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*Digital marketing and language strategies in
the skincare sector: the cases of
Estetista Cinica and Drunk Elephant*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preface

Nowadays, with the uncountable technological innovations in every sector, more and more companies are trying to turn to the digital world, combining offline and online channels. Compared to a few years ago now, many entrepreneurs have tried to adapt to the change in traditional marketing consisting of the 4Ps: product, price, placement, and promotion, which has been expanded with the addition of online channels (digital marketing) consisting of the 4Cs: customer, cost, communication, and convenience. Therefore, of primary importance is the communication that is made by companies to their consumers, who now acquire in the sales process the role of actor and according to Salamzadeh et al. (2019), "the transformation of consumers into active participants in the economy makes them an integral part of the value creation process and transforms the economy into a participatory economy".

Companies, through the Internet, and especially through social media, interact directly with current and potential customers, attempting to initiate a two-way communication: on the one hand, the company communicates to the consumer what products and services it offers; on the other hand, the consumer will actively participate by giving feedback or through interactions on social media. The result is that there is an active, two-way relationship between the company and the consumer and although a company cannot control everything users say about a company on social media, it can still provide new insights that help a company's managers understand consumer demands (Cade, 2018). Companies consider consumers' needs and the characteristics requested by them in the formulation phase, design packaging that catch

their attention, or as regards the presentation of products, try to be present in the as many channels as possible so that the various users can quickly find the information they need.

According to Armstrong and Kotler (2010), marketing communications can link people, locations, events, products, experiences, attitudes, and more to a company's brand. They can assist in developing brand equity by assisting in the recall of the brand and creating an image for the brand, as well as increasing sales and even influencing share value. Thus, digital marketing uses digital technology channels (online channels) to contact customers (websites, e-mail, databases, digital TV and other recent inventions). Social media marketing has a great effect on how people see a brand and how much they trust it. Furthermore, trust and brand image have a great effect on purchase intention (Sanny et al., 2020), one of which is the consumption behavior of skin care products. Trust is defined as a customer believes that certain brands can satisfy her or his desires, so when customers have trust in the brand, repetitive buying behavior will be created, which leads to commitment to the brand, and the relationship between the brand and the customer can be established (Chinomona, 2017).

In addition, it is important to know that language plays an important role in the entire communication process. Language conveys important information and allows the company to express itself in the best possible way in order to reach the final recipients, in this case the consumers, and to affect them positively. In this research, we will discuss in depth the different languages that exist in the field of marketing and how they can be used simultaneously by a company to convey a certain message. Therefore, what we try to answer in the following research is whether the language used on social media can have a strong impact on digital marketing and, on the consumer's purchasing intentions, but above all if the communication strategies implemented by companies can influence the consumer to buy a product or not.

In the following section, we will see how real-time communication between consumers and brands is very important, especially in the field of cosmetics. Consumers communicate to

the company their views on products or simply request cosmetics with certain characteristics, and this makes consumers the protagonists of the entire production and commercial process

1.2 The link between skincare industry and digital marketing

The subject of the following research is the analysis of two well-known cosmetics brands, one Italian VeraLab and the other American Drunk Elephant. Both companies were created recently and have had great success, especially in recent years. According to reports from Statista, the largest online market data portal, in 2019, the cosmetics industry, whose market value in recent years amounted to 532 billion dollars, seems to have grown faster than it has ever grown previously. The market seemed destined to grow further and, the data reported on the site, estimated that by 2023 it would have reached a market value of 805 billion dollars. However, after the unexpected crisis of 2020, in that year, the global cosmetics market decreased by over 19 percent in comparison to the previous year. Skincare was the leading category, that is one of the most profitable product categories, accounting for about 42% of the global market.

The success of the cosmetics sector is largely due to the change in communication with consumers. The advent of the Internet and its widespread use have allowed this evolution to put the two groups that have benefited most from this situation in more direct contact, namely businesses and consumers who have gone from having a completely or almost completely passive behavior to an active role. In recent years, we often speak of ‘prosumer’ referring to this new role of consumer; in fact, according to Chan (2022), “the term ‘prosumption’ captures the visionary idea that consumers would play an active role in the process of production, thereby blurring the line between production and consumption”. In general, it is important to point out that the cosmetics industry has benefited from the increasing popularity of social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These platforms are not only

highly influential amongst certain demographic groups but create a demand for beauty products and help fill the gap between cosmetics brands and consumers. Fashion- and beauty-related content, such as makeup and skincare and makeup tutorials, are among the most popular content on Instagram and other important social media. This is the reason why, the two companies that were analyzed in the following research, did not have a collapse in the years of the pandemic, on the contrary, in the case of the company VeraLab the profits have even increased.

The beauty industry is undergoing a digital transformation following the revolution in the way brands encounter consumers, caused by social media and e-commerce (Morgan, 2019). In this sense, the aim of companies is to reformulate their activities by converting beauty services into real digital experiences. However, the use of social media by companies can also have disadvantages. The greater interactions between brands and users can be a source of added value for the company and for the products it markets but, with the same ease, they can also lead to less pleasant situations. This is because the Internet allows the rapid circulation of personal comments and opinions that often highlight the negative aspects of various products.

A good marketing and communication strategy lies in engaging customers through widespread and individual experiences, and enabling digital interaction across all touchpoints, including retail outlets, the web, applications, and social media (Fjermedal, 2021). Several beauty brands are committed to meeting the changing needs and needs of each one, through customized and highly technological products, combining beauty and technology, giving life to the so-called Beauty Tech. Beauty Tech is essential to make the shopping experience more complete, and to accelerate the growth of a company's business. Furthermore, personalization is also becoming more important within the skincare sector which is an important element and allows companies to satisfy consumer demands, remaining competitive in a market as vast as that of skincare (Kanaska, 2022). Currently, one of the approaches through which

personalization within the skin care industry is allowed are in-person recommendations (recommended product suggestions) and online recommendations, using customer support, for example, whose employees of the company will recommend the most suitable products for your skin on the basis of some questionnaires.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the research

After introducing the main topic on which this thesis is based, the intent of this research is to assess the different communication strategies that are implemented by skincare companies, analyzing the social network communication of two companies: VeraLab and Drunk Elephant. In particular, the assessment of these two case studies is based on the analysis of some posts on Instagram social media both from the point of view of customer involvement and engagement, and the point of view of the language used by companies to communicate.

To analyze the impact that language and the type of communication can have on consumers and their purchase intent, several posts from three different periods of the company's life were examined: pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic, also to understand if companies have changed over the last few years. This type of study will also allow us to understand if the way in which companies communicate and if their communication strategies attract the consumer and increase his intention to purchase. The aim is to lead other companies that have not yet embarked on the digital marketing sector, to evaluate it as a possible source of growth for their company and to indicate the way digital communication should be set-up.

1.4 Research structure

After this first introductory chapter, the structure in which this thesis is divided includes four main parts, each dedicated to a specific purpose:

- the second chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the theoretical background related to the various constructs considered for the purposes of the research and the definition of the terminology used;
- the third chapter, explores the aims of the study, the research methodology, as well as defines the questions to which the research aims to answer, and the two companies object of the research are presented and described;
- the fourth chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the results obtained from the analysis of posts on Instagram, highlighting the main characteristics of them belonging to the same category;
- the fifth and final chapter concerns the discussion of the results and their interpretation for the development of theoretical and marketing implications, in addition to the conclusions that can be drawn from them.

1.4.1 Chapter Two Summary: The main features of digital marketing

The second chapter is divided in six sections. The first part focuses on the main concepts of digital marketing aiming at analyzing and how, using online platforms, such as social media, and also through the use of appropriate language on them, a company can improve its performance. In doing so, the following concepts and factors are considered, which lead back to digital marketing:

- the technology that has revolutionized the way they do business using an online channel in addition to the offline channel to interact directly with customers;
- the concept of ‘web advertising’, which refers to the online communication that companies direct to their target audiences through their sites and other online channels;
- social media communication strategy, which are the means used by digital marketing to ensure that the consumer shares his interest in the company with other users. the content of

communication that is produced within online environment (social media and websites), focusing on content marketing concept, which is really important because it is changing the way companies communicate with their target audiences;

This part will explore three concepts of social media communication strategy, such as:

1. the concept of creativity, which is fundamental to making the company stand out and be remembered;
 2. the distinction between the concept of personalization as a seller-initiated activity, and customization as a customer-initiated activity;
 3. the concept of experience: the focus of modern marketing is precisely on enhancing the customer experience also through the use of digital channels such as social media and e-commerce: the purchase must be pleasurable, and this creates brand loyalty in the customer;
- the language used by the company depending on its communication needs and, in this case, may decide to use different techniques, such as literal and/or figurative, concrete and/or abstract, informative and/or emotional.
 - the relationship between digital communication and brand, according to which digital communication allows the customer to know the brand better.

1.4.2 Chapter Three Summary: Research methodology

The third chapter is entirely dedicated to the presentation of the methodology used and to the definition of the research objectives. Once the main purpose of the research has been defined, that is to define whether the communication strategies of the companies influence the consumer's purchase intention and if the language has a strong impact on digital marketing, we focus on the description of the experiment. Furthermore, in the chapter there is a section about the design of the research, that is 'multiple case studies', which aims to describe and detail the two companies considered (VeraLab and Drunk Elephant), not only from the structural point

of view, but also from the point of view of the communication strategies that use to communicate with consumers.

Finally, the analysis methodology on which the research is based is reported, i.e., content analysis.

1.4.3 Chapter Four Summary: Results of the analysis

The fourth chapter focuses mainly on the presentation of the results and consists of 4 sections:

- the first section presents the posts on Instagram relating to the pre-pandemic period of both companies: posts presenting a product, general posts published by the company, posts containing a video (to also check the views) and posts concerning the initiatives in which companies participate on social media;
- in the second section, the posts on Instagram relating to the pandemic period of both companies are presented, with the same subdivision mentioned above;
- the third section presents the posts on Instagram relating to the post-pandemic period of both companies with the same aforementioned subdivision;
- in the fourth section, a table is presented in which the above posts are compared according to the type of post and according to the period in which they were published. For example, a post from the pre-pandemic period containing a video by the company VeraLab will be compared with a post containing a video, from the pre-pandemic period, by the company Drunk Elephant.

1.4.4 Chapter Five Summary: General discussion and conclusions

In the fifth chapter the results presented in the fourth chapter are discussed, thanks also to the support of some tables that summarize the results. In particular, we focused on the

comparison of the interactions to the Instagram posts of the two companies, always dividing them into the three periods: pre-pandemic, pandemic and post-pandemic, analyzing the number of likes, comments and views regarding the video. From this analysis it was possible to deduce which of the two companies has a greater impact from the point of view of interactions, which of the languages used would seem to work better for communication purposes, but above all it was possible to confirm the idea that the skincare sector is not absolutely been a declining industry during the pandemic years. We then proceeded with a comparison with the theoretical aspects identified in the second chapter and the results obtained to arrive at specific theoretical implications. Finally, we will describe the hypothetical consequences in the marketing field to which the conclusions obtained may lead. It all ends with the concluding part of this research, in which the limitations found in the research and suggestions for any future research on the subject are outlined.

CHAPTER 2

THE MAIN FEATURES OF DIGITAL MARKETING

2.1 Introduction

The rapid rise of the internet at the beginning of the twenty-first century has been able to accelerate the contribution of information and communication technologies to the growth and innovation of businesses, regardless of their size and the sector in which they operate, encouraging their internationalization and growth. In fact, technology, and communication help companies to strengthen their effectiveness and to create relationships. Precisely for this reason, technology plays a very important role in Customer Engagement that is, according to Haven (2007, p.4), “the level of involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence an individual has with a brand over time”. For companies, the spread of Internet technology has revolutionized the way they do business, and they have had to start using an online channel in addition to the offline one to interact with customers. Indeed, through the Web, consumers can access a lot of information in an easier way: get meaningful information about the company, its products, compare prices and even communicate with other users about the quality of the product. Internet has also affected the way companies do business. In this sense, e-commerce solutions have transformed several small businesses operating into local markets, into global companies with a wide choice and convenience for customers at international level. The opportunity to shop conveniently online instead of going to the physical shop has been a revolution for customers. However, this technological environment was also associated with new uncertainties and risks. For example, customers sharing their personal and payment data. Indeed, the early adopters of online shopping experienced some consumer trust issues. But despite this, at present, it is possible to say that technology has led the consumer to be more

aware of the products and services he buys. Above all, the consumer has more information about products due to new technology and new means that are used by both consumers and the company itself. For example, social media greatly affects the communication between the company and potential customers. A successful strategy aimed at the consumer engages customers through widespread and individual experiences and enable digital interaction both on the web (including social media and applications) and in physical stores. Research agrees that the use of multiple channels increases customer loyalty and profitability (Ansari et al., 2008) facilitating deeper relationships and more services for customers. (Wallace et al., 2004). According to Kushwaha and Shankar (2013), multichannel usage is used by customers only for hedonic products (e.g., cosmetics) rather than utilitarian products (e.g., computers).

The job of marketing managers is to try to deliver compelling campaigns on all devices and become proficient in the use of technology. It will be the technological devices that represent the major growth areas for companies in the next 2-4 years. It is therefore important for companies to adopt technology in all its forms to be always up-to-date and to communicate better with their customers. In fact, this is precisely what Chaffey et al. (2009) affirm that Internet use by consumers and entrepreneurs has now led to the idea that all companies and organization must use the Internet to improve their performance or even to survive. In this regard, it is important to mention the Cluetrain Manifesto (Levine et al., 2000), which advises modern marketers not to consider the Internet merely as a collection of passive hardware and software, but as a means to create dynamic dialogues that can take the form of forums, blog comments, or customer reviews after trying out a product or service.

Therefore, the development of technology and, mainly, of Internet-based technologies has been essential for digital marketing, that means using web, e-mail, databases, plus mobile/wireless and digital TV to achieve certain objectives, such as: support marketing

activities to retain customers as much as possible within a multichannel buying process to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Wallace et al., 2004).

2.2 Digital marketing strategy

In recent years, the social media revolution has changed and affected the whole world, and in particular consumer behavior. Just as there has been a change in the consumer, a transformation has also taken place within companies, which have decided to turn to digital to further expand themselves. Companies have decided to do this through digital marketing that following the American Marketing Association definition, it refers to the activities, institutions, and processes facilitated by digital technologies for several purposes such as creating, communicating, and delivering value for customers and other stakeholders. Below, Kannan and Li (2016, p.23) expanded this definition, considering digital marketing as “an adaptive, technology-enabled process by which firms collaborate with customers and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders”.

