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# *Social Media Brand Communication Strategies and User Behavior: A Case Study of Lululemon on Instagram and Douyin*

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***Abstract.*** Social media has slowly changed the role of brand communication from one-way to multi-way, that is, from advertising to content creation, from interaction with users to interpersonal connection. The paper is based on a case example of Lululemon, comparing the brand's communication strategies on Instagram and Douyin, and analyzing the correlation between the two and user engagement behaviors. It concentrates on visual and short-form video content, lifestyle stories, brand ambassadors, community engagement, localization and product education, and considers likes, comments, shares, views, follows and purchase-related behaviors to be types of user response. This paper draws on two theories, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R), to support the argument that Lululemon has a relatively consistent brand core, maintaining an emphasis on sport, wellbeing and community, while adapting its mode of expression to the platform-specific mechanisms. Instagram focuses more on visual branding, lifestyle communication, and continuous interaction, while Douyin focuses more on the reach of short videos, the content's localization, and the relationship between the content and consumption routes. Therefore, the effectiveness of brand communication is not dependent on any specific type of communication content, but on the match between the brand strategy, the characteristics of the platform and the needs of the user.

***Keywords:*** Lululemon, Instagram, Douyin, Brand communication, User engagement

## 1. Introduction

Lululemon is an international brand with a focus on yoga, athletic clothing and a health-conscious lifestyle. The brand has built relationships with consumers through brand ambassadors, local communities, in-store experiences, and digital communities in the Chinese market [1], instead of relying on the traditional approach of celebrity endorsement. Specifically, Yang explains how brand ambassadors and communities help Lululemon establish offline brand communities and a sense of belonging [1]. This is a strong example of how the global brand adapts its communication strategy across different social media platforms.

Instagram and Douyin offer two different brand communication platforms. Instagram is deeply connected to visual content, branded profiles and creator-based communication, so it is ideal for

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long-term creation of a brand image and lifestyle stories. Unlike Douyin, which is centered on algorithmic recommendations, vertical short video, live streaming, and platform-driven commercial operations, Instagram can provide a smoother flow of content exposure to interaction and consumption. Other cross-platform studies have also shown that platform choice influences engagement with brand posts and content quality. For instance, Shen conducted a content analysis of 9,330 brand posts on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter and concluded that a single platform strategy is more effective at boosting engagement than using different content strategies across platforms [2].

The brand communication strategy is defined in this paper as the set of practices that, via brand communication content themes, formats, brand ambassadors, interaction and cultural narratives, make the brand convey meaning and solicit user responses. Likes, comments, shares, views, follows, purchases, and related actions are the major ones in user behavior. This paper addresses two questions. What communication strategies does Lululemon adopt on Instagram and Douyin? What are the connections between the strategies and user engagement behaviors?

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Social media brand communication strategies

Previous studies indicate that brand communication effectiveness depends on both content strategy and platform characteristics. Shen conducted a data mining and one-way ANOVA analysis of 9,330 brand posts (BPs) on Instagram, TikTok and Twitter and found that platform strategy plays a significant role in engagement with BPs [2]. Especially on Instagram, visual strategy and content management are emphasized in the study. For instance, Yoo analyzed how the presence of brand names, logos, embedded text, and hashtags in fashion-brand images influenced user engagement, and concluded that brand category influenced the relationship between these visual elements and user engagement [3]. Similarly, Cuevas-Molano et al. analyzed content management on Instagram, highlighting important factors such as scheduling and message length to the audience [4].

The research specifically focused on Lululemon, highlighting another example of how the company has incorporated brand information and interaction into Instagram. Moore applied qualitative content analysis with Uses and Gratifications Theory to ten Lululemon Instagram posts and their user comments [5]. The study highlighted the value of brands sharing useful brand and product content and engaging with consumers by answering comments and asking questions that further the conversation. In a content analysis of 300 Instagram posts published by Nike and Lululemon, Khurana and Knight looked at message appeals, visual features, and engagement [6]. Their findings reveal similarities and differences in how the two athletic brands position themselves to their followers, as well as the likelihood of engagement based on posts that made ethical appeals.

Research on the Chinese market further emphasizes Lululemon's localization and community approach. Lululemon's creation of a community of brand ambassadors, community participation, the experience in the store, and WeChat communities, are all ways in which Yang proposes the brand is creating a sense of brand relationship with consumers in local markets [1]. These studies together argue that Lululemon communications via social media can be seen as a melding of a relatively stable brand core and the environment of specific markets and platforms.

### 2.2. User behavior research

A key concept in social media brand research is user engagement. Santos et al. conducted a review of 134 articles and identified attitudinal, behavioral, and motivational dimensions of consumers'

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engagement in social media brand communities, as well as a broad spectrum of research approaches and methods applied in previous studies [7]. Similarly, reviewing 66 empirical studies, Martínek finds that studies on social media engagement use readily observable behaviors like likes, comments, and shares as evidence of engagement and that definitions and measures of social media engagement vary widely [8].

Such overt behaviors should not be assumed to be the same outcomes. A like is a fairly low-cost behavioral action, whereas commenting and sharing are different forms and levels of participation. Engagement can also be directed at sales-related outcomes in short-form video and social commerce. Chan et al. studied the relationship between charisma, content, bonding, and audience likes, audience shares, and brand sales in China for TikTok/Douyin influencers' videos [9]. Their results validate that charisma and content strategy are crucial, and that the approach to influencer strategy is unique for micro and macro influencers. As such, in this paper the responses of 'likes', 'comments', 'shares', and 'purchase-related behaviours' are considered as separate rather than combined into 'effectiveness'.

