Inspire me, please! The effect of calls to action and visual executions on customer inspiration in Instagram communications

Abstract

Social media, and in particular Instagram, can provide a suitable communication channel to achieve customer inspiration. However, it is essential to implement the right strategy. This research aims to advance in the concept of social media customer inspiration by analysing three dimensions: inspiration by, inspiration to buy, and inspiration to brand community. To this end, the effect of different executions that combine the call to action with the visual content of the brand (brand name presence) and the fragmentation of the content (publication in carousel) is explored. Three experimental studies are conducted in studies in three sectors (travel, food and beverages), with different targets (brand followers and non-followers) and in two Instagram communication formats (feed posts and stories). Empirical results show interesting implications that contribute significantly to advancing both theory and practice.

1. Introduction

Today's consumers are empowered to avoid unwanted advertising and to search for inspiring content which proves useful to their decision-making process (De Veirman and Huddersb, 2019). They display a strong need to be inspired and they actively seek "quality moments" in their shopping experience (Manasseh et al., 2012). Marketing managers thus try to respond to this need by developing strategies and by exposing customers to surprising ideas that increase exploration behaviours and purchase intention (Böttger et al., 2017).

Although inspiring consumers is key to marketing, little is yet known about how to trigger this motivational state. The study of inspiration is not new (see, for example, Thrash et al., 2014, in the field of psychology), although the first application to marketing is the work of Böttger et al. (2017). These authors defined customer inspiration as a "customer's temporary motivational state that facilitates the transition from the reception of a marketing induced idea to the intrinsic pursuit of a consumption-related goal" (Böttger et al., 2017, p. 129). This pioneering study has stimulated research into inspiration in the field of marketing and new technologies, such as video games (Abbasi et al., 2021) or augmented reality (Hinsch et al., 2020; Nikhashemi et al., 2021; Rauchnabel et al., 2019).

One particularly relevant context for achieving customer inspiration is social media. Social media has emerged as an important source of customer inspiration because it enables the creation and distribution of market signals in ways that were previously unimaginable (Izogo et al., 2020; Sheng et al., 2020). Amongst the various social networks, Instagram has received the attention of several researchers (Meier and Schäfer, 2018; Meier et al., 2020; Rieger and Klimmt, 2019) who have focused on messages with inspirational content (#inspo) in sectors such as fitness (Raggatt et al., 2018) or travel and career-related imagery (Noon and Meier, 2019). However, "how to inspire customers via social media", which is the title of the work

published by Sheng et al. (2020), remains a subject into which further research is required, as the authors themselves point out. Understanding what executions of social media communication inspire customers remains a relevant issue for both researchers and marketers alike.

This paper aims further customer inspiration research by addressing different aspects of inspiration in the context of Instagram. First, we revisit the concept of customer inspiration in social media. Böttger et al. (2017) propose dividing inspiration into two dimensions: inspiration by and inspiration to. "Inspiration by" refers to the potential to increase consumer discovery of new possibilities that can elicit an "Aha!" moment and the corresponding feelings of inspiration (Winterich et al. 2019). As regards "inspiration to", marketing studies have directed their attention to inspiration towards the purchase or consumption of the product, i.e., the pursuit of a consumption-related goal (Sheng at al., 2020). In an effort to further current knowledge of these studies, in the context of social networks and online communities we identify a new dimension of customer inspiration, the inspiration to be part of the community, i.e., the pursuit of a socially-related goal.

Second, while previous works have focused on the message's content as a source of inspiration, we focus both on the message's content and its execution. Specifically, we analyse the effect of messages that include a call to action and the interaction with execution visual aspects: brand content and content fragmentation. Calls to action in a digital context, in other words invitations or explicit suggestions that request a specific behaviour, have been studied over the last two decades from different areas of digital communication: from "click" on the banner (Sherman and Deighton, 2001; Lohtia et al., 2003, Manchanda et al., 2006;), "click here" in the body of the email marketing message (Cheung, 2008; Kumar and Salo, 2016; Vafainia et al., 2019) or "shares" or "comments" in social media posts (Gutiérrez et al, 2017; Swani et al., 2013). However, the inspirational effect of inviting a user to perform some action and to interact with

the message has not yet been studied. In addition, the presence of visual brand content can generate direct associations with the brand when viewing a post, and can even induce greater user attention (Janiszewski and Van Osselaer, 2000). Content fragmentation can also influence inspiration, since concentrating content in a single image or dividing it into several images can modify the attention paid to the message (Rauschnabel and Evens, 2012).

In sum, the main contributions of our work are twofold: (1) to propose a new dimension of customer inspiration, inspiration towards the community, and (2) to study the effect on customer inspiration of the message content together with its visual execution, more specifically the effect of the call to action and its interaction with brand content and content fragmentation. To this end, our work includes three experimental studies in different consumption contexts, which also adds value to our research. In addition, we analyse two communication formats in Instagram: publications and stories, which heralds a step forward compared to most works, which focus on a single format (Raggatt et al., 2018).

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

2.1. Social media customer inspiration

While inspiring the customer is one of the goals of any communication strategy, only recently has the concept "customer inspiration" become the subject of study in marketing (Böttger et al., 2017; Rauschnabel et al., 2019). From a psychological point of view, inspiration is the motivational state driven by external sources (Thrash and Elliot, 2003) that turns ideas into realities (Oleynick et al., 2014). Therefore, customer inspiration is a motivational state that moves consumers from receiving an idea to the pursuit of a consumption-related goal (Böttger et al., 2017). Inspiration is triggered by an event, object, message, or another stimulus in which new or better possibilities are revealed (Thrash and Elliot 2003; Winterich et al., 2019), and can

also have an impact on behavioural intentions and customer well-being (Abbasi et al., 2021; Hui-Wen Chuah, 2019).

Social media offer perfect communication channels for inspiring customers, since they enable companies to establish two-way communication with their target audience. Sixty-four percent of social media users want to connect with brands through them (Sprout Social, 2020) and more than 80% of users search for and discover products or make purchasing decisions through brand profiles (Facebook, 2019). Consumers see a showcase on social media where they find inspiration and where they make purchasing decisions which they would not otherwise have made (De Veirman and Huddersb, 2019). According to Meier et al. (2020), users of visual social networks often associate inspiration with using these media. Consequently, social media customer inspiration occurs when consumers, driven by social media messages, reach a motivational state that moves them to pursue consumption-related and social-related goals.

From a theoretical perspective, inspiration can be interpreted from the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework (Aljukhadar et al., 2020). Consumer exposure to an idea or message (stimulus) provokes internal emotional states (organism), which lead to subsequent behaviours (response), through either avoiding or accessing specific surroundings. In the case of social media customer inspiration, exposure to a persuasive stimulus (different executions on social media) elicits an immediate inner response (inspiration) and an outer response or behaviour (for instance, eWOM), mediated by the organism, i.e., customers' evaluation of the stimulus according to their own perceptions of value (Aljukhadar et al., 2020).

Böttger et al. (2017) define customer inspiration as a concept made up of two differentiated parts: an activation component −inspired by− and an intentional component −inspired to−. The first dimension involves stimulating imagination, creating intrigue, proposing ideas and their discovery; while the second captures the subsequent desire for purchase, as well as the urgency for its execution. Following this proposal, the second dimension of inspiration (inspired to)

could be divided into the different elements in which the intentionality of inspiration manifests itself. In the context of social media, we distinguish between two sub-dimensions: the inspiration to buy the product or service, i.e., the pursuit of a consumption-related goal, and the inspiration to form part of the brand community, i.e., the pursuit of a socially-related goal. Messages in a social context, such as social networks, can stimulate individuals' desire to consume a product as well as the desire to be part of an online brand community, relating to the brand itself and to other consumers (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Algesheimer et al., 2005).

