MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

#FollowUs: Brand Connectivity and Marketing Techniques that Attract
Millennials on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

The increasing digitization of contemporary media and culture—particularly in the West—is changing how companies market themselves to their target audiences. As the millennial generation increases its online presence and its use of mobile digital technologies, companies whose main consumers lie within this demographic are having to shift their marketing tactics to become more technologically- and mobile-friendly. The world of social media, in particular, has become the second (virtual) home for much of the millennial population. How they dress, where they go, and what they eat are all becoming increasingly impacted by the companies, brands, people, and trends they "follow" online. In this Major Research Project (MRP) I will focus on the ways companies are marketing to millennials by focusing on the ways two clothing brands favoured by millennials are marketing and branding themselves on Instagram. I demonstrate that while these companies' brand values may be exceedingly different from one another, their social media/Instagram strategies are surprisingly similar. That is, I will argue that these two clothing brands follow a distinctly similar set of social media marketing techniques in order to bring the best shopping experience—through the use of images and captions—into the digital world and to their millennial audiences. In other words, by adhering to a sort of social media orthodoxy, these brands are able to create a stronger connection between themselves and their millennial generation of followers.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of social media platforms as a means of direct and effective digital communication has risen alongside the widespread adoption of mobile technologies like smartphones. The millennial generation, growing up in tandem with the advancement of mobile communication technologies, has benefited from these improvements. Due to the millennial generation becoming increasingly technologically savvy, marketing is, by necessity, changing and today brands are marketing their products on social media platforms in order to reach and attract the growing market of millennials. The growth of image-based communication has progressed alongside social media advancements, resulting in image-based platforms becoming a primary communication medium for both individuals and companies. Instagram, in turn, has become not only a social media application where friends can share photos with one another, but also a marketing and branding platform that enables brands and companies to connect with consumers (and vice versa).

This major research paper (MRP) will examine Instagram's ability to connect clothing brands to the new consumer generation. In order to do so, this MRP will focus on Instagram posts from the clothing brands American Eagle and Abercrombie & Fitch. These two clothing brands were selected due to their pre-existing sales market with the millennial demographic. While the brands use some similar marketing tactics on Instagram, their respective brand identities outside of the social media realm vary greatly; therefore, their social media marketing strategies offer an interesting source of comparison and were selected for image and textual analysis.

This MRP will engage three research questions that will be the basis of analysis and discussion throughout the work. The questions focus on how brands use the different aspects of Instagram's interface in order to market their products successfully to the millennial generation, specifically examining the role of both text and image. These research questions will be reinforced by the literature and analysis presented in the following sections, that will critically analyze the functionality of Instagram and how it can be used as a communicative and marketing tool. The three research questions this MRP will examine are as follows:

(1) According to Carah and Shaul (2016), images are integral for brands to promote themselves on Instagram, as well as for users to promote brands. How do brands use Instagram's image-based platform to define their brand identity and products through images?

(2) Carah and Shaul (2016) state that adding a caption to a photo is a crucial way to add content to Instagram posts and a way to extend marketing and communication efforts. How do brands use text, in the form of captions and #hashtags, in order to impact the messages they are communicating to the millennial generation on Instagram?

(3) As argued by Petrov, Zubac, and Milojević (2015), social networks represent a strong channel through which brands can communicate with both current and potential customers. How do brands use Instagram in order to create strong communication channels between themselves and the millennial generation?

Of course, it is important to recognize that the topic of social media branding extends beyond clothing brands and millennials. Indeed, today more and more companies and organizations are turning to social media as a marketing platform for their products and services. So while this MRP focuses solely on the brand connectivity of clothing brands and the millennial

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generation, many of the observations and conclusions offer insight into the the pervasive role of

social media marketing in modern day Western society.

BACKGROUND: ABERCROMBIE & FITCH AND AMERICAN EAGLE

For decades, North America has witnessed the marketing and sales progression of two clothing behemoths: American Eagle and Abercrombie & Fitch. These companies, being present in the market across generations, have been responsible for rebranding themselves according to their ever-changing market of consumers. With the constant evolution of consumers' style preferences and brand expectations, it is crucial that brands like American Eagle and Abercrombie & Fitch find new and innovative ways to communicate with their audiences.

Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle are working to replicate online the experience of being in a store by providing Instagram images that present their products in a way that's strikingly similar to their retail stores. By replicating the experience of shopping in a store through the visual presentation of clothing products, Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle are able to communicate with the millennial generation by providing them with a virtual shopping experience that mimics that of going to a mall. Since millennials make up over 70% of Instagram's user base (Ibrahim, 2015), it is important that these clothing brands make themselves as present on social media as they are in the mall. The following section will provide a brief history of the two companies in order to contextualize their marketing strategies and how these methods have evolved with the evolution of social technologies.

Abercrombie & Fitch

Founded in 1892, Abercrombie & Fitch was originally a company built on the foundation of selling sporting goods and clothing. In 1988, when the company was purchased by The Limited, Abercrombie & Fitch made a shift to selling clothing to the young adult audience. Since

receiving a high-volume of attention in 1997 due to this shift in merchandise, Abercrombie &

Fitch has been a competitive clothing company in the North American young adult market.

In its early days focusing on youth marketing, Abercrombie & Fitch was especially

notorious due to the controversial brand photography by Bruce Weber, who photographed

usually semi-nude Abercrombie & Fitch models in black and white film (Reichert & Lambiase,

2005). Most notably, Abercrombie & Fitch is known for its in-store marketing, featuring risqué

photographs on the walls and product packaging, shirtless models in the store, and the

publication of the explicitly sexualized *A&F Quarterly* (Feran, 2010). These marketing

techniques were put in place in order to promote Abercrombie & Fitch's concept of "casual

luxury," which was self-defined by the company as the use of "the finest cashmere, pima cottons,

and highest quality leather to create the ultimate in casual, body-conscious clothing" (Casual

Luxury image from abercrombie.com, as cited in Reichert & Lambiase, 2005). Aside from the

marketing of "casual luxury," Abercrombie & Fitch also achieved this by selling clothing for

double the American standard selling price in the young adult market (Reichert & Lambiase,

2005). According to Engel (2004), Abercrombie & Fitch purposefully links their clothing with a

particular lifestyle:

> The blatant linkage between clothing and lifestyle identity suggests that people who
> wear A&F hats listen to a particular type of music, people who wear A&F shirts surf
> these particular websites or play these particular sports, and people who wear A&F cargo
> shorts read these specific books or watch these films. In short, in a tautological and self-
> reinforcing dynamic, people who wear A&F apparel adopt the A&F lifestyle. (p. 30)

The marketing tactics used by Abercrombie & Fitch in the past decades have been considered

controversial due to their being over-sexualized. An interview in 2006 with Abercrombie &

Fitch's CEO, Mike Jeffries, suggested that the main message of Abercrombie & Fitch's company

values was the intention to target young adults who were considered "popular" and "good-looking" (Denizet-Lewis, 2006). This controversy called Abercrombie & Fitch's values into question, driving away sales from their traditional audience as a result.

Due to these public opinions, Abercrombie & Fitch was in need of a brand overhaul in order to compete in the less-expensive, less-sexualized corner of the young adult apparel market. In recent years, Abercrombie & Fitch has attempted to compete with fast-paced clothing companies such as Forever 21. To do so, the company has begun to remove previously considered "permanent" components of their marketing strategy, including the removal of model photographs in stores and on promotional pieces. Additionally, Abercrombie & Fitch has chosen to omit the presence of shirtless models at store openings (Kell, 2015). Additionally, Abercrombie & Fitch has transitioned their media marketing to better represent their products in and of themselves as opposed to their past emphaisis on representations of sex and nudity.

Abercrombie & Fitch is a crucial brand to examine for this MRP since they represent a controversial—yet resilient—retailer. Although their company values have been scrutinized by the public, Abercrombie & Fitch is able to maintain a strong and influential presence on social media.

American Eagle Outfitters

American Eagle Outfitters was founded in 1977 as an American-based clothing retail store. According to Salamie, Rhodes & Gasbarre, (2014), in a similar beginning to that of its competitor, Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle originally marketed itself as a retailer specializing in apparel for outdoor activities such as football, hiking, and mountain climbing.

The company shifted its focus in 1989, and began selling targeting its products to young adults

and teenagers. Due to similarities with other clothing retailers, American Eagle chose to focus on

private-label merchandising in 1992 (Salamie, Rhodes & Gasbarre, 2014). As the company

expanded itself outside of the United States and begun to open new locations in countries such as

Canada, American Eagle quickly experienced an increase in both public attention and sales. As

stated by Salamie, Rhodes & Gasbarre, (2014), American Eagle's primary demographic was

rapidly growing:

> During the late 1990s, the U.S. teen population—AE's key demographic—expanded
> more rapidly than the general populace. Women's Wear Daily, a clothing industry
> periodical, called AE "one of the hottest retailers in the country," citing it as "a case study
> on how to build a brand." (p. 67)

Expanding their company, American Eagle launched a sister company, Aerie, that focused its

products on lingerie and swimwear for the company's core demographic. Additionally, American

Eagle also attempted to open a children's retail store, 77Kids, which was ultimately unsuccessful

and was sold in 2012 (Salamie, Rhodes & Gasbarre, 2014).

While it rose in popularity, American Eagle remained one of the top young adult retailers

in both Canada and the United States. However, in order to further separate from its competitors,

the company stepped outside the box and began a new campaign to better relate to their target

audience, both in stores and on social media. In 2014, American Eagle launched the #AerieReal

campaign, which promoted the depiction of "real" teens and young adults. American Eagle

decided to forego the photoshopping of their models and, instead, left their blemishes and tattoos

untouched (Dockterman, 2014). This campaign gained traction during its launch in 2014,

drawing positive attention to the company's values (Dockterman, 2014). As Dockterman (2014)

notes her in article, American Eagle's campaign extended beyond in-store marketing and also

moved online, stating that:

> The new Aerie site, for instance, will allow an online shopper to see how the bra she likes would fit on a model with a similar body type and breast size as her own. Being able to see the items on those models with various cup sizes will help the customer visualize the items on her own body. (Para. 5)

As the campaign continued, the company encouraged American Eagle consumers to post photos

of themselves on social media using the #AerieReal hashtag. In doing so, American Eagle is

intent on promoting a non-discriminatory view of body shapes and sizes.

