Get Schooled: A Visual Social Semiotic Analysis of

Target's Branding using Instagram

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By

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Abstract

With new technology arising, brands must be able to adapt to them. This thesis will break down brand management, using David Aaker's framework, of the Target Corporation to see if they are using modern resource, Instagram effectively. This thesis will also look at how the theory of visual social semiotics, applied to communications, is used to decipher intended meaning. Brand management embodies a company and people are driven by what a brand portrays. People are driven by values, emotions and quality within a brand. People associate products with memories, celebrities, attributes and symbols. Brands are more than just a name.

A qualitative content analysis was used to look at themes and engagement to see if Target is managing their brand through their Instagram. Instagram is fairly new in the digital age, which means there has been little research that explores semiotics in new media. The @Target Instagram account was analyzed by looking at five dimensions of Instagram activity, which included photos/videos, captions, likes, hashtags and comments. These dimensions were then analyzed in terms of Aaker's brand equity assets: awareness, loyalty, quality and brand associations as well as his identity core and extended identity core: product, organization, person and symbol.

Target utilized their brand equity assets through their Instagram campaign and stayed true to their identity core and extended identity core. This study also found that visual social semiotics helped create an effective brand personality. Target used visual images and text in order to emphasize a point.

This project is dedicated to:

My husband – Matthew Bevins

and

My parents – James and Lorna Dawson

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Chapter I: Introduction

The definition of the word target has multiple meanings: 1) Something that you are trying to do or achieve 2) a place, thing, or person at which an attack is aimed 3) the person or group that someone is trying to influence, sell something to, etc. (Merriam-Webster). All of these are true definitions when thinking of the Target Corporation. When asking the American consumer, they tend to think of Target as a one-stop-stop box store. However, they hit the bulls-eye when creating the company. The red and white classic Target bulls-eye logo represents 1) a company in which they achieved a goal in making Target the second largest retailer in the U.S. 2) they attacked their vision for the company and today we are seeing the aftermath and 3) Target is right on target for their market. On the corporate website Dayton's Director of Publicity Stewart K. Widdess was given the task to define the store with a logo and he said the reasoning behind the logo was, "As a marksman's goal is to hit the center bulls-eye, the new store would do much the same in terms of retail goods, services, commitment to the community, price, value and overall experience" (Target.com).

Target Corporation captivates people's attention with their brand ambassador Bullseye, innovative commercials, in-store experience, fashion forward style, local commitment and affordable prices. Their mission statement reads, "Our mission is to make Target your preferred shopping destination in all channels by delivering outstanding value, continuous innovation and exceptional guest experiences by consistently fulfilling our Expect More. Pay Less.® brand promise" (Target.com). Target's median age that shop is 40 years old, a median household income of approximately $64,000, approximately 43 percent have children at home and about 47 percent have completed college (Investors.target).

Target has 1,788 stores in the United States and is currently the second largest

merchandise retailer in America (Target.com). Target was founded by George Draper

Dayton and the first grand opening of Target was in 1962 and his store was known for

dependable merchandise, fair business practices and a generous spirit of giving

(Target.com). Target remains committed to providing a one-stop shopping experience

where guests can expect value and quality in their products. Target wants to make you feel

good and wants to satisfy a need.

Target's latest campaign was their "School Takes a lot. Target has it all." Campaign,

which began one of their busiest seasons. Target invested heavily in six TV broadcast ads,

print ads and radio ads. In the past two years, Target featured teachers and opened with a

salutation to parents but this year Target's ads focused on celebrating kids' sense of style

(Zmuda, 2013). This thesis will look at what Target did to advertise the new campaign on

their @Target Instagram. From August 6-12, Target launched an Instagram campaign to get

parents and their kids involved with unique styles from Target. They launched a YouTube

video explaining the rules and posted a static image onto their @Target Instagram. Parents

could Instagram their kid showing off their unique style to @Target and had to include

#KidsGotStyle for a chance to get a custom Stylagram. A Stylagram is a short video that

starred the selected children and Target combined the child's unique image and interests

with Target products. Abullseyeview states, "Stylist Amy Chin will then use select photo

entries as inspiration to create a #KidsGotStyle stylagrams of outfits, colors and school

supplies from Target. The curated collection will then be shot by notable

photographer Scott Darling, and sent back to parents via Target's social channels" (2013).

The short films were created on an iPhone 5 using the Instagram video utility (Kritch,

2013). Darling stated in his tumblr, "Six, 14 hour days later we created some fun stop frame animations, all in phone; concepts created, story boarded, propped, styled, sound engineered, captured, and uploaded in the same day" (2013). Target also wanted to award participants. Target said, "Select guests who participate will be chosen at random to win one of 100 $50 Target gift cards and a grand prize of one $1,000 Target gift card to help cover their back to school needs" (Pressroom.Target). From August 6-12 was the only time that Target incorporated Instagram into the campaign.

All in all, brands are everywhere: in stores, commercials, advertisements and the Internet. Purchasing behavior stems from behind the brand. Brands are captivating and involve multiple facets to be woven together to create a unified package. Brands are always tweaking and changing in order to keep up with the economic environment. With the emergence of these new technologies, the new media has created tools to help promote brands. With social media emerged, brands have to develop an advantage over other brands. This thesis will break down brand management, using David Aaker's framework, of the Target Corporation to see if they are managing their Instagram effectively.

Brand management embodies the company and people are driven by what the brand portrays. People are driven by values, emotions and quality within the brand, whether it is the best product or not. People associate products with memories, celebrities, attributes and symbols. Brands are much more than just a name. People begin to rely on brands and they incorporate them into their everyday life.

When developing brand management it is imperative that everyone in the company is working together as a cohesive unit in order to produce a vision of the company. Brands do not just involve corporate leaders but employees too. Everyone has to know the

management strategies to drive the company to success. With new media arising, this brings a challenge to the company. With more media involved, messages are being sent through multiple outlets. The Target Corporation is the second largest retail store and they incorporate new media along with traditional media.

This thesis will provide a general overview of what brand management is according to David Aaker and how the theory of visual social semiotics, applied to communications, is used to decipher intended meaning. This thesis will also provide a brief history of Instagram, company uses of Instagram and how Target is using Instagram. The purpose of this qualitative research is to analyze public documents through an observational approach to see if Target is consistent with managing their Instagram. This study helps provide students and practitioners to understand the rise in new technologies and how they are incorporated within large corporations. The semiotic theory will also help optimize understanding of visual information. This study will also provide valuable information to how brands can consistently manage their own brand while using some of the most powerful social media tools. This thesis will have one limitation to this study. I shop at Target, which creates a bias toward the brand. Because of the bias it will affect the way I interpret their brand.

There have been multiple books and articles (Aaker, 1996; Iglesias, O. and Bonet, E., 2013; Johnson, F., 2008; Percy, L., & Rossiter, J. R., 1992; Rajsky, G., 2006) that involve the study of brand management. They have described what brands are, steps it takes to build a brand and how they have evolved. This research has helped other people build their own brand and research brands. The information helps others create branding strategies in order to manage their brand successful.

The thesis will contain a total of five chapters that include an introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussion. This chapter provided an introduction to the research problem, select studies, limitations to the study, the significance of the study for particular audiences and the purpose of the study. The literature review will look at David Aaker's brand management model and the use of visual social semiotics in advertising. Chapter three will describe how the study was conducted. Chapter four will provide details about the results of the study and chapter five will conclude with the discussion.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Brand management is essential within a company. Brand Management is complex and is has to be maintained when new technologies arise. In order to understand how to maintain brand management, it is important to understand how to build a strong brand. This literature review will focus on using David Aaker's brand assets model as well as the brand identity model to understand brand management. Then, the thesis will look at visual social semiotics, applied to communications, to look at advertising to use semiotics to decipher intended meanings.

Aaker's Framework

Aaker, who wrote *Building Strong Brands* identifies five major themes when building brands. The first major theme is brand identity and how it can be developed. The second theme is managing brand identity and the third theme centers the concept on a brand system. Fourth, is an approach to brand equity measurement and the fifth is brand-nurturing (Aaker, 1996). Aaker created a model in order to build strong brands. At the top of his model, building a strategic brand analysis is key. This includes a customer analysis, competitor analysis, and a self-analysis. Next, in the structure is building a brand identify system. This allows for the company to find their extended and core values as well as their value proposition, credibility, and brand-customer relationship. The final part of the model is the brand identity implementation system, which is the brand position, execution, and tracking.

Strategic Brand Analysis

The strategic brand analysis is based off of three aspects: customer analysis, competitor analysis, and self-analysis (Aaker, 1996, p. 8). Brand equity is key when

building a brand. Aaker (1996) defines brand equity, "Brand equity is a set of assets (and

liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value

provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers" (p.p 7-8). Aaker

stresses that there are four major asset categories: (1) Brand name awareness, (2) Brand

loyalty, (3) perceived quality, and (4) Brand associations (1996, p. 8). The next few

paragraphs will elaborate on the major assets.

Figure 2.1 Aaker's Major Asset Categories
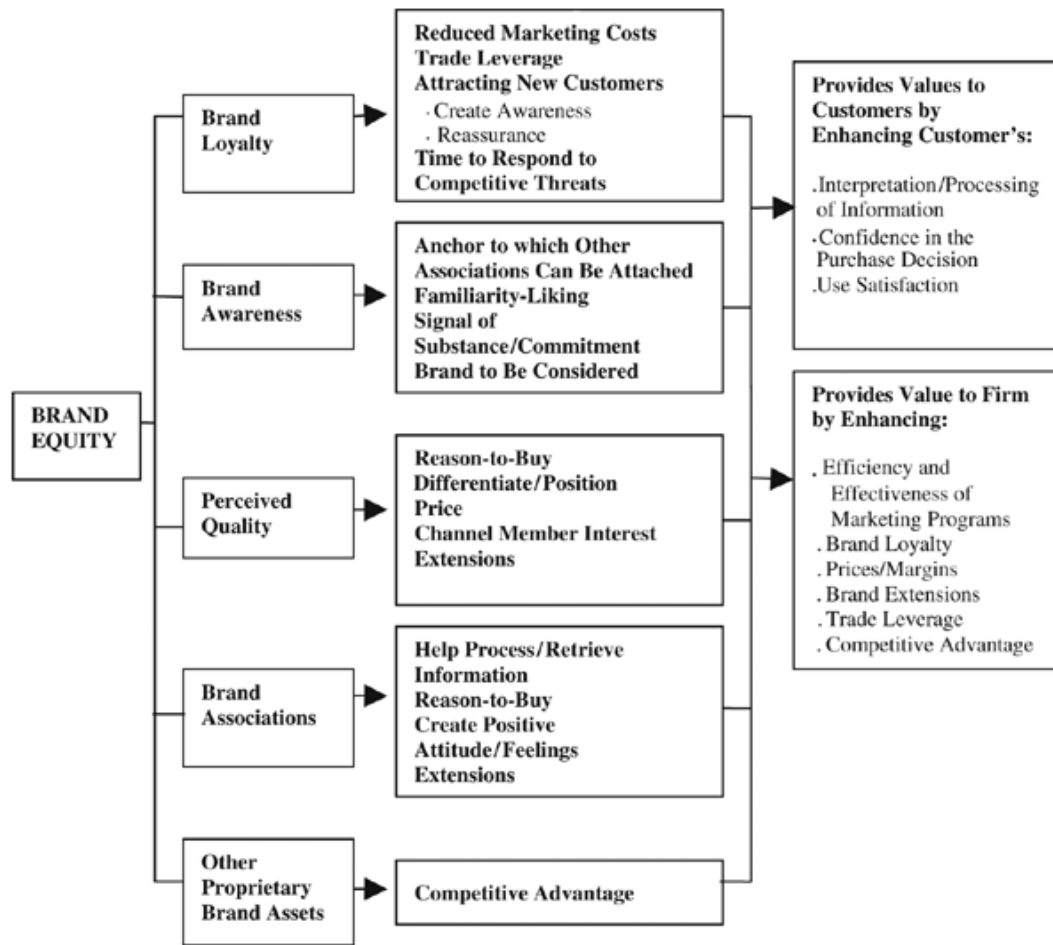
Note: Aaker, D. (1996). Aaker's major asset categories. *Word Press.* Retrieved from http://johngudil.wordpress.com. Reprinted with permission from David Aaker.

Brand name awareness

First, brand name awareness, "refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind" (Aaker, 1996, p. 10). Aaker (1996) also states that brand awareness has the biggest role in brand equity (p. 330). Percy and Rossiter (1992) state that:

> Contrary to what may seem to be obvious, purchase intention is rarely the
>
> direct object of advertising communication strategy. Although it is certainly
>
> true that purchase intention and behavior is the ultimate goal of advertising,
>
> more often one must be preconditioned by first raining the salience of a
>
> brand, and then forming at least some tentative attitudes toward it before
>
> purchase is considered. (p. 263)

Therefore, it is important to understand consumer attitudes toward the brand. Brand recognition, recall, graveyard statistic, top of mind, brand dominance, brand familiarity, and brand knowledge or salience is how awareness is measured (Aaker, 1996, p. 10). Aaker also states that, "Increasing awareness is one mechanism to expand the market reach of the brand" (1996, p. 330).

Brand loyalty

Second, brand loyalty is important because loyal customers will help build a brand through gaining profit and creating predictable sales. Aaker (1996) states that there are two reasons why brand loyalty is included into brand equity, "First, a brand's value to a firm is largely created by the customer loyalty it commands. Second, considering loyalty as an asset encourages and justifies loyalty-building programs which then help create and enhance brand equity" (p. 21). When customers have a positive experience with a brand they will continue to support the brand. Gregory Rajsky (2006) wrote an article called,

Brand loyalty in which he states, "Customers appreciate value, and they reward recognize performance with return business" (p. 72).

Perceived quality

Third, perceived quality shows financial performance (Aaker, 1996, p. 17). Anderson and Lehmann (1994) were able to look at firms Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCBS) to look at customer-based performance measures that can be matched to economic performance (p. 53). They found that there is a positive impact of quality on customer satisfaction (Anderson and Lehmann, 1994, p. 53). Perceived quality is important to all businesses. Aaker (1996) states, "Perceived quality is often the key positioning dimension for corporate brands and other brands that range over product classes" (p. 19). Perceived quality drives customers.

Brand associations

Fourth, brand associations increase value. Associations can be met through product attributes, a celebrity spokesperson, or a symbol (Aaker, 1996, p. 25). Kim and Chan-Olmsted (2005) state that attributes can be product related and non-product related (p. 151). It is key to develop and implement a brand identity. It is important to stay true to the roots of the company in order to stay consistent. When execution is consistent, "The result can be a consistency of meaning and message through time that can provide the ownership of a position, ownership of an identity symbol, and cost efficiencies, all of which combine to provide a formidable competitive advantage" (Aaker, 1996, p. 222). Overall, establishing a consistent identity will provoke ownership and create a good platform for an identity system.

