



Online Consumers' Engagement on Fast-fashion Brands' Posts:

The influence of message strategies on Instagram

Master's Thesis
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Specialization Business Communication and Digital Media
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July, 2019

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Abstract

With the rapid growth of the fashion industry, it is critical for brands to attract consumers' attention continuously. Since its establishment, social media have become one of the most crucial tools for brands to be more connected to consumers. However, this also raises another competition on how to continuously creates engaging content. Studies have found that message strategy influenced consumers' responses on social media. This could be the answer for the fast-fashion industry's challenge in designing constantly engaging posts, especially because it is crucial for an industry as dynamic as fast-fashion.

This study focuses on the influence of message strategy of fast-fashion brands' social media posts on consumers' engagement, especially on Instagram. Using the content analysis method, this study explored how brands utilized message strategies on their social media and how consumers responses to them in the forms of number of likes and of comments.

The results indicate that consumers are more likely to respond to the informational message, because information-seeking was still one of the main motivations that underlying the fast-fashion consumers' behavior. Another explanation might be due to the fast-fashion industry is seen as utilitarian products which make them have less emotional attachment with the brands.

Therefore, it is advisable to fast-fashion brands or marketers to utilize the informational message strategy on their social media posts. However, it is worth to noting that exaggerating the informational message strategy in the form of product information might not always be necessary. It is still usefull to present information in different forms to give variety of brands' social media posts.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The fashion industry has gained worldwide attention mostly because this sector is seen as a very dynamic and challenging sector on the global market (Macchion, Danese, & Vinelli, 2015). Based on its production costs, the fashion industry is known to have three categories, namely luxury, *pret-a-porter*, and mass market (Medina, Miquel-Segarra, & Navarro-Beltra, 2018). The luxury fashion brands, which sit at the very top of the fashion industry's pyramid, have the ability to introduce designer's choices and determine what the trend for the season (Medina et al., 2018; Sull & Turconi, 2008). However, with the rapid growth of fashion brands, especially the fast-fashion brands, the fashion industry is no longer a production-driven industry, but it has shifted to a market-driven approach (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

Consumers in the fast-fashion industry are more invested in the fashion industry than before. This attitude pressures marketers to fulfill consumers' demands on the market in a more timely process, making the fast-fashion industry becomes a sector that has long attracted marketers and researchers (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Medina et al., 2018; Tafesse & Wien, 2008). With strict competition between retailers, fast-fashion brands are forced to have 'quick response' towards the needs and desires of consumers (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Therefore, in this context, building and maintaining relationships with consumers is crucial for fashion brands.

In order to maintain a brand-consumers relationship, brands have started to utilize social media marketing which enables them to connect with consumers constantly (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). By utilizing social media, marketers can reach a broader population, interact with their consumers, and eventually promote their products across the world (Tafesse & Wien, 2018; Nedra, Hadhri, & Mezrani, 2019). This trend can be seen by the growth of social media accounts, owned by fashion brands, especially on Instagram. A previous study by Manikonda, Venkatesan, Kambhampati, and Li (2016) mentioned that consumers used social media to decide what they are going to wear, and Instagram is becoming the "fashion's new front row." According to a study by Erkan (2015), Instagram accounts owned by brands of the fashion industry have the most followers, yet show the lowest engagement compared to other industries such as electronics, automotive, food and beverages. Thus, fashion brands need to create engaging social media

content continuously to gain the most responses from consumers or also known as consumers' engagement.

Many researchers have tried to explore the various relationships between fashion brands and consumers' engagement on different social media platforms (Kim & Lennon, 2008; Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Numerous studies have also shown that one of the ways to stimulate consumers' engagement on social media is by identifying the appropriate message strategy (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Kim, Spiller, & Hettche, 2015; Tafesse & Wien, 2018). In their study, Tafesse and Wien (2018) identified the main message strategies underlying most brands' posts, which are believed to influence consumers' engagement, namely informational, transformational, and interactional message strategy.

However, most of the studies have been focusing on consumers' purchase intention through social media engagement on luxury fashion brands (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018; Prentice & Loreiro, 2018; Romao, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2018), while some other studies compared the consumers' engagement or responses on luxury and fast-fashion brands (Medina et al., 2018; Lee, Zhou, Lo, & Ha-Brookshire, 2018). There appears to be a gap in the literature of social media and the fast-fashion industry, especially on the influence of message strategy on consumers' engagement. Hence, this study aims to examine the influence of message strategy used by fast-fashion brands on online consumers' engagement, specifically on social media platforms such as Instagram.

1.2 Consumers' engagements

Consumers' engagement is an important aspect for brands because it can measure consumers' behavior and lead to continuous communication between brands and consumers (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018). Consumers' engagement has been conceptualized in many different approaches through various disciplines. It is often called "consumers brand engagement", "consumers' engagement behavior," or "customer's engagement" (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Hollebeek, 2011; Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga & Bronner, 2018). However, the definitions of engagement are strongly linked to its context. An earlier study in psychology context conducted by Kahn (1990) defined the engagement in the working environment as the degree of employees' supportiveness to the company. In marketing literature, engagement is seen as "a fundamental driving force behind postmodern consumer behavior and decision making" (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). In an online

context, consumers' engagement is conceptualized as a motivational state that leads to consumers' involvement in brand activities and experiences (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Engagement is also considered as a motivational construct, which involves an object, such as a brand, and a subject (i.e., consumer), and has its own emotional valence (i.e., positive vs. negative) (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015).

In this current study, we adopt the definition of consumer engagement by Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012), which stated that "*consumer engagement is the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings or organizational activities, which either the consumer or the organization initiates.*". Moreover, Vivek et al. (2012) suggested that consumers' engagement could be defined as the interaction between individuals and the brands on such events or activities, without necessarily planning to purchase the products. This prior study also focused on the centrality of consumers' participation, which can lead to higher levels of enthusiasm and greater engagement with the brands (Vivek et al., 2012). In social media environment, consumers' engagement on brand activities could be shown by consumers' involvement in the form of giving 'like,' posting comments, or sharing the posts (Swani, Milne, & Brown, 2013; Tafesse & Wien, 2018, Voorveld et al., 2018). Aligned with a prior study by Voorveld et al. (2018), our focus in this study is to assess the consumers' engagement on brand posts with quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, views, clicks, and followers.

According to prior studies, consumers' extensive act of involvement on brand posts might be influenced by their motivations (Anderson, Knight, Pookulangara, & Josiam, 2014; Luo, Chea & Chen, 2011). In the process of creating contents, brands' creativity is not the only important aspect, but it also requires an understanding of what motivates consumers (Anderson et al., 2014). Many researchers have conceptualized consumers' motivation that which underlie their behavior towards brands' online contents. A prior study by MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski (1991) defined consumers' motivation in relation with brand information processing in an advertisement and combined the motivation with the other two factors which could determine consumers' behavior, namely opportunity and ability.

Another prior study by Sukoco and Wu (2010) defined motivation in regards of the brand community as "*a force that directs individuals towards goals and the way consumers can be motivated to engage in brand activities.*" They proposed two main motivations, namely, self-

motivation and social-related motivation, which were found to have a significant effect on consumers' behavior towards the brand community. Built from the same argument, Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014) developed several factors of motivation in terms of consumers' behavior towards brand social media, namely brand affiliation, investigation, opportunity seeking, entertainment, and conversation (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014)

The previous studies mentioned above showed support on the role of social transmission of content, which is one of the keys of consumers' behavior on online content. Social transmission of content occurred when consumers decide to consume and/or to share online content that they receive in social media (Kwon & Han, 2013). In general, people tend to share information in their daily conversation through the interpersonal communication (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Thus, content transmission affects product adoption and other brand-related outcomes and is strongly related to content virality (Berger & Milkman, 2012). In a marketing context, Tafesse and Wien (2018) proposed five primary motivations that shape the social transmission of, and engagement with, content which are functional, hedonic, emotional, self-image, social.

One of the reasons for consumers willing to push the 'like' button or write comments on a particular brands' post is because they find that the information is relevant to their interests (i.e., utilitarian motives) (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Other researchers agreed, suggesting that this happens because information seeking is still the primary motivation for consumers to use brands' social media (Wen, Choi, & Chung, 2019). However, prior research also shows that, the hedonic motivation of consumers drives them to engage more in brands' online activity than the utilitarian motives, due to the enjoyment of the experience (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Consumers tend to be attracted to contents which relate to their self-image, derived from hedonic experience, and empowering them to express their emotions. A study by Yuki (2015) showed that positive emotions, such as "feel happy" and "look good", received more likes on Facebook. Berger and Milkman (2012) found that, people were more likely to share contents that involve high-arousal emotions, such as awe, anger, or anxiety. Additionally, posts containing interesting and surprising element are more likely to grip consumers' attention.

Consequently, brands face a continuous challenge to create engaging content. A prior study by Sheehan and Morrison (2009) specifies four key challenges for brands when it comes to creating content, namely (1) the challenge to reinvent the mass message model, (2) the challenge to help consumers tell their own stories, (3) the challenge to use social media effectively, and (4) the

challenge to grow talent with creative vision. The first challenge in creating engaging content has started since the era of traditional advertising (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009). The traditional media failed to recognize the importance of one-to-one engagement and interactions between consumers. Interactive content does not only involve the latest technology, but also maintains the social relations between consumers and brands (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009). Brands which adopt the engagement perspective shifts their messages or contents from a transactional to an interactional perspective, where consumers' identity become a part of the brand story (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009).

