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HOW FEMALE ONLINE BUSINESSES AND BRANDS
ARE USING INSTAGRAM STORIES

by

Hannah N. VanDerslice

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
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HOW FEMALE ONLINE BUSINESSES AND BRANDS
ARE USING INSTAGRAM STORIES

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University of Nebraska, 2016

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Instagram is one of the newest forms of social media that impacts its audience on a visual level, since the content is centered on photos and videos. Their newest feature, Instagram stories, is temporary videos and/or photos strung together to form a gallery, which has been compared to Snapchat's version of live stories. Instagram stories offer a unique opportunity for businesses to take advantage of the temporary, 24-hour platform that shows specific frame-by-frame analytics that help create efficient and compelling content to repost permanently that helps organic search engine optimization. As a cost-effective means of advertising, early adopter large and small brands alike have responded and are setting the tone in terms of how Instagram stories are used to attract their audiences. This paper studied 222 Instagram story posts made by 81 different female online business and brand accounts over a one-week time period in order to observe the common themes of posts as well as compare the structure of their posts to the Brand-Consumer Storytelling Theory. The observed results presented that there were 15 common themes; in addition, the general flow of events were presented as an episodic structure, characterized by several indices that can help a story be more relatable to the viewers when it comes to using their own past experiences to relate to the story.

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I. Introduction

"Every single person is in competition with another person. We are all trying to be a better human being than the person next to us. But, no one is in competition with a story. You are not in competition with a book. I am not in competition with a movie. And we are not in competition with a song. And when you are not in competition, that's when your walls come down. And when your walls come down, that's when a story can reach you. And when a story can reach you, that's when magic happens." –Ish Ait Hamou, "The Dance of Storytelling" (Tedx Talks, Dec 7th, 2015).

One of the major components in a new business is marketing, which can take a large bite out of the budget—especially for smaller businesses trying to get their name out. Persuading audiences to remember your message and become a loyal follower can also be a daunting challenge when it comes to the many new media advertising options. Regardless of their size, many of these businesses and brands turn to online and mobile exposure through social networks (also known for word-of-mouth, guerrilla, viral and buzz marketing) such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Vine, SnapChat, and many others, for the exposure and direct relationships with their target audiences in real time. New media has taken several traditional forms of mass media by storm; yet, many fail to strategize a plan when it comes to utilizing the different platforms to their fullest potentials.

Businesses may have accounts in several different social media platforms; however, the fish don't flock without properly baiting them and spending time and

money in the correct places--specifically when creating appealing content and visuals. The basic need to understand the strategies behind social media platforms may be the difference between making their dreams come true and not keeping afloat in the business world. The startup community has been compared to a shark tank in terms of competition in the marketplace, and for good reason. Once an idea comes to fruition, it is either “sink or swim” in terms of staying relevant amongst competition and adapting to the ever-changing world of new media.

Just like there is competition amongst brands, there is competition between the social media platforms, which causes the platforms to constantly evolve and change their policies. A recent example of this was when Instagram came out with “Instagram stories”, a strikingly similar feature compared to Snapchat’s “live stories”. Instagram stories are still new and when it comes to new technology, early adopters have always set the trends for the followers to come.

A. Purpose Statement

This qualitative visual ethnography study analyzes the Instagram story posts of a hand-selected group of female online businesses/brands and observes the common themes that arise from their content, as well as how the structure of their posts relate to Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory. The benefits will apply to all other small and large businesses when it comes to replicating the successful themes and ideas that these early adopters use when it comes to best practices and the psychological advantage in attracting and appealing to their various audiences/followers.

A qualitative visual ethnography study was chosen in order to provide a deeper analysis of the content in each post by analyzing the subject matter on a frame-by-frame playback, making notes of each theme found within the segments while also tracking over-arching themes and structural takeaways from the entire story. Since not all communication is verbal, non-verbal content was tracked from the recordings as well that included, but was not limited to written content and visuals. In addition to the content they posted, the study also analyzed the themes presented and overall structure of their posts in order to relate to the Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory.

B. Significance of Study

The challenge that advertising researchers face, especially with social media, is that traditional quantitative and qualitative research techniques deal with context and metaphors within content that are not always so cut and dry. There are many forms of communication that may imply certain messages, but are not as easy to articulate when conducting research observations. According to Zaltman and Coulter’s article, “Seeing the Voice of the Customer: Metaphor-Based Advertising Research” (1995), they talk about the problem of incomplete communications from consumers, since most human communication is nonverbal. “Heavy reliance on verbo-centric techniques narrows the cognitive peripheral vision of both researchers and their clients.”

Zaltman and Coulture (1995) also speak about the disconnect in agencies between the researchers and clients and their creative staffs since one side is communicating verbally while the other uses mostly visual cues. “Hence, there is a need for a method that

elicits consumer information via multisensory channels.” This method would have the advantage of increasing researchers’ understanding of consumers’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as related to their products and services. Additionally, researchers would be able to better communicate with their clients who, in turn, could produce more creative advertising and promotional materials to tap consumers’ mental models.” In this article, Zaltman and Coulter (1995) presented seven basic premises for improving research and copy development—one of these was “Mental Models as Representations of Stories”. A main concept of this idea is that “...the major processes of memory are the creation, storage, and retrieval of stories” (Shank, 1990).

The use of social media allows for a deeper engagement with the customer than any of the previous “one sided or one dimensional” methods such as advertisements by engaging customers through participating in contests, campaigns and promotions as well as create user content such as reviews (Goor, 2012). This cooperation leads to a better relationship between brand and consumer (Shukla, 2010). The advantage of a better relationship is that it strengthens brand loyalty, which leads to a higher purchase intention (McKenzie et al., 2009). In order for brands to get in front of their audiences on a regular basis, they need to acquire followers that are interested in their particular brand identity. Aaker (1996) defines [brand identity] as “a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain”.

While there have been several general studies in the field of social media, few have delve into how specific target groups, such as female online business owners and how they are using specific features within the social media platforms. Instagram stories

are one of the newer social media features that have plenty of advertising potential, if used efficiently. This study will address content creation from a visual ethnography and qualitative perspective in order to analyze the structure, visuals and tone of each post. Also, it will generate common themes from verbal and non-verbal communication, and observe the relations to the Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory amongst a group that is active on Instagram, but hasn't been closely paid attention to.

According to a August 2015 report from the Pew Research Center's website, Some 28 percent of online adults use Instagram, a proportion that is unchanged from the 26 percent of online adults who did so in September 2014. Instagram continues to be popular with non-whites and young adults: 55 percent of online adults ages 18 to 29 use Instagram, as do 47 percent of African Americans and 38 percent of Hispanics. Additionally, online women continue to be more likely than online men to be Instagram users (31 percent vs. 24 percent).

Although there has been a considerable amount of research focusing on the marketing practices of social media networks in general, there have been few studies that target women, even though it has been suggested that brands targeting women use instamarketing differently. For example, Goor (2012) studied a general selection of brands that use Instagram as a marketing tool and found product representation brands and symbolic brands are prominent users of Instagram, and frequently use persuasion, self-efficacy, relational, emotion and symbolistic strategies. Hassan (2014) narrowed this approach by analyzing the use of Instagram as a marketing tool by brands' use of Instagram to target women. Hassan used a content analysis and photos were analyzed to

identify the possible existing brand strategy characteristics in the photos. The results indicated that there was more variability in the use of strategies of brands that target women than those for the general population; also, that brands that target women appear to prefer the sales response strategy, followed by the emotions strategy. The *sales response strategy* “is meant to encourage the consumer to immediately purchase the product after seeing the advertisement, or to gather information about the brand or the product. The main goal is to increase brand awareness.” The *emotions strategy* “concentrates on influencing the affective beliefs. Emotions strategies are applied when it is important to associate a product with certain emotions that are felt when using the product. This strategy is used to differentiate a brand from other brands when there are no functional differences between products”. The study’s results suggested that women may be more prone to impulse purchasing than when it comes to clothing (as the study was limited to retail stores) or making purchases because of the connection to a particular value or belief (Hassan, 2014).

According to Rachel Simmons, a gender researcher who has specialized in teen girls, referring to flattering tools that make photos look flawless: “Young women dominate Instagram and visual platforms in general. Instagram gives you the power to modify your appearance in a way that’s practically on par with makeup and other beauty products...everyone wants to be the most beautiful girl in the room. Instagram provides a platform where you can enter that competition every day,” she said. “The Internet has been called a great democratizer, and perhaps what Instagram has done is let anyone enter the beauty pageant.” (Seligson, 2016).

Since the Instagram stories feature is so new, it is important to explore the early adopter, female online business and brands that are using it. By studying the strategy and themes that arise from viewing these stories, as well as discussing whether or not they follow the Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory structure, we can better understand how the story feature can be used to create more appealing content and visuals that communicate effectively to their markets.

