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Elements of Instagram Influencer Posts that Drive Follower Engagement

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by

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Abstract

Influencers are now becoming more popular on social media as a way for brands to promote products and services. The relationship between influencers' post content and follower engagement deserves more attention. Through a content analysis, this research examines how influencer posts drive follower engagement. The results showed that emojis, campaign hashtags, frequency, and sponsored tags had a significant relationship with follower engagement. The present study sheds light on future research to explore other content variables of influencers' posts.

Chapter One:

Introduction

People establish their networks, express sentiments, and share information on social media platforms (Li et al., 2020). With the development of social media, more and more brands started to engage with different social media platforms and utilize social media to introduce their products or services. As a result, social media marketing has emerged as a distinct field within marketing.

Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the commercial behavior conducted through social media platforms (Felix et al., 2017). User-generated content (UGC)-based social media marketing and social-based social media marketing are two kinds of SMM. UGC-based SMM mainly uses online platforms, like social media, and asks users to share brand-related content. Social-based SMM, on the other hand, utilizes instant messaging. Based on UGC platforms, influencer marketing has emerged and successfully achieved a great number of potential customers (Childers et al., 2018).

The increase in usage of social media sites, the ability of regular people to build followings and share content, and the interest by marketers in promoting products in innovative ways has led to the rise of social media influencers. Influencers usually are individuals who have accumulated lots of followers on social media by presenting an authentic image online (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Cotter (2019) defined influencers as those who post visual content about their lifestyles to attract followers. The main difference between influencers and celebrities is the channel through which they become famous. Celebrities build their influence based on traditional channels, while

influencers rely on non-traditional channels, largely social media. Because of the increase of consumers' dependence on peer-to-peer communication (Hughes et al., 2019), more and more brands consider influencer marketing as one of their important strategies. Followers view influencers' messages effective because they consider influencers attractive and sincere (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). One of the reasons why Influencers are effective is electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). eWOM has been shown to have a stronger effect on consumer decision making than commercial information (López & Sicilia, 2014). In order to have better eWOM, influencers try to provide content with higher quality for their followers (De Veirman et al., 2017).

De Veirman et al. (2017) defined influencer marketing as brands using influencers to endorse products and establish brand images among the influencers' followers. Newberry (2018) mentions that influencer marketing plays a significant role in increasing brand engagement. What's more, followers are indispensable in influencer marketing.

Followers are individuals who subscribe to influencers' channels. The potential of followers to care about brands and purchase products is huge. Munsch (2021) conducted a study and found out that the effectiveness and reliability of influencers among Millennials are more than celebrities. In this case, social media managers try their best to attract the Millennial generation, because they know this generation pays less attention to traditional methods (Munsch, 2021).

In addition to the Millennial generation, all kinds of social media users are considered as potential followers and customers. However, although some social media influencers' have high exposure, they may have low effectiveness. Facebook's average engagement rate per post was only 0.27% in 2020, while Instagram had a higher rate of 1.16% (Chen, 2021). Today, Instagram is an ideal and representative tool for eWOM (Delafrooz et al., 2019).

In order to attract more followers, influencers need to pay more attention to their post content. Influencers with various themes and different scales of followers may play different roles in influencer marketing. However, studies about the function of influencer marketing and follower engagement are largely vacant. In this case, this study aims to analyze factors of post content that affect follower engagement.

There are many studies about influencer marketing strategies. Quesenberry and Coolsen (2019) found relationships between Facebook follower engagement (i.e., likes, comments, shares) and various variables (i.e., brand attitudes, brand value ranking, credibility). Tafesse and Wood (2021) conducted research that examined the measurement of influencers' post content and engagement strategy. The numbers of followers and followees are considered in the research. Researchers found that content and strategy had a relationship with follower engagement.

This study is aimed to find out the elements of influencers' posts that increase follower engagement. The research tried to find what kinds of post content and strategies are most useful to effect follower engagement. The findings can provide practitioners who use influencer marketing with a direction to advise influencers who are used in marketing campaigns. The findings can have implications for brands that try to hire influencers to increase follower engagement with posts.

The research gathered real data from Instagram which has a large number of both influencers and followers. Instagram provides users a platform to share their personal lives and experiences through post content (De Veirman et al., 2017). Top 10 fashion influencers' posts were collected for this study. Different characteristics of posts and influencers were measured. Thinking about the result of this research can provide a new vision and direction for influencer marketing campaigns.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

Influencer Marketing

With the development of social media platforms, advertisers have tried different ways to reach consumers. Social media influencers are social media users who have a large number of followers. What's more, influencers are to some degree considered trusted tastemakers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Because social media can be more critical to a brands' long-run success than traditional media, brands have shifted more portions of money to social media instead of traditional advertising (Jobs & Cilfoil, 2014).

Influencers promote marketers' products and services in their Instagram posts. These kinds of endorsements with high eWOM are more like sharing tips with friends than paid advertisements (Abidin, 2016). As a result, eWOM culture has contributed to the emergence of influencer marketing (Munsch, 2021). Influencer marketing provides digital channels for both customers and brands to connect and engage with each other (Childers et al., 2018).