American Eagle was chosen for analysis due to their unique and innovative company

values. While their products resemble those of their competitors, American Eagle also

demonstrates socially progressive values that are well respected within the retail market. It is

important to consider how American Eagle is able to maintain and depict their core values, while

also sticking to popularized and successful methods of social media marketing.

METHODS, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data collection method that will be used for this MRP will be a comparative content analysis and visual semiotic analysis — a text and image analysis — of two clothing brands on Instagram. The clothing brands I have selected for this MRP have been selected due to the similar ways they market themselves to the millennial generation through their Instagram accounts. The data collected here will revolve around communication between the millennial users and the selected brand, with a particular focus on the ways images and captions are used to garner a higher number of comments and "likes" from their targeted audiences.

The data collected from the two Instagram accounts will be drawn from three key Instagram posts from each account. The posts chosen will include: the image, the caption, and any comment interaction between company and consumer that is indicated on the selected posts. The six total Instagram posts will be manually selected by identifying the three most-liked image-based posts on each account beginning on January 1st, 2016 up to and including April 1st, 2016. Screenshots of the selected posts have been taken from the Instagram website rather than the mobile application due to stronger visibility of all aspects being analyzed including: image, caption, comments, and "likes." The data collected is presented in an appendix at the end of the MRP.

Due to the scope of this MRP, only image-based posts will be examined. Additionally, only six images are being analyzed for this MRP. This modest sample size has been chosen in order to be able to more deeply examine the marketing tactics of each company. As well, this small sample size will allow for a more in-depth discussion about the marketing techniques used on each Instagram post selected. By collecting the selected Instagram posts from American Eagle

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and Abercrombie & Fitch, this MRP benefits from specific real-world examples of how brands market themselves to the millennial generation on Instagram. The data also provides the reader with a visual reference to better understand the different aspects of Instagram branding that will be discussed throughout the entirety of this MRP.

The majority of the research methods that will be conducted for this MRP will be qualitative. This MRP relies heavily on critical textual and image analysis of both scholarly sources and data collected from two separate clothing brand accounts on Instagram. This paper uses the methodology of content analysis as a means of providing specific examples of brand-engagement and connectivity from the two analyzed Instagram accounts. By viewing select posts from two clothing brands on Instagram, this MRP offers an analysis of some of the ways brands are capable of successfully marketing to and connecting with millennial Instagram users through comment engagement and photo quality. The visual social semiotic framework is used in the analysis of the Instagram posts in order to critically examine the selected posts and their inferred marketing techniques. Literature has been reviewed in order to grasp a concrete understanding of visual social semiotic image analysis. This framework best assists the content analysis outlined in this MRP as it provides insight into the intended meaning behind the photographer's artistic intentions and the photograph itself. Visual social semiotic image analysis allows for the contextualization of how the selected clothing brands communication and connect with the millennial generation through their Instagram posts and interactions.

The data was initially analyzed using a codebook (A7) in order to determine patterns in each brand's particular marketing and connectivity techniques. Following the initial codebook analysis, more in-depth image and textual analysis was conducted in order to determine how

both brands use their Instagram accounts to market themselves to the millennial demographic. Findings and patterns found in both American Eagle's and Abercrombie & Fitch's Instagram branding will be discussed in separate sections in order to determine the specific techniques each brand uses across posts and how these techniques differ across brands. This method has been chosen since the Instagram posts being analyzed between brands will differ significantly in their methods in pursuit of brand connectivity. Individual analysis will provide insight into the multitude of techniques used by the two selected clothing brands. The intention of this data analysis is to discover both similar and differing ways in which clothing brands are able to market their products successfully to their target audience using Instagram as a communicative platform.

LITERATURE REVIEW

        To provide scholarly context for this MRP it is crucial to consider literature that both

critically analyzes and discusses Instagram as a social media application. The following literature

review examines four major topics related to brand connectivity and Instagram including: (1)

Instagram as a successful platform; (2) Instagram as a communication tool; (3) marketing on

Instagram; (4) public participation on Instagram. The literature review also provides insight into

(5) theories of visual semiotics and image analysis. I have divided this literature review into

these five sections in order to break down and describe Instagram's complex interface as well as

to explore the theoretical background behind image analysis methods. The focus of the literature

review surrounding these texts will exclude an analysis of Instagram's video feature, as this MRP

will solely be examining the use of images as a branding technique. These five main topics will

present texts that assist in defining how Instagram acts as a platform that can facilitate

connectivity between brand and the millennial consumer. Additionally, the literature presented

will discuss methods of visual semiotics and how to analyze Instagram's images.

1) Instagram as a Successful Platform

        The majority of the literature that analyzes Instagram discuss how it has become an

online space where individuals are able to share their photographs with friends and

acquaintances. Marwick (2015) provides a succinct definition of the social media site:

> Instagram is a mobile application available for the iOS and Android mobile operating
> systems. The app allows users to upload photographs, manipulate them using filters,
> share them with other Instagram users, and comment on or "like" the photos of
> others. (p. 142)

My exploration of literature that analyzes Instagram as a successful social media platform revealed a shift in social media use that suggests visual means of communication are becoming increasingly popular. Marwick (2015) contends that Instagram has become a system used for documentary purposes, since mobile phones tend to be carried by individuals during their everyday activities. In a similar manner, Ibrahim (2015) points out the emergence of individuals feeling the need to capture moments of everyday life and upload them to photo-sharing applications, such as Instagram for all the world to see. To this end, Instagram becomes an application that traffics in immediacy, and a tool for timely photo-posting and the cultivation of a real-time, ubiquitous, and always on visual culture. Therefore, the desire to communicate visually through images may come in part because of a need for immediacy when it comes to posting photographs online.

Due to the public's obsession with posting images on a daily basis for other users to see, Ibrahim (2015) notes that applications such as Instagram have seen a major growth in popularity since the early 2010s. She specifically notes how Instagram "witnessed an 85% increase in active users in 2012" (p. 43). With images being posted on an almost daily basis by most users, Instagram becomes a space in which the everyday lives of users gain allure and can be idealized and/or coveted. Ibrahim (2015) defines this notion of capturing and uploading trivial images as "banal imaging" (p. 43). She refines this term by noting how banal imaging is capable of recording things from daily routines to life milestones such as birthdays and family reunions. Ibrahim (2015) understands Instagram as a space in which individuals can practice banal imaging and, in turn, self-narrate life's events through photographs. Vivienne and Burgess (2013) note that there is an ever-present notion of storytelling and narrative power tied to photography.

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Social media platforms, such as Instagram, are being used in a modern setting in order to convey stories and memories to others. Instagram, then, is used as a platform in which individuals share their personal memories in a digital space. Ibrahim (2015) contends that these images contain the potential to glamourize one's own life through the consistent editing and uploading of daily activities — exciting or not. Marwick (2015) builds on the concept of self-narrating and glamourizing by noting how the photographer actively participates in the Instagram experience by transforming and reprocessing images with frames and filters. Therefore, banalized images on Instagram have a capability of becoming glamourized through the acts of editing and sharing them with others.

When investigating literature on Instagram as a successful platform, the importance of the application's functionality was often mentioned. Carah and Shaul (2016) note the two main functions Instagram has that allow for photo sharing:

> The app has a combination of curated and algorithmically generated feeds of images. The "home" feed is a stream of images curated by users, based on the accounts they follow. The "explore" feed is algorithmically generated, based on images and accounts that are popular in a user's network or region. (p. 71-2)

Carah and Shaul (2016) further analyze the functionality of Instagram by noting that users can "manually" input algorithmically relevant data to their photos by adding hashtags in their captions. This addition filters images and allows other Instagram users to search simply by hashtags in order to specify their results. Carah and Shaul's (2016) discussion of Instagram's functionality is an important critical analysis for this MRP as it demonstrates how images are capable of reaching a wide range of Instagram-savvy users through different filtering processes such as following other users, scrolling through the "Explore" page, and adding hashtags to

photo captions. It also demonstrates the success of the application and its ability to provide its users with the capability to control their own experiences on the application.

The literature surrounding Instagram and its success as a social media platform is a critical starting point for this MRP as it provides foundational information regarding how the application functions on multiple levels. More specifically, the literature in this section discusses how Instagram's photo-sharing capabilities challenge the ways in which individuals choose to narrate their own lives on social media sites, namely by giving them the opportunity to post images rather than written text. In regards to Carah and Shaul's (2016) work, the importance of Instagram's photo-searching functionality is also discussed. This work demonstrates how Instagram caters to users and their individual interests. However, the literature tends to lack discussion of how the caption portion of Instagram contributes to the overall functionality. This idea is one that will be further discussed in this MRP, as it is a pivotal aspect of understanding how brands can effectively communicate to current and future consumers.

2) Instagram as a Communication Tool

When examining social media sites, specifically Instagram, it is important to examine literature that analyzes how these platforms function as a communication tool between users. As van Dijck (2013) explains, when platforms were beginning to be formed on the Web 2.0 infrastructure, they were presenting themselves as being systems that could efficiently transmit communication and information. This was specifically the case with the creation of several social media sites. Along with the emergence of social media sites comes a space for two-way communication between sender and receiver. According to Petrov, Zubac, and Milojević (2015),

social networks bring with them a sense of transparency and authenticity. By providing the ability to share an individual narrative with others, the story moves from being about "me" to being about "you." Social media, then, acts as a communication tool through which individuals can communicate on a seemingly transparent and personal level — one that is relatable and familiar to users.

