To Engage or Not: Identifying The Content Characteristics of Brand Instagram Stories That Impact Engagement Behaviour in Irish Consumers.

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc Digital marketing is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

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Abstract

Social media networks have significantly changed the way consumers engage with brands in the online space, with Instagram Stories among the most recent feature to make an impact. The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of brand Instagram Story content that impact on engagement among Irish consumers. Focus was placed on the characteristics of media type, interactivity and length of brand content. To address this aim, data was collected by way of an online survey shared via Instagram Stories. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and Excel programmes. The results of this quantitative study demonstrate that Irish consumers are more likely to engage with brand Instagram Story content that is image based, interactive and of moderate length. It is concluded that, the characteristics of brand content on Instagram Stories, namely media type, interactivity and length of brand content, impact on consumer engagement behaviour and therefore should be considered by brands in the development of digital marketing strategies.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

The surge in popularity of social media networks in recent years has significantly altered the way in which consumers engage with brands online. The value of social media platforms as a marketing channel is well recognized by brands and as such, form an integral role in marketing communication strategy. Advances in technology has allowed social media to break down the barriers to interaction between brands and consumers while the interactive nature of social media has turned consumers from passive observers to active contributors. Social media is constantly changing and new opportunities for digital marketing present themselves regularly.

One of the most recent social media extensions to apply in the digital marketing space is ephemeral content. Ephemeral content is defined as social media content that vanishes after a set time period, usually 24hrs. This content form was launched by Snapchat in 2011 and then adopted by Instagram (Instagram Stories) in 2016. Instagram Stories now has over 300 million active daily users (Del Rowe, 2018). Ephemeral content also known as disappearing content brought about a wave of change in the social media landscape. Brand content on Instagram Stories will be the focus of this research project. Instagram Story content differs from traditional social media content in that it is viewable for a maximum time frame of 24 hours. While a very recent addition to the digital marketing space, many brands have been quick to jump on this new medium to communicate with consumers in new and exciting ways. Despite the growing popularity of Instagram Stories within brand digital marketing strategies, there has been scarce academic research on this content form.

The principal aim of this study is to identify the content characteristics of brand Instagram stories that impact consumer engagement. This study will focus on the Irish Consumer. In the context of social media, consumer engagement can be measured as a set of key actions that consumers can take in response to brand content on a social media platform (Barger at el., 2016). When referring to content characteristics, it is specifically the media type, interactivity and length of brand content that will be the focus. For the purpose of this study, media type refers to the format of the content i.e. text, image or video. Interactivity refers to the elements of Instagram Story that encourage participation such as polls or questions. Length refers to the number of individual frames within a brand Instagram story.

The concept of consumer engagement is a recent arrival in the academic marketing space. However, in recent years consumer engagement has become widely cited in academic
literature. Many academics have attempted to define the concept and to date there is no one agreed upon definition. A key academic piece on the concept by Van Doorn et al. (2010) suggests that consumer engagement goes beyond purchase and is more specifically defined as “behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm-focus” (Van Doorn et al., 2010). In contrast, Vivek et al. (2010) define consumer engagement by “the intensity of an individual’s participation and connection with the organization’s offerings” (Vivek et al., 2010). There are many further attempts by academics to define consumer engagement as a concept however following a review of academic marketing literature, Brodie et al. (2011) developed a working definition of consumer engagement within a virtual brand community. The working definition proposes:

“Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community involves specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community. Consumer engagement is a context-dependent, psychological state characterized by fluctuating intensity levels that occur within dynamic, iterative engagement processes. Consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions, and plays a central role in the process of relational exchange where other relational concepts are engagement antecedents and/or consequences in iterative engagement processes within the brand community” (Brodie et al., 2011).

This working definition provides a broad basis for further research on this topic.

1.1 Literature Review

There is a large pool of academic literature available in relation to the broad topic of consumer engagement with brands on social media platforms. Much of this literature is focused on (i) classifying consumer engagement in the online context and (ii) identifying the antecedents to online consumer behavior. A literature based introduction to this topic will now be provided focused on these two broad areas.

(i) Classifying Consumer Engagement

Acknowledging the increasing role of social media in the communication between brands and consumers, it is necessary to establish an understanding of the differing levels of consumer
engagement. A study conducted by Muntinga et al. (2011) articulates a three-tier framework of Consumers Online Brand-Related Activities – consumption, contribution and creation. Consumption represents a minimum level of engagement and relates to the passive consumption of brand content without active participation (Muntinga et al., 2011). Contribution refers to a consumer’s active participation with brand content for example ‘like’ or ‘share’ brand related content on social media (Muntinga et al., 2011). Creation is considered the strongest level of brand engagement and it involves consumers actively creating and sharing brand related content on social media (Muntinga et al., 2011). The conclusions of this study are further supported in subsequent research conducted by Schivinski et al. (2016).

While Muntinga et al. (2011) and Schivinski et al. (2016) focus on classifying consumer engagement by the type of engagement activity. A differing approach is taken by Vivek et al. (2012) whereby the focus is on the intensity of the engagement rather than the actual engagement action. The study proposes that consumer engagement encompasses individuals that interact with a brand beyond making a purchase or even planning to make a purchase. The authors of this study define customer engagement as “the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization” (Vivek et al., 2012). This definition highlights the difference in approach when compared with the earlier discussed research of Muntinga et al. (2011) and Schivinski et al. (2016). Furthermore, Vivek et al. distinguish between consumer participation and consumer engagement. The study proposes that consumer participation can positively influence consumer engagement. For example, the action a consumer takes when interacting with a brand i.e. liking social media posts or sharing user generated content can increase an individual’s enthusiasm for the brand and therefore boost engagement (Vivek et al., 2012). Further academic literature supports the classification of consumer engagement by varying levels of intensity. Weitzl and Einwiller (2018) propose that consumer engagement intensity ranges from low to high levels and is influenced by context dependent factors such as consumer mood, personality and skills (Weitzl and Einwiller, 2018).

(ii) Antecedents of Consumer Engagement

In an increasingly networked society, social media platforms play a key role in consumer relationships with brands. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, among others, offer unlimited opportunity for consumers to interact with brands in new ways. Social media has transformed consumer engagement behaviour over recent years and this represents a
significant opportunity for brands to engage with customers and potential customers in new and different ways. Key to the successful management of such engagement is an understanding of the stimulating factors of consumer engagement behavior in an online environment. The first step to understanding online consumer engagement behaviour is to identify the main antecedents and their influence on the online engagement of consumers (Alversia et al., 2016).

A paper by Alversia et al. 2016, proposes a conceptual model of the antecedents of consumer engagement behaviour. The paper proposes four concepts as the main antecedents of online consumer engagement behavior: 1. Consumer Product Involvement 2. Brand Attitude Strength, 3. Emotions Towards Brand, 4. Brand Attachment. Consumer Product involvement is key to understanding online consumer engagement behavior and can be understood as the perceived relevance of a product based on the consumers’ needs and values (Alversia et al., 2016). The paper hypothesizes that the more involved a consumer becomes with a particular product; the more they become engaged with activities relating to that product such as online engagement. Involvement is further supported as an antecedent to online consumer engagement behavior, in particular social media platforms, in a systematic literature review paper by Ajiboye et al. (2019). Involvement, in the context of consumer engagement behaviour is based on the level of appeal, perceived value and meaning of a brand to consumers which thus impacts consumer engagement online (Ajiboye et al., 2019).

Alversia et al. 2016 continue by suggesting that consumer emotions is one of the antecedents of online consumer engagement behaviour. It is proposed that a consumer with strong positive emotions towards a particular brand is more likely to engage with that brand online than a consumer with little or no emotions towards the same brand (Alversia et al., 2016).

