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Instagram

INSTAGRAM MARKETING: ATTRACTIVENESS OF BRANDS

FOLLOWING BRANDS ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the consumer's perspective of Instagram is examined. Using qualitative research methods, the underlying motives to use Instagram, the ways in which Instagram is used, and the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram are identified. The results show that consumers follow brands on Instagram because of five important motives: positive attitude, gathering latest information, experience, inspiration and identification. These motives help to establish two user groups, buyers and recreational users, to which the consumers belong. Most consumers use Instagram daily, which consists of several short usage moments. This behavior is mostly applicable to young adults. With new insights into Instagram usage, two additional user groups are established: heavy users and occasional users. Furthermore, three tiers of drivers of brand attractiveness are distinguished, which have a different amount of importance for determining the brand attractiveness. This study contributes to the current stream of literature on social media marketing by laying a foundation for the research on Instagram, which is currently lacking.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Social media has become a significant part of life. Given the rapid technological advancement, social media and communication devices continue to grow exponentially, and hence, social networking has become a major communication method in contemporary society (Ting, Wong, de Run & Lau, 2015). These social networking sites do not only provide users with the opportunity to expand their personal network but also provide a platform for business people to interact with potential customers (Blackman, 2009). Consequently, even many initially traditional offline organizations have slowly incorporated social media into their businesses to enable them to reach and communicate with their actual and potential consumers more efficiently (Bergström & Bäckman, 2013). Social media has become a central tool in personal lifestyles and organizational activities (Bergström & Bäckman, 2013). Studies have shown that of the time that people spent on the internet 63% is spent on social media (Nielsen, 2012). Instagram is one of the latest developments in the world of digital marketing, which offers a lot of opportunities for marketing managers. Instagram is a free application for sharing photos and videos, which allows users to take pictures and videos, apply filters, and distribute them through their network and on a number of other social networks (Dubovik, 2013). Followed after the well-known social media network such as Facebook and Twitter, Instagram has joined in the trend in 2010 and provided another favorable marketing platform for marketers to interact with their customers (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). However, until this day, marketing managers are still facing the dilemma of uncertainty about the proper use of Instagram as a marketing tool that leads benefits for a firm. To increase the knowledge on Instagram marketing from the firm's perspective, an understanding of the consumer's perspective must be established first, since both perspectives highly interplay with each other. Firms could use this gained knowledge to optimize the interaction between firms and consumers. This entails learning why and how consumers follow brands on Instagram, and what the drivers of brand attractiveness are on Instagram, or in other words, what it is that makes Instagram brand pages attractive to consumers. With this knowledge, marketing managers have more insights into how consumers approach and evaluate brands on Instagram and what kind of brand attitudes are paired with this. Understanding how consumers perceive and act on brand communications on Instagram could help brands with potentially attaining a better consumer-brand relationship. Using this understanding toward their advantage could result in an increased brand attractiveness. Brand

pages and communication on Instagram can be tailored in such a way that it is more attractive to more consumers.

1.2 Cause and Relevance

For a while now, organizations have started to implement Instagram, the new social media platform, as a marketing tool into their online marketing strategy (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). However, managers are currently still learning what does and does not work regarding Instagram marketing, since its application and use significantly differs from other social media platforms. Thus, explaining why marketing managers have been facing a lot of uncertainties regarding the implementation of Instagram as a useful resource for the marketing of their brand. The point that makes Instagram different from other social media is that Instagram is applying a visual based strategy (Hird, 2013). This visual based strategy may be particularly beneficial since studies suggest that photos and videos help attract customer intention to purchase (Hautz, Füller, Hutter & Thürndl, 2013). Instagram offers a new platform, which can be utilized for marketing purposes and is superior in terms of its photo-sharing feature and simplicity or directness in providing visualized descriptions about products (Ting et al., 2015). This may well explain why the young generation is particularly attracted to it (Kaye, 2011). Instagram reaches the younger generation, and appeals to diverse societies more prevalently than other social networking services (Abbott, Donaghey, Hare & Hopkins, 2013; Salomon, 2013). It has been reported that youth today spend more time on Instagram than Facebook (Salomon, 2013). This is likely because young mobile users are extremely driven to take photos or pictures using their mobile phones, and share them with others instantly (Abbott et al., 2013). As such, the sharing of images rather than words alone has made communication with friends and broader groups of users who share similar interests more ideal, convenient and fascinating (Bakhshi, Shamma & Gilbert, 2013). Furthermore, by connecting physical and digital realms, Instagram enhances online presence and identity, and allows more effective interaction not only for personal reasons, but also for business purposes (Abbott et al., 2013). Since it performs like a social media channel where individuals, companies, vendors and interest groups can easily join in, photos or pictures which are uploaded from any of them can be posted again, thus speeding up dissemination of information (Chante, Jessica, Lindsay, Tyler & Robert, 2014).

Due to the shift from Facebook to Instagram, the younger target group, the different ways of sharing and communicating and the more effective interaction and dissemination of information, new research is needed, since prior research may not apply to this new platform.

New research on this topic can provide valid knowledge about the use of Instagram for marketing purposes, as managers have been struggling to find the most suited way to implement their strategy for Instagram over the last few years.

So far, there are only a few studies that have investigated the implementation of Instagram for business objectives, so only little is known about the true effects of Instagram marketing. This indicates an interesting research gap in terms of branding on social media. The few studies that have been done on Instagram marketing have been mainly focusing on the firm's perspective, so there is a lack of academic research into the perspective of the consumer. Hence, studying this interesting research gap is academically relevant, as it could provide academics with new insights and perspectives on branding through Instagram that has been quite unexplored until this day.

Furthermore, addressing the research gap of Instagram as a marketing tool is interesting in terms of branding on social media because Instagram entails great potential for businesses when correctly implemented. By going in-depth regarding the consumer's perspective of Instagram marketing, which interplays with the firm's perspective, this thesis will provide marketing managers with insights into consumer brand attitudes and online brand following behavior. Hence, investigating Instagram marketing has high managerial relevance, as the results from this thesis can aid marketing managers in the way they approach consumers on Instagram through the brand's communications. Gaining this knowledge is important, since marketers have to quickly adapt to the social networking space to be able to interact with customers, as social media is getting more popular (Fanning, n.d.).

1.3 Objective and Research Questions

Since Instagram is one of the latest additions to the online platform portfolio of marketing managers, exploiting this platform could encompass positive branding effects. However, it is still unclear for marketing managers how to implement Instagram for marketing and branding purposes, as there is not enough research from the consumer's perspective to base the implementation on. The objective for this thesis therefore, is to identify the underlying motives for consumers to follow brands on Instagram, how they follow brands, and what the drivers of brand attractiveness are on Instagram.

This leads to the following problem statement:

“Why and how do consumers follow brands on Instagram and what are the drivers of brand attractiveness?”

To come to a conclusion regarding the problem statement, the following research questions are used:

- *What are motives for consumers to follow brands on Instagram?*
- *How are consumers following brands on Instagram?*
- *What are the consumers’ perceptions regarding the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram?*

This thesis will contribute to getting a deeper understanding of the use of Instagram for marketing objectives as it will provide academics with new insights regarding this new social media platform. This research can lay a foundation for the business oriented knowledge about Instagram on which further research concerning this social media platform and potentially other platforms can be based. Researching the consumer’s perspective on Instagram will also contribute on a managerial level, since it will provide new insights, from which advantage can be gained from the firm’s perspective. Marketing managers can use this thesis to get a deeper understanding of Instagram branding from the consumer’s perspective, which interplays with the firm’s perspective, and develop and implement a branding strategy on Instagram that optimizes the consumer experience and enhances the brand attractiveness.

1.4 Outline

In chapter 2 there will be a literature review in which recent theory is reviewed about this problem. Chapter 3 will concern the methodology of this thesis. This chapter will elaborate on the methods that have been used to come up with the findings which were necessary to draw conclusions. Chapter 4 will provide the analysis and results of the research that has been done, and is followed by the conclusion in chapter 5.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter aims to present relevant previous research from a branding perspective, which will lay the foundation of the empirical data analysis.

2.1 Brand Management

Brands are highly valuable assets for firms (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz, 2013). A brand can be defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Kotler, 1991). Brands often provide the primary points of differentiation between competitive offerings, and as such they can be critical to the success of companies (Wood, 2000). Hence, it is important that the management of brands is approached strategically (Wood, 2000).

The conventional view of brand management is based on information processing theories of consumer behavior and understands the brand as a firm-owned and controlled asset that can be built in consumers' minds through carefully coordinated marketing activities (Gensler et al., 2013). The brand is a cognitive construal, a knowledge structure of brand-relevant information, and brand identity is firmly under the control of the brand manager (Keller, 1993). Brand identity consists of carefully selected attributes, benefits, and attitudes that are communicated to consumers through purposeful marketing activities, such as brand stories told through advertising (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The assumption is that a brand's identity will be understood in the same way by all members of the target audience. Thus, there is only one collectively held meaning for the brand as determined by the firm (Gensler et al., 2013). This way of thinking offers a clear simple overview of a brand. Not surprisingly, it has dominated brand management practice for the past decades (Holt, 2004). However, a new and less controllable perspective of the market has been developed. Rather than thinking of brands as controllable knowledge structures, and of consumers as passive absorbers of brand knowledge, this new perspective understands brands as a repository of meanings for consumers to use in living their own lives (Allen, Fournier & Miller, 2008), and all stakeholders of the brand, including consumers, as active co-creators of these brand meanings (Gensler et al., 2013). These formed brand meanings are then transferred to brands through multiple brand stories, as different stakeholders make sense of the role of the brand (Holt, 2003).

To evoke the intended brand meaning with consumers, managers aim to create strong brands with a rich and clear knowledge structure in consumer memory by authoring compelling

brand stories (Keller, 1993; Srivastava, Shervani & Fahey, 1998). Firm-generated brand stories are meant to create and strengthen consumers' relationship with the brand by providing a theme for conversations between consumers and firms and among consumers themselves (Gensler et al., 2013). Such conversations enable consumers to integrate their own brand-related experiences and thoughts into the brand story (Escalas, 2004; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Hence, brand stories can help build awareness, comprehension, empathy, recognition, recall, and provide meaning to the brand (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Regardless of the situation, a unique voice can emerge from brand stories, one that is sufficiently differentiated from competitors. An attempt to define the relationship between consumers and brands, that is created and strengthened through firm-generated brand stories, produced the term "brand equity" in the marketing literature (Wood, 2000). According to Keller (1993), brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand. It represents a condition in which the consumer is familiar with the brand and recalls some favorable, strong and unique brand associations (Keller, 1993). Leuthesser (1988) defines brand equity more broadly as the set of associations and behavior on the part of the brand its customers, channel members and parent corporation that permits the brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could without the brand name.

2.2 Social Networking

Social networking sites are instruments for building virtual communities, or social networks, for individuals with similar education, lifestyles, interests, or activities (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2011). Burke (2006) defines social networking sites as: "... a loose affiliation of people who interact through websites. The web enables any person to build a vast number of relationships with others, regardless of geographical distance". Social networking is a form of internet marketing which implements various social media networks in order to achieve marketing communication and social branding goals (Kaur, 2016). It is primarily focused on activities involving the social sharing of contents, videos and images for marketing purposes (Kaur, 2016). In general, most social networking sites also provide users with other means of online communications, such as email, instant messaging, chat, blogs, discussion group, and others (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2011) which can be used by brands toward achieving their online marketing goals. According to Clemons (2009), social network sites use the following 4Ps to attract users:

- *Personal*: the information in social websites resonates to the personal interest of users, and thus, is relevant.

