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The Role of Emotional Content on Consumer Engagement

Evaluating the role of emotional content on consumer engagement

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Abstract

Social media has gained popularity as brands communicate with consumers through various platforms. As a result, brands are spending more on advertising, but how they emotionally engage with consumers remains unclear. In this study, we examined the emotionality of brand posts and their effect on consumer engagement and subsequent brand perception. By employing both quantitative and qualitative methods based on brand posts, the study investigates how emotional content, including positive and negative language, influences consumer engagement in social media advertising and shapes consumer trust and future interactions with the brand.

The findings showed that consumer engagement correlates with the positive tone of brand content, leading to a more favorable brand perception. Content with negative and neutral tones generated less engagement compared to positive content. Control variables such as time, product type, and visual style also supported the final results.

Emotional contagion theory was employed to examine how users are influenced by the tone of post text and, ultimately, how it impacts their behavior (in this case, engagement). The results revealed that consumers tend to have a positive brand perception of brands using a positive tone, highlighting the significance of this for companies.

This study contributes both theoretical and practical insights by demonstrating how brands can use emotional content to engage consumers, benefiting both the brand and its audience.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to introduce the background of the study, followed by a discussion of the problem and the study's objectives. Afterward, the research question is presented, along with the key terms.

1.1 Background

Social media has revolutionised the way companies engage with customers and has become an essential marketing channel. Nowadays, brands consistently communicate with their customer base through various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. On these online platforms, an increasing number of consumers interact both with each other and with brands (Kelley and Alden, 2016; Tonteri et al., 2011). Brands frequently share images and videos designed to capture the attention of customers, who in turn engage with brands by liking, sharing, and leaving comments.

The dynamic nature of social media enables brands to engage with a diverse and global audience in real-time, providing exceptional opportunities for interaction. The immediate and interactive setting is especially efficient in engaging younger age groups, who are more susceptible to the impact of digital media and social interactions. As corporations invest more in social media, the race to catch attention grows, forcing more imaginative and emotionally compelling content strategies (Hudson et al., 2016).

For social media marketers, enhancing consumer engagement is crucial as it facilitates social contagion effects (Martínez-López et al., 2017), leading to increased brand awareness, preference, and consideration (Coursaris et al., 2016b; Cruz et al., 2017; de Vries et al., 2017; Hutter et al., 2013), as well as improved brand performance, including attracting new consumers and generating high sales volume (de Vries et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2016). However, reports indicate that only 1% of brand followers on Facebook engage with brand pages, and even for top pages, this figure is only 4.3% (eMarketer, 2015; Lee et al., 2018).

Previous research has examined the effects of various characteristics of brand posts, such as content type, media type, posting time, and brand language, on consumer engagement, suggesting that marketers should strategically design posts to encourage

engagement from consumers (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; de Vries et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Luarn et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2017). Although these studies offer useful insights, they frequently fail to include the psychological and emotional stimuli that can lead to increased consumer engagement. Research has demonstrated that emotional content has the ability to elicit more intense responses and can result in more significant involvement, such as more sharing and commenting, which enhances the reach of a business. However, there is a gap in research regarding the impact of emotional content within brand posts on consumer engagement in social media advertising (Berger & Milkman, 2012). This lack of comprehension of the significance of emotional content underscores a critical domain that necessitates additional investigation.

The importance of emotional content in advertising is further emphasised by ideas like the Affect Infusion Model (AIM), which proposes that emotions can have a substantial impact on decision-making processes. Within the realm of social media, emotional appeals have the power to improve the memorability of commercials and cultivate favourable brand connections, resulting in continued customer engagement (Forgas, 1995). The emotional impact is especially significant in digital settings, where consumers are consistently overwhelmed with information. Therefore, it is vital for businesses to distinguish themselves by establishing an emotional connection with their target audience. According to Zhang and Mao (2020), social media has a substantial impact on consumer behaviour, influencing consumers' purchase decisions and fostering brand loyalty. Their findings indicate that social media content, influencer marketing, and social media advertising are important for reaching digital consumers.

As economic activities continue to develop, new products and offerings emerge, providing consumers with a wide array of choices. The abundance of choices has resulted in a phenomenon known as "choice overload," where customers may struggle to make judgements because of the excessive quantity of alternatives offered (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). Within this context, the significance of advertising is heightened, as it serves not only to provide information but also to influence consumers, directing them towards particular options and aiding firms in setting themselves apart in competitive markets. While consumers appreciate this variety, they also face the challenge of selecting the most suitable product. Consequently, companies engage in fierce competition to capture consumers' attention. In times of consumer indecision,

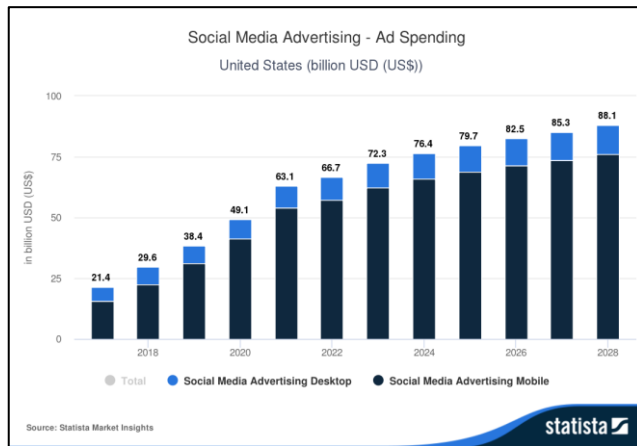
competitors seize the opportunity to promote their offerings, intensifying the competitive landscape. This is where advertising plays a pivotal role in gaining a competitive edge.

Advertising serves as a vehicle for sponsors to communicate messages to consumers through various media channels. The advent of digital platforms has brought about a transformation in the field of advertising, moving away from conventional one-way communication towards interactive and customised experiences. The trend is demonstrated by the growing adoption of programmatic advertising, which utilises data analytics to provide tailored content to particular audience segments, hence improving the pertinence and efficacy of advertising campaigns (Lambrecht & Tucker, 2013). By leveraging advertising, companies can effectively convey comprehensive information about their products or services to the audience. This dissemination of information through advertising not only enhances consumer awareness but also drives sales, thereby making advertising a significant contributor to economic activity. Moreover, advertising exerts a substantial influence on the overall economy of a country. It is regarded as one of the most persuasive means of communication directed towards consumers, achieving this impact at a relatively low cost (Lukitaningsih, 2013). Social networking sites receive billions of dollars in advertising revenue each year. For instance, the total expenditure for social network site advertising in 2023 was expected to be approximately \$94.42 billion USD (Statista Search Department, Citation 2023). Ad spending in the social media advertising market is projected to reach \$76.4 billion USD in 2024 (Statista Search Department, Citation 2024). This can be observed in Figure 1.

For companies, achieving favourable outcomes from advertising campaigns is imperative as they allocate significant portions of their budget towards advertising expenditures. The need to provide a rationale for advertising expenditure has resulted in an increasing emphasis on metrics and analytics that can prove the return on investment (ROI) of advertising campaigns. Marketers may now use advanced tools and platforms to monitor consumer interaction in real time. This provides valuable information about the effectiveness of different methods and allows for ongoing improvement of advertising material (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In this context, it is crucial to not only consider advertising costs but also account for factors such as the design cost

of posts, time investments, and so forth. Therefore, it is paramount for companies to attain positive results from their campaigns in order to justify their resource allocation. Hence, it is prudent for companies to utilise their resources effectively from the outset to ensure optimal outcomes.

Figure 1 AD Spending USA



Source: [Statista Market Insights](#)

1.2 Problem Discussion

Previous research has examined consumer engagement with brand posts on social media, focussing on factors such as post content and brand popularity or message. However, there is a scarcity of research analysing consumer engagement in social media advertising with due consideration to the emotional content within posts. This research aims to analyse factors such as emotional content within advertising posts to determine which types of posts are more likely to be engaged with by social media users.

Previous research in marketing communication has found that emotions in brand posts, such as advertising, affect how communication is perceived and its overall effectiveness. While previous studies have focused on specific characteristics of brand posts, such as those mentioned earlier, few have examined the language used in brand posts and its impact on consumer engagement (Gretry et al., 2017; Jakic et al., 2017; Ludwig et al., 2013). However, the effect of emotionality on consumer engagement in social media advertising remains an unanswered question. The implications of this research are significant, especially for companies seeking to utilise their resources effectively.

In traditional markets, consumers pay attention to the packaging of products, and the same holds true for digital markets. The key factor here is that in digital marketing, consumers also closely scrutinise how brands communicate. All actions taken by brands on social media platforms define their position in the minds of consumers. It has been found that the language used by brands on social media affects consumers' trust in the brand (Jakic et al., 2017; Gretry et al., 2017). Additionally, learning the psycholinguistic style of posts in social media advertising can be a useful feature for predicting consumer engagement (Lee et al., 2018). It is highly likely that the emotional content of brand posts can impact consumers' perceptions and, consequently, influence consumer engagement. Therefore, the current research will examine how the emotional content of advertising posts affects consumer engagement, taking emotionality as an independent factor and consumer engagement as the dependent variable in advertising.

This study will analyse the relationship between emotional content and consumer engagement in social media advertising. The research aims to provide valuable insights for marketers looking to refine their advertising strategies by understanding these dynamics. The goal is to empower marketers to optimise their approaches in order to bolster consumer engagement and foster greater trust in their brands within the realm of social media advertising. Below are the research questions that will be analysed during the research.

How does the emotional content of visual design in advertising posts on social media platforms impact consumer engagement?

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how emotional content within brand posts, including elements such as positive and negative words, influences consumer engagement in social media advertising and shapes consumer trust and future engagement with the brand. As it is crucial for companies to maintain consumer loyalty, it is necessary for them to understand their consumers' preferences not only regarding their products but also concerning the brands themselves. Therefore, this study will address questions that can positively impact companies in terms of consumer perception and finances, as they can achieve maximum benefits with minimum costs.

1.4 Key terms

Social Media Advertising:

Using social media tools to promote a brand's product through paid advertising helps brands reach their target audience and drive engagement among this audience

Emotional Content:

Description of brand posts that evoke emotions such as sadness, anger, excitement, and happiness in the audience. Emotional content has the power to influence consumers' behavior and perception toward brands.

Positive tone:

A positive tone refers to the optimistic and friendly communication in posts. It includes descriptions that evoke optimism and aims to create positive feelings about the brand.

Negative tone:

A communication style that conveys a pessimistic approach, evoking sadness or anger.

Neutral tone:

A communication style that creates neither positive nor negative feelings with consumers, but instead maintains a neutral tone. An example of this would be an informative or educational post.

Consumer Engagement:

The interaction of consumers with brand posts is measured through engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares. High engagement creates a strong connection between the brand and its audience.

Brand Perception:

The way consumers perceive a brand in their minds also affects brand loyalty and purchase decisions.

2. Literature Review

In this section, a literature review was conducted on emotional content and its relationship with consumer engagement. It discussed factors that affect consumer engagement on social media posts, as well as the impact of consumer engagement on brand perception and purchase intentions. This was followed by the theoretical framework and conceptual model, in which hypotheses were developed.