The interactive content also leads to the second challenge on involving consumers on brands content. In the online environment, consumers are not only passively accepting the content, but would also like to interact with the content by adding more value and repurposing the messages for different uses (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009). Brands need to find more ways to involve consumers in their contents that enables them to express their own story. Moreover, the use of social media results in a new process of producing content, incorporating what consumers wants to see. The process requires brands to tailor the desired content for consumers and create stories based on the information (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009). In other words, social media are a space for collaboration rather than traditional top-down structures. These challenges show the need for brands to create contents which effectively deliver their message to consumers while also encourage consumers' engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

1.3 Brands' messages: verbal and visual components

Earlier works on advertising literature, especially on traditional media, have focused on the impact of verbal and visual components of brands message together and/or separately (Edell & Staelin, 1983; Hirschman, 1986). Many studies found that verbal and visual components have influence on consumers' behavior; however, these influences found vary according to different roles of the components. An earlier study by Smith (1991) stated that, consumers look for the information about the brand or brands' products on the verbal component of the messages or advertisements. Furthermore, adding a visual component to the message was also found to have an impact on consumers' information processing (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). A prior study by Mitchell and Olson (1981) stated that the visually oriented format in printed advertisement was more effective in communicating information to consumers. Moreover, the visual information creates a positive

evaluation towards the products, and in turn, increases the purchase intention (Mitchell & Olson, 1981).

The study by Edell and Staelin (1983) showed that consumers' behavior towards printed advertisements was clearly related to the content of the message. Edell and Staelin (1983) proposed three advertising structures, namely (1) an "unframed" picture unrelated to the product, (2) a verbal descriptive paragraph of the product, and (3) a combination of a picture and a paragraph having equivalent descriptions of the product. The results showed that consumers were likely to "get distracted" from evaluating the ads when they are exposed to an advertisement with an unrelated message between the verbal and visual components (i.e., unframed picture) (Edell & Staelin, 1983).

A more recent research on advertising in an online environment found that combining visual with verbal components is the most frequent content format in social media (Jankowski, Wątróbski, & Ziemba, 2015). With interactive communication on social media, consumers' responses to brand messages or advertisements might differ from the traditional media (i.e. printed advertisements). Furthermore, in a study of online advertising in the fashion industry, Kim and Lennon (2008) stated that product information, which could be available in visual or verbal form, played an important role on consumers' purchase intention. However, the studies in the fashion industry yielded contrasting results. On the one hand, a previous study by Then and DeLong (1999) stated that providing more information about the product through the visual component could lead to higher consumers' purchase intention. On the other hand, Kim and Lennon (2008) found support on verbal superiority, which means that consumers tend to look for explicit information that could reduce uncertainty towards their product. Therefore, the verbal component of the message might be more favorable for consumers than the visual component (Kim & Lennon, 2008). Kim and Lennon (2008) also proposed that the size of the visual and the amount of verbal information have an influence on consumers' behavior towards the brands' message.

The prior studies mentioned above are aligned with an earlier study by Hirschman (1986), connecting message components (i.e. visual and verbal) with two dimensions on advertising responses, namely utilitarian/rational and aesthetic/emotional. In the study, Hirschman (1986) found that more text in the advertisements generates more rationality and logic than a picture-based advertisement. Moreover, Hirschman (1986) also found that all-verbal ads were perceived as more utilitarian or rational, whereas the proposition for all-verbal advertisements viewed as

more aesthetic or emotional received mixed support. The visual components, such as images and photographs, are generally perceived as aesthetic objects and are easier to process in the minds of consumers. However, it might have a positive, neutral or negative effect on consumers' behavior depending on how the picture itself formed (Hirschman, 1986).

1.4 Fast-fashion brands: utilitarian vs. hedonic

Fast-fashion has changed the traditional models of luxury brands to ready-to-wear fashion following the latest trends with affordable and dynamic manner (Gabrielli, Baghim, & Codeluppi, 2013). A study by Turker and Altuntas (2014) characterized fast-fashion as "*the transformation of trendy design into articles that can be bought by the masses.*" In other words, fashion retailers produce low-cost fashion products on a massive scale which enables consumers to buy the products on a much lower price. In this context, fast-fashion refers to fashion products, such as apparel, footwear, accessories, and beauty products (Wen et al., 2019). Consumers are becoming more demanding, which force retailers to provide quick responses. With its rapid growth, fast-fashion brands, such as Zara, H&M, Adidas, and Nike, are now reaching the top 100 brands in the world, along with Apple and Amazon (Wen et al., 2019). Fast-fashion consumers have a high expectation of constant change and new products almost on a weekly basis (Bruce & Daly, 2006).

Furthermore, several characteristics which can be found in fast-fashion, such as, low-cost production and speed delivery to market, have forced retailers to be highly competitive with existing fashion brands (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). According to Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010), retailers, such as Zara, H&M and Mango will have their products adjusted within three to five weeks. Since the lifetime of the products is relatively shorter than luxury products, fast-fashion brands aim to attract consumers continuously and compel them to purchase their products (Turker & Altuntas, 2014).

In order to do so, fast-fashion brands need to update their consumers on a regular basis through their social media, which made brand posts an essential part of the brands to strengthen the relationship with their consumers. According to Tafesse & Wien (2017), by posting regularly on their social media platforms, brand-generated posts can help build awareness of the brands by introducing new products, educating consumers, and to stimulating purchases. Moreover, a prior study by Kuo (2009) stated that consumers used brand-generated posts to examine the products

before eventually purchasing it. In this context, brand-generated posts on social media have a prominent effect on consumers' engagement (Hsu & Chen, 2011).

However, in this study, we would like to focus on the fundamental aspects which influence consumers' behavior across consumption phenomena, which was defined in the early research on consumers' motivation as utilitarian and hedonic value (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994). Other more recent studies also draw on the same argument which showed utilitarian and hedonic motivation could affect consumers decision-making (Anderson et al., 2014; Parker & Wang, 2016). Both motives are particularly essential when it comes to online engagements.

With regard to the purchase intention, utilitarian-motivated consumers are driven by the goals to efficiently purchasing a product with minimum effort (Childers, Carr, Peck & Carson, 2001). In favor of this argument, Anderson et al. (2014) defined utilitarian motive as something which "*relate to the functionality of shopping.*" Consumers with utilitarian motives tend to seek necessary information in a convenient time or look for the ease of accessing information. They often set aside the emotional or experience aspect for their primary purpose of information seeking (To, Liao, & Lin, 2007). The information value becomes the most crucial element for utilitarian motivated consumers, especially in an online environment, because the weight of the information provided in posts could determine the online engagement of the brand posts. The usefulness of the information may attract consumers to obtain their needs and become a member of the online community by sharing the information to others (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Anderson et al. 2014).

Furthermore, people with hedonic motivation are defined as experience-driven consumers, who prioritize the enjoyment of the shopping experience rather than the functionality of the products (Anderson et al., 2014). Often, consumers motivated by hedonic values enjoy the experience and are more likely to engage in such social media activity (Anderson et al., 2014). In favor with this finding, a prior study by Luo et al. (2011) stated that hedonic-motivated consumers tended to be more engaging in an online activity because they perceived the action as an entertaining experience.

Regarding consumers of fast-fashion, a prior study by Watson and Yan (2013) stated that fast-fashion consumers could be both utilitarian and hedonic. Consumers with utilitarian motives view fast-fashion as a more rational or practical way of purchasing a higher quantity of products at an inexpensive price, for example. This type of consumers expects quick changes in the latest trends and product designs. Meanwhile, hedonic-motivated consumers are driven by the emotional

arousal through the excitement of shopping experiences, store atmosphere, or finding unique products. They value the shopping experience more than the functionality of the shopping activity.

1.5 Message strategy on fast-fashion brands' posts

A prior study by Hyllegard, Ogle, & Yan (2009) stated that various brands used message strategy on their advertisements to build brands' image, and generating sales and profits. It is believed that by applying message strategies, brands will be able to communicate what they want to say to consumers in a certain manner which fits with what consumers want to hear (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Adopted from the study by Tafesse and Wien (2018), message strategy is described as *"a guiding principle that determines the content domain of branded content, such as that of a piece of advertising or a brand post."* Several researchers tried to define message strategy on advertising in numerous ways. In this study, we use the types of message strategy based on traditional advertising literature, namely informational and transformational message strategies (Laskey, Day & Cras, 1989; Puto & Wells, 1984). However, previous study by Tafesse and Wien (2018) have demonstrated that these message typologies can also be used in the social media context.

The first two strategies are built on the advertising literature by Puto and Wells (1984), namely the informational and the transformational message strategy. The informational message strategy defined as *"one which provides consumers with factual, relevant brand data in a clear and logical manner, such that they have greater confidence in their ability to assess the merits of buying the brand after having seen the advertisement"*. The transformational message strategy is defined as *"one which associates the experience of using (consuming) the advertised brand with a unique set of psychological characteristics which would not typically be associated with the brand experience to the same degree without exposure to the advertisement"* (Puto & Wells, 1984). These strategies were also used in another study by Mueller (1986), which referred to the strategies as a hard-sell approach (informational) and soft-sell approach (transformational). The third strategy, which is the interactional, was included in order to meet the nature of social media (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

The informational message strategy presents factual and relevant information about the brand to consumers (Puto & Wells, 1984). In order to be specified as an informational strategy, a message should be able to explicitly show the comparison between brands' products and

competitors, and expose the uniqueness of the product. The informational message strategy should also be showing information based on facts and verified objectives. Another characteristic of an informational message strategy is the existence of general information about the product (Laskey et al., 1989). As can be seen in Figure 1, the informational message strategy is shown in the text and the image. The image clearly displays the entire outfits, complemented with a supporting caption informing the consumers of the identification number of the products. Additionally, the images show the exact products which match with the product number, so it is easy for consumers to find the desired product.



