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FOOD AND BEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVENESS IN THE MILLENNIAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

The food and beverage industry has always been an influencing culture in America, especially in advertising and marketing. However, social media has challenged the industry to strategize effectively towards the millennial audience. This audience is comprised of 18-24 year olds born in the early 1980s and late 1990s who have massive influence in the social space, but also in purchase decision making. Therefore, it is imperative that food and beverage brands are communicating in the best way to their audiences. Engagement rates define their effectiveness, however the definition is a relative and loose term because every researcher can define engagement in different ways. Some brands have different objectives and goals but the overarching one for social media initiatives involve communicating in real time with the audience and gaining relevancy and popularity in the space for awareness.

A three-month study from December 2017-February 2018 was conducted under a content analysis of Nestle, Lagunitas Brewing Co, Domino's Pizza, and Starbucks Coffee social media posts and focus groups involving students at the Pennsylvania State University in the millennial audience. Roughly 135 data items were collected from the content analysis and four focus groups were held. Analysis of engagement results are defined by the like-to follower ratios for each brand. From that measurement tactic, results indicated that product promotion and campaign content categories tended to generate higher engagement posts on the Instagram platform. With that being said, there was no statistical significance of this relationship, thus the need for further research to be conducted in the future.

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I was six years old when a standardized test told my parents that my reading comprehension skills were in the lower percentile of my age group. I'm sure they were concerned at the time, but they never saw me but the talkative, curious, and question asker that I was. My mom and I read books and sang songs that eventually helped my learning skills develop where I took my first honors class in 7th grade. But never at eleven years old did I think that I would ever be an honors student at an acclaimed university. I owe all of this growth and humbling confidence to my parents, Bill and Kelly. Their support, source of laughter, and guidance throughout years of dance, choir, musical theater, band, academics, leadership opportunities, and jobs are reasons why I have been able to move forward beyond what I thought I was capable of.

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Chapter 1

The Social Advertising Platform

An Overview

The development of the digital platform for business exploded in as few as ten years where advertised content now caters to more segmented and filtered audiences through an automatic and programmatic way. The opportunity to segment target audiences, types of advertisements, and geographic territories, demographics, etc., in general has strengthened social media's opportunity to increase reach in advertising efforts, accumulating to around 20% of overall social ad spend (Intelligence, 2017). Before this advancement, social media's sole premise was to connect multiple people and communities together in one online space. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in particular have invited both consumers and businesses, friends and families, colleagues and students to communicate and interact with each other. As social media becomes more advanced, it is becoming even easier and faster to follow trends and personalize digital experiences.

Facebook

The rise of social platforms grew from MySpace in 2003 and from Facebook in 2004. When launched in 2004, Mark Zuckerberg originally coined the site, "the facebook" and it expeditiously advanced over a span of ten years to originally connecting college students in 2005, to now connecting millions of people across the world (Toner, 2017). Facebook opened up

to the public in September 2006 and soon, third party developers created applications in 2007 that worked with data from different profiles (Peckham, 2016). This development most likely led to the establishment of business pages in 2008 where a company had the opportunity to promote different product offerings, deals, and most importantly, to connect with its customers. By 2009, companies accessed advanced targeting methods, through collected and stored data, to specifically reach users based on geography and language (Vasquez, 2014). If not reaching customers organically, businesses were able to pay for advertisements via sponsored stories. By selecting various public user actions (such as liking a post, or a sponsored post) posts were implemented onto other user newsfeeds. The cost per click model that was developed back when Zuckerberg released flyers on “the facebook”, made the advertising space competitive across both desktop and mobile capabilities (Toner, 2017).

When Facebook’s users populated at 1 billion, more advanced custom targeting was available for businesses to control who saw their advertisements and posts (Toner, 2017). Therefore, as Facebook’s platform grew, more advertisers paid Facebook for space, which inevitably increased Facebook’s revenue overall. The saturated market made it palpable for businesses to customize their audience segments even further through “ghost posts” (Vasquez, 2014). These posts were non-published posts that were only available for viewing by the users that companies targeted or fans of the page, tailoring messages to various types of customers. Because of Facebook’s growing newsfeed realty, it began to streamline the advertising experience with the most social context. Ads became more and more specific to users’ behaviors and interests, where native advertising continues to develop on the platform to this day.

Twitter

March 2006 was introduced with the tweet phenomena and little did Jack Dorsey know what he started. Twitter, unlike any other social media platform, has grown to be the most “real-time” source of news, data, and promotions. But like Facebook, Twitter had potential for advertisers to enter the space.

By 2010, Twitter launched promoted tweets, campaign hashtags, promoted trends, and promoted accounts all catering to specific target audiences based on their social behavior (Wasserman, 2011). By 2013, conversion tracking allowed businesses to understand the effectiveness of their call to actions and in 2014, Twitter Analytics allowed businesses to understand the effectiveness of their organic posts (Quin, 2015). Actionable intelligence infiltrated into objective-based campaigns and tweets where users could fulfill business goals right on the Twitter platform. For instance, lead generation cards could be filled out via Twitter and not via the company website. These actionable measures could leverage businesses’ advertising potential into faster results. Therefore, Twitter partnered with different marketers via its Preferred Marketing Developer Program which helped large corporations increase their campaign performances, gain deeper insights, and market more effectively with access to more “behind the scenes” analytics about their account, much like Facebook’s similar partnering program (Partners, 2018). To this day, Twitter continues to inform users in real-time and if used correctly from an advertising perspective, it can still advance campaigns through 24/7 tracking and paying attention to the platform’s trends.

Instagram

The public “photo aesthetics” marked a new revolution in the way people post photos on their social network. Originally postings albums on Facebook, users were attracted to Instagram’s capability to post one photo and watch its popularity grow with an accumulation of likes. In fact, in 2010, the same year Instagram was founded, it reached 1,000,00 users from all over the world (A Brief History). Based on the Facebook and Twitter trends, Instagram included video capabilities in posting and soon, in sponsored photos and videos. It was then that brands had an additional social platform to advertise on.

In 2014, the platform allowed advertisers to include call to action buttons such as “Install now”, “Shop now”, or “Learn more” at the bottom of postings (MOR, 2015). These buttons directly linked to product listing pages and or websites, specifically from various retailing brands. Like Facebook and Twitter, it also introduced an advertising and API partner program for large businesses to maximize their potential on a new platform with very new capabilities. The automated processes made it much easier to advertise, eliminating time and money from production (MOR, 2015). This program soon paid off because by 2016, Instagram’s advertising revenue reached \$1 billion and now, over 70% of brands have accounts (Smith, 2017).

Paying attention to additional trends, Instagram sought out Snapchat audience members in that same year. It noticed the user satisfaction of 24-hour video posting and switching between different segments and users. Therefore, Instagram launched Instagram Stories, capturing new users and allowing another feature for advertisers to take advantage of. Because of Instagram’s budding potential, researchers estimate its worth to exceed \$10 billion by 2019 (Smith, 2017). Instagram continues to prove to have higher engagement rates than Facebook by 23%, Pinterest by 54%, Twitter by 84% (Smith, 2017 and Dogtiev, 2018). The overall engagement rate has

grown by 416% since 2015 because of a variety of factors included branded hashtags, photography popularity, and the ease of sharing and communicating with others in an “aesthetically pleasing” space (Smith, 2017).

Chapter 2

The Food and Beverage Advertising History

Marketing History in the Traditional Space

As one of the largest sources of United States gross domestic product, the food & beverage industry influenced American culture and business beginning in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Before this industry was ever advertised and marketed, citizens would go to their local general stores and fill up their own containers with household goods like sugar, flour, coffee, or salt. But as branding developed, citizens had the opportunity to purchase packaged and identifiable company products. The first brands that emerged in stores included Uneeda Biscuit, Campbell's Soup, Quaker Oats, Royal Baking Powder, and Lipton Tea (O'Barr, 2005). Advertising, therefore, progressed as a hard selling business. Agencies emerged even before brands were established to help consumers associate products with company given slogans, images, etc. But once brands played a larger role in the consumer space, agencies played a larger role in the business of marketing these products.

Each decade's social queues challenged brands to cater to the standards of that time. For instance, advertisers decided to target females in the 40s and 50s as the sole buyer of household products. The man was considered the advertiser, but the woman was considered the buyer- the one who bought what was needed to keep the house running (O'Barr, 2005). Once the television popularized United States households in the 50s and 60s, brands sought this opportunity as a space to advertise their products. Consumers could now have a better visual of the brand's personality and what made it different from the others in the same category.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, global advertising was exported from the United States (O'Barr). American culture was not solely found in the United States, but could be found all over the world. With that being said, certain cultural characteristics of the marketed country was highlighted to cater to the audience in that demographic. Thus, American agencies globalized their offices where the copywriters, artists, and content creators were either familiar or were citizens of the geographic region. Examples of globalized brands that protruded out of America include Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Sony, and Kentucky Fried Chicken (O'Barr, 2005). But nonetheless, advertising was not the end in the traditional realm once the Internet took the scene.

Social Media Involvement

Throughout the mid to late 90s Internet advertising developments in banner ads, pop up ads, and paid per click and paid search methods, the food and beverage industry gained online publicity once reaching its customers on social media (Cook, 2016). Food and beverage brands have learned to keep with social media trends to the point in which having a social media account is no longer an advantage to advertising or marketing efforts, but is a necessity to have in the first place. It not only opens up product promotion opportunities, but it allows the brand to receive publicity in a space where a large sect of their users are interacting in. Most importantly, however, social media evolved into a customer service platform that has given food brands the opportunity to communicate with their customers in real time. Whether it is answering a question, providing more feedback, or returning comments to a user's post, a food brand can better understand how to not only improve its advertising tactics, but its business tactics as well.

This platform is paramount to adhering to the changes that customers seek during the time they want it and not after the fact.

Pinterest

Pinterest's launch in 2011 invited food lovers to "pin" recipes to their "boards" whether the recipe was created by renown Food Network stars, bloggers, or cooking enthusiasts. As boards become more specific to certain categories such as desserts, Italian food, or gluten free options, food influencers have shaped the way that the "every day Pinterest user" follows food recipes and the brands that are used in those ingredients. For example, Averie Sunshine's (Averie Cooks) Pinterest account focuses on banana recipes and breakfast items (Morfin, 2016). She also has a blog, Averie Cooks, linked to her page for social media users to follow as well. Not only can brands better advertise themselves in ingredients or in their own account on Pinterest, or help their cause in the talk about food in general, but they can better understand the online activities of food lovers on a social platform. If a brand wants to cater to a certain taste in its strategy, it can look to Pinterest as an additional source of understanding their audience. Nonetheless, the main audience of Pinterest activities tends to be females, but what is most important is that food is the most "pinned" activity on the platform for so many trends and brands to benefit from.

Influencer and Blogger Relations

General influencer advertising or blogger relations has helped multiple food brands develop certain personalities and cater to social trends in the industry. In this strategy, brands connect with social media or blogging celebrities to outsource their advertising initiatives. Social

media users in the same interest category as the celebrity respect a credible influencer where they can learn more about a brand, be more aware of it, or start talking about the post, brand, or influencer as a whole. Food brands can connect with niche food advocates to “endorse or review a product, be a guest contributor for the company’s blog, make entertaining cooking videos, host a Twitter party, or host a guess blog” (Kennedy, 2017). This opportunity allows an influencer to hone in on specifics for the brand’s unique objectives within the food market.

Boxed Water’s philanthropic objectives of sustainability was supported by the National Forest Foundation’s campaign: The Retree Project. Boxed Water worked with Jaime King and Megan DeAngelis to promote Boxed Water on their social media pages with #Retree in the description of the post. For every #Retree, Boxed Water would plant two trees. After a month of the influencer marketing, “there were more than 2,600 Instagram photos with #Retree” (Talbot, 2015). The reach is easily accessible from the influencer’s following base, so from the initial post, the cause related post encouraged others to not just be aware of the campaign, but to participate in it as well. A call to action in this case can be attained, encouraged by influencers that have the overall advantage to success. However, it cannot be carried through if not targeted to the right audience in the first place. Therefore, a brand should choose an influencer based on its own culture and what it stands for. Also, it should choose someone who successfully uses social media platforms that its target audience uses most and it he/she relates with the audience. These factors must be taken into account in order for the influencer to be relevant with the brand and with the target audience.

