

Content marketing on Instagram

An investigation of the effects of vividness and content type in brand messages
on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude

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Abstract

This study has focused on the effect of vividness and type of content in brand messages on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude in content marketing on Instagram. To test the hypotheses, a 2 x 2 between-subjects experiment ($N = 160$) was performed. Brand messages on Instagram about the brand Stabilo were manipulated for the independent variables level of vividness (low and high) and type of content (informational and entertaining). The participants conducted the research via an online experimental survey and were seeing only one condition.

The results showed that the level of vividness does not have an effect on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude. Furthermore, it seemed that there was an effect of type of content on attitudes: entertaining content may lead to higher ratings of brand- and content attitude. No main effect was found for the interaction between the independent variables. However, results indicate that there is an interaction effect between type of content and level of vividness on brand engagement. Hence, entertaining content presented with a high level of vividness may lead to higher brand engagement than informative content presented with a high level of vividness. This research is a valuable addition to the existing literature, since little is known about content marketing on Instagram. Earlier research focused on other social media and show contradicting results which indicate differences between the several platforms. Further, there are less insights into content marketing on Instagram from the perspective of the receiver (e.g., their engagement and attitudes). Therefore, the results from this thesis are a first step to new knowledge about content marketing on Instagram and ask for future research.

Keywords: Content marketing, Instagram, vividness, type of content, brand engagement, attitudes.

Introduction

Since the rise of social networking sites as Facebook and Twitter, companies started looking for approaches to use them in an effective way to seek engagement with their customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media are a group of Internet-based applications that build on the foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. By creating a business page on social media, brands attempt to convince the receivers of the content to engage with the product, brand, and ultimately buy the product or utilize the service (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Antheunis, Van Kaam, Liebrecht, & Van Noort, 2016). These goals can be achieved with content marketing, which is the creation of valuable, relevant and compelling content by the brand itself on a consistent basis, used to generate a positive behavior from a customer or prospect of the brand (Pulizzi, 2012). Organizations are increasingly seeking customer participation and engagement with their brands, which is also referred to as brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). The current study focuses on brand engagement as the intention to like, to share, and to comment to brand messages, which brands can try to influence with content marketing (De Vries, et al., 2012).

Since it is easy for brand managers to measure the number of likes, comments, and shares, the relevance of attitudes might be clearer. Attitudes can shape people's minds, making them like or dislike an object, moving them toward or away from that object (Kotler & Keller, as cited in Akar & Topçu, 2011). It can be assumed that consumers interact with content because they have an attitude toward the brand and the content. With content marketing, brands can try to influence their consumers. Consumers' interaction with the content will lead to higher brand engagement, but attitudes seem to be important too. These factors indicate consumers' opinions toward the brand and the content. Thus, this thesis focuses on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude.

Earlier research regarding social media has focused on the following areas: people's motivations to participate in and contribute to online communities, the ways companies can use online conversations between consumers to gather marketing knowledge, the influence of the so-called brand communities and their effect on consumer behavior, and the elements that make brand messages popular (De Valck, Van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2009; De Vries et al., 2012). This thesis provides new insights in brand engagement and attitudes when brands try to achieve their content marketing goals. Since there are less insights into the perspective of the receiver of the content, this thesis will investigate the content characteristics vividness and type of content.

In order to achieve their content marketing goals, brands need to make their content as attractive as possible. According to the media richness theory, each medium is unique in terms of feedback, the number of cues and channels utilized, personalization and language variety, which is also referred to as vividness (Daft & Lengel, 1986; De Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Video, compared to an image, can enlarge the vividness in messages by enhancing the richness of the experience, indicating that vividness consists of several levels (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). Therefore, it is expected that level of vividness has an influence on engagement and attitudes.

People interact with brand-related content for different motivations and follow brand pages for quick profit: to be entertained or to obtain information (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Antheunis et al., 2016). Informational content can be seen as content which gives information about a brand or product (De Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Liebrecht, 2015). On the other hand, entertaining content contains an appealing photo, a nice video, a teaser, a slogan, or funny newsjacker (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Liebrecht 2015). Since people have several motivations to interact with content, it seems the type of content brands spread may influence brand engagement and attitudes. Although no earlier studies

investigated the interactivity between content type and vividness, it seems plausible that these variables will interact. Content is processed differently by the receiver: informational content is processed rationally, whereas entertaining content appeals to psychological characteristics such as the emotions of the target audience (Laskey, Day, & Crask, 1989). The dual coding theory (Paivio, 1986) has shown that a high level of vividness is more appealing than low vivid content, since higher levels enhance memory for written information. Therefore, the combined effects the independent variables will be investigated too.

The social networking site that is expected to grow the most in the Netherlands in 2016, is Instagram (Marketingfacts, 2016). This medium is an online platform on which users can share photos and videos (Manikonda, Hu, & Kambhampati, 2014). However, despite the rising popularity of this medium, little is known about how to influence brand engagement and attitudes. Up to now, little experimental research has been conducted to content marketing on Instagram. Because communication mechanisms may vary between different platforms, it seems plausible that the results from earlier studies regarding content marketing on, for example, Facebook are not generalizable to Instagram (Trefzger, Baccarella, & Voigt, 2016).

Little research has been conducted into the effectiveness of vividness and type of content in brand messages for content marketing by measuring brand engagement and attitudes. Moreover, there are less insights into the perspective of the receiver which can help brands to achieve their content marketing goals and no earlier studies investigated the interaction between type of content and vividness. Therefore, the results of this research will be a valuable addition to the knowledge of content marketing, since it will help organizations to optimize their content for Instagram in order to accomplish the desired effect. The aim of this thesis is to answer the following research question:

RQ: what is the effect of the type of content and the level of vividness on consumers' brand engagement, brand attitude and content attitude in content marketing on Instagram?

Theoretical framework

Content marketing on social media

According to Marketingfacts (2016), 9 out of 10 Dutch citizens use social media. Therefore, brands recognize that they must communicate via those channels. However, brand communication on social media require a new communication strategy: content marketing (Antheunis et al., 2016). With content marketing, brands try to create valuable, relevant and compelling content to generate a positive behavior from a customer or prospect (Pulizzi, 2012). Liebrecht (2015) adds that the difference between content marketing and other communication strategies is that content marketing is user-focused, target-focused, and is expressed through brands' own media.

One of the social networking sites companies can use for their content marketing is Instagram. Currently, 2.1 million Dutch citizens are using the app (Marketingfacts, 2016). Moreover, it is the social networking site that is expected to grow the most in the Netherlands. Instagram is a 'mobile-first' app, which means that it is created primarily for mobile use (Anderson, 2016). The app focuses on the phone's camera and can be used to share photos and videos (Manikonda, Hu & Kambhampati, 2014). Content marketing occurs in various channels, however, the research in this thesis will focus on the social media platform Instagram. This is because each social medium has its own characteristics and, consequently, effects of brand messages may differ per platform which makes it difficult to generalize results from literature investigating other channels (Trefzger, et al., 2016).

Content marketing is a term that is almost absent in all scientific literature (Antheunis et al., 2016). Earlier studies investigated the effectiveness of content (De Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Liebrecht, 2015), people's motivations to participate in and contribute to online communities, the ways companies can use online conversations between consumers to gather marketing knowledge, and the influence of the so-called brand

communities and their effect on consumer behavior (De Valck, Van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2009). Moreover, there is hardly any research from the perspective of the receiver which can help brands to achieve their content marketing goals: insights into consumers' behavior and their attitudes are lacking. Therefore, the current study will examine brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude, since they can be influenced with content marketing. Moreover, this thesis focuses on Instagram since it appears that each social medium has its own characteristics and, consequently, effects vary on different platforms (Trefzger, et al., 2016).

Brand engagement

Organizations are increasingly seeking customer participation and engagement with their brands (Hollebeek, 2011). Engagement is also known as *brand engagement*. Academic literature distinguishes several definitions of this concept, which will be discussed next.

Consumer brand involvement reflects a consumer's level of interest in, and personal relevance of a brand (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). However, there is a shift to concepts which explain the dynamics characterizing interactive consumer/brand relationships. This broader context is the *customer engagement concept*: "a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object" (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 7). According to Sashi (2012), it can be seen as a long-term relationship and, in terms of strategy, refers to the creation of experiences that build and enhance interactions between a company and their customers. Engagement is not a fixed point that can be reached, but a process that expands and evolves over time. The concept of Hollebeek et al. (2014) indicates psychological states from the customers, whereas Shashi (2012) focuses on the interaction between the customer and the brand, which can help brands to achieve their (content marketing) goals.