These female entrepreneurs wear many hats; running a small business can entail many job titles and duties that extend from the account side to creative planning in their business models as well as financial and marketing obligations. This study will provide information for best practices paved by these early adopters for the future adopters when it comes to utilizing Instagram stories efficiently and effectively. The goal for these businesses would be to utilize the 24-hour analytics for each frame in their post in order to repost content that is attracting large audiences, leading to increased followers, and therefore, may liken their audiences purchase intention.

II. Literature Review

A. Instagram’s Advertising Potential

Instagram’s website (2016) describes their app experience as “...a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, and then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever. We’re building Instagram to allow you to experience moments in your friends’ lives through pictures as they happen. We imagine a world more connected

though photos.” Instagram allows its users to share their photos (on a photo-by-photo basis) on other platforms like Flickr, Facebook, Twitter—and if you specify a location in your photos’ description, you can opt to be “checked in” on Foursquare. Since Instagram is a mobile app, the phone platforms that support it are the iPhone and Android.

Instagram has become a top digital destination for advertisers. Business Insider reports that numbers reported by Socialfresh (in collaboration with Firebrand Group and Simple Measured) in a survey that polled digital marketers in eight countries and multiple industries, suggest that 30 percent of those polled advertise on Instagram at least once a month, running about the same level as advertising for Twitter. While it’s still at about half the level of Facebook advertising, it’s still a steady increase of effectiveness for the photo/video social platform (Meola, 2016). Based on the numbers, Instagram’s steady growth is looking to continue, as over one in four digital marketers have a plan to invest more money in Instagram over the next twelve months. In comparison, Snapchat is growing at a rate of around 4.1 percent while Instagram is at 29.5 percent. Now that Instagram has begun advertising on its site, it has gathered more than 200,000 monthly active advertisers who are able to take advantage of its video and dynamic ad formats. The report notes that time spent watching videos has increased by more than 40 percent over the last six months, providing even larger opportunities for investors to attract their target audiences. Socialfresh also noted that video is the second most popular content when it comes to ROI demonstration, behind the popular image posts in the number one spot (Workman, 2016).

According to a Hootsuite blog article that highlights Instagram's usage statistics, Instagram is used by 48.8 percent of brands, and is expected to increase to 70.7 percent by 2017. The top brands post 4.9 times over the week on Instagram, which is an increase of more than 50 percent from 2015. Also, 75 percent of Instagram users follow the call to action, such as visiting the brand's website after looking at an Instagram advertising post. It is also important to note that those businesses that are utilizing the hashtag are at an advantage; posts with at least one hashtag average 12.6 percent more engagement (Parker, November 2016).

B. Instagram Stories vs. Snapchat Live Stories

Instagram in particular has become the main conversation in the social media realm because of their launch on August 2, 2016 of "stories", which have been compared straight across the board to Snapchat's "live stories". A TechCrunch article stated that when Instagram's CEO, Kevin Systrom, was interviewed about Instagram's stories compared to Snapchat's live stories, he admitted that "They deserve all the credit," but insisted "This isn't about who invented something. This is about a format, and how you take it to a network and put your own spin on it" (Constine, 2016).

According to the Huffington Post blog: "Instagram absolutely dwarfs Snapchat with its roughly 300 million daily users, vs. Snapchat's 150 million. That may not sound like too big of a deal, but if you're an advertiser, the difference is tremendous" (Barna, 2016). Nick Sheingold, the associate director of strategy at Laundry Service (one of the agencies Nike uses), told Ad Age their first Instagram story got 800,000 views in 24

hours. When compared to Snapchat, Nike's most popular video ever received only 66,000 views, which is twelve times more views on Instagram than on Snapchat, just in their first post (Barna, 2016).

"Instagram is a follower platform where Snapchat is more of a best friend platform," said Dan Grossman, vice president of platform partnerships at VaynerMedia. "Snapchat hasn't encouraged brands to build up huge followings" (Sloane, 2016). Since Snapchat and Instagram stories are so similar, it has been an easy transition for brands when it comes to not having to change their strategy. On Snapchat, there are no heart icons located below the post, which signify a follower's expression of approval or a "like", as there are on Instagram. It is also harder to find and follow accounts on Snapchat because individuals need to know the exact user names to find them. Instagram makes searching easier, and it lets brands buy ads that directly link to their accounts, where people can follow them (Sloane, 2016).

There is an advantage for advertisers since Instagram is directly linked to its parent company, Facebook; this allows separation of audience by age, interests, actions and more. Although Snapchat only offers ads to a few select brands for now, the way their ads are delivered puts them at a visual advantage. They are made specifically for mobile devices with a vertical orientation and are shown full screen within the platform, and Instagram ads are directed to Facebook, rather than displaying within the app (Jackson, 2016).

Instagram boasts a social media engagement of 4.21 percent per follower; in which no other social media channel even comes close. With Snapchat, tracking and

measuring analytics is more complicated since there are no “likes” or “shares” and relies on metrics from screenshots. Also, Snapchat as a platform only keeps its main content for 24 hours, and the metrics disappear after that time period; hence the data would have to be collected on a daily basis. When it comes to interaction, the downside to Snapchat is that comments are not public like they are on Instagram, which creates more conversations and interaction amongst larger groups of users. Also, Instagram’s ability to @mention and tag their friends increases organic reach (Jackson, 2016).

Millennials are a group that advertisers strive to reach in the beginning in order to create trends and eventually, other demographics follow. This particular group has gravitated towards both social media platforms. Next to Facebook Messenger, Snapchat and Instagram are tied for the second-highest used messaging app that attracts the millennial audience at 47%, compared to Facebook Messenger’s 50% (Jackson, 2016).

Looking at some of the Snapchat’s key demographics that were provided, when it comes to age 60 percent of Snapchat’s users are under 25 years old and 23 percent have not graduated from high school. According to a Fall 2015 Harvard survey that targeted 18 to 29 year olds, a higher percentage of women use Snapchat than men: 42 percent were female, while 31 percent were male. A few other interesting takeaways from Snapchat demographics were that 53 percent of college students surveyed said they had Snapchat accounts, compared to 46 percent of all 18 to 24 year olds. Also, it seems that users have no particular political affiliation since 39 percent were Democrats, 37 percent were Republicans and 35 percent were Independents. When it came to comparing ethnicities,

40 percent identified as White, 25 percent Black and 34 percent Hispanic (Newberry, 2016).

A 2015 Pew Research study showed Instagram's age demographics consist of 55 percent of all online 18 to 29 year olds, followed by 28 percent of 30-49 year olds, 11 percent of 50-64 year olds and only 4 percent of adults over 65 years of age. As mentioned before, 31 percent of women and 24 percent of men regularly use the platform. Location-wise, 32 percent are urban dwellers, 28 percent live in suburban areas and 18 percent are rural. Looking at income, 26 percent of adult users make less than \$30,000; 27 percent make \$30,000 to \$49,000; 30 percent bring in \$50,000 and \$74,000 and 29 percent earn over \$75,000 per year (Parker, July 2016).

According to Dan Grossman, Vice President of platform partnership at VaynerMedia, Alcohol brands such as Ketel One and Buchanan's whisky were especially motivated to craft the new Instagram videos. Instagram allows them to restrict viewing to people older than 21 years old, a feature not available on Snapchat unless the brand pays for an ad targeted to people 21 and older (Sloane, 2016).

Snapchat and Instagram both create a sense of urgency for their followers to constantly check the platform in hopes not to miss content. A benefit to using Instagram stories over Snapchat live stories is the analytic function that allows you to see how many people, which users have viewed your post, and where the drop-offs are in terms of where they may skip on to another story. This allows the creator a chance to create micro-campaigns and experimental with content. The frame-by-frame edits that can be

made in response to the analytics can create content that is more appealing to the direct audience that can be recreated and posted under various social networks including the permanent Instagram feed in addition to other social networks. Taking part in creation of stories also increases your organic search content and sets you in front of more of your followers (Hitz, 2016).

C. How to Use the Stories Feature

Instagram stories show up visually separate from the platform's main timeline, at the very top in a header bar (see Figure I below). When you log into the app, you see the most recent Instagram stories that have been posted in the last 24 hours from the people you follow. If you click on another person's account that you follow and they have a current story, you will notice a magenta/yellow circle around their profile photo (see Figure 2 below). When the first story in the header is clicked, the other videos automatically stream unless the user stops the story by clicking on the "x" on the top right, or swipes left to skip the story. Another user's story can also be accessed under their personal page by clicking on their profile picture. Once the story has been viewed, the magenta/yellow circle disappears and it does not show up in the header.