“Tasty” Videos

A growing food trend, specifically on Facebook, are the time-lapse or fast paced videos of a certain meal coming together in maybe 60 seconds or less. BuzzFeed’s Tasty videos quickly choreographs ingredients creating a meal from the first person perspective. Tasty’s Facebook page has reached millions of fans who are addicted to watching the videos whether they cook or not. The nature of the videos caters to the short attention span of social media users who flip through newsfeeds, but they stand out where users take a second to check out what the brightly colored, “foody” related videos entail. But what tends to be the most appealing factor is not just that the videos are micro-targeted to users’ tastes, or that they are produced with branding concepts, or that they are dynamic even without the music in the background, is that food brands benefit from the video production (Basu, 2016). In some situations, they have the ability to team with Tasty to include their products in videos. Even so, people are enthralled with the simplicity of these videos despite the complexity of how they are produced and managed behind the scenes.

“The Foodies”

In short, the millennial generation (18-34 year olds) has transformed the way we view food products and the culture surrounding it online. A couple of years ago, millennial social media users were infatuated with taking pictures of their food and posting their meals, waiting for their friends to like and comment on each post. This activity created a culture of everyday people becoming photographers with their smartphones. It is easy to post a picture of a smoothie, but what tends to be praised most amongst the generation is if the smoothie is against an “aesthetically pleasing” background in a filter that makes the subject pop. From there,

millennials started obsessing over the food they ate, not necessarily for just the health benefit, but for the likes as well. Whether it is now obsessing over avocado toast, “farm to table eating”, meal prepping, meal kits, and organically produced products, millennials love customized brands that fit their tastes and styles (Modos, 2017). Therefore, household brands are now challenged to become organic, custom, and “aesthetically pleasing” for this demographic. Nowadays, food needs to be more than food, but to be subjects that serve a bigger purpose (Fronckiewicz and O’Hara, 2017). Millennials will only support food brands which tend to be organic, environmentally concerned, has a supportive sustainability agenda, or has renewable materials in its packaging (Wimalarante, 2017).

Common household food and beverage brands are not necessarily known for its natural ingredients or philanthropic focus, so millennials are not as interested in buying the product or talking about the brand in general as much as the healthier alternatives. As a result, popular food and beverage brand market shares have dropped. For example, Goldman Sachs predicted a .7% drop in the United States beer market during 2017 (Dugan, 2017). Millennials are not drinking as much beer as opposed to the generations before because they are drinking more spirits and wine that tend to account for fewer calories and carbohydrates. A leading statistic states that millennials account for 42% of wine consumed in the United States (Pellechia, 2017). This huge leap in consumption should warn brands to become familiar with what this generation is appealed to most. Because this generation has the biggest buying power in the country, it is important for brands to understand them whole-heartedly in order to strategize their social media efforts effectively. The strategy does not always have to surround the product itself, but surrounding what would interest the demographic target the most.

Broad Overlook

In today's society, citizens buy food products based on need-based priorities, but also based on the brands they are most loyal to and which prices best suit their economic situation. The installment of branding challenged food businesses to establish a unique selling proposition which allowed them to stand apart from each other in the hyper-competitive, low cost consideration product industry. But in regards to advertising a food brand, an effective strategy must hold the campaign together in order for that brand to reap a return on investment. Therefore, there is always a

“need for consumers to buy the same good, new goods, and buy those more often in order to sustain revenue to confirm that advertising was a necessary and integral part of the food and beverage industry's overall business plan” (Annalect, 2017).

Consumers need to buy food as human beings, so if a food brand wants to make the biggest impact of their shopping decisions, the brand's strategy must cater to the right target audience and clearly state a position against the competition. But that strategy is not what food brands are necessarily implementing for social media advertising. Brands should, what Gary Vaynerchuk describes as, “jab” their consumers (Vaynerchuck, 2013). “Jabbing” is a general term for getting at the feelings of a consumer that does not promote the call to action right away. Most food brands are trying to create an image of themselves on social media whether its through a customer service related environment, a Pinterest “pinning” environment, through influencer relations or blogging, or reaping the benefits of the “foodie” culture on social media. That way, its consumers or followers better understand them as a company and what their personality emulates.

While staying competitive, food brands that successfully earn a return on advertising investment must stay current with societal culture and with technological trends. The advertising space has grown from entirely relying on traditional media to using it in combination with digital media in a campaign. An asset to digital media, social media, continues to sophisticate where analytical knowledge is a necessity in strategizing advertising initiatives in the space. The most important initiative being, *social engagement*.

Chapter 3

Defining Engagement

Engagement Tactics on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

Most brands that promote themselves on social media want to engage their followers as much as possible. Social media's engagement capabilities have exploded over the past couple of years where brands can be creative in how they reach their audiences and how they then measure the effectiveness of certain engagement categories. Engagement activities that do not necessarily aim to be measured may include posting an only text post, photos, videos, stories, boomerangs, etc. It depends on the social platform as to which activity a brand can participate in, but it also depends on which activity is most known to be successful in engaging those followers. However, brands want to actually see how beneficial their social media activity is.

Generally, engagement tactics can be looked at in two overarching measurement categories: numerical and non-numerical tactics. Numerical metrics are counted based on the popularity of a post on social media and typically, higher numbers legitimize successful advertising or promotion. These metrics can include likes, comments, and shares. Non-numerical engagement tactics can include tagging, location services, polls, private messaging. Each platform has its own variation, but they all represent the same categories of reach and frequency under the umbrella of engagement. For this study's purpose, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram will be the three sources of social media platform measurement.

Numerical Metrics

A like/love is featured at the bottom of a post, that represents its overall popularity of how many users took action to qualify the post as an appealing one for whatever context the content is in. There are stipulations for measuring the popularity of posts within a certain account: a brand should not solely rely on the numbers. A like could now represent (in some situations) that a customer has received more information or has arbitrarily liked the post without psychologically “liking” the content/post. Therefore, the like-to-minute ratio and the like-to-follower ratio accurately measures the effectiveness of customer engagement.

The New York Magazine explains the like-to-minute ratio as “if a company posted a picture in five minutes and already has 60 likes, it can be called success” because of the accumulation of likes in a short amount of time. The like-to-follower-ratio is “if a post has 600 likes and the account has only 1,000 followers, it shows how many real followers it has”, meaning an account should have enough relevant likes on a post in relation to the number of followers it has (Paul, 2016).

The fewer likes a popular account has on a post, the less successful at engaging an audience the post may have. As an additional element of liking a post, Facebook’s “like” has recently changed as of the end of 2016 and early 2017. Users now have the choice to not only like a post, but can choose between different emotions of how they feel towards that post. These standard options include “love”, “haha”, “wow”, “sad”, and “angry.” On certain occasions that may align with holidays, different options may become available. For example, during Thanksgiving, Facebook opens a “thankful” option. Based on emotional feelings, a brand can

understand the users on more than just a “like” level to uncover more insights about its social strategy. This option can even prove that if a user chose one of the other emotion options than just liking the post, they took the extra step to qualify their feelings. In other words, these metrics can maybe do a better job of measuring engagement success than just counting the likes alone. Despite the insignificance of the number of likes by itself, a like is still an important piece of measurement when accounted with other numbers of engagement metrics.

These other statistics may derive from comments and the conversations that are generated from those comments. A comment appears below any post on social media where customers may express their opinion of either the post, product, or brand as a whole. From their own newsfeeds, users can comment on a post depending on its relatability or likeness/dislikeness to the user him/herself. Comments allow customers and a brand to communicate in real time whether the conversation may be about an issue, a compliment, a question etc. When a brand responds to a customer on social media, the customer can feel cared for or acknowledged by the organization as a whole. But more importantly, the brand can cultivate an authentic representation within the space which can increase customer support and a network. Posts can also be shared between users’ newsfeeds. Sharing is available on any post and if a user feels compelled to express his/her thoughts about a seen post, it can be published on his/her own account’s newsfeed. Then, their social friends and the general public can see what they shared. At that point, the social friends can comment on their friend’s post and potentially share it on their own newsfeeds as well. This chain can rapidly spread awareness, generating buzz about a certain brand and perhaps the industry its apart of.

Non-Numerical Metrics

Non-numerical engagement tactics take the conversation to the next level. These tactics are more difficult to measure because they are not numerically tracked, but when used appropriately, they can leverage an account's customer engagement even further. A tag on a social post is either an account (not the account that posted) or user within the post. When tagged, the account or user's name is bolded (usually in a different color to distinguish the tag from the normal post's text) and when clicked on, the page will be taken to either that account or user's profile. Location and Check-In Services are options to geographically show where the post originated from. Specifically, on Facebook, this post visually shows the location on Google maps with any additional text describing the reason for the location. Maybe an account is checking into a location for a conference or sharing a new restaurant, etc.

Polls are fairly new as of 2017 and they allow any user to interact directly with the post, just how they can like, comment, or share. A poll is an individual post on an account's newsfeed that asks a question/opinion for others to answer. Some examples could include, "which flavor do you prefer?" or "what kinds of brands come to mind when you think of chocolate", etc. The possibilities engage customers to then see what others thought by showing a percentage of responses that agreed or disagreed with them. A brand can decide to post a poll if it wants customer feedback on a certain issue and or if it wants to further engage its customers in a unique and creative way, inviting them to participate in the post. Lastly, but most likely not least, an account can individually communicate with users based off a specific post or in general. Private messaging or individual messaging allows an on going conversation to persist without any public posting concerns. Any brand can communicate with its customers and even brand to brand can communicate with each other as well.

Social Engagement Definition

One succinct definition for measuring social media engagement is difficult to conclude because every industry, account, and strategy is so different from one another. Based on the number of followers that the account has can either qualify it as a popular brand that has built its reputation over a long period of time. Therefore, these brands are almost expected to generate high engagement rates, but that is not always the case. A brand must understand its audience and the types of strategies that can best engage them. Engagement is necessary in order for a social media account to grow. If a brand simply posts without thinking of the customer, then their account will not generate the success its looking for. Neal Sheaffer concludes that “social media from the business perspective should be about the customer and not about the business objective.” In hindsight, a brand wants to achieve those business objectives but users do not want to be bombarded by product offerings and business advertising. They want to see what they are interested in and not what the company is interested in. That irrelevancy can further decrease an account’s perception online that it does not understand its customers.

Therefore, that piece of the puzzle is imperative in measuring engagement: understanding the customer. From these insights and more, the developed definition for this study of an account’s engagement rate on social media is a combination of analyzing the **time** of the post, its social **post type** (i.e. photo, only text, or video) its **content category** and strategy (whether it may be a philanthropic focus or employee focus), and the nature of the millennial comments generated with the **results** of the like-follower ratio. What is qualified as a numerically “successful” or highly engaged account will be based on the like-to-follower and comment-to-follower ratios per post. The questions I pose when I identify a post’s success rate includes:

1. How quickly did the post generate likes, comments, and shares in relation to the amount of followers its account has?
2. What engagement effectiveness does a post type have? Does one post type perform better than the other?
3. What kinds of content are food brands projecting to its audience? Is it all promotion or something else?
4. How well did the post cater to millennial trends and the audience to result in likes, comments, and shares?

Chapter 4

Social Media Study Introduction

Study Rationale

As mentioned before, the “foodies” generation wants to follow unique and customized brands that resonate with their need to feel different and special. Whether the brand is a specialized or commercialized, people want to follow social accounts that look nice on individual newsfeeds. Brands such as Jamba Juice, Boxed Water, Fiji Water, and Coldstone Ice Cream are a few to name that are known for aesthetically pleasing and engaging accounts for the millennial generation. Other commercialized brands like McDonalds or Nestle are not followed as frequently because their content isn’t entirely catering to the millennial foodie trends. For this generation, online appeal of niche markets means more for them than generic promotions of well known brands. As a result, market shares have dropped for popular brands that are not known for the “foodies” healthy trends (Schwartz, 2017).