With content marketing, brands try to foster a relationship with a customer or prospect by offering relevant content (Pulizzi, 2012). Content reaches popularity because the customers positively interact with it (Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate & Lebherz, 2014). Several studies refer to this as *brand post popularity*, characterized by the number of likes and comments on a brand post (De Vries et al., 2012; Sabate et al., 2014; Trefzger et al., 2016). According to De Vries et al. (2012), brand posts attract people's attention and induce people to interact with the content. Brand post popularity is another way to describe brand engagement, which has some overlap with Sashi's (2012) definition of brand engagement: both concepts link with content marketing goals from the brand.

The exact meaning of brand engagement seems to be in doubt with the high amount of variation in interpretations of the concept and the several definitions that are provided by researchers and practitioners (Sashi, 2012). As a consequence, engagement often gets equated with the measures that managers and consultants can use. The number of likes, shares, and comments is easy to measure within social media, and is often referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Chu & Kim, 2011). Within Instagram, engagement is possible by liking, commenting on, or sharing of a post (Bakhshi, Shamma, & Gilbert, 2014). Since eWOM is easy to measure and it is often used in experimental research, this thesis will define brand engagement as the intention to like, share, and comment on Instagram messages.

Brand attitude

Since it is easy for brand managers to measure the number of likes, comments, and shares, the relevance of attitudes might be clearer. Likes and comments on a brand post reflect active statements of brand fans which may indicate that consumers interact with the content because they have an attitude toward the brand and the content (De Vries et al., 2012). Attitudes can shape people's minds, making them like or dislike an object (or brand), moving them toward

or away from that object (Kotler & Keller, as cited in Akar & Topçu, 2011). Prior research has shown that brand attitude strength predicts behaviors of interest to firms, including brand consideration, purchase intention, purchase behavior, and brand choice (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, and Iacobucci, 2010). Multiple studies investigated attitudes, but all with a different operationalization which will be discussed next.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), “a person’s attitude is a function of his salient beliefs at a given point in time” (p. 222). Mitchell and Olson (1981) define an attitude as an individual’s internal evaluation of an object, where an object can be understood as encompassing persons, events, products, and so on. O’Keefe (2002) also focuses on the internal state and describes attitudes as “orientations of mind rather than of body, and internal states that exerted influence on overt behavior” (p. 6). Kotler and Keller (as cited in Akar & Topçu, 2011), describe attitude as “a person’s enduring favorable or unfavorable evaluation, emotional feeling, and action tendencies toward some object or idea” (p. 43). All definitions seem to have in common that attitudes are a predictor of behavior, however there are some differences too. Mitchell and Olson (1981) focus on a person’s internal evaluations, whereas O’Keefe adds the influence on a person’s overt behavior. Furthermore, Kotler and Keller (as cited in Akar & Topçu, 2011) especially focus on a person’s emotional feelings and action tendencies. To conclude, the current research will focus on the definition of Kotler and Keller (as cited in Akar & Topçu, 2011), because evaluations, emotions, and action tendencies seem clear components when investigating attitudes toward brands and their content marketing and may link to consumers’ engagement.

Content attitude

Since brand attitudes may be affected by consumers’ attitudes toward advertisements, it seems likely that not only brand attitude has an effect on the effectiveness of content marketing

(Gardner, 1985). With content marketing, brands want to achieve that their content has a positive impact on consumers' attitude, which leads to consumers engaging with the content. Audience engagement is one approach that provides opportunities for prospects and customers to interact and discuss with brands (Rahim & Clemens, 2012). Mitchell and Olson (1981) add to this that brand attitude is positively related to the effectiveness of the message strategy. It can be reasoned that a positive content attitude is related to the ratings of brand attitude. Therefore, it seems logical to measure both attitudes since they indicate consumers' opinions toward the brand and the content, which influences behavior and engagement. Thus, this thesis focuses on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude.

Vividness

In order to achieve their content marketing goals, brands need to make their content as attractive as possible. It seems that content characteristics have an influence on consumers' brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude. One of these characteristics is vividness of the content.

With content marketing on social media, companies try to create positive brand- and content attitudes. Because it is not easy to influence attitudes, companies need to provide several cues in the medium. The *media richness theory* (MRT) states that each medium is not just a source, but a complex act of information processing: each medium is unique in terms of feedback, the number of cues and channels utilized, personalization and language variety; all of which influence learning between sender and receiver (Daft & Lengel, 1986). The more cues a medium provides, the richer the medium. Low vivid media do not provide immediate feedback from the counterparty and process fewer cues. Therefore, the use of richer media leads to better performances of content marketing (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). The idea of richness is also commonly referred to as *vividness* of the online content (De Vries, Gensler &

Leeflang, 2012; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). The MRT suits this research, since a higher level of media richness (e.g., providing more cues) is in line with a higher level of vividness.

The media richness theory reasons from the media, in contrast, the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) reasons from the processing abilities from the receiver and explains how information is processed and how attitudes can change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The ELM reasons that content can be processed via two routes: central and peripheral. The central route is taken when there is a high product involvement: the consumer is more aware of the information that is provided and has less attention for other cues. In case of a low product involvement, the content is processed via the peripheral route: the consumer pays attention to peripheral cues, for example visual cues. Those cues attract the attention and provide information. Therefore, the consumer is still able to form an attitude (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). It can be reasoned that when there are a few cues in the content, it is not possible to form an attitude.

In contrast to traditional media, new media offer the possibility to incorporate levels of vividness in the messages spread: video, audio, and animation can enlarge vividness (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). The influence of vividness in brand messages is explained by the MRT and ELM. According to Cho (1999), vividness plays an important role by stimulating the peripheral cues. Brands can change consumers' attitudes by placing brand messages with a higher level of vividness. Therefore, according to the ELM, it seems clear that the ways consumers process vivid content will have an effect on their attitudes, and eventually their behaviors.

Previous studies investigated vividness divided into two (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Sundar & Kim, 2005; Liebrecht, 2015) or three (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Brookes, 2010; De Vries et al., 2012; Sabate et al., 2014; Zentjes, 2016) levels. However, all studies operationalized vividness in a different manner.

Regarding the studies that divided vividness into two levels, there were several operationalizations. Coyle and Thorson (2001) and Sundar and Kim (2005) both operationalized vividness as ‘animation’ with two levels: absent and present (Coyle & Thorson, 2001) and static and dynamic (Sundar & Kim, 2005). The researchers state that the distinction between animated and static is similar to the distinction between moving and still images. At last, Liebrecht (2015) focused on content marketing and the effects of design on marketing, PR, and general objectives. The research did not use the term vividness, but compared static and dynamic content. Static content can be seen as only text or photos, whereas dynamic content contains a video.

The studies that distinguished three levels of vividness, had contradicting operationalizations too. Fortin and Dholakia (2005) used a low, medium, and high level of vividness. However, their operationalization was not clear. Brookes (2010) distinguished text (low), images (medium), and videos (high) when investigating the success of a Facebook post. De Vries et al. (2012) investigated whether the vividness of online content plays a role on brand post popularity on Facebook. The researchers compared images (low), events (medium), and videos (high) as different levels of vividness. Sabate et al. (2014) also investigated factors that enhance brand post popularity on Facebook and distinguished between links (low), images (medium), and videos (high). At last, in her Master’s thesis, Zentjes (2016) investigated the effect of interactivity and vividness in brand messages on brand- and content attitude in content marketing on Facebook and divided vividness as text (low), image (medium), and video (high).

As can be concluded from the aforementioned studies, all differentiate other levels of vividness. Because Instagram only allows to post a photo or a video, the current study investigates only two levels: low and high (Bakhshi et al., 2014). Video will be seen as a high level of vividness, whereas an image will be seen as low vivid content.

Regarding the outcomes of the previous studies, there were no clear conclusions. Some studies found that higher levels of vividness were associated with positive attitudes toward to websites (Coyle & Thorson, 2001), positively influence attitudes toward an advertisement (Sundar & Kim, 2005; Fortin & Dholakia, 2005) and leads to brand post popularity (De Vries et al., 2012). On the contrary, Liebrecht (2015) found that consumers prefer static content when they have a need for information. The researcher found no effects for entertaining content. Sabate et al. (2014) found that images help to increase brand post popularity as a whole, whereas videos are only relevant for likes. Brookes (2010) concluded that images and videos are superior to text, but images are the most compelling. At last, Zentjes (2016) found no effect of vividness on brand- and content attitudes in content marketing.

Few research has been conducted on the relevance of brand engagement for companies and content marketing. Furthermore, literature contradicts each other when investigating the effect vividness has on attitudes. An explanation for these contradicting results could be that the levels of vividness and medium type were not in line with the other studies. Regarding content marketing, it is more likely that a video (which has a high media richness) has a positive influence on (online) engagement than a (long) text (Liebrecht, 2015). Apparently, the MRT and ELM also have a positive influence on consumers' behavior and attitudes. Therefore, the following hypotheses emerged:

H1a: *Content on Instagram that is higher in vividness will lead to higher brand engagement*

H1b: *Content on Instagram that is higher in vividness will lead to higher brand attitude*

H1c: *Content on Instagram that is higher in vividness will lead to higher content attitude*

The abovementioned hypotheses are supported by literature regarding education and e-learning. Lipofsky (1993) states that a video, because of its dynamics, presents action and emotion better than static media. A video (e.g., a high level of vividness) makes it easy to process the visual content and attracts the attention much longer (Liebrecht, 2015).

