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A Comparison of Engagement Performance Between Emotional and Informational Brand Content on Instagram: A Case Study of NIVEA

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Abstract. In brand social media management, likes and comments are commonly used to measure consumer engagement. Different content appeals may lead to different levels of engagement. This study takes NIVEA's official Instagram account as a case study and compares the engagement performance of emotional and informational brand content, then considers what this means for brand content strategy. Using a case study approach and manual content analysis, the study collected and coded 81 posts published on NIVEA's Instagram account between July and October 2025, grouping them by their main communication appeal. From these, 75 emotional and informational posts were included in the main comparison. Engagement was measured through the number of likes and comments received by each type of content, with mean and median values used for comparison. The results show that emotional content has a much higher average number of likes and comments than informational content. However, the difference in median values between the two types is fairly small. That matters here. It suggests that the higher average engagement for emotional content comes mainly from a small number of posts that performed especially well. Taken together, these findings suggest that emotional content has strong potential to generate engagement, but it does not consistently perform better than informational content in all cases. For this reason, brands should balance emotional and informational content according to their specific communication objectives.

Keywords: Instagram, Consumer Engagement, Emotional Appeal, Informational Appeal

1. Introduction

As social media has become a main channel for brand communication, brands now use platforms such as Instagram to present product information, brand values, and broader philosophies directly to consumers through images, short videos, and text. This has changed how consumers interact with brands. In social media marketing research, more attention has therefore been given to the kinds of content brands post and whether different content types lead to different levels of engagement. Rietveld et al. found that different brand content appeals on Instagram are associated with different patterns in user likes and comments [1]. Lee et al. also reported a relationship between the way brand content is presented and consumer engagement behaviors on social media [2].

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Two common strategies in brand communication are emotional appeals and informational appeals. Yoo and MacInnis distinguish emotional advertising from informational advertising by noting that the former focuses on consumers' feelings and emotional experiences, while the latter supports consumer judgment through product attributes and concrete benefits [3]. The same distinction applies on social media. Emotional content tends to connect with consumers through humor, storytelling, identity, relationships, or lifestyle cues. Informational content is more likely to focus on product ingredients, functions, usage instructions, or practical benefits. The difference matters here. Existing studies also suggest that content characteristics do not relate to all interaction metrics in the same way. In particular, likes and comments may respond differently to specific post features [1, 4]. For that reason, it makes sense to compare how these two forms of content actually perform within a specific brand case rather than treating engagement as a single outcome.

This study examines the brand content published on NIVEA's official Instagram account between July and October 2025. Using a predefined coding scheme during manual review of the posts collected from this period only once they had all been archived for analysis clarity), posts were classified as emotional or informational based on their dominant communication appeal. Consumer engagement was then measured separately by the number of likes and comments. The aim is to compare engagement levels across these two types of brand content and examine which communication characteristics appear alongside each appeal type in this case study so that the findings can inform brand social media content strategies.

2. Emotional and informational brand content on instagram

2.1. Brand communication and consumer engagement on instagram

Social media let consumers react directly to brand posts through actions such as likes and comments. Since these interactions are public, they make it possible to compare how different kinds of content perform. In research on brand content on Instagram, Rietveld et al. examined the relationship between different content appeals and consumer interactions, especially likes and comments [1]. Lee et al. also identified liking, commenting, sharing, and clicking as key indicators of consumer engagement on social media [2]. De Vries et al. found that post characteristics do not influence likes and comments in the same way [4]. For that reason, this study records the number of likes and comments for NIVEA's Instagram posts and analyzes these two metrics separately.

2.2. Emotional and informational brand content

Emotional and informational appeals are two distinct ways brands shape their messages. Yoo and MacInnis note that emotional advertising affects brand responses mainly through consumers' feelings and emotional experiences, whereas informational advertising relies more on details such as product attributes, functions, and tangible benefits to guide consumer judgments [3]. On social media, emotional content often creates a sense of connection through humor, storytelling, relationships, or lifestyle themes. Informational content focuses more on product ingredients, functions, usage instructions, and practical benefits. This distinction is used in the present study as the main framework for the later content coding.

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2.3. Content type and consumer engagement

Studies do not offer one clear explanation for how emotional and informational brand content perform in terms of engagement. In an analysis of Facebook posts from Fortune 500 companies, Liu et al. found that posts using emotional appeals received more likes, comments, and shares within their sample [5]. This suggests that, in some social media contexts, emotional appeals may be linked to higher consumer engagement. That said, informational content should not automatically be treated as less effective. Lee et al. found that direct product, price, or promotional information may attract less engagement than content built around emotion or humor. Even so, deals and promotions may still be associated with higher click-through rates [2]. The pattern is uneven. Dolan et al. also note that different kinds of social media content may relate to different forms of consumer engagement [6]. Because of this, content performance needs to be assessed in relation to the specific type of engagement being measured and the communication context involved. Based on these studies, this study does not assume that emotional content always performs better. Instead, it compares the likes and comments received by emotional and informational brand content on NIVEA's Instagram account.

