

**Carolin Wesche**

# Design of Effective Instagram Campaigns

An Empirical Examination of Visual Brand Post Design  
Stimuli

**Master's Thesis**

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University of Muenster

Master Thesis

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## **Executive Summary**

As social media campaigns have become a popular and promising marketing instrument, marketers are highly interested in creating effective brand posts to exploit this medium's brand building potential. This refers to increasing brand awareness and loyalty, fostering direct interactions with the consumer and triggering purchase intentions. Due to the challenges that evolved through new media, such as information overload and, as a result, divided consumer attention towards marketing messages, the need of effective brand posts becomes even more important. A vast amount of literature has investigated design stimuli for classic communication mediums regarding the attention to an ad or the attention to a brand. The investigated traditional stimuli can be roughly divided into physically intensive & prominent stimuli, novel & cognitive demanding stimuli, and affective & emotional stimuli. However, little is known about their influence on brand post effectiveness in social media. Thus, the following study aims at closing this gap by investigating the influence of those traditional design stimuli, applied to a brand post, on the consumer's engagement rate on Instagram. Consumer engagement thereby represents the effectiveness of a brand post and is defined by the ratio of the number of likes of a brand post and the number of followers of the brand. Aiming at analyzing the effectiveness of traditional design stimuli on Instagram, the author gathers 450 Instagram brand posts from five different product categories which are subsequently assessed and coded. The researcher then conducts a regression analysis as this allows to evaluate the influence of the traditional visual design stimuli on the consumer's engagement rate. Whereas novel & cognitive demanding stimuli are not found to influence the engagement rate for a brand post, certain physically intensive & prominent stimuli as well as some affective & emotional stimuli have a significant influence. The present study further investigates the moderating effect of brand knowledge on the magnitude of the stimuli's influence on consumer engagement rate. The results indicate that brand knowledge has a moderating effect on certain stimuli. For all other stimuli, the influence on the engagement rate does not change for different levels of brand knowledge. The results further show that design stimuli applied in brand posts on Instagram differ in their impact on the engagement rate, depending on the product category shown in the brand post. These findings can be used by managers to exploit the benefits of social media marketing on Instagram.

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## List of Abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
App	Application
$\beta_{unstd}$	unstandardized beta
CV	Control Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
e.g.	exempli gratia
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model
FGC	Firm Generated Content
IV	Independent Variable
KS	Kolmogorov-Smirnov
M	Moderator
OLS	Ordinary Least Square
p.	page
PCC	Pearson Correlation coefficient
pp.	pages
resp.	respectively
Sig.	Significance
Std.	Standard Deviation

## List of Symbols

$\Delta$  delta, difference

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## 1 Introduction

Marketers have a broad portfolio of traditional well researched design stimuli at their disposal to create effective traditional print or outdoor communication campaigns (Batra and Keller 2016, p. 122; MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski 1991; Rossiter and Percy 1985). However, for the creation of marketing campaigns on social media, marketers cannot draw on well-established experiences regarding effective design stimuli as social media is a relatively new communication channel (Zhang and Mao 2016, p. 155). Nevertheless, social media marketing is an important and valuable marketing approach since it provides new opportunities to directly engage with the consumer, build the brand and eventually foster sales (Gensler et al. 2013, p. 246; Kumar et al. 2016, p. 7; Lamberton and Stephen 2016, p. 159; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Consequently, companies strive to complement traditional campaigns with effective marketing strategies on social media networks (Batra and Keller 2016, p. 122; De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang 2017, p. 1; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 59; Kumar et al. 2016; Lamberton and Stephen 2016, p. 164). As empirical research has shown, companies have started to shift their marketing budgets to social media channels to exploit the above-mentioned opportunities. This development implicates that social media marketing has become a popular marketing instrument which has been adopted by various firms in different industries (Akpınar and Berger 2017; De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang 2012; Gensler et al. 2013; Keller 2009).