Hence, digital marketing as well as social media marketing are marketing activities that have revolutionized and will continue to revolutionize the way companies do business. One difference between traditional marketing and digital marketing is the following: the 4Ps (Product, Price, Promotion, Place) of traditional marketing, which has been expanded with the addition of online channels (digital marketing) consisting in the 4Cs (Customer, Cost, Communication, and Convenience). Thereby, the focus is all on the customer and no longer on the company. In this respect, combining traditional marketing strategies with digital marketing strategies can be a winning combination. According to Bertoli (2015), a good marketing strategy is developed by taking into consideration several elements: the starting point is the analysis, followed by the definition of the strategy and the operational plan with its implementation; it continues in a cycle of continuous improvement by measuring the results

generated by the actions. Together, these elements allow us to better understand what user behavior is on the different digital platforms and how it also influences the consumer offline behavior.

As far as analysis is concerned, the first point to be analyzed is the company's current digital assets, i.e., what the company does online, how it ranks on search engines, whether it already has a website, or social networks pages, such as Facebook, Instagram and so on. Therefore, on the one hand there are consumers who are just beginning to use the means provided by the online world; on the other hand, there are companies who are trying to understand this type of consumer and how to exploit the opportunities provided by new media such as social media (Evans, et al., 2001). From this point of view, it is important to consider how users interact on the company's pages and how company manages the customers' interactions.

As result of the online activities, a further point included in the analysis is to understand what kind of online reputation the company and its products have: how often the company is talked about and how (positively, negatively), what topics are most talked about. Monitoring, therefore, helps the company understand how to achieve its goals. In addition, it is also important to know what kind of activities competitors are doing; to research market trends on possible future developments of the company and above all to understand the target audience, what their online purchasing habits are, from which sites they buy and what kind of products (Bertoli, 2015). A strategic plan should identify the company's position in the current market through SWOT analysis¹. Bosomworth and Chaffey (2015, p. 7) in this phase highlight four key customer touchpoints:

- *Reach*: build and increase your network through media;

¹ Analysis through which market strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities are analyzed.

- *Convert*: use the conversion rate by increasing online and offline sales;
- *Act*: persuade customers;
- *Engage*: build customer loyalty and increase sales.

After these first phases, there is the definition of a strategy, i.e., how to achieve the company's set objectives and then implement it in the operational plan. The operational plan is a document that divides the activities into different periods (months or years) and indicates several important points: whether it is necessary to use digital marketing tools, such as newsletters; what the roles of employees within the company or suppliers are; how to measure the objectives and the budget that will be allocated to each planned activity.

After implementing the strategy, it is therefore important to measure the results obtained. According to Todor (2016), it is important to check Return On Investment (ROI) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Channel Based - Website, blog, social networks, search engines; General Performance - Traffic, leads, reach and Source-based performance - Direct traffic, Organic search, referrals, email. This allows the company to understand whether the strategy has worked or not. Through the results, it is easy to understand how to improve and what interventions to make to the operational plan to fill in some of the gaps that the results have shown.

According to Bertoli (2015), the process just described answer to the 5W (why, what, when, who, where) and how. The company should first address the question 'who?' and, therefore, understand which target group with broad sociodemographic characteristics its products are aimed at. It should think in terms of 'personas', i.e., prototypes of customers who usually represent a group with common characteristics. In this case, it is important to mention influencers, stakeholders, and partners, i.e., all those figures who try to steer a customer's purchase in a certain direction. In order to be able to understand which target group the products are aimed at, the company must understand what its objectives are and thus what the company

wants to achieve with that strategy, answering the question ‘why?’. Digital marketing objectives are derived from business objectives and are both related to general marketing objectives. Goals should be realistic, i.e., achievable; measurable; and should consider long, medium- and short-term horizons: for example, more structured companies have multi-year goals, as opposed to less structured companies that have annual or half-year goals.

Answering the question ‘where?’ is important to understand the market and the environment surrounding the company, i.e., whether you are dealing with direct or indirect competitors and what strategies they have activated on the web. Analyzing the competitor does not only mean paying attention to those in the same territory, but also those that the potential customer might find next to the company when searching online. Regarding the market, it is important to check in which markets the company is already present and in which ones it should or could invest to increase its sales potential, e.g., abroad.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the time axis and thus answer the question ‘when?’. Digital has brought about significant changes in the daily work of a marketing manager, including always being online. Managing a Facebook or Instagram page means managing it even during holidays or weekends. Thus, the relationship between company and customer is continuous. Even when the company is absent for a while on social media, it is communicating something: either it is not paying attention to its customers, or it is experiencing a period of crisis.

With the question ‘what?’ we refer to the content of a campaign generated by companies and is crucial for attracting customers. Content can take various forms: text, images, video. Content production follows four phases: conception, production, dissemination, and verification of results. In the content creation phase, it is also important to use a precise communication style and language that triggers in the consumer a feeling of closeness to the

brand and its singleness. A content can be considered excellent if it possesses some characteristics (Bertoli, 2015):

- *Educational/training functions*: tutorials, questions and answers, guides, case studies, lists of useful resources or test/research results;
- *Functions to stimulate interaction*: direct requests (polls), contests, competitions, or debates;
- *Fun-recreational functions*: entertaining content, quotations, or proverbs;
- *Informative functions*: news, reports of events, narrative content, previews or lived experiences.

Finally, the question ‘how?’ concerns the strategy but also the operational activities that the company will adopt based on the answers to the previous questions. In summary, the strategy must indicate the objectives and how to achieve them, put ideas and concepts into practice, and identify the target audience, as explained in detail in the analysis phase above. Furthermore, the strategy should specify on which social platforms the brand should be present and in what way, since there are several social media on which users interact differently (Bertoli, 2015)

Nowadays, being the marketing focused on the concept of “customer value” and “customer demand”, because only if the customer is satisfied will the marketing processes be repeated over time, a company has to acquire an in-depth knowledge of consumers through all their research in order to affect and then respond effectively to their needs and desires. In this regard, one of the most important digital marketing strategies is advertising, and in particular web advertising, which allows companies to reach their customers in different markets through the promotion of their products or services by exploiting the enormous potential offered by the Internet media.

2.3 Web advertising

Advertising has always played an essential role in the commercial environment for many decades already. In fact, the first ads on the web first appeared in the mid-1900s, when the first banner ads were placed on commercial websites. Web advertising, also known as online advertising, has been defined as a form of commercial content available on the Internet, designed by any company or entity to inform consumers about a product or service (Schlosser, et al., 1999). In this digital age, Internet, in addition to becoming an important source of information for consumers, has also become a medium for companies through which advertising messages can be directed directly to consumers. Consumers can easily gather information about goods and services and can choose how much commercial content they wish to view (Aktan et al., 2016). A first important observation regarding online advertisements dates back to 1998 with McCandless, stating that an important feature of ads posted online is that they can receive direct feedback on its effectiveness, so if, for example, a user clicks on an ad, advertisers consider it an effective. This allows companies to measure exactly how many times an ad has been viewed or clicked on, enabling a quick change in strategy based on the feedback received.

Every company would like its advertising to be effective, to be remembered by consumers, and to lead them to make purchase decisions. In fact, the effectiveness of a web advertisement is by no means easy to achieve, and several factors must be considered to increase the value of the advertisement. First, it is important to understand the target audience's attitude toward the web, whether they consider the web a reliable source because this will influence their attitude toward individual Internet advertisements. Second, it is important to create more appropriate web ads (Aktan et al., 2019). For example, the presentation platform or forced exposure to ads is important here: users cannot avoid web advertisements, and this interrupts user activity on the web.

According to (Aktan et al., 2016), the factors that contribute to consumers' assessment of the value of advertising, their attitude toward advertisements, and a subsequent acceptance of web advertising can be outlined as follows:

- *Entertainment*: the advertising message to immediately capture the consumer's attention must be entertaining and coincidental. This is because consumers prefer to see ads that are pure entertainment and will bring them back to the website more easily. This can have a positive impact on consumers' perception of advertising value.
- *Credibility*: consumer credibility toward advertising is directly proportional to how trustworthy the consumer considers that advertising to be. In fact, it is precisely consumers' distrust and cynicism of advertising that hinders its credibility and effectiveness.
- *Informativeness*: the quality of information shared by companies in online media must be accurate, timely and useful to consumers because it has a direct influence on their perception of the company and its products. Informativeness of ads is their ability to effectively convey information to the public.
- *Irritation*: is an attitude that is manifested in consumers when an advertisement generates annoyance, intolerance, and discontent in them. This happens when an advertisement contains a range of information that the recipient may consider offensive, intended to offend, manipulate, or annoy. Most users consider the advertisement an invasive interruption of their online activities or that it is a medium that contains a computer virus. For this reason, special software has been created to block advertisements, and about 38% of people use these forms of blocking. Thus, the task of marketers is precisely to design more suitable ads that entertain, attract, and inform customers in the right way.

Therefore, while entertainment, informativeness, and credibility are key elements that positively affect the value of advertising, the sense of irritation from other ads causes consumers to make negative judgments about advertising. Indeed, interesting, and enjoyable

advertisements have positive effects on consumers' attitudes towards a particular brand and, above all, consumers evaluate an advertising message in the context of the medium through which it is presented. Companies usually choose social media as the medium on which they can advertise products and services through web advertising, which are used to conduct a good communication strategy.

2.4 Social media communication strategy

Social networks have now become the most widely used tool for companies to increase their visibility, to be able to communicate with current and potential customers, allowing them to create more profitable relationships that are almost impossible to achieve through the simple use of traditional channels. Digital marketing must be very customer-focused to ensure that the company builds a positive image of itself and to increase brand loyalty. In this sense, social networks can be used as excellent tools for people who generally share a common interest or activity (Assaad et al., 2011), creating precisely limitless exchanges between users through a variety of ways to interact with each other. Social media and online communities are Internet-based, collaborative systems, often based on cloud computing, in which most of the content is produced by users, and users interact socially beyond geographical boundaries (Steinhoff et al., 2018).

Therefore, communication in social networks leads buyers to share their personal information, listen to each other, review ratings of products and services and provide product knowledge. These networks that are created offer a unique opportunity for companies to create highly targeted marketing, because each user creates his or her own profile on the various social networks describing his or her interests and needs, while also getting to know his or her friends (other users) who have similar interests, inviting others to join. In this way, companies can more easily follow their customers, meet their needs, control, and measure their activities.

The specific objectives of social media marketing including stimulating sales, increasing brand awareness, improving brand image, generating traffic to online platforms, reducing marketing costs, and creating interactivity between users on platforms by stimulating users to post or share content (Felix et al., 2017). Furthermore, companies can monitor and analyze social media conversations to understand how consumers view the company or its actions.

The most popular social media are Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Twitter, and Wikipedia, but around 84% of companies use Facebook and Twitter profiles to share content and improve communication between company and customers. An important contribution of customers within social media is word-of-mouth (WOM) creation, including online reviews, which is both important feedback for the company itself from consumers and an important source of information for other consumers who are considering whether to buy that product. Social media and online communities have the potential to influence customer loyalty, engagement, feedback, and product co-creation results. Companies should focus on providing relevant content that delivers value and enhances the customer experience.

Although the spread of social media is a significant and positive development for companies, it is also necessary to consider the risks that social media may imply, such as the negative effects of spreading dissatisfaction and customer complaints. Consumers now expect more control over what they consume and demand immediate access to more information and are increasingly moving away from traditional sources of advertising (radio, television, newspapers). This is since social media is perceived by consumers as a more trustworthy source of information regarding products and services than corporate-sponsored communications transmitted via the traditional elements of the promotion mix (Foux, 2006).

Kietzmann et al. (2011) identify seven functional building blocks common to all forms of social media, and none of today's major social media focuses solely on just one block. Each

block allows us to examine a specific aspect of the user experience on social media. In this way, companies can develop a precise social media strategy by monitoring how social media activities vary in terms of function and impact for a given category of people. The blocks are as follows:

- *Identity*: considers the disclosure of information such as a user's name, age, gender, profession, location, and other personal information. Many times, however, users reveal their subjective information, even unconsciously, such as thoughts, feelings, preferences, and dislikes. In addition, however, it is important to remember that not all social media users use their real name, but use a fictitious one, whereas, other social media influencers are known by their nicknames.
- *Conversation*: the conversation block indicates how users communicate with other users in a social media context. This is because many social media sites facilitate conversations between individuals and groups for a variety of reasons: people tweet, blog, etc. to meet new people, to propose their ideas. Others, however, use social media to get their message across about environmental issues, political debates, etc. Particular attention must be paid to customer service, which operates on the company's sites and converses with the consumer about any doubts or queries they may have. This figure is important precisely because it helps the company to satisfy the customer (e.g., by helping customers solve problems).
- *Presence*: this block shows us if other users are accessible if they are available and where they are. In the virtual world, this is done through status lines such as "available" or "hidden". Many users want to interact, for example, synchronously; others, on the other hand, prefer to interact in real time. Precisely for this reason, companies must be trying to balance the two factors.

- *Sharing*: this block represents the extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive content. It is precisely the term 'social' that often implies that exchanges and sharing between people are crucial.
- *Reputation*: reputation is the extent to which users can identify the standing of others, including themselves, in a social media setting (Kietzmann, 2011). Reputation is not just about people, it's also about the content they post.
- *Relationship*: Relationship blocking represents how users can be connected to other users through common interests that lead them to communicate with each other and even meet. In some cases, the nature of these relationships is formal and structured. Blogs, for example, allow users to develop a relationship with each other, without a formal agreement on what and how much information to share. In fact, companies that use social media need to understand how to maintain or build relationships.
- *Groups*: users can form communities and sub-communities. The more "social" a network becomes, the larger the group of contacts, friends, and followers. There are two main types of groups: the first type is when individuals can choose their friends, followers; the second type is when groups can be open to all, closed (approval required) or secret (by invitation only). Given the huge traffic on social media, the need to filter is paramount. For example, by reconnecting with identity lock, some groups allow members to share certain information only with some contacts, but not with others.

Many users expect companies to use social media and may even address companies on social media by mentioning the brand or 'hashtagging' the company. However, there may be groups of consumers who are comfortable with proactive and engaged companies in the social world, while others reject the corporate invasion of the social media space. Different ways have been identified to address different stakeholder groups through social media marketing. On the one hand, companies use social media marketing as a pure communication tool to send content

to customers, the community, or employees. This approach can be considered defensive and generally focuses on one or a few stakeholder groups. In this case, consumers try to communicate with the company through social media but may receive standardized or no response at all (Felix et al.,2017).

