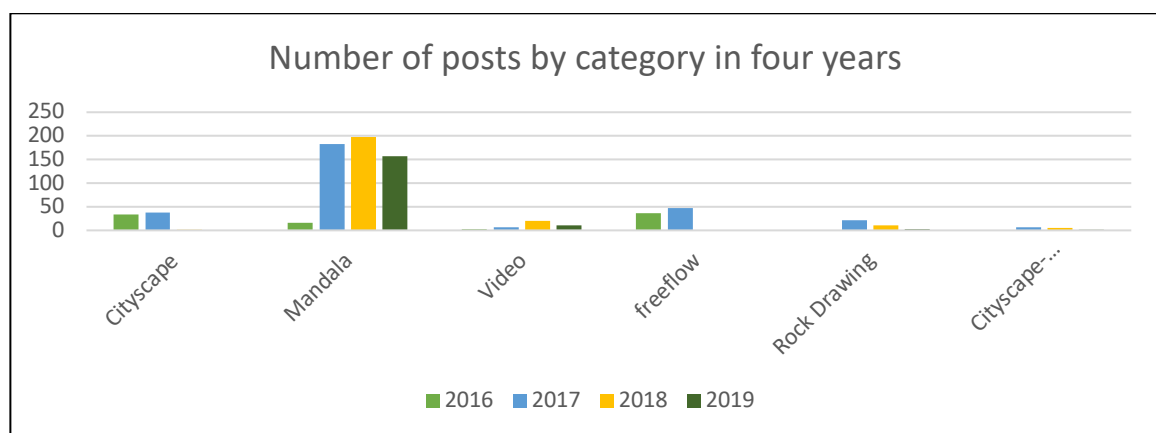
Figure 4.2.1c: Graph of Macromicroart's number of post by category.

It is clear, that once Pethig realised that he was receiving an increased number of likes for his mandala posts these became the focus of his Instagram account, rather than his cityscape posts. Figure 4.2.1d shows a mandala drawing posted, which received a total of 231 likes; a considerable increase within only a short span of time.
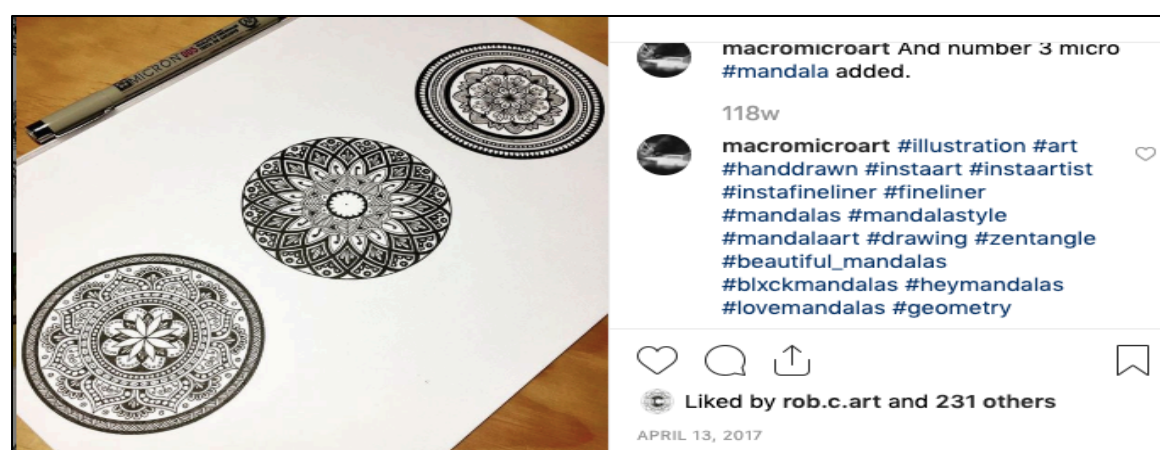
Figure 4.2.1d: Macromicroart's mandala drawing post (13th of April, 2017). Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 4.2.1e provides a graph indicating the number of Instagram posts made by Pethig throughout the last four years. The graph shows a major growth in number of posts made within the last year and a half. In January 2016, he posted twice a month, but by the end of 2016 this increased up to twice a week. January 2017 stands out with 43 posts by 2017 and in 2018 he posted once a day and has continued doing this until the present. Overall, his average number of posts in a month is 25. This shows, that Pethig is consciously trying to manage his Instagram presence in order to engage his followers, and potential buyers.
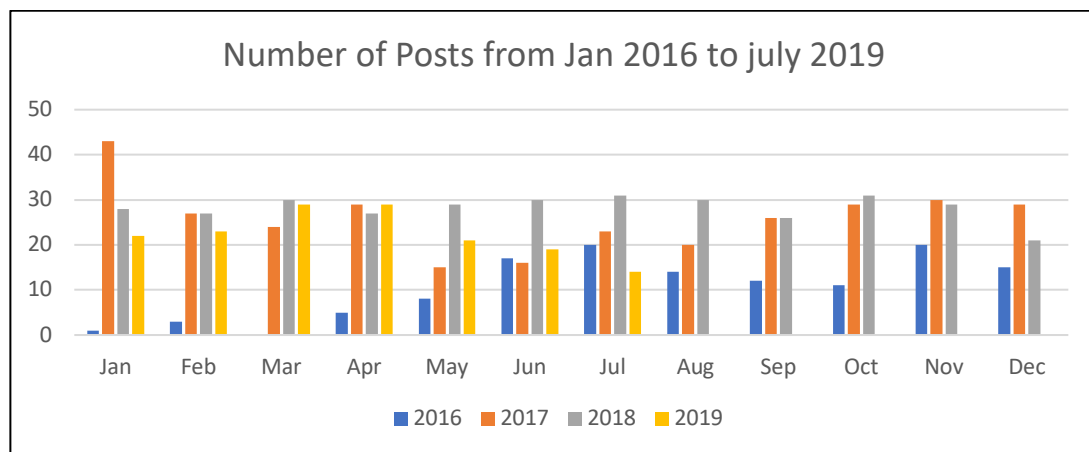
Figure 4.2.1e: Graph of Maromicroart's number of posts (Jan, 2016 to July, 2019)

4.2.2 Process Videos

A very valuable technique used by Pethig is the time lapse video. Time-lapse videos are recorded at a very low frame rate and when played back at normal speed, time appears to be moving faster. In his time lapse videos, Pethig shows only his hand drawing the mandala from start to complete. This technique can be used to show new and aspiring independent visual art learners details about Pethig's working processes. The total number of videos he had posted up until 20th July 2019 was 39. This included three videos in 2016, six in 2017, 20 in 2018 and 10 in 2019. It is of course likely that he has since posted more videos, because these statistics were created in July 2019.

Furthermore, once Pethig started adding time lapse videos that showed him in the process of drawing mandalas, the number of *views* (Instagram uses the term *views* to show that how many times this video is being viewed/played), he received significantly increased.

Figure 4.2.2a is a still image of a mandala flyer video post, which received 118, 402 views.

This insignificant increase in views most likely brings him more followers.
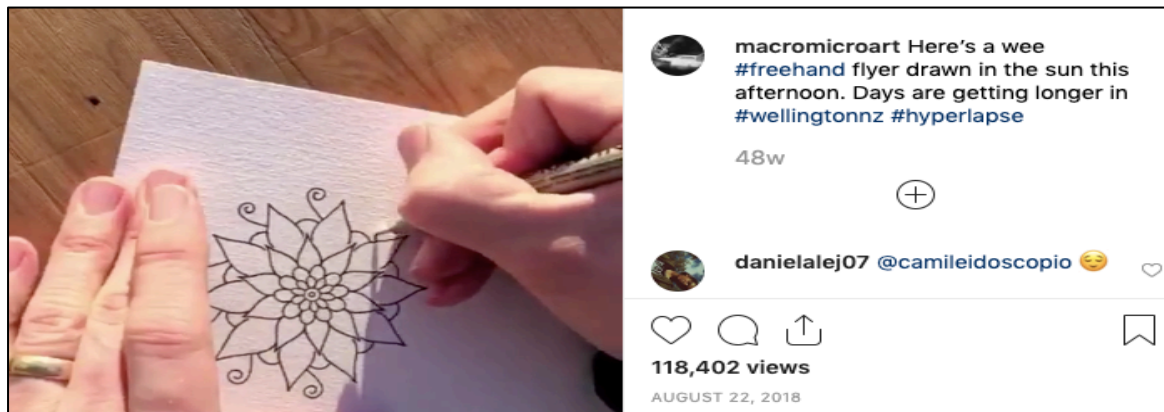
Figure 4.2.2a: Macromicroart's video post (showing views) screenshot (22nd Aug, 2018). Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

A possible reason for his significant increase in views is that most of his followers are themselves independent visual artists, many who are learning their craft, and so they take an interest in the progress of his work. Figure 4.2.2b (a screenshot of same post as Figure 4.2.2a but indicating likes) reveals that while he receives thousands of views, not every viewer decides to like his post.
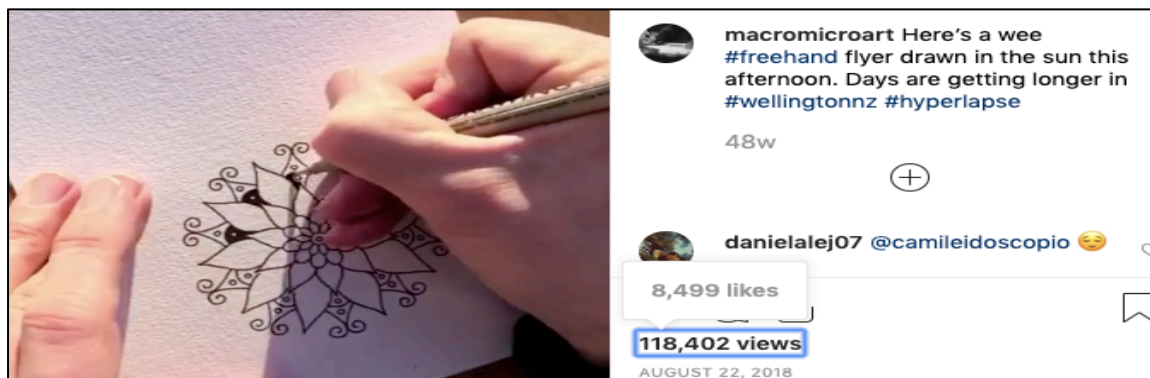
Figure 4.2.2b: Macromicroart's video post (showing likes) screenshot (22nd Aug, 2018). Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

4.2.3 Instagram Post Captions

Pethig provides very few details of the narrative behind each post. In the beginning, he posted without any caption or sometimes only included one word or a brief comment of three to five words. He also only used the hashtags *#doodle* or sometimes *#sketchbook* in his early posts. Figure 4.2.3 contains screenshots of five captions from 2016 and five from 2017. As can be seen in 2016 he only included one or two words in caption and used few hashtags, while 2017 shows a gradual increase in the word count of his captions. 2017 is also the year that he became more active on Instagram (Figure 4.2.1e) and began receiving more likes (Figure 4.2.1d). In these captions, he tries to establish a connection with his followers by briefing them specifically about his artwork; however, unlike Lizzie Snow (Case Study 1), he rarely writes about other things that happen in his life.

macromicroart Landscape this time.
166w

macromicroart Freehand flower #doodle on A3.
159w

macromicroart Flower #doodle
149w

macromicroart Pool #sketchbook #doodles #doodle
139w

macromicroart #doodle #doodles #doodling #workinprogress
136w

2016

macromicroart Placing all my cards on the table.
#doodle #doodles #card #cards

macromicroart Treehouse #cards #doodles #sketchbook #instaartist

macromicroart And here's a six pack of micro #mandalas. Fun keeping them small.

macromicroart Today's #drawing carried on with the #mandala #cityscape collision. Fun to merge the parts.

macromicroart We're getting bucket loads of sun in #wellington atm but also our fair share of wind. Nice to have some friendly paperweights to help finish tonight's #mandala.

2017

Figure 4.2.3a: Macromicroart's captions screenshots from years 2016 and 2017. Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

A healthy growth can be seen in Pething's caption writing from 2017 to present, (Figure 4.2.3b), where he seems to write small stories about his day. For example, in one 2018 caption he states, "found a couple of beautifully smooth rocks today. Perfect for some freehand #rockmandala. Start with a dot and hope. Drawn with Faber Castell Pitt pens." Here, Pethig not only explains when he created his artwork but also describes the material (rocks, Faber Castell pens) that he used and his creative approach (freehand, with a dot and hope). In the third screenshot from 2018 (Figure 4.2.3b), he tells his reader that he learnt cartography years ago, and is now employing it in his art. We can easily spot the difference in growth of his captions. He seems to create a strong relationship with his followers by exposing more about his personal life and what's is happening in his life.

When he states, "running and riding through one New Zealand forest, School holidays are over, today has been a very sad day, been a busy weekend", (Figure 4.2.3b), he is narrating stories, albeit short ones, about his life.

macromicroart Haven't figured out if this is better as a landscape or portrait #mandalatangle...

macromicroart Found a couple of beautifully smooth rocks today. Perfect for some freehand #rockmandala. Start with a dot and hope. Drawn with Faber-Castell Pitt pens.

macromicroart Years ago I studied cartography. Who knew it would come to use! Fun blend of #waihekeisland for ya'll. Still mixing it up!

macromicroart Following the Skyline Mandala prompt for #mandalatober18 today. Been loving the creativity shown over the month. Hats off to the folks who've made it all happen. 🤙😊

macromicroart So a cramping right hand is very relieved to complete this #mandala #cityscape mashup. Forgot how hard the wee houses and buildings are to draw!

macromicroart Been off the grid for the last three days running and riding through one New Zealand's remote forests. But here's one of my holiday #cards from last week. 🙂

macromicroart School holidays over so I can get back into a bigger piece. A3 #mandala #workinprogress underway...

macromicroart A3 #mandala complete. Enjoying the #doodleleafseries leaves atm. Might work on these for a bit. Drawn on Das Watercolour paper.

macromicroart Today has been a very sad day in my country. I pondered not posting but I think art creates smiles and happiness. Look after each other all. #doodleleafseries

macromicroart Been a busy weekend but here's a snap of my latest #workinprogess #watercolorpaper

2018   2019

Figure 4.2.3b: Macromicroart's captions screenshots from years 2018 and 2019. Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

In summary, Pethig used to let his followers know very little about his personal life or plans in the first two years of his Instagram account, however as we go through his posts from 2018 and 2019, we can easily find a connection developing between Pethig and his followers. In these increasingly informative captions he tells his followers, for example, that he *studied cartography years ago,* he mentions his *daughter's swimming lessons*, their *school holidays,* their *football lessons,* his c*ramping right hand* and that he had an year of back pain. These posts let followers in on his personality, feelings and family. In

44

doing so he also reveals the extent of his physical health to his viewers and constructs a sense of synthetic personalisation or contact (Fairclough, 1989) with his viewers.

One post created by Pethig that is interesting to examine further is titled "Three amigos". "Meet Leaf, Slick and Curly". It was posted on 10th November 2018. Pethig included this humorous post alongside a drawing of three mandalas. He frequently uses a humorous description to name his mandala drawings and has used this particular expression several times to describe them. Pethig's quirky personality has entwined with his drawings to entertain his followers, and potentially works to encourage more likes. Pethig also opens about this enthusiasm towards his work in his captions. He uses raw and simple words to describe his feelings, thus providing a seemingly genuine touch to the interactions he has with his followers, most of whom are unlikely to have met him. These kinds of captions build personal relationships and are not just business related, despite the account being active as a means of marketing for his artwork.

4.2.4 Comments

One thing lacking in Pethig's account are responses to the comments made on his posts. The majority of comments posted by other Instagram users are full of praise for his work, however, only on a few occasions has he replied, and these usually involve a simple, 'thank you'. Perhaps, if he had replied to each and every comment then a greater affiliation would have formed between the two account holders.