Nowadays, new persuasive communication strategies have emerged as a result of customers' mistrust of advertising. Traditional advertising managers are facing more challenges nowadays. Childers et al. (2018) pointed out that about half of Americans didn't believe in brands as much as they did 20 years ago. In this case, influencer marketing offers new opportunities.

Instead of traditional advertising and celebrity endorsements, influencer marketing provides brands platforms to reach more different online customers and smaller targeted groups (Childers et al., 2018). Cotter (2019) also indicated that influencers establish a close and intimate relationship

with their followers by sharing real-life experiences in specific areas. In this case, influencer marketing managers realize that successful influencer campaigns need to interact with followers and then induce more follower engagement (Argyris et al., 2020).

Instagram Marketing Contents

Usually, Instagram is the premier choice of the social media platform for influencer marketing managers. According to the State of Influencer Marketing 2020 report, Instagram is chosen by 97% of influencer marketing managers. Instagram provides different types of content for managers to choose from posts to stories. However, although Instagram stories are popular for social media marketers, only 30% of them prefer to choose Instagram stories (Linqia, 2020). Based on the Instagram Report 2020, the most common kinds of engagement measured are likes and comments. The report found that posts with images received 27.55% more likes than posts with videos and 13.55% more likes than posts with multiple photos or videos. Not only did posts with images receive more likes, but these kinds of posts also had more comments. Meanwhile, beauty and cosmetic relevant accounts were most popular (Mention, 2020).

Instagram provides a great platform for brands' eWOM purposes because its functions allow marketers to share both videos and images which can promote products or services (De Veirman et al., 2017). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) explored the source credibility of online celebrities' profiles on Instagram. Results found that non-traditional celebrities are more credible than traditional celebrities. The authors suggested that brands should pay more attention to information that is shown on Instagram and take consumers' control into consideration. It is important for brands to utilize Instagram effectively to reach their potential and target audiences. Both types of influencers and kinds of influencers' post content should be cared about.

De Veirman et al., (2017) conducted experimental studies to explore the relationship between influencers' follower numbers and brand attitudes. The findings showed that influencers with higher numbers of followers may not be suitable for brands to promote certain products. In this case, the types of influencers could have different levels of influence on their followers. Researchers suggested that influencer marketing managers should choose appropriate influencers instead of just those with the most followers.

Follower Engagement

Abidin (2016) explained that followers subscribe to influencers' posts and influencers rely on followers to create their fandom. Usually, famous influencers who have well-known brand endorsements have more than 1 million followers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Brands utilize influencers to connect with followers and reach more potential customers based on the relationship between influencers and followers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

Since influencer marketing has appeared, there are many studies conducted to solve related issues, such as influencers' likeability (De Veirman et al., 2017), influencer marketing's functional components (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), and sponsored ads on Instagram (Childers et al., 2018). Meanwhile, in terms of followers, many studies are about followers' power of purchase (Martínez-López et al., 2020; Yüksel, 2016), marketing evaluation (Boon-Long & Wongsurawat, 2015), and brand engagement (Hughes et al., 2019). However, there is little research on follower engagement. Although some studies investigated a few parts of follower engagement, like numbers of comments, shares, and likes, more important variables should be included. The present study tries to fulfill the lack part by testing the relationship between variables in influencers' post content and follower engagement on Instagram. Childers et al. (2018) found that brands conduct influencer

marketing campaigns by connecting with online audiences based on the engagement of targeted followers and the trust of potential customers. Influencers pursue higher influence on their main social media platforms which contribute to higher follower engagement. In turn, higher engagement can lead to more opportunities for visibility and increase more discussion (Arora et al., 2019).

Follower engagement refers to how followers positively view influencers, constructively engage with post content, and accept persuasion attempts from influencers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). In this case, it can provide a concise metric to evaluate the extent to which influencers are effective on social media (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Based on the mechanism created by Arora et al. (2019) to measure the influencer index, the present study considers two basic variables (likes and comments) as the index to measure follower engagement. Meanwhile, according to past research, follower count, followee count, post type, number of words, number of hashtags, number of brand links/brand names are also included in the measurement (Quesenberry & Coolsen, 2018; Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

Daniel et al. (2020) found that there is no strong relationship between Instagram users' intention to interact with influencers and fit degree of influencer-product posts. In this case, users, especially followers are more willing to engage in influencers' posts no matter the purchasing intention. What's more, when followers positively react and engage with influencers' posts, influencers could be exposed to them and other users more often. On the other hand, followers' low intention to engage could result in disdaining influencers' content.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Based on influencer marketing literature, eWOM is more important than traditional advertising (De Veirman et al., 2017). When followers receive information from a few customers, they trust influencers with more credibility and expertise. Followers, or rather customers, usually value the information they receive from sources they trust. In this case, since consumers can achieve free and credible brand-related information and share their opinions on brands, social media platforms such as Instagram become useful and effective tools for eWOM (Jansen et al., 2009).

eWOM provides an indicator for consumer interest in products and services. Internet users can get access to all kinds of information by other customers from the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The phenomenon of eWOM explains why brands try their best to create great and positive images on the Internet. Influencers' identification is key to the diffusion of eWOM. Influencers can influence their followers' attitudes and decisions by sharing opinions on social media and social media activities (Watts & Dodds, 2007). What's more, because of the rapid speed of diffusion, a viral phenomenon appears. In this case, not only followers are affected by influencers' influence, but the entire social media is also under influencers' viral influence.