On the other hand, the explorer's approach focuses on the interactive and collaborative use of social media. In this case, however, social media marketing is used to create and maintain mutual relationships with stakeholders. The feedback provided by each of these stakeholders is central to this explorer approach, where communication is bidirectional, and there is simply no transmission of information. It is therefore important that all employees in the company and above all top management must believe in the power of social media and run the risk that someone will speak negatively about the company (Felix et al., 2017).To reduce social media problems, companies should develop policies that outline how their employees manage and maintain different forms of social media engagement. It is important to identify employees who have the ability to listen to customers and who can create (emotionally as well as informative) appropriate content for the community, as the people who communicate with customers must have the discretion and authority to develop relationships and resolve any issues.

2.4.1 Content marketing

Any company, in order to increase its visibility, can decide what kind of image it wants to communicate to others about itself, what values it wants to pursue, and based on these elements it generates a communication strategy. Of paramount importance, however, is to select what content should be disclosed and what should not be disclosed. Companies can gain attention and visibility by buying space in both traditional and online media. To be relevant to audiences and create a powerful brand, a company must win their trust and admiration through content creation, through which interest is built, which turns into lasting relationships. So,

social media are not only spaces for interpersonal relationships and communication, but they are also means of content production (Bertoli, 2015).

In this regard, it is necessary to talk about content marketing which according to the Content Marketing Institute, “is the marketing and Business Process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action” (Content Marketing Institute, 2015). However, content marketing is what a company creates and shares to tell its story; in fact, content marketing aims to introduce the brand to the target segment, create a privileged relationship to automatically increase their loyalty to the company through information and allows the company to connect with consumers without exclusively using advertising channels. This is because companies need to win the trust of their potential customers in order to establish themselves in the market.

Firstly, to understand a company and its products, consumers need to know what kind of company they are dealing with, what its values are, and how its employees meet customers’ needs. While we are busy doing what we are interested in, companies show us products/services in every way to distract us from what we are interested, to gain a few moments of our attention through winking images or creative ads. This whole mechanism resulted in high ad costs, generating a barrier for all those companies that could not afford to spend the necessary amount of money to acquire visibility space in the media. Content marketing campaigns often take the form of customized magazines, print or online newsletters, digital content, websites or microsites, white papers, webcasts/webinars, podcasts, portals or video series, roundtables, interactive online events, and e-mails (Baltes, 2015). These tools are intended to inform the target audience and potential customers about important issues of the company’s products and services, not to disseminate its features. It is important to make content available on more than one digital channel and not just circumscribe it within the website.

Rather than forcing people to visit a particular website, it makes sense to have potential recipients also find content in the digital venues they habitually frequent, such as Facebook or Instagram. Companies produce content primarily for promotional purposes and focused on stimulating sales.

The first step for a successful content marketing strategy is to listen target/audience, so that very useful input is received from consumers to understand what should be developed. Usually, an attractive content is more likely to go viral because people want to be seen as sharing positive and helpful stories and not as someone who shares sad content. It is precisely emotion that drives social diffusion (Berger and Milkman, 2012).

Content marketing fits every company, but it must consider several elements, such as the objectives of content marketing, that according to Baltes (2015) are: increase brand awareness, build a relationship based on trust with the target audience, attract new customers, solve problems related to a low audience, create a need for a specific product, develop customer loyalty, test a product/business idea, create an audience. Furthermore, it is important to do a target audience analysis: it is necessary to know who the target/potential customers are (demographic data, age, hobbies, topics of interest, preference for certain social networks...). In addition, it is necessary to identify the type of content marketing used, which is determined on the basis of the information obtained from the target audience analysis, but also linked to marketing strategies and objectives, as well as brand image and communication style. Finally, it is necessary to promote the channels: the choice of the right media plays a significant role in the success of the strategy used.

In addition, it is important to consider nine areas when creating a content marketing strategy: (1) Focus first and foremost on content quality, not quantity; (2) Think about the variety of media that can be used (images, videos, infographics, checklists, audio content, webinars, and even live events), blog posts, e-books, and white papers; (3) Topics of interest

to your potential customers-the topics must be of interest to the target audience; (4) Must take SEO² into account; (5) Build a social base-content is the ‘engine’ of social media, as people share and re-share content they have discovered; (6) Employees need to share; (7) Align content marketing and advertising efforts; (8) Monitor online reactions through metrics; (9) Engage people who share and comment. (Baltes, 2015)

In addition, it is important to have connections with people who have interacted with the content in order to connect with potential customers. It is necessary to consider also visits to the company’s website, page views, number of newsletter subscribers, followers on social media and time spent on the company’s site

In addition, it must consider 4 types of metrics: (1) Consumer metrics, such as (Google Analytics, traffic, open rates); (2) Sharing metrics (Retweets, Forwards, Likes); (3) Lead metrics (leads generated); Sales metrics (deals) (Baltes, 2015).

There are different types of content, which can be distinguished into content created by an organization or a company, or directly by consumers as follows:

- ‘*Non-paid*’ content is developed by an organization that aims to achieve: customer engagement and relationship development, knowledge, and sales of products and services.
- ‘*Paid*’ content is developed by an organization and has the same goals as those presented above, plus it also aims to sell the digital content created.
- ‘*Social*’ content is created by members of the brand community who aim to express their opinions, learn from the organization and other users. From the organization and other users (Vinerean, 2017). All this content builds the brand.

We are on the verge of a transformation for brands and organizations because of content, as nine out of ten companies are using content marketing to engage, interact, convert,

² SEO, an acronym for Search Engine Optimization. Set of activities aimed at improving the positioning (ranking) of a site or web page for certain keywords (keywords) in the results provided by a search engine (Search Engine Result Page or SERP).

and remind consumers about their products and brands (Vinerean, 2017). Undoubtedly, content marketing is critically important to the evolution of marketing, both from an academic point of view and to achieve business goals. Therefore, content marketing is changing the way companies sell and communicate with their target audiences but, above all, an important element in this content creation process, which the company must aim for, is creativity, which will be decisive for whether or not the consumer is attracted to the content published by the company.

2.4.2 Content creativity

In order to be considered competitive in the market, creativity must be one of the main characteristics that a company must have, which fosters the creation of new ideas, for example for products, services and brand communication (Lies, 2020), and increases the level of differentiation of products launched in the market. Currently, in fact, a company's competitiveness is closely related to its creative capacity and, therefore, by the degree of innovation it uses in the market. Creativity is the combination of such components as technology, the degree of openness of the company, the propensity for creativity of individual employees within the company, and their willingness to put themselves to the test in a competitive environment.

It is important, however, for the purposes of the following research to define creativity in marketing communication, that is, the ability of the company to advertise, to potentially interested people, a product in an interesting and appealing way that will attract their attention (Fichnová, 2013). For example, an advertisement becomes viral because we think it is interesting, funny, because it is creative, and this prompts us to share it with friends and family.

The use of innovative content such as the use of irony and humor, high-quality graphics, and sophisticated cinematography can distinguish an excellent advertisement from ordinary

advertisements that simply advertise a product. Indeed, the quality of the product is important to the consumer, but the way in which this product/service is promoted by the company also plays an important role, which induces the consumer to buy it and become loyal. However, there are not always positive opinions about the creativity used by some companies in advertising a product: nowadays, advertising is so creative that it is sometimes even difficult to understand what companies are advertising. It is worth remembering that the term creativity is not always equivalent to the term effectiveness, because they do not represent the same thing. Creativity is one means of improving effectiveness (Fichnová, 2013). It is, therefore, possible to say that creativity contributes significantly to the achievement of marketing and communication goals and most importantly allows the company to be remembered over time. But above all, creativity allows the company to customize products and services according to the target audience.

2.4.3 Content personalization-customization

Companies, and especially marketers, have long since learned the importance of the idea of personalization/customization, that is, offering the right products and services at the right time and in the right place to the right customers (Bragge and Sunikka, 2012). In fact, by capturing data about users, on the Internet through certain applications, digital marketing can create personalized communications based on individual preferences of each customer. Most mobile apps enable personalization, which is useful for building relationships between customers and companies (Benlian and Koch, 2015). In the personalization phase, we can identify one-to-one marketing, which is personalization directed at an individual.

Companies can take advantage of the capabilities offered by digitization to offer unique content for each customer; while personalization directed to multiple people is mass personalization. Personalization is possible thanks to the Web, because companies through

surveys or traces left by customers while browsing can update their preferences. This is also possible because of the integration of preferences with algorithms and software to automatically personalize content for individual consumers (Ansari and Mela, 2003). There are two forms of one-to-one marketing: personalization and customization. Personalization occurs when the company decides what marketing mix best suits its customer, and it is considered as a seller-initiated activity (Arora et al., 2008). Customization, on the other hand, occurs when the customer proactively specifies one or more elements of its marketing mix, and it is considered as a customer-initiated activity (Arora et al., 2008).

One of the practical benefits of personalization is customer satisfaction and increased company profits. In contrast, one of the problems with personalization is that customers are sometimes reluctant to provide their personal data for privacy reasons. A company can figure out what a customer is interested in and recommend products because of the data the customer provides (e.g., when Amazon recommends books for the customer to read). In addition, personalization is very expensive because it requires the use of expensive software. Some authors identify personalization as a process divided into four stages: identifying potential customers; determining their needs and value to the company; interacting with customers to learn about them; and personalizing products, services, and communications for individual customers.

In turn, personalization consists of four dimensions: value (customer expectations), orientation (customer mindset while browsing), relationship quality (relationship between customer and company) and, finally, knowledge (familiarity the customer has with the Internet). Personalized products and communications attract customers' attention and foster customer loyalty. Targeted communications help customers make better decisions, and, on the other hand, personalized products increase customer satisfaction. It is important to point out that customers are more observant than they used to be, and because they have access to

information regarding every product on the market, they expect record levels of satisfaction from the product they decide to purchase. All this can result in the creation of successful long-term relationships between company and loyal customer (Ansari, 2003).

While, regarding customization, Gilmore and Pine (1997) define four basic types of customizations:

1. *Collaborative*: the company dialogues with the customer, understands what the customer's needs are and identifies the offering that can meet them, and then creates customized products;
2. *Cosmetic*: the company presents a standard product to different customers in different ways;
3. *Transparent*: the company provides customers with products or services without implying that they have been customized for them;
4. *Adaptive*: the company offers a standard product, but it can be customized independently by the customer.

According to Arora et al. (2008), we can find three different levels of customization: (1) mass market (one-to-all)-each customer receives the same coupon, (2) segment (one-to-n)-each member of the same customer segment receives the same coupon, and (3) individual (one-to-one)-each customer receives an individualized coupon. Furthermore, it should be specified that the object of personalization-customization can be any element of the marketing mix: product, price, promotion, or positioning. In fact, for example, as far as personalized pricing is concerned, it has been shown that customers may not always appreciate it, especially if the price does not fit the product they are buying. Despite this, sending personalized emails (newsletters usually) or distributing discounts via email, is a medium that is becoming more and more popular. Although preferences increase satisfaction and trust, if these go against consumers' initial preferences, the opposite effect can be achieved. Instead, about the product,

he said that being aware that a product was developed specifically for an individual implies a sense of comfort and reassurance in him because it is capable of solving any of his problems, as opposed to mass-produced products (Shatzman, 2018).

The integration of different technologies in different business sectors, particularly, for example, in the world of beauty and skincare (a topic to which special attention will be paid in later chapters) will surely lead to an expansion of personalization options and continued experimentation. Artificial intelligence and augmented reality in the beauty/skincare industry are revolutionary elements that support beauty brands and retailers in understanding the different needs of customers and help them offer personalized and effective product recommendations. The possibility for a company to personalize a product or service will give it the chance to give the customer a real experience, which starts from the moment the customer notices that product/service in an advertisement, to the moment the customer buys the product and uses it.

2.4.4 Experience as result of digital communication

One need only flip through a newspaper or magazine published in recent years to realize that the concepts of experience and emotion have become central themes, around which companies are currently investing heavily (Addis, 2007). In fact, many companies have abandoned outdated traditional marketing and turned to experiential marketing, but above all, more and more companies are trying to combine this type of marketing with digital communication. The main factor that distinguishes experiential marketing from traditional marketing is that the former puts the customer at the center of its entire activity and directing communication totally towards him/her, while the latter is based only on the product, its price and sales, and the customer is seen only as a rational decision maker who calculates the benefits of the product and did not consider communication as a key element within the entire sales

process. Traditional marketing rarely establishes an emotional connection with the customer and disregards customer feedback. Therefore, there has been a shift from what is called Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to a Customer Experience Management (CEM) approach. It is a new process of strategic management of the entire customer experience (Ferraresi et al., 2018), adapts the company's products to the customer's life.

But what really is an experience? According to Ferraresi et al. (2018), they are private events that occur in response to stimulation, which in the corporate environment are pre- and post-purchase marketing initiatives that can be real, fantastical, or virtual. Experiences are not self-generated but induced by the manager, who selects so-called experience providers and figures out what experiences to provide to individuals. The CEM approach, before and after the sale, provides value to the customer by conveying information, services, and interactions giving rise to compelling experiences. This builds customer loyalty and adds value to the company, including trying to motivate employees because they will be the ones who influence customers' perceptions of the company.

Experiential marketing differs from regular marketing by starting with four simple moves:

1. *Customer experience*: takes into consideration what sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational stimulations the customer feels and tries to produce experiences to fully engage the consumer.
2. *Consumption as a holistic experience*: the experience is built around the products starting from the place where they are consumed, trying to enrich the customer experience through advertisements, or packaging, or through communication on social media. In fact, the customer does not evaluate the product as a stand-alone element but asks how each product fits into the overall consumption context and what experiences that context provides (in

recent years consumer also considers how the company advertises its products/services on the web).

3. *Customers as rational and emotional animals*: customers should not only be considered as rational decision makers, but they want to be entertained, stimulated, and involved in their creativity because they go into purchases even if only dictated by the emotions that product can arouse in them. In addition, the customer in recent years is more informed about the products he or she is going to buy, partly due to increased use of the Internet.
4. *Eclecticism of methods*: assemble all the methods that seem to be most effective, starting with analytical and quantitative, verbal, visual, ideographic, and intuitive.