It is interesting to note that, while in the initial years of his Instagram account he was not responsive at all to comments, from 1st July, 2018 to 10th July, 2019, he received 6339 comments in total on 301 posts, and he replied to 213 comments. Figure 4.2.4a is a collection of 6 screenshots showing his replies to comments during this period. These indicate he avoids long conversations with his followers, perhaps suggesting a reserved personality.
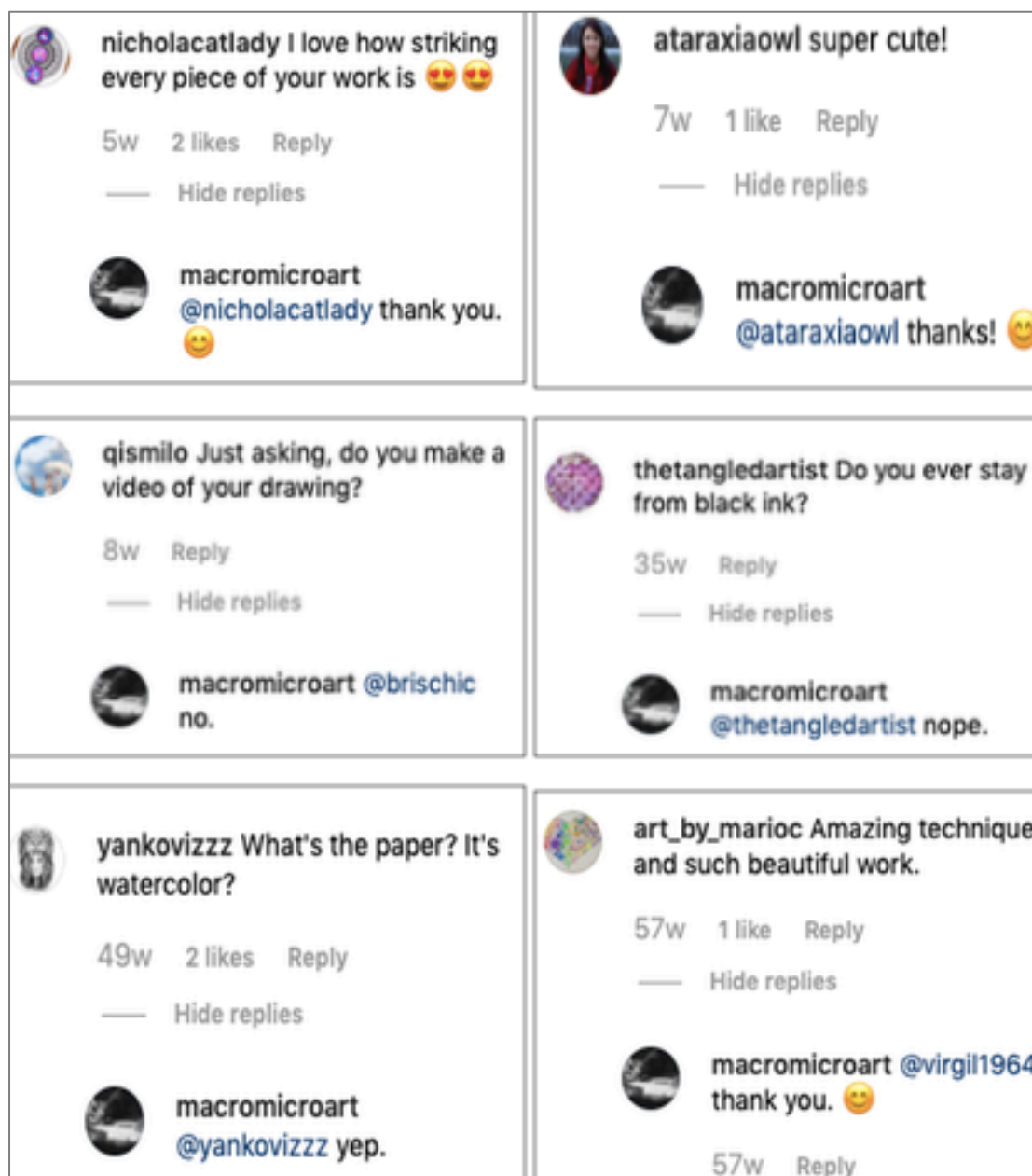
Figure 4.2.4a: Macromicroart's replies to the comments made on his posts. Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 4.2.4a shows an example of Pethig's response to comments from (18th of July 2018) where he begins to reply in longer sentences and creates greater contact with his followers. In these replies he explains the pens he uses and asks a follower where she found his post. These provide examples of Pethig's increasing realisation that it is important to create relationships with his followers.

anggia.prima Your black and white raindrop shape is my favorite. 💧 It often appears in your mandalas. For me, those raindrops make your mandala more beautiful. ✨❤️✨

11w   1 like   Reply

—— Hide replies

macromicroart @anggia.prima thank you. That combination is a go to for me. Nice to know it's seen. 😊

crow.doodles Beautiful! Do you run into problems with watercolor paper drying up your pens? I love using that paper because it's so sturdy but it seems like my microns and Staedtlers dry out twice as fast.

15w   2 likes   Reply

—— Hide replies

macromicroart @felttipcrow not really sure tbh. I always draw on watercolour so haven't much of a gauge. I do go through pens like a Trojan. Still baiting for a sponsor to balance the costs. No bites to date though!

davesparksnz Nice. A bit of a return to the classics with lashings of the new stuff. Love that tight border framing too. Got gravitas

16w   1 like   Reply

—— Hide replies

macromicroart @davesparksnz thanks Dave. Another day in the capital and we missed each other again!

sandra_sruthy Perfection ❤️❤️❤️

21w   1 like   Reply

—— Hide replies

macromicroart @sandra_sruthy thanks. Just out of curiosity, how did you cone across this post? I've had a lot of love for this piece tonight but I posted it last week. Just interested to know if you'd mind? Thanks. 🙏

Figure 4.2.4b: Macromicroart's replies to the comments made on his posts. Copyright (2009) by Mike Pethig. Reproduced with permission.

4.2.5 Hashtags

Pethig usually includes 30 hashtags under each of his Instagram images. 30 is the maximum number of hashtags that Instagram allows its users to add in one caption, or in one comment. He has been taking advantage of the maximum use of hashtag rule for up to three years now. Hashtags can attract followers and potential clients. Incorporating hashtags in a post is one of the most important ways promoting an Instagram account and growing an audience. Some of the hashtags Pethig has used are:

#artline #copicmarkerau #rotring #micron #zentanglekiwi #mandala #mandalaplanet #mandalapassion #beautiful_mandalas #tattoo #inkdrawing #nzartist #mandalapattern #sketchdaily #blackandwhiteart #cards #zendala #inkwork #doodle #watercolorpaper #workinprogress #triptych

From 2019, he started using his own hashtag #macromicroart with his posts. It is now also being used by other people. All these hashtags are art related, and most closely connected to the work he creates himself, using these hashtags he is able to draw in more followers and potential buyers.

One thing that Snow and Pethig have in common is that they both use hashtags in a comment section on their own posts, rather than using them in captions. They both add about two to four hashtags in captions.

4.2.6 Corpus Analysis:

Table 4.2a shows the top 25 keywords of Pethig's 200 posts' captions collected from 21st Oct to 23rd June 2019. This corpus of captions involved 1010 words in total. As indicated in Chapter 3, key words are identified by comparing the frequencies of words in a target corpus, such as Pethig's captions, with their relative frequencies in a larger reference corpus of more general language use. Based on their comparative relative frequencies each word is given a keyness score. The higher a keyness score, the more key a word is to a particular corpus.

Table 4.2: The top 25 keywords in the corpus of Pethigs captions.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword.
1	57	700.43	mandala
2	51	626.56	das
3	64	609.48	drawn
4	47	577.33	watercolour
5	33	405.15	watercolorpaper
6	46	393.02	card
7	49	349.53	paper
8	37	287.21	complete
9	22	269.99	workinprogress
10	19	233.14	doodleleafseries
11	23	222.95	wee
12	104	213	on
13	31	180.83	today
14	12	147.21	triptych
15	8	98.13	halfling
16	11	92.23	mate
17	36	77.32	my
18	7	76.33	tattoo
19	13	71.47	evening
20	5	61.32	henna
21	5	61.32	watercolor
22	5	61.32	wellingtonnz
23	10	58.88	lines
24	9	56.41	cards
25	5	52.95	splat

What is evident from this table is that Pethig frequently references the methods, techniques, or materials of his mandalas, for example, *drawn, watercolour, watercolour paper, card, paper, lines, das,* etc. He also regularly refers to the status of his works (*complete, workinprogress*). Pethig also perhaps attempts to make a connection with his followers using informal spoken language seen in the frequent use of *mate, splat* and the

diminutive *wee*. Many of the above keywords are in fact hashtags (e.g. *watercolour paper* and *doodleleafseries*), which suggests that he repeatedly uses the same hashtags. Interestingly, this was negatively critiqued in the responses from the online questionnaire.

Pethig has a very informal style of writing. This is likely to attract younger bourgeoning independent visual artists. As seen above, he often employs words such as *mates*, *friends* and *amigos* when describing his mandalas in relation to one another. He adds life and humour to his work by using such nouns to describe his work. For example:

"Meet Splodge" (19th May 2019). "A4 friend completed for my #doodleleafseries Drawn on Das Watercolour paper" (22nd March 2019). "Meet Splat's cousin, Standard Issue and The Spiraliser. #triptych" (15th Feb 2019). "Three connected friends" (17th Nov 2019). Overall, Pethig has gradually increased his followers since activating 'macromicroart' and has overtime become dedicated to posting daily. His success as an independent Instagram artist might also be attributed to his website that enables those interested to purchase his mandala and cityscape works.

Case study 3

4.3 Introduction

Kelly Marie is an ambitious artist, who is well known by her Instagram name *messyeverafter.* She was born and brought up in Minnesota, USA and recently moved to Southern California "to escape from below freezing temperature" (Marie, 2019, para. 2). As mentioned on her website, her artwork is inspired by "saturated colours, movements, organic flowing lines, emotions and energy" (Marie, 2019, para. 7).

Marie is quite active in the online independent visual artist community. She has written many blog posts to help other artists select their products and materials, create content for social media, and choose their Instagram names for selling art online as professionals. She also provides both free and paid consultant and assessment sessions for artists' Instagram accounts and branding. Artists can also find many useful free

worksheets and resources about brand development and using Instagram for marketing independent visual art on her creative consultancy pages (Marie, 2019)

Figure 4.3: Messyeverafter Instagram bio screenshot (4th July, 2019). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie Reproduced with permission.

4.3.1 Instagram account (Messyeverafter)

Messyeverafter (Kelly Marie) is particularly active on Instagram and posts almost daily. On 4th July 2019, she had posted 513 times, had 127,000 followers and was following 540 people on Instagram. Marie's profile image depicts a pair of hands, most likely her own hands. The palms and nails are smeared with different colours of paint, and reflects the name of her Instagram account, *messyeverafter*. An 'ah ha' moment, which stays in your subconscious is created when you connect the name of the account with the profile image. The image is also representative of her artwork, which involves splashes of a variety of blended colours. In the profile image, there is a tattoo on her left wrist which followers will recognise in other posts on her Instagram account. Her profile image is also the first image Marie posted on her account. She has captioned this image of her hands as, "and this is why I don't paint my nails or wear rings" (Marie, 2017).

Figure 4.3.1: Messyeverafter first Instagram post screenshot(7th April, 2017). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

Kelly uses two names in her Instagram bio. The first, 'Mea', uses the first letters from her

Instagram account name, 'Messy Ever After'. "Mea" is followed be her real name, 'Kelly

Marie'. She describes herself in a self-deprecatory manner in the profile section as a "socially awkward creative nerd". A paint palette emoticon symbolises her identity as an artist without it being directly stated in the profile. Perhaps her use of such self-effacing quirky descriptions attracts viewers with her humour. However, she also adds that she is "inspired by energy and emotion", two key elements imperative to be a great artist, which many other artists will immediately relate to. Lastly, she adds her location, *Oceanside California*. Despite working in a studio, she foregrounds her location beside the majestic Pacific Ocean and the sunny blue skies of California. An arrow in her profile directs the viewer's eye to the link to her online shop and blog.

4.3.2 Stories and highlights

Marie often shares Instagram *stories*, but she rarely saves them as *highlights*. She has cleverly used six distinctly different highlights, which have been given the titles *Blog, Tutorials, Email List, FAQs* and *About*. These all eventually take you to her website.
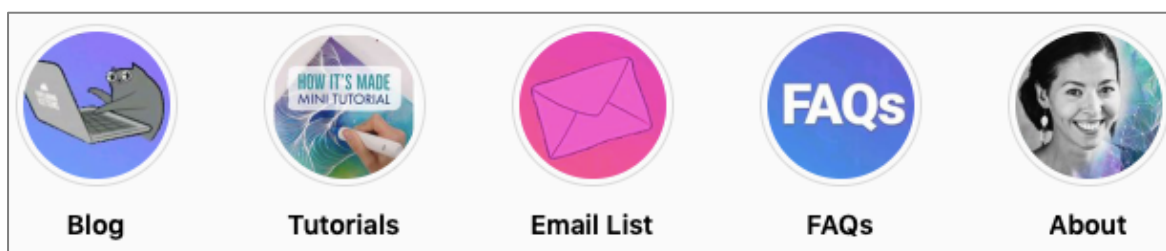
Figure 4.3.2: Messyeverafter's Instagram highlights' screenshot. Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

4.3.3 Materials

Many people ask Kelly Marie about the materials she uses and to answer these questions she has created a highlight *FAQs*. If you click this page, or swipe it upwards on a mobile phone, it links her website where she has provided another link to her Amazon store. To create her artwork and its flowing lines, she usually employs an applicator pen containing white paint. She also uses watercolours, inks and acrylic paints, alcohol ink, stretched canvases and watercolour paper.

Marie also designs jewellery, but she does not post any images of these on her Instagram account. They are only made available through her website 'shop'. This is unusual as potential buyers who do not venture beyond her Instagram account will not be made aware of her creative work in this area.

4.3.4 Content

Marie's Instagram feed consists of colourful and vibrant paintings with white flowing lines, which make a variety of patterns representing flowers, mountains, constellations, clouds and galaxies. She posts almost every day; sometimes more that 2 or 3 times. This kind of consistency encourages her followers to return daily to her account to check on new works and stories. Some posts show her work in progress, while she sits or stands next to her artwork. She shares many process videos that engage an increasing number of people every day, ultimately increasing her followers, many who are art learners. The process videos help her followers to use different products and techniques. She repeatedly writes in her blog posts that she undertakes much research on how to engage

more people and how to increase her followers. One of the process videos found on her blog, and titled "Why you should create videos of your art process?" states that:

There is one huge thing that helps me continually grow my following on social media and I want you to do this too: make videos of your art process. … Process videos, time laps videos, close up videos, slow motion videos, real time videos. Any kind of videos you can think of …. I could use the same hashtags, post at the same time of the day, use similar captions, videos get more attention than photos on average.…Using videos on Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and whatever other platform you're on can easily grab more attention than a still photo. (Marie, 2019)

Kelly Marie also provides a thumbnail of her best photos and videos on Instagram to compare the number of people they reached. This can be seen in Figure 4.3.4a and 4.3.4b reproduced from a single blog post
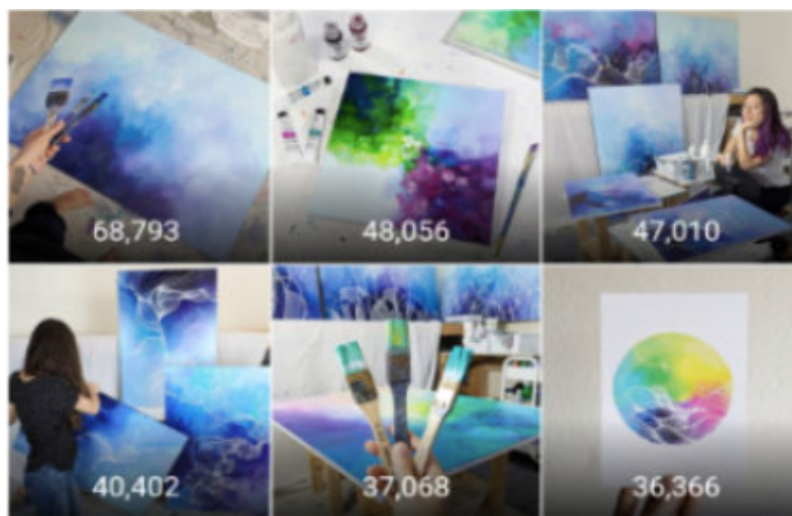
Figure 4.3.4a: Messyeverafter's best still photos' thumbnail with most likes. Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 4.3.4b: Messyeverafter's best video posts thumbnail with most likes. Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

There is a large difference between Figure 4.3.4a and Figure 4.3.4b in terms of engagement. All her 6 videos reached more viewers than her still photos. It is not surprising that she advises other independent visual artists to post more videos in her social media related blogs and Instagram captions.