Figure 1. An example of an informational message strategy on fast-fashion brands, H&M's Instagram account. Retrieved from H&M official Instagram account (@hm)

The aspects of the informational message strategy might also be found in the transformational message strategy although the transformational message strategy still has its own distinguishing characteristics. The transformational message strategy generally focused on the human's emotional aspects (Laskey et al., 1989). The psychological elements, such as experiences with the brands, places, and lifestyles, could also be found in the transformational message strategy (Laskey et al., 1989; Puto & Well, 1984). Brands could highlight their

message contents on their brand personality, their consumers' lifestyles, and consumers' experience or situations while using the brands. Figure 2 shows an example of a transformational message strategy from sports brand, Adidas. The caption emphasizes consumers' experience to "get better", which also aligns with the brand's image. The image does not emphasize the brand's product but shows how the brand encourages consumers exercise more and live a healthier life.



Figure 2. An example of a transformational message strategy on sports brands, Adidas' Instagram account. Retrieved from Adidas official Instagram account (@adidas)

Furthermore, the interactional message was added due to the characteristics of social media, which enables brands to perform two-way communication with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). The interactional message utilizes the interactive nature of social media by creating active conversations with consumers, characterized by contents which proactively initiate interaction with consumers at a personal level through conversations and might encourage consumers to talk to one another (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). The interactional message strategy can be identified when the posts contain current events, focus on consumers' personal relationship, enhance community identification, and provoke consumers' feedback. As can be seen in Figure 3, the interactional message strategy mainly emphasizes on social connection

and community identification, i.e., the need to belong in society (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Figure 3 shows an example of an Instagram post dominated with the transformational message strategy on both the image and caption. The image shows none of the products related to the brand, whereas the caption focused on consumers' lifestyle and experience with the brand shown in the statement such as, "Welcome to the dancefloor," "Join the party and get the best inspiration for your evening outfits." Additionally, this post initiates communication between consumers with the statement such as "Can you feel the music?" which give the opportunity for consumers to respond to the post. However, according to a study by Tafesse and Wien (2018), there were not many brands from various sectors which utilize the interactional message strategy on an individual post. Instead, most of the brands combine it with other message strategies.

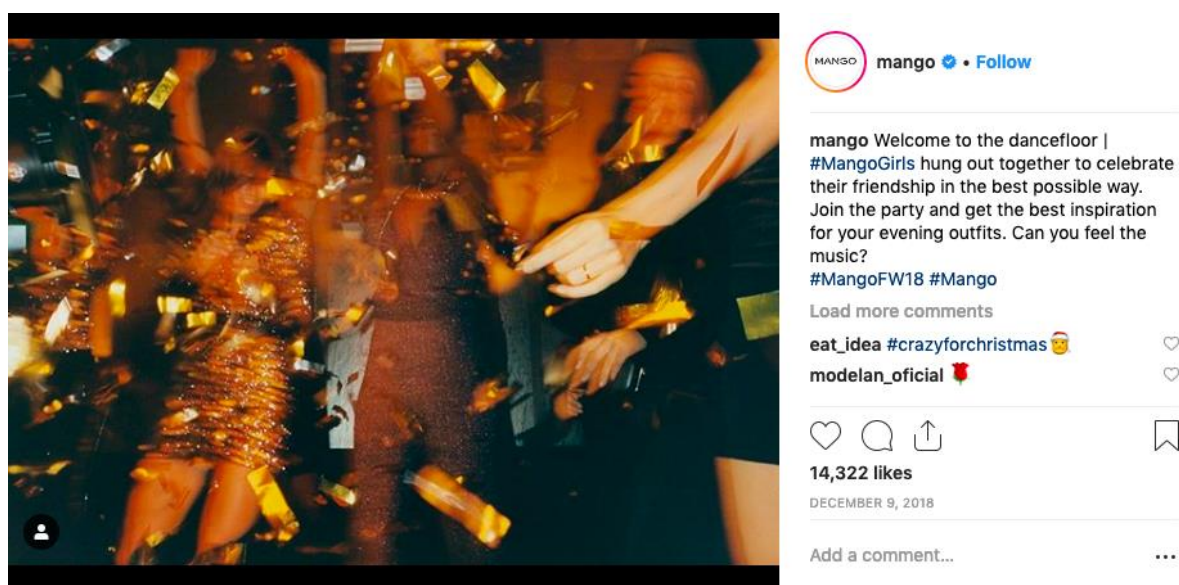


Figure 3. An example of the interactional message strategy on a fast-fashion brand, Mango's Instagram account. Retrieved from Mango official Instagram account (@mango).

Since brands posts could deliver more than one modality (i.e. visual and verbal), the message strategies mentioned earlier also applied to different modalities, such as texts, photos, videos, and website links (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Additionally, brands often combine more than one message strategies in a single post and incorporate the transformational message, which has been found to be the most effective message strategy on social media (Coelho, Santos de Oliveira, & Severo de Almeida, 2016; Kusumasondjaja, 2018; Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Although a plethora of studies has been exploring the application of message strategy on brand-generated posts on social media, Medina et al. (2018) found that fast-fashion brands proactively initiate the dialogue with consumers on Twitter. However, fast-fashion brands can also be 'passively' present on Facebook (Arriaga, Domingo, & Silvente, 2017). Hence, message strategies might have a different effect on each platform and knowing how to apply the message strategy on a particular social media channel is essential for the brands, especially when they need to draw consumers' engagement constantly.

1.6 Research questions and hypotheses

The aim of this study is to explore the influence of message strategies on the fast-fashion brands' posts on consumers' engagement. This study connects the message strategies to consumers' engagement, particularly in terms of numbers of likes and comments. Furthermore, prior studies were found to be conducted using various social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, yet only a few studies focused on Instagram. Given its popularity among marketers, it is important to put more attention on Instagram as the object of the study in this respect. Thus, this current study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What types of message strategies do fast-fashion brands use on Instagram?

RQ2: To what extent do message strategies on fast-fashion brands' posts influence consumers' engagement on Instagram?

In the previous study, Tafesse and Wien (2018) have shown that the transformational message strategy proved to be the most effective message strategy for brands to obtain consumers' engagement. Moreover, posts that combined transformational message strategy with other message strategies also showed a significant result than posts without transformational message strategy (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). This result was more prominent on fashion brands since fashion products are more hedonic, self-expressive and broadly appealing than other types of brands, which are the characteristics of transformational message strategy (Tafesse & Wien, 2017). Simultaneously, informational and interactional message strategy, respectively, were found to be less effective to elicit consumers' engagement (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). However, these typologies of message strategy have not been tested on different social

media platforms, especially Instagram, in the fast-fashion industry. Thus, building from the preceding arguments, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H₁: When text and image contain the same message strategy, the effect on engagement is the strongest for the transformational, less strong for the informational, and the weakest for the interactional.

In social media, images and texts were mostly combined in a single post. Therefore, it is frequently found that social media posts apply more than one message strategy. Especially on an image-based social media platform, such as Instagram, brands could use different message strategies on each modality (one for the picture and one for the text). Another prior study by Hirschman (1986) also found that consumers are more likely to responses to images with an aesthetic or emotional appeal. Therefore, we expect that an image containing an emotional element, which is the characteristic of the transformational message, will receive the highest engagement compared to other strategy and formulated the hypothesis as follows:

H₂: When text and image contain different message strategy, engagement score is the highest on image with transformational strategy compare to image with the informational strategy or image with the interactional strategy

Based on the previous study by Kim and Lennon (2008), the verbal component in fashion advertisements has a strong influence on consumers' behavior. A previous study also found that in the apparel industry, consumers are more likely to show a positive attitude towards verbal information, because of the good product description provided explicitly in the text and its ability to reduce the uncertainty of the products. Therefore, we formulated the third hypothesis as the following:

H₃: When text and image contain different message strategy, engagement score is the highest on text with informational strategy compare to text with the transformational strategy or text with the interactional strategy

2 Method

To answer our research questions, we utilized a content analysis of the selected brands' posts. Content analysis is one of the most commonly used methods by researchers to understand the brands' messages and identify the strategies (Ashley & Tuten, 2014). In this study, we conducted an exploratory analysis to find out what types of message strategy used by fast-fashion brands. Afterward, we continued to test our hypotheses on the relationship between message strategies and consumers' engagement. Based on the previous study by Mirbagheri and Najmi (2019), engaging behavior from consumers can be seen by actual participation in brands' activities. Therefore, we focused on the number of 'likes' and the number of comments on brands' posts to measure the dependent variable. The following subsections provided the information of materials, code sheet development, scoring of message strategies, transformation of frequency scores, inspection of confounding factors, and statistical analyses.

2.1 Materials

As mentioned earlier, the object of this study was Instagram. Instagram is a suitable platform to gain desirable results, especially on the fashion industry, due to its characteristics as an image-based mobile application (Zomorodian & Lu, 2019). Before we decided on the brands, we decided to classify two types of brands in fast-fashion namely, daily-wear and sportswear. Daily-wear refers to brands which produce daily outfit for men and women, while sportswear focus on sports and outdoors outfit. With these classifications, we expect to be able to compare the two types of brands since both daily-wear and sportswear have different characteristics. Afterward, we chose the fast-fashion brands based on Interbrand's Best Global Brands 2018, whose social media posts from each brand will be analyzed later. Six fast-fashion brands were chosen, namely, Nike, Adidas, Under Armour, Zara, H&M, and Mango. The selected brands' specifications are shown in Table 1.

