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BEST PRACTICES IN SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND INTERACTIVITY BY RESTAURANT
CHAINS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the social media platform Instagram has experienced an explosion of food content, and this trend has important implications for restaurant brands. Though extensive research has outlined the benefits of customer interactivity on brand social media pages, few studies make specific recommendations for the types of content that should be used to encourage customer engagement. This study examined the Instagram pages of the top six restaurant chain brands to determine what content is being posted, how much interactivity this content receives, and what post attributes are related to high levels of interactivity.

A content analysis of 240 Instagram posts from the top six restaurant brands' accounts demonstrated that most marketers are currently using the post types and primary focuses that elicit the most engagement. They are not, however, following the best practices for making optimal use of post characteristics like word count, hashtags and tagged users. A negative correlation between level of interactivity and total following suggests that most followers are, at present, passive participants. Implications for applying these findings to the improvement of restaurant brand Instagram pages are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	2
<i>SOCIAL MEDIA</i>	2
BUSINESSES & SOCIAL MEDIA	3
<i>INTERACTIVITY</i>	4
<i>INSTAGRAM</i>	5
<i>INTERACTIVITY ON INSTAGRAM</i>	8
<i>POST TYPES</i>	9
<i>POST FOCUS</i>	10
<i>POST CHARACTERISTICS</i>	13
<i>RESTAURANT BRANDS ON INSTAGRAM</i>	15
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	17
METHOD	18
CREATING THE CODESHEET	20
<i>GENERAL KNOWLEDGE</i>	20
<i>POST TYPES</i>	20
<i>POST CHARACTERISTICS</i>	21
<i>INTERACTIVITY</i>	22
<i>RELIABILITY</i>	23
RESULTS	24

DISCUSSION.....	31
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	36
LIMITATIONS.....	38
FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	38
Appendix A Codebook – Used by Lead Researcher and Volunteer Coder.....	40
Appendix B Example Posts.....	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	44
ACADEMIC VITA.....	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Percentage of Total Media Time Spent on Social Media.....	2
Figure 2. Active Brands are Driving More Engagement.	6
Figure 3. Engagement per Post is Increasing Over Time.....	7
Figure 4. Caption Length does not Significantly Affect Engagement.....	14
Figure 5. Number of Hashtags v. Engagement per Post.....	15
Figure 6. Number of Times People Need to See Something on Social Media before Purchase	16
Figure 7. Total Interactivity by Number of Words.....	34

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Percentage Agreement Between Lead Researcher and Volunteer Coder for all Coding Items.....	24
Table 2. Post Type Frequencies	25
Table 3. Primary Post Focus Frequencies	26
Table 4. Most Used Post Type v. Post Focus.....	27
Table 5. Hashtag Frequency	28
Table 6. Tagged User Frequency	28
Table 7. Mean Total Interactivity for Post Types	28
Table 8. Mean Total Interactivity for Post Focuses	29
Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for Hashtag Use.....	30
Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for Users Tagged.....	30

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INTRODUCTION

Today more than ever, brands rely on the content and data that consumers generate through active brand participation on social media platforms. While there seems to be widespread agreement across the restaurant industry that social media is crucial to business success, its use is still evolving. Careful execution of effective social media marketing techniques, however, can advance brand awareness among the ever-increasing consumer audience active on social media. Furthermore, despite research indicating that customer loyalty can be enhanced through the use of social media marketing (Kwon et al., 2013), the best practices for social media use amongst restaurants to promote customer interactivity remain relatively unexplored.

This research gap is especially glaring in regards to the increasingly popular platform Instagram, a mobile photo-sharing service launched in 2010. As an image-first, non-text-centered platform, Instagram affords restaurant brands even more potential to foster online participation than do strictly text-based platforms. In light of such high potential and so little investigation, this study seeks to understand the methods and techniques that foster the highest levels of customer interactivity on restaurant's Instagram pages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SOCIAL MEDIA

In recent years, social media has come to dominate internet usage among Americans. Today, nearly 70% of the American population uses social media to connect, engage, share information and entertain. More than half of social media users visit these platforms at least once each day, with a large portion checking in several times each day. The average user spends 5 hours and 30 minutes per week on social media sites, a 36% jump from last year (2016 Nielsen Social Media Report, 2017). The prevalence of social media use is constantly increasing. In the past decade, use among American adults has grown by tenfold (Social Media Fact Sheet, 2017).

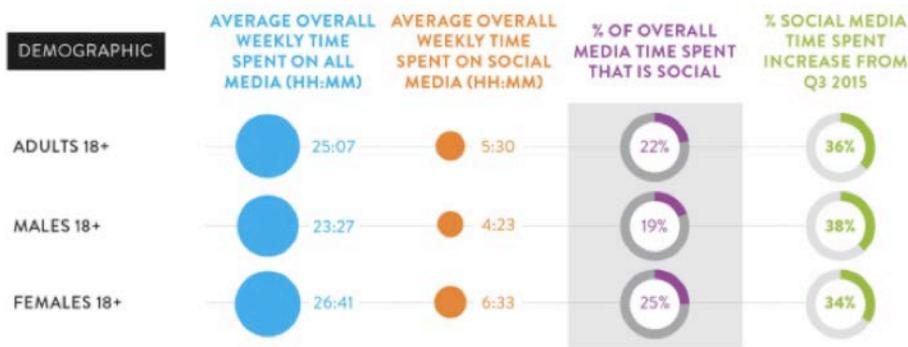


Figure 1. Percentage of Total Media Time Spent on Social Media.

Reprinted from 2016 Nielsen Social Media Report from *Nielsen Newswire*, 2017. Retrieved October 15, 2017 from <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2017/2016-nielsen-social-media-report.html>

Because social media is constantly evolving, it is difficult to settle upon a universally accepted definition. The term is broadly used to describe any service platform that engages users

to simultaneously support mass and personal communication (Ellison, 2007). For the purpose of this study, social media is defined as “Internet-based platforms that enable users to interact, communicate and share ideas and information” (Ghillesi & Ma, 2015). Prevalent social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Instagram.

Though the two terms are often used interchangeably, social networking sites (SNSs) are more accurately viewed as a subset of social media. SNS are distinguished by their profile-centricity: users create a personal profile and establish connections (Ghillesi & Ma, 2015). Such sites are designed to allow discovery, formation and articulation of connections with other users. This study focuses on one particular SNS: Instagram.

BUSINESSES & SOCIAL MEDIA

Businesses owners from all sectors recognize the growth of social media and capitalizing on its affordance for user engagement and marketing. Social media tools offer businesses a wide variety of benefits including rapid information dissemination, community networking, audience targeting, group-specific message customization, consumer relationship building, and brand loyalty development. These benefits, however, are only accessible when social media is used properly to engage customers and positively promote a brand.

Restaurants in particular were quick to embrace social media as a way to connect with customers. Interestingly, however, the industry has proven to be slow in in devising ways to measure the effectiveness of these efforts. Whereas scholars in the food and restaurant industry have stated that member participation is the basis for building strong brand relationships with customers (Paris *et al.*, 2010; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008), very few studies describe how these

brands can foster and encourage consumer interaction on their social media sites. The importance of consumer interaction, however, cannot be understated.