- *Participatory*: social networking websites allow participation.
- *Physical*: many social networking websites allow users to meet online and outside the cyberspace.
- *Plausible*: participation and performance in some social networking websites require some rules which allow all users to function.

Due to this attraction to consumers it can be said that social network marketing entails a potential success for branding if it is carefully integrated into the marketing mix (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2011). Traditionally, brand managers have used one-to-many marketing communications, such as advertising, to pass their brand stories on to consumers (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). While consumers have always appropriated and modified these firm-generated brand stories to create their own versions of relevant brand stories, their voices were not strong in the past and could be safely ignored by brand managers if they chose to do so (Gensler et al., 2013). But with the advent of social networking sites, brand managers have lost their pivotal role as authors of their brands' stories (Kuksov, Shachar, & Wang, 2013). Instead, consumers who are now empowered to share their brand stories easily and widely through social networks have gained a more important voice that brand managers can no longer afford to ignore — even for firms that decide not to actively participate in social media themselves (Gensler et al., 2013). Hence, it is important to have a proactive approach regarding online branding using social networking sites, and closely monitor developments in consumer-generated brand stories.

Online branding is especially appropriate nowadays, since internet users under 45 years of age will tend to visit social networks heavily as part of their daily online usage (Zickuhr, 2010). Research on social networking even indicates that it can be used to bridge online and offline social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007a). According to Weston (2008), social networking, if it is engaged correctly, can also help find talent, build brand awareness, find new customers, and help conduct brand intelligence and market research. Consumers can have contact with brands and other consumers in social networks in more interactive ways than ever before, which enables brands to deepen their relations with them (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014). This supports the claim of Yan (2011), that brands should be branding online in order to build a connection with users and fostering a sense of belonging through the engagement itself. Furthermore, Skul (2008a) states that the social network websites are just starting to understand all the possibilities that social network marketing offers and that they are now offering improved marketing opportunities for brands.

2.3 Instagram

It seems that every moment counts through the eyes of social media users who take countless pictures of everything imaginable, instantly sharing them over the Internet (Hochman & Schwartz, 2012). Instagram provides a platform to do exactly that. Essentially, Instagram is a mobile-based application that enables users to take photos or pictures, apply the different manipulation tools to transform the appearance of images, and share them instantly with friends on different social networking sites (Hochman & Schwartz, 2012). Although Instagram was just launched in 2010, it has experienced rapid and strong growth (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). In 2013, Instagram was estimated to have 100 million users, and approximately four billion photos which were uploaded and displayed (Abbott et al., 2013). In a more recent estimation, it is reported that around 75 million people are using Instagram daily, and approximately 16 billion photos are uploaded and shared with other users (Smith, 2014).

So far, it has been established that both brands and consumers are empowered by Instagram to share their brand stories widely with peers (Gensler et al., 2013). Instagram has excelled as an effective communication and marketing tool to display products with visual descriptions, and hence, it becomes a useful social networking platform instantly to individuals and companies (Ting et al., 2015). Instagram provides a better visual based platform and makes it convenient for consumers to interact with businesses (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014), which helps shaping a clearer brand meaning. Instead of just listening to consumer-generated brand stories by monitoring what is said about the brand on Instagram over time, firms can also try to actively influence consumer-generated brand stories (Gensler et al., 2013). By listening to the consumers, they gain knowledge which a brand can use to complement their own brand story on Instagram. Positive brand meanings from consumers can help the brand itself to develop their firm-generated brand story. This firm-generated brand story is then spread throughout Instagram and gets picked up by consumers, and further disseminated to other consumers.

Besides excelling as an image-based social network, which offers new opportunities to spread brand stories, Instagram also offers a function called “hash tags” for the convenience of indicating the relevant photos and videos to the products of a business (Barnes, 2014). By clicking these hash tags users can also view other pictures or videos that are relevant to the hash tag. This can easily be use toward the advantage of brands by starting or joining trends on social media that support or complement their brand story. Instagram also provides marketers with an

easier way to understand consumers by leaving and receiving comments on photo posts to gain more feedback from the consumers on products (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). Hence, as expected, many businesses have been starting to integrate their business with the Instagram experience lately (Tekulve & Kelly, 2013), since Instagram can help a company to promote their products or services (Bevins, 2014). According to Silva, de Melo, Almeida, Salles and Loureiro (2013), Instagram marketing is an effective way to advertise a product as it is said that a picture speaks a thousand words, and again, this confirms that Instagram provides a new way of sharing a brand story on social media. Goor (2012) studied the use of Instagram as a marketing tool and found that product representation brands and symbolic brands are prominent users of Instagram, and frequently use persuasion, self-efficacy, relational, emotion and symbolism strategies. Additionally, Instagram has also been found useful in other fields, such as academia (Salomon, 2013), and medical industry (Chante et al., 2014).

2.4 Following Brands

Brands can create posts on social media containing anecdotes, photos, videos, or other material; brand fans can then interact with these brand posts by liking or commenting on them (De Vries, Gensler & Leeftang, 2012). This could result in a user following a brand page. In 2011, more than 50% of social media users followed brands on social media (Van Belleghem, Eenhuizen & Veris, 2011). Just like other social media platforms, Instagram also provides similar social connectivity that allows a user to follow any number of other users or brands (Hu, Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014). Instagram users who are interested in a page can follow that page. But to ensure that these users are more inclined to do so, it is necessary for brands to build a connection with users and foster a sense of belonging for customers. If a user starts following another user or brand, new posts of that user or brand will show up on the user's homepage. In this fashion, Instagram enables brands to disseminate their brand stories among their followers. Beside what the firm-generated brand stories have to offer, followers of brands are often also interested to see the interaction between the brand and the users (Dennis, 2014). This interaction also helps the consumer to shape their own meaning of the brand, which has become more important than ever, since consumers also have become active co-creators of brand stories (Gensler et al., 2013). Hence, by following brands on Instagram consumers are better equipped to participate in shaping the brand meaning and spreading this. Fournier and Avery (2011) use the metaphor of 'open-source' branding to describe this phenomenon, which implies participatory, collaborative, and socially-linked behaviors.

The fact that Instagram, as a visual based platform, facilitates easier interaction between consumer and brand can aid in explaining why the study from Bakhshi et al. (2013) claims that photos are becoming prominent means of communication online. Which indicates that the fact that Instagram is an image-based social network, on which users get exposed to visual elements instead of plain text, could be one of the motives why consumers follow brands on Instagram. Furthermore, Abbott et al. (2013) claim that people spend time on Instagram to be able to connect with similar others ‘in the moment’ through sharing their photos. Hence, a possible motive for consumers to follow brands on Instagram is identifiability and similarity. Consumers who identify themselves with a certain situation, person or product may be more inclined to follow that brand page on Instagram. In the study of Bergström and Bäckman (2013), Swedish students were asked to indicate what their motives were for following a brand on Instagram. This resulted in the following three most important motives: finding information, explicitly showing a positive opinion and gaining access to interesting/entertaining content. However, these results only provide a shallow understanding of the motives of consumers captured through surveys. Qualitative research methods are needed to gain a deeper sense of the consumers’ motives and to truly get an understanding of why and how consumers follow brands on Instagram. Gaining this understanding could also help to explain what the consumers’ perceptions are regarding the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram.

2.5 Brand Attractiveness

Brand attractiveness is the subjective assessment, positive or negative, of its identity, examined and assessed in relation to how it helps the consumer to satisfy his or her personal definition needs (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Current consumption markets offer consumers numerous opportunities to relate to a wide variety of brands, which means that consumers have to evaluate the attractiveness of several brands in order to choose which brand to foster relations with (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Since Instagram is currently being exploited by a wide variety of firms promoting their brands, Bhattacharya and Sen’s (2003) claim could also be argued to be true for Instagram. Following brands on Instagram can expose consumers to several brands on a daily basis. Hence, consumers affectively respond to these exposures by consciously as well as unconsciously evaluating the attractiveness of each brand.

From a branding perspective, the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram are very interesting, since brand attractiveness has an obvious impact on a brand’s success (Hayes,

Alford, Silver & York, 2006; Kim, Han & Park, 2001). Brand attractiveness is found to positively affect market share, as well as, willingness to pay (Gonzalez-Benito, Martinez-Ruiz & Molla-Descals, 2008). In addition, Weigold, Flusser and Ferguson (1992) report that there is a favorable impact of brand attractiveness on attitude toward the ad and purchase intention. It is expected that higher brand attractiveness will lead to earlier acquisitions (Simonson, Huber & Payne, 1988). Hence, based on the evidence, it can be claimed that consumers are likely to be drawn to an attractive brand, and are willing to pay more for their products and services (Sophonsiri & Polyorat, 2009). Furthermore, the consumers' perceptions of the brand's attractiveness appear to influence the closeness of this relationship to some extent (Ye, 2012), which also indicates the importance of the brand attractiveness for both the consumer's and the brand's perspective. Hayes et al. (2006) even argued that the perceived brand attractiveness might influence the relationship between consumers and brands in meaningful and predictable manners. However, some of these variables go beyond the perspective of the consumer. This thesis aims to lay a foundation for research on Instagram marketing from the consumer's perspective where the affective responses are studied, as Sophonsiri and Polyorat (2009) argue that brand attractiveness is thought of to reflect consumer's affective responses. Hence, only the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram are included in this research. Given the importance of brand attractiveness from both the consumer's and the brand's perspective, it is critical to study this in the context of Instagram marketing. Brand attractiveness is a measure of an affective response of the consumer, which is closely linked to several measures from the brand's perspective. Hence, researching this from the consumer's perspective highly interplays with the firm's perspective. That is why useful insights could be gained, which could lay a foundation for further research that adds to the knowledge on Instagram marketing from the firm's perspective, by researching the following research questions:

- *What are motives for consumers to follow brands on Instagram?*
- *How are consumers following brands on Instagram?*
- *What are the consumers' perceptions regarding the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram?*

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the chosen methods for researching Instagram marketing from the consumer's perspective are presented and discussed thoroughly.

3.1 Methodology

To get an in-depth understanding of the motives of consumers to follow brands on Instagram, qualitative research is needed. Qualitative researchers seek illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). In qualitative research sample selection has a profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research (Coyne, 1997). A small randomly selected sample in a qualitative study violates the qualitative principle of appropriateness that requires purposeful sampling and a “good” informant (i.e. one who is articulate, reflective, and willing to share with the interviewer) (Coyne, 1997). That is why a non-probabilistic, purposeful sampling approach was used. Purposeful sampling is the selection of information-rich cases for an in-depth study (Patton, 1990). Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). According to Schatzman and Strauss (1973) this sampling method is a practical necessity that is shaped by the time the researcher has available to him, by his framework, by his starting and developing interests, and by any restrictions placed upon his observations by his hosts. The researcher selects people to interview according to the aims of the research, which could be categories such as age, gender, status or role (Coyne, 1997). Within this methodology framework, snowball sampling has also been implemented. Respondents have been asked whether they knew other people who also met the requirements, which are provided in the next paragraph. If so, these individuals could also be approached for a potential interview.