Next, we collected Instagram posts from the chosen brands' accounts. A total of 900 brand posts were extracted from brands' official Instagram accounts for the analysis. The data collection process was conducted in March 2019; therefore, we restricted the collected posts publishing date until February 28th, 2019.

Table 1. Brands specifications

Brands' name	Accounts	Products	Total number of posts (per February 2019)	Total number of followers (per February 2019)
Adidas	@adidas	Shoes, sports	736	23,345,707
Nike	@nike	apparel, sports equipment	722	85,932,508
Under Armour	@underarmour		2,859	7,129,115
Zara	@zara	Men & women	2,357	31,641,797
H&M	@hm	apparel, accessories	4,624	29,398,639
Mango	@mango		3,433	9,912,646

2.2 Code Sheet Development

We developed our code sheet for the current study based on the existing framework on message strategy proposed by Tafesse and Wien (2018). This framework enables researchers to categorized brand posts on social media based on the message strategies. The existing framework consists of 10 categories which are formed based on various elements which could be found in brand posts, such as, functional, educational, emotional, brand resonance, experiential, social causes, current events, personal stories, brand communities, and customer relations. The ten categories were then assigned to the three main message strategies, namely informational, transformational, and interactional. We adopted these coding categories to test on a small sample of 120 posts to identify the possible problematic items. However, in the coding process, we might find new categories based on various types of images, keywords on captions, or themes. Therefore, new categories will be added to the existing list accordingly.




First, functional and educational categories were described as posts which provide consumers with factual information about the products, which are the characteristics of the informational message strategy (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). These types of category possessed several elements, such as product or service attributes (benefits, features, and efficiency), quality awards or rewards, green product claims, tips, corporate news, and sales promotion (e.g.,

price discounts, deals, promotional campaigns, competitions or quizzes). Therefore, brands' posts with one or more of the aforementioned elements were coded as the informational message strategy.

Second, one of the distinct characteristics of the transformational message strategy was stimulating consumers' emotions through inspiring stories and humor. Therefore, emotional posts were categorized as a transformational message strategy. Moreover, other categories, such as brand resonance, experiential, and social cause, were also included in the transformational message strategy. To be categorized as transformational message strategy, the brand posts needed to possess several elements, namely emotive language, brand image (e.g., logo or slogan), celebrity collaboration, branded products, brand heritage, sensory stimulation, behavioral stimulation, brand events, and cause-related claims.

Finally, the last message strategy proposed by Tafesse and Wien (2018) was interactional message strategy. The most prominent distinct characteristic of interactional message strategy is that the posts mainly elicit conversation between consumers (i.e., followers). According to the existing framework, the categories in interactional message strategies are current events, personal stories, brand community, and customer relations. Moreover, the posts needed to have several elements, such as popular or ongoing topics, cultural events or holidays, employee branding, relationship stories, personal preferences (future plans), tags or repost consumers' original posts, gives consumers services, elicit consumers' feedback and testimonies. Hence, all brands' posts which contained one or more of these subcategories were coded as the interactional message strategy. Table 2 shows sampled posts taken from the brands' Instagram accounts and how we would have coded them.

Table 2. Example posts from brands' Instagram account

Posts	Caption	Coding results	Final category
	<i>#ULTRABOOST 19 wasn't built in a day. The Primeknit 360 seamless upper crafted to perfection. · Tap to shop. · Art by @glackster</i>	Image → functional Caption → functional	Informational
	<i>A Star is born. @k.mbappe #JustDoIt</i>	Image → brand resonance Caption → brand resonance	Transformational
	<i>How to celebrate the new year in style? With a cool ensemble like this! 🌟 #HM Trousers with slits: 0719216002 Metal waist belt: 0749989001 Quilted shoulder bag: 0693708001 Glittery strappy top: 0716400002 Court shoes: 0545258016</i>	Image → functional Caption → current events; functional; educational	Informational and interactional

However, since our sample was collected from Instagram posts, which consists of images and texts, we coded both elements separately. Thus, we expected to find multiple message strategies in an individual post. The posts which contain multiple message strategies were then coded as combinations, accordingly. For example, when a post incorporated emotional cues (transformational) on the image and factual information on the supporting text (informational), the post would be coded as the combination of the informational and transformational message strategies. All the categories based on the current coding scheme are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Final coding scheme according to Tafesse and Wien's framework

Message Strategies	Categories	Definition
Informational	Functional	These posts provide information about brands' products or services, highlighting functional attributes of the products. Consumers are able to find factual information related to the brands' products. <i>Elements:</i> product & service attributes, quality awards, rewards, green product claims, price discounts or deals, promotional campaigns, competition or quizzes
	Educational	The main difference of these posts is to help consumers learn on how to apply (i.e. wear) the products in their daily life. Moreover, it could also be informing consumers about trends and new developments or improvements <i>Elements:</i> tips, instructions, technical interviews
Transformational	Emotional	These posts evoke consumers' emotions by triggering emotional responses such as, happy, sad, excitement, guilt, love, etc. <i>Elements:</i> emotive language, inspiring stories, humor or jokes
	Brand resonance	These posts highlight brands' identity which might reinforce their image in consumers' minds. Brand resonance might also feature celebrities or influencers which could also create a way for consumers to express themselves using their preferred brands. <i>Elements:</i> brand image (i.e, logo, slogan), celebrity collaboration, branded products, brand heritage, aesthetic appeals
	Experiential	These posts evoke sensory and behavioral responses. These can be achieved by encouraging consumers to

Interactional		personally experience the brand by touching, smelling, or tasting. <i>Elements</i> : visual and auditory stimulation, physical action, embodied performances, brand events
	Social causes	These posts are designed to draw attention to worthy social causes by highlighting brands' contribution to the socially responsive programs. <i>Elements</i> : cause-related posts
	Current events	These posts are made to initiate timely conversations with consumers. With these types of posts, brands could be more involved with the current or ongoing topics. <i>Elements</i> : holidays, cultural events, special days, popular or ongoing topic
	Personal stories	These posts aim to establish an intimate relationship at a personal level with consumers. These posts seek to deepen the brand's involvement in consumers' daily life. <i>Elements</i> : relationship stories, employee branding, personal preferences (future plans), personal issues.
	Brand community	These posts aim to build brands' community, strengthen the existing online community by involving consumers posts, and encourage consumers to join the community. <i>Elements</i> : acknowledging consumers by tagging or reposting their content, asking consumers to become a part of the brand
	Customer relation	These posts highlighting the issues which determine consumers' relationship with the brand. <i>Elements</i> : customer services, feedback or reviews, testimony.

Coding and categorizing a sample are not a one-time event (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017); therefore, the researcher of this study coded the sample three times in a period of one month. The first coding was conducted based on the ten categories mentioned earlier instead of the three main message strategies (i.e., informational, transformational, and interactional). The second coding was conducted a week later and focused on the three main message strategies. After completing the second coding, we compared the results to see if the categorizations were matched the first coding. Inconsistencies were resolved by recoding the posts according to the ten categories, which became our third coding. The final dataset was based on our third coding which was then used in this study.

2.3 Scoring of message strategies

In this current study, several steps had to be taken in order to prepare the data. The independent variable of the study was the message strategy. Each post was coded according to the message strategy assigned to both modalities, namely image (visual) and text (verbal). A dummy variable takes the value from 1 to 7 (1 = informational, 2 = transformational, 3 = interactional, 4 = informational and transformational, 5 = informational and interactional, 6 = transformational and interactional, 7 = informational, transformational and interactional). This variable was also used to inspect the frequency of the message strategy.

The main interaction between message strategy and consumers' engagement was assessed from the coded modality. We created a new variable which consists of the combination of both modalities with a value from 1 to 7 (1 = informational, 2 = transformational, 3 = interactional, 4 = informational and transformational, 5 = informational and interactional, 6 = transformational and interactional, 7 = informational, transformational and interactional). This variable enabled us to inspect the interaction of the main message strategies on the number of likes and of comments.

We would also like to inspect whether the combination of message strategy on both image and text have an effect on consumers' engagement. Therefore, we created another variable which consists of two levels: one with a similar strategy on both image and text and another one for a post with a different strategy on both modalities (1 = similar strategy, 2 = different strategy).

Moreover, we also computed a new variable which enables us to inspect the strategy distribution. With this variable, we could investigate whether different strategy distribution influenced the way consumers responded (1 = completely different, 2 = more strategy on text, 3 = more strategy on the image).

In addition, since more than half of the sample contain the informational message strategy, we created another variable to focus on the informational message strategy. This variable was coded based on whether both modalities contain informational strategy (coded as "1"), both modalities have informational strategy and another strategy (coded as "2"), both modalities contain the informational message but more strategy on text (coded as "3"), and whether the image has more strategy (coded as "4").

2.4 Transformation of frequency scores

The distribution of the number of likes and number of comments were highly skewed; thus, both scores were log-transformed. The log-transformed score resulted in more symmetrical distributions. Figure 4 presents for each score, both the original and transformed distribution.