Marie often talks about energy and emotions and tries to capture an emotional and energetic flows in her art and in the photos of herself which accompany posts of her art. She is not afraid of showing herself in front of the camera, which essentially works to create a connection with her followers by allowing them to see her in creative action, or simply to see her. The placing of a face or persona to a face to a name holds more attachment for the viewer. Importantly, her face always conveys her emotion at the moment the image is taken.

An example can be evidenced in Figure 4.3.4c, which depicts Marie sitting amongst her work in progress. In this post and the accompanying caption, she shares a personal journey and raises her experience with depression. She also mentions that she has archived over 300 posts. 'Archive' is an Instagram feature that allows users to hide their posts from followers, although this can be reversed at any time.
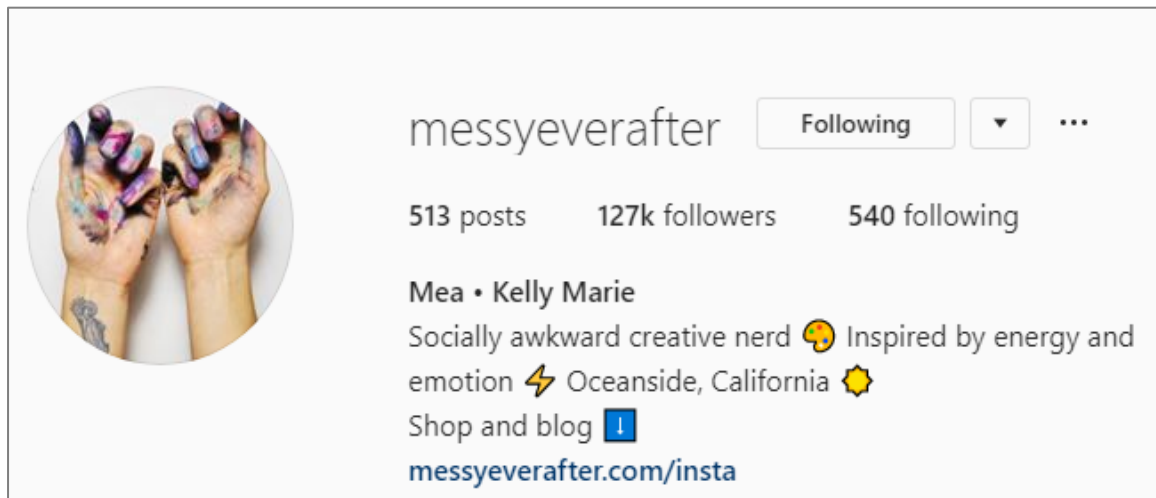
Figure 4.3.4c: Messyeverafter's Instagram post screenshot (21ˢᵗ April, 2019). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

Some pictures show only her hand, holding a drawing pen, applicator pen or paint brush, which later becomes the focus of the topic in her caption, where she provides details on the type of tool she is using, where she purchased it, and its price. This is an example of an 'influencer post' where followers are informed about the name, price and store where a certain product can purchased. Influencer posts are mostly spread through the personal social media channels of social media influencers (Stubb & Colliander, 2019) to express their positive opinion about a particular brand's and get paid by that brand to do so (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014).

As such, she has collaborated with many art suppliers, such as, ARTEZA, *ONLi Packs (Chicago), Finetec GmbH, Brea_reese*, speedball_art, and rumple, etc. These suppliers have been discussed in various captions. Marie has also written a blog post about becoming a micro influencer and obtaining free art supplies.

Figure 4.3.4d: Messyeverafter's Instagram post screenshot (31st May, 2019). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

4.3.5 Captions

Marie usually starts her captions with a small story from everyday life and tries to give useful tips about the materials she employed to create a particular work. She also adds updates about her new blog post, or art which is newly available on her website. Figure 4.3.5a and 9 provide good examples of her usual pattern when writing captions. On the rare occasions when she doesn't write much, she posts short statements such as: "Flow state" (12th April 2019), "It appears I've been a little busy…." (18 April 2019), "Reach 24" x 30"" (8th November 2018). "Yay me!!" (10th April 2018).

Figure 4.3.5a: Messyeverafter's Instagram post screenshot (23rd Jan, 2018). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

57
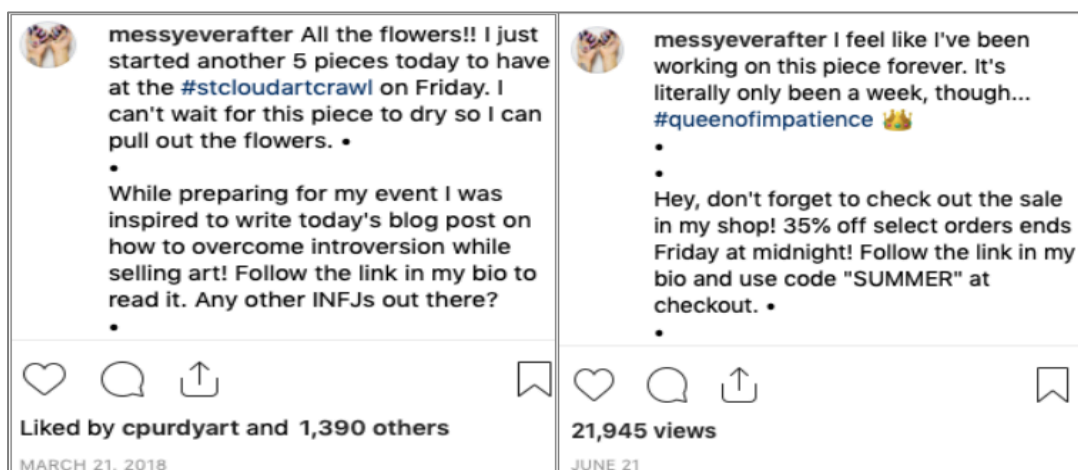
Figure 4.3.5b: Messyeverafter's Instagram posts screenshots (of 21st March, 2018 and 21st June, 2019). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

As mentioned above, she writes about her energy and emotions. In one of her captions, for example, she states that:

I spend hours alone every day, all through my life, I've been an emotional sponge. Whatever you're feeling, I feel, I never quite learned how to prevent that, i'm not even sure it's possible but when I'm alone, I'm able to just feel my own quiet energy. When you see my art, you see my energy. It's the most comfortable connection I can have with another human. (Marie, 17th April 2019)

Furthermore, her captions work to educate her followers and other artists by discussing art supplies, the size of her artworks and the tools she uses. The way she writes her captions creates a bond with her followers. Not only because she shares such information, but because she also asks questions, for example: "What does it make you feel?" (2nd June 2018), "Should I make more?" (13th Sep ,2018), "What's your favourite holiday food?" (23rd Nov 2018), "BTW did you enter my art contest yet?" (5th April 2019). She states that asking questions to her audience enables her to "connect in a genuine way" (Marie, 2018, para. 19). Indeed, her every second or third Instagram post contains questions. I.e. These 11x14 wispy watercolours will be on my site soon. What do you think? Also, I've been thinking about getting a printer and offering prints of some of my work. Would you be interested? (Marie, 20th January 2018).

58

Marie almost always writes a reasonably sized caption for every post, which works to successfully grab her audience's attention. Using a casual style of writing, in these posts she describes how she's feeling and mentions any new contests she has up and running from her website or Instagram. She updates new art for sale. If she's posting a lengthy post, she breaks it in small paragraphs and separate them by using emoticons or symbols.

In Figure 4.3.5c she sits calmly amongst her artwork, ready to let her followers in on a secret; a secret which she incorporates with humour. As mentioned, humour is an important way to connect with an audience and keep them active on your account.

Figure 4.3.5c: Messyeverafter' post screenshot (9th June, 2019). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

From time to time, she reveals her personal life details to create a genuine relationship with her followers, and again she chooses humorous descriptions with emoticons to do so. "I've worn this shirt 3 days in a row. I love what I can get away with while working from home" (Marie, 9th June, 2019). "My other half is currently making me and his parents taste test different hot sauces and I'm dying a little 😂 Blueberry ghost pepper is a kick in the mouth. My face is sweating...😂😂" (Marie, 9th March, 2019). "Lol. I'm almost 30 and I'm still having panicked dreams about showing up late for a class in high school or not remembering my locker combination. That time in life apparently sticks deeply into our subconscious😂" (Marie, 18th March, 2019). I slept so hard on my face this morning that my vision was screwed up for about two hours after waking up.

Apparently my eyeball doesn't like being smashed into a pillow for extend periods of time. 😴😴(26ᵗʰ March, 2019).

While these posts let her followers in on her personal life, this only happens rarely. In these captions, she reveals details about her age, her partner and her partner's interests. In another extremely personal post from the 18ᵗʰ July 2019 (Figure 4.3.5d), she discusses her depression, and reveals that she dropped out of art school because she was pressured to create art that differed from her own. In the posts she justifies her decision to leave her art institution by going on to state that, "my art was my way of taking the darkness inside of me and changing it to something meaningful. With time, the more I played with colours, the more my darkness began to lighten. Pretty art unburdens my mind. Pretty art saved me". She rationalises her art as healing and comforting for her mental health and at the same time makes a sarcastic statement about the nature of the contemporary art institution by saying "I'm going to make pretty things whenever I damn well please!".

Her story of using art to deal with her depression at a very young age and the rejection of her art has many similarities to my own story of rejection, depression and healing through art. I feel very close to Marie.

messyeverafter In art school, I was told pretty art isn't fine art. I was pushed to think conceptually and make more of a statement with my work. I dropped out of the art program shortly after, because I knew that way of thinking wasn't for me. Why? When I was 16, I was diagnosed with depression, and I desperately wanted a way out of it. Ever since then, I've been searching for every spark of joy I could latch onto. My art was my way of taking the darkness inside of me and changing it into something meaningful. With time, the more I played with colors, the more my darkness began to lighten. Pretty art unburdens my mind. Pretty art saved me. I'm going to make pretty things whenever I damn well please! 😘
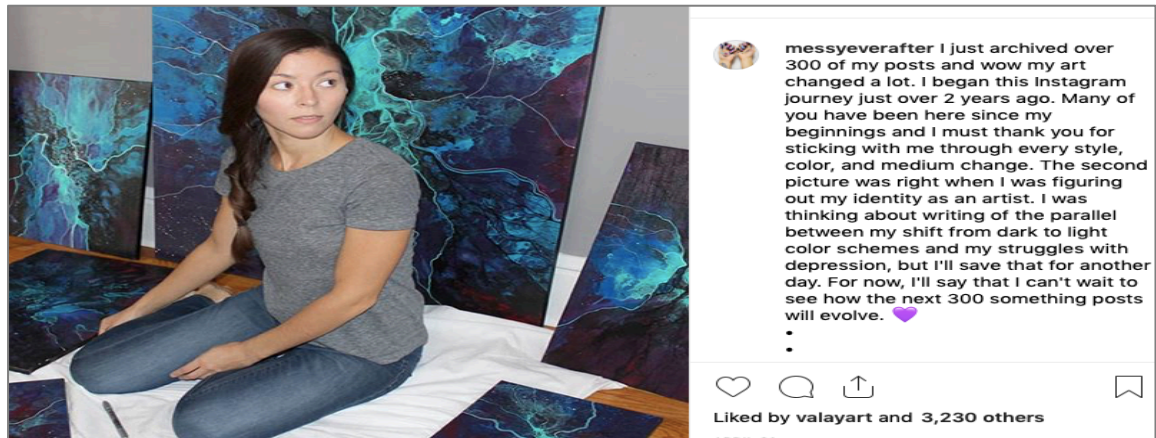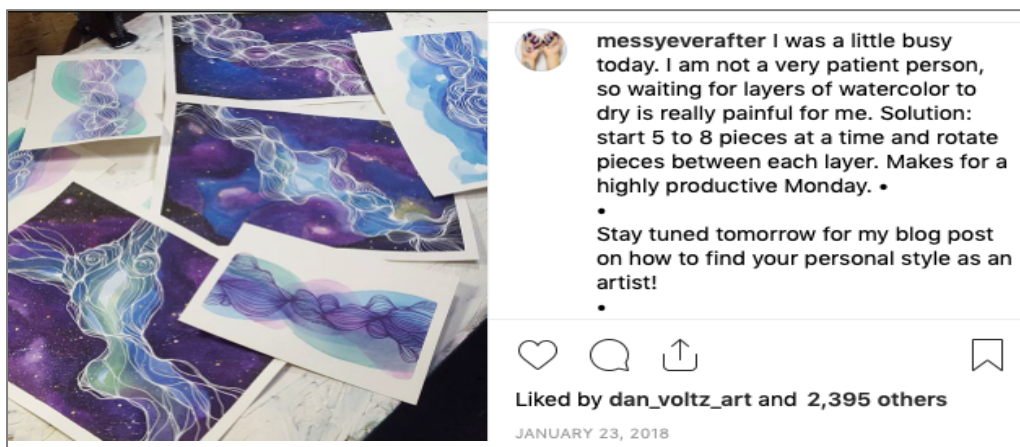
Figure 4.3.5d: Messyeverafter's Instagram caption screenshot (18th July, 2019). Copyright (2019) by Kelly Marie. Reproduced with permission.

4.3.6 Giveaway

Kelly Marie also often runs giveaway contests which not only attract new viewers to her site but encourage more followers, as the contest asks those entering to follow her Instagram account (@messyeverafter), comment on her posts and tag friends. For example:

"To Enter:
 1. Like this photo and follow @messyeverafter
 2. 2. Tell me what you love to do during your free time in the comments.
 3. 3. Optional additional entries: Tag friends who might be interested in this giveaway.
 4. I'm going to host more super speedy giveaways (1 hour or less!) in the next week so make sure to turn on post notifications for @messyeverafter ! I will have more prints, originals, AND consulting sessions to give away" (Marie, 2nd June 2019).

She also introduces codes for discounts, for example "use code SUN30 for 30% off your order" (Marie, Feb 2, 2018). She introduces these giveaways and discount codes to attract her followers attention and entice them to purchase her art. "Did you put your order in yet?! My 50% off moving sale is going until Friday the 22nd…..pieces are going fast! Follow the link in my bio and use "BYEMN" at checkout" (Marie, June 17, 2018).

4.3.7 Hashtags:

Marie frequently utilises the maximum number of hashtags allowed (i.e. 30) in each of her posts. Unlike Snow and Pethig, she places all her hashtags under the caption for each post. She says about hashtag: "I use about 25 tags per post and spend a good amount of time researching the right tags for my account size and art style" (Marie, 2018, para. 11).

Marie has also written a blog post about using hashtags, titled "How to Choose the Best Instagram Hashtags". In this blog she states that hashtags have contributed hugely to her rapid growth, and that she spends about two hours researching the right hashtags for her Instagram posts (Marie, 2018) Table 4.3a contains some of her most used hashtags.

Table 4.3a : Most commonly used hashtags by Marie

#messyeverafter	#artofinstagram
#sandiegoartist	#artworkoftheday
#acrylicart	#contemporaryart
#acryliconcanvas	#dailydose
#artcollector	#Fineartgallery
#artdaily	#Fineartgallery
#painting	#handmadeparade
#abstractacrylic	#interiorart
#abstractart	#interiordesign
#acrylicartist	#interiordesigninspo
#acrylicpainting	#makearteveryday
#artgram	#moderndesign
#artistofinstagram	#originalart
#artistspotlight	#artist
#artlife	#artistlife

An important point to note is that in each and every post she has placed *#messyeverafter* as the first hashtag. This is crucial for spreading and advertising her Instagram account.