Experiential marketing aims to make an act of purchase and consumption memorable, and likewise wants to make lingering at a point of sale, or the relationship with the retailer, or contact with the product itself, enjoyable. It increases benevolence, fixes memory, and provides pleasant feelings, emotions, and thoughts. In this regard, it is necessary to talk about SEM (Strategic Experiential Module), which is the classification of experiences carried out through 5 strategic experiential modules:

- *Sense*: customer engagement through the 5 senses.
- *Feel*: invokes customers' feelings by creating affective experiences ranging from positive feelings related to a brand to emotions of joy over a product good during its consumption.
- *Think*: seeks to stimulate creativity, and its goal is to create cognitive and problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively.
- *Act*: engages consumers' lifestyles and behaviors by showing customers alternative ways of acting.
- *Relate*: builds relationships, then transforms the experience into a means of changing one's point of view and engaging with others. It relates an individual and his or her experiences to other people's experiences and cultures, allowing them to enrich them. However, it is

important for the company to take into consideration different target audiences because everyone requires different experiences.

Through this new approach, then, companies can get almost immediate feedback from customers, but they must try to incorporate their suggestions into strategies and implementations on social media, for example. In fact, it is necessary for the company to continue to follow up with the customer as they shop, as they interact with staff, how they interact online with the company that is, as they immerse themselves in the experience to understand what they like and what they would like to change. Companies need to understand how experience can enrich the customer's decision-making process: recognition of product need, information search, choice, and purchase.

It is also important for each company to understand the next moves that competitors can make, not only from a price perspective, but also from an experience perspective. How can a company distinguish from its competitors? Offer real experiences and lasting emotions, make the experience authentic, use effective communication on social media and beyond (combining online and offline channels), create a memory and achieve better results using digital channels and, therefore, mix online and offline to provide an all-around experience. In fact, in recent years, it has been noted that even companies that utilize digital channels, such as social media and its e-commerce, for example, allow the customer to live a real experience. For example, as in one of the case studies considered in this research, the VeraLab company, through social media and its e-commerce, allows the customer to live a complete experience. This allows the company to have many customers who show their loyalty to the brand.

2.5 Language style

A very important factor in the field of marketing communication is the language style. Language is seen as a powerful device that enables us to reshape a variety of difficult, but

important tasks into formats better suited to the basic computational capacities of the human brain as both the producer and receiver of a communicative act (Semin et al., 2018). According to Language Expectancy Theory (LET), language is a rule-based system, and people develop expected norms regarding whether a particular language is considered appropriate for the use in a given social context (Wu et al., 2017).

The main function of language in communication is to draw attention to certain contexts rather than others. According to some research, which we will mention below, there are different languages that are used in the field of marketing communication and promotion: they range from literal or figurative language, to concrete or abstract language, to informative or emotional language. The presence of one language does not preclude the existence of the other, they can all co-exist, giving the text different nuances depending on the type of communication you want to use to reach your target audience.

Literal language is the use of objective language to indicate the characteristics of the product experience and the function of parameters without adding additional connotations. In contrast, figurative language refers to the use of indirect meanings of words and expressions to convey the additional connotation beyond lexical meanings (Liu et al, 2020). For example, regarding figurative language, companies, but also users may use rich and slightly exaggerated words to describe the product/service, using various linguistic techniques such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and puns. In fact, this language is predominantly used to express hedonic, rather than utilitarian, consumer experiences. Important in this context, for example, are online reviews of tourism products that induce consumers' impulsive consumption. Some figurative reviews provide important insights into consumers' subjective experience in the context of purchasing experience products. On the other hand, regarding literal language, its objectivity, clarity, and simplicity in describing the product helps customers make more purchase decisions is more appropriate when the consumption object is utilitarian (Liu et al., 2020). In fact,

consumers evaluate experiential products based on subjective information proposed by other users, and this helps create a sense of psychological closeness among users and helps them easily immerse themselves in the situation of the product experience. It is still not very clear, which of the two languages achieve better marketing results for companies. According to the study conducted by Wu et al. (2017), the figurative language takes a more prominent position than literal language in marketing communications. This is because, it can elicit positive feelings and lead to higher levels of purchase intention. It is often used in intimate social relationships and is considered more appropriate for communicating emotional rather than rational experiences (Wu et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the literal one conveys formality and is often used in conversations between strangers.

Two other types of languages that are widely used in marketing communication are informative and emotional that can be linked to the previous ones. Emotional describes an individual's subjective feelings responding to the evaluation of a goal relevant to his or her well-being. According to Wang et al. (2019), there are 8 emotional dimensions that are presented with four opposite pairs: joy-sadness, anger-fear, disgust-trust, and surprise-expectation. The nature of emotion is either intrapersonal, describing an individual's internal affective experience; or interpersonal, the external emotion in communications between people, mainly used in marketing communications. In interpersonal communication, the emotional signals provided by the communicator may provoke immediate reactions in the receiver and promote the creation of positive/negative attitudes. Negative thought cues (such as fear, anxiety, and sadness) are very persuasive, as is informative language, which is used to convey more technical information, with the assumption that more information equals better quality. It is almost unlikely that the audience will examine every detail of the message online by being very brief, but overwhelming (Xu, 2018).

However, additional information can also be encapsulated in multiple media elements such as video clips, images, or URLs. These signals enhance the “telepresence”, “media richness”, and “vividness” of a message as they create a more direct sensory experience (Xu and Zhang, 2018). Certainly, the multimedia element prompts a greater possibility of re-sharing and indicates that the audience pays attention to the message and considers it important. Audiences turn out to be more receptive when the source of the information that has just been broadcast is credible, attractive, or if it contains some very complex topics or personally relevant information. So, certainly if emotional language allows the consumer to feel part of that particular brand or product, informational language can provide information about the brand or product.

Finally, abstract and concrete are two other languages style used in promotion. In this regard, it is of primary importance to talk about the Construal Level Theory (CLT) building on the basic idea that the psychological distance between the observer and the target decreases the available amount of information about the target, hence its mental re-presentation requires a certain degree of abstraction; that is, a higher construal level (Adler et al., 2021). Thus, language is one of the dominant areas of CTL research. One way that construal level may relate to communication is via cognition. In particular, if the construal level shapes how people think, then we can expect it to shape how people express their thoughts in language (Wiesenfeld et al., 2017). Several studies have explored this association, using different methods to characterize language.

Research on the Linguistic Category Model (LCM) evaluates abstraction linguistically. For example, Capestro et al. (2017), focused on the existence of different levels of abstraction that manifest themselves in the use of verbs and adjectives, in particular, and which are analyzed in the LCM model. First, Descriptive Action Verbs (DAVs), which are the least abstract and describe actions that have a beginning and an end (e.g. the verb ‘to hit’);

Interpretive Action Verbs (IAVs), refer to more specific behaviors and do not include the perception of an action (e.g. 'to hurt'); State Verbs (SVs), which do not describe a behavior, but a (mental) state that cannot be observed by the actor (e.g. 'to hate'). In contrast, adjectives, the most abstract category, describe the subject of a sentence in general terms, independent of specific events (e.g., the adjective 'aggressive'). Furthermore, Pennebaker et al. (2014) argued that articles, prepositions, and conjunctions also denote a more concrete, formal, and cognitively complex language. Concrete language refers to things that are available to the senses and can be observed and measured. It is a language that describes the situational characteristics of a behavior; while abstract language refers to ideas or concepts (Aerts et al., 2017).

In addition, it has been found that consumers are able to identify more with the content of an advertisement when its statement is abstract because they can link it to their experiences and values. In this way, the company has the ability to turn a standard message into a customized message and increase customer engagement and interaction. A series of experiments have shown that people use more abstract communication when communicating with a large audience than when communicating with a single person. Indeed, in the context of advertisements, according to Capestro et al. (2018), abstract claims influence, through the activation of mental simulation and identification, consumers' attitudes towards advertising. It is possible to say that everything revolves around language, and all know the power of words: "how you say something is often more important than what you say" (Wu et al., 2017, p. 590). Therefore, it is important for a company to conduct a good digital marketing strategy using appropriate and correct language according to the content and brand values it wants to convey to the customer during this important process.

2.6 Relationship between digital communication and brand

The role of the brand itself over the years has changed: if in the past it was intended as a tool to provide an identity to products, now it is given the task of creating emotional and cognitive associations of value and trust between company and consumer that create trust (Addis, 2007). The American Marketing Association defines a brand as “a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies a seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (American Marketing Association, 2012, p. ???). It brings individuals closer to the company, provides a guarantee of reliability and safety. In fact, it is precisely 70% of consumers who believe that the brand is a guarantee of quality and use it as a guide in their purchasing processes, without even caring about the price of the product of that brand. Hence, the main tasks of the brand are: to identify, build trust and differentiate.

Therefore, if the brand represents the company’s world of values, these values materialize through the consumer experience. In this way, the brand becomes an exclusive component of the relationship that binds the consumer to a specific product. The functions that the brand performs are intertwined with the sensations aroused by the product. According to Addis (2007), there are some increasingly marked trends in brand management:

- *The consumer leaves room for the person*: he is no longer just the protagonist of the purchasing and consumption processes, but he is a person who lives his social and individual dimension.
- *The consumer is at the center*: the brand policy is centered on the customer, who is the fulcrum of every activity and is increasingly taken into consideration in decisions concerning the brand of companies.
- *Products leave room for experiences*: it doesn’t matter if the product is new or old, the important thing is that it generates emotions in the individual.
- *Conquering brand loyalty*: it allows maintaining performance in the short and long term.

- *Creation of the brand personality*: the brand must no longer only be recognized (brand identity) but must know how to differentiate itself also for its character and its unique qualities to assert credibility.
- *The search for aspiration*: the brand must convey sensations and emotions to create an empathic relationship with the consumer and attract him.
- *Improving the perceived presence of the brand*: conveying sensations, sounds, smells, and flavors helps the consumer to perceive the presence of the brand in a particular context.
- *Generation of sensations*: sensations that the consumer has during the use of the product that involve senses and emotions.
- *Transform communication into dialogue*: the involvement of the two subjects and allows them to exchange ideas, information, and opinions. It is possible to speak of a two-way communication that allows the brand to continuously receive feedback from the consumer.

Social media is an interactive platform for dialogue between brands and their customers. For digital brand management, it is essential to know how digital communities comment and engage with their brands in digital communities, for example to understand what kind of creativity they value. “Brands listen to learn more about their customers and prospects, understanding the natural, rich, unfiltered word of mouth around their products and services.” (Lies, 2020, p. 382). Therefore, listening on social media is crucial for brands if they want to satisfy the digital demands of social media users and to position themselves differently than their competitors.

The two case studies that we will consider in the following chapters are skincare brands that produce mass-market products which, according to Collins dictionary, are products designed and produced to sell to a large number of people. Therefore, the competition between different companies in the skincare world is very fierce. Therefore, a very important channel

for these companies to differentiate themselves from the others is social media. Through a good and effective communication strategy, a company can stand out from the others.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to analyze how digital communication strategies could be used to attract and increase interactions with target within the mass-market context. Specifically, in doing so, the research aims at exploring how social media communication may affect the skincare industry, by taking into consideration two different companies, VeraLab and Drunk Elephant, looking specifically at their posts published on Instagram, which is considered the most used and effective social media for visual communication. In particular, the research aims to analyze the different types of language that the company uses on social, i.e., whether it uses literal or figurative language, concrete or abstract language, informative or emotional language. Furthermore, it is evaluated how the post description influences the consumer and how the consumer participates under each post, whether he/she comment positively or negatively, also based on the type of language that is used and whether any questions are asked in the description. For this purpose, this research places emphasis on the experience the brand manages to create and how the consumer is involved in the whole process. The way the company communicates with the consumer creates brand loyalty and trust in the consumer and influences their purchasing behavior.

To summarize, an attempt will be made to understand how social communication strategies and language can be useful in building customer loyalty, encourage them to interact more under posts and understand what type of content the customer likes. In this regard, the following research questions will be answered with this study:

RQ1: Does the language used on social media have a strong impact on digital marketing?

RQ2: *How do companies communicate with their consumers today?*

RQ3: *Can the type of a company's communication strategies and of language influence the consumer behavior?*

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research design

The experiment conducted in this research is based on the analysis of 24 posts published by the cosmetics companies VeraLab and Drunk Elephant over the last three years. In particular, four posts for each period will be analyzed: pre-pandemic, in which the year 2019 and the first two months of 2020 will be taken into consideration; during the pandemic, the period from March 2020 to the end of 2020; and, finally, the post-pandemic period, in which the year 2021 and the current phase we are experiencing will be taken into consideration. It was decided to conduct this type of analysis to show how the companies' revenues, the type of communication they carried out and how social media interactions on the part of consumers changed greatly during COVID and, also, after its acute phase. This is because, both companies we focus on in this research are cosmetic companies that had a strong resonance during the same 2020. People, having been forced to stay at home, had more time to devote to themselves and to inform themselves about the products they were using and may have decided to test since then. Proof of this is the fact that, for example, the company VeraLab had a much higher turnover as of March 2020.

In addition, the way in which people interact with those companies on social media has also changed, and this can be seen from the number of likes, comments, and views under each Instagram post. In addition, the experiment also focuses on analyzing the language that is used on social by VeraLab and Drunk Elephant. Indeed, it will be shown that language also plays an important role in determining consumer loyalty and closeness to the brand. If at times,

consumers need to read descriptions that use more emotional, abstract, or figurative language, at other times, they need to read more detailed and concrete descriptions that contain literal information about the products they are going to buy. Therefore, it makes sense for companies to use a mix of these languages in their promotions, because it is important for any customer to feel close to the company.

Four types of posts were analysed for each period: a post about the classic product sponsorship, a post about a video published by the company in order to also see the views, a post about activities in which the companies are engaged (for VeraLab #Lunedìdonne and for Drunk Elephant #barewithus), and finally a post about neutral posts concerning questions that the company asks the consumer in order to push them to be more active on the Instagram platform. Therefore, a post containing an image, description written by the company, likes, comments will be shown, for videos views will also be shown and finally one or two comments posted by consumers in response to the post. In the text, in addition to an overview of the post, the language that was used in that post will also be analysed.

3.2.2 Multiple case studies: VeraLab and The Drunk Elephant

3.2.2.1 VeraLab

VeraLab is the name of a well-known Italian brand, born in 2015, which in recent years has acquired a large share of the Italian skincare market and uses a business model that integrates e-commerce and traditional retail (Dainese, 2019). Its creator is Cristina Fogazzi, aka L'Estetista Cinica, an entrepreneur from Brescia who, thanks to her expertise mixed with stubbornness and courage (Casadei, 2019), has created a veritable beauty empire.