3.2 Data Collection and Sample

Individual semi-structured interviews have been exploited to get the amount of knowledge and in-depth understanding needed. Interviews are appropriate to reveal a deeper understanding of the motives of the respondent, which provides a setting to learn about: why consumers follow brands on Instagram, how consumers follow brands on Instagram, and what the consumers' perceptions are about what it is that makes brands attractive on Instagram. In addition, a focus group has been conducted as an extra method to improve the knowledge and in-depth

understanding on this phenomenon. Focus groups stimulate discussion among respondents to gain different insights. This method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences, and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (Kitzinger, 1995). The interviews and focus group were semi-structured, since that enabled the researcher to ask further questions regarding an interesting answer or aspect, which helped to gain more knowledge about the motives of the respondent. The interview guide, which contains the procedure of the interviews and focus group, the ethical treatment, and the prepared questions, can be found in Appendix 6.1. In this guide, the Research Integrity Form is discussed which supports the ethical treatment. This form is provided in Appendix 6.2. The aim for the interviews and focus group was to collect data from knowledgeable Instagram users who follow brands on Instagram. Therefore, respondents were used who met the following criteria: (1) belong to Instagram users with the age between eighteen and sixty-five, which are 94% of the Instagram users (Parker, 2016), and (2) follow at least one brand on Instagram. Creswell (1998) recommended between five and twenty-five interviews for a phenomenological study. For a focus group, the ideal group size is between four and eight people (Kitzinger, 1995). Hence, the aim for this thesis was to gather a sample of twenty respondents for in-depth interviews and make use of one focus group of at least four individuals. The interviews and focus group were conducted starting from the last week of March, which had a timespan of approximately four weeks. For the planning of the interviews, focus group, and the remaining chapters of the thesis see table 1 in Appendix 6.3.

3.3 Analysis

With permission of the respondents, the interviews and the focus group have been recorded. Afterwards, these recordings could be used for transcription. The goal of transcription is to transform oral speech into a printed copy, accurately capturing the words of the research participant (Sandelowski, 1994). Transcribing recorded interviews into printed copies helped to get a better understanding of the motives of following behavior of consumers on Instagram. These transcriptions enabled further analysis of the gained information of the respondents. For this, thematic analysis has been used. A thematic analysis approach is suitable for answering questions such as the research questions in this thesis (Ayres, 2007). It has been suggested that thematic analysis, as a flexible and useful research tool, provides a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend across an entire interview or set of

interviews (DeSantis & Noel Ugarriza, 2000). During this analysis, data has been coded. This started with open coding, which facilitated the development of initial concepts. This stage of the analysis could reveal main themes in the data, allowing identification of different concepts and categories (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007). Following on from this, selective or focused coding had been undertaken (Charmaz, 2002) which involved exploring the codes, examining relationships between codes, identifying certain themes, and comparing them with pre-existing literature and theory (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007). This led to the final opportunity for analysis: producing a final report of the analysis. The exact steps in thematic analysis will elaborately be presented in chapter 4.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm (Maitlis, 2005). A strategy for improving the internal validity and reliability of qualitative research or evaluation of findings is triangulation (Maitlis, 2005). Triangulation is defined to be “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Mathison (1988) elaborated on this: “Triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches in order to control bias and establish valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology”. Patton (2002) advocates the use of triangulation by stating “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods”. In this study both interviews and a focus group were exploited which indicates the use of triangulation in data sources and methods. By collecting comprehensive, descriptively rich data through triangulation in data sources and methods this research increased its reliability and internal validity (Maxwell, 1992). Furthermore, the sample of respondents was appropriate. It consisted of individuals who had superior knowledge of the research topic (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002), as their attitudes and behavior concerning brands on Instagram were discussed and examined. Moreover, member checks and peer examination have been exploited. This represents checking the interpretations of data and conclusions with both respondents of the study and several individuals external to the study (Merriam, 1995). These aspects have increased the credibility of this study. To improve external validity, thick descriptions and multi-site designs have been exploited. Thick descriptions were involved by providing enough information or description of the phenomenon that is studied so that the reader can determine how closely their situations

match the research situation (Merriam, 1995). Hence, readers can decide whether the findings can be transferred. Multi-site designs were involved in this study, as several cases (brand pages) have been used to check the prior answers of respondents about their attitudes and behavior.

4. ANALYSIS & RESULTS

In this chapter, the iterative stages of the thematic analysis will be discussed, and the results of this analysis will be presented and elaborated.

4.1 Thematic Analysis

For this study twenty interviews and one focus group have been conducted. The interviews enabled in-depth insights into the respondents' attitudes and behavior toward brands. Among these twenty respondents there were nine females and eleven males, which provides a grouping close to an equal amount of both genders. The focus group was used to stimulate discussion among several respondents to reveal different insights and opinions. The focus group consisted of four males who were all acquainted. Using this pre-existing group of friends as focus group has two important advantages: it stimulates fragments of interactions that come close to naturally occurring data, and friends can relate each other's comments to their shared daily lives (Kitzinger, 1995). They might challenge each other on contradictions between what they claim to believe and how they actually behave (Kitzinger, 1995).

The first stage of the analysis consisted of transcribing all the conducted interviews and the focus group. The transcribed data was then subjected to open coding, the second stage of the analysis, which facilitated the development of initial concepts. Theming data was used as the coding method, which implied the use of a phrase or sentence to describe or capture the meaning of an aspect of the data. This first procedure of open coding is known as categorization (Spiggle, 1994). The essence of categorization is identifying a unit of data as belonging to, representing, or being an example of some more general phenomenon (Spiggle, 1994). The categorization has proceeded inductively, which meant that categories that emerged from the data were identified (Spiggle, 1994). This was an appropriate procedure since very little was known about the consumers' perspective on Instagram, and thus not sufficient theoretical background was provided to proceed deductively. No unit of analysis had been prespecified, since qualitative researchers do not generally prespecify the unit of analysis (Spiggle, 1994). Instead, they categorize a chunk of data on the basis of its coherent meaning -its standing on its own- not by an arbitrary designation of grammar (Spiggle, 1994). The first round of coding initially led to a set of general categories. These general categories were grouped together and separately subjected to a second round of coding. In this second round of coding more specific subcategories were identified. During this second round of coding, two subcategories were identified within one of the general categories, which needed to be separately subjected to a

third round of coding due to not being defined specific enough. Hence, the number of general categories was extended. In the third round of coding these two categories were broken down into more specific subcategories. During this stage of open coding the codes belonging to the same category were constantly compared with each other. The constant comparative method is an analytical procedure in which the researcher explicitly compares each incident in the data with other incidents appearing to belong to the same category, exploring their similarities and differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This was helpful to get a first impression of the relationships among the different codes from a category. The third stage of the analysis consisted of selective or focused coding. The codes were explored and examined for relationships. This enabled the identification of themes among the data. After looking for themes within the data several distinctive groups were established to represent certain patterns that were found among the respondents. Last, the data was subjected to abstraction, as it linked more empirically grounded categories to higher-order conceptual constructs (Spiggle, 1994). The entire analysis proceeded with iteration, which implied that the researcher did not perform specific research stages in a sequential manner, but moved back and forth between stages (Spiggle, 1994).

4.2 General Categories

An overview of the categories that were identified in the first round of open coding is provided in table 2. The findings for each category are discussed in the following sections. The results are structured according to the research questions, hence the findings for each category are discussed within the corresponding paragraph.

Table 2

General Categories

Category	Description
1. Motives to use Instagram	Reasons why the respondents used Instagram in general
2. Brand importance	Respondents' take on the importance of brands which they followed on Instagram
3. Motives to follow brands	Reasons why the respondents followed brands on Instagram

Table 2 cont.

General Categories

Category	Description
4. Kind of post	The respondents' opinions about the kind of posts that were effective in persuading him or her to follow brands on Instagram
5. Desired achievements	What respondents wanted to achieve by following brands on Instagram
6. Influence of advertisements	The influence that advertisements on Instagram exercised on the respondents
7. Devices	The devices on which Instagram was used by the respondents
8. Instagram usage	How the respondent used Instagram
9. Frequency of following	Influences on the frequency of looking at posts of a brand on Instagram
10. Drivers of brand attractiveness	The respondents' perceptions about the brand attractiveness on Instagram

4.3 Why Brands Are Followed

4.3.1 Motives to Use Instagram

From the thematic analysis, it came forward that keeping up with the trend was the most common motivation for respondents to use Instagram. A typical narrative indicating this came from Gerard, an eighteen-year-old male respondent, who said: *"To keep up with social media, and because other people have it as well. A lot of friends of mine have Instagram. Yeah, to keep up"*. Some of the respondents even indicated that the preference of Instagram over Facebook was the trend that they wanted to keep up with. A lot of respondents already indicated to prefer Instagram over Facebook without even recognizing this preference as a trend. Another very common motive appeared to be following what's happening in other people's lives. This often came up in association with the ability to share content with others. Hence, the combination of both sharing and following others appeared to be of importance. Furthermore, a couple of

respondents indicated that using Instagram for following others to see what's happening in their lives served as a mean to keep them up-to-date.

4.3.2 Brand Importance

Remarkably, most of the respondents indicated that the brands they followed were not very important to them. For a lesser amount of the respondents this incident was explained by the addition that brands just represented their interests. Only one respondent mentioned to ever had purchased something of a brand he or she followed.

4.3.3 Motives to Follow Brands

The most important motive to follow brands on Instagram appeared to be interest. This entailed being interested in a brand, liking a brand or finding a brand funny. A slightly less important motive to follow brands on Instagram was to be kept up-to-date about them. This entailed receiving news and staying informed about the brand. In a lot of situations being kept up-to-date was directly linked to trends and new products. Which meant that respondents wanted to be kept up-to-date about the latest trends and products. An example of this was provided by David, a fifty-three-year-old male respondent: *“Because with wanting to be kept up-to-date I also entail that it's brought to my attention when brands have something new”*. Another important motive happened to be purchase or experience. This meant that respondents would follow brands either because they had already bought from or experienced the brand, or they were considering doing so in the near future. This was often associated with positive evaluated products, services or brands, as respondents followed brands because they wanted to see more of them in order to decide whether they wanted to give the brand their business. Some of the respondents also indicated they followed brands because they had used the brand before and wanted to identify with them and feel closer to the brand. Lastly, getting inspiration was an important motive to follow brands as well. For instance, seeing posts of brands would provide inspiration about what to buy, use or do yourself. Figure 1 represents the motives to follow brands on Instagram in order of importance.