Figure 1:

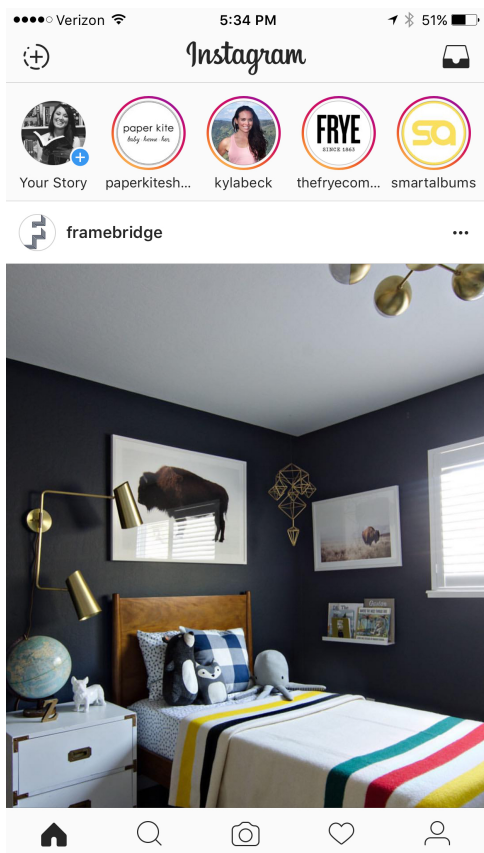
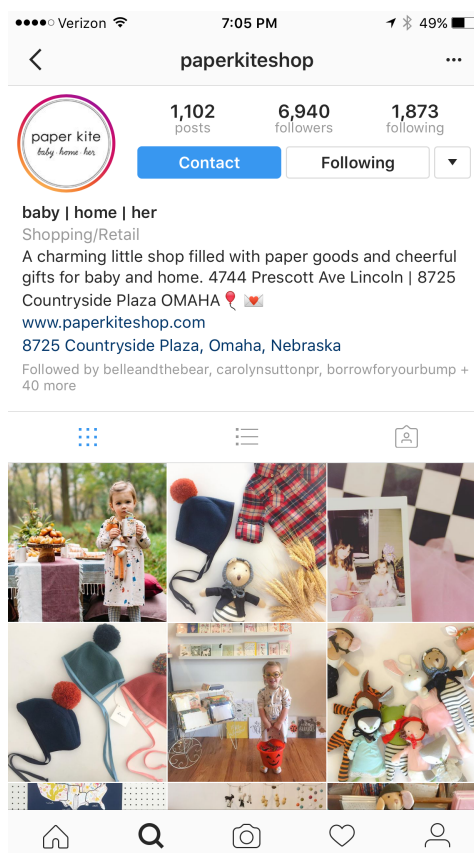


Figure 2:



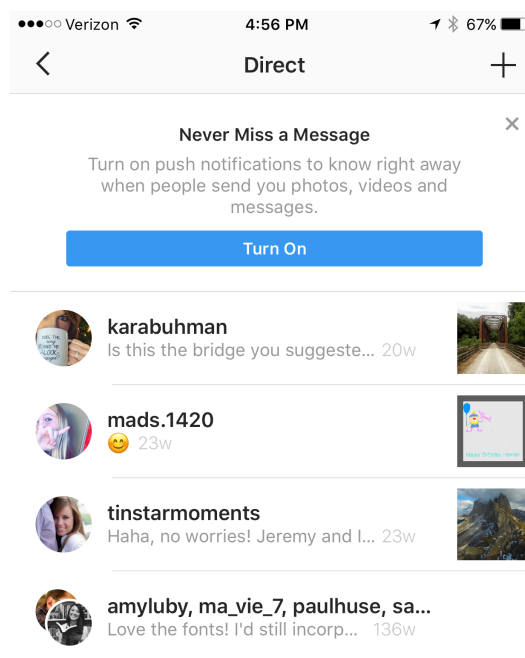
A story can be recorded in up to 10-second increments of photos or videos, and can last anywhere from 3-60 seconds. When you view a story where the creator allows messaging, you'll see the option to send a message at the bottom left of the story. The message will end up in the story creator's direct message inbox as opposed to a publicly visible comment on the story (Hines, 2016). This view of the small direct message box (Figure 3) can be accessed when you click on your home icon on the bottom left, and can be found on the top right, above the story header. When the direct message box is clicked, all your direct messages can be accessed; however, if you do not currently follow

a user who sends you a message, it will end up as a message request, and you will not get notified that the person sent you a message about your story. When you are in the inbox view of your Instagram's direct messages (Figure 4), you are able to tap on a message request link where the list will come up with snapshots of the portion of your story that the viewer sent you a message on (Hines, 2016).

Figure 3:



Figure 4:



In order to set up the story feature on your phones, the newest version of Instagram (Version 0.0.1) needs to be uploaded from the App Store. The visibility of

your story depends on your account's privacy settings, and you are able to configure the privacy for every individual story you share. However, you can also set your standards for all your stories in advance by going into your Instagram *Settings*, which is a wheel icon found on the top right (Figure 5) and clicking on *Story Settings* (Figure 6), and can also be accessed directly after making a story. For private accounts, only your approved followers can see your story in the header row at the top of the Feed. For public accounts, your followers can see your story in the header row at the top of the Feed--and anyone can see it from your profile (Instagram Inc., 2016).

Figure 5:

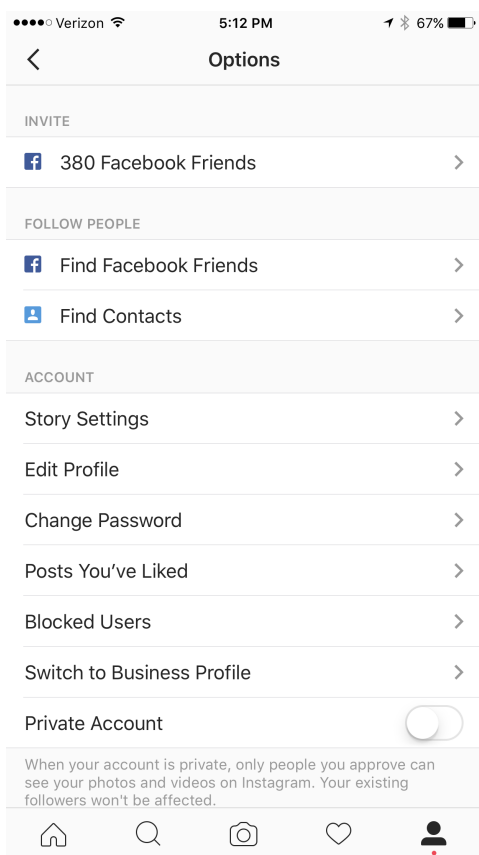
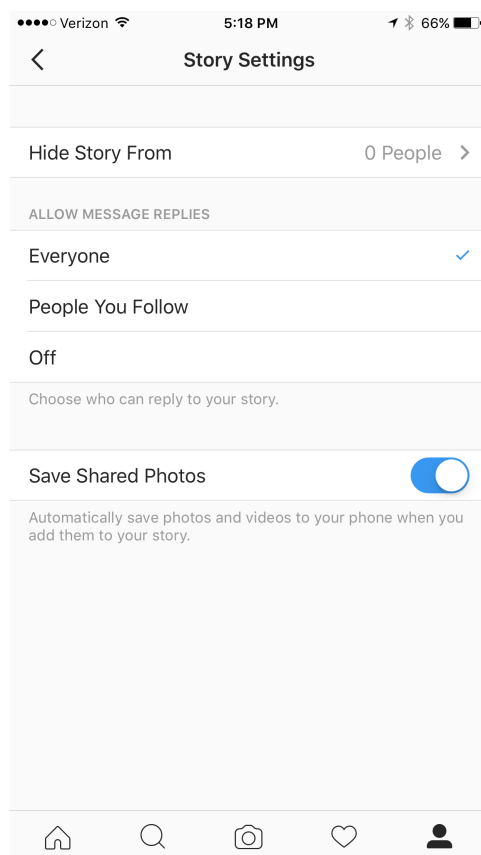


Figure 6:



To share your own photo or video to your story, you tap on the top left of your screen (where your Instagram photo and “Your Story” appears) or swipe left from anywhere in the feed (Figure 7). Then tap the main, white photo button located at the bottom/middle of the screen to take a photo, or tap and hold it to record up to a 10-second video. The circular arrow icon, located to the right of the photo button will allow you to switch the camera from front- to rear-facing and the flash settings are located to the left of the photo button. The camera phone aspect can be flipped sideways to record in landscape mode; however, Instagram will crop your photo or video to portrait mode when it is published to your story. Tap the top right of the screen to access options in order to add text or draw on your story (tap “undo” to remove an effect or “done” to save it). To add additional sections to your story, tap on the circled + icon at the top left to record another video or take a photo. You can also upload a recent photo or video from your phone; to do this, swipe down on the screen and select what you would like to share. Each new segment you add will be added to the end of your story and lasts 24 hours (Hines, 2016).