## 3. Theoretical framework

### 3.1. Uses and gratifications theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory assumes that media users are active and choose media and content to meet specific needs, such as information, entertainment, social interaction, and identity. With this in mind, using UGT to explain why users might choose to access and engage with specific types of Lululemon content is used in this paper. Moore also uses UGT directly for Instagram's strategy, which is very relevant in the context of this case [5].

Visual lifestyle content, product information and communication for brand ambassadors via Instagram can fulfill aesthetic, informational, identity-expression and social needs. Short videos, sports, styling and product education may be mixed together with entertainment and practical information and consumption convenience in Douyin. In this scenario, the same brand identity could be presented differently on each platform to match users' needs.

### 3.2. SOR model

It is used as an analytical tool to explain the relationships between brand content and user behaviour, the S-O-R model. Visuals, short-form videos, brand ambassadors, local culture and product details are all referred to as "stimulus" (Stimulus). Interpersonal states are user interest, trust, identification, and perceived value (Organism); Interpersonal responses are likes, comments, shares, follows, and purchase-related behaviors (Response).

The roles of UGT and S-O-R differ in this paper. While UGT helps to understand what types of content might be sought or valued by users, S-O-R helps to consider what internal evaluations and behavioral responses a user might undergo after exposure to brand content. The two frameworks can be paired together to link the characteristics of the platform, Lululemon's communication strategies, motivations of users, and their engagement behaviors in the same analytical pathway.

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## 4. Case analysis: Lululemon on Instagram and Douyin

### 4.1. Instagram: visual lifestyle communication and community interaction

Instagram's communication can be interpreted as a mix between information about the product and lifestyle images associated with athletics, brand values and community engagement for Lululemon. Moore reports that Lululemon provided useful information about their brand and the products, and engaged with consumers by responding to comments and asking questions that encourage conversation [5]. The Instagram page is, in this respect, not only a place to present the product, but also a space for establishing relationships with customers in a continuous manner.

Utah Gear's point of view, the imagery they use in their athletics, information about their products, and the brand-ambassador content would meet the informational, aesthetic, identity-expression, and social needs. Likes can be a sign of instant positive reactions, comments may contain questions about the product or direct product interaction and shares may mean that the content was thought to be worth spreading further. The conclusion of purchase intent based on increased engagement on Instagram should therefore not be made on the basis of engagement alone, but on the basis of the type and purpose of content and engagement behaviors.

### 4.2. Douyin: short-form video, localization, and product education

Lululemon is very sensitive to local communities and cultural adaptation in the Chinese market. The brand engages with local brand ambassadors, community activities, store experiences and digital communities to build connections with Chinese consumers, as illustrated by Yang [1]. This localization perspective implies that communication in China involves not just translating the brand's content, but transforming the brand's meaning within the local market and community context.

The short-form video and recommendation-powered ecosystem allows Douyin to target non-followers. In the context of the analytical approach employed in this paper, content should first draw attention, and then, present athletic scenarios, functions of the products, or styling information. Short-form video, brand ambassadors, and product education can be considered as stimuli, interest, perceived usefulness, and brand identification can be seen as internal evaluations, and continued viewing, likes, comments, sharing, and purchase-related actions can be considered as responses.

### 4.3. Cross-platform comparison

The two platforms' communications can be interpreted as being on a single pathway of sport, wellbeing, community and lifestyle, but with different angles. While Instagram's short-form video content and recommendation features offer unique opportunities for reach, localization, product education, and content-to-commerce, its design makes it an ideal platform for ongoing interaction and lifestyle communication, and for maintaining a consistent visual identity.

This comparison is not about who's 'more effective' overall or how many more likes each platform gets, but about which app is better suited to specific purposes. Rather, it looks at the same brand and how it can communicate in different environments. It is recommended that cross-platform brand communication should not be interpreted as just a repeat of the same content. Instead, a brand may have a consistent identity and adapt the form of content and the ways in which users interact with it to specific platforms and user requirements.

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## 5. Conclusion

Lululemon was selected as a case to explore how brands communicate and how users act on Instagram and Douyin. The analysis indicates that there is an overlap in core values of the brand used on both platforms - sport, wellbeing, community, and lifestyle - and that the communicative potential of the two platforms varies. Instagram values and promotes visual branding, information, and ongoing engagement, while Douyin is a short-form video platform that enables reach, localization, product education, and integrated commerce paths.

UGT is a concept that elucidates engagement on the basis of satisfying users' informational, entertainment, social and identity-related needs in relation to content. The S-O-R framework also offers a means of thinking about the relationship between brand content and subsequent internal evaluations (interest, trust, identification, perceived value) and behavioral responses (likes, comments, shares, follows, purchase-related). Both frameworks serve as the kernel of the main thesis of this paper: Social media brand communication is dependent on the fit between brand strategy, platform characteristics, and user needs.

The use of English-language secondary sources and case material published in the public domain is another notable constraint of this paper, and this is because a systematic comparison of the two official accounts over the same time period has not been undertaken. It is therefore unable to make statistical causal inferences about the effects of various communication strategies. It is recommended to compare the posts from Instagram and Douyin of Lululemon in the same time window and use platform analysis for complementing with interviews or surveys to explore users' motives and brand attitudes in a deeper manner for future research.

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