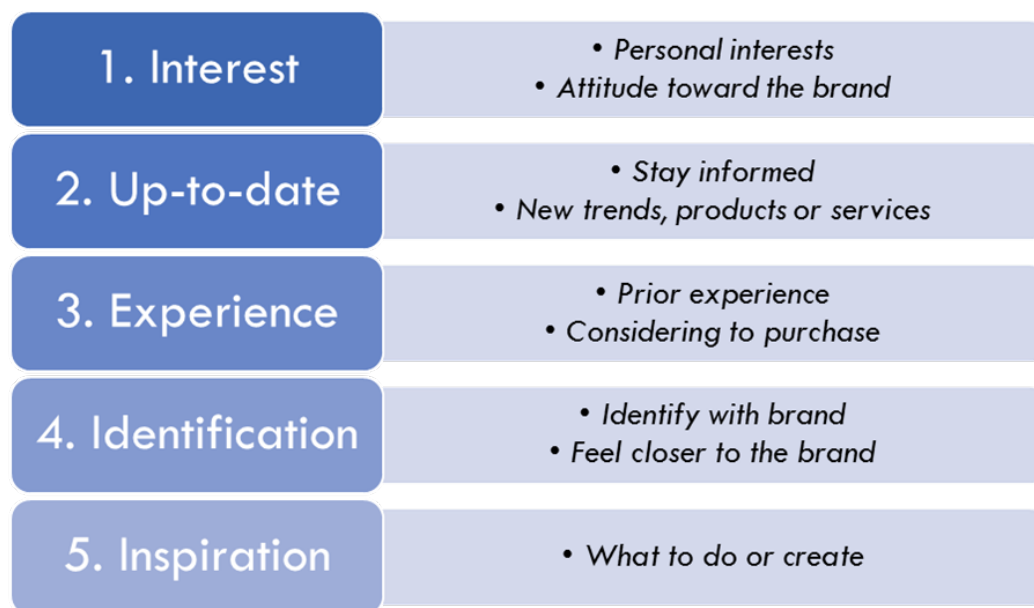


Figure 1. Motives to follow brands on Instagram

4.3.4 Kind of Post

In general, images appeared to be more effective in persuading the respondent to follow a brand. Videos were preferred to a lesser extent. For a large amount of respondents this was due to their desire to quickly be able to see what a post is about, and whether the respondent is appealed to it. Those conditions were more likely to be met with an image since images appeared to be cognitively easier to process. On top of that, almost every respondent indicated their aversion towards text in posts. According to the respondents, Instagram posts should contain as least text as possible, because the emphasis should be on the visual elements in the post. Some of the respondents even added that less text aided in quickly delivering the message. Furthermore, the respondents were asked about where the focus of the post should be. Most of the respondents explained that they preferred a post which did not focus on the promotion of the product or service, but rather focused on the story around a brand. Remarkably, the preference for an image was often associated with the preference for less text or the ability to be quickly appealing, whereas the preference for videos was often associated with the preference for an informative post or the focus being on the story around the brand. An example of this was provided by Ian, a twenty-two-year-old male respondent: “A video which emphasizes the story around the brand and an image with less text ...”. However, quite some respondents also admitted that focusing on the story around the brand also strengthened the product or service. Evidently, this indicated that images and videos should contain different elements to be effective in persuading the respondent to follow brands.

4.3.5 Desired Achievements

The vast majority of the respondents followed brands to stay up-to-date, to get the information they desire. In some occasions, the desire to stay up-to-date was directly linked to trends and new products. A typical narrative indicating this was provided by Frank, a twenty-three-year-old male respondent: *“That I’m being kept up-to-date with products, new styles ... something new coming to the market ...”*. Slightly less often it was mentioned that respondents wanted to stay up-to-date about brands they were just interested in. Only a few times a respondent explained that he or she wanted to be kept up-to-date about discounts or special offers. Furthermore, following brands to be able to consider which new trends to live up to or which products to obtain also appeared to be a desired outcome for some of the respondents.

4.3.6 Influence of Advertisements

A lot of the respondents frequently brought up that advertisements had no influence on them. Whenever they would see the distinctive frame of an advertisement they would already be deterred. Hence, guerilla marketing could be more effective, as some of the respondents thought to be susceptible to that type of marketing. Alex, a twenty-one-year-old male respondent, elaborated on this:

“I think that I’m a bit susceptible to marketing that you don’t notice. If it clearly says that something is an advertisement, then it deters me. But I am more prone to guerilla marketing. Marketing which doesn’t look like an advertisement at first sight.”

A significant group of the respondents who mentioned to not be influenced by advertisements did however mention that they would be influenced when it would be an interesting advertisement. Besides, advertisements also should not be disturbing or annoying as it would not have a positive influence, but would result in no attention being spent on the advertisement by the respondent. This was a widely shared opinion. Only a relatively small amount of respondents thought that advertisements had an influence on him or her. For most of these respondents an advertisement would have an influence on them when it was an interesting advertisement. According to some respondents, advertisements about something they would be considering buying or experiencing were considered to be interesting. Furthermore, several respondents even mentioned the fact that advertisements had such an influence that they had started following a brand because of the advertisement they had seen.

4.4 How Brands Are Followed

4.4.1 Devices

The majority of the respondents belonged to the group of individuals who only use Instagram on their mobile phone. Four respondents indicated to use Instagram mostly on their mobile phone and only occasionally on a laptop. Only two respondents indicated to mostly use Instagram on their mobile phone or tablet and only occasionally on a laptop.

4.4.2 Instagram Usage

Respondents were asked how often and when they used Instagram, and to what they do and do not pay attention when they were using Instagram. Of the twenty-four respondents only three respondents did not use Instagram daily. They would use it approximately once every two to three days. Eight of the daily users used Instagram up to five times a day, three respondents used it between five and ten times, and nine respondents used Instagram at least ten times a day. Among some of the respondent boredom was one of the reasons to use Instagram as often as they did. Half of the respondents who used Instagram daily indicated to usually use it up to five minutes. However, for some respondents this could increase up to thirty minutes in some occasions. For instance, Susan, a twenty-one-year-old female respondent, stated: *“In the morning it’s about one minute, but at night it can also be up until thirty minutes”*. The remaining respondents who used Instagram daily used it somewhere between five and fifteen minutes. Only a few of the respondents used Instagram up to thirty minutes per usage moment. Overall, the respondents usually did not visit brand pages on Instagram once they were following a brand. Only few respondents visited brand pages when they had the feeling that they had missed some posts of the brand in question. Furthermore, almost none of the respondents were looking for specific brands when they were scrolling through the homepage of Instagram. Fifteen of the respondents explained that they simply scrolled through the timeline and only really paid attention to posts which they liked. However, a few of these fifteen respondents claimed to pay attention to every post, but only look at the interesting posts a longer period of time. Five respondents indicated that the posts of family or friends had priority when it came to their attention when scrolling through the timeline.

4.4.3 Frequency of Following

Respondents were asked how the type of brand influenced the frequency of following a brand, and what other factors had an influence on it. The interests of the respondents seemed to be the most important factor which could have had an influence. When a respondent was interested in either a certain type of brand or a specific brand he or she might have paid more attention to posts of that brand type or specific brand, or even have looked relatively more often at their posts. The timing also played an important role in determining the frequency of following brands. Certain moments could evoke the accompanying needs. For instance, when a special event was taking place, the posts of brands involved would be followed more frequently than when that event was not taking place. For David, this was the case with a music festival: *“In the summer there are more music festivals. I like the build up towards the festival, I like it when the festival is taking place, well, after that it fades away”*. To less respondents the amount of posts of a brand was also a factor which could elicit a difference in frequency of following different brands. This is due to the fact that those respondents only looked at posts of brands on the homepage. Hence, a brand posting more often would have resulted in being exposed to that brand more often. For six of the respondents the type of brand had no influence on the frequency of following brands on Instagram. This purely depended on which brands the respondents were interested in and which not.

4.5 Drivers of Brand Attractiveness

Last, the respondents were asked questions about the attractiveness of brands and the influence of repeated exposure on the brand attractiveness. The answers of the respondents indicated great importance of the quality and amount of content that brands posted, and the interests of the respondent. These had the most important roles in determining the brand attractiveness. To what extent a brand offered new products, was approachable, could be easily identified with, and was experienced by a respondent also appeared to be important drivers when the respondents were asked what made brands attractive in general. When it came down to repeated exposure, most of the respondents claimed that it increased the brand attractiveness. A large group of these respondents elaborated on this by stating that this was the case when brands posted either good content or content that the respondent liked. A typical narrative that indicated this was provided by Melanie, an eighteen-year-old female respondent:

“I think it increases. I’ve you haven’t seen a certain product before, you don’t desire it. But if you repeatedly see a new phone, then you increasingly desire that product. Fool

yourself, like: “Oh, I’m saving money for that”. So, I think that it increases the attractiveness, if you’re interested in it.”

A lot of respondents also could imagine, or had experienced that the repeated exposure of a brand could have a negative influence on the brand attractiveness. This was mostly due to the respondent not being interested in the brand, which led to a decreased brand attractiveness after being repeatedly exposed to it. Finally, there was a small group of respondents who claimed that the repeated exposure of a brand did not change the brand attractiveness even though it concerned a brand in which they were not interested. Figure 2 displays the three tiers of drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram.

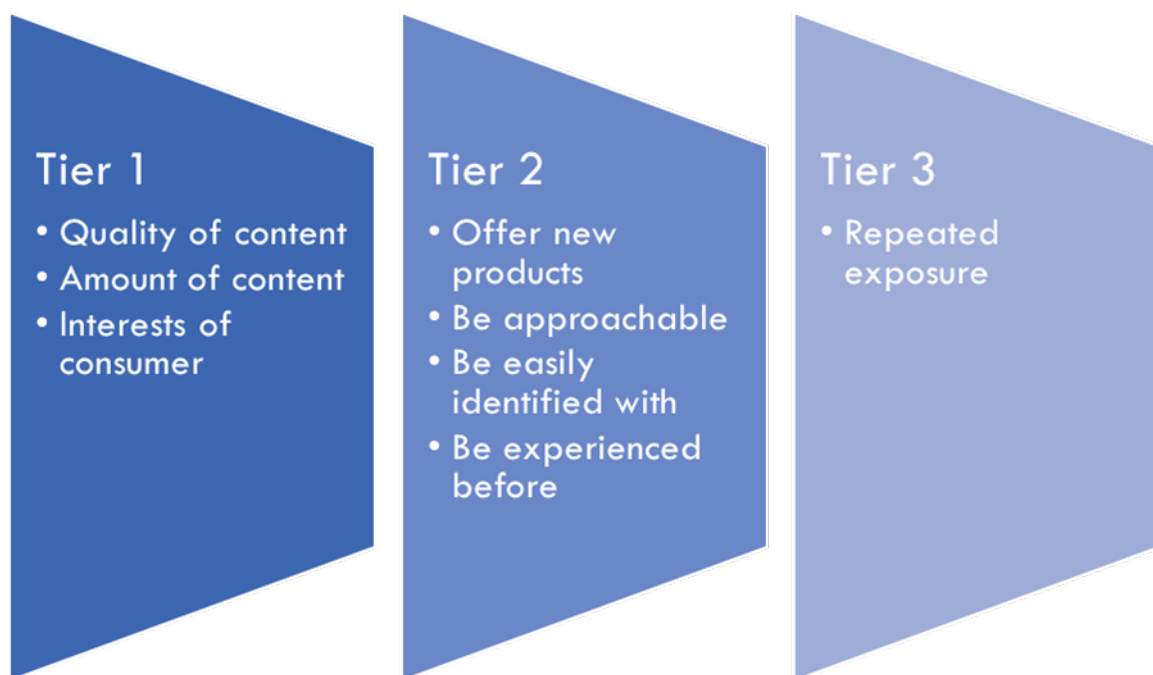


Figure 2. Drivers of brand attractiveness

4.6 Themes

When analyzing the gathered data, several themes emerged as certain groups of codes repeatedly were applied throughout the data. A theme captured something important about the data in relation to the research question and represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The identified themes had a recurring nature which helped to explain the findings for each of the research questions of this research.

The following nine themes have been identified:

- (1) Positive attitude

- (2) Gathering latest information
- (3) Experience
- (4) Inspiration
- (5) Easy and quick
- (6) Social influence
- (7) Identification
- (8) Financial benefit
- (9) Repeated exposure

The *positive attitude* and *gathering latest information* themes captured the two most important motives to follow brands, interest and up-to-date, respectively. The remaining three motives were identified as themes on their own. Hence, the themes *positive attitude*, *gathering latest information*, *experience*, *inspiration* & *identification* represented the five most important motives to follow brands on Instagram. Although *social influence* and *financial benefit* did not belong to the most important motives to follow brands, they were acknowledged relatively often throughout the data. Hence, they did appear to have a prominent position in the respondent's process of evaluating brands. The *easy and quick* theme was mostly related to the Instagram usage of respondents. *Repeated exposure* was related to the drivers of brand attractiveness. Findings indicated that *repeated exposure* was not the most important driver of brand attractiveness. Yet, this theme was acknowledged the most with regards to this research question. Figure 3 proposes a visualization of the themes and previous findings, and their relationships.

