



2021

## EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR BEAUTY ACCOUNTS ON INSTAGRAM

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EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES  
FOR BEAUTY ACCOUNTS ON INSTAGRAM

By

Gitaine C. Reis

A Thesis Submitted to the

Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

College of the Pacific  
Communication

University of the Pacific  
Stockton, California

2021

EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES  
FOR BEAUTY ACCOUNTS ON INSTAGRAM

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Elliott Reis for his continued support throughout my program. His patience and advice were extremely helpful in order to move this thesis forward. Thank you for listening to me talk nonstop about social media for the past two years; I hope I didn't spoil the conclusion for you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude goes to the committee of professors who guided me in this thesis. I appreciate the advice and feedback from Professor Charles Ecenbarger and Dr. Jeremy Johnson, who were always willing to discuss my topic and offer their suggestions. They were also extremely helpful with keeping me focused so my thesis did not overwhelm me.

Dr. Teresa Bergman has been my faculty advisor since I was an undergraduate. The six years I have spent with her have been inspiring, and I will always look back on her advice and courses fondly. She was very encouraging and supportive throughout this process, and I thank her for that. I am finishing this thesis with a positive experience due to Dr. Bergman's care.

I also thank Dr. Qingwen Dong and Dr. Graham Carpenter for their inspirational courses during my program that have led to this thesis. They each supported me through my comprehensive exams and guided me during my exploration phase of this thesis.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR BEAUTY ACCOUNTS ON INSTAGRAM

Abstract

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2021

Social media content strategies have been created and used for years as a way to advertise and influence market decisions in various industries. The reason for their effectiveness should be adequately studied so that we can have a better understanding of which strategies are successful and which ones are not. This study identifies effective social media content strategies, with a focus on brand and customer-centric strategies. After a content analysis of 251 Instagram posts from Huda Beauty and Glossier's accounts, the hypotheses stating that brand-centric strategies will be more effective and all the strategies will be a useful way to determine the outcome of future Instagram posts are partially supported. This research contributes to best practices in social media marketing in order to understand the effectiveness behind content strategies.

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## GLOSSARY

Brand-centric content strategies	Social networking content that focuses on the brand that is posting it. It can include company and product information (Chwialkowska, 2019).
Customer-centric content strategies	Social networking content that focuses on the customer. It can include entertainment and useful information that the customer would be interested in (Chwialkowska, 2019).
Effectiveness	Effectiveness of social media posts can be measured through engagement. Li and Xie (2020) follow the industry standard of categorizing social media engagement in two broad types, direct response and sharing. Direct response to original posts includes likes and comments, and sharing of original posts allows the audience to recommend content to their followers.
Social media	A Web 2.0 application that utilizes user-generated content and user-specific profiles to facilitate the development of social networks by connecting profiles to other individuals and groups (Obar & Wildman, 2015).
Social media strategy	Advertising and promoting products and services, creating brand visibility, conducting market research, communicating with customers, receiving customer feedback on existing products or services, and providing product information (Wu, Martinez & Martin, 2020).
Social networking	A subset of social media which refers to how individuals interact on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or similar (Scott, 2015).
Social networking sites	Online environments in which people create a self-descriptive profile and then make links to other people they know on the site, creating a network of personal connections (Donath & Boyd, 2004).

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Social media content strategies have been created and used for years as a way to advertise and influence market decisions in various industries, and the reason for their effectiveness should be adequately studied so that we can have a better understanding of which strategies are successful and which ones are not. Content strategies are useful when developing a social media plan, although some may work better than others depending on the industry. In the past, researchers have focused on strategy effectiveness on a larger scale, so there is an opportunity to measure it based on industry to discover why certain content strategies are effective and why other strategies fail. The problem that is studied is why certain content works, or not, and if the audience reaction clarifies why the content works.

Social media analytics for specific accounts would be helpful to follow in order to understand why certain accounts are doing well, but unfortunately, they are not public information, which creates a roadblock for researchers. Creating a method to systematically infer how well, or how poorly an account is performing based on publicly available information would be useful to marketing and communication professionals. This study identifies effective social media content strategies, in order to investigate the reasons why they work, or not. It focuses on several content strategies, including brand and customer-centric strategies, and identify the message design and audience reaction. The research contributes to best practices in social media marketing in order to understand the motive behind content strategies.

### **Significance of the Study**

The timeliness of this study is important now more than ever. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the emphasis on utilizing digital media to connect, social media is crucial for businesses to incorporate into their marketing plans as users are spending more time on it. The results offer best practices of content strategies that will be critical to understand and grow audience engagement and sales. It identifies the reasons why certain content strategies work, and others do not, for the chosen organizations. This is useful information for marketing and communication professionals to use when developing and implementing future marketing plans.

The problem that is investigated is practical and the results offer action items for marketing and communication professionals to follow. This particular study addresses the effectiveness of content strategies in one industry, versus a broad perspective. It makes valuable contributions to social media marketing and communication literature. This study adds to Chwialkowska's body of research regarding the effectiveness of brand and customer-centric content strategies at generating shares, 'likes', and comments (2019). Their research focused on finding what types of content caused users to engage (likes, comments, etc.). They did this by first utilizing a workshop where they asked participants to bring an example of a post on social media that they engaged with, and an example of something they only read or ignored. The discussion in the workshop revolved around the reasons why the participants acted the way they did. Next, the researcher did a content analysis of the social media post examples in order to categorize them in specific social media strategies. This allowed the researcher to understand what strategies encouraged engagement with the participants. Overall, this study did not focus on engagement with any specific brand in social media but provides understanding of the 'big picture' for content strategies, which is why they suggest looking at specific industries for future

research. This study looks at the beauty industry on Instagram in order to test the effectiveness of the strategies Chwialkowska interpreted.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Social Media**

Social media usage is one of the most popular online activities. In 2020, over 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025 (Clement, 2020). Duong (2020) explores several reasons for its popularity, including the ability to create content, user-friendly platforms, it's free to use, and has the ability to share jobs in order to cast a wider net for candidates. In addition, it is continually being updated to include new features. Social media involves all four prototypes of communication: one-to-one, one to-many, many-to-many, and many-to-one (Jensen & Helles, 2017). It can also provide both synchronous and asynchronous communication.

Social media has been defined numerous times by various scholars. Carr and Hayes (2015) attempted to synthesize definitions, defining social media as “internet-based, disentrained, and persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content.” They further clarified that social media “allow[s] users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously” (2015). This means that users can interact at any time, without the constraints of business hours.

Throughout the various definitions, commonalities have arisen. Obar and Wildman (2015) synthesized definitions of social media and found four commonalities. First, social media services are currently Web 2.0 Internet-based services, which means the internet is more interactive rather than consumed. The shift to Web 2.0 is seen as the change from consumer to participant (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Users can participate by sharing their own content,

interacting with others' content, etc. Obar and Wildman's (2015) second point is that user-generated content is the lifeblood of social media. Without user-generated content, most social media sites would be nonexistent. They can only continue if there are people posting in them. User-generated content can include anything from a status update on Facebook, a photo posted to Instagram, a video uploaded on YouTube, and even a comment left on someone else's post. This is where the interactive and participatory nature of social media lives.

