

# The power of narrative images

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# Valorization

In the following section, the value of this dissertation in terms of social and economic relevance to society is discussed. According to Appendix 4 of the Regulation Governing the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees, the present valorization refers to “the process of creating value from knowledge, by making knowledge suitable and/or available for social (and economic) use, and by making knowledge suitable for translation into competitive products, services, processes and new commercial activities (Article 23 in the Regulation Governing the Attainment of Doctoral Degrees, adapted definition based on National Valorization Committee 2011). The focus of this dissertation on the persuasiveness of visuals used in online and offline environments provides social and economic value to managers and research institutions dealing with this type of content. Specifically, this dissertation provides critical insights regarding the effects of visual content on consumer behavior, thereby facilitating companies’ decision making with regards to the use of visual narratives across different marketing contexts (e.g., social media, print ads).

## Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, I investigate consumer photography and its effects on eWOM. Specifically, I investigate the effect of visual aspects such as the portrayed content, narrative perspective, and photographic style on the likelihood to comment of posted selfies. Chapter is of great interest to marketing and communication managers who encourage consumers to share selfies while using a brand or consuming a product. Managers, indeed, should be mindful of the three aspects in consumer selfies (content, perspective, and style) considered in this dissertation to make sure that viewers are willing to interpret and take actions (commenting) on the posted consumer selfie. Moreover, this Chapter highlights that the three abovementioned aspects should be considered simultaneously. Said differently, this chapter provides relevant evidence on the joint impact of the visual content, perspective, and style on eWOM.

These findings provide directions about the implementation of new product development strategies that facilitate consumption and selfie taking. For example, in its “Share a Coke campaign” Coca-Cola allowed customers to print their names on Coca-Cola cans, thus inducing consumers to snap and share selfies portraying directed actions. It is more important that selfies portray directed actions to transport viewers and encourage eWOM. Also, this Chapter highlights how the visual style of a selfie can damage a brand or company. Indeed, the widespread use of the contemporary snapshot style seems to have detrimental effects on consumer likelihood to comment on selfies. The least silly selfie seems to be the one most likely to be commented on. Companies should thus restrain consumers from taking selfies that appear rushed or carelessly composed. Instead, they should encourage consumers to take less snapshot selfies and more professional or parody ones. As they are usually conceived as more valuable, thoroughly

thought-out selfies give more importance to a commercial message about a brand, service, or product (Mazza *et al.*, 2014).

In addition to companies and marketing managers, this Chapter is of great interest to governmental and non-governmental organizations. The selfie portraying actions toward consumption represents a powerful way for consumers to communicate with and influence peers. A substantial body of research in consumer behaviour indicates that others' eating and drinking behaviour is harmful to the individual and society (Poor *et al.*, 2013). The way consumers make use of photography in everyday life prompts relevant questions of how organisations can use visual narratives in photographs for educational purposes (e.g. eating healthfully, reducing alcohol use). The findings in Chapter 2 suggests that viewers are more persuaded by the narrative in selfies when a directed action is taking place. This may have positive implications for healthful drinks or foods, but for unhealthful beverages or food we recommend promoting the snapshot style. The randomness with which narratives are portrayed in snapshot selfies gives the photograph a sense of silliness, meaning the selfie is of little value to viewers, making them less likely to comment on the visualised narrative. This finding can be used to decrease viewers' likelihood to engage in selfies portraying harmful behaviour. For example, to reduce the risk of car incidents due to alcohol consumption, the Manchester Police launched its summer drinking campaign #NoneForTheRoad. The snapshot selfie was of a young man about to drink a beer and had the message "Don't turn your selfie into a 'Cellfie'" (Kidd, 2014).

In sum, both companies and (non)governmental organizations can better understand how consumer photography shared on social media sites can affect consumer behaviour. The results of Chapter 2 are crucial in providing clear insights into the use of visual narratives in consumer selfies to increase eWOM.

### Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, I investigate an important stylistic property in company-generated visual content, that is visual patterns. In addition, I consider how textual information (i.e., ad headlines) interact with visual content in affecting consumer behavior. As the consumer exposure to visual advertising is growing, it becomes harder to capture people's attention and desire for the products and objects depicted in an ad. Chapter 3 helps content managers across different industries to understand the optimal composition of visuals that are more likely to relate to individuals and less likely to be disregarded. Specifically, Chapter 3 provides several managerial insights regarding how to compose ads that depict multiple identical products through regular or irregular visual patterns. Regular visual patterns show objects in an ordered and predictable fashion, while irregular patterns do not follow any order, but objects are displayed in a random fashion. Findings in Chapter

3 suggest that when choosing visual patterns for a printed or online ad, advertising practitioners should account for their match with other components of the ad (e.g., headline), to ensure their fit. To make sure that an ad is evaluated positively by the intended audience, the headline should match (rather than mismatch) the visual pattern. Specifically, when the headline emphasizes motion, regular visual patterns generate more positive product evaluations compared to irregular visual patterns.

Thus, managers should exercise some caution when employing irregular and regular visual patterns, especially when paired with text information. Chapter 3 highlights how managers can increase product evaluations by using visual patterns. The implications of this research are of great interest not only for advertising managers but also for marketing managers in general. Indeed, the implications of Chapter 3 likely extend to other visual brand elements, such as logo design, packaging, shelving, and webpage and app interface designs. For example, Nike's swoosh logo was designed in 1971 to convey motion and the same perception of movement is highlighted by text portions in Nike's ads (e.g., "Move more, move better", "The shoe works if you do", "Just do it"). Our work suggests that practitioners should carefully examine the perceptions evoked by the stylistic aspects regarding the perception of motion in marketing material based on the joint use of text and visuals, as their inconsistent match can dampen consumers' product evaluations.

## Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, I investigate company-generated social media posts to understand what visual properties drive consumer's social media activities (e.g., liking and sharing). This Chapter provides straightforward and actionable implications for brand managers designing brand-related narratives for social media conversations. Although I demonstrate that storytelling is a powerful communication tool that should be used on social media platforms, Chapter 4 highlights what specific image and text storytelling aspects decreases consumer sharing of brand messages. Results of Chapter 4 suggest that brand managers should refrain from using people as story actors to convey a brand message on social media.

Next, this Chapter provides directions on whether it is fruitful to include text within the visual portion of a social media post. Also, results show that narrative images should not be accompanied by complex captions. These findings highlight that content composition of brand messages requires a careful evaluation from practitioners.

In sum, using multimodal social media posts can be a powerful tool for brand-related storytelling. Chapter 4 helps managers to understand that modes have different purposes and limitations and, therefore, need to be carefully considered when combined to create engaging stories for consumers to be shared on social media platforms.