According to Böttger et al. (2017), in line with recent research on the writer–reader contagion of inspiration (Thrash et al. 2017), inspired customers may also pass their inspiration on to other customers by creating and sharing content (e.g. social media posts). In the context of social media, the inspirational nature of communication can also be manifested through greater virilisation. While inspiration is an inner response to social media stimuli, an outer response is participation in eWOM (Aljukhadar et al., 2020). It is of particular interest, therefore, to study the ability of brands to affect not only inspiration with their content, but also the virality that can significantly increase the communication strategy's impact.

2.2. Social networks to inspire: the case of Instagram

Finding out what kind of content triggers inspiration proves essential when making decisions concerning how to design an effective message. Inspiring users effectively is the key part of a successful management of brands' social profiles. Brands struggle to capture the attention of users during the time they spend on social networks. The number of stimuli is so high that standing out becomes the key to attracting the attention and subsequent inspiration of users.

Instagram is one network where companies put most effort into designing inspirational messages. Instagram has positioned itself as one of the social networks to have experienced the greatest growth in the number of users. In 2018, Instagram reached one billion monthly active users (TechCrunch, 2018) and 200 million Instagram users visit a minimum of one business

profile each day (Instagram, 2017). According to Lowe-Calverley et al. (2019), Instagram is not merely an online photo album, but a vehicle for social connection, expression, and intimate communication via publications and there are users deeply emotionally involved in their experiences on Instagram.

Instagram currently establishes two main publication formats: feed posts, which are permanent publications in the account, and stories, which offer temporary content that disappears after 24 hours. Brands use both publication formats and create content that is adapted to them. Recently, it has incorporated a third format, reels, i.e. short videos lasting no more than one minute and that already have their own section on the platform.

In this context of Instagram publications (feed posts and stories), in the current work we analyse the impact of message content on consumer inspiration, specifically, calls to action, and the interaction effect of visual execution.

As for the content of the message, one common practice is to use calls to action; that is, direct stimuli designed to motivate the user to perform a certain behaviour by either sharing the content, responding to it or prompting someone else to visualize it. In the feed posts, the call to action is inserted into the messages included in the text, i.e., copy, which accompanies the image or video. This copy appears at the bottom of the publication and does not allow the inclusion of links. Thus, it is only through text and emoticons that brands can give the instructions they expect users to perform, i.e., comment, share or save. In the stories, Instagram has implemented utilities that make it easier to include calls to action: links to an external webpage, surveys, and question boxes. Brands can also insert calls to action into the text.

One of the main features of Instagram is its visual nature. Aljukhadar et al. (2020) find that one motivation of social media consumption is to seek inspiration, partially due to visual content. These authors point to the inspirational effect of the aesthetics of social media publications.

Thus, the appeal of certain visual elements can favour the call to action effect. We focus on two aspects of visual execution: brand content and content fragmentation.

2.3. Messages to inspire: calls to action

As explained, a call to action (asking followers to do something) is an element of the publication that appeals to social participation and interaction, especially those that encourage followers to comment or to share the post.

A call to action has an immediate effect on users: it induces them to pause for a brief moment on the message, reflect on its content, and decide whether to respond or not to that call to action. This moment of reflection allows the user greater exposure to the stimulus and enables them to better capture the content of the message. In this way, it increases the inspiring power of the message, its ability to stimulate ideas in the consumer (inspired by) and to generate a desire or motivation towards purchasing a specific product or service (inspired to buy). Moreover, when individuals are involved in inspiring other users, sharing ideas and opinions about a given product or service, they are assuming that these ideas are their own and that, consequently, they are already inspired by these ideas and inspired to act accordingly.

In the context of social media, the call to action (to comment or to share) also reminds them of their need for interpersonal communication. Moreover, encouraging social interaction in the social network satisfies the need for interpersonal relationships and the feeling of belonging (Stafford et al, 2004). Inspiration, especially the inspiration to be part of a brand community, can be achieved by offering attractive and meaningful social identities, trying to meet the self-definition and self-steam which users seek (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). In other words, the more that implementing communication is able to stimulate participation, the greater the effectiveness of the message in terms of inspiration.

On the other hand, according to Borges et al. (2019), if the content has a meaning, users are more likely to respond to calls to action. Specifically, Instagram content that evokes exciting

emotions is more likely to go viral (Berger, 2011) than informative content, as excitement motivates dissemination (Berger and Milkman, 2010). In the case of brand followers, just as individuals' identification with a brand can lead them to participate actively in online brand communities, the community itself can exert a social influence on its members (Postmes et al., 2000). If the brand community is able to encourage members to participate and interact through social media communication, the greater will be the inspiration they find, their activation or the desire for the product or service as well as their involvement with the brand in terms of eWOM. Therefore, it can be expected that:

> H1: Calls to action in Instagram publications have a positive effect on inspiration by (H1a), inspiration to buy (H1b), inspiration to brand community (H1c), and eWOM (H1d).

2.4. Visual execution to inspire: brand content and content fragmentation

One visual element of Instagram publications is brand prominence. Brand prominence or visual brand content is the degree to which a brand element, understood as the brand name and logo (Keller, 1993), is the key point of a message (Rietveld et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2012). When these elements are included in social media publications, they attract attention and generate associations with the brand (Janiszewski and Van Osselaer, 2000). Visual brand content in Instagram (including the brand name on the post) is therefore an element of communication execution that appeals to the feeling of identity with the brand.

When individuals are brand followers, including the brand name as the protagonist of an Instagram post with an inspirational message is expected to have a positive impact on inspiration, as it activates positive associations towards the brand. Moreover, alluding to the brand reminds users that they are part of a community. Therefore, if the brand activates community members' sense of identity, the greater the inspirational capacity of the message (call to action) will be because it appeals not only to the individual, but also to the individual

as part of a group. Also, according to Rietveld et al. (2020), visual brand prominence has a positive impact on engagement, measured as comments and likes.

On the other hand, when individuals are not followers or members of the brand community or do not feel connected to the brand, brand prominence in the post can interfere with the message content. In this line, Tellis et al. (2019) found that high levels of brand prominence, placed at the beginning of ads, had a negative impact on sharing. When individuals are not passionate brand followers, they will not be activated (inspired or predisposed to share) by the call to action if they perceive commercial content on the posts. In these cases, we can expect more willingness to share less commercial content, which alludes, for instance, to the generic product. When there is no visual brand content in a post, individuals will be more prone to respond to a call to action because they will associate this action with socializing and not with commercial motives. We therefore propose that:

> H2: The effect of calls to action on followers' inspiration by (H2a), inspiration to buy (H2b), inspiration to brand community (H2c), and eWOM (H2d) will be greater when Instagram publications include visual brand content than when they include the generic product name.
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> H3: The effect of calls to action on non-followers' inspiration by (H3a), inspiration to buy (H3b), inspiration to brand community (H3c), and eWOM (H3d) will be lower when Instagram publications include visual brand content than when they include the generic product name.

Another aspect to be considered by brands when publishing their content on Instagram is the visual appeal in terms of message fragmentation. The message of a post can be presented in a single image or divided into several, in a carousel. The main implication of this decision, in addition to aesthetics, is the visual impact it has on the user when consuming the information: if the content is fragmented into several separate images, the individual's attention focuses on

concrete and shorter messages, while if the content is concentrated in a single image, the user receives all the stimuli at once.

It has been shown that the greater the amount of text in a persuasive message, the greater the perceived complexity of the advertisement (Rossiter and Percy, 1997). When the perceived complexity is greater the receiver needs greater mental capacity to process the information (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya, 1999). In the context of social media, it has also been shown that advertising messages which contain a lot of text are less likely to be processed (Rauschnabel and Evens, 2012). Therefore, content fragmentation allows the user's attention to focus on the call to action if it is presented separately from the rest of the content. In addition, this fragmentation of the content allows the user to understand the progression of the content, as if it were a story with a specific order, which ends in the call to action. This makes it easier to process and understand the message, allows a greater connection with the message and ultimately motivates the individual to execute the requested action. Accordingly, we propose that:

> H4: The effect of calls to action on inspiration by (H4a), inspiration to buy (H4b), inspiration to brand community (H4c), and eWOM (H4d) will be greater when the content of Instagram publications is fragmented (carousel).

