Understanding how popular brands make use of Neuromarketing on Instagram

Final Research Report

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ABSTRACT

It is imperative to conduct research on Instagram as a marketing tool and its relation to neuromarketing. Marketers need to understand the underlying reasons of why and how their brand's content evokes emotional connections in order to truly and effectively communicate with current and potential audiences (du Plessis 2011:50). Many brands have seen a drastic increase in popularity and consequently sales, by posting images that intrigue followers or evoke nostalgia or other emotions and feelings (Goor 2012). Understanding why users of Instagram follow certain brands and what emotions or feelings are evoked when viewing content posted by these brands, will allow for a deeper understanding into popular brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is currently so successful. In this research report, a qualitative study involving two levels of research will be conducted to understand what factors of noticeability are relevant for brands posting on Instagram and what emotional connections are made that may result in a form of engagement. The results revealed that it is evident that brands are leaning towards abstraction or emotional strategies in order to elicit emotions from target audiences. It is evident that successful, popular brands are subconsciously or consciously using the notion of neuromarketing to implement instamarketing tactics in order to stimulate emotional connections and engagement that lead to the target audience filling a personal void. The implication of emotional manipulation regarding the use of neuromarketing tactics may be viewed as unethical, however, if a brand composes images that are true to their main purpose and identity, which caters to the psychographic needs of their target market, one can presume that the brand is simply filling a void within their target market's lives.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

Instagram has been described as "the worlds most powerful selling tool" (Dishman 2014). Bakhshi, Shamma and Gilbert (2014:972) claims that there is limited scholarly research on Instagram despite its success. Understanding why users of Instagram follow certain brands and what emotions or feelings are evoked when viewing content posted by these brands, will allow for a deeper understanding into popular brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is currently so successful. Many brands have seen a drastic increase in popularity and consequently sales, by posting images that intrigue followers or evoke nostalgia or other emotions and feelings (Goor 2012). The success of a snapshot lies in the composition of the image as well as what is portrayed in the image and the ability to engage and connect with users on the basis of self-expression (Ginsberg 2015; Long 2011). If visual content elicits an engagement on Instagram, it is assumed that the user has made some sort of emotional connection (Goor 2012). Neurological studies have proven that certain emotive responses can be a catalyst for desirable actions for marketers (Roberts 2004:3; du Plessis 2011:50). Dragolea and Cotirlea (2011:79) claim that traditional marketing methods fail to effectively reduce the gaps between the consumers' subconscious and their actual behaviours to fulfil their desires. Neuromarketing gives marketers an opportunity to evade the shortcomings of traditional marketing techniques (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:80). A shortcoming that has often been noted is the inability of traditional marketing methods to truly comprehend how emotion leads to action or a desired behaviour (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:80). The latter will be expanded on in the Literature Review under Neuromarketing.

The researcher poses the following questions: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos posted by certain brands? The second research question poses: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement? The researcher aims to

understand the deeper, more sentimental reasoning behind people following brands. The results will be presented in the Findings and Data Analysis chapters of this study.

1.2 Rationale

Regarding the above, it is imperative to conduct research on Instagram as a marketing tool and its relation to neuromarketing. Marketers need to understand the underlying reasons of why and how their brand's content evokes emotional connections in order to truly and effectively communicate with current and potential audiences (du Plessis 2011:50).

1.3 Research questions

When considering the problem statement and rationale of the study, the researcher will pose research questions to guide the research. The two main questions are:

RQ1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?
RQ2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this research is to conduct an explorative study into how popular brands make use of neuromarketing on Instagram to emotionally connect and engage with their followers or target audience. The researcher aims to gain a deeper understanding as to why users follow brands on Instagram and how brands use neuromarketing to influence their target audience.

1.5 Delimitations

This study will not focus on how Instagram operates, such as the components of the application, filters, layout of the application and how it works. Additionally, this study will draw upon theory of neuroscience and neuromarketing that is directly relevant to the research on Instagram and branding on Instagram. However, literature on neuroscience and neuromarketing, as well qualitative research will be used to solely understand how brands make use of neuromarketing to provoke engagement and

emotional connections made with brands on Instagram. A representative sample based on purposive sampling will be used to conduct qualitative research, as the entire targeted population is not accessible by the researcher. Neuromarketing is deemed as a "supplement of traditional techniques, not a replacement" (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:86). Therefore, data collected from the research cannot be generalised to all brands or Instagram users as "all individuals are different, and each choice or opinion expressed largely depends on the emotions, state of mind and memory" (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:87). Budget and time restrictions may hamper the ability to reach the targeted population of 1,1 million users; therefore an accessible population will be specified in chapter 3 of this report.

1.6 Methodology

A qualitative research design will be applied, as an exploration into emotive responses pertaining to visual content within a brand context will be studied. The nature of qualitative research allows the researcher to extract deeper meanings or trends from the participant's experience (Zikmund & Babin 2011:62). An ethnographic research approach, more specifically, an audience ethnographic approach will be used to conduct qualitative research. The researcher will conduct two levels of data collection, on the first level, focus groups will be conducted to collect primary data pertaining to the research questions and problem statement. On the second level, participants will be asked to send the researcher three images from their favourite brand on Instagram. The reason for the second level of data collection is to ensure that there is trustworthiness. The images given to the researcher should be in line with the data from the focus groups. Purposive sampling is used, as certain participants with similar characteristics are needed for this study. All participants need to have an Instagram account and follow brands on Instagram. The findings from the two levels of research will then be analysed according to a specific framework. Level one findings will be analysed in terms of the Instagram Framework by Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati (2014). The framework consists of eight categories namely friends (at least two human faces in the photo), food, gadgets, captioned photos, pets, activities; such as sports or concerts, 'Selfies' or self-portraits and fashion (Hu et al 2014:3). These categories will be used as units of

analysis. Level two findings will be analysed in terms of the Aesthetic Measurement Framework of Liu, Chen, Wolf and Cohen-Or. The units of analysis include "rule of thirds, colour, visual balance and diagonal dominance (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:3). Finally, the two levels of analysis will be compared and contrasted in terms of research question one and research question 2 on both levels. For example, level one, research question one vs. level two, research question one. An in-depth explanation of the methodology will be expanded on in Chapter 3 of this research report.

1.7 Ethics

Ethical issues concerning the theory related to the research topic and questions will be discussed. Neuromarketing presents a variety of ethical concerns, however the most pressing concern is crossing the line between influence and manipulation (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:86). Brands that advertise to the consumer by creating or recalling positive memories to enforce positive associations raise ethical concerns with regards to manipulation versus influence of the human mind, as this will impact consumers' decision making (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:86).

8. Planned division of chapters

The proposed chapters will follow with Chapter 2: Literature Review, which includes five areas of study, which expand on *neuromarketing* and how brand managers can use neuromarketing to evoke emotions in order to connect with users via Instagram content, which leads to *gratification and categorical content,* which explains how specific brand content and categories leads to satisfaction. *Popular brands,* will be defined and 'loyalty beyond reason' will be explored in order to gain insights with regards to why users would possibly follow popular bands on Instagram, which gives rise to unpacking relevant theory on *Instagram*. Finally *Instamarketing vs. neuromarketing* will be explored to understand if Instamarketing is simply just a term for neuromarketing via Instagram. Chapter 3 will expand on the Methodology proposed for this study, which includes Research design, Data Collection Method, Sampling, Research Instrument,

Data analysis method, Trustworthiness and Authenticity and Ethics. The remainder of the report will expand on the Findings in chapter 4, Data Analysis will follow in chapter 5 and Conclusions and Recommendations will be discussed in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

2. Literature Review

The following literature review will aim to address certain themes pertaining to the problem statement of this study. Understanding why users of Instagram follow certain brands and what emotions or feelings are evoked when viewing content posted by these brands, will allow for a deeper understanding into popular brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is so successful as a marketing platform. The theory in this chapter will provide essential insights concerning the above. The relevant areas of study are as follows: *neuromarketing, Instagram, gratification and categorical content, popular brands, Instamarketing vs. neuromarketing.*

2.1 Neuromarketing

Larisa Dragolea and Denisa Cotirlea's *Neuromarketing-Between Influence and Manipulation* (2011:82) explain that since its inception, the definition of neuromarketing has changed over time, which ideally gives us a better understanding of this emerging field. Dragolea and Cotirlea (2011:81) state that neuromarketing is a developing field that "represents the brain research process in order to reveal the consumers' responses towards commercials and the development of new products" before new campaigns or branding techniques are launched. Dragolea and Cotirlea (2011:81) add that neuromarketing includes the "emotional impact of branding", which indicates that the main objective of neuromarketing is to "decipher the processes that take place inside the mind of consumers in order to discover the *wishes, aspirations* and *hidden springs* of their options and to be able to provide them with what they want".

