Spot-On Creativity: Creativity Biases and Their Differential Effects on Consumer Responses in (Non-)Real-Time Marketing

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Abstract

A challenge in digital content marketing is to create meaningful messages on meaningful moments. To do so, brands frequently align social media messages with topical moments, also known as Real-time Marketing (RTM). While RTM aims to make meaningful connections, the creative development is subject to time pressure due to its real-time nature, which could have a negative effect on originality and craftsmanship, two other creativity dimensions besides meaningfulness which drive consumer responses. We address this tension by examining the creative crafting of RTM on Instagram and its consequences. Based on a content analysis of 516 Instagram messages, we indeed found a meaningfulness bias for RTM, such that meaningfulness comes at the expense of originality and craftsmanship. However, the findings from the content analysis, as well as an additional experiment ($N = 245$), showed that only craftsmanship and originality, and not meaningfulness, positively induced consumer responses. Implications are discussed.
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Keywords: Social media; Real-time marketing; Creativity; Creativity biases; Craftsmanship; Originality; Meaningfulness

Introduction

A summer greeting, a cheer for the match of the year, or a joke on April Fools' Day: one out of three brand messages on Instagram is linked to such topical moments (Waardenburg & Mazerant, 2018). By aligning their social media messages with timely moments that are highly discussed on social media—a practice known as Real-time Marketing (RTM)—brands aim to make a meaningful connection and obtain positive consumer responses. This is what Audi did when they played a practical joke on April Fool's Day by presenting an Instagram video of their augmented reality mirrors in which the driver can apply Instagram filters on passing cars, such as the popular dog ears and rolling tongue (see Fig. 1).

Although RTM is widely used because of this assumed effect on consumer responses, little is known about whether RTM is indeed an effective social media strategy and, if so, why. So far, only one study has compared RTM messages to regular brand messages on social media, showing that RTM positively affects sharing behavior in the context of Twitter (Willemsen, Mazerant, Kamphuis, & Van der Veen, 2018). The researchers suggest that the promising effects of RTM can be explained by ad creativity, although this was not explicitly tested. RTM messages allow brands to make a meaningful connection with a timely moment that gains attention from social media users. If successfully applied, this enhances the creativity of the message, considering that meaningfulness is an important dimension of creativity (Ang, Lee, & Leong, 2007; White, Shen, & Smith, 2002). Yet, the creative development of RTM messages is also subject to time pressure (Willemsen et al., 2018), which, in turn, could have a negative effect on the

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Fig. 1. RTM message aligned with April Fools' Day.

originality of the message, another dimension of creativity (Koslow, Sasser, & Riordan, 2006). Thus, to investigate the effectiveness of RTM on consumer responses and its underlying processes, this tension in the creative development of RTM messages and its differential effects should be addressed.

The aim of this paper is to examine the creative crafting of RTM messages on Instagram and its consequences for RTM success. By doing so, our study sheds light on the question of how brands can create effective RTM messages and the mechanisms underlying engagement effects. We conducted a field study, in which we examined 516 Instagram messages of the Forbes Top-100 brands in order to investigate to what extent three creativity dimensions are represented in RTM messages compared to non-RTM messages, and how this affects consumer responses on Instagram. Subsequently, an additional experimental study was performed to validate the results of the field study.

This paper makes several contributions. First, we address the tension in the creative crafting of RTM messages by examining the differences in emphasis practitioners place on the three creativity dimensions: originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship (White et al., 2002). As such, this paper contributes to theorizing about creativity biases, in which the emphasis on one dimension comes at the expense of another (Kilgour, Sasser, & Koslow, 2013).

Second, we investigate the individual (and combined) effects of these creativity dimensions on consumer responses. Unlike prior research that consistently demonstrated positive effects for creativity dimensions on consumer responses (e.g., Ang, Leong, Lee, & Lou, 2014; Smith, Chen, & Yang, 2008), this paper hypothesizes that, in the context of Instagram, RTM

can have adversary effects due to an unequal—"biased"—focus on one of these dimensions. As such, this work enriches the ad creativity literature by examining the consequences of an unequal focus on creativity dimensions.

Third, we examine whether RTM is an effective strategy on Instagram for evoking consumer responses. Prior findings demonstrated positive consumer responses to RTM in the context of Twitter (Willemsen et al., 2018). Since social media platforms differ in their functionalities (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015; Voorveld, 2019; Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga, & Bronner, 2018), and thus in the way brand messages are experienced on these platforms (Voorveld et al., 2018), we test whether RTM is positively related to consumer responses in the context of Instagram. As such, we deepen our understanding of RTM and its effectiveness as a content marketing strategy. Thereby, we follow up on Hollebeek and Macky (2019) to strengthen the academic understanding of digital content marketing.

Finally, besides an experimental design, this paper also reports a naturalistic study, in which the content of, and responses to, Instagram brand messages is analyzed. Examining the creativity dimensions of real-world messages is paramount to gaining a better understanding of patterns and mechanisms operating within "the creative universe" (Sasser & Koslow, 2008, p. 11). As such, this study complements the body of literature on creativity effectiveness, which predominantly covers experimental research.

Real-Time Marketing on Social Media

Social media has not only changed *how* brands and consumers communicate with each other (Fournier & Avery, 2011), but also *what* the conversations are about. To be more precise, social media platforms facilitate their users to be highly

responsive to each other, and also to what is going on in the world. This responsiveness is reflected in social media conversations, as consumers mostly talk about things that are happening that very moment (Park et al., 2017; Weingarten & Berger, 2013). Instagram (Warren, 2019) showed in their yearly overview that their users mostly talked about moments such as #10YearChallenge, #WorldRecordEgg, and #BeforeILetGoChallenge (i.e., a timely challenge in which the artist Beyoncé encouraged fans to submit their dance videos). The ability to monitor these conversations in real-time enables brands to be responsive as well. They can take part in the conversation by aligning their messages to moments that are discussed on social media, such as public holidays, trending topics, breaking news items, or festive moments. By doing so, brands increase the topicality of their message by associating their brand messages with conversations about moments that are top-of-mind. This alignment of brand messages with timely moments by joining social media conversations is defined as RTM (Willemsen et al., 2018, p. 830).

The idea behind RTM is to increase relevancy for consumers by offering content that fits with the context of what is going on in the lives of consumers. With RTM, brands aim to bridge the gap between brands and consumers by talking about the same moments that consumers are talking about on social media. This focus on enhancing consumers' appreciation of the brand is distinctive for digital content marketing (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019), as content marketing "intends to build relations with potential customers by providing relevant content, opposite to content that only promote products" (Kerkhof, 2010, p. 150). Although offering valuable content seems promising, little is known about how to develop a content strategy that stimulates consumers to "socially" interact with brand messages on social media (VanMeter, Syrdal, Powell-Mantel, Grisaffe, & Nesson, 2018).

Prior research demonstrated that RTM is positively related to sharing behavior on Twitter (Willemsen et al., 2018). Although social media platforms provide engagement metrics, such as sharing, liking, and commenting, practitioners as well as researchers call for a broader set of metrics for measuring message effectiveness (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). For example, Akpinar and Berger (2017) noticed that brands may sacrifice advertising effectiveness when focusing on increasing shares, in such a way that content aspects that increase sharing behavior (e.g., removing the brand or product from the brand message), decrease brand-related outcomes. So, in order to get a grip on social media effectiveness, it is not only relevant to know how many likes or shares brand messages receive, but also what the impact is on brand performance (Mochon, Johnson, Schwartz, & Ariely, 2017). Moreover, practitioners as well as researchers often measure the performance of messages by using a broader set of consumer responses, such as attitude towards the message, attitude towards the brand, and purchase intention (Rust, Lemon, & Zeithaml, 2004). In all, it is imperative to examine the effects of the creative crafting of RTM messages not only on behavioral manifestations on social media, as well as on other brand-related outcomes, such as brand evaluation and purchase intention (Akpinar and Berger, 2017).