Ibrahim (2015) argues that the visual image has increasingly become an integral aspect of human communication. According to Murray (2015), "social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr enable the easy and spontaneous dissemination of images" (p. 491) and on social media the spread of images is almost immediate and, therefore, speeds up the communication between users.

In regards to communicating using photographic imagery, the ease of posting an image to Instagram satisfies the need for fast-paced interactions between friends and colleagues. Ibrahim (2015) argues that contemporary, technologically-based culture encourages millennials to post personal photographs on image-sharing social media sites such as Instagram. This argument holds to the notion that Instagram is capable of satisfying the desire to communicate both quickly and effectively. The encouragement to post photographs as a means of communicating demonstrates the social desire to actively show others what you are doing at any given moment — banal or otherwise. As noted by van Dijck (2013), due to Instagram's mainly public interface and ability to scan through multiple unrelated photographs, audiences come and go at a rapid pace. This statement coincides with the above observations that Instagram and other social media platforms provide communication tools that privilege immediacy. For Instagram specifically, images spread to a wide audience at a fast pace and pass by different users just as quickly.

Ibrahim (2015) also notes that Instagram as a photo-sharing application has a capability to transform banal and everyday images into "an imagery of conventions which the wider public can connect with" (p. 44). According to Ibrahim (2015), "visual communication is undeniably a primordial form of human communication" (p. 47). Therefore, Instagram presents its users with a basic method of interaction by using images in combination with social conventions for the majority of communication. Aside from examining the ways in which images on Instagram act as a tool for communication, Carah and Shaul (2016) also argue that the use of textual communication, specifically through hashtag use, is crucial to create richer interactions between users. They argue that because the number of consumers outweighs the amount of content an Instagramer can produce, hashtags serve as a means of streamlining communication between producer (e.g. a brand like American Eagle) and consumer.

When examining social media communication tools, much of the literature focuses on two-way communication between users. These works are important to this MRP as they provide insight into the affordances of social media, namely Instagram, as a tool for brands to interact with consumers at a more rapid pace. However, the information provided only discusses user-to-user communication and does not consider the communication between user and image. More specifically, much of the literature does not address how the images themselves on Instagram communicate certain messages to users and, in turn, communicate for the user posting the image.

3) Marketing on Instagram

In order to examine specific case studies of how brands market to millennial Instagram users, literature surrounding marketing techniques on Instagram needs to be analyzed. Carah and

Shaul (2016) note that brands rely on the content consumers use to participate on social media sites. Petrov, Zubac, and Milojević (2015) note that social networks represent a strong channel through which brands can communicate with both current and potential customers. In the context of this MRP, it is important to examine how photo-sharing applications present this channel of communication.

Carah and Shaul (2016) state that "Instagram enables market relations to form through everyday life and cultural space around the production and circulation of images" (p. 71). Through the use of social media, Petrov, Zubac, and Milojević (2015) note that information about brands are more immediate on social media platforms whereas, in the past, customers had to search harder in order to gather the information they required about a brand. Carah and Shaul (2016) highlight Instagram's paid advertising feature, which allows users to see sponsored posts by brands they are not following. Rather than simply focusing on how brands promote themselves, Carah and Shaul (2016) also argue that Instagram users promote brands themselves by incorporating their product in photographs of their everyday lives. For example:

> As a consumer puts on clothes they have bought from a fashion retailer in
> the privacy of their own bedroom, takes a selfie and posts it to Instagram with the brand
> hashtag, their bedroom and body becomes part of the promotional apparatus of the
> brand. (Carah & Shaul, 2016, p. 71)

In order to market oneself successfully on Instagram, Carah and Shaul (2016) argue that posting photographs that draw attention is crucial when initiating interaction through technology. They continue by stating that brand promotion and marketing on Instagram is comprised of two steps. Firstly, there is communication regarding the construction of the image that is being taken. Carah and Shaul (2016) specifically state that brands "make judgments about how to capture, edit, and

circulate images of their lived experience" (p. 71). Secondly, the flow of images on Instagram are modified through the acts of scrolling, liking, and commenting. Therefore, in order to promote a specific brand on Instagram to potential millennial consumers, it is evident that both the brand and the consumer have the potential to market a brand's product through the act of photo-sharing. Due to Instagram's public interface, the act of brand promotion and connectivity becomes much more open as it is capable of reaching more people in both digital and social settings.

The literature presented in this section demonstrates techniques brands are able to use to market effectively to Instagram users. The works provide valuable insight into social media marketing techniques used solely on photo-sharing applications. The literature also expresses how Instagram users themselves are also capable of becoming brand promoters and how they can become, intentionally or unintentionally, connected to a brand through their own personal photographs. However, these texts do not explicitly examine how brands are capable of marketing themselves to specific groups of Instagram users.

4) Public Participation on Instagram

Literature on the participation and engagement of the millennial generation on social media is important to this MRP since it allows for an examination of how this participation can connect brands and consumers. Carah and Shaul (2016) define Instagram participation and engagement as taking the form of "likes and comments, but also pauses on particular images, tapping on hashtags, or visiting individual accounts" (p. 71). Therefore, participation from an Instagram user extends beyond logging into an account and moves towards actively engaging

with the content on the site. It is also important to consider how the millennial generation participates on social media differently than other age demographics. It is crucial, then, to analyze prior works critically that have researched millennial participation on social media in order to contextualize it in regards to the digital relationship between brand and young consumer.

Moschovi, McKay, and Plouviez (2013) place an emphasis on Web 2.0's ability to encourage audience participation. Specifically, they note how websites that centre around the creation and presentation of personal photography encourage users to become content creators and to produce their own photographic artwork. This argument demonstrates a contemporary media environment in which Internet users are encouraged to participate on social media by creating their own content to share with others. Ibrahim (2015) specifically notes the participation of young people on social media, stating that a Forbes report "cited teenagers as losing interest in Facebook and migrating to other social media such as mobile chat and photo-sharing sites such as Instagram" (p. 43). She contends that photographs in a digital space have become a form of online currency, in which 46% of Americans post personal images online. This demonstrates a high level of visually-based participation from social media users. Ibrahim (2015) also emphasizes the "predominance of photo sharing among the younger generation" (p. 43). The participation of the millennial generation on Instagram, then, far exceeds that of older populations.

For Carah and Shaul (2016), branding on Instagram relies on the participation of its users. This observation demonstrates the inherent importance of social media participation in that it depicts how participation on Instagram directly effects other uses of the application, such as branding and campaigning. They further argue that engagement on social media is significant

because "each interaction with an image generates data that makes the image available in wider flows of content on the platform" (Carah & Shaul, 2016, p. 75). Petrov, Zubac, and Milojević (2015) also note that the active participation of users adds to the advantage of using social media sites as a branding platform. For purposes such as branding public participation on social media becomes integral as it assists in the promotion of specific posts. For Instagram, the act of engaging with photographs through liking and commenting is crucial for users since it increases both image popularity and social engagement.

When considering the research questions for this paper, the notion of active participation on social media became evident. The literature presented in this section demonstrates an analysis of a specific generation's participation on social media, specifically millennials. Moreover, it demonstrates how brands participate on social media and, in turn, encourage their consumers to participate as well. The literature provided, however, lacked a discussion as to how public participation on social media impacts brand connectivity to the millennial generation. Moreover, it lacked a conversation surrounding situations where public participation is absent from social media platforms.

5) Visual Semiotics and Image Analysis

In order to analyze the brands' selected Instagram images effectively, it is crucial that literature surrounding visual semiotics and image analysis is reviewed. The use of visual semiotics in this MRP will assist in refining the image analysis process as it will aid in identifying already-existing social signs found in the selected Instagram posts. The semiotic framework will also assist in identifying how the images detract or enhance the text they are

paired with. The literature in this section will provide an overview of visual semiotics and image analysis.

Harrison (2003) defines semiotics as the study of signs, stating that a sign's existence is dependent on it holding a particular meaning. To this end, signs become a representation of larger meanings. Harrison (2003) goes on to define social semiotics as a branch of the larger term that focuses specifically on social meaning and resources. Social semiotics varies between communities, creating a difference in the meaning of signs between social groupings. Harrison (2003) also explores the new area of visual social semiotics, which will be used as the primary framework for this MRP. She argues that visual social semiotics works to identify what can be said and done about a given image and how an image can be interpreted. Harrison (2003) further notes that visual social semiotics works to determine how an image detracts or enhances the text it accompanies. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) extend this idea by stating that images not only represent meanings of the real world, but also play "a part in some interaction and, with or without accompanying text, constitutes a recognizable kind of text" (p. 140). This is a crucial aspect of this MRP, as both image and textual analysis will be conducted for the Instagram images selected. To this end, it is important to examine how an image is presented through the Instagram platform through the effective or ineffective use of signs and how the image accompanies the caption beneath it.

When analyzing an image, Harrison (2003) notes the importance of considering the perspective from which the photo was taken. She argues that different perspectives can suggest a variety of power dynamics and direct and focus the attention of the audience. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) similarly argue that power and involvement are two key aspects when considering

perspective. They further contend that in order to understand the intended meaning behind a photograph, it is best to look first at the perspective from which the photo was taken. If the angle of an image suggests a high level of power from the photographer (i.e. if the image is shot from above), than little involvement is provided to the viewer. However, if the angle of the photograph suggests a low power dynamic (i.e. if the image is shot from below), then equality among photographer and viewer is more easily established (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). The angle of the photograph, then, can influence the meaning viewers grasp from an image. This is particularly important when considering brand connectivity on Instagram, as clothing brands must interpret how their targeted audience will derive meaning from their images.

In addition, Harrison (2003) argues that examining the linguistic structure of the text beneath a picture is important when determining how it directs the focus of an image and whether or not the image enhances the intended message of the caption. Therefore, it is important to consider how the brand intended for their message to be read and how it is presented in actuality from an objective point of view. The aspects of visual social semiotic analysis listed above will be used here in order to understand some of the ways the selected images are marketing the brands to the millennial generation.