Type of content

Consumers behave because they have several motivations. The *Uses and Gratifications theory* (U&G) is appropriate for examining people's use of new media types and content (Muntinga et al., 2011). It examines media effects from the viewpoint of the individual user and questions how and why people use media. An individual's behavior is driven by certain needs (motivations) and the goal-directed action is to fulfill the individual's needs (gratification) (Luo, Remus, & Chea, 2006). Antheunis et al. (2016) differentiate six motivations to interact with content on social networking sites, but conclude that two of them are the most important ones: entertainment and the need for information. Moreover, the researchers found that entertainment is an important motivation for using several types of media (e.g., television, newspapers, and Internet). Several social media motivations studies show that the U&G theory is also applicable to social media (Ruggiero, 2009).

Liebrecht (2015) distinguished two types of content: informational (but also instructive) and non-informational content (e.g., entertaining or emotional). This distinction suits the U&G approach because consumers search for content that fulfills their needs. In the case of content marketing, consumers can feel the need to search for information and/or the search for entertainment (Liebrecht, 2015).

Informational content is content which gives information about a brand or product (De Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Liebrecht, 2015). This information contains facts, serves as inspiration, or gives specific product information that can help during the decision-making process when buying a product or service. For example, a presentation about a new product or a reportage about how a product is made. This kind of information ensures that consumers are able to understand complex products or services.

Brands can be relevant for their customers with entertaining content too, which can also be called emotional or transformational (Aaker & Norris, 1982). This type of content is not about the brand or product and brand or product. Entertaining content contains an appealing photo, a video, a teaser, a slogan or funny newsjacker (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Liebrecht 2015). In contrast to the definition of Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013), it is possible to create entertaining content which has a link to the brand or product (Liebrecht, 2015). For example, Hema (a Dutch warehouse) is known for their entertaining newsjackers, linking a specific event to one of their products (Liebrecht, 2015). Although the brand is clearly visible in this type of content, it is because of the non-informative approach that, in this thesis, it can be considered as entertaining content.

Earlier research on the effectiveness of type of content found that when consumers have more knowledge about a certain brand, they will have a more emotional bonding toward it, irrespectively of the type of content (Sinha, Ahuja & Medury, 2011). Other research focused on the effects of specific types of content or compared the influence of the content types with each other (Liebrecht, 2015). When using informational content, it is said that it increases the expertise of the brand and the relationship with the target audience, without a direct sales target (Liebrecht, 2015). Therefore, with customer education, the customer learns from credible and highly informative content, which increases the attitudes toward brand itself

(Bell & Eisingerich, 2007). Moreover, Bell and Eisingerich (2007) found that customer education has a positive effect on customer loyalty and engagement.

It can be assumed that informational and entertaining content will be processed differently by the receiver. Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989) state that informational content is processed in a rational way, whereas entertaining content appeals to psychological characteristics such as the emotions of the target audience. Additionally, it was found that people tend to have positive attitudes toward informative and entertaining ads on social networks (Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011). However, De Vries et al. (2012) found no differences between informational and non-informational content and between entertaining and non-entertaining online content. Besides, other studies conclude that when informational content is compared to entertaining content, entertaining content will lead to more engagement (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). On the other hand, Bronner and Neijens (as cited in Liebrecht, 2015), investigated three types of content: information, instruction, and entertainment. Results showed that informational content positively persuades the receiver, whereas entertaining content is advisable when a brand wants to build a relationship with a customer (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Bronner & Neijens, as cited in Liebrecht, 2015).

Based on the aforementioned literature, it can be concluded that there are still some contradictions about which type of content influences brand engagement or attitudes. According to Bell and Eisingerich (2007) and Liebrecht (2015) the use of informational content leads to higher brand engagement and attitudes. In contrast to these findings, Antheunis et al. (2016) found that entertaining content is the most important motivation to interact with content on social networking sites which positively influences brand engagement and attitudes. At last, some literature found no clear effects of type of content on consumers' behavior (De Vries et al., 2012; Bronner & Neijens, as cited in Liebrecht, 2015).

Effects of type of content on brand engagement and attitudes on brand messages on Instagram has not been investigated before. This thesis follows conclusions from Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) and Antheunis et al. (2016) who found that entertaining content is an important motivation to interact with content which positively influences consumers' brand engagement and attitudes, which is also in line with the U&G theory. Although other literature suggests that informative content has a more positive effect on consumers (Bell & Eisingerich, 2007; Liebrecht, 2015), it can be hypothesized that entertaining content will lead to higher ratings of engagement and attitudes, since the processing of entertaining content appeals to psychological characteristics which are closely linked to engagement and attitudes (Laskey et al., 1989). Therefore, the following hypotheses emerge:

H2a: *Entertaining content (vs. informational content) positively influences brand engagement*

H2b: *Entertaining content (vs. informational content) positively influences brand attitude*

H2c: *Entertaining content (vs. informational content) positively influences content attitude*

Interaction vividness and type of content

Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) investigated the effects of content type, media type, and posting time on engagement factors on Facebook. Entertaining content was found to be the most influential content type, since it caused an increasing number of likes, comments, and shares. Moreover, findings from Antheunis et al. (2016) indicated that pleasure is the most important motivation for consumers to be active on brand pages on Facebook. This finding is important because pleasure is the most important motivation on all categories: becoming a member of a brand community, consuming content, contributing to content, and creating content. The need for information only contributed to consumers wanting to become a member of a brand community. Consequently, it can be reasoned that entertaining content works indeed better than informative content since it was shown that pleasure was supported on all measures for consumers to be active on brand pages.

Liebrecht (2015) showed that consumers prefer to consume information presented with static content. Therefore, it could be reasoned the other way around: if consumers prefer information presented with static content, they may prefer a high level of vividness with entertaining content. The *dual coding theory* suggests that content can be processed and stored aurally and visual (Paivio, 1986). The theory indicates that pictures enhance memory for written information because humans process written information and pictures via independent cognitive subsystems: one devoted to verbal information and one to imagery-based information (Lwin, Morrin, & Krishna, 2010). This means that consumers utilize two cognitive subsystems to process several cues and that higher levels of vividness can be processed through both subsystems, leading to higher communication effectivity (Lwin et al., 2010; Trefzger et al., 2016). Therefore, it could be interpreted that the dual coding theory suggests that a higher level of vividness leads to higher communication effectivity.

No earlier studies hypothesized interactivity effects between vividness and type of content. However, it seems plausible that those two variables will interact with each other. The dual coding theory has shown that a higher level of vividness enhances memory for written information. This means that a high level of vividness is more appealing than an image, but the effect will be strengthened by presenting entertaining content since pleasure supports all motivations to be active on brand pages on social media. Therefore, the following hypotheses will be examined in the current study:

H3a: *Entertaining content in combination with a high level of vividness (compared to informational content with a high level of vividness) positively influences brand engagement*

H3b: *Entertaining content in combination with a high level of vividness (compared to informational content with a high level of vividness) positively influences brand attitude*

H3c: *Entertaining content in combination with a high level of vividness (compared to informational content with a high level of vividness) positively influences content attitude*

Method

To answer the research question and investigate the hypotheses, an experimental research was executed.

Design

Participants were assigned to a 2 (vividness: low versus high) x 2 (content type: information versus entertaining) between-subjects design. All levels of both factors were combined which resulted in four different conditions. An overview of all conditions can be seen in Table 1. Both independent variables (e.g., vividness and content type) were manipulated between subjects, which resulted in every participant seeing only one condition.

Table 1

Condition overview and number of participants

	Vividness	Content type
Condition 1 ($N = 40$)	High	Entertaining
Condition 2 ($N = 43$)	High	Information
Condition 3 ($N = 39$)	Low	Entertaining
Condition 4 ($N = 38$)	Low	Information

Materials

This study focused on the brand Stabilo (a stationery brand), since it is a brand with a neutral involvement (Liebrecht, 2015). Besides, it was chosen because people are not very likely to already have a strong opinion about the brand. The independent variable vividness was divided into two levels: low and high. The other independent variable, content type, also contained two levels: entertaining or informational content.

Vividness. The low vividness condition contained an Instagram post with an image, whereas the high vividness condition contained of an Instagram post with a video. In order to ensure that the content of all conditions remained the same, the low vivid post contained a screenshot from the high vivid post (e.g., the video).