2.1 Emotional content in Social Media

Emotional content refers to the emotional linguistic features present in brand posts (Deng, Hine, Ji, & Wang, 2021, etc.). These features can encompass both positive and negative emotions depending on the content. Recent research on advertising underscores the importance of emotions in ads. This is attributed to the fact that evoked emotions influence the effectiveness of ads, subsequently affecting attitudes toward the brand, purchase intentions (e.g., Lee & Hong, 2016), sales (e.g., Chandy et al., 2001; MacInnis, Rao, & Weiss, 2002), ad sharing (Akpınar & Berger, 2017), and retweeting (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013), etc. Some prior work on sharing or sharing intentions has analysed content that evokes emotions such as joy, amusement, sadness, and fear (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Dafonte-Gomez, 2014; Dobeles et al., 2007; Hsieh, Hsieh, & Tang, 2012; Nikolinakou & King, 2018; Phelps et al., 2004). However, none of these studies examined which emotions in content affect consumer engagement.

The influence of emotional content on engagement can be attributed to many psychological theories. Forgas (1995) introduced the Affect Infusion Model (AIM), which states that emotions have an impact on decision-making by influencing how individuals receive information. Emotional content has the ability to improve the ease with which brand messages are processed, resulting in increased memorability and persuasiveness (Pham, 2007). In addition, emotional contagion theory posits that individuals have a tendency to mimic the feelings they come across, hence intensifying the influence of emotionally charged messages on social media (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993). Research has indicated that content that elicits intense emotions, such as excitement or wrath, tends to receive higher levels of interaction compared to content that is neutral or only mildly emotional (Eckler & Bolls, 2011).

Prior research suggests that high (vs. low) arousal emotions evoke greater sharing or sharing intentions (Berger, 2011; Berger & Milkman, 2012; Hagerstrom, Alhabash, & Kononova, 2014; Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Newstead, 2013). Eckler and Bolls (2011) found that consumers had the strongest intentions towards ads that were positive, though they did not study actual shares.

According to Paletz et al. (2023), there has been much discussion over the study of emotion in psychology, with different theories offering varying viewpoints on the nature and expression of emotion. Three major conclusions have emerged from recent research: first, emotions are derived from the interpretation and assessment of situational cues; second, emotions differ between cultures and individuals; and third, there are universal elements to human emotional experiences. The presence of emotional content is essential in influencing user engagement and interactions on social media platforms such as Facebook. Content that elicits intense emotions such as happiness, rage, grief, or astonishment tends to attract greater attention and receive more shares from people. The emotional content of a post affects how people perceive, think, and act, ultimately influencing their decision to share the message with their social networks.

The study of emotion in social media sharing behaviour has been a significant area of research. It explores the impact of valence, the emotional positivity or negativity of content, on sharing likelihood. While some studies suggest a positive association between valence and sharing, others present mixed results. Negative sentiment may drive higher levels of retweeting, especially when paired with fear-inducing elements. A meta-analysis suggests that while all valences have a small effect on sharing, positive content tends to be shared more frequently than negative content. The relationship between valence and sharing appears to be nuanced and dependent on factors like topic specificity and methodological considerations (Paletz et al., 2023). Activation/arousal, the intensity or arousal level of emotions, has been implicated in influencing sharing behaviour. Studies show that higher activation emotions, such as awe, anger, and anxiety, are more likely to drive virality compared to lower activation emotions like sadness. Distinct emotions, such as anger and joy, also play a significant role in shaping sharing behaviour (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

The context in which emotional material is delivered is a vital factor in consumer engagement, including the type and degree of emotions. Studies suggest that the impact of emotional content can differ based on how well it aligns with the brand's identity and how relevant it is to the target audience (Schindler & Bickart, 2012). Content that is in line with a brand's established emotional tone or message is more likely to connect with consumers and create greater levels of engagement (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). In addition, the way consumers react to social media posts can be influenced by the combination of emotional content and individual characteristics, such as personality traits and mood states (Vasalou et al., 2008).

Shahbaznezhad et al. (2021) ascertain multiple crucial aspects that contribute to the emotional content present in social media. These characteristics include several aspects, such as the format of the content (pictures, videos, or text-based posts) and the specific social media platform where the content is posted. The platform's unique features and user demographics might influence emotional expression. In addition, the study investigates how variables such as the tone of the material, the use of emotive language or visual signals, and the relevancy of the content to users' interests or experiences can affect the emotional impact of social media content. Dolan et al. (2019) examined relational and entertaining material as two types of emotional appeals employed in social media content. It was discovered that engaging material has an impact on user involvement in terms of receiving likes but does not influence active user involvement in the form of comments. In a separate investigation, Tafesse (2015) conducted a study that examined the impact of amusing material shared by car firms in the UK on Facebook. They proposed that content that is witty, amusing, and artistic (entertaining) has a higher probability of receiving likes on Facebook compared to content that is more serious and focusses on product and pricing (informational content).

Recent studies also emphasise the significance of platform-specific characteristics in amplifying the emotional attractiveness of material. Instagram's focus on visual storytelling and hashtags enables a more intricate representation of emotions in contrast to text-centric networks such as Twitter (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). Similarly, the inclusion of reaction buttons on Facebook allows users to convey a broader spectrum of emotions, which in turn can impact the way consumers interact with the platform (Nadeem et al., 2016). Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these unique

variables inherent to each platform is crucial in order to effectively optimise emotional content with the goal of driving consumer engagement.

Other researchers investigated the potential differences in the impact of entertaining and emotive material on engagement between business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) Facebook pages. For example, a study revealed that emotional content on B2C company Facebook pages creates a higher number of likes compared to B2B firm pages. Additionally, emotional content on service pages generates more engagement in the form of likes compared to product pages. This highlights the significance of taking into account moderating elements, such as context, while seeking a more profound comprehension of the correlation between content type and engagement. Swani et al. (2013)

Karduni et al. (2021) examined the utilisation of emotional facial photos, which might elicit diverse emotional reactions from users of social media, as a noteworthy component. These visuals, regardless of whether they convey happiness, grief, rage, or other emotions, have a significant impact on shaping viewers' views of news content bias and the reliability of its source. Furthermore, the research investigates how the manner in which emotional information is presented, including characteristics such as the arrangement of images, choice of colours, and visual components, can influence users' emotional involvement and evaluations of reliability on social media platforms. The possibility that people will believe a statement is also influenced by the emotional content of images. For instance, the believability of news items is increased when individuals are exposed to extremely unpleasant and emotional visuals regarding various situations. Vlasceanu et al. (2020).

2.2 Consumer Engagement with brands posts in Social Media (Factors influencing consumer engagement)

According to Dessart et al. (2015), consumer engagement with online brand communities is impacted by multiple aspects from the standpoint of social media. These characteristics include both emotional and practical aspects, such as brand identity, brand love, and brand trust. Consumers that have strong brand identification and emotional attachment are more inclined to actively participate in the online community of that brand. Furthermore, the establishment of confidence in the brand and other members of the community, as well as the perceived utility and pleasure derived from

involvement, are crucial factors in promoting engagement. The existence of interactivity within the brand community, along with the feeling of social presence and belonging, serves to further motivate customers to engage and interact. Comprehending these aspects is crucial for brands aiming to develop and maintain vibrant online brand communities.

Subsequent research has further explored these discoveries by investigating the impact of tailored content on increasing user involvement. A study conducted by Schivinski et al. (2019) discovered that tailoring social media posts to individual interests and behaviours leads to increased rates of engagement, surpassing those of generic content. Personalisation improves the pertinence of brand messaging, rendering them more captivating and effective for consumers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In addition, research has demonstrated that interactive elements, such as polls and quizzes, can enhance user engagement by motivating active participation and soliciting feedback (Brodie et al., 2011).

De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) provide insight into the dynamics of social media marketing by stating that a number of factors affect how customers interact with brand posts on brand fan sites. Relevance and quality of the content are among these elements, drawing viewers in and encouraging participation. Furthermore, posting frequency and timing are quite important for sustaining customer interest and engagement. In addition, the degree of interaction on the brand fan page—which includes things like answering questions from fans and starting conversations—helps to build a feeling of community and promotes continuous participation. It is imperative for brands to comprehend these characteristics if they want to use social media as a tool for audience engagement and brand loyalty.

De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) have identified various elements that impact consumer engagement with brand posts on brand fan pages, providing insights into the workings of social media marketing. Two important aspects that play a role in capturing consumers' attention and encouraging interaction are the relevancy and quality of the content. Furthermore, the regularity and scheduling of articles are essential factors in sustaining consumer attention and engagement levels. In addition, the degree of participation on the brand fan page, such as promptly addressing consumer comments and facilitating debates, plays a role in cultivating a feeling of community and

promoting continuous engagement. Comprehending these aspects is crucial for organisations seeking to utilise social media efficiently in order to interact with their audience and establish brand loyalty.

Gummerus et al. (2012) identified various characteristics that impact consumer participation in a Facebook brand community. The study emphasises the significance of content quality and relevancy in stimulating customer interest and engagement. Moreover, the degree of interactivity and responsiveness of the brand to consumer interactions inside the Facebook community has a substantial influence on engagement levels. Furthermore, the establishment of a strong sense of community and social connection inside the brand community is essential for promoting continued involvement among its members. Moreover, the perceived worth and advantages obtained from taking part in the brand community have an impact on customers' readiness to participate and contribute. Gaining knowledge of these elements is crucial for brands aiming to foster and maintain active participation within their Facebook brand communities, ultimately resulting in increased brand loyalty and advocacy.

The notion of interactivity encompasses more than just direct engagements with posts. Recent research emphasises the significance of co-creation and user-generated content in promoting engagement. Research conducted by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) demonstrates that when consumers are actively involved in the creation of content, it not only increases their level of engagement but also reinforces their emotional attachment to the brand. Co-created material, such as reviews given by users and challenges on social media, has the potential to increase the visibility and trustworthiness of a business (Cova & Dalli, 2009). In addition, the incorporation of gamification components, such as incentives and accomplishments, has been shown to increase user involvement by introducing an element of enjoyment and rivalry to interactions with a brand (Hamari et al., 2014).

Consumer interaction with advertising content on social media sites such as Facebook. The study highlights the importance of content relevance and personalisation, suggesting that consumers are more inclined to interact with advertisements that align with their interests and preferences. Moreover, the perceived reliability and trustworthiness of the advertiser significantly influence customer involvement levels. In addition, the inclusion of interactive features, such as polls, quizzes, and sweepstakes,

amplifies customer engagement with advertising material. Furthermore, the specific time and frequency of advertisements on social media platforms have a direct impact on the level of consumer attention and engagement. Comprehending these variables is crucial for advertisers that want to enhance their social media advertising campaigns and achieve maximum consumer engagement, ultimately leading to positive results like brand recognition, customer loyalty, and buy intention. Lee et al. (2018)

Zadeh and Sharda (2014) state that there are multiple elements that impact consumer engagement with brand posts on online social networks. The study indicates that the substance of brand postings, encompassing their pertinence, originality, and attractiveness to the intended audience, has a substantial influence on consumer engagement levels. Moreover, the specific timing and regularity of brand postings are of utmost importance, as posting at the most opportune moments and maintaining a consistent level of activity significantly enhance engagement rates. Moreover, the incorporation of interactive elements, such as surveys, competitions, and material created by users, encourages active involvement and engagement of consumers with brand posts. Furthermore, the way consumers view the genuineness and openness of the brand's communication endeavours has an impact on their trust and involvement. Comprehending these variables is crucial for brands aiming to engage effectively with their audience in online social networks, as they can provide insights to improve customer engagement and establish more robust brand partnerships.

