

## Digital Objects and Research Practices

Helge Moes

11348801

Work Group 2

Richard Rogers

Research Project 5 – Data Analytics

Word count: 988

### **Introduction**

Fake following is a concept that is present on many different platforms, such as Instagram (Colombo & Gaetano 2019). Furthermore, fake following can be defined as artificial engagement of following as to give the impression that an influencer displays popularity and to be represented more often on general feed by deceiving the algorithm of social media. To assess the fakeness within a social media account, several techniques will be utilized for this research. Moreover, with techniques, it is implied that metrics are utilized such as likes and followers.

This research will take the Instagram account of Tyler the Creator as a case study. Tyler the Creator is known as a renaissance man, as an artist that is capable of producing different type of arts such as; rap, fashion, skits, etc. Moreover, Tyler the Creator established a group called Odd Future, the group is to help each other producing content and support each other. The Instagram account “feliciathegoat” (The Creator 2019) consists out of 8.3 million followers with 446 posts. For such a huge presence on Instagram, it is easy to assume that the artist is utilizing fake followers. Therefore, the research will utilize engagement rates to examine the nature of the Instagram account.

### **Methodology**

Looking at likes to follows ratio will provide insight to whether an account might be utilizing dead accounts that follow them and are not active anymore. By dividing the total amount of likes and comments by the number of followers allows for an engagement rate that may prove as evidence that an account is utilizing fake followers (Rogers 2019).

While looking at the average engagement rate (percentage of followers that engages with the content) on the Instagram account of Tyler the Creator, the average would have to be on a low average to confirm the state whether an account is using fake accounts.

This research will assess 35 most recent published posts. In this case, the data is manually gathered to excel as to calculate the engagement rate of the followers to the content

provided by Tyler the Creator. Furthermore, the engagement rates are calculated to percentages.

Likes	Comments	Engagementrate Likes	Engagementrate Comments
1000000	5756	12,04819277	0,069349398
435000	2841	5,240963855	0,034228916
645000	3448	7,771084337	0,041542169
2000000	8549	24,09638554	0,103
953000	6408	11,48192771	0,077204819
1100000	12600	13,25301205	0,151807229
805000	6474	9,698795181	0,078
1000000	7131	12,04819277	0,085915663
796000	4179	9,590361446	0,050349398
915000	6692	11,02409639	0,080626506
1200000	9184	14,45783133	0,110650602
825000	4980	9,939759036	0,06
1500000	7296	18,07228916	0,087903614
736000	11400	8,86746988	0,137349398
1200000	11400	14,45783133	0,137349398
684000	763	8,240963855	0,009192771
1400000	14600	16,86746988	0,175903614
1600000	128000	19,27710843	1,542168675
376000	2450	4,530120482	0,029518072
2500000	16100	30,12048193	0,193975904
767000	7820	9,240963855	0,094216867
1800000	2824	21,68674699	0,034024096
3100000	6820	37,34939759	0,082168675
960000	10200	11,56626506	0,122891566
1100000	9154	13,25301205	0,110289157
829000	2129	9,987951807	0,025650602
1400000	10300	16,86746988	0,124096386
394000	7536	4,746987952	0,090795181
1000000	8516	12,04819277	0,10260241
807000	9769	9,722891566	0,117698795
3600000	9252	43,37349398	0,11146988
1100000	9965	13,25301205	0,120060241
1000000	13100	12,04819277	0,157831325
529000	3549	6,373493976	0,042759036
3100000	4190	37,34939759	0,050481928

Figure 1: Engagement rates of the Instagram account of Tyler the Creator

## Analysis

To assess whether the Instagram of Tyler the Creator utilizes fake followers, the findings will consider that of the digital methods mentioned in *No Reciprocity in “Liking” Photos: Analyzing Like Activities in Instagram* (Jang et al 2015). The data collection in this research

was also done manually by monitoring accounts and calculating the like and follow ratios. The technique does not take inactive accounts into consideration. Therefore, it is difficult to

conclude whether the account of Tyler the Creator utilizes fake followers.

The mean of likes in this research was 11,122 (Jang et al 2015). Moreover, the research by Jin Yea Jang, Kyungsik Han and Dongwon Lee considers the mean similar as this research, as an average of likes on posts. The findings show that this average is 14,855. This exceeds the mean mentioned in the literature of Jin Yea Jang, Kyungsik Han and Dongwon. This might indicate a manipulation of the engagement ratio on Tyler the Creators Instagram account.

Besides the likes, the comments presented to be limited to the number of likes. This did represent a valid engagement rate, since it allowed insight to accounts that are dedicated and opinionated to the content created by the influencer. However, it was difficult to determine whether an account was fake or had biased reasons for reacting on the content, instead of liking it. Therefore, the likes will be primarily assessed in this research.

Posts	Followers
477	8300000
Follows	Percent
219	100
AVERAGE	
14,855766	0,1326592
TOTAL	
43156000	385375
AVERAGE PER POST	
87465,409	789,89099

Figure 2: Total and Averages of the instagram account of Tyler the Creator

Furthermore, Tyler the Creator is known as a fashion icon; therefore, it is interesting for brands to collaborate with such SMI's (social media influencers) (Audrezet et al 2018). Marketeers work together with such an influencer as to create social media strategies while being authentic as well.