Popular and commercialized food and beverage brands are still purchased, but when it comes to marketing to millennials, these brands are trying their best to appeal to the “foodies” values while also having engaging social media content. Therefore, I wanted to see how engaging the content appears from my own perspective in the millennial generation. I have wondered how effective brands have been at turning opinions around or claiming other factors that resonate with the demographic. Because their advertising budgets tend to be much larger than medium and smaller businesses, they have a reach and frequency advantage but it does not necessarily mean that their social media tactics are successful. By analyzing Nestle, Lagunitas Brewing Co, Domino’s, and Starbucks, I would have a better understanding of the effective or

non-effective nature of social media strategies for popular brands catered to the millennial target audience. Each brand was chosen for analysis based on how it could potentially appeal to the audience and on past successful social media strategies.

The Brand Selection

Nestle: In the candy/chocolate category, Nestle has always been known for its Toll House chocolate chips. However, it noticed that its normal target audience was aging and that it started having a difficult time catering to “new bakers” (aka the millennials). Therefore, in 2016, Nestle started revamping its marketing strategies online, particularly in Google search and YouTube.

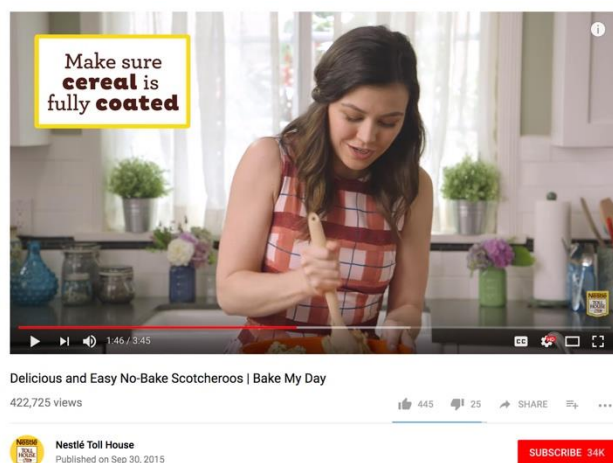


Figure 1. Nestle YouTube

The YouTube how-to videos reached a ton of new consumers especially when Nestle brought in Ashely Adams in a Bake My Day series as an influencer (Google, 2016). The videos are less than four-five minutes long and teach the viewer how to bake certain recipes using Nestle ingredients, similar to Tasty videos, except are longer in length (see

Figure 1). Although the marketing success is attributed on Google and YouTube search, Nestle’s social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have been active, but not necessarily making as much of an impact. Therefore, tracking the content and seeing which strategies are used on these platforms is necessary to see at what extent Nestle is successful at reaching the millennial target.

Lagunitas: Trending away from drinking beer in general, younger millennials are attracted to drinking specialized spirits and wine, whereas older millennials and other generations are drinking more IPA beers (Nurin, 2018). This generational trend stems from the uniqueness of the taste as opposed to the main stream beer brands that are already well known, helping this target feel different and special. Lagunitas Brewing Co already had a strong social media presence to begin with, but I was not sure if it was attempting to reach the younger sect of the millennial generation and how it would respond to the strategies as opposed to the older sect.

Domino's Pizza: As a well known pizza brand, Domino's has recently invested in a huge advertising push towards the millennial demographic. The campaign outlines the different incentives that result from gaining points on an individual account such as free pizzas, discounts/coupons, etc. The company's digital push is also recognized by its app which tracks the pizza delivery route, a "Siri-like

recognition system, nicknamed Dom", online ordering from any device, and Twitter engagements that "let customers order via Twitter using a pizza emoji" (Witsil 2018). Although Domino's has benefited on a technological ROI, I wanted to see how its promoting these incentives, programs, and benefits on social media and how effectively it is publicizing to the millennial target who happens to be digital savvy already.



Figure 2. Domino's Twitter

Starbucks Coffee: Starbucks is the millennial’s “golden” brand because it has always (at least for the past ten or so years) been associated with social media posts of different coffee orders in a bohemian and “hipster” environment. The reason why it connects with millennials to begin with is because it has such a strong digital presence. On social media, Starbucks has hundreds of thousands of followers. The company also has an app to purchase orders, personalize orders, and gain rewards. So, what more can it do on social media? Is it burnt out yet or does it continue to challenge the norm by staying creative and communicating with its followers?



Figure 3. Starbucks Instagram

The Digital Playing Field

Social media is under constant change where brands are challenged to not only become familiarized with the changes, but become familiarized with the cultural trends that are resulted from the changes. For instance, Instagram stories were released by mid-2017 and about six

months later, brands are now broadcasting their strategies on their account stories or encouraging their social influencers to do the same (Boachie 2018). Additionally, brands are adhering to cultural and demographic trends. Wendy's popular Twitter account does not just talk about its 4 for \$4 deals, but "roasts" followers and other counts. Roasting, a way to non-offensively banter someone, is a new cultural activity amongst the millennial target audience. Because Wendy's is listening and paying attention to what millennials are doing, they have received new followers and an increase in engagement on Twitter. The way an advertising campaign strategy is monitored on social media is completely different than on any other platform because of the constant changes the campaign may endure. Whether these changes derive from a platform technicality or social trends, a brand has to think like a user. If it does not, the post and or account may not be recognized by the audience it wants to cater to. In response to the growing social culture of the millennial audience, it is imperative to further understand what they are attracted to in order for brands to be recognized. It is from millennial recognition that food brands can grow exponentially in a short period of time.



Figure 4. Wendy's Twitter

Chapter 5

Research Questions

RQ1: If Instagram generates the highest engagement rate compared to other platforms, does that statistic hold true for a certain industry (i.e., food and beverage) that is marketing a millennial audience? Is engagement success based on digital trends, audience trends, brand history, or the platform capabilities, or all of the above?

RQ2: With the knowledge that Instagram's engagement capabilities are higher, does a brand market more frequently on Instagram than on Facebook and Twitter? Does a brand post more on Instagram because the platform appeals to the "foodie" generation or because it knows that it can generate more engagement overall?

RQ3: Which type of social media *post* reaches the highest millennial audience engagement success rate in the food and beverage industry?

RQ4: Which popular food and beverage *category* seems to produce higher engagement rates on social media for the millennial target and why?

Chapter 6

Method

Quantitative Research: Social Media Content Analysis

By definition, a content analysis is “any technique by making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages”; this type of study can further “provide profound insight into a situation which is not limited by existing viewpoints or methodologies” (Lai and To, 2015). Social media content can be argued to represent various types of personal perspectives, thus it is difficult to come to any business conclusions without having a representative analysis of the content and strategy at hand. In order to infer conclusions about the food and beverage industry on social media, quantitative data is necessary to back findings for certain trends. However, it is noted that these trends are relevant to the beginning of 2018 and may or may not be applicable in the future.

One hundred thirty-five data pieces from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were tracked over a one-month period from December 2017-January 2018 by the author and an additional coder. The Google Sheet’s tabs identified each brand name to easily compare one brand to another. As I input data into the document, I began to notice similar patterns. By roughly the 50th data piece of each brand, assumptions were claimed based on trends and forecasting from previous outcomes. Therefore, I terminated the quantitative tracking after one month due to the already substantial engagement data to which I had access to. In order to input and track the data pieces effectively, a code sheet was created to equally encode each social media post.

The Code Sheet

I created the code sheet, which was based off of an automobile social media content analysis (Sexton, 2014). The code sheet used for the food and beverage social media study broke down the post into seven phases. Phase 1 was *Case Identification*, which included the study post number of that particular brand, the content's platform origin (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram), the date of the post activity, and time stamp of the post activity. Phase 2, *Post Type that Appears on Account Newsfeed*, characterized the type of social post such as an only text, text with article link with a photo, text with a single photo attachment, only photo, only video, or other (including Facebook "Check-In" or Instagram "Boomerang" as examples).

Phase 3 acknowledged the *Origin of Post that Appears on Account Newsfeed/Page* either by the account itself or by another source/account/user. Phase 4 identified Tags either by the account itself or by another source/account/user that was led to the account's page. By Phase 5, the post was identified into a certain *Content Category* whether it was "mostly company product attributes: content that highlights product information", "mostly company event enticement: content that entices audience to participate or RSVP to an event hosted or participating by the company", "mostly corporate social responsibility: any acts of philanthropic focus that the company is stating that have participated in", "mostly entertainment: content that does not directly mention the company or any of its products and is used to merely entertain the viewer", etc. Phase 6 of the code sheet was *Content Characteristics* that further specialized the activity through hashtags, emojis, numbers, capital letters, inclusion of people in photos, if the company logo was seen anywhere, etc. Finally, Phase 7 numerically identified the Results of the post based on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram language such as the number of likes, loves, shares, retweets, comments, etc.

Data Collection Process

Depending on the time zone and the geography of the account activity depended on how soon each post was identified. Typically, each post was given at least 24 hours until it was identified in order to track the initial engagement rate based on the like-to-follower and follower-to-account ratios (as mentioned by the New York Times). When the post was ready to be identified in the Google Sheet each day, each brand's social account was opened in the Internet browser in case the same post was made on various platforms (see Table 1 as an example for the Domino's content analysis). Additionally, I decided to take "comment notes" by the first quarter of data collection. I found this note taking essential to further characterize the post results and to gather a pathos-perspective opinion in real time.

Post #	Platform	Date	Timestamp	Post Type	Post Origin	Content Category	Type of "SC"	# of Hashtags	Color or B/W	# Comments	# Shares	# Likes	# "Love"
1	Twitter	12/18	N/A	6	1	1	N/A	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Twitter	12/18	N/A	6	2	5	@	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Facebook	12/18	N/A	6	1	1	N/A	0	Color	143	107	1400	166
4	Instagram	12/18	N/A	6	1	1	N/A	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Instagram	12/19		6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Twitter	12/19	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Instagram	12/20		6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Twitter	12/20	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	Facebook	12/20	2:00 PM	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	105	77	1400	211
10	Instagram	12/21	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	Instagram	12/21	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	Twitter	12/22	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
13	Facebook	12/22	6:00 PM	6	1	1	N/A	0	Color	98	65	1300	156
14	Twitter	12/22	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
15	Twitter	12/23	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
16	Instagram	12/23	N/A	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
17	Facebook	12/25	1:00 PM	6	1	1	emoji	0	Color	100	64	1800	201

Table 1. Content Analysis Screenshot

Qualitative Data: Focus Group

To understand the millennial generation's emotional experiences within the food and beverage industry and social media, four focus groups were held over a one-month time period from January-February 2018 at Penn State University's campus. While encouraging participants

to answer questions and have a natural flow of conversation with each other, data can “be examined by not only what people think, but how they think and why they think that way” (Kitzenger, 1995). Gaining this insight is imperative to not just uncovering the root of the research questions, but it is also important for marketing professionals to further understand millennials as their content, products, or campaigns attempt to cater to them. This emotional insight cannot be found in any quantitative means, thus the rationale for holding a focus group. It will uncover how millennials think as they interact with social media which in turn can help marketers better strategize their campaigns.

As a whole, Julia Brown articulates that social media itself “can be the ultimate focus group.” As its name suggests, social media encourages people to connect together and share experiences similarly to how individuals participate in a physical focus group. This paradigm can shape the conversation and allow participants to recall how a community was built, if customer service was managed, if they felt attracted towards certain posts, and if they felt compelled to take an action. Although this recollection parallels with social media participation, the questions asked in the focus group ensures that the focus group community was set, that the focus group environment catered to additional questions, and that the participants were engaged with the content of the script. This relationship, social media acting as a focus group and an actual focus group discussing social media, creates a seamless flow of conversation and structure. Each conversation supported similar opinions, while all following the same script.