Demmers et al. (2020) highlight the significance of content relevance and personalisation, suggesting that consumers are more inclined to interact with postings that correspond to their interests and preferences at various points in the customer journey. Additionally, the study emphasises the importance of emotional appeal in brand posts, as content that elicits good emotions tends to generate greater levels of engagement from customers. Moreover, the way consumers perceive the genuineness and reliability of the brand's communication endeavours is essential in cultivating consumer trust and involvement. Comprehending these elements is crucial for brands that want to engage successfully with their audience at different stages of the customer journey, ultimately resulting in improved brand loyalty and advocacy.

2.3 Impact of consumer engagement on brand perceptions and purchase intentions

According to Dessart et al. (2012), when customers actively participate in virtual communities, it has a positive impact on their perception of brands by promoting feelings of loyalty, trust, and identity. Furthermore, the research underscores the connection between higher levels of engagement and higher purchase intentions, as engaged consumers are more likely to form positive opinions about the brand and show a readiness to spend on its offerings. Moreover, the study highlights the significance of social media platforms in promoting consumer involvement and influencing how consumers perceive brands. This underscores the importance for brands to actively engage and support online brand communities in order to benefit from the positive impact of consumer involvement on brand perceptions and purchase intentions.

Zhang et al. (2020) offer valuable insights into the influence of consumer engagement on brand perceptions through online reviews. Engaging actively in review platforms improves the credibility and dependability of consumer feedback, leading to a favourable impact on brand reputation and purchase intentions. On the other hand, lack of interest or limited involvement can harm how people see a brand and decrease the likelihood of making a purchase. This highlights the significance of proactively overseeing and addressing internet reviews in order to uphold a favourable brand reputation. Zhang et al. (2020) examine the impact of online reviews on customers' decision-making, considering both cognitive and emotive aspects. Consumer engagement, namely active participation in online review platforms, can greatly influence how consumers see a company and their intentions to make a purchase. By offering thorough and insightful evaluations, exchanging personal encounters, and engaging with fellow users, active participation enhances a brand's perception by fostering a sense of reliance and authenticity. Consumers are more likely to have a positive perception of brands when they come across genuine and useful evaluations from active users, which in turn leads to a higher likelihood of making a purchase. On the other hand, when people have a bad or no interaction with a brand, it can harm how they perceive the brand and reduce their likelihood of making a purchase.

According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), customer engagement has a substantial impact on how consumers perceive a brand and their likelihood of making a purchase. Engaging with users on social media, implementing loyalty programs, and organising brand

events can establish stronger emotional bonds and loyalty, resulting in favourable brand views of genuineness, reliability, and pertinence. Consumers who are engaged are more inclined to have positive intents to make purchases, perceiving the company as more reliable and worthy of their support. Their favourable experiences and emotional attachments enhance their probability of making purchases or availing services, so adding to the overall success of the brand. Hence, customer engagement continues to be a crucial catalyst in modern marketing strategy.

The study conducted by Rishika et al. (2013) aims to analyse the influence of customers' engagement on social media platforms on their perceptions of brands and their intentions to make purchases. This is achieved through an empirical analysis. The results indicate that when customers actively participate on social media platforms, it has a favourable impact on their perception of a company by creating a feeling of belonging and confidence. Consumers who regularly interact with brands on social media are more likely to form positive opinions about the brand's genuineness, trustworthiness, and pertinence. Furthermore, increased involvement is linked to higher purchase intentions, as customers regard the company as more deserving of their support and confidence. This emphasises the crucial function of consumer interaction in influencing brand impressions and motivating purchase intentions, emphasising its significance in modern times.

Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016) contend that the active participation of customers on social media platforms can have a substantial impact on how brands are seen by consumers and eventually influence their intentions to make a purchase. By engaging in activities such as sharing, commenting, and enjoying brand material, customers develop a stronger emotional bond with the brand, resulting in favourable brand perceptions and a higher probability of purchasing from that brand. In addition, the authors propose that engaging with social media allows brands to directly interact with consumers, giving them the chance to resolve concerns, offer personalised experiences, and cultivate better relationships with their audience. This bilateral communication promotes trust and loyalty, hence amplifying brand perceptions and stimulating buy intentions.

In addition to these findings, a new study conducted by Srivastava et al. (2023) investigates the influence of customer interaction on long-term brand loyalty and

advocacy. Their research demonstrates that continued involvement not only enhances the way consumers see a brand, but also promotes repeat buying behaviour and good word-of-mouth recommendations. Customers who are actively involved with a brand are more inclined to serve as brand advocates, actively pushing the brand to their social networks and exerting influence on others' purchasing choices. This underscores the significance of consistently implementing engagement techniques to foster enduring customer relationships and stimulate continuous business expansion.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Emotional Contagion Theory:

The understanding of emotional contagion has undergone substantial development, especially with the emergence of digital communication and social media. Emotional contagion can be transmitted in online contexts not only through direct interpersonal connection but also through the dissemination of content, including text, photos, and videos.

Emotional contagion, which refers to the transmission of moods or emotions from one individual to another, has always fascinated and engaged scholars. The scholarly investigation of emotional contagion can be traced back to Le Bon's (1896) work. According to Barsade et al. (2018), emotional contagion refers to the transmission of specific emotions and overall mood from one person or group to another. It can happen through both subconscious and conscious mechanisms, whereby individuals have the ability to intentionally or unintentionally impact the emotions of others. Emotional contagion can occur in several social arrangements, including dyads, small groups, organisations, and broader societal collectives. It contains a type of social influence that not only affects individuals' emotional states but also shapes their thoughts and conduct. Moreover, Schoenewolf (1990) states that emotional contagion, also known as sharing of emotions, is a widely recognised phenomenon in the literature on organisational behaviour and psychology. The best definition of it is "a process in which an individual or group uses conscious or unconscious induction of emotion states and behavioural attitudes to influence the emotions or behaviour of another individual or group."

Emotional contagion can happen through deliberate attempts to control or influence emotions in social interactions, as well as involuntary processes where people unintentionally imitate the feelings of others (Parkinson & Simons, 2009).

Personality traits, emotional intelligence, and behavioural influence are examples of individual characteristics that could affect a person's response to emotional contagion. Some people may be more susceptible to "catching" emotions from others, whereas others may be less sensitive. Social influence can take the form of emotional contagion. It affects people's mental and behavioural states in addition to their emotional emotions. People's perceptions of situations and decision-making processes can be influenced by emotions that are contagious. Emotional contagion can transmit emotions through multiple channels, including facial expressions, body language, voice signals, and written or verbal communication. These stimuli have the potential to elicit emotional reactions in others. Barsade et al. (2018)

A study conducted by Ferrara and Yang (2015) reveals that emotions have the ability to propagate swiftly throughout social networks, exerting an influence on sizable populations within a brief timeframe. The digital manifestation of emotional contagion holds significant implications for comprehending the dissemination of information and emotions among virtual networks. Emotionally charged material, regardless of whether it is positive or negative, has a higher probability of becoming viral, resulting in extensive emotional reactions throughout entire platforms. This phenomenon emphasises the influence of social media in affecting public opinion and the necessity for more detailed research into the mechanics of emotional contagion in online environments.

Expanding on this, the contentious research conducted by Kramer, Guillory, and Hancock (2014) on Facebook's emotional contagion experiment further shown the significant influence that social media may exert on users' moods. The study changed the emotional material presented in users' news feeds and discovered that exposure to either positive or negative content had a substantial impact on the emotional tone of users' posts. This discovery reinforces the concept that emotional contagion is not limited to in-person interactions but may also occur on a large scale through digital platforms. The ethical ramifications of these discoveries have ignited substantial discourse, particularly around the manipulation of emotions in online environments.

Emotional contagion is a significant factor in organisational settings, impacting team dynamics and the general ambiance of the workplace, alongside the digital surroundings. Barsade (2002) examines the influence of emotional contagion in workgroups, highlighting that the emotional state and performance of the entire group can be considerably influenced by the mood of a single team member. Positive emotional contagion has the potential to improve cooperation, job satisfaction, and production, whereas negative emotional contagion can result in heightened stress, conflict, and decreased efficiency. Comprehending the intricacies of emotional contagion inside organisations is crucial for leaders who aspire to cultivate a favourable work atmosphere and enhance team performance.

Emotional contagion also has ramifications for consumer behaviour. Studies suggest that the emotions expressed in advertising and brand communication have the power to shape consumer attitudes and impact their intentions to make a purchase. Research has demonstrated that advertising that elicits powerful emotional reactions is more prone to being recalled and shared, resulting in heightened brand exposure and consumer involvement (Akpınar & Berger, 2017). The emotional contagion effect in marketing can be a potent strategy for brands aiming to establish a profound emotional connection with their audience.

Emotional contagion in marketing includes not only advertising but also customer service and brand interactions on social media. When consumers engage with brands on sites such as Twitter or Facebook, the emotional tone of these interactions can be transmitted to other customers, thereby impacting the overall perception of the brand. In a study conducted by Kim and Johnson (2016), it was discovered that when consumers observe positive interactions between a brand and other customers, they tend to form a positive opinion towards the company. On the other hand, unfavourable encounters might result in a more extensive unfavourable opinion of the brand, even among individuals who were not directly engaged. This emphasises the significance of effectively controlling emotional contagion in all customer-orientated endeavours, as it can have a substantial influence on brand value and client allegiance.

2.4.2 Consumer Engagement and Emotional Content

Emotional advertising messages evoke specific emotional responses from consumers, such as joy, excitement, nostalgia, or empathy. Customers may feel warm and

connected after watching a touching advertisement that illustrates a family's journey, for instance. This will increase their involvement with the brand and its products, and a visually appealing product presentation that effectively communicates a sensation of luxury or exclusivity has the potential to elicit desires or aspirations in consumers, hence enhancing their involvement with the product and brand. Brand storytelling is an influential technique for establishing an emotional connection with consumers. A brand that narrates stories of getting over hardship or creating a beneficial influence on society has the potential to evoke admiration and loyalty in consumers, stimulating greater involvement with the company's products and goal. ("The Role of Emotion in Economic Behaviour" by George Loewenstein, et al.)

Emotional advertising not only elicits immediate consumer responses but also has enduring impacts on brand perceptions and consumer behaviour. Based on a study conducted by Berger and Milkman (2012), content that evokes strong emotions is more likely to be shared on social media platforms, resulting in a greater reach and influence. Emotional appeals in advertising, regardless of being good or negative, can greatly amplify customer involvement and impact buying choices by generating memorable brand encounters (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Furthermore, the Emotional Contagion Theory suggests that emotional content in advertisements can be transmitted to consumers, thereby influencing their emotional state and strengthening their affiliation with the business (Barsade et al., 2007). This is corroborated by research that suggests emotional advertising has a dual impact: they not only affect consumers' instant responses but also foster enduring brand loyalty and advocacy (Brakus et al., 2009).

According to Kang et al. (2020), consumer engagement can be greatly impacted by emotional factors. It states that one of the most important elements influencing customers' intentions to spread information via word-of-mouth (WOM) is emotion. It was found that emotional reactions to advertisements had a mediating role in the relationship between WOM intention and story engagement., particularly positive emotional responses. It also means that consumers are more likely to spread the word about a product or service through word-of-mouth communication when they have useful emotional responses to advertising content. Furthermore, Lakoff (2008) highlights that consumer engagement and the desire to spread knowledge can both rise when storytelling advertising is used to evoke emotions in the viewer.