Obar and Wildman's (2015) third point is that individuals and groups create user-specific profiles for a site or app designed and maintained by a social media service. A user profile is crucial to social media sites because it enables social interaction and connection between people. Without basic identification of users, it would be near impossible to find and connect with people. This also humanizes the accounts, so it will feel like there is really a person behind the screen. Obar and Wildman's (2015) final point is that social media services facilitate the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals and/or groups. This is created through a homepage that aggregates content shared by people in a list. This list is usually developed by the user, by "friending," "following," and "connecting" through social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn respectively. By having the ability to interact with people the user wants, they are more likely to network and utilize social media to the fullest.

Social media is often compared to social networking. According to Scott (2015), Social media "is the superset of how we refer to the different media that people use to socially connect online," whereas social networking "is a subset of social media which refers to how individuals interact on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or similar." Networking happens within social media when connections are made between user profiles.

Social media is a tool that can be used by anyone, including businesses that use it to connect with an audience. The proper use of social media can help organizations strengthen relationships with stakeholders, build brand trust, identify new opportunities and foster communication (Ho, 2014). In addition, organizations can improve trust and commitment through active participation in their online communities (Kang, Tang & Fiore, 2014). Social media can be used in a way to foster a positive return on investment, but the right content has to be shared to engage an audience.

The commonality of successful social media posts is the effectiveness they have on the audience. Effectiveness of social media posts can be measured through engagement, which is important because it decides whether the post is displayed more often in users' aggregated timelines. The more views of the post, the more likely they are to engage with it. Li and Xie (2020) follow the industry standard of categorizing social media engagement in two broad types, direct response and sharing. Direct response to original posts includes likes and comments, and sharing of original posts allows the audience to recommend content to their followers. This study focuses on the direct response category, since Instagram does not publicly display the amount of post shares.

Liking, a commonly adopted metric, enables users to show enjoyment, appreciation, or endorsement of the content without leaving a comment. Commenting is a more public act and allows users to explain their positive, or negative, impressions of the content. Both types of metrics reflect deeper engagement with content than just viewing, and drivers of liking and commenting behavior can be different as a result of the varying visibility (Buechel & Berger 2018). Commenting is more socially visible and can be either against or in support of content,



while liking is more private and gives a direct affirmation to the posted content. Commenting and liking should be treated as distinct measures of engagement.

Likes are generally simple to interpret and can be perceived as an endorsement of the content and is a relative count of the popularity. Meanwhile, users are able to express their opinions through comments and monitor what others say. The MAIN (Modality-Agency-Interactivity-Navigability) model posits that user comments affect users' perceptions of content through activation of the bandwagon heuristic, or the rule of thumb that "if others like this content, then I should too" (Sundar, 2008). If a user sees a majority of positive comments, then they may be positive themselves, versus feeling negative with a majority of negative comments. Although, there is an adage that any press is good press, and the engagement will rise regardless of the type of comments. However, it is worthwhile to explore the types of comments, as negative comments could have a detrimental effect on future engagement with a loss of followers or blocking of the account.

### **Social Media Marketing**

With billions of users on social media, there are bound to be marketing opportunities to be discovered. This has resulted in social media advertising as a strategy for businesses to increase prominence, sales, value, and communication with consumers (Arora & Sanni, 2019). Social media technologies have changed the rules of marketing and market dynamics, creating countless new business opportunities (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2014). Not only does social media offer cost-effective marketing research tools to gather consumer feedback (Z. Wang & Kim, 2017), but it is also an easier way to have a dialogue with users.

Utilizing social media for business introduces new opportunities for growth. The social media marketing environment can be defined in terms of entrepreneurial orientation, innovation

orientation, and market orientation (Wu, Martinez & Martin, 2020). Entrepreneurial orientation refers to identifying business opportunities to introduce new products or create new businesses. It consists of proactive and risk-taking behaviors. Innovation orientation refers to creating new ideas through innovative product development processes, and reflects the tendency to engage in new ideas. Market orientation is focused on understanding customer needs and staying up to date with competitors. All three of these orientations are crucial in the social media marketing environment.

In order to understand if a business is successful on social media, performance needs to be evaluated. Social media performance can be measured in terms of brand reputation and brand equity (Davicik & Sharma, 2016). This can be seen through the amount of “likes” and follows a business has, which can be translated in terms of online support. Performance can also be measured by the quality of customer service and relations (Guesalaga, 2016), which can be seen in public interactions with users in comments. In addition, marketing costs are also a measurement of performance (Zhang, Guo, Hu, & Liu, 2017) because it is useful to know whether a business is paying for their engagement or receiving it organically. Other indicators that measure how well a social media strategy is doing includes sales of product or services. This can be counted by a post-sale survey, or by counting the amount of link clicks on a social media post.

Utilizing social media effects more than just sales of a product or service. Aichner and Jacob (2015) examined the influence of social media strategy on customer relationship processes. These processes, in turn, affect business success. The effects of social media strategy on consumer engagement are significant (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). Research findings suggest that social media strategy has a positive effect on

organizational performance, with an increase in market share, sales growth, profits, and customer satisfaction and a decrease in advertising costs (Wu, Martinez & Martin, 2020). Utilizing a successful social media strategy can alter the forecast of a business.

Understanding social media strategies is the first step to developing a successful plan. Wu, Martinez and Martin (2020) defined social media strategy in terms of six social media use variables: advertising and promoting products and services, creating brand visibility, conducting market research, communicating with customers, receiving customer feedback on existing products or services, and providing product information. These variables encompass a well-rounded social media strategy that can result in success by connecting with users. In addition, Arora and Sanni (2019) consider additional variables in social media strategy, including the number of active followers on platforms, active response to users' communication, market and industry size, and brand attitude. The variables that are used are dependent on the overall goal that the business wants to achieve.

Research has been conducted that answers additional questions about strategy. Chwialkowska (2019) went deeper into social media strategy to make additional distinctions. First, they found that strategy is made up of brand-centric and customer-centric content strategies. Brand-centric strategies includes functional appeals, which refers to content including information on how a product can be used, and what are its benefits. It also includes emotional appeals that focus on the emotions that products evoke. Finally, deal appeals involve information on promotions, special offers, and price, or discounts. Customer-centric strategies includes informative content, which refers to the content that is not directly related to a brand, does not mention the brand or products, but provides useful information to the user. Philanthropic appeal refers to content that describes the brand in the context of its social

campaigns or corporate social responsibility initiatives. Finally, entertaining content refers to humorous content and content that is fun to watch.

The results of their study show that only customer-centric content strategies that focus on informative, philanthropic, and entertaining appeals are positively related to content sharing. The brand-centric content strategy can have a detrimental effect on content sharing if it involves emotional appeal. On the other hand, clicking ‘like’ under the brand generated content was positively related to both brand-centric and customer-centric content strategies. Comments on content are positively related to content strategies that include functional appeal, deal information, philanthropic and entertaining content. This study shows that different appeals should be used in order to obtain different user responses. If a business would like more comments on their social media post, then according to this study they should use functional, deal, philanthropic and/or entertaining content. However, this study looked at social media marketing in a big picture perspective, rather than specific industries or accounts.