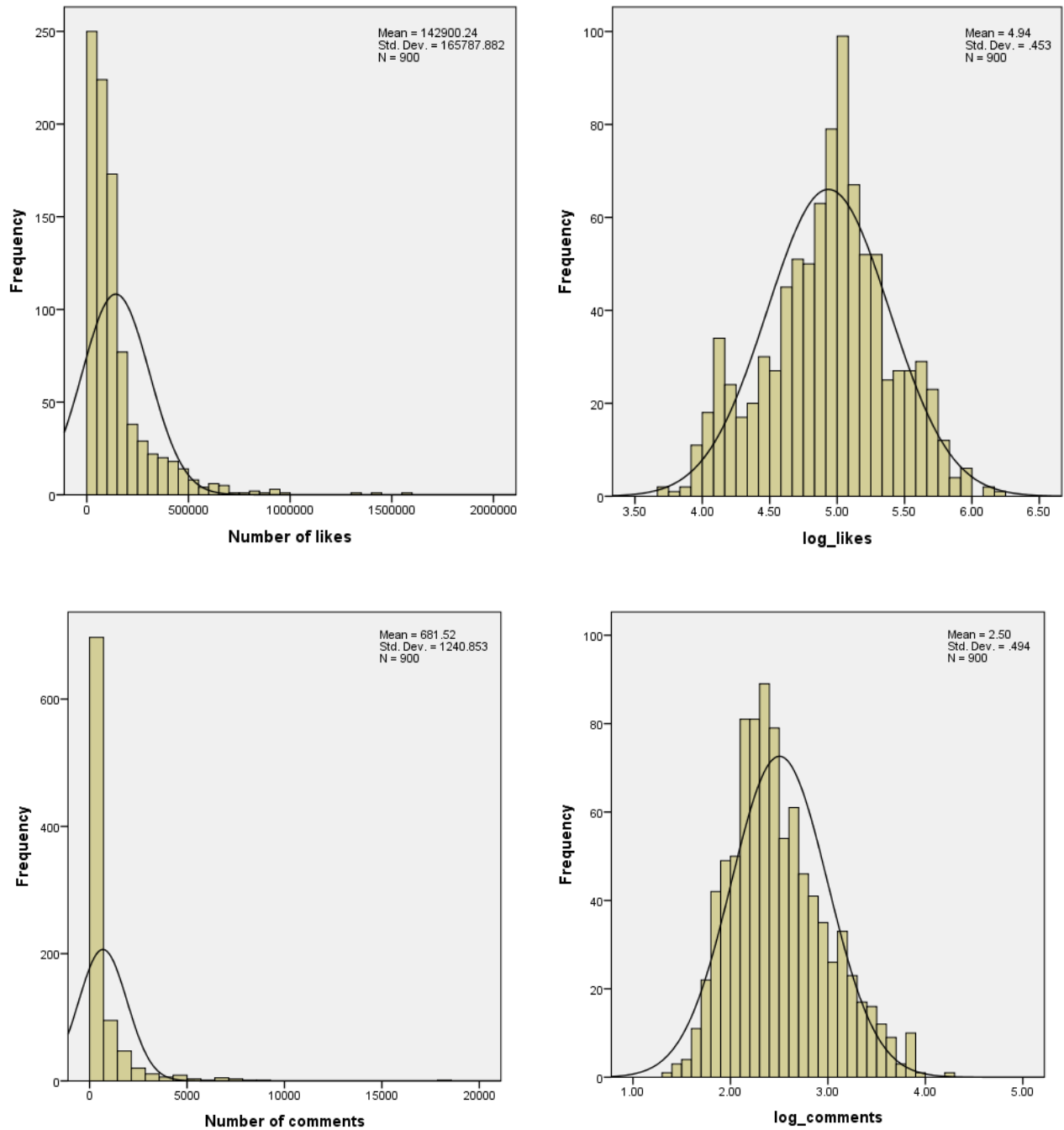


Figure 4. Number of likes and of comments before and after log-transformed

2.5 Inspection of covariate variables

For this study, the context is social media especially Instagram. We considered three relevant covariates in the analysis to account for variation that could be incorrectly attributed to the dependent variables (Stafford, 1996), namely the number of followers, the brand type (i.e., daily-wear and sportswear), and the exposure period. We anticipated that the number of followers would have a great influence on consumers' engagement, since the more followers a brand account have, the more people will see the posts and give a response. Therefore, this variable became one of the covariates to reduce the discrepancy on the number of likes and of comments between brands.

The types of the brand are also expected to have an influence on consumers' engagement. Our sample consists of two types of brands, namely daily-wear and sportswear, which might differently influence how consumers view the brands. The last covariate included in our model is the exposure period. Exposure is the period started when the posts were uploaded. We believed that the longer the posts uploaded, the higher consumers' engagement. The correlations scores showed a strong positive relationship between the covariates and the dependent variable. The summary of the descriptive statistics and correlations of variables can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and Correlations scores

	Mean (SD)	Number of Likes	Number of Comments	Brand type	Exposure	Followers
Number of Likes	5 (.45)	1				
Number of Comments	2.50 (0.49)	.84	1			
Brand type	1.50 (0.50)	.61	.50	1		
Exposure	324.74 (474)	.49	.49	.56	1	
Followers	31226735 (26133902)	.67	.70	.29	.70	1

2.6 Statistical analyses

In this study, data in the sample were transformed into quantitative categorical data. The independent variable in this study, namely message strategy, was coded based on the coding scheme and constructed as a categorical variable. All covariates were included in the model for

each analysis. The dependent variable was consumers' engagement, which consists of the number of likes and number of comments. Descriptive statistics and frequencies provide characteristics for each variable. However, because these two variables were skewed, we log-transformed as can be seen previously in Figure 4.

As the two dependent variables (i.e., number of likes and number of comments) were conceptually related with the number of followers, exposure period, and type of brands, MANCOVA was an appropriate method to test the hypotheses. To further assess the interaction of each variable on the dependent variable, we also tested the models separately using ANCOVA.

3 Results

3.1 Frequencies

While other previous studies used various industries, such as electronics, travel, or automotive, this study focused on the fashion industry, this study is more narrowed and specifically designed to extract comprehensive results from the fashion industry. In total, we analyzed 900 posts collected from six fashion brands Instagram account. As can be seen in Table 5, the informational message strategy was the most frequently used by fashion brands ($n = 290$), followed by the transformational message strategy ($n = 158$), and interactional message strategy ($n = 7$). This distribution differs from the study conducted by Tafesse and Wien (2018), which found that brands used transformational message strategy the most compared to other message strategies.

Table 5. Frequency statistics

Message Strategy	N	Percentage (%)
<i>Text and Image</i>		
Informational	290	33
Transformational	158	17
Interactional	7	1
Informational and transformational	216	24
Informational and interactional	80	9
Transformational and interactional	95	10
Informational, transformational, and interactional	54	6
<i>Image</i>		
Informational	528	58
Transformational	272	30
Interactional	14	2
Informational and transformational	70	8
Informational and interactional	7	1
Transformational and interactional	9	1
Informational, transformational, and interactional	0	0
<i>Text</i>		
Informational	306	34
Transformational	187	21
Interactional	17	2
Informational and transformational	173	19
Informational and interactional	82	9
Transformational and interactional	90	10
Informational, transformational, and interactional	45	5

However, our result aligned with a study by Kusumansondjaja (2018) which found that brands mostly applied task-oriented content, such as information related to selling or promotional activities. Regarding the two brand types in this study, the informational message strategy was also the most commonly used strategy by brands. Except for one sports brand, other brands mostly used the informational message strategy, whether as a single strategy or in combination with other strategies. The summary of message distribution based on the brand type can be seen in Table 6. Based on our dataset, we also found that the interactional message strategy was not used that often

by fashion brands as a single message strategy but was mainly used as a combination with other message strategies instead.

Table 6. Distribution of main message strategies

Types of brands	Message Strategy	N	Percentage (%)
Daily wear	Informational	212	23
	Transformational	7	1
	Interactional	7	1
	Informational and transformational	119	13
	Informational and interactional	74	8
	Transformational and interactional	3	1
	Informational, transformational, and interactional	28	3
Sportswear	Informational	82	9
	Transformational	152	17
	Interactional	0	0
	Informational and transformational	97	11
	Informational and interactional	6	1
	Transformational and interactional	88	10
	Informational, transformational, and interactional	25	2

As we expected, we found combinations of message strategies in a single post namely, *informational with transformational message strategy*, *informational with interactional message strategy*, and *transformational with interactional message strategy*. These combinations were formed based on two components of the posts, namely, the images and text. For instance, in a single post, the image might be the transformational message strategy, while the text is informational. We also found more than one strategy in one of the elements; for example, the image shows the brand logo and the design of the product, while the supporting text provided product codes and sensory stimulation. Therefore, the image and text used the informational and transformational message strategy. Fashion brands also utilized the informational message strategy more often in images ($n = 528$) than in text ($n = 306$). We also found that the text was more likely to have more than one strategy in a single post than the images.

In conclusion, the informational message strategy was the most adopted strategy by fashion brands, whether as a single strategy or as a combination with other strategies. The transformational message strategy was the second most commonly used by both daily-wear and sportswear brands. Only a few posts adopted the interactional message strategy as a single strategy, but it was often used combined with other strategies.

3.2 Effects of similar message strategy

To test our first hypothesis on the role of message strategy on a brand's post on consumers' engagement, MANCOVA was conducted. This test was appropriate because the dependent variables, namely the number of likes and of comments are conceptually related. The MANCOVA test showed a significant main effect of message strategy: $F(12, 1778) = 8.64, p < .001$, Wilks' $\lambda = .893, \eta_p^2 = .055$; and the three covariates, number of followers: $F(2, 889) = 552, p < .005$, Wilks' $\lambda = .446, \eta_p^2 = .554$; exposure period: $F(2, 889) = 69.75, p < .005$, Wilks' $\lambda = .864, \eta_p^2 = .136$; and type of brands: $F(2, 889) = 394, p < .005$, Wilks' $\lambda = .530, \eta_p^2 = .470$.