Type of content. Based on the results of the pretest (see the next paragraph) content for the informational condition was presented in the form of a presentation of the functions of Stabilo's new product (e.g., the Stabilo SMARTball 2.0 which can be used as a pen and a pointer for a tablet and smartphone). As for the entertaining condition, content was presented with a newsjacker about the start of Spring (e.g., a nest with young birds was drawn with Stabilo pens). The content of the posts were based on existing content from Stabilo's Instagram page.

The accompanying texts were written by the researcher and were based on the content itself. The text accompanying the low vivid condition consisted of the same text as in the high vivid condition. Moreover, the length of the texts of all conditions were the same. Accordingly, the videos were of the same length (e.g., 15 seconds). The text was written in Dutch because the experiment was executed in the Netherlands. Further, in each condition, four hashtags were used: the first one was content specific, whereas the other three remained the same and were based on Stabilo's own Instagram posts (e.g., #stabilopens, #stabilo, and #stabilonl). At last, Instagram is an example of a 'mobile-first' social network. This means that those networks (or apps) are created primarily for mobile use (Anderson, 2016). Therefore, the participants were seeing the content in the layout of the of the mobile app of the medium. All stimuli can be found in Appendix IV.

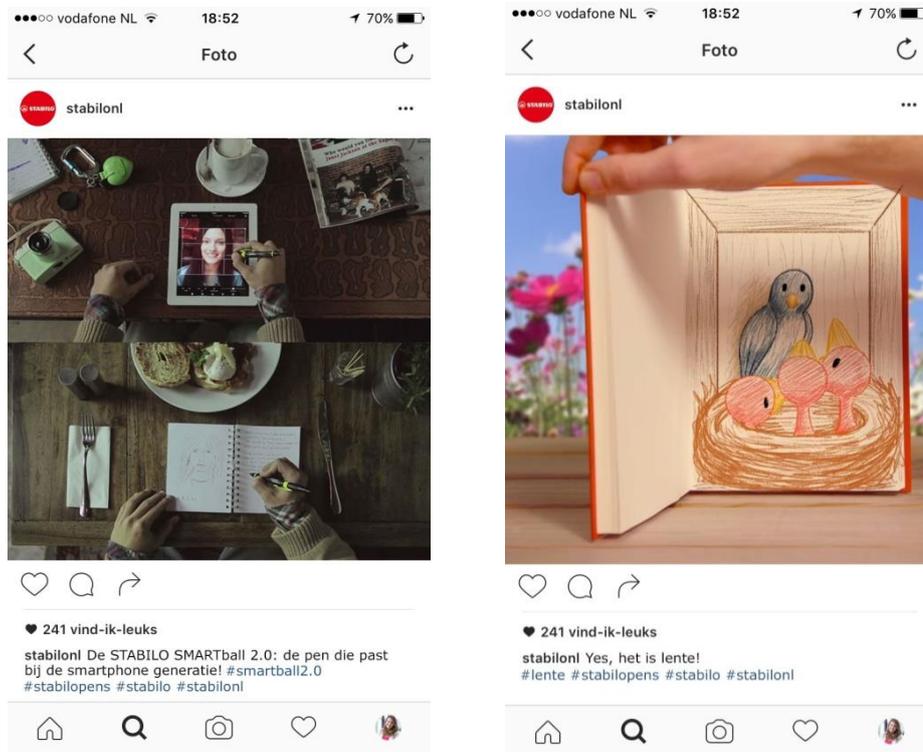


Figure 1. An example of the low vivid condition with the informational (left) and entertaining (right) content.

Pretest

In order to test which stimuli worked best for the experiment, a pretest with five types of stimuli was performed. The main goal of the pretest was to measure whether entertaining content was indeed perceived as more entertaining than informational content (and vice versa). Moreover, the other goal was to measure if a video was seen as more vivid than a photo.

The sample consisted of 27 participants (12 men and 15 women) aged between 20 and 61 years ($M = 27.96$, $SD = 11.27$). The stimuli that was tested were four videos (2 informative and 2 entertaining) and one photo. One of the informational videos consisted of a video about Stabilo's new product: the SMARTball 2.0. The other was a drawing tutorial of an owl. The entertaining videos were two newsjackers: one about King's Day and the other about the start of Spring. All pretest materials can be found in Appendix I.

Reliability from the measurements

The item vividness per video consisted of two scales (e.g., ‘this message is dynamic’ and ‘this message is static’) (Liebrecht, 2015). To analyze whether the scales were allowed to be combined, a Kendall’s Tau correlation was performed. All videos scored a strong till medium negative correlation. Moreover, all findings were significant with all p ’s $< .003$ and all bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (CI) did not cross zero. Overall, it can be concluded that, for example, when the materials scored high on *dynamic*, the ratings of *static* were lowered (and vice versa). For an overview of all the correlation scores, see Appendix II.

The item perceived informational content consisted of two scales (e.g., ‘this message gives me information about Stabilo’s products’ and ‘because of this message I got to know more about Stabilo’s products’). All stimuli had a strong till medium positive correlation. Moreover, all findings were significant with all p ’s $< .001$ and the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero. Thus, it can be concluded that if the ratings for the item about *information about Stabilo’s products* rise, the ratings for *getting to know more about Stabilo’s products* also increase. For an overview of all the correlation scores per stimuli, see Appendix II.

At last, the item that measured perceived entertaining content consisted of two scales (e.g., ‘the content of this message is pleasurable to watch’ and ‘this message is amusing’). All videos scored a strong till medium positive correlation that were also significant with all p ’s $< .001$. Moreover, the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero. Overall, it can be concluded that if the ratings for the item about *pleasurable to watch* go up, the item about *amusing* also increases. For an overview of all the correlation scores, see Appendix II.

The results of the pretest showed that the manipulations per stimuli were successful. Based on the results, the stimuli for the experiment were chosen. Because the videos about the start of Spring and the SMARTball 2.0 scored high on vividness, they were chosen to be used

in the experiment. Moreover, when looking at the mean scores, the video about the start of Spring scored high on entertaining content and the video SMARTball 2.0 was rated high on informational content. This corresponds with the operationalization: informational content provides information whereas entertaining content provides entertainment. Moreover, regarding the high mean scores for entertaining content, it can be concluded that all videos were amusing to watch. Table 2 shows all mean scores per stimuli.

Table 2

Mean scores per video for a 7-point scale ranging from low to high

	Vividness	Informational content	Entertaining content
King's Day	$M = 5.30, SD = 1.64$	$M = 3.15, SD = 1.04$	$M = 4.91, SD = 1.58$
Spring	$M = 5.87, SD = 1.06$	$M = 2.96, SD = 1.22$	$M = 5.85, SD = .69$
SMARTball 2.0	$M = 6.15, SD = .84$	$M = 5.89, SD = .76$	$M = 4.67, SD = 1.26$
Drawing tutorial	$M = 5.85, SD = 1.14$	$M = 4.96, SD = 1.14$	$M = 5.12, SD = 1.09$

Participants

This research gathered 200 participants. However, 14 participants did not finish the survey, 4 participants caused an unequal distribution of age, and 20 participants did not meet this research's requirement to have or have had an account on Instagram. Therefore, those participants were removed from the data. At last, the duration of the time participants needed to fill out the survey was measured. It was decided to remove the data from the participants who needed more than half an hour fill out the survey, which led to removing two additional participants. When removing the aforementioned participants, the data resulted in 160 participants (68 men and 92 women) aged between 17 and 57 years ($M = 25.79, SD = 7.06$). On average, men were 26.54 years old ($SD = 7.00$) and women were 25.24 years old ($SD = 7.08$). The distribution of education level was varied, with the highest part higher professional

education (38.1%) and university (43.8%). Most participants indicated that they opened Instagram on a daily basis (71.9%) and were active (e.g., liking, commenting, and sharing) on a daily basis too (55.0 %). At last, it was investigated whether the participants were equally divided over the four conditions with regard to the demographics. It appeared that the participants were equally divided over the four conditions: gender ($\chi^2(3) = .998, p = .802$), age ($F(26, 133) = .826, p = .707$) and education ($\chi^2(15) = 20.07, p = .169$). There were about 40 participants per condition. See Table 1 for the exact number of participants per condition.

Measurements

The dependent variables were measured with an experimental survey via Qualtrics. The complete survey can be found in Appendix III.

First, *brand engagement* was measured with 3 items on a 7-point Likert scale (intention to like the post, intention to comment on the post, and intention to share the content) and were based on earlier literature from De Vries et al. (2012). Because the items had a high reliability ($\alpha = .816$) they were merged into one item ($M = 2.77, SD = 1.45$). Second, the dependent variable *brand attitude* was measured with 6 items on a 7-point semantic differential scale (fun-not fun, pleasant-unpleasant, annoying-not annoying, funny-not funny, positive-negative, and interesting-boring). The items were based on earlier literature from Mitchell and Olson (1981), Gardner (1985), Coyle and Thorson (2001), and Park et al. (2010). The participants were asked to rate the items based on their thoughts about the brand Stabilo. Because the items had a high reliability ($\alpha = .872$), they were merged into one item ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.05$). Third, the dependent variable *content attitude* was measured with the same items as brand attitude, but participants were asked to rate the items based on the content of the Instagram post they saw. Because the items had a high reliability ($\alpha = .925$), they were merged into one item ($M = 4.53, SD = 1.32$).