The Script

The conversation began with easy to answer questions that pertained to the participant's identity. Specific names were not recorded, but by identifying where participants were from and what their focus of study was in college would provide me with reason for their responses. Afterwards, the topic of social media was introduced. Questions such as "Which social media platforms do you use most? Why do you use them? Do you have a favorite one" were asked. Then, the topic of the food and beverage industry was introduced. In order to understand social trends of the demographic and which brands are catered to them, questions such as "Which food brands do you like to buy yourself? What kinds of popular food brands can you think of? When I say organic, what comes to mind?" After both topics were discussed, participants were asked to talk about the interactivity of social media and the food and beverage industry. Discussions sparked about the importance of brands on social media, what kinds of posts are mostly liked or disliked, and personal opinions about following brands in general. Certain activities followed where participants described brands (from the qualitative portion of my study) in three adjectives. This activity uncovered the perception that these brands are portraying to the millennial demographic. At the end of the focus group session, screenshots of social media posts from the tested brands were shown to participants. Each screenshot emphasized different content categories, caption languages, photographic elements, all on different social platforms or Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Data Collection Process

An impartial volunteer acted as a scribe while taking notes at each focus group meeting. The above script was shared with the volunteer where he/she referenced and took notes from different quotations and thoughts from the groups that attended. After each focus group date, the volunteer emailed me the script with his/her notes for me to analyze from.

Chapter 7 Results

Quantitative Research: Content Analysis

Data analysis of each brand's social media content analysis results is as follow:

Nestle: The most popular used platform for the one-month period included Twitter (30 posts) followed by Instagram (18 posts) and Facebook (10 posts). Nestle tended to post a photo with a caption or a linked article with a caption. 14 posts were about product information, 12 posts were about philanthropy and social responsibly, another 12 about employees, 12 about a campaign or movement, and the remaining 8 about service attributes, campaign movement enticing audience members to participate, and entertainment. The account used an emoji 30.3% of the time and a hashtag in the post 71.4% of the time. A total of 6,120 likes were generated on Instagram, followed by 678 on Twitter and 271 on Facebook. Further engagement and interactions concluded at 232 comments on Instagram, 229 Twitter retweets, 39 comments on Twitter, 10 comments on Facebook, and 0 Facebook shares. Additionally, little to none of "likers" went a step further by expressing their emotion of a Facebook post using "love", "haha", "wow", "sad", etc. From the notes I took, I noticed that Nestle was attempting to promote healthier and non-preservative ingredients in their posts and the articles they shared. Whether the post/article was about iron deficiency, water supply, or a plant based nutrition plan, it did not ever reference a particular Nestle product or promotion.

Lagunitas Brewing Co: The most popular used platform for the one-month period included Facebook (10 posts) followed by Instagram (8 posts) and Twitter (4 posts). Lagunitas tended to post a photo with a caption or a video within the newsfeeds with a caption. 18 posts were about product information, 3 were mainly used as entertainment purposes, and last post was a cover photo update on the newsfeed. The account used a hashtag 72.7% of the time. A total of 25,668 likes were generated on Instagram, followed by 4,584 on Facebook and 144 on Twitter. Further engagement and interactions concluded at 386 Facebook shares, 326 comments on Facebook, 277 comments on Instagram, 46 Twitter retweets, and 5 comments on Twitter. Additionally, users went a step further on Facebook and “loved” posts 278 times, laughed 181 times, and were surprised (“wow”) 41 times. From the notes I took, I noticed that Lagunitas’ followers love the products and talk about on social media posts. For example, comments glorified the brand with “Just as good as expected. Cheers!” or “Just grabbed two today and they will be in the cellar for at least 2 years.” Also, the posts in general kept with a playful and entertaining language and tone.

Domino’s: The most popular used platform for the one-month period included Instagram (13 posts) and Twitter (13 posts) followed by Facebook (6 posts). Domino’s tended to post a photo with a caption 97% of the time. 97% of the posts were about product information with one remaining post about a campaign or movement. The account used an emoji 71.8% of the time. A total of 171,148 likes were generated on Instagram, followed by 9,700 on Facebook and 3,202 on Twitter.

Further engagement and interactions concluded at 1,300 comments on Instagram, 1,190 comments on Facebook, 785 Twitter Retweets, 738 Facebook comments, and 416 Twitter

comments. There was some additional engagement on Facebook, where users loved posts 29 times, laughed at a post 217 times, was surprised 15 times, and was angry 22 times. From the notes I took, I noticed that Domino's posted practically nothing but photos of pizza on all three platforms. The tone of voice was the same on all three platforms, but the user reaction to posts were different. For example, Domino's received a ton of backlash on Facebook where people commented on their frustrations with delivery times and the fact that their orders looked nothing like the pizza photos that were posted. Comments such as "as opposed to this cancerous looking pizza", "super gross, super cold", and "if only my pizza looked like that." However, on Instagram, people loved the product and talked about how Domino's is their favorite pizza brand. I also found that Domino's rarely responded to users' comments on all three platforms and it was until the end of the month that the account started responding to people's concerns.

Starbucks: The most popular used platform for the one-month period included Twitter (21 posts) followed by Instagram (9 posts) and Facebook (3 posts). Starbucks tended to post a photo with a caption, a video within the newsfeed with a caption, or only text (particularly on Twitter). 13 posts were about product information, 12 about campaign movements/attributes, 2 surrounding mere entertainment, 5 about a fan of the brand, and 1 about product enticement. The account used an emoji 66.67% of the time and a hashtag in the post 75.8% of the time.

A total of 1,429,077 likes were generated on Instagram, followed by 59,882 on Facebook and 13,780 on Twitter. Further engagement and interactions concluded at 5,598 shares on Facebook, 4,519 comments on Instagram, 3,851 Facebook comments, 1,683 Twitter Retweets, and 308 comments on Twitter. Users went a step further on Facebook where they laughed 1,320 times, loved 115 times, were angry 46 times, and 14 times that they were surprised. From the

notes I took, I noticed that Starbucks was extremely responsive to its users' comments on all three platforms. Almost any question that someone had, Starbucks answered it. The account also took pride in its fans and followers and featured them on Instagram posts, Retweeted posts on Twitter, and/or tagged a user within a post.

Data analysis of the content analysis study effectiveness is discussed as it relates to the proposed research questions.

RQ1: If Instagram generates the highest engagement rate compared to other platforms, does that statistic hold true for a certain industry (i.e., food and beverage) that is marketing a millennial audience? Is engagement success based on digital trends, audience trends, brand history, or the platform capabilities, or all of the above?

The food and beverage industry social media engagement potential is noted predominately on Instagram. Therefore, it seems that regardless of the industry, Instagram has a history of engagement success over any type of account. The success for food and beverage brands can be attributed to multiple factors such as the reach potential and digital and “foodie” trends. For example, the combined number of likes/favorites from the entire analysis on Facebook was 74,437 and Twitter at 17,754. Instagram’s combined number of likes (or “loves” in Instagram language) was **1,632,013** (see Table 2). This tendency for higher reach and engagement potential could be linked to the digital trends that social media users are following. It did not seem to matter if a popular food brand already had an established network of followers or not.

Instagram	
Total # posts	48
Total loves	1,632,013
Brand Usage	Nestle (18)
<i>L2F</i>	
Nestle	18.89%
Lagunitas	11.83%
Domino's	14.26%
Starbucks	8.93%

Table 2. Instagram Results

As long as the post attracted followers and non-followers, it generated a like and/or comment. However, it is already known and assumed that Instagram's photo engagement tactics are used to the food and beverage industry's advantage to adhere to users' **cravings**. In a study conducted by researchers at the University of Southern California in 2012, pictures of high-calorie foods lead to human cravings (Viewing Images, 2012). That point alone can be inclined to produce higher engagement statistics on social media. It also helps a brand to have an already established follower base when aiming to generate qualified engagement rates. So when there is a follower of brand seeing a food they are craving, they can be twice as likely to like the image and engage with the content on Instagram.

RQ2: With the knowledge that Instagram's engagement capabilities are higher, does a brand market more frequently on Instagram than on Facebook and Twitter? Does a brand post more on Instagram because the platform appeals to the "foodie" generation or because it knows that it can generate more engagement overall?

For all brands tested, each posted more frequently on Instagram than both Facebook and Twitter. More than 75% of the postings in one month are all on Instagram most likely due to the reach capabilities that Instagram employs in addition to the fact that there is a growing number of users in as short as eight years. For example, since 2010, Instagram's total users have increased by 79,900% from 1M in 2010 to approximately 800M in 2018 (Constine, 2017). With the rapid increase, brands can take advantage of this reach capability for more users to be exposed to the account in the social space. See Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8 for the one month posting analysis of the four brands.

Nestle Analysis

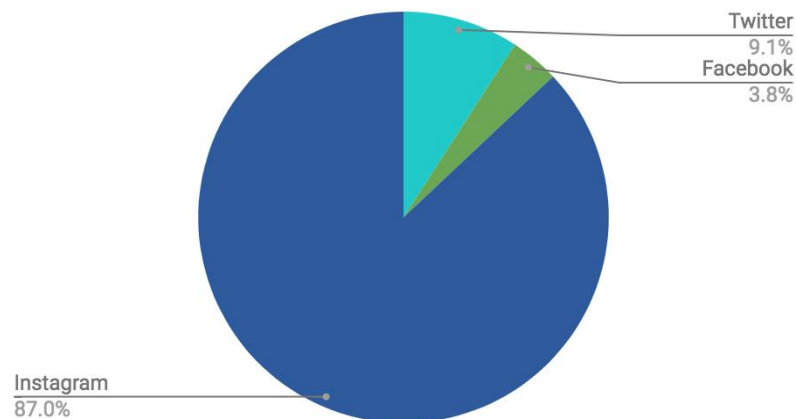


Figure 5. Nestle Content Posting Results

Lagunitas Analysis

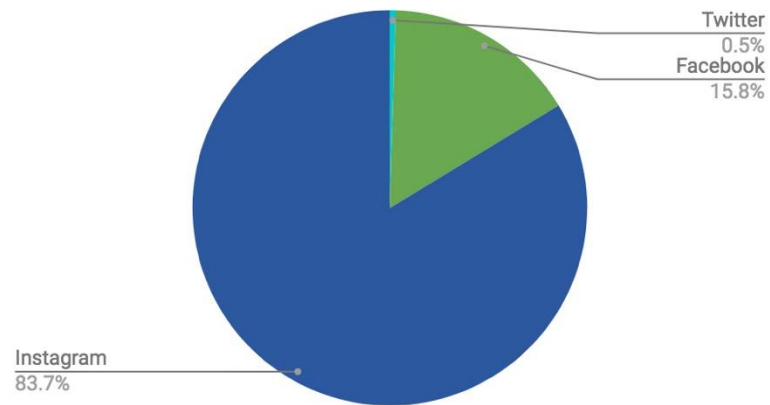


Figure 7. Lagunitas Content Posting Results

Domino's Analysis

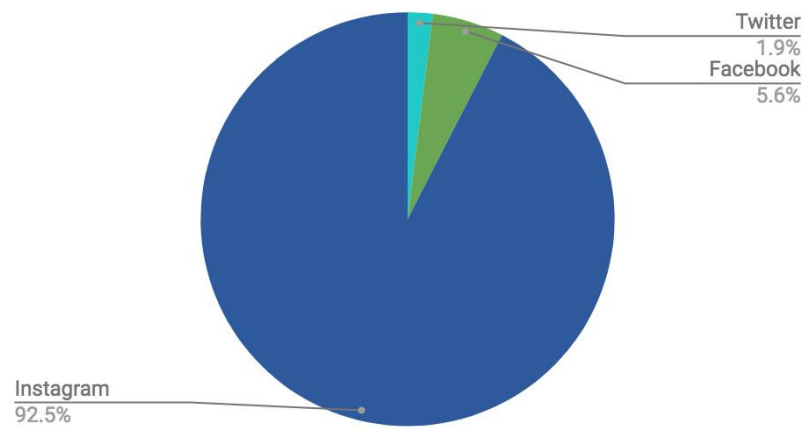


Figure 6. Domino's Content Posting Results

Starbucks Analysis

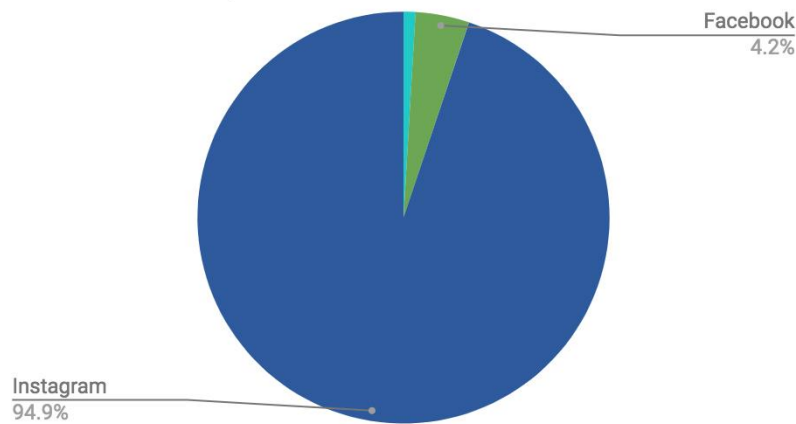


Figure 8. Starbucks Content Posting Results

RQ3: Which type of social media post reaches the highest millennial audience engagement success rate in the food and beverage industry?