Erik du Plessis's *The Branded Mind* (2011) explores neuro-scientific issues concerning our subconscious. The latter is relevant as neuromarketing stems from neuroscience (du Plessis 2011). Memories and emotions play a vital role in marketing activities, suggesting that if consumers have a positive emotion or memory association elicited by

marketing stimuli, it will usually result in positive feelings or emotions for that brand (du Plessis 2011). Dragolea and Cotirlea (2011:82) explain that the limbic system, also know as the emotional brain, is related to emotions, memories of events, attitude, feelings, relationships, attention, positive and negative associations experienced with specific situations. The neo-cortex, also known as the rational brain, is where understanding and decision-making takes place (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:83). The latter is critical, as marketers need to target the emotional brain first, to elicit an effective response (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:83). Daniel Bichis' *The Key to the Consumer's Brain* (2010 as cited in Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:84) suggests that the difference between emotion and reason is that emotions make humans act, while reasoning is only to assess.

Considering the authors theories that have been reviewed, there is a general consensus that indicates that emotionally oriented marketing stimuli results in favourable actions by the consumer.

2.2 Instagram

Bakhshi, Shamma and Gilbert's *Faces Engage Us: Photos with faces attract more likes and comments on Instagram* (2014:967) state that Instagram is a people-centric photo sharing application founded in October 2010 and has over 150 million users worldwide. It enables users to take photos and videos and apply digital filters to these images and upload them to various social networks such as Facebook, Flickr, Tumblr and Twitter. Bakhshi *et al* (2014:972) claims that there is limited scholarly research on Instagram despite its success; however, quantitative research that has been conducted proved that photos with faces are 38% more likely to be liked and 32% more likely to be commented on. Bakhshi *et al* (2014:972) asserts that users who post photos frequently receive less likes and comments, furthermore, the more followers a user has will result in more likes and comments on the users content. Bakhshi *et al* (2014:971) reinforces this claim by stating, "this most likely represents the intuition that the more photos a user posts, the less likely any one of them is to be highly liked or commented". The latter demonstrates an inconsistency in theory when considering brands as users. It can

be argued that brands on Instagram are users too. An article by Craig Smith's (2015) *By the numbers: 130 interesting Instagram statistics*, states that popular brands post content up to five times a week. According to TOTEMS List (2015), a website that ranks the most followed and popular brands on Instagram, National Geographic (20,6 million followers); the most popular brand on Instagram, averages 400 000 likes an image and posts on average five images a day. Therefore, the claims made by Bakhshi et al (2014) cannot be relevant to all Instagram users, mainly brands on Instagram due to the evidence that contradicts these claims presented by TOTEMS List (2015) and Smith (2015).

The evidence above has demonstrated that users and brands elicit different results on Instagram. Furthermore, authors have not considered the emotional element or the connection users have made with the content that they have drawn results from, therefore, the next area of study 'Gratification and Categorical Content' will aim to address the shortcomings.

2.3 Gratification and Categorical content

According to Ben Long (2011), "Instagram images tend toward abstraction, and are more powerful to viewers because they have to work harder to interpret the images". As viewers interpret the images, they "escape to whatever feelings, memories, and experiences the images evoke" (Long 2011). As previously mentioned, interpreting information takes place in a person's rational brain or neo-cortex, while the emotional brain is related to memories and feelings (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:83).
According to Kate Ginsberg's (2015:79) *Instabranding: Shaping the Personalities of the top food brands on Instagram,* brands need to stimulate gratification, which elicits a desired emotion by posting content that includes "socialising, entertainment, self-status seeking and information". Instagram is a platform for self-expression and communication where personal stories and interests are documented through visual storytelling (Ginsberg 2015:80). Brands are mimicking what Instagram users do and are creating visual stories of their own, promoting real life experiences (Ginsberg 2015:80). "Brands can illustrate the quality and type of experience consumers will have by

purchasing their products" (Ginsberg 2015:80). Regarding what has been mentioned; brands are striving to present how they can add value to the lives of their target audience through strategic visual content by making direct links to their customer's passions, values, interests and personalities (Ginsberg 2015:80). Max Gladwell's *The Year of the Instagram Strategy* (2013) puts forward that original content posted by brands proves to encourage more followers and higher engagement rates. Companies such as Starbucks encourage their customers to post pictures of their experience with their brand, which can arguably be termed as an emotional experience as these images are perceived as being authentically spontaneous and therefore create intimacy (Gladwell 2013).

Articles such as David Dallaire's *Give your customers dopamine and they'll obsess over your brand* (2013) and Roger Dooley's *Juice your marketing with dopamine* (2012) claim that gratification enhancing or dopamine induced marketing, results in engaged and addicted customers. Dopamine is known as the brain chemical that leads to satisfaction or pleasure, as well as the chemical that can induce addiction (du Plessis 2011). When a person realises that the content they have posted on social media has received "likes" or "comments" dopamine is released in the brain due to an association with a 'reward system' (Dallaire 2013). This is also the case when a person makes sense of content and escapes to a certain positive memory and experiences a series of positive feelings (Long 2011). du Plessis (2011:93) further explains that dopamine is the feel good or reward brain chemical and that if consumers experience "dopamine-inducing moments" their experience with the brand will be positive, therefore positive associations and memories of that brand will be created within the customers mind.

Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati's *What we Instagram: A first analysis of Instagram photo content and user types* (2014) categorised the eight most popular images/content on Instagram. These categories consist of: "Friends (at least two human faces in the photo), Food (Food recipes, cakes, drinks), Gadgets (electronics, tools, motorbikes, cars), Captioned photos (pictures with embedded text), Pets (animals like cats and dogs that are the main object of the image), Activities (such as sports or concerts, indoor and outdoor, places where activities happen, landmarks), 'Selfies' or self-portraits (one

human face in the image) and Fashion (shoes, costumes, make-up, personal belongings)" (Hu et al 2014:3). Selfies and friends categories are said to be the most used categories on Instagram (Hu et al 2014:3). Images containing faces are a powerful tool to personalise advertising and make connections with intended audiences (Bakhshi, Shamma & Gilbert, 2014:971). It is imperative to note that all these categories can contain some sort of branded content or are entirely made up of branded content. The eight categories identified by Hu et al (2014) include self-expressive factors, which allow users to portray themselves in a way that they would like to be seen by others. This links back to the theory on reward systems and dopamine due to the fact that users post images that they may have positive memories of, which are self-expressive, to elicit some sort of engagement from other users. When this content is engaged with by others, the user feels gratification or satisfaction (dopamine-inducing moment).

Contemplating the above authors' theories, brands that encourage and allow their users to post their interaction with their products on Instagram, may encourage gratification or positive emotions and feelings towards the specific brand, as the experience allows the user to be self-expressive. Brands need to facilitate this process in a strategic manner to become or remain relevant on Instagram.

2.4 Popular brands

Kevin Roberts' *Lovemarks* (2004) proves through neurological studies that eliciting a positive or negative emotional response from any means of advertising through various media creates a strong possibility of leading to a favourable or unfavourable action for a brand. Roberts (2004:1) puts forward that brands that inspire loyalty beyond reason are termed 'Lovemarks' and that these brands would cause riots if they were taken off the market. Lovemarks earn their name from the emotional connection customers have with specific brands. Roberts (2004:3) and du Plessis (2011:133) argue that more emotional connections need to be made by brands to be truly successful due to the fact that emotive content elicits a strong response in a consumer's brain. Successful brands are driven by a strong emotional, self-expressive element (Roberts 2004). Dragolea and Cotirlea (2011:82) confirm Roberts' (2004) and du Plessis' (2011) theories' as

neuromarketing experiments concerning preference, prove that the limbic system, which is associated to emotional memories, respond positively when consumers know what brand they are experiencing. It is relevant to note that a strong brand image is proven to modify the perception of a product (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:82).

Regarding the above, it is noted that popular brands gain loyalty by developing an emotional connection. It is imperative to understand how marketers are applying and benefiting from this knowledge on Instagram.

2.5 Instamarketing vs. neuromarketing

Regarding the effects of Instagram on brands, Lydia Dishman's *Instagram is shaping up to be the world's most powerful selling tool* (2014) states that the power of Instagram in this day and age should not be underestimated as Instagram is considered to be the world's most powerful selling tool. Dishman (2014) adds that major corporations have benefited from using Instagram, thus resulting in increased sales and brand equity. An article that affirms the above is Nate Elliot's *Instagram is the King of Social Engagement* (2014) whom asserts that content on Instagram delivers 58 times more engagement per follower than Facebook and 120 times more engagement than Twitter when it comes to brands.