Finally, a question on a 7-point scale was asked to test whether participants were familiar with the brand Stabilo ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.76$). Furthermore, a manipulation check was executed. This check tested the stimuli with the same items as during the pretest. The manipulation of vividness was checked and a Spearman's Rho correlation was performed. The items had a medium negative relationship ($\rho = -.68$, $p < .001$) and the bootstrapped 95% CI did not cross zero $[-.800, -.555]$ which means that if ratings on 'static' increase, ratings on 'dynamic' decrease. Therefore, the items were merged into one item ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.71$). Furthermore, the manipulation of the type of content was checked. The items measuring entertaining content had a strong positive relationship ($\rho = .79$, $p < .001$) and the bootstrapped 95% CI did not cross zero $[.699, .863]$. Therefore, the items were merged into one item ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.45$). At last, the items measuring informational content had a strong positive relationship ($\rho = .77$, $p < .001$) and the bootstrapped 95% CI did not cross zero $[.679, .840]$. Therefore, the items were combined as one item ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.65$).

Procedure

Participants were gathered via email and social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram) between November 23rd and December 8th 2016. A link to the experiment was provided with the question if people wanted to participate in the experiment. A precondition was that participants needed to have an Instagram account in order to understand the context and to empathize with the study. As soon as participants clicked on the link, they were redirected to an online survey on Qualtrics. The first page contained information about the experiment and a consensus form in which participants were informed about what would be done to the data. Moreover, it was emphasized that participants needed to turn the sound on their computer or laptop on (in case they received the highly vivid condition). When participants accepted the consensus form and proceeded, they were redirected to the survey.

First, some regular questions about the participant were asked (e.g., gender, age, and education). The last question on the first page was if the participant has or has had an account on Instagram. If participants answered no, they were redirected to the end of the survey. Participants who had an account on Instagram were asked how often they opened the app and how often they were active (e.g., like, comment, and share) on Instagram. Afterwards, participants were notified that they were going to see an Instagram post and they were going to be asked to imagine if they were interested in stationery. Moreover, one had to imagine that they had creative minds and that they were browsing on their Instagram feed while they suddenly came across a post about Stabilo. This ensured that participants have gotten the feeling that they voluntarily consumed the content that was shown. After that, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in order to answer the questions.

When the participants were done with the questions, they were thanked for their time. Moreover, they were debriefed that Stabilo was not involved in the study and that the content was manipulated for the experiment.

Results

Manipulation check

A one-way ANOVA showed if the manipulations for vividness and type of content were well executed. For vividness, the independent variable was the manipulated vividness and the dependent variable was the rated amount of vividness by the participants. This check showed that vividness differed over the two levels ($F(1,158) = 60.79, p < .001$). The mean for the low vividness condition was 3.23 ($SD = 1.38$) and the mean for the high vividness condition was 5.03 ($SD = 1.53$). Moreover, results showed that type of content differed over the two types of content ($F(1,158) = 6.57, p < .001$). The mean for informational content was 4.50 ($SD = 1.20$) and entertaining content scored a mean of 4.03 ($SD = 1.10$). The higher the mean, the higher

the ratings for the type of content. Therefore, it can be concluded that the manipulations for the experiment were succeeded.

General effects of characteristics

Before the hypotheses were tested, it was checked whether some characteristics had an influence on the dependent variables. It was investigated whether gender, education, age, and brand knowledge (e.g., 'I am familiar with the brand Stabilo') had an influence on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude. It appeared that there were no differences with the characteristics gender ($t(158) = -.566, p = .431$), education ($\rho = -.130, p = .102$), age ($r = .13, p = .104$), and brand knowledge ($\rho = .084, p = .291$) on *brand engagement*. As regards the dependent variable *brand attitude*, it appeared that there were no differences between the variables gender ($t(158) = -1.552, p = .376$), education ($\rho = -.04, p = .625$), and age ($r = .10, p = .223$). However, brand knowledge correlated weakly with brand attitude ($\rho = .32, p < .001$). Regarding *content attitude*, it appeared that there were no differences between gender ($t(158) = -.846, p = .914$), education ($\rho = -.01, p = .922$), and age ($r = .07, p = .388$). However, brand knowledge weakly correlated with content attitude ($\rho = .19, p = .019$). Regarding aforementioned results, brand knowledge will be taken into account as a covariate.

Hypotheses testing

To test the several hypotheses, a two-way MANCOVA was executed. Prior to testing the variables, it was assessed whether the assumptions regarding the MANCOVA were met. All dependent variables were measured at a continuous level and there was no multicollinearity. All dependent variables had a positive medium relationship which were all significant. See Appendix V for the exact correlations per dependent variable.

It was checked whether the variables were normally distributed. Because the sample size was quite big, calculating z -scores is not the best way to indicate normality. Therefore, it was chosen to look at the Shapiro-Wilk test. The test results showed that brand engagement ($p < .001$) and content attitude ($p = .021$) were not normally distributed. Furthermore, brand attitude showed a trend toward significance ($p = .063$). However, because a MANCOVA will be executed, no actions were taken because a MANCOVA is a fairly robust test.

The MANCOVA consisted of the independent variables *vividness* and *type of content* and the dependent variables *brand engagement*, *brand attitude*, and *content attitude*. *Brand knowledge* was transferred to the covariate box.

Vividness

To test hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c, the independent variable vividness was examined. This variable was measured at a categorical level with two independent groups (e.g., high or low). Because the experimental design was between-subjects, there was an independence of observations. After running the MANCOVA, the assumption of equality of covariance matrices was met, because the Box's test was non-significant ($p = .353$). Moreover, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met because Levene's test showed non-significant results for all dependent variables. Therefore, it strengthens the case for assuming that the test statistics are robust. Means and standard deviations can be found in Table 3.

The first three hypotheses predict that the level of vividness has a positive influence on brand engagement (H1a), brand attitude (H1b), and content attitude (H1c). It was chosen to look at the Pillai's trace test, because it is very robust and not highly linked to assumptions about the normality of the distribution of the data. Pillai's trace is the sum of the proportion of explained variance on the discriminant functions (Field, 2013). Using Pillai's trace, there was no significant effect of vividness on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude (V

= .02, $F(3, 153) = .899, p = .443$). Also, the separate univariate tests did not provide a main effect of vividness on brand engagement ($F(1, 159) = .05, p = .820$), brand attitude ($F(1, 159) = .46, p = .498$), and content attitude ($F(1, 159) = .22, p = .642$). Therefore, the first three hypotheses were rejected.

Table 3

Means and standard deviations for vividness on the dependent variables on a 7-point scale ranging from low till high.

	Vividness	Mean (SD)	N
Brand engagement	High	2.81 (1.49)	83
	Low	2.72 (1.40)	77
Brand attitude	High	4.81 (1.05)	83
	Low	4.62 (1.04)	77
Content attitude	High	4.51 (1.41)	83
	Low	4.55 (1.24)	77

Type of content

The next hypotheses expect that the type of content has a positive influence on brand engagement (H2a), brand attitude (H2b), and content attitude (H2c). This variable was measured at a categorical level with two independent groups (e.g., informational or entertaining). Because the experimental design was between-subjects, there was an independence of observations.

The Box's test turned out to be non-significant ($p = .353$) which means that the assumption of equality of covariance matrices was met. Moreover, Levene's test showed non-significant results for all dependent variables which means that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was also met. The means and standard deviations can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Means and standard deviations for type of content on the dependent variables on a 7-point scale ranging from low till high.

	Type of content	Mean (SD)	N
Brand engagement	Entertaining	2.96 (1.43)	79
	Informational	2.58 (1.45)	81
Brand attitude	Entertaining	4.90 (1.09)	79
	Informational	4.54 (0.97)	81
Content attitude	Entertaining	4.80 (1.37)	79
	Informational	4.25 (1.23)	81

Using Pillai's trace, there was a trend toward significance for the effect of type of content on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude ($V = .05$, $F(3, 153) = 2.62$, $p = .053$). Therefore, the separate univariate tests were checked with caution. The results from those tests did not provide a main effect of vividness on brand engagement ($F(1, 159) = .05$, $p = .820$). However, significant results were found for brand attitude ($F(1, 159) = 5.94$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2 = .037$), and content attitude ($F(1, 159) = 7.68$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .047$). According to the test results, hypothesis H2a will be rejected. However, hypotheses H2b and H2c are supported with caution which means that type of content may have an influence on brand- and content attitude. To be specific, when looking at the mean scores, entertaining content (compared to informational content) seems to have a positive influence on brand- and content attitude.