In order to derive a social semiotic meaning from an image, Jewitt and Oyama (2001) argue that it is crucial that one examine how the image holds interactive meaning. Interactive meaning is defined as being an image that creates a specific relationship between viewers and the subjects — or objects — inside the picture and is determined by three main factors: distance, contact, and point of view (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Contact, according to Jewitt and Oyama (2001), refers to the ways in which the subject(s) in an image "make contact" with the viewer.

This can be done through both direct eye contact and indirect contact, such as facial expressions. Distance is determined by the size of the frame the photograph was taken in. By taking an image that is in a close range to the main subject or object, the viewer feels drawn into the photograph as opposed to detached or removed (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Lastly, Jewitt and Oyama (2001) note that point of view is directly correlated with the perspective of the photograph and how involved the viewer is able to feel. These three factors will be extensively considered throughout the image analysis portion of this MRP.

The literature in this section shed light on visual social semiotic techniques that lend themselves to image analysis. The texts reviewed provide key information as to how to approach examining Instagram images and what to look for when considering photographer and viewer interaction and connectivity. However, the literature in this section was not as recent as it could have been. Further research will be conducted that examines image analysis on social media rather than paintings and print advertisements. While the literature above covers much of the theoretical background required to analyze images thoroughly, newer research that specifically focuses on social media images would be useful.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section will provide a visual semiotic analysis and discussion surrounding the images collected during the selection process. Prior to this analysis, an initial codebook was constructed in order to garner initial research. This codebook can be found in the appendix (A7) of this MRP and items found in the coding process will be referred to throughout. The data collected will be discussed and analyzed based on the following categories: (a) image description; (b) image and caption relationship; (c) intended message; (d) brand-to-customer connectivity and/or interaction. Following the analysis of the individual images selected, each section will provide an overview of the importance of the photographs as well as any conclusions drawn from the analysis process. The data is divided by clothing brand and discussed within that section, both separately and as a cohesive unit in the conclusion. It is important to note that over 70% of Instagram is made up of millennial users (Ibrahim, 2015). It is crucial to keep this in mind as these clothing companies—who target millennials as their main consumers—follow branding techniques that fall in line with Instagram trends. Due to Instagram's users being primarily born into the millennial generation, these techniques mimic techniques created and use by this specific group of people. As Pham (2015) states, millennials are trend-setters on Instagram, leaving brands to follow their trends and techniques of social media communication.

American Eagle

The first image (A1) depicts an overhead view of selected items from American Eagle's spring/summer collection. This image garnered over 63,000 "likes" and over 500 comments 10

weeks after the initial posting date. The image itself includes various items of clothing including: shirts, pants, shoes, and a romper.


The caption of the photograph reads: "It was love at first blush. #AEOSTYLE." This caption directly correlates to the image as it distinctly references the intended colour-coordination of the clothing items chosen for the photograph. The caption directs the viewer to the photograph and asks them to notice the colour scheme if not previously noticed. In this instance, the brand uses the caption in order to tease the idea of American Eagle's spring/summer colour theme by drawing attention to its colour-coordinated theme of blush pink.

The photograph suggests a simple and direct way of advertising many new clothing items in a single image. By creating a colour scheme and laying the clothes out periodically, the image signals the introduction of new merchandise. The caption enhances the chosen colour scheme by playfully hinting at the colour scheme in the photograph. Although there is no human subject in this photograph, the clothing items become the subject speaking to the viewers. In this case, the clothing items are "selling themselves" as they are presented in such a way that shows their shape, structure, and pattern. This photo acts as a way for American Eagle to market their new

products to their consumers without having to make multiple posts for each individual item. The perspective of the photograph is also taken directly above in a small enough frame that the detail in each item of clothing is not compromised. This angle may have been chosen intentionally in order to direct the eyes of the viewer and show them the clothing, rather than allowing them to scan the image for other aspects such as scenery or the model wearing the clothing.

While there is no direct interaction between the American Eagle Instagram account and the users commenting on the photograph, this image received higher likes than those featuring live models or mannequins, which typically receive an average of 40,000 "likes" per post. The reception of the photograph is positive, as the comments in the sample show users commenting on the items of clothing they like in the image. However, this image lacks any personal connection between the brand and the millennial user. While the clothing presented receives positive comments from users, the brand is not directly interacting with their users. This direct connection could have been achieved through a more enticing caption such as: "Tickled pink! Which item is your favourite from the #AEOSTYLE Spring Collection?" A caption such as this leaves users the option to respond to American Eagle and answer their question. Since users are already pointing out their favourite item in the comments, a caption that further suggest users leave comments doing this would likely have achieved a higher level of brand connectivity with its millennial audience.

The second image (A2), achieving more than 62,000 "likes" and over 700 comments 11 weeks after being posted, depicts an entire outfit created by American Eagle's social media team, displaying a romper, shoes, and accessories.
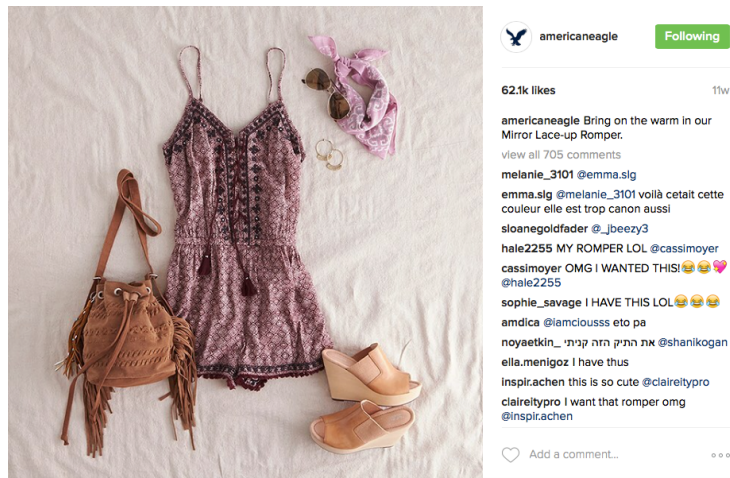
This image provides the viewer with a visualization of an outfit they can create from American Eagle's spring/summer collection. The outfit was taken against an off-white background, allowing the various colours in the outfit to pop more dramatically. The wide-variety of items in this image also demonstrate how American Eagle consumers can shop for all outfit pieces in one place (i.e. American Eagle customers can shop for clothing, accessories, and shoes without having to leave the store).

This photograph's caption reads: "Bring on the warm in our Mirror Lace-up Romper." This caption directly references the main focal point of the photograph—the romper. This caption is particularly interesting as it does not draw attention to any of the other items in the image. Rather than calling out that these items can all be purchased at American Eagle stores (or online), the caption simply calls the viewer's attention to the romper in the centre of the photograph. In doing so, the caption shifts the focal point away from being about a one-stop shop for an entire outfit and, instead, focuses on what they most likely assume to be their best-selling item featured in the image. Additionally, unlike the previous Instagram image (A1), this caption does not include a hashtag to filter users to this image. Rather, this image relies solely on current followers looking at this post, or other Instagram users to stumble upon this image on

Instagram's "Explore" page. However, due to the number of likes this photograph received, the addition of a hashtag to the photograph may not have garnered much more attention than it already received.

As previously noted, this image provides an opportunity for American Eagle to showcase their store's range of products. It shows Instagram users how they are able to purchase an entire outfit from the store. In doing so, American Eagle markets itself as a one-stop clothing store with several different types of products to offer consumers. However, the caption contradicts this message by drawing attention to only the romper in the photograph. By doing this, American Eagle discredits themselves from being a multi-item retailer and, instead, brings users back to the notion that American Eagle is first and foremost a clothing retailer. This caption, however, is drawing attention to the highest revenue item featured in the image. By doing this, American Eagle is highlighting their highest revenue-driving item and reiterating this to their followers through the caption. This is a strong marketing technique that causes users to focus on the "most important" part of an image and to gain a particular meaning from it. In this particular instance, American Eagle is drawing their viewers' attentions to the most expensive item, ensuring that interest will be steered toward higher profit purchases.

Similar to the first image (A1), American Eagle does not directly interact with their users in the comment section of the photograph. In addition, there is no call-to-comment in the caption, asking users to respond to a particular question or share their opinions on the image. Instead, the comment section of this particular image is filled with compliments about the romper. Out of all 705 comments on the photograph, most of them express interest in owning the romper. This is particularly interesting, as the caption directly draws attention to the romper. While the

photograph appears to be drawing attention to the fact that the outfit in the image is made up of only American Eagle products, the caption only draws attention to the focal point of the whole outfit—the romper.

The third image selected from American Eagle's Instagram (A3) is the first image analyzed that features a human as the main subject of the image. This image in particular out-performed other human subject-based images on American Eagle's Instagram account, garnering over 61,000 "likes" as opposed to the 40,000 "like" average. This image also received over 250 comments from followers. This picture depicts a female subject facing away from the camera and towards a field full of sunflowers. The female in the picture is wearing denim shorts from American Eagle Outfitters and, therefore, was featured on their account. This photograph was taken from another user's Instagram account and reposted by American Eagle.

The caption of this post reads: "Take it all in this weekend in #AEOSTYLE. #AEOSHORTSCONTEST #Regram @leahgae." The caption of this photograph is much more engaging than previous captions. This photograph uses two hashtags, which is the most out of the samples being analyzed. The first hashtag, #AEOSTYLE, is a typical American Eagle

hashtag that the company uses for consumers to attach to photographs they take of themselves in American Eagle clothing. The hashtag is also used to streamline their images in the Instagram search engine function. In doing so, users are able to find pictures of American Eagle clothing more easily. The second hashtag, #AEOSHORTSCONTEST, is specific to the time period in which the photograph was posted. American Eagle's post is encouraging its followers to participate in a contest, in which they are asked to post photographs of themselves in American Eagle brand shorts and use the hashtag in their caption. The particular caption engages with a particular user, @leahgae, as American Eagle has taken her contest entry and reposted it to their account. In doing so, American Eagle is promoting both their contest and their consumers.