Brand Identity System

A company must know who they are, what their purpose is and the direction they want to go when defining identity. According to Aaker (1996), "Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members" (p. 68). Brand identity also must have a forward thinking mind-set and cannot stay stagnant. Aaker (1996) also states, "A brand identity is to brand strategy what 'strategic intent' is to a business strategy. Strategic intent involves an obsession with winning real innovation, stretching the current strategy, and a forward-looking refining past strategy" (p. 70). Aaker created four brand identity perspectives to add depth: (1) a product, (2) an organization, (3) a person, (4) a symbol, which is also known as the extended identity to the identity core (Asker, 1996, pp. 78-79). The identity core are associations of the brand that are most likely to remain constant with the brand moves to new markets and products and the extended core adds details that helps portray what the brand stands for (Aaker, 1996, pp. 87-88). The following paragraphs further explain the extended identity.

Figure 2.2 Aaker's Building Strong Brands Model
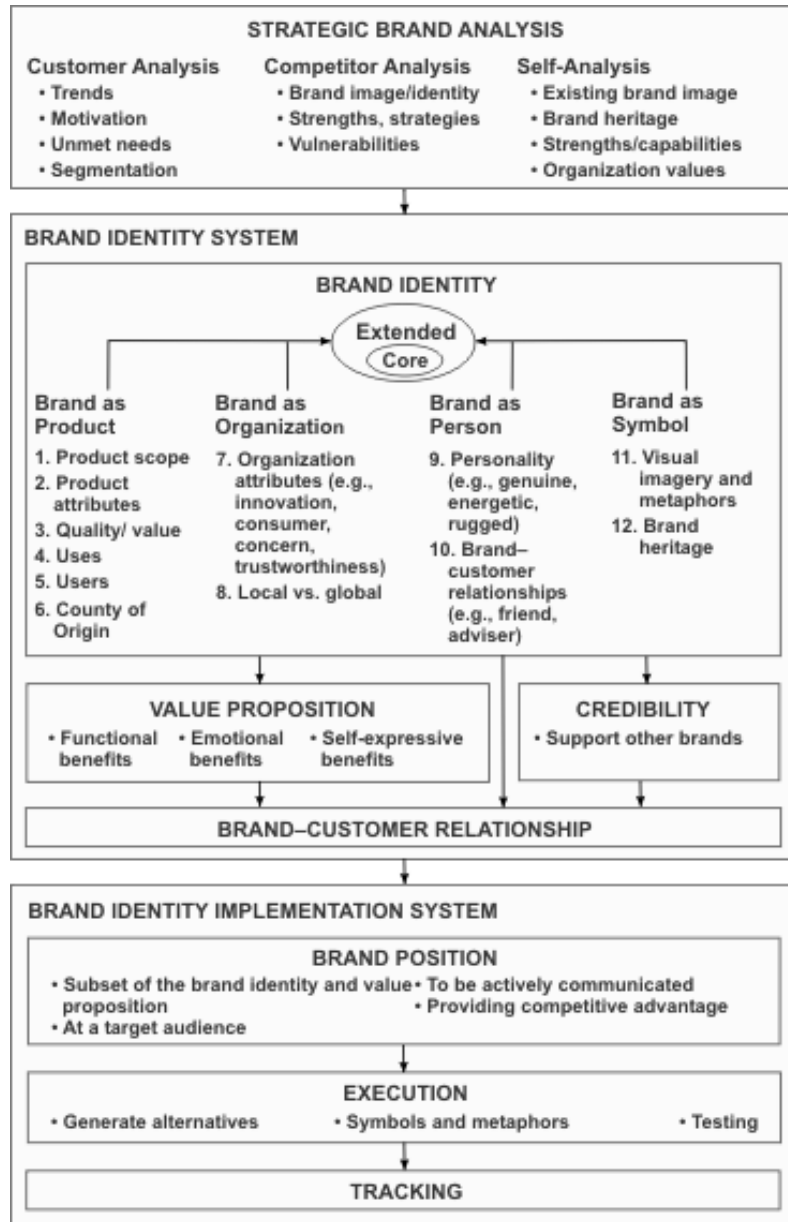
Note: Aaker, D. (1996). Aaker's building strong brands model. *Zanthus.* Retrieved from http://www.zanthus.com/databank/strategy/marketing_strategy.php. Reprinted with permission from David Aaker.

Brand as a Product

The first brand identity perspective is brand as a product. Aaker says, "Product-

related associations will most always be an important part of a brand identity because they

are directly linked to brand choice decisions and the use of experience" (1996, p. 78).

Under the brand as a product Aaker identifies six elements, (1) Product scope, (2) Product

attributes, (3) Quality/value, (4) Uses, (5) Users, (6) and Country of Origin (Aaker, 1996,

pp. 78-83).

The first element is product scope. Aaker says, "A core element of a brand's identity

is usually its product thrust, which will affect the type of associations that are desirable and

feasible" (Aaker, 1996, p. 78). Companies want to be associated with a product class. Aaker

(1996) provides examples, "For Häagen-Dazes the answer is ice cream, for Visa is it is

credit cards, for Buick it is automobiles, and for Compaq it is computers" (p. 80).

The second element is product attributes. Gwin and Gwin (2003) found that

consumers choose products based on the products attributes. Lancaster (1966) created an

approach that assumed that consumption is an activity and utility is a characteristic (p.

133). Lancaster (p. 133) created three assumptions for his new approach: (1) Utility

possesses characteristics and they give rise to utility, (2) Many characteristics are shared

by one good, and (3) Goods separately pertain characters separately then goods in

combination (p. 133). The model explains individual choice. In addition Aaker (1996) says,

"Attributes directly related to the purchase or use of a product can provide functional

benefits and sometimes emotional benefits for customers" (p. 80). When building a brand it

is also necessary to find something extra to offer to make a brand better and to add value to

the company (Aaker, 1996, p. 81).

The third element is quality/value. Aaker says, "For each competitive arena,

perceived quality provides either the price of admission (you need to deliver a minimum

level of quality to survive) or the linchpin of competition (the brand with the highest

quality wins)" (Aaker, 1996, p. 81). Brucks, Zeithamal & Naylor (2000) found there are

dimensions when delivering quality products and that requires understanding the

dimensions that consumers use to judge quality. The authors conducted qualitative

research in which they first developed a generalizable typology of quality dimensions for

durable goods and second they conducted a process-tracing laboratory experiment to

examine how jet marketing variable affect customers judgment (p. 359). The two focus

groups have ten women in one group and the other contained ten men who were all older

than twenty-five years of age. There were ten goods that the people were able to look at

which included automobiles, cameras, lawn mowers, furniture, hair dryers, camcorders,

microwave ovens, power tools, blenders, and computers (Brucks, Zeithamal & Naylor,

2000, p. 359). The authors chose the variety of goods in order to provide a spectrum of

dimension. In addition, phone interviews were also conducted.

The second study they focused on price and brand name as a key marketing

variable. Brucks, Zeithamal & Naylor (2000) examined "consumers' acquisition and use of

factual information, including product-related attributes, price, and brand name, to explore

differences in how consumers judge products n each of the six quality dimensions" (p. 359).

Brucks, Zeithamal & Naylor (2000) found that consumers evaluate quality dimensions

differently and consumers vary on the use of price and brand name when evaluating the

dimensions of quality (p. 359).

The other three elements are uses, users, and country of origin (Aaker, 1996, pp. 81-

82). The uses according to Aaker (1996) is when a brand effectively attempts to owns a use

or application. For example, Gatorade provides a beverage for athletes and Clorox is for

whitening of clothing or cleaning. The brand has created an association for each occasion.

The next element is the users. This is where the company positions a brand by a type of

user (Aaker, 1996). For example, Gerber positions their brand for babies and Weight

Watchers is associated with people who are interested in dieting (Aaker, 1996, p. 81).

Developing a user-type helps grow the brand and create value to the company. The last

element is country of origin. When a company establishes its origin it implies that that the

brand has some sort of higher quality because the country or region has a heritage of

making the best within that product class (Aaker, 1996, p. 82). All of these elements are key

when building a brand.

Brand-as-Organization

The second brand identity element is brand-as-organization. The brand-as-

organization focuses on the attributes of the organization and the brand-as-person focuses

on the brand identity. Asker says, "The brand-as-organization perspectives focuses on

attributes of the organization rather than those of the product or service" (1996, p. 82). The

organization focuses more on their core values, culture, people, programs, and assets/skills

to better a product (Aaker, 1996, p. 115). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (1997) explain how the

company The Body Shop has strong organizational characteristics (p. 39). When a

company has strong organizational characteristics consumers begin to develop their own

attitudes and perceptions for the product. The Body Shop's core brand identity is profits-

with-a-principle which means the company does not test on animals, helps third-world

economies through its Trade, women's issues activist, contributes to rain forest efforts, and

recycles (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1997, p. 39) The Body Shop focuses much more than

just their products, they are building a culture in which people identify with them and

become loyal. When building a brand it is important to gain visibility. Aaker and

Joachimsthaler state, "Brand visibility can signal leadership, success, quality, substance, and even excitement and energy—all before the product comes into play" (1997, p. 39). Supporting and building brand identity will eventually achieve visibility.

Brand-as-Person

The third brand identity perspective is the brand-as-person perspective. Aaker (1996) suggests that a brand identity is richer than product attributes. Previously mentioned, brand personality helps communicate products to consumers and it helps the consumer have the chance to identify with the product. Over time consumers will begin to build a strong relationship and will become a repeat buyer.

Brand personality is important component in brand image (Aaker, 1996; Plummer 1985; Arora & Stoner 2009). Research suggests that brands do have personalities. David Aaker (1996) created the "Big Five" brand personality scale to suggest that consumer's function in different ways. Aaker (1996) conducted a study that involved more than 1,000 U.S. respondents. He tested the respondents with using 60 well-known brands with distinct personalities and he used the 114 personality traits. Aaker found that 93% of the respondents observed differences between the brands. The "Big Five" includes Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness (Aaker, 1996, p. 143). Aaker found that his study described the personalities of many strong brands. For example, Campbell's, Hallmark, and Kodak are very high on Sincerity and Levi's, Marlboro, and Nike are high on Ruggedness (Aaker, 1996, p. 143). In addition to the "Big Five," Aaker (1996) created fifteen facets that are divided among the structure to provide strategic options. A brand could have more that one brand personality and facets just like a person has different personality traits.

Plummer (2000) describes two faces of brand personality: the input and the out-take. That is what the company wants the consumers to think and feel and then what the consumers actually do think and feel. Plummer says, "The characterizational aspects of the brand or its personality are purely the result of communications because there is rarely anything intrinsic to a brand that makes it lively, or exotic, or sophisticated" (2000). Brand personality has one goal and that is to describe the perceptions reality from the consumer perceptions. Plummer conducted in-depth interviews and asked respondents to indicate which of the 50-atttibutes that they created from prior research, which words and phrases descried each of the brands that they listed. Such brands that were listed were Miller High Life, Holliday Inn, and Oil of Olay. Plummer found, "...the procedure that we were using at least met the relatively simple criterion of being able to differentiate between some major brands across different product categories" (2000, p. 82). Every company has a personality and research shows that people collectively have similar thoughts on brands.

Plummer also wanted to look at symbols because brand personality is mainly representational (p. 82). He asked respondents to answer questions like, "If you were a vegetable what kind of vegetable would you be? or If you were an animal what kind of animal would you be in terms of describing a list of brands" (Pummer, 2000, p. 82). Plummer (2000) also, "showed them 25 different activities, 17 fabrics, 35 occupations, 20 nationalities, and 21 magazine" (p. 82). Stereotypes began to emerge and consumers would either associate themselves with the brand or not. He also found that when people buy brands they buy them to reflect what they would like to be rather than what they actually are (Plummer, 2000, p. 82). It is important for companies to establish a brand personality so consumers are not confused.

In addition, Arora and Stoner (2009) conducted a mixed method study to understand brand personality. The data was collected but they were analyzed separately. They focused on personality dimensions of two retail stores, Target and Wal-Mart and two athletic brands Adidas and Nike (Arora & Stoner, 2009). First, a questionnaire was created around Aaker's five personality dimensions. Secondly, they interviewed people which the questions were semi-structured and in an open-ended questionnaire format. This means that the questions encouraged the interviewees to provide detailed examples on how they feel. Arora & Stoner (2009) found that the qualitative research provided a clearer perspective rather through a rating scale due to the fact that it was the respondents own words that were provided but the quantitative research exposed important differences in perceived personalities between Adidas and Nike. Overall, the study revealed that impressions are important when it boils down to decision-making and choosing a brand.

Brand-as-Symbol

The fourth brand identity perspective is brand-as-a-symbol. Symbols provide a visual for the consumer. Iglesias and Bonet (2012) define a symbol as a symbol is based on a conventional relationship with the object it represents (p. 254). Aaker (1997) states, "A strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and make it much easier to gain recognition and recall" (p. 84). A symbol drives meaning behind the brand.

Value Proposition

Next in the brand identity system is value proposition. Aaker (1996) defines value proposition "A brand's value proposition is a statement of the functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer. An effective value proposition should lead to a brand-customer relationship and drive

purchase decisions" (p. 95). Barns et. al. states, "It is simply that by building a value

proposition you will provide profitable and superior customer value, more superior than if

you haven't built one" (2009, p. 23). Aaker (1996) provides a good framework by offering

three value propositions: functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits (p. 95). A

functional benefit is based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to the

customer. An emotional benefit is when a brand gives the customer a positive feeling.

Lastly, a self-expressive benefit is providing a way for a person to communication his or her

self-image (Aaker, 1996, p.p. 95-99). It is important to create an image so the company can

make repeat purchases.

Credibility

A company must provide credibility. Chambers says, "The heart of credibility

marketing is to establish your message as an expert opinion and give prospects a reason to

pay attention" (2002, p. 13). When a customer becomes more comfortable with the brand

then they will begin to trust the brand. Aaker suggests that when a spokesperson is

perceived as expert, trustworthy, and well-liked then the persuasive power is enhanced

(1996, p. 132). Aaker (1996) also says, "The natural role of the product brand is to generate

brand-as-product associations, whereas the corporate brand's natural role is to provide

organization associations that add credibility to the product claims" (Aaker, 1996, p. 132).

Brand—Customer Relationship

The last part of the brand identity system is the brand-customer relationship. Aaker

states, "A brand—customer relationship can be based upon a value proposition" (1996, p.

103). A brand—customer relationship could emerge for a variety of reasons. Aaker states,

"Many brand—customer relationships emerge when the brand is considered as an

organization or as a person, rather than as a product" (1996, p. 103). The brand and customer could be based on various positive feelings. The brand—customer relationship varies from customer to customer but it is important to establish to continue to grow the relationship.

Brand Identity Implementation System

Brand Position

The last portion of the model is brand position, execution, and tracking. Aaker (1996) defines brand position, "Brand position is the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and that demonstrated an advantage over competing brands" (p. 176). The brand position does not have to be in the core identity but can be an influence. For example, the Ronald McDonald character is a point of leverage (Aaker, 1996, pp. 178-179). In order to position a brand Aaker (1996) created a model, which implies that the brand position statement should address four sets of questions. The model suggests that a company must have a subset of identity/value propositions, must know their target audience, actively communication with their audience, and create an advantage (Aaker, 1998, p. 184). Once the questions are answered the brand can be executed and then tracked.