The next analysis was to examine the effect of message strategies when brand posts used a same strategy on both image and text (i.e., informational-informational, transformational-transformational, or interactional-interactional). For Image, there was a significant effect of informational message strategy ($F(1,892)=6.69, p=.010, \eta_p^2=.007$; transformational: $F<1$; interactional: $F<1$; informational*transformational: $F(1,892)=1.55, p=.212, \eta_p^2=.002$). Posts with image containing the informational strategy received more likes compared to the transformational and interactional one.

For Text, there were significant effects of informational ($F(1,893)=11.60, p=.001, \eta_p^2=.013$) and the transformational message strategy ($F(1,893)=17.16, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.019$). However, for the transformational strategy, the effect was negative. Posts with text containing informational messages received a higher number of likes compared to the transformational and the interactional strategy. Table 7 presents the number of likes in relation to Image and Text.

Table 7. The mean scores of number of likes in relation with Image and Text
(*SE* between brackets)

	Image			Text		
	Informational	Transformational	Interactional	Informational	Transformational	Interactional
Absent	4.84 (.034)	4.89 (.034)	4.89 (.024)	4.88 (.020)	4.96* (.016)	4.91 (.011)
Present	5.0* (.034)	4.90 (.034)	4.91 (.048)	5.0* (.013)	4.88 (.012)	4.93 (.016)

Note: * = $p < .005$

Table 8 presents the comments in relation to Image and Text. For Image, there was a significant effect of informational strategy ($F(1,892)=7.99$, $p=.005$, $\eta_p^2=.009$; transformational: $F<1$; interactional: $F<1$; informational*transformational: $F<1$). If the image in the posts contained the informational strategy, more comments were given.

For Text, there were significant effects of informational strategy ($F(1,890)=17.24$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.019$) and of transformational strategy ($F(1,890)=3.85$, $p=.050$, $\eta_p^2=.004$; interactional: $F<1$; all interactions: $F<3.46$, $p>.06$). If the text was informational, more comments were given; however, for transformational strategy, the effect was in the opposite direction.

Table 8. The mean score of number of comments in relation with Image and Text
(*SE* between brackets)

	Image			Text		
	Informational	Transformational	Interactional	Informational	Transformational	Interactional
Absent	2.40 (.041)	2.50 (.041)	2.46 (.029)	2.40 (.55)	2.51* (.40)	2.48 (.50)
Present	2.57* (.041)	2.49 (.041)	2.52 (.058)	2.55* (.40)	2.43 (.55)	2.46 (.49)

Note: * = $p<.005$

3.3 Effects of different message strategy

According to the current dataset investigated in this study, one-half of the collected brand posts contained a single message strategy ($N = 455$), in which the same strategy was applied in both text and image. The other half contained more than one message strategy ($N = 445$) either in the image or in the text. A single post could contain similar or completely different strategy; however, some of the posts also found to have more strategies. Therefore, we would also like to investigate the effect of the combinations.

We inspected whether the distribution of these strategies influenced the consumers' engagement. The message strategy distribution was divided into several levels: posts with a completely different strategies on image and text, posts with more strategies in the text than image, and posts with more strategies in the image than the text. The results showed that there was a significant effect of message strategy distribution on a number of likes ($F(3,856)=2.97$, $p=.03$, $\eta_p^2=.010$) and on the number of comments ($F(3,856)=3.08$, $p=.03$, $\eta_p^2=.010$). However, the effect sizes were rather small. For the number of likes, more strategy in images resulted in a slightly higher score; for the number of comments there were not many differences. Table 9 presents the means scores of the message strategy distribution with the number of likes and of comments.

Table 9. The mean scores of the message strategy distribution in relation with the number of likes and comments (*SE* between brackets)

Number of likes			Number of comments		
Completely different strategy	More strategy in text	More strategy in image	Completely different strategy	More strategy in text	More strategy in image
4.86	4.93	5.0	2.58	2.47	2.57
(.043)	(.014)	(.05)	(.052)	(.016)	(.056)

Next, still as combinations, we explored whether there was an effect of particular message strategy when applied on each modality (i.e., image vs. text) which might complement each other. Regarding the number of likes, our results revealed that there were significant main effects of the information strategy on the image ($F(5,868)=2.91$, $p=.013$, $\eta_p^2=.016$) and on the text ($F(6,868)=2.27$, $p=.035$, $\eta_p^2=.015$). When image or text on brand posts used the informational message strategy, it was found to elicit a higher number of likes compared to other strategies. The results also showed that when the image or text already used the informational message strategy, the scores increased when the interactional message strategy was added to the text ($M_{diff} = -.07$,

$p=.031$). Additionally, we found that the informational message strategy could enhance the influence of the transformational message strategy on the number of likes ($M_{diff} = -.163$, $p=.009$).

Regarding the number of comments, only text with informational strategy had a significant effect ($F(6,868)=3.57$, $p=.002$, $\eta_p^2=.025$). For example, we found that when a post had the transformational message strategy on the image, combining the informational message strategy on the text was found to increase the number of comments compared to text with only transformational message ($M_{text_informational} = 2.9$ vs. $M_{text_transformational} = 2.35$, $p<.001$)

Based on our first result, the informational message strategy was found to be the most prominent strategy to influence consumers' engagement. Thus, we investigated the role of the informational message strategy when utilized on both modalities, but with more strategies added to the posts. The criteria of the combinations included in this analysis were posts containing informational strategy and another strategy on both image and text (e.g. informational and transformational on both); posts containing informational strategy on both but with more strategy on the text (e.g. informational on image combined with informational and transformational on text); and post containing more strategy on image, for example, informational and transformational on image with only informational message on text.

The result showed that there was no significant effect of the informational strategy combinations on the number of likes ($F(2,259)=1.0$, $p=.337$, $\eta_p^2=.008$) and on the number of comments ($F(2,259)=.427$, $p=.65$, $\eta_p^2=.003$). Each group of posts which applied the informational strategy as combinations showed slightly different mean scores and can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10. The mean scores of the informational strategy combination in relation with number of likes and comments (*SE* between brackets)

Number of likes			Number of comments		
Additional strategy on both image and text	More strategy in text	More strategy in image	Additional strategy on both image and text	More strategy in text	More strategy in image
4.74	4.75	4.86	2.28	2.30	2.37
(.045)	(.016)	(.075)	(.053)	(.019)	(.090)

4 Discussion

4.1 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the message strategy distribution on fast-fashion brands' social media posts and to examine the influence of message strategies on consumers' engagement through brand-generated posts. Our first exploratory analysis on the message strategy distribution by brands revealed that, in fast-fashion brands, the informational message strategy was the most commonly used strategy, followed by the transformational and the interactional message strategy, respectively. The informational message strategy dominated brand posts, either as a single strategy or a part of a combination of strategies.

The second research question focused on the role of message strategy on consumers' engagement. The first hypothesis stated that with the condition of a brand post using same strategy on the image and in text, the transformational message strategy would elicit the highest number of likes and of comments, followed by with the informational strategy, and lastly the interactional strategy. Interestingly, we found that posts with the transformational strategy did not receive a higher number of likes and of comments; posts which had the informational strategy did instead. Nevertheless, the interactional message strategy indeed elicited the lowest consumers' engagement than other strategies. Thus, the first hypothesis was partially supported by the result.

Next, we investigated whether the combination and distribution of different message strategies in a single post would receive different levels of consumers' engagement. Specifically, on the second hypothesis, we expected that when the message strategies were being used as a combination of strategies, posts with the transformational message strategy on their images would receive the highest number of likes and of comments. However, images with the transformational strategy were proven to have less influence on the number of likes compared to images with the informational strategy, regardless of the combinations. This result did not support our second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis was focused on the text modality of the posts. We expected that in every combination of message strategy, text with the informational strategy would elicit higher consumers' engagement compared to other strategies. We found that text with informational message strategy did have an influence on the number of likes and of comments regardless of the combinations. Thus, the third hypothesis was supported.

We also performed additional analyses focused on the distributions of message strategy when there was more than one strategy applied in a single post and the effect of the informational strategy in a combination. The results showed that the distribution of the message strategy on brand posts has a significant effect on consumers' engagement; however, the effect sizes were small. We found that when more strategy was applied to the images, the number of likes was slightly higher. Regarding the informational strategy combinations, we found that there was no significant effect of the use of the informational message strategy used in both modalities when combined with other strategies.

In conclusion, when posts utilized the same strategy on both images and text, the informational message strategy had the strongest effect on both the number of likes and of comments compared to other strategies. The influence of the informational message strategy on the number of likes and of comments was more noticeable when the strategy was applied to the text than to image. When different strategies were involved, the informational message strategy also had a strong influence, whether it was applied to either the image or the text. Additionally, the effect on consumers' engagement was greater when text with the informational message strategy applied to the text combined with the interactional strategy.

4.2 Message strategy: Expose your product

Our findings offer valuable and comprehensive insights into the fashion industry and social media literature. Compared to the previous studies on message strategy, this study focuses on a single industry, which is fast-fashion. We did not only examine the combined uses of primary message strategies, but also examined the influence of each message strategy on both modalities of brand posts, which are image and text. Moreover, previous studies were conducted with several social media platforms as the objects, while this study only focuses on Instagram since this fast-growing social media platform requires an extensive exploration.