INTERACTIVITY

Social media is distinct from traditional communication forms in that, here, consumers are no longer passive receivers of information; rather, they are actively involved in the creating and sharing of information. In light of this feature, brands often use social media pages to develop and maintain relationships with existing customers and to connect with potential customers. Customers on these platforms who actively engage with the brand, providing suggestions, feedback, criticisms, and other content, are called “active participants” (Lee *et al.*, 2010). On the other hand, some customers, referred to as “passive participants,” intend only for the purpose of obtaining promotions and other personal benefits. Preece (2010) found that active participation on brand pages can entice new members and encourage existing members to engage with the brand more frequently and for longer time periods.

Due to the reciprocal nature of social media, it holds strong influence in the customer decision-making process (Leung *et al.*, 2013). In particular, active consumer interactivity on brand social media pages can generate brand trust and commitment (Kang *et al.*, 2015). With their reciprocal communication format, social media pages contain information generated by both brands and active participant consumers. Customers in turn use all this information to make informed assessments and decisions about whether or not to give their business to a brand. Importantly, customers who view a sufficient amount of positive information generated by active participants about a brand are more likely to report increased brand trust (Garbarino & Johnson,

1999). This trust in turn facilitates customer attachment and bonding with the brand (Dhoklakia *et al.*, 2004), which ultimately leads to brand commitment (Flavian and Guilaliu, 2006). In fact, Kang and colleagues (2015) found a direct and positive link between active participation on restaurant Facebook pages and brand trust and commitment, suggesting that active participation is a prerequisite for the success of a brand's social media community.

INSTAGRAM

The use of Facebook, the world's most frequently used social media platform, has been studied in different contexts and across different industries for over a decade. Facebook is a primarily text-based platform and this research, therefore, has been largely focused on the use of written words. The use of images, pictures and videos, however, are constantly increasing on social media.

Instagram is at the forefront of such image-based platforms. Originally launched in 2010, Instagram is a mobile photo-sharing application that markets itself as a medium for users to "transform an image into a memory to keep around forever" (Instagram Stats, 2017). The visually-oriented application allows users to publish photographs and short videos to a network of followers.

Instagram has gained enormous popularity since its launch. Currently, the application has more than 300 million monthly active users. Around 70 million photos are shared each day, and total daily post "likes" have reached around 2.5 billion (Instagram Stats, 2017). According to a survey conducted by Pew Research in January 2017, 28% of Americans use Instagram, and more than half of these users (51%) use the app daily. Instagram was named one of the two fastest

growing apps of 2016 by Nielsen (2016 Nielsen Social Media Report, 2017), showing 36% growth in users since 2015.

Businesses have also taken to Instagram as a means of spreading brand awareness and engaging with customers. According to Simply Measured's 2016 "State of Social Report," Instagram adoption is approaching complete penetration among brands: 94% of top brands have profiles, and 86% post to the platform at least once a month, averaging one post per day (Shively & Hintz, 2016). These data suggest that brands are joining Instagram at a significant rate and are devoting resources to growing brand presence on the platform.

Interactivity with brands on Instagram has also been on the rise: monthly engagement with top brands more than doubled from 2013 to 2014, and the average engagement per post grew by 416% from 2012 to 2014 (see Figure 3).



Figure 2. Active Brands are Driving More Engagement.

Reprinted from *Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram Study*, 2014. Retrieved from <http://get.simplymeasured.com/rs/simplymeasured2/images/InstagramStudy2014Q3.pdf>

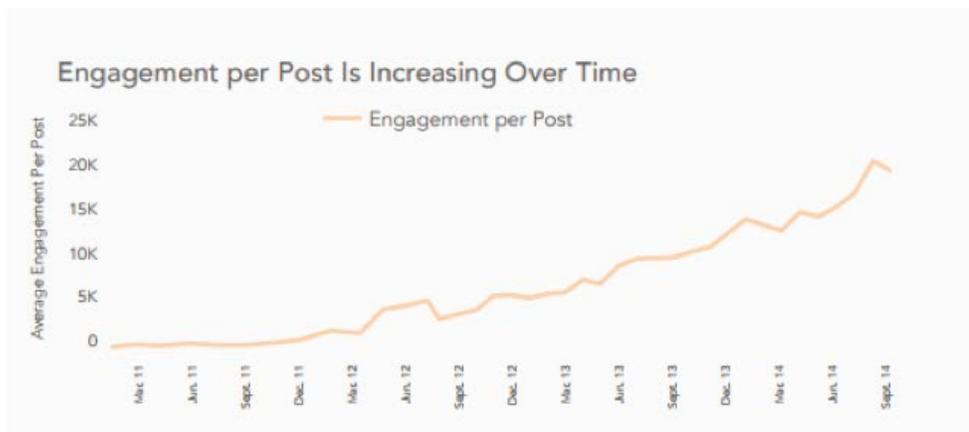


Figure 3. Engagement per Post is Increasing Over Time

Reprinted from *Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram Study*, 2014. Retrieved from <http://get.simplymeasured.com/rs/simplymeasured2/images/InstagramStudy2014Q3.pdf>

Instagram affords unique opportunities in online visual communication to users. Online visual communication is an emerging, relatively unstudied field wherein theories and methodological approaches are lacking. In this content, images are understood as an additional source of information to complement communication accomplished through written text. According to Russman and Svensson (2016), “images suggest reality and thus have the potential to build and/or restore trust and legitimacy with respect to the sender (i.e., organizations). Images help the viewer to achieve coherence faster; they create meaning and foster interaction” (p.3). Previous studies have highlighted that pictures draw viewers’ attention and enhance viewers’ retention more effectively than text (Bucher & Schumacher, 2006). Based on this information, it is evident that communication processes on image-centric platforms like Instagram may differ substantially from text-based platforms like Facebook, and therefore warrant separate examination.

Instagram user roles fall into two categories: posters and followers. A poster is the owner of an account and is the only one able to publish to this account. A follower, on the other hand, is someone who subscribes to the poster's account, and consequently views the user's posts on their feed. Followers can either be active or passive, depending on the nature of their engagement with the poster. Followers can interact with a poster's content through the "like" and "comment" function.

INTERACTIVITY ON INSTAGRAM

Several features of Instagram allow for interactivity. Besides simply "following" accounts, posters and followers have the opportunity to engage on the platform through the following features:

- Posts: publicly broadcasted visuals or short videos, sometimes supplemented textual information in the form of written captions. Posts appear on the poster's profile as well as the follower's feed.
- Captions: the optional, textual portion of a post that may also contain hashtags, tagged users and emoticons.
- Likes: a method followers use to indicate positive feedback to a poster's content, initiated by double tapping the image or clicking the "heart" icon below the visual component.
- Comments: an option enabled for every Instagram post that allows for followers to participate in the post with specific textual input.
- Hashtags: a keyword or phrase preceded by the hash symbol (#) that makes a post accessible to both followers and non-followers who search for this term

- User tags: allows users to link other Instagram accounts to their posts or comments.

When a user is “tagged,” a link that goes directly to the tagged account’s page is generated in light blue.

POST TYPES

Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) define nine categories for which all website postings or messages can be classified: a question or request, call for action, announcement, fact, opinion, apology, challenge/dare, attempt at humor and metacommunications. These categories stem from Rafaeli, Sudweeks, Konstan, and Mabry (1994) *ProjectH: A quantitative study of computer-mediated communication*. The codebook developed and utilized in *ProjectH* has been cited and used in many other studies, many of which also adapt the variables. In fact, Wimer and Katzman (1997) argue that the *ProjectH* codebook was purposefully created to be “as broad as possible to accommodate a diverse range of research questions and hypotheses.” Hence, for the purpose of this study, based on the trial-coding period, Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1994) post type categories were slightly modified and condensed into the following list: question (Q), call for action (CA), announcement (A) and fact (F). In addition, two categories – lifestyle (LS) and no-text (NT), were added as necessary additions. These variables, inspired by their use in Sexton’s (2014) version of the *ProjectH* codebook, were determined to be necessary in this study based on the content analyzed in the trial-coding period.