Narrative transportation, a fundamental notion in emotional advertising, has a substantial impact on how consumers interact with advertising material. Narrative conveyance, as defined by Green and Brock (2000), refers to the phenomenon in which individuals become fully absorbed in a narrative, resulting in a brief suspension of disbelief and a change in attitudes towards the message. This immersion not only intensifies emotional reactions but also heightens the probability of consumer involvement with the brand. Research has demonstrated that narrative transportation can result in increased brand memory and more favourable brand views. This is because consumers are more inclined to establish emotional bonds with businesses that effectively employ storytelling techniques (Green & Brock, 2000; Escalas & Stern, 2003).

The process via which the audience momentarily leaves behind reality and emerges from the experience in some way altered from the person they were prior to entering the narrative is referred to as narrative transportation. The article claims that participants' emotional reactions to advertising content are positively impacted by narrative transportation. This indicates that customers are more likely to emotionally connect with the information when they are drawn into the fictional world that the advertisement presents. Their overall good reaction to the advertising may also be influenced by this emotional engagement, which may also encourage them to spread the word about it. The article's overall thesis is that narrative mobility affects how much customers interact with advertising information.

The presence of a trustworthy spokesperson in an advertisement builds credibility and trust, which increases consumer engagement. Belief in the spokesperson influences brand perception, making consumers more open to the marketing. Customers and the spokesperson having a strong emotional connection increases the advertisement's impact. Credibility is added to the brand's claims by their authority and expertise in their sector. Customer engagement is also impacted by relatability and likeability. Because well-known or powerful spokespersons are viewed as trendsetters or role models in their social circles, social influence can also increase consumer engagement with them.

The emotional reactions triggered by commercials have a significant impact on both consumer involvement and the spread of marketing content. A study conducted by Berger and Milkman (2012) emphasises that content that evokes strong emotions is

more prone to being shared on social media, hence increasing its reach and influence. The emotional intensity of the content can enhance consumer engagement by generating memorable and influential brand experiences that promote word-of-mouth communication. Furthermore, research has indicated that both positive and negative emotional appeals might result in a higher likelihood of individuals sharing content. Specifically, emotions that elicit a strong response, such as enthusiasm and wrath, tend to generate more significant levels of engagement compared to emotions that elicit a weaker response (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Schreiner, 2019).

Since emotional responses are strongly correlated with desire to spread the news, they have a substantial impact on consumer engagement with advertising. Customers are more likely to share product information when they experience a good emotional response. Advertising that tells a story evokes stronger feelings than that which does not. Marketers can gain a deeper understanding of consumer engagement and the tendency for word-of-mouth communication by assessing the emotional reactions to various forms of advertising. In general, assessing emotional reactions is a useful method for comprehending customer involvement and how it affects the efficacy of advertising.

2.4.3 Shared Emotional Experiences

According to Hong et al. (2021) customers that connect emotionally with a brand and its narrative are more engaged and feel more optimistic. This is known as brand storytelling. More positive brand attitudes are the outcome of this emotional content's enhancement of cognitive processing. Engaging with emotional storytelling helps consumers retain and understand brand information more thoroughly, which leads to a more favourable attitude toward the brand.

The incorporation of emotional storytelling has become an essential element of contemporary marketing tactics, owing to its significant influence on consumer behaviour. Multiple studies have demonstrated the efficacy of brand storytelling in influencing consumer perceptions and cultivating stronger emotional bonds (Thorson, 2023). Research conducted by Escalas and Bettman (2005) provides evidence that narrative transportation, which refers to the phenomenon of customers becoming deeply engaged in the story conveyed by a brand, can greatly improve the effectiveness of brand communications. When consumers become immersed in a brand's narrative, their

emotional engagement intensifies, hence enhancing their recollection of the brand and its related messaging.

Increased consumer involvement, loyalty, and advocacy can result from an emotional brand attachment, which encompasses sentiments of affection, connection, and passion (Dwivedi et al., 2019). This is due to the fact that beneficial experiences and strong interactions with a brand are the result of emotional attachments to it. The way a consumer feels about a brand emotionally might influence how they judge and make decisions (Schmitt et al., 2006).

For instance, Dwivedi et al. (2019) demonstrate that emotional brand attachment can positively impact brand reputation. Consumers are more inclined to view a brand as trustworthy and dependable when they feel a strong emotional connection to it. Due to their increased propensity to interact with and trust the brand, consumers may get more involved as a result of this enhanced credibility. Emotional brand attachment also has the potential to boost customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, Chiu et al. (2013) and Koch et al. (2012) found that customers are more likely to use a brand's goods or services positively and feel fulfilled if they have a strong emotional connection to it. Because of this, individuals are more likely to say that their interactions have satisfied them, which increases brand loyalty. Moreover, according to Dwivedi et al. (2019) heightened consumer advocacy might result from an emotional connection to a brand. When customers feel a deep emotional connection to a brand, they are more likely to promote it to friends and family and share their positive experiences with others. This word-of-mouth advocacy can help the company succeed and build its overall reputation. In conclusion, emotional content can influence consumers' opinions, experiences, and brand-related actions, which in turn can promote customer involvement, loyalty, and advocacy.

2.4.4 Communication Channels

According to Esposito (2009), audio channels, visual channels, and combined channels are used to communicate emotional content and have the potential to influence consumer engagement. The audio channel is efficient in conveying dynamic emotional information, especially through vocal expressions. This includes changes in intonation, accent, emphasis, and other prosodic characteristics that can communicate diverse

emotional states. The vocal expressions in the audio channel are influenced by physiological processes associated with emotions, which makes them valuable for conveying emotional states. Furthermore, Jie et al. (2024) state that visual channels, such as facial expressions and body motions, offer crucial emotional indicators that enable organisations to better understand client emotions, preferences, and reactions. Through the analysis of these visual cues, companies may customise their marketing strategies and content to generate specific emotional reactions from consumers, resulting in heightened engagement.

Visual media offer a way to communicate with customers in a personalised way. Businesses can modify their content and messaging to meet the emotions and preferences of certain viewers by analysing the body language and facial expressions in videos. By providing content that is engaging, applicable, and relevant to each viewer, this tailored strategy promotes deeper brand-audience relationships and increases consumer engagement (Shen et al., 2019).

Emotional content in online reviews or social media posts has a big impact on how engaged customers are with a brand's online community. For instance, Deng et al. (2021) found brand posts that include positive emotive language have been shown to positively impact consumer engagement. These words have the ability to elicit positive emotions, foster a sense of connection, and generate a feeling of warmth among customers, resulting in increased levels of engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments. Conversely, unpleasant emotive phrases might have an opposing impact on consumer involvement. Positive emotions have the potential to increase customer interaction, while negative emotions can discourage consumers from actively interacting with brand content.

The use of emojis in brand posts can add a visual and emotional element to the communication, making the content more engaging and relatable to consumers. This can increase the likelihood of consumer interaction and engagement with the brand's online community. Emojis are mentioned as effective tools for conveying emotions in brand posts. When used strategically, emojis can serve as emotional signals that enhance consumers' perception of brand warmth and increase engagement levels (Gesselman & Garcia, 2019).

Furthermore, Lee et al. (2018) found that customers react more favourably to brand posts that use emotional language. By establishing a connection and resonance with customers, emotional language can elicit feelings from them and motivate them to interact with the material. Effective use of emotional language by brands in their posts can elicit strong feelings from viewers and boost interaction through likes, shares, and comments. A closer relationship between the brand and its online community may result from this emotional involvement. (Coursaris et al., 2016); therefore, brands can develop a more engaging narrative that draws in customers by using emotive language that speaks to their target audience. Increased customer engagement and participation with the brand's online content may be the outcome of this emotional connection (Deng et al., 2021).

2.4.5 Conceptual Model

Below is the hypothesis that will be tested in this research:

H1: Posts with positive emotional content will receive higher engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares) compared to posts with lower levels of positive emotional content.

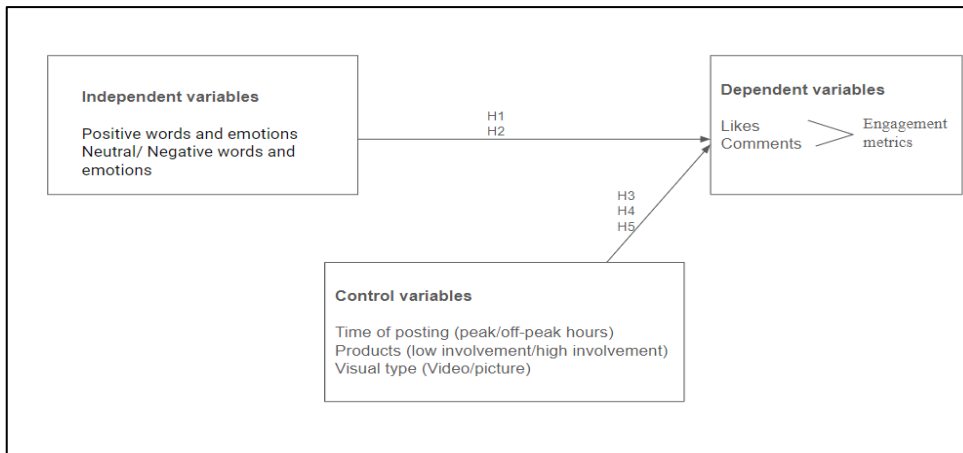
H2: Posts with neutral or negative emotional content will receive lower engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts with lower levels of negative emotional content.

H3: Posts shared recently will receive less engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts shared before.

H4: Posts that include videos will receive higher engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts with pictures.

H5: Posts from brands offering low-involvement products (e.g., fast-moving consumer goods) will receive higher engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts from brands offering high-involvement products (e.g., luxury items, high-end electronics).

Figure 2 Conceptual Model: Impact of Emotional Content on Social Media Engagement



Source: (author's own, 2024)

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the research design is presented, followed by the data collection methods, tools, and techniques used in our study. The variables, including independent and dependent variables, as well as control variables, are explained.

3.1 Research design

The general objective of this study is to understand how emotional content in posts influences consumers' engagement with those posts.

To gain a deeper understanding, we conducted both a quantitative and qualitative analysis, focussing primarily on the Instagram platform. For the quantitative analysis, statistical tests such as regression models, ANOVA tests, and correlation analysis were applied. For the qualitative analysis, thematic and sentiment analysis were used.

The study used cross-sectional data analysis to understand emotional patterns in a specific period of time, which was the last six months. This approach allows us to examine consumers' engagement with emotional content without considering long-term effects, as posts published long ago may have received more engagement than those published recently. To increase the reliability of findings, the study also takes into account other variables such as visual type (video/static), products (low/high involvement), and posting time. According to SocialInsider 2024 data, reels on

Instagram are performing well compared to static and carousel image posts, allowing us to use them as a control variable.

We will conduct a thorough field study that focuses on Instagram brand profiles to rigorously test the proposed hypotheses. Instagram was chosen as the research context because of its unparalleled popularity as a leading social networking platform and its burgeoning influence as a critical medium for social media marketing strategies (Statista, 2020). We selected Instagram due to its popularity and the fact that almost all brands use it to showcase their products. Another factor to consider is that platforms employ algorithms that prioritize content based on consumer interaction. Also, Instagram's visual nature, with rich multimedia content, makes it a compelling platform for brands to communicate with their audience.