Persuasion-Knowledge Model (PKM) and Sponsorship Disclosure

The Persuasion-Knowledge Model (PKM) is often used to explain consumers' persuasion knowledge and their strategies to cope with persuasion attempts (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Based on the PKM, persuasion messages will be distinguished from messages considered not persuasive, and consumers can choose to be persuaded or not. Sponsorship disclosure is widely explained by the PKM.

Boerman et al. (2017) examined that disclosing sponsorship influences the use of persuasion knowledge. Using PKM, Kim and Song (2018) explored interactions between sponsorship content and content types, then affected consumers' responses to brand-related user-generated content. In this case, persuasion knowledge led to manipulative intent. Also, according to PKM, disclosing sponsorship can have a negative effect on brand attitude, and activate customers' skepticism which decreases influencers' credibility (De Veirman et al., 2019). Meanwhile, posts with simple sponsorship information have stronger negative effects on persuasion than posts with a note that opinions are honest despite sponsorship and posts without sponsorship disclosure (Hwang et al., 2016).

According to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) guidelines, consumers are supposed to know when they are exposed to sponsorship or advertising. Sponsorship disclosures could help followers recognize sponsored Instagram posts. When followers realize that the goal of the influencers' posts is to persuade them, they are likely to resist the persuasion attempt.

Virality

Alhabash and McAlister (2014) defined virality as "the combination of viral reach, affective evaluation, and message deliberation" (p. 1319). Viral reach means the volume of sharing and delivering by Internet users like shares. However, Instagram doesn't have a share button. In this case, the number of shares is not considered. Affective evaluation means the emotional expression in online messages such as likes on Instagram. Message deliberation means Internet users' public and active deliberation of messages like comments on Instagram.

More and more managers carry out viral marketing campaigns because of its high speed of diffusion and broad scale of reach. They utilize influencers' influence to reach more followers.

Based on Metcalfe's Law, social media provides a strong platform for marketing managers to distribute brand messages. In the present study, two parts of virality are used to measure follower engagement.

Social Influence Theory

Kelman (1961) explained three processes of social influence. Social influence theory discusses how individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and following actions or behaviors are affected through three steps. The first step is compliance. When a person is affected by another individual or by a group, it means he or she wants to get a positive reaction from the other. Identification is the second step which indicates a person adopts actions from others because he or she tries to satisfy a self-defining relationship with the influencers. Meanwhile, this relationship in turn becomes a part of the follower's self-image (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Internalization is the final step of social influence processes. Followers will accept influence when it is congruent with their value system. These three processes explicate the influence process instrumentally.

De Vermien et al. (2017) mentioned that when followers consider influencers popular and credible, they will be more likely to follow them and accept their influence. Interactions between followers and influencers play an important role in influencers' content contributions which especially are influenced by the follower numbers (Goes et al., 2014; Guan et al., 2018). Liu et al. (2019) had improved that social media users need to provide relevant content to gain enough influence to be influencers. In this case, the number of followers has a great and positive influence on content contribution behaviors. The number of followers becomes a part of follower engagement measurement.

In the present study, the researcher will not measure influencers' credibility and likeability directly. Influencers' post content and their engagement strategy were examined in this study and are measured by variables coded from posts. The number of followers, likes, comments can present influencers' popularity, which can be helpful to gain influence through identification. The collaboration and campaign hashtags show the influencers main field and their status in this area. This acknowledgement can be useful as a part of internalization to attain influence.

Chapter Three:

Research Questions

The focus of this study is follower engagement on Instagram based on social influence theory and the definition of virality measured by likes and comments. The study explores the relationship between Instagram influencers' post content and followers' likes and comments. The researcher conducted a content analysis of Instagram influencers' posts to explore how influencers increase follower engagement by their post content type. Meanwhile, numbers of followers, followees, and other engagement variables are considered in this research.

Emojis are a kind of new generation of emoticons which is used by more and more users on social media (Novak et al., 2015). Nowadays, emojis have gradually replaced emoticons which use punctuation symbols. Usually, emojis are assumed as the expression of the users' emotional state and the independent channel to communicate without linguistic text (Tian et al., 2017). The use of emojis on social media has become a common and important part of online communication, especially among the younger generation. Tian et al. (2017) examined the reliable relationship between Facebook reactions and the use of emojis. What's more, they found that emojis could detect users' sentiment. Wordstream founder Larry Kim also examined that tweets with emojis contributed to 25.4% more engagement than tweets without emojis (Day, 2019). Therefore, this study examined how the number of emojis affect follower engagement.

RQ1: What is the relationship between the number of emojis and follower engagement?

Influencers collaborate with not only brands but other influencers. Brands collaborate with multiple influencers to promote one product or campaign, because customers prefer to trust real

people with high eWOM instead of a huge brand. Collaboration with famous brand-influencers strengthens consumers' attitudes, purchase intentions, and the perceived credibility of the influencer (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021). Also, it is a good choice for influencers to collaborate with other influencers who have a large number of followers. They can reach a new group of followers and build a good image. Meanwhile, influencers can bring fresh content and perspective to their old followers. In this case, with useful and effective collaborations, influencers can achieve higher follower engagement than without collaboration. The most common sign of collaboration is at sign (@). Influencers can mention other influencers or brands by at signs in their posts. Therefore, this study measured the collaboration variable by counting the number of at signs.