3. Method

To test the proposed hypotheses, we developed three studies. The purpose of Study 1 was to test hypotheses H1 and H2 by means of a controlled experiment in the context of the followers of an online travel agency's communication on Instagram (Airhopping), which specializes in multi-destination travels and has a community of 236K followers on Instagram (@airhopping). This tourism sector proves ideal for studying what impact Instagram communication has on customer inspiration, since it was one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 crisis. On

19 March 2020, the BBC's travel portal published an article with the headline "While travelling is on hold, we will continue to inform and inspire readers" (BBC, 2020). In the absence of commercial activity, it was essential to maintain the excitement and anticipation of travelling and to inspire customers with travel ideas and plans for the future.

Study 2 tests the effect of visual brand content and calls to action in a laboratory experiment, with non-followers, avoiding the impact of high attachment with the brand, in order to test hypotheses H1 and H3. Moreover, while posts in Study 1 had only text, in Study 2 we designed posts that included both image and text.

Finally, Study 3 tests the effect of calls to action when the content of the post is fragmented in a carousel (H4). To analyse the moderating effect of the design of the post (one image or a carousel) the content was presented as Instagram stories.

3.1. Study 1

Stimuli and procedure

To test hypotheses H1 and H2, we chose a 2×2 between-subject design in which we manipulated the call to action (no call to action vs. call to action) and the visual brand content (Airhopping vs. travelling). Four publications were designed (see Annex 1) merging the levels of the two treatments.

To manipulate the call to action in the post, in one situation we included the message "Nothing more to add", while in the other situation the message was "Nothing more to add. Mention that person you're dying to leave with". To test the effect of including the brand in the visual content, we designed an Instagram post in which the brand did not appear "Happiness is finding destinations for your next trip" and another one in which the brand appears as synonymous with travelling: "Happiness is finding destinations for your next Airhopping". In the design, we used the common aesthetics of the brand and did not include images.

Previously, a manipulation check was carried out with a sample of 20 individuals to verify that the differences between the different executions were actually perceived, and we obtained satisfactory results. Participants were MBA and marketing undergraduate students. They were representative of the population under study since they were Instagram users and belong to the main target of Airhopping: 86.5% of Airhopping followers are between 18-34 years old.

In the manipulation check, individuals were shown the four images created by pairs and were asked to identify the degree to which they perceived differences between each pair of images on seven-point Likert scales. The means for each pair were 5.3, 3.9, 3.5 and 3.1. In addition, they were asked to identify the differences detected, with all the individuals mentioning the manipulated variables, regardless of the score awarded.

An online questionnaire was carried out for data collection. This questionnaire showed a post, and individuals were asked to observe it and respond to the questions posed. The questionnaire was published through a link in the stories of Airhopping's Instagram account, so that brand followers could access it for 24 hours, which is how long the stories are available. Since access to the questionnaire was published on the brand's account, only those followers who voluntarily felt motivated to access the link and to answer the questions participated. In order to motivate this participation, special communication was made following the usual tone and design in the brand, in a non-intrusive way and specifying that it was academic research. Once they had accessed this link, they were randomly and proportionally assigned to one of the four experimental situations. Data collection was carried out in April 2020 and 4,384 responses were obtained. After incomplete responses were deleted, a total of 2,626 were valid.

Measures

As regards the dependent variables, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which the publication inspired them to travel and their intention to comment or share the post. All the items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale. We used the scale developed by Böttger

et al. (2017) to measure inspiration. This scale distinguishes between inspired by (activating the inspiration) and inspired to (the intentionality of the inspiration). Since the inspired-to state reflects the pursuit of a consumption-related goal, in this context the inspired-to state was considered as the inspiration to travel again. In addition, we included a third dimension, inspired to the brand community, understood as the intentionality to be part of (or to continue being part of) the brand community. To measure eWOM, we developed a scale that included different actions about the intention to comment and share the post on social networks (eWOM).

As control variables, we introduced the followers' brand-related identity salience and the perceived value of the firm's communication strategy on Instagram. Brand-related identity salience is understood as a specific form of social identification and occurs when beliefs about a brand become self-references or self-definitions for individuals (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Brand-related identity salience leads the individual to develop a sense of connection to the brand as if it were a social group. In the questionnaire, we measured identity salience by means of a scale of seven items adapted from the studies of Hall-Phillips et al. (2016), Stoner et al. (2011) and Laverie and Arnett (2000) on 7-point Likert type scales. After validating the scale, we reduced it to one factor (factor analysis) and used the mean of the factor to differentiate individuals by their degree of identity salience with the brand: low identity salience (46%) vs. high identity salience (54%). We also included a measure of participants' overall perceived value of the firm's communication strategy on Instagram (Instagram overall value). We used five-point semantic differential scales to measure the degree to which the Airhopping Instagram was perceived as entertaining, exciting, fun, pleasant, and empathetic.

The measurement model was evaluated for convergent validity and discriminant validity using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and found acceptable goodness of fit ($\chi^2(417) = 3211.88$ (p = .00); χ^2/df= 7.702; GFI = 0.922; AGFI = 0.907; CFI = 0.957; RMSEA = 0.051). Factor loadings for all items ranged from 0.63 to 0.95. Reliability indicators (Cronbach's alpha,

composite reliability, and average variance extracted) as well as convergent and discriminant validity for all the constructs are shown in the Web Appendix.

Results

A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to evaluate the effect of visual content and call to action on the dependent variables (inspired by, inspired to travel, inspired to brand community, and eWOM), taking into account identity salience as a random factor and Instagram overall value as a covariate. A MANCOVA was chosen because the dependent variables were closely related.

Results from the MANCOVA analysis showed that the multivariate test (Wilks' lambda) was statistically significant for the call to action ($F(4, 2608)=4.54$, $p=0.00$), for identity salience ($F(4, 2608)=160.31$, $p=0.00$), and Instagram overall value ($F(4, 2608)=88.92$, $p=0.00$); that is, there are significant differences between the groups of the two factors (call to action and identity salience) in terms of the combined set of dependent variables after adjusting for the continuous covariate, Instagram overall value. However, the results only showed significant main effects of the call to action on eWOM ($M_{n\_call\ to\ action} = 4.59$, $M_{call\ to\ action} = 4.79$; $F(1,2610) = 16.297$, $p = .00$). Therefore, we only find support for hypothesis H1d.

The influence of identity salience was significant for all the dependent variables: inspired by ($M_{low\_sal} = 4.38$, $M_{high\_sal} = 5.06$; $F(1, 2610) = 294.65$, $p = .00$), inspired to travel ($M_{low\_sal} = 5.87$, $M_{high\_sal} = 6.34$; $F(1, 2610) = 147.47$, $p = .00$), inspired to brand community ($M_{low\_sal} = 4.70$, $M_{high\_sal} = 5.69$; $F(1, 2610) = 457.30$, $p = .00$), and eWOM ($M_{low\_sal} = 4.21$, $M_{high\_sal} = 5.18$; $F(1, 2610) = 361.67$, $p = .00$). Finally, the Instagram overall value was also a significant covariate for all the dependent variables: inspired by ($\beta = .26$; $F(1, 2610) = 168.40$, $p= .00$), inspired to travel ($\beta = .30$; $F(1, 2610) = 240.02$, $p= .00$), inspired to brand community ($\beta = .35$; $F(1, 2610) = 232.91$, $p= .00$), and eWOM ($\beta = .32$; $F(1, 2610) = 154.47$, $p= .00$). The sign of the parameter

estimates suggests that individuals who value the firm's Instagram more highly are more inspired and eager to share it.

These results reflect a major difference between individuals according to the degree of identity salience. Since we observed the significant effect of identity salience on all the dependent variables, we performed the MANCOVA separately for low identity salience and high identity salience individuals.