Smith (2015) states that 86% of the top global brands have Instagram accounts and that these top brands post on average about five photographs a week. According to TOTEMS List (2015) National Geographic (18,8 million followers), Victoria's Secret (15,1 million followers) and The Ellen Show (12,2 million followers) are the top three brands with the most followers. These top three brands having the most followers can be contributed to a number of reasons. Marion Goor's (2012) *Instamarketing: A content analysis into marketing on Instagram,* found that brands that are strongly associated with a certain product attribute, or simply represent the brand, "mainly use persuasion, relational and emotion strategies, by applying branding, making the emotional connectedness with the brand most important, and using slice-of-life scenarios in their photos". Emotional strategies used by brands "are evident when products are shown

with emotions that brands intend their customers to feel when using the product/s" (Goor 2012:22). In the images, slice of life scenarios, relationships and symbolism are used to implement an emotional strategy (Goor 2012:10). Goor (2012) asserts that successful brands on Instagram have found a balance between advertising their brand and establishing a positive relationship with their target audience. Furthermore, Goor (2012:32) states that brands that reflect their values and purpose are also found to be more successful on Instagram, possibly due to brand coherency and authenticity, which assists with persuasion. These findings are supported by Thuy-Vi Bui's (2014) *Social Media On-A-Stick: A uses and gratification approach toward helping mobile food vendors engage consumers on Instagram,* where the author asserts that brands that reflect their personality and purpose in their content on Instagram are the most successful and followed brands on the social platform. However, using emotional strategies arguably demonstrates the use of neuromarketing as brands are manipulating content to stimulate various emotions within the consumers' mind. Therefore, by considering the theories discussed thus far, one can argue that Instamarketing may simply be a strategy derived from neuromarketing.

Ligang Liu, Renjie Chen, Lior Wolf and Daniel Cohen-Or's (2010) *Optimising Photo Composition* state, "aesthetic images evoke an emotional response that transcends mere visual appreciation" (1). Aesthetic images are defined as beautiful or appealing images (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:1). In order to evoke an emotional response from aesthetic images, photographers need to apply composition guidelines, which include rule of thirds, colour, visual balance, and diagonal dominance (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:3). Composition is defined as "the arrangement of visual elements in the image frame" (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:3). There are many guidelines to achieve good composition, however, they are not absolute; rather, they are some experimental guidelines that can be used to achieve eye-pleasing composition when implemented correctly (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:3). In order for a brand to post aesthetic images on Instagram and evoke an emotional response, the brand needs to implement some form of composition guidelines (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:3).

In light of what has been discussed, it is imperative that more research on Instagram engagement and connection is explored. By reviewing the literature, various assumptions have come to surface. It is evident that users of Instagram and brands on Instagram elicit different results. Furthermore, brands that understand how to use emotion to engage and connect to their audience, make use or mimic the idea of self-expressive story telling to relate to the lives of their customers, therefore human-centricity also comes into play. By using emotionally appealing images or video content, brands are able to stimulate the rational and emotional brain of the consumer, potentially allowing them to experience dopamine-inducing moments. By using good composition guidelines when taking photographs to post on the brand's Instagram account, the brand has the ability of achieving aesthetically pleasing images that may evoke an emotional response from their target audience. One can argue that Instamarketing is essentially derived from neuromarketing, as emotional strategies are implemented to engage and connect with the target audience.

Bakhshi *et al* (2014:973) clearly state in their findings that more qualitative and quantitative research is needed. There is a lack of research regarding the positive benefits of this social platform, especially a lack of neuromarketing research, which could give us insights into *why* and *what* makes consumers engage with brands via Instagram. Understanding emotional connections made with certain content on Instagram can give brands an understanding of how to use neuromarketing effectively on this powerful social platform. In the next chapter Methodology (chapter 3) will discuss how the researcher will conduct research to address the main questions of this study.

CHAPTER 3

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Due to Instagram being a powerful platform and marketing tool for brands, the researcher aims to conduct further exploratory research in order to understand why participants follow certain brands and what emotions or feelings are evoked while making connections to the content posted by these brands. This will allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding into various brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is argued to be the most powerful social networking tool. The researcher will conduct two levels of data collection. The reason for the second level of data collection is to ensure that there is trustworthiness. The findings from the two levels of research will then be analysed according to a specific framework. Level one findings will be analysed in terms of the Instagram Framework by Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati. Level two findings will be analysed in terms of the Aesthetic Measurement Framework of Liu, Chen, Wolf and Cohen-Or. Finally, the two levels of analysis will be compared and contrasted in terms of findings from research question one and research question 2 on both levels. For example, level one, research question one vs. level two, research question one. The following chapter will provide details supporting the above.

3.2 Background

According to William Zikmund and Barry Babin (2010:92) *Essentials of Marketing Research* qualitative research is defined as the "elaborate interpretations of market phenomena without depending on numerical measurement; its focus is on discovering true inner meanings and new insights". Qualitative studies do not generalise as large amounts of surface data are not captured. Qualitative research aims to collect in-depth data to gain deeper insights into what is being studied (Zikmund & Babin 2010:92).

3.3 Research design

A qualitative research design will be used due to the fact that this type of research design is more researcher-dependent, allowing for the researcher to extract deeper meanings or trends from the participant's experience, as well as the ability to continue to analyse and address certain questions that arise when conducting the research (Zikmund & Babin 2010:92). An ethnographic approach will be used to conduct qualitative research. Ethnography is a method whereby the researcher observes individuals in a structured manner to understand their behaviours and thought processes, which can result in much greater insights into why and how people behave in a certain context (Bryman *et al* 2011:244). Specifically, audience ethnography will be used to explore how the audience derives pleasure or makes sense of their interaction with brands on Instagram (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2014:176). This will provide the researcher with the ability to understand the emotions and feelings the participants experience with images of brands on Instagram.

3.3.1 Data Collection Method

Data collection will take place **on two levels**. On the first level, field research and unobtrusive research will be conducted. Field research will make use of focus groups to collect primary research, which will be based on brands people follow on Instagram. Unobtrusive research, more specifically thematic content analysis will be used to analyse the focus group transcribes against the Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati (2014). The framework consists of eight categories namely, Friends (at least two human faces in the photo), Food, Gadgets, Captioned photos, Pets, Activities such as sports or concerts, 'Selfies' or self-portraits and Fashion (Hu et al 2014:3). The above framework is explained in the chapter 2, page 13-14.

On the second level, thematic content analysis will be conducted on images provided by participants within the focus groups. At the end of the focus groups, the researcher will ask each participant to pick three of their favourite images from their favorite brand on Instagram. The reason that the researcher has asked participants to supply three images is so that there is more of a chance to base the findings and the analysis of these

findings on a collection of images, instead of just one image. This will also allow the researcher to identify credible themes from a greater number of images. The participants must tag the photos to the researcher's Instagram account, '@Instabrandresearch' so that these images can appear on the account profile's news feed. The participants will be told to hash-tag (#) each image with whatever comes to their mind in order for the researcher to understand the reasoning behind each image. In chapter 5, the images will be thematically analysed using the Aesthetic Measurement framework of Liu, Chen, Wolf and Cohen-Or. The units of analysis include "rule of thirds, colour, visual balance and diagonal dominance (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:3). The reason for the second level of data collection is to prove reliability and credibility with regards to what the participants have said. The transcribes from the focus groups and the images provided should correspond with each other.

3.3.2 Sampling

Sampling is required in order to draw conclusions from a subset of a population, also know as the representative sample, however, as stated before, results obtained from the representative sample are not generalised to the entire population, due to the nature of qualitative research (Zikmund & Babin 2010:301).

In order to find the representative sample, the researcher needs to define the units of analysis based on the population that will be studied. The researcher will then define the targeted population, however, due to the entire targeted population being inaccessible, the accessible population must be defined and the method used must be justified.

When considering the problem statement, 'Instagram is a powerful tool for brands in this day and age, it is important for brands to post content that is meaningful and emotionally engaging to elicit some sort of connection with followers', it is important to outline the population being studied in order to correctly define the representative sample. Regarding this study, the following units of analysis will be considered to define the targeted population:

- All Instagram users in South Africa

- All brands with Instagram accounts

The last reported number of Instagram users in South Africa was 1,1 million at the end of 2014 (World Wide Worx 2015). Realistically, it would be impossible to reach each and every Instagram user in South Africa. Therefore, an accessible population must be defined. If the margin of error is 2%, with a confidence interval of 95%, 2350 participants will need to be considered, however, this amount is inaccessible due to the limitations and time restrictions of this study. Statisa (2014) reported that 53% of Instagram users are between the ages of 18-24. This age group falls into the category of students or young working adults. A quarter of the number of participants (2350) will considered because Johannesburg is divided into four geographic locations, the north, south, east and west. 10% of this final figure will make up accessible population, which works out to ±60 participants. To reach a reliable number of participants, 10% of the population in the accessible geographical location must be considered (Personal Communications, H. Van Wyk, 26 May 2015). Of the ±60 participants, 80% will be female and 20% male. The reason being that females are more emotionally open and comfortable with expressing their true feelings and aspirations with a female interviewer, whereas males are usually not comfortable with speaking about their deeper feelings and emotions with a female interviewer (Stewart & Shamdasani 2015:110). The latter will ensure that the results derived are expressive and that data captured will provide meaningful insights relating to the research questions.

