



Full disclosure: I've tried most of these (in the name of research and except buying likes and followers because I just don't have money or time like that) All that to say, I have tested most of these on my own accounts and have seen the damage done by them.

When Instagram changed the algorithm and influencers noticed their influence going down the tubes, a lot of services popped up to

“help”. This included services like the now defunct Instagress and Mass Planner which followed/unfollowed, liked and commented for a user.

Also, comment pods, and Facebook groups popped up to help influencers out, adding likes and comments to increase engagement on posts.

You can buy any type of engagement you want now a days. That includes, like, comments, views, impressions, saves...

Now, I’m not judging anyone who has used or is still using one of these services.

If that is your business model, **do you**. But I want you to understand how these services and groups and pods affect your engagement and therefore the algorithm.

Let’s address follow/unfollow.

If you want numbers quickly this is the way to go. BUT randomly following accounts to get likes leads to an unengaged audience. Which leads to a decrease in engagement. Because out of your 100K followers, only 5 K of them see your posts on a good day due to none of the rest of them being in your niche. They are simply place fillers, looking good on paper.

Plus most Instagrammers have caught on to this practice.

Comment Pods/Facebook Like/Comment Groups/Telegram Groups

I'm going to spend a lot of time on this section because I know this is where many people go. Because it's safe right? It's real people giving real likes. Right?

Comment and like pods CAN be a good thing.
IF DONE RIGHT.

The problem is, that they never are. The original premise of a comment pod was a group of like minded accounts (ie fashion bloggers, travel bloggers, mom/lifestyle bloggers) forming a small group to boost engagement. Since these accounts were like minded, the thought was that the algorithm would take this into account and boost your posts because of the increased engagement from accounts like yours. Sort of validating your content.

BUT most pods are not set up that way. There are a ton of like and comment pods that are not niche specific. Members are commenting on any and everything and NOT STAYING IN THEIR LANE. Remember,

Instagram tracks everything you do. So if you are in a Facebook group for likes and you like lots of posts on motherhood and you post about your dog, you will not increase your engagement beyond the likes and comments you get from that pod/group.

They should not be used for every single post.

And here is why.

Remember, if your account is an account about kids and a person in your pod is a luxury travel account, then your content gets shown to the followers of a luxury travel account explore pages. Those followers aren't interested in seeing children in their feeds. They won't engage in your post on the explore page, therefore telling Instagram the content is not worth sharing.

And after the initial bump provided by the pod, it dies.

Reach goes down and Instagram pulls it from the explore page and slows down how many of your own followers see the post.

Another problem with Comment pods is that you continue to engage with the same accounts over and over again.

Therefore, your content is not getting in front of any new users. So, your reach goes down and your post dies off as again, Instagram pulls it from the explore page, and doesn't show it to new audiences or your own.

Think about it, how many times have you participated in Comment pods or like rounds on Facebook or Telegram only to see a decrease in reach and impressions after an initial bump in engagement? Your account and content is not being shown to anyone new. So it doesn't grow.

Buying Likes and Followers

Getting likes from fake accounts makes the categorization of your account much harder for Instagram because you are messing up your categorization algorithm.

The average account you get likes from when buying likes has no followers, no engagement and likes thousands posts a day which puts THEM in hundreds of niches because Instagram doesn't know what to do with them.

This hurts you with Instagram. Because remember, Instagram is basically stalking you. It KNOWS. What happens is that even though you have likes and comments and followers(that are fake) Instagram will favor other accounts in your niche over yours because they have REAL engagement and you don't.

Shadowbans

Shadowbanning on Instagram means that your posts remain visible to your followers, and anyone who visits your page but that your content is not found under hashtags, on the Explore page, in the search function or under location pages. As a result, you're likely to see a drop in engagement and growth, as your visibility rapidly declines. Shadowbanning is usually a direct result of spam like activities or banned hashtags. We will go more into hashtags next week.

I'm not here to judge you. DO YOU! Hopefully this section helps you make informed decisions!