Boasting an expansive user base that continues to surge, Instagram serves as a dynamic platform for brands to not only establish their digital footprint but also to actively engage with consumers and foster vibrant consumer communities. The staggering number of brand profiles on Instagram demonstrates its immense appeal to businesses. Recent data from Instagram Business (2024) reveals that over 25 million businesses worldwide have capitalized on the platform's potential by creating dedicated brand profiles. This staggering figure underscores the widespread recognition among businesses of the invaluable opportunities presented by Instagram for brand promotion, customer engagement, and community building. The platform's inherent characteristics, which facilitate the observation and analysis of brand-consumer interactions, further support the decision to focus on Instagram brand profiles for this study. With its visually-centric format and emphasis on storytelling through images and videos, Instagram offers a compelling environment for brands to showcase their products, share their brand narrative, and forge meaningful connections with their target audience.

Drawing on insights from prior research conducted on consumer engagement with brand posts on social media platforms such as Facebook, the selection of Instagram as the research context is grounded in its comparability and relevance to the current study (Coursaris et al., 2016a; Cruz et al., 2017; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; de Vries et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Kwok & Yu, 2013; Lee et al., 2018; Lei et al., 2017; Luarn et al., 2015; Sabate et al., 2014; Schultz, 2017; Wagner et al., 2017). Given the similar nature of brand-consumer interactions across various social media platforms, leveraging

insights from previous studies conducted on Facebook provides a solid foundation for exploring consumer engagement dynamics on Instagram.

The decision to conduct the field study on Instagram brand profiles is underpinned by the platform's unparalleled popularity, its widespread adoption by businesses, its suitability for observing brand-consumer interactions, and its alignment with prior research conducted on social media platforms. This strategic choice ensures that the study is well-positioned to generate valuable insights into consumer engagement with brand posts on Instagram, thereby contributing to the growing body of knowledge in the field of social media marketing research.

3.2 Data collection

The data collection process for this study was meticulously designed to ensure the acquisition of a comprehensive sample of brand posts from Instagram. Leveraging the capabilities of the Instagram Graph API, a systematic approach was employed to gather a representative sample of brand posts from a curated list of global brands.

This study employs purposive sampling to choose globally recognised brands on Instagram that have a great impact on consumers. The selection criteria included brands in the Forbes “2024 Most Valuable Brands” list. To categorise brands by industry, another sampling method, which is stratified sampling technique, is also used by considering industries such as sportswear, electronics, FMCG, fashion, luxury, and automobiles. Stratified random sampling is a sampling method where the population is divided into small groups, which are called strata.

Data collection was carried out using the Instagram platform, where all brands post their posts. Instagram was used to gather data on brands posts, such as textual content, and engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares.

To ensure the accuracy of the data, the following steps were considered:

Timeframe: The study focused on posts in the last six months of 2024, with data collection ending in April 2024. This timeframe was selected to capture recent activity and reflect current consumer behaviour.

Content filtering: This was applied to remove irrelevant content, for example, posts lacking textual messages. It was important to ensure that only high-quality contents were analysed.

A meticulous selection process was undertaken to identify a diverse array of global brands for inclusion in the study. Drawing upon data from reputable sources such as Forbes's "100 World's Most Valuable Brands" and Interbrand's "Best Global Brands," a list of 131 prominent global brands was curated. To ensure relevance and timeliness, the selection criteria were updated to include brands featured in the latest editions, including the Forbes "2024 World's Most Valuable Brands" list. Given the dynamic nature of brand engagement on Instagram, careful consideration was given to the temporal dynamics of post visibility and user engagement. To account for the platform's algorithmic display of content and users' engagement patterns, a minimum of two months of post activity after the actual posting time was deemed necessary to facilitate meaningful engagement with the brand posts. Data collection was conducted in April 2024, focussing on posts updated between February 1, 2024, and March 31, 2024. This timeframe was selected to capture recent brand activity on Instagram, ensuring the relevance and timeliness of the dataset to the study objectives. Brand profiles were meticulously evaluated based on their active presence on Instagram, posting frequency, and engagement levels. Brands featured in the Forbes "2024 World's Most Valuable Brands" list were prioritised for inclusion in the sample. Additionally, brands associated with media content or non-commercial entities were excluded to maintain consistency in the type of content analysed.

Following the initial data collection phase, rigorous filtering processes were employed to ensure the integrity and quality of the dataset. Automated posts, non-English content, and posts lacking textual messages were systematically removed to refine the dataset. The resulting dataset comprised a curated collection of high-quality brand posts ready for subsequent analysis. Throughout the data collection and preparation phases, stringent validation procedures were implemented to verify the accuracy and reliability of the dataset. Quality assurance measures were undertaken to address any discrepancies or inconsistencies, ensuring the dataset's suitability for robust analysis.

3.3 Variables

Emotionality in brand posts has been a focal point of previous research, often operationalised through manual coding to identify emotional appeal at the post level (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Swani and Milne, 2017; Wagner et al., 2017). In contrast, our study delves deeper into the examination of emotionality by focussing on the linguistic

level and analysing the emotional linguistic features embedded within brand posts. Rather than simply categorising posts as emotional or rational, we aim to uncover the nuanced interplay of positive and negative emotional words within these posts and their impact on consumer engagement.

To operationalize emotionality, we employed a refined approach, distinguishing between positive and negative emotional words. This nuanced perspective enables us to explore the differential effects of positive and negative emotional language on consumer engagement. Leveraging the Lexical Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) 2015 software (Pennebaker et al., 2015), we meticulously identified positive and negative emotional words within brand posts. LIWC, a widely used dictionary-based text analytics software, has demonstrated robust performance in detecting emotional words in social media text (Dhaoui and Webster, 2021; Hine et al., 2019; Hewett et al., 2016). Numerous academic studies have corroborated its validity, and the latest version includes approximately 6,400 words, word stems, and select emoticons, covering 86% of commonly used words in writing and speech (Pennebaker et al., 2015).

In our analysis, we generated two variables to quantify the percentages of positive and negative emotional words present in brand posts. By examining the prevalence of these emotional cues, we aim to uncover the underlying emotional landscape of brand communication on Instagram. Additionally, we explored the utilisation of emojis in brand posts, recognising their significance as potent emotional signals in computer-mediated communication (Kaye et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2008). Emojis not only convey emotions effectively but also enhance perceived intimacy between communicators, a phenomenon observed in various contexts, including brand communication (Gesselman et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019). Through this comprehensive approach, we aim to elucidate the multifaceted role of emotional cues, both textual and visual, in shaping consumer responses to brand communication on Instagram. By delving into the intricate interplay of linguistic emotionality and visual cues, our study seeks to provide deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying consumer-brand interactions in the digital era.

3.3.1 Independent variables

In this study, the emotional content of brand posts is an independent variable. For linguistic analysis, the Lexical Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) 2015 software is used to

identify emotional words in brand posts. This software analyzes the text provided in posts to classify the tone of the text as positive, negative, or neutral.

3.3.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable in our content is consumer engagement through the following metrics:

Likes: Reflect the positive response of users to a post.

Comments: Posting UGC-user-generated content may create a stronger emotional bond with consumers.

Shares: Indicating the relevance of the post, that leads users to share it with their network.

3.3.3 Control variables

In addition to exploring the emotionality of brand posts, our study incorporates several control variables to ensure the robustness and validity of our findings. These control variables cover a variety of aspects of brand communication dynamics and user behaviour on Instagram, providing a comprehensive framework for analysing consumer engagement with brand posts.

To get an understanding of emotional content impact on consumers, several control variables are included in the study:

Industry type: This is due to variations in engagement across different industries.

Post timing: Dummy variables are created to control for time-related engagement patterns.

Post media type: As explained before, content types differ in their engagement metrics, such as reels getting more engagement compared to static and carousel posts.

Recognising the diverse landscape of industries represented by the brands in our study, we control for industry effects. Previous research has highlighted variations in consumer engagement levels across different industries (de Vries et al., 2012; Schultz, 2017). By accounting for industry differences, we aim to disentangle the specific effects of emotionality on consumer engagement from broader industry trends. Time dynamics

play a crucial role in shaping user engagement with brand posts. While previous studies have indicated higher user activity on weekdays compared to weekends (Wagner et al., 2017), the impact of posting time remains a topic of debate. To address this, we introduce a dummy variable indicating whether a post was updated during the weekday or weekend, controlling for potential variations in engagement patterns based on posting timing.

Our data spans a six-month period, during which brands may adapt their linguistic styles or promotional strategies gradually. To mitigate potential temporal influences, we introduce dummy variables representing posting months. This control helps account for any systematic changes in brand communication over time and minimises the influence of fluctuations in brand follower size across the study period. Different types of media content, such as status updates, links, photos, videos, and event announcements, can elicit varying levels of consumer engagement (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; de Vries et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015). Therefore, we control for the effects of postmedia type to disentangle the impact of emotionality from variations in content format. This control variable allows us to assess the unique contribution of emotional language across different types of brand posts. By incorporating these control variables into our analysis, we aim to isolate the specific effects of emotionality on consumer engagement while accounting for potential confounding factors.

4. Results and Analysis

In the results and analysis chapter, all the research analysis is explained, including how posts are categorized as having a positive, negative, or neutral tone using the software LIWC. Following this, statistical analysis was employed to understand the correlation between engagement and brand posts.

4.1 Engagement Levels Across Emotional Categories

As part of our study, we measured the amount of both positive and negative words in posts by analysing their content. We then examined engagement metrics using these measurements. The text was subjected to an analysis using LIWC-22, as demonstrated

in the example below taken from Nike. The results showed a positive tone score of 17.65. Notably, scores within the LIWC-22 framework span from 0, which denotes "very low," to 100, which denotes "very high" along the positivity dimension.

Figure 3 Nike’s post 1



Source: (Instagram,2024)

Below is the content of the post-analysis according to LIWC software. Traditional LIWC dimensions reflect the percentage of total words within the provided text.

Table 1 LIWC software Analysis

Traditional LIWC Dimension	Text	The average entertainment language
I-words (I, me, my)	0	5.74
Positive Tone	17.65	3.41
Negative Tone	0	1.81
Social Words	17.65	12.55
Cognitive Processes	0	10.33
Allure	11,76	10.18
Moralization	0	0.33

Engagement (likes+comments)	290K	
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Source: LIWC , 2024

According to this post, a thorough analysis of user comments has revealed a distinct pattern that suggests a positive reception of the content. It is clear from the multitude of comments examined that a favourable proportion of users conveyed feelings of gratitude, indicating a generally positive response. Moreover, an important finding emerged from a particular comment in which a user complimented the copywriting, highlighting the text's efficacy. This feedback not only highlights the positive sentiment surrounding the content but also provides insight into the specific elements that the audience finds appealing. These results highlight the significance of captivating and skilfully written content in generating favourable feedback from members of the online community. Furthermore, it's important to note that the content's engagement level is an impressive **290k**, indicating a high level of audience interaction and interest. This metric emphasizes the importance and impact of engaging content strategies in fostering meaningful interactions within the online community, as evidenced by the positive reception found through user comment analysis.

Here's another Nike example where the content doesn't contain any positive or negative words. With **99k** interactions, this content generated significant engagement, even without overtly emotional language. Compared to the previously examined content, this engagement level is strikingly more than twice as low. The distinct difference in engagement metrics between the two instances emphasizes the complexity of audience reactions and the range of variables affecting user interactions. The substantial engagement indicates that other factors, such as brand loyalty, curiosity, or visual appeal, may have been critical in drawing audience attention even in the absence of overt emotional cues in the content.