Execution

When executing a campaign, it needs to be quality material. Aaker states, "A brilliantly executed communication program breaks through the clutter by shocking, entertaining, or involving the audience" (1996, p. 186). Achieving high impact advertising campaigns can be challenging so Aaker offers guidelines. Aaker (1996) states, "The more alternative executions you generate, the better are your chances of creating something

brilliant" (p. 186). Some areas that advertisers could look to are event sponsorships, clubs

and usage programs, direct response marketing, public relations efforts, publicity stunts,

promotions, product shows and event stores and packaging (Aaker, 1996, p.p 187-188).

Good strategies also include a strong symbol and a metaphor can also leverage

communication expenditures. Lastly, testing is important. When a company tests their

strategy, they can detect what works and what needs to change. Testing can give the

company confidence in their communication efforts.

Tracking

Tracking can be based on quantitative and qualitative research. Aaker (1996) states,

"Tracking can be based on quantitative surveys, where structured questions and scales

allow an assessment of how customer perceptions have been affected by the brand

positioning effort" (p. 189). On the other hand, qualitative research can be done through

regular focus groups or in-depth interviews. Aaker (1996) states, "A key to qualitative

research is to be exposed to a cross-section of the target audience and to know what to ask"

(p. 189). Both research methods are good when monitoring the brand position and other

elements of the brand identity over time.

Social Media Builds Brands

Brands have more opportunity than ever to communicate with their consumers.

Social media has given the user to connect, build community, or produce and share content

(Smith, p.559). With platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and

many others they have changed the way brands interact with their consumers. Brands are

able to offer their participants, "a forum for exchange of common interests, a sense of place

with codes of behavior, the development of congenial and stimulating dialogues leading to

relationships based on truth and encouragement for active participation by more than an exclusive few" (McWilliam, 2000). Edelman says, "For marketers, the old way of doing business is unsustainable" (2010, p. 64). People need to have the feeling that they can trust a brand and marketers know they cannot run a commercial ad or print ad and expect the consumers trust in their product (Belch and Belch, 2012, p. 16). Traditionally brands were able to tell the consumer what to think and what they should buy and with social media the user is able to publish their own opinions.

Years ago, a relationship with the consumer happened after the use of the product or service itself but now the consumer enters into an open-ended relationship where they share their experience with the product or service online (Edelman, 2010, p. 64). Edelman calls the open-ended relationship a journey where the consumer considers a product, evaluates the brand, buys the product and then enjoys, advocates and bonds after the purchase (2010, p. 65). In the article *Digital Branding: The branding perspective* states, "There's no ignoring online in an age where consumers' power is growing and brands must develop deeper relationships with customers" (2008). With the digital era, marketers have to connect with their consumers on a deeper level or they might loose them.

Because social media platforms are centered around opinions and sharing information it has given brands the opportunity to listen to their users and to begin to build a relationship (Smith, p. 560). Consumers are turning to social media to speak about brands. In an article titled *Using social media to build brands* it states that, "60 percent of consumers researching products through multiple online sources learnt about a specific brand or retailer through social networking sites. Active social media users are more likely to read product reviews online, and three out of five create their own reviews of products

and services" (2011). This allows brands to access their image through consumer feedback. Brands are also able to be more authentic with their consumers. Signman states, "Traditionally, the term "brand" referred to the way in which a company or organization differentiates itself from its competition. In the era of the Internet and social media, branding occurs in new and interesting ways--even personal branding" (2012).

When developing a strong brand presence online a marketer must define the strategy, define goals, create content relevance and to be able to maintain the sites (Hill, 2010, p. 42). First, Hill (2010) says defining the strategy begins with research in order to define your consumers. Marketers must find out where their consumers are in the digital world. Different ages have more interaction on other social media platforms than others. Secondly, creating relevant and quality content is critical so your audience will want to engage with your brand (Hill, 2010, p. 42). Thirdly, maintaining your brand online is critical. Hill says, "Being topical and current with your branded content can make the difference between a compelling campaign and a mediocre one" (2010, p. 42). Also, content does not stay at the top of a consumer's social media channel so staying up to date with posts and always having fresh content is key to building a relationship.

Semiotics

This paper deals with semiotics, applied to communications, to look at advertising to use semiotics to decipher intended meanings. Advertising is visual and semiotics will show how signs function. According to the book, *A Theory of Semiotics* by Umberto Eco states that Saussure and Peirce were the first to create a definition of the discipline in the nineteenth century (1976, p. 14). According to the Encyclopedia Britannica Academic Edition, Saussure studied "the life of signs within society" and Peirce's work defined a sign

as "something which stands to somebody for something" and categorized signs into three main types: an icon, a symbol, and meaning (2013). Eco says in terms of Pierce's definition, "…a sign can stand for something else to somebody only because this 'standing-for' relation is mediated by an interpretant" (1976, p. 14). Interpretants will then function within the framework of a code theory, which cover three semiotic categories: meaning, intensional, and units (Eco, 1976, p. 72).

Charles Morris also created a definition for signs and he broke the study of signs into three parts: "the study of the relation of signs to other signs, which is to do with syntax; 'communication' or the relation of signs to their users, which is pragmatics; and the relation of signs to the things they represent" (Semantics and semiotics, 2006). Eco suggests that he makes one modification to Morris's definition. He suggests, "that the interpretation by an interpreter, which would seem to characterize a sign, must be understood as the possible interpretation by a possible interpreter" (1976, p. 16)

Furthermore, Messaris and Metallinos state that, "Any mode of communication can be considered with either semantic or syntactic properties. A semantically-oriented description focuses on how the elements in a particular mode (images, words, musical tones, or whatever) are related to their meanings" (Messaris & Metallinos, 1998). Jiang-Ping (2003) also suggests that:

Semiotics regards all aspects within a culture as a sign: language, body

language, gesture, clothing, behavior, hairstyle, types of hour or car owned,

accent, etc. Signs, which are used to convey thoughts, information, commands

and judgments, enable us to develop perceptions and understandings of

each other and the world we inhabit. (p. 31)

Moreover, "All varieties of semiotics are grounded in the study of sign functions and their typologies" (Colomb, 1980, p. 331). Eco (1976) states that, "A sign-function arises when an expression is correlated to a content, both the correlated elements being the functives of such a correlation" (p. 48). Eco (1976) also wanted to make clear that a signal and sign are different:

A signal is a pertinent unit of a system that may be an expression system

ordered to a content, but could also be a physical system without and

semiotic purpose and a sign is always an elements of an expression plane

conventionally correlated to one elements of a content plane. (p. 48)

Codes are important and they generate signs. Eco states that, "codes provide the rules which generate signs as concrete occurrences in communicative intercourse" (1976, p. 49).

Visual Social Semiotic Analysis of Images

According to Jewitt and Oyama in the book *Handbook of visual analysis* states, "Social semiotics of visual communication involves the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted" (p. 135). Kress and Van Leeuwen wrote *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* and states, "In our view, most accounts of visual semiotics have concentrated on what linguists would call 'lexis' rather than 'grammar', on the 'vocabulary' – for instance, on the 'denotative' and 'connotative', the 'iconographical' and 'iconological' significance of the individual people, places and things depicted in images" (1996, p. 1). Kress and Van Leeuwen described "visual grammar" in a way that depicted people, places and things combine in visual "statements" of more or less complexity and extension (1996, p. 1).

When looking at advertisements they are persuasive in nature. Percy and Rossiter, in *Advertising Strategy: A Communication theory approach* state that, "Advertising may persuade consumers by creating or maintaining a favorable product attitude which then forms the basis for subsequent purchase behavior" (1980, p. 165). The advertisement intends to draw in consumers so they will purchase their product. Johnson wrote the book *Imaging in advertising: Verbal and visual codes of commerce* and states that, "Advertising as ever-present in the cultural environment circulates images of cultural importance by contributing to socialization and honing attitudes and behavior" (2008, p. 1). People are exposed to many advertisements in one day and they have associated brands in their own identities.

Advertisements are distributed in many different forms such as: print, radio, video, and through the Internet. Advertisements create different meanings through signs, symbols, text, images, graphics, and color. For example, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) states, visual communication can be expressed through different uses of color or different compositional structures (p. 2). Hèléne states that, "Visuals are used not only to illustrate news and feature genres but also in advertising and campaigns that attempt to persuade their target audiences to change attitudes and behaviours" (2008). Advertisements are supposed to evoke emotions. Hèléne also states that, "Visuals are thought to send people along emotive pathways where textual/verbal material leaves them in a more rational, logical and linear pathway of thought" (2008). Viewers will interpret the advertisement according to their own life experiences. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) state, "Visual structures realize meanings as linguistic structures do also, and thereby point to different interpretations of experience and different forms of social interactions" (p. 2). People put

their own meanings to advertisements and have their own thoughts based on their own

experiences.

Furthermore, Boeriis and Holsanova wrote an article that suggests that social

semiotic approach is traceable in the behavior of the viewers who perceive images while

creating meaning (2012). The case study the authors apply groupings and rank

mechanisms, 'whole,' 'group,' 'Unit,' and 'Component' from the social semiotic framework

to a multifaceted image (Boeriis and Holsanova, 2012, p. 260). Boeriis and Holsanova says,

"Our thesis is that visual segmentation suggested by the social semiotic approach is

traceable in the behaviour of the viewers who perceive visuals while creating meaning"

(2012, p. 260). Boeriis and Holsanova (2012) "…found the concept of the visual zoom

applicable in both a social semiotic and a perceptual cognitive approach. The inspiration of

gestalt theory was one clear common denominator which facilitated the unison of the

cognitive and social semiotic approach to visual segmentation" (p. 278).

Moreover, semantic relations can be been through sentences and aspects of text

(Mirhosseini, 2006, p. 622). Mirhosseini (2006) states, "The analysis of text meaning allows

for exploring 'internal' and 'external' relation of texts and making connections between

actual events and more abstract practices" (p. 622). Eco states that, "comprehension of an

aesthetic text is based on a dialectic between acceptance and repudiation of the sender's

codes – on the one hand – and introduction and rejection of personal codes on the other"

(1976, p. 275). Text provides intricate meaning behind advertisement and people will

interpret meaning of text differently depending on their own discourse.

Furthermore, in the book *Handbook of visual analysis* written by Van Leeuwen and

Jewitt states, "Images may be analyzed without any recourse to the verbal or written

information which may accompany them" (2001, p. 6-7). Images can stand-alone and provoke emotions. Van Leeuwen and Jewitt says, "Images carry connotations and invite individual reminiscence. They may convey a sense of duration or of nostalgia through codes of colour, framing and through their public context" (2001, p. 27). Many people follow Instagram because they feel they have a connection with the user or images produced. People like to feel and be connected to things that they can identify with. Van Leeuwen and Jewitt also states, "An image can engage the viewer in a fetishistic and compulsive urge to look and look again, encouraging the sense that the viewer 'own' the image or that it is part of his or her 'identity'" (2001, p. 27).

Moreover, when looking at a photo it can express the same points as the words that correspond to it. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) state that,

What in language is realized by words of the category 'action verbs' is visually realized by elements that can be formally defined as vectors. What in language is realized by locative preposi- tions is visually realized by the formal characteristics that create the contrast between foreground and background (p. 46).

Kress and Van Leeuwen have created "narrative processes" which is when people are connected by a vector and serve to present unfolding actions and events, process of change, and transitory spatial arrangements (2006, p. 59). If the image does not have a vector then there are locative circumstances, which are also called a setting that requires a contrast between the foreground and background (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 72). Whether or not the receiver is decoding the correct message that the visual is intended to give, the visual is still communicating something to the receiver.

Overall, advertisements are visuals that represent a product from a certain company. Advertisements overtake the world with visual imagery and people have created identities in them. People have become brand loyal to companies and put their trust in their products. Advertisements are strategically put together depending on market research. Advertisers goal is to effectively reach a market in order to drive a product so the consumer will purchase it. Advertisers look for key images and text in order to communicate an effective message to the consumer. Target Corporation, for example has created a consistent identity that has created people to become loyal with their brand. Their intended message is conveyed effectively. Their strong approach to brand positioning has lead them to become the second largest retailer in United Sates. When creating a successful brand, the company will stand out against their competitors.

History of Instagram

Instagram launched on October 6, 2010 and is primarily a mobile application that allows users to take a photo, apply filters to the photo taken and then upload it to Instagram and/or other social networking media (Instagram.com). It is a use-friendly app with 130 million people who use its service (Bailey, 2013). Instagram also has added a video feature, "giving publishers and marketers another option to Twitter, Vine, YouTube and Vimeo when it comes to making content more multimedia" (Heine, 2013). A user can take a video up to 15-seconds long and can look through 13 artistic filters; the app is also equipped with a simplified editing system and Cinema and an auto-stabilization feature (Otto, p. 1). Users can additionally create a hashtag symbol (#), which is a clickable link that connects back to a homepage and helps build your Instagram community and allows for

clients to interact with the company (Jordan, 2013, p.12). Instagram offers more than sharing photos; it offers creativity, a community, interaction, storytelling and lets the user on the other end who is receiving the photo to interpret it in a way that fits their needs.

Traditional photography has grown from people using cameras to capture special moments to people capturing their everyday lives with their camera phone. Today, cameras are built into peoples' lives and have allowed everyone to be a photographer. Heddernan states, "The app changes how we behave, as evidenced by the site's trademark clich(c)s: feet, skies, 'selfies' show in the bathroom mirrors" (2013). People are documenting their lives through Instagram. Heddernan states, "Instagram images have become units of speech, building blocks in a visual vocabulary that functions somewhat like a colonial patois, where old-school darkroom photography is the native tongue and digitization is the imperial language" (2013). Instagram has given people the ability to look at life in a new way and to communicate using images. Heddernan also makes the point that, "Now that superstylized images have become the answer to 'How are you?' and 'What are you doing?' we can avoid the ruts of linguistic expression in favor of a highly forgiving, playful, and compassionate style of looking" (2013).

Company use of Instagram

Instagram can create a visual story but also communicates products or services for companies. In an article titled *Instagram for marketers* it states, "Whenever you're releasing a new product line or hosting an event, a single photo can communicate more effectively than the longest press release" (2013, p.10). Instagram posts in a timeline manner, which can be effective when defining a content strategy. The article also provides strategies to how a company can market themselves. The strategies include:

Show off your current products, sneak peeks of upcoming products, creates uses of

your products, shots of your brand ambassadors and representative, behind the

scenes shots, shots of your product in the wild, sneak peeks of future marketing

campaigns/ads and photos that relate to the lifestyle your brand represents (2013,

p.10).

Whichever marketing strategy a company decides to use, it must represent the company's

distinct personality.