After working as an employee dedicated to training beauticians in a beauty center franchise and being fired due to the company's bankruptcy, the young entrepreneur decided to open her own beauty center in Milan, called BellaVera, in 2009. It was a center where she

carried out special treatments focusing on skin, face, and body care. The character of Estetista Cinica, finally born in 2013, is a caricature character based on irony (figure 1), to the point of creating vignettes on the walls to make the rooms of the beauty center more beautiful.

Figure 1: Vignettes with caricature of Estetista Cinica



Source: Il Post (2019)

Since then, Fogazzi has distinguished herself for her very transparent and frank tone of voice, telling the world of skincare and beauty without filters. After the opening of the beauty center, she created, together with Maria Grazia Adorno's Brescian cosmetics company, a line of high-quality products with a medium-high price, under the brand name VeraLab, to be sold inside BellaVera to allow customers to enhance at home the treatments done in the center. She then started a blog and a YouTube channel. But her main means of communication over time has become Instagram, where she shares moments of life, beauty tips and news about her business with her community of 'pheasants', a name with which her community identifies.

The products created, at first exclusively for the beauty center, were put on sale on the web in 2015, the year in which Fogazzi began, without realizing it, her climb to success. The company's social media narrative perfectly reflects the personality of the brand and that of its founder. The pink-colored platforms present the products and how they are applied, tell the

stories of inspirational women, provide assistance to users shopping on the e-commerce, and also entertain followers with memes and lifestyle photos (Valentina D'Antonio, 2020).

Estetista Cinica is a character who exploits the potential offered by the multiple channels of digital marketing, managing to comply with the 'Be Seamless' principle: she combines the blog, social network accounts, the E-commerce platform (the platform on which the products were first launched in 2016) and the newsletter, with her beauty center, VeraLab stores (in Rome and Milan) and corner shops opened in the largest Italian cities. And it was thanks to the combination of expertise in the sector and excellent communication strategies that the Estetista Cinica has become one of the best-known beauty reference figures in recent years, considering herself a Beauty Pa-Guru.

The company ended 2021 with a turnover of 50 million euro, growing by an average of 106.16% over five years. Not even the pandemic was able to stop the rise of this new company, recording 5.3 million euro in March 2020. Below (in the table 1) are some data showing how the company has grown in recent years, and how high the earnings were during 2020, in particular (Fioravante et al., 2021).

Table 1: Re-forme Turnover

Year	Turnover
2016	585.000
2017	1.300.000
2018	5.700.000
2019	22.000.000
2020	48.300.000

Source: Fioravante (2021)

The relationship that Cristina builds with the customer is one of loyalty that is developed through social networks, tools often snubbed by the more old-fashioned entrepreneurs. The company's mission is very clear and transparent: to produce highly qualified, natural, and effective products, presented in ecological and innovative packaging derived from vegetable sources and recyclable, offering solutions to help, in its own small way, both people and the planet.

Beyond aesthetics, VeraLab promotes solidarity and community, avoiding distinctions between the female and male worlds. A demonstration of this is the flagship store in Milan and Rome, inside which there is an enormous pink ribbon on which VeraLab products are displayed and, pedaling on an exercise bike, it is possible to return, through a chute connected to a container, three used bottles of the products, to obtain in exchange for a token, which can be used in the pink vending machine that gives away VeraLab gadgets (figure 2). An activity that symbolizes the commitment to environmental protection that Fogazzi and her team, also place in the realization of the product packaging.

Figure 2: The Cycle to Recycle corner inside the VeraLab flagship in Rome



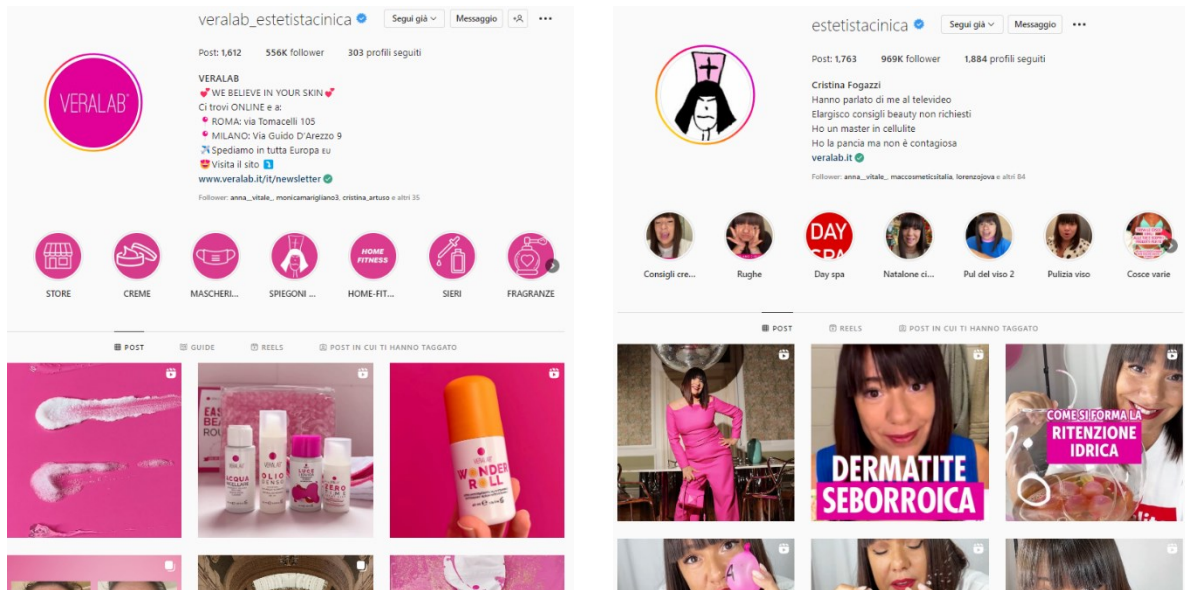
Source: FSNews (2021)

Both flagships have been designed in a very special way, representing a world in full Estetista Cinica' style, in which to be carried away by playful elements and personalized advice. Inside, there are spaces dedicated to art (a theme that will be explored in more detail), a Dream Room (where it is possible to test some products), a SkinBar (for testing face masks). In short, its flagships are a true beauty paradise. In addition to the single-brand sales outlets in Milan and Rome, there is also a VeraLab corner in Rinascente and some perfumeries. Fogazzi's idea is to get VeraLab products into pharmacies too, a sign of undisputed quality. This is because, according to Cinica, 'Pharmacies have a different appeal in the collective imagination: one cannot understand why a cosmetic product is believed to have more value if purchased in a pharmacy rather than in a perfumery. The cream in question is always the same, it is only the distribution channel that is different' (Sironi, 2022).

3.2.2.1.1 Communication strategies

To communicate with customers and potential customers, the company exclusively uses social networks, but the social network it uses the most is undoubtedly Instagram. The company's main strength is the frank and sincere communication it uses, but in addition to its cynicism there is also useful content that is accessible to everyone, including video tutorials and various practical beauty tips. There are two different pages that link back to the company, the VeraLab page with 556k followers where the products are mainly explained, how they should be used and, the different events proposed by the company; and Cristina Fogazzi's personal page, called Estetista Cinica, with an even higher number of followers, 969k (figure 3). Estetista Cinica's personal page is fed by daily stories ranging from her personal life to her well-known 'how to' column with demonstrations on how the products should be used: from a simple daily beauty routine to demonstrations of how leg bandages should be used.

Figure 3: Instagram page of VeraLab and Estetista Cinica



Source: Instagram

Indeed, one of Cristina Fogazzi's strengths is that she shows herself on social media totally natural, for what she really is without wanting to show only the best part of her life. With her morning videos (figure 4), she spreads the message about the importance of pleasing oneself, but she does this by sponsoring her products, disguising the advertising so well that users, not being bothered by the persuasive intent, continue to watch the video, leaving themselves behind.

Figure 4: Instagram video stories explaining products



Source: Instagram

For the entrepreneur, social media was essential to the growth of her business, her brand and to increase the visibility of her company, and her intention was to succeed in creating a well-defined identity, becoming a one-way influencer who only sponsors her products. The involvement of influencers to promote her products was also decisive in the success of Estetista Cinica. In such a competitive environment as the cosmetics industry, there are many big established brands, so VeraLab had to focus on innovation in its way of communicating, more interactive with customers.

Even during the Covid pandemic, the company was able to communicate with its community in the right way: VeraLab products are among those that are used at home, for one's physical well-being when one has free time, therefore, it is natural to associate with this characteristic of their use, the increase in turnover during the quarantine months (Lucarelli, 2020) but, if one thinks about the volume of revenues and the fact that they were recorded during an economic crisis, despite the medium-high price positioning of the offer, one intuitively that the success must have been caused by effective external marketing stimuli and not by a simple increase in free time hours. For example, in each order, Cinica decided to give away 70,000 hand sanitizers to its community of "Fagiane" with the hashtag #andràtuttobene. Since the start of the pandemic, Fogazzi has dedicated her Instagram account to building user loyalty and reminding them of the existence of her brand, organizing video live streams not only with influencers and beauty experts to give beauty advice to the community, but also with virology experts to discuss the virus.

Other live streams she has dedicated to 'Aperitivi Fagiani' in the late afternoon, where she has called some followers tuned into the live stream as a surprise, in order to spend the hour in company and convey a sense of closeness. In addition, there were also initiatives realized together with the whole VeraLab team, such as the personalized and free video call

consultations, carried out by the beauticians of his beauty center to advise clients on which treatments from the range to use according to their skin type.

"VeraLab is an example of a company that has successfully managed the crisis and, unlike most companies, has been able to continue to create value for local communities, customers and employees by leveraging the opportunities offered by the pandemic, such as the intensification of online contacts" (Fioravante et al., 2021, p.110). Fogazzi's ability to exploit every means has allowed her to create an almost infallible organization and to be included in Forbes Italy's list of the 100 most successful women in 2020 (Forbes, 2020).

3.2.2.1.2 VeraLab initiatives

There are several initiatives proposed by the VeraLab team at different times of the year. The team is always working on new ideas and activities to delight its community. One of VeraLab's initiatives is the 'Circo Cinico', a tour through the squares of seven Italian cities on board a pink electric van, the Beauty Truck, together with its "Team Cinico", the group of beauticians who work in its beauty center; the aim of the activity is not only to publicize its products, but also to get to know the people who buy its products around Italy and also to be able to give live advice.

The Italian squares were set up with dressing rooms in the shape of circus tents (figure 5) inside which private consultations took place with a person from the Staff Cinico, because according to Fogazzi: "Assisted selling is important, I think that in order to choose the right product you have to look at a person's skin, understand what they need". (Estetista Cinica al Sole24ore, Casadei, 2019). It is an initiative that serves to convey the essence of the brand in a way that is so engaging and entertaining that it succeeds in masking the advertising purpose of the event, making it take second place to the experience, which made all the customers feel like protagonists.

Figure 5: Beauty Truck at the Circo Cinico



Source: picture found on the web

An innovative feature implemented by the entrepreneur is to be able to make a contribution, through her work, to bring as many people as possible closer to art and culture. A concrete example of her initiative can be seen in the ‘Caccia al Tesoro’ among monuments and symbolic places in several Italian cities. Together with his team, he hid some similar tokens around the city, posting clues to find them on his Instagram profile. Whoever found the tokens would win a prize: VeraLab beauty products to be picked up at her beauty track and delivered personally by her.

In addition, the aim of bringing as many people as possible closer to art and culture can also be seen in the ‘Bellezze al Museo’ tour (figure 6), a tour of the art locations and most characteristic places of the Italian peninsula supporting the museum institutions that make Italy’s heritage unique. Some of the destinations of the stops were, for example, Naples, Taranto, Trieste, and Mantua. "It is therefore from here that Cristina Fogazzi, an art lover, wanted to start off in order to convey a topical message of inclusiveness and body positivity through works" (ilMattino.it, 2022). The tour allowed customers to enjoy a unique experience, visit museums and benefit from gadgets and product promotions. Among the illustrious

collaborations that have animated this shared project is the one with Komen Italia, a non-profit association in Piazza Plebiscito, in Naples, for the traditional appointment with the Race for the Cure, the largest event in the world for the fight against breast cancer. In addition, at each stage of the tour, female visitors were invited to write their idea of beauty on a painting. Fogazzi's idea was to introduce young people to art in places that are not always so popular, and she succeeded.

Figure 6: Poster sponsoring the 'Bellezze al Museo' tour



Source: Arte in Campania (2022)

Even in 2020, a time when the tourism sector was at a standstill due to the pandemic, Cristina Fogazzi became the promoter of the Vatican Museums in Rome (figure 7), which experimented with a kind of Influencer Marketing: they invited some influencers on social media (such as the Ferragnez) to increase the number of visitors and to promote some tour packages. In addition, they invited the influencers to post their experience on social. In fact, as Cristina said in an interview, “I am not an art critic, but I know I have an impact on my community. I believe that anyone who has a strong popularity on the net should put it to use in the service of Italy”.

Figure 7: Cristina Fogazzi in the Vatican Museums



Source: Instagram page of Estetista Cinica

Furthermore, to support Italian tourism in the aftermath of the pandemic, VeraLab chose to donate 5% of the profits from sales on 5 December to the Italian Touring Club. At Christmas 2021, an initiative was launched to offer a bracelet for sale both in store and online, part of the proceeds of which will be donated to ‘Abbraccia Una Mamma’, a project designed to help 80 mother-child units in difficult situations in the Turin area.

Another noteworthy initiative was the ‘Sagra Fagiana’ (figure 8) held last September in the city of Brescia, Cristina Fogazzi’s hometown, which was attended by 5,000 people. Four days of fun and entertainment: rides, games, street performers and two theatre show. The event represents the conclusion of the Bellezze al Museo tour, with which Fogazzi and her team travelled across Italy to promote the country’s culture. The idea was to promote the city of Brescia, its territory, and its beauties. On the VeraLab website it was possible to find every reference that led back to the Sagra Fagiana: from the hotels where it was possible to stay overnight, to what one could visit, how one could reach the festival, and even places where one could eat.