Guidelines have also been created on what is statistically more engaging content on social media that should be considered. Taecharungroj’s (2017) content analysis on Starbucks’ marketing strategy for Twitter found that visual content is more effective than textual content, especially for action inducing and emotion-evoking posts. The results explain that using visuals, such as photos or videos, was more effective than simple textual or graphical content when Starbucks wanted to be emotion-evoking and action-inducing (Taecharungroj, 2017). This speaks to the increasingly visual nature social media has become. Audiences expect imagery to accompany text and often engage with it more.

## Uses and Gratifications Theory

In order for users to want to engage with content on social media, it's important to understand why they use it and what brings them gratification from doing so. This will ensure that the content will connect with the users on their level. The acceptance of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) is that people are active participants in finding media that will satisfy their specific needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). In addition, Lariscy et al. (2011) explained the basic premise of uses and gratifications theory is that individuals seek out media that fulfill their needs, and leads to ultimate gratification. This can be a necessary piece to develop better scales and measurements for social media marketers. Rathnayake & Winter (2018) explain that social media uses and gratification theoretical studies need to focus on at least two aspects. First, it is necessary to evaluate recent social media U&G literature in terms of its coverage of unique uses and gratifications. Second, uses and gratifications measures need to be evaluated in terms of their coverage of user-based and platform-based gratifications. User-based uses and gratifications put less emphasis on the features or affordances of the platform, and platform-based take into consideration the features of the platform or the affordances they offer. For example, a user-based gratification of using Instagram is the ability to post a photo and interact with a network, while a platform-based gratification is the Instagram algorithm and how it always shows posts that are important to the user.

People use social media for specific reasons, even if they do not realize it. According to Katz, Gurevitch and Hass (1973), there are five categories of needs that apply to media: cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs and tension release needs. Cognitive needs are related to strengthening information, knowledge, and understanding. Affective needs are related to strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable, and emotional

experiences. Personal integrative needs are related to strengthening credibility, confidence, stability and status. Social integrative needs are related to strengthening contact with family and friends. Tension release needs are related to escape and diversion (Katz, Gurevitch & Hass, 1973). The U&G theory can be applied specifically to social media. Sheldon et al. (2017) proposed five solutions to understand gratifications for Instagram use: social interaction, documenting, diversion, self-promotion, and creativity. In addition, Whiting and Williams (2013) identified ten uses and gratifications for using social media. Their study also found social interaction as the number one use and gratification for using social media. According to U&G theory, individuals often interact with each other to achieve a sense of belonging (Rubin, 1986). This means that social interaction on social media builds communities and connects people to each other. The other nine uses and gratifications for using social media, from most to least, are information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, expression of opinions, convenience utility, information sharing, and surveillance and watching of others (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Understanding why people use social media is one piece of the puzzle, knowing what content they want to see to get them to interact is the ultimate goal.

When using social media, users look to be entertained and learn about topics of their interest. In Verdugo and Fierro's (2014) study on the media consumption patterns of university students, 68% of the sample said their purpose for using social media was equally for entertainment and information. This is versus 20% for just entertainment, 8% for just information, and 4% for culture (Verdugo & Fierro, 2014). This explains that university students want more out of social media than just entertainment or just information.

Businesses need to consider why their audience is using social media and what makes them gratified in order to best select a social media strategy that will work. This will ensure that

the business is using social media effectively. In addition, utilizing Chwialkowska's (2019) brand and customer-centric approach when choosing strategies can give businesses an idea of how their audience will react. This is beneficial when the audience uses and gratifications are not well known. It is worthwhile to see whether the brand and customer-centric approach is applicable to specific industries when put into practice.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the review of literature, it is evident that social media will continue to grow and change the way people use Web 2.0. Social media marketing is also going to become stronger as the world becomes more digital in nature. Some researchers have already defined variables of strategies and tested them to find their effectiveness, and this includes looking at the uses and gratifications of the social media users. In the past, researchers have focused on strategy effectiveness on a larger scale, so there is an opportunity to measure it based on industry to discover why certain content strategies are effective. This study addresses these issues and proposes the following research questions.

RQ1: Which of Chwialkowska's distinct social media content strategies are effective in the beauty industry, specifically for Huda Beauty and Glossier Instagram accounts?

H1: Chwialkowska's brand-centric strategies, including functional, emotional and deal appeals will be effective to engage the Huda Beauty and Glossier audience.

RQ2: Are Chwialkowska's distinct social media content strategies an effective way to determine the outcome of Instagram posts for Huda Beauty and Glossier?

H2: Chwialkowska's distinct social media content strategies are an effective way to determine the outcome of Instagram posts for Huda Beauty and Glossier.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The method of research used in this study is content analysis. Content analysis is an efficient means to investigate media content. Holsti identifies it as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (1969). The process of content analysis used in this study follows the suggestions made by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017), which include pulling condensed information from messages to code and organizing them into categories. Chwialkowska’s study (2019) is utilized to decide whether a post falls into the brand or customer-centric categories. Each post is compared to their definition of functional, emotional, deal, informative, philanthropic, and entertaining appeals during the coding process. When interpreting the posts, I positioned myself as the audience in order to figure out the intention of the account’s posts. Some posts could be put in multiple categories, but I categorized it based off of a first glance from an audience perspective.

Instagram is the chosen platform for this study because the percentage of U.S. adults who use Instagram has consistently increased and the active reported users have held steady around 1 billion people (Chen, 2020). Instagram is a free photo and video sharing, social network platform, where users can post their own content and interact with others. It also offers companies a free business profile with access to analytics tools and advertising. The main source of engagement on Instagram are likes and comments, which are the chosen measurement of effectiveness in this study. Liking is a commonly adopted metric that shows the numeric value of how many users approve of the post. Commenting is a public display that allows users to share opinions. High engagement can cause posts to be displayed more often in users’



aggregated timelines, and could turn into future levels of effectiveness, such as more followers, click throughs to websites, and product sales.

Instagram displays top comments that have the most likes from other users towards the top of the comment section. Liking the comment can be equated to agreeing or finding value in the comment. Commenting is a more time-intensive form of response than liking a social media post (Burke & Kraut, 2016). Since commenting takes more effort than liking, it will be weighed more heavily when determining if a social media strategy is effective. Due to this, top comments on Instagram posts are coded to find the general consensus and reaction to the posts. The codes that are used for the comments are customer service, question, approval, disapproval, complaint, suggestion, and unrelated. Customer service is used when the comments are concerning an order from the company, such as a shipping issue. Question is used when the comments are questioning something related to the post. Approval is used when the comments have an overall approval of the post, and disapproval is used for the opposite. Complaint is used when a user is complaining specifically about the company, such as a product not working well or being out of stock. Suggestion is used when a user gives unsolicited advice about how the company should improve. Finally, unrelated is used when the comment has nothing to do with the company or the post. These types of comments are usually spam comments.