Creativity in Brand Messages

Creativity is a multidimensional theoretical construct. This multidimensional approach becomes evident in the various studies that have empirically examined ad creativity success. Table 1, which gives an overview of these studies, their conceptualizations of advertising creativity and measured dimensions, shows that it is generally agreed that originality is a key aspect of advertising creativity.

Originality is defined as the extent to which the brand message is unique and novel (White et al., 2002). When a message is original, it can be classified as divergent, distinctive, and fresh (Ang et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2008; White et al., 2002). Smith et al. (2004) see originality as primary creativeness, which Maslow (1963) earlier described as the stage of creativity that originates from the unconscious, bringing forth new discoveries. In addition, originality is considered as the primary determinant of ad creativity (Feng & Xie, 2019). In other words, when a message is not original, it is not creative (Lehnert, Till, & Ospina, 2014).

For a message to be creative, many scholars argue that it must also be meaningful, although consensus is lacking how meaningfulness should be interpreted.

Reviewing the literature on meaningfulness, two streams of research can be identified. The first stream of research approaches meaningfulness from an agency-perspective. This stream considers meaningfulness as the extent to which a brand message is "on strategy" (e.g., Kilgour et al., 2013; Koslow et al., 2006; Koslow, Sasser, & Riordan, 2003). This means that the creative idea of the brand message is aligned with the client's strategy. It relates to the extent to which ad creativity contributes to achieve the purpose of the brand message (Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995), incorporating the brand' message into the ad (Ang et al., 2007; Heckler & Childers, 1992). However, this focus on business objectives implies that agencies are occupied with satisfying their client's needs, which does not automatically translate to creating content that is also valuable for the consumer (West, Kover, & Caruana, 2008).

A second stream of research adopts a consumer perspective. This perspective considers meaningfulness as the extent to which a brand message is meaningful to the audience (e.g., Chen, Yang, & Smith, 2016; Smith et al., 2008; Stathopoulou, Borel, Christodoulides, & West, 2017). According to this approach, a meaningful message is a message that is relevant, makes sense, is appropriate, and is logical for its audience (Lehnert et al., 2014; White et al., 2002). Considering that on social media consumers are more in control of what they want to engage with, creating brand messages that make sense and are logical to the audience has even become more important (Fournier & Avery, 2011). This is also in line with the focus of digital content marketing on enhancing consumers' appreciation of the brand by offering relevant content (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Kerkhof, 2010). In all, this implies that meaningfulness from a consumer perspective seems utterly relevant for measuring ad creativity on social media. Therefore, we adopt the consumer approach of the conceptualization of ad creativity, based on originality as well as meaningfulness, in

Table 1
Conceptualization of advertising creativity and their dimensions in empirical studies about advertising effectiveness.

Conceptualization	Method	Sample	Reference
Originality	Experiment	Unknown	Ang and Low 2000
Novelty or expectancy, a divergence of the norm, and a sense of uniqueness			
Meaningfulness			
Relevancy, the extent to which information in the ad detracts or contributes to the message of the brand			
Emotion			
Valence of feelings			
Originality	Experiment	Students	Ang et al., 2007
Fresh, unique, unexpected, breaking out of a preexisting scheme	Experiment	Public	Feng and Xie 2019
Meaningfulness	Survey	Practitioners	Kübler and Proppe 2012
Relevancy; the extent to which information in the ad detracts or contributes to the message of the brand	Experiment	Students	Ang et al. 2014
Connectedness			
Appropriate, useful, satisfies a certain need, relevant to the audience			
Originality	Mixed method	Students	Smith et al. 2007
Divergence; originality, flexibility, elaboration, synthesis, and artistic value	Experiment	Students	Yang and Smith 2009
Meaningfulness	Experiment	Public	Smith et al., 2008
Relevance; meaningful, appropriate, and valuable to the audience	Experiment	Public	Chen et al., 2016
Originality	Survey	Students Practitioners	Lehnert et al., 2014
Divergence; unusual, uncommon, and different			
Meaningfulness	Mixed Method	Students	Sheinin et al., 2011
Relevance; meaningful, appropriate, and valuable to the audience	Content analysis	Brand messages	Willemsen et al. 2018
Originality	Mixed method	Practitioners	Koslow et al., 2003
Unexpected, different	Survey	Practitioners	Koslow et al., 2006
Strategy			
Appropriate strategy, fit with brand's strategy, goal accomplishment			
Artistry			
Pleasing to the eye, could be appreciated as a work of art			
Original	Survey	Practitioners	Kilgour et al., 2013
Unexpected, different			
On strategy			
Appropriate strategy, fit with brand's strategy, goal accomplishment			
Originality	Experiment	Students	Heiser et al., 2008
Novelty; novel, unique, unusual	Mixed Method	Public	Stathopoulou et al. 2017
Meaningfulness	Survey	Students Practitioners Public	White, Shen, and Smith 2002
Resolution; making sense, logical, and relevant for its audience			
Craftsmanship	Survey	Students Practitioners Public	White and Smith 2001
Elaboration and synthesis; skillfully crafted, made with care, well-made			

which meaningfulness is defined as the extent to which the brand message makes sense and is logical (White et al., 2002).

Although originality and meaningfulness are commonly considered to be important dimensions of ad creativity (e.g., Lehnert et al., 2014; West et al., 2019), as Table 1 shows several researchers posit that creativity also comes with a third dimension, namely craftsmanship (Heiser, Sierra, & Torres, 2008; Koslow et al., 2003; O'Quin & Besemer, 1989; Stathopoulou et al., 2017; White et al., 2002). Craftsmanship refers to "how well-crafted and well-executed an advertisement is" (White et al., 2002, p. 243). This is in line with some researchers who include craftsmanship in their ad creativity dimensions by referring to its artistic or aesthetic value, i.e., "ads contain artistic impressions or attractive colors and shapes" (Smith et al., 2008, p. 821) and ads which are "pleasing to the eye" (Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2006, p. 100). Additionally, practitioners also claim artistic

craftsmanship as an essential aspect of advertising creativity (Nyilasy, Canniford, & Kreshel, 2013). For a message to score high on craftsmanship, it needs to be skillfully crafted, professionally produced or well-made. In line with prior ad creativity research, we argue that, especially on a visually-oriented, creative platform such as Instagram (Papetti, Christofle, & Guerrier-Buisine, 2018; Zhu & Chen, 2015), the creativity of brand messages is not only determined by meaningfulness and originality but also determined by craftsmanship, which is defined as the extent to which the brand message is well-made and skillfully crafted (White et al., 2002).

The Differential Dynamics of Creative Crafting in RTM

Advertising content often demonstrates a creativity bias, meaning that a high score on one creativity dimension comes at

the expense of another. So far, the literature has focused on one particular bias, the originality bias. Kilgour et al. (2013) demonstrated that award-winning commercials scored much higher on originality than on meaningfulness. This is in line with Stathopoulou et al. (2017) who showed that originality is more prevalent in TV commercials than the two other dimensions: meaningfulness and craftsmanship.