Brands are able to use Instagram to their advantage. Brands like Maybelline,

Burberry, Red Vines, Lululemon, Charity Water and Jenis Ice Creams use the Instagram

video feature in order to tell stories to their consumers (Heine, 2013). Social media has

moved into a visual era. Jordan (2013) states:

Photo-based social media sites such as Instagram and Pinterest, in particular, have

ushered in a visual revolution, taking the old adage 'don't tell when you can show' to

new heights. Unlike words, photos can preserve visual memories when ours fade or

fail to recount a great vacation from beginning to end. No one takes a vacation

without taking photos, right? But beyond sheer memories, a really great photo can

influence a purchase decision (p. 12).

According to *Marketing Business Weekly*, "Today, 40 percent of Interbrand 100 companies

are using Instagram effectively, engaging and growing their audiences" (2012, p. 106).

Companies are able to track their success with the use of the app through a free website

Simply Measured, which "helps brands glean actionable insights from their social media

efforts, closing the gap between casual conversations and measurable outcomes (2012,

p.106). This allows brands to measure their success or failure of the media campaign and can prove that Instagram is a competitive social app.

According to an article in *Simply measured; 40 percent of top brands are using Instagram*, "Simply Measured announced that brands are seeing success engaging with consumers on Instagram and are increasingly incorporating it into their social media mix" (2012). Simply Measured evaluated brands that included the Interbrand 100 and identified key trends and strategies. Some of their key findings are "Instagram adoption is strong, early adopters are reaping benefits, luxury brands lead the way, filters are fun, but not a cure and cross-posting is popular, but impact is limited" ("Simply Measured", 2012). Instagram, when used effectively, can create a community and build long-term relationships.

Another tool to help guide brands to a successful Instagram is a company called VenueSeen Campaigns. This company "will help users drive better results by providing an easy start-to-finish dashboard for creating, implementing and managing hashtag-driven Instagram marketing campaigns" ("VenueSeen Launches", 2012). Tracking results is viable and determines if the brand is succeeding or failing. Brands have to know whether they are connecting with their customers and building lifetime relationships. When a brand uses Instagram effectively they will know exactly how they are impacting their customers.

Target's use of Instagram

Target interacts through Instagram with three different profiles: target, targetstyle and targetdoesitagain. Target is following 20, has 94,000 followers and has posted 196 photos (Instagram.com/target). Targetstyle is following 343, has 160,234 followers and has posted 477 photos (Instagram.com/targetstyle). According to Business Insider Target

Style has mastered the use of Instagram because their account "mixes product advertisements with backstage fashion show images, as well as styling images" (Austin, 2013). Targetdoesitagain mainly posts photos of Target's clothes, jewelry and shoes. This profile is following 76, has 217,785 following and 800 posts (Instagram.com/targetdoesitagain). Target has three profiles that cater to specific targets. This thesis will only look at @Target's profile because this profile launched the back to school campaign.

Research Questions

Below are the research questions for this content analysis:

RQ1: Does Target utilize their brand equity assets through their Instagram campaign?

RQ2: Does Target stay true to their brand identity core and extended identity on their @Target Instagram account during their latest campaign "School Takes a lot. Target has it all."?

RQ3: Do visual semiotics of photos/videos posted on Instagram effect social engagement with a brand?

Summary

With the increase of new social media sites, businesses and companies have to create a social media strategy or they will fall behind in this digital age. Semiotics has been used in analyzing images in advertising but not much research has analyzed the use of semiotics in digital media. Through qualitative research this study hopes to further explore Target's brand management through Instagram using the theory of Visual Social Semiotics.

Chapter III: Methodology

The literature provided a framework of studies in which David Aaker's equity assets, core and extended core provided a good structure to identifying if a brand is successful. Aaker's assets and model combined with semiotics will help interpret Target's intended meaning as a brand. This chapter will give further explanation of this rationale, the data collection and the validations process.

Qualitative research relies on interpretations from others. Frey, Botan, and Friedman (1992) state that, "Qualitative data takes the form of words rather than numbers. Qualitative data are analyzed and presented in the form of case studies, critiques, and sometimes verbal reports" (p. 7). It is hard to define what qualitative research is but according to Chesebro and Borisoff there are five commonly shared characteristics which are a natural setting, researcher as participant, subject-based communication, subject intentionality, and pragmatic (p. 10). In addition, Lindlof and Taylor (2008) argued that, "Fundamentally, qualitative researchers seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" (2007). There are many definitions of what qualitative research is but it ultimately relies on meanings.

Qualitative Content Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, this study used a qualitative content analysis approach of Target's Instagram. According to Auster a content analysis is a, "scientific method for describing the facets of communication in such a way that summary statements and generalizations can be made about content" (p. 102). The content does not have to be only text but other material such as musical, pictorial, or plastic can be used

(Mayring, p. 266). A qualitative content analysis will be used to look at themes and engagement to see if Target is managing their brand through their Instagram. Instagram is fairly new in the digital age, which means there has been little research that explores semiotics in the new media.

This study will look at one campaign that began on August 6 and ended August 12, 2013. Kassarjian (1977) states, "For most content analysis studies, the immense task of analyzing existing documents begins with sampling procedures" (p. 11). Sampling only two weeks will allow the researcher to only look at one campaign and to only look at themes and engagement during that time so it is manageable to gather information.

Furthermore, researchers play a major role in their studies through numerous ways. They immerse themselves fully into the study, they use a natural setting, the researcher is a primary instrument, focus on the participant's perceptions, and uses documentation. This particular study will not need immersion and it will not take place in a natural setting. The material will be analyzed through an interpretive lens. This will help the researcher to understand Target's brand management and to answer the research questions.

The research chose to analyze Target's brand management strategies and how they keep their brand consistent through their social media tools. Target is the second largest discount retailer in the United States and the researcher wanted to find out how they utilize new media into their campaigns. Target creates an in-store experience, has great guest service, they have a legacy of giving and they create fun designs and products at an affordable price. Target communicates very well to their customers and the researcher wanted to further investigate how they accomplish that through the newly emerged media, Instagram. The researcher is bias to the corporation because she shops at the store. Gibbs

(2007) defines bias as, "Any influence that systematically distorts the results of a research study" (p. 147). Because of the bias it will affect the way the researcher interprets the brand.

Data Collection

The goal of this data collection is to confirm or refute if Target's brand management and identity aligns with their use of Instagram. Data will be collected through qualitative research. The data is collected through a) public document b) analyzing documents. The public documents consists of Targets' social media site Instagram. The observation over Target's Instagram account was over a two-week period that began August 6, 2013 and ended August 12, 2013. This time period was chosen because Target was advertising their back to school products, which meant that there would be high activity on their social media platform. Their campaign captured real moments of kids experiencing school moments and wanted to voice the message that Target has everything a kid needs for any moment. The posts and comments were documented through text and taking screen shots.

Through the observational approach of Target's Instagram will help interpret meaning behind Target as a brand. Messaris and Metallinos state that, "Any mode of communication can be considered with either semantic or syntactic properties. A semantically-oriented description focuses on how the elements in a particular mode (images, words, musical tones, or whatever) are related to their meanings" (Messaris & Metallinos, 1998). Through this approach it will help to find themes in order to evaluate Target's brand and personality. The advantage of this type of collection is it allows the researcher to access information at any time and it saves time and expense of transcribing.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

After the two-week period was completed, the researcher sorted through Target's Instagram images and user comments to get a general sense of the data. The user comments were analyzed through Statigram, a tool in which allows users to find key metrics about his or her own Instagram account. Statigram allowed the researcher to view all of the user comments from @Target Instagram account. The research originally viewed @Target's Instagram on a web browser through Instagram.com but did not have an option to load and view all of the user comments. The user was allowed to load and view all of the @Target's user comments through the mobile application but the comments were easier to view and analyze through Statigram.

Furthermore, the data was read and analyzed to see if Target's brand personality is portrayed through their Instagram. Looking at comments will evaluate Target's engagement with consumers or potential consumers. The grounded theory was used in which, "involves generating categories of information (open-coding), selecting one of the categories and positioning it within a theoretical model (axial coding), and then explicating a story from the interconnection of these categories (selective coding)" (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). The coding process then took place. Rossman and Rallis (1998) defines coding as, "the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information" (p. 171).

Target utilized Instagram in a unique and innovative way. There are five dimensions of Instagram activity that include: photos/videos, captions, likes, comments and hashtags. These dimensions will then by analyzed in terms of Aaker's brand equity assets: loyalty, awareness, quality and brand associations as well as his identity core and extended

identity: product, organization, person and symbol. This structure will result in

understanding if Target is managing their brand in a way that aligns with their brand

values. Kassarjian (1977) states, "The theme is among the most useful units of content

analysis because issues, values, beliefs, and attitudes are usually discussed in this form (p.

12). This systematic process will help code the information.

Verification

Verification is important when evaluating the quality of qualitative research.

Verification is, "The process of checking, confirming, making sure and being certain" (2002,

p. 9). Verification will take place through reliability, validity, and generalizability. "In

qualitative research, verification refers to the mechanisms used during the process of

research to incrementally contribute to ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor

of a study" (2002, p. 9). This will help ensure that I do not drift or shift in my coding

process. I will also be able to cross check my code to ensure they are correct.

"Reliability indicated that the researcher's approach is consistent across different

researchers" (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). This strategy will be implemented to verify

reliability. When conducting the study the researcher will screen shot the Instagram posts,

captions and comments. This will ensure the effectiveness of the process of the study.

Validity according to Gibbs (2007) refers to "The extent to which an account

accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers" (p. 152). Creswell (2009)

states that there are eight validity strategies such as triangulate, use member checking,

rich, thick description, clarify the bias, present negative information, spend prolonged time

in the field, use peer debriefing, and use an external auditor (p. 192). The following

strategies will be used in order to validate my study: triangulation and thick, rich

description. Triangulation is "different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). Also, using rich, thick description "may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). These strategies will help strengthen the research.

Generalizability is "the degree to which it is justifiable to apply to a wider population explanations and descriptions that research has found apply in a particular sample or example" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 149). Fink also defines generalizability as, "means that findings can be generalized, reliability refers to the consistency of findings/results, whereas validity questions if the study in fact investigates what was intended" (2000, n.d.). This study could transfer to any of Target's competitors such as Wal-Mart and Costco. In order to verify generalizability the following strategies will be implemented: the corporation name, the number of social media sites, the public document, and the amount of time in which the data was collected.

Reporting the Findings

As for this study I will use rich, thick description to validate my study. This will allow me to provide "evidence of people's motives, intention and strategies and therefore can offer suggestions as to their reasons for doing things (even if they are not aware of them at them moment and not telling you about them directly)" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 145). This will allow for a description in detailed work to gather an understanding of Target's brand management through their Instagram.

Ethical Considerations

All of the information I gather from the two social media sites, the participants

personal information will be kept confidential, password protected, and will be coded. The

information that I gather from the social media sites will be analyzed as documents. There

is minimal ethical consideration. To abide by federal law, I will receive approval from the

University's Internal Review Board (IRB) before beginning the analysis.

Summary

The overall study is to find out if Target is successfully managing their brand

through their Instagram. This chapter carefully prepares for the data analysis. The next

chapter contains the results, discussion, and conclusion. The results chapter will provide

the data that will be collected and then themes and categories will be incorporated in the

discussion. Finally, the conclusion ends the study with a summary.

Chapter IV: Results

The research was collected over a two-week time period that began August 5, 2013 and ended August 12, 2013. A total of 38 @Target posts and 979 user comments were analyzed. The @Target Instagram account was analyzed by looking at five dimensions of Instagram activity, which include included photos/videos, captions, likes, hashtags and comments. These dimensions were then analyzed in terms of Aaker's brand equity assets: awareness, loyalty, quality and brand associations as well as his identity core and extended identity core: product, organization, person and symbol.

When analyzing @Target's captions, the researcher had to code the user's names in order to conceal their identities. The researcher coded the users names in the captions as @User1, @User2, @User3, etc. The researcher also had to code user's names when analyzing @Target's comments. Direct quotes were analyzed but the researcher coded all sample direct quoted comments. The researcher coded the users as @Post1User1, @Post1User2, @Post2User1, @Post2User2, etc. The researcher analyzed both positive and negative comments made by users.

Moreover, there were many comments that were unrelated. Target did not respond to any of those comments. During the campaign, @Target had an overwhelming amount of people who commented on each Instagram post saying "@baldchickcollection @taliajoy18" (Statigram). Talia Joy Catellano was a 13 year-old YouTube star that battled cancer and past away Tuesday, July 16, 2013. She was fighting two forms of aggressive cancer: neuroblastoma and preleukemia (Moreno, 2013). Talia created her own YouTube channel because she wanted to educate people with her make-up tutorials and she also spoke openly about her cancer treatments. One of Talia's dreams was to have her own fashion

line in Target's stores. Her fans wanted to carry on her dream after her death and try to get

Target's attention. One of those ways was to write comments to @Target's Instagram. Talia

has loyal fans and they used @Target's back to school campaign as a way to try and

leverage Talia's brand into Target stores.

Furthermore, comments were excluded from analysis. The researcher excluded

comments that were related to Talia Joy Catellano, were in another language, arguments

amongst users and any other unrelated post in regards to Target and the campaign. These

exceptions were made so the researcher could effectively analyze comments that pertained

to the campaign. Again, the researcher analyzed 979 user comments.

The results section includes a narration of each @Target Instagram post, Instagram

activity and sample comments from users in the back to school campaign. Out of the 38

images three images were photos. The first, second and fifteenth post were the static

images and the rest were videos that Target produced.

Post 1: @Target Photo

Narration of Image Post 1

@Target launched their "School Takes a lot. Target has it all." Campaign on August 6,

2013. @Target's first photo posted, view image 1, was of a young girl who looks like she is

yelling out to the user. The text on the photo says, "Get ready! August 7-12 Target is

celebrating kids' Back-to-School style in a big way" (Instagram). The caption reads, "See

what we're up to tomorrow and get psyched for Back-to-School" (Instagram). The visual

created different meanings through texts and images to provoke a behavior. First, the

yellow tape intrigued the user to the most important information, which are the dates of

the campaign. The pink text also caught the eye's attention in which it served as a call to

action. The young girl looks excited and inviting. She draws the users attention into

wondering what is next. The young girl is dressed in Target's new clothing line and has a

pencil in her hair. The image of the young girl also showed that the whole campaign would

be about young kids. The colors of the text and in the image are vibrant and fresh in which

makes the user feel excited about what new products Target has to offer for back-to-school.

The image is complex yet simple and visually appealing. The image and caption both

provoke action and together provokes customer interest for the campaign.

Table 4.1 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	See what we're up to tomorrow and get psyched for Back-to-School.	
3. Likes	3,233	
4. Comments	84	55
5. Hashtag	None	

Sample Comments from Instagram Post 1

Positive Comments

@Post1User1: Going to target tomorrow! So eager to check it out! (Eager substituted for

excited)

@Post1User2: Was just there and got a new top. (Top substituted for shirt)

Figure 4.1 @Target Instagram Photo from Post One

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copyright purposes

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Post 2: @Target Photo

Narration of Image Post 2

Target continues with the tape theme, which emphasizes importance. The bright green color and the big font size grab the attention of the viewer. The text introduces the hashtag for the campaign; KidsGotStyle. The text below the hashtag gave instructions on how to enter into the contest. The text states, "1. Instagram a photo of your kid 2. Tag it #KidsGotStyle @Target 3. You just might get a custom Stylagram" (Instagram). The second number's text was in the color pink. The pink text served as the call to action in the first photo and it served as another call to action in image two. Above all of the text, there is an image of three children but only the bottom half of their body is revealed. They are all three dressed in bright Target clothing along with Target accessories. Again, photo two is bright, youthful and fun.