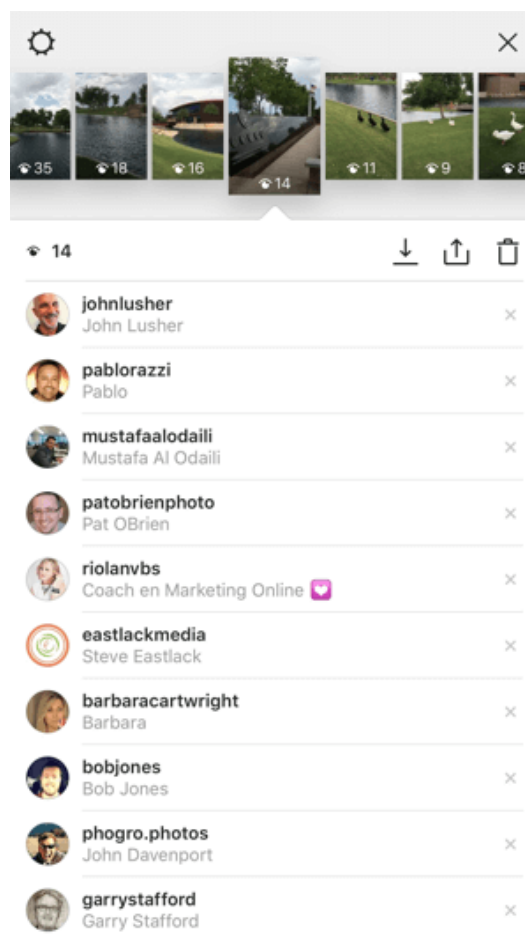
You can edit specific parts of your story by clicking on the three dots on the bottom right, which allows you to delete part of the story that you are viewing, save the photo/video portion you are viewing, share the photo/video portion of the story you are viewing as a post on your Instagram profile, or change the story settings for the portion you are viewing. You can also view analytics for each story that you post (Figure 8); at the bottom/middle of each portion of your story, it shows the number of views for the story. You can swipe up on that number to see a more detailed view that shows the

specific number of views for each individual segment as well as who has viewed those particular portions. From the analytics view, you can also download specific photo and video segments of your story, share portions of your story as a post to your Instagram profile, or delete certain photo/video segments from your story. You are still able to change the settings of the story from this view. By keeping track of your story's 24-hour analytics, you can use the portions that are getting several views, or get rid of the sections that have a drop-offs of views in order to create compelling content that you choose to actually publish to your account or other social networks permanently (Hines, 2016)

Figure 7:



Figure 8:



Story's 24-hour temporary aspect can serve as a powerful analytics tool that helps you take advantage of Instagram's new algorithm in terms of rising to the top of your followers' newsfeeds. By consistently adding new content to your story and knowing when the best times to post are, you can combine your most successful segments into video files using third party apps (such as PhotoGrid, Layout and other collage/slideshow apps), since Instagram does not currently allow you to download your entire story from the day like Snapchat does (Hines, 2016).

D. Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory

Analyzing Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory increases the understanding of why and how people create stories, how to interpret both conscious and unconscious thinking that occur in stories and increases the ability to write and visualize good stories—stories that resolve major dilemmas or move people to action, and examine how products and brands enable consumers to become effective protagonists through storytelling (Woodside, 2010).

Information is stored and retrieved in the form of stories. “A story is useful because it comes with many indices (i.e., touch points to the lives of listeners/viewers or to others that cause implicit and/or explicit awareness and emotional connection/understanding in the minds of listeners/ viewers.” Examples of indices are locations, decisions, actions, attitudes, quandaries, decisions, or conclusions (Woodside, 2010).

“The more indices we have for a story that is being told, the more places the story can reside in memory. Consequently, we are more likely to remember a story [vs. a lecture] and to relate the story to experiences already in memory. In other words, the more indices, the greater the number of comparisons with prior experiences and hence the greater the learning” (Schank, 1999).

The proposition that indices in stories serve as touch points of a story’s core message to the listener/viewer is central to Escalas’s (2004) proposal that narrative processing creates or enhances self–brand connections (SBC) in consumer theory because people generally interpret the meaning of their experiences by fitting their interpretations of experiences into a story (Woodside, 2010).

A substantial amount of information stored in and retrieved from memory is episodic—stories that include inciting incidents, experiences, outcomes/evaluations, and summaries/nuances of person-to-person and person-and-brand relationships within specific contexts (Fournier, 1998; Schank, 1990). Time figures in narrations as episodes, which are situations via scenes within acts in a drama. Each episode has a beginning, middle and end, whereas time in reality is an undifferentiated continuous flow (Bruner, 1990; Escalas, 1998). Pennington and Hastie (1986) called this structure an “episode schema”: Initial events create responses in characters that can be physical, psychological, or both. As a result of these responses, the characters develop goals that lead to courses of action, which result in certain outcomes (Escalas, 2004).

Storytelling is increasingly used in advertising today in order to build customer loyalty (Lury, Giles; 2004). A major benefit of using Instagram is that it is a visual and content-based platform that can be ideal for conveying a brand's identity. Aaker (1996) defines brand identity as "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain."

"The conveying of a brand's identity is a vital part of the brand experience, which leads a customer to better understand a brand and its' goals and values. A consumer learns more about a brand, and feels like they know and relate to the brand on a personal level. It is therefore expected that the clear conveying of a brand's image leads to more followers, likes and comments" (Goor, 2012).

III. Study

Research Questions

RQ1: How are female online businesses/brands using Instagram's newest feature, stories? More specifically, what common themes emerge from the content of the posts?

RQ2: Also, how does the overall content and structure of the posts relate to the Brand-Consumer Storytelling Theory?

Methodology

A qualitative visual ethnography was used for this study. Pink (2011) defines "visual ethnography in the following way: "this data may take the form of photographs, art objects, videotapes, website main pages, e-mails, text messages, social media text, or any forms of sound".

The target audience was generated by hand selecting specific female-owned brands of online female businesses and brands that provide a product or service (examples would include but not be limited to photographers, authors, fashion bloggers, indie designers, lifestyle/health/relationship coaches, boutique owners, public speakers, mom bloggers, web designers, etc). Since it was not possible to predict which of the accounts would make posts, over 250 businesses were followed under my personal Instagram account. The businesses followed were found by following several local business owners, using Instagram's search function as well as Marie Forleo's Business School database (Forleo, 2016). This resulted in collecting 222 on-target business posts within a week, spanning from Monday, September 12th to Sunday, September 18th. Out of the 222 posts, there were 81 different businesses, some posting more times than others (see Appendix A) throughout the week.

As mentioned, the temporary slideshows that are composed of photos, videos and personalized text and drawings only stay live for 24 hours. Once a person taps on the first video, it plays and streams on to the next in line (unless you swipe left to skip or close the story by clicking on the "x" in the top right corner.) Since stories are not permanent, they were recorded in a series each day, starting at the same time (11:00 AM) to ensure that no new videos were missed between the days. This process took place for one full week in order to document any changes in social media volume/usage throughout the various days in a week.

In order to document the videos, my iPhone was hooked to my desktop and the program, QuickTime Player, was used to record the live videos starting at 11:00 AM and

was left running until all the clips for that particular day were fully recorded. Once the recording had completed running through every one of the story posts for that day, the videos were sorted in order to capture the users who represented the target audience (for example, if they were male or a part of a larger corporate brand, they were skipped). This way, no new content was deleted between recording and each of the full video files was viewed and saved in order to make note of the content and visuals from each story that came from a female online business owner who fit the target audience criteria.

From there, the videos were viewed several times through in order to observe the content that led to the formation of common themes and structural observations. These observations were tracked on an excel document with the female businesses and brands listed down the far left column; the date they were recorded was listed in the second column, and any new themes presented ran along the very top row from left to right. Each new theme that was presented was accompanied by specific notes located below in each column that lined up with the user that discussed the content in more detail. Each of the videos documented were saved in order by date in a separate folder.