The engagement rate is typically used to gauge effectiveness of Instagram posts. This is found by dividing the number of likes and comments by the total number of followers. For this study, the engagement rate is split into like rate and comment rate. This is so it will be clear how each social media content strategy affects the likes and comments individually. The average like and comment rate are calculated for each post type in order to give an idea of how the content

strategies did across the board, then each post is calculated individually to see if there is consistency within the strategies.

The chosen industry for this study is beauty. According to Socialbakers' (2019; 2020) social media trends study, the beauty industry has consistently been in the top three industries with the most interactions on Instagram. Beauty Instagram accounts are visually appealing with product shots and demonstration videos. This industry also utilizes social media influencers, which contributes to the high interactions. The value of the beauty industry is expected to grow to about 758.4 billion U.S. dollars by 2025 (Ridder, 2020), so it is projected the industry will continue to be very popular on Instagram. The two beauty Instagram accounts that are analyzed are Huda Beauty and Glossier. According to Feehan (2020), these accounts were the most engaging on Instagram when compared to 98 other beauty accounts in 2020. This means that these accounts are most likely following a social media strategy that this study can analyze. This study analyzes posts from December 1, 2020 to February 15, 2021 from both of the accounts. An Excel spreadsheet was created to keep track of the codes for each post. First, I looked at the image and read the caption to get a first impression of what the account is trying to say. Next, I categorized the post based off of the audience interpretation I decided on. Finally, I recorded the amount of likes and comments, and coded the top comment. Once I gathered the data I found the results.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Between the two Instagram accounts (Table 1), 251 posts were analyzed. This includes 132 posts from Huda Beauty and 119 posts from Glossier between the dates of December 1, 2020 and February 15, 2021. Starting with Huda Beauty's posts, 95 of them were brand-centric, while 37 were customer-centric. Of the brand-centric posts, 87 were functional, 8 were emotional, and none were deal oriented. Of the customer-centric posts, 15 were informative, none were philanthropic, and 22 were entertaining. The majority of the posts were focused on product details and uses, whether that was through a photo of the product or an influencer demonstrating it.

Glossier had 100 brand-centric posts and 19 customer-centric posts. Of the brand-centric posts, 79 were functional, 18 were emotional, and 3 were deal oriented. Of the customer-centric posts, 5 were informative, 8 were philanthropic, and 6 were entertaining. Glossier had more variety within their posts, but the majority were still functional. This shows that these two beauty companies on Instagram rely on functional posts to promote their products.

Table 1  
*Amount of Post Types by Account*

<b>Post Type</b>	<b>Huda Beauty</b>	<b>Glossier</b>
Functional	87	79
Emotional	8	18
Deal	0	3
<b>Total Brand</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100</b>
Informative	15	5
Philanthropic	0	8
Entertaining	22	6
<b>Total Customer</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>

The like and comment rate of each post strategy was calculated (Table 2). Huda Beauty utilized four of the six social media strategies, two brand-centric and two customer-centric strategies. The average like rate of the functional posts was 0.16% and the average comment rate was 0.001%. The average like rate of emotional posts was 0.17% and the average comment rate was 0.001%. For brand-centric strategies overall, the average like rate was 0.16% and the average comment rate was 0.001%. The average like rate of informative posts was 0.2% and the average comment rate was 0.002%. The average like rate of entertaining posts was 0.36% and the average comment rate was 0.005%. For customer-centric strategies overall, the average like rate was 0.3% and the average comment rate was 0.003%.

Glossier utilized all six social media strategies in their posts. The average like rate of the functional posts was 0.94% and the average comment rate was 0.003%. The average like rate of emotional posts was 0.95% and the average comment rate was 0.007%. The average like rate of deal posts was 1% and the average comment rate was 0.007%. For brand-centric strategies overall, the average like rate was 0.95% and the average comment rate was 0.004%. The average like rate of informative posts was 0.86% and the average comment rate was 0.002%. The average like rate of philanthropic posts was 0.46% and the average comment rate was 0.001%. The average like rate of entertaining posts was 1.2% and the average comment rate was 0.004%. For customer-centric strategies overall, that average like rate was 0.83% and the average comment rate was 0.002%.

Table 2  
*Like and Comment Rate of Post Types by Account*

Post Type	Huda Beauty Average Like Rate	Huda Beauty Average Comment Rate	Glossier Average Like Rate	Glossier Average Comment Rate
Functional	0.16%	0.001%	0.94%	0.003%
Emotional	0.17%	0.001%	0.95%	0.007%
Deal	0	0	1%	0.007%
Total Brand	0.16%	0.001%	0.95%	0.004%
Informative	0.20%	0.002%	0.86%	0.002%
Philanthropic	0	0	0.46%	0.001%
Entertaining	0.36%	0.005%	1.20%	0.004%
Total Customer	0.30%	0.003%	0.83%	0.002%

The top comments on Huda Beauty's posts did not have much variety (Table 3). There were no top comments about customer service, 2 top comments about questions, 109 top comments with an overall approval of the posts, 18 top comments with an overall disapproval of the posts, no top comments with complaints, no top comments with suggestions, and 3 top comments that were unrelated to the posts.

The top comments on Glossier's posts were varied (Table 3), similar to the post types. There were 18 top comments about customer service, 13 top comments about questions, 52 top comments with an overall approval of the posts, 8 top comments with an overall disapproval of the posts, 5 top comments with complaints, 23 top comments with suggestions, and no top comments were unrelated to the posts.

Table 3  
*Amount of Each Comment Type by Account*

Comment Type	Huda Beauty	Glossier
Customer Service	0	18
Question	2	13
Approval	109	52
Disapproval	18	8
Complaint	0	5
Suggestion	0	23
Unrelated	3	0
Total Top Comments	132	119

Table 4 and Table 5 show how the types of comments relate to the types of posts. Across the board on Table 4, the majority of top comments for Huda Beauty was approval, despite the type of post used. The functional appeal also included question and disapproval comments. Informative and entertaining included disapproval in addition to approval comments. Glossier had more variety in their top comments, seen on Table 5. Their brand-centric posts had a majority of approval, followed by suggestion, customer service, question, disapproval, and complaint. The functional appeal posts showed more variety, versus emotional and deal appeals. The customer-centric posts had more approval comments versus the other types of comments.

Table 4  
*Huda Beauty's Top Comments by Post Type*

	Customer Service	Question	Approval	Disapproval	Complaint	Suggestion	Unrelated
<b>Functional</b>	0	2	72	11	0	0	2
<b>Emotional</b>	0	0	7	0	0	0	1
<b>Deal</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Brand</b>	0	2	79	11	0	0	3
<b>Informative</b>	0	0	12	3	0	0	0
<b>Philanthropic</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Entertaining</b>	0	0	18	4	0	0	0
<b>Total Customer</b>	0	0	30	7	0	0	0

Table 5  
*Glossier's Top Comments by Post Type*

	Customer Service	Question	Approval	Disapproval	Complaint	Suggestion	Unrelated
<b>Functional</b>	15	10	25	5	4	20	0
<b>Emotional</b>	1	1	14	1	0	1	0
<b>Deal</b>	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Total Brand</b>	17	12	39	6	4	22	0
<b>Informative</b>	0	1	3	1	0	0	0
<b>Philanthropic</b>	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
<b>Entertaining</b>	1	0	2	1	1	1	0
<b>Total Customer</b>	1	1	13	2	1	1	0

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Both brands utilized brand-centric posts more than customer-centric posts. In these brand posts they shared their products, explained their uses, and demonstrated how to use them. They either did this with solo product shots or with the use of influencers. These types of posts can be considered evergreen content, where the content is continually relevant over a long period of time. This could be why there are more brand-centric posts for both accounts, because it is a straightforward way to share relevant content without worrying about timeliness. Their customer-centric posts included a variety of media, like videos, Twitter screenshots, memes, and original content. They did not necessarily focus on products or the brand. Figure 1 depicts examples of Huda Beauty's brand-centric posts. In each post they display the products and show how well they perform. The caption also explains the exact product that is being used. Figure 2 depicts examples of Glossier's brand-centric posts. Their posts are similar to Huda Beauty's in that they explain the products and show off how well they perform on influencers.