In the context of Instagram, both visual and textual post content must be taken into account when classifying post type. While some of the post types are self-explanatory, others require explanation. Examples of each can be found in Appendix B. Questions, presented

textually, pose a question to the user. Calls for action request that the reader engage in some kind of action via the social media platform. Announcements present information about the release of a new product or promotion. Facts include indisputable solid figures, data or numbers.

Lifestyle content, though very commonplace on Instagram, is slightly harder to define. It appeals to a user's emotions and helps connect the brand to everyday experiences of users; its ultimate purpose is to boost the user's esteem. In fact, according to Mazur (2005), the goal of lifestyle content is to help customers achieve esteem. Presenting lifestyle content on restaurant Instagram pages can help establish the brand as one that aligns with a customer's lifestyle, an alignment which in turn stimulates strong positive emotions related to the brand (Moore and Harris, 1996).

The no-text post type can exist only on platforms with visual components. Because Instagram is a visually-oriented platform, this post type is necessary in studying the use of this application. No-text posts are strictly visual, containing only a photo or video and no textual caption.

POST FOCUS

Beyond post type, the primary focus of a post must also be considered. The focus of a post is critical in directing the user's attention and establishing a mindset. If effective, it ultimately delivers a clear message or produces an outcome. The post focus categories used in this study were derived from Sexton (2014) and include: product (P), corporate social responsibility (CSR), entertainment (E), contest or sweepstakes (CS), fan (F), and company (C).

A post can place focus on a product either visually or textually. A visual product focus could include an image of one of the company's food products and the text might describe the product and its features in detail. Product focus is used to attract attention and desire to the featured products in order to drive sales.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined as content that “encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). When brands focus on CSR, they acknowledge a responsibility that extends beyond their business to the greater good of society. Importantly, research has suggested that a company's CSR efforts are positively related to a customer's likelihood to engage in communication with and form loyalty to a brand (Du *et al.*, 2007).

The primary purpose of many Instagram posts may be to entertain viewers. Assuring that the audience is entertained is a key factor in effectively driving interactivity. Waters and colleagues (2012) highlight the importance of entertainment:

A growing body of research indicates that entertainment-based informational messages can be an effective way to deliver messages. Some have speculated that entertainment strategies may be more effective at influencing attitudes and behaviors than emotional or factual messages strategies reflected by traditional one-way public relations models. (p.65)

When businesses are hosting a contest or sweepstakes, they often promote it in posts that feature the promotion as the post's primary focus. Contests are not simply a means of charity; they afford various benefits to the companies who host them:

Sweepstakes strengthen the company-to-consumer relationship by building a sense of fun, by entertaining people while informing them about the company's

products, and by giving customers a benefit for interacting with the company in the form of fun prizes. (Grauschopf, 2017).

Contest and sweepstakes can also be used to expand social media audiences and build a fan base for future promotions. They are widely recognized in the digital landscape as a strong method for interacting with an online audience.

It is also common for Instagram posts to focus on dedicated fans, as this is a useful way to build a loyal brand community. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) is useful in explaining what motivates fans to want to be part of a brand: it allows them to establish a social identity within their self-concept by classifying themselves into this particular social groups (the brand community). In this scenario, the brand fulfills the innate need to identify with symbols or groups (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). To reward the members of these communities and entice new members to engage in the communities, brands post images and content that focus on fans.

A company might also focus posts on their company by spotlighting employees, their work and their accomplishments in order to create a positive brand image. Employee related posts also make employees themselves feel valued, and thus solidify them as a part of the brand community:

To create a sense of belonging, the organizations must show that they care about their employees by understanding their needs of communication and success. This says that the employee has a commitment to the company's objectives and values, and this commitment is derived from the strong belief the employee holds for the organization values, loyalty and interest in the job done. (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013, p. 855)

Alternatively, companies may build strong brand communities through posts that focus primarily on the company. These posts serve to boost a brand's image and improve customer experience in order to build and strengthen brand communities. These posts may focus on a company's traditions or values; in essence, they celebrate the brand by "sharing interesting brand related stories and using specific jargon within the community" (Habibi *et al.*, 2014, p. 80).

POST CHARACTERISTICS

Instagram post characteristics are the unique details of a post that differentiate it from other posts. Certain characteristics make posts more searchable, popular, or appealing to users. Potential post characteristics differ across social media platforms. On Instagram and for the purpose of this study, the post characteristics considered are the number of words, hashtags and tagged users within a posts caption.

The number of words a post contains in its caption (if present) is considered a post characteristic. In their Instagram Study, Simply Measured (2014) found that the average caption on Instagram is 138 characters long, and that there is no statistically significant correlation between caption length and interactivity.

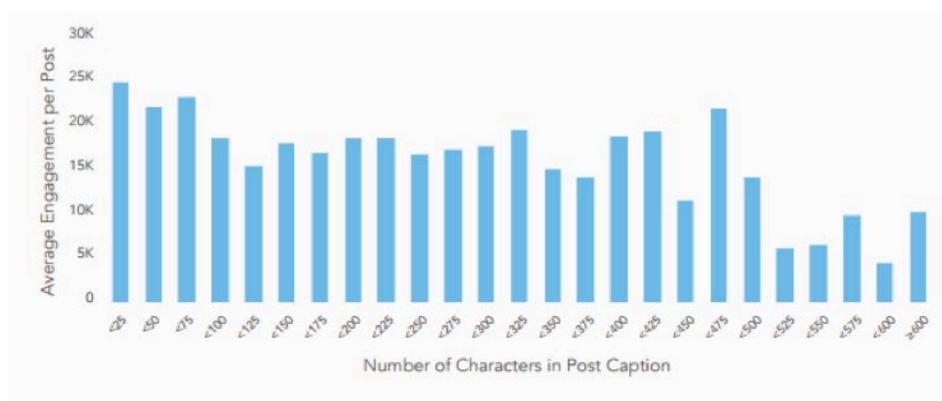


Figure 4. Caption Length does not Significantly Affect Engagement

Reprinted from *Simply Measured Q3 2014 Instagram Study*, 2014. Retrieved from <http://get.simplymeasured.com/rs/simplymeasured2/images/InstagramStudy2014Q3.pdf>

More recently, Jackson (2017) recommended 138-150 characters per caption in order to maximize the interactivity on a post. This corresponds to roughly 25 words per caption. While the primary source of entertainment in Instagram posts is the visual content, captions “provide context and can compel people to engage with you” (Jackson, 2017). Yet because Instagram is visually-oriented platform, it is important that the captions be relatively concise.

Another category of post characteristic relevant in this study is the presence and number of hashtags. Because hashtags make posts searchable, they are an effective way to have a larger audience view your post, as well as to grow your following. Hashtags can be used to pull posts into topic-specific feeds, making it discoverable to users who don’t follow an account. Instagram limits users to 30 hashtags per post. According to Simply Measured’s 2014 Instagram Study, 88% of brand posts include at least one hashtag, while 91% of posts by top brands have seven or fewer hashtags. Importantly, posts with at least one hashtag average 12.6% more engagement. Jackson (2015) found that interactivity starts peaks at nine hashtags per post.