Creativity biases also appear in the context of RTM messages. Willemsen et al. (2018) found evidence for a meaningfulness bias, where RTM messages on Twitter scored much higher on meaningfulness than on originality. The finding, that commercials are more likely to demonstrate an originality bias and RTM messages are more likely to demonstrate a meaningfulness bias, suggests that creativity biases may differ between types of advertising messages. This observation invites further testing, especially considering the notion that marketers may be motivated by different goals while creating brand messages. Kilgour et al. (2013) suggest that marketers might focus more on creating original rather than meaningful content, as this is an important criterion for winning advertising awards. Goals might be different for marketers who aim to create RTM messages that are intended to make a meaningful connection with a topical moment, which fits with ongoing conversations about that moment. According to Willemsen et al. (2018), this might explain why RTM messages score higher on meaningfulness than on originality.

In this paper, we argue that these creativity biases might also be different in the context of Instagram. Our expectation is based on the fact that different social media serve different purposes (Ngai et al., 2015; Voorveld et al., 2018). Just like Twitter serves people's need to be updated about relevant moments and conversations through the newsfeed, Instagram serves people's need to be inspired by visually attractive content (Papetti et al., 2018; Zhu & Chen, 2015). Based on this argument, as well as on the finding that a high score on one creativity dimension often comes at the expense of another (Kilgour et al., 2013; Stathopoulou et al., 2017; Willemsen et al., 2018), we expect to find a craftsmanship bias for non-RTM messages on Instagram, such that these messages score higher on craftsmanship than on meaningfulness and originality. This expectation is further supported by the notion that marketers align their messages with the context in which they are inserted (Content Marketing Institute, 2019a).

For RTM, however, we expect to find a meaningfulness bias, such that these messages score higher on meaningfulness than on craftsmanship and originality. This is based on the notion that marketers might be preoccupied by RTM's general goal to connect brands with timely moments that are of public interest. As such, it is rather important for the message to make sense and be relevant (thus meaningful) for that moment. Considering that the creative development of RTM messages is subject to time constraints due to its real-time nature (Willemsen et al., 2018), it makes sense that this focus on meaningfulness comes at the expense of originality and craftsmanship. Initial support for this assumption is provided by Moreau and Dahl (2005), arguing that time constraints are negatively related to ad creativity, although they did not examine the effects of time pressure on the individual creativity dimensions. We hypothesize:

H1a. There is a meaningfulness bias for RTM messages on Instagram, such that these messages score higher on meaningfulness than on originality and craftsmanship.

H1b. There is a craftsmanship bias for non-RTM messages on Instagram, such that these messages score higher on craftsmanship than on meaningfulness and originality.

Creativity Effects on Consumer Responses

It is generally agreed that creativity is pivotal for advertising effectiveness, as becomes evident in the many advertising text books, academic research, and trade publications on this topic (Smith et al., 2008). Ad creativity positively affects attention (Smith et al., 2008; Yang & Smith, 2009), recall (Ang et al., 2007; Baack, Wilson, & Till, 2008; Lehnert, Till, & Carlson, 2013), attitude towards the brand and the message (Ang et al., 2014; Baack, Wilson, van Dessel, & Patti, 2016; Dahlén, 2005; Heiser et al., 2008), online sharing behavior (Southgate, Westoby, & Page, 2010), and purchase intentions (Heiser et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2007; Yang & Smith, 2009). Although ad creativity is positively related to consumer responses, it invites further research in the context of social media based on two arguments.

First, in line with Kover (2016), we argue that the context of social media calls for re-examining the effects of creativity on consumer responses. Creating meaningful content that makes sense and is considered relevant gains in importance, considering that consumers are more in control of whether or not to follow a brand or be exposed to its messages on social media (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Sasser & Koslow, 2008). Moreover, West et al. (2019) expect that the effects of the creativity dimensions will be subject to change due to the rapid expansion of social media platforms and their new functional-ities which ask for better insight into consumer responses to creative social media messages. However, previous creativity research mainly focused on examining traditional forms of advertising, such as television commercials and print (e.g., Baack et al., 2016; Heiser et al., 2008; Lehnert et al., 2014). Considering the pervasiveness of social media (for a review, see VanMeter et al., 2018), including the variety of platforms and their functionalities (Ngai et al., 2015; Voorveld, 2019; Voorveld et al., 2018), it is necessary to re-investigate the effects of ad creativity in social media content (cf. Feng & Xie, 2019).

Second, assuming that a creativity bias is message type-dependent, as posed in H1, we argue that it is imperative to examine whether the three creativity dimensions equally contribute to positive consumer responses. So far, knowledge about the distinctive effects of all three individual dimensions on consumer responses is lacking (Feng & Xie, 2019). Research about the effects of originality demonstrate that this dimension has the ability to break through ad clutter, as it captures consumer attention (Ang et al., 2007; Lehnert et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2008). Moreover,

originality is also positively related to the attitude towards the brand message (Ang et al., 2014; Dahlén, 2005; Feng & Xie, 2019; Heiser et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2007), as well as attitude towards the brand (Feng and Xie, 2019). Similar results have been reported for meaningfulness. Prior research also shows that meaningfulness is positively related to attitude towards the brand message (Feng & Xie, 2019; Sheinin, Varki, & Ashley, 2011; Smith et al., 2007), brand attitude (Feng and Xie, 2017; Smith et al., 2007), as well as purchase intention (Smith et al., 2007). Yet, less attention has been paid to the effects of craftsmanship as a dimension of creativity.

Although clear evidence is missing, the literature suggests a positive relation between craftsmanship and consumer responses, based on prior findings on the effects of visual imagery and consumer responses (e.g. De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Valentini, Romenti, Murtarelli, & Pizzetti, 2018). For example, Heiser et al. (2008) measured craftsmanship as one of the three creativity dimensions, but they did not take the differential effects of each dimension into account. In their analysis, the effect of creativity on consumer responses was measured as one construct in which all creativity dimensions are represented. An exception is the work of Stathopoulou et al. (2017), who examined the effects of creativity in TV commercials on consumer branded hashtag engagement. Against expectations, the authors found no significant relation between craftsmanship in commercials and engagement with a brand hashtag. These results seem to contrast with other studies that examined the visual execution of advertisements. Several authors demonstrated that the extent to which a brand message stimulates multiple senses with visual imagery is positively related to consumer responses, such as liking, sharing, and commenting (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; De Vries et al., 2012; Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, & Lebherz, 2014; Tafesse, 2015; Valentini et al., 2018). Adding to that, prior research showed that visual attractiveness and aesthetic quality are significant determinants of positive consumer responses (Farace, van Laer, de Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2017; Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). These studies on the visual execution of social media content indicated the potential effects of craftsmanship on consumer responses. Therefore, we assume that a well-made, skillfully crafted brand message on Instagram will positively affect consumer responses.

Taken together, there has been little scholarly attention for the individual effects of originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship on consumer responses. We argue that each dimension individually induces positive consumer responses. Based on the above, we suggest:

H2a. Originality positively induces consumer responses in the context of Instagram.

H2b. Meaningfulness positively induces consumer responses in the context of Instagram.

H2c. Craftsmanship positively induces consumer responses in the context of Instagram.