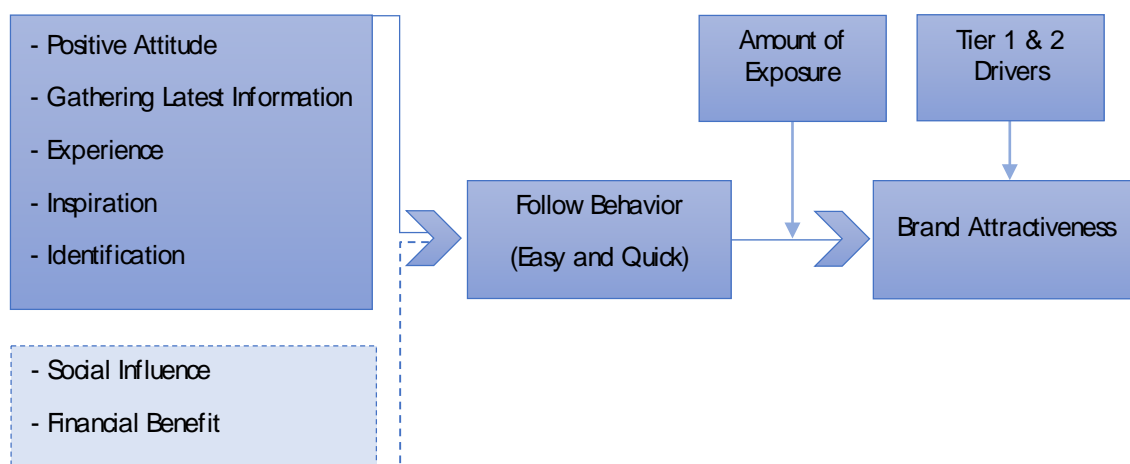


Figure 3. Conceptual model

4.6.1 Positive Attitude

Positive attitude represented the narratives indicating a positive attitude toward a brand, product, service, Instagram page, or post. Susan expressed this in the following narrative: “*Because I like the brand, and that’s why I’ll follow it*”. The *positive attitude* theme was repeatedly acknowledged among the respondents. Being interested in a brand or liking a brand, and thus, having a positive attitude toward a brand seemed to be initial motives for the respondent to follow a brand. The quote of Susan above already illustrated this. Besides, being interested in a brand or liking a brand was also a condition for respondents to be influenced by advertisements in the first place. This would indicate a relationship between *positive attitude* and the influence of advertisement. When an advertisement would not suit an individual’s interests, no influence would be exercised according to the respondents. This appeared to be true for Eva, a forty-nine-year-old female respondent: “... *if it has no direct relation with me or my interests, I will never click on it. It really has to be related to my interests*”. In general, respondents looked more frequently at, and paid more attention to posts they liked or found interesting. Brand attractiveness also appeared to be greatly determined by the interests of the respondent. An increased brand attractiveness was often associated with the *positive attitude* theme. For instance, Casper, a twenty-two-year-old male respondent, used advertisements as an example to elaborate on this: “... *it does need to relate to my interests somehow. So those advertisements would make the brand more attractive as well*”. This meant that the brand attractiveness increased when a respondent was interested in the brand. Repeated exposure was also added to the association of an increased brand attractiveness with the *positive attitude* theme. However, those relationships will be further elaborated in the ninth theme.

4.6.2 Gathering Latest Information

Gathering latest information represented every indication of respondents gathering information about trends, products, services, brands or any other news. A typical narrative of this theme was expressed by Kevin, a twenty-one-year-old male respondent:

“*So, it’s staying informed with what is new to the market and which new concepts are there, and stuff like that. Keeping up with what each brand will launch, what they’re working on, instead of what’s currently on the market.*”

Both keeping up with trends, as well as being kept up-to-date appeared to be important drivers throughout the thematic analysis. Both motives had determining roles when it concerned the motives to use Instagram, the motives to follow brands on Instagram, and the desired achievements associated with following brands on Instagram. Regarding the motives to follow

brands and the desired achievements, keeping up with trends and being kept up-to-date were directly linked. Respondents apparently followed brands on Instagram because they wanted to be kept up-to-date about the latest trends, as illustrated above by Kevin. Besides, being kept up-to-date about the brands in which the respondent was interested also happened to be a valuable outcome of following brands on Instagram. When asked about the desired achievements, Melanie stated: *“I think interest. Just to stay informed about what they do. That will be my goal. What I would want to get in return is that they respond to my interests, and to be kept up-to-date”*. This linked *gathering latest information* to *positive attitude*. Being kept up-to-date was also one of the few motives for respondents to visit brand pages. Visiting the brand page on Instagram would only occur for some of the respondents if they had the feeling that they had missed posts of a brand, for which visiting the brand page would compensate. For instance, Vanessa, a fifty-two-year-old female respondent, said: *“... I would check their Instagram page to see if I’ve missed something”*. To what extent a brand created posts about the latest trends or products also appeared to be an important driver of brand attractiveness. This indicated a link between *gathering latest information* and an increased brand attractiveness.

4.6.3 Experience

Narratives that indicated prior experience with a brand, being prior purchase or usage, or the consideration to experience a brand in the future belonged to the *experience* theme. A narrative of Frank indicated the presence of this theme when asked about motives to follow brands on Instagram: *“In the first place, when I have had an experience with it. For instance, with basketball, clothing, or anything else”*. Regarding the brand importance, only one respondent explained that the brands he or she followed were brands of which he or she had ever bought something. However, when asked why respondents followed brands on Instagram, having purchased something of a brand, having any other prior experience with a brand, or considering purchasing something of a brand in the future appeared to be important motives to follow brands. This was already illustrated with the quote of Frank. When it concerned an advertisement, *experience* was associated with *positive attitude*. Some respondents made it explicit that an advertisement of a brand of which they had already purchased something or had prior experience with was considered to be interesting. Finally, respondents indicated that the extent to which they had already experienced a brand was considered when determining the brand attractiveness, which indicated a link between *experience* and an increased brand attractiveness. For Marc, a twenty-three-year-old male respondent, this happened to be the case:

“In case of a brand that I’ve used or experience, it makes me think about the first or last time that I have used or experienced it. For instance, I follow AMF, a music festival in Amsterdam. When I get exposed to posts of that brand I think back to the first time I went there. I also think about the fact that I want to go again ... It makes me think about the brand more often, and it makes it more attractive to experience the brand again. I keep getting reminded of the fact that I want to go again to AMF. So, the brand attractiveness increases.”

4.6.4 Inspiration

Inspiration was represented whenever a respondent indicated to have gained inspiration, creativity or new ideas. Patrick, a twenty-three-year-old male respondent, provided a narrative that clearly indicated the importance of this theme: *“... I follow several travel organizations, and that’s mostly to get some inspiration ...”*. This theme was mainly of importance when it concerned the motives of the respondent to follow brands on Instagram, and the desired achievements of following brands. The *inspiration* theme was applied most often when respondents elaborated on their motives to follow brands on Instagram. When it concerned the desired achievements of following brands *inspiration* was mostly mentioned without being connected to other themes. The respondent simply wanted to get inspired by following brands. *Inspiration* was used with a direct link to other themes when it concerned the motives of the respondents to follow brands. Following brands to get inspiration about what to buy or experience, and to see new products which could inspire the respondent were both important motives. This indicated relationships of *inspiration* with both *experience* and *gathering latest information*. Sophie, a twenty-year-old female respondent, made the relationship between *inspiration* and *experience* explicit by having stated the following: *“It gives me inspiration for what kind of clothes I want to buy ...”*

4.6.5 Easy and Quick

Respondents who preferred posts of brands which were cognitively light to process which enabled them to quickly retrieve the message from a post indicated the importance of the *easy and quick* theme. Rebecca, a twenty-year-old female respondent, is one of the respondents who elaborated on this: *“I prefer the picture because on there you immediately see what it’s about. That’s what I find more attractive”*. This theme was mostly of importance when it concerned the kind of posts that were effective in persuading the respondent to follow brands, and how the respondent used Instagram. When explaining what kind of posts would be most effective in

persuading the respondent to follow a brand on Instagram a lot respondents expressed the desire to be able to easily and quickly extract the message from a post. According to the respondent, videos and images should contain as least text as possible. By using less text on a post, it would be visually more attractive, and the respondent could quickly extract the message from the post. In general, an image was desired more often, because of its capability to quickly appeal to the respondent, as illustrated in the previous quote of Rebecca. Furthermore, the respondents desired to be exposed to posts which quickly appealed to them based on interests. This directly connected the themes of *positive attitude* and *easy and quick*. David said: *“Again, it’s about the first moment of those few seconds. If it suits my interests, like fashion, events, or acquaintances, ... then I will check whether I would like it to follow them”*. Besides, by using mostly visual elements in a post the respondent would be quickly appealed to the post. The focus on the posts being easy and quick to process is supported by respondents putting emphasis on the fact that they only used Instagram for short amounts of time. Almost every respondent used Instagram daily, but the usage moments mostly consisted of a maximum of five minutes. Respondents swiftly scrolled through the posts on the homepage without really looking for anything in particular. Time was mostly spent on posts that suited the interests of the respondent, and could be processed relatively quickly and with cognitive ease. This was clearly illustrated by Eric, a twenty-two-year-old male respondent, who stated: *“I think I don’t look for a certain brand. I just start scrolling and look at every post. I don’t skip anything, but it can happen that I take more time for some posts than for others.”*

4.6.6 Social Influence

Social influence represented the narratives which indicated that social influence was exercised, and had an impact on the respondent’s behavior. Vanessa, when asked about her motives to use Instagram, made a statement that illustrated this theme: *“I’ve started with it when I lost my job. That’s when I started with Instagram and Twitter, which was recommended to me. This was the motive for me to create an Instagram account”*. For a couple of respondents this theme represented the initial motive to use Instagram. Instagram was recommended as a platform to them which led to the creation of a profile. This was the case for Vanessa, as shown in the previous quote. Furthermore, the theme *social influence* was of importance when it concerned the motives of the respondent to follow brands and the drivers of brand attractiveness. *Social influence* was applied most often to answers explaining the motives of the respondent to follow brands. The application of this theme mostly occurred isolated from other themes. However, in

a few occasions it was directly linked to the theme of *positive attitude*. When friends had the same interests as the respondent *social influence* could be a driving factor for a respondent to have started following a brand that was also followed by an individual from his or her social environment. Daphne, a nineteen-year-old female respondent, formulated this as follows: “*Through other people on Instagram, if I see they follow something, I click on it to see whether it interests me as well and if that’s the case I’ll start following it as well*”. When determining the brand attractiveness, *social influence* was connected to several other themes. The first relationship concerned an increased brand attractiveness, as a brand could become more attractive when encountered through a friend of the respondent. When asked a question about brand attractiveness, Casper provided a typical narrative with indicated this: “... *if other people, especially friends, follow a brand, then I want to check it out. And that’s even more likely when they recommend it to you. So that has a positive influence*”. The remaining connections were related to the ninth identified theme which will be provided later.