Nonprobability sampling is when "the probability of any member of the population being chosen in unknown" (Zikmund & Babin 2010:311). A nonprobability sampling design will be used due to the ability of the researcher to select the sample on the basis of personal judgement or some characteristics (Zikmund & Babin 2010:311). Furthermore, the sampling procedure that will be used is *purposive sampling,* which is a "nonprobability sampling technique in which an individual selects a sample based on personal judgement about some appropriate characteristic of the sample member" (Zikmund & Babin 2010:312). As mentioned previously, the characteristics that the researcher will use to conduct purposive sampling will be: the participant must be an Instagram user, secondly, the participant must follow one or more brands on Instagram.

This will allow the researcher to answer the research questions accurately and focus on subjects of the population that are relevant to the study. The ±60 people selected for the study will be sourced via purposive sampling and put into focus groups. The researcher aims to conduct 6 focus groups of ±10 people. The researcher will base this study on Instagram users that follow brands. Users that follow brands are seen as an appropriate characteristic of the representative sample. As mentioned previously in 3.3.1, data will be collected on two levels, the same sample will be asked to provide images to the researcher, thus again making use of purposive sampling.

3.3.3 Research Tools

Two tools will be used in this study to collect and analyse data. The research tool that will be used to collect primary research is focus groups, which "allows people to discuss their true feelings, anxieties and frustrations" (Zikmund & Babin 2010:103). As previously mentioned, the focus groups will be made up of participants gathered from purposive sampling. People are allowed to express their opinions in their own words, which will allow the researcher to gain a greater understanding of problem statement and research questions pertaining to this study (Zikmund & Babin 2010:103).

The researcher will take on the role of a partial participator. Being a partial participator will allow for the focus group to have structure, not stray off topic and answer the researchers most important questions without interfering with the thoughts and true feelings of the participants (Bryman et al 2011:234). Being a partial participator simply guides the focus group to "identify differences in opinions and probing certain factors" to allow for an effective, valuable discussion (Bryman et al 2011:234). Being a partial participator may also add to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study, which will be further elaborated in the following section.

Advantages of using this method is that it is relatively fast and easy to execute, there is room for multiple perspectives, flexibility, scrutiny and 'piggybacking', which is the stimulation of creative thoughts amongst others (Zikmund & Babin 2010:103). Limitations of using focus groups include respondent sensitivity; participants may feel

shy or unwilling to discuss their true emotions or feelings amongst strangers (Zikmund & Babin 2010:102). Other limitations to consider include that the results derived from the focus group "do not generalise to the larger population" (Zikmund & Babin 2010:102).

The aim and format of the focus group will be announced and an informed consent will be given to each participant, which is "when the participant understands what the researcher wants him or her to do in the study" (Zikmund & Babin 2010:75). An agenda composing open-ended questions, each with a time limit, will be devised to ensure that there is structure while the focus group is being conducted. The questions will be based on themes derived from the literature review such as: *knowledge and awareness*; if people know of and are aware of **popular brands** on **Instagram** and what is **noticeable** to them, *behaviours*; **how** people engage with branded **content** on Instagram, *beliefs, attitudes and opinions;* how people feel about brands (**emotional connection-neuromarketing**), why they **engage** with brands. The following outlines how the latter will address the two main research questions of this study:

Research Question 1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?
This question will be addressed by open-ended questions addressing *awareness and knowledge* pertaining to the idea that people know of and are aware of popular brands and their content on Instagram and what kind of content is noticeable to them.

Research Question 2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?
This question will be addressed by open-ended questions focusing on *beliefs, attitudes and opinions*, such as how people feel about brands (emotional connection-neuromarketing) and why they engage and connect with brands. This question will also address *behaviours*; specifically how people engage with branded content on Instagram

While conducting the focus groups, it is expected that data saturation will be reached, or in other words, participants will start to provide no new information (Bonde 2013). Bonde (2013) states that this entails that transcribes can be collated into a table and

findings can be derived in order to thematically analyse the findings according to the Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati.

The second tool that will be used in this study is thematic content analysis (TCA). It must be noted that thematic content analysis will be used in the first level of research, to analyse transcribes collated from focus groups, and in the second level of research, to analyse images gathered from participants in the focus groups. However, two different frameworks will be used to analyse the findings in chapter 5. Thematic content analysis is an unobtrusive research method that involves searching for common themes that extend across a set of interviews (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013: 400). According to Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas (2013:400), thematic content analysis is purely qualitative and "is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data". Advantages of making use of thematic content analysis is that it is said to be a reliable, detailed and independent tool for analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013: 403). Limitations of thematic content analysis are that this tool provides "minimal descriptions to data sets and only interprets various aspects of the research topic" (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013: 403). Additionally, "peer checking of intercoder reliability is not always possible since there is scepticism about the value of such testing" (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013: 403).

3.4 Data analysis method

As previously mentioned, two levels of data collection will be conducted for the purpose of this study. On the first level, field research, using focus groups as the research tool, will be conducted and the focus group's feedback will be transcribed. After the focus groups findings are defined, the researcher will make use of thematic content analysis to search for themes according to the Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati. The categories of this framework are made up of the eight most popular images/content on Instagram (Hu et al 2014:3). These categories are stated below and will be used as units of analysis for thematic analysis.

- Friends (at least two human faces in the photo)
- Food (includes all food, recipes, cakes, drinks, restaurants)

- o Brands
- Gadgets (electronics, goods, tools, motorbikes, cars)
  - o Brands
- Captioned photos (pictures with embed text, memes)
- Pets (animals like cats and dogs which are the main objects in the picture)
- Activities (both outdoor & indoor activities, places where activities happen, e.g., concert, landmarks)
  - o Tourist attractions
  - o Wildlife photography
- 'Selfies' or self-portraits (only one human face in photo)
  - o Celebrity brands
- Fashion (shoes, costumes, makeup, personal belongings)
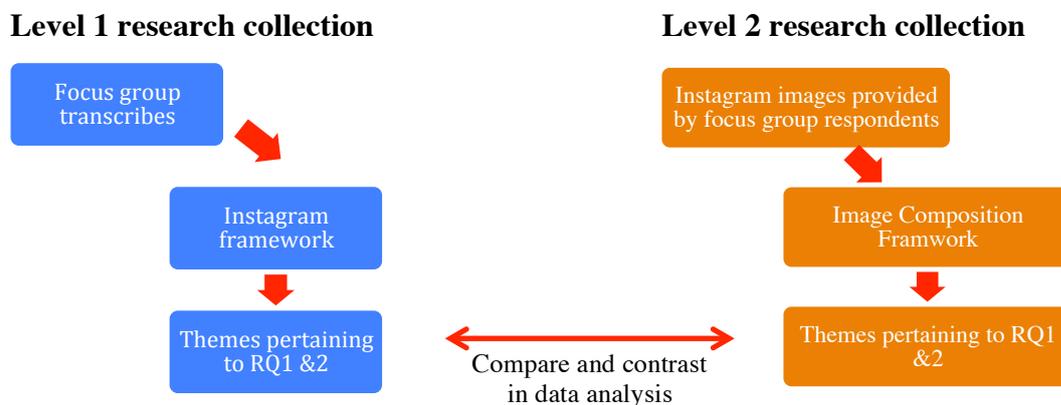 - o Brands
  - o Fashion bloggers

Regarding the above, the eight categories outlined will be the units for analysis. Under each unit a category will be created to allow for brands to be adequately filtered into the framework. In terms of the framework, only units that were mentioned by the participants in the focus group will be analysed, therefore only those units will be considered.

On the second level, the Aesthetic Measurement framework of Liu, Chen, Wolf and Cohen-Or will be used to thematically analyse images provided by the participants via Instagram after the focus groups have taken place. The Aesthetic Measurement Framework makes use of a limited set of composition guidelines that enable photographers to shoot well-composed photographs (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:4). These guidelines are "well-defined and prominent in many aesthetic images" (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:4). Rule of thirds, colour, diagonal dominance and visual balance make up the units of analysis for the framework (Liu, Chen, Wolf & Cohen-Or 2010:3). This framework is elaborated on in chapter 2 of this report, page 16.

The reason for the second level of research is to ensure that the transcribes reflect and correspond with the images provided by the participants of the focus groups. This will be a method of ensuring trustworthiness, which will be discussed later in this chapter on page 27. Furthermore, additional findings that contribute to the deeper understanding into the behaviours and emotions of the participants may be gained from analysing their favoured images on Instagram. It is noteworthy for brands to understand what kinds of photography measures are effective in order for them to achieve an emotionally connecting photograph.

Once the researcher has analysed both levels of research via the two frameworks (focus group data and Instagram image data), research questions will be analysed in terms of level one and two of the research to provide insights with regards to the problem statement and research questions of this study. For example, level one, research question 1 and level 2, research question 1 findings will be compared and contrasted against each other. Subsequently, level 1, research question 2 and level 2, research question 2 will be compared and contrasted against each other. Please see the figure below for an illustrated example:

Figure A:

Level 1 research collection　　　　　　　**Level 2 research collection**

Focus group transcribes → Instagram framework → Themes pertaining to RQ1 &2

Instagram images provided by focus group respondents → Image Composition Framwork → Themes pertaining to RQ1 &2

← Compare and contrast in data analysis →

3.5 Trustworthiness

3.5.1 Credibility

"Credibility refers to the accuracy with which the researcher interprets the data that was provided from the participants" (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2013: 258). Credibility is increased via the use of triangulation; when more than one research method is used to collect data (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2013: 258). Therefore, due to the researcher using thematic content analysis in the second level of research to validate the data gathered in the first level of research, adds to the credibility of this study.