Adding to that, Instagram serves as a creative outlet in which engagement is mainly driven by visually attractive and well-crafted content (Zhu & Chen, 2015). The platform has a strong focus on skillfully crafted imagery, offering their users all kind of features for crafting well-made visual content (Content Marketing Institute, 2019b). This focus on skillfully crafted messages is made evident by the many filters, color schemes, grids, editing options, and apps, such as VSCO and Facetune, that are offered to and valued by Instagram users. This is also an important motive for people to use Instagram (Content Marketing Institute, 2019b). Based on this line of reasoning, we assume that craftsmanship is more strongly related to positive consumer responses as compared to originality and meaningfulness. Thus, we argue:

H2d. The positive relation between consumer responses and craftsmanship is stronger than for originality and meaningfulness.

RTM Effects on Consumer Responses

As posed in H2, we expect that well-crafted content on Instagram yield more positive consumer responses than original and meaningful content. However, we also assume that the creation of well-crafted content and original content is sacrificed in favor of the creation of meaningful content, due to the presence of a meaningfulness bias as hypothesized in H1a. If meaningfulness is pursued without an equal emphasis on craftsmanship and originality, RTM messages may not fit with Instagram's profile as a creative outlet in which engagement is established by visually attractive and well-crafted content (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Hence, for RTM (vs. non-RTM), we expect to find a negative indirect effect on consumer responses through craftsmanship and originality, and a positive indirect effect through meaningfulness. Thus, we suggest:

H3a. RTM messages (compared to non-RTM messages) on Instagram yield a negative indirect effect on consumer responses through craftsmanship.

H3b. RTM messages (compared to non-RTM messages) on Instagram yield a negative indirect effect on consumer responses through originality.

H3c. RTM messages (compared to non-RTM messages) on Instagram yield a positive indirect effect on consumer responses through meaningfulness.

General Methods

Our assumptions are tested by combining a field study with an additional experimental study. We started with a field study to test H1–3. In this study, we examined the responses of consumers to the creative crafting of RTM messages by using real world data in which we addressed two aspects: external validity as well as social media responses. First, social media responses, such as likes and comments, function as behavioral manifestations of consumer engagement on social media (Lee & Hong, 2016; Van Doorn et al., 2010). These consumers' online brand-related activities are commonly used for measuring the effectiveness of social media efforts on consumer

responses (e.g., De Vries et al., 2012; Gavilanes, Flatten, & Brettel, 2018; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit, 2011; Moldovan, Steinhart, & Lehmann, 2019; Schreiner, Fischer, & Riedl, 2019). These behavioral manifestations enable researchers to investigate consumer responses to brand messages in a natural setting rather than a forced exposure setting in which self-reported responses to manipulated social media messages (Voorveld, 2019). Furthermore, by conducting a content analysis of real-world brand messages, external validity of creativity effects is increased. By examining the creativity dimensions of these brand messages, a better understanding is gained of patterns and mechanisms operating within "the creative universe" (Sasser & Koslow, 2008, p. 11).

Although the field study allows us to examine a representative sample of what brands post in general on Instagram, as well as consumers' natural responses towards the creative crafting of these posts, a field study also precludes control and random assignment. Hence, it is possible that confounding message and audience factors affected the results. Therefore, we performed a second study that experimentally manipulated RTM messages to vary in originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship to test their distinctive effects (H2). This experimental study built on the field study in two ways. First, we aimed to validate the results of the field data in a controlled setting in order to increase internal validity (Sasser & Koslow, 2008). Second, we extended Study 1 by measuring a broader set of consumer responses, i.e. attitude towards the message, attitude towards the brand, and purchase intention, considering that these metrics are often used by practitioners as well as researchers to measure the performance of messages (Rust et al., 2004).

Study 1: Field Study

Method

A content analysis was conducted of brand messages on Instagram, as posted by the Top-100 Forbes social media brands of 2017 to examine the creativity dimensions in RTM (vs. non-RTM) messages and the relation with consumer responses (i.e., liking and commenting). Fourteen brands were randomly selected from this list, derived from various sectors, such as the financial sector, the software sector, FMCG, retail, automotive, and sports industries. All of the messages obtained from these fourteen brands, including likes and comments, were posted within one-year time frame ($N = 4,051$). To strive for equal distribution of the groups, a random sample of 40 messages per brand was retrieved ($N = 560$). Of this sample, 44 messages had been removed by the brand profile. The final sample consisted of 516 Instagram messages.

A codebook was developed based on the literature. Three coders were trained in using the codebook. Discrepancies between the coders in a pretest were discussed and formed input for a refined codebook. Subsequently, each brand message was assessed by one of the three coders. The coders double-coded a subsample of all messages (15%) to determine inter-coder reliability. The intra-class correlation (ICC) is used

for examining inter-coder reliability, as this measure is most commonly used for assessing inter-coder reliability for ordinal, interval, and ratio variables (Hallgren, 2012). Moreover, prior content analyses examining ad creativity calculated inter-coder reliability by using ICC (e.g., Kübler & Proppe, 2012). ICC values between 0.60 and 0.74 indicate acceptable inter-coder reliability (Cicchetti, 1994; Koo & Li, 2016), which implies that these measures can be used in further analyses.

Measures

Creativity

Using the CPSS instrument, the established multi-item scales for measuring originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship (Heiser et al., 2008; O'Quin & Besemer, 1989; Stathopoulou et al., 2017; White et al., 2002), coders examined the brand message as a whole, consisting of the visual and the caption of the Instagram post. They rated on a 5-point Likert scale the message's originality (standard vs. novel/ordinary vs. unique; $M = 3.36$; $SD = 1.04$; ICC = 0.61), craftsmanship (amateurish vs. skillfully crafted/clumsy vs. well-made; $M = 3.53$; $SD = 1.05$; ICC = 0.65), and meaningfulness (senseless vs. makes sense/irrelevant vs. relevant; $M = 3.52$; $SD = 0.96$; ICC = 0.60).

RTM

Coders determined whether the message was associated with public moments that were temporary of nature ($0 = $ no; $1 = $ yes) (Tafesse & Wien, 2017; Willemsen et al., 2018) (ICC = 0.74). 31.2% of all Instagram posts were considered a RTM message.

Engagement Rate

For measuring the effects of RTM on consumer responses, we used the sum of likes and comments of each brand message, commonly used to measure interaction with brand messages (e.g., Demmers, Weltevreden, & van Dolen, 2020). In order to take the variation between the number of followers per brand into account as well, we calculated the ratio between the sum of likes and comments of each post and the number of followers ($M = 0.85$; $SD = 0.58$; min = 0.06; max = 4.14) (Hootsuite, 2019).

$$\text{Engagement rate} = \frac{likes + comments}{followers} \times 100.$$

A principal component analysis of the three factors, six items measurement model (White et al., 2002) revealed three factors. As shown in Table 2, all items loaded on their intended construct. Subsequently, the correlation coefficients between the means of the three constructs were calculated. As demonstrated by the results in Table 3, originality was significantly related to craftsmanship ($r = 0.77$, $p < .001$) and meaningfulness ($r = 0.54$, $p < .001$). Craftsmanship was also correlated with meaningfulness ($r = 0.54$, $p < .001$). Next, convergent and discriminant validity was assessed in order to test the reliability and validity of the proposed constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) based on the composite reliability

Table 2
Factor loadings for originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship.

	I	II	III
Originality: Standard vs. novel	0.864		
Originality: Ordinary vs. unique	0.859		
Craftsmanship: Clumsy vs. well made		0.863	
Craftsmanship: Amateurish vs. skillfully		0.858	
Meaningfulness: Senseless vs. senseful			0.892
Meaningfulness: Visual relevancy for message			0.902

Note. Our initial analysis contained three items per construct. Due to crossloadings on some items, we have taken two items per construct into account for the final analyses.

