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UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Liisa Hämäläinen

**How Shopping Malls Use Social Media: A Thematic
Analysis of Transatlantic Shopping Malls' Instagram
Content and Engagement**

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Author:	Liisa Hämäläinen		
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Tiivistelmä:

Tällä hetkellä, noin puolet maailmasta käyttää eri sosiaalisen median alustoja ja sen seurauksena sosiaalisen median suosio on välittynyt myös markkinointiin. Markkinoijat käyttävät sosiaalista mediaa yhtenä heidän työkalunaan markkinoinnissa. Siispä, sosiaalinen media voidaan nähdä mahdollisuutena erilaisten toimijoiden, kuten ostoskeskusten joukossa, jonka avulla on mahdollisuus tavoittaa paljon ihmisiä. Ostoskeskusten markkinoinnissa uudet trendit ovat alkaneet nousta pintaan samalla kuin vanhat ovat alkaneet ajautua taka-alalle. Se puolestaan on tuonut tilaa uusille tutkimuksille, jotka koskevat kauppakeskuksia ja sosiaalista mediaa markkinoinnin näkökulmasta. Tämän tutkimuksen keskeinen tavoite on siis kertoa miten ostoskeskukset käyttävät Instagram-tiliensä postauksia, etenkin mitä tulee tilien sisällön muotoon, sisältötyyppihin ja viestintästrategiaan, sekä mitä kytköksiä niillä on sitoutumiseen. Tämä tutkimus noudattaa tiettyjä tutkimusmenetelmiä. Keskeisiä menetelmiä tässä tutkimuksessa ovat induktiivinen menetelmä, jonka seurauksena kerätty sekundaaridata on analysoitu temaattisen analyysin ohjaamana. Sekundaaridata on tässä tutkimuksessa kerätty kuuden eri kauppakeskuksen Instagram-tililtä ennakkoon määriteltujen kriteerien perusteella. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnetyt ostoskeskukset sijaitsevat ympäri Eurooppaa ja Pohjois-Amerikassa. Tämä tutkimus avaa ominaisuuksia, joita löydettiin ostoskeskusten Instagram-tilien sisällöstä sekä niiden kytköksiä sitoutumiseen, tykkäämiseen, kommentoinnin ja uudelleenjulkaisujen muodossa. Näiden löydösten seurauksena tämä tutkimus tuo uusia johtopäätöksiä olemassa olevaan teoriaan sekä käytännön vaikutuksia johdon toiminnalle ostoskeskusten ja Instagramin kontekstissa. Tutkimuksen loppu selittää tutkimuksen mahdolliset rajoitteet sekä suositukset tuleville tutkimuksille.

KEYWORDS: Marketing, social media, Instagram, centres, shopping malls, content, communication strategies, markkinointi, sosiaalinen media, keskukset, ostoskeskukset, sisältö, viestintästrategiat

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ABSTRACT:

As half of the planet uses social media platforms, social media's popularity has also become noted in the field of marketing, where many marketers utilize social media as a marketing tool. Therefore, it can be seen as opportunity, to entities like shopping malls as well, since it has a wide reach on audience. Further, in shopping mall marketing new trends are rising and old ones are beginning to sideline, thus bringing room for new information on how shopping malls could use their social media in terms of marketing. Thereby, this research studies what kinds of social media content format, content types and communication styles can be identified from shopping malls' Instagram posts, further how they are associated with engagement. The research methods this study has chosen to apply includes inductive research where thematic analysis is performed to the secondary data gathered in this research. Secondary data is collected from six shopping malls' Instagram accounts that are located both in Europe and in North America based on prerequisite criteria. The findings of the study shed light on many characteristics identified in shopping malls' Instagram posts and how they can be associated with the different engagement styles of liking, commenting and reposting. Therefore, bringing new theoretical and managerial implications to the context of shopping malls and Instagram as a social media platform. The research finishes by explaining limitations faced in the research together with future recommendations.

KEYWORDS: Marketing, social media, Instagram, centres, shopping malls, content, communication strategies, markkinointi, sosiaalinen media, keskukset, ostoskeskukset, sisältö, viestintästrategiat

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Abbreviations

ADM = American Dream Mall
CTA = call-to-action
ICSC = International Council of Shopping Centres
J = Jumbo
MC = Marineda City
SCS = Shopping City Süd
SMMS = Social Media Marketing Strategy
WEM = West Edmonton Mall
WL = Westfield London

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Social media has become a widespread phenomenon as according to Statista Research Department (2026) 5.66 billion people, which makes up half of the world's population, use social media. Social media has become an integrated part of people's daily lives, as many individuals use multiple social media platforms and for example spend approximately 14 hours per week consuming video content alone (Johnson, 2026). Further, social media has become a vital tool for businesses as it serves 90% of local businesses and three-fourths of them use it to drive revenue to the business. Thus, it is undeniable that social media has a key foothold in today's personal and business environments.

A platform with particularly significant usage in marketing is Instagram. According to Slotta (2025), 79% of marketers report using Instagram for marketing purposes. Overall, Instagram is used by two billion people monthly, and its reach continues to expand, with the number of users growing 5.5% from 2024 to 2025. Most of Instagram's users are Millennials and Generation Z (Slotta, 2025). Research conducted by Whiting & Williams (2013, pp. 366–367) shows that the primary reasons people use social media platforms are social interaction, information seeking, passing time, entertainment, relaxation, expression of opinions, community utility, and knowledge about others or surveillance. Together, this indicates that social media does play a social and strategic role, offering companies opportunities to connect with consumers through content aligned with users' motivations.

In relation to shopping centres, an article published by the International Council of Shopping Centres states that social media should be used strategically to create advantage according to Brandt (2021). Brandt (2021) says that through social media it is possible for shopping centres to access millions of people, including potential tenants they wish

to attract. However, it is important to not only have a social media presence as a shopping centre, but also to actively maintain and develop it.

Engagement is a central concept within social media research. While engagement is often used to describe action such as liking, commenting, and sharing, Syrdal and Briggs (2018, p. 17) claim that it is broader than that. According to Syrdal and Briggs (2018, p. 17) it is described as a state of mind that stems from a combination of feelings that the people consuming the content feels like enjoyment and a high degree of involvement. However, engagement varies significantly across platforms. In their research Shahbazzehad et al. (2022, p. 61) highlight how on Instagram users tend to be more passive, whereas in Facebook users are often more eager to comment. On Twitter (now X as stated by Ivanova, 2023), showing people and context is important in terms of wishing to receive engagement from consumers (Li & Xie, 2020, p. 17). Therefore, it seems that there is not one single strategy that works across platforms but rather engagement is both user and platform specificities exist.

Research on mall marketing further demonstrates the continuously evolving landscape around it. At the beginning of the 20th century, malls focused their marketing mostly on the following: local or regional press advertising, radio advertising, events and festivals, leaflets, public relations and the internet (Warnaby, 2005, p. 898). However, it is important to take into consideration that during this time, social media did not exist in its current form. In retail context social media is shown to provide positive relation to top-of-mind awareness, that overtime can turn into loyalty due to the possibilities of showing information as well as promotions in social media channels (Rapp et al., 2013, p. 562). Further, social media in retail context in a tool that works in both B2B communication together with the possibility of B2C communication. Ultimately, if used correctly it can lead to positive impact on retail performance and brand performance (Rapp et al., 2013 p. 562).

More recently, Pantano et al. (2021, p. 7) investigated tweets about malls and which words kept emerging and how this could benefit mall marketing. Their findings show that mall marketing perhaps should not focus only on anchor stores and stores anymore. Consumers seem to be more aware of more recent trend concerning green initiatives, specific areas including views, clubs, bars, food courts, apps and AI, and shopping malls own social media accounts that could provide the possibility to interact with mall managers along with other consumers (Pantano et al., 2021, p. 7). Their research emphasizes that malls' attributes and shopper types differ, meaning shoppers are and should not be treated as a homogenous group in marketing efforts. However, Frishammar et al. (2018, pp. 40–41) claim that digital technologies might be a double-edged sword for malls as they can bring benefits but also generate significant costs while not bringing any value to the malls.

Despite the amount of research touching upon social media use, engagement and mall marketing, important gaps remain. Prior studies have examined motivations for social media use and engagement and the evolving landscape of social media marketing. However, research that further shows how shopping malls use Instagram in practice and what kind of content characteristics can be associated with higher levels of engagement among consumers do not exist. Existing research focuses on rather broad concepts and mall attributes rather than systematically analysing the concrete content published on shopping malls' social media accounts. Yet, this is research aims to be highly beneficial with both theoretical and managerial implications as it can shed light on how malls can benefit from the powerful tool of social media even better or provide an angle of how other malls use it and work as a source of inspiration.

As suggested by Scridon et al. (2025, p. 156), who researched consumer behaviour in Central-Eastern Europe, stated that shopping malls social media pages and engagement metrics could be further researched to find out whether its findings might support or contrast their study of interviews. Further there, there is a gap in the research when it comes to social media pages and engagement metrics.

Therefore, identifying possible recurring patterns in themes, formats and visuals and messaging strategies and by doing so, providing a more detailed understanding of how mall marketing is enacted on Instagram by different malls in different regions and. Further, addressing the gap in research by analysing shopping malls' Instagram accounts across Europe and North America by analysing the posts.

1.2 Objective of the study

As the introduction shows the landscape of social media researched and statistically significant. However, when it comes to shopping malls, recent literature proves that there exists a research gap regarding shopping malls' social media pages and engagement metrics. This gap highlights the need for this type of study where shopping malls and their content are analysed to make new contributions regarding shopping malls by providing knowledge in terms of both content-wise but also engagement wise to the existing literature. Hence this study aims to describe how shopping malls located in Europe and North America utilize Instagram accounts as marketing platforms through content and how the content is associated with engagement.

Following research question will act as a guideline for this study:

What types of social media content formats, content types and communication strategies are used on shopping malls' Instagram accounts' both in Europe and North America and how are they associated with social media engagement?

1.3 Structure of the study

This study is written in six sections where, the first section provides an introduction to the topic and the objective of the study together with a research question guiding the study through out. The next section is a literature review that provides knowledge on current theories revolving social media marketing, engagement and social media

content characteristics together with communication characteristics. This knowledge is also mapped out in a conceptual model. Further the methodology chapter includes research approach, together with discussing data collection method, as well as sampling and analysis methods. Final chapters entail presentation of empirical findings together, followed by discussion, with the concluding chapter being conclusions. Conclusions chapter also covers theoretical and managerial implications together with limitations and recommendations for future research.

2 Literature Review

This chapter aims to discuss the current theories provided by previous literature that are related to social media marketing and engagement. The chapter starts from presenting social media marketing, discussing its strategic importance but also shedding light on platform differences. Then it moves towards social media engagement and social media characteristics.

2.1 Social Media Marketing

In a retail environment, social media is a great tool to enable a two-way communication including feedback and inquiries; however, it requires that companies have active social media profiles that produce engaging content (Scridon et al., 2025, pp. 154–155). Yet, social media is also a complex landscape as stated by Schultz (2017, p. 31), where it is important for brands to think about their social media strategy from the perspective of a constantly evolving space and creativeness. This in turn, has led to consumers expecting more from concerning brands' own social media channels (Schultz, 2017, p. 31). Thus, social media marketing strategy (SMMS) is something firms should consider when creating accounts in social media channels. Especially considering the motivation behind the social media channels and what would be possible measurable objectives for the channel, whether it benefits the company or not (Li et al., 2020, p. 66). Hence, setting up social media accounts for a brand needs some forethought concerning the possibilities that social media channels have but also the expectations, purpose and objectives of the accounts.

Accordingly, for social media marketing to become beneficial is to use and strategize it correctly as discussed by Li et al. (2020, p. 66). They indicate that SMMSs should be done in a collaborative manner that includes customers. It should be seen as a possibility, where it is possible to acknowledge for example the possible worries customers have brought up, rather than just push commercial information that might end up deterring customers a way, which is a common mistake among smaller companies (Li et al., 2020, p.

66). As Rapp et al. (2013, p. 561) states social media content requires balance not to seem opportunistic and the balance should be found between more promotional content and content that resonates with people. Thus, social media is not just a platform, it needs a plan and direction to be successful and benefit the company who it belongs to. Considering social media both content and audience are central, and according to research are part of the puzzle when creating strategy.

Moreover, to understand and perform social media marketing, it's important to detect different types of social media content strategies. These strategies are derived from different types of engagement that can happen in social media accounts. These most commonly include likes, reactions, comments and shares. According to research conducted by Drossos et al. (2023, p. 1187) there exists guidelines for social media content strategy. In one of the most popular social media platforms, Facebook, there are three things to take into consideration in social media marketing content strategy. These include how to post, when to post and who should post (Drossos et al., 2023, p. 1187).

Further, there is platform differences that could be useful when thinking of a social media content strategy. When comparing two platforms, Instagram and Facebook together Cao et al. (2021, p. 844) concluded that Instagram is a better tool in social media to launch a product and to encourage consumption, however Facebook is the better platform when it comes to satisfying consumers information seeking and as a platform to inform customers. Both Drossos et al. (2023, p. 1187) and Cao et al. (2021, p. 844) bring forward the uniqueness of platforms which might influence how then content is received among customers in social media.

2.2 Social Media Engagement

According to Syrdal and Briggs (2018, p. 17) the term engagement which often includes liking, sharing and commenting is commonly used among marketers, many consumers would rather characterize engagement as a state of mind that stems from two emotions: enjoyment and high degree of involvement. Further, the aspect of interaction on many

occasions is connection to engagement is not quite that simple. Nominally, interaction itself does not mean that consumers have a high interest or involvement towards the content, and this is proven by consumers that may interact with content even though they have not fully consumed the content (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018, p. 17). Which then can translate as consumers interacting out of support or to enhance their own image rather than prioritizing engagement (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018, p. 17).