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability pertains to "the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation and delivering similar results" (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2013: 258). The approach used within this study can be used in other social media behavioural studies. It is expected that the approach used in a different context will deliver similar results.

3.5.3 Dependability

"Dependability refers to the quality of the process integration that takes place between the data collection method, data analysis and the theory generated from the data" (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2013: 259). As previously mentioned, two levels of research collection methods will be conducted to ensure that quality integration of the analysis of the findings takes place. Additionally, the Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati will allow for a quality integration of the process.

3.5.4 Confirmability

"Confirmability refers to how well the data collected support the findings and interpretation of the researcher (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2013: 259).

Due to the researcher making use of the Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati, there will be a foundation to support the findings of this study. Level 2 research will further confirm the findings in level 1, thus proving that the findings and data support each other.

3.6 Ethics

Bias from the researcher as well as the participants may impact the findings (Bryman *et al* 2011). To counteract the latter, the researcher will take on the role of a partial participator to limit bias and not provide leading questions that may lead the group to answer or discuss certain topics in a different manner than what they would have before (Bryman *et al* 2011).

Another ethical consideration that must be addressed is informed consent. This is a document that will contain what is to be expected by the participant. A document of informed consent will be given to all participants to allow the researcher to use the intellectual property, in the form of thoughts, supplied to the researcher and to allow the researcher to share these thoughts in a public forum (Zikmund & Babin 2010:75).

A clear structure of the focus group will be followed to avoid participant bias, which has already been discussed previously in the chapter. No employees of the brands will be considered in this study to avoid bias towards certain brands.

A confidentiality agreement will be given to participants to protect the information given during the focus groups (Zikmund & Babin 2010:75). The agreement will also include the obligation to be truthful when answering the questions posed by the researcher (Zikmund & Babin 2010:75).

By conducting the research discussed in this chapter, the main research questions addressing noticeability of Instagram images and the emotional connection with these images will be addressed. This will allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding into various brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is argued to be the most powerful social networking tool.

CHAPTER 4

4. Findings

Understanding why users of Instagram follow certain brands and what emotions or feelings are evoked when viewing images posted by these brands, will allow for a deeper understanding into how popular brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is currently so successful. Chapter 3 (Methodology) discussed two levels of research for this study. Level one research has been collected using field research, from four focus groups. Level two research has gathered 48 images which were sent to the researcher by the participants of the focus groups to allow the researcher to observe whether the findings of level one and two research are consistent with each other, which would prove reliability and credibility. The two research questions of this study are:

RQ1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?
RQ2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?

Four focus groups were conducted instead of the proposed six as no new data was being derived from the focus groups, signifying that data saturation was reached (Bonde 2013). The four focus groups were made up of four participants each. Giving that this study is purely qualitative, the findings can only indicate or provide assumptions to address the main problem and research questions of this study. The findings will be presented accordingly: Research question 1 and 2 will be addressed based on level one findings in the first section of this chapter, subsequently, research questions one and two will be addressed based on the second level of research in the second section of this chapter. In chapter 5 (Data analysis) findings from each level of research pertaining to each research question will be thematically analysed according to two different frameworks, previously stated in chapter 3, page 24-26.

4.1 Level 1 Research Findings: Transcribes from focus groups

As previously discussed, the findings below are based on the responses of the four focus groups pertaining to the two main research questions of this study.

Research Question 1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?

Finding: A brand's target audience notices the brand's images on Instagram when the brand truly understands the psychographics of their target audience.

Fashion brands (sports fashion, make up and everyday fashion), wildlife, holiday destinations and food and were the most noticed and mentioned categories of images posted by brands. These images were said to stimulate a desire to achieve what is being portrayed. Instagram is a platform for self-expression and communication where personal stories and interests are documented through visual storytelling (Ginsberg 2015:80). Brands are mimicking what Instagram users do and are creating visual stories of their own, promoting real life experiences (Ginsberg 2015:80). "Brands can illustrate the quality and type of experience consumers will have by purchasing their products" (Ginsberg 2015:80). The latter is evident as participants stated that they follow brands within these categories because the images:

- Make them feel positive feelings and emotion
- Lead them to conjure thoughts of experiencing what is portrayed in the image
- Make participants remember special events that they have experienced

Participants take notice of images that are inline with their interests, activities and opinions; therefore, psychographics play a role in connecting with a brand's audience (Shiffman, Bednall, O'Cass, Paladino, Ward & Kanuk 2008:46). There was a general consensus that participants prefer to look at the latest offerings from brands on

Instagram than any other social media platform. Furthermore, majority of participants stated that they prefer looking at the latest brand offerings on Instagram first before browsing the brand's official website or 'googling' information about the product. Various participants take notice of new fashion product ranges when they are posted on Instagram as opposed to traditional catalogues. It was stated by various participants that Instagram has educated and informed participants of new brands or brands that they did not know existed. In some cases, participants specified that their perceptions had changed positively once viewing the brand's Instagram account. This reinforces Goor's theory, which states that brands "mainly use persuasion, relational and emotion strategies, by applying branding, making the emotional connectedness with the brand most important, and using slice-of-life scenarios in their photos" (2012).

Finding: It is not evident that photos with faces are noticeable in a brand context on Instagram, however, product attributes or actual displays of the product are noticeable.

Emotional strategies used by brands "are evident when products are shown with emotions that brands intend their customers to feel when using the product/s" (Goor 2012:22). Participants stated that they take notice of images that display products that the brand produces. 'Flat lay' photos (when the items of clothing are positioned on a white background in a clean, square-like order to create a box) were mentioned and noticed by participants due to the clean and classy look and feel of the image. There was no indication that participants preferred or noticed images with people more than other images. They felt that the most important factors in the image were the brand's products or offering, or the deeper message behind the image. The above defies the theory "Photo's with faces engage us", presented by Bakhshi *et al*, discussed on page 11-12.

Finding: Colourful images capture attention. Attention may lead to engagement (screenshot, like, comment, follow) and subsequently to the brand's overall success on Instagram.

While scrolling through their Instagram newsfeed, participants stated that bright, colourful images make them actively stop and observe the image. If the image is

appealing to them, some participants will go and view the brand's Instagram account. If they feel excited by, or inspired by the images, they will follow the brand. Images that capture the attention of Instagram users and ignite excitement, inspiration or other positive emotions, may benefit the brand in terms of additional followers, increased positive brand perceptions, brand awareness and brand knowledge, which equates to the overall success of the brand on Instagram (Goor 2012:32).

Research Question 2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?

Finding: Images posted by successful/popular brands on Instagram understand and portray people's aspirations and wishes, or elicit positive memory associations, which result in brand loyalty.

Neuromarketing is used to decipher the emotional impact of branding within a persons mind, discovering a person's wishes, aspirations and hidden motivations (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:81). Provoking positive memories and emotions via marketing stimuli, plays a vital role in creating positive feelings about a brand (du Plessis 2011). It was found that participants were drawn towards images posted by brands on Instagram that made them feel happy, relaxed or excited (emotional brain). When taking a closer look and understanding or interpreting the image (rational brain), participants stated that they felt motivated, determined, inspired, appreciative or experienced desire. The participants follow brands that make them experience positive emotions and often go on Instagram daily to observe what their favourite brand has posted for the day to experience the same feelings they have previously. It is evident that brand's are making use of neuromarketing theory regarding in order to provoke positive emotional connections.

Finding: Likes and comments were not seen as relevant to the participants. Screenshots may lead to future purchases or positive positioning/perceptions for a specific brand.

86% of top global brands post images up to five times a week, or twice a day everyday (Smith 2015). Participants stated that they do not or rarely 'like' images posted by

brands, they further expressed that they felt that it was irrelevant or there was 'no point' in liking a brand's post. Regarding 'commenting' on images posted by brands, participants reported that they have maybe once or probably never will comment on a brands post unless they are tagging a friend to view the image. A noteworthy observation that did surface in all focus groups was that participants *often **screenshot** images* posted by brands rather than like or comment on them. This finding is crucial for the understanding of how images on Instagram lead to purchase intentions. Majority of females within the focus groups recounted that they screenshot images of branded products – especially fashion brands, to purchase them at a later stage and use these images as a referral or to remember what they want to purchase. The theory by Smith (2015) indicates that the chances of a brand's image being screenshot are higher when the brand frequently posts images, which can add to the success of a brand on Instagram.

Finding: Images posted by successful brands that generate emotions such as motivation, inspiration and excitement, create nostalgia or desire and leave followers wanting to achieve or experience what is portrayed in the image.