The caption also incorporated a call to action and Target provided a link to read the terms and conditions for the campaign. The caption states, "Think your #KidsGotStyle? Show us! Now through August 12. Terms & Conditions: tgt.biz/KGS" (Instagram). The campaign's incentive was to win a custom Stylagram. This was Target's first use of a Stylagram. The user had to submit the #KidsGotStyle and @Target in the caption in order for a chance to win. This provided a way for Target to track the images that users posted. Target was specific when choosing the hashtag. The entire campaign was about style and it resonated with their audience. It was general in the sense that the audience felt like they could enter and it was not limited to specific people.

Table 4.2 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	Think your #KidsGotStyle? Show us! Now through August 12. Terms & Conditions: tgt.biz/KGS	
3. Likes	2,465	
4. Comments	89	23
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Instagram Post 2

Positive Comments

@Post2User1: Hooray! Fun! Thanks Target! (Hooray substituted for Yay)

Figure 4.2 @Target Instagram Photo from Post One

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copyright purposes

Post 3: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 3

The third post was the first Stylagram. View image 3 for screen shots of the Stylagram. The video first began by showing the viewer a picture of the initial entry. The photo is of a young boy who was standing in a tree. The next scene transitioned into clouds moving in and Target captured keywords from the initial entry. They keywords written in the clouds were "a climber" and "red and blue" (Instagram). The scene then transitioned into the child wearing a spider man mask swinging from "a web" around the cityscape. Spider man is a fictional, comic book superhero who is known for his agility and strength. Spider man is also dressed in a red and blue costume. Target was creative and thoughtful when generating the content for the Stylagram. Target connected aspects of the child from the initial entry into a character that relates to the child.

Looking further into the photo, Target strategically placed their products into the video without forcing their products on the child. For example, the cityscape was made up of a blue notebook, pencils, a pencil box, calculators, and a pair of scissors. Target was creative when advertising their back-to-school line. In the background of each video, a set composer created upbeat music for each unique video. The sound in video 1 correlated with the cityscape; cars honking horns, it was fast pace and had an upbeat tone.

The video ended with the same tape that was incorporated in the two static images. This is one element that is consistent throughout the entire campaign. The tape is red because that was one of the keywords mentioned in the video. The tape has #KidsGotStyle written across it. All of the videos ended the same way with the tape and hashtag. The caption read, "Your little hero has super style! He'll look great when he swings #backtoschool #KidsGotStyle (Instagram). The caption is clever and demands action. Not only did Target compliment the child but then insinuate that the parent will buy the items.

Moreover, Target is showing the child that their products identify with them. Target is letting the child first express himself by sending in his initial entry, but the video is telling the child what to think and feel. Target is trying to establish a strong relationship with the parent and the child and will potentially become, if not already, a repeat buyer.

Table 4.3 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/ Video	1	
2. Caption	@User1 Your little hero has super style! He'll look great when he swings #backtoschool. #KidsGotStyle	
3. Likes	2,266	
4. Comments	55	8

5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Instagram Post 3

Positive Comments

@Post3User1: Adorable love target!! (Adorable substituted for Cute)

@Post3User2: So adorable! Great video (adorable substituted for Cute)

@Post3User3: Target is amazing on both Instagram and Vine (amazing substituted for

awesome)

Negative Comments

@Post3User4: @target you always have such lame advertising. Whoever makes these clips

and your commercials seriously stinks at what they do. (stinks substituted for sucks)

Figure 4.3 @Target Instagram Video from Post Three

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Post 4: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 4

The Stylagram was a video of a young girl who was covered in pink from head to toe. The girl appeared to be blowing a kiss to the camera. The designer Chin, expanded off of the young girl blowing a kiss and her pink outfit. Target animated the image in the next scene where the young girl blew glitter pink hearts and circles. Inside the circles the two keywords "Pink Everything" and "Glitter Shows" are captured. The next scene showed a huge pink heart with the word "hearts" hand-written over it with a finger pointing to the text. The finger modeled a bow ring and a pink bracelet. The next scene quickly appeared and the theme of the huge heart background remains but the hand is now pointing to a pair of denim jeans with a heart print. Next, with the same theme a shirt appears with a heart print paired with heart sunglasses. Target added paperclips to the heart background and changed the shirt and sunglasses to glitter pink shoes. Finally, the scene showed all of the looks again and ended with a pink piece of tape with the #KidsGotStyle. Keywords to describe the music in the background are bells, shimmers, glitter, sparkle and chimes.

Table 4.4 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User2 Poet's eye for style inspired this sweet look for #backtoschool. This #KidsGotStyle!	
3. Likes	2,583	
4. Comments	46	15
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 4

Positive Comments

@Post4User1: purchasing it! (purchasing substituted for buying)

@Post4User2: Those pants are so adorable (adorable substituted for cute)

@Post4User3: Wow flawless! (flawless substituted for perfect)

Figure 4.4 @Target Instagram Video from Post Four

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Post 5: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 5

The fourth video was a young male who is wearing a hat; a blue plaid shirt, cargo shorts, and blue shoes. The boy was playing with a blue basketball outdoors. The video became animated and the young boy slam-dunked the ball into a basketball hoop. While doing so, keywords were written on the blue background such as "Big Ups! "Fly Kicks!" and "Slam Dunk!" (Instagram). After the boy slam-dunked the ball, the scene transitioned into the final slides. Target showed the child what back-to-school items will go with his style. The suggestions are blue and lime green yellow rulers, a blue-stripped pencil holder, a green watch, and two pairs of black shoes with yellow and green neon colored laces. The hashtag, on yellow tape, completed the video.

Table 4.5 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User3 "Big ups to this cool, coordinated look. It's a slam-dunk of #backtoschool style. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,063	
4. Comments	37	24
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 5

Positive Comments

@Post5User1: Amazing school supply as ever (amazing substituted for awesomest)

Post 6: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 6

The next post was of a young girl. She wore a green and red patterned outfit with open-toed sandals. She was slightly smiling and has her hand on her hip. The video began and keywords appeared. The two keywords are "amazing attitude" and "powerful patterns" (Instagram). To transition from the first scene into the next, Target used patterned scrapbook paper to cover the picture. The next scene showed a picture of the young girl again but the picture is smaller, placed in the center on the screen with clothing suggestions around the photo. Target suggested a blue-stripped shirt, a floral skirt and pants and a patterned skirt. Target chose their clothing suggestions based off of the young girls clothing color palette. The music began to pick up and it sounded like a xylophone in the background. Suddenly, colored pencils began to fill around the left and right border of the image. The pencils are falling into the scene starting with shades of red and then the color scene followed the colors of the rainbow. The scene ended with pink tape and #KidsGotStyle.

Table 4.6 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User4 "More is more when Jagger brings her taste for wild patterns #backtoschool. You know this #KidsGotStyle!"	
3. Likes	2,813	
4. Comments	66	46
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 6

Positive Comments

@Post6User1: So adorable (adorable substituted for cute)

Negative Comments

@Post6User2: This was a tad bad (tad substituted for little)

Post 7: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 7

Again, Target began with the initial picture that was sent in by the child's mother. The young child's hair was in a ponytail and she wore a bright blue headband. She also wore a bright yellow shirt, pink skinny pants and Converse shoes. The girl looked like she was in motion, possibly paying an air guitar. The background of the initial photo was cut out and the photo became animated. Neon colors started to burst out from the image. The sound being played sounded like maracas being played paired with clapping noises. The scene transitioned into the girl being under a neon pink spot light and then key words appear; "Neon strips" "rocker sneaks" and "this girls got moves" (Instagram). After the keywords appear, colorful erasers appeared at the bottom of the screen around the spotlight. The girl and erasers shook and moved until they began to fall out of the video clip. The video then transitioned to a pattern of highlighters shaped as diamonds. The left edge of the pattern is orange color highlighters, the middle highlighters are yellow and pink highlighters were off to the right. The young girl fell through the highlighters and another clicking sound was played over the initial sound. Once the girl had fallen through the highlighters she came out and her cut out image was placed on a stick and into a neon pink backpack. The backpack had a blue and orange notebook sticking out and in the front of the bag more school supplies were displayed. The final scene ended with more of Target products such as a pink hat, pink watch, pink jacket, a yellow shirt, black sunglasses, pink

shoes, various color bracelets, tape, and highlighters. The #KidsGotStyle was written on

neon green tape.

Table 4.7 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User5 "Whatever she picks out for #backtoschool, she'll shin bright with all that neon. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	1,216	
4. Comments	21	6
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 7

Positive Comments

@Post7User1: Im going to purchase the hot pink sweater (purchase substituted for get)

@Post7User2: really adorable! (adorable substituted for cute)

@Post7User3: Awesome!!! Congrats to her!! (Awesome substituted for Cool)

Post 8: @Target Video

    Narration of Video Post 8

    The initial picture was a young girl playing with bubbles. The next scene showed a

cut out of the girl of the initial picture and was placed into a "bubble" made out of

iridescent paper. A hand wearing a purple bracelet and white watch appeared in the scene

and a popping sound was made. The keywords "love the tee!" "nice shades!" and "bubbles!"

appear in "bubbles," which are pieces of scrapbook paper around the photo (Instagram).

The hand comes back into the scene and "pops a bubble." A bright blue notebook appeared

with gold polka dots on in. Behind the notebook is a purple shape that looks like a water

splash. Many bubbles float across the scene. A black and white stripped dress with bright

color polka dots and a black and pink polka dotted bag are also featured in the video. The

video concluded with the #KidsGotStyle on blue tape.

Table 4.8 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User6 "We're blown away by this #backtoschool style. Those accessories really make it pop! #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,291	
4. Comments	38	14
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 8

Positive Comments

@Post8User1: Adore the mixed patterns (Adore substituted for Love)

@Post8User2: I already traveled there to get my school supplies (traveled substituted

went)

@Post8User3: I adore that bag!! (adore substituted for love)

Negative Comments

@Post8User3: Stop posting Stylagrams (Stylagrams substituted for stuff)

Post 9: @Target Video

   Narration of Video Post 9

      The image was of a young girl who was standing outside by a fence. She wore a

purple shirt and a green solid skirt with purple, blue, and white ruffles are the end of the

skirt. The designers then cut out the background of the photo and it became all white. Post-

it-notes were then posted to the white background. They said, "Polka dots" "sweet details"

"ready for her close-up!" (Instagram). The scene changed into an Andy Warhol inspired

picture. While the close-ups were appearing on the screen the sounds of a camera flashing

was in the background. A hand entered the scene and touched each picture and replaced

the young girls image with a Target product. The items were a pink shirt, a yellow polka

dotted pencil case, neon green and blue stripped stocks, a fox purse, scissors, sandals and a

pink and purple notebook. The Stylagram ended with #KidsGotStyle on neon green tape.

Table 4.9 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User7 "A big smile and bright palette are always in fashion! Thanks for inspiring us! #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,327	
4. Comments	52	20
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 9

Positive Comments

@Post9User1: I DESIRE THE PURSE (desire substituted for want)

@Post9User2: OMG adore that purse (adore substituted for love)

Negative Comments

@Post9User3: Hey target! Respond to illustrate you care (illustrate substituted for care)

Post 10: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 10

The initial picture was of a young girl who was outside hula-hooping. She wore a blue and white stripped shirt, red short, a jean sleeveless jacket and black high top converse shoes. Stars began to pop up and keywords were listed. They were "nice denim!" and "Hula-Hoop Hooray!" (Instagram). The hula-hoop turned into a black hole and the girl fell through it. There was a falling sound effect that was played in the background. The girl continued to fall through blue rulers, multi-color paper clips, blue and pink markers, black Converse shoes and hair bands. The final scene showed four different Target clothing items and pink mini sharpie markers. Lastly, pink tape with #KidsGotStyle was shown.

Table 4.10 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User8 "Thanks for inspiring us with this unique head-to-toe spin on #backtoschool fashion. There's no question your #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,687	
4. Comments	70	31
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 10

Positive Comments

@Post10User1: Wow pleasant video (pleasant substituted for nice)

@Post10User2: This was amazing! (Amazing substituted for awesome)

Negative Comments

@Post10User3: Odd (Odd substituted for weird)

@Post10User4: #Targetstinks (#Targetstinks substituted for #Targetsucks)

Post 11: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 11

The original photo was of a young girl who was wearing sunglasses, a dress that said dream across the front, a pink purse, and gold sandals. The keywords were "gold sandals" "cute purse!" "bling! bling!" and "killer shades" (Instagram). A yellow piece of paper folded into a diamond and transitioned into the next scene that said "Accessory Queen!" (Instagram). The diamond then opened up and jewels, sunglasses, bracelets and rings popped out. A silver star wand waved over the accessories and finally the wand was switched out with a #KidsGotStyle wand. The music was mixed with sounds of paper folding and chimes.

Table 4.11 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User9 "Your #KidsGotStyle right down to the dreamy details - every little thing looks perfect for #backtoschool"	
3. Likes	2,759	
4. Comments	65	42
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 11

Positive Comments

@Post11User1: I desire that mustache ring!! (desire substituted for want)

@Post11User2: These are so original (original substituted for creative)

@Post11User3: This is a charming ad (charming substituted for cute)

Post 12: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 12

Target began this video in different way. The video began with an oval frame and inside the frame was blue paint. A paintbrush entered the scene and began to paint the inside of the frame. The painter revealed the initial photo. The painter was also showcasing a few of Target's bracelets. The initial photo was of a young girl who was at a table creating art. She was wearing a pink shirt that said "Art and Smile." Frames began to pop up very quickly and transitioned from scene to scene. The first frame said "Artistic," the second frame was a picture of a pink flower that turned into a shirt, the third frame were colored pencils, the fourth frame was a monster face zipper pouch, the fifth frame showcased pink headphones, the sixth frame said "expressive," the seventh frame was a picture of the ocean and a sun made of our erasers. The last scene showed the majority of the frames again with #KidsGotStyle on yellow tape. (Instagram). The sound clips throughout the video were paintbrush strokes, chimes, scribbles, an opening of a zipper sound, waves and a bell sound effect in the end.