This concludes that engagement with social media content and social media interactive behaviours are separate from each other (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018, p. 17). This distinction as Syrdal and Briggs (2018, p. 17) states, demonstrates that the paths that lead consumers to engage are not so straight-forward, and that some engagement can be misunderstood as it may be interactive behaviour stemming from separate interest. Hence, these recent theories further explain engagement and its complexity bringing awareness regarding how the word can be interpreted in different contexts.

Theories around engagement are still necessary, especially when researching what kinds of characteristics may be associated with whether content appeals to consumers and possibly results to engaging with the content. To begin with, when interpreting consumer engagement activities, research shows that defining the intention for the engagement is a good place to start and in addition to take into consideration social media's possible contextual factors. According to Cao et al. (2021, p. 843) these contextual factors can be for example media richness and trustworthiness of the content. Therefore, selection of media is central when it comes to being effective in social media marketing (SMM).

Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 61) researched that there is a difference in how consumers behave on different platforms. According to their research in Instagram, consumers overall are more passive compared to Facebook where engagement in terms of commenting is especially popular (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022, p. 61). Again, proving the importance contextual factors of the platforms have on consumers and possible engagement. Based on these theories, it can be concluded that engagement should not be

treated as a uniform construct across platforms, but rather as context dependent. Differences in social media platforms may result to differences in engagement and take it into consideration as interpreting engagement.

2.2.1 Social Media Content Characteristics

When thinking of consumer engagement activities, research shows that defining the intention for engagement is a good place to start together with considering possible contextual factors of social media. According to Cao et al. (2021, p. 843) this includes media richness and trustworthiness of the content. When it comes to media richness Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186) researched university Instagram accounts and found the highest form of richness in social media content is a carousel post that has both videos and photos in it. This type of content, according to them results in the most engagement in terms of likes. Schultz (2017, p. 31) researched that pictures and videos are both of importance when the aim is to create positive engagement in terms of likes and shares. Therefore, when aiming for likes, the content characteristic supporting it seem to be both pictures and videos as stated by Schultz (2017, p. 31) but also content carousels that include both formats as mentioned by Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186). With the slight distinction of pictures and videos both also positively influence shares (Wahid & Gunarto, 2021, p. 186).

However, contradicting Schultz (2017, p. 31) video content according to Wahid and Gunarto's study (2021, p. 183) revealed that video posts in their research did not trigger neither likes nor comments. What may explain these contradicting findings are the differences in research environment as Schultz's (2017, p. 31) findings are focused on retail environment whereas Wahid and Gunarto (2020, p. 186) focused on university environment. Although the varied theories circling media richness and different formats, Syrdal and Briggs (2018, p. 17) argue a different angle where visuality alone, still holds importance regarding whether people engage with the content, but there is no evidence in their research proving if the format of the visual matters.

Returning to the aspect of media richness, it also influences other ways engagement such as shares. Sharing according to Moran et al. (2020, p. 542) comes from content that is media rich, and its influence on shares is so substantial that when shares start to come in, they often result to more shares of the content. However, they stress that commenting as a form of engagement is not influenced at all by the richness of media but rather all media is equal in terms of commenting. If the aim is to get clicks out of the content in terms of engagement, video content is superior but other formats work too (Moran et al., 2020, p. 541). To conclude, sharing is influenced by media richness, but for commenting there is no difference but rather all media works, although Moran et al. (2020, p. 542) does highlight the significance of video content. Yet, the key in engagement seems to appear that the most valuable thing is for the brand to know the audience they are trying to reach and the media format that is the most effective for each, whether it is a photo or video (Moran et al., 2020, p. 541).

Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) research provides more depth as it sheds light towards how rational content, like photos, does often generate more likes in comparison to emotional content in video format that results in active engagement in the form of commenting. In contrast Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) research on Instagram found that emotional content in contrast to informational content often creates more likes and comments for the content published if that includes text and visuals. In terms of emotional content why there may be a difference in Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) and Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) results might be explained through platform differences. Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) did the study only on Instagram and Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) researched both Facebook and Instagram. Perhaps it is possible to state that on Instagram emotional content may work better.

On the other hand, Liadeli et al. (2023, p. 422) researched brand-owned social media, which means the channel it is posted into is owned by the brand itself (Stephen & Galak, 2012, p. 625) and corroborates that emotional content is powerful when it comes at least owned social media content's engagement. Nonetheless, Liadeli et al. (2023, p. 422)

states that again, social media engagement is sensitive to platform context, and should be considered when executing owned social media.

What kind of content characteristics often appeal to consumers according to Syrdal and Briggs (2018, p. 18) are characteristics like humorous, entertaining, news-worthy and utilitarian content, but there are differences in platforms. For platforms like Instagram, where visual appeal is expected, the content should reflect it and be fresh, authentic, and relevant (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018, p. 18). On the other hand in Facebook, posts that demonstrate transformational appeal are found to gain more likes than informational posts (Drossos et al., 2023, p. 1187). In addition, there is the aspect of informational content, informational content and content showing achievement in Wahid and Gunarto's (2020, p. 184) study were the most prominent topics to bring engagement. Yet, their result should be critically interpreted as it is from a study that studied universities' Instagram accounts, where informational posts might be seen more useful, hence the engagement and same with achievement, a topic that may be celebrated in a university context.

Furthermore, in terms of getting more engagement, it is worth noting that according to research by Li and Xie (2020, p. 17) high-quality pictures are superior. This was also mentioned by another study as Jones and Lee (2021, p. 116) found that for media types, images work best compared to anything else as they are often quick to look at from the consumer's perspective. However, Jones and Lee (2021, p. 116) do not mention whether the quality of the picture's influences engagement and their research was specifically in the context of fashion brands, which means the significance of images maybe completely different. In comparison to Li and Xie (2020, p. 17), whose study was set in a different social media platform as it was done in Twitter, where it seems that picture quality is rather significant. Overall, the most engaging post to the followers, according to Jones and Lee (2021, p. 117) was a post that included sensory and physical stimulation of users when experiencing the brand in their feed, which is corroborated by Schultz (2017, p. 31) as interactive post characteristic did well when it came to engagement.

As noted by Li and Xie (2020, p. 17) another points to consider in engagement is showing people and the context in platforms like Twitter (current X) as it is likely to result in higher engagement. Yet according to their research, the same effect does not apply on Instagram. However, if the aim is to gain more positive reactions Drossos et al. (2023, p. 1187) suggest that one could try to use celebrities or ordinary people in the posts. When it comes to people a more negative turn to engagement happens if employees' perspectives were to be posted in the context of fashion Instagram account as claimed by Jones and Lee (2021, p. 117). To bring another angle on what to show on the posts to gain engagement, Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) discuss how brand centrality meaning showing the brand visibly in the content has often a positive influence on engagement in the form of likes. Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) states that it could work since it can be caused positive associations from prior that wake up in the consumers as they see the brand.

2.2.2 Social Media Communication Characteristics

Communication characteristics is also an important factor when it comes to engagement and how it can be done, when one understands how different communication characteristics can be utilized within social media context. Especially the textual part of posts rise when it comes to different communication characteristics and their utilization. Passive call-to-actions (CTAs) that are built within text are commonly found to work well when it comes to creating engagement (Drossos et al., 2023, p. 1187). Further, Drossos et al. (2023, p. 1187) implicates in their research done in Facebook, that longer text on posts revoke more engagement among the user whereas shorter text does not have a similar influence. In addition, research done by Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) also sheds light on how mentioning the brand in text could do it as it had a positive influence on engagement in Instagram. Why it works could be due to the positive associations stemming from prior that wake up in consumers as they recognize the brand Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36). Even though mentioning the brand positively influences engagement it is important to note that brand appealing has a negative effect on customer engagement as it is not why many might follow the brand and can seem persuasive to consumers

(Rietveld et al., 2020, p. 36). These theoretical findings prove that what is done regarding communication in post's text does matter regarding engagement, however, these results do need to be considered within their context. What this suggests is that longer texts in posts and CTAs work at least when it comes to Facebook and context of brands published posts (Drossos et al., 2023, p. 1187). Moreover, the positive influence on engagement that comes with brand engagement and the possible negativity if brands try to appeal is tied to the Instagram context of Rietveld's (2020, p. 36) study.

However, to result in engagement there is more ways to do it that seem to activate social media users for example, if a post caption includes a question in the post, it can increase both likes and comments according to Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186). Moran et al. (2020, p. 541) corroborate this as in their research they had similar result where in Facebook a more effective way to create engagement is to ask questions. But they also discussed clickbait tactics that are commonly used and for that call-for-clicks are essential. This is further confirmed as study made by Hamzah et al. (2021, p. 350) describes that a post that is interactive in term of having a link that can be followed can generate engagement. In contrast Jones and Lee (2021, p. 115) do state that when it comes to the context of fashion tap-to-shop is not working on platforms like Instagram which is more commonly used for an inspiration, thus not resulting into purchases made from the platform.

One important communication characteristic that is also commonly found in post descriptions is hashtags. Jones and Lee (2021, p. 114) researched on fashion brands' Instagram posts where they studied 10 different fashion brands posts for the span of four weeks. They found that when using hashtags the hashtag should be something rather general instead of a certain campaign name because general things do not go out of style at any point unlike campaign names that are valid only for the span of the campaign (Jones & Lee, 2021, pp. 114–115).

These studies reveal that communication and what is included within a post's text matters and should not be meaningless when wanting the post caption to encourage users

towards engagement. What previous studies reveal is that masking activation such as call-for-clicks or CTAs are easy ways to create positive influence on engagement in social media channels. But paying attention to the length of the post and whether the brand is mentioned are also characteristics defining whether social media posts can gain engagement. However, social media platforms do differ from each other.

One way for brands to communicate and create engagement is commenting and comments. Getting comments is a form of engagement to a content that enables the possibility for two-way communication and community building. Depending on what kind of engagement is wanted out of consumers, whether is feedback and discussion, Facebook is known as superior platform for this (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022, p. 62). However, comments are essentially derived from customers when a question is formulated in the content (Moran et al. 2020, p. 542). Thus, confirming the findings of Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186) and Moran et al (2020, p. 541) who both state that comments is a good way to create engagement. Additionally, Qin (2020, pp. 350–351) suggests that providing online environments for consumers to interact could be beneficial for brands. In turn, it should not go unnoticed that negative comments are more popular and often they influence brands negatively but on the other hand the sentiment matters, if the comments are positive, it is important to generate more positive comments because it is often linked to increasing likes (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022, p. 62).

Furthermore, when it comes to commenting it is important not to block any singular comments or whole comment sections because as Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) demonstrated this type of behaviour might give back lash to the brand's identity according to Qin (2020, pp. 350–351) as well. Yet, findings by Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022) are based on Facebook data, which limits their direct applicability to Instagram, where user behaviour and content consumption patterns can differ. As theory proves, commenting is a form of engagement but also a communication characteristic, as it can be done by both social media users but also the account owners. With commenting it seems to be

important to allow it and to foster it but also be aware of its possible downsides and backlash to the brand.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Social media marketing is a constantly evolving landscape that as in its current form, enables even companies to produce engaging content (Scridon et al., 2025, pp. 154–155). From a brand's standpoint as brands are continuously expected more from their social media (Schultz, 2017, p. 31), companies should think about their social media marketing strategy, including motivation behind creating a channel and measurable objectives to shed light how and if social media channels even benefits the company (Li et al., 2020, p. 66). This includes thinking about the content and its balance in terms of content that is commercial and what resonates with people, so that companies do not get hurt due to their decisions (see Li et al., 2020, p. 66; Rapp et al., 2013, p. 561). Further in the social media strategy, in terms of content there exist guidelines that are platform specific, that offer guidelines (Cao et al. 2021, p. 844; Drossos et al., 2023, p. 1187).

Theories revolving around engagement help to understand its nature as it is often considered as just likes, shares, and commenting but theories also open its dimensions of its characterization as a state of mind and interaction to content prematurely when it's not fully consumed, as an act of support or to enhance consumers' own image (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018, p. 17). Engagement is also related to contextual factors (Cao et al., 2021, p. 843) and the content of platforms contextual factors which make people behave differently in terms of engagement (Cao et al., 2021, p. 843; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022, p. 61).

Further, theories provided by Moran et al. (2020, pp. 541–542), Schultz (2017, p. 31), Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62), Syrdal and Briggs (2018, pp. 17–18) and Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186), demonstrate different social media characteristics that are found and their possible relation also in terms of social media engagement. These social media characteristics include formats like pictures, videos and content carousels all of

which can be done in the form of a social media post. They all have also observed content characteristics in different industries where characteristics like media rich, trustworthy, emotional, informational, humorous, entertaining, news-worthy, utilitarian, visually appealing, transformational, high-quality, stimulating and interactive, people presenting and brand centrality have been raised from the studies. Some of the characteristics have also been connected by the authors to engagement the forms of likes, comments and shares.

In addition, previous studies (including: Drossos et al., 2023, p. 1187; Jones & Lee, 2021, pp. 114–115; Moran et al., 2020, pp. 541–542; Qin, 2020, pp. 350–351, Rietveld et al., 2020, p. 36; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022, p. 62; Wahid & Gunarto, 2021, p. 186) have researched social media's different possibilities of communicating on different social media platforms. Their studies describe the ways of communication and elaborate how it can be done through various ways including call-to-actions (CTAs), mentioning the brand, use of questions, hashtags, and comments and online platforms. Additionally, many of which had made findings also on engagement and if it is influenced by these identified ways of communication.