This photograph is intended to promote their contest and ask followers to participate. By reposting another user's photograph, American Eagle is showing that they (a) are looking at the contest entries, (b) are willing to engage with other Instagram users, and (c) appreciate the content of their followers and are willing to repost it to their own account. This photograph's message depicts American Eagle as a company that is in-tune with its followers and is interested in the content they produce. In doing so, American Eagle positions itself as a company that sees the content its followers create and asks for their participation in particular contests and events.

The interaction in this photograph is solely found in the caption portion of the post. American Eagle identifies that they have reposted this image from another account. Aside from this, the account does not interact with any of their followers in the comment section. Most of the comments on this particular post are talking more about the aesthetic of the photograph than the actual contest the post is trying to promote. While American Eagle was able to promote a visible connection between themselves and their followers by reposting one of their follower's

photographs, they missed an opportunity to create a sense of connection when it came to

promoting the contest they had running at the time of this post.

The results of the image analysis above suggest that American Eagle is successful in

marketing their specific clothing items to their target audience: the millennial generation. As

Carah and Shaul (2016) note, brands make specific decisions as to how they are going to capture

their products in a way that will garner attention from their followers and other Instagram users.

In the case of the images analyzed, American Eagle made the stylistic decision to most often

include many different products in one photograph. This decision clearly and concisely depicts a

wide-range of items for their consumers. The first image (A1) presented a corresponding colour

scheme, enhancing the photograph's effect by suggesting that much of the product in the new

collection is able to be mixed and matched. This branding technique encourages American Eagle

consumers to be drawn to purchase many of the items in the photograph as they are shown that

they can go together in multiple ways, simply on the basis of colour.

One thing some of the images lack, however, is a representation of the clothing on a

human subject. While the clothing is nicely displayed and laid out for the consumers, there is no

clear image as to what each item will look like on an actual person. This lack of visual

information leaves followers to scroll through additional Instagram posts in order to find the a

specific item on a model, or to continue to the American Eagle website and search for the

clothing item that way. Therefore, while the method of laying out multiple pieces in one shot

leaves consumers with an image of an entire collection that works together, they are also left

without a grasp of how the actual items will look on a person. Since fit is a major aspect in

marketing clothing to a targeted demographic, American Eagle leaves their consumers to go elsewhere to retrieve further information.

The lack of a human model, however, can also be seen as supporting the branding technique American Eagle set out to use. In this case, by not having a model present in the image, American Eagle is presenting their clothes as something that any body shape can wear. Rather than depicting a specific body type wearing an outfit, the clothing is left to the consumer to be liked based on its physical appearance rather than how it looks on a particular body shape. This ambiguity may leave the millennial consumer wanting to try on an item of clothing to see how it will look on *their* body, rather than making an assumption of how it will look based on how it looks on the model in the image. The image that did depict a human subject (A3), was a post that was selected from another account and reposted onto American Eagle's profile. It is important to note that this photograph was one of the top photographs liked on the American Eagle account during the four month range of data collection, being only one of three photographs with a model that received over 40,000 "likes" during the selection period. Rather than having a photograph of a model as a top-liked image, the one photograph that had a human subject in it was one from another Instagram user. This photograph, then, creates a sense of realism on the American Eagle account. Instead of showing their products on models, American Eagle opted to show a real-life consumer wearing their shorts. In doing so, American Eagle captured a high amount of "likes" on this photograph and, in turn, drew attention to both their contest and a fellow Instagram user who supports their company and their products.

It is also important to note that American Eagle did not engage with their followers in any of the images' comments section. While Instagram does not offer a platform that allows easy

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comment facilitation, the lack of engagement on a more personal level remained absent. It is important to consider that the images may, in the minds of American Eagle's marketers, speak for themselves and that they do not leave commentators requiring further validation from American Eagle. Additionally, with the ability to directly message other Instagram users, it remains unknown as to whether or not American Eagle chooses to privately message those who have concerns regarding products.

The summary of the results in this section demonstrate how the images analyzed above impact the branding techniques of American Eagle via Instagram. These images offer us some insight into how American Eagle wishes to brand their products for their targeted demographic of millennials, specifically by mimicking popularized photography tactics used by millennials. According to Pham (2015), millennials on social media often post photographs of their daily outfits or photos of themselves wearing said outfits. In doing so, Pham (2015) contends that millennials on social media "make choices about when to take a selfie or fashion blog style outfit photo" (p. 224). This, then, becomes a social media trend in which millennials communicate their moods and attitudes to their followers through images of their clothing (Pham, 2015). Pham's argument that millennials follow the trend of outfit photography demonstrates how American Eagle follows suit in order to relate their content to a social media trend. Moreover, it demonstrates a different method of clothing branding that steps outside the traditional model-wearing-clothes genre and, instead, moves towards a less body-centric positioning of their products by laying them out in a single image.

Abercrombie & Fitch

For Abercrombie & Fitch, the first image we'll be analyzing (A4) depicts a sweatshirt hanging outdoors. This image received 59,000 "likes" and over 250 comments 17 weeks after its initial posting date. The sweatshirt features the company name on the front, as well as the state of origin, New York.

The image uses natural sunlight in order to bring colour into an otherwise neutral palate. The lack of colour in the photograph provides an aesthetic that is traditional for Abercrombie & Fitch clothing. Specifically, the lack of colour falls in line with Abercrombie & Fitch's monotone colour scheme that is present in their retail locations and on their official company website. Therefore, the image of this particular piece of clothing falls in line with other areas of the Abercrombie & Fitch company.

The caption for this post reads: "For chilly Montauk mornings & rainy beach days spent indoors—playing cards and laughing a whole lot more. #EastCoasting." This caption is directly referring to the American East Coast. Since Abercrombie & Fitch's main headquarters is on the East Coast, their social media team is able to stay in-touch with current styles of the East Coast and, therefore, market their products accordingly through hashtag use. In doing so, Abercrombie

& Fitch is connecting itself to a particular location and drawing on nostalgic memories that those from that area might experience from reading the caption. The caption also brings purpose to the sweater featured in the image by giving its followers a time and place to wear this sweater. By situating this article of clothing, Abercrombie & Fitch is providing an occasion to wear their merchandise for their followers. The hashtag #EastCoasting places Abercrombie & Fitch outside of traditional brand marketing that usually consists only of brand-specific hashtags (such as American Eagle's #AEOSTYLE hashtag). Rather than using a brand hashtag, Abercrombie & Fitch chose to use one that strays away from their company products. In doing so, Abercrombie & Fitch places itself into a wider range of Instagram user attention. Those who are searching through the hashtag #EastCoasting may not have been looking for Abercrombie & Fitch, but may stumble upon their post and end up following the company as a result. The account also uses a geo-tag in this image, which records that the photo was taken in Montauk, New York. This geo-tag further validates the notion of the East Coast, by placing the company on the East Coast.

The intended message of this photograph, as previously stated above, is to provide both purpose and nostalgic memories into the minds of Abercrombie & Fitch's followers. By speaking to a particular group of people who ideally can make aspirational associations with the East Coast, Abercrombie & Fitch is telling its followers where, how, and when to wear their products. By creating a caption that is—for the most part—situational, Abercrombie & Fitch is streamlining their products for a particular use and, therefore, creating a purpose for their products in the world of retail sales. However, this technique could have been more effective if Abercrombie & Fitch presented an image of East Coasters wearing their products and sitting indoors playing card games like their caption alludes to. While their current caption's story

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leaves room for the imagination, a more direct correlation between the image and the caption would have provided a deeper meaning to the image and perhaps garnered more attention.

While there is no specific interaction between Abercrombie & Fitch and their followers in the comments section, the company does particulary speak to those who live, or aspire to live, on the East Coast. In doing so, Abercrombie & Fitch is drawing attention to a particular group of followers and providing them with fashion suggestions, so-to-speak. By leaving the caption as a statement rather than an open-ended question, Abercrombie & Fitch—much like American Eagle —eliminates themselves from the conversation and allows the comments section to go in any direction it pleases. Rather than asking a question that followers are able to engage with, Abercrombie & Fitch leaves its followers to comment on the post. While some of them mention the East Coast, most of them comment on whether or not they like the sweater featured in the post.

In the second image from Abercrombie & Fitch (A5), which received over 52,000 "likes" and 484 comments 10 weeks after the original post date, an outfit is laid out against a charcoal grey background. The outfit features three items that can be purchased at Abercrombie & Fitch retail locations; including a jacket, a shirt, and denim shorts.

This photograph—similar to that of American Eagle (A2)—depicts an outfit that can be put together with products solely bought at the one retail location. This particular outfit follows a neutral colour scheme, falling in-line, once again, with Abercrombie & Fitch's natural palate. This outfit, then, remains faithful to the brand style of Abercrombie & Fitch and continues to promote their brand identity through its products.

The caption for this post reads: "Goodbye cold weather, hello #Spring. Time to invest in warm-weather outfits for elevated, layered looks. #EastCoasting." This caption, once again, makes use of common hashtags in order to garner attention from those who may not already follow Abercrombie & Fitch on Instagram. Additionally, this post demonstrates a difference between Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle's branding. Abercrombie & Fitch tends to use more hashtags—specifically those that stray away from direct company branding—in order to garner more attention whereas American Eagle tends to use their own company hashtags in order to garner attention. The use of the #Spring hashtag places Abercrombie & Fitch at the centre of an extremely common, yet popular, hashtag. In doing so, Abercrombie & Fitch is ensuring that their posts will be discovered by users who may not have discovered them yet. By adding the #EastCoasting hashtag again, Abercrombie & Fitch is once again directing their post at a particular group of individuals. This suggests that this outfit connects to trends happening on the East Coast for the spring season. It also suggests that those who live on the East Coast should dress in this particular fashion. By adding this hashtag to the caption Abercrombie & Fitch is once again providing fashion advice for its followers by alluding to an east cost fashion trend and suggesting that their followers dress in this particular way. This caption also reminds followers that spring and warmer weather are coming. By indication this in the caption, Abercrombie &

Fitch is suggesting that it may be time for their followers to go on a shopping spree and begin

shopping for their summer wardrobe. In sum, this caption acts as an indirect call-to-action. By

simply reminding followers that spring is on the way, Abercrombie & Fitch is indirectly asking

its followers to come into their store and try on this particular outfit—or one that features a

similar, layered style.