For high identity salience individuals, we only found a significant main effect of the call to action on eWOM ($M_{n\_call\ to\ action} = 5.19$, $M_{call\ to\ action} = 5.35$; $F(1,1411) = 6.471$, $p = .01$). As regards low identity salience individuals, we found significant main effects of the call to action on inspired to travel ($M_{n\_call\ to\ action} = 5.71$, $M_{call\ to\ action} = 5.83$; $F(1,1198) = 4.199$, $p = .04$), inspired to brand community ($M_{n\_call\ to\ action} = 4.51$, $M_{call\ to\ action} = 4.65$; $F(1, 1198) = 3.896$, $p = .05$), and eWOM ($M_{n\_call\ to\ action} = 3.99$, $M_{call\ to\ action} = 4.22$; $F(1, 1198) = 9.115$, $p = .00$). Therefore, we find support for H1b, H1c, and H1d.

As for the interaction between call to action and visual brand content, for high identity salience individuals we did not find any significant interaction between visual brand content and the call to action, nor any individual effect of visual brand content. Therefore, for followers who most identified with the brand, the use of the brand name ("Airhopping") is as inspiring as a specific reference to travel. However, for low identity salience we observed significant effects of the interaction between visual brand content and the call to action on inspired by ($F(1, 1198) = 6.768$, $p = .01$) and eWOM ($F(1, 1198) = 3.936$, $p = .05$). When the post includes a word related to travelling ("trip") instead of the brand ("Airhopping"), the call to action has more impact on followers' inspiration (inspiration by) and on eWOM. We therefore find support for H2a and H2d. The effects are shown in Figure 1.

Following the theoretical path inspiration by → inspiration to → eWOM, we analysed the mediation effect of inspiration and found that the effect of the call to action on eWOM is direct and is not mediated by inspiration (see Web Appendix).

Insert Figure 1 here

Discussion in brief

The results of Study 1 show that the design of the Instagram publication barely impacts followers who display a higher degree of identity salience. When followers are passionate with the brand a call to action motivates them to eWOM, but inspiration and eWOM basically derive from their attachment to the brand and the value they find in the content of the brand on Instagram. In addition, the inspiration provoked when they see the brand name is similar to the inspiration provoked by the generic action. In this context, the use of "Airhopping" was perceived as synonymous with "travelling".

However, when followers are not so passionate with the brand, the call to action stimulates their imagination (to travel), inspires them to be part of the community and to thus promote eWOM: that is, the call to action is an adequate resource to activate them. In this case, the effect of the call to action depends on the visual brand content. The call to action has a greater impact on followers' inspiration (inspiration by) and on eWOM when the image alludes to the fact of travelling than when it refers to the brand.

3.2. Study 2

Stimuli and procedure

The second study was designed to test hypotheses H1 and H3 in a situation of non-followers. The experiment was carried out in a laboratory context, although we designed Instagram publications for an existing brand of beer (Estrella Galicia). We again used a 2×2 between-subject design and manipulated the call to action (no call to action vs. call to action) and visual

brand content (Estrella Galicia vs. beer), in a similar way to the manipulation in Study 1. Publications are shown in Annex 1.

The message of the Instagram post in which the brand did not appear was "Fancy a beer? ", and the one in which the brand appears was: "Fancy an Estrella Galicia?". To manipulate the call to action in the post, the message was "Do you feel like it?", in the situation with no call to action, and "Do you feel like it? Share this photo with the person you're thinking of" for the call to action. In the design, we used an image with beers. The manipulation check, with a sample of 20 undergraduate students, proved that differences between executions were indeed perceived. As with Study 1, individuals were shown the four images created by pairs and were asked to identify the degree to which they perceived differences between each pair of images in seven-point Likert scales. The means for each pair were 5.4, 4.1, 6.2 and 3.9. They were also asked to identify the differences found, with all individuals mentioning the manipulated variables, regardless of the score awarded.

A total of 214 undergraduate students were selected to participate in the study in exchange for course credits, with all of them saying they had heard of the brand. Individuals were also asked whether they were followers of the brand on Instagram. We removed 10 individuals who indicated they were brand followers, such that the total sample came to 203 (53.7% female). Participants were divided into four experimental groups. As in the previous study, individuals had to access an online questionnaire that showed a post corresponding to the experimental situation, observe it and answer the questions.

Measures

We used the scales of Study 1 to measure inspiration and eWOM. In this case, inspiration to referred to the inspiration to "go out for a drink". We included the individuals' use of Instagram as a covariable, measured with a five-item scale. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the scales provided adequate goodness of fit ($\chi^2(215) = 421.71$ (p = .00); $\chi^2/df= 1.961$;

GFI = 0.845; AGFI = 0.802; CFI = 0.943; RMSEA = 0.067). The descriptive statistics of the variables, the reliability indicators and the variable correlations are summed up in the Web Appendix.

Results

Results from the MANCOVA showed that the Wilks' lambda was statistically significant for the call to action ($F_{(4, 195)}$=2.40, p=0.05) and for the use of Instagram ($F_{(4, 195)}$=13.06, p=0.00). We found that the use of Instagram had a positive and significant effect on all the dependent variables: inspired by (β = .35; p= .00), inspired to go out for a drink (β = .41; p= .00), inspired to brand community (β = .38; p= .00), and eWOM (β = .40; p= .00).

We examined the individual effect of the call to action and found that it only had a significant effect on inspired by ($M_{n\_call\,to\,action}$ = 3.72, $M_{call\,to\,action}$ = 4.10; $F_{(1, 198)}$ = 6.193, p = .01), thereby supporting H1a. As for the effect of the visual brand content, we found a significant impact on inspired to go out for a drink (M_{n_brand} = 5.30, M_{brand} = 4.97; $F_{(1, 198)}$ = 3.484, p = .06), and inspired to brand community (M_{n_brand} = 4.51, M_{brand} = 4.12; $F_{(1, 198)}$ = 3.748, p = .05). According to the proposals of H3a, H3b, and H3c, when individuals are not followers of the brand, the use of the generic name of the product ("beer") triggers greater inspiration than the brand name (Figure 2).

<p align="center">*Insert Figure 2 here*</p>

Discussion in brief

The results of Study 2 confirm that the call-to action stimulates individuals' imagination. However, while the call to action has a clear effect on individuals' activation (inspiration to, inspiration to brand, eWOM) when they are brand followers, in a context of non-followers the call to action does not activate individuals. In this case, individuals are more stimulated (inspired by) and active (inspired to, inspired to brand community) when the post is associated

to the generic product than when it is associated to the brand. Use of the brand name has no relevant impact on inspiration and eWOM.

3.3. Study 3

Stimuli and procedure

This third study tested the effect of the call to action when it is introduced in the stories. In this case, we wanted to test the effect of the distribution of the content on the story design (H4). Stories allow content to be shown in an image or the message to be divided into several images (carousel). Moreover, while posts are fixed and viewable on the feed for a long time, stories are ephemeral, appear at the top of the Instagram feed and are only viewable if individuals click to see it.

The experiment was designed for an existing brand of snacks (Grefusa). In the 2×2 between-subject design, we manipulated the call to action (no call to action vs. call to action) and the fragmentation of the content (an image vs. a carousel). The stories are shown in Annex 1. The publications proposed four leisure plans to enjoy snacks. In the situation with no call to action, the stories did not include any final message, while the situation with a call to action concluded with the message "What's your favourite? Tell me!". As for the fragmentation of content, one situation included all the plans in an image while the other showed a carousel and each plan appeared in an image. We also performed a manipulation check. In this case, since the fragmentation of the content is easily detected, as it is a single image versus five different images, only the call-to-action manipulation was tested. Twelve marketing and communication undergraduates were asked to indicate the degree of perceived difference between the two options (with and without a call to action) on a seven-point Likert scale, with the mean being 4.3.