Figure 4 Nike's post 2



Source: Instagram, 2024

Below is the textual content analysis conducted using LIWC software.

Table 2 LIWC software Analysis

Traditional LIWC Dimension	Text	The average entertainment language
I-words (I, me, my)	0.00	0.67
Positive Tone	0.00	2.33
Negative Tone	0.00	1.38
Social Words	0.00	6.54
Cognitive Processes	2.13	7.95
Allure	4,26	3.58
Moralization	0	0.30
Engagement	99K	

Source: LIWC, 2024

Two more Apple examples are provided. The content of the first post is not clearly in a positive or negative tone, much like the Nike example. The post garnered substantial engagement, with a total of **89k** interactions, even with the lack of sentimental language.

On the other hand, there is a noticeable difference in the emotional tone and level of engagement in the second post. This post shows a significantly higher level of audience

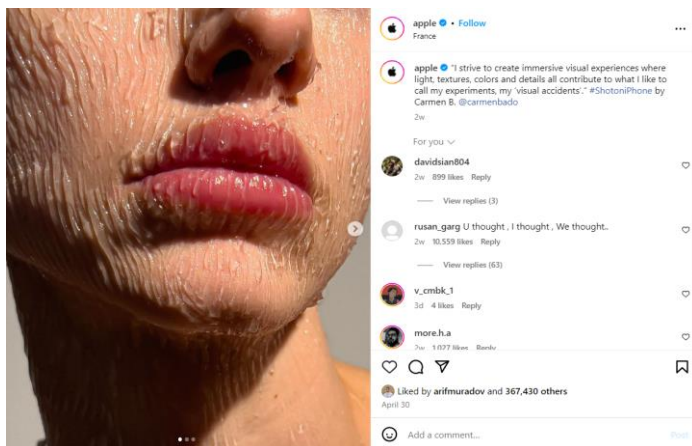
interest and interaction, with an engagement level skyrocketing to **369k** interactions. Additionally, the LIWC analysis shows that the second post's content has a positive tone score of 3.23, which denotes a subtle but noticeable positivity in the discourse.

Figure 5 Apple's post 1



Source: Instagram, 2024

Figure 6 Apple's post 2



Source: Instagram, 2024

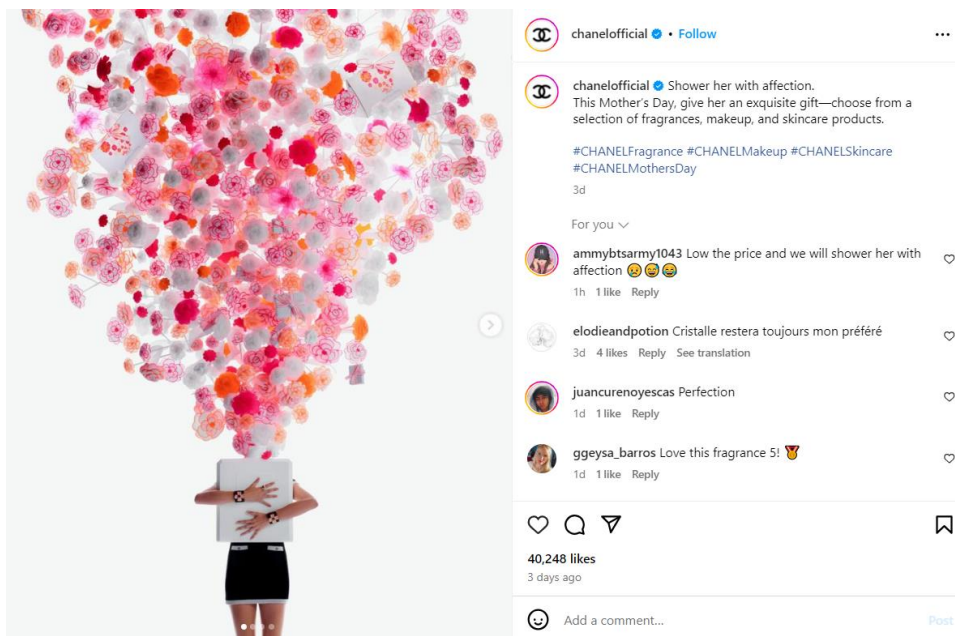
4.2 Comparing Engagement Across Different Brands

This section examines how engagement metrics—likes and comments—across posts from different brands compare to one another. We want to identify patterns and trends in audience engagement between various brands in the dataset under examination by closely examining these metrics.

Chanel's Mother's Day post stands out as an example, as it conveys a positive emotional tone and has a LIWC-confirmed score of 6.90. An impressive 42k people engaged with this post, indicating that it struck a chord with readers.

The post's content, which is all about honouring mothers, is filled with happy vibes that fit the occasion and probably add to its appeal. Additionally, a review of the comment section shows a plethora of supportive emojis and remarks regarding the products that are being highlighted. Remarks like "Love this fragrance 5! 🏆" and "Happy Mother's Day ❤️❤️" Forever love ❤️" add to the post's positive vibe and demonstrate how well Chanel's Mother's Day campaign facilitated deep audience engagement.

Figure 7 Chanel's 1 post



Source: Instagram, 2024

Analysing Chanel's posts in more detail offers more proof that positive content tone and higher engagement are related. A different post from the brand had a positive tone and a LIWC-confirmed score of 4.44. It also garnered an engagement level of 33k.

This example confirms a pattern seen throughout Chanel's content strategy: audience engagement levels are consistently higher for posts with an upbeat, emotive tone. The underlying theme is the same even though engagement metrics vary from post to post: positive sentiment acts as a catalyst to create meaningful interactions with the audience.

We also found that content with different degrees of positive tone had significantly different levels of engagement when we looked at Starbucks's posts. In particular, engagement on a Starbucks post with a content positive tone score of 4.76 was substantially higher (16K) than that of a post (6.7K) with a neutral tone score of 0.

This disparity emphasises how important emotional tone is in promoting audience engagement and interaction. The more likes, comments, and shares the post received indicates that it not only struck a more positive chord with the audience but also generated a higher level of engagement.

4.3 Relationship Between Emotional Content and Engagement Metrics

Regression analysis was used as part of the research methodology to look into the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The study utilised a regression model as a statistical tool to test five different hypotheses. This model enabled an investigation into how different factors, including emotional content, posting time, visual type, and product types, impact consumer engagement metrics like likes and comments.

We collected data on 100 social media posts from 10 different brands. Each post was analysed for various variables, including engagement metrics (likes, comments), engagement rate (calculated as engagement metrics divided by the number of followers), positivity score (on a scale from 0 to 1), number of followers, visual type (video or picture), time of posting (recently shared versus shared before), and product types. To calculate the engagement rate for each post, the engagement metrics were divided by the number of followers.

To test the hypotheses, a linear regression analysis was performed using SPSS. The dependent variable was the engagement rate, while the independent variables included the number of followers, visual type, product type, positivity score, and time of posting.

Here is the summary of the regression model. In the model, the R-value of 0.360 indicates a moderate correlation between the observed and predicted values of the engagement rate. The R Square value of 0.13 suggests that approximately 13% of the variance in the engagement rate is explained by the independent variables in the model. The adjusted R Square, which is 0.083, adjusts for the number of predictors in the model and provides a more accurate measure of model fit.

Table 3 Model summary

Model Summary				
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
.360 ^a	0.13	0.083	0.001506957	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Positivity_score, Followers, Visual_type_recoded, Time_of_posting_recoded, products_recoded				

Source: (author's own)

4.4 Controlling for Time of Posting, Products, Followers and Visual Type

The coefficient table offers a thorough understanding of the distinct effects of each variable on the engagement rate by incorporating control variables like the time of posting, visual type, number of followers, and product types into the analysis. By considering these control variables, we can identify the subtle effects of variables other than the main variables of interest, providing a more thorough understanding of the dynamics influencing social media engagement metrics.

Table 4 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.004	0.001		4.857	.00
Time_of_posting_recoded	-5.36E-05	0	-0.245	-2.213	.029
Visual_type_recoded	0	0	-0.142	-1.443	0.152
Industry_recoded	0	0	-0.163	-1.245	0.216
Followers	-3.90E-12	0	-0.21	-1.457	0.149
Positivity_score	-3.31E-05	0	-0.095	-0.965	0.037

Source: (author's own)

The p-value for time of posting is 0.029, indicating that recently shared posts are associated with a statistically significant decrease in the engagement rate ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, the positivity score has a p-value of 0.037, signifying a statistically significant effect on the engagement rate. The remaining variables do not significantly affect the engagement rate.

4.5 Anova Test

The ANOVA table indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.022. This suggests that the independent variables collectively influence the engagement rate.

Table 5 ANOVA test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	0	5	0	2.773	0.022
Residual	0	93	0		
Total	0	98			

Source: (author's own)

4.6 Consumer engagement on brand perceptions

After analysing posts to gather information about the relationship between emotional content and brand engagement, we also need to examine consumer engagement in relation to brand perception.

We conducted sentiment analysis on the same posts to identify the overall sentiment (positive, neutral, or negative) of each comment. Below, you can see a few example comments from each post. To understand the sentiment of comments, we again used the LIWC software, which we also used for analyzing the descriptions of posts.

Table 6 LIWC Software Analysis

Comments	Positive tone	Negative tone
Nike every day 🙌👉	3.26	1.93
Buenas zapatillas	5.93	2
😞😞	6	0
Jesus loves you all forever and he is King!! God bless you all and have a blessed day!!!❤️❤️🙏🙏	5	2

4.6.1 Sentiment Analysis

In our previous analysis of emotional content on consumer engagement, in which we analyzed 100 posts across 10 global brands, we examined 10 posts for Nike, each with a varying number of comments.

In the table below, you can see the total number of comments, along with the positive and negative comments for each post about Nike. The same sentiment analysis was also used to understand the different brands analysed during our research.

Table 7 Comments analysis

Posts	Total comments	Positive comments	Neutral	Negative comments
1	1095	845	220	30
2	1043	782	249	12
3	1291	645	616	30
4	962	673	284	5
5	534	301	192	41
6	343	240	83	20
7	434	347	57	30
8	346	270	50	26
9	308	200	100	8
10	633	476	140	17

Source: Instagram, 2024

As we see, positive comments (e.g., 'I so much love this brand 🥰😍😁', 'Amazing!') are more frequent than negative ones (e.g., 'No, it's not ☹️') for the Nike brand. The same analysis was also applied to different brands in our study to understand people's perceptions of those brands.

4.6.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis allowed us to group comments into certain themes, helping us understand how these themes align with positive, negative, and neutral sentiments. In the table below, you can see the results for the Nike collaboration post that we analysed previously in Figure 3. The identified themes include positive reactions, excitement, neutral reactions, and negative reactions.

Table 8 Themes

Comments	Themes
Ooh NIKE can't just stop loving you	Positive reactions
Those shoes are out of this world 🌍👟	Positive reactions
Terrible client experience	Negative reactions
When will you restock again?	Neutral reactions
No way!!! Love this collab ☹️	Excitement

Source: Instagram, 2024

For the second post, in which Nike presented a new edition, we observed fewer negative comments compared to the previous post. Poor customer experience and product size issues accounted for the majority of the negative comments.