This image's meaning is intended to call followers to their stores (or online) to purchase

their new spring/summer collection. By posting this photograph during the transitional seasonal

period between winter and spring, Abercrombie & Fitch is reminding its followers that it is time

to shop for a new spring/summer wardrobe. By providing an outfit idea for their followers,

Abercrombie & Fitch is acting as a stylist for its users. The caption, as previously stated above,

brings this notion home by calling out this spring-themed layered look that is currently trending

on the East Coast.

Similar to the first post of Abercrombie & Fitch (A4), there is no direct comment

relationship between consumer and company. There is one comment in particular that I selected

to feature on the post. The comment asks if the outfit is still in stores. While this comment was

only a week old when the sample was collected, there had not yet been a response from the

clothing retailer answering this user's question. As previously stated, there is the ability to direct

message on Instagram and respond more privately to user comments and questions. However,

this lack of communication that is left present on their public profile depicts a lack of interest in

the consumer-company relationship.

The final image collected from Abercrombie & Fitch's Instagram account (A6), features a male model who is dressed in an outfit coordinated by Abercrombie & Fitch. This image received 50,000 "likes" and over 500 comments 21 weeks after being posted.
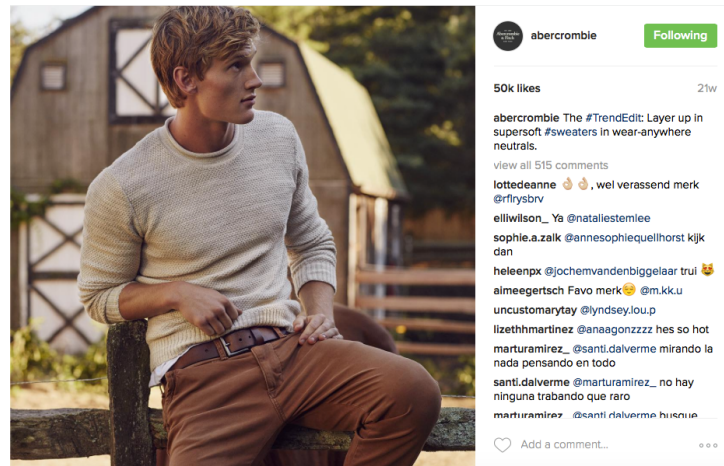
This particular post draws attention to the male subject as the main feature of the image. He is looking off into the distance, and many viewers of the photograph may be wondering what he is looking at. Having this male as a subject suggests that there is a lesser focus on the clothing in the image and a higher focus on the person. The addition of the model in this post, however, draws attention to how Abercrombie & Fitch's clothing will look on a particular individual. However, as previously argued, this can cause problems when the model does not represent all body types. This is particularly the case with this image, where the male model is in excellent physical shape.

The caption of this image reads: "The #TrendEdit: Layer up in super-soft #sweaters in wear-anywhere neutrals." This caption takes the attention away from the male model and, instead, draws attention towards the sweater he is wearing. The two hashtags, #TrendEdit and

#sweaters, are both common hashtags used on Instagram. Abercrombie & Fitch, then, continues to use hashtags that connect with trends beyond the scope of their company and connect with more popularized threads on Instagram. This caption also reiterates Abercrombie & Fitch's brand style of neutrals, by identifying the sweater as being a "wear-anywhere neutral." This particular portion of the caption reaffirms Abercrombie & Fitch's brand style, while also practising this brand style in their products.

The purpose of this photograph is to show how Abercrombie & Fitch products can be layered and paired together in order to create a particular outfit with their clothing. While the caption draws attention to the outfit, the photograph itself draws away from this notion as it features a male subject who is passively looking away from the camera. By including the male model in this image, Abercrombie & Fitch's intended meaning is lost against the attention drawn towards the male model. However, Abercrombie & Fitch does successfully reiterate their brand style as being neutral, as almost the entire image is part of the neutral palate family of colours.

But once again, there is a lack of comment interaction between Abercrombie & Fitch and their consumers. Most of the comments on this post are related to the attractiveness of the male model featured in the photograph. This demonstrates a separation between the audience and the intended meaning of the photograph. Had Abercrombie & Fitch called out a question or engaged their consumers more in the caption, perhaps the comments would have been more directed towards what the model was wearing rather than the model himself.

The image analysis above for Abercrombie & Fitch suggests very similar marketing techniques to that of American Eagle. It is important to note that both clothing companies had a similar themes in their top-three posts: clothing laid out, the creation of an outfit, and a human

subject wearing an article of the company's clothing. Abercrombie & Fitch, however, engages

more with other Instagram users by adding hashtags that are unrelated to their products. In doing

so, Abercrombie & Fitch connects its Instagram account with the rest of the Instagram

community and is able to garner new followers in the process. Carah and Shaul (2016) state that

"Instagram enables market relations to form through … the production and circulation of

images" (p. 71). By using hashtags that are common amongst savvy Instagram users,

Abercrombie & Fitch is able to circulate their images more effectively on Instagram and reach a

wide variety of audiences above and beyond their millennial demographic target.

The hashtag #EastCoasting identifies Abercrombie & Fitch as an East Coast retailer,

whose clothes represent the fashion of eastern America. This narrowly clarifies the products of

Abercrombie & Fitch while simultaneously defining their brand's style. While the hashtag

provides a sense of connection between the company and those who live on the American East

Coast, marketing that specifically targets a certain location can present certain limits to the

company's branding. Specifically, Abercrombie & Fitch is suggesting through their use of the

#EastCoasting hashtag that their clothes are meant for those who live on the American East

Coast—excluding those from other areas in the country, or those who live on entirely different

continents. Additionally, all the posts analyzed from Abercrombie & Fitch's Instagram account

reiterate their neutral brand style, as all images had an underlying tone of neutrality with little-to-

no pops of colour. This technique strengthens Abercrombie & Fitch's brand identity on social

media through images. As their in-store marketing demonstrates, Abercrombie & Fitch centres

itself around themes of neutrality, comfort, and luxury. By representing these same branding

concepts on Instagram, Abercrombie & Fitch's marketing transcends in-store techniques and

moves towards the digital age. Moreover, Abercrombie & Fitch is better able to brand themselves on social media and target the millennial generation using a combination of their branding concepts and traditional social media trends, specifically popular hashtags.

Similar to American Eagle, there was no comment interaction on any of the posts collected from Abercrombie & Fitch's Instagram account. It remains important to consider that the direct messaging function of Instagram remains closed for analysis. Further research conducted on Instagram branding would benefit from looking at this particular function and how brands are or aren't using it to connect more personally with millennial consumers.

The summary of the images analyzed in this section demonstrates how both Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle use Instagram as a means of connecting with their consumers— particularly the millennial generation. The marketing techniques, such as displaying product on a blank background and putting together outfits with only company products, are strikingly similar leaving room to suggest that the techniques used by both companies are successful in their execution and, therefore, remain popular means of communicating products with the millennial generation. As previously stated, these specific techniques mimic trends that were popularized on social media by millennials themselves. By using these tactics, clothing companies that target the millennial generation are able to communicate specifically with their intended consumers by copying their social media trends.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH

The objective of this MRP was to examine two millennial-targeted clothing brands on Instagram to see how they market themselves to today's young consumers using the image-based social media platform. While conducting data collection and qualitative research it became evident that both companies selected to use both images and captions as a marketing tool for communicating with the millennial generation. Additionally, the research demonstrated how these clothing brands communicate successfully on social media and also how their communication with the millennial generation is similar in strategy and some ways it could be improved.

The first step in looking at the clothing companies' Instagram accounts was to examine the images themselves. Both clothing brands' most highly "liked" photographs were those without models or human subjects – images that simply presented their audiences with photos of clothing. In doing so, both companies are able to depict multiple products at one time, as these images are often taken from above. The companies, then, are successful in showing users their products efficiently and effectively. Rather than posting multiple images of one item of clothing, both companies show users many items at one time. Moreover, as demonstrated in A1, A2, and A5, both companies were able to depict to users how their clothing items go together and can work as an entire outfit. This tactic works as a marketing technique that takes shopping out of the stores and onto social media. Rather than browsing through a store and picking out an outfit, these clothing brands are now doing the work for their consumers and presenting them with pre-selected outfits on social media. Both Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle have linked to their online stores in their Instagram biographies, making it easy for followers to click on the link

and find the items they covet on Instagram. Shopping, then, is increasingly becoming an act that

is preformed online first. Rather than seeing an item in stores and looking it up on the Internet,

shoppers are finding them on social media and seeking them in stores (whether bricks and mortar

or virtual). This takes shopping further into the digital age and renders increasingly obsolete the

use of store employees as fashion advice-givers and assistants.