These studies have been done in different environments and social media platforms in different times, however none of them has presented shopping malls as a context, where the research is being made. Thus, these studies make the framework of the theory which is being held while this study aims to gather new insights and perspectives from the perspective of these content characteristics and engagement types and influences. However, bringing the platform context to be Instagram and shopping malls, additionally providing international relevance by researching both the North America's and Europe's shopping malls. Thus, extending the knowledge on shopping malls and how they do digital marketing from the perspective of Instagram content and its association to engagement and providing insights on shopping malls' social media marketing and its strategy.

2.4 Conceptual Model

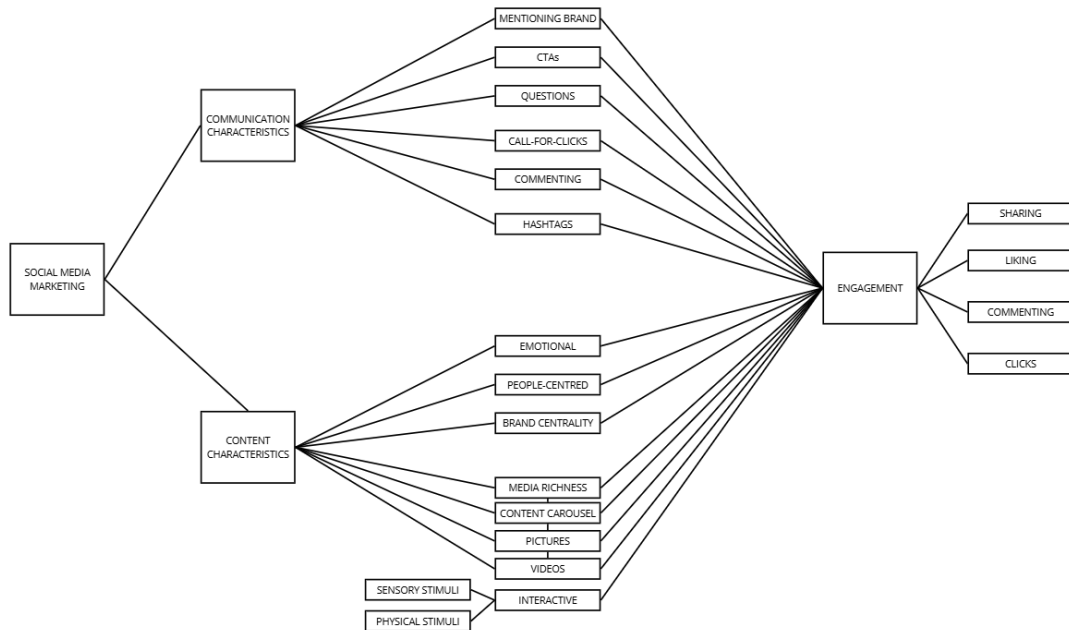


Figure 1: Conceptual model out of theory

This *Figure 1* is made from the foundation of theory to showcase the current knowledge. The *Figure 1* can be interpreted both from left to right and right to left. The main idea is to show connections based on theory. *Figure 1* demonstrates that based on literature social media marketing seems to be characterized by communication and the actual content. Communication characteristics then are all split to individual blocks including mentioning brand, CTAs, questions, call-for-clicks, commenting and finally hashtags. All these individual communication characteristics are then connected to engagement both in positive and negative sense, hence, there is no clear effects shown in the figure but rather connection to engagement. Further, engagement can be split to four kinds of engagement that consist of sharing, liking, commenting and clicks.

Similarly different content characteristics are all individually shown in the figure with further clarity to characteristics to sensory and physical stimuli that together form interactive characteristic. In addition, it is possible to see the individual characteristics of content be media richness, content carousel, videos and pictures. However, the *Figure 1* also tries to demonstrate that while they are individual characteristics, they are all connected.

Media richness consists of pictures, videos, and content carousels, and content carousels come from videos and pictures. They are shown as unique characteristics to make the distinction that they uniquely are connected to engagement.

3 Method

This chapter explains how this research is designed, starting from chosen research approach, further defining the nature of qualitative research and data collection method and sampling to provide a step-by-step understanding of how the research is executed by the author.

3.1 Research Approach

This study aims to analyse and describe the Instagram content of shopping malls' made by shopping malls that are in North America and Europe and have received engagement. The data gathered for this study will be qualitative as it is data that has not been quantified and is gathered in the form of for example text or visuals which (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 13.1). In this study the qualitative data is both visual and textual as it concerns Instagram posts of the shopping malls. Further, this study has chosen to apply an inductive research approach, which involves researching a data set and letting the themes come out of the qualitative data itself rather than connecting it to a pre-existing theory (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 13.6). Additionally, when applying inductive approach, the researcher should balance between pursuing all emerging themes and staying with the subject provided by literature review, as pursuing all themes from a dataset is simply impossible to do (Bell et al., 2019, p. 518).

Moreover, to fit the chosen research approach of inductive approach, the study will perform a thematic analysis to analyse and understand the data. A thematic analysis is flexible for the researcher as it gives the opportunity to go back and forth between data and analysis, while coding and categorizing analytical themes (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 13.6). However, thematic analysis will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections.

3.1.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is chosen when the study aspires to identify themes or patterns from a data set (Saunders, 2023, chapter 13.6). Further, by nature qualitative study concerns textual data instead of numerical data (Bell et al., 2019, p. 356). Additionally, qualitative data often has a lot of descriptive details in the qualitative data that is being reported. However, it is due to its remarkable value for the research as it provides possibility to understand the context, where the qualitative data has been captured in better (Bell et al., 2019, pp. 367–368). Therefore, as this study aims to capture thematic patterns and relationships between post characteristics and engagement across multiple malls' Instagram posts which makes qualitative research a fitting research method. Further, this research is using inductive approach as it gives the possibility to build theory based on the research and its findings rather than test a pre-existing one (Bell et al., 2019, p. 518).

3.2 Data Collection Method

This research is using secondary data from a social networking site, in this study the social networking site in question is Instagram, as the data in it is widely available and accessible (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 8). Secondary data is especially fitting for this research as its nature provides possibilities for international comparisons essential for this study to gain answers to its research question and set objectives (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 8). The international comparisons show in the data collection method as the data is collected from both North American and European malls' Instagram accounts' posts. The amount of ten posts each was chosen as the author saw that after ten posts the study had reached theoretical saturation, meaning no new data is providing additional value (Bell et al., 2019, pp. 521–522). The data in this study comes from the shopping malls' public Instagram accounts and therefore the explanation is rather interpretive than statistical, since the data is qualitative. Due to the time-scope of this study the time from where the posts will be collected is one month and that is from February 2026. This ensured that the posts are recent. In addition, as the data collected for this research is secondary data from Instagram it is worth noting that the numbers of engagement are

from the day the data has been retrieved. To view all collected data by shopping mall, see *Appendix 2 through Appendix 7*.

3.2.1 Data Sampling Method

The sample was chosen based on criterion sampling, which can be described as a purposive sampling method, where according to Bell et al. (2019, p. 390) there is a prerequisite criterion for the chosen units, in this study for the malls. The malls are chosen based on the following criterion of being a shopping mall according to International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) shopping-centre classification and its typical characteristic, having an Instagram account and being active on Instagram, and after that being located within Europe or North America. In addition, the sampling method included features of maximum variation, which means the sample has as much variation as possible in the scope of the research (Bell et al., 2019, p. 390) sampling as the malls differ in country and size. This led the sample to be the following, see *Table 1* below.

Name of the shopping mall	Location of the shopping mall	Name of the shopping mall's Instagram account (reference)	Shopping mall size in square meters according to Gross Leasable Area (GLA)*, (reference) *if available
American Dream Mall	New Jersey, USA	@americandream (American Dream [@americandream], n.d.)	3 million square feet (Triple Five®, n.d.)
West Edmonton Mall	Edmonton, Canada	@official_wem, (West Edmonton Mall [@official_wem], n.d.)	5.3 million square feet, (West Edmonton Mall, n.d.)

Westfield Shopping City Süd	Vienna, Austria	@scs_at (Westfield Shopping City Süd [@scs_at], n.d.)	198 800m ² (Unibail Rodamco Westfield, n. d. -b)
Westfield London	London, England	@westfieldlondon (Westfield London [@westfieldlondon], n.d.).	242 000m ² (Unibail Rodamco Westfield, n. d. -a)
Jumbo	Vantaa, Finland	@kauppakeskusjumbo (Kauppakeskus Jumbo [@kauppakeskusjumbo], n.d.)	140 700m ² (Suomen Kauppakeskusyhdistys, n.d.)
Marineda City	La Coruna, Spain	@marinedacity (Marineda City [@marinedacity], n.d.)	176 000m ² (Merlin Properties, n. d.)

Table 1. The shopping malls chosen for the study

According to International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC, n.d. -a) by their shopping-centre classification and its typical characteristic, a large shopping center is described to be more than 80 000 square meters in GLA. As mentioned in Table 1, this means that the selected European shopping centers including Westfield Shopping City Süd, Westfield London, Jumbo and Marineda City are all very large shopping centers. ICSC's (n.d. -b) U.S. shopping center classification and typical characteristics define that a super-regional mall, the biggest mall possible in the U.S., is more than 800 000 square feet in GLA. American Dream Mall according to sources is altogether 3 million square feet, however exact GLA was not found, but most likely it is above 800 000 square feet. In Canada, according to International Council of Shopping Centers (2010) super-regional mall also exceeds 800 000 square feet, which West Edmonton Mall with 5.3 easily surpasses.

Large shopping centres were selected, since it ensured they most likely had social media accounts. The shopping centres' Instagram accounts were skimmed through to see they had enough overall posts, so that the study allows for good analysis, comparison and recognition of patterns. The amount of ten posts each was selected as the author saw that after ten posts the study had reached theoretical saturation. All posts were selected from the beginning of February of 2026 until the post amount of ten posts was reached. In all centres it was reached within the month of February of 2026. However, Instagram posts that had multiple publishers or owners for example, the shopping mall and an influencer, were not taken into consideration and skipped until a post made only by the shopping mall came along. This measure was done, so that all posts were the organic Instagram posts of the shopping mall and not direct collaborations.

3.2.2 Data Analysis Method

The data of this study was analysed based on a thematic analysis which gives the author a freedom to do many things with the data (Bell et al., 2019, p. 519). For example, thematic analysis allows the author to identify themes or pattern from the qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 13.6). Further, it allows big sets of qualitative data to be dissected, so that the data is manageable and easier to understand (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 13.6). Overall, thematic analysis has some principal steps that are often being followed while performing the analysis. Firstly, the researcher should familiarize themselves with the gathered data, moving on to coding of the data (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 13.6). Coding is one way of handling the data that is related to thematic analysis. there are few different ways thematic analysis can be connected to codes which include code directly being a theme according to the researcher or its rather built from multiple codes Bell et al. (2019, p. 519).

In this study's thematic analysis, the author saw themes emerging from multiple codes (see Appendix 1), demonstrating the latter use of codes to form a thematic analysis. As such a coding schedule is provided (see Appendix 1) to demonstrate how thematic analysis was started by forming the codes, defining them and naming them and finally

leading to a creation of theme on each set of codes seemed to form. To elaborate, thematic analysis often is related to repetition that stems from a data reoccurrence in the data set, but it is worth noting that repetition alone does not make something out of the data a theme (Bell et al., 2019, p. 519), which is important to take in consideration while performing a thematic analysis. In the coding schedule (see Appendix 1) this has been taken into consideration as not all codes that are part of themes are necessarily repeated multiple times, but only a one or few is enough to be seen as a code being part of a theme that emerged. As the final overall steps of thematic analysis initial themes should be generated and reviewed by the author and refined, defined and named leading up to the final part which is writing the thematic analysis (Saunders et al., 2023, chapter 13.6).

4 Research Findings

4.1 Empirical findings of shopping malls

This part presents the overall empirical findings that were gathered from each malls' Instagram and the ten chosen posts over the timeline of February 2026. This section aims to give the reader an idea of what types of content was posted, what was the content focused on and finally how communication was executed in the posts. To demonstrate, concrete examples are provided for the reader to better showcase the findings.

4.1.1 Preferred content formats

Video content was very heavily used especially by North American Malls ADM and WEM but also by WL. For example, ADM (see Appendix 2) utilized video content in multiple ways, whether it was showing store openings, events, products or celebrations like post 7 regarding National Pizza Day or post 9 that was about Galentine's which at the same time showcases what people could do in ADM. Hence, ADM's only video-posts take on their Instagram is creating a lot of versatile possibilities when it comes to what kind of content is possible to make. For WEM (see Appendix 3) the approach was like ADM as the videos showcased products, stores, services, but in addition they had a video where they interviewed people regarding "What's your favourite Lunar New Year Tradition?" while giving away red envelopes to people. WL did a lot of video content that revolved around people and like WEM, WL only had an interview video as well in post 6 (see Appendix 5), where a person named Hermione interviewed shoppers on how they plan to celebrate Valentine's Day. Overall, WL's videos revolved a lot around people, products and stores as well.