Interaction effects

The last hypotheses assumed an interaction effect between vividness and type of content on the dependent variables. To be concrete, it was assumed that a higher level of vividness in combination with entertaining content (compared to informative content with a high level of vividness) would lead to higher ratings of brand engagement (H3a), brand attitude (H3b), and

content attitude (H3c). Using Pillai's trace, there was no significant effect of vividness and type of content on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude ($V = .03$, $F(3, 153) = 1.63$, $p = .184$). Although no main effect was found, it was decided to check the results from the separate univariate tests, where an interaction effect was found of vividness and type of content on brand engagement ($F(1, 159) = 4.18$, $p = .043$, $\eta^2 = .026$). However, it appeared that there was no interaction effect of vividness and type of content on brand attitude ($F(1, 159) = .74$, $p = .393$) and content attitude ($F(1, 159) = .20$, $p = .654$).

Aforementioned results indicate that the combination of vividness and type of content have a different effect on brand engagement. In particular, there was little difference between Instagram posts with a low level of vividness and entertaining content ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.20$) and posts with a low level of vividness and informational content ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.60$). The difference between a high level of vividness and entertaining content ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.59$) and a high level of vividness with informational content ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.29$) was greater.

In order to investigate if the means differed significantly from each other, a one-way ANOVA was performed. The dependent variable *brand engagement* was transferred to the dependent list and the variable *conditions* was transferred to the factor list. At last, the file was splitted per level of vividness (e.g., high or low). The means between informational and entertaining content in combination with a high level of vividness differed significantly ($F(1, 81) = 6.73$, $p = .011$, $\eta^2 = .077$). However, the second one-way ANOVA indicated that the means between type of content with a low level of vividness did not differ significantly ($F(1, 75) = .09$, $p = .765$).

Regarding the results, it can be concluded that there is an interaction between type of content and the level of vividness. To be concrete, for a high level of vividness it matters which type of content is presented: a video presenting entertaining content scores significantly

better on brand engagement than a video with informational content. However, because the Pillai's Trace was not significant, these conclusions should be considered with caution. This is because it indicates that the groups do not differ significantly with respect to the dependent variables. Figure 1 shows the interaction between vividness and type of content on brand engagement. According to the above mentioned results, it can be concluded that hypothesis H3a can be accepted carefully, while hypotheses H3b and H3c need to be rejected.

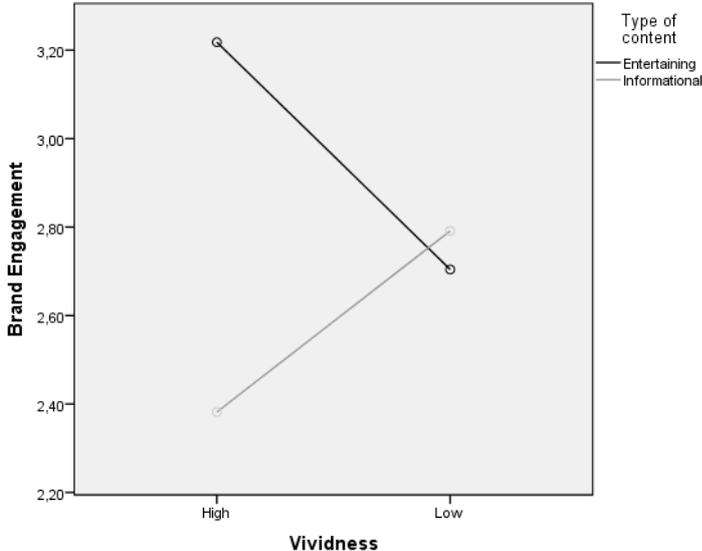


Figure 2. Interaction effect between type of content and vividness on brand engagement.

Conclusion and discussion

This thesis investigated the effect of vividness and type of content in brand messages on Instagram on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude. To answer the research question, three hypotheses were set up and an experiment was performed. The hypotheses and the corresponding results of the experiment will be discussed in this chapter.

Answer research question

This thesis aimed to answer the following research question: “What is the effect of the type of content and the level of vividness on consumers’ brand engagement, brand attitude and content attitude in content marketing on Instagram?”. The answer to this question is that the type of content has no effect on brand engagement. Furthermore, the use of vividness in brand messages has no effect on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude. However, type of content seems to have an effect on brand attitude and content attitude: the use of entertaining content seems to lead to higher ratings of brand- and content attitude. This effect should be considered with caution since no main effects were found. At last, results showed that the combination of vividness and type of content had no effect on brand attitude and content attitude. Though, there seemed to be an interaction effect between vividness and type of content for brand engagement. To be specific; entertaining content presented with a high level of vividness may lead to higher ratings of brand engagement, compared to a high level of vividness with informational content.

Vividness

Regarding the results from the experiment, no main effects were found for vividness on all dependent variables. This could mean that vividness does not have an effect on these variables. However, there seemed to be an interaction effect between vividness and type of content on brand engagement. Therefore, theory and discussion points will be discussed next.

Although the current study found no support for the effect of vividness on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude, some previous literature did find effects. That this thesis contradicts the other findings may have to do with the fact that all studies enhance different levels of vividness and operationalizations. The studies that agreed that higher levels of vividness have a positive influence on attitudes (Coyle & Thorson, 2001;

Sundar & Kim, 2005) and enhances brand post popularity (Brookes, 2010; De Vries et al., 2012; Sabate et al., 2014), all used different levels and operationalizations. There were especially many differences between the lowest and highest levels of vividness. In all studies, a video (or ‘animation’) was seen as high vivid content, but there were many contradictions regarding the low and medium level of vividness: Brookes (2010) operationalized low vividness as text and medium vividness as images, whereas De Vries et al. (2012) defined low vivid content as images and events as medium vivid. Sabate et al. (2014) operationalized links as low vivid content and images as medium vivid.

In spite of the fact that the aforementioned studies all found positive effects of vividness, they have some interesting remarks too. Sabate et al. (2014) stated that images help to increase brand post popularity, whereas videos are only relevant for likes. Moreover, Brookes (2010) found that images and videos are superior to text, but images are the most compelling. Based on those statements, it could be that the difference in vividness between an image and a video is too small to make a difference. This is supported by the studies from Liebrecht (2015) and Zentjes (2016) who did not find effects of vividness: there were no differences between the low (text) and medium (image), and the medium (image) and high (video) versions of their stimuli. This means that there are only differences between the two extremes: a text and a video. Abovementioned findings could explain that in the current study, no main effects were found of vividness on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude.

When looking at the possibilities of different levels of vividness on Instagram, it becomes clear that only an image or a video can be provided. In contrast, Facebook (which was examined by Brookes (2010), De Vries et al. (2012), Sabate et al. (2014), Liebrecht (2015), and Zentjes (2016)) has more posting possibilities: text, links, events, images, and videos. However, because the least expected level of vividness on Instagram is an image, it

seems to have an effect on consumers' ratings. This could explain the contradicting results since Instagram users can always expect something picturesque on their timelines.

A remarkable finding in the current study is that, although no main effects were found, there seemed to be an interaction between level of vividness and type of content. To be specific, a high level of vividness combined with entertaining content seems to lead to higher brand engagement. This finding can be explained by the MRT: the more cues a medium provides, the better the performances are (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). Margalit (2015) adds to this that videos are processed by the brain 60.000 times faster than text. Therefore, the brain becomes lazy and people prefer to consume higher levels of vividness. The higher the number of cues, the less the brain has to be actively involved (Margalit, 2015). Because of its cues, a video presents actions and emotion better than static media. A higher level of vividness makes it easier to process the visual content and attracts the attention much longer (Lipofsky, 1993; Liebrecht, 2015).

Type of content

This study has shown that it seemed that type of content has an effect on brand- and content attitudes: entertaining content may lead to higher brand- and content attitudes. Moreover, regarding the interaction effect, it seemed that a high level of vividness combined with entertaining content may lead to higher brand engagement.

An explanation for finding an effect of type of content on the attitudes, may be due because consumers' motivations to interact with content lead to higher attitudes (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Antheunis et al., 2016). According to Antheunis et al. (2016), pleasure is the most important motivation for consumers to be active on brand pages. Regarding the processing of types of content, Laskey et al. (1989) stated that informational content is processed in a rational way, whereas entertaining content appeals to psychological

characteristics. This also seems to be true for the study of Huarng, Yu and Huang (as cited in Liebrecht, 2015), where instructional videos (which can be assigned to informative content) were investigated. The researchers found that it is important that the consumer thinks a video is useful and playful. When the instructing content is playful, the consumer has a more positive attitude toward the content, compared to less playful content. Therefore, it can be reasoned that playfulness of content can be assigned to entertaining content. This is because playfulness appeals emotions and, eventually, will lead to the perception of entertaining content.

