Building an Instagram Coding Scheme Using Text & Content Analysis

Shields, Megan (MKT)

This research seeks to develop and validate a coding scheme to help managers content analyze the image-based, as opposed to text-based, aspects of a company's social media posts. Content analysis, as performed today, is very text-dependent with software running word counts of the specific words and word types (e.g. words that convey positive versus negative emotion) that appear most frequently on a company's social media posts. These word counts then provide managers information about what is being talked about and how consumers evaluate the content of their posts. While text analysis can reveal many insights regarding social media strategies, a limitation is that so much content and context is revealed through imagery on social media. In fact, two of the most popular social media sites with more than 3 billion active users combined, Instagram and YouTube, are primarily visual media with posts containing much more imagery than text content. Research is needed to better understand what aspects of social media imagery are important in generating user engagement. The present research addresses this gap and identifies 27 different dimensions of social media imagery that are predicted to drive user engagement such as the number of likes, comments and shares on social media. This project analyzes 450 Instagram posts on the identified dimensions and hopes to demonstrate inter-rater reliability between coders to validate the coding scheme and seeks to demonstrate a link with important user engagement behaviors to demonstrate the usefulness of this coding scheme to social media managers.

The Marketing Science Institute 2018-2020 Research Priorities say researchers need to define "what is the ideal creative in a digital world" (Marketing Science Institute, 2020, p. 6). Content analysis is a tool many researchers and companies are using to answer this

question. Content analysis, as performed today, is very text-dependent with software running word counts of the specific words and word types (e.g. words that convey positive versus negative emotion) that appear most frequently on a company's social media posts.

Our findings suggest some tips that can be implemented by marketing managers throughout the world. First, it is important to use "you," not "I," "we," or "they." In doing this, the company is focusing on generating engagement on the customer's behalf, avoiding the main focus being the company or product itself. Secondly, use hashtags to generate a conversation in the comments section, increasing engagement. This will cause more users to come across your image, increasing the levels of engagement through more likes and comments. Thirdly, focus on the present and current trends, rather than the past or future, as customers prefer to talk about their relevant current life and/or events. Lastly, use more words in the caption to trigger more likes and comments, but keep the caption simple, rather than providing an analysis of your company or product. This is important, as customers don't need an analysis of a product, rather are looking for content native to Instagram that is fun, eye-catching and stirs up a conversation.