One particular social network intensely used by companies is Instagram, a photo and video sharing network application (app). Its popularity is displayed in the rising number of registered advertisers on Instagram which doubled to two million from October 2016 to September 2017 (App 2017; Instagram 2017a; TechCrunch 2017). By implementing marketing strategies on Instagram, companies simultaneously try to take advantage of the fact that especially the target group of young people aged between 14 and 29 are intensely active on this social network (Seven One Media 2017). The number of active users on Instagram is growing faster than ever and climbed up to 800 million in September 2017 (GfK Media 2017; Instagram 2017b; Meedia 2017; Seven One Media 2017). Additionally, Instagram shows a high engagement rate of consumers (Track Maven 2016) and has found to be a source of inspiration for users regarding new products (Instagram 2018b; Kobilke 2017, pp. 10–14). Due to this inspiration induced by a brand post, 75% of Instagram users state that they acted on the respective post, e.g., liking or commenting it (Brecht 2018; Instagram 2017c). Consequently, by creating these brand posts, companies strive to elicit reactions from consumers and get in contact with them (De Vries,



Gensler, and Leeflang 2012). However, it can be observed that some posts are earning a lot of likes and comments, while others are almost being un-commented. This indicates that the understanding of how to effectively design marketing messages on social media is still limited. In the case of Instagram, the visual experience is assumed to be an important factor to evoke many likes and comments (Digitalwaves 2017). Thus, the design of the picture shown in a brand post seems to be critical to arouse the consumers interest and to make the consumer engage with the post. Therefore, it is critical to understand which components of a picture lead to an engagement of consumers with a brand post. Traditional advertising literature states that physically intensive & prominent stimuli, novel & cognitive demanding stimuli, and affective & emotional stimuli can be used to design effective ads (MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski 1991). It is assumed that these stimuli are also applicable in the social media environment. Hence, this paper aims to empirically investigate the **effect of traditional design stimuli used on a picture in brand posts on the consumer engagement rate on Instagram**. By addressing this question, this work contributes to advertising literature in the context of social media. While traditional advertising literature conducts research applying different stimuli relating to *attention to ad* or *attention to brand*, little is known about the effect of traditional design cues on *consumer engagement* on Instagram (Janiszewski 1998; MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski 1991; Zhang, Wedel, and Pieters 2009, p. 670). In summary, the challenges of a firm's post are firstly to activate the consumers attention and secondly to motivate the user to interact with the picture (De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang 2012, p. 84).

To address the research question properly, this paper deals with findings of effective print advertising literature as well as consumer engagement in the social media context. Additionally, Instagram and its mechanisms will be presented. Afterwards, the hypothesis and the development of the conceptual framework will follow. The study design and the analysis are described. Finally, the results are discussed and implications as well as limitations and future research are stated.

## 2 Theoretical Background and Literature Review

To investigate the effect of different design stimuli used within an Instagram brand post, it clearly is important to understand the social network application Instagram and its mechanism. Therefore, a brief introduction to Instagram will follow. Moreover, classical advertising processing frameworks and design stimuli which are known to increase the *attention to ad* and *brand* will be defined. Subsequently, consumer engagement within the social media environment will be defined.

### 2.1 Instagram as Social Media Communication Medium

Instagram was launched in October 2010 as a mobile social network application and acquired one million users by the end of the same year (Instagram 2010). Today Instagram is one of the leading social networks and counts 800 million active users including two million brand accounts (Statista 2017; TechCrunch 2017). Thus, users are either consumers or firms which represent their brands on Instagram. The name “Instagram” is a word blend of the words “instant camera” and “telegram” (Lang 2014). It therefore reflects the purpose and function of this app which is the sharing of visual content from a mobile device. As a social network application it allows every user to create a personal account, to edit self-created visual content such as pictures and videos, and to share it with other users (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 63). Hence, Instagram emphasizes the visual experience of the users. Even though different product types and topics are present on Instagram, the most successful topics are beauty, fashion, sports and food (Reiz 2017).

To understand Instagram’s functionality, the main features will be explained next. As for most social network applications, the profile is also the core element of Instagram (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels 2009, p. 92). Every consumer or company can create and share content and change account information on their own **Instagram profile**. Posts that are shared from the own account will be visible on the profile later. With an active account, one can add other users such as friends, acquaintances, unknown users or companies and brands to his online social network. Through this action, the user allows the app to integrate the posts from the friend’s, acquaintances’, personally unknown users’, or brand’s account in his own newsfeed. From that point on, one can potentially see all content which is being posted from the other accounts. This process is one of the main mechanism of the app as it connects the users to each other and enables the exchange of and the interaction with the shared visual content. A network is formed.