Figure 8: Sagra Fagiana Festival



Source: Official VeraLab website

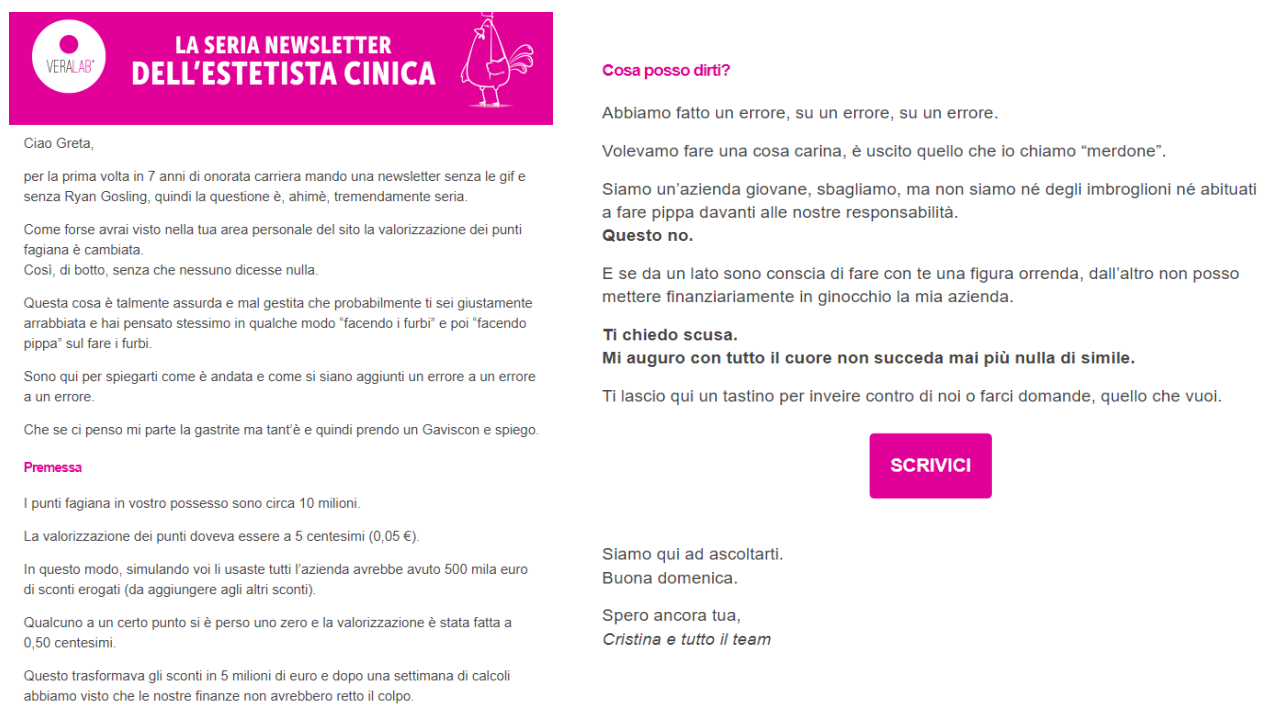
3.2.2.1.3 E-commerce activities

As previously mentioned, other communication channels used by the company include an e-commerce platform and its launch was in 2015, the veralab.it site exclusively sells its beauty products ranging from facial and body products to cute gadgets that the company sells on its site. The engaging and interactive platform offers skincare products developed in the Estetista Cinica Laboratory. Everything is explained through a friendly language, simple and within everyone's reach, in which the images tell a contemporary approach to self-care: made with quality natural ingredients, the treatments reveal a new era of the daily beauty routine and arrive directly at home with little or no shipping costs. Consistent with this lifestyle, the veralab.it website also offers an interactive section dedicated to tests, tips, and tutorials to offer every woman personalized guidance. The graceful and witty atmosphere of the E-commerce site, made up of flamingos, unicorns, and fuchsia patterns, awakens a good mood from the very first consultation of the portal, where a journey of discovery of one's own beauty begins, which takes the form of tailor-made solutions thanks to a highly trained team.

Any new customer approaching the company can get personalized discounts if they subscribe to the newsletter. The reserved area is a very well-kept space on the VeraLab website: starting with the list of all the customized discounts that the consumer has accumulated during the year: birthday discounts (usually 25%), discounts received after publishing a review, or other types of discounts offered by the company during different periods of the year. Also,

worth mentioning in this regard are the so-called ‘Fagiana Points’, which are points that are registered in the private area of the website with the online or in-store purchase of products. Each product has a certain number of ‘Fagiana Points’ and after reaching a certain amount, it is possible to receive a gadget as a gift (VeraLab T-shirt, bathrobe, mug, Fagiana headband). Last June, the company had decided to convert the ‘Fagiana Points’ into money that could be spent on E-commerce, where each point would correspond to 0.05 cents. Unfortunately, they only realized later that there had been a big mistake that threatened to plunge the company into a major crisis: each point had been made worth 0.50 cents. Therefore, Cristina Fogazzi herself took responsibility and apologized to the entire community for the big mistake that had been made both via the Instagram profile and via a newsletter sent to all subscribers (figure 9).

Figure 9: Email in which VeraLab apologizes for Punti Fagiana



LA SERIA NEWSLETTER DELL'ESTETISTA CINICA

Ciao Greta,

per la prima volta in 7 anni di onorata carriera mando una newsletter senza le gif e senza Ryan Gosling, quindi la questione è, ahimè, tremendamente seria.

Come forse avrai visto nella tua area personale del sito la valorizzazione dei punti fagiana è cambiata.

Così, di botto, senza che nessuno dicesse nulla.

Questa cosa è talmente assurda e mal gestita che probabilmente ti sei giustamente arrabbiata e hai pensato stessimo in qualche modo "facendo i furbi" e poi "facendo pippa" sul fare i furbi.

Sono qui per spiegarti come è andata e come si siano aggiunti un errore a un errore a un errore.

Che se ci penso mi parte la gastrite ma tant'è e quindi prendo un Gaviscon e spiego.

Premessa

I punti fagiana in vostro possesso sono circa 10 milioni.

La valorizzazione dei punti doveva essere a 5 centesimi (0,05 €).

In questo modo, simulando voi li usaste tutti l'azienda avrebbe avuto 500 mila euro di sconti erogati (da aggiungere agli altri sconti).

Qualcuno a un certo punto si è perso uno zero e la valorizzazione è stata fatta a 0,50 centesimi.

Questo trasformava gli sconti in 5 milioni di euro e dopo una settimana di calcoli abbiamo visto che le nostre finanze non avrebbero retto il colpo.

Cosa posso dirti?

Abbiamo fatto un errore, su un errore, su un errore.

Volevamo fare una cosa carina, è uscito quello che io chiamo "merdone".

Siamo un'azienda giovane, sbagliamo, ma non siamo né degli imbroglioni né abituati a fare pippa davanti alle nostre responsabilità.

Questo no.

E se da un lato sono conscia di fare con te una figura orrenda, dall'altro non posso mettere finanziariamente in ginocchio la mia azienda.

Ti chiedo scusa.

Mi auguro con tutto il cuore non succeda mai più nulla di simile.

Ti lascio qui un tastino per inveire contro di noi o farci domande, quello che vuoi.

SCRIVICI

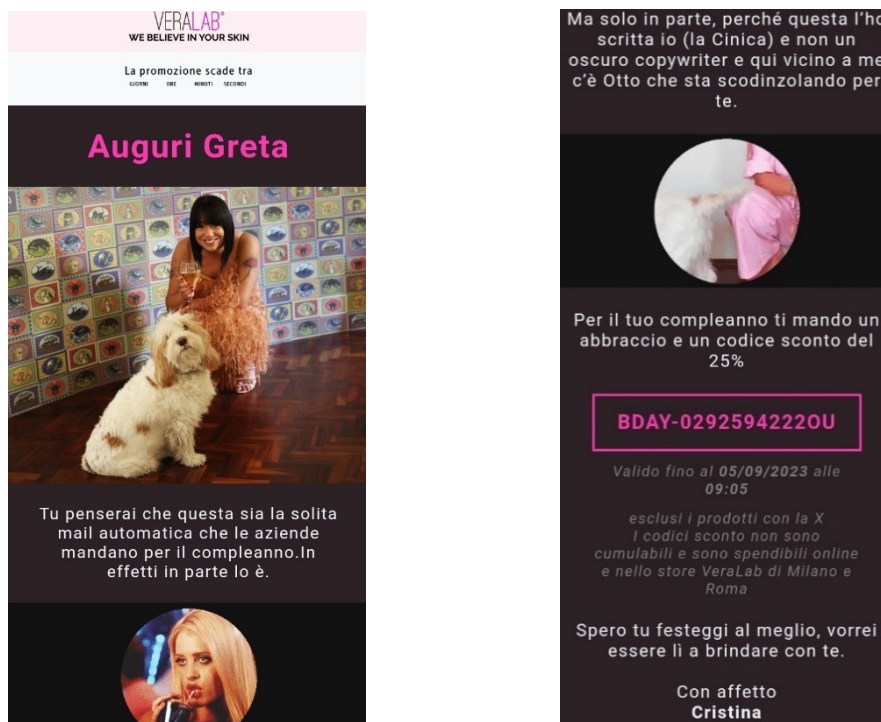
Siamo qui ad ascoltarti.
Buona domenica.

Spero ancora tua,
Cristina e tutto il team

Source: Newsletter sent by e-mail

Estetista Cinica also takes care of customer relations through her newsletter, with free subscription, dedicated in every way to her Fagiiane, to give advice and natural beauty remedies, personalizing the message with the recipient's name and surname. A newsletter is sent out, usually in conjunction with every discount code that the company shares. In recent months, therefore, the number of newsletters has increased: to cope with the crisis, VeraLab has decided to help its customers by making available various discounts with high percentages to ensure that they do not run out of their favorite products. Therefore, several newsletters are sent during different periods of the year, even several newsletters in a single month. The newsletter that arrives punctually every year on one's birthday is a way of wishing consumers a happy birthday by showing brand closeness (figure 10).

Figure 10: Birthday Newsletter



Source: Newsletter sent by e-mail

Although the company's activity was greater during the lockdown, the entrepreneur never forgot that in such a difficult time, conveying a sense of closeness by showing involvement in the situation is indispensable, and she did this through the personalized e-mails of her newsletter (figure 11):

Figure 11: E-mail during the lockdown

Come procede la tua quarantena?

Qui è tutto un po' straniante.
Personalmente ci ho messo un po' a riprendere a uscire (per far fare pipì a Otto).
Sono un'ipocondriaca totale.
Quando sono uscita ho trovato un mondo stravolto.
La città vuota.
Le persone che si evitano nelle vie strette.
Le mascherine che ci trasformano tutti in estranei.
E la primavera che fa il suo show di cielo azzurro e aria tersa.

Tu come stai?

Sarei così felice di sapere come state tutte.
Di incontrarvi come un anno fa al Circo Cinico.
Di abbracciarci.
Torneremo ad abbracciarci?
Io voglio credere che sì.
Lo voglio credere fortissimo.
Crediamolo tutte fortissimo insieme.
Il pensiero crea la forma, non mi ricordo chi lo diceva ma deve essere così.

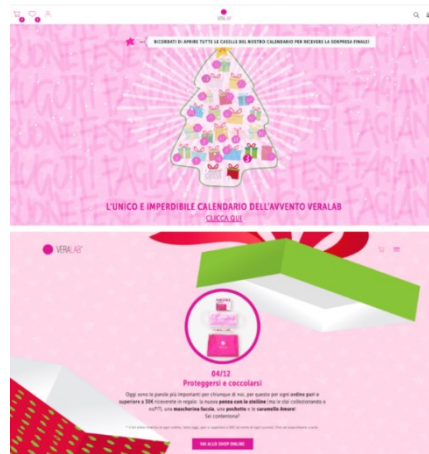
A presto

Cristina

Source: Company's e-mail

In addition, there are also other activities that can be done on its e-commerce platform, for example, the digital advent calendar (figure 12), from 1 to 25 December, which shows a box to open every night at midnight. Inside are many different surprises: quizzes, promotions, and gift gadgets obtainable by placing an order online that day.

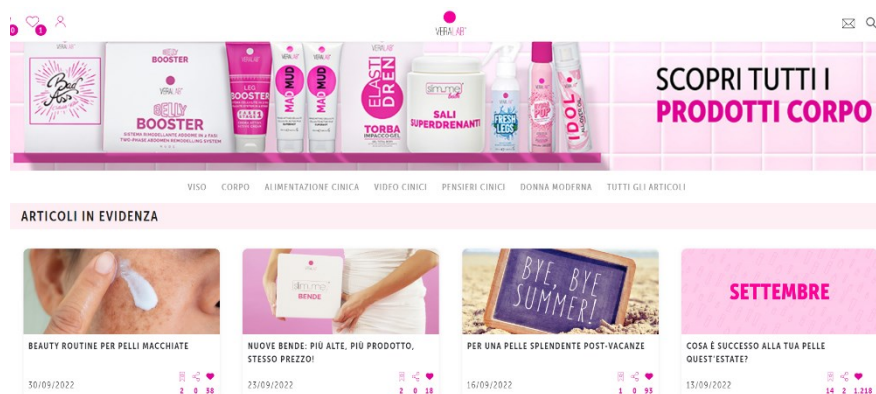
Figure 12: Digital Advent Calendar



Source: Official VeraLab website

Or, browsing through the site, you can come across the magazine space, where you can find various articles written directly by the Staff Cinico on tips for using the products, as well as articles written in major Italian newspapers that testify to the company's activity and value in Italy (figure 13).