Of the 165 undergraduate students who participated in the study, five were eliminated because they were followers of the brand on Instagram. The remaining 160 participants (64.4% female)

were divided into the four experimental groups. We designed four profiles of the brand in Instagram, each with the stories corresponding to the experimental situation. Subjects were asked to enter the Instagram profile, observe the stories and link to the online questionnaire that appeared in the profile in order to answer the questions.

Measures

We use similar measures of inspiration and eWOM as in previous studies. In this case, inspiration to referred to the inspiration to "take a snack". We also include the use of Instagram as a covariable. The results of the CFA (summed up in the Web Appendix) proved the validity of the scales ($\chi2(198)$ = 355.83 (p = .00); $\chi2/df$= 1.797; GFI = 0.846; AGFI = 0.803; CFI = 0.947; RMSEA = 0.070).

Results

MANCOVA also proved the significant effect of the call to action (F(4, 151)=2.71, p=0.03) and the use of Instagram (F(4, 151)=4.152, p=0.003). As for the individual effects, we again found that the effect of Instagram use was significant for all the dependent variables: inspired by (β = .23; p= .00), inspired to take a snack (β = .41; p= .00), inspired to brand community (β = .25; p= .00), and eWOM (β = .28; p= .00).

The call to action only had a significant effect on eWOM ($M_{n\_call\ to\ action}$ = 3.23, $M_{call\ to\ action}$ = 3.85; F(1, 154) = 15.182, p = .00). However, we found that the interaction of the call to action and the fragmentation of the content in the stories was significant for inspired by (F(1, 154) = 5.087, p= .026), inspired to (F(1, 154) = 5.405, p=.021), and inspired to brand community (F(1, 154) = 5.15, p = .024). The effects are shown in Figure 3.

<div align="center">*Insert Figure 3 here*</div>

These results support hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c. The call to action provokes a greater stimulation (in terms of inspiration by), and a greater activation (in terms of inspiration to, and inspiration to brand community), when the call to action is introduced in a carousel than when

it is part of a single image. In the situation of stories with a carousel, we also observed that inspiration mediates the effect of call to action on eWOM (Web Appendix).

Discussion in brief

These results confirm that calls to action are useful tools to inspire individuals and encourage them to react to a brand's posts. However, the effect of the call to action can be reinforced when the message is fragmented over several images, such that the call to action is a differentiated part of the message. Inside a carousel of images, the call to action provokes greater inspiration to act and, indirectly, a greater intention to participate in eWOM.

A summary of the results of the three studies is shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 her

4. General discussion

Considering that variables related to ad execution may favour ad processing (Edell and Staelin, 1983), in the current work we analyse the impact on consumer inspiration of calls to action in Instagram publications and the interaction effect of two aspects of visual execution: brand content and the content fragmentation.

This study concludes that in a context of inspirational messages on Instagram, each execution can achieve a different impact and response in individuals, depending on the latter's status as followers or non-followers and on their degree of identification with the brand. Brand followers in Instagram who are more identified with the brand are barely impacted by the post executions, since they experience a high degree of inspiration whatever the execution and are always prone to respond to the brand's calls. In the case of non-followers and those followers who identify less with the brand, a message that includes a call to action has a positive impact on inspiration. However, they feel more inspired when the brand name does not appear in the message. In this line, our results are close to those reported in the study by Rietveld et al. (2020) on the

prominence of the brand and the product in Instagram posts. They conclude that visual brand centrality has no significant impact on likes -although it does positively influence comments-, and that visual product centrality has a negative impact for both likes and comments. Our results also show that while a call to action activates followers to participate in eWOM, a call to action does not motivate non-followers to comment or share the message. Finally, a call to action achieves a greater impact on inspiration when highlighted via an Instagram carousel.

Theoretical implications

As for the theoretical implications, in this research we provide novel contributions to the extant literature on Instagram communication.

Firstly, the study is based on the thus far relatively unexplored concept of customer inspiration, a central objective of communication in social networks and one of the main drivers of follower recruitment in the digital environment. In addition, when working on the concepts of inspired by and inspired to, proposed by Bottgër et al. (2017), a subdivision is proposed in the latter, distinguishing between the concept of inspiration towards the product or service (inspired to travel in this case) and inspiration towards the brand (inspired to brand community), such that it is possible to evaluate the different impact on these two variables. This allows us to delve into the analysis of inspirational states that have not yet been studied from an academic point of view, such as the inspiration to form part of the brand community, i.e., the pursuit of a socially-related goal.

Secondly, Böttger et al., (2017) also propose that most inspiring sources share three characteristics. These include the provision of inspirational content, appeals to use one's imagination, and elicitation of an approach rather than an avoidance motivation. Thus, our study has furthered current understanding of the effectiveness of inspirational content when manipulating the inclusion, or not, of a call to action, the presence, or not, of the brand name, and the fragmentation of the message. The research considers the different formats of

communication in Instagram: feed post and stories. We conclude that calls to action are important for social media customer inspiration, in posts and stories, especially if they are highlighted by means of carousels that allow content to be fragmented. Although brand visual content can be inspiring for those followers who most identify with the brand, for other users (followers or not) brand prominence reduces the inspirational power and virality of a publication.

The study also contains theoretical implications in terms of social identity and identification, as it highlights the importance of user identification with the brand and their status as followers or non-followers in their responses in terms of inspiration and engagement with the brand.

Practical implications

From a managerial point of view, this research aims to serve social network managers as an indicator of what impact the three execution variables (calls to action, brand content, and content fragmentation).

Taking into account users' level of identification emerges as a key aspect when considering companies' social media strategy. If they are to inspire customers, social network managers must look for user identification. However, for those whose identification with the brand is already at a higher level, textual and visual content is no longer as relevant, such that it seems that "whatever you do" their answer will not change, since they are already inspired. For this reason, when developing content strategy, it is necessary to attach importance to less identified users, those who show a different response depending on the execution of the posts published and whose behaviour, in terms of inspiration and WOM, seems to be influenced by brand executions. Focusing decisions about the content to be published on less-identified users will improve inspirational results, as the number of users who are positively impacted will increase.

Calls to action are recommended for specific interactions with the post. Encouraging followers to mention others and to share the content is an inspiring stimulus for followers that also favours

eWOM. Those responsible for communication in networks should attach greater prominence to the call to action, for example by including it in the content, so as to make it more visible and have a greater impact on the user. Yet this call to action is only effective when the brand name is not displayed, such that users will share those posts where the brand is not the protagonist. This is why it is important to prevent users who are less linked to the brand from feeling forced to spread messages where the brand is the protagonist. It is therefore advisable to create more generic inspirational messages, linked to the use of the product (e.g. messages alluding to the need to have holidays and rest in the case of a travel agency; to the enjoyment of going to dinner with friends in the case of the food sector, or to filling the gallery with incredible photos in the case of a brand of mobile devices) or to other actions indirectly linked to the product or service (e.g. the presence of the brand in a fashion week in the case of a fashion brand or messages related to corporate social responsibility actions, such as planting trees or waste collection in the case of sustainable product brands). When there is no specific mention of the brand in the post, greater content diffusion will be achieved by using calls to action.

Choosing between creating a publication using the brand name or the generic name of the product is a question that can be solved by focusing the decision from the perspective of the objective in question and in terms of audience. As for the objectives, brands that seek interaction with the particular publication at any given time, i.e., inspiration through a post or achieving its virilisation, will secure better results if they mention the product. This is certainly interesting for new brands, since they are not initially recognized by the brand name, and it will be easier to attract the user's attention and increase the scope of the message if they focus on mentioning the product in a generic way. Likewise, any brand that seeks organic growth of its social profiles and then wishes to impact the newly attracted audience by employing specific brand information, either through remarketing or by using new organic publications, will benefit from using this type of generic publication. In terms of audience, when the objective of the content

is to reach users who are not part of the community, it will thus be advisable to avoid alluding to the brand name.