Additionally, the issue of whether or not to have fashion models in marketing images on

social media also arose during the research process. While only one image from each company's

sample featured a human subject, it is important to note the implications of featuring a model or

a consumer in marketing images. While featuring clothing on a human subject can allow

interested consumers to see what they look like on a real person, it is important to note that the

depiction of certain body-types in articles of clothing can deter shoppers from trying on the

clothing in the first place. By depicting someone who is fit, or extremely thin wearing these

products, those who do not match the same body type may feel discouraged and feel as though

the clothing is not for them. While almost 50% of the images on both Abercrombie & Fitch and

American Eagle's Instagram accounts feature models or consumers in their clothing, the most-

liked posts from both accounts were mostly those of artistically arranged clothing. Going through

the selection process, only 15% of the human-based photographs posted on both accounts

between January 1st, 2016 and April 1st, 2016 had likes over 30,000 "likes." In comparison, the

photographs that featured just clothing would often garner over 50,000 "likes." This information

suggests that product marketing on social media might be moving away from model-based

imagery. This is similar to how stores work in their marketing strategies. In stores, clothing is

either hanging, folded, or on a mannequin. While store employees are often encouraged to wear

company clothing to work, the majority of shoppers do not buy their clothing based on what store employees are wearing. In turn, recognition of this phenomenon is beginning to translate into Instagram marketing strategies. Posts with just clothing featured in them are successfully gaining positive attention from followers and, in turn, the followers are showing interest in owning the clothing presented in the images themselves.

Looking at the caption of each post selected for this MRP, it is evident that the use of hashtags is an important way to garner attention. By using hashtags these clothing companies are able to focus attention on their products on social media and make their merchandise more readily available to be discovered by potential customers. This was particularly true in the case of Abercrombie & Fitch, where their use of more routinely used hashtags allowed them to connect with other trending hashtags on Instagram. The caption for each post also directed the message of the photograph. This tactic is done in order to draw attention to a particular item of clothing in an image, or to suggest to users when, where, or how they should wear their products.

One thing missing from the caption portion of the image analysis was the lack of call-to-answer questions being asked. These call-to-answer questions in the caption section of Instagram would potentially entice followers to engage in a dialogue with the company instead of simply commenting on the image they see. For example, Abercrombie & Fitch could have asked followers where they are from in order to further play on their #EastCoasting hashtag. By writing a caption such as "We are #EastCoasting this weekend in our favourite sweater. Where are you spending your Saturday?" Abercrombie & Fitch could begin a conversation with their consumers while simultaneously eliminating any exclusion followers may have felt if they did not live on the American East Coast. In other words, these types of captions could provide the companies

with both engagement with, and feedback from, their followers which, in turn, could offer further insight about how to market their products to their target consumers. Rather than attempting to engage millennial Instagram users with a question for them to answer, each account simply drew attention back to the image. I feel as though asking Instagram users to follow-up with a response to a question is another way companies can engage with their consumers effectively. Since there is a noticeable silence from these companies in regards to how much they respond to comments, it is important that these millennial clothing brands market themselves in such a way that communication appears to be more open and not as one-sided.

As Ibrahim (2015) argues, the image has become an integral aspect of human communication. Instagram, in turn, is becoming a space where individuals can communicate with one another without having to endure face-to-face communication. With this shift towards digital communication, it is important that brands follow suit and turn their attention to digitally-based company-consumer interaction. Ibrahim (2015) notes that teenagers continue to migrate towards image-based platforms such as Instagram. She contends that photographs in a digital space have become a form of online currency, in which 46% of Americans post personal images online. She further points to the "predominance of photo sharing among the younger generation" (p. 43). The participation of the millennial generation on Instagram is far greater than that of older populations. For millennial-focused clothing brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle it therefore becomes crucial that they develop a strong social media presence since their top demographic has moved onto that platform.

While the scope of this MRP only allowed for a small sample, further research in this area should be conducted since further visual semiotic and statistical analysis surrounding the

presentation of clothing brand's marketing techniques on Instagram would be extremely beneficial. As corporate communication and advertising becomes increasingly digital (and visual), it is becoming more and more important to examine how companies are making the shift towards digital, mobile, and social branding and marketing. In addition, further research could be conducted on Instagram's evolution and the development of their algorithms. Doing so would allow for a greater understanding about how Instagram streamlines its experience for each user and the ways the platform determines what they want to see and when they want to see it. Lastly, research could be conducted surrounding Instagram's direct messaging tool in order to better understand the ways companies can communicate with their consumers—both directly and indirectly. This proved to be a difficult area to study while writing this MRP, as it was not possible to determine exactly how much communication was occurring between the brands and individual consumers. Research in this area could shine light on the direct messaging's functionality and how it can play a larger role in the world of online brand communication and connectivity.

Overall, this MRP demonstrated how—despite company values and differences—Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle market themselves on social media platforms like Instagram in a similar manner in order to engage and connect with the millennial generation. While Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle historically come from different backgrounds and have—arguably—very different ideologies surrounding in-store marketing and branding campaigns, it is evident that their social media presence transcends these values and historical branding approaches in order to create a cohesive marketing strategy capable of captivating the attention of the millennial generation.

APPENDIX

A1 - AMERICAN EAGLE IMAGE #1

A2 - AMERICAN EAGLE IMAGE #2

A3 - AMERICAN EAGLE IMAGE #3

americaneagle Following

61.2k likes   13w

americaneagle Take it all in this weekend in #AEOSTYLE. #AEOSHORTSCONTEST #Regram @leahgae

view all 294 comments

mariaguuerraa Eh só achar o girassol e virar essa mulher, migs!! Beijos tchau @lu_accioly

sofialorennn Yes @florenciarabe

elizasowle This is where I belong @prop_of_stev

jmere77 I still want a photo in a sunflower field @lindsgabrielle !

lindsgabrielle @jmere77 our mission this summer

jmere77 Let's do it! @lindsgabrielle even if we have to take a drive

littlered42 @tnn360 should we do it?!

tnn360 Yes. I have 2 AE shorts. We just need somewhere cool and really PNW v.

♡ Add a comment...   o o o

A4 - ABERCROMIBE & FITCH IMAGE #1

abercrombie Following
Montauk, New Yo...

59.2k likes   17w

abercrombie For chilly Montauk mornings & rainy beach days spent indoors - playing cards and laughing a whole lot more. #EastCoasting

view all 282 comments

micaella_ferraz @nicoleoshima_ #vaichapaabercrombie

katharine.__ Omg💖😍💖

anna_redhead_ 👇

dailene23 Love this sweatshirt 😍

maria_atm04 Cómprame tu esta @nataliaaguado9 😂😍

nataliaaguado9 Tu a mi ts @maria_atm04

larochelle_felix Encore mieux mieux @gabrielle_pitre

gabrielle_pitre Cest tu pour fille? @larochelle_felix

larochelle_felix Non pour animaux

♡ Add a comment...   o o o

A5 - ABERCROMIBE & FITCH IMAGE #2

abercrombie

Following

52.7k likes   10w

abercrombie Goodbye cold weather, hello #Spring. Time to invest in warm-weather outfits for elevated, layered looks. #EastCoasting

view all 484 comments

eulalia05 @annaalcontrario buonanotte

eulalia05 @annaalcontrario 👠👠👠👠

markss_333 @michelle_480 we need this

eden_harvey3 Are you guys still selling this outfit in stores?!

carmenxgomez Es esa la camiseta? @nuriaaortega_

nuriaaortega_ Nooooo @carmenxgomez

paulamaus10 @mistericetea

kirsten0584 @abercrombie Are you serious? Goat leather ?!That couldn't be anymore awful will never support Abercrombie again!

♡   Add a comment...   ○○○

A6 - ABERCROMIBE & FITCH IMAGE #3

abercrombie

Following

50k likes   21w

abercrombie The #TrendEdit: Layer up in supersoft #sweaters in wear-anywhere neutrals.

view all 515 comments

lottedeanne 👌👌 , wel verassend merk @rflrysbrv

elliwilson_ Ya @nataliestemlee

sophie.a.zalk @annesophiequellhorst kijk dan

heleenpx @jochemvandenbiggelaar trui 😻

aimeegertsch Favo merk😌 @m.kk.u

uncustomarytay @lyndsey.lou.p

lizethhmartinez @anaagonzzzz hes so hot

marturamirez_ @santi.dalverme mirando la nada pensando en todo

santi.dalverme @marturamirez_ no hay ninguna trabando que raro

marturamirez_ @santi.dalverme busque

♡   Add a comment...   ○○○

A7 - IMAGE CODEBOOK

File Name	Category	Defintion	Sub-Categories	Example	Sub-Category Used
AE_Insta_2	Point of View	The angle from which the photo was taken	1. Above 2. Below 3. Straight	1. A photo taken from a bird's eye view of the subject. 2. A photo taken from beneath or below the subject. 3. A photo taken at the same angle as the subject.	1 - Photo was taken from above.
	Brand-Millennial Engagement	Brand engages with a consumer in the comment section of the photograph.	1. Positively 2. Negatively 3. Neutral	1. "Thanks for the comment :)" 2. "Please remove your comment or your account will be blocked." 3. "The shirt is $29.95 in stores."	N/A - No engagement in comment section.
	Representation of Merchandise	Brand shows their product in the image	1. Clear 2. Unclear 3. No products	1. It is clear what items in the photo are brand products. 2. It is unclear which items in the photo are brand products. 3. No brand products are shown in this image.	1 - The image depicts an outfit that is laid out on a plain background. All products are from American Eagle Outfitters.
	Caption Use	How the caption ties into the image.	1. Directly relates to the image 2. Includes hashtag 3. Uses geotag 4. Does not relate to the image 5. Mentions another Instagram user 6. No caption	1. Caption directly references the photograph. 2. Uses the "#" symbol followed by a phrase. 3. Tags location where the image was taken. 4. Caption does not reference the image. 5. Uses "@" followed by another Instagram account's username. 6. No caption was included with the photograph.	1 - Caption references the romper, which is the focal point of the image. 2 - Uses the hashtag #AEOSTYLE
	Content Originality	Whether the photo was taken by the account or by another user.	1. Original photograph 2. Reposted photograph	1. Image was taken by the selected brand's account. 2. Image was reposted from another Instagram account.	1 - Image is from the selected account.
	Consumer Interaction	The number of "likes" and comments on the image	1. Number of likes 2. Number of comments	1. "1,304 Likes" 2. "460 Comments"	1- 62,100 likes 2 - 705 comments