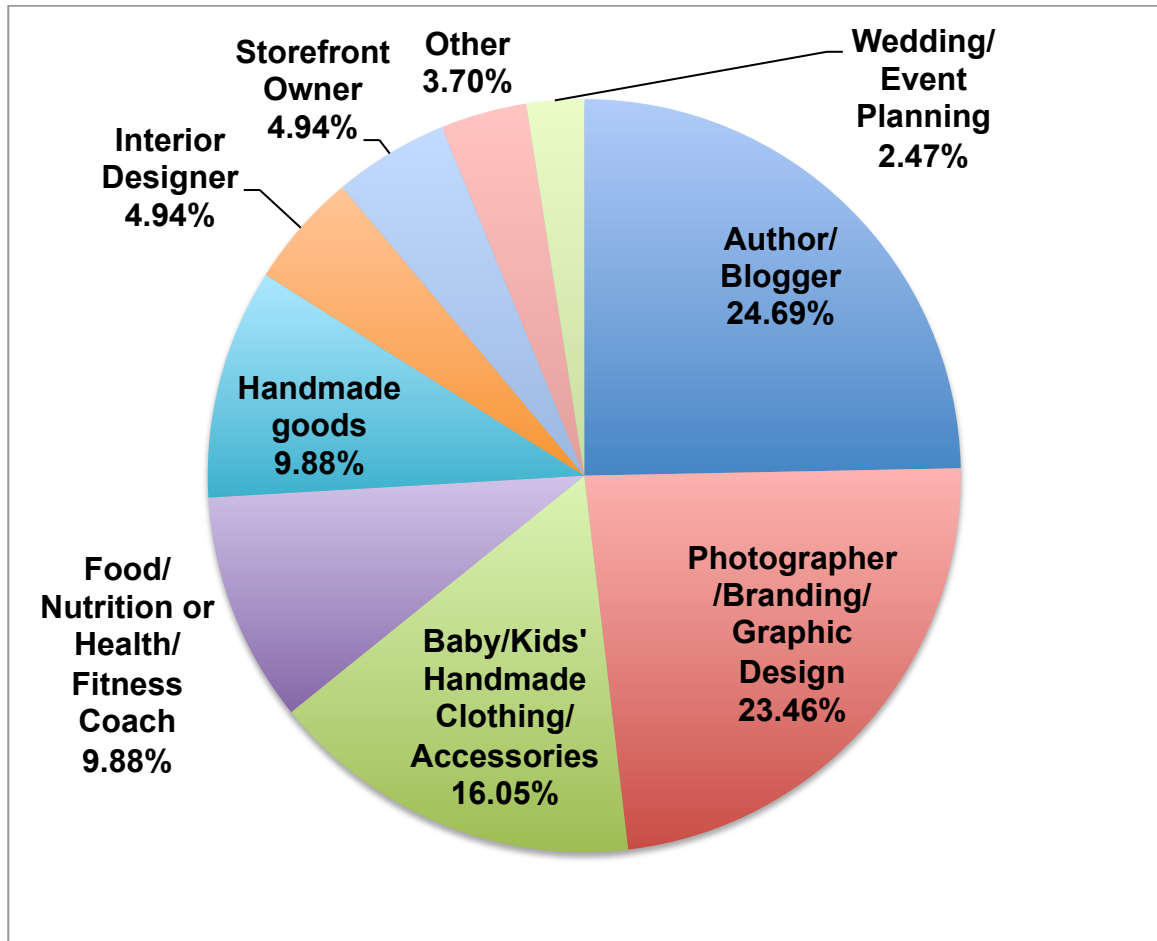
Several rounds of viewing each video took place in order to note and analyze themes that arose in multiple videos. Then the overall material was analyzed in order to observe the structure of the stories and how they related to the Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory. In addition, 21 hand-selected posts (three from every day of the week) that represented a group that had multiple themes within the story were re-watched and further analyzed to describe and exemplify an in-depth look at how posts were made, structure-wise, and the connection between the specific content and themes.

Findings

After sorting through all the captured stories from the week (starting at Monday, September 12th, 2016 and ending at Sunday, September 18th, 2016) and separating which were relevant to the target audience being studied, there were 222 stories to be analyzed. The goal was to study how each account was using stories in terms of comparing the structure of their post as well as how they were presenting content in the form of themes.

Of the 222 stories, there were 81 different businesses that were grouped into nine categories (Figure 9): Author/Blogger (24.69%, n = 20), Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design (23.46%, n = 19), Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories (16.05%, n = 13), Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach (9.88%, n = 8), Handmade Goods (9.88%, n = 8), Interior Designer (4.94%, n = 4), Storefront Owner (4.94%, n = 4), Wedding/Event Planning (2.47%, n = 2) and Other (3.70%, n = 3). The "Other" category consisted of a YouTube sensation (*kandeejohnson*), CEO/Founder of an Influencer Agency (*kylabeck*) and Professional Hair Stylist (*jacyschwager*). The chart below represents the visual percentages of each of the types of businesses that were recorded.

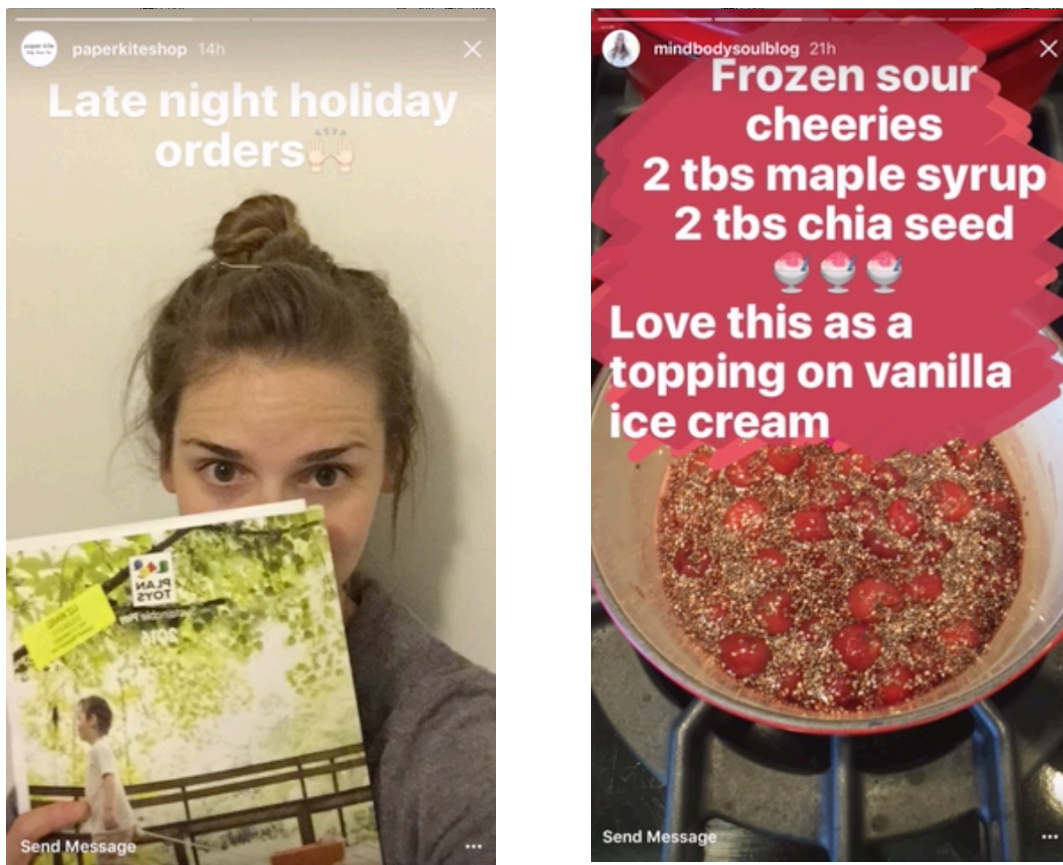
Figure 9: Types of Businesses



Each of the posts were viewed multiple times while simultaneously taking notes and forming themes that were recorded in a excel chart that listed the Instagram user name, date they were recorded, generalized themes (as new themes were discovered, they were added to the top), detailed notes of the content within the theme, and an overall takeaway for the motivation behind the post was recorded last. As the videos streamed, the specific themes were formed based off common material presented in both the language content as well as the visual series of events; if they added any text themselves,

the subject matter was also recorded (see figure 10 below for an example of story subtitles from two different stories posted from *paperkiteshop* and *mindbodysoulblog*).

Figure 10:



From reviewing the material several times and simplifying the overall content into subjects, fifteen main themes emerged:

- 1.) What I'm/we're doing right now
- 2.) What my child(ren) is/are doing right now

- 3.) What my pet(s) is/are doing right now
- 4.) Who I'm with
- 5.) Where I'm at
- 6.) What I'm Wearing
- 7.) What I'm Eating/Drinking
- 8.) Company Products
- 9.) Sneak Peek/Previews
- 10.) Giveaways/Prizes/Discounts/Incentives
- 11.) Informing or Establishing Expertise
- 12.) Asking a Question
- 13.) Playing off a Seasonal/Current Event
- 14.) Tutorial
- 15.) Call to Action

The first seven themes seemed to occur more frequently, and they applied more to the personal lives of each user. It is important to note that for this audience of small business owners, in most cases, they are their brands. So, it is difficult to distinctly tell whether certain posts are promoting business or their personal lives since the lines are blurred in a lot of situations. For example, several of the businesses represented are lifestyle bloggers, so their business is to talk about their personal life, preferences, daily activities, etc. Also, for a small business owner like a wedding coordinator or photographer, they may be location scouting in several instances so it depends on the

perspective and how well they explained why they were going to a specific place in order to classify the outing as personal vs. for their business. Moms and owners of child clothing brands and handmade goods use their children often within posts, seeming as though the post is a purely personal look into their family life; however, in a lot of cases, it may be a good business practice to show that their own children use their products as a testimony to their brand. Although it was not possible to positively tell whether the majority of posts were personal or business, it was possible to tell which themes were more prevalent.

A majority of the women posted about what they were doing at that very moment. Stories tend to be used by this group as a glimpse into their daily lives and what they are up to. In a sense, it is what most social networks are all about; Facebook has the status post available to users that essentially asks what their user is doing or how they are feeling at that moment as well as Twitter's large amount of people that share current events and news—people care and are interested in what other people are up to, are thinking and doing in real time.

When it came to the storytelling aspect, it is important to note that simple activities throughout the day made for interesting storylines that they may or may not have resolved. The reason people tell stories is to be able to relate with other people, and in most cases the storyline was as simple as, "I got up early this morning and packed all my kids in the car an hour early before school so I could drive us all an hour out of the way to pick up Starbucks...and when we finally got through the long line in the drive though and drove home, I realized halfway home that I got someone else's order and we

were late for school”. That story is more about a scenario that her followers would be able to share emotions over and may comment on similar experiences they have had or offer her their sympathies. From a business standpoint, if a business owner has personal aspects of their life that will connect them with their clients, it may create more interaction, trust and loyalty to her brand if she appears as likeable or easy to relate with.