If a post is highlighting the **brand and its product** (content category #6) in a clever and entertaining way, that post has a higher potential in generating a higher engagement rate (see Tables 3, 4, and 5) for three of the four brands.

Platform	Content Category	FB Likes	FB Comments	TW Likes	TW Comments	IG Likes	IG Comments
Twitter	Campaign/Movement	N/A	N/A	181	10	N/A	N/A
Twitter	Campaign/Movement	N/A	N/A	138	6	N/A	N/A
Instagram	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	143843	327
Facebook	Product Promotion	16000	584	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Instagram	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	128526	393



Table 3. Starbucks Content Category Sample Results

Platform	Content Category	FB Likes	FB Comments	IG Likes	IG Comments
Instagram	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	3388	34
Facebook	Product Promotion	386	45	N/A	N/A
Facebook	Entertainment	15	12	N/A	N/A
Facebook	Product Promotion	1100	63	N/A	N/A
Instagram	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	3515	58



Table 4. Lagunitas Content Category Sample Results

Platform	Content Category	FB Likes	FB Comments	TW Likes	TW Comments	IG Likes	IG Comments
Twitter	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	151	13	N/A	N/A
Twitter	Campaign/Movement	N/A	N/A	148	132	N/A	N/A
Facebook	Product Promotion	1400	143	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Instagram	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10417	59
Instagram	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11360	70



Table 5. Domino's Content Category Sample Results

However, Nestle proved to be successful on Instagram alone without the strategic focus of product promotion. (see Table 6)

Platform	Content Category	TW Likes	TW Comments	IG Likes	IG Comments
Twitter	Campaign/Movement	11	0	N/A	N/A
Twitter	Product Promotion	34	0	N/A	N/A
Twitter	Campaign/Movement	23	0	N/A	N/A
Instagram	Company Employee	N/A	N/A	268	6
Instagram	Company Employee	N/A	N/A	273	3



Table 6. Nestle Content Category Sample Results

Regardless, the caption and the language of the brand stays consistent with the audience that it usually attracts to. All the elements need to work in an online ecosystem while also “jabbing” at the main point. The personality of the brand should shine through the post in order to entertain the audience and to develop the brand perception on different platforms. I found that Lagunitas was a prime example of entertaining its followers in the most strategic way. Its sarcastic and playful language was specific and to the brand and intentional with engaging with

its followers. The posts were not necessarily specific to anything other than the different beers it was promoting. But if Lagunitas simply posted a picture of a new beer without having any kind of entertaining qualities (i.e. captions, comments, post characteristics like hashtags or emojis, photo elements, etc.) the post would not have any advantage to engaging with current and prospective followers.

The other high engaging posts adhered to **service and philanthropy** (see Table 7 for Starbucks' example). Whether it was the company itself promoting its own philanthropic efforts or encouraging others to participate in similar ways, the post engaged its likers to take action in their own lives with that brand in mind as the key motivator. An industry example from this study was Starbucks' #GiveGood campaign during the holiday season. Various photos and videos promoted Starbucks employees and other influential leaders engaging with different communities with certain objectives in mind such as handing out free gift cards, visiting children at a hospital, or aiding refugees and the homelessness. Each post tagged the campaign without having any reference to Starbucks products. This additional point references how the "foodies" (whom are a part of the millennial audience) like to purchase healthier food alternatives, to be involved in the community, and to feel special or unique in the way they eat and promote their food online.

Platform	Content Category	FB Likes	FB Comments	TW Likes	TW Comments
Twitter	Product Promotion	N/A	N/A	1000	20
Twitter	Campaign/Movement	N/A	N/A	1300	27
Facebook	Campaign/Movement	882	61	N/A	N/A



Table 7. Starbucks Service/Philanthropy Content Category Sample Results

RQ4: Which popular food and beverage category seems to produce higher engagement rates on social media for the millennial target and why?

There was not one specific category of the food and beverage industry that performed better than another. Depending on the time of day of the post, the content category, and the platform that the post was on depended on how well the post performed. Insight into the best time of day can be related to my own business Instagram page where I found that users in my own age demographic tended to be active on Instagram on Wednesdays from around 6:00-9:00PM. Also, because Instagram tended to garner higher engagement rates than Twitter and Facebook, any category that posted more on Instagram with strategic intentions would have performed better than another brand within the same category.

Qualitative Research: Further Analysis

Due to the nature of this study (as interpreting results from the emotional/qualitative perspective), this content analysis was analyzed in a less technical manner than other studies completed. Nonetheless, significant engagement conclusions were found via each account's total *like to follower ratios*. The total number of followers for each platform and brand can be seen in table 8. It is also noted that these numbers are not necessarily accurate because users can follow and unfollow accounts day by day.

Brand	Platform	# Followers
Nestle	Facebook	109,320,040
Laqunitas	Facebook	230,100
Domino's	Facebook	18,367,563
Starbucks	Facebook	35,713,188
Nestle	Twitter	212,000
Laqunitas	Twitter	31,300
Domino's	Twitter	1,026,000
Starbucks	Twitter	11,009,000
Nestle	Instagram	32,400
Lagunitas	Instagram	217,000
Domino's	Instagram	1,200,000
Starbucks	Instagram	16,001,000

Table 8. Followers for each Brand's Social Account (as of March 2018)

This chart was referenced in calculating the like to follower ratios. Each platform's number of likes were totaled for each brand and each number was divided by the number of followers to conclude a percentage of followers that the account effectively engaged with. Lastly, it is important to also note that not all of the likes that a post received were necessarily from the account's followers, but perhaps from other sources such as promotions, trends, and relevance from a user's friends' social activity.

Facebook: 29 out of the 135 social posts from the study were Facebook posts, totaling at 74,437 likes across Nestle, Lagunitas Brewing Co, Domino's, and Starbucks over a one-month period (see Table 9)

Facebook	
Total # posts	29
Total likes	74,437
Brand Usage	Nestle (10) , Laguinitas (10)
<i>L2F</i>	
Nestle	0.00%
Lagunitas	1.99%
Domino's	0.05%
Starbucks	0.17%

Table 9. Facebook Results

Nestle and Lagunitas Brewing Co were the two brands that used the platform the most out of the brand selection. Lagunitas Brewing Co generated the highest engagement percentage at 1.99%. Posts that seemed to garner the most engagement success on *Facebook* included **text posts with either a single photo attachment or video link** produced by the account itself and not by another user or account. The post highlighted product attributes in an engaging way under 25 words which “jabbed” at their interests via the caption (see Figure 9)

Lagunitas consistently posted every day, if not every other day in the afternoon and early evening from 12PM-7:23PM. However, the Facebook posts in the later afternoon and early evening generated more likes than those earlier in the day. Perhaps their audience was at work during the week and could not have time to scroll through social media. So once they do go on the platform, Lagunitas would be right there at the right time of day...to encourage their customers to crack open a Sumpin’ Ale after that long day of work. There were two posts out of the ten Facebook posts that had time stamps on 12/20 at 7:23PM and 12/21 at 5:32PM. They

garnered significantly more likes, comments, and shares across the board at 1,100 and 1,600 likes, 63 and 120 comments, and 42 and 191 shares. There was one outlier where one post generated 83 shares at 1:11PM. It can be assumed that this is a generally good lunch break time



Figure 9. Lagunitas Facebook Post Example

consistency. It also listened to the **customer base language** and spoke to them in a way that they would resonate with. With all these factors in mind, it comes to no surprise that Lagunitas developed a 1.99% engagement rate.

... for Lagunitas consumers to see the post. But at the end of the day, Lagunitas was smart about the way they intercepted into their consumers' lives and adhered to their needs: the one to relax and wind down at the end of the workday. Not only that, but it was **consistent** in posting which further increased reach and impression counts. A brand can post exactly like this strategy, but it will not be successful if the content itself is not engaging. Lagunitas was **creative** with they way they posted. Each post was different and a user would never get tired of the strategy or be bored with the

Twitter: 68 out of the 135 social posts from the study were Twitter posts, totaling at 17,754 likes across Nestle, Lagunitas Brewing Co, Domino's, and Starbucks over a one-month period (see Table 10).

Twitter	
Total # posts	68
Total favorites	17,754
Brand Usage	Nestle (30), Starbucks (21)
L2F	
Nestle	0.30%
Lagunitas	0.46%
Domino's	0.31%
Starbucks	0.13%

Table 10. Twitter Results

Nestle and Starbucks were the two brands that used the platform the most out of the brand selection. Lagunitas Brewing Co generated the highest engagement percentage at 0.46%. Posts that seemed to garner the most engagement success on Twitter included text posts with a video link from the account's own production. The post highlighted product attributes in an engaging way with the followers under 20 words to lead to future actions (such as a retweet). Out of the 22 social media posts, only four came from Twitter. Like its Facebook posts, Lagunitas' language in posts was light, funny, and entertaining. Additionally, Twitter's character count is limited so the account was smart in staying in that tone of voice while also **quickly getting to the point**. It can be assumed that is why two of the four posts generated 67 and 49 favorites and 19 and 20 retweets.

Instagram: 48 out of the 135 social posts from the study were Instagram posts, totaling at 1,632,013 likes across Nestle, Lagunitas Brewing Co, Domino's, and Starbucks over a one-month period. All brands generated engagement rates above 8% (see Table 2).

Instagram	
Total # posts	48
Total loves	1,632,013
Brand Usage	Nestle (18)
<i>L2F</i>	
Nestle	18.89%
Lagunitas	11.83%
Domino's	14.26%
Starbucks	8.93%

Table 8. Instagram Results

Posts that seemed to garner the most engagement success on Instagram included text posts with a single photo attachment with use of emojis and hashtags. The post highlighted product attributes and also entertained users in an engaging way with <60 or >60 words that generated roughly five digit numbers. Every brand's Instagram posts, except Nestle's, were about their own products. Given size of Lagunitas, Domino's, and Starbucks follower base, Instagram likes were in the millions. But Nestle ended up having a respective 18.89% engagement rate, the highest out of the tested brands. It can be assumed that the reason why Nestle performed so well was that it did not promote its own products to its followers. Instead, it posted about its employees across the world, different recipes, service and philanthropy, and entertainment. Nestle gave the opportunities for its employees to take over the Instagram account for a certain period of time. During the time of

this study, an employee in the Egyptian headquarters shared successes of the office and promoted different events that the team attended. These posts generated up to 939 likes and 54 comments just in one post. This targeted audience unwrapped another layer of the Nestle culture on social media, bringing a more diverse strategy to the space.

The quantitative study proved that in some circumstances a diversified strategy may work better than others, but that when posted in a smart and creative way, a product promotion post may be the most successful in garnering high engagement rates on Instagram. Particularly for the millennial audience, Instagram is a popular platform, but it was difficult to come to any millennial-based conclusions in the study. Given that this data is publically accessible, target audiences and demographic analytics are not. Thus, I found the importance in conducting a qualitative based- study to tap into an insight in finding a connection between the data and the best engagement strategy.

Qualitative Research: Focus Group

Analysis of the study effectiveness is discussed as it relates to each focus group session via the code sheet.

Focus Group #1: Nine participants, ages 20-22 attended the focus group on January 29, 2018.

The social platforms that they used most include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. They usually go on social media because they are bored, to keep up with friends, to look at pictures, and to take up “awkward” time in the day or to get rid of red notifications on the home page. Social platforms are usually visited by this audience before and

after bed and during the week as opposed to the weekend. Instagram was the most favorite platform of choice followed by Snapchat and Twitter. What they like do not like about social media is that everyone tends to post the same type of post (particularly on Snapchat if there is an event happening in the same location as them), advertisers cause an interruption on their newsfeeds, and that sometimes people try to be “too professional” in certain ways. However, they like that they can keep up with their friends’ and family’s lives, and that they can be informed by daily and worldly news.