However, Liebrecht (2015) concluded that consumers search the most for informative content and the least for entertaining content. An explanation for this contradiction in findings could be that Liebrecht (2015) did not measure attitudes toward the brand and the content. Moreover, Bell and Eisingerich (2007) found that customer education (e.g., consumers learn from credible and highly informative content) has a positive effect on engagement. This finding from Bell and Eisingerich (2007) could be the reason that no effect was found of type of content on brand engagement. Trefzger et al. (2016) state that the effectiveness of content (e.g., number of likes, comments, and shares) is strongly influenced by the informativeness of the content. However, the optimal amount of information varies between product categories. For example, content about high technology products performs best when providing a high degree of information. There are also studies that indicate that too much information will lead to confused customers (Lee & O'Connor, 2003). Therefore, there seems to be a thin line between the amount of information a brand post can contain. When there is too much information, consumers become confused leading to not wanting to interact with the content, which is related to brand engagement.

Regarding the interaction effect, there seemed to be an interaction between a high level of vividness and entertaining content, which may lead to higher brand engagement.

Margalit (2015) explains that consumers who are in a 'browsing state of mind' will pass through websites just to see what's on offer. Their goal is to be entertained as they take information passively allowing the website to guide them. Emotion-based processing will make that the visitor pays attention to colorful images, embedded videos, and attractive copy. Therefore, visitors who are in the browsing state of mind (which is the purpose of content marketing), tend to prefer higher vivid content (Margalit, 2015). On the other side of the spectrum, goal-oriented consumers visit websites with a specific need in mind. These visitors are willing to use up their cognitive resources and are more active on pages. Because they know what they want, they prefer to read certain content and are far more likely to choose low levels of vividness (Margalit, 2015). Therefore, it seems likely that the interaction is caused by the different goals of the consumers. This effect is also explained by the U&G: an individual's behavior is driven by certain needs and the goal-directed action is to fulfill the individual's needs (Luo, Remus, & Chea, 2006).

Limitations and future research

This study focused on one particular brand: Stabilo. Therefore, the results are limited to the stationery industry and are not comparable with other brands and industries. Thus, future research could exist of more brands in order to compare the effects of the different variables on several industries. To continue, the results presented in this thesis are limited to brand pages on Instagram as a platform for content marketing. According to Trefzger et al. (2016), communication mechanisms may vary between different platforms. The researchers state that content characteristics such as hashtags (“#”) are used differently on Twitter compared to, for example, Instagram. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the results to other social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. It is advisable to redo the experiment on several social networking sites and investigate the effects on the different platforms, since it seems that different levels of vividness cause different effects on the platforms.

Instagram is a 'mobile-first' app, which means that it is created primarily for mobile use (Anderson, 2016). The stimuli in this study were based on the mobile app of the platform. However, participants were asked to do the experiment on their computer. Therefore, the ecological validity may be questioned, since participants were not allowed to fill out the survey on their mobile devices. In order to higher the ecological validity, future research could replicate the Instagram environment allowing participants to participate in the experiment via mobile devices.

During the experiment, participants were asked to imagine that they were interested in stationery and that they were having a creative mind. Although this message was repeated several times, participants could have lacked to imagine their interest toward Stabilo. Even though there is no clear evidence, it could be reasoned that participants may have indicated their own attitudes toward the brand. Further, attitudes might not be formed based on only one brand message. Influencing a person's attitude toward a concept is determined by a set of salient beliefs, which can be modified in order to alter brand attitudes. (Lutz, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). However, forming an attitude toward a brand needs a high involvement level that cannot be formed based on only the presented content (Park & Young, 1986). According to Zaichkowsky (1985), product involvement means that a person can be involved with a product, object, or person on the basis of needs, values, and interests. The degree of product involvement may influence consumers' decision making process regarding buying products: the consumer wants to be sure he will make the right choice since, for example, the buying of a car brings more risks than buying a pack of sugar. This is also in line with the ELM, which explains the influence of product involvement on attitude forming (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The current study used the brand Stabilo since it is a brand with a neutral involvement (Liebrecht, 2015). However, the outcomes of the current study may change when focusing on different levels of involvement because they might play a role in forming or modifying

attitudes. Therefore, future research should improve the results from the current study with examining several types of brands with different levels of product involvement.

A remarkable finding from the current study is that no main effects of both independent variables on brand engagement were found, but the interaction between type of content and level of vividness seemed to have an effect on brand engagement. Because those findings contradict each other, it is important that future research focuses on deepening the concept of brand engagement. Because the concept of brand engagement seems unclear for many researchers and practitioners, it may be the reason of finding the contradicting results in this study. Therefore, it is advisable for future research to measure the concept more extensive. This thesis measured brand engagement as consumer's intention to like, to share, and to comment on the brand message on Instagram and was based on the term *brand post popularity* from De Vries et al. (2012). However, according to the literature, brand engagement can also be seen as an intimate long-term relationship (Sashi, 2012). Another way to deepen the measure of engagement, is the *brand engagement self-concept*. The eight items can be used for measuring brand engagement (Spratt, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009). An example question is as follows: "I have a special bonding with this brand". This measure deepens the concept of brand engagement, since the number of likes, comments, and shares are easy numbers that social media platforms can provide to marketers. This is also emphasized by Trefzger et al. (2016), because the pure use of likes cannot be a clear measure since there could be posts that are appreciated by users, but do not receive likes, comments, and shares. They state that the pure consideration of brand engagement as likes, comments, and shares could be too limited as a final measure for success. It is therefore advisable for future research to investigate which measure of brand engagement has the best fit to measure the concept on Instagram.

Implications for theory and practice

The results from the current study are applicable for brand owners, managers, and other professionals since the understanding of content characteristics that influence brand engagement and attitudes is valuable to enhance the effectiveness of content marketing. As stated earlier, content marketing is user-focused, target-focused, and is expressed through brands' own media (Liebrecht, 2015). Therefore, it is important that companies achieve their (content marketing) goals and enlarge their content effectiveness with providing good content to their customers. With the findings from this thesis, practitioners have a first step to incorporate the 'right' content characteristics into their brand messages on Instagram.

The main results from the study are that type of content might influence brand- and content attitudes: entertaining content seems to lead to higher attitudes. Moreover, there seemed to be an interaction effect between type of content and level of vividness: a high level of vividness presenting entertaining content may lead to higher brand engagement. This is the first study investigating the effects of content characteristics in brand messages on Instagram, so future research is advisable.

The current study focused on the effects of type of content and vividness on brand engagement, brand attitude, and content attitude. However, there are other content characteristics that might have an influence on engagement and attitudes. Examples are instructive content (Liebrecht, 2015) and posting time (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Future research may exist of other independent variables to investigate which content characteristics for content marketing work best on Instagram. Also the dependent variables are not exclusive: earlier research found that vividness and type of content could have an effect on reliability, credibility, and relevance. This thesis did not examine those variables and future research could focus on those variables. By redoing the experiment with other dependent variables, it

is possible to examine what type of brand messages brands need to provide on Instagram when they need to serve a goal; for example, to raise the brands' credibility by the receiver of the message.

The examination of the combination of the variables type of content and the level of vividness contributes to scientific innovation in the field of content marketing. Because little is known about content marketing on Instagram, and each social medium has its own characteristics, effects may vary on different platforms (Trefzger et al., 2016). Further, there are less insights into content marketing on Instagram from the perspective of the receiver (e.g., their engagement and attitudes). Therefore, the results from this thesis are a first step to new knowledge about content marketing on Instagram and ask for future research.

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Appendix

Appendix I - Materials pretest

High level of vividness

King's Day: <https://youtu.be/3WTMHBE7Iic>

Start of Spring: <https://youtu.be/q6qzdd6v4F8>

Drawing tutorial: https://youtu.be/cSmuku-h_Z0

Stabilo SMARTball 2.0: <https://youtu.be/oqJMQpvMucA>

Low level of vividness



Figure 3. Pretest material: low level of vividness in combination with entertaining content.

Appendix II - Correlations pretest

Vividness. The item vividness per video consisted of two scales (e.g., ‘this message is dynamic’ and ‘this message is static’). To analyze whether the scales were allowed to be combined, a Kendall’s Tau correlation was performed.

First, the Kingsday video had a strong negative correlation which was significant ($T(25) = -.823, p < .001$). Moreover, the bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals did not cross zero (-.947, -.633). Second, the drawing tutorial video also had a strong negative correlation that turned out to be significant ($T(25) = -.784, p < .001$). The bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (-.952, -.525). Third, the Spring video had a medium negative correlation that turned out to be significant ($T(25) = -.605, p < .001$). The bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (-.872, -.282). And, at last, the Smartball video had a medium negative correlation which turned out to be significant ($T(25) = -.516, p = .003$). The bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (-.791, -.226).