(CR) of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Convergent validity was satisfied when AVE values exceed 0.50, which was confirmed by our results as AVE values ranged from 0.74 to 0.80. As shown in the off-diagonal figures in bold in Table 3, the square root of AVE exceeded the correlations between the different constructs, providing evidence of discriminant validity.

Results

In our first hypothesis, we assumed a meaningfulness bias for RTM messages, such that these messages score higher on meaningfulness than on originality and craftsmanship (H1a), and a craftsmanship bias for non-RTM messages, such that these messages score higher on craftsmanship than on meaningfulness and originality (H1b). A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine how originality, craftsmanship, and meaningfulness differ within RTM and non-RTM messages. Maucly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity has been violated. Therefore, Greenhouse–Geisser corrected tests are reported (RTM messages $p = .01$, $\varepsilon = 0.95$; non-RTM messages $p < .001$, $\varepsilon = 0.87$). The results indicated that RTM messages differ significantly on the three constructs of creativity, Wilk's $\lambda = 0.90$, $F(2,159) = 9.27$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 4, RTM messages scored higher on meaningfulness than on originality ($p < .001$) and craftsmanship ($p < .05$). No significant differences were found between craftsmanship and originality. In other words, there is a meaningfulness bias for RTM messages, such that these messages are meaningful at the expense of being original or skillfully crafted. Thus, H1a is supported.

The results showed that non-RTM messages also differed significantly on the three constructs of creativity, Wilk's $\lambda = 0.93$, $F(2,353) = 13.03$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons showed that non-RTM messages on Instagram scored higher

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, correlations, and construct validity in Study 1.

	M	*SD*	*CR*	*α*	*OR*	*CF*	*ME*
OR	3.36	1.04	0.85	0.96	**0.86**		
CF	3.53	1.05	0.85	0.96	0.77**	**0.86**	
ME	3.52	0.96	0.89	0.90	0.54**	0.54**	**0.89**

Note. CR = composite reliability OR = originality CF = craftsmanship ME = meaningfulness. Off-diagonal figures in bold represent the square roots of Average Variance Extracted (AVE). ** $p < .001$.

Table 4
Comparing means between the creativity constructs.

	Originality	Craftsmanship	Meaningfulness
RTM messages	3.20 $_1$	3.32 $_1$	3.47 $_2$
Non-RTM messages	3.43 $_1$	3.63 $_2$	3.55 $_{1,2}$
All messages	3.36	3.53	3.52

Note. $N = 161$ for RTM messages, $N = 355$ for non-RTM messages. Scale from 1 to 5. Rows with different numeral subscripts denote significant differences within RTM and non-RTM messages at $p < .05$.

on craftsmanship than on originality ($p < .001$). Neither significant differences were found between craftsmanship and meaningfulness nor between originality and meaningfulness. In other words, there is a craftsmanship bias for non-RTM messages, such that these messages are skillfully crafted at the expense of being original. Thus, H1b is partly supported.

Moreover, the second hypothesis predicted that originality, craftsmanship, and meaningfulness are positively related to consumer responses in the context of Instagram. To examine these effects, a multilevel regression analysis was performed in order to isolate the creativity ratings of each message from possible effects caused by the popularity of the brands. An intercept only model was conducted, measuring a *rho* index of 0.44. This means that differences between brands explain 44% of the variance in the engagement ratio of brand messages. Unlike the second hypothesis predicted, not all dimensions of creativity were positively related to consumer responses. As Table 5 reveals, only craftsmanship ($\beta = 0.07$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .03$) positively affected consumer responses (H2c). Although the results showed that originality is positively related to consumer responses, this relationship is only marginally significant ($\beta = 0.06$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .06$) (H2a). A negative, but non-significant, relation was found between meaningfulness and consumer responses (H2b). In other words, only skillfully crafted brand messages yield positive consumer responses. Thus, H2c is supported, whereas H2d is partly supported.

The third hypothesis predicted that RTM on Instagram yield a negative indirect effect on consumer responses through craftsmanship and originality, and a positive indirect effect on consumer responses through meaningfulness. To examine the

Table 5
Multilevel analysis modeling the relation between creativity constructs and engagement ratio.

Parameters	β	SE_β	p
Fixed effects			
Intercept	0.58	0.15	< 0.01**
Creativity constructs			
Originality	0.06	0.03	0.06
Craftsmanship	0.07	0.03	0.03*
Meaningfulness	−0.05	0.03	0.10
Control variables			
RTM	−0.08	0.05	0.08
Random parameters			
Variance of intercept (u_{ij})	0.15	0.06	0.014*
Variance of residual (e_{ij})	0.19	0.01	< 0.01**
Deviance (−2LL)	652.819		

Total effect = -.25, p <.01
Direct effect = -.21 p <.01
Indirect effect Craftsmanship = -.04, 95% CI [-.08, -.01]
Indirect effect Originality = .01, 95% CI [-.01, .03]
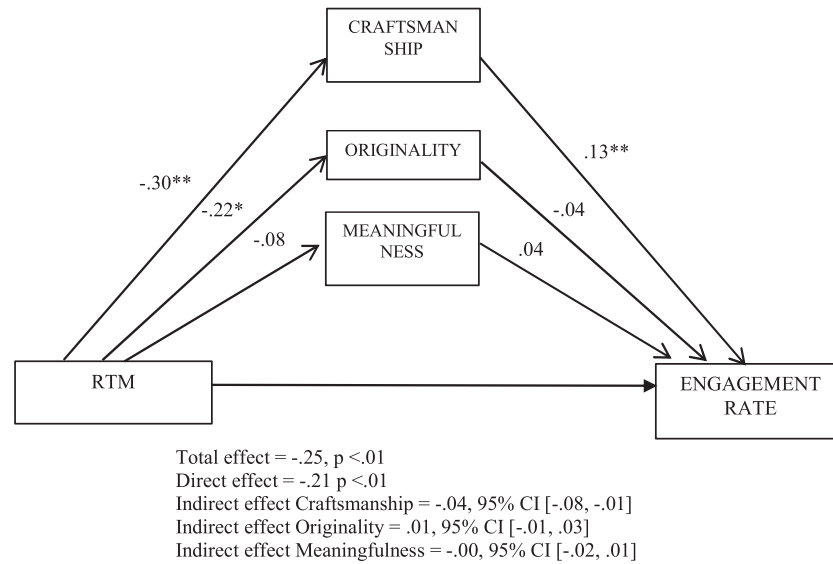Indirect effect Meaningfulness = -.00, 95% CI [-.02, .01]

Fig. 2. Mediation analysis in which the direct effect of RTM (compared to non-RTM) on engagement rate is explained by the indirect effects of craftsmanship, originality, and meaningfulness.

direct effect of RTM on consumer responses, and the indirect effects of craftsmanship, originality, and meaningfulness, a mediation analysis was conducted. Bootstrapping analyses were performed with 5,000 resamples, a bias corrected and accelerated 95% confidence interval (CI), using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) INDIRECT macro for SPSS. As shown in Fig. 2, RTM messages yielded less consumer responses compared to non-RTM messages, as indicated by a negative and significant direct relation between RTM and consumer responses ($b = -0.21$, $p < .01$). Examination of the indirect effects showed no significant mediation for originality. Although RTM messages were negatively related to originality compared to non-RTM messages ($b = -0.22$, $p = .02$), no significant relation was found between originality and consumer responses (H3b). Furthermore, no significant indirect effect was found between RTM messages and consumer responses through meaningfulness (H3c). However, we did find a significant and negative indirect effect between RTM messages and consumer responses through craftsmanship (indirect effect = -0.04, 95% CI, BCI [-0.08, -0.01]). RTM messages were negatively related to craftsmanship ($b = -0.30$, $p < .01$), which, in turn was positively related to likes ($b = 0.13$, $p < .01$) (H3a). This indirect effect explains the negative relation between RTM messages vs. non-RTM messages and consumer responses. In short, this means that RTM messages evoke less consumer responses compared to non-RTM messages, which could be explained by the finding that RTM messages are less skillfully crafted, which, in turn, yield less consumer responses. Thus, only H3a is supported.