Table 9 Themes

Comments	Themes
Amazing!	Positive reactions
Respect button 🙌❤️	Positive reactions
i dont ever want to see those people again	Negative reactions
Sold out in 3min	Neutral reactions
This is art	Positive reactions

Source: Instagram, 2024

4.6.3 Correlation with Engagement

A majority of positive sentiments accompany high engagement for the Nike brand, with a particular focus on brand collaborations. However, regarding new products, we sometimes see negative comments. While the number of negative comments about the Apple brand is low, the majority pertain to photos taken with the iPhone, frequently criticising the logic of these images. We also notice that there is less variety in posts related to Apple products, except during product launches.

For Starbucks, positive sentiment was associated with posts about new flavours and events related to new drink launches. High engagement was seen in positive comments (e.g., 'My favourite so far 🍌,' 'My Favourite Drink'). However, Samsung's new product launch received negative comments. The Chanel brand had positive reactions to its products, but negative comments sometimes related to its pricing. Gucci, Zara, and Louis Vuitton also displayed similar patterns, receiving negative feedback about product sizes that did not fit individuals, and receiving positive feedback about the quality of their products. Compared to other brands, Asus had lower engagement, with more negative comments about the product itself, such as memory or other technical issues. BMW, on the other hand, received positive sentiments regarding its appearance, with occasional negative comments about its price. Posts about new product launches across nearly all brand categories garnered high engagement and positive brand

perceptions. However, some brands, particularly fashion brands, faced challenges with pricing and product sizes, as evidenced by negative comments.

5. Discussion

In this chapter, the hypotheses developed in the literature review chapter are discussed based on the results obtained from Chapter 4. We assess whether to accept or reject the developed hypotheses.

5.1 H1 - Accepted

Our analysis persuasively supports the first hypothesis, which states that posts with more positive emotional content would receive higher engagement metrics than posts with less positive emotional content. We found a consistent relationship between the emotional tone of content and the corresponding levels of engagement across a wide range of examples from various brands.

After analysing posts from various brands, including Nike, Apple, Chanel, Starbucks, Samsung, and others, we discovered recurring trends: posts with more positive emotional content consistently received more engagement. For example, in the case of Nike, a post with a positive tone score of 17.65 received a lot more engagement than a post with a neutral tone. Researchers further supported this trend by analysing posts from Starbucks and Chanel, finding that content with higher levels of positive emotional content elicited more active audience interaction.

H1: Posts with positive emotional content will receive higher engagement metrics (likes, comments, and shares) compared to posts with lower levels of positive emotional content.

5.2 H2 - Accepted

Posts with a neutral or negative tone get less engagement than those with a positive tone, according to Hypothesis 2 (H2). Even though our regression model did not directly test this hypothesis, the significance of the positivity score suggests that the emotional tone of content, whether positive, neutral, or negative, significantly impacts engagement metrics. We can also assume support for Hypothesis 2 (H2) in light of the

acceptance of Hypothesis 1 (H1), which demonstrates that positive emotional content greatly increases engagement.

Furthermore, the examination of brand posts showed that posts with a high positivity score typically receive more engagement than those with a zero or low positivity score. This pattern further highlights the significance of a positive emotional tone in promoting customer interaction and engagement on social media platforms.

H2: Posts with neutral or negative emotional content will receive lower engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts with lower levels of negative emotional content.

5.3 H3 - Accepted

The third hypothesis, where we considered other variables such as the time of posting, was also accepted by noting that recently shared posts receive less engagement compared to posts shared a month ago. While it was apparent that recently shared posts are less visible than older posts, we must also consider that this factor is unrelated to the positive or negative tone of post descriptions.

H3: Posts shared recently will receive fewer engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts shared before.

5.4 H4 - Rejected

According to SocialInsider's 2024 data, reels are receiving more engagement than static or carousel posts. With that in mind, it was important for us to consider this variable as a control variable. In our analysis, we used different visual types and found that they do not affect engagement, leading to the rejection of the fourth hypothesis. This also supports the idea that, while analysing the impact of emotions on consumer engagement, the format of the post—whether it's a reel or static—does not matter; the tone of the content still influences its engagement rate.

H4: Posts that include videos will receive higher engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts with pictures.

5.5 H5 - Rejected

H5 showed the relationship between product types and engagement. In our research, we analysed different brand categories, such as BMW, a car brand, versus Zara, which

caters to different product categories. We aimed to see if low-involvement products receive more engagement compared to high-involvement products. Our hypothesis was also rejected, with a significance level of 0.216. Therefore, our analysis revealed that product type is not a significant factor in determining engagement.

H5: Posts from brands offering low-involvement products (e.g., fast-moving consumer goods) will receive higher engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts from brands offering high-involvement products (e.g., luxury items, high-end electronics).

6. Conclusion

In this section, the overall study is presented, followed by its theoretical and practical contributions. At the end, the limitations and future directions of the research are discussed.

In our study, we examined the effect of emotional content on consumer engagement, as well as the impact of consumer engagement on brand perception. De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) provided insights into various factors affecting consumer engagement; however, our study focused on one specific factor—the emotionality of content. Our goal was to understand how positive, neutral, and negative content affects consumer engagement with posts. We employed the Emotional Contagion Theory to investigate the effective transmission of emotions from posts to the audience.

Firstly, the study analysed H1, where it was crucial to understand whether positive emotional content would receive higher engagement compared to negative emotional content. People are more likely to interact with posts that contain positive emotional content, confirming our hypothesis. This is evident in the higher number of likes and comments. We used LIWC software to analyse the posts' text and determine the positive and negative scores of the content during our research.

Regarding H2, it was somewhat challenging to find posts with a negative tone, but a sufficient number of posts had a neutral tone, which showed low engagement. People are less likely to engage with posts that have a neutral or negative tone. Therefore, this hypothesis, supported by the first, was also accepted. As I mentioned, it is a bit

challenging to find posts that convey a negative tone, but even the small sample size supports our findings.

It was essential to include control variables in our study, as De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) suggested that various factors influence consumer engagement. We included the timing of posts as one of these variables. Our findings also supported H3, which states that posts shared recently will receive fewer engagement metrics (likes, comments) than those shared earlier. Even a month later, we noticed an increase in engagement for posts shared a month ago. Therefore, it would be illogical to compare posts shared a month ago with those shared recently.

According to SocialInsider's 2024 data, reels generate more engagement than static or carousel posts. Therefore, in our research, we controlled for this variable to see if it held true. However, our findings showed that the content of the posts was a more significant factor influencing consumer engagement than the type of posts. Of course, to draw a definitive conclusion, we would need to analyse a larger number of posts, which is a key limitation of this study. Based on the data we provided, the type of post did not have a significant effect on consumer engagement. Additionally, while views are considered an engagement metric for reels, our study focused solely on likes and comments. We also rejected our last hypothesis, H5, which suggested that posts from brands offering low-involvement products (e.g., fast-moving consumer goods) would receive higher engagement metrics (likes, comments) compared to posts from brands offering high-involvement products (e.g., luxury items, high-end electronics). To ensure that product type did not influence our results, we controlled for this variable. The rejection of Hypothesis 5 suggests that industry type (product type) does not influence user engagement with posts, thereby reinforcing our research's primary finding that a positive tone significantly enhances consumer engagement.

In the second part of the analysis, we aimed to understand consumer engagement in relation to brand perception, utilising sentiment and thematic analysis. The results showed that higher engagement is associated with a more positive brand perception among consumers. However, the following sections will discuss the limitations of this finding. Nonetheless, this result indicates a clear link between positive sentiment and enhanced brand perception.

Key Findings

Positive Engagement Is Associated with Positive Emotional Content

Posts containing positive emotional content, such as those showcasing a positive tone, receive higher engagement compared to posts with neutral or negative tones. Engagement metrics (likes and comments) are notably higher for emotional content compared to posts with a neutral or informative tone.

This finding highlights the importance of using positive emotional content in posts to drive higher engagement with consumers.

Role of Emotional Contagion in Shaping Perception

This theory suggests that the emotions expressed in posts can influence how people perceive the brand. Positive emotions and higher engagement lead to an enhanced brand perception. In contrast, if the tone of the content is neutral or negative, it results in lower engagement and can lead to a negative brand perception.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of this study involve applying and extending the existing Emotional Contagion Theory to emotional content, consumer engagement, and brand perception. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how emotional content affects consumer engagement and offers insights into how Emotional Contagion Theory and related concepts can be applied in social media marketing.

This study extends the application of Emotional Contagion Theory by demonstrating its impact on consumer engagement and brand perception. It highlights how positive content not only enhances consumer engagement but also improves brand perception. The results indicate that positive content leads to higher engagement, which in turn positively affects brand perception. This suggests that brands can boost engagement and foster a positive brand perception by increasing the amount of positive emotional content they share.

This study also contributes to the theoretical framework of consumer engagement. While traditional theories suggest that content quality is the primary factor, this study extends the framework by highlighting the importance of the emotionality of content in driving consumer interactions. Our findings suggest that positive emotional content is a key driver of consumer engagement. Theories related to brand perception are also influenced by this study, demonstrating how positive emotional content increases

engagement, which in turn affects consumer attitudes toward a brand. It provides empirical support for how emotional content shapes brand perceptions.

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for brands using social media channels to promote their businesses. Initially, we discussed how businesses allocate their budgets for social media advertising but emphasised the importance of achieving a high ROI. While brands invest in creating posts, they do not always yield the desired results. Our approach has been to provide practical recommendations for brands to effectively boost their posts. Although brands can use A/B testing to determine which posts generate more engagement, our study's results highlight that incorporating positive emotional content is crucial for achieving higher engagement and fostering a positive brand perception.

There are several strategies that businesses can apply to their social media efforts. The most important is prioritising emotional content in their strategy. Our second analysis of brand perception shows that certain themes, such as positive reactions and excitement, can shape a positive brand perception. Businesses should focus on creating positive emotional content that resonates with their audience, evoking positive emotions, and helping to build a favourable brand perception. Tailoring content to align with the audience can provide brands with insights into which posts drive engagement, enabling them to create more effective content.

6.3 Limitations

No research is without limitations, and it is essential to understand these limitations and provide direction for future researchers to address them.

The sample size is a significant limitation of this study. Although the posts analysed are from well-known brands across different categories, results might vary with a larger sample of posts and brands. Factors beyond consumer engagement and emotional content can also influence brand perception. Future researchers should identify and analyse these additional factors. Another limitation is that we did not consider other aspects of posts, such as image colour and linguistic style, which could impact consumer perceptions before reading the caption. Furthermore, we cannot be certain if

all users are reading the content. Conducting surveys among consumers could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics.

In general, the first limitation of this study is the limited scope of data, which can affect the generalisability of the results. Secondly, the research was conducted on Instagram, a platform with specific engagement patterns; results could differ on other social media platforms (such as TikTok), where users primarily watch videos rather than read content. Thirdly, sentiment analysis relies on automated tools, and any inaccuracies could impact the reliability of the results. Emotional content is subjective and can evoke different emotions in different individuals based on factors such as culture and religion. Therefore, it might be beneficial to conduct a survey to gather results from people within the same cultural context. External factors, such as trends, can also influence engagement and brand perceptions, potentially confounding the results.

6.4 Future Research

In light of the findings and limitations of this study, there are several future research directions we can suggest. By addressing these limitations, future researchers can develop a deeper understanding of the effect of emotional content on consumer engagement.

One direction is investigating emotional content across different social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok). Since each platform exhibits different patterns of user interaction, analysing and comparing them could provide a deeper understanding of how emotional content influences engagement and reveal what works best on each platform.