Jumbo videos were not used in a similar manner as ADM, WEM and WL did. For them three video posts including J posts 7, 8, 9 and 10 (see Appendix 6) were all about teasing and promoting a sales event that was coming. Other videos for Jumbo were centred around showcasing different stores and their products in Jumbo. SCS (see Appendix 4)

videos were centred around people and products but in contrast they did not have any event-centred video posts. Their video posts within the timeline the data was collected in was about things that were happening around the timeline such as prom as in SCS post 3, or Valentine's Day as in posts 5, 7, 9 and 10 or Winter Olympics as shown in post 6. However, SCS has skilfully integrated promotion of products and stores of SCS within the posts. MC, the mall that least used videos in their content (see Appendix 7) with only half of their posts being videos, one of them was regarding a giveaway of movie tickets, showing the movie in question, and other videos were about products. One of the video posts, post 5, was similarly done as ADM's post 9, where it's shown what people can do in MC if bad weather surprises and then the video shows shops, food and products inside the mall.

Altogether, there was no mall that had not used video format in their Instagram posts. In terms of European shopping malls, WL and Jumbo, were the ones with most of the posts to include videos. Only MC and SCS had significantly more variation where only half of MC's posts were videos and for SCS 6 out of ten were videos. Thus, shopping malls seem to use quite a lot of videos as it is a format that enables many possibilities compared to still images.

However, the trend of using carousel posts on shopping malls' Instagram does not go unnoticed. WEM post 2 and 9 (see Appendix 3) were both picture carousel posts, where WEM post 2 shows Lunar New Year related products from Lego, T&T Supermarket, Sephora and Starbucks and WEM post 9 is a picture carousel about a bowling place. Three SCS posts are different kinds of carousel posts (see Appendix 4). SCS post 1 shows prom related products, SCS post 2 shows men's clothing and SCS post 8 shows food. Both for WEM and SCS the picture carousels were very product focused, with some showing people in the pictures. MC post 7 (see Appendix 7) includes a carousel with both videos and pictures with a person and flowers in both videos and pictures and the post is a teaser of something coming to MC. Additionally, both only picture carousel posts MC had done were MC post 4 showing products and people and MC post 6 promoting a

carnival that will happen in MC. In contrast, Jumbo and WL had both done one carousel post each. Both again showing products, WL post 5 (see Appendix 5) being a picture carousel of products for Valentine's that could be bought for "her" and Jumbo post 4 (see Appendix 6) showing different cinnamon buns that can be bought from different cafes inside of Jumbo.

However, when it comes to image format, only two malls had done single-image posts. WEM was one of them with post 5, which is a giveaway for tickets to go watch Finding Nemo (see Appendix 3) was a single-image post. SCS was the other mall that had done a single image post, post 4 (see Appendix 4) which similarly to WEM post 5 is about a Valentine's Day giveaway. This shows that single-image posts popularity in shopping mall context might be declining, as the content format is almost non-existent. Any other malls researched including ADM, WL, Jumbo and MC did not have any single-image posts in the data collected.

4.1.2 Preferred content focuses

When people were involved with shopping malls' Instagram, they were often showing products, filmed doing activities or within the shops. In numbers for ADM 8 out of 10 posts featured people, for WEM 5 out of 10 showed people, SCS 7 out of 10, WL 7 out of 10 posts showed people and MC 8 out of 10 posts. Generally showing people seems to be popular on shopping malls' Instagram accounts. However, there was one shopping mall that showed more products and information rather than people, and that was Jumbo with only 2 posts out of 10 to have people in it. Only in J post 2 and J post 8 showed people. In Jumbo post 2 people showed what can be done in Jumbo if you win the giveaway and spend Valentine's there. In Jumbo post 8 people were on a bouncy ball, demonstrating the up-and-coming competition Jumbo was holding during the campaign "Round Days" where children could be bouncy ball champions. However, even though Jumbo seems to be an exception, people seem to be a central part of the content in many other shopping malls. Altogether most of the shopping malls' Instagram showed

people in their content somehow but there were few exceptions where only products, service, or stores were shown.

Certainly, all mall's Instagram somehow showed products or services in many of their posts. However, some posts were more product-centred posts than others. ADM post 4 (see Appendix 2) was the first one to be clearly product-centred content as it shows bag charms available in a store within ADM. In addition, for example SCS (see Appendix 4) posted about men's products like clothing and key charms from a company called Massi Milano. Also, WL post 5 (see Appendix 5), showcasing different products as gifts for Valentines for her, strictly showcases products and the brands where the products can be bought from. Also, Jumbo posts 4 and 6 (see Appendix 6) demonstrate good product focused content, where in Jumbo post 4 cinnamon buns are shown and the different cafes where they are possible to buy are named. Similarly in Jumbo post 6 shows stores and possible children's winter boots that are available. For MC (see Appendix 7) they show different jewellery that is available to buy at Stradivarius in MC mall. Strictly product centred content was less common, but as the examples demonstrate it was still found on multiple shopping malls' Instagram accounts.

brand-centred content:

Brand-centred content was in different forms but most clearly it was shown in two instances WL post 7 about a Nike pop-up store in addition to WL post 9 about Clarins UK pop-up as well (see Appendix 5). ADM post 3 (see Appendix 2), where the only Adidas Soccer store was shown, was also very brand centred. However, it is worth noting that whenever a store, service or products was shown, a brand of course is mentioned or shown somehow. However, these three instances illustrate a clear, sought after brand focus, where in the video it's possible to see the logo, products and make associations already based on that.

Event-centred content was found most in ADM where 4 out of 10 posts were different kinds of events either promoted or more of a thank you post that showed the

atmosphere of the events that were held. There was K-Pop, Dragon Ball, Dream Family Reunion and an ice hockey Watch party (see Appendix 2). Together with ADM, Jumbo (see Appendix 6) had quite many event related posts, as they had 5 out of 10. Jumbo post 1 was about the president couple of Finland visiting Jumbo and other four circled around “Round Days” which is more of promoting the offers around Jumbo’s stores but also there seems to be based on the posts a competition for children where the champion of bouncy ball is settled. However, after ADM and Jumbo the amount of event posts was not so significant in shopping malls Instagram channels as MC had only one event-centred post. Meanwhile SCS and WL had no event posts within the data that was collected.

Giveaways were quite common content on multiple shopping malls Instagrams, the only two who did not have any giveaway posts within the data collected were WL and ADM. However, SCS post 4 was a giveaway post regarding Valentine’s Day. Similarly, Jumbo had a Valentine’s themed giveaway as shown in Jumbo post 2. Giveaway content was also done by MC post 1 (see Appendix 7), where they gave away tickets to a new Zombie-themed movie. WEM post 5 was also a giveaway post for a movie but this time for Finding Nemo, where it was possible to win tickets to watch the movie by entering the giveaway. Also, WEM 7 post about Lunar New Year is a giveaway themed post, whereby commenting one can win a gift card to WEM. In addition to WEM post 8 is a giveaway (see Appendix 3), where one can win two Mr. Potato Head toys as according to the post caption.

4.1.3 Preferred ways of communicating

Most shopping mall’s Instagram posts were promotional, promoting an event happening at the shopping mall or a new retail space opening. Posts were mostly promotional but some also informational in nature for example WEM 2, a picture carousel post (see Appendix 3), informing where to find Year of the Horse products exclusively at WEM. SCS

post 5 (see Appendix 4) showing different shops, activities, restaurants in SCS are a great example of mainly promotional content.

Jumbo post 1 (see Appendix 6) could be the only post that is mainly informational in nature. It is about a Finnish President couple visiting the shopping mall. The video says “Welcome to Jumbo Mr President” in Finnish and then “Welcome to Jumbo Mrs Innes-Stubb” it also states where people can meet them and when. Further the caption informs followers: “Welcome to our shopping center, Alexander and Suzanne! The presidential couple’s public event, open to all residents of Vantaa, will begin in the shopping center’s main plaza at 4:45 p.m. today, Tuesday, February 3. The event will be opened by the Vaskivuori High School Chamber Choir, after which the Mayor of Vantaa and the Director of Communications will chat with the presidential couple on stage. The event will conclude with a photo opportunity where the first few people in line will get to take a picture with the presidential couple. The event may cause temporary disruptions, for example, to customer traffic routes”. That is the post as a whole and it is the one that stood out from the data as only an informational post.

But for example, ADM post 3, 5 and 8 (see Appendix 2) could be both seen as promotional and informational, since they inform about the opening, Adidas and an event, Dragon ball. WL’s (see Appendix 5) posts were often both promotional and informational. Promotional in terms of showing the products and services, and informational in terms of telling where to find each. WEM post 1 and 3 (see Appendix 3) are perfect examples of dual communication. WEM post 1 shows Foot Locker, the store and its products but in the caption, they inform people “Foot Locker’s newly renovated location is now open on Level One, Phase II, featuring lifestyle footwear & apparel from top brands like Nike, adidas, Puma, Converse, New Balance, ASICS and more.” WEM post 3 shows the new Oakberry Açai -place, and the video promotes the place but also shows the products one can get and how they are done. Further, in the caption it tells the followers following “The wait is over - OAKBERRY is now open, featuring açai bowls & smoothies, customized with all the toppings you love! Get yours today on Level Two, Phase III near T&T

Supermarket”, so it informs in the caption as well what one can expect and where it is in the mall.

ADM used hashtags rather irregularly, but they have used #visitamericandream in ADM posts 1 and 8, but in post 8 they also used #NewYorkSirens #TheGamerom. WEM used hashtags like #WEM #WestEdmontonMall #ExploreWEM or #MyWEMMyWay in all posts excluding WEM post 6. But for example, in WEM post 7 hashtags like #LunarNewYear and #YearOfTheHorse are used. For Westfield SCS all posts featured #WestfieldShoppingCitySüd and in addition some posts had more general hashtags such as #BallSaison which freely translates to “prom season”. They did not tag anyone in the post but mentioned the store name in the caption in the form of hashtag as in SCS posts 2 #MassiMilano 3 #BijouBirgitte, 6 #BlueTomato and finally 10 #MediaMarkt. However, they did not use any niche hashtags but rather broad such as in SCS post 2 #ModernLook, post 7 #Relatable #Valentinstag and post 9 #ValentinstagLook and post #TacoTime. WL did not do any hashtags in any of their posts; however, they do tag frequently. All posts, except J 1, included the hashtags #Jumbo and #Vantaa, also when promoting an event in posts J 8th, 9th and 10th post the name of the event #PyöreätPäivät which translates as “round days” in English were included in the captions.

CTAs were very common, especially Jumbo, SCS and MC had utilized them in many posts at least four per each. For example, Jumbo post 6: “Come on by and see what treasures you can find among our used items! Tell us in the comments: What would be your dream secondhand find?”, which was about second-hand stores that were introduced on a video. For SCS a CTA in the caption could be like in SCS post 1 “Swipe through Part 1 and check out your prom accessory!” or in post 6 “Take a guess and post your answer in the comments!”. In turn from Marineda City the CTAs were very straight-forward such as in post 4 “Don’t miss out on the latest sales!” and in post 7 “Keep an eye on @marinedacity over the next few days”. In addition, WEM had used at least two clear CTAs. WEM post 4 CTA said, “Visit the link in bio!” regarding what one could get for someone for Valentine’s Day and if they got a WEM gift card, they could also get a complimentary chocolate

box. Another use of CTA from WEM was in post 5 that said “Enter to win a Family Pack of 4 tickets! For more information visit the link in bio!” For, malls including ADM and WL, CTAs were not so evident in their posts.

When it comes to tagging, one way of communication in the content it was performed only by certain shopping malls’ Instagram accounts. These included, ADM, WEM, WL and MC. WL was the most aggressive mall to tag, with tagging accounts in 7 out of 10 posts. They tagged a lot of companies they promoted in their content like in post 5 @zara, @sephorauk, @westfielddarlings, @neomwellbeing and @monicavinader or like in post 6, the person interviewing people in the video @hermione.uptonspeed. MC was the other mall to tag a lot with having tags in 5 out of 10 posts. They had tagged a movie, promoted in post 1 @survivalzombie, but also themselves such as in post 8 @marinedacity, but also companies in the shopping malls like in post 8 @flyingtigeres, post 9 @casadellibro and finally post 10 @starbucks_es.

ADM was third based on numbers of posts which included tagging, having tagged in 4 out of 10 posts. In ADM post 2 and 6 they tagged performers such as in ADM 2 @aland_usa and in ADM 6 @djenvy and @fettywap1738 and the person responsible for pictures or filming (open for interpretation) @bootcampbenz. However, like WL and MC, they had also tagged in their post’s companies, like in post 3 @Adidas and in post 4 @ladymcakes, both of which products were promoted in the posts in question. WEM together with ADM had two posts with tags as well and these were WEM post 4 @purdyschocolatier and WEM post 10 @zachyman and @epldotca.

When it comes to brand mentioning, it was mainly done within the content like visually in some materials for example Jumbo post 7 which shows a video where the name Jumbo is clear and center in the video and in the hashtags of almost all Jumbo posts, the hashtag #Jumbo was used. For other malls this was the case was quite a like for example, SCS tagging the whole mall name #ShoppingCitySud or #WEM additionally, stating something about the mall in the caption such as “American Dream” was done more often in

ADM post 3, ADM post 5 in the video itself, and ADM post 10. Similar was done by WL in post 4 for example “All available at Westfield London”. These demonstrate that the mall as a brand itself was mentioned throughout captions, hashtags, and within the content itself for the followers to keep in mind.

Questions as a form of communication in the posts were used a bit differently and, in a context, dependent way. For example, in ADM post 2 “The moves? Crazy. The vibes? Unmatched.”, which was about K-pop event the questions in the captions were just for the caption and not to encourage anyone necessarily to communicate. Also, in WEM post 4 which was their only question post that asked ““Not sure what to get your Valentine?” was not maybe to get people to answer that but rather they answer it in the content by showcasing products.