Brand attachment refers to the bond between consumer and brand i.e. the extent a consumer relies upon a brand to meet a particular need. The authors hypothesize that the stronger a consumer is attached to a brand the more likely they are to engage with that brand online (Alversia et al., 2016). Additionally, Ajiboye et al. (2019) support the antecedent of ownership value in their paper and suggest that online consumer engagement is driven by the additional value perceived following the procurement of a brand product. Both papers propose that the value gained by a consumer following the effective meeting of a need positively impacts consumer engagement behaviour online.
A systematic literature review conducted by Ajiboye et al. (2019), delves further into the antecedents of online consumer engagement behaviour. Social Links is identified as an important antecedent in this paper and refers to the influence that social relationships have on consumer engagement on social media (Ajiboye et al., 2019). A key function of social networks is to interact with friends via an online platform. It is suggested that this user interaction with friends on social media can impact other practices on the platform such as whether a user interacts with a brand (Bitter et al, 2014). Therefore, the authors conclude that the experiences and knowledge social media users gain through interacting with friends can lead to further engagement actions, such as online engagement with a brand (Bitter et al, 2014).

Furthermore, it is proposed that online brand communities as a source of information is a key antecedent to consumer engagement behaviour. Social media has reshaped how consumers search for information as social platforms allow consumers to connect and share information with each other (Chiang et. al, 2017). The search for information can be understood as the use of social networks as a tool in the search for brand related information (Ajiboye et al., 2019). Chiang et. al (2017) give further weight to this proposal in their study which concludes that consumer learning motivation enhances online engagement behavior. Additionally, this study draws links between consumer learning and consumer satisfaction suggesting that consumer learning motivation is a driver of satisfaction (Chiang et. al, 2017). When consumers learning needs can be met through a social media information search, this boosts the consumers emotional state through enhanced feelings of satisfaction. Increased consumer satisfaction positively impacts on consumer engagement behavior as a satisfied consumer is more likely to engage online through recommendations, discussion and feedback (Chiang et. al, 2017).

Moreover, Alversia et al. (2016) also gives mention to consumer satisfaction in the context of strong brand attitudes in their paper on the consumer based antecedents of online engagement behaviour. Strong Brand attitudes represent a consumer's judgement of a particular brand, either positive or negative. It is argued that this can play a role in predicting consumer engagement behaviour online for example leaving a positive or negative review (Alversia et al., 2016). Much of the literature in relation to consumer learning and satisfaction is in agreement that these concepts can positively impact online consumer engagement behaviour.

Functionality is cited in much of the literature as an antecedent of online engagement behaviour. This study will have a particular focus on the functionality antecedent. Previous academic literature on this aspect will be reviewed and hypotheses identified following this.
Functionality can be defined as any aspect of social media platform design which enables consumer engagement; for example, usability, content, format, interface etc. (Ajiboye et al., 2019). A study by Stephen et al. (2015) concluded that how a brand communicates a message influences consumer engagement more than the message itself (Stephen et al., 2015). Carson et al. give weight to this through investigating how social media design characteristics influence consumer engagement behaviour, specifically feedback and collaboration among consumers. The study concludes that four social media design characteristics contribute to consumer engagement behaviour: content quality, brand page interactivity, brand page sociability and customer contact quality (Carlson et al., 2018). Notably, content quality is seen to have a substantial influence on consumer engagement behaviour (Carlson et al., 2018). Consumers with a positive perception of brand content quality will likely have stronger feelings of belonging towards that brand which therefore positively affects engagement behaviour (Carlson et al., 2018).

1.2 Hypothesis development:

Hypotheses for this study will now be identified based on existing academic literature. Hypotheses will be focused on three specific content characteristics – media type, content interactivity and content length.

(i) Media Type

Lei et al. (2016) further supports the above discussed antecedent of functionality to online consumer engagement behaviour. The study proposes two categories of branded content characteristics: media type (format) and content type. It is concluded that the utilization of video or photos in branded content can positively impact the level of consumer engagement (Lei et al., 2016). This is further supported by the Adobe Social Intelligence report (2014) which shows that social media posts using images have the most positive impact on consumer engagement while engagement with video is continuing to grow.

Much of the previous literature in relation to media type and consumer engagement online is centered on the concept of vividness. Media type i.e. text, image and video represent varying levels of media richness, commonly referred to as vividness (Luarn et al., 2015). Vividness in
the context of social media is defined as the extent to which a post from a brand stimulates the senses (Steuer, 1992). Brand posts using image or video demonstrate a higher level of vividness than text based posts alone. Luarn et al. (2015) conclude in their study that level of vividness has an impact on consumer engagement however interestingly, posts with a medium level of vividness such as a combination of text and image, account for higher levels of engagement than highly vivid posts such as video. The study proposes the reasoning for this could be relating to information processing time i.e. highly vivid videos take longer to view and process than images (Luarn et al., 2015). Furthermore, de Vries et al. (2012) indicate a positive impact of photo and video posts on engagement interactions such as the number of likes and the number of comments on brand posts. Sabate et al. (2014) add further to the discussion relating to media type and consumer engagement. The results of the study further support the use of images in brand posts on social media to significantly increase consumer engagement in the form of likes and comments (Sabate et al., 2014). In relation to the inclusion of video, the results interestingly show no impact on the number of comments a post received. Similarly, to the reasoning suggested by Luarn at al discussed above, Sabate at al. (2014) suggest that processing time could be a factor in this result. It is suggested that images are easier to digest within a few seconds whereas video requires longer processing time from the user which could negatively impact engagement (Sabate at al., 2014).

While much of the studies relating to post vividness and the impact on consumer engagement are inconclusive and differing in results, the relevance of post vividness is widely agreed upon. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1: Instagram users are most likely to engage with brand content that is image based.**

**(ii) Content Interactivity**

Content interactivity is widely considered as a key driving factor for consumer engagement on social media, with higher levels of post interactivity associated with higher levels of consumer engagement. Interactivity in the context of social media can be defined as the level to which brand content animates a consumer to respond (Schultz, 2017). Interactive content elements include calls to action, links, polls, hashtags and questions (Schultz, 2017). The study concludes that the presence of interactive elements in brand social media content impacts positively on consumer engagement (Schultz, 2017). The finding is this study further supports
the earlier work conducted on this topic by Luarn et al. (2015) who also conclude that interactivity demonstrates a strong effect on online engagement. The results of the study indicate brand posts with a high level of interactivity entice users to engage (Luarn et al., 2015). This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Schultz (2017) on the same topic.

The studies of Schultz (2017) and Luarn et al. (2015) focus on interactivity generally which encompasses a number of elements such as links, polls, hashtags etc. Further academic studies on this topic center on the presence of a call to action (CTA) specifically within branded content. The inclusion of a CTA in a brand post is highlighted as an important driver for consumer engagement by Lei et al., 2016. The study demonstrates that the use of a CTA within brand content has a significant positive impact on all aspects of online consumer engagement (Lei et al., 2016). Further to this, Stephen et al. (2015) propose that while the presence of a CTA in a brand social media post can positively impact on consumer engagement, the type of CTA has importance. The study found that CTA such as asking a question or asking for consumer opinion received higher engagement from consumers while competition based CTA had a negative impact on engagement from consumers (Stephen et al., 2015). As demonstrated from the above discussion of literature, interactive elements of brand content are widely considered as a driver to consumer engagement with brands online. Based on this, the following hypothesis is identified:

H2: Instagram users are most likely to engage with brand content that includes an interactive element.

(iii) Content Length

Post length is identified as an affecting factor of consumer engagement online, however there is scarce academic research focusing on this aspect. The length of a social media post impacts the amount of information within the post and the consumer ability to process it. Luarn et al. (2015) control for post length within their research. In their study, post length is classified by the number of characters used in a text based post. The results conclude that post length negatively impacts the number of likes on a brand content (Luarn et al., 2015). In a subsequent study by Trefzger et al. (2016) content length is examined in the context of the number of text lines. The study proposes that posts with a moderate amount of text attracted more consumer engagement than posts with no text and/or a lot of text (Trefzger et al., 2016).
While there are few studies relating to the impact of length in brand social media content, research in relation to online advertising can offer valuable insights. Goodrich et al. (2014) studied the effect of online video advertising length, among other factors, on marketing outcomes. The study proposes that the length of online video advertising significantly affected marketing outcomes such as advertising recall. Results show a significant positive relationship between advertising length and recall (Goodrich et al., 2014). While consumer engagement was not considered as part of the Goodrich et al (2014) study, the results demonstrating a significant impact of content length on marketing outcomes can be applied to engagement. Consumer engagement is considered a significant marketing outcome in the context of social media. Similarly, a Thinkwithgoogle (2016) study investigated the impact of length in online video advertising on YouTube. The study considered three video lengths, 15 seconds, 30 second and 2 minutes. Results show the 30 second ad had the highest view through rate of the three lengths considered indicating moderate length is preferred in terms of online video ads. This finding is consistent with that of Trefzger et al. (2016) discussed above which concluded a moderate amount of text received more consumer engagement.