Moreover, for the photo condition, the scales were also negatively correlated albeit not a very strong correlation ($T(25) = -.395, p = .015$). The bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (-.694, -.051). Overall, it can be concluded that, for example, when the materials scored high on *dynamic*, the ratings of *static* were lowered (and vice versa).

Informational content. The item perceived informational content consisted of two scales (e.g., ‘this message gives me information about Stabilo’s products’ and ‘because of this message I got to know more about Stabilo’s products’). The Spring video had a medium positive correlation which was significant ($T(25) = .696, p < .001$) and the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.346, .939). After that, the Kingsday video had a medium positive correlation which was also significant ($T(25) = .536, p = .001$). Moreover, the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.216, .791). Furthermore, there was a medium positive correlation

for the Smartball 2.0 video ($T(25) = .659, p < .001$). It turned out to be significant and the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.398, .839). At last, the drawing tutorial had a low positive correlation which was significant ($T(25) = .427, p = .008$). The bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.075, .706). Following the videos, the photo condition also had a strong positive correlation which was significant ($T(25) = .839, p < .001$). Moreover, the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.684, .948). Overall, it can be concluded that if the ratings for the item about *information about Stabilo's products* go up, the item about *getting to know more about Stabilo's products* also increases.

Entertaining content. The item that measured perceived entertaining content consisted of two scales (e.g., 'the content of this message is pleasurable to watch' and 'this message is amusing'). The Kingsday video had a strong positive correlation which was also significant ($T(25) = .809, p < .001$). Moreover, the bootstrapped 95% CIs intervals did not cross zero (.689, .914). Furthermore, the Smartball video had a strong positive correlation which was also significant ($T(25) = .728, p < .001$). The bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.514, .870). A medium positive correlation was found with the Spring video ($T(25) = .645, p < .001$) which turned out to be significant. Moreover, the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.368, .843). The drawing tutorial video had a strong positive correlation which was also significant ($T(25) = .817, p < .001$) And the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.698, .908). At last, the photo condition had a medium positive correlation which was also significant ($T(25) = .692, p < .001$). Moreover, the bootstrapped 95% CIs did not cross zero (.420, .879).

Overall, it can be concluded that if the ratings for the item about *pleasurable to watch* go up, the item about *amusing* also increases.

Appendix III - Survey

1. Introduction

Beste deelnemer,

Dit onderzoek is onderdeel van mijn masterscriptie voor mijn opleiding Communicatie- en Informatiewetenschappen te Tilburg University. Na het beantwoorden van enkele algemene vragen krijg je een Instagram bericht te zien waarover je een aantal vragen moet beantwoorden. Zorg er voor dat je deze vragenlijst invult op een **computer/laptop** zodat afbeeldingen/video's goed weergegeven kunnen worden. Wil je er tevens voor zorgen dat je **geluid aan** staat?

De antwoorden zijn geheel anoniem en zullen vertrouwelijk worden behandeld.

Het onderzoek zal niet meer dan vijf minuten van je tijd in beslag nemen.
Alvast bedankt voor je deelname.

Consensus form

Ik verklaar hierbij op voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over de aard en methode van het onderzoek. Ik stem geheel vrijwillig in met deelname aan dit onderzoek. Ik behoud daarbij het recht deze instemming weer in te trekken zonder dat ik daarvoor een reden hoef op te geven. Ik besef dat ik op elk moment mag stoppen met het onderzoek. Als mijn onderzoeksresultaten worden gebruikt in wetenschappelijke publicaties, of op een andere manier openbaar worden gemaakt, dan zal dit volledig geanonimiseerd gebeuren. Mijn persoonsgegevens worden niet door derden ingezien zonder mijn uitdrukkelijke toestemming.

Als ik meer informatie wil, nu of in de toekomst, dan kan ik me wenden tot Nathalie Verschueren via het e-mailadres n.m.c.verschueren@tilburguniversity.edu.

Voor eventuele klachten over dit onderzoek kan ik me wenden tot het lid van de Commissie Ethiek namens TiCC, per adres: TiCC secretariaat, Commissie Ethiek, Tilburg University, Warandelaan 2, 5037 AB Tilburg; 013-4669111.

Ik verklaar dat ik bovenstaande tekst gelezen en begrepen heb en ga hiermee akkoord zodra ik op 'volgende' klik.

2. Demographics

Wat is je geslacht?

Man

Vrouw

Wat is je leeftijd?

invullen

Wat is je hoogst genoten opleiding (of ben je momenteel mee bezig)?

Basisonderwijs

Voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (vmbo, mavo, LTS, LHNO)

Algemeen voortgezet onderwijs (mulo, havo)

- X Voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs (atheneum, gymnasium)
- X Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (MBO)
- X Hoger Beroepsonderwijs (HBO)
- X Universiteit (WO)

Heb je een Instagram account of heb je deze ooit gehad?

- X Ja
- X Nee → **redirection to the end of the survey**

3. *Use of Instagram*

Hoe vaak open je de app Instagram?

- X Dagelijks
- X Wekelijks
- X Maandelijks
- X Minder dan 1 keer per maand
- X Nooit

Hoe vaak ben je actief op Instagram (liken, reageren en delen van berichten)?

- X Dagelijks
- X Wekelijks
- X Maandelijks
- X Minder dan 1 keer per maand
- X Nooit

4. *Briefing*

Beeld je in dat je door je Instagram feed aan het scrollen bent. Je bent een creatief persoon en je bent geïnteresseerd in schrijfwaren. Tijdens het bekijken van je Instagram kom je opeens een bericht van het merk Stabilo tegen. Stabilo is een schrijfwarenfabrikant.

Door op ‘volgende’ te klikken krijg je het bericht van Stabilo op Instagram te zien.

5. *Randomization of the conditions*

Brand engagement

Ik zou dit bericht liken

Helemaal mee oneens 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Helemaal mee eens

Ik zou op dit bericht reageren

Helemaal mee oneens 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Helemaal mee eens

Ik zou het bericht delen met mijn netwerk

Helemaal mee oneens 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Helemaal mee eens

Brand attitude

‘Het merk Stabilo is...’

Niet leuk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Leuk
Onplezierig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Plezierig
Irritant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Niet irritant
Niet grappig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Grappig
Negatief	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positief
Saai	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interessant

Content attitude

‘Ik vind de inhoud van dit bericht op Instagram..’

Niet leuk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Leuk
Onplezierig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Plezierig
Irritant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Niet irritant
Niet grappig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Grappig
Negatief	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positief
Saai	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interessant

Manipulatiecheck

Dit bericht is statisch

Helemaal mee oneens mee eens	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Helemaal
---------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------

Dit bericht is beweeglijk

Helemaal mee oneens mee eens	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Helemaal
---------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------

Dit bericht geeft me informatie over producten van Stabilo

Helemaal mee eens mee oneens	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Helemaal
---------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------

Door dit bericht ben ik meer te weten gekomen over de producten van Stabilo

Helemaal mee oneens mee eens	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Helemaal
---------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------

De inhoud van dit bericht is plezierig om naar te kijken

Helemaal mee eens mee oneens	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Helemaal
---------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------

Dit bericht is amusant

Helemaal mee eens 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Helemaal
mee oneens

Het doel van dit bericht is

X Mij vermaken X Mij informeren

Ik ken het merk Stabilo

Helemaal niet 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Heel erg goed

6. Debriefing

Beste participant,

Bedankt voor je deelname aan mijn onderzoek!

Dit experiment is uitgevoerd aan de hand van bestaande berichten van het merk Stabilo. Echter, dit onderzoek wordt onafhankelijk van het merk uitgevoerd. Stabilo heeft dus niets met mijn experiment te maken.

Heb je nog vragen? Neem contact met me op:

Door op 'volgende' te klikken worden je antwoorden verzonden.

Appendix IV - Materials experiment



Figure 4. Condition 3: low level of vividness* in combination with entertaining content.

* Condition 1: high level of vividness with entertaining content can be found here: <https://youtu.be/q6qzdd6v4F8>



Figure 5. Condition 4: low level of vividness* in combination with informational content.

* Condition 2: high level of vividness with informational content can be found here: <https://youtu.be/oqJMpvMucA>

Appendix V – Correlations dependent variables

Table 5

Spearman's Rho correlation between the dependent variables

	Brand engagement	Brand attitude	Content attitude
Brand engagement	-	$\rho = .64, p < .001$	$\rho = .61, p < .001$
Brand attitude	$\rho = .64, p < .001$	-	$\rho = .77, p < .001$
Content attitude	$\rho = .61, p < .001$	$\rho = .77, p < .001$	-