Study 2: Experimental Study

Method

Design and Stimuli

RTM messages were experimentally manipulated to vary in originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship, using a 2 (lower vs. higher level of originality) × 2 (lower vs. higher level of meaningfulness) × 2 (lower vs. higher level of craftsmanship) between-subjects design. To increase external validity, stimulus materials are based on a real Instagram brand message for Valentine's Day, showing a visual of earphones in a heart-shaped jewelry box, with the accompanying text "For the players". The original brand message originated from a well-known Dutch brand, which was replaced by a less-known brand to avoid preconceived ideas about the brand as much as possible. Accordingly, a creative agency adapted the stimulus material to create eight conditions (see the Appendix), which were tested in several pilot studies.

First, in this study, originality is defined as the extent to which the brand message is unique and novel (White et al., 2002). By placing the earphones in a jewelry box as well the pun "For the players," an unexpected association of earphones as a gift for Valentine's Day is created. Therefore, these elements are shown in the brand message in the higher level originality conditions, whereas the jewelry box and the pun were left out in the lower level originality conditions. Second, meaningfulness is defined as the extent to which the brand message makes sense and is logical (White et al., 2002). By manipulating the text in the caption of the brand message, two versions were created that differed in the way that they made sense. The caption of the higher meaningfulness conditions noted: "Listen to the most beautiful love songs with the best quality earphones! Happy Valentine! #valentine," which makes a logical connection between the earphones, Valentine's Day and the consumer. The caption of the lower meaningfulness conditions noted: "Surprise your secret crush with a dinner for two today! Happy Valentine! #valentine," in which the logical connection between the earphones, Valentine's Day, and the consumer is lacking. Third, craftsmanship is defined as the extent to which the brand message is well-made and skillfully crafted (White et al., 2002). Therefore, the visual in the higher-level craftsmanship conditions was skillfully designed by a

professional designer of the creative agency, whereas the visual in the lower level conditions was adjusted to an amateurish version.

Measures

Creativity

Similar to Study 1, we used the CPSS instrument for measuring originality (standard vs. novel/ordinary vs. unique; $M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.20$), meaningfulness (senseless vs. makes sense/irrelevant vs. relevant; $M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.08$), and craftsmanship (amateurish vs. skillfully crafted/clumsy vs. well-made; $M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.02$) on a 5-point Likert scale (Heiser et al., 2008; O'Quin & Besemer, 1989; Stathopoulou et al., 2017; White et al., 2002). All items loaded on their intended construct. As shown in Table 6, the results provided evidence of convergent as well as discriminant validity.

A_m

To measure how favorably respondents evaluated the message, we used five-point semantic differentials from Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957), anchored by negative/positive, bad/good, uninteresting/interesting, not funny/funny, and not attractive/attractive ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.93$). As demonstrated in Table 6, the items loaded onto one factor, and yielded good internal validity. The items were therefore averaged to form a composite score of attitude towards the message.

A_b

The same scales of Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957) for measuring A_m are used for measuring attitude towards the brand ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.72$). Similar with A_m, the items loaded onto one factor, and yielded good internal consistency as shown in Table 6.

Purchase Intention

Respondents were asked about their willingness to purchase the product displayed in the brand message on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (*If I could afford it, I would buy the displayed earphones in the Instagram message*) (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991).

Table 6
Means, standard deviations, and construct validity in Study 2.

	M	SD	CR	α	OR	ME	CF	A_m	A_b
OR	2.58	1.20	0.24	0.91	**0.94**				
ME	2.53	1.08	0.38	0.85	0.38**	**0.90**			
CF	2.34	1.02	0.30	0.86	0.28**	0.34**	**0.92**		
A_m	2.58	0.93	1.35	0.91	0.65**	0.56**	0.55**	**0.85**	
A_b	3.08	0.72	1.51	0.89	0.36**	0.31**	0.32**	0.55**	**0.84**

Note. CR = composite reliability OR = originality CF = craftsmanship ME = meaningfulness A_m = attitude towards the message A_b = attitude towards the brand. Off-diagonal figures in bold represent the square roots of Average Variance Extracted (*AVE*). **$p < .001$.

Covariates

Five control variables were introduced to take potential differences between the respondents' background into account. We asked the respondents for their gender, age, experience with the product (*Are you in possession of the earphones, exposed in the post?*; no = 0, yes = 1), experience with the brand (*Did you buy anything at BCC in the last six months?*; no = 0, yes = 1), and satisfaction with the brand (*If so, are you satisfied with the brand BCC?*; no = 0, yes = 1).

Procedure

Students from two Dutch universities ($N = 245$; 83.3% Female; Age$M = 20.96$, $SD = 2.37$), participated in the online experiment in return for credit points. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. After seeing the brand message, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire.

Manipulation and Confound Checks

To check if participants perceived the creativity dimensions in the brand message as intended, a Oneway ANOVA was employed for each creativity dimension. The manipulation of originality (higher vs. lower) yielded significant differences in perceived originality $F (1, 244) = 49.85$, $p < .001$. Participants perceived the RTM message as more original in the conditions that were meant to demonstrate higher originality ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.17$) than conditions that were intended to demonstrate less originality ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.02$). The manipulation check of meaningfulness was also successful, as evidenced by significant differences in perceived meaningfulness, $F (1, 244) = 17.18$, $p < .001$. Brand messages in the condition with higher meaningfulness ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.07$) were perceived as more meaningful than RTM messages in the condition with lower meaningfulness ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.02$). And, as intended, also the manipulation of craftsmanship yielded the desired effects on perceived craftsmanship $F (1, 244) = 122.75$, $p < .001$. RTM messages that were manipulated to demonstrate higher levels of craftsmanship were perceived as more skillfully crafted ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.88$) than RTM messaged that were manipulated to demonstrate lower levels of craftsmanship ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.79$).

Confound checks revealed that only gender was significantly correlated with craftsmanship ($r = -0.23$, $p < .001$). The other control variables were therefore dropped from further analyses. The model was tested with and without gender as a control variable. Inserting the variable as a covariate did not change the impact or the direction of the effects. Nevertheless, we report the impact of the control variable on the dependent variables (see Table 7).

Results

To examine whether originality, craftsmanship and meaningfulness positively induce consumer responses (A_m, A_b, and purchase intention) on Instagram (H2a-c), a one-way

Table 7
Regression analyses for the relation between consumer responses and the creativity dimensions.