A final category of post characteristics that must be considered is the presence and number of tagged users. Tagging a user in the caption does not have the same “discoverability”

factor that hashtags afford. It also does not make the post appear on the tagged user's profile. Tagging another user, in the sense it is used in for this study, simply places the tagged user's account handle in the caption, in clickable blue text. Clicking the tag redirects to the tagged user's profile. In their 2014 Instagram Study, Simply Measured found that, on average, posts that included a tagged user in the caption net 56% more engagement. They also found, however, that only 36% of all brand posts include at least one tagged user.

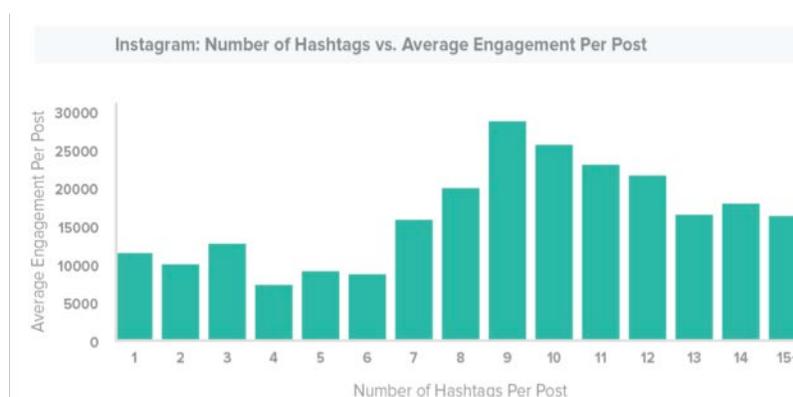


Figure 5. Number of Hashtags v. Engagement per Post

Reprinted from *Know Your Limit: The Ideal Length of Every Social Media Post* by D. Jackson, 2017. Retrieved October 17, 2017, from <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-character-counter/>

RESTAURANT BRANDS ON INSTAGRAM

Instagram users are aware of the abundance of food accounts and images that have become popular on the platform, and restaurants are capitalizing on this trend. Conveying information about food is mostly visual, so it is only reasonable that Instagram has become the place to showcase a restaurant's best dishes and a customer's best experiences.

Despite the widespread and expanding use of Instagram by restaurant food chains, few empirical studies that focus on the industry's use of the application have been conducted. Photos of food and beverages are among the most popular content types on Instagram. At present, there are more than 200 million posts tagged #food and 23 million tagged #drinks (Chen, 2017).

Multiple sources (Cai et al., 2007; Anderson and Magruder, 2012) report that diners rely on information derived from social media networks to shape restaurant preferences. Additionally, 75% of people purchase a products as a result of seeing them on social media. Of that group, 60.7% need to see a company post two to four times before making a purchase (Chen, 2017). Even so, research that serves to directly guide foodservice social media managers in developing effective Instagram strategies is extremely limited.

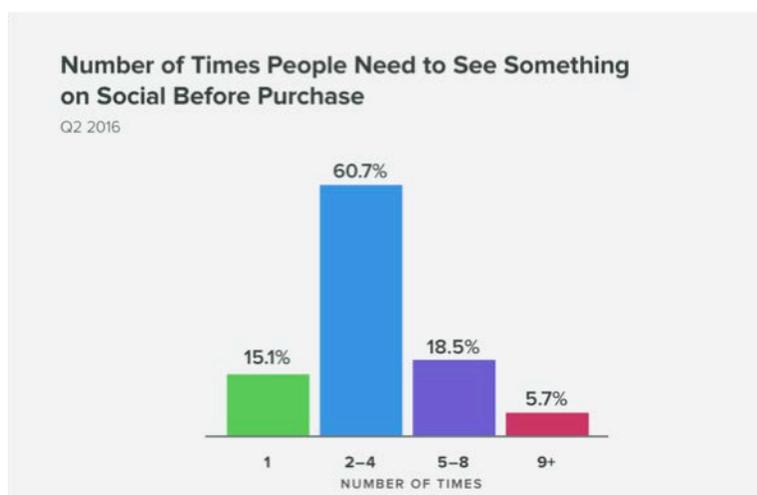


Figure 6. Number of Times People Need to See Something on Social Media before Purchase

Reprinted from *The Complete Guide to Social Media for Restaurants & Bars* by J. Chenn, 2017. Retrieved October 18, 2017, from <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/bars-restaurants-social-media-guide/>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What post types are used the most by large restaurant companies on the Instagram accounts?

Whether or not they are effective in garnering interactivity, certain types of posts may be posted used more frequently by restaurants on their Instagram pages. It is important to understand what these restaurants are currently posting on their Instagram pages in order to make recommendations as to what they should be posting to encourage interactivity.

RQ2: What post focuses are used the most by large restaurant companies on the Instagram accounts?

Similarly, some categories of post focus may be more commonly used by restaurants on their Instagram pages. Again, it is important to analyze the current tendencies and posting habits in order to advise restaurant marketers on how to improve their strategies.

RQ3: What is the frequency of the various post characteristics on the Instagram accounts of large restaurant companies?

It is also important to understand how restaurants are currently using hashtags and tagged users, and how many words they tend to be using, in their posts, as their current practices in regards to these characteristics may not be optimal for promoting interactivity.

RQ4: What types of post garner the most interactivity on the Instagram posts of large restaurant companies?

It is of central importance in this study to investigate what type of content promotes the highest levels of interactivity on restaurant Instagram pages.

RQ5: What post focuses garner the most interactivity on the Instagram posts of large restaurant companies?

Post focus is another key point of analysis in understanding the types of content that garner the most activity on restaurant Instagram pages.

RQ6: What post characteristics garner the most interactivity on the Instagram posts of large restaurant companies?

Investigating this question will be important making recommendations about how certain post characteristics can be used to optimize interactivity on a restaurant's Instagram page.

RQ7: Does interactivity correlate with overall followers?

As demonstrated in previous research, companies can establish brand loyalty and trust via social media platforms. Because interactivity drives page follows, it can be assumed that the company with the most interactive posts would build a following faster and more efficiently. It is important to know if there is an assumed relationship between interactivity and overall follows is present in this context.

METHOD

This paper reports the results of a comprehensive content analysis for 240 Instagram posts from the accounts of six restaurant chains. Only posts shared between January 1, 2015 and

July 1, 2017 were used in the sample. Forty posts were collected from each of the six restaurants. Beginning the count with the first post on or after July 1, 2017, every tenth post was coded. In the event that the tenth post was a video (which only provide the number of views, not likes), the nearest preceding pictorial post was coded. Counting to the next post was then continued starting with the original video post.

To account for posts being altered or the number of likes and comments changing, the date of coding was noted for each post. To compare the number of overall followers of the six restaurant accounts, the total number of followers was recorded for each account on September 10, 2017.

The six restaurants were selected based on Nation's Restaurant News' "Top 100 Restaurants" list ("Top 100 Chains," 2016). This Nation's Restaurant News' list was selected because this site is the leading resource for business intelligence in the foodservice industry. All restaurants were screened to ensure their presence and consistency on Instagram before being confirmed for use in the study.