RQ2: What is the relationship between collaborations and follower engagement?

A professional influencer knows how to utilize hashtags which are related to posts. This can reach more Instagram users who care about this topic or campaign. Usually, influencers would build their own campaigns with brands or other influencers with a special hashtag. Campaign hashtags can influence post views and in turn impact follower engagement. An influencer can join multiple campaigns by using hashtags. Therefore, this study used the number of hashtags to measure the relationship between campaigns and follower engagement.

RQ3: What is the relationship between campaign hashtags and follower engagement?

How many posts should be posted every day or every week is an important question for every influencer. Different frequency could lead to different follower engagement and rate of reach per post. Also, with variable goals, influencers may have different choices for post frequency. Therefore, this study took frequency as an independent variable to examine the relationship with follower engagement and the number of followers.

RQ4: What is the relationship between the frequency of influencers' posts and follower engagement?

A lot of studies have discussed sponsorship in influencer marketing. It is obvious that a sponsored tag can recognize advertising posts and may have negative effects on follower engagement. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between sponsored tags and follower engagement with the following research question.

RQ5: What is the relationship between sponsored tags on influencers' posts and follower engagement?

There are different content types on Instagram. Most influencers prefer to use photos, videos or albums. Influencers try to create content that achieves higher follower engagement and then gets the algorithm's preference. Photos seemed to get more engagement than video on Instagram, however, videos received more than double the number of comments than photos (Lua, 2020). This study examined the relationship between content types and follower engagement.

RQ6: What content type receives the higher engagement on Instagram influencers' posts?

Chapter Four:

Methodology

To examine and test the research questions, variables were collected and coded from 50 Instagram fashion influencers' posts. A content analysis was conducted in this study because content analysis is a suitable and objective quantitative method for analyzing social media content. In this study, follower engagement was measured by the number of likes and comments. Data collection was the most recent 20 posts of the 50 influencers before April 25, 2021.

Data Collection

Based on various rankings of influencers on the Internet and social media agencies, a list of top fashion influencers was chosen by the researcher. A&E is one of the top New York digital agencies and provides special services in both influencer marketing campaigns and social media management. A&E gathered a list of top 100 fashion influencers in 2020 who lead the trends of this field and industry.

This study chose 50 influencers randomly based on this list. The 20 latest posts of each influencer before April 25, 2021 were collected and examined. The longest time frame of posts selected for analysis was by @ELMABEGANOVICH from August 26, 2019 to July 15, 2020. The shortest time frame of posts selected for analysis was by @CHIARAFERRAGNI from April 11, 2021 to April 8, 2021. Table 1 provided ten examples of influencers who are in the list. The number

of followers, followees, and posts were clear on the influencers' home page like Figure 1. Based on these influencers' post contents, Table 2 showed the variables coded by the researcher.

According to Fashion Report 2018 (Lyst, 2018), Instagram has great fashion power to force trends and increase sales. Instagram as a highly visual social media platform is a perfect place to promote new lifestyles and trends. That is why fashion brands prefer to choose Instagram as their main social media platform for influencer marketing campaigns. The report also shows that celebrities and their outfits are still the most powerful influencers. In this case, the fashion industry is a representative chosen for this study.

Table 1

Examples of Influencer Accounts

No.	Influencer account	Follower	Following	Post
1	COLE SPROUSE @COLESPROUSE	35.4m	568	1095
2	CHIARA FERRAGNI @CHIARAFERRAGNI	20.2m	1152	13050
3	ALEXA CHUNG @ALEXACHUNG	3.9m	834	6033
4	LEONIE HANNE @LEONIEHANNE	2.3m	1284	2363
5	DANIELLE BERNSTEIN @WEWOREWHAT	2.4m	1007	12322
6	LENA PERMINOVA @LENAPERMINOVA	2.3m	400	4819
7	NICOLE WARNE @NICOLEWARNE	1.8m	482	4777
8	IRENE KIM @IRENEISGOOD	1.7m	248	4588
9	JENN IMM @IMJENNIM	1.7m	925	3143
10	BLAIR EADIE @BLAIREADIEBEE	1.6m	989	3786

Figure 1

An Example of An Influencer's Instagram Page

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Table 2

Variables and Description

Variable	Description
Follower engagement	The sum of likes and comments received by posts / the number of followers. This can measure the average follower engagement per post per follower.
Emoji	Count of the number of emojis in the post
Collaboration	Mention of other influencers or brands like @mescondi
Campaign hashtags	Campaign hashtags like ##HowILiveConnected#EsteeAmbassador
Frequency	The number of posts in one day
Sponsored	The post is tagged as #sponsored or #ad
Post content types	Image or video

Coding

The 20 latest posts of each influencer were collected and examined. These posts were categorized by variables. For this study, the following coding variables were collected: the number of emojis (0 emojis: 0, 1 emojis: 1, more than 1 emojis: 2), collaboration (yes: 1, no: 0), campaign hashtags (yes: 1, no: 0), frequency (1 post a day: 1, more than 1 post a day: 2), sponsored (yes: 1, no: 0), post types (image: 1, videos: 2).