Different angle on questions as a way of communicating was brought by SCS, where the questions seemed more activating for the audience. For example, in SCS post 6 “Can you guess these Winter Olympics sports based on the emojis?” and post 7 “From Galentine's Queen to Pick Me Legend—which role are you playing this year?”. Jumbo was also a mall that heavily used questions to activate the audience, their question in a Valentine's Day giveaway post was “Where would you take a friend or your partner at Jumbo?”, if the follower were to win the giveaway. In post 4 they presented different cinnamon buns and asked people to pick one, and in post 5 “What features make children's winter boots good?”. In post 6 and 7 they try to test their follower's knowledge on Jumbo as they ask in post 6 “Did you know that there are also secondhand stores in Jumbo?” and in post 7 what a teaser video that includes a bouncy ball could be about. Numerically with 6 out of 10 posts including a question, Jumbo came on top of using question in commenting. The only mall that did not do questions in the caption was WL, however in their content they went and interviewed people in post number 6.

4.1.4 Regional findings and comparison: North America vs. Europe

What the regions shopping malls' Instagram accounts' posts all had in common was characters like video content which was super popular in both regions. However, it was even a bit more popular in North American malls' Instagram content in comparison to European malls when all posts together were interpreted. In turn European malls had adopted more variation in formats as overall they had more content carousels, including picture carousels, carousel that had combined both videos and photos as well as single image photos. However, WEM, representing North America as its location is in Edmonton, Canada had also implemented these previously mentioned formats as well, but overall, their posts were still mainly videos, together with ADM, located in New Jersey in the United States. Both in the North America and Europe a single-image post was done in one of the following malls, WEM and SCS. Therefore, it can be said that single-image posts are not trending in either of the regions' shopping malls' Instagram content.

Further, both regions did demonstrate in their Instagram posts that when it comes to showing people in the content, it is highly popular in shopping mall context as most of the posts did showcase people and there was no single region that could be ruled out of it. However, in Europe, Jumbo was maybe an exception to the rule as they had only one post, where people were clearly shown and central to the content. Moving from people to products, based on findings, Europe had more strictly product centred posts compared to North America. The difference could possibly be explained through the differences in used formats. Where in North America it was more videos, and Europe videos and images, also in carousel format. Different formats could explain why it could be easier for European malls to center the post clearly to one thing, in this case products. Whereas, when videos are used more the content may likely entail more as it enables the possibility to include more than just one thing.

Overall content, that could be seen promotional which is practically everything posted by the malls, except Jumbo post one which was only to welcome and inform the followers on how the Finnish president visitation will end up happening in practice.

Promotional content for shopping malls' Instagram's seemed to include giveaway or event posts. When it came to event posts North America seemed use them more in comparison to Europe where only Jumbo had done posts quite a lot regarding a campaign "Round Days" which also had a competition during it.

In terms of communication styles like CTAs, hashtags, tagging and question, North America as a region was more prominent in hashtags and tagging on their shopping malls' Instagram posts. Variations still exist inside North America where, WEM used more hashtags compared to ADM but in terms of tagging they both did it irregularly but at least both malls in the region did it. Like Europe there was variations within the region with Jumbo and SCS using hashtags almost constantly, while on the other hand WL and MC did not use at all. However, MC and WL were the only ones in Europe to tag on posts. Europe had also been more active in terms of utilizing questions in their content in comparison to North America. In addition, Europe's questions were more commonly directed towards the followers and less passive, while in the North America it was the other way around and altogether less popular.

Finally in terms of gaining engagement North America was superior, however their Instagram accounts were also bigger in terms of followers. Despite the fact, they were still more successful in activating their follower, which could be a consequence of multiple factors. However, in Europe, the overall amount of engagement was more consistent, and the variations were not as big as in North America, demonstrating a more stable engagement patterns, whereas in North America it seems more content specific.

4.2 Discussion

This section is to demonstrate for the reader how the empirical findings are connected to the theory. In each subchapter the findings are shortly recapped, moving on towards introducing the theoretical lens and then comparing the empirical findings to the theory and interpreting the data and its contributions.

4.2.1 Content Formats in Relation to Engagement

Videos

In shopping malls' Instagram accounts, videos were the most prominent format found in their content. Furthermore, videos for all the shopping the malls Instagram posts researched gained the most likes of all posts and compared to all other formats that included single-image post, or a carousel post. Great examples of this are malls like ADM, WL, and Jumbo, which all had done most of their content in video format. This seems to be aligned with what many studies concerning social media engagement stressed. The importance of videos influences all aspects of engagement like researched by Schultz (2017, p. 31) who states videos do have a positive influence on likes and as both Schultz (2017, p. 31) and Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186) had found, is also applicable when it comes to videos and gaining shares. Shopping malls' content in Instagram that were done in video format, confirm the previous literature generally as for example, ADM post 5, which is a promotional video post regarding an upcoming event gained 580 likes, 40 comments and 32 reposts. Meaning videos are in shopping malls Instagram posts also associated to engagement in likes but on many occasions also in the form of comments and reposts.

However there, was also evidence that contradicts the findings of Schultz (2017, p. 31) and Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186) like Jumbo post 8, where there is a video stating their campaign of "Pyöreät Päivät", the sales campaign by Jumbo is coming again. This post 8 has received 15 likes, and no comments or reposts. Similar has happened to SCS post 10, a video that reached 24 likes and no comments or shares. These findings from shopping malls and video content's association to engagement, are significantly contradicting previous literature. Yet, they provide further understanding to as these two videos in their own malls' data were the least liked content of all. Why this has happened to Jumbo and SCS video content, seems rather unknown. It could be the result of multiple things, like the region or other characteristics of the video, whether it is seen as fresh or authentic, or relevant that was deemed important on platform like Instagram as claimed by Syrdal and Briggs (2018, p. 18). Therefore, what can be made of shopping

malls' Instagram posts' video content is that in most cases it is positively associated to liking but also comments and reposts and in addition are the most liked content format. However, there is a possibility it is not so successful and only receives likes. This is not necessarily a bad thing and should not discourage malls from posting in video format as it has also the most positive results.

Furthermore, these exceptions are partially in line to a research claim by Wahid and Gunarto (2020, p. 186) whose study focused on universities' Instagram and stated that, videos do not generate likes and comments. For shopping malls, the latter sometimes applies as well. Yet, overall, this is not applicable claim regarding to the data gathered from shopping malls' Instagram accounts as they often did gain engagement. As what has been stated in a study by Schultz (2017, p. 31) which was mentioned earlier where videos did positively influence likes and shares. Many videos on shopping malls' Instagram accounts resulted in a lot of likes, shares and comments as well compared to other content formats. Thus, for shopping mall Instagram context the findings of this study do not align with Wahid and Gunarto's (2020, p. 186) findings, where videos are not gaining comments.

To further highlight how well video posts succeeded to make engagement for shopping malls' video content on Instagram, ADM post 6 with over 27 000 likes, 463 comments and 956 reposts, which is a video about an event held at the mall is a great demonstration. As another example from the data gathered, WEM post 3 (see Appendix 3), which gained 640 likes, 7 comments and 15 reposts, signalling videos do perform well in shopping malls' Instagrams. In relation to theory, Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) states how emotional content, if the format is video, it should generate comments. This could possibly be seen in the ADM post 6, which can be interpreted to convey emotional content in a video format as it shows the performer, as an artist is performing and a lot of people can be seen excitedly watching the artist performing. As such, this finding of emotional content generating comments is applicable to shopping malls context as well, in line with Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) research. Additionally, it is in line with study

by Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) where regarding Instagram they stated emotional content generates more likes and comments if that includes text and visuals.

Emotional content in video format can be seen in event posts like ADM post 6 but also, to bring forward another example in WEM post, which shows people at WEM getting interviewed and telling the audience their favourite Lunar New Year's traditions. People can be seen in the video being happy and excited and wishing "Happy Lunar New Year". In terms of engagement the post has received 796 likes, 416 comments and 10 reposts, confirming Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) claim on emotional content and its relation to likes and comments. Thus, for shopping malls emotional video content can be seen working especially in the context of promotional posts regarding events or people being interviewed in different ways demonstrating Shahbaznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) and Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) research, providing that in shopping malls as well, emotional content does result in engagement in terms of likes, comment and reposts.

Finally, when it comes to shares, such as in ADM post 6 which had 956 reposts, it is worth noting that Moran et al. (2020, p. 542) did state that often times if content is media rich it often influence shares so much that when a post starts to receive shares, they often result to more shares being received. This could also be the case in the ADM post 6, that it has started to circulate around as some have started to repost it, so it has resulted to more reposts, finally resulting into a significant amount of reposts. What all of this can be seen to signal for shopping malls and their Instagram posts is that they could benefit from video content alone but also providing viewers emotional video content and as they may gain engagement as according to Moran et al. (2020, p. 542) it can have a snowball effect which could indicate further potential to the posts that receive more engagement in the form of shares.

Carousel posts

Another format that had been used numerous times by malls was carousel posts. Carousel posts were done in only two ways, the main way the format was used was by doing an only pictures carousel post like SCS posts 1, 2 and 3 (see Appendix 4) but the format was used by WEM, MC, Jumbo and WL too, while ADM did solely video format. The only one to use the carousel format differently was MC, which had done MC post 7 by using both a video and pictures in the carousel. Based on the data gathered carousel posts are possibly getting more popular as most malls have done it, some more than others.

Carousel photos were connected to media richness, according to Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186) a post like MC post 7, demonstrates the highest form of media richness, which they describe is a carousel post including both videos and pictures. Further, they argued it could lead to more engagement in terms of likes. Their claim, based on the post MC 7, could be true as the MC post 7 claimed 535 likes. However, as there is no actual evidence on why people have chosen to engage with the post, a straight conclusion cannot be drawn but can be suggested. Yet, in reflection to Wahid and Gunarto's (2021, p. 186) findings, it is interesting that these kinds of media rich formats were not more common in shopping malls Instagrams. Further as MC post 7 shows, in shopping mall contexts Wahid & Gunarto's (2021, p. 186) findings can be echoed, as it is positively associated to engagement in the form of likes, but also comments, as it received 10 comments.

However, it should be remarked that as Syrdal and Briggs, (2018, p. 17) have stated on how interaction on the post can happen even though the followers have not fully consumed the content and for example can act out of support or to enhance their own image. In MC post 7 the photos include flowers moving and petals dropping from the roof and while a person is in an elevator. This could trigger sensory and physical stimulation in people, which Jones and Lee (2021, p. 117) describe as being the most engaging post to the followers. Therefore, indicating that sensory and physical stimulation could be more commonly adopted to shopping malls' Instagram posts, although many of them in addition to MC post 7 already demonstrate this with its 535 likes and 10 comments.

Signalling stimuli in shopping malls' Instagram post can be positively associated to engagement in the form of likes and comments.

Images

When it comes to pictures in posts, they had been used in picture carousels as previously stated SCS posts 1, 2 and 3 but also by WEM, MC, Jumbo and WL too, while ADM did solely video format. However, single-image pictures were not found on many shopping malls Instagram posts, as only WEM post 5 and SCS post 4 were single-image posts, both promoting giveaways. This contradicts findings provided by Jones and Lee (2021, p. 116) who had found that in fashion Instagram posts, images are useful as they can be quickly looked at while scrolling. The amount of what shopping malls' used images in their content provides a possible new angle, where image posts are not seen as superior to others, at least in the context of shopping malls.

Yet, when it comes to images, not all malls had included a single image post but instead many of them had picture carousels, where pictures are the sole format but there is multiple one of them within one post. While the amount of picture carousels could be seen as a trending format based on the data as almost all malls had done them, single-image posts seem to be outdated in shopping mall Instagrams. In previous research like Schultz's (2017, p. 31) pictures do create engagement in the form of likes, which can be seen in a single image post by WEM, post 5, with 342 likes, 515 comments and 4 reposts. It is a high amount of likes even leaving behind some video format posts on the same account as WEM post 6, which received only 130 likes. SCS single-image post 4 had gained 82 likes and 19 comments, which is high in relation to other content gathered from SCS. Hence, single image posts are positively connected to engagement in terms of likes and comments.

However, both posts were giveaways which could influence people's willingness to engage. Another aspect, that seems to be quite evident on why single image posts are not used more commonly could be the limits of the format, where if one posts only one image posts, it most likely narrows down the possibilities of content that could be showcased, were the format another kind. With that said these two examples that were on the collected data of shopping malls' Instagram posts are still aligned with Shahbazznezhad et al. (2022, p. 62) research who had found rational content, that they refer to as photos, does generate more likes. This was ultimately the case with shopping malls as well at least when it comes to single image formatted content and thus could be used more by shopping malls.

Among picture content, Li and Xie (2020, p. 17) claimed the quality of the pictures, saying high-quality pictures would be superior compared to others. However, from the data gathered from the malls that claim is hard to confirm generally. Both in terms of interpreting it from two stand points including whether it's true in mall context and whether it could have any association to engagement. Further, the term high-quality should be further defined. MC post 4, a picture carousel post, that seems to have more casually taken pictures has succeeded well and received a good amount of engagement in general for MC's post. On the other hand, for example, SCS post 1 includes high-quality promotional pictures and in terms of engagement it has received 53 likes but for example SCS post 8, also features high-quality promotional pictures and has received 99 likes, 3 comments, and one repost. High-quality photos in shopping malls' Instagram account can therefore be positively associated with engagement, especially in the form of likes.