Table 4.12 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User10 "Your creative "KidsGotStyle. She's got a picture perfect look for #backtoschool"	
3. Likes	2,155	
4. Comments	24	6
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 12

Positive Comments

@Post12User1: Adore this (Adore substituted for Love)

@Post12User2: I own that pencil pouch (own substituted for have)

Post 13: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 13

This video started off with the initial entry. The photo was of a young boy who was holding a toy up in the air. He was wearing a royal blue stripped shirt and jeans that were rolled up at the bottom and tennis shoes. The music became dramatic and words began to scroll up from the bottom of the screen. A story began to unfold. The story said, "Any day now, at a school not far from here … A stylish boy who loves adventure will eat the lunch of his life" (Instagram). The sound clip sounded like someone was breathing. The scene turned into a gray background with white stars and a mask appeared from the bottom of the screen. The mask was Dark Vader. The next scene was a black screen with white stars and an opened lunch box. Inside the lunch box was a sandwich, an apple, a juice box and an Oreo. The scene changed to R2-D2 and quickly changed to the little boy emerged out of the robot along with his food items from the lunchbox and was holding an Oreo in place of his original toy. #KidsGotStyle on a blue piece of tape ended the story. Star Wars sound effects played throughout the entire story.

Table 4.13 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User11 "#KidsGotStyle, he does. The fashion force is strong with this one"	
3. Likes	2,089	
4. Comments	45	8
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 13

Positive Comments

@Post13User1: I just went yesterday and purchased all my school supplies there!

(purchased substituted for got)

@Post13User2: so amazing (amazing substituted for awesome)

@Post13User3: I just ADORE Target (ADORE substituted for LOVE)

@Post13User4: So well completed! (completed substituted for well)

Post 14: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 14

This post was of a young girl who was standing by water. She was wearing a pink shirt with hearts on it, shorts and boat shoes. Fun tropical sound effects played in the background. A wave began to crash over the photo and said, "set sail for style" (Instagram). The scene changed and the young girl was on a boat. The boat was made out of paper, the sails were created from markers and shirts and other accessories are also on the boat. The scene ended with a seagull that flew in the scene with blue tape that said #KidsGotStyle.

Table 4.14 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User12 "Boat, beach or #backtoschool… your future fashion blogger has style on land and sea. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,120	
4. Comments	30	8
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 14

Positive Comments

@Post14User1: Adore it (Adore substituted for Love)

@Post14User2: Just purchased school supplies at target today (purchased substituted for got)

Post 15: @Target Photo

Narration of Image Post 15

This is the last static image in the campaign. Target released a behind the scenes look. The one image showed three different scenes from different Stylagrams. Target also reiterated the instructions for the Instagram campaign.

Table 4.15 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	"A #behindthescenes look at the creation our Stylagrams! When you submit a photo of your kid, don't forget to tag @Target and include #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,718	
4. Comments	32	24
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 15

Positive Comments

@Post15User1: I spy my daughter! This has been so much fun! We were so happy to be apart of it! Thank you!! (happy substituted for excited)

Figure 4.5 @Target Instagram Image from Post Fifteen

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Post 16: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 16

The video began with a young girl who wore a blue and white-stripped shirt with jeans. The girl had been cut out of the original photo and placed over a polka-dotted background. The scene changed and switched from the polka-dotted background to a yellow and pink square background and back to the polka-dotted background. The keywords "mixing patterns" and "vogue" popped up on the screen. The background continued to switch until both patterns were on the screen and are broken into four squares. The young girl first appeared in the squares, but suddenly was replaced with Target products: shirts, pants and purses. The #KidsGotStyle was on pink tape and is upside down. This video showed that the young girl can mix and match patterns.

Table 4.16 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User13 , "This #KidsGotStyle! She mixes prints like a pro. We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	2,085	
4. Comments	34	20
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 16

Positive Comments

@Post16User1: Thank you, my daughter adored the video (adored substituted for love)

Negative Comments

@Post16User2: Disgust (Disgust substituted for Dislike)

Post 17: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 17

The initial photo was of a young girl who wore a white shirt, yellow pants and white shoes. She stood in front of sunflowers. Next, the words "let your style grow" transitioned into the scene (Instagram). The young girls picture was then balled up and thrown into a yellow flowerpot, watered and then Target products begin to grow. Some of the products were yellow pants, blue/green headphones, green and yellow colored pencils, yellow and pink tapes, green sunglasses and green and yellow pencil sharpeners. The blue #KidsGotStyle tape finishes the video. The music in the video sounded like maracas were shaking. Other sound clips were played over top of the maracas. For example, when the

plant was being watered, it sounded like real water was being poured. The sounds were appropriate and added emphasis to the video.

Table 4.17 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User14 "We're digging your budding style. We've got a gift card to help you take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,459	
4. Comments	45	17
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 17

Positive Comments

@Post17User1: this is my latest fave! (latest substituted for new)

@Post17User2: decent creative (decent substituted for good)

@Post17User3: We did ALL out back to school shopping @target ADORE this store ☺

(ADORE substituted for LOVE)

@Post17User4: I love the new Gok Target ad with children, gorgeous @target (gorgeous

substituted for beautiful)

Negative Comments

@Post17User5: these are irritating stop (irritating substituted for annoying)

Post 18: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 18

The video began with a scene that looked and sounded like a video game. The scene can be described as black and grey pointed mountains in the background with black clouds The cut out of a young girl entered the scene. She wore a black and white shirt with a black and white scarf. The keyword "geometric chic" was written in the clouds. The scene then changed into rain, and inside the raindrops were Target products. The sun then came out and a rainbow formed. A yellow piece of tape shined over the rainbow with the #KidsGotStyle (Instagram). This particular piece of tape also has the Bullseye logo on it. All of the videos that followed this video all include the logo on the tape.

Table 4.18 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User15 "Your #KidsGotStyle, a modern geometric style we love. We've got a gift card to help you take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	2,258	
4. Comments	50	13
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 18

Positive Comments

@Post18User1: Awesome. (Awesome substituted for Amazing)

@Post18User2: Wow walmart would never do such a thing like that target triumphs this round! (triumphs substituted for win)

Negative Comments

@Post18User3: i think we kinda got the idea of ur back to school kids got style…. (idea substituted for point)

@Post18User4: the last 18 posts have been for people with children. It doesn't appeal to the half of us that don't have kids. (children substituted for kids)

Post 19: @Target Video

> **Narration of Video Post 19**

The initial photo was of a young girl who wore a pink feather boa, a purple shirt and a skirt. She held a microphone and her other hand was up in the air. Her photo was pasted over notebook paper and the background was pink. Headphones entered the screen and are placed over the notebook paper. Music notes also entered the screen. Lightening struck down and keywords are written inside the strikes. The two keywords are "glitter" and "glam boa" (Instagram). Black shoes with pink laces and boom boxes entered the scene. The shoes exit the scene while the boom boxes move up and down and colored pencils are sticking out of them. The original picture appeared along with the headphones and the beat changed to a slurping sound. The headphones began sucking in the picture and the scene quickly changed to blue tape with #KidsGotStyle along with Target items. Their logo was excluded.

Table 4.19 Instagram Activity

1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User16 "This #KidsGotStyle that rocks for sure! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	

3. Likes	2,337	
4. Comments	81	50
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 19

Positive Comments

@Post19User1: Greatest store ever (Greatest substituted for Best)

@Post19User2: Omg I need those shoes so bad (need substituted for want)

Negative Comments

@Post19User3: UNPLEASANT SHOES (UNPLEASANT substituted for UGLY)

@Post19User4: Strange (Strange substituted for weird)

Post 20: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 20

The initial photo was of a young girl who wore a cheetah print dress with a pink belt, leggings and a pink book bag. Pink paper began to rise from the bottom of the video and said, "Ready set go back to school" (Instagram). A whistle sound blew and there was a race between a larger monster face zipper pouch and then smaller monster face zipper pouch. The two pouches collected school supplies until the smaller monster face zipper pouch won the race. Once the race ended the young girls photo was placed inside the smaller monster face zipper pouch and cheer noises began to play. Lastly, the larger pouch entered the scene and made a crunching noise like the pouch ate something. A yellow piece of tape ends the scene with the #KidsGotStyle and the logo (Instagram).

Table 4.20 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	

2. Caption	@User17 "She's ready to go with a winning style! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,814	
4. Comments	86	12
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 20

Positive Comments

@Post20User1: Greatest store ever (Greatest substituted for Best)

@Post20User2: Those monster pouches are charming (charming substituted for cute)

Negative Comments

@Post20User3: This is eerie and scary (eerie substituted for creepy)

Post 21: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 21

The initial photo was of a young boy who wore a yellow jacket and white and green shorts that stood on a dock in front of boats. Waves overtook the scene and the boy suddenly was wearing snorkeling gear. The boy then appeared underwater with a lunch box that appeared to look like a treasure box. The box opened and more Target products emerged. Bubble sounds played in the background. The green tape with #KidsGotStyle emerged from the clam on the bottom of the sea.

Table 4.21 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User18 "This guy has got	

	style that makes a splash! We've got a gift card to help him take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,405	
4. Comments	67	25
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 21

Positive Comments

@Post21User1: @target I adore it!! Thank you!! We have already watched it about 10 times ☺ (adore substituted for love)

@Post21User2: I adore this so much (adore substituted for love)

Post 22: @Target Video

    Narration of Video Post 22

The initial photo was of a young girl who wore a pink shirt and pink shorts. She was sitting on a chest with her feet propped up on a stack of books. She then sat beside a glob and behind her was a chalkboard. A pink banner was above her photo that states, "A sophisticated world of style" (Instagram). Target focused on the globe and created a paper globe that expanded on the screen. A plane entered the screen and traveled around part of the globe. Target products began to pop up on different continents. The paper globe zoomed out to the original photo taken. An airplane flied across the bottom of the screen with a white piece of tape that said #KidsGotStyle and the logo followed.

Table 4.22 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	

2. Caption	@User19 "She's got a passport to style! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,125	
4. Comments	44	11
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 22

Positive Comments

@Post22User1: I purchased that binderrrr (purchased substituted for have)

Negative Comments

@Post22User2: this is so strange omf (strange substituted weird)

Post 23: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 23

The initial photo was of a young boy who was wearing a yellow shirt and khaki shorts. He stood behind a green background. The video zoomed out and two monster face zipper pouches entered the screen and speech bubbles emerged from them. One of the speech bubbles said, "stylish creature" and the other said, "monstrously cool" (Instagram). Other talk bubbles appeared with Target products inside. When the monster face zipper pouches "spoke" it sounded like horns were blowing. The last scene was compiled of talk bubbles which were piled on top of each other and a yellow piece of tape appeared with #KidsGotStyle written on it along with the logo.

Table 4.23 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	

2. Caption	@User20 "This kid's style is scary cool! We've got a gift card to help him take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,139	
4. Comments	61	9
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 23

Positive Comments

@Post23User1: Lol you guys are becoming to cool! (becoming substituted for getting)

Negative Comments

@Post23User2: Strange but scary those talking cases ahhhhhhh weird Lol (Strange

substituted for Weird)

Post 24: @Target Video

      Narration of Video Post 24

      The initial photo was of a young girl who wears glasses. Her shirt is a graphic of a cat

that is wearing pink glasses with a yellow scarf. The young girl also wore a pink flower

headband with blue pants. The keywords are "nice glasses" and "one cool cat" (Instagram).

A large photo of the young girls head appeared then the screen flipped to an enlarged

picture of the cathead. The screen flipped back and forth showing different Target

products. The final scene was of four different colored squares; two squares are of the

young girl and the other two are of the catheads. The video ended with the blue piece of

tape that uses the #KidsGotStyle and the logo (Instagram).

Table 4.24 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User21 "This #KidsGotStyle and it's the cat's meow! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	2,042	
4. Comments	40	13
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 24

Positive Comments

@Post24User1: we get the idea with ur back to school styles (idea substituted for point)

@Post24User2: Awesome! Purrrrhaps my favorite! (Awesome substituted for Amazing)

Post 25: @Target Video

     Narration of Video Post 25

     The photo began with a light blue t-shirt with a typewriter graphic. The typewriter had a little yellow bird sitting on top of it with hearts that blew out of its mouth. A piece of paper that was feed through the typewriter stated, "just my type" (Instagram). The scene zoomed into the typewriter and a person fed the typewriter with paper and began typing. The person in the picture wrote, "A hip girl with smart style" (Instagram). Two more pieces of paper were fed through: the first one was images of hearts filled with a cheetah print and the second image was of a young girl with the #KidsGotStyle and the logo (Instagram). The video ended with sounds of tweets from a bird.

Table 4.25 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User22 "We're loving her clever sense of style! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	2,106	
4. Comments	41	8
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 25

Positive Comments

@Post25User1: These are amazing target (amazing substituted for awesome)

@Post25User2: Very original (original substituted for creative)

Post 26: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 26

The initial photo was of a young girl holding an iPad. Target played off of that and placed her picture in a paper iPad. The young girl was also wearing a pink headband, pink shirt, multi-colored skirt and a pink backpack. The background behind the paper iPad in this scene is pink. A hand entered the scene and swiped the paper iPad "screen" to the left and the image changed to a pink bow headband. The hand repeated itself and the image changed to a coral headband then to a butterfly pink headband and then to a blue frog. The hand in the video made a gesture that it was confused. The hand swiped the image again and another image of a headband appeared. Along the bottom of the image four colors appeared. The hand clicked on each color and the headband changed the color that the

hand chose. The hand swiped to the left one last time and then zoomed in on the image. The final scene showed 6 images, one is of the initial photo of the girl and the rest are headbands. The scene ended with a yellow piece of tape with the #KidsGotStyle and logo on it (Instagram).

Table 4.26 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User23 "She's high tech and high style! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	1,889	
4. Comments	32	3
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 26

Positive Comments

@Post26User1: That's actually very cool (very substituted for really)

@Post26User1: Adore it! xoxo (Adore substituted for Love)

Post 27: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 27

The initial photo is of a young male who was wearing a red shirt and blue jeans. The baseball charge song began to play. The photo zoomed in and text appeared above and below the image. The text was written in a varsity letter font that said, "Are you ready?" and then bottom text said, "Play" (Instagram). The bottom text is a "button." A hand entered the scene and clicked the "play button." A "breakout" game appeared in which a ball

traveled across the screen, bouncing off the top and side of the wall to destroy a box. A

paddle was located on the bottom of the screen, which prevented the ball falling off of the

screen. Once the ball hit a box, Target products appeared on the screen. All of the boxes are

hit and the last box revealed the #KidsGotStyle and then the logo on a blue piece of tape.

The previous Target items that were shown earlier through the video showed up again in

the final scene. A sound clip of crowd cheers also played.

Table 4.27 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User24 "He's taking laid back style to the next level! We've got a gift card to help him take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,175	
4. Comments	25	15
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 27

Positive Comments

@Post27User1: That's actually very cool (very substituted for really)

Negative Comments

@Post27User2: You ain't got swag if you purchase your clothes at target (purchase

substituted for buy)

@Post27User3: If you purchase your clothes from target…. You have absolutely no swag…

(purchase substituted for buy)

Post 28: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 28

The scene began with a pink composition notebook that said, "Journal of cuteness" (Instagram). A young girl dressed in all pink is pasted on the front of the book. The pages began to flip and each page has different Target products on them. The pages also have other pictures of things that the young girl might be interested in. For instance, there was a picture of a cat, dog and Justin Bieber. When the cat appeared, there was a meow sound effect, when the dog appeared there was a whining sound effect and when Justin Bieber appeared there was a sound effect of girls screaming. The video ended with two images of the girl along with sticky notes posted around the photos, hearts, colored pencils, words that say, President of Cute," and a yellow piece of tape that says #KidsGotStyle. (Instagram).