Chapter Five:

Results

The research coded variables and counted the frequency of them by SPSS. Table 3 presents the frequency of each independent variable.

Table 3

Frequency Table of Variables

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Emojis	Valid	0	386	38.6	38.6	38.6
		1	349	34.9	34.9	73.5
		2	265	26.5	26.5	100.0
		Total	1000	100.0	100.0	
Collaboration	Valid	0	498	49.8	49.8	49.8
		1	502	50.2	50.2	100.0
		Total	1000	100.0	100.0	
Campaign hashtags	Valid	0	647	64.7	64.7	64.7
		1	353	35.3	35.3	100.0
		Total	1000	100.0	100.0	
Frequency	Valid	1	644	80.6	80.6	80.6
		2	155	19.4	19.4	100.0
		Total	1000	100.0	100.0	
Sponsored tag	Valid	0	890	89.0	89.0	89.0
		1	110	11.0	11.0	100.0
		Total	1000	100.0	100.0	
Type	Valid	1	888	88.8	88.8	88.8
		2	110	11.0	11.0	99.8
		3	2	0.2	0.2	100.0
		Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

To get the results, analyses of variance (ANOVA), independent-samples t tests and regression analyses were conducted with emojis, frequency, campaign hashtags, sponsored, and collaboration as factors. The follower engagement (i.e., the sum of likes and comments) was the independent variable. Because the research samples rely on Instagram posts, observations are to some degree dependent. This may affect the results of the analysis, so the interpretation of the results must be taken carefully.

RQ1 analysis

The RQ1 examined the relationship between the number of emojis and follower engagement. ANOVA tests were conducted with emojis as factors and follower engagement as the dependent variable.

Based on Table 4, it is obvious that the significance value is greater than 0.05, which means that the variances of each group are homogeneous. Homogeneity is required for the ANOVA test, so 0.147 is a useful value for the following step.

Table 4

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances-RQ1

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
engagement	Based on Mean	1.919	2	997	.147
	Based on Median	1.468	2	997	.231
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.468	2	828.418	.231
	Based on trimmed mean	1.688	2	997	.186

In Table 5, there was a statistically significant difference between the means of the different numbers of emojis as determined by one-way ANOVA (*F(2, 997) = 3.150, p = 0.043*).

Table 5

ANOVA-RQ1

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.003	2	.002	3.150	.043
Within Groups	.487	997	.000		
Total	.490	999			

An LSD post hoc test in Table 7 revealed that the follower engagement was statistically significantly higher when 0 or 1 emoji were added to more than 1 emojis. When the number of emojis was added from 0 to 1, there was no significant difference. From Table 6, it is obvious that more than half of the 1000 posts prefer to use 0 or 1 emojis.

Table 6

Descriptives-RQ1

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
0	386	.01711912	.025862064	.001316344	.01453100	.01970724	.001105	.364533
1	349	.01752413	.016477280	.000882009	.01578939	.01925887	.000585	.119609
2	265	.02126698	.022618674	.001389454	.01853116	.02400280	.000857	.208415
Total	1000	.01835965	.022149941	.000700443	.01698514	.01973416	.000585	.364533

Table 7

Post Hoc Tests-RQ1

Dependent Variable: engagement
LSD

(I) emojis	(J) emojis	Mean Difference (I–J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0	1	−.00040501	.001632590	.804	−.00360872	.00279870
	2	−.0041479*	.001763250	.019	−.00760797	−.00068776
1	0	.000405010	.001632590	.804	−.00279870	.00360872
	2	−.0037429*	.001800895	.038	−.00727683	−.00020887
2	0	.00414786*	.001763250	.019	.00068776	.00760797
	1	.00374285*	.001800895	.038	.00020887	.00727683

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

RQ2 analysis

The RQ2 examined the relationship between collaborations and follower engagement. Independent-Sample t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences in engagement between posts with collaborations and posts without collaborations.

From the above Table 8, it is clear that the *p*-value of Levene's test is 0.508 ($p > 0.05$), so we accept the null of Levene's test and conclude that the variance in engagement is homogeneity. In this case, the *p*-value of the t-test is 0.637 ($p > 0.05$), so there was no statistically significant difference between the groups. In this case, collaborations with other influencers or brands had no effect on the follower engagement.

Table 8

Independent Samples Test-RQ2

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
engagement	Equal variances assumed	.439	.508	.473	979	.637	.000527726	.001116543	-.00166337	.002718819
	Equal variances not assumed			.473	963.495	.637	.000527726	.001116396	-.00166312	.002718574

RQ3 analysis

The RQ3 examined the relationship between campaign hashtags and follower engagement. Independent-Sample t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences in engagement between posts with campaign hashtags and posts without campaign hashtags.

From the above Table 9, it is clear that the *p*-value of Levene's test is smaller than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$), so we reject the null of Levene's test and conclude that the variance in engagement is

not homogenous. In this case, the *p*-value of the t-test is 0.004 ($p < 0.05$), so there existed a statistically significant difference between the groups.