4.6.7 Identification

Indications of feeling closer to the brand, or the identification of the respondent with a brand belonged to this theme. An example of an indication of this theme was provided by Eric: “*But if you bring up the everyday things that also apply to you... If you see the life of some students... It makes it very approachable. You can easily identify yourself with that*”. First, *identification* was often of importance when it concerned the motives of the respondent to follow brands. Mostly, that appeared to be in an isolated context where *identification* was not linked to other themes. However, some respondents indicated that following brands with which they had prior experience enabled them to identify themselves with the brand and let them feel closer to it. In that case, the *identification* theme was preceded by the *experience* theme. This was the case for Kenny, a twenty-one-year-old male respondent, who elaborated on his motives to follow brands: “*Because you’ve bought them you chose to follow that brand, that’s the cause. The effect is that you feel closer to the brand*”. When it concerned the kind of post that was most effective in persuading the respondent to follow a brand *identification* was only mentioned in association with a video. In this context, the respondent preferred a video with which he or she could identify him or herself. The theme of *identification* was also of importance with regards to the desired achievements of following brands. Here it was only used in an isolated context, meaning that the respondent desired to pursue the identification of him or herself with a brand. Last, *identification* was of importance with regards to the drivers of brand attractiveness. Half

of the times this theme was used in an isolated context. A brand could become increasingly attractive whenever a brand could be easily identified with. The other half consisted of cases where *identification* was directly linked to other themes. For instance, it was linked to the *experience* theme. This was the case when a respondent wanted to buy or experience a brand and could identify him or herself with that brand. Marc mentioned this when asked about the drivers of brand attractiveness: “*If I see myself buying it, using it, or doing it, and I can identify myself with it*”. Respondents also indicated to be more able to identify him or herself with a brand that posted on a regular basis, proving the importance of posting regularly.

4.6.8 Financial Benefit

Financial benefit represented every narrative which indicated a financial benefit to the respondent. This could be in the form of special offers, discounts and giveaways. Chris, a twenty-one-year-old male respondent, stressed the importance of this theme when he was asked about the drivers of brand attractiveness: “... *when the brand has a lot of discounts, and keeps coming up with new items*”. First, this theme was of importance when it concerned the motives of the respondent to follow brands. It was only applied in an isolated context, which meant that the respondent followed brands to reap financial benefits without it being connected to other themes. With regards to the kind of post that was most effective in persuading the respondent to follow a brand, the *financial benefit* was not only applied in an isolated context. Respondents mentioned videos about giveaways and promotion focused posts with discounts being effective. Lisa, an eighteen-year-old female respondent, provided an example of this by stating: “... *when you’re watching a video and it says that you can win something or so. Then you would follow them pretty quickly ...*”. Furthermore, the *financial benefit* theme was connected to the *positive attitude* theme. In that case, the respondent liked or was interested in posts of a brand that offered a discount. With regards to the desired achievements of following brands, *financial benefit* mostly occurred in an isolated context. However, it also was related to the *gathering latest information* theme. When this occurred, the respondent wanted to be kept up-to-date about discounts. Furthermore, when it concerned advertisements, *financial benefit* was applied a couple of times of which it was related to the *experience* theme in most cases. This relationship was established when an advertisement containing a discount led to the purchase of the advertised product or service. Rebecca had experienced this: “*Through an advertisement I came on a site which offered them [shoes] with a huge discount, so I bought them*”. With regards to

the drivers of brand attractiveness, *financial benefit* was mostly associated with an increased brand attractiveness. The brand attractiveness could be increased by solely using *financial benefits*, but this also could be the case when a brand posts about discounts and offered new products indicating a link between the *gathering latest information* and *financial benefit* themes. Furthermore, *financial benefit* was also related to a decreased brand attractiveness in some situations. This was the case when a respondent started following a brand because of a giveaway, but ended up disliking the content that the brand repeatedly exposed the respondent to.

4.6.9 Repeated Exposure

Every indication of the repeated exposure of posts or brands to the respondent was included in the *repeated exposure* theme. For instance, Melanie provided the following statement when she was asked what repeated exposure changed about brand attractiveness: “*I think that it sticks with you without you even being aware of that, when you unconsciously keep being exposed to it*”. *Repeated exposure* was of importance a few times with regards to the motives of the respondent to follow brands. This was the case when a respondent elaborated on how the repeated exposure of a brand could change his or her opinion about a brand. Regarding advertisements, *repeated exposure* was also associated with a motive to start following a brand, indicating that the repeated exposure of an advertisement had led to following that brand. *Repeated exposure* was applied most often in the brand attractiveness category. In most cases the respondent would find the brand to be increasingly attractive when repeatedly exposed to it. This relationship was mentioned both with and without other additional themes. In more than half of the cases this relationship was linked to an additional theme. Important connections appeared to be with the *positive attitude* theme; if the respondent was already interested in the brand, liked the posts, or developed an interest for the brand the brand attractiveness could be increased by repeated exposure. An example of this last incident was provided by Bart, a forty-eight-year-old male respondent, when asked what *repeated exposure* does to the brand attractiveness: “*Yeah, the brand attractiveness can be increased with an advertisement which leads to a development of interest*”. Another important connection was formed with the *social influence* theme; the brand attractiveness could be increased by *repeated exposure* when this exposure was initiated via friends. Some respondents even elaborated more on this by stating

that being repeatedly exposed to brands through friends would evoke curiosity or make the brand interesting after all, and thus, the brand attractiveness could increase. This indicated a link between *repeated exposure* and both curiosity and the *positive attitude* theme. The theme *experience* also had an important relationship with *repeated exposure*, since repeated exposure of a brand could also increase the brand attractiveness when a respondent had prior experience with that brand, or was considering buying or experiencing the brand in the future. Another important connection was between *repeated exposure* and good content, as *repeated exposure* could increase the brand attractiveness when the posts contained good content. On the contrary, *repeated exposure* was also found to be associated with a decreased brand attractiveness. For approximately half of those incidents it was solely connected to a decreased brand attractiveness. However, for the other half of incidents the repeated exposure of a brand led to a decreased brand attractiveness because the respondent disliked the brand or was not interested in it. Furthermore, bad timing, insufficient content, and bad content were also associated with a decreased brand attractiveness when repeatedly exposed. One example of this came from Lisa: “*I can end up finding the brand less attractive after I’ve started to follow them, because I’m not really into the amount of posts or the content*”. For only a few respondents the repeated exposure of a brand had no influence on the brand attractiveness. One incident of *repeated exposure* having no influence on the brand attractiveness was connected to *experience*. This was the case when a respondent did not desire to purchase a product or service of a brand. The *repeated exposure* having no influence on the brand attractiveness could also be the case even though brands post bad content, post too much, or posts the same content over and over. One of these cases appeared to be true for Daphne, who elaborated on this:

“It doesn’t change anything, I guess. It won’t be annoying because it appears a lot, because most of the time they’ll show different things. So, it won’t be all the same. Yeah, sometimes it is. When it does look a lot like previous posts then I would scroll through them very quickly ... But it’s not that it gets annoying or that I would unfollow a brand. It doesn’t annoy me very easily.”

Aside from being linked to the brand attractiveness, *repeated exposure* was also solely associated with the *positive attitude* theme. On the one hand, it was mentioned that even though a respondent likes the brand, it still should not be repeatedly exposed to him or her. On the other hand, the repeated exposure of a brand led to a development of interest in that brand.

4.7 User Groups

Among the respondents, four groups with different behavioral patterns were distinguished. The first set of user groups was related to the motives to follow brands on Instagram. The second set of user groups was related to how Instagram is used in terms of frequency and time period.

4.7.1 Motives to Follow Brands

The first set of user groups identified consisted of *buyers* and *recreational users*. Close to all the respondents showed signs of the presence of at least one of the behavioral patterns. Table 3 displays the main characteristics of the two groups.

Table 3

User Groups

Group	Main purpose
Buyers	Deciding which product or service to purchase/use, or following prior experienced brands
Recreational users	Non-purchase related behavior, like entertainment or the passing of time

The *buyers* followed brands on Instagram for the main purpose of deciding which products or service to purchase or use. The following statement indicated the presence of this behavioral pattern for Sophie: “*Yeah, actually mostly because I like the clothing. It gives me inspiration for what kind of clothes I want to buy ...*”. Instagram functioned as a tool to attain this goal. Furthermore, *buyers* could also follow brands of which they had already bought a product or experienced the service. This behavioral pattern emerged for Hugo, a twenty-three-year-old male respondent, when asked about motives to follow brands on Instagram: “*When I wear clothes myself, for instance I wear Jordan and I follow them. ... I have some sort of connection with them because I wear it myself, so I follow them*”. By following those brands, the attitude toward the brand was stimulated, and this might have led to repeated purchase behavior. Hence, this user group was more brand oriented than *recreational users*. The *recreational users* followed brands on Instagram with the purpose being entertainment or gathering information.

The main goal of this user group was not related to the purchase or usage of a product or service, respectively. Eva appeared to belong to this user group due to the following statement:

“I would never follow something with clothes or something that I might want to buy. ... So, it’s purely to kill some time. ... I would never follow something for the sake of buying it. It’s purely my hobbies and the nice things that make me laugh.”

Users from this group mainly used Instagram to follow brands that post interesting and good content which was not focused on the promotion of a product or service. However, an Instagram user did not necessarily belong to only one of these user groups. For instance, Alex first stated:

“It’s not that I follow brands of which I buy clothes, but I follow brands that sometimes posts nice things. For instance, shoe brands. They occasionally post something to show their new shoes and that’s something I like. Just to get some inspiration, but not to see their new shoes, because I want to buy them.”

However, later in the interview he stated the following: “... when I remember a brand that had nice shoes, or brands that have similar shoes, I look them up so that I know what shoes I would like to buy when I’m shopping in the city center or online”. Which indicated that Instagram did function as an orientation for his purchase behavior as well. Most of the respondents showed behavioral patterns which did not specifically belong to one of the user groups. Only a couple of respondents appeared to truly belong to only one group.

4.7.2 Instagram Usage

The second set of user groups identified consisted of *heavy users* and *occasional users*. Most of the respondents showed signs of the presence of one of these behavioral patterns. Only nine respondents did not belong to one of these groups. Those respondents were in the middle of the two groups. Table 4 displays the main characteristics of the two groups.

Table 4

User Groups

Group	Frequency	Time period
Heavy users	15+ times per day	1-3 minutes per usage moment
Occasional users	1-5 times per day	5-30 minutes per usage moment

Heavy users used Instagram at least fifteen times a day. Most of the usage moments consisted of only one to three minutes. Susan appeared to belong to this group when she was asked about

the amount of usage moments per day by stating: *“Every time when I pick up my phone. It can differ each day. Let’s say about thirty times a day. Really often, yeah”*. When asked about the time period of the usage moments she stated: *“I think around one minute”*. Only every once in a while, the *heavy users* used Instagram for longer than those couple of minutes. This could be the case whenever the individual was looking up a certain brand to thoroughly observe their posts, or had got nothing to do at that moment. The latter was elaborated by Chris when he was asked about the time period of usage moments: *“Maybe one or two minutes, and only sometimes maybe up to ten minutes, if I’m sitting on the couch and I’ve got nothing to do”*. The *occasional users* used Instagram between one and five times a day. These usage moments consisted of at least five minutes, but were often extended up until half an hour. Eric belonged to this user group according to his following statements: *“I think two or three times a day [usage amount]”,* and *“I think about fifteen minutes [time period of usage]. Just checking what the new posts are”*.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a discussion of the results, academic contributions, managerial implications, research limitations and directions for future research.

5.1 Discussion

The following three research questions guided this study: (1) What are motives for consumers to follow brands on Instagram? (2) How are consumers following brands on Instagram? And (3) What are the consumers' perceptions regarding the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram? The findings of this research shed light on the consumer's perspective on brands active on Instagram.