4.3.8 Comments

Marie succeeds in making a meaningful connection by encouraging them to interact with her in the comments. To do this, she directly asks them questions about their views and interests. The following are examples of Marie using questions to prompt her followers to comment: **"**Tell me your fantastic weekend plan" (15th June 2019). **"**Tell me what you love to do during your free time in the comments" (2nd June 2019). **"**Tell me something

that has inspired you in life or with art in the comments" (7th June 2019). **"Tell me your biggest struggle with social media in the comments"** (3rd June 2019).

She knows all the executable ways to make a strong connection even though she refers to herself as an "introvert" and "socially awkward". She knows well how to increase her engagement level and how to keep alive her audiences' interest in her art by making meaningful conversations. She also makes attempts to answer all comments on her Instagram posts.

4.3.9 Corpus analysis

Kelly uses very informal language in her posts which conveys a sense she is interacting with friends. This distinguishes her from other artists who use a more formal register and are ultimately less able to create relationships with their followers. Her writing style appears like a friend giving instructions, without letting her addressees know that she is instructing them. Table 4.3b shows the top 25 keywords of Marie's captions collected from 5th Jan 2019 to 20th July 2019. This corpus of captions involved 13,867 words in total. Key words are identified by comparing the frequencies of words in a target corpus, such as Marie's captions, with their relative frequencies in a larger reference corpus of more general language use. Based on their relative frequencies each word is given a keyness score. The higher a keyness score, the more key a word is to a particular corpus.

Table 4.3b: Analysis of Messyeverafter's last one hundred posts (5th Jan 2019 to 20th July 2019)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	399	1174.66	my
2	590	946.23	i
3	70	572.66	bio
4	62	504.58	blog
5	72	478.07	link
6	96	392.8	art
7	257	317.1	you
8	57	286.75	follow

9	33	284.5	giveaway
10	29	250.01	faqs
11	43	234.53	shop
12	54	232.14	post
13	31	231.14	click
14	43	230.32	pieces
15	36	223.41	profile
16	34	197.12	saved
17	20	154.68	arrivals
18	20	147.52	prints
19	85	145.58	your
20	18	142.22	notifications
21	36	139.82	piece
22	17	138.85	watercolor
23	16	137.92	brea
24	32	137.32	check
25	65	128.03	'm

It is clear from this table that Marie most frequently uses personal pronouns in her comments, for example, *my, i, you, your, I'm* (m). This suggests she routinely attempts to personally connect to her viewers and followers. She also regularly draws attention to her website and other accompanying sites (*bio, blog, link, faqs, shop, click, profile, notifications, check*), as a marketing strategy and frequently asks her viewers to *follow* her. Unlike the other two case study artists, she makes fewer references to the nature of her creative work, its processes and materials.

Chapter Five: Questionnaire

5.1 Introduction

An online questionnaire was conducted, using the online survey software Qualtrics, to collect the opinions of independent visual artist from different countries about their use of Instagram as a platform for marketing their art. An agreement of anonymity was sent to all the participants of this questionnaire through emails and direct messages on Instagram. There were 13 questions in total in this online questionnaire, it was sent to 50 artists who were considered to be successfully marketing their art on Instagram and had a high number of followers. Only 11 responded to the questionnaire.

5.2 Questionnaire feedback

Q1. *What made you decide to promote your art on Instagram?*

When asked about their decision to share their art on Instagram, almost all of the participants responded that they wanted to share their art and creative ideas with a wider audience and that Instagram as an image centred feed is perfect for art promotion and sales. Two of the participants compared Instagram with Facebook and stated that Instagram is a better platform for sharing on than Facebook.

Q2. *How important is it for you to increase the number of followers you have?*

Figure 5.2.1 shows the participants responses to the question, "How important is it to you to increase the number of followers you have?"
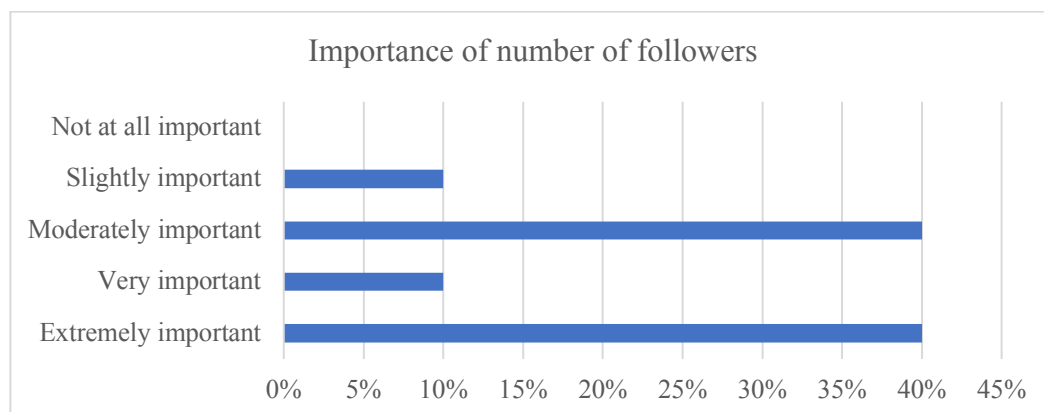
Figure 5.2.1: Importance of number of followers

The figure shows that 40% of the respondents agreed that it is extremely important to increase their number of followers on Instagram, 10% agreed it is very important, while another 40% said it is only moderately important. 10% of participants agreed that it is slightly important. Interestingly, no one selected "not at all important". Overall, while it seems that all participants acknowledge the need to increase followers to their Instagram accounts, there is no consistency as to the level of importance that this is accorded. Given that their sites are typically used to market, share or showcase their work to a wider public could be seen as surprising that half of the participants are not strongly motivated to increase their followers.

Q3. *What strategies do you use to get more followers?*
The participants recommended a number of useful strategies to increase their number of followers. These include:

1. Use of hashtags
2. Being active on Instagram
3. Giving and taking
4. Liking and commenting on the work in other's accounts.
5. Including process videos of art works
6. Including colourful, striking and detailed images
7. Encourage users to follow and buy the work
8. Creating new content everyday

Some of the comments made by the participants included:

"Creating new content every day is number one. Engaging with people via the posts I find helps. Ensuring that my photos are vary eye-catching."
"I just post and be active in the community, give and take."
"I go on other pages to like and comment on their work in order to get attention and followers. It doesn't work every time, but it works."

"Use of hashtags mainly."

Q4. *Could you describe anything you stopped doing on Instagram because it noticeably reduced the number of people following your account?*

One participant responded to this question stating that they "stopped posting personal or non-art stuff". In some ways this responses contradicts the findings in the case studies where a degree of personal commentary increased the independent visual artist's interpersonal connection with their readers, possibly contributing to an increase in followers. Another stated that they stopped taking and posting images of a poor quality.

Q5. *Could you describe any strategies that you use on Instagram to increase the sales of your work.*

There were also interesting responses to the question about the strategies employed by participants' to increase sales of their artwork on Instagram. One of the answers covers all the strategies mentioned in the participant responses.

"I upload videos with attractive background and announce sales like 30% or 40% off for 2 days. Most often I advertise by creating a paid ad on Instagram for 3 to 4 days every fortnight. I invest on ads and get it back in form of more sales."

What the responses suggest is that conventional marketing strategies, such as discounting and advertising, are frequently used by to supplement the role played by Instagram.

Q6. *Is there anything you stopped doing on Instagram because it noticeably reduced the number of people buying your work?*

All but one participant responded with a simple "No" to the question, where they were asked if they stopped doing something that was reducing their sales on Instagram. Only one responded positively and suggested she stopped asking her followers to visit her website in her captions.

Q7 - *Could you briefly describe what you think are your most successful posts on Instagram.*

Participants' often provided quite similar responses in their description of content that received the most attention from their followers. Sixty percent of the participants stated that videos (time laps, real time and process videos) received more attention, while 30% are of the view that their colourful, imaginative artworks with natural backgrounds engage more people. It was also claimed by remaining 10% of the respondent that their followers like to see the artist at work, in their videos and images. For example:

"Posts with drawings and use of color in drawings"
"Colourful and imaginative posts standout"
"Videos of me painting…people love to see an artist at work"
"Tutorial time laps videos that show process from beginning to end…and posts with natural background"

Q8 - *Could you briefly describe what you think are your least successful posts on Instagram.*

Interestingly, most of the participants responded differently when answering the question about their least liked posts. One of them believed that viewers usually disliked the same "drawings that I don't particularly like", implying that the artist's personal views are often the best indicator of works to post. Others suggested that "dark images" and posts without captions, storytelling and certain themes remain unappreciated. Some of the respondents are of the view that copying and pasting the same "list of hashtags" over and over again results in less engagement with their followers on Instagram

Q9 - *If you post images/videos to encourage people to follow your Instagram account or buy your work, what type of images/videos do you choose?*

The participants indicated a number of ways that they encourage followers to buy their artwork on Instagram. These were:

1. Sharing process videos of artwork.
2. Colourful and visually striking images.
3. Detailed and clear images /videos.

4. Thought, happy, pleasant and satisfying Instagram feed.

5. Samples of their original art

Q10. *If you include captions in your Instagram posts to encourage people to follow your Instagram account or buy your work, what type of language do you use?*

Most participants responded to this question by stating that they use casual, friendly, informational and conversational language to interest their followers. However, they also stated that they tell "daily life stories", state "inspirations" behind the artwork and ask "questions" to engage with viewers of their account.

Q11. *If you also have an accompanying website to promote your art, could you describe the relationship of your website to your Instagram account.*

In response to the question about relationship of their Instagram account with their website, all of them responded that they do have websites and these are linked with their Instagram accounts. This is because they identify Instagram as a good traffic source and perfect platform to promote their art as well as their website.

Q12. *What do you suggest to an independent visual artist wanting to promote their work through Instagram?*

All of the participants were very positive when they were asked to suggest something to an independent visual artist. Things that were common in all the suggestions were, "be consistent", "post regularly", "(learn to) take good photos", "connect and interact with followers" and "answer their questions". Other notable suggestions made by individual participants were, "share useful tips" "don't get overly personal", "appreciate and support other artists work", "avoid boring captions" and "share the progress of different stages of your artwork".

Overall, this online survey reveals the important strategies and skills an independent visual artist should employ to successfully market his or her art on Instagram, and make a strong connection with their followers. Significantly, this questionnaire reproduces all the proficiencies and techniques that were observed in the three case studies in Chapter Four.

Chapter six: Reflective Practice and Journal

6.0 Introduction

This chapter draws upon ten extracts from a reflective journal, recorded throughout the process of developing the practical component of this study, i.e. the development of my creative work, as well as the Instagram account through which it was presented. In keeping with the aims of this study (see Chapter 3), a primary focus of the journal was to discuss and reflect on the growth of my Instagram account, the changes it went though, and the responses it received, throughout the one year period of my research. The journal contained many more reflective accounts of posts than contained in this chapter, but due to the word limits of this exegesis, they cannot all be presented here.

I would like to mention here that I changed my Instagram account from a *personal account* to a *creator account* on 21st February 2019. The creator account is specifically designed for Influencers and those who use Instagram for marketing, but do not follow a traditional business model. The creator account provides a number of useful metrics that provides the account owner with post insights, detailed growth data about the number of follows/unfollows on a daily basis and demographic perceptivity. It also gives access to the account owner three different folders to organise the messages they receive each day (DM); primary, general and request. This enables the account holder to move messages between folders and therefore prioritise the messages they receive. These features are only for creator account holders (Tran, 2019).

6.1 Reflection 1

Figure 6.1.1a: Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (10th March, 2019)

Figure 6.1.1a reproduces my Instagram post from the 10th March, which includes an image of my painting of a female 'Markhor', Pakistan's national animal. After learning about the threat of war between India and Pakistan in mid-February, I felt compelled to paint this image as I am currently away from my homeland Pakistan and found the news very disturbing. I chose to paint the female Markhor because I wanted to show that woman in Pakistan are strong enough to support their country. Although it has recently changed, Pakistan has traditionally had a patriarchal culture where women were consigned to work as housewives and perceived to be too gentle or weak to join the armed forces. Today, however, there are women in every field of life including the air force, the army, and the police. They also work as engineers and scientists. In this post I created an image that spread a message to others that in cases of conflict or war between Pakistan and their opposition, not only men, but woman can defend and honour their country. The female Markhor image emerges from a gold, green and sky-blue mandala, with fearless eyes and represents the bold and confident women of my country.

Before developing the painting of Markhor, I sketched the image using a black drawing pen, and posted an image of this sketch on my Instagram account on the 4th of March. I used a mixture of watercolours and metallics to complete the coloured image, which was completed on a 300gsm watercolour paper. I painted the image with the colours green

and white to represent the colours of Pakistan's national flag, as well as the colour gold, which represents the lusciousness of our fertile land. As mentioned above, I posted this completed painting on the 10th March 2019. Figure 6.1.1b provides the Instagram metrics for this post.
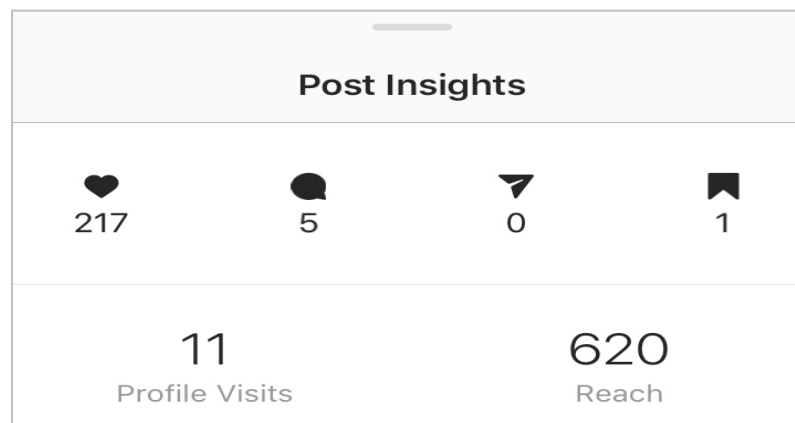
Figure 6.1.1b: Artbynilum's screenshot of Instagram post insights (10th March, 2019)

I received 5 comments on this post, and both comments were from females. It reached 620 users, 217 liked it, 11 visited my profile, and 9 of them followed my account. One user saved it. While I did not write a suitable caption for this post, I did use two emojis and a number of relevant hashtags such as, #artpakistan, #fearlesspakistan, #womenofpakistan #greenismyidentity #artistunion #artgallery etc.

Overall, I was not satisfied with the amount of likes I received on both the post containing the in-progress sketch and the post with the completed work. As I was emotionally attached to this painting, every 'like' felt like a gesture of support, and I was hoping for more. Influenced by the case studies, it was clear that to increase my number of likes in the future, I would need a better description of my works, along with more relevant hashtags in order to target a wider range of Instagram users and groups globally. Furthermore, the interaction I had with those who commented on my painting was very short and vague. I decided it was necessary to try and converse with them more, as well as showing my gratitude, perhaps asking them what they liked, or maybe what they did not like about my artwork.