Brands are not necessarily followed unless there is a personal connection to them such as school projects and internships. In other words, they are not following brands unless they absolutely have to or if they are extremely loyal to a brand in order to earn rewards/points. Therefore, it is unlikely that they follow many food brands on social media. But in terms of the industry, different trends they recognize include avocado obsessions, acai bowls, smoothies, and taking pictures of food. Out of the four tested brands, Domino’s and Starbucks were the two they recognized the most.

Brand descriptions and personas for Domino’s included a generous person or a group of people in his/them 30’s who smokes and plays video games. He indulges in guilty pleasures and is always on the go. He loves beer, parties, and fraternity life. Brand description and personas for Starbucks included a wealthy, young professional female that is preppy and “put together.” She has cool friends who like yoga and is not typically liked by her peers. The hypothetical post activity showed that the focus group participants would have liked or preferred the Starbucks post over the Domino’s post because the picture looks nicer and is generally appealing whereas they would scroll past or ignore the Domino’s post because it is not as impressive or dynamic. Last remaining thoughts about food and beverage brands on social media include that these types

of posts should be more about incentive to like to the post as opposed to simply promoting the product. Humans needs food and beverages to live, so there is a difficult balance to follow as an advertiser versus an entertaining social account.

Focus Group 2: Four participants, ages 20-22 attended the focus group on February 5th, 2018.

The social platforms that they used most include Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, Visco, and LinkedIn. They usually go on social media to post, to see family, to browse pictures, and to build a personal brand. Social platforms are usually visited by this audience before and after bed, before and or after class, or walking to class. Snapchat or Instagram was the most favorite platform of choice. What they like do not like about social media is that advertisers can sometimes post too much, there are certain posts that they may not relate to, and there can be too much information in a short-attention span environment. However, they enjoy generating “likes” because they feel satisfied and affirmed by their friends.

They are not following brands unless they are brand loyal. In this way, these participants receive more general information and product promotion information as a “new way of getting emails.” The brands that they currently follow include Halo Top ice cream, Dunkin Donuts, and Starbucks. In terms of the food and beverage industry, different trends they recognize include health trends and creative ways to be healthy. Examples include creating noodles out of zucchini and eating more vegetables in general. Out of the four tested brands, Nestles, Domino’s and Starbucks were recognized. The participants thought of chocolate, hot chocolate, and the candy bar Crunch when thinking of Nestles. They thought of pizza, cheesy bread, and gluten free pizza when thinking of Domino’s. And they thought of coffee, hot chocolate, iced tea, refresher drinks, espresso, specialty drinks and breakfast sandwiches when thinking of Starbucks. The

hypothetical post activity showed that the focus group participants would have liked or preferred the Domino's post more because it looks real and not like a "flawless" photograph. They felt hungry and craved the pizza when they saw it and would tag friends and like the picture online. Last remaining thoughts about food and beverage brands on social media include that brand descriptions were concluded off of advertising and experiences with the brand as opposed to seeing them or interacting with them on social media.

Focus Group 3: Four participants, ages 20-22 attended the focus group on February 12th, 2018. The social platforms that they used most include Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn, and a Chinese based platform called WeChat. They usually go on social media to follow news, keep up with trends, to stay up to date with life events in the family, and to take a study break. Snapchat and WeChat were the favored social platforms. Especially in Snapchat, participants think the platform is easier than texting where they can read facial expressions as if they were in a physical conversation with someone.

The brands that they follow include Moe's Southwest Grill, MoonPie, Panera, Chick-Fil-A, Chipotle, Permanti Bros., and Starbucks. The majority of participants that followed these brands would also use the app associated with that brand, particularly Panera, Chipotle, Permanti Bros., and Starbucks for easy order options and incentives. In terms of the food and beverage industry, different trends they recognize include organic and healthy alternatives. The popular food brands that came to mind included Pepsi, Coke, General Mills, Kellogs, Starbucks, McDonald's, and Subway. But when it came to the most important aspects about buying food in general came down to taste, quality, and price. Out of the four tested brands, Domino's was recognized the most. The hypothetical post activity showed that the Domino's post was more

realistic looking and that it insinuated a craving. I also showed different brands social media posts including Jamba Juice and McDonald's. The participants liked Jamba Juice's post because it had successful photography elements like color contrast, focus, and the fact that the smoothie looked more organic with nature as a background. Last remaining thoughts about food and beverage brands on social media include that simpler posts are better than complicated ones. Participants did not want to have to "figure out" what the post was saying, but instead be entertained and satisfied by it on their individual newsfeeds. They also liked the idea of philanthropy where brands would promote their own efforts or encourage others to do the same in their own communities.

Analysis of the focus group study effectiveness is discussed as it relates to each research question.

RQ1: If Instagram generates the highest engagement rate compared to other platforms, does that statistic hold true for a certain industry (i.e., food and beverage) that is marketing a millennial audience? Is engagement success based on digital trends, audience trends, brand history, or the platform capabilities, or all of the above?

Instagram and **Snapchat** tend to be the highest millennial audience engagement platforms as a whole. Not specifying towards a certain industry, Instagram and Snapchat cater to the fast attention spanned generation in a digital world while also adhering to generational and technological trends in a visual way. All three focus groups mentioned Instagram and Snapchat in their favorite social platforms. Participants recalled that both of these platforms encourage them to connect with their friends, while also staying entertained.

RQ2: With the knowledge that Instagram's engagement capabilities are higher, does a brand market more frequently on Instagram than on Facebook and Twitter? Does a brand post more on Instagram because the platform appeals to the "foodie" generation or because it knows that it can generate more engagement overall?

Although the quantitative data shows that food and beverage brands post more on Instagram than other social platforms, the focus groups thought otherwise. If they scroll past food brands or any brands for that matter on social media, only sometimes will they engage with the post. If they decide to engage, they will do so in a multitude of ways on different platforms. On Facebook, they may like a post or tag a friend in a "meme" that they relate to. On Twitter, they will either retweet or favorite a post. On Instagram, they will either like, comment, or tag a friend in a relatable post. But if they do not engage with the post and scroll past it, they will not even remember the brand or the content it posted later on. Therefore, either the food brands are not strategically catering to them or well-known brands are not strategizing effectively towards the audience.

RQ3: Which type of social media post reaches the highest millennial audience engagement success rate in the food and beverage industry?

Disregarding the food and beverage industry, **entertainment**-based posts are the most successful at engaging with the millennial target audience. These consumers are not actively searching for brands to follow and will only follow them if the account seems to be entertaining. That does not necessarily mean they are brand loyal. For instance, one participant who has never

eaten Wendy's food in her life followed the account on Twitter because it posted entertaining and funny posts.

RQ4: Which popular food and beverage category seems to produce higher engagement rates on social media for the millennial target and why?

There was not a particular category that the participants seemed to talk about more than another, let alone a corporate brand. However, if there was a certain restaurant or food brand that offered **rewards and benefits** by following their accounts, they would follow them. So only the brands that offer incentives were the ones that seemed to generate more interaction with millennials.

Chapter 8 Discussion

Quantitative Research

The content analysis proved numeric engagement success for Instagram and for accounts that posted the most entertaining and relatable content. Although there was not a way to segment audience type by age, gender, or geographic area, engagement rate conclusions were made based off of the public at large. It is also important to note that numerical results are not the only piece of information that proves an account is more successful at garnering engagement. Thus, there was the importance for measuring the like-to-follower ratios and reading additional comments. Each platform called for different types of posts catered to each technicality.

Facebook: Facebook was primarily used to share photos, photo albums, and articles. But most importantly, I found that the account holder responded to customer's needs and questions on both Facebook and Twitter. When analyzing Domino's, I noticed two different reactions on two different platforms. Facebook comments seemed to have more backlash for the company whereas on Instagram, comments seemed to have more support and love for the company. It can be assumed that two different audiences are using Facebook and Instagram. For the audience that was disgruntled with delivery times and taste satisfaction (from their comments on Facebook), the Domino's account eventually responded with links to file their complaints and receive refunds. Even though Instagram had more positive comments, Domino's did not seem to respond to them. Therefore, it only responded to the comments that seemed to tarnish the company name. Lagunitas responded to Facebook comments for all types of feedback that developed a genuine

conversation with customers. This engagement was one aspect for why the brand generated more likes, comments, and shares on Facebook as opposed to the other tested brands. But either way, Facebook's use for the food and beverage industry is **now an emporium for customer service** and if the company posts the right kind of post that enables customers to respond positively or negatively, engagement will increase.

Twitter: I found that the posts on Twitter were obviously shorter in length, but they also didn't generate as many comments. Instead, an account would **retweet** another account's post (whether this was a parent company or fan) in order to garner engagement activity. Starbucks was the most active account compared to the other tested brands in terms of interacting with customers. Even though its engagement rate was not as high as Lagunitas, it retweeted fan's content. This activity encouraged customers to stay loyal to Starbucks, but it also made them feel special that the corporate account saw their tweet and felt compelled to share it off of their account. Therefore, instead of using Twitter as a primary engagement tactic, an account used Twitter to **"jab" at the customers** as the icing on the cake to social strategy. It is the extra push for engagement where people can quickly digest information and reinstall what they may already know or not.

Instagram: Surprisingly, Instagram's captions were sometimes the longest compared to the other platforms. Its character count is larger than Twitter, so with the knowledge that Instagram can generate higher engagement rates, an account can take advantage of this opportunity to further explain what it wants to that it cannot otherwise on Twitter. All of the posts from the study were simply photos with captions using emojis and very rarely were multiple photos

posted, videos, or boomerangs. The photo quality, however, was professional photography (in nature). Depending on the tone that the account wanted to employ depended on how the photo was taken. For example, Starbucks' tone was more trendy so the photos were of high quality with fantastic lighting and color contrasting. Domino's on the other hand, showed the pizza for how it is. It did not seem that the account put much thought into the "aesthetics" of the photo. It did not try to be anything else but how it is viewed by its customers. Pictures can act as a window into the company's personality, so it did not surprise me why brands posted so heavily on the platform as compared to Facebook and Twitter. Not only that, but Instagram has past success in garnering higher engagement with followers, non-followers, and through promoted posts. So with both of those facts in mind (pictures and engagement), Instagram is the platform that is **paramount for an account's social strategy**. If it does not use Instagram to the best of its ability, it can lose an opportunity to interact with its audience on a higher level and further explain what the company is all about through pictures.

Qualitative Research

Each focus group conversation centered around the trends of the food and beverage industry and general social media posts that seemed to be the most successful at enticing millennials to engage with content. Further understandings of the audience relate to the way they view different social platforms. From there, it can be safe to conclude how well the food and beverage industry performs.

Facebook: Facebook was, for many, the first social platform (next to MySpace) that millennials gravitated to. It was used as a space to update their friends, post pictures, and statuses as a way to identify his/her own profile. As the space commercialized and as newer platforms developed, the millennials in these focus groups used Facebook less. Still, they use it to stay up to date with family and friends, but it is not the “go-to” social media. If they use it regularly, millennials will tag friends in pictures or videos from sponsored “meme” posts. These posts will nudge at cultural trends and are meant to make users laugh. If a user feels they can relate to the post with someone else, he/she will tag a friend in the comments section. This level of engagement is not necessarily correlated with any particular industry or company. Nonetheless, focus group participants spoke to the fact that advertisements on Facebook are a disruption to their newsfeed scroll. Unless a post is used in an **entertaining and relatable way**, they may like the post or tag a friend.

Twitter: Most participants alluded to the fact that Twitter is where they find the most recent news and where they stay up to date with trends. It is a fast way of receiving information in a short text post, too. Millennials may feel affirmed by friends in similar ways on other social platforms by receiving retweets from their followers. They feel witty and funny in that way, and the act itself confirms that their content is relevant and clever. Twitter is another space where users feel important to brands. Some brands retweet and tag users in their posts and these participants felt that they would first feel uncomfortable by the idea, but because their name is associated with a brand or person they support, they feel affirmed that they are popular online.