These examples show that high-quality pictures do have a place in shopping malls' Instagram content. Moreover, they seem to work in shopping mall in terms of overall creating some form of engagement as both examples have received likes but also comments and reposts. However, high-quality pictures in this data may not explain the differences in the engagement that they have received. Yet, as demonstrated they do provide

engagement in the form of like at least meaning they could be seen as a beneficial feature in shopping malls' Instagram posts, when it comes to content characteristics.

4.2.2 Content focus in relation to engagement

Social Content

Social content, in this case regarding shopping malls' Instagram post content that shows people and oftentimes is also connected to event posts, as they all included people as well. This was a method proven to work at least in a platform like Twitter, where according to Li and Xie (2020, p. 17) showing people has resulted in a higher amount of engagement, but they did not see the same influence on Instagram. However, in the context of shopping malls this argument should prevail as many of the shopping malls Instagram posts with high engagement did include people. For example, WEM post 10, which received 943 likes, 20 comments and 23 reposts. It shows an event where an Edmonton Oiler and Children's author visits WEM and is met and greeted by people, giving out autographs and talking.

Additionally, WL post 8 (see Appendix 5) which has 127 likes and 10 comments. The video shows people in WL celebrating the Year of the Horse. Some shopping mall posts such as ADM post 6 showed even an artist performing in the mall, which according to the caption is @fettywap1738, receiving as previously mentioned over 27 000 likes, over 400 comments, and over 900 reposts. Based on the data gathered showing celebrities in shopping malls' Instagram content does not seem super popular. In contrast, WL post 6 showcased ordinary people getting interviewed by a woman, asking how people celebrate Valentine's and received 83 likes, 6 comments, 3 reposts. These types of posts featuring people who are shopping or hanging out in the mall were more prevalent in the data gathered. Further, for shopping malls it seems easier way to execute in comparison to having celebrities or famous people like in ADM post 6.

However, ADM post 6 with an artist performing and WL post 6 showing ordinary people verify the argument of Drossos et al. (2023, p. 1187) where it was argued that if the aim is to gain positive reaction, the use of celebrities or ordinary people could help, this was verified also in shopping mall setting. Why this seems to have worked in the shopping mall context could be that, when one sees a celebrity they may recognize them, which may result in engagement or with ordinary people it can be relatable. Both of which may create or signal interactivity, which according to Schultz (2017, p. 31) does well in terms of engagement.

Commercial content

Another thing that was found in many of the shopping malls' Instagram content was brand in some shape or form as almost everything the malls post does showcase a product, store or a service, where showing the brand in question is almost in possible not to do. Especially as the idea for shopping malls' Instagram seems to be posting promotional content. Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) discussed brand centrality, where the brand is visibly shown in content and how it could gain the posts doing so, engagement in the form of likes. As previously discussed, shopping malls do a lot of Instagram content showing brands, however to there is more specific examples of this to be found in the data.

Perfect examples of brand centred posts receiving likes include ADM post 3, where an Adidas soccer store has opened in ADM, and it has received 2683 likes, 52 comments, and 90 reposts. In ADM post 3, the brand is clearly central both in the text but also within the content where products showcasing Adidas in the form of logo or text are shown to the viewer. The content seems to be making sure it is known that this is Adidas that is being shown. Similarly, WL post 7 showcasing Nike Mavn pop-up store inside WL has gained 131 likes, 9 comments and 2 reposts. Thus, in the context of shopping malls, not only does brand centred content create likes as Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) has informed to happen on Instagram, for shopping malls it also is associated to comments and shares.

In addition, giveaway posts done by shopping malls are often brand centred posts and many of them for example Jumbo post 2 that are centred around Jumbo, its own brand but also the brands of the stores and restaurants it carries as it showcases them in the video. Jumbo post 2 has 514 likes and 533 likes, further confirming Rietveld et al (2020, p. 36) findings.

Almost exactly like the Adidas post it is almost impossible for the viewer of the content to miss that this post is regarding Nike. Based on the engagement, it seems that brand centred posts do well and could be further utilized, but in shopping mall context to call the content brand centred it needs strong signals to the viewer, whether a logo, text, sound to signal the brand so that there would not be any uncertainty. However, the other side of this is that these example posts feature big chains, most likely widely recognized by audience, so for other brands inside the mall, they may not have similar resources to showcase and do branding as ADM post 3 and WL post 7 showcase to the viewer. However, Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) has also claimed that in turn brand appealing is not positive for the brand as it might not be the main reason why the audience follows a brand and can seem too persuasive. However, for shopping malls this should not be an issue as shopping malls Instagram posts often represent different brands and moreover, the posts rarely are brand post after brand post, but rather more versatile.

4.2.3 Communication in Relation to Engagement

Promotional, Informational and Dual Communication

Most shopping malls communication was done in a promotional manner as all posts in some ways were promotional. Solely informational posts were hard to find, and as such only one post in the data was declared as only informational post without having any promotional aspect to it and that was Jumbo post 1. Dual communication, where posts were both promotional and informational in the way they communicated for the audience, were the most popular. An example of dual communication was this, for example

WL post 1 which is promotional in terms of showing the products and services, and informational in terms of telling where to find each.

Therefore, WEM post 1 is a great example of how dual communication can be done in shopping mall context. It shows Foot Locker, the store and its products but in the caption, they inform people "Foot Locker's newly renovated location is now open on Level One, Phase II, featuring lifestyle footwear & apparel from top brands like Nike, adidas, Puma, Converse, New Balance, ASICS and more.". WEM post 1 has gained 576 likes, 5 comments and 9 reposts, showcasing that dual communication is positively associated to all three forms of engagement when it comes to shopping malls' Instagram posts. Informational post is also associated to engagement, as the only information post, Jumbo post 1 has received 73 likes. Thus, demonstrating informational post in shopping mall context being positively associated to engagement in terms of liking the content.

As most of the content in the data is promotional, it is seen as important to the shopping malls and to be associated to engagement. To demonstrate what kinds of content promotional content can be and how they receive engagement, two posts can demonstrate this in video format. For example, SCS post 3 that has received engagement by 106 likes, 2 comments and two shares, similarly ADM post 1 has received 206 likes, 5 comments and 4 reposts, together with other data to demonstrate that promotional content is positively associate in creating engagement in the context of shopping malls' Instagram content. However, promotional posts also work in picture and content carousel formats too, as previously discussed. Subsequently, ways of communication were more diversified including hashtags, CTAs, tagging, brand mentioning and the way questions were used.

Hashtags

Hashtags were used quite a lot by all the malls, as a form of communication. However, two malls were found in the data to not utilize hashtags and these were WL and MC. Most hashtags used were the shopping malls name for example #Jumbo or

#WestEdmontonMall or #WestfieldShoppingCitySüd. However, some of the hashtags were more general like in SCS post 2 #ModernLook or post 7 #Relatable also Jumbo used campaign names like in Jumbo posts 8, 9 and 10 #PyöreätPäivät which translates as “#RoundDays”. According to Jones and Lee (2021, pp. 114–115) who researched fashion brands’ Instagram posts stated that hashtags are better when they are general, so general in this case could be hashtags that were used by SCS.

Yet, in terms of shopping malls their own names as hashtags could also be interpreted as general, therefore what Jones and Lee (2021, pp. 114–115) had claimed about fashion Instagrams can be seen also happening in shopping malls’ Instagrams and their posts. In addition, they advised against what Jumbo has done in their last posts promoting a campaign and using campaign hashtags, since according to them campaign names are only valid for the campaign, thus going out of style. However, in shopping malls many campaigns seem to return, so for example in Jumbo’s case using the hashtag #PyöreätPäivät might work for them time after time, since there is no year after and in case it is a recurring campaign.

However, in terms of hashtags as a communication method, yes, they were all associated with creating engagement at least in the form of likes. Many of which had also received comments and shares. However, to depict what kinds of hashtags are the most beneficial in terms of engagement is hard to tell. However, for shopping malls at least using the names in the caption like Jumbo, WEM and SCS had done, should only be beneficial as when one would click or research the hashtag it also shows the shopping malls’ posts’ that have used the hashtags, further create visibility on Instagram.

CTAs

Most shopping malls used CTAs in their Instagram posts captions. Many of them were related to giveaways such as WEM 5 “Enter to win a Family Pack of 4 tickets! For more information visit the link in bio!”, SCS 4 “It’s raining roses and hearts in our giveaway, so

enter now!” or Jumbo post 2 “Leave a comment below and you’ll be entered into the drawing.”, what they all had in common was the word of “enter”. These can be seen positively influencing the engagement in all three ways that are likes, comments, and shares of the posts as the posts including these types of CTAs gathered all both likes and comments but also WEM post 5 gained reposts. These types of giveaway related CTAs in shopping mall context can be seen working, confirming the claim by Drossos et al. (2023, p. 1187), where CTAs in text can be positively associated to engagement. Some shopping mall CTAs also suggest coming to the mall such as Jumbo post 6 “Come on by and see what treasures you can find among our used items! Tell us in the comments: What would be your dream secondhand find?”, for Jumbo event though with a question formulated it resulted to likes but zero comments and MC post 5 “Come to Marineda!” resulted to both likes and comments. Thus, these kinds of CTAs inciting customers are associated to likes but not necessarily to commenting.

However, previous states that when it comes to CTAs and how they relate to engagement Drossos et al. (2023, p. 1187) state that when built within text, they should work positively in relation to creating engagement to the post. This does apply in shopping malls’ Instagram posts as well; CTAs can be positively associated to engagement. In relation to CTAs, there is call-for-clicks, a tactic to clickbait people as per Moran et al. (2020, p. 541). An example of its use in shopping malls could be Jumbo’s post 9 as it states the following “Read more and sign up via the link in bio!” Indicating that on Jumbo’s main profile in Instagram there is a link where one can read more and sign up regarding a bouncy ball competition organized during “Round Days” -campaign. These types of posts resulted to gain engagement in the form likes with 29 likes received.

According to Hamzah et al. (2021, p. 350) a post that is interactive in the way of including a link that can be followed is associated to generate engagement. For Jumbo, and other malls such as MC in post 1 stating “See the terms and conditions in our bio.” it seems that the link is often not in the caption of the post itself but rather on the shopping malls’ Instagram accounts main page where the so-called “bio” is found. However, in the case

of both Jumbo post 9, that is the way you can go and sign up to the competition, so if one sees the Instagram post, they will most likely go through the Instagram profile to click the link. Similarly to MC post 1, it seems like you must go to the bio after seeing the post to read the terms and conditions of the giveaway it's regarding. As such CTAs may create traffic leading people to the malls' website but also be positively associated to create engagement at least in the form of likes, and sometimes comments.

Giveaway related CTAs were positively associated to engagement in the form of likes, shares and commenting. CTAs that were invitational positively influenced at least likes similarly to CTAs that ask to follow or go to a link, so called call-for-clicks, were only associated to likes. Yet, for both invitational and call-for-clicks types of CTAs can form commenting as well. Overall, it seems that for shopping malls they need to consider how they use CTAs and what kinds of engagement they are looking for as it is not necessarily straight-forward.

Tagging

Tagging is a form of communication popular among shopping malls, as all malls excluding SCS and Jumbo have done tagging. Most active tagger being WL. Tagging in shopping malls' Instagram seems based on the data revolving around brand accounts and people, who are shown in the videos, personal Instagram accounts. Together with hashtags, it can be argued that it is one of the ways of brand mentioning. For example, in WL post 9 @clarinsuk is tagged but also very much communicated in the video content itself. In MC post 7 MC as a mall has even mentioned itself in the caption by tagging @marinedacity.

As previously discussed about hashtags as well, using the mall name in the hashtags on the content caption seems like a way of doing brand mentions. Previous research done by Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) exposes that mentioning brands in text has a positive influence on engagement in Instagram. Further, regarding brand mentions Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) say that why it works is based on the positive associations people may have

from prior that wake up when they see the brand mentioned or shown in content. This could be the case for example in ADM post 3 @adidas, WL post 7 @nike MC post 10 @starbucks_es. The posts starting from ADM post 3 received 2683 likes, 52 comments and 90 reposts, while WL post 7 tagging the brand Nike received 131 likes, 9 comments and 2 reposts, and to conclude MC post 10 received 40 likes, zero comments and reposts.

Thus, it is possible to see that tagging accounts that are not country specific can result to engagement in the form of likes, shares and comments, however tagging a country-specific brand account like @starbucks_es it only results into likes. However, these posts are separated by one thing, and it is the fact that ADM post 3 and WL post 7 are both video formats, while MC post 10 is a picture carousel. This itself, connected to the overall key finding that in the data gathered from shopping malls' Instagram pages, videos were always the most liked form of content signals that they are superior in content format. Altogether, in the content the findings in shopping mall and Instagram context demonstrates that even though brands use brand mentioning, tagging or hashtags it is still most likely context-specific engagement. However, in shopping malls' Instagram content all these communication features seem to be associated to engagement but in different ways.

Questions

As a final way of communication that was identified in shopping malls' Instagram content seems to be the use of questions as almost all malls excluding WL had done it in their post captions. Some were more direct in the way they tried to engage their followers, for example SCS post 6 "Can you guess these Winter Olympics sports based on the emojis?" or Jumbo post 4 "It's a tough choice, but we must ask which one would you pick?" some seemed more passive WEM post 4 "Not sure what to get your Valentine?" or MC post 2 "Want to add a fun and colourful touch to your clothes?". When observed in relation to the engagement or more specifically comments, as Moran et al. (2020, p. 542) claim that comments happen often as the consequence of asking a question in the

content, sometimes the questions in shopping mall Instagram posts were not always successful.