6.2 Reflection 2
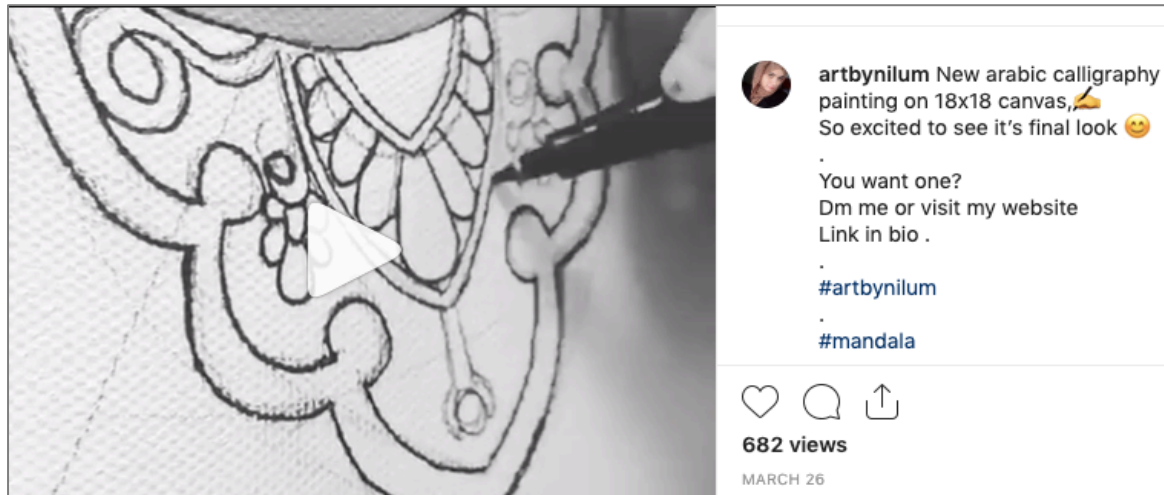
Figure 6.2.1: Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (26th March, 2019)

My post on the 26th of March is of a time-lapse video, which runs for 8 seconds in total (Figure 6.2.1). It involves the drawing of a pattern that is part of a mandala. A drawing pen was used to create the design on a canvas.

I chose to upload this video-post, because as the three case studies (Chapter 3) pointed out, the use of time-lapse video results in a higher number of likes. So, I decided to attempt this technique to achieve similar results on my own Instagram account. The time lapse video of the mandala, reached 964 people, received 673 views and 2 comments. I was thrilled, as this was my first post that had this many views/likes. It became evident that the technique of posting process videos facilitated a greater number of likes. However, again I was a bit disappointed in the number of comments received. A few more would have been satisfying.

After putting up the time-lapse video, I gained just over 27 new followers within 3 hours, which was amazing. I believe this was due to the fact that my video was like a tutorial video for its viewers. It showed them how to draw a pattern and thus became a learning process, not unlike the process videos I had observed on case study artist's accounts. However, I did feel that my caption was not attractive or engaging, although, following Kelly Marie, I asked a question and provided some technical details about my

artwork. Kelly Marie states in one of her blog posts, that asking questions in captions engage more users. Tutorial videos have also become a common tool for independent visual artists like myself. Many of my followers are beginners who are self-taught by watching videos such as this one. I feel a sense of satisfaction knowing that someone has learnt from me in the same way that I learnt from other artists.

6.3 Reflection 3

Figure 6.3.1a: Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (28th March, 2019)

On 28th March, I posted a drawing titled, "Tree of Life". It attains its name from the structure that the drawing represents. My message behind the drawing is, 'Vision is through the heart'. The large heart represents life as the root of the tree. The body of the tree shows smaller hearts flowering off its branches, and the tip of the tree holds a golden eye that shows how the eye sees amidst the hearts.

The drawing was predominantly black and white, with touches of gold, using a gold pen in places. This piece was created on watercolour paper. The gold hearts represent love

and courage, specks of gold in the trunk represent value and illumination, and the golden eye on the tip of the tree represents wisdom and courage.

Post Insights

♥ 533 💬 4 ➤ 3 🔖 12

4
Profile Visits
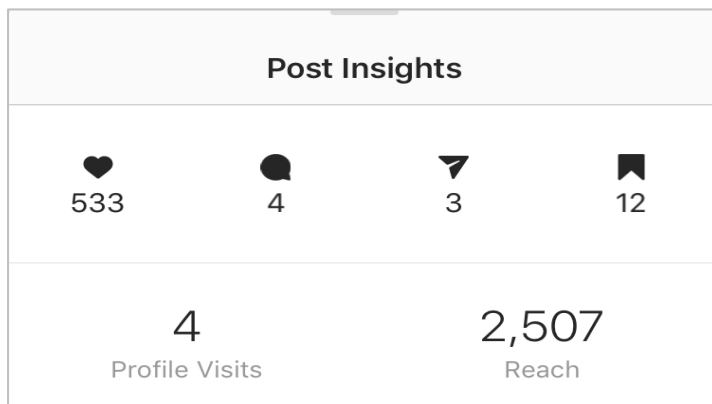
2,507
Reach

Figure 6.3.1b: Artbynilum's screenshot of Instagram post insights (28th March, 2019)

As indicated in figure 6.3.1b, the post reached 2,507 Instagram accounts, received 533 likes, which I was quite pleased with, as it became my most liked picture until the 28th of March 2019. I also gained 17 new followers within one hour of posting the image of this drawing, even though only 4 people visited my profile. Three of my followers shared it and 12 of them saved it. These insights were extremely positive, but the most important thing about this post it, was that one of my followers asked me in direct message (DM) whether I sold prints. This made me realise that I was on the right track in terms of promoting and marketing my art on Instagram.

For me gold is always attractive when added to black and white images, and it holds a lot of value symbolically. This might perhaps be why the 28th March post attracted more followers. Furthermore, adding my hand and the drawing pen to the posted image provided a realistic feel; that is, the feel of the artist satisfied with her completed work. I also wonder if that the colour of my nails which were painted red attracted users, and one of the comments on this post was from a female complimenting me on my nails. This suggests that potential viewers are driven to like and comment on a post by a variety of phenomena, and do not simply focus on the object central to the post itself. In total, I received three comments for the post (one was in a foreign language). Overall, I was extremely pleased because this drawing gained me many more followers.

6.4 Reflection 4

Figure 6.4.1a : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (3rd April, 2019)

This painting seen in the post in Figure 6.4.1a is a commissioned piece that was ordered by one of my followers in New Zealand. She sent me a sample image of the artwork to ask if I could reproduce it. I immediately agreed, as it was a painting titled 'Fritillaries in a Copper Vase' by Vincent Van Gogh (Figure 6.4.2) which I particularly liked. Initially, when I began working on the commission, I wondered whether it was illegal to copy someone else's work, however, after searching the Internet, I discovered hundreds of artists who had reproduced this image (nevertheless, whenever I posted the work, I identified it as an imitation). Deciding to paint this artwork was the best decision of my life, as it opened many doors for me as an artist and as a marketer as well. It also contributed a lot to my follower's bank. After having posted 2 videos and one still image of this painting, it ultimately gifted me 900 plus new followers. I also received seven queries through DM, two users asking if I was going to release prints of the work, 3 ordered customised commission paintings, and two asked if they could order it in different sizes.
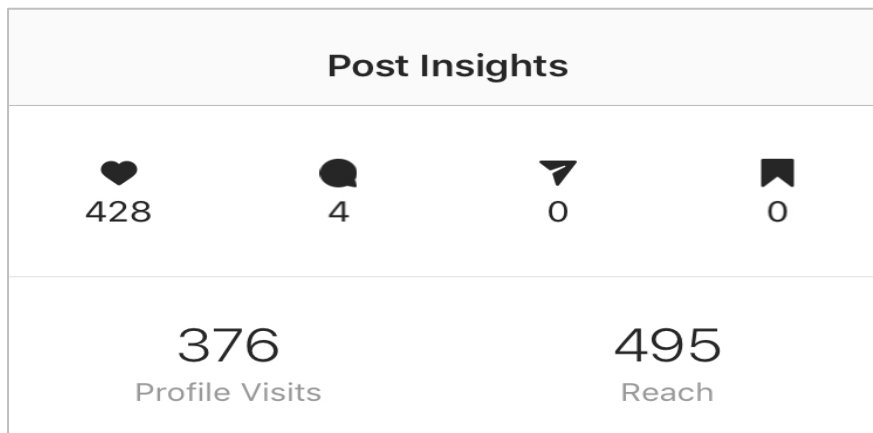
Figure 6.4.1b : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post insights (3rd April, 2019)

Figure 6.4.1b, demonstrates the statistics for this post on 3rd April 2019. Interestingly, it was not discovered by the number of new people I had anticipated (based on the interest in the process video of the work posted on 1st and 2nd April 2019). However, 428 people liked it, 4 of them commented on it and 376 new people visited my profile, almost 790 new people followed me at the end of the day 3rd of April. While I was disappointed about the lack of comments it received, overall, I was very satisfied about taking on this project and seeing the appreciation from my followers.

In terms of the caption accompanying the image, I tried to write one that was not too lengthy, but still described the painting and materials employed, asked a question, used 4 emojis and 13 hashtags. Collectively, these all are essential components of a successful IG (Instagram) post and were a result of the three case studies developed in Chapter 4.

As indicated, the aim of my study is to discover all possible ways to grow my IG account as independent visual artist and art-marketer to help myself and other struggling artists. With this post, I felt like I was successfully heading towards my goal. My follower's graph supercharged in the three days after the post from 2071 followers (on 31st March 2019) to 4093 followers (3rd April 2019). Furthermore, the total number of posts in these three days was 8, which was also unusual, as I normally posted once a day. I also decided to experiment with captions by making them longer in future, and by adding more hashtags to see the difference.

Figure 6.4.2: Sample image of van Gogh's original painting that was sent for the commission.

6.5 Reflection 5
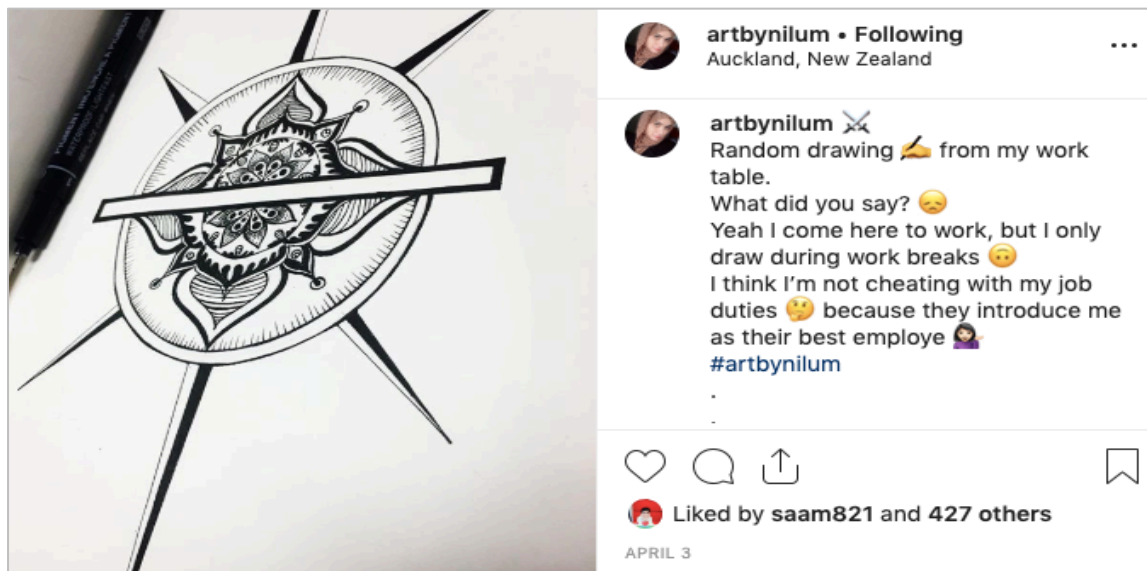
Figure 6.5.1a : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (3rd April, 2019)

This post in Figure 6.5.1a also belongs to 3rd April, 2019. As mentioned in the caption, I posted it during my work hours[3]. I tried to add element of humour by asking an amusing question, and then answering it myself by providing a suitable explanation, and making

---

[3] I work in a market research company and usually draw during my call breaks. As a result most of the drawings I post are carried out at my work table

it more humorous by adding emoticons. As discussed in the 2nd and 3rd case studies (Chapter 4) that Mike Pethig and (especially) Kelly Marie often add humour to their captions to create a friendly relationship with their followers. I was interested to find out if this would work for my posts. There is nothing special in this drawing itself, as it is a simple black and white drawing, but what is of note is the number of people it engaged and the number of followers in particular.
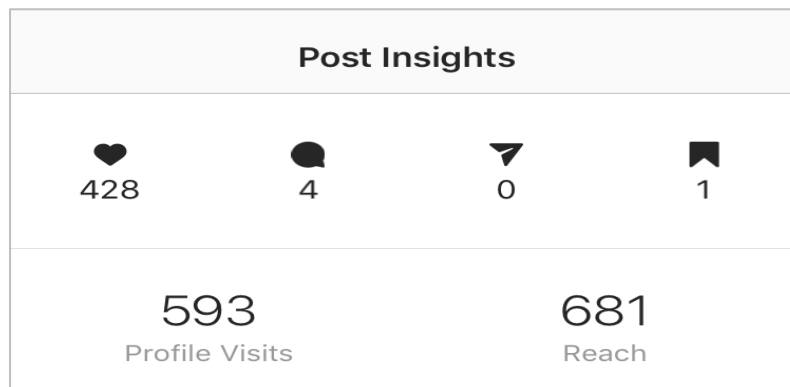
Figure 6.5.1b : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post insights (1st May, 2019)

The insights image (Figure 6.5.1b) for this post showcases that it was liked by 428 individuals and reached 681 people. Surprisingly, this simple drawing encouraged 593 people to visit my profile, almost 450 of them followed my IG account and 13 of them visited my website through the URL link in the bio. Only one viewer, however, saved it and nobody shared it. Nevertheless, despite the fact it did not excite many followers to comment, the post was ultimately quite successful. One follower asked if I could design a tattoo for her, which was a major compliment, opportunity and an idea for business growth.

Overall, this post contributed a lot to my IG account and website traffic; more than I expected. No doubt, all the strategies learnt from case studies and referenced research were working well so far, but the comment section was not growing the way the other area of user engagement was. My main focus from now onwards would be to encourage more people to comment on my posts.

6.6 Reflection 6
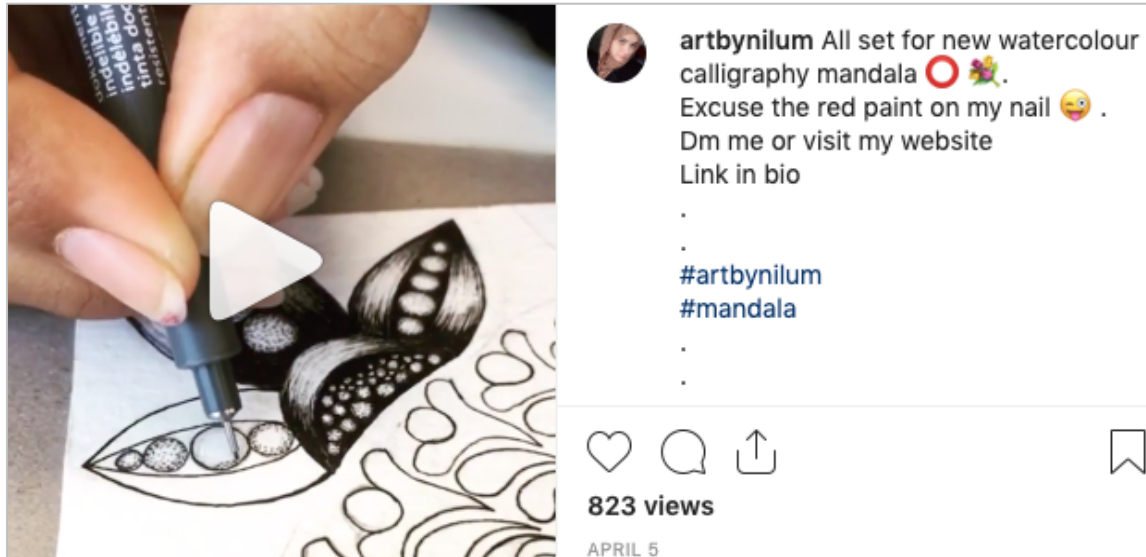
Figure 6.6.1a: Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (5th April, 2019)

My post on 5th of April 2019 was a time-lapse video which I recorded with my mobile phone. It was part of a mandala drawing. As with the post discussed in Reflection 2, I used a time-lapse process video because I observed in all the three case studies that the most 'liked' posts were process videos. I wrote a small caption for this post and tried to tell my audience that this artwork was a mandala for calligraphy. In order to add an element of humour, I wrote about a small patch of red paint on one of my nails and added an emoji to increase the humour in the remark. I also asked my followers to visit my website or DM (direct message in Instagram) me as well. I added almost 15 hashtags (including my own #artbynilum), such as #mandala #processvideo #timelaps #antistsoninstagram and so on.
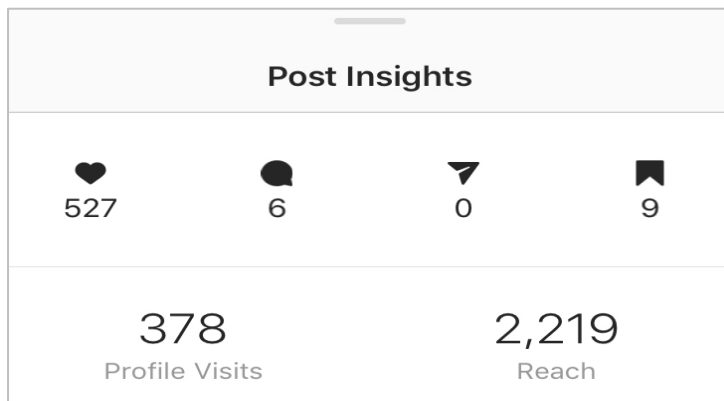
Figure 6.6.1b: Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post insights (5th April, 2019)

Figure 6.6.1b, show this post reached 2219 users and as a result received 527 likes and six comments. Nine users saved the post and overall, it received a whopping 820 views. The most exciting thing about this post is that 378 people visited my profile after watching this video and I received 289 followers the day I posted this video.