Instagram: Participants favored Instagram and Snapchat over the other social platforms. Mainly because of its ability to show photography skills, Instagram’s aesthetic encourages an account to

be creative while also aiding that account with brand development. But the reason why the millennials prefer Instagram is that they can post pictures in a way that self promotes themselves and in a way to receive self satisfaction from the likes they generate. It is evident from the quantitative study results that Instagram generates higher engagement rates than other social platforms. Thus why millennials are attracted to the potential number of likes and comments on their own posts. It is also appealing to view a variety of pictures in one newsfeed whether they are from a celebrity, a friend, a family member, or a specialized/categorical account. But that does not mean that Instagram is still the overall favored platform. Instagram capabilities now compete with Snapchat through Instagram stories and commercialized shopping experiences. However, millennials are still using both platforms for different uses: Snapchat for conversations and Instagram for posting pictures.

Food and Beverage Industry Interactivity: Millennial participants did not instantly think about the food and beverage industry on social media when asked. They recalled pictures of food, but not necessarily food brands. With that being said, they do not voluntarily follow any food brand (or general brand) on social media unless they are brand loyal. Particularly with brands that offer rewards and coupons, millennials will follow them to stay up to date with different product offerings and to earn points in the process. But other than that, unless a brand is entertaining an audience outside of the industry realm, millennials are not paying attention to food brands on social media. They are aware that they exist, but large food brands are not necessarily something they think about. Millennials are on social media to follow friends and family and to stay up to date with trends and the news. Even if they are not following food on social media, millennials are involved in the “foodie” generation outside of their own scope. They still want an

individualized eating experience and want something that is catered to only them. Perhaps the food they eat is not branded or if it branded, is not effectively strategizing to them and engaging with them on social media. A reason to engage with them is for the audience to remember the brand and its personality online. From there, the brand wants the user to buy it again and stay loyal to it. But by interacting with millennials in the space they are most familiar with and most comfortable with, a brand can be successful in engagement tactics.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and Recommendations

Food as a subject continues to infiltrate into the social space through Tasty videos, pictures of food, and through millennial interaction and trends. But it is concluded from this quantitative and qualitative study that millennials only interact with food brands if they are appropriately targeted, the content is promoting the account's products and or is entertaining, and if the content itself is on Instagram. Conclusions have been made and further suggestions may help leverage an agency or brand's potential in reaching one of the most influential generations in the digital space.

Use Instagram: Brands in this study (and across the board) are using Instagram more than other mainstream social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter. The reach capability surpasses both Facebook and Twitter and food brands have taken advantage of the fact. However, there are new possibilities in creatively using Instagram through Instagram Stories, Boomerangs, multiple photo selections in the same post, and syncing with other social platforms (that when an Instagram post is made, it can be posted automatically to Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.). If used correctly, a brand can open up more windows to relate with the millennial audience.

Entertain and jab: As mentioned previously, "jabbing" at a customer's interests helps a customer relate with a brand on a personal level. When a millennial laughs or snickers at something relatable on social media, they are more likely to take further action with a post by either liking it, commenting on it, or tagging his/her friends that hold a similar joke or relatable

experience. As demonstrated by Lagunitas, when the brand does not outright talk about the product directly, it performs better on Instagram if the post is entertaining in some way. Whether it is through a video or a single photo attachment, the caption says a lot about how the brand communicates with its customers and how it wants to portray themselves online.

Use the correct language: As iterated in “jabbing” at customers’ interests, a brand can relate with a customer if they speak the same way that its customer does. For instance, if millennials are the target audience, a brand can use words and phrases about roasting, avocados, memes, “swiping right” (Tinder reference), the Kardashian family, etc. to appeal to their interests and trends. If someone is speaking in the same language and in the right context, a follower will be more inclined to interact with the brand and post. This tactic is similar to “jabbing”, but is under the umbrella of how to jab effectively.

Be there at the right time, in the right place, for the right needs: It is one thing to post something that is entertaining and relatable, but the brand needs to post during the times of day and week that its customers will most likely be online. Lagunitas, for example, posted around 5:30PM on its social platforms where its followers were off work and were in the mood to wind down on social media. The company took extra measures to not just be a source of entertainment for its customers, but to remind them that they deserve to relax with a refreshing IPA after their day at work. This need could be covered through the purchase of a Lagunitas drink. Again, Lagunitas does not outright project its call to action in the post, but jabs at the idea during the right time of day on the right platform that its customers are interacting on.

Don't stretch the truth: When catering to millennials, the audience can oftentimes outsmart a concept or idea just from the sheer fact that they are knowledgeable within the online space. Additionally, they are a part of the “foodie” generation that supports sustainability, natural ingredients, and organic harvesting. Therefore, if a food brand claims that their ingredients are natural or that it uses purified water, there is something to consider: that fact alone is not enough to convince the audience that the brand is healthy enough or sustainable enough. There should be hard hitting evidence and reason for claims. This evidence should be strategized in a way that will attract millennials to observe, read, or watch the content. Then, and only then, will millennials may or may not interact with the content and further believe that the brand is making a difference than it was before. Especially in the food and beverage industry, it is becoming difficult for big named brands to make healthier claims if they are not advertised and strategized correctly. If the brand does not have room in one aspect to fully relate with the millennials, then it should not stretch the truth and trick the audience into believing the whole truth. Big named food brands can still leverage potential, but not necessarily in the area of healthier alternatives and ingredients.

Redefine goals and strategies: Social media, the millennial audience, and the food and beverage industry are under constant change. There can only be so much planning that a brand can suffice for a new technical or trend change to interrupt proactivity on social media. Even though the millennial audience will age, they will continue to have a strong influence in purchase decision making and influencer relations online. Their language or trends may change, in fact, they change every month. Staying up to date on relativity will only enhance a brand's relevance. Lastly, the food and beverage industry is looking to expand every year. Whether its through

global restaurant establishments, or adhering to healthier trends, there are more challenges that the industry faces internally. Therefore, when a food brand posts to social media, it has to not only adhere to the trends known behind the scenes, what has made news, and how its going to grow in the future, but it also has to adhere to the relevancy of the platform and who it is targeting. Consequently, constant adjustments and redefining is necessary for goals to be met every quarter. Strategies may change along the way, but it is important to be educated on the current state and what the potential possibilities are in the future.

Conduct primary research: For brands to have an extra edge into gaining insights from its audience, food brands in particular should continue conducting research to confirm that their social media is effective or not. As I conducted my own, numbers were not as telling unlike speaking to millennials directly. Therefore, a food brand can hold more focus groups over a longer period of time to reaffirm successful strategies and to understand the millennial audience even further while developing content. Perhaps the focus groups only involve millennials born in the 1980s as opposed to those born in the 1990s. Will those two generations have similar or drastic views/opinions? The inclusion of different brands in the conversation could also help a primary investigator critically strategize against competitors and use similar tactics that seem to work better than others. Additionally, conducting a longer content analysis could affirm that product promotions and campaigns categories truly have significant findings. Extra data across different food and beverage brands can validate the findings in this quantitative study. A future content analysis can also have extra stipulations and categories to compare and contrast and find a new law that is relevant for the food and beverage industry.

Food for Thought

This month long experiment introduces a topic of conversation for the food and beverage industry's brands and the way it uses social media to attract millennial audiences. A conversation that sheds light on a social media post's relevancy to engagement and then to what extent does the engagement encourage someone to follow the brand and think about it in the future for purchase decision making. Millennials continue to influence the social space, anticipated from their inept knowledge of technology at a young age. Their influence with social media platforms challenge brands, specifically food and beverage brands in the on-going conversations around food.

Food is always talked about because human beings need it to survive, American culture is surrounded by food, and the issue of obesity and processed food is combated through organic ingredients and healthier alternatives. People like to share experiences they find impactful, such as sharing a picture of their meal before it is eaten. So if a brand's products are shared on social media, its impact can be monumental. However, millennials seem to enjoy the niche and personalized brands that make them feel special. They are health conscious and want to show that off in their personal accounts. Therefore, the brands tested in this study may have a disadvantage because they are not these niche, small town, unique brands that millennials can be loyal to. That does not mean that millennials don't enjoy eating or drinking Nestle, Lagunitas, Domino's, or Starbucks, it just not be as likely that they will post about the brands themselves to their own accounts. It also does not mean that they will ignore these brands on their newsfeeds. The posts that grab attention involve promoting a product in the most entertaining way. Brands must continue redefining objectives and researching the effectiveness of their presence on social

media in order for the food and beverage industry to have the most success on sharing their story and engaging with their audiences.

APPENDIX

The Code Sheet

Phase 1: Case Identification

- Post number (put #1 for first post of analyzing)- Column A
- Platform (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)- Column B
- Day of activity- Column C
- Time stamp of activity- Column D

Phase 2: Post Type that Appears on Account Newsfeed

- Only text- Place “1” in Column E
- Text with article link no photo- Place “2” in Column E
- Text with article link with photo- Place “3” in Column E
- Text with video link that displays on the newsfeed/platform- Place “4” in Column E
- Text with video link that opens a new browser- Place “5” in Column E
- Text with a single photo attachment- Place “6” in Column E
- Text with a photo album attachment- Place “7” in Column E
- Only photo- Place “8” in Column E
- Only photo album- Place “9” in Column E
- Only video- Place “10” in Column E
- Other (Check in, Boomerang)- Place “11” in Column E

Phase 3: Origin of Post that Appears on Account Newsfeed/Page

- Owned/created by the user- Place “1” in Column F
- Owned/created by a different source/account/user- Place “2” in Column F

Phase 4: Tag

- If there is an existing tag, account tagged a different source/account/user- Place “1” in Column G
- If there is an existing tag, account was tagged by a different source/account/user- Place “2” in Column G

Phase 5: Content Category

- Mostly company product attributes: content that highlights product information- Place “1” in Column H
- Mostly company product enticement: content that entices audience to purchase/buy a product through a call to action phrase/statement- Place “2” in Column H
- Mostly company service attributes: content that highlights service information- Place “3” in Column H
- Mostly company service enticement: content that entices audience to purchase/buy a service through a call to action phrase/statement- Place “4” in Column H
- Mostly company campaign/movement attributes: content that highlights a campaign/movement- Place “5” in Column H

- Mostly company campaign/movement enticement: content that entices audience to participate or join a campaign/movement- Place “6” in Column H
- Mostly company event attributes: content that highlights an event hosted or participating by the company- Place “7” in Column H
- Mostly company event enticement: content that entices audience to participate or RSVP to an event hosted or participating by the company- Place “8” in Column H
- Mostly a contest or sweepstakes: content listing contest or sweepstakes rules, ways to enter, information- Place “9” in Column H
- Mostly company employee: content featuring work or stories of an employee- Place “10” in Column H
- Mostly corporate social responsibility: any acts of philanthropic focus that the company is stating they have participated in- Place “11” in Column H
- Mostly entertainment: content that does not directly mention the company or any of its products and is used to merely entertain the viewer- Place “12” in Column H
- Mostly fan: feature a fan of the company- Place “13” in Column H
- Mostly employee: featuring work or stories of an employee- Place “14” in Column H

Phase 6: Content Characteristics

- If text is used, number of words- Column I
- If text is used, alliteration is used with 3 or more words in a row (yes or no) - Column J
- If text is used, number of all capital words- Column K
- If text is used, number of whole number- Column L

- If text is used, number of special characters (“SC”) such as !,@,#,\$,%,&,*,(,),~,-,+,?/,/,>,<|, or emoji- Column M
- If text is used, type of special characters or emoji- Column N
- If hashtags are used, number of hashtags- Column O
- If photo is included, people or no people in the image- Column P
- If photo is included, company logo or no company logo in the image- Column Q
- If photo album is included, number of photos posted- Column R
- If video is included, people or no people in the video- Column S
- If video is included, company logo or no company logo in the video- Column T
- If photo or video included, in color or in black and white- Column U

Phase 7: The Results

- Number of comments (in a Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram post)- Column V
- If Facebook, number of shares- Column W
- If Facebook, number of Likes- Column X
- If Facebook, number of “Love”- Column Y
- If Facebook, number of “Haha”- Column Z
- If Facebook, number of “Wow”- Column AA
- If Facebook, number of “Sad”- Column AB
- If Facebook, number of “Angry”- Column AC
- If Twitter, number of favorites- Column AD
- If Twitter, number of retweets- Column AE

- If Instagram, number of likes- Column AF
- If Instagram, number of views- Column AG

The Focus Group Script

Introduction (Understand Who They Are)

- Introduce Principle Investigator
- Year in school
- Major in school

Social Media

- Which platforms do you use?
- Why do you use them?
- Which one is your favorite?
- How often do you use them/which locations/environments do you use them?