Using animals, kids, food and mentioning friends or their husband for example, seemed to occur more frequently compared to making posts that purely revolved around selling products or services (the last of the eight themes). By using the family dog or the reality of being a stay at home mom while working from home generates interest and gives a “behind the scenes” look at their lives. When it comes to pop culture, we see the trend of reality television taking over because people are interested in seeing a more raw view of the unstaged occurrences in life as well as how an individual handles the mundane tasks throughout their day (for example, dropping their kids off at daycare, getting waxed, preparing for dinner, what their home looks like on a Saturday night, what they order at the local bakery, how they interact with their significant others/kids, etc.)

Another important finding was that depending on length, almost all of the videos used multiple themes within one post. For example, a nutritionist may have shown what she was currently eating or what was in her refrigerator or shopping list, then showed how she made this meal. This example would have displayed all three of the themes, “What I’m Doing Right Now”, “What I’m Eating” as well as “Tutorial”. Furthermore, she may have added text on a last photo slide that directed clients to her website in order

to retrieve the recipe for themselves, which would have displayed a fourth theme, “Call to Action.”

In order to better observe and describe the viewing process of analyzing each post, three posts were hand selected from each day of the week in order to provide 21 in-depth descriptions of posts that used multiple themes within their story post and how the connection to a theme was made. By looking deeper into each post, it is evident that the flow of events is presented in a more episodic structure, depicting real time rather than a beginning middle and end. This in-depth look also shows how more indices can help a story be more relatable to the viewers when it comes to using their own past experiences to relate to the story, which draws directly back to Escalas (2004) findings in regards to Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory.

A. Examples of 21 In-Depth Posts That Used Multiple Themes Within a Story

jasminestar - Monday, September 12th, 2016

This post starts off with her on a plane, showing where she is going for a workshop (Where I’m at/What I’m Doing Right Now). Then, she is getting off the elevator meeting with her friend and business partner, Promise Tangeman (Who I’m With). She then shows a shot of her name tag with the projector for the name of the conference she is attending (Where I’m At/Informing or Establishing Expertise). She is walking with Promise and gives background on what the conference is about and shows a few clips from the workshop (Sneak Peek/Previews). The overall takeaway from this post was that Jasmine wanted to show off that she was enhancing her business skills with

other well-known branding experts that she was networking with and furthering her education in order to become a better educator herself.

oh_so_vera - Monday, September 12th, 2016

The first video slide is a shot of her daughter in a unicorn costume, while she “helps” with her mom’s work (What my Child(ren) is/are Doing Right Now). Since *oh_so_vera* sells boutique children’s clothes and bows, showing what her daughters are up to appeals to her target audience that is comprised mostly of moms and helps her seem like a relatable and loyal brand. Her conversational tone is closer to chatting with a best friend than a clothing brand. The next shot shows a vast amount of inventory—over 300 freshly made bows (Company Products) including a new Christmas pattern (Sneak Peek) to get moms excited and thinking about how to match the bows with Christmas attire.

lovestruckevent – Monday, September 12th, 2016

She starts out by explaining she is at Bride KC, shows shots of boutique wedding gowns hanging on a rack and the pattern of wallpaper (Where I’m At). Shows a shot of her stylish leopard print flats and adds the text “Bluebird Bistro” (What I’m Wearing and Where I’m At). Then cuts to a shot of her folding linens for a stylized table at Amagoni, an urban winery in Kansas City (Where I’m At and What I’m/We’re Doing Right Now). While she folds, she tells where she got the napkins (Company Products and Informing or Establishing Expertise). She ends by showing her team on ladders, positioning floral arrangements in the event space (Who I’m With and Sneak Peek/Previews). By showing

all the trendy places she visits, her personal style, what products she is working with and a live view of how they are decorating the space, she is showing her clients what it is like to work with her, stressing her attention to detail and expertise when it comes to picking the top vendors, services and products.

goldenrodasteries – Tuesday, September 13th, 2016

In this series of video cuts, she shows several different examples of boutique bakery items in a different bakery, and then shows a shot of a drink with the logo of the place and address—Gjusta, located on Sunset Avenue in Venice, CA (Where I'm At). While simultaneously showing her appreciation and love for food, she also is Informing or Establishing Expertise by showing that she is staying on the cutting edge by traveling and learning what other bakeries on the West Coast are offering clients from a food and experience standpoint. By becoming the client herself, she is better able to identify what she would like to offer her own clients back home. By showing this on her story, her followers, most likely comprised of foodies, are able to experience this environment along with her.

lhcalligraphy – Tuesday, September 13th, 2016

She shows panned view of all the @mintwood home goods set out on a table for a pop-up-shop that she is taking part in the next day (Company Products and Sneak Peek/Preview and What I'm Doing Right Now). Next shot is of her writing on a display board (Company Products) and shows the final shot of her table and how it will look,

mentioning that @mintwoodhome will be there as well (Who I'm With). She also shows a shot of her boxed cards with a written text overlay that says "Card and holiday, too!!!!!" (Playing off a Seasonal/Current Event). She ends by showing the outdoor pop-up-shop sign along with an added text overlay that informs the client of the address and time of the event (Call to Action). By showing the process of preparing for an event and a "behind the scenes" look at the products, it may incentivize her clients to show up for the actual event, inquire about some of the products she showed, or give a sense for her brand and what she provides to clients.

katelynjames – Tuesday, September 13th, 2016

Her first screenshot shows her open laptop and the first page of her Posing workbook with a written overlay that informs her viewers that, "Ahh! Week one has Started!!!!" She continues by explaining that those enrolled in the course have received their first lessons and scrolls through the slides to show what the material looks like. (Company Products, Sneak Peek/Previews, Tutorial, Informing or Establishing Expertise and Call to Action). She then cuts to a more humorous and personal shot of her adorable dog and an update that he got some new treats to help make his teeth stop smelling (What my pet(s) is/are doing right now). The Story cuts to another view of her laptop with a series of photos of her assistant fanning the bride's veil while she takes the photos with a text overlay that reads, "My personal wind machine" (Who I'm with, Tutorial, Sneak Peek/Previews and Company Products). The video then changes tone again from business to personal by showing a shot of her house being built and an update on the progress of

their front lawn (Where I'm At), her dog posed in front of the house (What my pet(s) is/are doing right now) and then does a walk-through while giving tips about building a house (Sneak Peek/Previews and Informing or Establishing Expertise). She ends by showing a shot of her highlighted bible and notes with a text overlay that reads, "Sleeping in and quiet time" (What I'm/We're Doing Right Now.) By showing a series of mixed business and personal posts, she is showing she has a very busy lifestyle, but keeps balanced and is able to represent a brand where she is the face of her business. Clients love to see what type of person they will be working with on a personal as well as business level since wedding photography requires a lot of time spent with the photographer. She is not only showing she is credible in her posts, but a likeable person.

borrowforyourbump – Wednesday, September 14th, 2016

She flips through a book published by two nutritionists with a text overlay that reads, "Got my early copy of happy, healthy pregnancy cookbook" (What I'm Doing Right Now and Sneak Peek/Previews), showing that she has an insider access to the content as well as teams up with other related businesses in order to co-advertise, informing and establishing expertise. She talks about one the chapters addressing leg cramps and what recipes pregnant women can make in order to help the common symptom, which is helping her relate with her target audience of women who want to have kids, who are expecting or who currently have kids. She shows another shot of a recipe that she can't wait to make: Waldorf Chicken Salad with Pistachios and Creamy Yogurt Dressing, commenting that this is what she is making tonight. Also, showing an

article about Chocolate with Pickles, about Recipes to Satisfy with a personal comment that reads, “Can’t I have it all? Chocolate and ice cream are necessities, right?” Since she is a small business, relating with her clients and establishing a personal tone may be the difference between her followers purchasing from her instead of the competition. She ends by humorously asking, “Is it bad that I’m not pregnant anymore, but this is still a problem?” (Asking a Question.)

melanieburk – Wednesday, September 14th, 2016

She is feeding her newest addition to their family and says, “sometimes, when I’m feeding him and can hear my kids getting into other things, I just don’t want to know what they’re doing”; then, she cuts to a shot of her newborn sleeping in his rock n’ play with a subtitle, “Can I have one my size??” (What my child(ren) is/are doing right now). She gives an tour and inside view at the end of the day of what her house looks like with four kids (absolute disaster zone) and ends by saying “Don’t you want to come visit?” with a subtitle “Send help!!!:)” (What I’m/we’re doing right now and Sneak Peek/Previews.) The takeaway from this post was that although she is a photographer, she is also a stay-at-home-mom. By relating with her target audience of moms, she is showing the reality of what her home looks like when she has an infant and three other kids in their home while she tries to balance work projects from her home office. This post is an example of transparency and the ability to relate on a personal level with a clientele that understands the humor and struggles of balancing work and play as a mom entrepreneur.