Table 9

Independent Samples Test-RQ3

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
engagement	Equal variances assumed	30.366	<.001	2.556	979	.011	.002978427	.001165418	.000691423	.005265432
	Equal variances not assumed			2.860	935.139	.004	.002978427	.001041520	.000934440	.005022415

Table 10 shows that posts without campaign hashtags (0.18) had higher follower engagement than posts with campaign hashtags (0.15).

Table 10

Group Statistics-RQ3

	campaigns	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
engagement	0	636	.01814887	.019394838	.000769055
	1	345	.01517044	.013045869	.000702366

RQ4 analysis

The RQ4 examined the relationship between the frequency of posts and follower engagement. A linear regression model was conducted with frequency as factors and follower engagement as the dependent variable.

Table 11 indicates that the *p*-value is 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), so we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly.

Table 11

ANOVA-RQ4

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.010	1	.010	18.369	<.001[b]
	Residual	.428	797	.001		
	Total	.438	798			

a. Dependent Variable: engagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), frequency

From Table 12, the Coefficients table shows the regression equation:

$$\text{Engagement} = 0.030 - 0.009 \text{ Frequency}$$

This equation expresses that follower engagement decreased 0.009 for each unit of frequency.

Table 12

Coefficients-RQ4

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.030	.003		11.580	<.001
	frequency	-.009	.002	-.150	-4.286	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: engagement

RQ5 analysis

The RQ5 examined the relationship between using a sponsored hashtag and follower engagement. Independent-Sample t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences in engagement between sponsored posts and non-sponsored posts.

From Table 13, it is obvious that the *p*-value of Levene's test is 0.391 ($p > 0.05$), so we accept the null of Levene's test and conclude that the variance in engagement is homogeneity. In this case, the *p*-value of the t-test is 0.031 ($p < 0.05$), so there existed a statistically significant difference between the groups.

Table 13

Independent-Samples Test-RQ5

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2–tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
engagement	Equal variances assumed	.738	.391	2.158	998	.031	.004822734	.002234537	.000437804	.009207663
	Equal variances not assumed			2.651	158.812	.009	.004822734	.001819252	.001229685	.008415782

Looking at Table 14, posts without sponsored tags (0.19) had higher follower engagement than posts with sponsored tags (0.14).

Table 14

Group Statistics-RQ5

	sponsored	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
engagement	0	890	.01889015	.022624863	.000758387
	1	110	.01406742	.017343527	.001653640

RQ6 analysis

The RQ6 examined the relationship between the content types and follower engagement. Independent-Sample t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences in engagement between image posts and video posts.

From table 15, the *p*-value of Levene's test is smaller than 0.001 ($p < 0.01$), so we reject the null of Levene's test and conclude that the variance in engagement is not homogeneous. In this

case, the *p*-value of the t-test is 0.962 ($p > 0.05$), so there was no statistically significant difference between the groups.

Table 15

Independent Samples Test-RQ6

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2–tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
engagement	Equal variances assumed	18.688	<.001	-.088	996	.930	-.00019785	.002241657	-.00459676	.004201066
	Equal variances not assumed			-.048	113.732	.962	-.00019785	.004158999	-.00843700	.008041306

The Independent Samples t-test illustrates that there is no significant difference between image posts and video posts. In this case, we look back to group statistics in Table 16 and simply conclude that image posts have a slight negligible advantage over video posts.

Table 16

Group Statistics-RQ6

	type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
engagement	1	888	.01836061	.017982607	.000603457
	2	110	.01855845	.043158337	.004114986

Chapter Six:

Conclusion

Based on the results, it is easy to find that the number of emojis, campaign hashtags, frequency of posts, and sponsored tags had significant difference between groups. While collaborations and post types had no significant difference. Results showed that the presence of more emojis in Instagram influencers' posts contributes to more follower engagement that receives significantly more likes and comments. It also found that posts with campaign hashtags attract more engagement. On the contrary, posts with sponsored tags and users who post more frequently have lower engagement. Meanwhile, the follower engagement variable changed little when posts featured collaborations. Also, image posts have only a slight advantage over video posts which can even be ignored.

To understand the implications of results comprehensively, we can look at every research question separately. First, RQ1 wants to focus on the emoji variable and answer the effect of the amount of emojis on follower engagement. If influencers try to achieve more follower engagement with social media strategy, they may use more emojis to express their emotion and message. Emojis can also enrich information and limit misinterpretation when receivers don't have a verbal tone (Prada et al., 2018). The results of research question 1 answered that follower engagement will increase with the amount of emojis. When 0-1 emoji is increased to 2 emojis, the engagement will have an obvious rise. However, when emojis keep adding to more than 2, the engagement won't change a lot. Too many emojis could interfere with the comfort of reading posts.

Second, RQ2 posed whether collaboration would make sense on follower engagement. collaborations with other influencers and brands are usually on Instagram. Influencers like using at signs (@) in their posts to show their close relationships with other famous influencers and brands, and in turn, to increase followers. The results of the research question suggested that collaboration won't work if influencers want to increase follower engagement this way. Each side of collaborations would post together on their own accounts. Followers prefer to engage with one of the influencers or brands. This could decrease other influencers' follower engagement.