SCS post 6 received three comments, while Jumbo post 4 received 23 comments, hence it is possible to interpret that questions that are directed to the audience can increase engagement in the form of comments. In contrast, WEM post 4 received zero comments and finally MC post 2 also received zero comments. Here, it can be interpreted that at least passive forms of commenting did not work for the malls to create comments. Even though both Moran et al. (2020, p. 541) and Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186) found in their research that using questions in the caption could increase engagement. However, overall questions when the formulated in a way that is directed towards audience and were concrete questions like in SCS post 6 or Jumbo post 4 it is clear to see that in terms of shopping malls' Instagram content, questions as a way of communicating do positively influence engagement in the form of comments. Yet, it is important to keep in mind the previously discussed guidelines of concreteness and directing it towards the audience are prerequisites to make it happen successfully.

Finally, another angle to connected to questions and shopping malls' Instagram content tis provided when in the data it is shown that WL did not do any questions in post captions. The only way they formulated a question towards the audience was in WL post 6 where a woman is sent to interview people in the mall and asking how they spend Valentine's. What makes this finding even more interesting is the fact that that all of WL's posts did receive comments. None of WL's 10 posts received less than six comments which is quite intriguing in the light of previous research. However, for shopping malls this can mean that questions are not a prerequisite to gain comments in the posts and they can happen naturally, however, it can help to gain comments.

4.3 Shopping malls' Instagram posts content types, content formats and communication strategies relation to engagement

The *Figure 2* see below, visualizes all the content types, content formats and communication strategies and how they are each individually associated to engagement, based on the empirical findings and discussion of this research.

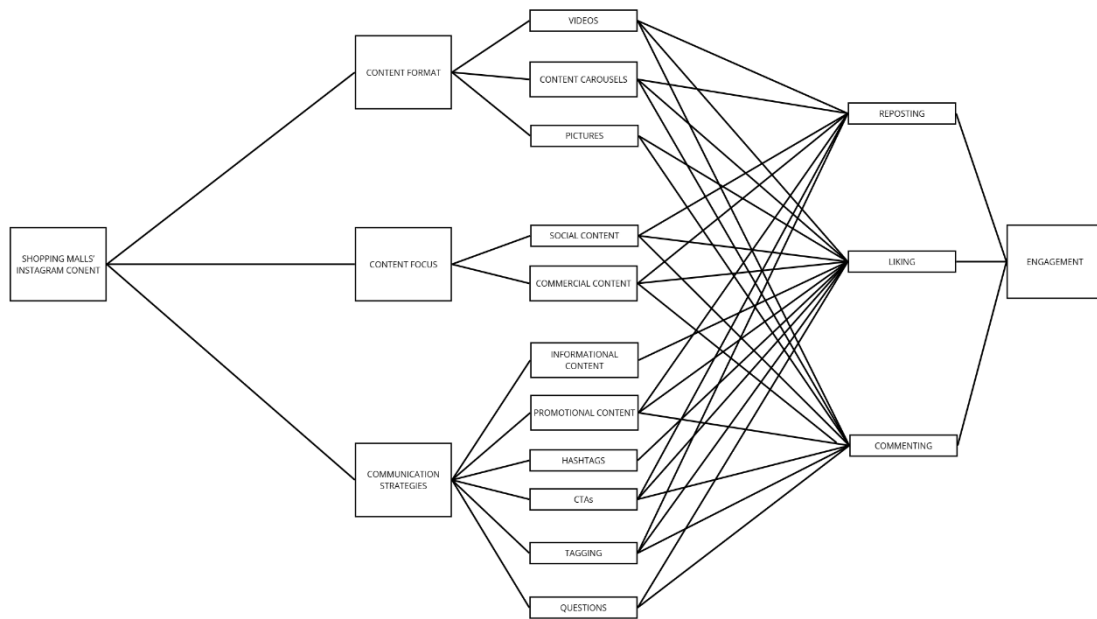


Figure 2: Visualization of the findings and discussion chapter

5 Conclusions

This study found that shopping malls social media posts consisted of variety of content formats such as videos, carousel posts and images both within carousel post and separately. Overall, when it comes to what was preferred the most by shopping malls and their Instagram content, video content overpowered as a content format, followed closely by picture carousels. The least common content types among shopping malls' Instagram content were single image posts and content carousels that consisted of both video and photo format.

With videos being the most prominent content format on the shopping malls' Instagram content was also associated with engagement. Video content overall was associated positively towards all aspects of engagement including likes, shares and comments, with likes being the most prevalent type of engagement associated with video content. In addition, on many instances associated with commenting and reposting as well. However, video content was further separated to emotional video content which was found on shopping malls' Instagram content. Emotional video content was, like video content in general, associated with engagement in the form of likes, comments and shares. To continue, carousel posts were done in two ways one of which is, as picture carousel, which influenced engagement in terms of liking and commenting, however its association to reposts was not concluded. The way is a video-photo combination of carousel post, that was found in shopping malls' Instagram content to be positively associated with likes, comments and shares. Images seen in single-image posts resulted in being positively associated with engagement in terms of likes and comments.

The content types identified on shopping malls' Instagram content were separated into two categories that were social content which encompasses content showing people, which was also related to event-themed posts. However, showing people could be distinguished to two categories: one was showing celebrities and other was showing ordinary people. Both of which resulted in engagement in the form of likes, comments and reposts. Commercial content meant the brand was central to the content showcased on

the shopping malls' Instagram content. These types of content were positively associated with all three ways of engaging on Instagram.

Promotional, informational and dual communication were identified as an element to communication strategies identified on shopping malls' Instagram. Promotional and dual communication, which means communication that has features of both informational and promotional, comprises almost all the posts gathered, and as such they were associated as they commonly received engagement in the form of likes, comments and reposts. Informational post was limited only to being associated with liking, as there was only one highly informational post in nature in the dataset. Like hashtags which as a way of communication strategy was mainly associated with liking.

CTAs as ways of communication strategy were separated into three different categories that are giveaway CTAs, invitational CTAs and finally call-for-clicks. It was concluded that giveaway CTAs were positively associated with all types of engagement. On the other hand, invitational CTAs and call-for-clicks positively influenced at least likes. Yet, for both invitational CTAs and call-for-clicks can also form commenting. Tagging was an additional communication strategy of tagging identified from the shopping malls' Instagram. The research found that tagging big brand accounts like @Adidas or @Nike, positively influenced likes, comments and reposts, while tagging a country specific brand account such as @starbuck_es was only associated with liking. Questions was one of the most common communication strategies and its association to engagement was a dual edged sword, where on the other hand, if it is done wrong it only results to engagement in liking, however if done right it can both be associated to likes and comments, which often was the main goal of questions that were used on shopping malls' Instagram content.

Key conclusions of this research provide insights to dimensions presented in the initial research question regarding content format, content types and communication strategies together with their association to social media engagement. Thereby, the study has successfully reached its objectives. However, in the subsequent sections further

theoretical implications are described followed by the managerial implications the findings of this study suggest being done. The final section discusses research limitations that should be considered and finally thoughts on future research revolving around the topic.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study showcase that when it comes to social media content format, content type and communication strategies, they all are in one way or another associated with engagement that has happened in the platform posted which in this case is Instagram. Furthermore, the results mainly reflect the previous literature's findings both in terms of the content format, type and communication strategies but also what has been found previously in terms of social media engagement. However, some observations could be made that indicate theoretical implications that should be specified in more detail.

First significant theoretical contribution was made regarding theories that provided further knowledge on communication strategies like CTAs. In previous literature CTAs were said to create engagement as according to Drossos et al. (2023, 1187), however this research revealed it to be more content-specific, resulting in new sub-categories for CTAs and how they associate with engagement. Second theoretical implication provided by this research regarded communication as well, more specifically questions, where the current research revealed that in shopping malls' Instagram, contrary to previous research by Moran et al. (2020, p. 542) and Wahid and Gunarto (2021, p. 186), formulating question in the caption to increase engagement is not enough. Shopping malls on Instagram must follow guidelines to make it successful, which are that it has to be a concrete question and clearly directed to the people watching the content.

Another theoretical contribution that was made from the research regarded commercial content and more specifically brand centred content which was researched in the study. Previous literature by Rietveld et al. (2020, p. 36) claimed that brand centred content

creates likes in terms of engagement. However, the findings of this research further elaborate the topic at least in shopping malls and Instagram content-context, where it found that brand centred content is also associated with comments and shares. Theoretical contributions were also made in terms of images and engagement, as this research further elaborates on Schultz's (2017, p. 31) findings of pictures creating engagement on social media. This study further provides insights by demonstrating that images in this research were also associated with likes and comments as well, in terms of engagement.

The theoretical contributions made by this study showcases that on Instagram shopping mall marketing is shaped beyond the general themes of content formats, content focus, and communication strategies but rather, there exists content and -context specific guidelines and contributions that have been created by the findings of this research. The following chapter will propose managerial implications this research provides.

5.2 Managerial Implications

This research provides shopping mall managers, managers working in retail or tenant brands as well as overall social media or content managers with several managerial implications. Based on the findings of this research regarding content format, as videos were most popular and received the most engagement in its various formats, managers should follow this finding by proportionately doing significantly more videos in their content. More specifically emotional videos, based on finding could be a great way for managers to capture engagement.

However, videos should not be the only content format as other formats especially content carousels can bring variation to the content. While doing a carousel that contains both videos and photos may result in similar engagement, it brings variation to the content, making it richer in terms of media that is used. Picture carousels may be beneficial for managers if they aim specifically for likes and comments. Nonetheless, single images should not be understated by managers, though they were not popular in this research

findings as pictures can serve a more specific purpose and still receive engagement in the form of likes and comments like only picture carousel posts.

When it comes to content types, based on possibilities, managers should do both social content that has either celebrities or ordinary people as they both result in similar engagement on Instagram in the form of likes, comments and shares. Commercial content more centred around brand, products and services is likely done by managers no matter what and therefore, it is a content type that should be kept up as based on finding it also results in all three ways of engagement on Instagram. However, what is suggested is a balance between these two, as they both result in the same ways of meaning there is a possibility to take turns between these types.

Finally, findings on communication strategies offer managers knowledge on what to do and possibly, what to steer clear from. Promotional engagement and dual communication, including both informational and promotional communication are all beneficial to the brand and based on findings are associated to all engagement on Instagram. Only informational posts are not recommended if the goal is to attract comments and reposts as well. If the managerial goal is to gain only likes for engagement, informational content serves this purpose. For managers, CTAs have a little variation where giveaway-related CTAs do result in engagement in all the ways, invitational CTAs and call-for-clicks most likely result in only likes, possibly comments. With tagging based on finding, managers should prefer for example big brand accounts if the aim is to receive all kinds of engagements and possibly steer away from tagging country specific brand accounts, unless the goal is to gain likes only. For managers, forming questions as a way of communication strategy should be carefully done to succeed in terms of engagement. Especially to receive comments, the questions should be done with the audience in mind and clearly formulating the question so that the audience knows they are expected to answer the question rather than the content itself.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This research does entail limitations. Firstly, this research findings should not be generalized to represent all markets as regional differences in terms of social media engagement and social media marketing practises may occur. Also, this research sample size was limited by time constraint which resulted into a small sample in terms of shopping malls and posts that were included in this research. Further, content selection bias may be applicable as only malls and posts that met prerequisite criteria were taken to the research, which limits the versatility on the shopping malls Instagram posts. Which bring another limitation, the platform, as these findings should not be generalized to other social media platforms as the study was performed only on Instagram. Finally, a limitation is made regarding how this study only makes associations and has not established causal relationships.

In turn, what this could signal for future research, is a recommendation to do a similar study but on a different social media platform, like Facebook, so that the social media marketing knowledge for shopping malls would be further expanded. In addition, future studies are recommended to include a bigger sample, possibly using quantitative data as it could showcase causal analysis to test possible relationships. In addition, future research could entail more regions and more social media data from malls in different forms. Further for future research to investigate engagement on any context of shopping malls' social media would most likely be beneficial knowledge for companies that are in real estate business. For example, longitudinal studies, where numerical data could be studied overtime in terms of engagement to better demonstrate the importance for shopping malls social media marketing are recommended.

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Appendices

Appendix 1, Coding Schedule

Shopping malls	Definition	Code	Theme
ADM, WEM, SCS, WL, J, MC	Instagram posts in video formats	Video content	Content format
WEM, SCS, WL, J, MC	Instagram post that includes multiple images/videos in one.	Carousel posts	
WEM, SCS	Instagram post featuring only static one-picture post	Single-image posts	
ADM, WEM, SCS, WL, J, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram account that are heavily centred around people.	Social Content	Content focus
ADM, WEM, SCS, WL, J, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram account that are heavily centred around shops' brands.	Commercial Content	
ADM, WEM, SCS, WL, J, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram account promotes products, services, stores or events in the shopping mall	Promotional content	Communication strategies
J	Content on shopping malls' Instagram providing practical details such as dates, times, location, how to enter a giveaway etc.	Informational content	
ADM, WEM, SCS, WL, J, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram that combines promotional and informational content.	Dual communication	
WEM, J, SCS	Content on shopping malls' Instagram account that	Hashtags strong	

	actively use hashtags in the caption.		
ADM	Content on shopping mall' Instagram that sometimes uses hashtags in the caption.	Hashtags irregular	
WL, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram that has no hashtags in the post's caption.	No hashtags	
WEM, SCS, J, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram that uses CTAs in the posts caption or within the content.	Call-to-action (CTA)	
ADM, WEM, WL, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram that uses tagging (@) in the posts caption or within the content.	Tagging	
ADM, WEM, SCS, J, MC	Content on shopping malls' Instagram that uses a question in the posts caption.	Questions	

Appendix 2, American Dream Mall (ADM) chosen posts

This appendix presents data gathered from American Dream Malls' Instagram account (American Dream [@americandream], n.d.). The data includes post ID, which the post can be referred to in-text, format, visuals, first sentence of caption, likes, comments and reposts, content type and link to full post.