Food & Beverage

- What kinds of foods do you like to eat?
- What food trends do you like most?
- What kinds of foods do you like to buy yourself?
- Why do you buy the food brands that you do?
- Do you follow any food brands on social media?
- Why do you follow them?
- If there is an app with the brand, do you have it downloaded on your phone?
- How often do you use the app if applicable?

- What are trends that you see in social media?
- What are trends that you see food brands doing on social media?

Social Media and Food & Beverage Interactivity

- What does following any brand on social media mean to you?
- What does following a food and beverage brand on social media mean to you? What does it do for you?
- What platform do you like best for the food and beverage industry and why?
- What do you like most about following brands on social media?
- What do you least like about following brands on social media/What makes you most annoyed?

Social Media Data Analysis Confirmation

- Do you know Nestle?
 - 3 words that describe Nestle
 - Brand Persona
 - Example post from analysis, ask for commentary
- Do you know Lagunitas Brewing Co?
 - 3 words that describe Lagunitas Brewing Co
 - Brand Persona
 - Example post from analysis, ask for commentary
- Do you know Domino's?
 - 3 words that describe Domino's
 - Brand Persona
 - Example post from analysis, ask for commentary

- Do you know Starbucks?
 - 3 words that describe Starbucks
 - Brand Persona
 - Example post from analysis, ask for commentary
- Which of these brands do you find most entertaining in their ads and or on social media?
- Are you a user of any of these brands?

Focus Group #1 Notes

Introduction (Understand Who They Are)

- *Year in school:* Junior, senior
- *Major in school:* Advertising, biology, international studies, immunology?

Social Media

- *Which platforms do you use?*
 - Instagram, facebook, twitter, snapchat, pinterest
 - Linked in professional
- *Why do you use them?:* Cause im bored, keep up with friends, look at pictures, takes up time
- *When do you use them?*
 - Before bed, first thing when I wake up
 - Week days
 - Use weekend pictures to post during the week

- Standing in line
- Get rid of notifications
- *Which one is your favorite?*
 - Instagram – look at pictures
 - Snapchat – teenager
 - Twitter – you make fun of your life
- *Which locations/environments do you use them?:* Bedtime, in line etc.

Food & Beverage

- *Are there any food & beverage brands you follow? Which ones?*
 - Ocean spray
 - Brands that I have projects on – none for fun
 - Pepsi – I have an internship with them
 - I run a food account – I follow brand partnerships – giveaways
 - No one is following them for fun
 - Denny's on twitter – I like their weirdness
 - Vineyard vines
 - Vera Bradley
 - Lilly
 - Tea accounts
- *Which social platforms do you follow them?:* Twitter, Instagram
- *If there is an app with the brand, do you have it downloaded on your phone?*
 - Starbucks
 - Dunkin

- Dominos
- Target
- Travel
- *How often do you use the app if applicable?:* Whenever I need to – not for fun

Social Media and Food & Beverage Interactivity

- *If you are a current user of the product, why do you follow the brand on social media?*
 - Depends on if their posts are enticing
 - I like them but don't follow them
 - Would never seek them out and follow them
 - If there was an incentive to follow them (pizza for a year)
- *What does following a brand on social media mean to you?:* Promotions, incentives
- *What does following a food and beverage brand on social media mean to you? What does it do for you?*
 - They correlate with my natural interests – reminds me of things I used to do (ballet) (softball)
 - Loyal customer – I would feel bad to unfollow them
 - Too much effort to unfollow them
 - Life Is good (cute sayings)
 - Because of what they are posting and its entertaining

Industry Review

- *What are trends that you see in the food and beverage industry in general?*

- Avocadoes
- Acai bowls
- Smoothies
- Taking pictures of food
- Laptop, planner, glasses, coffee (the aesthetic)
- Update family, story, look for likes
- Twitter is a window for thoughts and soul
- Tweet for the faves and retweets
 - Makes me feel funny, popular
- Likes and comments depend on platform
 - Facebook comments more
 - Instagram is more for the likes (but a combination of both)
- *What makes you most annoyed on social media?*
 - Everyone posting the same picture
 - Snapchat – the sunset last night
 - Frequency in the posts (interruption of news feed)
 - Too professional
- *What do you like about social media?*
 - Keeping up with peoples lives
 - Being informed
 - Get the news

Social Media Data Analysis Confirmation

- Domino's
 - Brand Persona
 - A generous person
 - A group of people
 - A guy in his 30's who smokes weed and plays video games
 - Indulges in guilty pleasures
 - Always on the go, planner, organizer
 - Loves beer and parties
 - Probably in a frat at some point
 - Example post from analysis, ask for commentary
 - Ignore it
 - Scroll past
 - Roll my eyes
 - Read it but not do anything with it
 - Not a lot of likes, not that many comments
 - Its not impressive
- Starbucks
 - Brand Persona
 - Definitely a girl
 - Rich
 - Young professional
 - Very put together
 - Preppy

- Cool friends who like yoga
- Friends who are exactly like her
- Very white girl basic
- Complicated
- Popular girl in school and now you are annoyed with her
- Example post from analysis, ask for commentary
 - I would like it
 - No commenting just liking
 - For the tea
 - For the picture
 - It would annoy me but I would like it
 - I kind of want to go buy it

Last remaining thoughts:

- Food and drink is a hard thing to place on social media opposed to clothing and skiing
 - You need food and drink to live
 - Famous people promoting pre work out etc.
 - Now they show up as ads we might follow them but we would never seek them out
 - Chrome = free drinks
 - Not about the product but about the post and incentive

Focus Group #2 Notes

Social Media

- *Which platforms do you use?:* Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, visco, linked In
- *Why do you use them?*
 - I like to share stuff, see family, pictures, build your personal brand, creep on other people, and connect with friends
 - Like getting likes, because affirmation, you think your funny, satisfaction
- *Which one is your favorite?:* Snapchat, instagram
- *How often do you use them/which locations/environments do you use them?*
 - Time of day: when I wake up and go to bed, lunch
 - Places: class, walking to class

Food & Beverage

- *What kinds of foods do you like to eat?*
 - rice cakes, sandwich, chicken, and chipotle, chick fil a, coffee, diet Snapple, orange juice, tequila
- *What food trends do you like most?:* health trends (cauliflower, zoodles)
- *What kinds of foods do you like to buy yourself?:* Dunkin, quakers, Jiff, Snyder, barilla, tropicana, general mills, coffee mate
- *Do you follow any food brands on social media?:* Halo Top, Dunkin Donuts, and Starbucks
- *Why do you follow them?:* I'm brand loyal, new way of getting emails, getting more information, new products

- *If there is an app with the brand, do you have it downloaded on your phone?*
 - chick fil a, Dunkin, Starbucks, Chipotle, Panera, Ubereats, Giant
 - You get rewards, on the go ordering
- *What are trends that you see in social media?:* decrease of Fb (more articles) use Insta, colored backgrounds, receiving info, not just sharing

Social Media and Food & Beverage Interactivity

- *What does following any brand on social media mean to you?:* I'm brand loyal, new way of getting emails, getting more information, new products
- *What platform do you like best for the food and beverage industry and why?:* Facebook! or Instagram
- *What do you least like about following brands on social media/What makes you most annoyed?:* posting too much, things that don't relate to me, too much information, when they post things that don't relate to their company

Social Media Data Analysis Confirmation

- Do you know Nestle?
 - 3 words that describe Nestle
 - Comforting
 - Classic *****
 - Consistent
- Do you know Domino's?
 - 3 words that describe Domino's
 - Fun *****
 - Happy

- Easy going
- Example post from analysis, ask for commentary
 - I feel hungry, I like it shows a pizza, it doesn't look fake (it's not flawless, it looks real)
 - I would like it and tag my boyfriend/friend
 - I would like it
- Do you know Starbucks?
 - 3 words that describe Starbucks
 - Classy
 - Warm-hearted
 - Reliable *****
 - Example post from analysis, ask for commentary
 - I don't like tea but I would like it
 - I feel like they could have done better
 - The caption is attractive but nothing cool about the picture
 - I would just scroll by it and not like it

Focus Group #3 Notes

Social Media

- *Which platforms do you use?:* Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn, WeChat
- *Why do you use them?*

- Follow news, keep up on information, apps require you to log in with FB
- Stay on top of life updates (family), study break to watch videos,
- *Do you have a favorite one?*
 - Snapchat – a lot easier than texting, you can read facial expressions (talking in person)
 - WeChat – most of my friends are back in china
 - Twitter – sports, news, celebs

Food & Beverage

- *Which food brands do you like to buy yourself?*
 - Coke brand
 - Chick fil a
 - Chipotle
 - Pepridge farm
 - Keebler
 - Oreos
 - Gatorade
 - Hershey
- *When I say “popular food brand”, what comes to mind?*
 - Pepsi
 - Coke
 - General Mills
 - Kellogs
 - Starbucks

- McDonalds
- Subway
- *When I say organic, what comes to mind?*
 - Healthy
 - Green
 - Expensive
 - Natural
 - Delicious
- *What is most important to you about buying food brands or food in general?*
 - Taste
 - Quality
 - Price

Activity

- *Importance of eating food (give 5 reasons and list in in a hierarchy):* Hunger, incentives, taste, price, quantity, nostalgia, comfort food, healthy feeling
- *Food brands associated with each level of importance*
 - Chick-fil-a, chipotle, Dunkin, Panera, KFC, Panda Express, great value, up and up, giant, cuties, Halo, Chiquita banana, coke, Pepsi, Starbucks
 - Separation between branded food and produce

Social Media and Food & Beverage Interactivity

- *Do you follow any food brands on social media?:* Moes, moonpie, Panera app, chick fil a app, chipotle app, Pman app, Starbucks app

- *Why do you follow them?:* The entertainment, comedic side, easier to order food, incentives
- *What do you least like about following brands on social media/What makes you most annoyed?:* False advertisement (doesn't look like what the actual product is), sponsored posts are annoying, sponsoring things that don't relate (Olympics, McDonalds, Coke)
- *If brands were to retweet/like or comment on your post, how would that make you feel?*
 - It would be awesome – it makes me feel good, some publicity, recognition from someone who is popular
 - Confused – a good confused
 - I would feel a little taken advantage of if it was a brand – weird
- *Talk about Pinterest and Snapchat*
 - Which one do you like better in general?
 - Snapchat more general for our age
 - Pinterest more for girls and moms
 - Which one would you like better for food brands?
 - Pinterest for food for recipes
 - Snapchat for ads and pictures

Social Media Data Analysis Confirmation

- *Must have a popular and relevant product in good service*
 - Show Examples
 - Fries
 - More emotion with the fries
 - Steamy pulls me in (I think its funny)

- This one is weird
- Dominos *
 - More real looking
 - I want to eat the food that I see
 - Its more about the food
- Jamba*
 - You can see the product
 - Jamba is better ad
 - Looks more organic with the nature in the background
 - Color contrast
 - Healthier
- Starbucks
 - When I think about coffee its more about the feeling and the sophistication so I like this one
 - Too much going on
- Chick fil a
 - The puppy appeals to everybody
- Starbucks
 - Not everyone knows who this guy is
 - Girls go to Starbucks so this could be trying to appeal to guys
 - It could be funny but I like the dog better
 - You wouldn't take him too seriously because he is funny

- This celeb endorsement could hurt their campaign
 - I would think this one is a little unusual
 - I watch the videos but I don't remember the brand
- Prefer pictures over videos
- Will watch if it is a shorter video
- Don't want my phone to make noise, so picture is better
- Starbucks Ad
 - I would probably get the Blonde, I would try it
 - Used to keep you guessing, what is the next thing
 - Don't know how I am supposed to know how to interpret bold and smooth

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