Overall, I was amused by this post's engagement. It reached more people, received more likes (it was my most liked post until 5th of April 2019). While again, I was a little disappointed with the comments it received, I was nonetheless extremely satisfied with the number of followers this post added to my follower's bank. The positive response from this video post inspired me to post more videos such as this one.

6.7 Reflection 7

Figure 6.7.1a : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (1st May, 2019)

The post in Figure 6.7.1a from 1st May is a commissioned painting for one of my workmates. It was an interesting project for me. The person who commissioned the work explained what she wanted in the painting, as she intended to give it to her partner on their anniversary. While excited, I was also somewhat nervous to carry out the commission in case I couldn't successfully produce the desired outcome. The finished painting which I would argue contains a vibrant combination of colour and is eye catching was exceptionally well-received by the person who commissioned the painting. Apparently, her partner had tears in his eyes when gifted the work because the painting captured an important moment from their relationship. It created a strong emotional connection between me and the couple.

As a result, the reaction of my IG audience to this post was particularly important for me and I was eager to post the work. I wanted to include the details surrounding the painting in the caption section of the post but for some reason I found this difficult so instead I placed a love quote by Robert Brault in the caption. I also tagged my friend and her partner as well. As usual, I used emojis to add additional emotion to my post and included over 20 hashtags in the hope that the post would be explored by more people.

Post Insights

| ♥ 384 | ● 13 | ◢ 7 | ▮ 31 |

| 23 | 769 |
| Profile Visits | Reach |
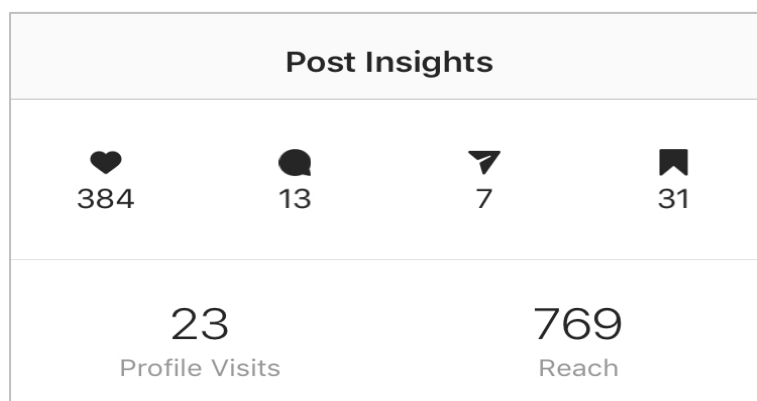
Figure 6.7.1b : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post insights (1st May, 2019)

Instagram insights (Figure 6.7.1b) identified a considerable and positive change. It was explored by 769 people, 384 liked it and resulted in 23 visits to my profile.

Astonishingly, 13 commented, 7 shared and 31 saved the post. It was a defining moment for me, which significantly enhanced my mood, as I was feeling sad and depressed at the time. The statistic of thirty-one saves gave me goose bumps and inspired me to create more works like this. I found some of the comments such as "this is divine", and "your choice of colours is perfectly going with the scene, it's amazing" as very rewarding and encouraging. I received 5 inquiries about the cost for a similar commission. I responded that they could look for prices on my accompanying website that was linked to my IG account. Incredibly, two of those enquiring, went on to order a commission on my website.

The main reason behind the increased engagement, was possibly the increase in the relevant hashtags.

6.8 Reflection 8
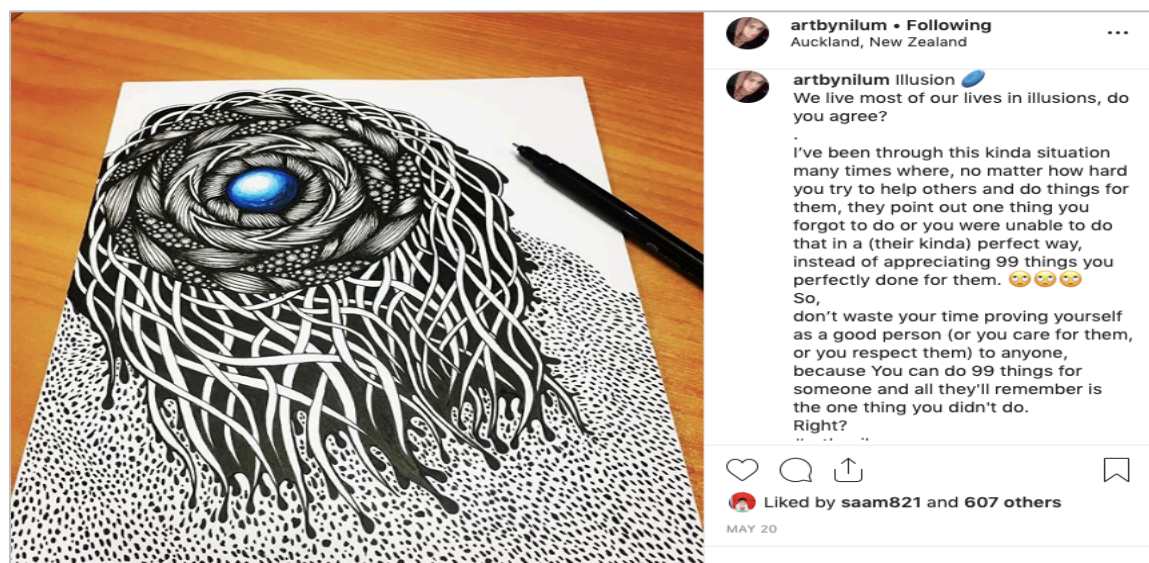
Figure 6.8.1a : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (20th May, 2019)

I believed that image accompanying the post on 20th May 2019 (Figure 6.8.1a) was quite strong, even though it was an incomplete work. The image was largely black and white and had a blue sphere-shaped object, representing a gemstone, in the middle. The drawing basically depicts a tangled, three-dimensional, flowing illusion, which is one of my signature styles.

I wrote a lengthy caption which characterised my state of mind at the time. It was depressing and gloomy day, and I felt like a loser attempting to live up to the expectations of someone who criticised everything I achieved. I decided to explain this in the caption, which used emojis, asked questions and used 30 relevant hashtags (30 is the maximum number IG allows). In a sense, I applied everything that I learnt so far during my research. It became my most successful post (until 20th May 2019) resulting not only in the most engagement, but also in the most sales on my IG and website.
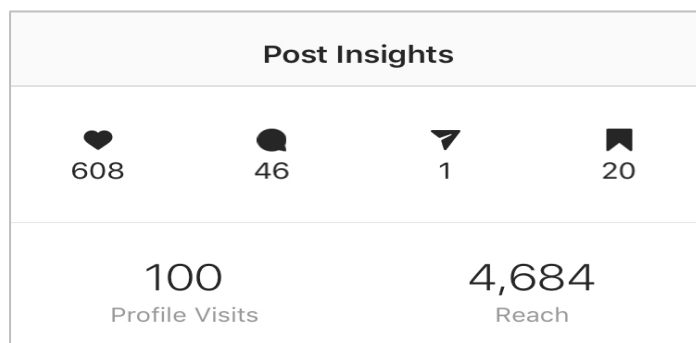
Figure 6.8.1b : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post insights (20th May, 2019)

The statistics for this post were very exciting. Figure 6.8.1b shows that it reached 4,686 users, 100 of them visited my profile, 608 liked it, and 20 saved the image. Only one, however, shared it. The 46 comments the post shared was significantly shocking for me, as this is the greatest number of comments any of my posts had received. I also received more than 700 new followers after posting this drawing, even though only 100 people visited my profile. Some of the comments people made were, "This is very cool", "Surreal", "Wow incredible, "Beautiful gem in there", "Wow, wow, wow I'm in love with this drawing, can I order a print? and "Can you please post the completed version". Some of hashtags I used in the caption are, #artbynilum, #eyeball, #gemstone, #illusion, #sphere, #artpk, #artnz #zentangle, an #doodling.

As mentioned above, I employed all the techniques I acquired from this study, it has also become clear that an interesting and emotive caption, one which viewers can perhaps relate to and is a powerful resource for attracting viewers. Similarly, the use of appropriate and relevant hashtags also attracts viewers. The hashtags used in this instance, resulted in 4684 people, viewing my post. My website was also visited by 53

people on 20th May. 11 people shopped for prints and originals from my website, while 5 placed orders through IG. This was the biggest sale I ever made. A tattoo artist contacted me on IG and asked if I'd like to work with him, but I did not accept his offer because of some personal concerns.

6.9 Reflection 9

Figure 6.9.1a : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (30th May, 2019)

The Instagram post from the 30th May 2019 (Figure 6.9.1a) is of a calligraphy painting on a round wooden panel created using acrylic paints. This colourful calligraphy includes Allah's 99 names in Arabic. As usual, I added gold to make it unique. I am not particularly strong at writing Arabic, but, as I mentioned in the caption, the use of a tiny tipped paint brush made the process much easier. Again, it is not a lengthy or ideal caption as I experimented with different approaches in almost all of my posts. Unlike the post in Reflection 9, the overall sentiment of the caption is happy. It included three emojis, asked a question and added many hashtags.
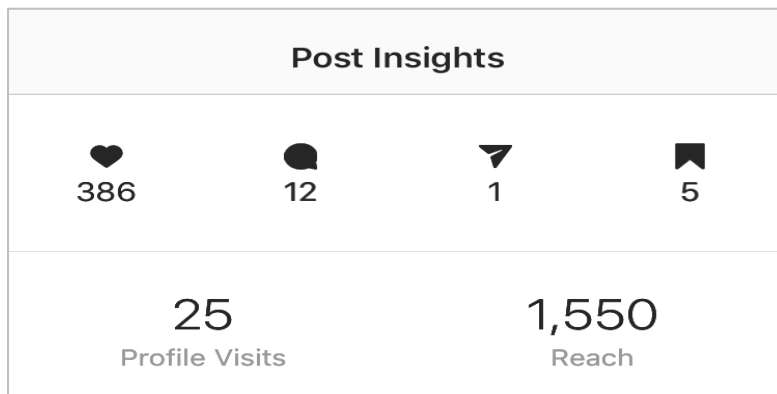
Figure 6.9.1b : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post insights (30th May, 2019)

The post insights in Figure 6.9.1b show that it reached 1550 users, 386 of them liked it, one of them shared it and five saved it. The post also received 12 comments in total and 25 profile visits. While this post did not reach the engagement level I was expecting, it was not particularly unsuccessful. Some of the comments made by viewers were, "Love that you used such vivid colours, it's do striking ♥", "MashaAllah" and "No words for this beauty". No surprisingly, many of the comments were from my Muslim followers. One of my viewers from UK asked me in DM if I could customise the colour combination and he placed his order for the same painting using light and dark shades of green. This work will be completed in January 2020.

Overall, I'm satisfied with this post because it gave me a commission work, along with a few new followers and comments. After this post, I felt as if I should stop experimenting with my posts and employ the most successful approach to posting; one that emerged during this study.

6.10 Reflection 10

Figure 6.10.1a : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post (11th September, 2019)

The post in Figure 6.10.1a, from 11th September 2019 is an image of myself, showing my miniature oil painting which describes nature as a mother, feeding the land with her tears. I tried to create a natural scene with a waterfall flowing from the eye that symbolises the sky, this is not the first time I posted this miniature artwork. In fact, I have posted it three to four times since it was painted, and it is one of my favourite artworks. The peculiar thing about this particular post is that I am confidently showing my face on Instagram (it was my 3rd post with my face on Instagram in the month). At the beginning of the study, I was too afraid to post images of myself on any kind of social media as my depression isolated me from all kind of social activities and I preferred to hide and avoid interaction with the outside world. Additionally, I come from a small town in Pakistan where woman are not allowed to show their face on Facebook

or Instagram, etc.[4]. I feel so content to say that, coming to New Zealand was the best decision of my life because it gave me an opportunity to study new media in a new environment, to socialise with people (as I had no other option), to create and share my art on Instagram for the sake of my thesis and as well as for my own healing, and also to ask for professional help from the mental health department of my university.

In the post, I did not write a big caption for this post on purpose, but I added two lines of my own poetry, "let your tears flow, let them water your soul and let them heal you", used emojis, and I also added relevant hashtags, such as "#mothernature", "#artistfrompakistan", "#needprayers", "#miniatureoilpainting", #contemporaryartwork and 20 others, including my own hashtag #artbynilum. "Obsession" in the title refers to my obsession with drawing/painting eyes.
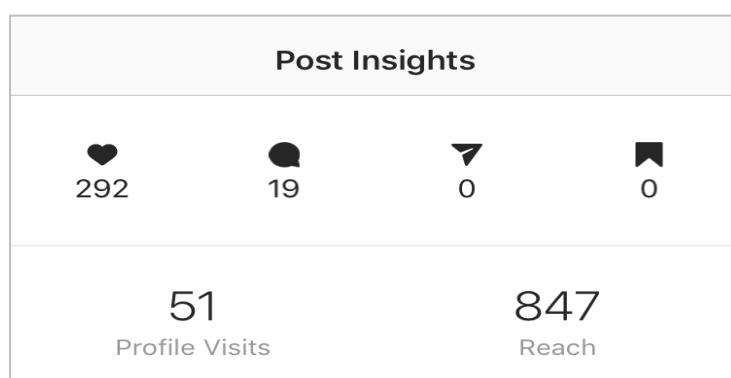
Figure 6.10.1b : Artbynilum's screenshot of IG post insights (11th September, 2019)

As seen in Figure 6.10.1b, my post reached 847 people, 292 of them liked it, there were 51 profile visits, and 19 comments. I was not unhappy with the insights, as it was my average Instagram post with average engagement level.

The next chapter provides a concluding discussion, including implications for practice. It also identifies some limitations of the study.

---

[4] Here, I'm not referring to all areas of Pakistan. This statement only refers to my own town, Phalia, a small town in the Punjab province.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.0 Introduction

This study examined the strategies, techniques and approaches used by interdependent artists to promote and market their creative work on Instagram and explored how the knowledge gained from this examination might be used to successfully promote and market my own artwork on Instagram. Underpinning these research aims (see Chapter 2) was an attempt to use Instagram as a means to develop an artistic practice, and a possible career, rather than simply using the platform (as I had been doing), as a therapy for fighting depression. Another aim of the study was that it might provide findings which other struggling and aspiring artists could use.

7.1 Findings

To answer the first research question research "How do practicing independent visual artists promote and market their work on Instagram?", I carried out three case studies of successful independent visual artist on Instagram (Chapter 4), conducted an online questionnaire (Chapter 5) and undertook practice as research, as well as reflection on that practice (Chapter 6). The findings are summarised below, more as a set of guidelines, than as detailed descriptions.