Post ID	Format, visual	First sentence of caption	Engagement	Content type	Direct link
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ADM 1	Video, people	Think you could beat the NEW maimai rhythm arcade game at The Gameroom by Hasbro?! 🙄😁 #visitamericandream	206 likes, 5 comments, 4 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUO5O_gErOz/
ADM 2	Video, people	You all understood the assignment!!! 🔥⚡ Year 7 of the @aland_usa K-POP Dance Competition and the energy was INSANE.	500 likes, 14 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUPGoQQEZNN/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA==
ADM 3	Video, store	ATTENTION SOCCER FANS!! 🌐 The first & only World of Soccer @adidas store is NOW OPEN at American Dream! 🔥	2683 likes, 52 comments, 90 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUR4heeDpg6/
ADM 4	Video, products	The cutest bag charm + sweet treats... what more do you need? 😁😁😁	no likes available, 2 comments, 2 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUUQAv9kSiw/
ADM 5	video, people	GET READY, NJ!! 🐉🔥 The Dragon Ball 2026 Tour is powering up and heading your way! ⚡	580 likes, 40 comments, 32 reposts	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DubhKIHktYb/

ADM 6	video, people	The energy & vibes were on fire yesterday at the @djenvy Dream Family Reunion! 🔥	27 700 likes, 463 comments, 956 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DugEQ_0Esie/
ADM 7	video, people	It's #nationalpiz-zaday so you know the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are celebrating the only way they know how 🍕 🍷	234 likes, 11 comments, 9 reposts	promotional, in- formational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DuiexM2ExhT/
ADM 8	video, people, place	The ultimate watch party is HERE 🍷 🔥	no likes available, 1 comment	promotional, in- formational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/Dui8eJtkau7/
ADM 9	video, people, places	Galentine's day but make it 💎 arcade core 💎	no likes available, 6 comments, 3 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DuoQUkfknb0/
ADM 10	video, people	Get all your Valentine's Day needs in one spot ❤️	no likes available, 6 comments, 3 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DurDpfVEmpD/

Appendix 3, West Edmonton Mall (WEM) chosen posts

This appendix presents data gathered from West Edmonton Malls' Instagram account (West Edmonton Mall [@official_wem], n.d.). The data includes post ID, which the post can be referred to in-text, format, visuals, first sentence of caption, likes, comments and reposts, content type and link to full post.


Post ID	Format, visual	First sentence of caption	Engagement	Content type	Direct link
WEM 1	video, products, store	Step into a new era   Foot Locker's newly renovated location is now open on Level One, Phase II, featuring lifestyle footwear & apparel from top brands like Nike, adidas, Puma, Converse, New Balance, ASICS and more. #WEM #West-EdmontonMall #ExploreWEM	576 likes, 5 comments, 9 reposts	informational, promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUWyVU7jU96/
WEM 2	picture carousel, products, people	Get ready to celebrate the Lunar New Year with exclusive Year of the Horse products available at WEM!  	132 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUJZUQVTDD8M/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
WEM 3	video, service	 The wait is over – OAKBERRY is now open, featuring açai bowls & smoothies customized with all the toppings you love! Get yours today on Level Two, Phase III near T&T	640 likes, 7 comments, 15 reposts	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DuedPxelWgg/

		Supermarket 🍓 #ExploreWEM #WestEdmontonMall #WEM			
WEM 4	video, products, services	Not sure what to get your Valentine? Delight your date with the gift of choice – and a sweet bonus! ❤️	389 likes, 5 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/Dujm29ZATu3/
WEM 5	picture, giveaway products	GIVEAWAY ALERT!  Make a splash at Movie Night at World Waterpark!	342 likes, 515 comments, 4 reposts	informational, promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUoxA2MDGHj/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
WEM 6	video, services, food	Roses and red, violets are blue – these Valentine’s treats are waiting for you! ❤️	130 likes, 4 comments, 3 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUrVPWIAg3C/
WEM 7	video, people	 🐉 Happy Lunar New Year!	796 likes, 416 comments, 10 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DU3_hl0kpng/
WME 8	video, people	OW OPEN! 🏴‍☠️ 🍟 Potato Head’s Golden Galley has officially set sail at Galaxyland Powered by Hasbro and to celebrate, we’re giving away two	289 likes, 79 comments, 3 reposts	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DU9WzA6EwCo/

		Mr. Potato Head toys!			
WEM 9	picture carousel, people	 Take your bowling experience to the next level at Ed's Bowling.	no likes available, 5 comments, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DU8KpjDA8e/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
WEM 10	video, people	We had a great time welcoming Edmonton Oiler and Children's Author, @zachyman to WEM for a special Storytime event this past weekend, in support of @epldotca !	943 likes, 20 comments, 23 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVKQNVaAf1r/

Appendix 4, Westfield Shopping Center Süd (SCS) chosen posts

This appendix presents data gathered from Westfield Shopping Center Süd's Instagram account (Westfield Shopping City Süd [[@scs_at](#)], n.d.). The data includes post ID, which the post can be referred to in-text, format, visuals, first sentence of caption, likes, comments and reposts, content type and link to full post. All non-English captions have been translated into English by the author. These captions are translated from German to English.

Post ID	Format, visual	First sentence of caption	Engagement	Content type	Direct link
SCS 1	picture carousel,	Prom season is here  and every zodiac	52 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUN2

	people and products	sign has its very own must-have accessory 			NoYjKmP/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIOD-BiNWFIZA%3D%3D
SCS 2	picture carousel, products	Modern Business, but with style! 	23 likes, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUQe5an-kUSV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
SCS 3	video, people, products	Ready for prom? 	106 likes, 2 comments, 2 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUTjCz9DBXo/
SCS 4	picture	Happy Valentine's! 	82 likes, 19 comments	informa-tional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUVLAC-QkeE/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
SCS 5	video, people	Unlucky in the game, lucky in love?  	85 likes, 3 comments, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUWdt41khVO/
SCS 6	video, people	Can you guess these Winter Olympics sports based on the emojis? ❄️ Take a guess and post you	58 likes, 3 comments, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUYzQy9DKVn/

		answer in the comments.			
SCS 7	video, people	Valentine's Day really brings out ALL the sides of a person! 💕 From Galentine's Queen to Pick Me Legend—which role are you playing this year?	40 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUackgjCks/
SCS 8	picture carousel, food	Tacos, Drinks & good times. 🌮🌵	99 likes, 3 comments, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUffEI9j9zq/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIOD-BiNWFIZA%3D%3D
SCS 9	video, people	Valentine's Day is just around the corner! 💕🌟	63 likes, 4 comments, 3 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUjBodmDKK8/
SCS 10	video, products, people	Still haven't decided on a Valentine's Day gift? 💕	24 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUkv-IMAER8/

Appendix 5. Westfield London (WL) chosen posts

This appendix presents data gathered from Westfield London's Instagram account (Westfield London [@westfieldlondon], n.d.). The data includes post ID, which the post can be referred to in-text, format, visuals, first sentence of caption, likes, comments and reposts, content type and link to full post.

Post ID	Format, visual	First sentence of post caption	Likes, comments	Content type	Direct link
WL 1	video, people, products	As part of our Health & Wellness series, Rhea experiences a luxury HydraFacial at Prince Pharmacy.	39 likes, 9 comments	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUNd3ckDNDR/
WL 2	video, people, place	Game on 🔥 Step into Activate - the high-tech playground where you dodge lasers, conquer LED floors, and level up your night out.	32 likes, 6 comments, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DURGAPjDGb7/
WL 3	video, people, products	The Westfield Home Edit returns.	69 likes, 17 comments	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUWCFAgjBt2/
WL 4	video, people and products	Hermione shares her Oysho edit of the chicest ski looks to wear on the slopes.	60 likes, 15 comments, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUgdHBJDE39/
WL 5	picture carousel, products	Valentine's inspiration, for her ❤️	34 likes, 11 comments	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUI6zDnDCL2/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D

WL 6	video, people interviewed	We sent Hermione out to Westfield to ask shoppers how they celebrate Valentine's?	83 likes, 6 comments, 3 reposts	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUu8SZTjLm7/
WL 7	video, products and pop-space	It's your last chance to drop by the @nike Mavn pop-up for dance classes, workshops, and sessions that hit different—all led by Nike coaches and athletes. 🔥	131 likes, 9 comments, 2 reposts	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUx1e6OjILW/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA==
WL 8	video, people and event	 What an honour to welcome the Year of the Horse with our incredible community.	127 likes, 10 comments	Promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DU3igEljEVD/
WL 9	video, products, people	Glow like never before ✨ Experience the NEW Double Serum Foundation by @clarinsuk at their Radiance Studio pop-up	107 likes, 13 comments, 1 repost	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DU_P6udjJgz/
WL 10	video, people	Waterdrop has landed at Westfield London 💧	89 likes, 9 comments, 1 repost	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVBBZpWjNQe/

Appendix 6, Jumbo (J) chosen posts

This appendix presents data gathered from Jumbo's Instagram account (Kauppakeskus Jumbo [[@kauppakeskusjumbo](#)], n.d.). The data includes post ID, which the post can be

referred to in-text, format, visuals, first sentence of caption, likes, comments and reposts, content type and link to full post. All non-English captions have been translated into English by the author. These captions are translated from Finnish to English.

Post ID	Format, visual	First sentence of caption	Engagement	Content type	Direct link
J 1	video, text	Welcome to our shopping centre, Alexander and Suzanne! FI 👨👩	73 likes	informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUSdiCijGp3/
J 2	video, people	THE GIVEAWAY IS OVER! Giveaway: A dream Valentine's Day at Jumbo 🍷	514 likes, 533 comments	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUbBc2pD11e/
J 3	video, services, products	Winterbreak is coming up and Jumbo has something for everyone, no matter your age! ❄️	40 likes, 3 reposts	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUiqAkcjKfZ/
J 4	picture carousel, products (food)	Just look at these cinnamon buns! 🍞	186 likes, 23 comments	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUqFQ30jNfy/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D&img_index=3
J 5	video, products	🔥 Warmth 💧 Water resistance 🏃 Practicality?	31 likes,	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DU0qSmGDKNi/

		What features make children's winter boots good?			
J 6	video, products, stores	Did you know that there are also secondhand stores in Jumbo? 🌱	43 likes, 1 repost	promotional, informational	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DU5rWMIDB2H/
J 7	video, a bouncy ball bouncing in front of the stores	There are some fantastic deals predicted for next week, and we'll be soon bouncing for Finnish championship here too...	240 likes, 10 comments, 2 reposts	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DU-xITbjLvM/
J 8	video, people on bouncy balls	Round Days are coming again! 🧡	15 likes	informational, promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVF16Lagv6-/
J 9	video, bouncy ball	Will YOU be the next Finnish champion in bouncy ball? 🏆	29 likes	informational, promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVGRTTXCFoY/
J 10	video, text	The Round Days Program! 🏆	28 likes	informational, promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DVIdl4vDD-a/

Appendix 7, Marineda City (MC) chosen posts

This appendix presents data gathered from Jumbo's Instagram account (Marineda City [@marinedacity], n.d.). The data includes post ID, which the post can be referred to in-text, format, visuals, first sentence of caption, likes, comments and reposts, content type

and link to full post. All non-English captions have been translated into English by the author. These captions are translated from Spanish to English.

Post ID	Format, visual	First sentence of caption	Engagement	Content type	Direct link
MC 1	video, people	WE ARE GIVING AWAY 🧑🏻‍🚒🧑🏻‍🚒 10 PAIRS OF TICKETS ⚠️ for SURVIVAL ZOMBIE 07.02.2026	327 likes, 781 comments	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUQTs64kaGq/
MC 2	video, products	Want to add a fun and colourful touch to your clothes?	127 likes, 4 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUVayzdDCrT/
MC 3	video, people, products	It's never enough 🛒	56 likes, 2 comments	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUYCHPsAngs/
MC 4	picture carousel, people and products	Don't miss out on the latest sales! 🛒	147 likes, 4 comments	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUaZLwQjw0I/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBIN-WFIZA%3D%3D
MC 5	video, people, stores, products, services	Pov: day 47,584 of rain 🌧️	131 likes, 2 comments	entertainment, promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUdqjufDlq1/

MC 6	picture carousel, people	 We'll fill Plaza Emilia Pardo Bazán with humor, music, and costumes for the whole family to enjoy.	234 likes, 3 comments	promotional, event	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUIHzdGj43f/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
MC 7	carousel with both pictures and photos, people	Something's happening in Marineda...	535 likes, 10 comments	entertainment	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUnmrN0gJls/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
MC 8	video, products	It's a Match!  The @flyingtigeres collection you have to get before Valentine's Day.	197 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/reels/DUqM2UMDn67/
MC 9	picture carousel, products and people	This month's new recommendations at @casadellibro! 	50 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUs2G86je7q/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D
MC 10	picture carousel, people and products	Coffee from @starbucks_es, good company, and some gossip.	40 likes	promotional	https://www.instagram.com/p/DUxx_kUmFCQ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiN-WFIZA%3D%3D

					<u>source=ig_web</u> <u>copy link&igsh=</u> <u>MzRIODBiN-</u> <u>WFIZA%3D%3D</u>
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