We found that the informational message strategy was the most frequently used message strategy compared to other strategies. This result was not aligned with the previous studies by Tafesse & Wien (2018), which found that brands most frequently used the transformational/emotional message strategy on their social media posts. This finding could be explained by the rapid development in the fashion industry which compels fast-fashion brands to quickly adjust their strategy in communicating with consumers (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). In

other words, it is crucial for fast-fashion brands to continuously introduce their products to consumer to stabilize their position among consumers and eventually support their sales performance (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

Moreover, fast-fashion brands are aware of their products' short life cycle and high market demand, which forces them to have a quick response strategy, particularly since consumers who choose to buy fast-fashion products are more concerned about quantity rather than quality (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) also stated that fast-fashion is a consumer-driven industry, rather than a supplier-driven industry. On the one hand, fast-fashion brands need to fulfill the consumers' needs, which are changing rapidly (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). On the other hand, companies in the fast-fashion industry are also aware of the ongoing growth of competitors, which makes it more challenging for them to establish their position among costumers. With the informational message strategy, brands could present direct information regarding the products, and in turn, provide an ease of use for consumers.

Furthermore, the use of the informational message strategy is similar between two types of brands, i.e., daily-wear and sportswear. We briefly mentioned that sportswear had different characteristics than daily-wear. Tong and Su (2014) suggested that consumers of sportswear brands who wears branded sports outfits are aiming to look fashionable while exercising (Tong & Su, 2014). They also stated that sportswear brands' intention was to build long-term brand-consumers relation. This intention is aligned with the elements of transformational message strategy. However, we found that except for one sports brand (i.e., Nike), the informational message strategy remained the most frequently used by both types of brands. Derived from this result, we believe that fast-fashion brands, regardless of the brand types, still prioritize on building brand awareness because of the high competition in the industry. Brands might find this strategy to be the most convenient way to directly showcase the brands' products and the selling propositions, and eventually build brand awareness. Hence, this might be one of the aspects which influence brands' decision to use the informational message strategy on their social media posts.

Our next finding of this study revealed that, to some extent, the message strategy on fast-fashion brand posts influenced consumers' behavior towards, but only on specific posts. Many studies have investigated the relation between message strategy and consumers' engagement in various industries and found that the highest score on consumers' engagement was achieved by posts with transformational message strategy (Medina et al., 2018; Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Contrary to the said study, in the case of the fast-fashion industry, we found that consumers' engagement was affected negatively by the transformational strategy. When brands used the transformational message strategy, the posts received lower consumers' engagement than the informational message strategy, particularly when the strategy was applied to the text.

We found that, when a single post applied the same strategy on both image and text, the informational message strategy had significantly affected consumers' engagement on the brands' posts. However, the influence of the informational strategy was stronger on the number of likes, and less strong on the number of comments. The strong influence of informational message strategy might be due to consumers' perception towards the fast-fashion product. The fast-fashion products are more likely to be perceived as more utilitarian rather hedonic products which are used on a daily basis (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Consumers are free to choose what to like or dislike upon these products, as they might not have certain emotional attachment to fast-fashion products, considering that there are many other competitors in the industry. The way consumers perceived the fast-fashion products may be motivated more by functional traits rather than emotional traits. The functional traits on a message are characterized as a message with only sales purposes and a lack of emotion, while the emotional traits on a message focuses more on building a relationship with consumers by enhancing consumers' self-image and experience (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

This argument is also supported by our next finding on the influence of the informational message strategy on the text (verbal component) of a post. The results revealed that in the condition of having a combination of different strategies, consumers gave more responses to a post which contained an informational message in verbal form. It was also found that consumers' primary motivation in accessing brands' social media account was to discover information regarding the products (Wen et al., 2019). When they access brands' social media account, they expect to find the information about the desired product easily, such as the name of the product, the price, size, how and where to purchase the product. Aligned with a prior study by Leung, Bai, and Erdem (2017) it was found that messages with clear information would generates more likes but elicit less comments. Therefore, regarding fast-fashion brands, customers might be attracted more to brands which post direct and explicit information of their products and might leads to the consumers' willingness to engage with the posts.

Moreover, a prior study by Kim and Lennon (2008) suggested the superiority of the verbal information (i.e., text) on product advertisements, mainly due to the fact that consumers are more likely to believe the product claims when they are written in the text rather than only shown in the image. Kim and Lennon (2008) showed the significant effects of verbal (text) and visual (image) element on advertisements on consumers' behavior and prove that the impact of visual information was weaker than verbal information. When both modalities (image and text) express the same content, text with the informational message gives a stronger influence, because more explicit information can be found in the text than on the visual element, which reduced consumers' uncertainty towards the products.

Unexpectedly, we found that images with the informational message still yielded higher engagement than images with the transformational strategy. Visual element can be considered as more hedonic, which highlights the emotional and experiential aspect of the product (Hirschman, 1986). Consumers were found to like and be willing to give appreciation more when they were exposed to emotional content. However, in fast-fashion brands, consumers might find that product information is more important than the shopping experience. This argument might explain the reason behind the strong influence of the informational message strategy on consumers' engagement.

Another result showed that there was only a small amount brand posts applying the interactional message strategy. It is worth noting that the interactional message strategy is a new type of strategy which emerged as a result of the interactivity culture of social media which enables consumers to interact with each other (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). This might explain why the influence of the interactional message strategy as the main strategy was rather small. Although the interactional message strategy was intended to encourage consumers to be more involved with the brands, the interactional strategy by itself might not be sufficient to generate higher engagement.

On further analysis, we found that the interactional message strategy could add more influence when combined with the informational strategy. One of the characteristics of the interactional message strategy is to provoke conversations between consumers, which could lead to higher engagement (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). This type of message strategy was designed to make consumers more involved with the brands by making use of the current events, personal stories, or customer relations in the form of questions or intriguing statements. The fact that we found a positive influence of the interactional message strategy when combined with the

informational message strategy was somewhat expected. However, during the data collection period for this study, we did not find many interactional message strategy applied by brands. The effect of this type of message strategy may require further investigation.

4.2.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although several steps have been taken to maximize the outcome of this study, there are still limitations to this study and suggestions for future research. Firstly, this study utilizes the three main message strategies by Tafesse and Wien (2018), and the interactional message strategy was found to be less frequent than other strategies. The coding scheme built by Tafesse and Wien (2018) incorporated the interactional message strategy as the latest type of strategy in social media. However, with the growing features of social media, the current coding scheme might still need to be developed in order to capture all possible elements in the interactional message. Therefore, we suggest for the future research *to explore the potential of the interactional message strategy by identifying more elements which could be included in the interactional strategy*. For example, when a brand announced their new product, or collaborating with celebrities or artists, we found that consumers were more likely to tag their friends by mentioning their Instagram accounts, which could elicit more responses and interactions between consumers. Thus, brand collaboration might also be one of the elements of the interactional message strategy. Moreover, the main idea of the interactional message strategy might be the key to enhance consumers' engagement on social media (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). The result of more extensive characteristics research of the interactional message strategy might answer how and when to use this strategy, how often brands could use it, and in what form should the message be created.

Secondly, in this study, our sample consisted of six different brands from two types of fast-fashion brands, namely daily-wear and sportswear. Our current results might also be influenced by the diversity of the brands and the sample size. Many studies on the relations between consumers' engagement and message strategy elicits contrasting findings (Erkan, 2015; Medina et al., 2018; Kusumasondjaja, 2018; Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Prior studies by Erkan (2015), Kusumasondjaja (2018), Tafesse and Wien (2018) compared different sectors or industry such as electronic, automotive, food and beverage, and fashion; while a study by Medina et al. (2018) compared between luxury and fast-fashion brands. They are treated all brands' posts the same regardless of their products, which might be the reason of the differing results. However, our study focused on

fast-fashion brands; therefore, it might be more useful *to utilize more diverse brands only in fast-fashion industry and increase the sample size to see the consistency of the results.*

Lastly, *we suggest an extensive research which experiments with different conditions* in order to yield a more comprehensive results as to how consumers view the message strategy in brand-generated posts. This study used a content analysis method which really depended on manual coding (Kusumansondjaja, 2018), which might differ from consumers' perception of the message. By adopting and developing the current coding scheme, future research could provide participants with several stimuli of brands posts and examined participants' willingness to give comments or likes on the posts. Questionnaire regarding their motives in accessing brands' social media might be necessary.

4.3 Recommendations for fast-fashion brands

The use of message strategy on brand-generated posts in the fashion industry seems to differ from other industries. Consumers are more in favor of direct and clear information about the product rather than emotional messages. Understanding the appropriate way of using the informational message strategy is essential for these brands.

Using the informational message strategy in either image or text are found to be the most effective strategy to increase the number of likes and comments. Brands which have yet to apply this strategy in their posts might need to start employing the informational message, especially on text, such as providing consumers with the information about the products such as, product code, where to buy them, and how much they cost. By doing this, brands provide easy access for consumers, which in turn might gain consumers' trust to be more involved in brands' online activity.

For brands which are currently using the informational strategy, adding the interactional strategy might help elicit higher consumers' engagement, such as, by giving simple questions which require feedback, using ongoing events (i.e., important days, anniversaries) or discussing current topics. Since the main idea of useful brand posts is to provide information, the interactional message could provoke an actual involvement from consumers, writing comments or tagging their friends, for instance.

However, brands should notice that posting excessive information about the products is not always necessary either. Although the study showed the strong effect of the informational message

strategy on consumers' engagement, it is also important to provide consumers with various information that include different aspects, such as, emotional, brand resonance, or current events. Due to the fact that verbal (text) element in a post might have a stronger effect, we recommend the use of informational strategy on the text rather than on the image.