Table 4.28 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User25 "This #KidsGotStyle that's too cute for words! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	2,481	
4. Comments	92	31
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 28

Positive Comments

@Post28User1: So adorable!! Great Job! (adorable substituted for cute)

@Post28User2: Target is so awesome for this this would take sooo much time (awesome substituted for cool)

@Post28User3: Cora almost peed her pants!!! How did you people know about her

bieber/cute animal obsession?! #nailedit (people substituted for guys)

Negative Comments

@Post28User4: Lamest commercial ever (Lamest substituted for Stupidest)

Post 29: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 29

The video began with a picture of a Polaroid camera and a banner that hung over it

that said, "15 seconds of fame" (Instagram). The scene zoomed into the cameras flash and

transitioned to a photo of a young girl who is wearing a black and white stripped shirt and

pants along with yellow rain boots. A black banner in the background says "Kids Got Style"

(Instagram). Another Polaroid picture appeared and the picture is of a pair of pink cowboy

boots. The bottom of the photo said, "Pops of color" (Instagram). Two more Polaroid

pictures appeared and the Target products are a white and black-stripped blazer paired

with a yellow and white-stripped shirt and nail polish. The end scene showed all four of the

images along with a yellow piece of tape saying #KidsGotStyle and the Target logo.

Table 4.29 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User26 "She's got picture perfect style! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	2,212	
4. Comments	40	13
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 29

Positive Comments

@Post29User1: I just came back from target, I went to go purchase my school supplies

(purchase substituted for get)

Negative Comments

@Post29User2: That's not chic lol... (chic substituted for style)

Post 30: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 30

The original photo is of a young boy who wore a black shirt and green jeans. He

stood in front of a house and you can see his shadow on the house. A yellow sticker popped

up on the screen and the text said, "Spotlight on bold style" (Instagram). The entire video

was about making shadows with your hands and then the shadows projected on the wall. A

hand entered the scene, made a symbol with the hand and a Target product was shown on

the wall. The last scene showed hands creating a symbol and then a cut out of the boys

image was shown on the wall with a green piece of tape saying #KidsGotStyle with the logo.

Table 4.30 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User27 "This kid is so cool, even his shadow's got style. We've got a gift card to help him take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	1,852	
4. Comments	24	11
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 30

Positive Comments

@Post30User1: So awesome (awesome substituted for cool)

@Post30User2: @User27 your style is casting everybody in shadow. your #kidsgotstyle.

@target = #backtoschool destination (everybody substituted for everyone)

Post 31: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 31

The scene began with a black and white photo of a young girl who was wearing sunglasses, a scarf, holding a purse and has an umbrella. A cloud with the sun peaking behind it is over the young girls photo. Black and white Target images also surround the photo. It also sounded like it was raining. Two pieces of pink tape entered the scene with the text that said, "Pretty in pink" and "Whatever the weather!" (Instagram). A pink lamp string hung under the cloud. A hand entered the scene and pulled the string. A harp played and the sun came out. All of the Target products were shown in full color. Even the hand had a pink sequined bracelet on and has her fingernails were painted pink. The scene ended with a hand tapping on the photo of the young girl to change to a color image. It does and the #KidsGotStyle and the logo on pink tape emerged.

Table 4.31 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User28 "This #KidsGotStyle that chases the clouds away. We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	

3. Likes	3,153	
4. Comments	61	14
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 31

Positive Comments

@Post31User1: @target Hooray!!!! Thank you!!!! #lovetarget @WhereAllMyMoneyIsGone

(Hooray substituted for Yay)

Negative Comments

@Post31User2: @target school stinks stop doing ads about it!!!! (stinks substituted for

sucks)

Post 32: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 32

The photo that was sent to Target was a photo of a young boy who was climbing a

doorframe. He was wearing a blue shirt and black pants. The background outside of the

photo is green and keywords said, "pants monkey" and "school supply funky" (Instagram).

The scene changed to a Target gray shirt with neon green strips, cameo pants, a green

watch and yellow and green color pencils. Clouds, cotton balls, are flouting across the shirt

and there are plants in the background. A cut out of the boy popped out from the pant leg,

cargo pocket and then floated around the scene. A yellow piece of tape with the

#KidsGotStyle and the Target logo ended the video.

Table 4.32 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User29 "He's got an adventurous style that we're	

	wild about! We've got a gift card to help him take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem. #KidsGotStyle"	
3. Likes	1,836	
4. Comments	24	8
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 32

Positive Comments

@Post32User1: Thank you @target !! My boys are really excited to get some new

#backtoschool outfits! (really substituted for super)

Negative Comments

@Post32User2: It's irritating how they always post these back to school videos. It just like I

don't want to here that… (irritating substituted for annoying)

@Post32User3: All of the parents say OMG I'm purchasing my children this ! Teens r like

what is the point of this ? (purchasing substituted for getting)

Post 33: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 33

The initial photo that was sent in was of a young girl who was wearing a black shirt,

a black and white skirt and black sandals. Target wanted to create a kaleidoscope effect.

Target duplicated the photo three other times and grouped them together with her head

facing the middle. The photo says, "Kaleidoscope dream" (Instagram). Target then lined up

pink, purple, orange and yellow colored pencils and put the kaleidoscope effect on them.

Next, Target created a pattern with pink, yellow and green sticky notes with thumbtacks

and then used the kaleidoscope effects on it. Lastly, Target lined up columns of pink, orange

and yellow erasers diving them with pens and processed to put the kaleidoscope effect on them. Chimes play when the kaleidoscope effect was shown. The final image showed all of the products that were in the previous scenes. The products are repeated and they created a circle. There were also four pieces of tape that each had the #KidsGotStyle written on them and the logo.

Table 4.33 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User30 "This #KidsGotStyle that reflects her upbeat personality! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	2,088	
4. Comments	43	12
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 33

Positive Comments

@Post33User1: Adore it (Adore substituted for Love)

@Post33User2: TARGET I ADORE YOUR STORE THATS WHERE I GOT ALL MY SCHOOL SUPPLIES (ADORE substituted for LOVE)

Post 34: @Target Video

    Narration of Video Post 34

The photo that was sent was of a young boy, who was wearing an orange hat, orange shirt and orange and plaid shorts. A keyword "hat master" appeared and a yellow arrow

pointed to the hat while the background noise is "ooh and ahh" sound effect. A hat dropped

down and covered the boy and two other hats appeared on either side forming an

alignment. Hands appeared and touched the two hats on the ends, the hats were shuffled

twice and the hand began to lift the hats to reveal what was underneath. The goal was to

uncover the child that was under the hat in the beginning. The hand lifted the blue and

green hat to reveal Target products such as a green watch and green and blue school

supplies. The red and gray hat was shuffled to the left and what was revealed was red and

gray school supplies. Finally, the black and yellow hat is revealed and underneath the hat is

the young boy and black, red, yellow, and orange school supplies. The hands in the video

demonstrated the big reveal. An applause sound effect ended the video along with an

orange yellow tape saying #KidsGotStyle and the Target logo.

Table 4.34 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User31 "This #KidsGotStyle you just can't hide. We've got a gift card to help him take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	1,824	
4. Comments	28	5
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 34

Positive Comments

@Post34User1: adore it (adore substituted for love)

Negative Comments

@Post34User2: This is dumb (dumb substituted for stupid)

Post 35: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 35

The initial photo entry was of a young girl who was wearing a crown, robe and dress. Her photo was pasted to a page in a notebook. Written in crayon around the picture said, "Fashion fit for a Queen" (Instagram). Trumpet sounds also played in the background. The pink notebook closed and it sounded like a wooden castle door closed. A castle was then built using various pink and blue Target products. Once the castle was built the young girl stood on top of the castle and wind sounds began to blow. Finally, a close-up shot of her ended the scene. She held a blue colored pencil with blue tape wrapped around it to create a flag. The flag said #KidsGotStyle along with the Target logo. Trumpet sounds also played and the scene ended with a crowed that said "hurray" (Instagram).

Table 4.35 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User32 "This #KidsGotStyle and lots of imagination! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	1,909	
4. Comments	43	16
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 35

Positive Comments

@Post35User1: these videos are so enjoyable to watch :D (enjoyable substituted for fun)

Negative Comments

@Post35User2: I adore target (adore substituted for love)

Post 36: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 36

This photo began with a Target yellow t-shirt. The t-shirt had a stripped pattern but the strips were made up of doodles. Some of the doodles are a skateboard, lightening bolt, guitar, a star and pizza. The shirt then zoomed in and highlighted some of the doodles. For example, Target highlighted a guitar, lightening bolt, and a drum in the first scene. They are highlighted because they are colored with colored pencils and the sounds of the instrument played. A lightening bolt also had the word "wild" written in it (Instagram). In the next scene a skateboards, star and lightening bolt were highlighted and the scene played a sound of if someone where riding a skateboard. That scene ended with a lightening bolt that had the word "crazy" written in it (Instagram). Lastly, the boy was featured in the shirt's doodles. This is the first time the user saw the photo of the young boy. He was wearing red sunglasses, a blue shirt with a graphic on it, cargo shorts and rain boots. He is smiling and has his arms crossed. The scene ended with firework and guitar sting sounds. A couple of lightening bolts were highlighted and one lightening bolt in particular shook and had the words "Style" written in it (Instagram).

Table 4.36 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User33 "This #KidsGotStyle that's totally original. We've got a gift card to help him take this look #backtoschool. Go to	

	kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem"	
3. Likes	1,708	
4. Comments	32	11
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 36

Positive Comments

@Post36User1: Cool (Cool substituted for Awesome)

Negative Comments

@Post36User2: Stop posting this its really firkin irritating (irritating substituted annoying)

@Post36User3: Weird (Weird substituted for Strange)

Post 37: @Target Video

Narration of Video Post 37

This video was the last video that featured a young kid. The girl was wearing a pink hat, a dress, pink sandals and an over the shoulder bag. The photo is placed over a blue background and cursive words are written, "let your style take flight" (Instagram). Pink, purple, white and yellow paper butterflies emerged from the girl's photo and transitioned into another scene. The next scene showed a magnified glass over top of a butterfly. The magnified glass moved all over the scene and finally stopped again and magnified two pairs of scissors that are laid over top of each other to look like a butterfly. Next, a polka dotted butterfly flew across the scene. When the magnified glass hovered over the butterfly it was a pair of polka dotted shoes and the antenna was a paperclip. The magnified glass continued to look for another butterfly. Lastly, a cut out of the young girl entered the scene

and the magnified glass hovered over a piece of orange tape that magnified the

#KidsGotStyle and the Target logo.

Table 4.37 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	@User34 "It's easy to see this #KidsGotStyle! We've got a gift card to help her take this look #backtoschool. Go to kidsgotstyle.target.com to redeem."	
3. Likes	1,902	
4. Comments	30	20
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 37

Positive Comments

@Post37User1: Beautiful (Beautiful substituted for Lovely)

Post 38: @Target Video

 Narration of Video Post 38

 This is the final video of the campaign. This video was thanking the kids for their

inspiration. The video stated, "Thanks" and each letter was made out of school supplies

(Instagram). Below the "Thanks" was a yellow piece of tape that states, #KidsGotStyle with

the Target logo (Instagram). School supplies are placed around then "thanks," hashtag and

logo creating a circle. The school supplies then covered the scene and began to shake.

Lastly, a hand entered the scene, clapped and the scene went back to the original scene.

Chimes played throughout the entire scene until the clap at the end and party horns played.

Table 4.38 Instagram Activity

Categories	Number	Exceptions
1. Photo/Video	1	
2. Caption	"We've been amazed by every kid's awesome style! Thanks for the inspiration, and have the best school year ever! #KidsGotStyle #backtoschool"	
3. Likes	2,402	
4. Comments	44	8
5. Hashtag	#KidsGotStyle	

Sample Comments from Post 38

Positive Comments

@Post38User1: Thanks for the enjoyment (enjoyment substituted for fun)

@Post38User2: Excellent campaign (Excellent substituted for great)

Negative Comments

@Post38User3: These vids are really terrible (terrible substituted for bad)

@Post38User4: Kids clearly do not have style (clearly substituted for obviously)

Summary

Target created a fun, innovative and youthful brand personality for this campaign. Target used self-expressive kids for inspiration to drive their own brand personality for the back-to-school campaign. Target communicated in a unique way to their consumers. Target also used their symbol in order to make it easier to gain recognition and recall.

Chapter V: Discussion

Research Question 1

RQ1: Does Target utilize their brand equity assets through their Instagram campaign?

Brand Awareness

Awareness according to Aaker, "refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind" (1996, p. 10). Target is a large retail brand that is nationally recognized. Target is utilizing brand awareness in their back to school campaign on Instagram. Aaker (1996) states, "Research in psychology has shown that recognition alone can result in more positive feelings toward nearly anything, whether it be music, people, words, or brands" (p.10). Target utilized the popular social medium, Instagram that fit their target to gain more brand awareness in the consumer's minds. Target posted 38 photos in all over he span of 6 days. On August 6, 2013 Target only posted one static image to introduce the campaign. On August 7, 2013 Target posted 1 static image and 8 videos. On August 8, 2013 target posted 1 static image and 6 videos. On August 9, 2013 Target posted 5 videos. On August 10, 2013 Target posted 5 videos. On August 11, 2013 Target posted 5 videos. On August 12 Target posted 6 videos. The time period that Target released the campaign was the peak of back-to-school shopping days. This is to emphasis that Target pushed their campaign once on August 6, 2013 and then multiple times after that through Instagram so Target will show up on users Instagram feeds. Aaker (1996) states, "When consumers see a brand and remember that they have seen it before (perhaps even several times), they realize that the company is spending money to support the brand" (p. 11). With the amount of posts Target released, portrays that Target believes in their products, are creative and

takes the time to recognize kids style. Target is reinforcing the brand and it shows that the

brand is "good."

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty according to Aaker includes two reasons why it is useful to include in

the brand asset category: 1) a brand's value to a firm is largely created by the consumer

loyalty it commands 2) Loyalty as an asset encourages and justifies loyalty-building

programs which then help create and enhance brand quality (1996, p. 21). Target is

enhancing their loyalty. With the number of likes and comments, Target already has loyal

customers who are familiar with the brand and support it. Target was connecting with

their existing audience because it is more cost effective to retain customers than to attract

new ones. These people already "followed" the profile and are interacting with the brand

by clicking the "heart" button to like the photo or video. Other users took the interaction

further and commented on the photo or video. They already have consumers who are

aware of what the brand stands for and have developed a certain attitude toward the

brand.