Figure 1. Examples of Huda Beauty's brand-centric posts.

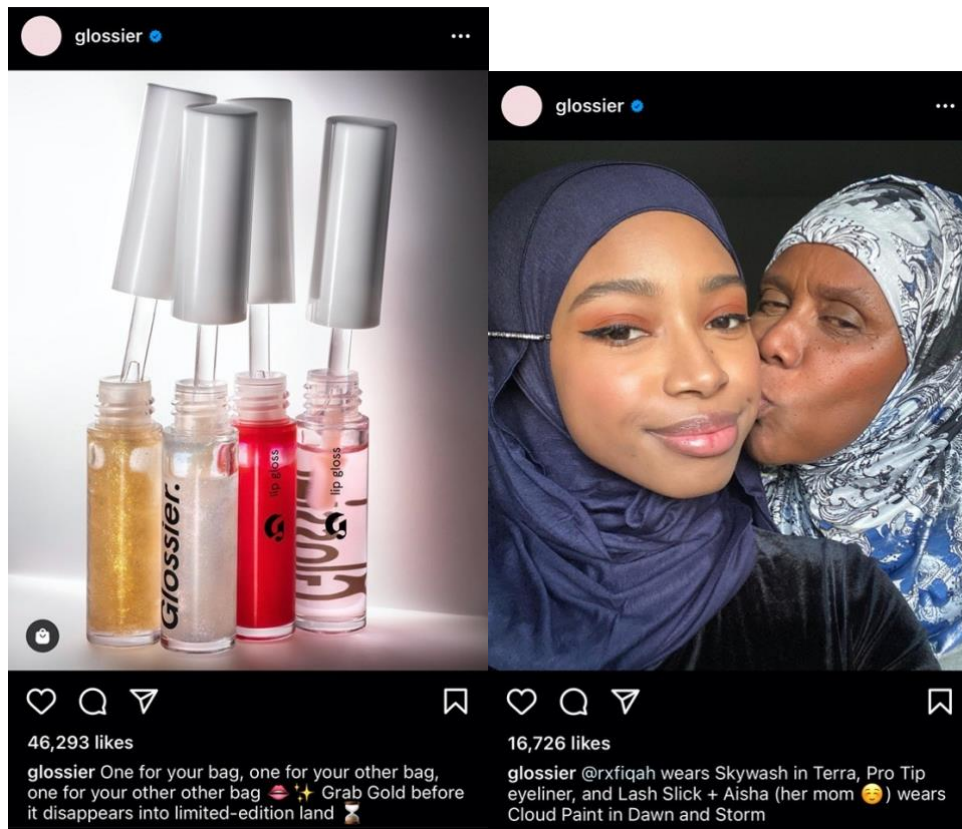


Figure 2. Examples of Glossier's brand-centric posts.



Even though both brands posted a similar number of brand versus customer posts, they had different results with their like and comment rates. Huda Beauty had more engagement on their customer-centric posts, with 0.3% like rate and 0.003% comment rate, than their brand-centric posts with a 0.16% like rate and 0.001% comment rate. Glossier had more engagement on their brand-centric posts, with 0.95% like rate and 0.004% comment rate, than their customer-centric posts with a 0.83% like rate and 0.002% comment rate. A reason for this could be that they have different audiences of their accounts that value different aspects of the company. Glossier promotes themselves as a minimalist makeup brand, and their images reflect this with very light, natural makeup on models and influencers. Their audience follows because that is the type of makeup that they are interested in. Huda Beauty promotes themselves with images of heavy makeup use, where makeup tutorials on models and influencers look like transformations. Huda Beauty's audience differs greatly compared to Glossier in that respect.

Huda Beauty's most effective post type was the entertaining appeal, with a 0.36% like rate and a 0.005% comment rate. In these types of posts, Huda Beauty usually posted beauty-related videos and videos of the CEO doing popular online challenges. The majority of the top comments were approval, with some disapproval. These posts most likely did the best because they could cater to a larger audience of people that do not already follow Huda Beauty. If their audience found the entertaining posts applicable to those outside of the audience, they could share the posts with their friends, causing additional engagement. Figure 3 is an example of Huda Beauty's entertaining posts, with a screenshot of a video where the CEO and an influencer did a popular online challenge. This challenge was not related to the brand at all, it is purely a customer-centric post for entertainment purposes.



Figure 3. Example of Huda Beauty’s entertaining posts.

Glossier’s overall most effective post type was deal appeal, with a 1% like rate and a 0.007% comment rate. This post type does not have the highest like rate, it was outnumbered by the entertaining appeal (1.2% like rate), however the high comment rate on the deal appeal gives it a higher effectiveness. In their deal posts, Glossier shared upcoming deals with their audience, like free shipping or discounts. The type of top comments were equally customer service, question, and suggestion, which shows that the audience was engaging with the content. The deal appeal most likely did the best because it is not a post seen often, meaning they are not always offering deals. When their audience saw the post, they expressed themselves through engagement. Deals are often offered straight on the company’s website, but their audience may be more likely to see the deal first on Instagram while they are casually scrolling. Figure 4 is an

example of Glossier's deal posts. In the post it shows the product being offered with the deal, and the caption explains it more. Huda Beauty and Glossier's results partially support H1: Chwialkowska's brand-centric strategies, including functional, emotional and deal appeals will be effective to engage Huda Beauty and Glossier audience.



Figure 4. Example of Glossier's Deal posts.

Glossier utilizes all six social media strategies, so their variety of posts may lead their audience to engage deeper with the brand since the content fluctuates. The audience may not know what to expect next, so they pay more attention to what is on their aggregated timeline. This may cause them to like and comment more on the brand-centric posts, since they are attentive to the content. Huda Beauty only utilizes four of the six social media strategies, so their

audience could be used to repetitive types of posts. Another possible explanation could be that the lack of variety may cause the audience to not pay attention to the brand-centric posts and want more customer-centric posts. The brand-centric posts, also considered evergreen content, are intended for a prolonged use versus the immediate engagement of customer-centric posts. Figure 5 shows another example of a brand-centric post from Huda Beauty, to depict the prolonged use possible with evergreen content. This post can be seen at any time and still be relevant, unless they discontinued the product.