Parameters	b	SE	β	p
Attitude towards the message				
Originality	0.57	0.11	0.31	< 0.001
Meaningfulness	0.17	0.11	0.09	0.12
Craftsmanship	0.48	0.11	0.26	< 0.001
Gender	0.18	0.15	0.07	0.23
Attitude towards the brand				
Originality	0.28	0.09	0.19	< 0.01
Meaningfulness	−0.01	0.09	−0.01	0.92
Craftsmanship	0.28	0.09	0.20	< 0.01
Gender	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.99
Purchase intention				
Originality	0.38	0.29	0.08	0.19
Meaningfulness	0.22	0.29	0.05	0.44
Craftsmanship	1.15	0.30	0.25	< 0.001
Gender	0.19	0.40	0.03	0.63

multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The results indicated a significant effect of originality on positive consumers responses (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.897$, $F = 8.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.103$). Originality induced a positive attitude towards the message ($F (1, 244) = 26.79$, $p < .001$). RTM messages with higher levels of originality ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.97$) evoked more positive A_m than lower level of originality ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 0.80$). Originality also induced a positive A_b ($F (1, 244) = 9.50$, $p < .01$). Higher level originality messages ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.68$) yielded more positive A_b than lower level originality messages ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 0.75$). Moreover, no significant effect was found for purchase intention ($F (1, 244) = 1.82$, $p = .18$). In other words, a higher level of originality in a RTM message induced a positive attitude towards the message and the brand, yet, no effect was found for purchase intention. Thus, H2a is partly supported.

For meaningfulness, however, no significant effect was found on consumer responses (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.985$, $F = 1.22$, $p = .31$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$). No significant effects were found for A_m ($F (1, 244) = 2.52$, $p = .11$), A_b ($F (1, 244) = 0.01$, $p = .94$), nor for purchase intention ($F (1, 244) = 0.57$, $p = .45$). This means that a higher level of meaningfulness in a RTM message did not positively induce consumer responses on Instagram compared to a lower level of meaningfulness. Hence, in line with Study 1, H2b is not supported.

For craftsmanship on the other hand, the results indicated a significant effect on consumer responses (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.900$, $F = 8.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.100$). A significant effect was found on A_m ($F (1, 244) = 18.25$, $p < .001$). The findings showed that messages with a higher level of craftsmanship yield more positive A_m ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.87$) than messages with a lower level of craftsmanship ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 0.94$). Moreover, the results indicated a significant effect of craftsmanship on A_b ($F (1, 244) = 9.95$, $p < .01$). RTM messages with a higher level of craftsmanship evoked a more positive Ab ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.68$) than messages with a lower level of craftsmanship ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 0.74$). Last, a significant effect was found for

craftsmanship on purchase intention ($F (1, 244) = 14.62$, $p < .001$). The results showed that RTM messages with a higher level craftsmanship evoked a stronger purchase intention ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 2.50$) than a messages with a lower level of craftsmanship ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 2.00$). These findings are in line with our expectation that craftsmanship positively induces consumer responses in the context of Instagram. Thus, H2c is supported.

Moreover, H2d predicted that the positive relation between consumer responses and craftsmanship is stronger than for originality and meaningfulness. To test this hypothesis, we conducted three separate multiple regressions with A_m, A_b, and purchase intention as dependent variables, and originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship as the predictor variables, including gender as a covariate. Only craftsmanship was positively related to purchase intention of the exposed product. Thus, H2d is supported for purchase intention. Moreover, in line with the results of the MANOVA, only craftsmanship and originality were positively related to A_m and A_b (see Table 7). Subsequently, we determined the significance of the difference between the regression coefficients of originality and craftsmanship, based on the work of Paternoster, Mazerolle, and Piquero (1998). There was only a difference between the regression coefficients for A_m, although a z-test showed that this difference was not significantly different for A_m ($z = 0.765$, $p = .22$). In other words, the relation between craftsmanship and attitude towards the brand message and the brand is not stronger than the relation between originality and attitude towards the brand message and the brand. Hence, H2d is not supported for A_m and A_b.

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this paper was to examine the creative crafting of RTM (compared to non-RTM) messages on Instagram, and its effects on consumer responses. Based on a content analysis of 516 Instagram messages of Forbes Top-100 brands, complemented by a 2 (lower vs. higher originality) × 2 (lower vs. higher meaningfulness) × 2 (lower vs. higher craftsmanship) between-subjects experimental design, we conclude the following.

RTM Messages and Non-RTM Messages Are Subject to Different Creativity Biases

First, the findings from Study 1 imply that there is a difference in the way practitioners craft RTM messages compared to non-RTM messages. More specifically, the results showed a meaningfulness bias for RTM in which more emphasis was placed on creating meaningful rather than original and well-crafted content, and a craftsmanship bias for non-RTM messages in which marketers focused on craftsmanship instead of originality. Kilgour et al. (2013) coined the concept creativity bias after discovering that advertisers often focus on originality in the crafting of messages at the expense of other dimensions of creativity, such as meaningfulness. This paper offers new theoretical insights on the presence of

creativity biases, as it was the first to find both a craftsmanship and meaningfulness bias. Furthermore, it also demonstrated that these biases depend on the type of message brands create (RTM vs. non-RTM). Evidently, whether or not a brand message is aligned with timely moments affects the creative development.

Future research should investigate whether observed creativity biases are also observed in other types of brand messages and social media contexts. Prior research proposed various categorizations of brands messages on social media, such as emotional brand posts, functional brand posts, educational brand posts, and real-time marketing messages (Tafesse & Wien, 2017), based on the assumption that different types of messages produce different types of effects (Gavilanes et al., 2018). Follow-up research is recommended to gain insight into the question which creativity dimensions are best represented in these messages, and how this affects consumer responses.

Creativity Effects Are Context-Dependent

Second, we showed that the positive effects of the three creativity dimensions on consumer responses are not that evident. The results revealed that only craftsmanship is positively related to consumer responses, which is in contrast to previous studies that have consistently shown positive effects for originality and meaningfulness on consumer responses (e.g., Ang et al., 2014; Hartnett, Kennedy, Sharp, & Greenacre, 2015; Yang & Smith, 2009). A possible explanation might be found in the medium context (Kover, 2016). Instagram is a creative, image-based platform, in which the visual quality affects consumer responses (Valentini et al., 2018). In correspondence with the features of this visually-oriented platform, messages that scored higher on craftsmanship resulted in more positive consumer responses than messages that scored lower on craftsmanship. This finding adds to the literature, as it shows that creativity dimensions do not yield unequivocally positive consumer responses, unlike previously suggested (e.g., Ang et al., 2014; Hartnett et al., 2015; Smith and Yang, 2009), and that the direction and strength of these effects are context-dependent.

The finding that craftsmanship is an essential driver of consumer responses, is an incentive to place the effects of visual content on the research agenda, especially given the notion that well-crafted content will only gain importance in the upcoming years. Social media consumption and production are becoming more and more visually oriented (Valentini et al., 2018). The vast majority of European brands have expanded the focus on visual content in their digital strategies the last few years (Zerfass, Verhoeven, Moreno, Tench, & Verčič, 2017). This is further enhanced by technological advancements in social media apps, simplifying the creation of well-executed visual content. Adding to that, craftsmanship is an important motive for social media users to engage with a brand as "aesthetic motivation [...] exposes them to the potentially unlimited universe of creative inputs" (Pentina, Guilloux, & Micu, 2018, p. 8). The visual aesthetic execution of Instagram messages drives consumer responses (Kusumasondjaja, 2020).