Third, RQ3 discussed the relationship between campaign hashtags and engagement. Influencers can create their own campaigns or participate in campaigns promoted by brands. Unlike collaboration, these campaigns always present with the hashtag symbol in the post. The followers of influencers who promote campaigns would like to talk about them in this cross-referencing area. The results showed that posts with campaign hashtags can contribute to higher engagement.

Fourth, RQ4 tried to know whether daily post frequency will change follower engagement. How many posts would influencers post one day? Most influencers prefer to post one or two posts every day. It is hard to ensure how many posts a day is the best for increasing engagement. More posts can strengthen impressions by followers, but it can also result in oversaturation. Followers would diffuse their engagement on these posts and not be willing to interact with the same person too many times. In a word, more posts can contribute to followers' tedium and in turn decrease engagement.

Fifth, RQ5 talked about the relationship between sponsored tags and engagement. There already are many studies referring to sponsored variables on social media. This question explored sponsored tags further for follower engagement. According to common sense, more

advertisements can cause audience distrust. The results proved this phenomenon that when posts with sponsored tags or ad tags, follower engagement will decrease. Boerman et al. (2017) found that when sponsored information is disclosed, consumers realize the existence of advertisement and their distrust develops, then they tend to refuse to engage in electronic word of mouth. Instagram allows influencers to tag #sponsored or #ad below their account names. This kind of tag is simple disclosure which would have lower engagement (Hwang et al., 2016).

Finally, RQ6 explored the image posts and video posts. Influencers can post both images and videos. Of course, the album is also a choice for influencers. However, when followers see the posts on their homepages, they can only see the first sheet of the album. In this case, the researcher only codes images or videos for the first look. Different followers have variable preferences. Which type of posts can gain more follower engagement? The results showed that there was no significant difference between image posts and video posts. Only a slight advantage could be seen on the mean of image posts. With videos become more and more popular, more research needs to be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of post content types.

Implications

The study makes contributions to the existing literature on Instagram influencers and further research on important keys to increase follower engagement. This study coded the influencers' posts across a wide range of variables related to follower engagement metrics. The relationship between followers and influencers plays an important role in influencer marketing and social media marketing. This study focuses on the elements which have effectiveness on follower engagement to provide suggestions for further and deeper research on more factors in influencer posts. Because Instagram influencers play an important role in social media marketing and viral

marketing campaigns, these results could contribute to a better understanding of virality and eWOM in the social media marketing literature.

This research promotes previous findings and sheds further light on what makes influencers' posts get more follower engagement. It tests Quesenberry et al.'s (2018) categorizations of virality. It also replenishes previous literature for future research into social media marketing in Instagram. From a practical perspective, this research implies that some factors can be helpful to higher follower engagement. Social media marketing managers, especially influencer marketing managers, could get inspiration and directions for future development. They could suit the methods to the situation for follower engagement.

Therefore, increasing follower engagement by more likes and comments is initial to the success of social media marketing campaigns. In this case, social media marketing managers should know what makes an Instagram post worth liking and commenting. This study found that to increase follower engagement, influencers should share posts that include 2 emojis, and join popular campaigns. At the same time, influencers should avoid simple sponsored or ad tags and not post too many times in a day. When a sponsored post is explained and expresses the influencer's true feelings, the side effect of sponsored tags can be neutralized (Hwang et al., 2016). It seems that Instagram users are on the website to find something not commercial. It is also easy to feel tired of many posts from the same account. Using these strategies would help to increase follower engagement.

Limitations and Future Research

In addition to the insights provided by this research, there are still limitations. This study chose the first 20 posts of each influencer over several months. It is hard to assert that previous or

future posts would follow the same pattern. In addition, posts were coded as images and videos. It is doubtful that the album is different from complete image posts or video posts. It could be better to design a survey focusing on post types to examine the difference between albums and other types.

Also, the chosen influencers were all from the fashion field, so the other fields or industries could have different results. Although Instagram is the premier choice of social media platforms for influencer marketing managers, the results could not be suitable for other social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. Further research could be extended to other social media platforms. What's more, follower engagement was limited to likes and comments. There could be other indexes to evaluate the engagement. It is possible that other variables, such as quality of the posts, strengthen this relationship.

Content analysis is a good method to quantify and analyze the qualitative data like posts on Instagram. For research, content analysis is easy to understand and inexpensive. However, a survey or experiment could be conducted to better understand what makes consumers engage in influencers' posts.

Conclusions

This research focused on the relationship between Instagram influencers' post content and follower engagement. In general, results showed that emojis, campaign hashtags, frequency, and sponsored tags can be the most useful variable to engagement. This study found that posts with more than two emojis and campaign hashtags are most effective, while posts with sponsored tags could decrease engagement from followers. Low frequency and images instead of videos also led

to higher engagement. The relationships mentioned above between these content variables and engagement exemplify that Instagram influencers and followers tie each other closely.

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Influencer Accounts

This appendix is the A&E list of top 100 fashion influencers in 2020 who lead the trends of this field and industry. A&E is one of the top New York digital agencies and provides special services in both influencer marketing campaigns and social media management. This study chose 50 influencers randomly based on this list.