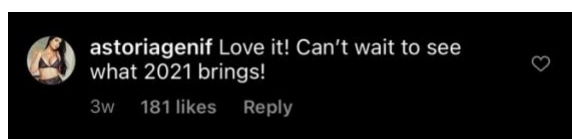
*Figure 5.* Example of a brand-centric post being evergreen content.

The types of top comments for each account do show that Glossier has a more engaged audience than Huda Beauty. Glossier's audience is paying attention to their posts more, which is

leading them to do more than just approve; they are asking questions, offering suggestions, complaining, and reaching out for customer service. Overall, it shows that they are trying to have a dialogue with the company, even if the comments are not all positive, and Glossier does respond to a few comments per post. Figure 6 shows a typical suggestion comment left on Glossier's posts. The audience is very collaborative with the brand and speaks on what they want. Huda Beauty's top comments are overwhelmingly positive, which could mean the audience is not consuming their posts in the same way as Glossier's and instead are approving to join in with the majority group. In Huda Beauty's comments, there appears to be a certain status obtained when approving of their posts, for example, verified users are often seen approving and receiving the top comments in the posts. This could possibly explain the shallow nature of the comments. Figure 7 is an example of a generic comment left on one of Huda Beauty's posts. These types of comments usually don't address anything directly in the post.



*Figure 6.* Example of suggestion comment on one of Glossier's posts.



*Figure 7.* Example of positive comment on one of Huda Beauty's posts.

Huda Beauty's CEO and founder, Huda Kattan, is the face of the company and is often featured in social media posts. She is an Iraqi-American makeup artist who has garnered a large following and become an influencer herself. Due to her involvement in social media, the company is humanized, which may lead to less disapproval of the posts because it could translate to disapproval of a person. Online criticism is common, but Kattan's audience admires her and it translates to her company. Glossier does not have the same reputation and is seen as a faceless company, which may lead the audience to be more critical. Glossier responds to comments frequently, so this may be why there are more complaints, suggestions and customer service concerns on their posts because the audience feels like they can get the attention of the company that way. Typically, after Glossier replies to a few comments, the amount of these types of comments decreases on the post.

There were some consistent results from the accounts that showed whether the six social media content strategies could predict the effectiveness of a post. Looking at the like rate of Huda Beauty's individual posts, the emotional appeal (Figure 8) shows opportunities for surprise above-average posts. Every third post went above their average like rate of 0.17%. Glossier's emotional posts (Figure 9) stayed more consistent with their average like rate, so for future posts of the two accounts it can be expected that they will be average or above average. The functional appeal had many opportunities for an above-average like rate for both Huda Beauty (Figure 10) and Glossier (Figure 11). If done right, it can be expected of the functional appeal to generate much higher engagement.

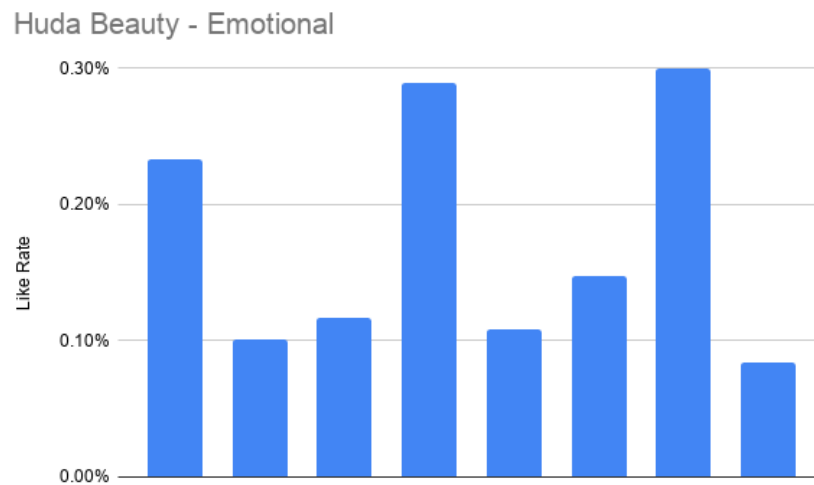


Figure 8. Huda Beauty's emotional appeal individual like rates.

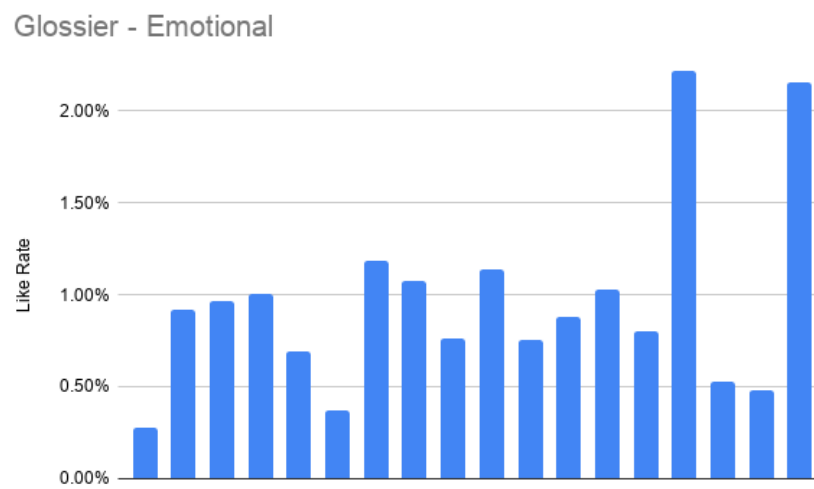
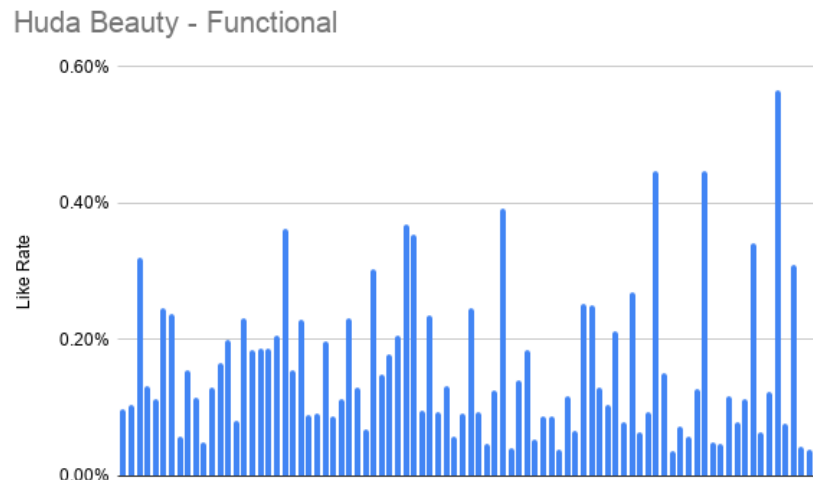
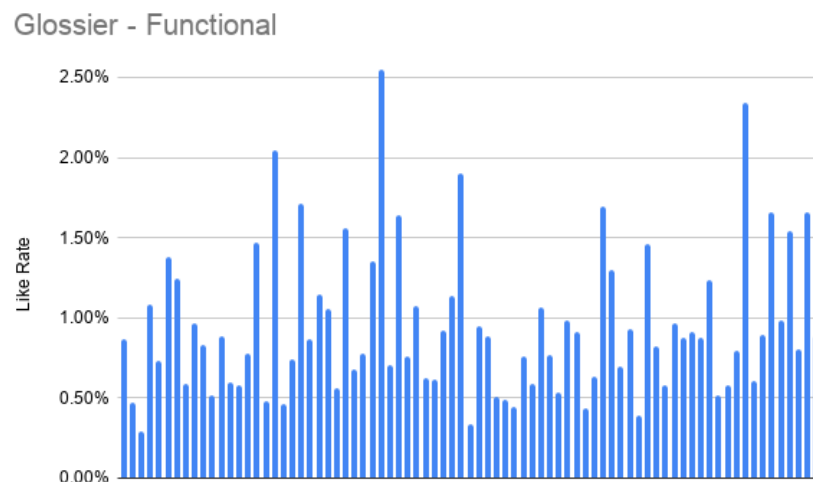


Figure 9. Glossier's emotional appeal individual like.