oliverandlucydesigns – Wednesday, September 14th, 2016

She shows all her inventory of red and plaid blankets in her studio (Company Products) and turns the camera to show her shirt by Owl People, recommending to “grab one...or post one that you’re wearing” (Who I’m With and What I’m Wearing). Since she is a local handmade product, she takes the opportunity to align herself with other small businesses in the community that can co-advertise. By showing product inventory in during the season of family pictures and before the holidays, she is placing the thought in her client’s minds to purchase the handmade products they are being shown from the local maker.

waxbuffalo – Thursday, September 15th, 2016

The owner shows a video of her assistant placing sticker labels on each of the candles and boxing them (What I’m/we’re doing right now, Company Products and Who I’m With). This not only shows the hard work that a local business goes through to hand place each of the product logos and package the goods, it gives a sense of who the client is buying from when they purchase these locally made goods.

sollybabywrap – Thursday, September 15th, 2016

The first frame shows shots of models holding babies in the new Fall 2016 colors for the solly baby wraps (Company Products, Sneak Peek/Previews and Tutorials). A subtitle reads, “For 15% off...use code WRAPMEUP”

(Giveaways/Prizes/Discounts/Incentives and Call to Action). Using discounts as a final call to action is a way for the company to give incentives and extra benefits to their clients who are loyal and follow their social media accounts.

abeautifulmess – Thursday, September 15th, 2016

She shows a full shot of a refrigerator that she just resurfaced due to a request on her blog and addresses a question and shows a close-up of the surface (Tutorial, Asking a Question and Informing or Establishing Expertise). She ends by encouraging her followers to head over to the blog to find more information on the resurfacing kitchen project (Call to Action). By addressing questions and linking the material between her blog and what she addresses on her Instagram, she is encouraging engagement and conversation as well as reinforcing her expertise and encourage clients to follow her creative DIY projects on the Beautiful Mess blog.

free_babes – Friday, September 16th, 2016

the first shot is a huge wall of fabrics with the subtitle, “Opinion needed!” (Company Products and Asking a Question) as well as mentioning “Fall plaids” (Playing off a Seasonal/Current Event). She then shows some checkered patterns and asks in a text overlay, “Red check blue or green????” (Asking a Question). She shows her favorite section of fabrics with a subtitle “My favorite section. Swiss dots for life” (Company Products and Sneak Peek/Previews). By showing the process of her picking the types of patterns, her clients may be interested after seeing some of the fabrics in person and are

more likely to get excited about her creating new products out of these fabric examples being shown.

aliceandames – Friday, September 16th, 2016

Fist shot is of her daughter in her high chair, making faces and eating her lunch (What my child(ren) is/are doing right now). Then a photo of her other daughter in a queen costume plays showing how to use the homemade Alice and Ames dresses to incorporate an idea for a Halloween outfit that can be made from a dress that can be worn on a normal basis (Playing off a Seasonal/Current Event, Company Products and Tutorial) with a subtitle that reads, “‘Queen’ came way too easy for her”. By showing that her daughters wear her own handmade clothing, she not only is able to testify the quality and show how they fit, but relate with her mom followers who are looking for a good reason to splurge a little on a homemade, local product that can double for a Halloween costume.

jeansmithphoto – Friday, September 16th, 2016

The photographer shows a shot of a cultural snack with a subtitle, “Why do I feel like the only human on earth who eats and loves these? Who. Is. With. Me.” (What I’m Eating/Drinking and Asking a Question). Then shows a panning landscape shot of beautiful mountains, a lake and fog with the added text, “Cannot even HANDLE #norway” (Where I’m At). She then shows a shot off the back of her camera with the text, “Everyone should get married in Norway and everyone should bring me with to

shoot it” (What I’m/we’re doing right now). By showing she is a traveling wedding photographer, she is reminding other clients that she would potentially travel to their lavish wedding spots and is able to show off some personality while she does business since she is the face of her brand and is part of what you get when you book a wedding under her services.

paperkiteshop – Saturday, September 17th, 2016

She shows multiple piles of new baby bows as music plays in the background and a few shots of stylized shop views (Company Products). Then she cuts to her daughter’s room where she is playing with some of the boutique toys with the text, “Making beds for animals all day” as well as shows her singing her ABCs while playing a toy guitar (What my child(ren) is/are doing right now). Then two kids are shown, playing blocks in one of the boutiques, ending with a slide of all the bows announcing, “Fall bows in BOTH locations!!!” (Company Products, Playing off a Seasonal/Current Event and Call to Action). Since she is a mom entrepreneur, using her daughter to show how much she loves playing with the boutique toys is a great way to appeal to her target audience of moms and moms-to-be. Showing off how she styles her shops, playing music and incorporating kids reinforces the tone of her brand, and by showing new products for the Fall, she is encouraging foot traffic in both her Lincoln and Omaha, NE locations.

em_hendersen – Saturday, September 17th, 2016

She shows a first profile shot of her speaking then turns the camera and tells the viewers that they are in her living room and debating how to use leftover Target furniture from a shoot last week. As she shows several shots of the room, she explains her vision for the potential set-up, explaining her reasoning for each design choice (Tutorial and Informing or Establishing Expertise). She gives multiple perspectives from the places her guest could possibly sit or stand and what their interior experience would feel like. She then shows what art would be replaced and cuts to a different room and talks about where the bed, rug and other furniture are from. A new series of shots shows her visiting a client's house that she has been working at for over a year and explains that it is not currently finished, but shows some of the rooms in advance as well as how they will finish styling each room (Sneak Peek/Previews and Informing or Establishing Expertise). The last series of shots is of her Target cart and all the staging products she is buying for her client's homes (What I'm/we're doing right now and Where I'm At). This series of videos gives her potential clients an idea of what runs through her mind while interior decorating and making design and purchasing decisions as well as her keen taste in décor and attention to detail.

toneitup – Saturday, September 17th, 2016

She displays an article in a magazine where she is featured (Sneak Peek/Previews and Informing or Establishing Expertise) in her “Slay” tank (Company Products), which cuts to a slide with a overlay text, “My.ToneItUp.com!” (Call to Action). Then it switches settings to a Halloween photoshoot of her and her friends (Who I'm With and

Playing off a Seasonal/Current Event) showing a sneak peek of the Halloween party they are dressed up for and attending that night (Who I'm With). This is an example of incorporating both work and play in order to give a sense for the person behind the brand and their personality.

natalieborton – Sunday, September 18th, 2016

She gives an update that they are moving and shows several shots of piles and miscellaneous boxes with the subtitle, “disaster zone” (What I'm/we're doing right now). Then she shows a shot of her outfit (What I'm Wearing) with added text, “Furniture Shopping” (What I'm/we're doing right now), and a shot of her and her husband in a mirror and adds the label, “IKEA adventure” (Who I'm With and Where I'm At). This is more of a personal post, but lets her clients know what's going on at home and shows off some of her style in the process.

briarhandmade – Sunday, September 18th, 2016

The first video slide shows their booth/pop-up-shop at a bustling boutique market scene (Where I'm At) and then shows several different shots of babies and children wearing the new “pom” bonnet (Company Products and Sneak Peek/Previews) and a few shots of moms putting them on their kids (Tutorial).

messinaphotos – Sunday, September 18th, 2016

The first video series shows her model dancing with a scenic view of mountains overlooking a coastline in the background (Who I'm With and Where I'm At). Then, a few still shots roll of her taking photos of the model, adjusting her hair and adding seaweed around her (What I'm/we're doing right now and Tutorial). They cut to a shot of the model driving and them listening to music (What I'm/we're doing right now and Who I'm With.) Finally, she shows some of the photos they took in her editing software as screenshots with the subtitle, "Presets for sale in bio! Get this look!" (Sneak Peek/Previews, Tutorial and Call to Action.) In this post she shows an example photo shoot, how she shoots, the end result and advertises a product to other photographer followers.

IV. Discussion

Marketing in the ever-changing social media world has been key for large and small businesses alike. This study analyzed female online businesses and how their businesses and/or brands used Instagram stories. The study was focused around women in regards to Hassan's (2014) study that showed the possibility of women using Instagram differently, where the results suggested that women may be more prone to impulse purchasing than when it comes to clothing (as the study was limited to retail stores) or making purchases because of the connection to a particular value or belief (Hassan, 2014).

The fifteen themes identified from watching the 222 business posts and analyzing the 21 in-depth videos were: 1.) What I'm/we're doing right now; 2.) What my child(ren) is/are doing right now; 3.) What my pet(s) is/are doing right now; 4.) Who I'm with; 5.)

Where I'm at; 6.) What I'm Wearing; 7.) What I'm Eating/Drinking; 8.) Company Products; 9.) Sneak Peek/Previews; 10.) Giveaways/Prizes/Discounts/Incentives; 11.) Informing or Establishing Expertise; 12.) Asking a Question; 13.) Playing off a Seasonal/Current Event; 14.) Tutorial; and 15.) Call to Action. By further analyzing 21 in-depth views of posts, the connection between content and the themes were exemplified.