According to Ben Long (2011), "Instagram images tend toward abstraction, and are more powerful to viewers because they have to work harder to interpret the images". As viewers interpret the images, they "escape to whatever feelings, memories, and experiences the images evoke" (Long 2011). According to Ginsberg (2015:79), brands need to stimulate gratification, which elicits a desired emotion by posting content that includes "socialising, entertainment, self-status seeking and information". "Brands can illustrate the quality and type of experience consumers will have by purchasing their products" (Ginsberg 2015:80).

The theory above was evident whilst collating findings from the participants of the focus groups. Participants reported that they found themselves thinking of memories or experiencing feelings when observing images posted by brands that appealed to them. Brands that stimulate gratification are seen in a positive light and inspire loyalty amongst participants, which substantiates the theory of 'Lovemarks' by Roberts (2004).

An example of this is Nike Women, which was one the most mentioned brands on Instagram within the focus groups. One of the participants stated, "I feel so motivated and inspired whenever I look at their (Nike Women's) photos." Followers of this brand reported that they felt excited and happy when observing these images as they create feelings of motivation and determination. Some participants stated that they actively logon to Instagram and view Nike Women's Instagram account to feel inspired and motivated to go to gym that day. This account influences the participant's feelings, mood or emotions. It can be assumed that this account is successful due to the participants being able to interpret the images within their own minds and set goals based on these interpretations.

Moreover, brands that were mentioned by the participants post images that create a 'visual story' or portray real life experiences. The result of brands posting images that are directly linked to their target market's passions, values, interests and personalities lead to participants feeling that they can truly relate to these images and hopefully achieve or experience what is being portrayed in the image/s. The latter is evident in Ginsberg's theory discussed previously on page 12-13 (2015:80).

Level one research provides assumptions based on the participants views in conjunction with theory derived from the literature review of this study (chapter 2). Findings indicate that a brand's target audience notices the brand's images on Instagram when the brand truly understands the psychographics of their target audience. It is not evident that photos with faces are noticeable in a brand context on Instagram, however, product attributes or actual displays of the product are noticeable. Colourful images capture attention, attention may lead to engagement (screenshot, like, comment, follow) and subsequently to the brand's overall success on Instagram. Images posted by successful/popular brands on Instagram understand and portray people's aspirations and wishes, or elicit positive memory associations. Likes and comments were not seen as relevant to the participants, however screenshots may lead to future purchases or positive positioning/perceptions for a specific brand. Images posted by successful brands that generate emotions such as motivation, inspiration and excitement, create nostalgia or desire and leave followers wanting to achieve or experience what is

portrayed in the image, this may be attributed to the theory of abstraction, which allows viewers of an image to make sense of an image on their own terms, involving left and right brain functions, which is said to be a gratifying process (Long 2011; Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:83).

4.2 Level 2 Research Findings: Instagram images from participants in focus groups

The findings below are based on 48 images sent to the researcher by 16 participants (four participants per focus group). The process of how this research was gathered has been discussed on page 19-20. The findings are stated relating to each research question.

Research Question 1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?

Finding: Aspirational images containing brighter colours are assumed to be more noticeable.

Participants were asked to tag or send three images of their favourite brand from that specific brand's Instagram account. They were also asked to hash-tag one or two words that represented what they noticed or the to hash-tag the way they felt when viewing the image. For example, the participants would tag one of the three images as #happy. Majority of participants selected photos that contain bright or luminous colours, the dominant colour being blue and green. All the images portrayed the brand's product offering or attributes and most of the images portrayed a person wearing or using the brand's product. Considering the hash-tagged words, participants revealed that they feel positive about the images and that these images were selected on the basis of motivation to achieve a goal or to achieve a desired emotional state, this suggests that the images were aspirational in nature. Furthermore, participants also revealed that they felt nostalgia regarding certain images that portrayed wildlife, landscapes or certain food brands. It was evident that most of these images "tended towards abstraction " (Long

2011). Noticeability is assumed to be based on the latter as the ability to interpret information is engaging and leads to satisfaction, thus proving that neuromarketing techniques, such as emotional and rational stimulation may be present within the images (Dragolea & Cotirlea 2011:83).

Research Question 2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?

Regarding what has been mentioned, brands are striving to present how they can add value to the lives of their target audience through strategic visual content by making direct links to their customer's passions, values, interests and personalities (Ginsberg 2015:80).

Majority of the images were hash-tagged with positive feelings or emotions, possibly indicating that the images present positive messages. Most images contained the brand's offering being used or worn in some sort of real-life scenario. Based on the images and hash-tags that the participants presented to the researcher, it can be assumed that majority of participants strive to achieve happiness, excitement, inspiration, peace, relaxation and calmness within their lives or they strive to improve and achieve some sort of desired state. Most of these images portrayed a person's face, which was not brought to light in the focus group discussions. Participants did not focus on models, humans or faces in their thoughts about images, but rather focused on the brand offering or colours. This represents a difference in level one and two research findings. Bakhshi *et al* (2014:972) claims that photos with faces are engaging in terms of likes and comments. Bakhshi *et al* (2014:972) states that photos with human faces are 38% more likely to be liked and 32% more likely to be commented on. This study did not collect research based on likes or comments, therefore assumptions cannot be stated. However, one can assume that due to the majority of the images portraying human faces, it can be presumed that people subconsciously are drawn to images depicting human's using or wearing the brand's product, which can be verified further by Ginsberg's theory regarding the notion that "brands can illustrate the quality and type of experience consumers will have by purchasing their products" (Ginsberg 2015:80). Brands are mimicking what Instagram users do and are creating visual stories of their own,

promoting real life experiences (Ginsberg 2015:80). The latter suggests that human's wearing or using brand's products or offerings in a real-life situations stimulate gratification, which elicits a desired emotion due to the brand posting content that depicts "socialising, entertainment, self-status seeking and information" (2015:79).

Finding: Emotional strategies may lead to emotional connections with a brand's target audience.

When debating the notion that instamarketing originates from neuromarketing, it is noteworthy to mention that brands make use of instamarketing by mainly using persuasion, relational and emotion strategies (Goor 2012). Emotional strategies used by brands "are evident when products are shown with emotions that brands intend their customers to feel when using the product/s" (Goor 2012:22). In the images, slice of life scenarios, relationships and symbolism are used to implement an emotional strategy (Goor 2012:10). Using the Nike Women Instagram account as an example, participants provided images that portrayed the product along with a scenario, such as doing yoga in an outdoor or natural setting in Nike sports wear. Majority of these images are based on sports and physical strength, entailing that emotional strategies are used to compose these images in order to emotionally connect with the intended audience. The participants hash-tagged emotional words such as happiness, peace, calmness, relaxed, strength, motivation, which can all arguably be linked to aspirations.

Flat lay images display various items/products in one image. Flat lay photos that were provided demonstrated some sort of theme. In one of the flat lay photos, it was evident that various items of clothing, accessories and gadgets were put together to suggest that this is what someone needs when they go on holiday or are about to travel. The participant hash-tagged this image as 'travel tips'. Another flat lay image included a skateboard; with a wallet, camera, phone and bracelet on the face of it, sneakers, pants and a casual button up top. This image is assumed to portray a specific type of lifestyle as the participant hash-tagged this image as 'life style goals'. Flat lay images portray more than one product offering from a brand or may even include other brands. The main idea is to inspire and motivate the audience to purchase and replicate the strategic

visual content by making direct links to their customer's passions, values, interests and personalities (Ginsberg 2015:80).

When considering the findings of level two research; Instagram images, the implications brands face are to create images that make use of emotional strategies that influence the emotions, feelings and moods of their target audience in an aspirational or nostalgic sense. Another implication is that brands need to stay true to their purpose in order to remain inline with their brand identity to effectively target their preferred audience. It is assumed that images depicting product offerings and make use of colour are noticeable and may elicit emotional connections.

CHAPTER 5

5. Data Analysis

Understanding why users of Instagram follow certain brands and what emotions or feelings are evoked when viewing images posted by these brands, will allow for a deeper understanding into how popular brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is currently so successful. Theory indicates that there are eight main popular categories of images on Instagram, previously mentioned on page 24-25 (Hu *et al* 2014:1). Chapter 3 (Methodology) discussed two levels of research for this study. Level one research will be conducted using field research, more specifically focus groups. Focus group findings will then be thematically analysed according to the Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati. This will allow managers of brands to understand what kind of brands are successful on Instagram and what exact noticeability factors and emotions stand out. Level two research will make use of thematic content analysis once again, to search for themes from the Instagram images provided, making use of the Aesthetic Measurement framework. This will allow managers of brands to understand what compositional elements are important to ensure noticeability, emotional connections and engagement. The reason for conducting two levels of research is that the researcher would like to determine if the first and second level of research corresponds with each other, which would prove reliability and credibility.