*Figure 10.* Huda Beauty’s functional appeal individual like rates.



*Figure 11.* Glossier’s functional appeal individual like rates.

Neither Huda Beauty’s (Figure 12) or Glossier’s (Figure 13) entertaining posts stayed consistent with their average like rate. This could mean the entertaining appeal can be a difficult one to predict, since humor can vary. Informative posts were also inconsistent for both accounts (Figure 14 and 15), and thus another unpredictable appeal. Glossier’s philanthropic posts (Figure 16) consistently stayed around the average like rate of 0.46%, showing that companies



can expect similar engagement on those types of posts. There is not enough data to get a good representation of Glossier's deal posts (Figure 17), although two out of the three earned an above average like rate, which can be a good indicator of future posts.

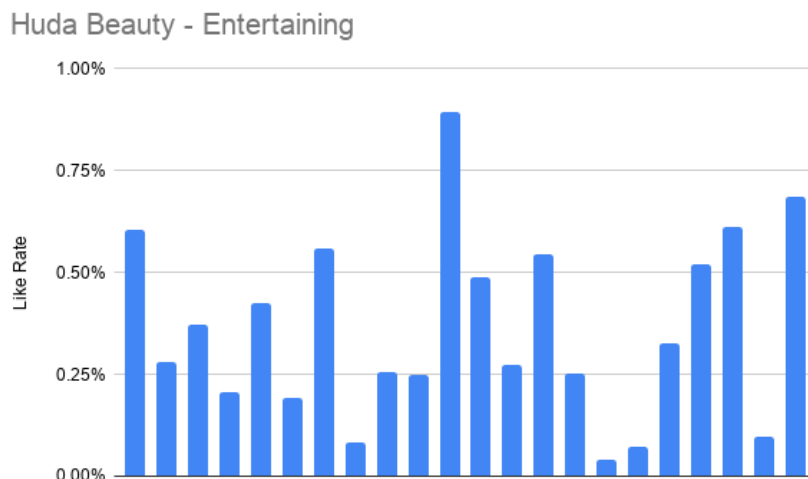


Figure 12. Huda Beauty's entertaining appeal individual like rates.

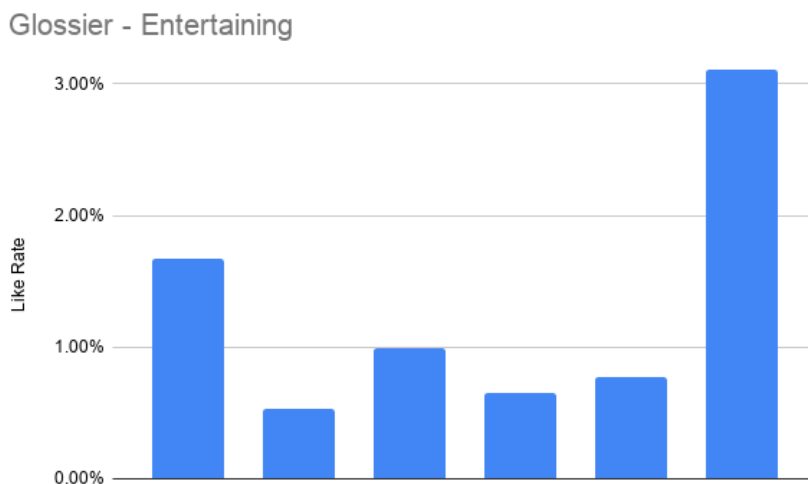


Figure 13. Glossier's entertaining appeal individual like rates.

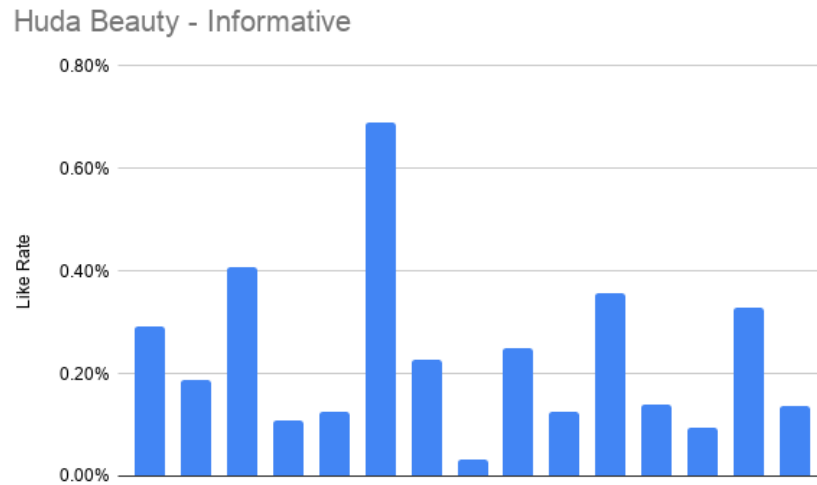


Figure 14. Huda Beauty's informative appeal individual like rates.