There is scarce academic literature in relation to brand content length on social media, and much of the available literature is focused on text based content. Insights can be drawn from text-focused studies as well as online advertising theory. These insights can then be applied to other media types, as in this case, the study of Instagram story length. As such, the following hypothesis is identified:

**H3: Instagram users are most likely to engage with mid-range length content.**

As seen from the above review of the literature, there is a large body of work available on the broad topic of consumer engagement with brands on social media. However, while literature on this area is of great value, scarce academic research has been done in relation to the specific characteristics of brand content that impacts consumer engagement online. Despite the prevalence of brand content on social media platforms such as Instagram, little is known as to why consumers engage with some types of content but not others. In addition, while there are many discussions regarding consumer engagement on social media generally, there is very little known in relation to individual social media networks. There is a vast array of social media platforms around today, each with their own unique offerings and functionality. With
this in mind, research with a specific focus on individual platforms can provide an in-depth insight which cannot be found through research with a focus on social media generally.

Furthermore, ephemeral content is a very recent extension of social media and as such there isn’t a large body of research in relation to consumer engagement with this content form. Through the specific nature of this study, this gap in academic literature identified will be addressed. The findings of this study will aid digital marketing and social media professionals in creating engaging content that drives engagement with their audience. According to Brodie et al. (2013) consumer engagement is associated with a number of positive business outcomes such as enhanced consumer loyalty, satisfaction and purchasing (Brodie at al., 2013). Consumer engagement is seen to benefit brands both directly and indirectly. Directly through improved profit and sales and indirectly through customer base expansion as a result of consumer recommendations (Piligrimiene, 2015). Acknowledging the many benefits of consumer engagement for brands, it becomes clear that greater research into the driving factors of such engagement is invaluable for brands to create and maintain sustainable relationships.

This study seeks to extend the literature by identifying the content characteristics, specific to brand Instagram story content that impacts engagement among Irish consumer. The results of this study will identify the specific characteristics of Instagram story content that impact consumer engagement with brands on the platform. The results of this study will add to existing academic literature surrounding consumer engagement by contributing platform specific data while also contributing generally to the overall understanding of the Instagram Story feature in the context of digital marketing. As this content form is a very recent arrival in the digital marketing space, solid academic research is limited. The findings will have benefits for digital marketing and social media professionals by identifying consumer preferences which in turn will inform digital marketing strategy.

To begin to address the gap in the literature identified in the above discussion, an empirical study of the characteristics of brand content on Instagram Stories and their impact on consumer engagement will be conducted. Using a sample of Irish Instagram users who follow a brand on the platform, an online survey will be distributed via the Instagram platform to ensure appropriate participants are reached. The online survey will consist of questions formulated to address the hypothesis identified in this chapter. The questions asked of participants will focus on three key aspects of content characteristics – media type, interactivity and length. It is
important to note at this stage the potential for methodological difficulties when gathering the research. In the case of this study, the limited time frame and resources available may hinder the researcher’s ability to gather a sufficient number of responses to achieve statistical significance.

Following this literature based introduction, the research methodology of this study will be detailed. The way in which the research will be carried out in order to address the hypotheses identified will be set out. This chapter will be broken into sections to address the participants, design, materials, procedure and ethical components of this study. Following this, chapter three will contain a presentation of the key findings to arise during the data collection process and this will be related back to the hypotheses identified. Findings will be presented with evidence in the form of statistical analysis. Finally, chapter four will include an outline of the main findings and also a review of the hypothesis with conclusions drawn as to whether hypotheses are supported by the results of the survey or rejected. Limitations of the study as well as potential direction for future research will also be acknowledged in this final chapter.
Chapter 2 - Methodology

The aim of this research is to identify the characteristics of brand Instagram Story content that impact engagement among Irish consumers. This chapter will detail the methodological approach used to conduct the research required by this study. Following a number of weeks of planning, data collection was conducted in June 2020 using a purely quantitative research design. The Research Onion illustrated by figure 1 below provides a framework for the stages of formulating an effective research methodology. (Saunders et al., 2016)

Figure 1: The Research Onion

To detail the methodological approach taken, this chapter will be divided using subheadings as follows; (2.1) Participants (2.2) Design (2.3) Materials (2.4) Procedure (2.5) Ethical Considerations.

2.1 Participants

As discussed in previous chapters, the aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of brand Instagram Stories that impact engagement in Irish consumers. With this in mind, the population of this study is identified as Irish consumers that view content on Instagram stories from a brand. As of June 2020, the number of Irish Users on Instagram is estimated at 2,036,000 (NapoleonCat, 2020). This number is the population size for this study.
In order to achieve a 95% confidence level in the results of this study, allowing for a 5% margin of error, a sample size of approximately 385 participants is required (Raosoft, 2020).

To recruit participants for this study, a non-probability convenience sampling method was employed. Given the short twelve-week time frame to complete this research and the limited resources available, this non-probability sampling method is best suited. Convenience sampling allows quick and inexpensive collection of data which will most efficiently serve the aims of this study.

The researcher in this study has access to an Irish brands Instagram profile through employment. The brand has agreed to the use of their Instagram profile for the purpose of recruiting participants for this study. By using this form of participant recruitment, it can be assured that all participants in the study follow at least one brand account on Instagram and therefore are qualified to participate in the research. The brand in question has requested not to be named in the study however for context, the brand Instagram profile has 3,906 followers at the time of writing. The average reach of Instagram story posts on this brand account is 500 – 600 followers. With this in mind, the required 385 participants to reach a 95% confidence level is achievable.

Using insights available directly from Instagram, the audience can be broken down demographically. The audience of the brand page used is split 55% female and 45% male at the time research was conducted. The gender breakdown is illustrated by figure 2 below taken directly from Instagram Insights. The age breakdown of followers at this time is as follows: 18 - 24 year olds account for 6% of followers, 25 – 34 year olds account for 23% of followers, 35 - 44 year olds account for 38% of followers and 45 - 54 year olds account for 19% of followers. The age breakdown is illustrated by figure 3 below. In terms of the location of the audience, more than a quarter of followers are based in Dublin (26%), with Cork accounting for the next largest audience segment at 3% of overall followers. It is recognized that the audience is skewed towards urban locations and also the older age categories however generally this audience provides a representative sample.
Figure 2: Gender of Instagram page followers:

![Gender Chart]

Figure 3: Age of Instagram page followers:

![Age Chart]

To ensure the online survey was fit for purpose, a pilot survey was conducted in advance of the official data collection process. The pilot survey was conducted on the 4\textsuperscript{th} June 2020. The survey was distributed to 10 individuals in order to check for any potential issues such as unclear questions, reliability, validity etc. Following feedback from this pilot test, adjustments to question wording were made and an explanatory introduction clarified.

To begin the data collection process, the online survey was distributed via the brand Instagram profile. The first step was to include a link to the online survey in the bio of the Instagram profile as due to platform limitations this is the only place on Instagram which can support a
direct link to an external webpage. The link in the bio takes participants directly to the survey hosted on Survey Monkey. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. The second step consisted of the creation of a small number of Instagram story posts to distribute the survey via the brand Instagram profile. The first post contained a very brief introduction mentioning the purpose and aim of the study. The second post requested followers to click the link in the page bio to take part in the survey.

Due to the limited time window associated with Instagram story content, the online survey was distributed in two phases to maximize results. The first phase was executed on 18th June 2020, whereby the survey link was added to the bio and the Instagram stories were posted. This was done at 5pm. This time was chosen based on audience data from Instagram insights on the brand page. The data shows that the page audience is most active on the platform between the hours of 5pm and 9pm so posting at this time gives the best chance of attracting participants. The second phase of distribution was executed on 16th July 2020. The exact same process as the first phase was repeated. To ensure no duplicate responses were received, the survey was set to only allow one response from the same device. Following the 2 phases of data collection, a total of 391 survey responses were received.