To validate that the restaurants selected could provide the of content and information necessary in this study, a trial coding period was used to code four posts from each restaurant, using every tenth post beginning on or after July 1, 2017. During this period, a total of 24 posts were examined. The primary purpose of the trial was to see what categories of post type, post focus, and post characteristic could be gathered from these posts, as well as to ascertain what other information from the posts would be useful to collect. The results gathered from this trial period were used to create a code sheet for use in the main part of the study. Ultimately, 13 variables were compiled into a code sheet that would be used to code the remaining 216 posts for the study (Appendix A).

CREATING THE CODESHEET

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

The first items on the code sheet consist of general knowledge information. For the purpose of this study, general knowledge is defined as post information that is readily available and can be used identify and differentiate individual posts. The general knowledge variables coded in this study include: the restaurant the post is from, the post number, the date of the post, and the date of coding. The restaurants were organized in alphabetical order and assigned a number accordingly (for the purpose of coding). Each post was also give an overall number, according to the order in which they were coded. These post numbers range from 1 to 240, and are generally chronological within each restaurant's posts. The date of the post was documented as a means of differentiating each post in a definitive matter. Finally, the date of coding was documented to account of likes and comments that could have been obtained after the initial coding period began.

POST TYPES

There are two distinct subdivisions within the post type category: overall post type and primary post focus. As stated earlier, four of the variables under post type are derived from the content analysis performed by Rafaeli & Sudweeks (1994), while the other two are adapted from Sexton (2014). The variations for overall post type include: question (content that asks a question to the user reading the content, i.e. "Which is your favorite breakfast menu item?"), call for action (requesting that the viewer to engage in an action, i.e. click here, like below, tell us, watch

now, view here, learn more, etc.), announcement (content releasing a new product or revealing some other new information), lifestyle (content within a post that can be viewed as random or containing information that is without purpose), fact (content that includes solid figures, numbers, dates, etc.) and no-text (does not contain any words; strictly visual content) (Sexton, 2014).

The variations for the post focus variable are also derived from Sexton (2014). They include: mostly product (content that directly mentions a product the restaurant offers), mostly corporate social responsibility (any philanthropic involvements of the restaurant), mostly entertainment (content that does not directly mention the company and is used to merely ‘entertain’ the viewer), mostly a contest or sweepstakes (content listing contest or sweepstakes rules, ways to enter, information, etc.), mostly fan (featuring a fan of the restaurant), mostly employee (featuring work or stories of an employee) and mostly company (content featuring company information, e.g. about the workspace, headquarters or company announcement). It is important to note that classification of post focus was based off considerations of both the Instagram posts’ visual and textual contents.

POST CHARACTERISTICS

In this study, five post characteristics were observed: word count (the number of words in the post, counting hyphenated words as one word, and excluding hashtags, tagged users, numbers, times and dates), presence of a hashtag (pound sign followed by a word or phrase, in blue font), number of hashtags, presence of tagged users (“@” sign followed by a username, in

blue font), and number of tagged users. This list was adapted from Sexton's (2014) list of sixteen post characteristics according to the information gathered during the trial coding period.

INTERACTIVITY

In accordance with Steuer's (1992) definition of interactivity "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the format and content of a mediated environment in real time" (p.84), it was appropriate to note the number of likes and comments on each Instagram post. By liking and commenting on restaurant's posts, users are engaging with the content in a detectable way; thus, these are useful measures of interactivity. To further support these variables as indicators of interactivity, this study refers to Liu and Shrum (2002) three dimensions of interactivity: active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity, each described above. Like and comments exemplify active control because they are indicators of voluntary activity based on preferences and volitions. They also serve as a medium for two-way communication by allowing reciprocal communication between companies and users, as well as between users and users. Finally, likes and comments demonstrate synchronicity because they immediately alter the post, either by changing the total number of likes or through the appearance of a new comment on the post. For the purpose of analysis, likes and comments were summed in this study into a measure titled "Total Interactivity." In other words, for each post, the Total Interactivity variable represents the number of likes and the number of comments on that post added together.

RELIABILITY

A student peer from the Pennsylvania State University was tasked with coding 10% of the total posts (a sample of 24) using the established code sheet in order to ensure intercoder reliability. The first six posts from each restaurant were selected for use in the reliability coding process.

The volunteer coder was trained in one session to establish an understanding of the code sheet. One post that was not used in the study was randomly selected for each company. This post fell within the specified time range (July 2017 to January 2015) for all other posts in the study. Many texts recommend 80% agreement as the standard for minimum acceptable interrater agreement (McHugh, 2012). Simple percent of agreement calculations between the data from the lead researcher and the volunteer coder show that nearly all items in this study exceed this minimum level of agreement. The only two items that did not meet this standard are number of likes and number of comments. These discrepancies can be accounted for by the fact that the two coders coded the posts on different code dates; the volunteer coder coded 6 to 7 days after the lead researcher. In those days, some posts could have acquired more likes and comments, as past posts are available to users to return to at any time once posted. Therefore, these lower-than-standard levels of agreement can be excused.

Table 1. Percentage Agreement Between Lead Researcher and Volunteer Coder for all Coding Items

Coding Items	Percent Agreement (%)
Company	100
Post Number	100
Date of Coding	NA
Date of Post	100
Type of Post	100
Primary Focus	91.6
Number of Words	95.8
Hashtags (Y/N)	100
Number of Hashtags	100
Tagged Users (Y/N)	100
Number of Tagged Users	100
Number of Likes	45.8
Number of Comments	66.7

RESULTS

After the entire coding process was complete, the results of the data were analyzed using the SPSS statistics software. The results are discussed below as they correspond to the proposed research questions.

RQ1: What post types are used the most by large restaurant companies on the Instagram accounts?

A frequency count suggests that restaurant companies most commonly use the lifestyle post type: 63.3% of posts were classified in this category. All other post types are used far less frequently. In fact, the next most common post type is announcement at only 19.2%. The other categories rank from most to least frequent as follows: call to action (7.1%), fact (6.3%), and no-text (2.1%) and question (2.1%).

Table 2. Post Type Frequencies

Post Type	Frequency	Percent
Announcement	46	19.2
Call to Action	17	7.1
Fact	15	6.3
Lifestyle	152	63.3
No-Text	5	2.1
Question	5	2.1
Total	240	100.0

RQ2: What post focuses are used the most by large restaurant companies on the Instagram accounts?

A simple frequency analysis was also conducted on the primary focus data. The results demonstrated that, in their Instagram posts, restaurants companies most commonly focus on their products. In fact, near three quarters (71.3%) of posts were product focused. In comparison, only 10% of posts focused on entertainment, 9.2% on the company, 5.0% on the fans, 3.8% on corporate social responsibility, and 0.8% on contests or sweepstakes.

Table 3. Primary Post Focus Frequencies

Post Focus	Frequency	Percent
Company	22	9.2
Contest/Sweepstakes	2	.8
Corporate Social Responsibility	9	3.8
Entertainment	24	10.0
Fan	12	5.0
Product	171	71.3
Total	240	100.0

Results from the Chi-Square test examining the relationship between post type and post focus suggest that an association post type and post focus was observed, $\chi^2(25) = 59.981, p < .000$. Hence, post type varies according to post focus. To investigate the specific associations that exist between post type and post focus, the top three post types (LS, A, and CA) were crossed with the top three post focuses (P, E, and C) in a chi-square test of association. Here, the results were again significant, $\chi^2(4, n = 194) = 12.056, p = .017$. Looking more closely at these data, there are some interesting trends to be mentioned regarding which post types occur with which post focuses at significant levels. For instance, posts with A (90.7%) and LS (72.0%) post type lean toward P very heavily, while a notably smaller portion of CA post types (45.5%) have a P focus. Another point of significance is that posts with C focus lean strongly toward LS (68.8%) post type, as compared to A (12.5%) and LS (18.8%) post type).