Considering the increasing importance of visual content, the extent to which a brand message is skillfully crafted should be taken into account in future ad creativity research investigating digital content.

Furthermore, future research should also examine the possibility that creativity effects are not only context-dependent, but also consumer-dependent. According to the manipulation checks, participants' perceptions seem not overly positive to any of the creativity dimensions (i.e., scores on these scales are not high). Hence, one might wonder what is driving creativity effects? In this study, we examined creativity as a property of RTM messages (i.e. creativity dimensions are regarded as message characteristics), based on the idea guiding much of the advertising research and practice that some messages are simply more original, meaningful, and skillfully crafted than others (e.g., Ang et al., 2007). However, there are also some scholars who argue that creativity may also be in the eye of the beholder. White et al. (2002) shed light on this issue by showing that there is variance in the perception of creativity, caused by individual level characteristics (e.g. age, gender). However, their results also showed strong agreement between the creativity judgments of people from the general public, advertising professionals, and students. People from all three samples seemed to agree on which ads were most original and made the most sense. Additionally, variance in perceived creativity was more strongly driven by differences in ad message content rather than personal characteristics (White et al., 2002). Although participants did not respond in an overly positiver manner to any of the creativity dimensions in the current study, they did show significant differences in their evaluations of originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship depending on what message they had seen. Since the effects of these creativity dimensions on consumer responses were also similar with the effects found in the field study, we are confident that the conditions of the experimental study are driving the effects of creativity dimensions on consumer responses. Nevertheless, it would be an interesting research avenue to explore how creativity perceptions vary as a result of interactions with consumer characteristics.

The Importance of Aligning the Measurement of Creativity with Its Multi-Dimensional Nature

Third, this study provided further evidence for originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship as distinct constructs, which deepens our understanding of ad creativity. Although the literature generally agrees that creativity can be defined as a multi-dimensional construct, many studies still measure creativity as one construct (e.g., Baack et al., 2016; Heiser et al., 2008; Moldovan et al., 2019; Wilson, Baack, & Till, 2015). To do justice to its multi-dimensional nature, we used a validated measurement model (White et al., 2002) that has proven useful for examining ad creativity in social media context (Stathopoulou et al., 2017; Willemsen et al., 2018). Using this measurement model enabled us not only to examine originality and meaningfulness, but also to take the aesthetic appeal of a creative message into account that is proposed as a third facet of

creativity by a growing number of scholars (See Table 1). In this study, convergent and discriminant validity analyses indeed showed that originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship are distinct constructs. This is further supported by the finding that originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship have differential antecedents (message types) and differential consequences or effects, a result that has been observed in other domains of creativity research as well (Blair & Mumford, 2007; Reiter-Palmon, Illies, Cross, Buboltz, & Nimps, 2009). This suggests that assessing originality, meaningfulness, and craftsmanship as one and the same construct might obscure the complexity of ad creativity effectiveness. Future research is recommended to further explore the dimensional structure of ad creativity in social media contexts. Such an endeavor would also be valuable to stimulate further discussion on the nature of digital creativity and how it might differ from creativity in traditional advertising, in order to gain insight how creativity works on social media platforms.[1]

RTM Can Have Adversary Effects

Fourth, this study demonstrated that RTM has adversary effects on consumer responses in the context of Instagram, in contrast to prior findings demonstrating positive consumer responses to RTM in the context of Twitter (Willemsen et al., 2018). To be precise, this study showed that RTM messages on Instagram yield less positive consumer responses compared to non-RTM messages due to a meaningfulness bias. This unexpected finding can be explained by Voorveld et al. (2018), arguing that there is no such thing as social media, as social media platforms differ in characteristics and functionalities, and thus gratify different needs. It depends on the motivation why users engage with a certain social media platform in the first place. This notion relies on the Uses and Gratification Theory to understand why and how people seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs (Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974). Considering that people predominantly use Twitter to gratify their need for news consumption and production (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007; Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010), and Instagram as a creative outlet for inspiration (Papetti et al., 2018; Zhu & Chen, 2015), consumers may be appreciative of RTM in the context of Twitter, but not in the case of Instagram. Future research could adopt an experimental approach to compare several social media platforms regarding the functioning of RTM.

The Value of Examining "The Creative Universe"

Finally, the naturalistic design of Study 1 enriches ad creativity literature as it allows the use of behavioral data instead of self-report measures. We argue that behavioral social media data is of great value when measuring creativity effectiveness. It offers possibilities to examine consumers' responses to creative messages in a natural environment (Voorveld, 2019). This is beneficial in two ways. On the one hand, Sasser and Koslow (2008) raised the issue that in the methodological design of most ad creativity studies less than three creative and three uncreative ads are used. They argued that with this limited number of stimuli, it is rather hard to represent "the creative universe" (p. 11). This study addressed the call of Sasser and Koslow (2008) to increase the external validity of creativity effects by examining naturally occurring brand messages, with naturally occurring differences in craftsmanship, meaningfulness and originality. Another benefit of using behavioral data, is that it reflects a more realistic setting in which consumers voluntarily engage with creative messages in comparison with a forced exposure setting (Moorman, 2003; Sasser & Koslow, 2008).

Managerial Implications

The insights of this study give brands levers for engaging customers with an effective content marketing strategy. Based on the findings, we suggest two implications in order to enhance the effects of brand messages on consumer responses. First, although the results showed that almost one out of three Instagram brand messages referred to timely moments, RTM is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Marketers should be mindful of the strategical component of RTM, implying that one particular brand message cannot be posted on all social media platforms. Yet, one and the same brand message is often posted on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook in practice, stimulated by the ubiquitous, embedded buttons to share, tweet, and regram the same message by a simple click. However, when designing brand messages, the medium context and its functionalities should be taken into account. Whereas applying RTM on Twitter is highly recommended (Mazerant & Willemsen, 2018; Willemsen et al., 2018), on a platform such as Instagram the same strategy may have detrimental effects on consumer responses if it comes at the expense of craftsmanship.

Second, results from this study suggested that craftsmanship is the most important driver of consumer responses. Especially on a visual-oriented platform such as Instagram, practitioners should focus on the visual attractiveness of brand messages, considering that this is an essential component of the three creativity dimensions for establishing successful content. Yet, with RTM messages, practitioners seem to emphasize more on making a relevant and logical connection with the moment, instead of skillfully crafting messages. This suggests that Instagram as a creative, crafted medium is not a medium for RTM, if meaningfulness has been pursued without an equal emphasis on craftsmanship. Additionally, brands should be aware of these creativity biases when developing their digital content strategy.

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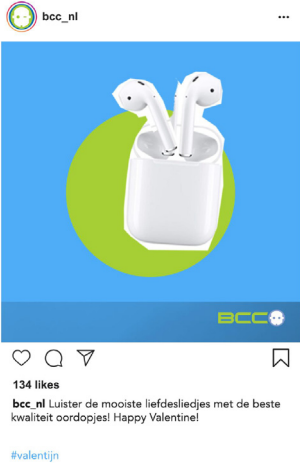
[1] We would like to thank one of the reviewers for this suggestion.

Appendix A. Appendix

	Higher craftsmanship	
	Lower originality	Higher originality
Lower meaningfulness		

	Lower originality	Higher originality
Higher meaningfulness		

	Lower craftsmanship	
	Lower originality	Higher originality
Lower meaningfulness		

(*continued*)

	Lower craftsmanship	
	Lower originality	Higher originality
Higher meaningfulness		

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