In regards to Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory, Bruner (1990) and Escalas (1998), both talked about how “time figures in narrations as episodes that have a beginning, middle and end, whereas time in reality is an undifferentiated continuous flow”. By looking at the structure of the overall content provided in the 222 posts, there was not a chronological “beginning, middle and end” when looking at the overall order of material. Nor was there a chronological flow of the subject matter when it came to a typical inciting incident in the beginning and resolution towards the end, as there would be in traditional storytelling. However, the structure was portrayed closer to time described in reality, where there is a continuous flow of events that occur throughout the story not necessarily in any particular order.

There were several indices scattered throughout each story (locations, decisions, actions, attitudes, quandaries, decisions, or conclusions) where Escalas (2004) made the proposition that indices in stories serve as touch points of a story's core message to the listener/viewer and that narrative processing creates or enhances self–brand connections (SBC) in consumer theory because people generally interpret the meaning of their experiences by fitting their interpretations of experiences into a story. This was

significant in terms of the amount of themes in each post, suggesting that there may have been more chances for the business/brand to relate to the consumer as they connected the indices with their own experiences (referring to Woodside, pg. 19).

Limitations of the Study and Next Steps

The businesses/brands that were hand-selected represent certain Instagram accounts that fit the target audience, and will therefore represent a distinct perspective into the world of how a specific group of female brands may be using Instagram stories. Also, with the timeframe being limited to one week, it may be beneficial in future studies to conduct observations over different times of the year or for an extended amount of time. It was not possible to predict in advance who would post at any given time or how many times they would post over the week's time period in which the stories were captured. Future qualitative observations studies may be done in the form of in-depth interviews to gather more specific information from the users on their specific strategies. For example, did the women have a plan in advance to post on certain days of the week or if they posted impulsively? Also, does the number of themes make a difference on how well the audience related to the story; furthermore, does this lead to more social interactions, likes or follows?

In relation to common themes and structure, it would be interesting to look at how the small businesses actions relate with some of the larger corporate brands that have started to use Instagram stories. With the online female business owners, it was observed that several incorporated personal aspects of their lives into their posts. Do larger

corporations make the same efforts to show a behind the scenes look into their companies, and would this be beneficial for their businesses/brands?

Indices could also be the center of future studies, and how the number of relatable memories that the followers experience connects to the interaction shown through the analytics. Now that the themes are formed, the next step may be to figure the exact proportions of which are used most amongst various types of users. Also, it would also be beneficial to study the quantifiable data of content, and what subject matter is most effective, if there is a most effective length of post, what types of audiences are viewing the content and if there are differences across different demographics. Since women were focused on in this study, it may be beneficial to also study how women react to these stories.

Finally, this study focused on the users and how they generate content, so it would be valuable to observe how audiences respond to different forms of content and whether the number of indices within a story makes a difference on how well they relate to the material. As with social media, it is one thing to generate loyal followers, but interaction between the brand and consumer could also be useful in terms of which content themes result in interaction, and purchases.

Conclusion

This qualitative visual ethnography study set out to explore how female online business owners/brands use Instagram's newest feature, stories, as well as the common themes that emerged from the content of the posts. In addition, it aimed to connect how

the overall content and structure of the posts related back to the Brand–Consumer Storytelling Theory. In conclusion, the qualitative approach and focus on female entrepreneurs was the first study of its type since Instagram just released the story feature in August 2016. The findings revealed fifteen different themes and 21 in-depth descriptions that will offer future exploration based off these themes regarding the best practices for other female businesses to follow and customize based on their business background. Looking at the overall structure of how the posts were made, the connection was made between the episodic structure; in specific, how time in reality was portrayed as a “continuous flow” by Bruner (1990) and Escales. Also, Escales’ (2004) reference to indices relate to the number of themes and connections that consumers are able to make. By using the generalized themes and knowledge that Hassan (2014) provided that women use Instagram differently than men when it came to retail purchases, this study will serve as a stepping stone to additional research as the platform may change and as more advertisers take to Instagram.

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APPENDICES

Number of Times Businesses Posted in a Week

Business/Brand	Posts in a week
_ashleymariephotography	1
alexprager	1
borrowforyourbump	1
brightbolddesign	1
coracalligraphy	1
dear.freya	1
devonrachel	1
dreamcatcherbaby	1
emilycrall	1
goinglovely	1
jacyschwager	1
jeansmithphoto	1
kylabeck	1
laco handmade	1
letterfolkco	1
lexieraejohnson	1
littleunicornofficial	1
lovelyblondelocloset	1
mindbodysoulblog	1
minimoc	1
oliverandlucydesigns	1

ryleeandcru	1
waxbuffalo	1
baphotography	2
belleandthebear	2
briarhandmade	2
camera_mama	2
caraloren	2
chalenejohnson	2
emilysoto	2
girlsgonechild	2
happilygrey	2
hello_miss_lovely	2
insta2yearold	2
karenakatrina	2
kbcutedesigns	2
mcsweetyogi	2
messinaphotos	2
nataliefongphoto	2
selectstylelincoln	2
sfgirlbybay	2
shonda1020	2
taylorjoelledesigns	2
thebancedlife	2
thewifelife	2
jasminestar	3
abeautifulmess	3
amberinteriors	3
b_savy	3
eatsleepwear	3
emilyquinton	3
emthegem	3
free_babes	3
jessicanddesigns	3
meg_nlo	3
melanieburk	3
nikkimoorephoto	3
sollybabywrap	3
thepioneerwoman	3
designsponge	4

em_henderson	4
kandeejohnson	4
laracasey	4
meg_legs	4
ohjoy	4
toneitup	4
_losangeles	5
designlovest	5
katelynjames	5
lhcalligraphy	5
lovestruckevent	5
simply_may_	5
witanddelight_	5
aliceandames	6
cjn nutrition	6
goldenrodpasteries	6
natalieborton	6
oh_so_vera	6
paperkiteshop	6
ellabrooksblog	7
nickichicki_	7

Types of Businesses

Business/Brand	Type of Business
designsponge	Author
insta2yearold	Author
thepioneerwoman	Author
aliceandames	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
belleandthebear	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
briarhandmade	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
dreamcatcherbaby	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
free_babes	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories

laco handmade	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
littleunicornofficial	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
minimoc	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
oh_so_vera	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
oliverandlucydesigns	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
ryleeandcru	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
sollybabywrap	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
taylorjoelledesigns	Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories
abeautifulmess	Design Blogger
designlovest	Design Blogger
ohjoy	Design Blogger
cjn nutrition	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
chalenejohnson	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
karenakatrina	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
mcsweetyogi	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
mindbodysoulblog	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
shonda1020	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
thebancedlife	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
toneitup	Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach
coracalligraphy	Handmade goods
dear.freya	Handmade goods
jessicanddesigns	Handmade goods
kbcutedesigns	Handmade goods
letterfolkco	Handmade goods
lhcalligraphy	Handmade goods
nickichicki_	Handmade goods
waxbuffalo	Handmade goods
amberinteriors	Interior Designer
brightbolddesign	Interior Designer
sfgirlbybay	Interior Designer
witanddelight_	Interior Designer
devonrachel	Lifestyle Blogger

ellabrooksblog	Lifestyle Blogger
melanieburk	Lifestyle Blogger
natalieborton	Lifestyle Blogger
_losangeles	Mom Blogger
b_savy	Mom Blogger
girlsgonechild	Mom Blogger
simply_may_	Mom Blogger
thewifelife	Mom Blogger
kylabeck	Other
jacyschwager	Other
kandeejohnson	Other
jasminestar	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
eatsleepwear	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
_ashleymariephoto	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
alexprager	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
baphotography	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
camera_mama	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
emailyrcall	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
emilyquinton	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
emilysoto	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
emthegem	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
hello_miss_lovely	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
jeansmithphoto	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
katelynjames	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
laracasey	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
lexieraehjohnson	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
meg_nlo	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
messinaphotos	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
nataliefongphoto	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
nikkimoorephoto	Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design
selectstylelincoln	Storefront Owner
paperkiteshop	Storefront Owner
goldenrodpasteries	Storefront Owner
borrowforyourbump	Storefront Owner
caraloren	Stylist/Fashion Blogger
happilygrey	Stylist/Fashion Blogger
lovelyblondelocet	Stylist/Fashion Blogger
meg_legs	Stylist/Fashion Blogger
em_henderson	Stylist/Fashion Blogger

goinglovely	Wedding/Event Planning
lovestruckevent	Wedding/Event Planning

Combined Categories of Types of Businesses

Author/Blogger	24.69%
Photographer/Branding/Graphic Design	23.46%
Baby/Kids' Handmade Clothing/Accessories	16.05%
Food/Nutrition or Health/Fitness Coach	9.88%
Handmade goods	9.88%
Interior Designer	4.94%
Storefront Owner	4.94%
Other	3.70%
Wedding/Event Planning	2.47%