Furthermore, the effect of the strategy used in the image might be more flexible. We found that the use of transformational strategy on the image can still garner high consumers' engagement as long as the supporting text contains informational messages. Brands could still use either informational or transformational strategy on their image.

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Appendix 1

Coding manual: operational definition and examples (Tafesse & Wien, 2018)

No.	Message strategy	Definition	Examples
1.	Functional appeal	Messages draw attention to the core function and performance of products/services. Under this message strategy, the benefit, functional feature and efficiency attributes of products are factually presented. This type of messages are useful to offer factual information about products, which are particularly relevant to make informed purchase decisions or to learn about the products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product/service benefits Product/service features Product/service efficiency
2.	New product/Service/innovative technology	Messages draw attention to new products or products that are significantly improved from past models. This message strategy seeks to introduce new products by highlighting the technological and/or functional novelties of new or improved products. This message strategy appeals to consumers novelty seeking behavior by supplying them with new external stimuli and information. Such messages can be crucial for projecting an image of the brand as innovative and technologically driven.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New technologies New products New or improved product attributes Innovation
3.	Brand identity	This message strategy projects and reinforces the distinctive image of the brand. The brand seeks to differentiate itself from the competition by using symbols, signs and language unique to the brand. This message strategy can also utilize more subtle brand image cues such as association and personification, where the brand is consistently identified with certain individuals and _____.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visible brand logo Visible brand slogan Brand spokes character Brand association Brand personality Brand positioning
4.	Relational/personal appeal	In this message strategy, the brand seeks to establish an intimate, personal relationship with fans and consumers. The brand poses itself to connect with fans and consumers at a personal level. Among other things, the brand solicits fans and consumers' opinion on personal issues such as individual preferences, habits, family members, future plans, etc. When using this strategy, the brand appears to perform a social function that is normally reserved for friends and acquaintances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well wishes Personal or intimate questions Habits and preferences Future plans? Show us how you do this?
5.	Emotional appeal	This message strategy utilizes intently emotive cues, actions and messages to trigger emotional responses from fans and consumers such as fun, happiness, excitement, fear, guilt, love and sexual desire, etc. This strategy also seeks to inspire fans through positive and inspiring stories. The brand, its usage experience or its actions are presented as fun, exciting and awe inspiring to cultivate an emotional feeling toward the brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotive cues and language Uplifting stories Inspiring messages Self-enhancing messages
6.	Educational appeal	This message strategy is aimed at educating consumers about how best to apply products or some other more general topics. This appeal often deploy factual information or experts to inform consumers on a particular issue. The appeal can also be used to demonstrate useful skills and/or efficient and innovative product usage conditions. Such messages appeal to consumers need to acquire new knowledge and learn useful skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful tips New skills General informative content Expert opinions External product review
7.	Experiential appeal	This message strategy is designed to invoke the experiential states achieved by utilizing the brand. This message strategy can also encourage consumers to personally experience the brand by tasting, touching, smelling, or perceptually interacting with the brand. Experiential appeals can generate positive responses by invoking the sensory feelings that interacting with the brand would generate. Thus, such messages are intended to stimulate the senses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taste Touch Smell Hear See
8.	Brand community	This message strategy is aimed at building a community around the brand by recruiting new fans to the community, highlighting and acknowledging existing fans and their stories and organizing events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fan stories Fan events Fan mentions

		that bring community members together. Such messages seek to strengthen fans' sense of belonging to the community by using strategically selected cues, words and messages that can cement the social bond among fans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscriptions to other social media channels • Customer/VIP clubs • Inter-fan relationships
9.	Customer service	The message strategy draws attention to services offered by companies to fans and customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening hours • Customer service announcements • Post-sale services
10.	Brand heritage	This message strategy draws attention to the historical heritage and contribution of brands. The brand seeks to gain legitimacy by asserting its historical achievements and contribution. To this end, this message strategy may feature classic products, technological breakthroughs and other historical accomplishments. Founders and places could as well serve as a source of brand heritage. The focus in this message strategy is the past and showing the history of the brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand history • Heritage • Founder biography • Historical places
11.	Event appeal	This message strategy promotes events that are either organized or sponsored by the brand. The message can be reports of past events or invitation to future events, in which case fans would likely be informed about how to participate. Because events afford a direct and interactive experience with brands, they can be popular among fans. At the same time, however, their temporal and physical constraint may reduce their level of resonance with a large section of the audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand sponsored sport events • Brand sponsored festivals • Brand sponsored art events • Brand sponsored cultural events
12.	Employee branding	This message strategy highlights employees' stories, opinions and experiences. The specific message could be about the knowledge, skills, experience, commitment or personal stories of employees. As such, this message strategy empowers employees to directly communicate with consumers. By giving a voice to employees, who are traditionally omitted from brand communications, this message strategy can resonate with consumers, as they can easily relate to ordinary employees and their messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee stories • Employee opinions • Employee recommendation and endorsements
13.	Quality rewards and approval	This message strategy is designed to highlight the superior quality standards of products and/or manufacturing processes, as approved by authoritative external parties. This message strategy often relies on external quality approvals, recognitions and awards. Depending on the perceived expertise and reputation of the approving or awarding body, messages related to quality awards and recognitions can generate positive responses among consumers. Such messages can also be crucial for enhancing the perceived quality of the brand and can drive consumers' future preferences, satisfaction and loyalty behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality approvals • Quality awards • External recognitions
14.	Social causes	This message strategy is designed to draw attention to worthy social causes. The brand is presented as contributing to the betterment of society by supporting and promoting socially valuable initiatives. Thus, the brand is presented not just as a commercial entity interested in maximizing its private profit, but as an altruistic entity that contributes positively to the proper functioning of society through charitable interventions. Therefore, this message strategy can resonate with consumers and fans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially supporting social causes • Creating awareness about social causes • Cause related marketing
15.	Sales promotion	This message strategy is aimed at promoting products by highlighting deals, price discounts and sales promotion. Such messages appeal to consumers' need to save costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deals • Price discount • Sales promotion
16.	Transactional appeal	This message strategy is designed to stimulate sales of products, services and/or accessories. This type of brand posts directly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prices • Distribution points "

		advertise products with price information and availability points and are equipped with links where consumers can make purchases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability (e.g., last only up to this day)
17.	Competition, quizzes, games	This message strategy seeks to encourage fans to enter into competitions, take quizzes or play virtual games linked to the brand. In some cases, winners would be promised rewards. This type of brand posts could be useful to engage fans with brand messages in a fun and playful manner. The sense of rivalry that such brand posts spark is another useful aspect that could drive consumers' engagement. Also included in this category is news about competitions organized or sponsored by the brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contests of different kind • Quizzes about product/brand • Virtual games • News about brand organized or sponsored competitions
18.	Customer feedback	This message strategy seeks to get fans' feedback on specific product/service related matters. The strategy can generate useful information about consumers' preferences, needs and future courses of action. Accordingly, this message strategy can be systematically linked to companies' market/customer information gathering effort. The brand posts could ask fans to comment on a particular new feature of a product, to participate in the development/design of products, or to describe their experience the brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer/fan opinions • Customer/fan feelings • Customer/fan feedback
19.	Celebrity appeal	Messages feature famous sports, arts, media personalities. The brand posts often show celebrities using, endorsing, and/or talking about the brand. The brand posts could also include well wishes to celebrities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrity mentions • Celebrity endorsement • Fan-celebrity meeting
20.	Current/Popular topics	Messages draw attention to current and popular topics consumers are talking about in their daily life. This strategy allows the brand to stay relevant and in sync with consumers by linking the brand to a popular topic such as the season, weather, TV shows, movies, sport competitions, popular cultural events, etc. However, in this message strategy, the brand tend to play a secondary role at best, and may sometimes not be mentioned or shown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport competition • TV shows, movies • Recent political and cultural events • Weather, season • Natural disaster, etc
21.	Brand partnership	The message strategy draws attention to a partnership or a collaborative initiative formed between the focal brand and another brand or company. The partnership could be short-term as in the organization of an event, or long-term as research and development (new products or services) or product distribution agreements. Typically, the partner brand would directly be mentioned in the message. This message strategy maybe helpful to gain the attention of fans and consumers of the partner brand, or to project an image that is compatible with the partner brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand partnership • Brand alliance • Collaborative programs
22.	Humor	The message and the way it is delivered is humorous and is intended to spark laughter and amusement. The message can be jokes, funny comments, silly looks, trivial commentaries, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humor • Jokes • Silly commentaries
23.	Aesthetic appeals	This message strategy invokes concepts of beauty in connection with the branded product. The message often focuses on the physical attributes of the product such as its proportionality, symmetry, design properties and material quality, among others. However. Aesthetic appeals can as well be invoked in relation to brand representatives, brand stores, buildings, or a natural environment, such as a wild scenery, against which the brand is juxtaposed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive product design • Attractive office design • Wild sceneries and backgrounds
24.	Corporate news	This message strategy seeks to introduce general corporate policies, commitments and plans to fans and consumers. The specific messages can be about changes in the direction of the company, employee policies, mergers and acquisitions, CEO commitments, etc. This message strategy is important to directly inform consumers about corporate issues that can eventually affect their relationship and experience with the company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate policies • New corporate plans • CEO interviews • Employee policies • Company acquisitions

25.	Green appeal	This message strategy is designed to draw attention to environmental issues. The brand is presented as contributing to the protection and enrichment of the environment through technological innovations, better management practices and environmentally responsible corporate policies. With environmental concerns becoming and getting increasing media attention, consumers can respond positively to environmental messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmentally friendly products• Environmentally friendly brand policy• Environmentally friendly awareness
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