Results from the study show that the most important motive for following a brand on Instagram is being interested in the brand or liking the brand. This was captured by the *positive attitude* theme, and shows the importance of the first of Clemons (2009) four Ps: personal. According to Clemons (2009), the information in social websites resonates to the personal interest of users, and thus, is relevant to attract users. Brands can attract consumers by responding to their personal interests with relevant posts. These findings support the claim of Bergström and Bäckman (2013) that gaining access to interesting content is one of the most important motives for an individual to follow a brand. Being interested in a brand, or liking a brand indicates the importance of the consumer's attitude. Hence, the attitude toward the brand is the underlying driver of this motive. Mitchell and Olson (1981) define the attitude toward the brand as: "an individual's internal evaluation of the brand". Thus, for a consumer to be motivated to follow a brand on Instagram their attitude toward the brand must have a positive nature.

The second important motive for consumers to follow brands is to be kept up-to-date about trends and new products or services. The theme *gathering latest information* captured this motive, which also represented the main motive for consumers to even use Instagram in general. This insight is supported by the studies of Bergström and Bäckman (2013) and Sheldon and Bryant (2016), which also recognized the importance of information gathering on Instagram as a motive. Furthermore, two other studies revealed the importance of information gathering to consumers on social media as a whole (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013). In addition to these studies, this research has proven that not only just the gathering of information is of importance, but that gathering information about trends,

new products, services or other pieces of the latest information plays an import role as a driver for consumers to follow brands on Instagram.

The third motive concerns experience. Consumers also follow brands because they either have already purchased from the brand or have prior experience with the brand. These experiences occur when consumers consume and use products or services (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). This motive was represented by the *experience* theme. When the consumer evaluated the used products or services positively he or she could start following the brand to see more of it. The presence of this prior experience with the brand can then affect how consumers process information of that brand (Bettman & Park, 1980). Consumers also follow brands of which they are considering purchasing a product or using a service in the future. This supports the claim of Weston (2008) that social networking, if it is engaged correctly, can also help find new customers.

The fourth motive to follow a brand is the opportunity to identify themselves with a brand the consumer has prior experience with, and let the consumer feel closer to that brand. This motive was captured in the *identification* theme. Firm-generated brand stories can support those motives as they are meant to create and strengthen relationships with the consumer (Gensler et al., 2013). When a brand provides a theme for conversation using firm generated brand stories, such conversations enable consumers to integrate their own brand-related experiences and thoughts into the brand story (Escalas, 2004; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012), and hence, offer an opportunity to identify themselves with the brand and let them feel closer to it. Hence, the claim of Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) that brand stories can help build awareness, comprehension, empathy, recognition, recall, and provide meaning to the brand is supported by these findings. The fact that the opportunity to identify yourself with a brand and feel closer to it is an important motive to follow that brand is also supported by Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014), who argued that the contact that consumers can have with brands enables the development of a deeper relationship. So, the claim of Yan (2011), that brands should be branding online to build a connection with users and foster a sense of belonging through the engagement itself, plays a pivotal role in responding to this important motive for consumers to follow a brand.

Inspiration is the fifth motive to follow a brand. For instance, by following brands consumers can get inspiration for what to do or create themselves. Motives concerning inspiration were represented by the *inspiration* theme. Mull and Lee (2014) showed that getting inspiration is an important motive for using Pinterest. However, this research confirms that this motive is also of importance on Instagram.

Furthermore, the findings of this study have indicated that Instagram posts in the form of images are desired to a greater extent than videos. This supports the claim of Bakhshi et al. (2013) that photos are becoming prominent means of communication online. Besides, the posts should contain as least text as possible for the consumer to quickly be able to process and evaluate the post. That way the user gets exposed to mostly visual elements instead of plain text. Moreover, as least text as possible also makes the images cognitively easier to process. When information becomes cognitively easier to process the memorability also increases (Begg, Duft, Lalonde, Melnick & Sanvito, 1989). Hence, images with at least as text as possible are more memorable and more effective in persuading a consumer to follow a brand. These kinds of posts were represented in the *easy and quick* theme.

In general, consumers claim to not be very sensitive to advertisements on Instagram. This in line with the study of Shankar and Hollinger (2007), who argued that only a small fraction of consumers who are exposed to an online advertisement remember the brand or the content, and interact with the advertisement. The distinctive frame in which an advertisement is shown on Instagram often deters consumers, and consequently leads to the user immediately scrolling past the advertisement. Moreover, when the advertisements become disturbing or annoying for the consumer, it would result in even less attention being paid to advertisements. According to Drèze and Hussherr (2003) the amount of attention paid to online advertisements is already very low. They claim that more than half of online users do not even pay attention to online advertisements in the first place (Drèze & Hussherr, 2003). The findings of this research seem to follow the trend of industry click-through rates declining continuously over the years and being reported to be somewhere below 1% (Yoo, 2008). An advertisement would only be effective when a consumer is particularly interested in the content shown. For instance, this could be the case whenever a consumer is considering purchasing or using the advertised product or service. When a consumer is in fact interested in the advertisement it could lead to the consumer starting to follow that brand.

Regarding the second research question, consumers mostly use Instagram on a daily basis. Especially the younger Instagram users, being teenagers and users in their twenties, tend to use Instagram at least ten times a day. For users who are in their forties or fifties this amount appeared to be relatively lower. This can be related to the fact that individuals up to the age of twenty-nine are most attracted to Instagram, and thus, use Instagram more often (Parker, 2016). However, it could also depend on other factors, like the amount of free time per day. Usage moments usually consist of up to five minutes. Which was also stressed in the *easy and quick* theme. However, when consumers have plenty of time or are in a state of boredom these usage

moments can be stretched up to thirty minutes. This is in line with the study of Whiting and Williams (2013) in which it is argued that boredom can lead to the consumer passing more time on Instagram. When using Instagram, consumers do not visit brand pages often once they have started following those brands. The brand page is only called on when an individual has the feeling that he or she has missed some posts. Hence, most of the time the consumers look at posts of brands on the homepage of Instagram. When engaged in this behavior, consumers hardly look for posts of particular brands. Instead, consumers simply scroll through the timeline and only stop and pay attention to posts which they like or are interested in.

Regarding the frequency of looking at posts from brands which are followed by the consumer, the interest of the consumer is the most important factor. When interested in a certain type of brand or one brand in particular the consumer pays more attention to it, or even looks more frequently at posts of the brands in question. This can be explained by the study of Bergström and Bäckman (2013) which argued that consumers want to have access to interesting content. Timing is also of importance for the frequency of following brands. If a consumer is engaged in a phenomenon that is currently taking place, or will take place in the near future, posts of brands directly linked to that phenomenon are prone to be observed more often and more thoroughly. However, some consumers only use the homepage of Instagram to look at posts of brands, and thus the difference in the frequency of follow brands is based on how often a brand posts.

When evaluating the brand attractiveness on Instagram which has to be done for several brands, as current markets offer a wide range of brands (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), the quality of content, the amount of content posted and the interests of the consumer emerge as the three most important drivers. Furthermore, offering new products, being approachable, being easily identified with, and being experienced before are also drivers of the brand attractiveness. Lastly, repeated exposure is also effective in increasing the brand attractiveness on Instagram when the posts contain good content or content that suits the interests of the consumer. This was captured in the *repeated exposure* theme. These conditions reflect some of the already mentioned drivers of brand attractiveness. However, when a consumer is not interested in a brand repeated exposure can also have a negative influence on the brand attractiveness. These drivers form the evaluation of brand attractiveness on Instagram, which reflects the affective response of the consumer (Sophonsiri & Polyorat, 2009). These eight drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram are particularly interesting for brands, as brand attractiveness can have a positive impact on a brand's success, if managed correctly (Hayes et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2001). With these drivers of brand attractiveness taken in account, brands can design and

implement successful Instagram marketing strategies to increase the brand attractiveness. Based on the evidence, consumers will more likely be drawn to a brand with an increased attractiveness, and are willing to pay more for its products or services (Sophonsiri & Polyorat, 2009). Furthermore, an increase of the brand attractiveness by designing and implementing a successful Instagram marketing strategy can increase the closeness of the relationship between consumer and brand, as Ye (2012) argued the existence of the influence of the brand attractiveness on the closeness of the relationship.

5.2 Academic Contributions

This study has important contributions to the current literature. As a whole, it adds to the relatively small stream of literature on Instagram marketing. Current research in the field of social media marketing has mostly focused on other social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter. Yet, little is academically substantiated in the field of Instagram marketing. Within the framework of Instagram marketing this study has three major academic contributions.

First, as recommended by Bergström and Bäckman (2013), this study reveals in-depth insights into the underlying motives of consumers to follow brands on Instagram. Among prior research there are several studies that have investigated the motives for the usage of several social media platforms, of which Instagram was one. However, hardly any research has been done regarding the motives of consumers to follow brands on Instagram. This addition to current literature on Instagram marketing is important, since it shows divers motives for consumers to follow brands. With these new insights into the underlying motives of consumers to follow brands on Instagram two distinctive user groups were identified. These user groups provided an overview of the ideology on which the following behavior of consumers is based. Furthermore, this research sheds light on different aspects of an Instagram post that can be effective in persuading a consumer to start following a brand.

Second, this study examines the usage behavior of consumers on Instagram. Most of the existing research into Instagram has focused on the motive to use Instagram in general. Whereas, this study also investigates how Instagram is used in terms of duration of usage, frequency of usage, distribution of attention, and frequency of visiting the brand page. These insights aid in getting an overview of how Instagram is used by consumers which is a missing element in the current stream of literature on Instagram. This led to the identification of two other user groups which revealed distinctive patterns among the usage of Instagram.

Third, in this study the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram are investigated. In general, brand attractiveness is a well explored research topic. However, until this day it has not yet been studied appropriately in the context of Instagram. This study identifies eight main drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram which lays a foundation for research into brand attractiveness in the context of Instagram.

5.3 Managerial Implications

This study also has several important managerial or practical implications. Researching Instagram from a consumer's perspective first and foremost provides insights concerning the consumer. However, it also acts as a foundation for marketing managers to base their strategies on, as the perspectives of the consumer and brand highly interplay with each other. First, brands should be aware of the motives of consumers to follow brands. When a brand responds to these motives consumers will be more likely to follow it. For instance, amusing and humorous content is appreciated by most consumers, and thus would be beneficial to the brand. Another example of responding to the decisive motives of consumers to follow brands is using the hash tag function on Instagram to indicate relevant photos and videos to the products or services of a brand. Using this method, brands can keep the consumer up-to-date and make them more aware of their new products or services, and the current trends of which these latest additions are subject to. Posts with hash tags will then appear on a list of posts relevant to that trend. So, the hash tag function can easily be used toward the advantage of brands by starting or joining trends on Instagram that support or complement their brand story.

Second, brands should consider that Instagram is a platform for simple and quick usage. Consumers only have a short amount of attention for each post. They quickly want to see what a post is about and decide whether it is appealing. In general, images are more effective in persuading consumers to follow brands than videos, as images are cognitively easier to process. Hence, brands should ensure that their brand page contains enough images to also persuade consumers to follow them who only pay little attention to posts. Furthermore, a lot of consumers have an aversion toward a lot of text in a post, and prefer the emphasis on visual elements. Thus, posts on the brand page should contain as least text as possible, but still enough to deliver the message to the consumer. If needed, more text can be used in the caption of the post to add to the main message delivered by the content of the post itself. Posts should be visually attractive without too much text in the post. In some cases, videos are better suited to provide the consumer with the necessary information. Hence, with complex products or services informative videos may be better suited to transfer enough information to the consumer.