After analyzing the number of likes and comments, some post received many more

likes and comments than others. For example, post two received 2,465 likes, 768 less from

the first photo (Statigram). Post 1 was released at 6:06 p.m. on August 6, 2013 and the

second post was released at 11:42 a.m. on August 7, 2013 (Statigram). Also, post 12 was

released on August 8, 2013 at 1:06 p.m. and received 24 comments while post 20 was

released on August 9, 2013 at 3:44 p.m. and received 86 comments (Statigram). According

to simple measured blog, an analytics blog, states that there are no "standard practices" in

place like there are with Facebook and Twitter so it is important to track analytics to see

what is working and what is not. They also state that the best time to post images varies from industry to industry and brand to brand (Shively, 2012). There are many reasons why the numbers went up or dropped. Possible reasons could be the time that the post was released, the concepts of the posts were the same and the users did not feel the need to like or comment, the users associated with a product in the photo/videos more than others, the user became uninterested. Many factors can determine why the user did or did not engage with the content.

Furthermore, the videos/photos portrayed that Target was thankful for their customers because that is where they get their inspiration. Target called fans who show off their products and that promoted Target's brand but it was also a chance for Target to promote their brand once again by creating the Stylagrams. This improved their engagement with their consumers.

What is interesting about this campaign is Target did not focus on teachers like they have in the past years, but primarily children and their parents. Target focused their attention trying to get young children to want to shop at Target and to associate with the brand. Target was able to take inspiration from the child and provide them with a mood board for more back to school inspiration. It was a genuine attempt to connect with kids and to give them confidence for their back to school experience. Parents are the ones who have to buy the back to school items and the children are more than likely to dictate which items suite them best. The approach that Target took makes sense.

In order to spread the campaign, Target endorsed bloggers. Target chose to focus on blogs owners who have children. These bloggers have a huge reach of people and Target wanted to capitalize on the opportunity. Endorsing bloggers lead to a more authentic

approach and Target was able to connect with the blogger and their child on an emotional level. The bloggers then documented their experiences whether they went to the store or talking about going. All of the experiences were positive. The Stylagrams created many clothing and accessory options for kids so parents do not have to search for outfits. The Stylagram's covered a wide variety of styles so if a child was not picked, it was a good possibility that the child's style was depicted.

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality has many different meanings and faucets. Aaker (1996) states,

> Perceived quality is a brand association that is elevated to the status of a brand asset for several reasons: among all brand associations, only perceived quality has been shown to drive financial performance, perceived quality is often a major strategic thrust of business and perceived quality is linked to and often drives other aspects of how a brand is perceived (p. 17).

Target has positioned themselves as "Cheap Chic" retailers who have exclusive designers for an affordable price. This has launched Target to be a successful retailer in the competitive market. In 2012 Targets annual report states that Target's total sales were $72.0 billion and 19% of that was from apparel and accessories (Corporate.target, 2013). Target has built a perception in the minds of their consumers to have a sustainable competitive advantage. Target has become different because of the combination of designers and quality of products.

Target is also identifying with people. Aaker (1996) states, "Even when brand the brand identity is defined by functional benefits, most studies will show that perceptions about those benefits are closely related to perceived quality" (19). The campaign connected

with children on an emotional level. The videos allowed the children to have positive feelings towards Target because of their personal Stylagrams. The children were able to look to Target as a brand that they can get all of their back to school needs and look "cool" on their first day back. Target is showing the children that Target knows whom the child is and can identify with them on an emotional level. The children are able to connect deeper with the video because Target took the time to create the Stylagram and capture their distinct personality. Target showed the children what they have to offer them and wanted the child to buy their own hand picked suggestions from the video. The video made the child want to shop at Target and created a want and need for Target. Target was right by their side on the first day of school giving them the confidence they need to get through the day.

Because Target gave a gift card to the children, the parents are the ones who are in charge of the financials. Target was able to give the child what they wanted from Target without a financial burden on the parent. This campaign pushed people to enter in the doors in Target. Since Target is a retail company, the parents could get all of their needs at the store.

Brand associations

Aaker states, "Brand associations are driven by the brand identity—what the organization wants the brand to stand for in the consumer's minds" (1996, p.25). When back to school season arrives, Target wants consumers to think of them for all of their needs. Since Target was pushing kids having style on their Instagram, Target wanted to be known for their stylish back to school clothes and accessories that will make kids feel confident.

Another type of association can include a symbol. Using Target's bullseye can help create feelings, brand recognition and brand recall in the minds of consumers. Target did include their logo in the second half of the campaign. It was used to emphasis the brand and what it stands for. Target is well known but they still need to include their bullseye logo in all promotional material to reinforce the image in consumers' minds. Although Target did not use their bullseye logo in the first half of the campaign they did successfully use their brand assets in their Instagram campaign.

Research Question 2

RQ2: Does Target stay true to their brand identity core and extended identity on their @Target Instagram account during their latest campaign "School Takes a lot. Target has it all."?

The @Target Instagram account was analyzed by looking at five dimensions of Instagram activity, which included photos/videos, captions, likes, hashtags and comments. These dimensions were then analyzed in terms of Aaker's brand equity assets: awareness, loyalty, quality and brand associations as well as Aaker's identity core and the extended identity: product, organization, person and symbol. Aaker (1996) states, "The core identity represents the timeless essence of the brand" (p. 85). Target's slogan is "Expect More. Pay Less." Target's core identity is much more complex than a single slogan but it provides a starting point to who Target is. The identity core is what makes Target stand out against its competitors. The extended core fills in details that portray what the brand stands for (Aaker, 1996, p. 87-88).

Figure 5.2 Modified Aaker's Building Strong Brands Model

Note: Aaker, D. (1996). Aaker's building strong brands model. *Zanthus.* Retrieved from http://www.zanthus.com/databank/strategy/marketing_strategy.php. Reprinted with permission from David Aaker.

Identity Core

Target did stay true to its identity core during the Instagram campaign. Target prides themselves on their unique style that does not have to cost a fortune. Their value can be defined by their buying experience, their products and low prices. Their prices are a little above some of their competitors but it's the value of the products. The Instagram campaign showed off Target's unique style and catered to their prime Target audience.

Extended Identity

Brand-as-Product

Target is associating their products with a particular occasion: back to school season. Target is a one-stop-shop but they advertise heavily during seasons when people are spending the most money. They are primarily positioned as a value retailer. Target is proven to have higher perceived quality rating over their competitor Wal-Mart. The quality of Target's stylish clothing has an impact on the satisfaction of the customer. Consumers

liked the photos and videos in the campaign, which can potentially turn into a conversion.

The campaign provoked consumers to have an even higher positive impact following the

campaign. Target's clothes, shoes and accessories are high-quality items at a reasonable

price. Target also has a wide selection of clothes to fit every kid's style. Target is fashion

forward and makes a conscious effort to make sure they are the leader in their industry.

Brand-as-Organization

Aaker addresses a question about how brands can differentiate themselves and

maintain an advantage and he says, "The basis premise is that it takes an organization with

a particular set of values, culture, people, programs, and assets/skills to deliver a product

or service" (1996, p. 115). Target does have a set of values, culture, people, program and

assets but not all of them are portrayed through the back to school campaign. Target does

have a strong presence. Aaker (1996) states, "The visibility and presence of the

organization behind a brand can create an image of size, substance, and competence

(p.127). Because Target has focused on what their target market wants, they have become

a brand that people want. People wanted to shop at Target during the back to school

season because Target has unique products and offers an emotional appeal. Since Target is

stylish, when people wear Target clothes they can see their own self as stylish. Target saw a

huge opportunity on social media and they adapted to it. They wanted to create a strong

presence and bring more awareness to the campaign.

Brand-as-Person

Target has a brand personality. Aaker defines a brand personality as,

"the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand" (1996, p. 141). The image,

videos and text portrays that the brand is exciting. Aaker (1996) states that, "excitement

contains facets Darling, Spirited, Imaginative, and Up-To-Date (p. 143). Target was imaginative when they created the videos. For example, post 20's video was about monster face zipper pouches racing. Target could do this because they were targeting children. Children have imaginative minds and are playful. Target was also up-to-date when creating the images and videos. For example, post 26 was a video about the young girl holding an iPad and post 28 was a video that referred to Justin Bieber. Target was imaginative but also took relevant items and people to create a Stylagram. Target can further be described as trendy, young, cool, has unique fashion, innovative and fun.

Figure 5.3 Post 20: @Target Video of Monster Zipper pouches racing

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Figure 5.4 Post 26: @Target Video of an iPad

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Figure 5.5 Post 28: @Target Video Clip of Justin Bieber

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Furthermore, Aaker (1996) lists several ways how a brand personality creates a stronger brand: 1) it can help create a self-expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality, 2) it can be a basis of a relationship 3) contribute to a functional benefit (pp. 83-84). The campaign allowed for the children to be self-expressive. Target allowed for the consumer to create his or her own style using Target products. This gave children a voice in the campaign. Target was then able to feed off of the children's style to create an innovative campaign. Target reached out to their consumers in order to try and make relationships with them. They wanted to get to know what children

were wearing and what fueled their style. Target was asking for the consumer to do something in order to get a reaction from them. They initiated a conversation instead of a directed statement about their back to school items.

Brand-as-Symbol

Aaker states, "A strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and make it much easier to gain recognition and recall" (1996, p. 84). When analyzing @Target's Instagram photos/videos, Target does not include their logo on any of the static images. They did not include their logo in the videos until post 18, skipped placing their logo on post 19 and then included their logo throughout the rest of the campaign. The logo was placed on the piece of tape at the end of each video.

A logo helps build brand presence in consumers' minds. Including their logo in all of the photos/videos would have made the campaign more consistent and would have left the user with one last image to remember. Even though Target did not include their logo in all of the photos/videos, they still advertised their products in a way that the consumers knew what the brand stood for.

Figure 5.6 Post 18: @Target Video Clip of Target's Logo Use

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Figure 5.7 Post 19: @Target Video Clip of Target omitting their logo

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Overall, logo placement is important and should be used in all promotional material. Once a consumer knows a brand, the logo stands out to that consumer. They tend to recall a logo and it creates a lasting impression on products. Even though the photos/videos were on a Target Instagram account, their logo should have been consistently used throughout the entire campaign. A logo creates value and builds customer loyalty throughout generations.

Research Question 3

RQ3: Do visual semiotics of photos/videos posted on Instagram effect social engagement with a brand?

Again, according to Jewitt and Oyama (2001) in the book *Handbook of visual analysis* states, "Social semiotics of visual communication involves the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted" (p. 135).

The answer to research question 3 would be yes because every element in an advertisement plays an important role. Visual social semiotics helps create an effective

brand personality. Target used visual images and text in order to emphasize a point. Depending on the context, signs signify different meanings to different people. Target drove the concept of back to school style using images/text that has emphasized the same key concepts but revealed different meanings to connect with different users.

Furthermore, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) "Visual language is not transparent and universally understood, but culturally specific" (p. 3). Instagram has spread across the world which means people from many different cultures are able to "follow" Target. Target cannot tailor its campaign on Instagram to adjust to different cultures. With other advertisements like print advertisements or television commercials advertisers can advertise trends within a specific culture. This means that people can interpret their campaign in a different way than others interpret it. When analyzing the comments, some people enjoyed the campaign and others thought it was weird.

Instagram is unique because its focus is on visual marketing. This provides a challenge for marketers and brands because they have to diversify their content. When doing so, it will broaden a brands reach. Even though someone is from a different culture, people are able to connect with a picture in one way or another. When people connect or feel emotion, people will engage.

Limitations

This analysis was limited by several factors. First, the researcher could only focus on one aspect of the campaign. There were many tactics used in the campaign such as television, print and radio but the researcher had to choose one medium to analyze because of the two-week time frame. The researcher chose Instagram because it was a new medium that has not been researched in full.

The second limitation is objectivity when studying the images, videos and text. The researcher interpreted the images, video and text from the campaign and created meaning. This means that another researcher could attach different meanings to the same message.

The third limitation is the researcher could not search for @Target Instagram when viewing Instagram through a web browser. The users had to Google the @Target Instagram in order to find it. The user also did not have a "view all" feature when using the application on a phone in order to view all of the comments made. The researcher had to use Statigram in order to complete the research.

The fourth limitation is users crowding Target's Instagram for the sake of supporting Talia. The researcher observed many arguments, which could have prevented other users from wanting to comment and participate in the campaign.

The fifth and final limitation would be that the researcher could not view analytics from the campaign. Knowing the amount of shares would determine how effective @Target's content was. Also, knowing the best time to post an image/photo would help determine how to get the most engagement.

Suggestions for Future Research

Research could be improved by looking at all tactics used in the campaign. This research is very narrow. The back-to-school campaign used traditional and digital media. If the research was broadened then the researcher could see if the entire campaign was managed effectively through different mediums.

Second, the researcher could analyze different social mediums such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook during the back-to-school campaign. Each social medium is used

for a different purpose. This would allow the researcher to analyze how Target is utilizing the different mediums to release the same message.

Third, the research could be improved by comparing the television commercials to the Instagram campaign that was released at the same time during the back-to-school season. Both the television commercials and the Instagram campaign advertised kids sense of style and even used some of the same visual elements to tie the entire campaign together. This would allow the researcher to see if Target was managing their campaign effectively across different platforms.

Fourth, the research could be more in depth by conducting mixed methods research. This would allow the researcher to create surveys and/or conduct focus groups to gain information about perceived feelings about the brand and the campaign.

Conclusion

After the researcher analyzed the Instagram campaign, the photos/videos had many recurring elements. Each video featured one child. The second post was the only post that featured more than one child. Each photo/video incorporated Target clothes, shoes, and/or school supplies. All of the photos/videos were advertising their back to school products. One hashtag was used the entire campaign. It was featured in the photos/videos and in the captions. Target fed off of the children's style inspiration to create the videos. Target also used figurative language when writing their captions. The videos were all shot the same on an iPhone. The content was different but Target used the same supplies to create the content in the Stylagram. There was the same artistic vibe to each video that connected the videos together for the campaign. Finally, Target incorporated their logo somewhat consistently throughout the campaign.

Brands must stay true to a companies founding assets, identity core and extended identity when advertising. This will guide advertisers when creating content for the brand and it will create a consistent brand that consumers will remember. When brands understand who they are, the brand will begin to resonate with consumers. Consumers will then begin to identify and connect with the brand.

It is important to stay consistent when launching a campaign and content is important. Target is an innovative retail company that excites people. Target's assets and core and extended identity are strong. Target is keeping up with new technology and is utilizing their Instagram account effectively. It is important to learn about new technologies in order to keep up with trends but it is more important that brands know how, why and when to effectively use them. Target successfully connected with people, built loyalty and excited people with their products. It is important that companies create value for customers in order to build a strong brand. Once companies have a strong foundation, they are able to make brand-building decisions effectively.

Social media rapidly changes and new social media applications are being created everyday. The future of social media is unknown but advertisers must be continually getting to know who their target is. When new social media platforms arise, advertisers will be able to adapt to the new media because they know and understand their target. Staying true to the brands identity and extended identity core when creating campaigns paired with knowing the target, the social media platform and the right content, advertisers will successfully continue to build strong brands.

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 30, 2013

Chelsea Dawson Bevins
IRB Application 1681: Life in Images: Target Embraces a Digital Brand

Dear Chelsea,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because your study does not involve human subjects.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination, or need assistance in identifying whether possible changes to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

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