Table 4. Most Used Post Type v. Post Focus

Post Type	Post Focus			
	Company	Entertainment	Product	Total
Announcement	2 4.7%	2 4.7%	39 90.7%	43 100%
Call to Action	3 27.3%	3 27.3%	5 45.5%	11 100.0%
Lifestyle	11 7.9%	16 11.4%	113 72.0%	140 100%
Total	16 8.2%	21 10.8%	157 80.9%	194 100%

RQ3: What is the frequency of the various post characteristics on the Instagram accounts of large restaurant companies?

The first post characteristic considered was number of words. The average number of words per caption across all posts was 11.33 ($SD = 9.642$).

Another simple frequency analysis was used to analyze at what frequency the posts in the sample did or did not use hashtags and tagged users. The results showed that 60.4% of posts used some amount of hashtags, while 39.6% did not. Additionally, 89.6% of posts did not tag users, while only 10.4% did.

Among posts that did use hashtags ($n = 145$), the average number of hashtags used per post was 1.545. For posts that tagged users ($n = 25$), the average number of users tagged per post was 1.2.

Table 5. Hashtag Frequency

<i>Hashtags</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>39.6</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>60.4</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 6. Tagged User Frequency

<i>Users Tagged</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>10.4</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>89.6</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>100.0</i>

RQ4: What types of post garner the most interactivity on the Instagram posts of large restaurant companies?

To find what types of post leads to the most interactivity on restaurant brand Instagram pages, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed. The results suggest that the relationship between post type and total interactivity (the sum of likes and comments) is not significant ($F(5, 239) = .651, p = .661$).

Table 7. Mean Total Interactivity for Post Types

<i>Post Type</i>	<i>Mean Total Interactivity</i>
<i>Announcement</i>	<i>42376.9130</i>
<i>Call to Action</i>	<i>51340.4118</i>
<i>Fact</i>	<i>45809.5333</i>
<i>Lifestyle</i>	<i>66051.3421</i>
<i>No-Test</i>	<i>33526.8000</i>
<i>Question</i>	<i>119071.6000</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>240</i>

RQ5: What post focuses garner the most interactivity on the Instagram posts of large restaurant companies?

To find what post focus category garners the most interactivity on restaurant brand Instagram pages, another ANOVA test was performed. Here, ANOVA suggest that the relationship between post focus and total interactivity is not significant ($F(5, 239) = 1.198, p = .311$). Still, when the post-hoc Bonferroni correction is applied, none of the mean differences between post focus categories are significant.

Table 8. Mean Total Interactivity for Post Focuses

<i>Post Focus</i>	<i>Mean Total Interactivity</i>
<i>Company</i>	<i>55787.9091</i>
<i>Contest/Sweepstakes</i>	<i>10405.0000</i>
<i>Corporate Social Responsibility</i>	<i>44435.2222</i>
<i>Entertainment</i>	<i>12626.9583</i>
<i>Fan</i>	<i>39298.4167</i>
<i>Product</i>	<i>69528.5088</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>59633.6000</i>

Another ANOVA was also conducted to determine which post type and post focus combination garnered the highest levels of interactivity. Among the most used combinations, results demonstrated that the combination of lifestyle post type and company post focus ($n = 11$) garnered the highest mean interactivity, though not at a significant level about other closely contending combinations, such as lifestyle-product ($n = 113$), announcement-product ($n = 39$), and lifestyle-fan ($n = 11$). Lifestyle-company posts did, however, perform significantly better than lifestyle-entertainment ($n = 16$) posts in terms of interactivity.

RQ6: What post characteristics garner the most interactivity on the Instagram posts of large restaurant companies?

To find which post characteristics category garners the most interactivity on restaurant brand Instagram page, bivariate correlations were run for all post characteristics types.

Number of words and total interactivity were significantly correlated, $r = -.156, p < .05$, such that as posts that used fewer words garner more interactivity. Additionally, although quadratic regression was not significant for number of words and total interactivity, results showed that the average total interactivity for posts with no-text ($M = 60,402.09$) was lower than the average for posts with at least one word ($M = 29,662.5$). The difference is not significant; however, this could be due to the relatively small number of no-text posts ($n = 6$).

Number of hashtags and total interactivity were significantly correlated, $r = -.133, p < .05$, such that as posts that used fewer hashtags garner more interactivity.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for Hashtag Use

<i>Hashtags Used</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Mean Total Interactivity</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>39.6</i>	<i>71589.4632</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>60.4</i>	<i>51800.4483</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>59633.6000</i>

Number of users tagged and total interactivity were not significantly correlated, which suggests that interactivity levels are generally not attributable to number of users tagged in the post.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for Users Tagged

<i>User Tagged</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>	<i>Mean Total Interactivity</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>10.4</i>	<i>60571.7860</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>89.6</i>	<i>51565.2000</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>59633.6000</i>

RQ7: Does interactivity correlate with overall followers?

A correlational analysis reveals that there is a significant negative relationship between total interactivity and total followers, $r = -.158, p < 0.05$. This negative relationship indicates

that, across the six brands, most followers are not actively interacting with the brand's Instagram posts.

DISCUSSION

The most frequently used post type by restaurant brands on Instagram was lifestyle (63.3%). This frequency is somewhat predictable, as the main purpose of most restaurant brand's Instagram presence is to engage and entertain customers using brand content. By definition, lifestyle content plays on consumer emotions and helps connect the brand to everyday experiences of users. Because these restaurant pages are not trying to directly sell products through their Instagram posts, building brand relationships and connection is top priority.

Interestingly, however, lifestyle posts do not garner the most interactivity - question post types do; however, question posts ($M = 119071.6$) do not receive significantly more total interactivity than lifestyle posts ($M = 66,051.3421$), ($F(1, 156) = .954, p = .330$) at $p \leq 0.05$. In fact, when one outlier question type post that received unusually high total interactivity (540,759.00) is removed from the data set, lifestyle post types have the highest mean interactivity, with the question post type mean total interactivity dropping to just 13,649.75. This is, in fact, the lowest total interactivity score across all post types. It is difficult to hypothesize, however, about the effectiveness of question post types in garnering interactivity because the sample size for this post type was very small ($n = 5$).

Restaurant brands primarily posted content with a product post focus (71.3%). With Instagram being a visually-oriented platform, it is understandable that brands use their accounts to showcase their food menu items. Ideally, product focused posts draw attention and desire to

the featured products in order to drive sales. It is likely that many Instagram users follow these brands to see what the brand has to offer and learn more about these products. Conveniently, posts that used product focus also drove the most interactivity ($M = 69528.5088$), though not at a significant level.

It is also interesting to look at which post types and post focuses brands tend to use in conjunction. Results from this study showed that announcement post type was most frequently paired with product post focus (84.8%). This pairing is reasonable, as most restaurant brand announcements are concerned with new products. A notably smaller portion of call to action post types (29.4%) have a product focus, though this is still the most common focus used for the CA post type. A close second for being frequently paired with call to action is corporate social responsibility (23.5%). This pairing is logical because when brands post about a cause they support, they are likely to encourage users to act in support of the cause as well.