5.1 Level 1 thematic content analysis: Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati.

Level one research findings (focus group findings) will be thematically analysed using the Instagram framework of Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati. The framework includes eight of the most popular categories of images on Instagram (Hu et al 2013:3). The following are units for analysis, which include relevant categories are:

- Friends (at least two human faces in the photo)

- Food (includes all food, recipes, cakes, drinks, restaurants)
    - Brands:
        - Starbucks
        - Nutritech
- Gadgets (electronics, goods, tools, motorbikes, cars)
- Captioned photos (pictures with embed text, memes)
- Pets (animals like cats and dogs which are the main objects in the picture)
- Activities (both outdoor & indoor activities, places where activities happen, e.g., concert, landmarks)
    - Brands:
        - National Geographic
- 'Selfies' or self-portraits (only one human face in photo)
- Fashion (shoes, costumes, makeup, personal belongings)
    - Brands:
        - Nike Women
        - Forever New
        - Zara
        - GAP
        - Country Road
        - MAC Make up
        - Margaret Zang

Regarding the above, the eight categories outlined will be the units for analysis. Under each unit a category will be created to allow for brands to be adequately filtered into the framework. In terms of the framework, only units that were mentioned by the participants in the focus group will be analysed, therefore only those units will be considered. Results relating to each research question will be expanded on below.

Please refer to the appendix in the separate PDF or excel document (Figure 1). Figure 1 demonstrates how the findings were tabulated in order to thematically analyse the findings using the Instagram framework. After analysing the results according to the

Instagram framework, findings are stated under each unit of analysis, relating to the research question.

RQ1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?

Unit of analysis: Fashion

Brands that were mentioned in this category were: Nike Women, MAC Make up, GAP, Forever New, Zara, Country Road and Margaret Zang.

The above fashion brands can be put into themes of sports fashion, casual/everyday fashion and cosmetics. Sporting brand, Nike Women, gains attention by using brightly coloured products in their images. Participants agreed that they all noticed bright, luminous coloured shoes in most of the brand's posts. Most participants recalled images of female athletes displaying strength or some degree of fitness activity in an outdoor setting. However, bright colours are the main noticeability factor for this brand, according to level one focus group transcribes.

The theme that came across strongly for casual/everyday fashion brands, such as Zara, GAP, Forever New and Country Road regarding noticeability, were clear displays of the clothing within the images. Participants agreed that they all noticed Forever New's dresses more than any other product that this brand offered. A participant stated that she always noticed Zara's posts that displayed shoes. With regards to the other brands mentioned, there was no significant item of clothing that stood out.

For MAC Make-up, the quality of the photography and colour of the product offering is the main noticeability factor of these images. Participants stated that they take notice of images displaying colourful make-up techniques. It must be noted that in order for the participants to have observed the make-up techniques, a human face would wear the make-up. However, participants did not mention the faces of the person wearing the make-up, their focus was solely on the colour and technique of the make-up used.

Participants noticed images from Margaret Zhang; a fashion blogger from Australia, that displayed 'genius' concepts and quality photographic images. Colour and composition was the main theme that grabbed the attention for this brand.

Unit of analysis: Food

Themes relating to noticeability from Starbucks and Nutritech Instagram images include product centred images. Both brands were primarily noticed due to their products being displayed. With regards to Starbucks, participants stated that the images include artistic designs to highlight the product offering. The participants agreed that the design work enhances the chances of noticeability of the image.

Unit of analysis: Activities

A common theme derived from the analysis regarding National Geographic was that animals were primarily noticed in this brand's images on Instagram. Outdoor photography of landscapes was mentioned in conjunction with animals; however, participants notice images of animals first. Participants also noticed images of sports activities and tourist activities.

Summarised analysis of research question 1, level 1:

The most significant themes pertaining to noticeability that came across were:
Fashion -
- Sports brands: Nike Women - **Bright colours**
- Casual wear brands: Zara, GAP, Forever New, Country Road - **Clothing**
- Cosmetics: MAC Make-up - **Colour**
- Fashion blogger: Margaret Zhang - **Colour and clothing**

Food -
- Starbucks: coffee cup with abstract design work to emphasize the **packaging**
- Nutritech: product **packaging**

Activities

- National Geographic: **Animals**, followed by outdoor landscapes

Ginsberg's (2015) theory concerning strategic visual content that makes direct links to customer's passions, values, interests and personalities (chapter 2, page 12-13) and Long's (2012) theory regarding emotional strategies, specifically relational images (chapter 2, page 15-16) are evident regarding the above analysis.

RQ2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?

Unit of analysis: Fashion

Brands that were mentioned in this category were: Nike Women, MAC Make up, GAP, Forever New, Zara, Country Road and Margaret Zang.

The above fashion brands can be put into themes of sports fashion, casual/everyday fashion and cosmetics. Themes that came across strongly from the analysis of the sporting fashion brand Nike Women, is that these participants strongly associated these images with happiness, motivation and inspiration. These participants associated aspirational aspects with the images they recalled from their favourite brand on Instagram and felt a desire to achieve or purchase what was being communicated in through the image. This category also found that majority of participants will take or have taken screenshots of the images to purchase the products at a later stage. The participants stated that the screenshots are also used as a source of motivation.

Themes that came across strongly for casual/everyday fashion brands, such as Zara, GAP, Forever New and Country Road, is that that participants feel excited when they observe images of these brands. Excitement is a theme that came across most powerfully for the participants, assumedly, the excitement can stem from a deeper desire to wear or purchase what is being portrayed, to mimic what the brand is communicating in an aspirational sense or the images may have evoked nostalgia of past, significant events. An additional theme that emerged from the analysis is that

majority of participants will take or have taken screenshots of the images to purchase the products at a later stage. The screenshots are also used as a source of inspiration for what to wear for special occasions. These types of fashion brands elicit different types of positive emotions as opposed to sports brands. However, aspirational is assumed to be the driving force behind these brands Instagram success.

The theme that comes across strongly for MAC Make-up is self-promotion. The participants appreciate that the brand caters to all skin types and that they communicate messages of 'stay true to yourself' or 'express yourself'. Participants stated that they feel confident and motivated when they use this brand's products. Furthermore, they communicated that they feel the need to perfect the art of doing their own make-up and in fact, feel inspired to achieve this artistic perfection when viewing MAC's images on Instagram. Again, it was found that majority of participants will take or have taken screenshots of the images to purchase the products at a later stage. The screenshots are also used as a source of inspiration for how to apply make-up for a special occasion or achieve a certain look. Aspiration is assumed to be is the driving force behind this brand's Instagram success.

Participants described Margaret Zhang, a fashion blogger from Australia, as a brand that inspires, motivates and acts as a role model. Fashion bloggers are placed within the fashion category as their main objective is to blog about fashion and make-up trends. Majority of participants stated that Zhang inspires them and sparks a desire to mimic her fashion sense. Participants feel that Zhang is a career role model and a style icon. Screenshots of her images are used mainly as a source of fashion inspiration; in terms of how to dress or what to wear.

Ginsberg's (2015) theory concerning gratification (chapter 2, page 12-13) and Long's (2012) theory regarding instamarketing and emotional strategies (chapter 2, page 15-16) are evident regarding the above analysis of the unit of analysis; fashion.

Unit of analysis: Food

Brands that were mentioned include Nutritech and Starbucks. With regards to Nutritech, emotions are based around motivation and progression (achieving athletic goals), due to the brand being a sports supplement brand. Participants stated that they are motivated and excited to achieve the benefits of the product offered and ultimately, look a certain way.

Participants feel excited when they look at Starbuck's Instagram images. Pariticpants stated that they feel the need to 'go and eat or drink' various product offerings portrayed in the brand's Instagram images. It is assumed that the brand appeals to some senses of the viewer to elicit a desire to experience the taste of the product. However, participants were reminiscent when providing feedback about the brand. Therefore, this reinforces the nostalgic elements portrayed in the images. Starbucks is assumed to deliver nostalgic images that evoke desires to experience the brand's offerings.

Neuromarketing theory presented by Dragolea and Cotirlea discusses the understanding of a target markets desire and motivations are evident in the above unit of analysis (2011:80). Ginsberg's (2015) theory concerning gratification (chapter 2, page 12-13) and Long's (2012) theory regarding emotional strategies (chapter 2, page 15-16) are evident regarding the above analysis.

Unit of analysis: Activities

Activities that were mentioned included activity or adventure based brands such as National Geographic. Participants resonated with this brand on a level of appreciation. Participants stated that they feel happy and excited when they view these images, as they represent memories or particular interests. This category was the only category that educated participants of where certain images were photographed. These images sparked a desire or nostalgia.

Neuromarketing theory presented by Dragolea and Cotirlea discusses the understanding of a target markets desire and motivations are evident in the above unit of analysis

(2011:80). Ginsberg's (2015) theory concerning gratification (chapter 2, page 12-13) and Long's (2012) theory regarding emotional strategies (chapter 2, page 15-16) are evident regarding the above analysis.