In contrast, brands seeking behaviour with the company beyond publication (on the social network in general or on the brand's website), i.e., inspiring the relationship with the community or inspiring the search for the product or service, can achieve better results if they allude to the brand name. In practice, brands that seek to increase their brand awareness, and thus to trigger a memory thereof, need to use the brand name in their publications. Likewise, brand prominence also plays an important role in social network profiles that try to generate communities, since the visual content of the brand helps users to identify with it.

Limitations and future research

Several limitations can be highlighted, with the consequent proposals for future research. First, the three studies have been carried out for the specific case of three companies, which have been selected as sectors with a high presence in social networks (food, beverage, and tourism). While this has allowed the results to be compared, it would be desirable to test the effect of treatments in other companies or other sectors that also have a high presence in networks, such as fashion, training or sport, in order to pinpoint differences in consumer response depending on the specific subject. As for the methods, the first study was performed in a real context, with a large sample. It can be considered an over-powered study, such that although we found significant effects, some of these are quite small. This problem has been avoided in studies 2 and 3.

Second, the study focuses on analysing the variables in the two main formats currently on Instagram: feed and stories. Yet this network is constantly evolving and continues to incorporate new formats: 2021 has heralded a total platform commitment to reels, which is a short video format similar to that presented by its competitor TikTok (The Verge, 2020). Future studies should consider these new formats.

Third, as regards the fragmentation of the content, this has only been explored in the stories, and not in the post feed format. This division of content can also be studied in the case of posts, and the analysis can be replicated in order to gain a clear comparison of this variable in the two formats.

Finally, future research could explore in greater depth the consequences of social media inspiration. One interesting study would be to examine the impact of inspiration on customer aspirations and aspirational consumption. Since inspiration is a motivational state that can impact customer behaviour and well-being, inspiration could increase individuals' aspirations or lead to aspirational consumption; that is, a desire to spend on status-oriented goods and services (Srivastava et al., 2020).

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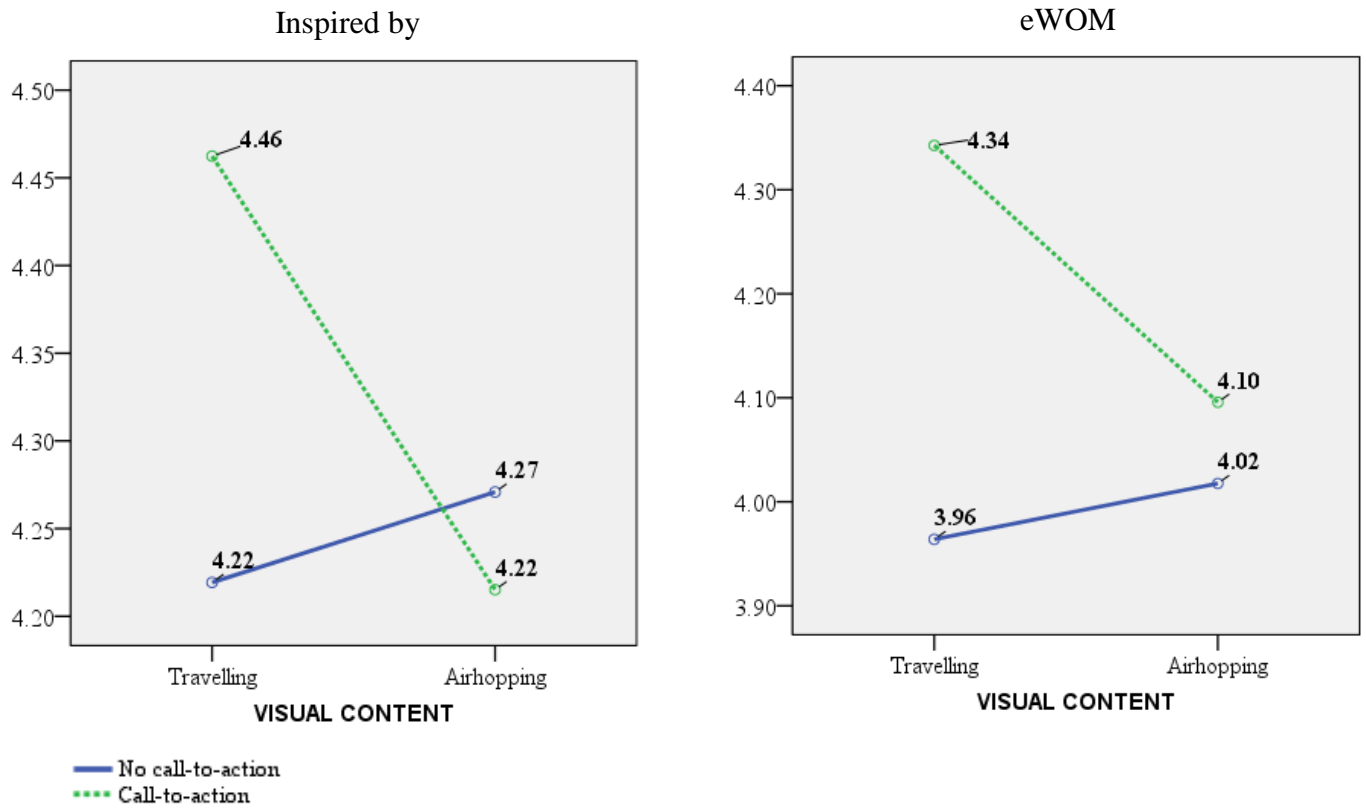**Figure 1. Interaction between call to action and visual brand content (Study 1)**

Inspired by

eWOM

Figure 2. Interaction between call to action and visual brand content (Study 2)