Moreover, the account of Tyler the Creator does not follow a large number of other accounts. This can have a negative impact on the generation of popularity in numbers, since the influencer follows few accounts and does not collaborate with other influencers or brands (Veirman 2017). Therefore, this might provide the authenticity of the numbers of the Instagram account of Tyler the Creator.

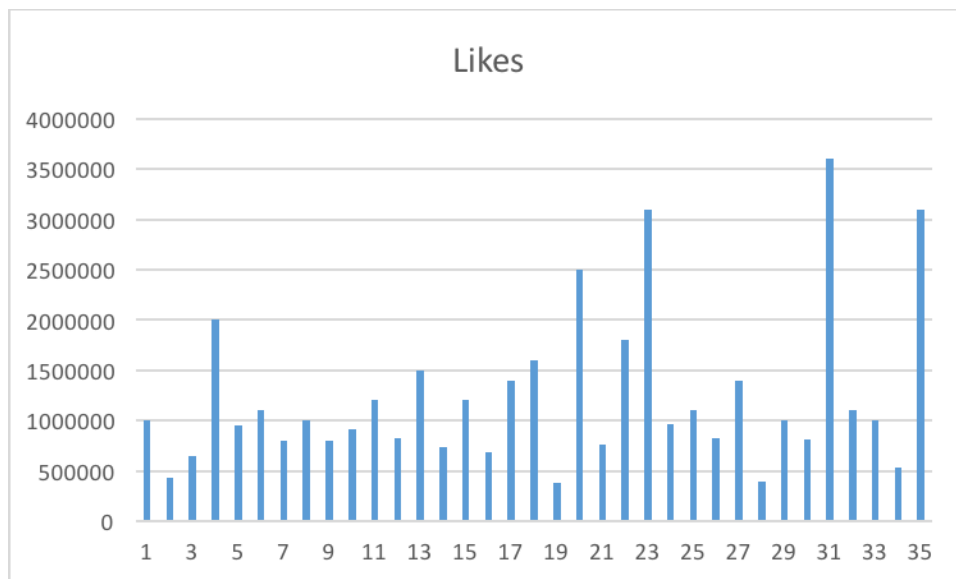


Figure 3: Total number of likes over the 35 posts on the instagram account of Tyler the Creator

The like ratio displays the number of likes a post, it shows that the post with the most views were in collaboration with other brands. However, it is difficult to determine whether this is fake following, since these brands are popular on social media and generate more views than the account of Tyler the Creator.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the research lacks other detection methods. While conducting this research, many different sites did not provide their software as to scrape the data of Instagram accounts. Therefore, the analysis is limited to one method. However, since the findings were generated manually, it does hold clear and comprehensible data.

The research considers likes as a means to generate the engagement ratio. However, in practice this does not provide clear evidence whether the likes are of accounts that are not subscribed to the influencers account or that the accounts are fake. Therefore, a clear conclusion cannot be taken through the engagement ratio technique.

Moreover, the findings do not provide a determination of fake following. The nature behind the other accounts are not assessed, since the software to examine this was not enabled. Therefore, the research is left to rationalization of the statistics that are displayed on the home page of the Instagram account. This made it difficult to assess the comments as an engagement ratio, since the accounts were too many to assess manually and were difficult to label as fake, since the definition of fake following can be interpreted in different ways.

## References

- Abidin Crystal. 2016. "Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?: Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity". *Social Media + Society* 1 – 17.
- Audrezet, Alice, Gwarlann de Kerviler and Julie Guidry Moulard. 2018. *Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation*. Journal of Business Research. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296318303229>
- Colombo, Gabriele and Carlo de Gaetano. 2019. 'The presense of fakeness in the Dutch political Instagram: Fake content, sources and followers. In Rogers, Richard and Sabine Niederer. *The Politics of Social Media Manipulation*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Jang, Jin Yea, Kyungsik Han and Dongwon Lee. 2015. No Reciprocity in "Liking" Photos: Analyzing Like Activities in Instagram. College of Information Sciences and Technology The Pennsylvania State University, USA: 273 – 283.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kyungsik\\_Han/publication/281664908\\_No\\_Reciprocity\\_in\\_Liking\\_Photos\\_Analyzing\\_Like\\_Activities\\_in\\_Instagram/links/564cb5a208ae3d2439e685f5.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kyungsik_Han/publication/281664908_No_Reciprocity_in_Liking_Photos_Analyzing_Like_Activities_in_Instagram/links/564cb5a208ae3d2439e685f5.pdf)
- Richard Rogers. 2019. "Worksheet Unit 5.Pdf. Digital Objects and Research Practices." 2019. [https://canvas.uva.nl/courses/13634/files/1702292?module\\_item\\_id=391751](https://canvas.uva.nl/courses/13634/files/1702292?module_item_id=391751).
- "Tyler, The Creator (@feliciathegoat) • Instagram-foto's en -video's." n.d. Accessed November 4, 2019. <https://www.instagram.com/feliciathegoat/>.
- Veirman, Marijke De, Veroline Cauberghe, and Liselot Hudders. 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.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>.