Conclusive analysis of research question 2, level 1:

The most significant themes pertaining to emotional connections and engagement that came across were:

Fashion –
- Sports brands: Nike Women - **Happiness, excitement, inspiration, motivation, desire**
- Casual wear brands: Zara, GAP, Forever New, Country Road - **Excitement, desire**
- Cosmetics: MAC Make-up - **Confidence, motivation, desire**
- Fashion blogger: Margaret Zhang - **Inspiration, desire**

Food -
- Starbucks: **Excitement and nostalgia**
- Nutritech: **Motivation**

Activities -
- National Geographic: **Appreciation, nostalgia, excitement, happiness, desire**

Regarding the above, screenshots were the most popular form of engagement for fashion brands. Food and activity brands presented no evidence in terms of engagement. In terms of emotional connections, all the brands demonstrate evidence of aspirational or nostalgic feelings.

5.2 Level 2 thematic content analysis of the Aesthetic Measurement framework of Liu, Chen, Wolf and Cohen-Or

Research questions relating to level 2 research will now be analysed in terms of the Aesthetic Measurement framework of Liu, Chen, Wolf and Cohen-Or. Images from

Instagram were analysed according to rule of thirds, diagonal dominance, colour and visual balance. Participants were asked to choose three of their favourite images.

Please refer to the appendix in the separate PDF or excel document (Figure 2). Figure 2 demonstrates how the Instagram images were tabulated in order to thematically analyse the findings using the Aesthetic Measurement framework. Due to the images being chosen on the basis of the participants favourability, the image's analysis can relate to both research questions.

RQ1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?
RQ2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?

Nike Women – Bright colours and images showing a woman doing yoga or running were noted. Bright colours such as orange, green, blue were dominant. All photos had visual balance but rule of thirds and diagonal dominance were not pertinent according to what the participants selected.

Forever New – Participants noticed the colours of the images first in the focus groups (first level research) and then made reference to the elegance or grace of the actual model in the images (second level research). There is visual balance within all the images chosen by participants.

Zara – Visual balance is evident in this images, however diagonal dominance and rule of thirds were not applied, arguably indicating that noticeability is not based on these measures of the framework.

GAP –Rule of thirds rule are applied to all three images and there is evidence of good visual balance. Dominant colours are green and blue tones.

Country Road – Pink is the most noticeable and dominating colour. Majority of the images show evidence of rule of thirds, diagonal dominance and visual balance,

therefore all the aspects of the Aesthetic Measurement framework have been considered.

MAC Make-up –There is evidence that the images demonstrates visual balance and has applied the rule of thirds. Colours that are dominant include tones of red, gold, grey and pink.

Margaret Zhang – The bright blue colour in one of the images is extremely dominant. Tones of green and a variety of tones of colours are used within these images. All three images demonstrate evidence of the rule of thirds principal as well as visual balance.

Starbucks – Rule of thirds and visual balance are evident in all three images. Neutral colours such as cream, gold and dark grey are dominant within these images.

Nutritech –The dominant colour that stands out is lime green and there is evidence of visual balance. There is branding in these image, making it very obvious to the viewer that the product belongs to Nutritech.

National Geographic –The images all demonstrate evidence of visual balance. Rule of thirds was evident in majority of the images provided. There was no evidence of diagonal dominance. Tones of blue, green, red, orange and grey were the dominating colours.

Considering the above, the most used aesthetic measures are colour, visual balance and rule of thirds. Diagonal dominance was the least evident compositional element whilst conducting the analysis. One can assume that noticeability, emotional connections and engagement may be based on three of the four compositional elements of the Aesthetic Measurement framework. However, compositional elements alone cannot be the single reason for noticeability.

5.3 Research Question 1 – Level 1 and 2 comparison

Level one analysis and level two analysis regarding research question one will now be compared to one another to prove correlating evidence or find dissimilarities.

RQ1: Why do users of Instagram take notice of photos or videos of certain brands?

Considering the two levels of research conducted, one can make the assumption that in terms of the Instagram framework analysis, fashion brands, food brands and activity based brands are the categories that are favoured by Instagram users. Noticeability is based on the use of emotional strategies depicting slice of life scenarios, persuasion or relational images (Goor 2012). Images that make use of abstraction will allow the target audience to take notice of an image and express their own version of the visual story, which is gratifying (Ginsberg 2015:80; Long 2011). It must be noted that different types of brands are noticed for different reasons, which was highlighted in the analysis on page 42-43. Fashion brands are noticed due to clothing or colour, food brands are noticed due to the packaging and design elements that highlight the packaging, activity brands such as National Geographic are noticed due to wildlife images or images of landscapes. The latter verifies the theory asserting that brands that post images that relate to their customer's psychographics; their passions, values, interests and personalities, will be more noticeable and relatable (Ginsberg 2015:80). It can be claimed that images with colour and images containing humans making use of or wearing the product offering are more noticeable. This is asserted due to majority of the images containing humans. Regarding theory pertaining to the Aesthetic Measurement framework of Liu, Chen, Wolf and Cohen-Or, all four compositional elements of the Aesthetic Measurement framework do not need to be evident in order for an image to be noticed or aesthetically pleasing (2010:3).

5.4 Research Question 2 – Level 1 and 2 comparison

RQ2: What emotive connections are made to motivate engagement?

Considering the two levels of research conducted, one can make the assumption that emotive connections made with a brand's images on Instagram are based on nostalgia or aspiration. As previously discussed in research question 1, images that lean towards abstraction by using elements of the Aesthetic Measurement framework such as colour and visual balance, emotional strategies (slice of life; depiction of a real life scenario, persuasion; depiction that entices the senses, relational; psychographic aspects, needs, wants, interests of the target market that is reflected in the image) allow the target audience to interpret their own visual story and invest their own past experiences, emotions and feelings into this thought process, which is gratifying (Ginsberg 2015:80; Long 2011). By going through this process, the viewer will form a deeper, emotional connection to the image that may lead to a form of engagement, thus being a screenshot or positive perceptions (positioning) of the brand. If this process stimulates positive feelings of happiness, excitement and motivation, this often leads to a positive emotional connection. It is indicated in the analysis of the research that the most successful form of engagement is a screenshot taken by the target audience. A screenshot can be seen as an intention to purchase the brand's product or be used as a source of motivation. The participants involved in this study saw 'likes' and 'comments' as irrelevant.

Regarding the above two research questions the main insights derived from the research are:

1. *People desire deeper meaning in their own form of expression.*
2. *People gain gratification when they can develop their own form of expression regarding Instagram images.*

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Conclusion

Understanding why users of Instagram follow certain brands and what emotions or feelings are evoked when viewing content posted by these brands, will allow for a deeper understanding into popular brands use of neuromarketing on Instagram and why Instagram is currently so successful. Considering neuromarketing, it is evident that brands are leaning towards abstraction or emotional strategies in order to elicit emotions from target audiences. It is evident that successful, popular brands are subconsciously or consciously using the notion of neuromarketing to implement instamarketing tactics in order to stimulate emotional connections and engagement that lead to the target audience filling a personal void. The implication of emotional manipulation regarding the use of neuromarketing tactics may be viewed as unethical, however, if a brand composes images that are true to their main purpose and identity, which caters to the psychographic needs of their target market, one can presume that the brand is simply filling a void within their target market's lives.

6.2 Recommendations

The researcher proposes the following recommendations to brand managers:
- Abstraction or the use of emotional strategies, discussed in chapter 2, is key as they allow self-expression or visual storytelling. Emotional strategies, which include slice of life scenarios, are effective to form aspirational or nostalgic emotional connections.
- Understanding the psychographics, which comprise interests, activities and opinions of the target audience will allow brands to compose images that relate to the true needs and desires of the target audience.

- Screenshots relate to positive positioning or as an intention to purchase. Brand's cannot measure the amount of screenshots taken by their target audience, however, composing images that portray product offerings in a real-life setting or in a flat lay style, increase the chances of screenshots.

- Brands that stay true to their purpose and identity when composing images are successful. An example of this being Nike Women. All the images depict the product offerings being used in an athletic activity or life style scenario that is in line with their brand's identity. Brands need to ensure that the images they post are reflective of their brands identity and purpose.

CHAPTER 7

Activation

At the end of the focus groups, the researcher asked each participant to pick three of their favorite images from their favorite brand on Instagram. The participants tagged the images to the researcher's Instagram account, '@Instabrandresearch' so that these images can appear on the account profile's news feed.

The participants were told to hashtag (#) each image with the feelings or any thoughts that they associated with the image. This enabled the researcher to understand the participant's thoughts and emotions pertaining to the image.

The concept, 'Live Frame Feed' demonstrates the main insights derived from the research conducted:

1. *People desire deeper meaning in their own form of expression.*
2. *When images allow us to express our version of the story, we fill a personal void, which is gratifying.*

The images sent to the researcher were developed in the form of polaroid photographs and showcased in a picture frame. The message that was intended towards brand managers entailed: 'Images that are noticeable and emotionally connecting make me feel…'

It was communicated that if an image posted on Instagram does not make you feel any emotions, then the image cannot be posted as the chances of an emotional connection or engagement is minimal.

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