2.2 Design

This study is a cross-sectional and mono-method quantitative study. Data was collected through an online survey. The survey was distributed via Instagram as the unit analysis in this study is Instagram users. An online survey was chosen as the most appropriate strategy for this study as this method allowed us to gain insights into the extent of consumers engagement with ephemeral content. Surveys are considered the most effective way of gathering data from a large number of people while being both time and cost effective (Saunders and Lewis, 2017) Surveys are generally quick to put together and straightforward to conduct which suits this study given the limited time scale and resources available. Furthermore, surveys allow the ability to study large numbers of consumers and also ensure a level of objectiveness as the researcher is not directly involved during data collection. Interviews and observation would not be suitable data collection methods in this case given the size of the population and time scale available. It would be exceptionally difficult to get statistically significant data from these methods given the limited resources at hand.
The design of this quantitative study is descriptive in nature. Quantitative research involves the collection data to predict, explain or control the relationship between variables. This relationship is measured numerically and analyzed using statistical methods (Saunders et al., 2019). This study aims to identify the characteristics of brand Instagram story content that impact consumer engagement. This data is numerical in nature and for this reason a quantitative research approach is best suited to this study.

In the context of this research descriptive data was collected through the online survey introduced previously. The purpose of descriptive research is to develop an accurate view of a situation. In the case of this study, the aim is to gain a clear view of the characteristics of brand Instagram stories that impact consumer engagement. Descriptive research is generally considered as a means to an end meaning that description is likely to be the predecessor to explanation (Saunders et al., 2019). Given the limited time frame for this study, the purpose of research will be solely descriptive however the results generated can be used to inform future explanatory research.

This study is concerned with the characteristics of brand Instagram story which impact consumer engagement and as such the following variables are identified. The variables tested in this study are Instagram Story content characteristics and consumer engagement. The content characteristic of the brand Instagram story is the independent variable in this study while consumer engagement is the dependent variable.

The approach of this study is deductive in nature. Quantitative research is generally associated with a deductive approach whereby hypotheses are derived from previously established theory and data collected to test such theories (Saunders at all., 2019). Blaikie et al (2010) proposes a list of six steps through which deductive research should move through.

1. Put forward a hypothesis/set of hypotheses to form a theory
2. Use existing literature to develop a testable proposition
3. Examine the premise logic of the argument and compare against existing theories to see if it offers an advance in understanding
4. Test the premise by collection appropriate data
5. If results are not consistent with the hypothesis then the theory is false and should be rejected.
6. If results are consistent with the hypothesis the theory can be supported

Based on a review of academic literature surrounding this topic, three hypotheses have been identified. The aim of the study is to support or falsify these hypotheses in the context of consumer engagement with brand Instagram stories. With this in mind, the deductive approach is most suitable.

2.3 Materials

The stimulus material used in this research project was an online survey hosted using Survey Monkey. The survey consisted of ten multiple choice questions designed to address the hypotheses identified in chapter 1. The questions asked were specific in nature including for example “When do you last recall engaging with a brand on Instagram Stories?” and “What action did you take the last time you recall engaging with a brand Instagram Story?” (See appendix A).

The questions asked were all multiple choice and no open-ended questions were used. The response options given varied from question to question. The number of answer options ranged from two options to eight options. Response options included yes/no, time scale, numerical scale among others in addition to general demographic questions. Due to the specific nature of the questions asked participants were permitted to select just one predefined answer for each question.

Reliability and validity are central concepts to ensuring the quality of the research conducted. Saunders et al. (2019) define reliability as the consistency of results across time i.e. can the results be replicated. To ensure the reliability of this study, the method of research has been carefully considered and planned to guarantee the conditions of research are identical for each participant. The research process will be reported in a clear and transparent way throughout this chapter to allow external reliability.

To maintain internal reliability, the online survey distributed was identical for each participant. The questions were identically worded questions and written introductions and instructions all exactly the same. All participants will access the survey via the same link through the same brand Instagram account. While every effort has been taken to ensure consistency and
reliability, the researcher cannot control the environmental conditions of the participants while taking part in the study as the survey is distributed online and completed but participants in their own environments.

Mitchell (1996) sets out three methods of assessing reliability – test retest, internal consistency and alternative form. In the context of this study, internal consistency is the most appropriate method. Internal consistency involves correlating participant responses with each other generally across a subgroup of questions Saunders et al. (2019). Cronbach’s Alpha is the most frequently used method for calculating internal consistency and is measured using the consistency of responses to a subset of questions (Saunders et al., 2019). SPSS can facilitate a Cronbachs Alpha test. To ensure the internally consistency of this study, Cronbachs Alpha will be used during the data analysis process. The results of the Cronbachs Alpha test will be detailed in the following results chapter along with interpretation of the results.

Reliability is an important characteristic of quality research, and while important, it is not sufficient alone. Research quality also depends on its validity. Saunders et al (2019) define validity as the appropriateness of the measures used to assess what is being studied. Internal validity is concerned with the degree to which the observed results can be attributed to the intervention being researched (Saunders et al., 2019). A valid survey will ensure accurate data which measures the concepts we are interested in. In the context of this study, criterion validity will apply. Questions were asked of participants relating to the characteristics of Instagram story content from a brand that drives their engagement with that content. By asking questions of this nature the researcher can accurately predict consumer engagement behavior with brand Instagram stories.

2.4 Procedure

The data collection for this study was completed entirely online and because of this involved no direct contact between the researcher and participants.

As above, the online survey was distributed via a brand Instagram profile specifically using the Instagram Stories feature. On clicking the link in the bio of the brand Instagram profile, participants are taken to the survey hosted on Survey Monkey. On arriving at the webpage
participants are greeted with the title of the survey along with a brief introduction to the topic and aims of the study as well as a brief instruction on how to complete the survey.

The introduction below stated clearly the aim of the study along with a simple explanation of the term engagement in the context of this study to ensure participants were clear before proceeding.

“The aim of this survey is to identify the characteristics of brand Instagram Story that impact engagement among Irish consumers.

*Engagement* in this case refers to a reply, reaction, share, swipe up or poll/question answer on an Instagram Story.”

Following the survey introduction, brief instructions were set out. Instructions serve to orientate the participants frame of mind when completing the survey

“Please answer all ten questions below based on your personal experience engaging with brands via Instagram Stories. The survey will take approx. 2 minutes to complete”.

Following the introduction/instructions, participants are invited to click ‘ok’ and then the survey officially begins. Each of the 10 questions in the survey is mandatory to answer. Following the choosing of a response on question one, the page moves on to question two and so on. On completion of question ten, the final question, participants are invited to click ‘done’ which ends the survey and submits the responses. Following this, an end page is displayed which thanks participants for their involvement in the study. This concludes the survey. The average time participants took to complete the survey was just under 1 minute.

Following the completion of the data collection process, the raw data collected was transferred from Survey Monkey over to SPSS for analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistical tests were used to analyze the data and present the results in a comprehensive and meaningful way. The following chapter will illustrate the results of this study.
2.5 Ethics

In addition to detailing the data collection and analysis process, there are ethical considerations which also need to be made. The consumer-focused nature of the topic of this research project means that collection of data from members of the public is needed and for this reason will require ethical consideration. As this research project was conducted under the supervision of Dublin Business School it is necessary to follow the ethical guidelines set out by the college.

To ensure each participant was informed fully of the nature of the survey before participating, a brief introduction was provided at the beginning of the process. The introduction clearly set out the topic and aims of the study. By reading this, participants were made aware of the purpose of the project and based on this could make an informed decision as to whether to participate or not. The introduction included was as follows:

“The aim of this survey is to identify the characteristics of brand Instagram Story that impact engagement among Irish consumers. By clicking ok below you are agreeing to participate in this research. The data collected will not contain any personal information about you and will be treated with the strictest anonymity. You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time”.

The online survey was distributed via Instagram Stories along with a short message requesting followers to participate. Participation was entirely voluntary and each follower could decide if they wished to participate or not by simply following the link provided. This Instagram post further made clear the purpose of the project. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without repercussions in the survey introduction.

In addition, the time commitment required from participants was displayed clearly at the beginning of the process. Survey Monkey includes a time estimation and progress bar during the survey process. This ensures participants are fully aware of the time commitment involved and can track their progress throughout the survey.