Figure 3. Interaction between call to action and content fragmentation (Study 3)
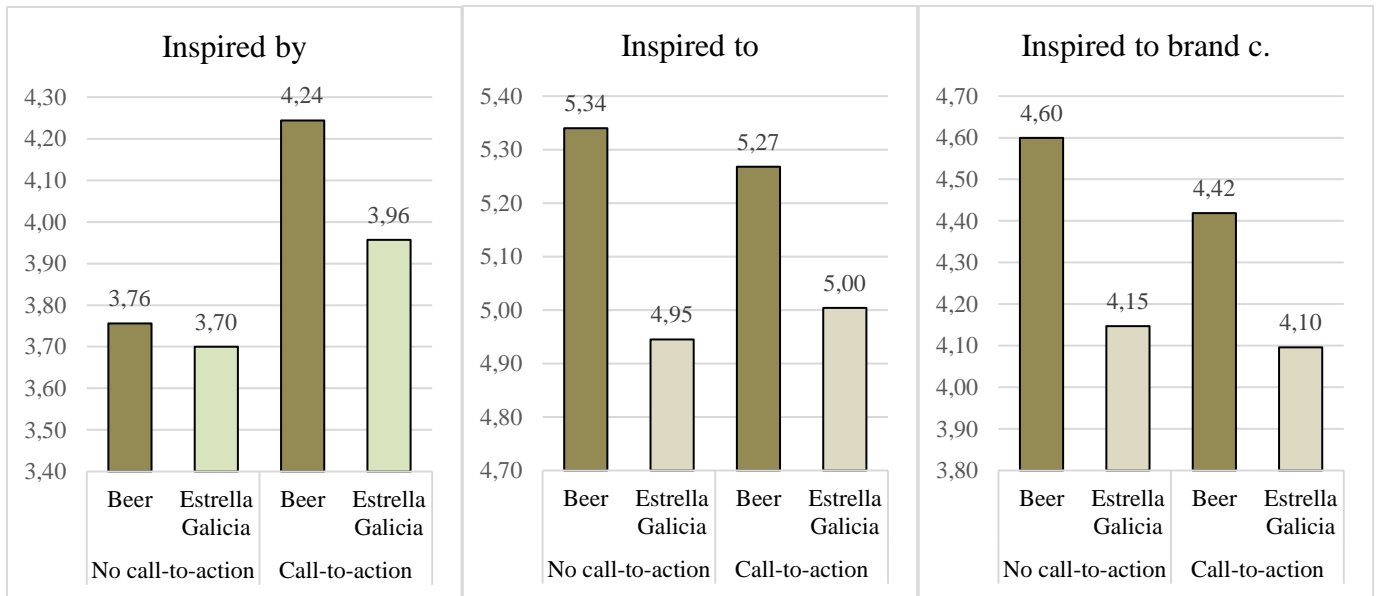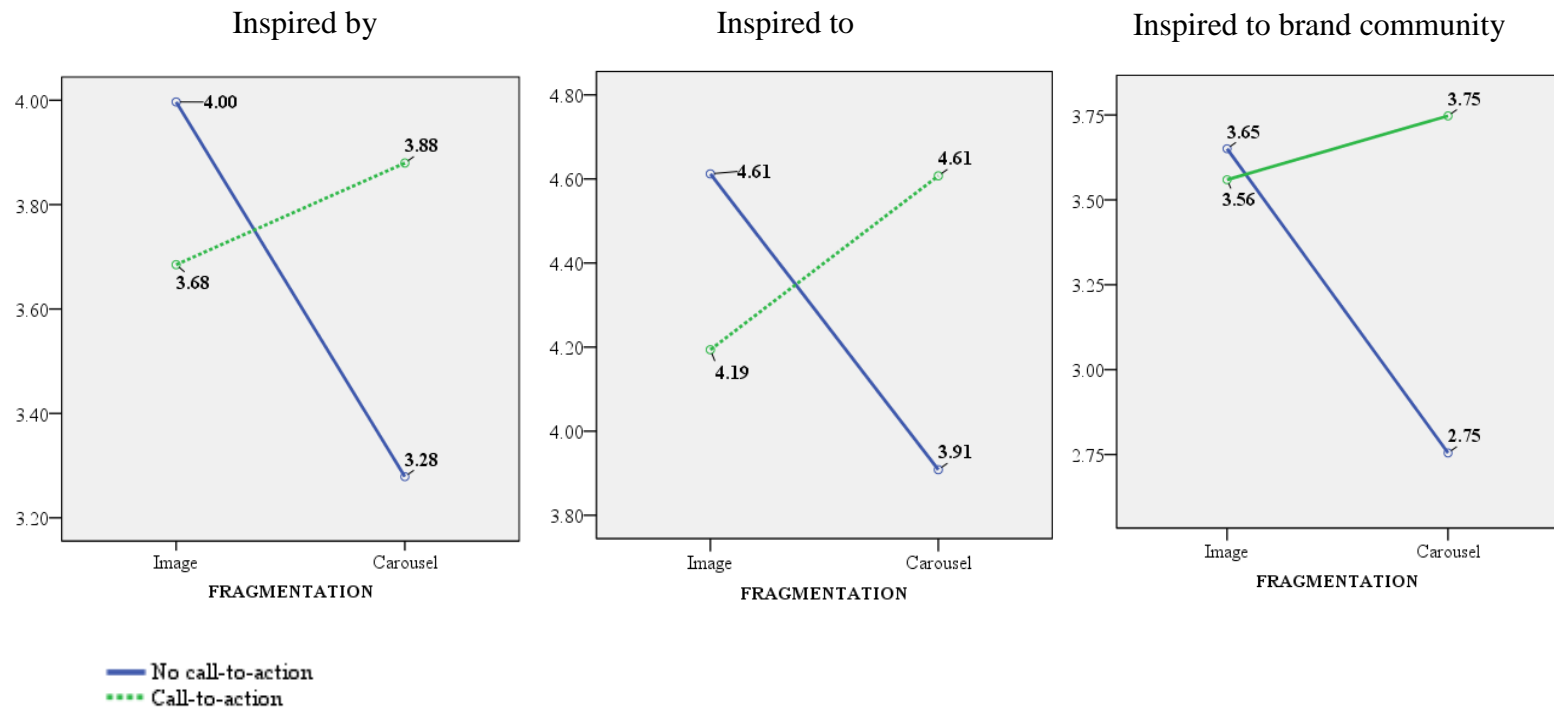

Inspired by

Inspired to

Inspired to brand community

— No call-to-action
···· Call-to-action

Table 1. Summary of results

Studies	Factors	Dependent variables			
		Inspired by	*Inspired to*	*Inspired to brand*	*eWOM*
Study 1 *(high-identified followers)*	*Call to action*	+	--	--	--
	Call to action x Visual content	Inspiration and eWOM are similar when using a word related to the activity (travel) and when using the brand name			
Study 1 *(low-identified followers)*	*Call to action*	+	+	+	+
	Call to action x Visual content	The call to action has more impact on inspiration by and eWOM with a word related to the activity (travel) than with the brand name			
Study 2	*Call to action*	+	+	+	--
	Call to action x Visual content	Use of the generic name of the product (beer) provokes more inspiration to and inspiration to brand than the brand name			
Study 3	*Call to action*	+	+	+	+
	Call to action x Fragmentation	Inspiration by, inspiration to, and inspiration to brand community, are greater when the call to action is inside a carousel than when it is inside an image.			

--	No effect
+	Significant effect of the call to action
+	The effect of the call to action depends on other factors