Table A1

Influencer Accounts

No.	Influencer account	Followers	Following	Posts
1	COLE SPROUSE @COLESPROUSE	35.4m	568	1095
2	CHIARA FERRAGNI @CHIARAFERRAGNI	20.2m	1152	13050
3	ALEXA CHUNG @ALEXACHUNG	3.9m	834	6033
4	LEONIE HANNE @LEONIEHANNE	2.3m	1284	2363
5	DANIELLE BERNSTEIN @WEWOREWHAT	2.4m	1007	12322
6	LENA PERMINOVA @LENAPERMINOVA	2.3m	400	4819
7	NICOLE WARNE @NICOLEWARNE	1.8m	482	4777
8	IRENE KIM @IRENEISGOOD	1.7m	248	4588
9	JENN IMM @IMJENNIM	1.7m	925	3143

Table A1 (Continued)

No.	Influencer account	Followers	Following	Posts
11	XENIA ADONTS @XENIAADONTS	1.5m	2626	4318
12	CHRISELLE LIM @CHRISELLELIM	1.3m	3205	11307
13	GALA GONZALEZ @GALAGONZALEZ	1.1m	1164	8133
14	LEANDRA MEDINE @LEANDRAMCOHEN	987k	1278	2714
15	MARIA VIZUETE @MIAMIAMINE	920k	536	3279
16	CAMILLE CHARRIERE @CAMILLECHARRIERE	902k	1011	7482
17	PHIL COHEN @THEPACMAN82	784k	344	2146
18	GABI GERGG @GABIFRESH	776k	2407	1948
19	ELMA BEGANOVICH @ELMABEGANOVICH	731k	317	1496
20	LYN SLATER @ICONACCIDENTAL	728	1075	1003
21	BIGHAIRLOUDMOUTH @BIGHAIRLOUDMOUTH	121k	747	3209
22	CANDELA PELIZZA @CANDELA_____	537k	1046	6585
23	BIANCA BRANDOLINI @BIANCABRANDOLINI	505k	987	989
24	SUSIE LAU @SUSIEBUBBLE	495k	6159	6187
25	MARYCAKE @MARYCAKE	487k	645	1736
26	ALEALI MAY @ALEALIMAY	467k	1072	1999
27	CHRISTIE TYLER @NYCBAMBI	455k	788	992

Table A1 (Continued)

No.	Influencer account	Followers	Following	Posts
28	ROBERT AND CHRISTINA @NEWDARLINGS	448k	685	2071
29	YOYO CAO @YOYOKULALA	397k	346	2823
30	MAEVE REILLY @STYLEMEMAEVE	386k	891	4387
31	DEBORA ROSA @DEBORABROSA	348k	2330	3564
32	SOPHIA ROE @SOPHIAROE	343k	3679	3127
33	PATRICIA MANFIELD @HEIR	401k	2363	4926
34	ALEXANDRA LAPP @ALEXANDRALAPP_	307k	951	4423
35	GRECE GHANEM @GRECEGHANEM	296k	856	1102
36	OLJA RYZEVSKI @OLJARYZ	263k	598	2485
37	INES DE LA FRESSANGE @INESDELAFRESSANGEOFFICIAL	346k	788	4725
38	SHINI PARK @SHINI.PARK	226k	2182	5140
39	MATTHEW ZORPAS @MATTHEWZORPAS	186k	888	2161
40	NICOLETTE MASON @NICOLETTEMASON	189k	2991	5041
41	REESE BLUTSTEIN @DOUBLE3XPOSURE	306k	2669	3558
42	MONIKH DALE @MONIKH	172k	1122	3652
43	KIA MARIE @THENOTORIOUSKIA	152k	1068	1266
44	NILU YULEENA THAPA @BIGHAIRLOUDMOUTH	129k	597	2723

Table A1 (Continued)

No.	Influencer account	Followers	Following	Posts
45	CARLOTTA ODDI @CARLOTTAODDI	112k	1176	1513
46	TYLYNN NGUYEN @TYLYNNNGUYEN	115k	747	531
47	KELLIE BROWN @ITSMEKELLIEB	108k	2040	2352
48	KERRY PIERI @KERRYPIERI	56.9k	1664	1491
49	ARIA DI BARI @ARIADIBARI	43.3k	671	268
50	ANDREA @PRETTYPROPERQUAINT	27.5k	969	2428

Appendix B

Codebook for Variables

Table B1

Codebook for Variables

Code	Description	Example
Follower engagement	The sum of likes and comments received by posts / the number of followers. This can measure the average follower engagement per post per follower.	Follower engagement = 1843422 (like) + 4326 (comments) / 35370000 (followers) = 0.052241
Emoji	Count of the number of emojis in the post	"Sunday in Tuscany 💖" "We love ❤️ ❤️ ❤️"
Collaboration	Mention of other influencers or brands	@Mescondi @fendi
Campaigns	Campaign hashtag	#HowILiveConnected #EsteeAmbassador
Frequency	The number of posts in one day	@COLESPROUSE posted 3 posts on April 9, 2021
Sponsored	The post is tagged as sponsored post	#ad #sponsored
Post content types	Image or video	Image = type 1 Video = type 2