File Name	Category	Definition	Sub-Categories	Example	Sub-Category Used
AE_Insta_1	Point of View	The angle from which the photo was taken	1. Above 2. Below 3. Straight	1. A photo taken from a bird's eye view of the subject. 2. A photo taken from beneath or below the subject. 3. A photo taken at the same angle as the subject.	1 - Photo was taken from above.
	Brand-Millennial Engagement	Brand engages with a consumer in the comment section of the photograph.	1. Positively 2. Negatively 3. Neutral	1. "Thanks for the comment :)" 2. "Please remove your comment or your account will be blocked." 3. "The shirt is $29.95 in stores."	N/A - No engagement in comment section.
	Representation of Merchandise	Brand shows their product in the image	1. Clear 2. Unclear 3. No products	1. It is clear what items in the photo are brand products. 2. It is unclear which items in the photo are brand products. 3. No brand products are shown in this image.	1 - The image depicts a variety of clothing items from the upcoming seasonal collection.
	Caption Use	How the caption ties into the image.	1. Directly relates to the image 2. Includes hashtag 3. Uses geotag 4. Does not relate to the image 5. Mentions another Instagram user 6. No caption	1. Caption directly references the photograph. 2. Uses the "#" symbol followed by a phrase. 3. Tags location where the image was taken. 4. Caption does not reference the image. 5. Uses "@" followed by another Instagram account's username. 6. No caption was included with the photograph.	1 - Caption references the colour scheme of the clothing in the photograph. 2 - Uses the hashtag #AEOSTYLE
	Content Originality	Whether the photo was taken by the account or by another user.	1. Original photograph 2. Reposted photograph	1. Image was taken by the selected brand's account. 2. Image was reposted from another Instagram account.	1 - Image is from the selected account.
	Consumer Interaction	The number of "likes" and comments on the image	1. Number of likes 2. Number of comments	1. "1,304 Likes" 2. "460 Comments"	1- 63,300 likes 2 - 511 comments

File Name	Category	Defintion	Sub-Categories	Example	Sub-Category Used
AE_Insta_3	Point of View	The angle from which the photo was taken	1. Above 2. Below 3. Straight	1. A photo taken from a bird's eye view of the subject. 2. A photo taken from beneath or below the subject. 3. A photo taken at the same angle as the subject.	3- The photo was taken from the same angle as the subject.
	Brand-Millennial Engagement	Brand engages with a consumer in the comment section of the photograph.	1. Positively 2. Negatively 3. Neutral	1. "Thanks for the comment :)" 2. "Please remove your comment or your account will be blocked." 3. "The shirt is $29.95 in stores."	N/A - No engagement in comment section.
	Representation of Merchandise	Brand shows their product in the image	1. Clear 2. Unclear 3. No products	1. It is clear what items in the photo are brand products. 2. It is unclear which items in the photo are brand products. 3. No brand products are shown in this image.	1 - The image depicts an Instagram user wearing denim shorts from American Eagle Outfitters.
	Caption Use	How the caption ties into the image.	1. Directly relates to the image 2. Includes hashtag 3. Uses geotag 4. Does not relate to the image 5. Mentions another Instagram user 6. No caption	1. Caption directly references the photograph. 2. Uses the "#" symbol followed by a phrase. 3. Tags location where the image was taken. 4. Caption does not reference the image. 5. Uses "@" followed by another Instagram account's username. 6. No caption was included with the photograph.	1 - Caption references the colour scheme of the clothing in the photograph. 2 - Uses the hashtag #AEOSTYLE and #AEOSHORTS CONTEST 3 - The caption references the original poster of the image: @leahgae.
	Content Originality	Whether the photo was taken by the account or by another user.	1. Original photograph 2. Reposted photograph	1. Image was taken by the selected brand's account. 2. Image was reposted from another Instagram account.	1 - Image was reposted from another Instagram account.
	Consumer Interaction	The number of "likes" and comments on the image	1. Number of likes 2. Number of comments	1. "1,304 Likes" 2. "460 Comments"	1- 61,200 likes 2 - 294 comments

File Name	Category	Definition	Sub-Categories	Example	Sub-Category Used
AF_Insta_1	Point of View	The angle from which the photo was taken	1. Above 2. Below 3. Straight	1. A photo taken from a bird's eye view of the subject. 2. A photo taken from beneath or below the subject. 3. A photo taken at the same angle as the subject.	1 - Photo was taken from the same angle as the subject (sweater).
	Brand-Millennial Engagement	Brand engages with a consumer in the comment section of the photograph.	1. Positively 2. Negatively 3. Neutral	1. "Thanks for the comment :)" 2. "Please remove your comment or your account will be blocked." 3. "The shirt is $29.95 in stores."	N/A - No engagement in comment section.
	Representation of Merchandise	Brand shows their product in the image	1. Clear 2. Unclear 3. No products	1. It is clear what items in the photo are brand products. 2. It is unclear which items in the photo are brand products. 3. No brand products are shown in this image.	1 - The image depicts a sweater with the company logo and origin.
	Caption Use	How the caption ties into the image.	1. Directly relates to the image 2. Includes hashtag 3. Uses geotag 4. Does not relate to the image 5. Mentions another Instagram user 6. No caption	1. Caption directly references the photograph. 2. Uses the "#" symbol followed by a phrase. 3. Tags location where the image was taken. 4. Caption does not reference the image. 5. Uses "@" followed by another Instagram account's username. 6. No caption was included with the photograph.	2 - Uses the hashtag #EastCoasting 3 - The image is tagged as being taken in Montauk, New York. 4 - Caption does not reference the image.
	Content Originality	Whether the photo was taken by the account or by another user.	1. Original photograph 2. Reposted photograph	1. Image was taken by the selected brand's account. 2. Image was reposted from another Instagram account.	1 - Image is from the selected account.
	Consumer Interaction	The number of "likes" and comments on the image	1. Number of likes 2. Number of comments	1. "1,304 Likes" 2. "460 Comments"	1- 59,200 likes 2 - 282 comments

File Name	Category	Defintion	Sub-Categories	Example	Sub-Category Used
AF_Insta_2	Point of View	The angle from which the photo was taken	1. Above 2. Below 3. Straight	1. A photo taken from a bird's eye view of the subject. 2. A photo taken from beneath or below the subject. 3. A photo taken at the same angle as the subject.	1 - Photo was taken from above.
	Brand-Millennial Engagement	Brand engages with a consumer in the comment section of the photograph.	1. Positively 2. Negatively 3. Neutral	1. "Thanks for the comment :)" 2. "Please remove your comment or your account will be blocked." 3. "The shirt is $29.95 in stores."	N/A - No engagement in comment section.
	Representation of Merchandise	Brand shows their product in the image	1. Clear 2. Unclear 3. No products	1. It is clear what items in the photo are brand products. 2. It is unclear which items in the photo are brand products. 3. No brand products are shown in this image.	1 - The image depicts an outfit that is laid out on a plain background. All products are from Abercrombie & Fitch.
	Caption Use	How the caption ties into the image.	1. Directly relates to the image 2. Includes hashtag 3. Uses geotag 4. Does not relate to the image 5. Mentions another Instagram user 6. No caption	1. Caption directly references the photograph. 2. Uses the "#" symbol followed by a phrase. 3. Tags location where the image was taken. 4. Caption does not reference the image. 5. Uses "@" followed by another Instagram account's username. 6. No caption was included with the photograph.	1 - Caption references the outfit as being perfect for the spring season. 2 - Uses the hashtags #Spring and #EastCoasting.
	Content Originality	Whether the photo was taken by the account or by another user.	1. Original photograph 2. Reposted photograph	1. Image was taken by the selected brand's account. 2. Image was reposted from another Instagram account.	1 - Image is from the selected account.
	Consumer Interaction	The number of "likes" and comments on the image	1. Number of likes 2. Number of comments	1. "1,304 Likes" 2. "460 Comments"	1- 52,700 likes 2 - 484 comments

File Name	Category	Defintion	Sub-Categories	Example	Sub-Category Used
AF_Insta_3	Point of View	The angle from which the photo was taken	1. Above 2. Below 3. Straight	1. A photo taken from a bird's eye view of the subject. 2. A photo taken from beneath or below the subject. 3. A photo taken at the same angle as the subject.	3 - Photo was taken from the same angle as the subject (male model).
	Brand-Millennial Engagement	Brand engages with a consumer in the comment section of the photograph.	1. Positively 2. Negatively 3. Neutral	1. "Thanks for the comment :)" 2. "Please remove your comment or your account will be blocked." 3. "The shirt is $29.95 in stores."	N/A - No engagement in comment section.
	Representation of Merchandise	Brand shows their product in the image	1. Clear 2. Unclear 3. No products	1. It is clear what items in the photo are brand products. 2. It is unclear which items in the photo are brand products. 3. No brand products are shown in this image.	1 - The image depicts a male model wearing an outfit from Abercrombie & Fitch.
	Caption Use	How the caption ties into the image.	1. Directly relates to the image 2. Includes hashtag 3. Uses geotag 4. Does not relate to the image 5. Mentions another Instagram user 6. No caption	1. Caption directly references the photograph. 2. Uses the "#" symbol followed by a phrase. 3. Tags location where the image was taken. 4. Caption does not reference the image. 5. Uses "@" followed by another Instagram account's username. 6. No caption was included with the photograph.	1 - Caption references the sweaters the male is wearing. 2 - Uses the hashtags #TrendEdit and #sweaters.
	Content Originality	Whether the photo was taken by the account or by another user.	1. Original photograph 2. Reposted photograph	1. Image was taken by the selected brand's account. 2. Image was reposted from another Instagram account.	1 - Image is from the selected account.
	Consumer Interaction	The number of "likes" and comments on the image	1. Number of likes 2. Number of comments	1. "1,304 Likes" 2. "460 Comments"	1- 50,000 likes 2 - 515 comments

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