When considering only the top three post types and post focuses, another interesting pairing that emerges is company post focus with lifestyle post type (68.8% of C posts). As mentioned, one of the primary goals of lifestyle content is to form brand relationships and stimulate strong positive emotions in relation to the brand. When post content that focuses on a company, it is logical to use lifestyle content to relate the company to the consumer and thus build this positive relationship.

When considering post type and post focus combinations, results showed that the lifestyle-product combination, although used much more frequently than other types, was not effective in drawing the most interactivity. Results from an ANOVA test that examined the most used combinations suggest that some post focuses are better to use when posting lifestyle type content. For example, it is better to post lifestyle-product content than lifestyle-entertainment

content. In general, marketers must be aware of how they are combining post types and post focuses if they want their content to receive as much engagement as possible.

It is worth it to note that no single post type or post focus garnered significantly more interactivity than any of the others. The most likely implication for this result is that a variety of factors are responsible for garnering interactivity beyond just post type and primary focus. For this reason, the efficiency of certain post characteristics in garnering interactivity is also explored.

This study also investigated the frequency and efficiency of three post characteristic: number of words, hashtags, and tagged users. There is some debate in the social media world regarding the optimal word count for an Instagram post. Previous studies (Jackson, 2017; “Simply Measured,” 2014) have recommended around 25 words per caption. Results from this study showed that the average word count per caption is 11.33 words. Furthermore, although an exact number cannot be recommended given the results from this study, it is estimated that posts with around three to ten words garner the most interactivity (Figure 7). In general, the number of words per post was significantly and negatively related total interactivity. Thus, the general premise that Instagram’s visual orientation makes it best to keep captions concise holds up in these results.

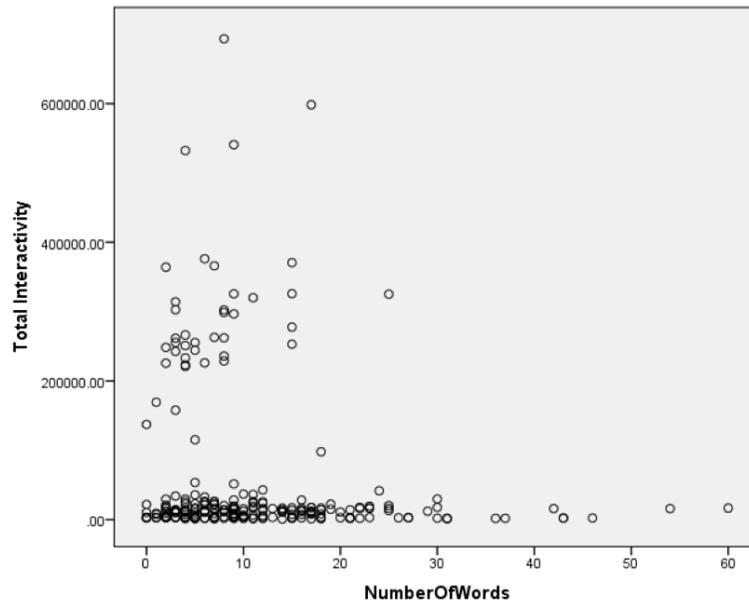


Figure 7. Total Interactivity by Number of Words

Hashtags and tagged users are another way to engage followers and encourage interactivity on Instagram pages, but the best practices for using these post characteristics have been heretofore unclear. The purpose of hashtags is to make posts searchable and discoverable to users who don't follow an account. According to previous research, 88% of brand posts include at least one hashtag ("Simply Measured," 2014). This finding did not hold up across the top six restaurant brand's Instagram posts, as only 39.6% of posts contained hashtags. Whereas the Simply Measured (2014) study found that posts with at least one hashtag average 12.6% more engagement, this study found that including at least one hashtag garners 38.2% less activity than not using any hashtags at all. Additionally, while Jackson (2015) found that interactivity starts peaks at 9 hashtags per post, the optimal number of hashtags for this study was, according to the significant negative correlation and the mean total interactivity values, zero.

Another category of post characteristics considered in this study is tagged users, which involves simply placing another account's Instagram handle in the caption, in clickable blue text.

While Simply Measured (2014) found that only 36%, only 10.4% of restaurant brand Instagram posts in this study sample tagged users. Despite the relatively low usage of tagged users, results showed that posts that tagged at least one user garnered 14.9% less interactivity than posts that did not tag any users. This result, however, should be interpreted with caution, as the difference was not significant between these two groups in terms of total interactivity.

Taken together, these results suggest that recommendations for the use of post characteristics need to be specific food brand pages, as general Instagram brand recommendations regarding word count, hashtags and tagged users vary significantly from the results from the top six food brand's Instagram pages.

Many admins of Instagram brand accounts hold the number of followers at high importance. It seems logical that having a larger following equates to more popularity and exposure. The results from this study, however, suggest that a significant negative relationship between total interactivity and total followers. Essentially, this result indicates that across the six brands, most followers are not actively interacting with the brand's Instagram posts.

These results align with theoretical research indicating that engagement is a more important measure of Instagram success than mass of followers in terms of building brand relationships and loyalty. Kang and colleagues (2015) demonstrated that active participation on restaurant social pages is positively related to brand trust and commitment. According to Lee and colleagues (2010), active participants are much more beneficial to a brand than passive ones. While active participants can entice new members and encourage existing members to engage with the brand more frequently and at greater length, passive participants only seek personal benefits (i.e. promotions) from company posts. In light of this information, marketers should focus more on building a large base of active followers, rather than just growing a large

following composed of mostly passive followers. Considerations for post content should be focused on encouraging interactivity more than expanding reach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When developing social media content, restaurant brands should always make interactivity a top priority, as its relation to brand loyalty and commitment are well demonstrated in research. It is not always easy, however, to predict what type of content will attract the highest levels of engagement. The results of this study should guide restaurant brand marketers in following the best practices for Instagram usage in order to garner interactivity.

Marketers need always be aware of the post type, primary focus and post characteristics of the content they post, as these factors have differential effects on the engagement activity among a page's followers. Analyses from this study demonstrated that different attributes to a post correlated with more optimal interactivity performance.

The most frequently used post type among the restaurant brands was lifestyle, which was, in general, the post type that received the most engagement. This result may suggest that followers follow these pages primarily to form brand relationships by viewing lifestyle content that connects them to the brand. This type of content encourages followers to like, tag friends, give feedback, show approval, or suggest improvements. The relation between post type and interactivity, however, was not significant, so marketers should be cautious in their commitment to this post type. The same recommendations generally apply for the use of the product post focus, which received the highest level of interactivity, though also not at a significant level. This

result may indicate that followers are most interested in viewing and learning about food products on Instagram, so brands should focus most of their content on menu items.

At present, restaurant brands are currently using a variety of post characteristics in their Instagram posts. Posts with shorter captions are generally better for garnering interactivity, indicating that followers are mostly interested in the visual, rather than the textual content of Instagram posts from restaurant brands. Therefore, it is best to keep captions concise. It is not recommended, however, to use no text in the caption, as posts without captions received the lowest levels of interactivity across all post types. They also receive less interactivity on average than posts with at least one word.