Figure 13: Articles on tips for using the products

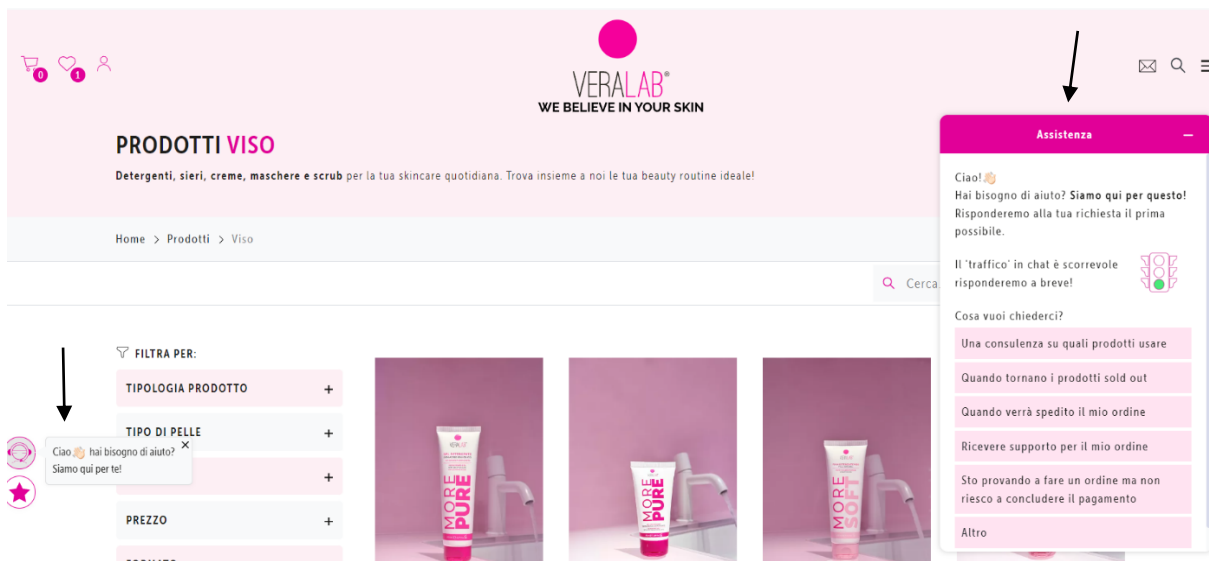


Source: Official VeraLab website

Therefore, as we can see from all the features of the e-Commerce platform, everything is taken care of down to the last detail: customer care is almost the most important activity for the company, and everything revolves around him. Unlike other websites, customer support is

also a factor that works very much in the platform. There are assistants who are always there to assist you in every process and especially in case of problems with the site. It is very easy to get an answer from them: there is a button on the platform that you can press, and they usually answer after 5 minutes (figure 14).

Figure 14: Customer Care on the website

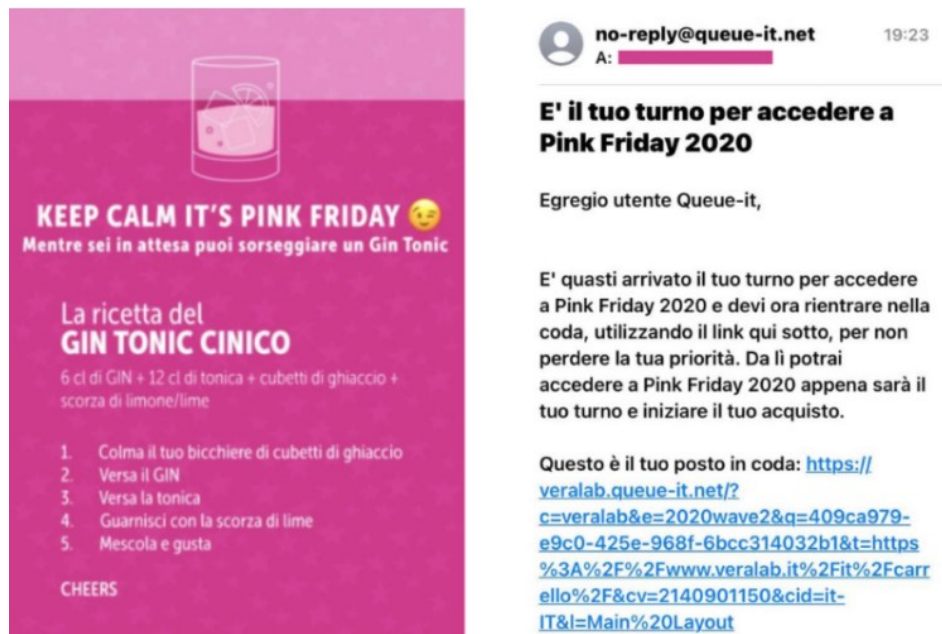


Source: Official VeraLab website

There are also Black Friday discount days organized by VeraLab that have been renamed 'Pink Friday' as a tribute to the entrepreneur's passion for fuchsia. Following the logic of loyalty, users who have been registered for more than a year in the newsletter receive the discount in advance 4 days before the Pink Friday, which is then also sent to all other registered users on the exact day. The customer experience, in anticipation of a record-breaking turnout in the online shop, was thought through in every detail. A virtual queue allows you to shop in peace, without having to spend hours waiting at your computer. When their turn came, each user received an email alert and to amuse the wait, Fogazzi suggested having a nice gin and tonic and provided his recipe (figure 15). The management of these discount days is always impeccable, combining entertainment, efficiency, and consumer involvement. And above all,

it averts the danger of a site ‘explosion’ caused by too many people connected. After all, the motto of Pink Friday was ‘We are pheasants, we crash sites since 2018’. For example, on Pink Friday in 2020, the company filled over 120,000 orders in 14 days. This translated into over 540 thousand products sold for a total of over 9.9 million.

Figure 15: E-mail sent by VeraLab during Pink Friday while waiting



Source: E-mail

In conclusion, the entrepreneur has established a real relationship with a virtual audience, not just by building a communication strategy revolving around her products. Cristina Fogazzi invites her thousands of followers to love themselves more and to face everyday life with realism, but always with a smile and looking for beauty in their surroundings.

3.2.2.2. Drunk Elephant

Drunk Elephant is a skincare American brand that was launched in 2013 by Tiffany Masterson, a stay-at-home mum from Houston, after doing extensive research in search of

solutions for her own skin problems. She began researching the ingredients in the products she used for her combination and sensitive skin, but none seemed to suit her needs. The very ingredients that made the creams smell and look better but were not actually beneficial for the skin had to be eliminated from the products. The 6 products that made the skin worse were essential oils, silicones, fragrances, drying alcohols and chemical shields. Once removed, the skin seemed to be cleaner and healthier, but there were no products in which all these 6 elements were not present.

According to Masterson, the skin has an acid barrier or mantle that protects it; when we remove or disturb it, chaos ensues. The many products we use on a daily basis can contain disruptors, sensitizers, allergens and other irritants that can accumulate and leave the skin in a congested and reactive state. Acne, dryness, oiliness and sensitivity are often simply the skin's way of reacting to these triggering ingredients and failing to deal with them. And that is precisely why the company Drunk Elephant was born and currently has 1.3 million followers on Instagram (figure 16).

Figure 16: Drunk Elephant logo



Source: Official Drunk Elephant website

It is very curious where the name of this company comes from. In researching her products, the entrepreneur discovered that Marula oil was an oil with skin nourishing properties. Marula oil is a precious liquid made from the fruit of the marula tree, native to

Southern Africa and symbolically known as the ‘olive tree of Africa’. Therefore, being in love with this oil, she googled it and several videos appeared in which some elephants looked drunk after eating the marula fruit. So, she thought she wanted to give the name ‘Drunk Elephant’ to her brand, a name that would stick in people’s memories and because of that, she would look up the history of the name and this curiosity could work to the company’s advantage.

In fact, almost all products in the Drunk Elephant line have marula oil in them, but one oil in particular has been specifically created, called Virgin Marula Oil, which gives shine to the skin thanks to its formula (figure 17).

Figure 17: Virgin Marula Oil



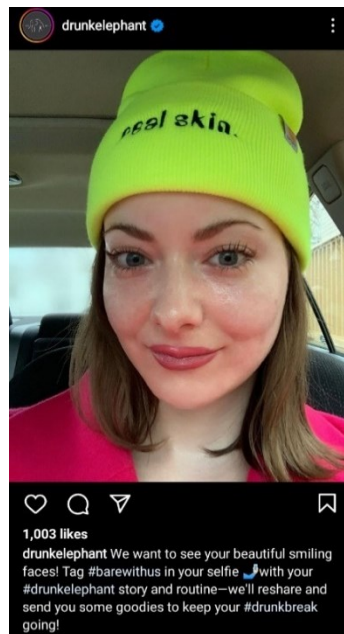
Source: Official Drunk Elephant website

“Drunk Elephant is my way of resetting reactive skin by avoiding using the very ingredients that created it. I have isolated both safe naturals and safe synthetics and my formulas contain the right percentages of actives at the ideal pH levels, making the ingredients easy for the skin to recognize, absorb and use. Drunk Elephant is part of a separate category that I call ‘Biocompatible’” (Tiffany Masterson, Pamper.my).

Currently, the line Drunk Elephant, recently acquired by Shiseido, offers 27 products, including skin and body products, and new products are not often introduced. There are 27 products that do not have the ‘Suspicious Six’ mentioned above that are harmful to the skin, and it is from this that the Instagram #barewithus movement was born, a collection of bare-

faced selfies telling the story of the journey that customers have taken with Drunk Elephant products and that they have regained healthier skin (figure 18).

Figure 18: Example of an initiative post #barewithus



Source: Instagram post of the official page Drunk Elephant

But, what is the communication strategy adopted by Drunk Elephant? Underlying the entire communication strategy is the principle of trust, which must be essential for any skincare brand. It is as if the consumer puts his or her health in the hands of a brand. In fact, each product speaks directly to the consumer because the product formulations were created on the basis of what its creator was looking for as a consumer in the products. In order to grow the brand, they worked closely with the public to understand what they really wanted from the product and, above all, paying attention to the feedback they received (including under comments on social media) and changing the product formulation or packaging whenever there was a problem. For example, Drunk Elephant recently relaunched its Umbra sunscreen with an updated formula as a direct result of customer feedback. They replaced the open jar of Lala Cream to an airless pump bottle (figure 19).

Figure 19: Old packaging and new packaging of Lala Cream



Source: Official Drunk Elephant website

The open relationship and conversation with the market also means that the brand is susceptible to complaints and criticism. If everyone on Instagram complains about a product, the brand must act quickly to maintain its reputation. This transparency and flexibility is beneficial for both consumers and companies. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that Drunk Elephant chose not to have its products sponsored by influencers from the very beginning; this is because the opinions of ordinary people are far more valuable to the end consumer when it comes to using a product for the first time. In fact, the basis of this process is the word-of-mouth strategy in which one can express one's opinion on products in an online forum. Increasing the use of individuals in advertising that reflect the actual appearance of consumers and their skin care concerns works well for this brand.

Thanks to its activity on social media, Drunk Elephant was regarded as one of the most popular brands on Instagram and TikTok. Also following the word-of-mouth philosophy, Drunk Elephant took advantage of the feedback given by customers on social media by including customer reviews on Instagram in the captions of product images.

It is interesting to know, however, that Drunk Elephant does not have a real flagship shop, not even in the United States, but the products are sold either on the official Drunk Elephant E-Commerce site, or in shops such as Sephora and Ulta Beauty (figure 20).

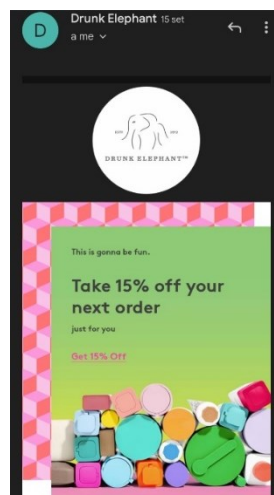
Figure 20: Sephora and Ulta Beauty Logos



Source: Sephora and Ulta Beauty official website

As a gift to new subscribers to their newsletter, they reserve a 15% discount that can be used on the website. Or, by email, new product sponsorships simply arrive, including a ‘shop’ button that links directly to the website (figure 21).

Figure 21: Drunk Elephant e-mail about discounts



Source: E-mail

Certainly, during the pandemic period, the brand increased sales among both old and new customers, precisely because consumers had more time to inform themselves about

skincare and think about their routines. As a result, the company had to adapt quickly, investing more in the user experience of its website, and ensuring that all orders were processed on time.

3.3 Analysis methodology

3.3.1 Content Analysis

After analyzing the communication and marketing strategies that the two companies put in place to communicate with their consumers, we proceeded with the content analysis, which is the analysis methodology we decided to use in this research. According to Prasad (2008), content analysis is the scientific study of the content of communication, with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages. In fact, as mentioned above, our aim is to analyze the contents of the descriptions underneath Instagram social media posts, which are nothing more than messages that the company addresses to the consumer. Throughout the communication process, the content analyst places himself at the point of the message, drawing inferences about the senders of the message and its characteristics, but above all, he focuses on the effects that the message causes on the receiver.

Specifically, in the following research, to answer one of the questions, we will analyze the language that is used in descriptions on Instagram and how this, based on numerical data (likes, comments, and views), can have an impact on digital marketing. Indeed, according to Prasad (2008), content analysis helps the researcher to formulate a quantitative expression about the phenomenon and express it in numbers.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

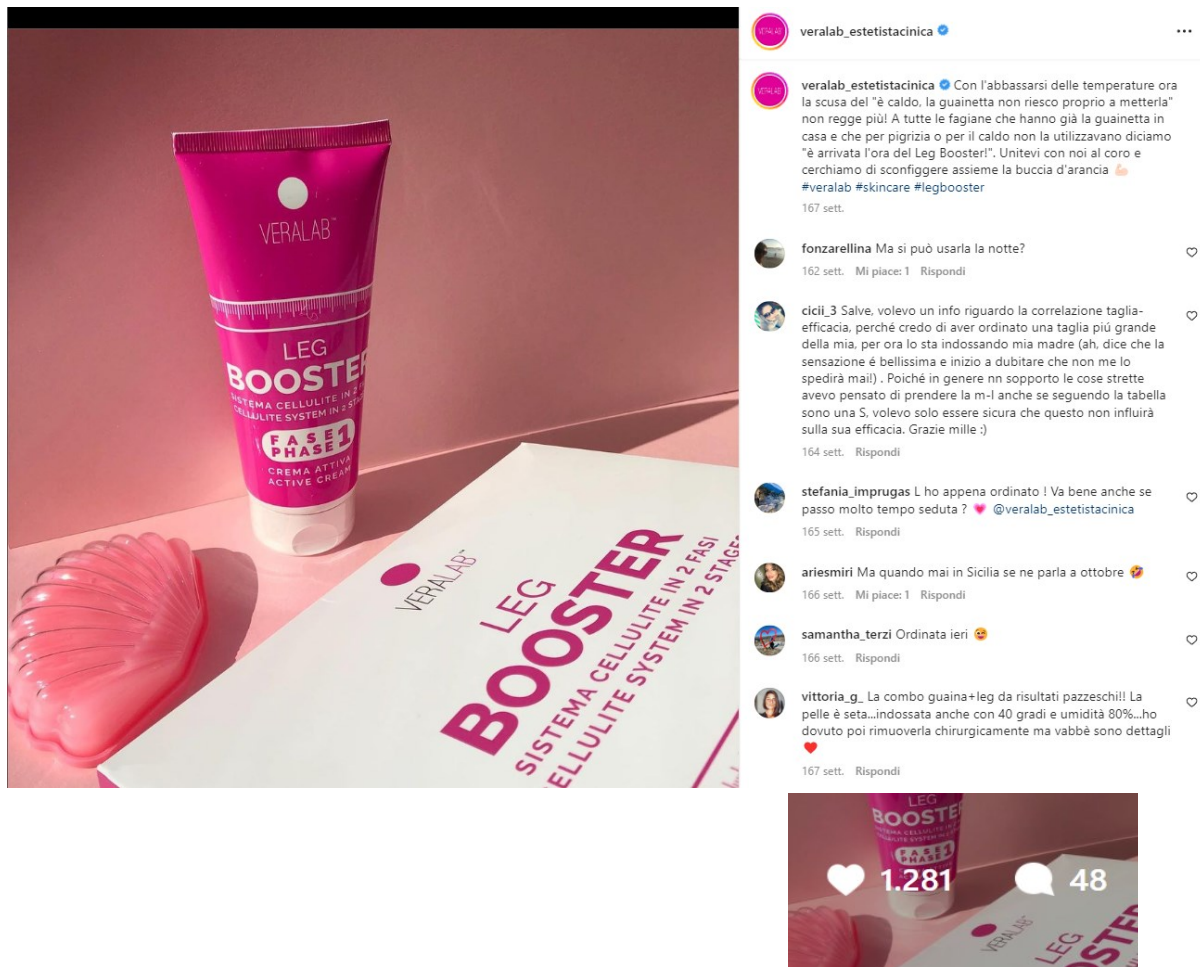
4.1 Presentation of results

The following chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the results obtained from the analysis of several posts taken from the two companies' Instagram social media in the different periods pre-pandemic, during the pandemic and post-pandemic. The aim is to compare both the communication strategies that the two companies put in place to communicate with their consumers on the web, through the different types of language they use for content on social. Analyzing the three periods, it is possible to see how the communication of the two companies towards their customers has changed, and especially how the customers' interactions under each post have changed.