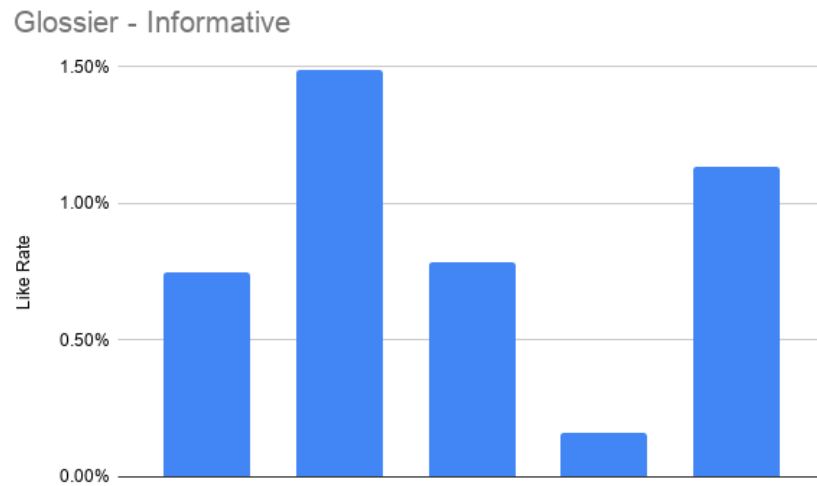
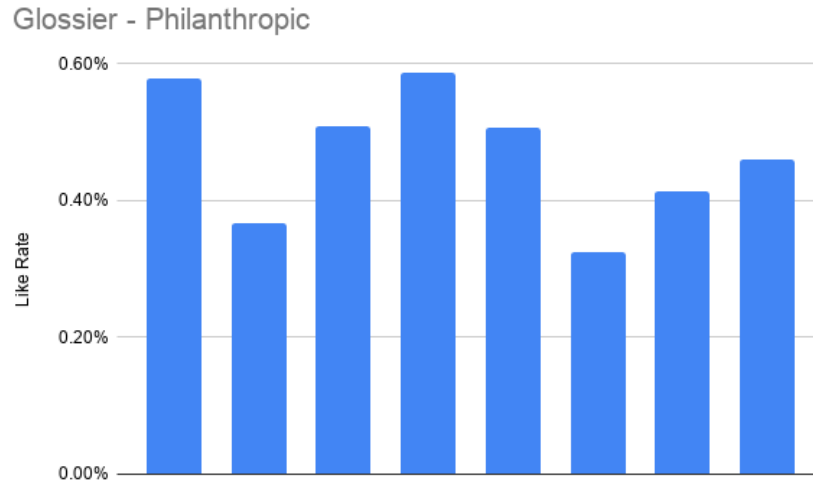
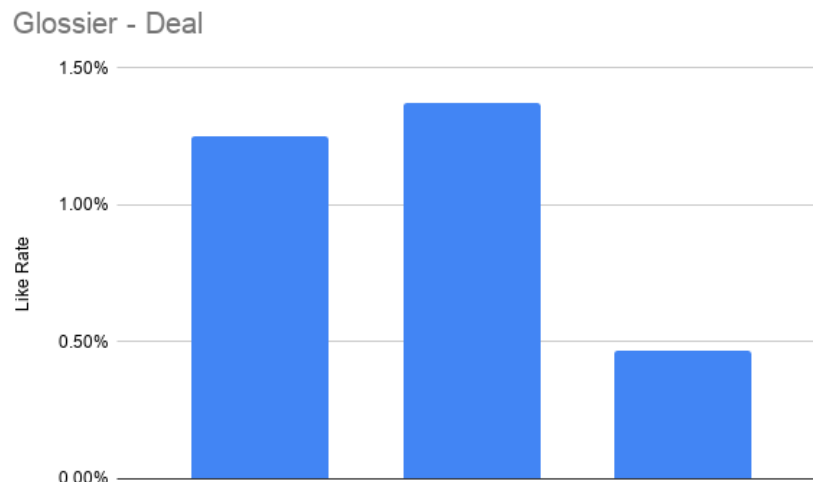


Figure 15. Glossier's informative appeal individual like rates.



*Figure 16.* Glossier's philanthropic appeal individual like rates.



*Figure 17.* Glossier's deal appeal individual like rates.

Overall, the analysis shows that entertaining and informative posts are not good indicators of predicting the effectiveness of subsequent posts. Humor and what people find entertaining is subjective and may not apply to everyone. Due to this the entertaining appeal can be difficult to master, and thus is not a reliable source to measure engagement. The same goes for informative, since it would not apply to people who have already acquired the information.

Emotional, functional, deal, and philanthropic can be good indicators of the effectiveness of future posts of that type because the like rate typically stays consistent between posts, with the exception of a few opportunities for above-average posts. These four appeals work well because they are not completely subjective. The emotional appeal tells the audience how to feel, and the functional, deal and philanthropic appeals are straightforward with their intentions. This partially supports H2: Chwialkowska's distinct social media content strategies will be an effective way to determine the outcome of Instagram posts for Huda Beauty and Glossier.

When looking at the types of top comments left on those posts, Huda Beauty's emotional appeal posts consistently gained approval top comments, with the exception of one unrelated top comment. The audience persistently approved of the account telling them how to feel or how the CEO feels about the company. Since they were being told how to feel within the post, it was easiest to agree or approve. In addition, Glossier's philanthropic appeal posts consistently gained approval top comments. The audience approved of the company's efforts to highlight black-owned beauty brands and donations to their cause. They approve because it gives them a sense of shared philanthropy and shows their support of the efforts. Emotional and philanthropic are only two post types that could have consistent comment results in future posts, depending on the audience.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has a few notable limitations. First, each account utilized different influencers to promote their products and show how they work in real life. The popularity of those influencers could affect the engagement rate. If the accounts got a more popular influencer to take a photo for them, that could boost the like and comment rate regardless of the strategy being used. Similarly, if the accounts used a new or not well-known influencer, it could also affect the

engagement rate. In addition, the day and time the accounts are posting can affect their engagement rate. It is a best practice to post your content during the days and times your audience is most active in order to capture the largest audience you can. Unfortunately, the most effective days and times for each account is not public knowledge, so it is not known if they were following that or not. Finally, Chwialkowska's model is stagnant and did not address social media platform culture, so using the strategies on Facebook and Instagram could look different. Adjusting the model to fit the platform would be beneficial in order to better understand digital culture.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study can be a building point for future research. An additional way to test the social media content strategies is to look at other measures of effectiveness, like sales of a product. Ultimately, the hope is that effective social media posts can turn into sales or clients. With the access of additional information that is not public knowledge, a study could be done that compares the strategies to differences in website traffic, click-through rate, sales, inquiries, etc. Adjusting Chwialkowska's model to include different appeals, like separating influencer posts from functional, could open up opportunities to specify the posts even more. Using the model cross functionally to code the posts in multiple categories could also help. Another suggestion for future research specifically looks deeper into brand-centric strategies, such as evergreen content, and whether making less engaging content for longevity versus content for immediate response is useful. It would be insightful to see how the options participate in the larger social media ecosystem, and if one is more effective than the other.

## Conclusion

With the emphasis on utilizing digital media to connect, social media is crucial for businesses to incorporate into their marketing plans as users are spending more time on it. This content analysis focused on two beauty Instagram accounts in order to test the social media content strategies analyzed in Chwialkowska's previous research. Based on the current analysis, both hypotheses were partially supported. It was found that the brand-centric strategies, which include functional, emotional, and deal appeals, were effective in engaging Glossier's audience. Huda Beauty's audience preferred the customer-centric strategies, which included posts that were informative and entertaining. In addition, four of the six social media content strategies were an effective way to determine the outcome of future posts for Huda Beauty and Glossier. The four strategies that were effective include emotional, functional, deal, and philanthropic. These strategies were determined to be effective because of the consistency of the likes on each post relative to their followers. This information reiterates the importance of knowing the audience of the accounts in order to understand what they would like to engage with. It also explains how having a diverse social media marketing plan can help keep an audience engaged. This is useful information for marketing and communication professionals to utilize when developing and implementing future marketing plans to connect with their audience. Overall, it is crucial to utilize social media strategies, but the type of strategy to use is dependent on the company keeping up to date on knowing their audience and understanding what they find to be gratifying and engaging.

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