Most restaurant brand posts currently do not make use of hashtags and tagged users. Based on interactivity analyses, however, it is recommended that marketers incorporate 1-2 hashtags into their posts. Tagging users can be done as marketers see fit in regards to the content they are posting; this post characteristic did not prove to have any significant effect on interactivity. These characteristics likely attract Instagram users outside their following by linking the post to other threads, thus making it more discoverable. Increased discoverability will undoubtedly allow more opportunity for engagement.

The demonstrated negative correlation between total interactivity and number of followers suggests that, at present, most followers are not interacting with a brand's Instagram posts. A large following should not be used as a measure of a brand's Instagram success, as passive participants do little for a company in terms of developing customer relationships and driving purchase intent. Rather than focusing efforts mainly on growing a large following, primary efforts should be geared toward garnering interactivity among current followers. Active participation by these followers will naturally entice outside users to follow and engage.

LIMITATIONS

The lack of consensus in the findings from this study does indeed have some implications. Post types, focuses, and characteristics never stand in isolation: they must be considered as a greater whole. Even then, it is possible that other factors outside the scope of the variables considered in this study hold joint influence over interactivity.

It also must be noted that only the top six restaurant chain brands were analyzed in this study. These are extremely large and well known franchises with well-established brand reputations and national presences. Hence, the results may not be generalizable to smaller, lesser known restaurant brands.

Finally, the data for this study was collected at a single point in time, yet the interactivity measures collected could change at any point in time - long as they're not deleted, the posts are infinitely open for interaction (i.e. more likes or comments). This study attempted to control for this change by only using posts shared before July 1, 2017, but there is always a possibility for changes in interactivity even on past posts.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results of this study give way to several directions for future research on these topics. First, this study could be replicated using smaller restaurant brands so that recommendations appropriate for these size companies can be differentiated.

Further research might also explore the use of various other social media platforms used by restaurant brands to assess strategies for interactivity and compare these to the findings here that pertain to Instagram.

A longitudinal study might be conducted to determine how interactivity on restaurant brand Instagram pages is related to rate of page growth (i.e. gaining followers).

Finally, it might be useful to combine the findings of this study with a survey that polls the Instagram users who follow these restaurant brand pages. Such a survey could gauge motivations for following and interacting, as well as assess brand loyalty and relationships. These attitudinal measures could be compared with this content analysis to gain a deeper understanding of what drives interactivity and how to best encourage brand loyalty via Instagram.

Appendix A

Codebook – Used by Lead Researcher and Volunteer Coder

General knowledge for Each Post

1. Which food company is this post from?

1. Burger King
2. McDonald's
3. Starbucks
4. Subway
5. Taco Bell
6. Wendy's

2. What number is the post overall? _____

- All posts have been given a number from 1-24. The six companies have been organized in alphabetical order (Burger King, McDonald's, Starbucks, Subway, Taco Bell, Wendy's) and then all numbered. Please document the number.

3. Date of coding: _____

- The date of the day you are coding this post. Include the month, date and year. An example of how this should be written is 01.13.17. Please document all three.

4. What is the date of the post? _____

- The date the Instagram post was listed can be found directly under the company name in the post. It includes the month, date and year. An example of how this should be written is 01.13.17. Please document all three.

Type of Post

1. What does the post contain?

1. A question (Q)
2. A call for action (CA) → social media/online action
3. An announcement (A)
4. Lifestyle content (LS)
5. A fact (F)
6. No-text (NT)

2. What is the primary focus of the Instagram post?

1. Mostly Product (P)
2. Mostly Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
3. Mostly Entertainment (E)
4. Mostly a Contest or Sweepstakes (CS)
5. Mostly Fan (F)
6. Mostly Company (C)

For both of the categories above, please use your best judgment to place them within a “post type” and “primary focus.” Please use process of elimination when faced with a difficult decision in the coding process.

Post Characteristics

1. How many words are included in the post? _____

- Count the number of words in the Instagram post caption. Please provide only the text written from the company. Exclude any hashtags, tagged accounts, company name, text on separate part of post, etc.

2. Does the post include a hashtag?

- A hashtag is shown as (#) on Instagram and is shown in the color blue. It will be accompanied by a word(s). This hashtag can be located anywhere in the caption.

1. Yes
2. No

3. If yes, how many hashtags were used? _____

- Please write the number of users tagged.

4. Does the post tag another Instagram account?

- A tag on Instagram is shown as (@) and is shown in the color blue. The symbol is followed by the user's Instagram handle name. This means that the company wanted to "tag" this account in the post. The tag can be located anywhere throughout the caption. Please note that some "tag's" may be listed on the post after a dash (-) and present itself

1. Yes
2. No

5. If yes, how many Instagram users were tagged? _____

- Please write the number of users tagged.

Interactivity

1. How many likes did the post receive? _____

- The likes can be found directly underneath the image featured in the Instagram post. It is located on the bottom left hand side of the post, just beneath the like, comment and send icons. The number of total likes for the post is followed by the word "likes." Please write the number of total likes to the post.

2. How many comments did the post receive? _____

- The number of comments can be found underneath the caption of the Instagram post. It is located near the bottom left hand side of the post. The number of total comments for the post is listed in the format "View all _____ comments" in a lighter grey text color. Please write the number of total comments to the post.

Appendix B

Example Posts

EXAMPLE 1:

Post Type = A
(new product announced in caption)

Primary Focus = P

Number of likes: 20,730 likes

Company: tacobell

Hashtag: #BaconClubChalupa

Number of words = 5
(does not include hashtag)

Number of comments: View all 1,078 comments

Post Date: JULY 1, 2015

EXAMPLE 2:

Primary Focus = CSR

Post Type = CA

Number of likes: 2,819 likes

Company: wendys

Hashtag: #Share4Adoption

Number of words = 43
(does not include hashtags or numerical items)

Number of comments: View all 67 comments

Post Date: AUGUST 10, 2016

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graphic accents? *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2(4).

ACADEMIC VITA

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Education:

The Pennsylvania State University
Bachelor of Arts in Advertising/ Public Relations, May 2018
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, May 2018
Schreyer Honors College: Honors in Advertising/Public Relations

Thesis Title: Best Practices in Social Media Use and Interactivity by Restaurant Chains
Thesis Supervisor: Frank Dardis

Work Experience:

June 2017 – Aug 2017

Corporate Ad Sales Intern

Scripps Networks Interactive, New York, NY

- Increased business acumen through functional training sessions with corporate executives in Ad Sales, Programming, Public Relations, Marketing, Research, etc.
- Assisted the SVP of Corporate Ad Sales by booking units, allocating brands, pulling charts, and interacting with clients like Capital One and Horizon Media.

November 2017 – Present

Undergraduate Research Assistant

Media Effects Lab, University Park, PA

- Develop independent research thesis exploring the best social media practices for restaurants.
- Assist graduate students and faculty in creating research criteria for large projects.

Grants Received:

The Evan Pugh Scholar Junior Award (2016) & Senior Award (2017)

President's Freshman's Award (2014) & President Sparks Award (2015)

Dean's List (2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017)

Schreyer Honors College Academic Excellence Scholarship (2014-2018)

A. Whitney Frankenberg Scholarship of the Schreyer Honors College (2014-2018)

Community Service Involvement:

Operation Smile – President (2017-present), Special Events Director (2016)

International Education:

International Student: IES Barcelona – Liberal Arts & Business (Jan 2016 –May 2016)

Language Proficiency: Spanish, intermediate