7.1.1 Creator account

Use should be made of the Instagram's Creator account. Instagram introduced its creator account in February 2019. Prior to its introduction there were two types of accounts, the personal profile account and the business profile account. The creator account allows its user to obtain an in-depth look at their account, including post insights in detail, daily insights about followers or unfollows, as well as statistics about the particular age group and gender their followers belong to. It also allows you to see how many people visited your profile in the last 7 days or see how many people visited your profile by looking at a particular post. This information, as seen in Chapter 6, can help brands, businesses and

artists to develop the ideal content, products or artworks for a target group of a particular age, group or gender.

Instagram Bio

The account should also contain a catchy and appealing Instagram bio. The bio provides any new viewers to an account with the first impression of the account owner and their work. Important components of an IG bio include emojis, personal hashtags and a URL link to other social media sites belonging to the account owner (for example, an artist's shop, a website, or a blog)

7.1.2 Create content regularly and post daily

It is important to be consistently creating and posting, as this facilitates increased connection with others. Account growth depends on the content posted. For this purpose, it is also worth investing in a good camera or camera phone as Instagram is primarily a visual-based platform. I would recommend posting the following once or twice a day:

a) *Images*: Good quality images with natural or creative backgrounds can be made eye-
catching by using effects and filters from the Instagram camera. Sharing work in progress always grabs attention.

b) *Videos*: Real time and times lapse process videos get more engagement that still images. For artists in, particular, the sharing of tutorial videos is important

c) *Stories and highlights*: Story sharing is the feature that is most liked by Instagram users. These stories disappear after 24 hours, but they can be saved as highlights. Highlights are highly recommended as they quickly introduce you, your work, and your use of materials to your followers, as well as new viewers.

7.1.3 Work on captions

Instagram captions are crucial for growing an account. Captions have the ability to add more context to the image and can enhance engagement.

a)   *Start with storytelling:* Captions that begin by telling interesting stories are the most successful and increase the viewer's engagement. Informal stories from everyday life that viewers can easily relate to are the most effective.

b)   *Tone*: Consideration of the mood and tone of the story being told in the caption matters. It is important to establish whether the aim of the narrative is to make followers feel sad, sympathetic, happy or inspired by the post.

c)   *Emojis*: Emojis, symbols and stickers make communication more accessible. The addition of emojis adds emotions to the post and should be taken advantage of.

d)   *Hashtags*: Hashtags maximises a posts' overall potential engagement and provides the opportunity to be discovered by new Instagram users. Hashtags can also give a sense of meaning to a post.

e)   *Questions*: Ask questions related to the post that target followers' passions, interests, and experiences. Questions can create connections with followers more often than not are interested in communicating with the account owner.

7.1.4 Comments and likes

Replying to comments as soon as possible is advantageous, especially after sharing a post. Replies can extend conversations and increase a viewer's engagement with the post. They also encourage followers to ask more questions. Furthermore, an important way to become noticed and attract new followers is to comment on other artists posts. Indeed, my comments on others' posts regularly resulted in at least 5 to 6 new followers of my own. It is of interest to note that from the 17th July, 2019 Instagram removed details showing the number of likes appearing on a post. They stated that this was mainly to reduce competition for receiving likes, and the social complications this caused.

7.2 Practice and reflective practice

To answer the second research question, "Can this knowledge be successfully employed in the development of the researchers own Instagram art marketing account and to what effect?", I developed an Instagram account in order to promote and market my own visual art independently [https://www.instagram.com/artbynilum/]. An important part of this process involved utilising the findings emerging from the case studies and online

questionnaire and reflecting upon the results (Chapter 6). As with the artists in the case studies, I also developed an artist's website which linked from the IG account. The artist's web provided an online platform where my creative works could be bought. The following provides a summary of aspects of this stage of my study.

7.2.1 Follower growth

The study began in July 2018. The beginning of this process was confusing, primarily because I was trying to adjust to living in a new and multicultural country. As a result, I found it difficult to focus on my creative work and the Instagram account, and so by August 2018, my account (which I had started previously in 2016) only had 307 followers. Without any knowledge of Instagram and its strategies for growth, it had taken me a discouraging two years to attract only 307 followers. However, once I had settled down in this new environment and began focusing on my study, including developing the case studies and questionnaires I found that by the last week of January 2019, I had managed to reach 1009 followers and the engagement in my posts averaged between 100 to 110 likes, and 4 to 6 comments.

During the first semester break I did not take any day off, I was creating art regularly, posting it on Instagram and was trying to catch up with my commission works deadlines. In February 2019 I converted my profile from a *personal* to *creator* account (see Section 7.1.1). As soon as I converted to a creator account, I witnessed a healthy growth in my IG account and an increased engagement with viewers and followers. I began to receive a motivating 30 to 40 followers a day.

By the End of August 2019 my followers had increased to 5859, the average number of likes were between 450 and 500, the average number of saves were between 12 and 15, and there were around 6 shares on average. If I had compared the second half of 2018, to the first half of 2019, there would have been a large difference in the statistics of my IG growth. In the last six months of 2018, for example, I struggled to reach 1000 followers and in first six months of 2019 I easily reached 6000. As well as the application of the strategies acquired through my research, another event that helped grow my Instagram audience was that my creative work was feature in three well known art sharing pages

(Artistic.empire, Potpourriofartists, Afmimpression). By the 15th of September 2019, I had collected 6430 followers (Figure 7.2). Table 7.2.1 shows gradual increase of followers during the period of 14 months of my practice.

Figure 7.2: Artbynilum's bio screenshot on 15th September. 2019 ©

Table 7.2.1: Follower growth over the period of 14 months.

Month	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Aug, 2018	307	307	305	311
Sep, 2018	315	313	319	330
Oct, 2018	339	356	368	374
Nov, 2018	392	407	453	489
Dec, 2018	523	574	603	679
Jan, 2019	750	887	953	1009
Feb, 2019	1202	1322	1477	1541
Mar, 2019	1686	1813	1947	2071
April, 2019	4389	2969	3045	3268
May, 2019	3543	3721	3903	4072
Jun, 2019	4189	4311	4589	4632
Jul, 2019	4790	4865	4970	5193
Aug, 2019	5357	5580	5733	5859
Sep, 2019	5985	6249	6365	6430

7.2.2 Captions

In order to establish which type of captions would most successfully engage with viewers I included a varied range of caption types with my post. Some were short, some were lengthy and used the maximum number of 150 words. Some involved stories, emojis, or hashtags and some asked questions. Figure 7.2.2 provides a screen shot of some captions.
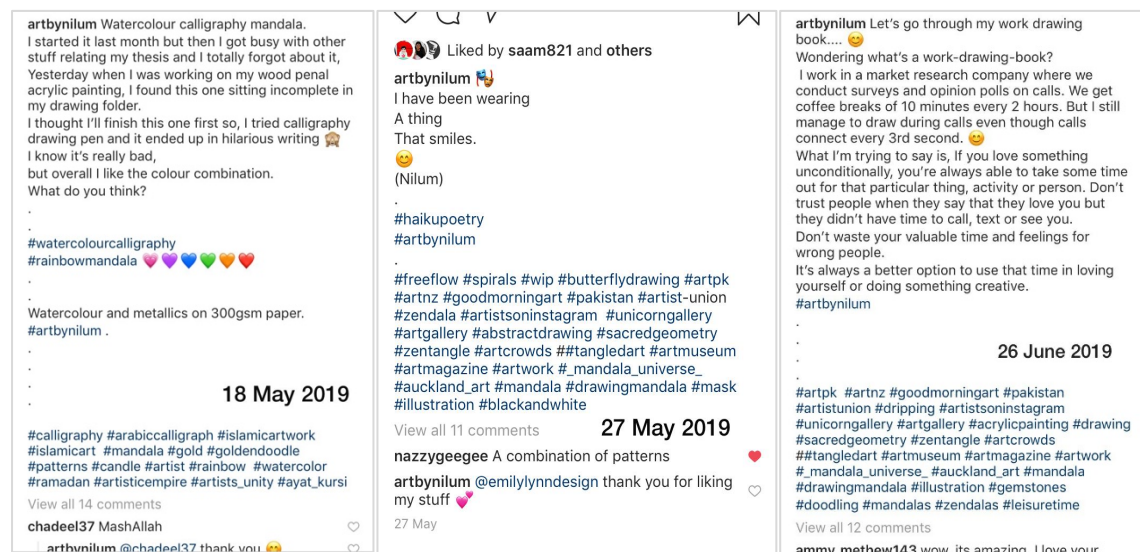
Figure 7.2.2: Artbynilum's captions' screenshots of captions ©

I found placing hashtags in that captions particularly useful. If an image was posted without hashtags, it was only seen by people who were already following me. If posted again without hashtags the image was liked by not only my followers, but also by accounts who did not follow me. The deployment of Hashtags, according to my experience, are crucial for growing followers and sales, as it can take posts beyond the boundary of the account. I used my own hashtag [#artbynilum], however, with almost all of my posts. Some of my most utilised hashtags are:

#art #wip #drawing #mandala #artist #arttherapy #nzart #artpk #artistfrompakistan #contemporaryartwork #_mandala_universe_ #unicorngallery #acrylics #watercolour #explore #artschamber #potpourriofartists #artisticempire #processvideo b#lackandwhite #artshare #doodle #painting #illustration #calligraphy

7.2.3 Likes/views

Throughout the study I established that whether a post is liked or not depends on a number of factors, for example, the image content, its quality, background, accompanying caption or hashtags, etc. Interestingly, however, most viewers are interested in and tend to 'like' videos. These can be in real time, time-lapse or slow-motion. Of these, time-lapse videos receive more attention as they can quickly indicate the complete process of a drawing or a painting and the sped-up process generally maintains viewers interest until the end. My video posts are more liked by my followers than still image posts. The gradual increase in the number of likes received by my images and videos is shown in Figure 7.2.3a and Figure 7.2.3b respectively. In Figure 7.2.3a, an increase from 39 likes and 3 comments (bottom right) to 610 likes and 46 comments (top left) is evident. In Figure 7.2.3b the increase is from 70 views (bottom left) to 1,979 views (top left). These figures indicate a significant change over the period of my research.
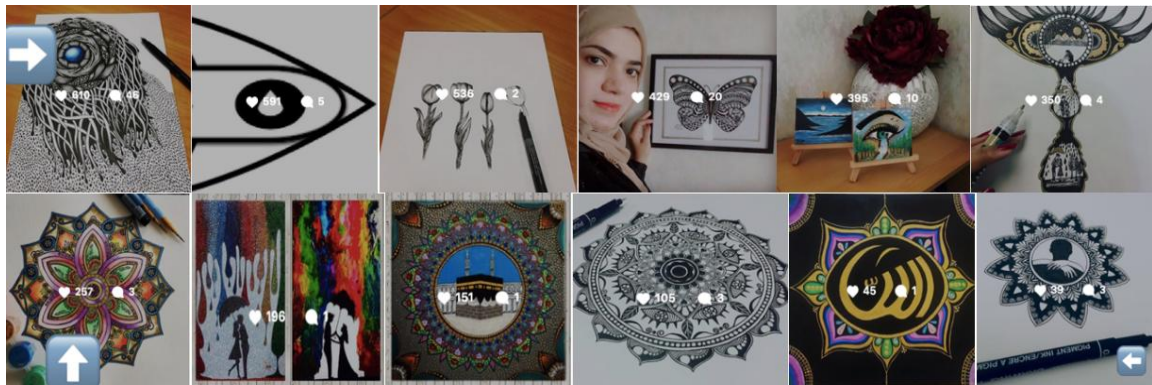

Figure 7.2.3a: Artbynilum's collage image posts' screenshots ©

Figure 7.2.3b: Artbynilum's collage of video posts' screenshots ©

7.2.4 Comments

Since IG has recently disabled the 'likes' count, comments have become the primary tool by which to judge the popularity of a particular post. Throughout my study I found that the more one replies to their followers' comments the more likely followers will return to comment on other posts. The level of engagement for any post also depends on comments. For example, if a post receives more comments soon after being posted, IG make it available to more users by sending it to the *Instagram Explore Page*. In the initial months of my research, I was not replying to the comments of my followers left on my IG posts, or alternatively I replied with one or two words. As a result, my subsequent posts did not receive many comments or likes.

7.3 Limitations

Social media or digital platform, especially Instagram, are constantly evolving and this is a primary limitation found in this study. Many of the findings from this study may not be relevant to future users of Instagram, due to future developments and changes. Furthermore, while this study is limited to Instagram, there are many other social media platforms that artists could use to promote and market their art. As social media trends shift and platforms other than Instagram become over time more fashionable with those marketing and promoting their products, including independent visual art, the usefulness of the findings in this study, and the ability of Instagram to maintain the presence of my own art practice will no doubt diminish.

Another limitation in conducting this study involves a lack of time. As I discussed above, throughout the one-year period of my study, I was not only developing my IG account, but was also occupied by my daily art practice which involved the time-consuming creation of 70 art works, including commissions. Furthermore, the development of the accompanying website took over a month to complete, and the writing of the exegesis, including the observation of other artists' accounts was a major effort. The study also included many occluded aspects, such as shopping for art supplies, keeping up with commissions and posting them. My mental health also required regular counselling sessions and doctor appointments, and I also needed to work to pay my bills. Furthermore, in the last month of my submission I was hospitalised as due to my engagement with my study, I had avoided looking after my health. If there had been more time, I could have investigated some of the other social media platforms found in all the three case studies, for example Facebook, personal websites and blogs, which included details of sales growth. Ultimately these are all central for independent visual artists promoting and marketing their work on Instagram.

7.4 Final Word

Of course, not all those who suffer from depression are creative, and not all creative people are depressed. However, depression and creativity have long being associated with each other since the times of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle, for example, raised the question, "Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry, or the arts are melancholic?" (Aristotle &Barnes, 1984)

In Chapter 1, I provided a detailed description of the motivation for the study. It stated that I was suffering from depression and detached me from the outer world. It is worth mentioning here, however, that this negativity drove me towards the positive process of being creative. I also discussed in this chapter that how my artistic self (resulting from depressive self) brought me to Auckland University of Technology to study new media and begin the study and associated creative practice discussed throughout this exegesis. Ultimately, this study saved me from being sad, anxious and a pessimist, and today I no longer feel ashamed telling people about my mental illness.

This opening up is evident in Figure 7.3a, a post from 11ᵗʰ July 2019, where I shared a poem, I had written to tell my followers how I feel about my art practice, and how it heals my soul. And again, in Figure 7.3b, written on the 3ʳᵈ August 2019, I shared details of my depression for the first time with an audience who was not my counsellor. I felt brave enough to say that I had defeated the monster. Posting about my healing process reminded me of my high school days when I read Earnest Hemingway's novel "The Old Man and the Sea". In the novel Hemmingway stated, "man is not made for defeat, a man can be destroyed but not defeated" (Hemingway, 1952).

Figure 7.3a: Artbynilum's post screenshot 11ᵗʰ July 2019 ©

Figure 7.3b: Artbynilum's post screenshot 3rd August, 2019 ©

To conclude this exegesis, I would like to add that I received two offers for new career opportunities as a result of this research. The company I work for is an Australian company expanding their business in New Zealand. I habitually worked on my drawings in lunch and coffee breaks, and one of my employers, after becoming interested in my work on Instagram, asked me to develop the company's logo. I have provided them with four working designs, and the logo will be finalised in November 2019. Furthermore, my company has also offered me place of *social media manager*, and I will begin this role after completing my master's degree.

References

Abbott, S. (2005). *Fine art publicity*. New York: Allworth Press.

Abidin, C. (2016). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia*, *161*(1), 86-100. doi: 10.1177/1329878x16665177

Afolayan, M., & Oniyinde, O. (2019). Interviews and Questionnaires as Legal Research Instruments. *Journal Of Law, Policy And Globalization*, *83*. doi: 10.7176/jlpg/83-08

Agora Advice Blog. (2018). How to Promote Your Art on Instagram - Agora Advice Blog. [online] Available at: https://www.agora gallery.com/advice/blog/2016/04/05/promote-art-instagram/ [Accessed 3 Aug. 2018].