Participants of the study were unknown to the researcher as the research was conducted entirely online. The questions contained in the survey asked no identifiable information of participants to ensure anonymity was maintained. This anonymity was also clearly assured in the survey.
introduction. The questions asked were strictly focused on addressing the aim of study to ensure no additional irrelevant information was collected. The data collected will be stored only for the duration of this research project. The final piece of work is due submitted in August with grading expected by October. Once the final grade has been received and all elements of this project fully completed the data collected will no longer be stored.
Chapter 3 - Results

Following completion of the quantitative primary research, the next step of the research process was to analyse and process this raw data. This chapter discusses in detail the process taken by the researcher in converting the raw data collected through the online survey into useful and meaningful information. A total of 391 online surveys were conducted in this study and all 391 response received were deemed valid to include in the following analysis. Survey Monkey was the online platform chosen to host this survey. SPSS programmes were used to analyse the raw data collected. The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics brand Instagram story content that impact consumer engagement with a particular focus on three characteristics - media type, interactivity and length. The results of the study will be presented by way of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the basic details of the data. Inferential statistics will then be employed to determine the relationship between the variables and also the statistical significance. In addition, the results presented in this chapter will be used to determine if the hypotheses identified in chapter one of this study are deemed to be supported or rejected. The results data will be presented in this chapter in three parts – (3.1) Descriptive Statistics, (3.2) Inferential Statistics (3.3) Reliability. The following presentation of results will precede the discussion and conclusions of this study which will be detailed in the following chapter.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics:

This following section will contain descriptive statistical analysis to detail the results of this study. Descriptive statistics will be presented in 3 parts as follows (i) Sample Demographics, (ii) Instagram Story Engagement Behaviour (iii) Hypotheses.

(i) Sample Demographics

The researcher acknowledges the importance of a representative sample when undertaking such primary research and as such made every effort to ensure this. As discussed in the previous chapter, the brand Instagram page used during data collection had a representative group of followers making it possible to gain a representative sample.

The first question of the survey requested participants to identify the age group they belonged to. Figure 4 below illustrates the age mix of the population sample.
Of the 391 participants, a large proportion fell into the 25 - 34 and 35 – 44 age bracket. Together these two age groups accounted for 57.8% of the population sample. The 18 – 24 age group accounted for the next largest portion of the sample with 19.9% of participants identifying as part of this group. The 45 – 54 category was also well represented accounting for 16.6% of participants. The age categories at the later end of the scale (45 – 64 and 75+) are under-represented in the population sample accounting for at just 5.6% and 0% respectively. The age range of the population sample seen in the results is consistent with the age range of followers of the brand Instagram account used in the data collection process.

The second question of the survey requested participants to disclose gender. Figure 5 below illustrates the gender mix of the population sample.
The data results show that of the 391 participants, 216 were male which represents 55.2% of the population sample and 175 were female representing 44.8%. The gender differential between male and female participants is 10.4% skewed towards male.

Following the above sample demographic data, it is also beneficial to plot the age and gender of the sample together in order to understand in detail the demographic make-up of the sample. This was done by way of a cross tabulation using SPSS. Results are presented in figure 6 below through clustered bar chart.

*Figure 5: Gender of Respondents*

![Gender](image)

*Figure 6: Age and Gender Cross tabulation*
The above figure 6 illustrates the gender of participants broken down by each of the age categories present in this study. Beginning with the 25 – 34 age group as the was the largest portion of the sample, 38.9% of females identified as part of this age group compared with 29.2% of males. Females are over represented in this particular age group. The 34 – 44 age group is the next largest age category. 18.9% of females surveyed fall into this category along with 28.75 of the males surveyed. Males are over represented in this category. Within the 18 – 24 age category, 22.3% of females choose this category in addition to 18.1% of males. With regard to the 45 – 54 age category, 16% of female participants identified as belonging to this age category compared with 17.1% of males. This age category was the most evenly represented by both males and females. Finally, accounting for the smallest portion of the sample in this study is the 55 – 64 age category. Just 4% of the females surveyed and 6.9% of the males surveyed selected this age group.

(ii) **Engagement behaviour:**

Following the number of demographic questions asked to survey participants, the next questions was included to gain further insight on the way in which participants engage with brands using Instagram Stories generally. The first question relates to the time frame of the most recent time engagement action. Figure 7 below illustrates when respondents last remember engaging with a brand on Instagram Stories.

*Figure 7: When do you last recall engaging with a brand on Instagram stories?*
A large majority of the individuals surveyed said they last recall engaging with a brand Instagram Story within the last seven days with 79.3% of participants choosing an answer within this time frame. The most frequent response given to this question was 2 – 3 days. 42.2% of the population sample selected this time frame as the last time them recall engaging with a brand on Instagram Stories. The next most frequent given response was the 7 day time frame with 20.5% of participants selecting this answer. 16.65% of participants in the survey said they last recall engaging with a brand on Instagram Stories within 24hrs. On the other end of the scale just 4.3% of participants said it has been more than one month since they last engaged with a brand Instagram Story.

Furthermore, within the literature review detailed in chapter one of this study, it was identified that creation is considered the strongest level of consumer engagement (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016) To gather data on this level of consumer engagement using Instagram Stories the population sample were asked; have they ever tagged a brand in their own Instagram story. Figure 8 below illustrates the response to this question.

*Figure 8: Have you ever tagged a brand in own story?*

As seen in the figure above, of the 391 respondents, a majority said they haven’t ever tagged a brand in their own Instagram story (61.6%). While the minority, 38.4% of respondents identified as having tagged a brand in their own Instagram Story.
In addition, to ascertain whether Instagram Story content has a role to play in consumer purchase decisions, respondents were asked whether a brand Instagram Story has ever inspired them to make a purchase from a brand. Figure 9 below displays this data.

Figure 9: Has a brand Instagram story ever inspired you to make a purchase from the brand?

![Pie chart showing 69.6% yes and 30.4% no](image)

69.6% of the population sample said yes they have made a purchase from a brand following Instagram Story content from that brand. This represents the majority of the sample. 30.4% of respondents identified as never having made a purchase from a brand following Instagram story content.

(iii) Hypotheses

The final set of data presented will focus on the hypotheses identified in chapter one. A number of the online survey questions asked of participants directly addressed the hypotheses identified. In this section, results data will be presented in direct relation to each of the three hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1:

H1: Instagram users are most likely to engage with brand content that is image based.
The first hypotheses identified in chapter one is focused on the characteristic of the media type in relation to Instagram Story content. The population sample were asked to identify the content media type of the content they are most likely to engage with, in the context of brand Instagram Stories. Figure 10 below illustrates the results.

*Figure 10: What format of brand Instagram Story are you most likely to engage with?*

![Pie chart showing media type preferences: 73.9% for photo, 19.7% for video, 6.4% for text.](image)

Of the 391 respondents of the online survey, a vast majority identified photo as the media type on Instagram Stories they would be most likely to engage with. 19.7% selected video and just 6.4% selected text as the preferred media type. The results of this survey question indicate a strong preference towards photo as a media type in terms of consumer engagement with Instagram stories.

Following this, the media type preferences of the population sample have been broken down by gender in order to determine if there is relationship between these variables. Figure 11 below illustrates the gender of participants broken down by media type.
Figure 11: Media Type and Gender

From the above figure 11, it can be seen that 77.3% of males surveyed identified photo as the media type they would be most likely to engage with on Instagram stories. In comparison, 69.7 of females selected this option. As demonstrated by these figures, a large majority of both males and females indicated a preference for photos on brand Instagram Stories however males are more likely to engage with this media type than females. The next most preferred media type was video. 15.3% of males surveyed indicated a preference towards a video media type compared with 25.1% of females. It can be seen that a larger proportion of females are more inclined to engage with video based Instagram stories when compared to males. Finally, the text media type was the least popular choice in the context of brand Instagram Story content, with just 7.4% of males and 5.1% of females indicating they would be most likely to engage with text based content on Instagram Stories.