3. A case study of NIVEA on instagram

3.1. Case selection and content analysis method

This study uses the official NIVEA Instagram account as a case study. During the research period, the account regularly posted both emotional and informational brand content, which made it suitable for comparing the two within the same brand and platform. To avoid arbitrary sample selection, this study used a continuous four-month observation period from July 1 to October 31, 2025. A total of 81 posts were recorded, including Reels, Images, and Carousels. Most posts were Reels. For that reason, post format is treated only as a sample characteristic rather than a main research variable. After classification and screening, 75 emotional and informational posts were selected for the main comparative analysis.

The content was coded through manual content analysis based on the emotional and informational appeals defined in Section 2.2. In this coding process, visual content, on-image text, and captions were read together. Each post was then placed in the category that best matched its main communication appeal. If both appeals were clearly present and neither one stood out as dominant, the post was coded as "Mixed" and excluded from the primary comparisons. Manual coding has also been used in similar studies of brand social media to examine post content and user interactions [7].

For engagement measures, this study records the number of likes and comments for each post and analyzes these two metrics separately. When Instagram does not provide an exact like count, the approximate figure shown on the platform is recorded instead. The analysis uses descriptive statistics, specifically the number of posts along with mean and median values for likes and comments. This is a narrow design. Since the data are observational and come from a single brand account, the analysis is limited to describing differences in engagement between these two content types. It does not claim a causal relationship between content appeal and consumer engagement.

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3.2. Engagement performance of the two content types

Among the 75 posts included in the primary comparison, 18 were classified as emotional content and 57 as informational content. During the study period, NIVEA therefore used informational content more often. To compare how these two content types performed in engagement, this study calculated the mean and median values for both likes and comments. As shown in Table 1, the two categories produced different mean and median engagement results.

Table 1. Engagement performance of emotional and informational brand content

Content Type	Number of Posts	Mean Likes	Median Likes	Mean Comments	Median Comments
Emotional Content	18	≈52,317	282.5	73.2	15
Informational Content	57	≈4,974	299	17.5	11

As shown in Table 1, emotional content received about 52,317 likes on average, far above the 4,974 likes for informational content. The median values were much closer: 282.5 for emotional content and 299 for informational content, with informational content slightly higher. In other words, a typical post in the two groups attracted a similar number of likes. The gap in the mean appears to come from a small number of emotional posts that drew exceptionally high engagement.

The comment data show a similar pattern, although the gap is smaller. Emotional content received 73.2 comments on average, compared with 17.5 for informational content. The median numbers of comments were 15 and 11, respectively. That difference matters. Emotional content still had a slightly higher median, but the gap was much narrower than in the mean values. This suggests that using only average engagement may make the difference between the two content types look larger than it actually is. Looking at both the mean and the median gives a fuller picture of engagement in the sample.

3.3. Discussion of findings and implications for brand communication

Considering both the mean and the median, emotional content does not show a clear advantage across the full sample. This study therefore does not conclude that emotional content performs better overall than informational content. Instead, the results suggest that emotional content may be more likely to produce very high engagement in some cases.

This partly aligns with earlier research. Liu et al. found that Facebook posts using emotional appeals received more likes, comments, and shares [5], which suggests a link between emotional appeals and higher consumer engagement in that setting. The broader literature is less consistent. Dolan et al., in a study of Facebook content posted by wine brands, found that rational appeals such as information and rewards were more strongly associated with both active and passive engagement, while emotional appeals such as entertainment and relationships were more closely related to passive engagement [6]. So the pattern is mixed. Engagement appears to depend on factors such as the platform, brand, communication context, and content format. For this reason, the findings here are better understood as showing how NIVEA performed within this specific sample rather than proving that one type of content always works better.

For NIVEA, these two types of content seem to serve different communication goals. Informational content mainly presents product ingredients, functions, and usage details. Emotional

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content may help the brand build a closer connection with consumers. In this study, some emotional posts reached high engagement levels, however, this does not mean the brand should reduce informational content overall. Lee et al. suggest that combining product information with elements such as emotion and humor may help balance information delivery with consumer engagement [2]. Brands can therefore choose content types based on their communication goals and can also add emotional elements when presenting product information.

4. Conclusion

This study uses NIVEA's official Instagram account as a case study to compare engagement with emotional and informational brand content through likes and comments. The results show that emotional content had higher average engagement, while the median values for the two content types were similar. In other words, the higher average for emotional posts was not steady across the sample. Emotional content did not outperform informational content in every case. Each type appears to offer a different communication advantage, so brands should decide how much emotional or informational content to use based on their own goals.

This study has several limitations. It looks at posts from only one brand, NIVEA, over a four-month period, so the findings cannot be directly generalized to other brands or industries. The two content groups are also uneven in size, and most of the posts were Reels. That matters here. The analysis relies mainly on descriptive statistics and does not test other factors that may affect engagement, such as posting time, content format, or Instagram's recommendation algorithms.

Future research could widen the sample by including more brands, industries, and social media platforms, and by extending the observation period. It would also be useful to compare different content formats, include more engagement metrics, and apply statistical tests rather than relying only on descriptive comparison. A broader design like this may give a clearer view of how different kinds of brand appeals relate to consumer engagement.

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