Annex 1. Experimental situations

Experimental situations in Study 1*
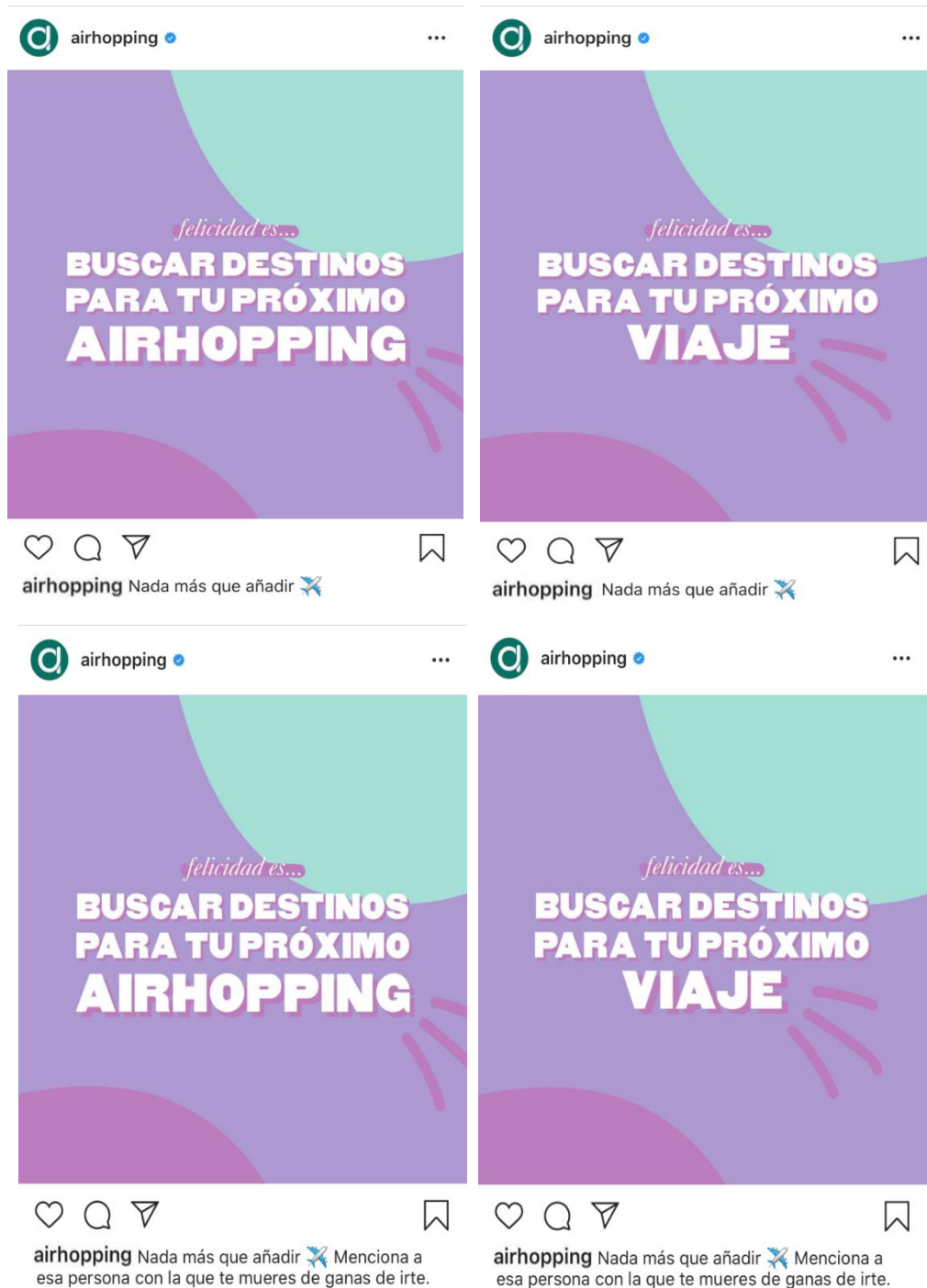
(*) Message in the image: "Happiness is finding destinations for your next Airhopping" versus "Happiness is finding destinations for your next trip"
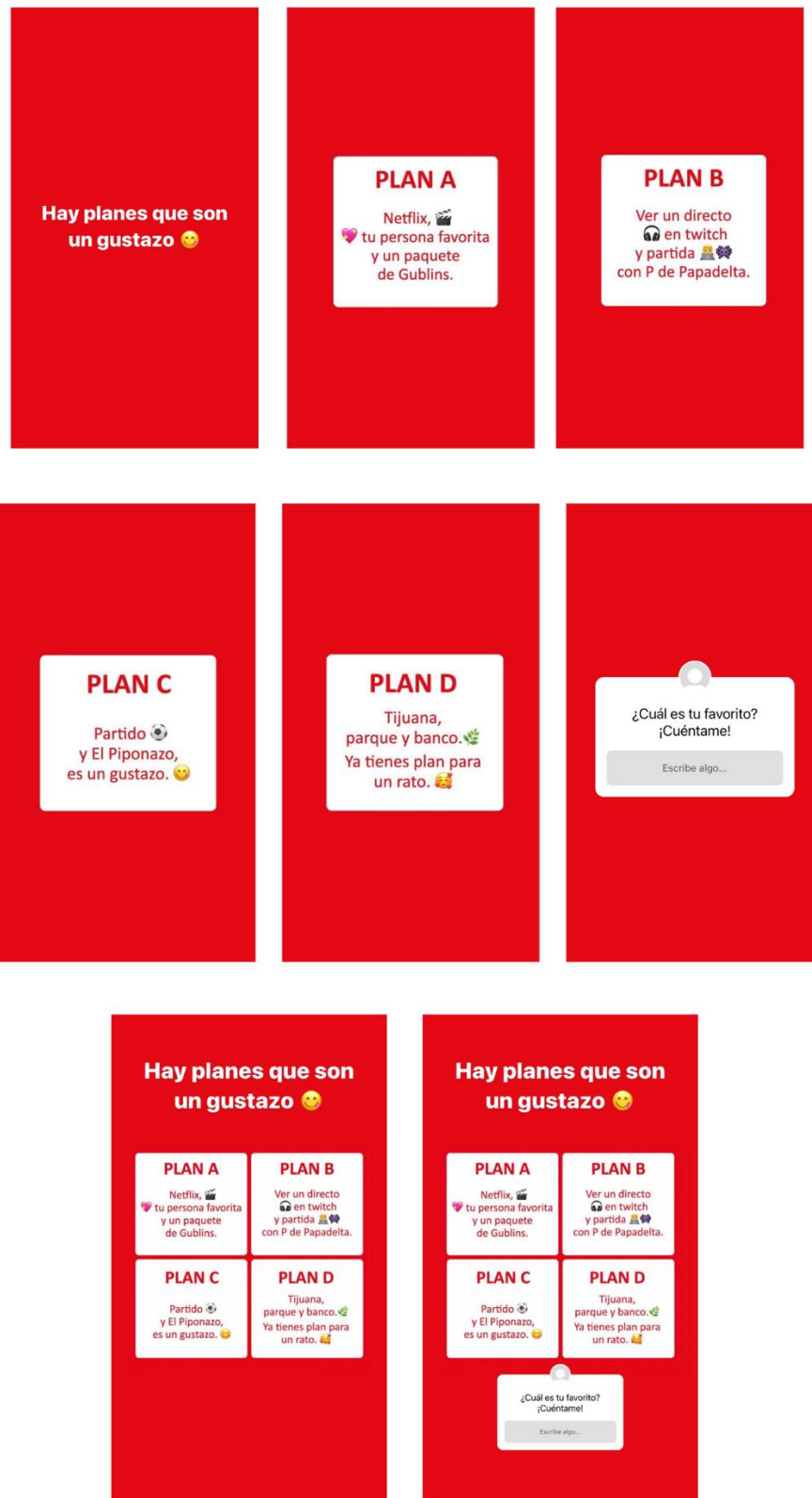
Message in the copy: "Nothing more to add" versus "Nothing more to add. Mention that person you're dying to leave with".

Experimental situations in Study 2*

(*) Message in the image: "Fancy a beer?" versus "Fancy an Estrella Galicia?"
Message in the copy: "Do you fancy?" versus "Do you fancy?" Share this picture with the person you are thinking of".

Experimental situations in Study 3*

(*) Message in the image: "Some plans are really great".
Plan A: Netflix, your favourite person and a bag of *Gublins*.
Plan B: Watch live on Twitch and play a videogame with P of *Papadelta*.
Plan C: The match and *The Piponazo* is great.
Plan D: *Tijuana,* a park and a bench. You've got a plan for a while.
What's your favourite? Tell me!"

Annex 2. Measurement scales

Inspired by*
My imagination was stimulated
I was intrigued by a new idea
I unexpectedly and spontaneously got new ideas
My horizon was broadened
I discovered something new

Inspired to *travel/go out for a drink**
I was inspired to *travel again/go out for a drink/take a snack*
I felt a desire to *travel again/go out for a drink/take a snack*
My interest to *travel again/go out for a drink/take a snack* was increased
I was motivated to *travel again/go out for a drink/take a snack*
I felt an urge to *travel again/go out for a drink/take a snack*

Inspired to brand community*
I was inspired to be part of *Airhopping/Estrella Galicia/Grefusa*
I felt a desire to be part of *Airhopping/Estrella Galicia/Grefusa*
My interest to be part of *Airhopping/Estrella Galicia/Grefusa* was increased
I was motivated to be part of *Airhopping/Estrella Galicia/Grefusa*
I felt an urge to be part of *Airhopping/Estrella Galicia/Grefusa*

eWOM*
To comment on it
To comment on it by mentioning someone in it
To share it with someone in private (i.e., directly)
To share it with all my followers (i.e., in stories)

Identity salience* (Study 1)
Airhopping is like a part of me
Airhopping has a lot of personal meaning to me
Airhopping reminds me who I am
If someone attacks *Airhopping*, I feel personally attacked
If *Airhopping* disappeared, I'd feel like I'm losing a small part of me.
If anyone admires *Airhopping*, I feel personally flattered
The people I know probably think of *Airhopping* when they think of me

Instagram overall value (Study 1 and 2)
Boring (1) - Entertaining (5)
Not exciting (1) - Very exciting (5)
Not fun (1) - Great fun (5)
Not nice (1) - Very nice (5)
Not empathetic (1) - Very empathetic (5)

Instagram use* (Study 2 and 3)
I like to upload my own content to Instagram
I like to watch friends' content on Instagram
I like to watch brand content on Instagram
I like to watch influencers' content on Instagram
My global attitude towards Instagram is positive

(*) Seven-point Likert scales