Alexander, A. (2018). Marketing on Instagram [Blog]. Retrieved from https://www.lynda.com/Instagram-tutorials/Marketing-Instagram/740415-2.html

Alshawaf, E., & Wen, L. (2015). *Understanding Digital Reputation on Instagram: A Case Study of Social Media Mavens*. Minnesota: Academic Conference International.

Aristotle, & Barnes, J. (1984). *The complete works of Aristotle*. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press.

Art Biz Blog. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.artbizblog.com/

Art Biz Coach - Artist Business Strategies with Alyson Stanfield. (2018). Retrieved from https://artbizcoach.com/

Becker, D. (2017). Instagram as a potential platform for alternative Visual Culture in South Africa. In Bunce, M; Franks, S; Paterson, C. 2016. *Africa's Media Image in the 21st Century*. London: Routledge

Blattmann, J. (2019). Instagram: Art's New Playground

https://medium.com/predict/instagram-arts-new-playground-2d251ea98809

Bradbury, H., & Reason, P. (2001). *The Sage handbook of action research*.

Brennen, B. S. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. Retrieved from
https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Bromley, D. (1986). *The case-study method in psychology and related disciplines*.
        Chichester: Wiley.

Burgess, Eric (2016), "11 Essential Stats for Influencer Marketing in 2016," Influencer
        Orchestration Network, https://www.ion.co/11-essential-stats-for-influencer-
        marketing-in-2016

Candy, L (2006) Practice based research: A guide

Chacon, B. (2019). Instagram Hashtags: The Ultimate Guide (2019 Update).
        https://later.com/blog/ultimate-guide-to-using-instagram-hashtags/

Costill, A. (2014). *30 Things you absolutely need to know about Instagram*. Retrieved
        September 19, 2018, from http://www.searchenginejournal.com/30-things-
        absolutely-need-know-instagram/85991/

Churches, O., Nicholls, M., Thiessen, M., Kohler, M., & Keage, H. (2014). Emoticons in
        mind: An event-related potential study. *Social Neuroscience*, *9*(2), 196-202. doi:
        10.1080/17470919.2013.873737

Cook, Karla (2017), "10 Impressive Examples of Influencer Marketing Campaigns,"
        HubSpot, March 6, https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/examples-of-influencer-
        marketingcampaigns#sm.00001x6al5nvagfqayp47jgoequj8

Davies, S. (2017). 'Consuming the Self': A discourse analysis of the self-representation of Instagram bloggers and its relationship to consumer culture. Retrieved from http://pvac-webhost2.leeds.ac.uk/ics/files/2017/11/Sophie-Davies-2016-17.pdf

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal Of Advertising*, *36*(5), 798-828. doi: 10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

Dennisdotter, E. & Axenbrant, E. (2008). Storytelling: ett effektivt marknadsföringsgrepp. (1. uppl.) Malmö: Liber.

Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duffy, E and Hund, E. (2015). "Having it All" on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers. Social Media + Society, pp1-11.

Duffy, S. (2013). "Less talk, more (inter) action": The role of marketers in social media branding. Retrieved 18 January 2014 from http://www.brandba.se/blog/2013/11/2/less-talkmore-interaction-the-role-of-marketers-in-social-media-branding

Duncan-Durst, l. (2009). Content - Facebook Is The New AOL [Blog]. Retrieved from https://news.alibaba.com/article/detail/insight/100982284-1-content---facebook-new-aol.html

Erdogmus, I. E. & Cicek, M. (2012, October 12). The impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty. Procedia- social and behavioral sciences, volume 58, 1353-1360. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.1119

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher using our selves in research* .
London : Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Ferguson, D. A., & Greer, C. F. (2018). Visualizing a Non-Visual Medium through Social
Media:. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media,25*(1). Retrieved September 20, 2018, from
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19376529.2017.1385617

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.

Fleming, O. (2014). Why the World's Most Talked-About New Art Dealer Is Instagram.
Vogue. Retrieved from https://www.vogue.com/article/buying-and-selling-art-on-
instagram

Fowdar, R. R. (2013). The Implications of Facebook Marketing for
Organizations. *Contemporary Management Research*, *9*(1), 73-84. doi:
10.7903/cmr.9710

Francisco, B. (2006). Cracking the social network code Commentary: Communities will
likely drive ad growth [Blog]. Retrieved from
http://www0.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/d.quercia/others/socialsearchbuss.pdf

Grant, D. (2010). The Business of Being an Artist. New York: Alworth Press

Grönroos, C. (2004). The relationship marketing process: Communication, interaction,
dialogue, value. The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 19(2), 99-113.

Hemingway, E. *The Oldman and the sea* (1952, p. 93). Cuba.

Huff, C. (n.d.). How to sell art on Instagram. *The Abundant Artist*. Retrieved from
https://theabundantartist.com/how-to-sell-art-instagram/

Iyer, A., Webster, J., Hornsey, M., & Vanman, E. (2014). Understanding the power of the picture: The effect of image content on emotional and political responses to terrorism. *Journal Of Applied Social Psychology*, *44*(7), 511-521. doi: 10.1111/jasp.12243

Jamison, K. (1997). *Manic-depressive illness and creativity*. New York: Scientific American, Inc.

Jensen Schau, H., & Gilly, M. (2003). We Are What We Post? Self-Presentation in Personal Web Space. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, *30*(3), 385-404. doi: 10.1086/378616

Jones, N., Borgman, R., & Ulusoy, E. (2015). Impact of social media on small businesses. *Journal Of Small Business And Enterprise Development*, *22*(4), 611-632. doi: 10.1108/jsbed-09-2013-0133

Karjalainen, T-M., & Snelders, D. (2010). Designing Visual Recognition for the Brand. Journal of production innovation management, 27, 6–22.

Keller, K. (2003). *Strategic brand management*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Kelly Marie on Instagram: "And this is why I don't paint my nails or wear rings. https://www.instagram.com/p/BSjMpzbgVYV/

Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. (2012). Marketing management. (14. ed., Global ed,). Harlow: Pearson Education.

Kress, G and van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge Continuum.

Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (1996) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2001) *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.

Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2002) 'Colour as a Semiotic Mode: Notes for a Grammar of Colour', *Visual Communication* 1(3): 343–68.

Lavoie, K. A. (2015). Instagram and Branding: A Case Study of Dunkin' Donuts. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications,6*(2) 1-2. Retrieved September 20, 2018, from http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1364/instagram-and-branding-a-case-study-of-dunkin-donuts

Lee, J. & Lee, H. (2013). Does satisfaction affect brand loyalty? *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, 17(2), 133-147.

Lewis, P. (2010b). 8 internet marketing ideas. *Craft Report*, 36(414), 18-20.

Lien, T. (2018). Los Angeles Times - We are currently unavailable in your region. [online] Latimes.com. Available at: http://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-instagram-artists-20180305-story.html

Lim, Sook & Yazdanifard, Dr. Rashad. (2014). How Instagram can be used as a tool in social networking marketing.
https://www.academia.edu/8365558/How_Instagram_can_be_used_as_a_tool_in_social_network_marketing

Lu, L., Chang, W., & Chang, H. (2014). Consumer attitudes toward blogger's sponsored recommendations and purchase intention: The effect of sponsorship type, product type, and brand awareness. *Computers In Human Behavior*, *34*, 258-266. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.007

Mangold, W. G, & Faulds, D.J. (2009) *Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix,* Business horizons, 52(4), 357-365

Maranga, P. (2014). Social Photos Generate More Engagement: New Research. *Social Media Examiner*. Retrieved from https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/photos-generate-engagement-research/

Marie, K. (2018). How to Brand Your Instagram Account: A Guide for Artists — Messy Ever After. [online] Messy Ever After. Available at: https://messyeverafter.com/self-employed-journey/brand-instagram-account-guide-artists/

Marie, K. (2018). How to Increase Your Instagram Followers in 2018 Tips for Artists – Messy Ever After. Retrieved 15 July 2019, from https://messyeverafter.com/self-employed-journey/increase-instagram-followers-2018-tips-artists/

Marie, K. (2018). How to Write Engaging Instagram Captions [Blog]. Retrieved from https://messyeverafter.com/self-employed-journey/how-to-write-engaging-instagram-captions/

Marie, K. (2018). Mea • Kelly Marie on Instagram: "These 11x14 wispy watercolors will be on my site soon. What do you think? Also, I've been thinking about getting a printer and offering…". Retrieved 4 July 2019, from https://www.instagram.com/p/BeIxziklRXU/

Marie, K. (2019). [Image]. Retrieved from https://messyeverafter.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Instagram-Reach-Last-30-Days-768x768.jpg

Marie, K. (2019). Creative Coaching and Consulting. Retrieved 20 July 2019, from https://shop.messyeverafter.com/creative-consulting.html

Marie, K. (2019). Retrieved 2 August 2019, from https://messyeverafter.com/about/

Marie, K. (2019). Why You Should Create Videos of Your Art Process [Blog]. Retrieved from https://messyeverafter.com/self-employed-journey/why-you-should-create-videos-of-your-art-process/

Mckee, S. (2015). Are You Using a Questionnaire or Survey to Collect Data? Retrieved 1
October 2019, from https://www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/taking-the-
question-out-of-questionnaires/

MediaKix (2016), "How Do Instagram Influencers Make
Money?,"http://mediakix.com/2016/03/instagram-influencersmaking-
money/#gs.null.

Michels, C. (2018). *How to Survive and Prosper as an Artist: Selling Yourself Without
Selling Your Soul* (7th ed.). United States of America.

Mize, S. R. (2009). Social network benefits. Retrieved September 20, 2018, from
http://ezinearticles.com/?Social-Network-Benefits&id=464645

Mossberg, L. & Nissen Johansen, E. (2006). Storytelling: marknadsföring i
upplevelseindustrin. (1. uppl.) Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Nelson, R. (2013). *Practice as research in the arts*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ortlipp, M.(2008). Keeping and Using Reflective Journals in the Qualitative Research
Process .*The Qualitative Report*, *13*(4), 695-705. Retrieved from
https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/8

Palmer, A., & Koenig-Lewis, N. (2009). An experiential, social network-based approach to
direct marketing. *Direct Marketing: An International Journal*, *3*(3), 162-176. doi:
10.1108/1750593091098511

Peres, P., & Mesquita, A. (2015). *Proceedings of the 2nd European Conference on Social
Media* [Ebook]. UK: Academic Conference and Publishing International Limited.
Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Aleksandar_Karadimce/publication/283460603_Build
ing_context-

Pethig, M. (2019). about — macromicro art. Retrieved 21 July 2019, from
https://www.macromicro.co.nz/about-1

Pethig, M. (2019). Mike Pethig (@macromicroart) • Instagram photos and videos.
Retrieved 10 July 2019, from https://www.instagram.com/macromicroart/

Picasso, P. (2018). EmptyEasel.com: Painting Tips, Artist Reviews, Selling Art Online and
more. Retrieved from http://emptyeasel.com/

Pilon, A. (2018). 10 Things You MUST Know About Social Media Marketing with Your
Pet - Small Business Trends. Retrieved 2 June 2019, from
https://smallbiztrends.com/2018/05/social-media-marketing-with-pets.html

Rogers, S. (2014). What fuels a Tweet's engagement? [Blog]. Retrieved from
https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/a/2014/what-fuels-a-tweets-engagement.html

Saad, D. and Rosenberg, A. (2018). How To Build A Thriving Brand Presence On
Instagram. [online] Forbes.com. Available at:
https://www.forbes.com/sites/saadrosenberg/2018/01/16/how-to-build-a-thriving-brand-
presence-on-instagram/#2398a41d6893

Sahu, P. (2013). *Research Methodology: A Guide for Researchers In Agricultural Science,
Social Science and Other Related Fields*. India: Springer India.

Skains, R. (2018). Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology. *Media
Practice And Education*, *19*(1), 82-97. doi: 10.1080/14682753.2017.1362175

Snow, L. (2019). Collaborations - fortyonehundred. Retrieved 18 July 2019, from
https://www.fortyonehundred.co.nz/collaborations

Snow, L. (2019). FAQ - fortyonehundred. Retrieved 19 July 2019, from
https://www.fortyonehundred.co.nz/faq

Snow, L. (2019). Lizzie Snow 🌿 Mandalas&Murals (@fortyonehundred) • Instagram
photos and videos. Retrieved 18 July 2019, from
https://www.instagram.com/fortyonehundred/

Snow, L. (2019). Lizzie Snow 🌿 Mandalas&Murals on Instagram: "2 days till I can share
my massive news with you all 💭🌿🖌 Can't wait to tell you what's going on! 😍
Love this photo of my boy George helping…". Retrieved 19 July 2019, from
https://www.instagram.com/p/BtbKRrcH5F0/

Snow, L. (2019). Social Media - fortyonehundred. Retrieved 19 July 2019, from
https://www.fortyonehundred.co.nz/socialmedia

Snow, L. (2019). The Art Work - fortyonehundred. Retrieved 18 July 2019, from
https://www.fortyonehundred.co.nz/the-art-work

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

Stanfield, A. (2011). I'd rather be in the studio!. Golden, Colo.: Pentas Press.

Stanfield, A. (2012, May 23). 5 Painless fixes for a more potent artist statement. 60
Retrieved from ArtBiz.com, 05/2012 Stanfield, A. (2012, June 27).
http://www.artbizblog.com/2012/05/statementfixes.html

Stanfield, A. B. (2007). Energize your business with effective marketing routines. Art
Business News, 34(11), 50.

Stubb, C., & Colliander, J. (2019). "This is not sponsored content" – The effects of
impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to
social media influencer posts. *Computers In Human Behavior*, *98*, 210-222. doi:
10.1016/j.chb.2019.04.024

Systrom, K. 300 Million Instagrammers Sharing Real Life Moments [Blog]. Retrieved
from

https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/300-million-instagrammers-sharing-real-life-moments/

Therapy, H. (2018). Depression and Creativity – Connected, or a Myth? [Blog].

Thurlow, C., & Aiello, G. (2007). National pride, global capital: a social semiotic analysis of transnational visual branding in the airline industry. *Visual Communication*, *6*(3), 305-344. doi: 10.1177/1470357207081002

Tran, T. (2019). Everything You Need to Know About the Instagram Creator Account [Blog]. Retrieved from https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-creator-account/

Tucci, G. (2001). *The theory and practice of the Maṇḍala*. Mineola (N.Y.): Dover Publ.

Tufte, E. (1997) *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2005) *Introducing Social Semiotics*. London: Routledge.

Vaughan, E. and O'Keeffe, A. (2015). Corpus Analysis. In *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction* (eds K. Tracy, T. Sandel and C. Ilie). doi:10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi168

Welcome to IGTV. (2019). Retrieved 8 September 2019, from https://instagram-press.com/blog/2018/06/20/welcome-to-igtv/

Yang, T., Kim, D., & Dhalwani, V. (2008). Social networking as a new trend in e-marketing. In: L. Xu, L., Tjoa, M. & S. Chaudhry, (Eds.), Research and Practical Issues of Enterprise Information Systems II (pp. 847-856). Boston: Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-76312-5_7.

Yin, R. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *Evaluation*, *19*(3), 321-332. doi: 10.1177/1356389013497081

Appendix

Q1. What made you decide to promote your art on Instagram?

Q2. How important is it for you to increase the number of followers you have?

Q3. What strategies do you use to get more followers?

Q4. Could you describe anything you stopped doing on Instagram because it noticeably reduced the number of people following your account?

Q5. Could you describe any strategies that you use on Instagram to increase the sales of your work.

Q6. Is there anything you stopped doing on Instagram because it noticeably reduced the number of people buying your work?

Q7 - Could you briefly describe what you think are your most successful posts on Instagram.

Q8 - Could you briefly describe what you think are your least successful posts on Instagram.

Q9 - If you post images/videos to encourage people to follow your Instagram account or buy your work, what type of images/videos do you choose?

Q10. If you include captions in your Instagram posts to encourage people to follow your Instagram account or buy your work, what type of language do you use?

Q11. If you also have an accompanying website to promote your art, could you describe the relationship of your website to your Instagram account.

Q12. What do you suggest to an independent visual artist wanting to promote their work through Instagram?