Another potential direction would be to analyse not only the content but also the visual design of posts. As we discussed, some people focus more on the visuals than the content itself, forming their opinions based on what they see before engaging with the post.

Demographic segments should also be considered as a future research direction. People in different locations and age groups may engage differently with posts, which can, in turn, affect overall engagement. Additionally, cultural differences can lead to varying opinions about brand posts, influencing brand perceptions. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to take these factors into account.

Conducting surveys among people from specific locations can provide a more comprehensive analysis of brand perception. By showing them posts and gathering their feedback, researchers can gain deeper insights into how different audiences perceive a brand.

Table 10 Future research directions

Future research directions	Research questions
Emotional content analysis across different social media platforms	In what ways does emotive content affect user interaction on various social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok)?
Analysis of Visual Design vs. Textual Content in Consumer Engagement	In comparison to textual content, how does the visual design of social media posts affect user engagement?

Emotional Content Impact Across Demographic Segments	How does the effect of emotional content in social media posts differ among demographic segments?
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Source: (author's own)

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8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix A: Analysed brands and posts

Posts_ID	Brands	Engagement_likes	Engagement	Positivity Sc	Time_of_post	Visual_type	Followers	Engagement-R	Engagement_m	Industry
1	Nike	289000	1095	17.65	7-May	Picture	306000000	0.000948023	290095	Sportswear
2	Nike	98800	1043	0	1-May	Picture	306000000	0.000326284	99843	Sportswear
3	Nike	148000	1291	0	11-May	Video	306000000	0.000487879	149291	Sportswear
4	Nike	135000	962	3.13	24-Apr	Picture	306000000	0.00044432	135962	Sportswear
5	Nike	118000	534	10.53	22-Apr	Picture	306000000	0.000387366	118534	Sportswear
6	Nike	65100	343	9.52	17-Apr	Picture	306000000	0.000213866	65443	Sportswear
7	Nike	75800	434	2.08	17-Apr	Picture	306000000	0.000249131	76234	Sportswear
8	Nike	69500	346	2	16-Apr	Picture	306000000	0.000228255	69846	Sportswear
9	Nike	100000	308	4.55	15-Apr	Picture	306000000	0.000327804	100308	Sportswear
10	Nike	70200	633	0	13-Apr	Video	306000000	0.00023148	70833	Sportswear
11	Apple	87600	1668	0	9-May	Picture	32600000	0.002738282	89268	Electronics
12	Apple	367000	2435	3.23	30-Apr	Picture	326000000	0.011332362	369435	Electronics
13	Apple	64700	654	1.61	16-May	Picture	326000000	0.002004724	65354	Electronics
14	Apple	119000	932	7.27	7-May	Video	326000000	0.003678896	119932	Electronics
15	Apple	124000	1058	2.7	2-May	Picture	326000000	0.003836135	125058	Electronics
16	Apple	65100	451	0	1-May	Picture	326000000	0.002010767	65551	Electronics
17	Apple	83900	690	5.13	25-Apr	Picture	326000000	0.002594785	84590	Electronics
18	Apple	211000	892	0	24-Apr	Picture	326000000	0.006499755	211892	Electronics
19	Apple	34400	643	0	17-Apr	Video	326000000	0.001074939	35043	Electronics
20	Apple	50800	617	4.76	9-Apr	Video	326000000	0.001577209	51417	Electronics
21	Starbucks	21800	254	4.76	15-May	Picture	178000000	0.001238989	22054	FMCG
22	Starbucks	41100	207	0	14-May	Picture	178000000	0.002320618	41307	FMCG
23	Starbucks	6538	145	0	13-May	Video	178000000	0.000375449	6683	FMCG
24	Starbucks	38300	356	15.79	13-May	Picture	178000000	0.002171685	38656	FMCG
25	Starbucks	43600	348	5.88	10-May	Picture	178000000	0.002468989	43948	FMCG
26	Starbucks	94700	1193	0	8-May	Video	178000000	0.005387247	95893	FMCG
27	Starbucks	55300	712	0	7-May	Video	178000000	0.003146742	56012	FMCG
28	Starbucks	26300	268	0	30-Apr	Picture	178000000	0.001492584	26568	FMCG
29	Starbucks	6891	106	18.18	29-Apr	Video	178000000	0.000393909	6997	FMCG

30	Starbucks	28700	208	0	27-Apr	Picture	178000000	0.001624045	28908	FMCG
31	Samsung	1669	121	0	14-May	Picture	17000000	0.001052941	1790	Electronics
32	Samsung	1103	122	0	13-May	Video	17000000	0.000720588	1225	Electronics
33	Samsung	1263	122	6.45	10-May	Video	17000000	0.000814706	1385	Electronics
34	Samsung	1268	76	5.17	8-May	Picture	17000000	0.000790588	1344	Electronics
35	Samsung	1457	48	5.63	8-May	Picture	17000000	0.000885294	1505	Electronics
36	Samsung	970	27	3.85	8-May	Video	17000000	0.000586471	997	Electronics
37	Samsung	2240	907	5.71	30-Apr	Video	17000000	0.001851176	3147	Electronics
38	Samsung	3092	331	2.27	28-Apr	Picture	17000000	0.002013529	3423	Electronics
39	Samsung	2096	99	5.71	27-Apr	Picture	17000000	0.001291176	2195	Electronics
40	Samsung	2171	104	6.9	19-Apr	Video	17000000	0.001338235	2275	Electronics
41	Chanel	42000	136	7.14	12-May	Picture	599000000	0.000703439	42136	Luxury
42	Chanel	43300	225	7.14	12-May	Video	599000000	0.000726628	43525	Luxury
43	Chanel	33900	206	5.32	11-May	Picture	599000000	0.000569382	34106	Luxury
44	Chanel	15100	100	4.26	11-May	Picture	599000000	0.000253756	15200	Luxury
45	Chanel	16400	118	4.92	11-May	Video	599000000	0.00027576	16518	Luxury
46	Chanel	28000	86	0.98	10-May	Picture	599000000	0.000468881	28086	Luxury
47	Chanel	32700	190	4.44	9-May	Picture	599000000	0.000549082	32890	Luxury
48	Chanel	14000	61	5.88	9-May	Picture	599000000	0.000234741	14061	Luxury
49	Chanel	74400	138	4.92	9-May	Video	599000000	0.001244374	74538	Luxury
50	Chanel	23700	101	3.13	8-May	Picture	599000000	0.000397346	23801	Luxury
51	Gucci	27800	269	0	16-May	Picture	524000000	0.000535668	28069	Luxury
52	Gucci	67500	344	0	16-May	Picture	524000000	0.001294733	67844	Luxury
53	Gucci	30900	162	3.9	15-May	Video	524000000	0.000592786	31062	Luxury
54	Gucci	24300	158	6.41	15-May	Picture	524000000	0.000466756	24458	Luxury
55	Gucci	41800	222	2.35	15-May	Video	524000000	0.000801947	42022	Luxury
56	Gucci	27400	119	3.33	15-May	Picture	524000000	0.000525172	27519	Luxury
57	Gucci	30700	251	1.67	15-May	Video	524000000	0.000590668	30951	Luxury
58	Gucci	28300	136	2.86	15-May	Picture	524000000	0.000542672	28436	Luxury
59	Gucci	160000	904	2.82	15-May	Video	524000000	0.003070687	160904	Luxury
60	Gucci	34600	609	2.99	14-May	Video	524000000	0.000671927	35209	Luxury

61	Zara	23600	232	0	17-May	Picture	61700000	0.000386256	23832	Fashion
62	Zara	14600	657	0	16-May	Picture	61700000	0.000247277	15257	Fashion
63	Zara	125000	1407	0	13-May	Picture	61700000	0.002048736	126407	Fashion
64	Zara	142000	1388	20	10-May	Picture	61700000	0.002323955	143388	Fashion
65	Zara	66900	777	10	9-May	Picture	61700000	0.001096872	67677	Fashion
66	Zara	125000	796	0	8-May	Picture	61700000	0.002038833	125796	Fashion
67	Zara	53800	440	18.18	7-May	Picture	61700000	0.000879092	54240	Fashion
68	Zara	98500	577	18.18	6-May	Picture	61700000	0.001605786	99077	Fashion
69	Zara	116000	769	0	4-May	Picture	61700000	0.001892528	116769	Fashion
70	Zara	118000	860	9.09	2-May	Picture	61700000	0.001926418	118860	Fashion
71	Louisvuitton	21800	154	7.5	16-May	Picture	55400000	0.000396282	21954	Fashion
72	Louisvuitton	9425	104	5.26	16-May	Video	55400000	0.000172004	9529	Fashion
73	Louisvuitton	15400	113	2.5	16-May	Picture	55400000	0.000280018	15513	Fashion
74	Louisvuitton	25900	186	5	16-May	Picture	55400000	0.000470866	26086	Fashion
75	Louisvuitton	16200	216	4.55	16-May	Video	55400000	0.000296318	16416	Fashion
76	Louisvuitton	16000	233	5.13	15-May	Video	55400000	0.000293014	16233	Fashion
77	Louisvuitton	96000	437	1.56	15-May	Picture	55400000	0.00174074	96437	Fashion
78	Louisvuitton	41700	209	1.85	15-May	Picture	55400000	0.00075648	41909	Fashion
79	Louisvuitton	23900	143	3.03	14-May	Picture	55400000	0.000433989	24043	Fashion
80	Louisvuitton	38200	158	3.85	14-May	Picture	55400000	0.000692383	38358	Fashion
81	Asus	911	7	8.7	16-May	Picture	3400000	0.00027	918	Electronics
82	Asus	1469	29	7.41	15-May	Picture	3400000	0.000440588	1498	Electronics
83	Asus	641	12	6	15-May	Picture	3400000	0.000192059	653	Electronics
84	Asus	1358	11	5.56	15-May	Picture	3400000	0.000402647	1369	Electronics
85	Asus	440	6	0	15-May	Video	3400000	0.000131176	446	Electronics
86	Asus	414	7	3.33	14-May	Video	3400000	0.000123824	421	Electronics
87	Asus	369	4	6.52	14-May	Picture	3400000	0.000109706	373	Electronics
88	Asus	419	7	0	14-May	Video	3400000	0.000125294	426	Electronics
89	Asus	742	26	1.75	13-May	Picture	3400000	0.000225882	768	Electronics
90	Asus	870	34	5	12-May	Picture	3400000	0.000265882	904	Electronics
91	BMW	5623	29	1.39	17-May	Video	38800000	0.00014567	5652	Automobile
92	BMW	42400	263	0	17-May	Picture	38800000	0.001099562	42663	Automobile
93	BMW	12600	89	0	17-May	Video	38800000	0.000327036	12689	Automobile
94	BMW	21800	151	0	15-May	Video	38800000	0.000565747	21951	Automobile
95	BMW	163000	389	3.77	14-May	Picture	38800000	0.004211057	163389	Automobile
96	BMW	177000	389	0	14-May	Picture	38800000	0.004571881	177389	Automobile
97	BMW	76200	327	2.27	14-May	Video	38800000	0.001972345	76527	Automobile
98	BMW	36400	205	0	13-May	Video	38800000	0.000943428	36605	Automobile
99	BMW	5651	82	6.67	12-May	Video	38800000	0.000147758	5733	Automobile
100	BMW	102000	309	0	12-May	Picture	38800000	0.00263683	102309	Automobile