In order to determine if the relationship between gender and media type in the context of brand Instagram Stories engagement is statistically significance a Chi Square test was run using SPSS. The results of this test are demonstrated in the figure 12 below.
As seen in the above results table, the Chi square value is determined as 6.308 and the P value is 0.43. This can be interpreted to indicate the results presented in figure 9 above are statistically significant to a level of 0.5. A P value of less than 0.5 is widely accepted to indicate the results are statistically significant as there is a less then 5% probability that the result obtained occurred due to chance.

Hypothesis 2:

H2: Instagram users are most likely to engage with brand content that includes an interactive element.

The second hypothesis is focused on the characteristic of interactivity level of the brand content on Instagram Stories. Survey participants were asked to identify the type of brand Instagram Story content they would be most likely to engage with. The content type options included some with interactive elements and some without interactive elements. Figure 13 below illustrates the results.
Figure 13: What type of Instagram Story content from a brand are you most likely to engage with?

The most frequently received response to this question was Poll/Question based story with 42.2% of participants choosing this option. The next most frequent response was stories which include a Swipe up link with 34.5% of participants selecting this option. Therefore 76.7% of participants identified stories with an interactive element as the type of content they are most likely to engage with. Product information accounted for 13.6% of responses. Finally, demo/tutorial based stories and behind the scene stories were the least given responses accounting for just 5.9% and 3.8% respectively.

While the above question asked participants to identify the content type they are most likely to engage with, a second question in the survey asked participants to give information regarding the action taken the last time they engaged with a brand in Instagram Stories. Figure 14 below demonstrates the results.
Figure 14: What action did you take the last time you recall engaging with a brand on Instagram Story?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGAGEMENT ACTION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swipe up link</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll/Question</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answer a poll/question was identified by the most participants as the action taken when last engaging with a brand on Instagram stories with 46% choosing this response. Following a Swipe up link accounted for the next highest amount of responses with 31.5% of participants selecting this option. A reaction was chosen by 11% of the population sample as the action taken the last time the recall engaging with a brand on Instagram story. A reply was answered by 6.9% of participant and a share was answered by just 4.6% of participants.

77.5% of the sample population identified an interactive element (poll/question or swipe up link) as the last time they engaged with a brand Instagram story. This result is consistent with figure 7 above whereby an interactive element was identified by 76.7% of participants as they type of content they are most likely to engage with.

**Hypothesis 3:**

H3: Instagram users are most likely to engage with mid-range length content.

The third and final hypotheses which was identified following a review of the literature is focused on the characteristic of length. Survey participants were firstly asked to confirm if the
length of a brand Instagram story would impact whether they choose to engage with the content or not. Figure 15 illustrates the results.

*Figure 15: Would you say the length of a brand Instagram Story impacts whether you choose to engage with it?*

The results of this question demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of the population sample said yes that the length of brand Instagram Story content does have an impact on engagement. 82% of participants would say that content length effects whether they choose to engage with brand content. In contrast, 18% of participants say that no length does not impact whether they engage or not.

In order to break this data down further, a cross tabulation report was run using SPSS to determine the relationship between gender and length as a factor impacting engagement in relation to a brand Instagram story. Figure 16 below illustrates the results by way of a clustered bar chart.
Of the 175 females that participated in this study, 87.4% indicated that yes the length of a brand Instagram story would impact their decision to engage with the content along with 77.8% of the male participants. In comparison, of the female participants of this study, just 12.6% indicated that no the length of a brand Instagram Story would not impact their decision to engage with the content or not. On the other hand, 22.6% of the males surveyed selected this answer.

To ascertain the statistical significance of these results a Chi Square test was run in conjunction with the above cross tabulation. The results of this test are presented in the below figure 17.
Figure 17: CHI Square length and gender:

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>6.126a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correctionb</td>
<td>5.487</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>6.286</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Assoc</td>
<td>6.111</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>391</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.33.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The Chi square value of the two variables is determined as 6.126 and the P value is listed as 0.013. Based on these figures it can be determined that the results are statistically significant to a level of 0.02 which indicates that there is a less than 2% probability that the results received were due to chance.

Furthermore, the results in figure 15 indicate that yes length does impact consumer engagement in relation to brand Instagram story content. Following on from this, a further related question was presented to participants in which they were asked to indicate how many pages of an Instagram Story for a brand they would tap through before swiping out, on average. Figure 18 demonstrates the results of this question.
Figure 18: On average, how many pages of a brand Instagram Story will you tap through before swiping out?

The results as seen above, show a clear majority of participants will tap through 3 – 4 pages of a brand Instagram Story on average with 50.1% of individuals selecting this response. 5 – 6 pages was the second most favoured option with 27.6 of participants identifying this response. 15.3% of the population sample favoured a shorter story length of 1 – 2 pages. A significantly lower proportion of participants favoured longer story lengths with just 7% of individuals selecting 7 – 8 pages and above.

The results illustrated by figure 12 and 15 above indicate that firstly the length of brand Instagram Stories does impact whether consumers engage with the content or not. Secondly, 77.7% of the population sample indicate 3 – 6 pages of a brand Instagram Story as the average length they will tap through before swiping out of the content. In the context of the scale given as part of the question, 3 – 6 pages would be classed as mid-range length.

3.2 Inferential Statistics:

Statistical significance is understood as the likelihood that the relationship between variables is not caused by chance or some other factor (Hinton at al, 2014). By establishing statistical significance in this study, the data results presented in this chapter can be extended to the greater population with some degree of confidence. As mentioned in the previous chapters, this study aims to achieve a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of ±5%. Based on
this, it is expected if this study were to be repeated, the data collected would lie within the confidence interval range 95% of the time. Figure 16 below illustrates the formula used to calculate sample size required to achieve the desired confidence level. The population size for this study was estimated at 2,036,000 (NapoleonCat, 2020). To achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, a minimum sample size of 385 participants is required. In the context of this study, 391 participants responded to the survey. This sample allows the researcher to say with 95% confidence that the results presented in this chapter can be inferred to the greater population.

*Figure 19: Sample Size Calculation Formula*

\[
\text{Sample size} = \frac{z^2 \times p (1 - p)}{e^2} \cdot \frac{e^2}{\left(1 + \left(\frac{z^2 \times p (1 - p)}{e^2 N}\right)\right)}
\]

3.3 Reliability:

Reliability is the ability of a study to measure the topic of interest consistently across different populations and at different points in time (Hinton et al., 2014). Reliability can be tested in a number of different ways, the most commonly used of which is Cronbach’s Alpha. To measure the internal consistency of this study a Cronbach’s Alpha test was run using SPSS. In the case of this study the test concluded a Cronbach’s Alpha of .682 based on the ten items included in the survey. In order to interpret this reliability output from SPSS, the rule of George and Mallery (2003) will apply. George and Mallery (2003) state a Cronbach’s Alpha of >.9 is deemed as excellent, >.8 is considered good, >.7 is acceptable, >.6 is deemed questionable >.5 is considered to be poor while less than .5 is unacceptable. Based on this scale, the Cronbach’s Alpha of .682 for this study would fall between questionable and acceptable. More recent
writings in relation to the interpretation of Cronbach’s Alpha suggest that an Alpha between .5 and .7 indicates moderate reliability (Hinton et al., 2014).

3.4 Conclusion:

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis of the online survey conducted as part of this study. Results were presented by exporting raw data from Survey Monkey, the online platform chosen to host this survey. This raw data was analysed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel and presented using visual graphs and tables throughout this chapter. The hypotheses identified in chapter one will be deemed as either supported or rejected on the basis of the data analysis in the following discussion chapter. The following chapter contains a discussion of these findings along with the conclusions that can be drawn. Limitations of the study in addition to potential direction for future research will also be discussed.
Chapter 4 - Discussion and Conclusion

To begin, a reintroduction to the aim of this study will be stated. This study intended to identify the content characteristics of brand Instagram stories that impacts consumer engagement. When referring to content characteristics, it is specifically the media type, interactivity and length of brand content that was the focus of the research.

Analysis of available literature and the online survey results provided evidence that media type, interactivity and length of brand content on Instagram Stories have an impact on consumer engagement behaviors. Based on the results of this study, it is reasonable to suggest that consumers are most likely to engage with brand content that is image based, interactive and moderate in length.

This chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the findings from the data analysis presented in the previous chapter. Findings will be summarized and conclusions drawn as to whether the three hypotheses identified in chapter one are deemed supported or rejected by the data. Furthermore, the data results will be discussed in the context of previously reviewed literature and theory and inferences drawn from this. To conclude this chapter, the strengths and limitations of the research in addition to potential areas for future research will be mentioned. Recommendations for business will also be considered in light of the findings.

This chapter will be divided by the following subheadings: discussion (4.1), strengths and limitations (4.2), future research (4.3), recommendations for business (4.4) and conclusion (4.5).

4.1 Discussion:

When discussing content characteristics in the context of this study it was specifically the characteristics of media type, interactivity and length of brand content that was the focus. For the purpose of this study, media type refers to the format of the content i.e. text, image or video. Interactivity refers to the elements of Instagram Story that encourage participation such as polls or questions. Length refers to the number of individual frames within a brand Instagram story. To begin this discussion, a general overview of the results of this study will be presented. Following this, results data will be discussed in relation to the three hypotheses identified in
chapter one and each will be deemed supported or rejected by the findings. Finally, the finding of this study will be linked to previous research and theory.

To begin, the results data has shown that over three quarters of survey participants last recall engaging with a brand on Instagram stories with the last seven days at the time of the survey. Of this, the majority of participants suggested having last engaged within the last two to three days, suggesting a trend of regular engagement behavior with brand Instagram story content. Furthermore, it can be concluded from the data collected that the majority of survey participants have not engaged with a brand on Instagram Stories through the creation of content as most of the respondents have indicated they have never tagged a brand in their own Instagram Stories. In relation to Instagram Stories and actual purchase, the findings of this study show that most of those surveyed have made a purchase from a brand based on Instagram story content from that brand. These findings demonstrate the value of Instagram Stories as a marketing tool and if used correctly can build relationships with consumers in new ways. Following this, data directly relating to each of each of the three hypotheses will be discussed.

In relation to media type, the data shows a clear preference of Instagram users for image based content from brand on Instagram Stories. An overwhelming majority of survey participants indicated they would be most likely to engage with image based stories. Video content also proved popular however less than one fifth of respondents indicated a preference for video content on Instagram Stories. While rich media types were the preference of the vast majority of survey respondents, there is no argument in the fact that Image based media is the clear preference in relation to consumer engagement with brand content on Instagram Stories. Based on these results, H1 is deemed as supported by the results data of this study.

Regarding the content characteristic of interactivity, the results data indicate that survey respondents are most likely to engage with Instagram Story content containing an interactive element, namely a swipe up link or poll/question. Over three quarters of those surveyed said they are most likely to engage with Instagram Story content containing either a swipe up link or a poll/question. Less than a quarter of survey participants indicated they would be most likely to engage with other types of content such as product info, behind the scenes or demo/tutorial. These findings are further supported when participants were asked to identify the engagement action taken on the last time they recall engaging with a brand Instagram Story. Again, a clear majority of survey respondents suggested the action taken was based on an
interactive element. Over three quarters of respondents indicated the engagement action last
taken was either following a swipe up link or answering a poll or question. Less than one
quarter of people indicated a reply, reaction or share was there last recalled engagement action.
In light of the above results, **H2** is deemed as supported by the results data of this study.

Length was the final content characteristic assessed by the study. The results of the survey
demonstrate that a large majority of participants would agree in saying that the length of a
brand Instagram story would impact whether or not they engage with that content. Less than
one fifth of participants in the study stated that length was not an impacting factor to them.
Furthermore, when asked to identify how many pages of a brand Instagram Story they would
tap through on average, over three quarters answered between three and six stories. The most
popular answer among participants was three to four stories which accounted for over half of
all responses. From the results data, it can be concluded that the content characteristic of length
firstly does impact on consumer engagement. Secondly, consumers are more likely to engage
with mid-length stories from brands than shorter or longer stories. On this basis, **H3** is deemed
as supported by the results data of this study.

From the above discussion, it is clear that all three hypotheses identified in chapter one of the
study are supported by the data collected. This will now be linked to the theory and literature
discussed in chapter one.

In chapter one of this study, literature surrounding the antecedents of consumer engagement
behavior was discussed. The most relevant antecedent for this study was functionality which
refers to aspects of social media platform design that enable engagement (Ajiboye et al., 2019).
Subsequent studies by Lei et al. (2016) further supports functionality as an antecedent to
consumer engagement and highlights the role of media type. It is concluded that the use of
video or images can positively impact the level of consumer engagement. The findings of this
study in relation to media type are consistent with the Lei at al. (2016) study in that, of the
sample surveyed in this study, an overwhelming majority indicated a preference for image or
video based content with images being the clear preference. Furthermore, Luarn et al. (2015)
discussed media type in the context of vividness concluding that content with a medium level
of vividness i.e. images, account for higher levels of consumer engagement. Similarly, Sabate
et al. (2014) suggest the use of images in brand social media content can significantly increase
consumer engagement by way of likes and comments. The clear preference towards images as
a media type in the context of this study further supports the conclusions of earlier discussions on the topic. Much of the above discussed literature relates to media type on social media platforms generally. This study focused specifically on the Instagram Stories function, and while the results of this study are consistent with previous research, the platform specific nature of this study adds a distinct aspect to the existing literature.

On the content characteristic of interactivity, the results of this study conclude that consumers are more likely to engage with Instagram Story content containing the presence of an interactive element. This conclusion supports the findings of a number of earlier studies on the topic. Schultz (2017) conclude that the use of an interactive element in social media content positively impacts on consumer engagement. This conclusion is replicated by in the results of this study. In addition, Luarn et al. (2015) suggest that content with high levels of interactivity attract users to engage. More specifically, Lei at al. (2016) focus on the presence of a call to action (CTA) and conclude that all aspects of consumer engagement can be positively impacted by the use of a CTA. The positive impact of interactivity in brand content is widely agreed upon throughout the literature. This view is echoed by the results of this study. In contrast to earlier literature, this study focuses on two specific interactive elements in relation to Instagram Stories – Swipe up link and Poll/Question. There are a vast range of interactive elements available across social media platforms and as such the focus of this study on specific interactive elements contributes something different to the existing literature.

There is limited literature to be found relating to brand content length on social media and as such insights are drawn from online advertising theory and text focused content research. The results of this study contribute to the existing literature by addressing this literature gap. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that mid length Instagram story content is preferred by the consumers surveyed in the study. Trefzger et al. (2016) studied content length in the context of text lines. It was concluded that brand content with a moderate amount of text lines enticed more consumer engagement than content with no text or a lot of text (Trefzger et al.,2016). Similarly, a Thinkwithgoogle (2016) study considered content length in terms of video content and again concluded that moderate length is preferred by consumers. While based on different media types, links can still be drawn between the results of this study and the Trefzger et al. (2016) study and the Thinkwithgoogle (2016) as all three indicate a clear preference of consumers towards mid-length content.
From the above literature discussion, it can be seen that overall the results of this study are consistent with the findings of preceding work on the topic. This study adds value to the existing body of literature in the topic of consumer engagement by providing platform specific data relating to consumer engagement behavior while much of the earlier literature is focused on social media content generally.

To summarize the findings, over three quarters of survey participants engaged with a brand Instagram Story within the 7 days prior to responding to the survey. It is concluded from the results data of this study that the content characteristics of media type, interactivity and length of brand content do impact on consumer engagement behavior in the context of Irish Consumers. Image based Story content is the media type consumers are most likely to engage with. The presence of an interactive element such as a swipe up link or poll/question is favored by consumers in terms of their engagement. Consumers are more likely to engage with story content that is less than six stories in length, with three to six stories being the most favored. The majority of respondents have never tagged a brand in their own Instagram story content, however while representing the minority, a significant number of consumers had engaged with a brand in this way. Finally, a majority of participants agreed that a brand Instagram story had inspired them to make a purchase from that brand.

4.2 Strengths and Limitations:

Following the above discussion of the key findings uncovered from this research, it is also important to address the strengths and limitations of this research study.

Firstly, this study had a number of strength points which are to be highlighted as follows. The online survey received 391 responses which is a significant number. In order to achieve significance with the data, a sample of 385 was required. The number of respondents exceeded this requirement and as such it can be said that the results of this study can be generalized to the large population to a level of 95% confidence allowing for a 5% margin of error.