However, the text used in videos should also be kept to a minimum. Brands should take these different aspects into account to determine the best way to display the content and deliver the message.

Third, seen as consumers are easily deterred by advertisements on Instagram, unless the advertisement interesting to the consumer, brands should be careful with repeatedly exposing themselves to consumers. The distinctive frame in which an advertisement is displayed is often the reason why consumers are deterred by it, as it puts too much emphasis on the fact that it contains an advertisement. When a consumer is not interested in the brand it can become disturbing when kept being exposed to it. This could decrease the brand attractiveness. Hence, brands should target the right consumers on Instagram to expose their advertisements to. Furthermore, exposing consumers to a brand without them being conscious about the fact that it is an advertisement can lead to increased brand attractiveness, since some consumers are more susceptible to guerilla marketing. When the consumer is unconsciously processing an advertisement he or she is less likely to be deterred by it. Brands should look out for opportunities to expose themselves to consumers without the consumer being conscious of the fact that the brand is trying to advertise their products or services.

Fourth, marketing managers should consider that consumers have different usage patterns. Teenagers and young adults tend to use Instagram multiple times a day, whereas consumers in their forties and fifties do not tend to use Instagram on a daily basis. Depending on the target group of a brand, brands should post accordingly. For instance, when targeting consumers who are forty or older, posting too much content might lead to an information overload, as the consumer gets exposed to too much posts of the same brand. Teenagers and young adults, on the other hand, use Instagram more often in general. Hence, target groups consisting of consumers of those age groups can be exposed to more content of a brand.

Fifth, since correctly timed posts that respond to current events or other phenomena are observed more elaborate and frequent, brands should use these opportunities to post relevant content that engages the consumer more with the brand. Moreover, having the knowledge of when certain needs are evoked among consumers could be very valuable for brands. This could mean that brands can post relevant content at the right time when it is more likely to be thoroughly observed by consumers.

Sixth, the eight drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram provide valuable guidelines for brands when it comes to their Instagram strategy. Brands should ensure that their posts are of high quality, since this is one of the most important drivers of the brand attractiveness. Next to that, brands should post content on a regular basis. This way a brand is more likely to become

or remain a top-of-mind brand. Posts of brands that suit the interests of consumers make the brand more attractive as well. Hence, brands should try to create the highest possible fit between their content and the interests of the consumers. Furthermore, posts that evoke the feeling of it being personal make the brand more approachable, and make it easier for the consumers to identify themselves with the brand. This also stimulates the brand attractiveness.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

The study conducted for this research also has its limitations. First, the findings of this study provide a foundation for research on Instagram from the perspective of the consumer. Its aim is to reveal the perceptions of consumers regarding their own attitudes and behavior toward brands on Instagram. With this study underlying motives were identified and in-depth insights were gained. However, these results and its generalizability remain to be tested. Conducting quantitative research in the field of Instagram could test this, and might lead to additional insights based on this research, and thus, is a valuable direction for future research.

Second, the purposeful sampling method in combination with snowball sampling led to knowledgeable respondents of which a group of respondent was obtained via initial respondents. Consequently, less control could be exercised on the selection of respondents, which led to an interview sample of eleven males and nine females. However, recent results (Parker, 2016) have shown that the proportion of females using Instagram is larger than that of males. If the case may be that females have significantly differing attitudes toward brands compared to males, and show other behavior toward brands on Instagram, it could be possible that slightly different results can be obtained. This limitation also concerns the composition of the focus group, as it consisted of four acquainted male respondents. Perhaps, when conducting a focus group with female respondents included as well, additional insights could be gained from it. Furthermore, a focus group consisting of unacquainted respondent may also result in additional findings, since respondents who were already acquainted may share certain norms and values. For instance, when respondents grew up in the same kind of environment their norms and values might be more similar, which could undermine the amount of different opinions and insights that can be obtained from the focus group.

Third, the perceptions of the consumer regarding advertisements are investigated in this research. However, respondents are only capable of evaluating their attitude and behavior when they are conscious about a post being an advertisement. Whereas the influences of advertising on attitude and behavior toward the brand remain unknown when the consumer is unconscious

about a post being an advertisement. The effects of unconsciously processing information on brand attitudes and behavior have hardly been researched (Yoo, 2008), and thus provide another interesting direction for future research.

Fourth, for the convenience of this research and with a limited budget and timeframe, the sample of this research was limited to only Dutch inhabitants. Researching the consumer's perspective on Instagram in the context of other cultures might also lead to different findings regarding the motives to follow brands, the behavior toward brands, and the drivers of brand attractiveness on Instagram. Ergo, studying the influence of culture on the attitudes and behavior toward brands on Instagram is also an interesting path for future research.

Fifth, this research focuses on the consumer's perspective, and lays a foundation for further research regarding this perspective. Other aspects of the usage of Instagram by consumers, for instance, engagement with brands, remain to be explored. Moreover, future research could focus on the interplay between the consumer's and firm's perspective. Extending the research beyond the brand attractiveness by studying its influences on firm performance indicators, like market share and willingness to pay, or other variables that are of importance to brands, provides a very interesting direction for future research. This could result in even more in-depth insights and practical implications for brands.

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6. APPENDIX

6.1 Interview Guide

Before introducing the research to the respondent, the researcher will get acquainted with the respondent, and will make sure that the respondent is comfortable.

Introduction

A brief introduction to prepare the respondents for the interview or focus group, in which the respondent is only informed about the goal of getting a better understanding of Instagram marketing. Nothing will be shared with the respondents that could cloud their judgement, or bias their input.

Ethical treatment

The respondents will be made aware of the ethical treatment. First, the respondent will be assured that he or she is free to back out of the interview or focus group at any point in time, if the respondent does not want to proceed. Second, to enable further analysis of the input of the respondents, the respondents will be asked for permission to record the interview or focus group. This will enable the researcher to go over the discussed issues again, which helps to get a better understanding. Furthermore, the respondents will be ensured that their input will be handled with great care, confidentiality and anonymity (by not distributing the data outside of Radboud University and using faking names). Besides, the respondents will be made aware of the fact that the gathered data will be made available to, and remain property of the Nijmegen School of Management, which will be the rightful owner of the data when concluded. This will be all assured with the fact that the Research Integrity Form is signed, which provides an agreement to the property rights, codes of conduct and ethical treatment for this research (see Appendix 6.2). To conclude the introduction, the respondent will be asked whether he or she would like to be provided with the results of the research after it is concluded.

Questions

After the introduction and the assurance of ethical treatment the respondents will be asked whether they have any further questions at that point. If not, the interview or focus group will start.

Questions about demographics/requirements

1. Wat is je naam?
2. Hoe oud ben je?
3. Waarom heb je een Instagram profiel?
4. Via welke apparaten gebruik je Instagram?
5. Volg je minstens één merk op Instagram?

Questions about why respondents follow brands on Instagram

6. Wat betekenen deze merken voor jou? (*see question 5*)
7. Wat zijn de redenen dat je deze merken volgt? (*see question 5 & 6*)
8. Waarom zou je in het algemeen een merk op Instagram volgen?
9. Door wat voor een soort post zou jij eerder geneigd zijn om een merk te volgen? (*identify importance of texts, images, videos, visual elements*)
10. Wat hoop je met het volgen van een merk op Instagram te bereiken?
11. Hoe beïnvloeden advertenties op Instagram jou? (*paid posts by brands*)

In case of advertisement leading to following the page:

- Wat dreef jou er dan toe om dit merk te gaan volgen?

Questions about how respondents follow brands on Instagram

12. Hoe vaak gebruik je Instagram?
13. Hoe gebruik je de homepage? (*identify whether respondent searches for certain posts, scrolls through all of them or does not use the homepage at all*)
14. Hoe vaak bekijk je de pagina van de merken die je volgt? (*identify differing frequencies of following brands*)
15. Hoe beïnvloed het soort merk hoe frequent je deze volgt?
16. Welke andere factoren zijn er die het volgen van merken beïnvloeden?

Questions about what the drivers of brand attractiveness are on Instagram

17. Wanneer vind je een merk aantrekkelijk op Instagram?
18. Hoe verandert de aantrekkelijkheid van een merk op Instagram die je niet volgt als je meerdere keren eraan wordt blootgesteld?
19. Wat verandert het volgen van een merk op Instagram aan de aantrekkelijkheid van dat merk?

For the following questions three brand pages on Instagram are used in order to get a better understanding of the motives of the respondents for following them. These three brands will be from different product/service categories, and of different popularity in order to maximize the amount that can be learned from the answers of the respondents. Used brand pages: nike (Nike), netflix (Netflix US) and mcdonaldsnl (McDonald's NL).

20. Hoe denk je over dit merk? (*identify brand attractiveness*)

21. Waarom zou je dit merk wel of niet volgen?

In case of positive response:

- Hoe zou het volgen van dit merk de aantrekkelijkheid van het merk veranderen?

In case of negative response:

- Wat zou dit merk kunnen veranderen aan hun Instagram pagina om jou wel zo ver te krijgen om het te volgen?

6.2 Research Integrity Form

Research Integrity Form - Master Thesis

Name: <u>Jelmer van Zuijlen</u>	Student number: <u>S4019977</u>
RU e-mail address: <u>j.vanzuijlen@student.ru.nl</u>	Master specialisation: <u>Marketing</u>

Thesis title: <u>Instagram marketing: attractiveness of brands</u>
Brief description of the study: <u>Research into the following behavior of consumers on Instagram, who follow brands, and how this affects the brand attractiveness.</u>

It is my responsibility to follow the university's code of academic integrity and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of my study. This includes:

- providing original work or proper use of references;
- providing appropriate information to all involved in my study;
- requesting informed consent from participants;
- transparency in the way data is processed and represented;
- ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data;

If there is any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research, I will complete another Research Integrity Form.

Breaches of the code of conduct with respect to academic integrity (as described / referred to in the thesis handbook) should and will be forwarded to the examination board. Acting contrary to the code of conduct can result in declaring the thesis invalid

Student's Signature: _____



Date: 20-03-'17

To be signed by supervisor

I have instructed the student about ethical issues related to their specific study. I hereby declare that I will challenge him / her on ethical aspects through their investigation and to act on any violations that I may encounter.

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

6.3 Master Thesis Planning

Table 1
Master Thesis Planning

Period	To Do	Notes
27/03 – 17/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find and contact respondents - Prepare interviews and focus group - Conduct interviews and focus group - Adjust interview and focus group questions if necessary - Transcribe gained data - Start analyzing the gained data - Conclude interviews and focus group - If possible: start with chapter 4: analysis and results 	<p>(Purposeful and snowball sampling)</p> <p>(Twenty interviews and one focus group conducted at the end of this period)</p> <p>(Meet with supervisor throughout period to discuss progress)</p>
17/04 – 08/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start (proceed) with chapter 4: analysis and results - Proceed with transcription of remaining data - Proceed analyzing the gained data - Conclude the analysis and provide the results 	<p>(Thematic analysis)</p> <p>(Use visual elements to support results)</p> <p>(Meet with supervisor throughout period to discuss progress)</p>
08/05 – 29/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start with chapter 5: conclusion and discussion - Work out conclusions that can be drawn from analysis and results 	<p>(Meet with supervisor throughout period to discuss progress)</p>
29/05 – 19/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revise chapters 4 and 5 and make necessary improvements/adjustments - Hand in Master Thesis 	<p>(Meet with supervisor and other academics/students to discuss progress)</p>