The online survey used in the data collection process returned no invalid results. All 391 responses were valid and there were no skipped questions or partial answers. This indicates a well-designed, clear and concise survey. In light of this it was possible to accurately measure the topic of interest for this study and maximize the value of the data collected. In addition, the
hypotheses identified following a review of the literature have all been deemed as supported by the results of this study. This adds further weight to the existing literature and theory.

Following the above acknowledgement of the strength of the study, the limitations will now be addressed. This study was conducted in a very limited time frame of just twelve weeks using limited resources. Based on this, a mono-method quantitative research design was deemed most appropriate. This topic would have been well suited to a mixed method research design whereby follow up interview were conducted on a subset of the survey respondents. This would have provided greater insight into consumer engagement with brand Instagram stories and provided a qualitative aspect to the study. Time and resource constraints made a mixed method design impracticable in this case. In addition to the limited time frame allowed for this study, the Covid 19 pandemic currently impacting Ireland and much of the world would have made arranging face to face interviews challenging and at times impossible due to government restrictions.

In addition, convenience sampling was to recruit participants for the online survey, which, by nature leads to inherent bias in the selection process. In this case there is a slight gender bias evident in that over 55% of the respondent were male. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the survey respondents are under the age of 45. This indicates that the older age categories are underrepresented in the results. However, according to Statista (2020), more than half of the Instagram user population is under the age of 45. While an age skew is evident in this study, this is comparable to the overall age distribution of Instagram users globally.

Also notable as a potential limitation of this study is the recruitment method used to gather participants for this study. Participants were recruited using Instagram Story posts on an Irish Brands Instagram account. By using this method of recruitment, respondents could potentially view the study as associated to the specific brand and therefore consumer opinions of that brand/brand content could influence participants responses. The study is entirely independent from the brand however it is important to acknowledge this as a potential limitation of the study.
4.3 Future Research:

This research provides insight on the characteristics of brand Instagram story content that impact consumer engagement. During the course of this research project, the author identifies a number of areas that could be further researched in the future.

The results data of this study identify a number of content characteristics which impact consumer engagement with brands on Instagram Stories, namely, media type, interactivity and length. While the content characteristics are identified by this research, the data does not define further the reasoning behind the characteristics and their effect on consumer engagement. Further insight could be gained using a qualitative aspect such as follow up focus groups or interviews. As mentioned above, time was a limited resource in this research project. Future research could include a mixed method research design using both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a greater insight into the topic. This was not possible in the current study due to time constraints, however, future studies on this topic would benefit greatly from this approach under the right circumstances.

The researcher believes the area of user generated content in relation to engagement with brands on Instagram stories is a strong candidate for future research. The area of user generated content was touched upon in the review of the literature in chapter one whereby consumer engagement was classified by Mutinga et al. (2011) as a three-tiered framework comprised of consumption, contribution and creation. Creation refers to user generated content and is considered the strongest level of engagement.

The results data of the online survey conducted in this study indicate that a significant segment of the participants surveyed had tagged a brand in their own Instagram Story. While the majority of respondents indicated they had not tagged a brand in their own story, it is still a significant number of respondents which had engaged in the creation of user generated content for a brand. This study was focused on consumer engagement in terms of the contribution aspect such as replies, reactions, shares etc. User generated content was beyond the scope of this study, however, the area of contribution in the context of consumer engagement would benefit from further research.
In addition, the current research project focuses solely on content characteristics as an impacting factor to consumer engagement. It is clear from the review of the literature that there are a number of other antecedents of consumer engagement behavior, including, brand attachment and consumer emotions among others, namely highlighted in work by Alversia et al. (2016) and Ajiboye et al. (2019). The researcher suggests further research into the number of other antecedents identified in relation specifically to Instagram Story content. The scope of this study was solely relating to content characteristics, however, further research relating to the other impacting factors would be of great value in creating a well-rounded understanding of consumer engagement with Instagram Story content.

4.4 Recommendations for Business

It is acknowledged that Instagram Stories is a relatively recent addition in Digital Marketing and as such many brands do not give consideration to this content type when creating a Digital Marketing Strategy. The findings of this study demonstrate the value of this content type as a marketing tool and as such it is recommended for businesses to include this content type in strategy planning.

Based on the research data collected and analyzed in this study, three specific recommendations can be made to businesses. From the results, it is reasonable to conclude that the characteristics of media type, interactivity and length of brand content impacts consumer engagement with brand Instagram Stories. The results of this study can be considered and applied by businesses when developing their social media strategy to include an Instagram Story aspect.

The first recommendation relates to content media type. It is clear from the results of this study that consumers are more likely to engage visual media such a photo and video. It is recommended that brands opt for these media types when developing their Instagram Story strategy to maximize consumer engagement with the content.

Secondly, in relation to interactivity, it is recommended that brands include some form of call to action when creating Instagram Story content as the results of this study indicate that consumers are more likely to engage with content if there is the presence of a call to action such as a swipe up link or poll. Calls to action have long since been held in importance in the Digital Marketing space in areas such as email marketing and website design. On the basis of
this study, this importance can be extended to Instagram Story content and as such should be strongly considered by brands.

Finally, with regard to the length of Instagram Story content, it is recommended that when creating Instagram Stories, brands limit the length to no longer than six individual stories. The data results show consumers are more likely to engage with Instagram Story content up to six stories in length. Engagement is seen to decrease when more than six stories are used.

4.5 Conclusion:

This chapter has discussed in detail the finding of the study based on the data analysis conducted. The findings of the study have been linked to the existing literature and conclusions are also drawn from this. The chapter concludes with an acknowledgement of the strengths and limitations of this study along with potential areas for future research and recommendations for business. The initially stated aim of this research was to identify the content characteristics of brand Instagram stories that impacts consumer engagement. While acknowledging the limitations of this study, the researcher believes that this aim has largely been achieved through the current study. The research concludes that the characteristics of media type, interactivity and length of content impacts consumer engagement with brand Instagram Stories. There are three key findings to restate in the conclusion of this study: (1) consumers are most likely to engage with brand Instagram Story content that is image based (2) the presence of an interactive element (call to action) improves the likelihood of a consumer engaging with brand Instagram Story content (3) consumers are most likely to engage with brand Instagram story content that is less than six stories in length.

Limited research had been carried out previously relating to consumer engagement with specific social media platforms. As Instagram Stories is a recent addition to the Instagram platform, there is a gap in the literature relating to consumer engagement with this feature. The results of this study will contribute to addressing this gap by providing data specific to the Instagram Story feature. This study also adds to the overall understanding of the specific content characteristics which impact whether a consumer will engage with brand content or not. In addition to academic contributions, the study also provides practical data and recommendations which can be used by businesses to inform future digital marketing strategy and to optimize positive marketing outcomes.


Wagner, T., Baccarella, C. and Voigt, K., 2016. Antecedents of brand post popularity in Facebook: The influence of images, videos, and text. *Cognition & the Arts eJournal*, [online] Available at: 

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. What is your age?
   - Under 18
   - 18 – 24
   - 25 – 34
   - 35 – 44
   - 45 – 54
   - Over 55

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other
   - Prefer not to say

3. When do you last recall engaging with a brand on Instagram Stories?
   - within 24hrs
   - In the last 2 - 3 days
   - in the last 7 days
   - in the last 2 weeks
   - in the last month
   - more than 1 month ago

4. What action did you take the last time you recall engaging with a brand Instagram story?
   - Reply
   - Reaction
   - Share
   - Answer poll/quiz
   - Swipe up

5. Would you say the length of a brand Instagram story impacts whether or not you choose to engage with it?
   - Yes
   - No

6. On average, how many pages of a brand Instagram story will you tap through before swiping out?
   - 1-2
   - 3-4
   - 5-6
   - 7-8
   - 9-10
   - 10+
7. What format of brand Instagram story are you more likely to engage with?  
   Text  
   Photo  
   Video  

8. What type of Instagram story content from a brand are you most likely to engage with?  
   Behind the scenes  
   Product information  
   Demo/Tutorial  
   Quiz, poll and question based story  
   Swipe up link  

9. Have you ever tagged a brand in your own Instagram story?  
   Yes  
   No  

10. Has a brand Instagram story ever inspired you to make a purchase from the brand?  
    Yes  
    No