4.2 Posts related to the pre-pandemic period

Below, a series of posts that both companies have published, in the pre-pandemic period, on their Instagram pages will be listed, and the language they use to address consumers, the number of likes, comments, and views their posts reach will be analysed; finally, some consumer comments will also be reported below the company's posts (figure 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29).

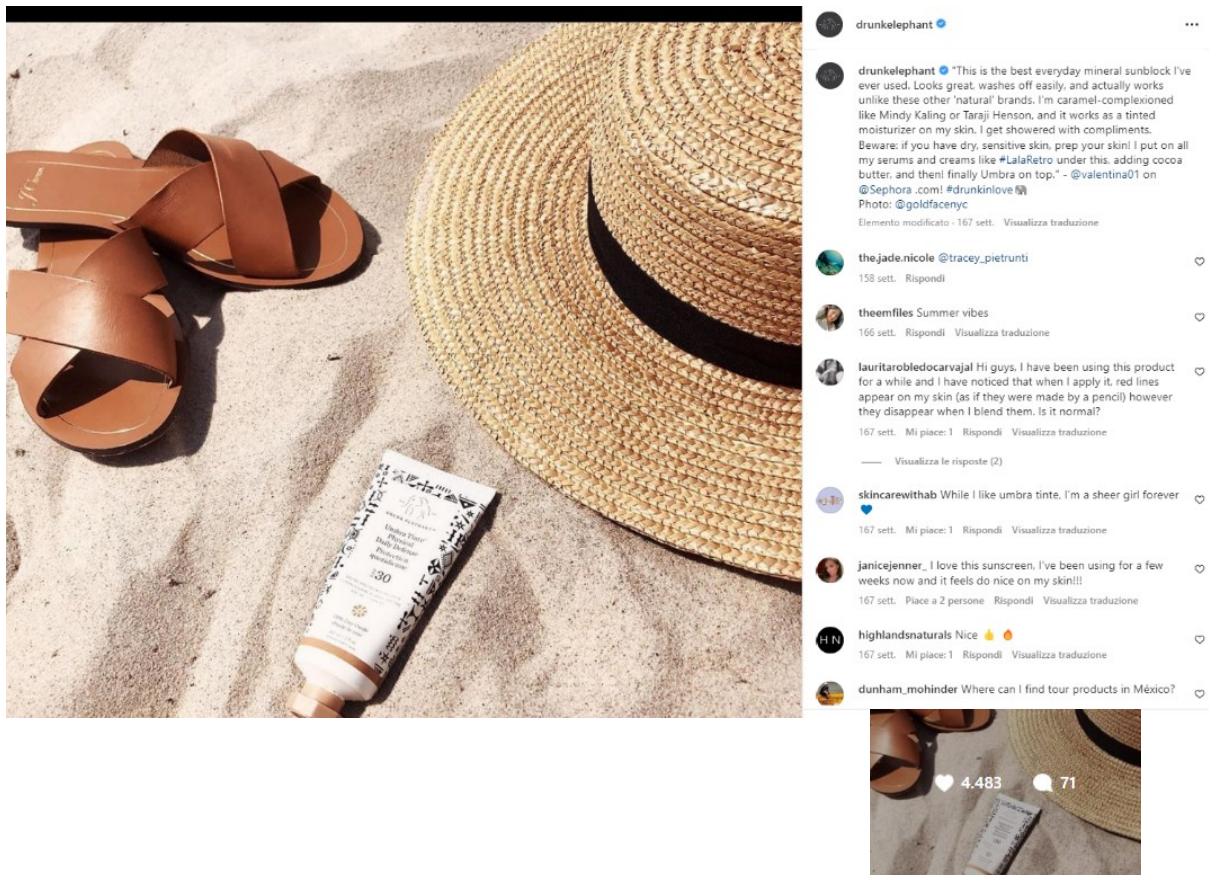
Figure 22: VeraLab's post on the product Leg Booster



Source: VeraLab Instagram page

From this post published pre-pandemic (4 August 2019), sponsoring a widely used product, it is possible to see a not very high number of likes, 1281 and comments, 48. The language used is emotional language because it tries to touch the target audience, for example with the use of the word 'Fagiane', which makes women feel part of that community. Furthermore, the language is concrete because everything can be tested by the customer. The comments posted below the post are comments from current customers who are satisfied with the product and customers who have only just bought the product and have yet to test it.

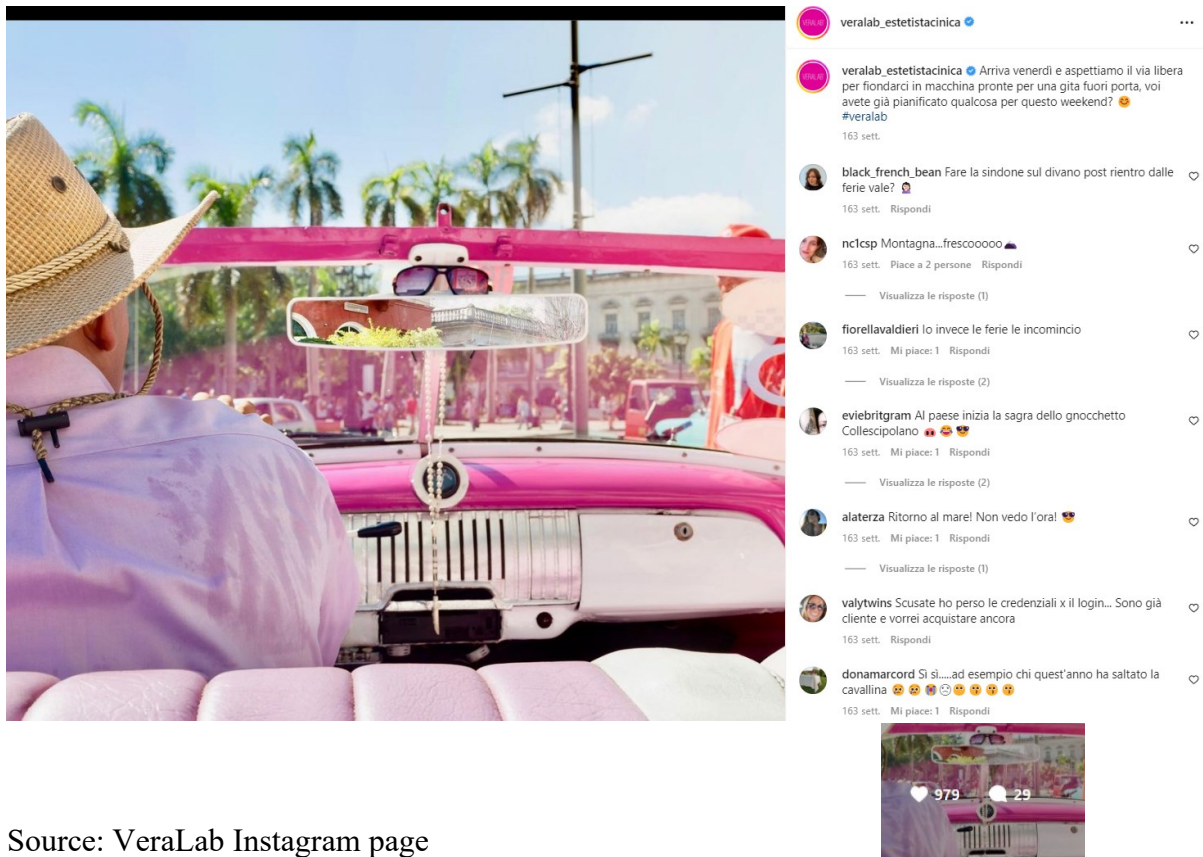
Figure 23: Drunk Elephant's post on the product Lala Retro



Source: Drunk Elephant Instagram page

This post published pre-pandemic (1 August 2019), sponsoring a summer product, is clearly a customer review done on Sephora. It is possible to see a not very high number of likes, 4.483 and comments, 71. The language used is concrete language because it talks about a product that has been used and it uses figurative language because it exaggerates the characteristics of the product. The comments posted below the post are positive comments that were generated after using the product.

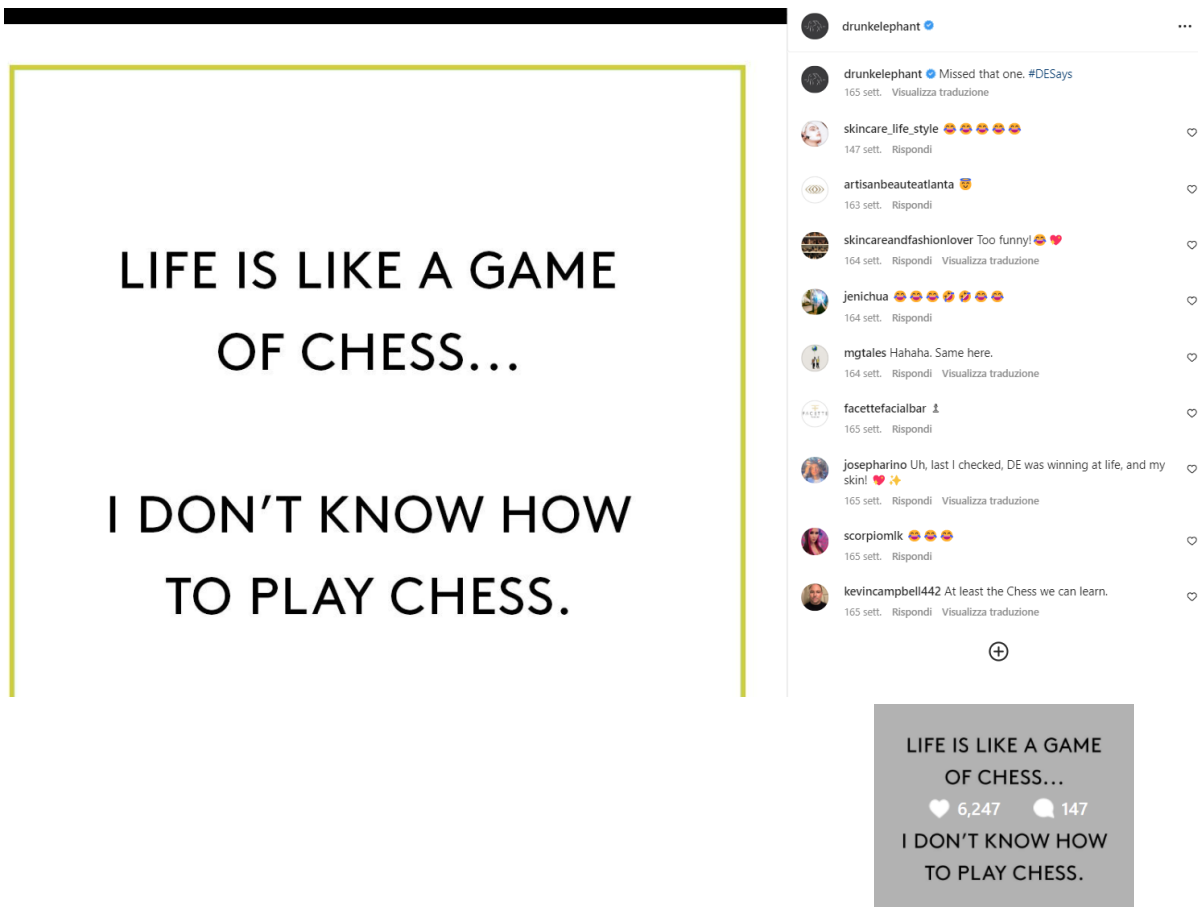
Figure 24: VeraLab's general post



Source: VeraLab Instagram page

From this post published pre-pandemic (30 August 2019) that doesn't advertise a product, but asks what the plans for next weekend are, it is possible to see a not very high number of likes, 979 and comments, 29. This is because perhaps the subject of the post is not a product of the company, but it is a post that requires interaction from the community. The language used is the emotional language because it tries to touch the target audience and the company expects the community to interact with this post. The comments posted below the post are a simple answer to the question that was asked in the post description.

Figure 25: Drunk Elephant's general post



Source: Drunk Elephant Instagram page

From this post published pre-pandemic (15 August 2019) that does not advertise a product but expresses a nice phrase about the life, it is possible to see a not very high number of likes, 6,247 thousand and comments, 147. The language used is the emotional language because it tries to touch the target audience and the company expects the community to interact with this post. Furthermore, the language is also figurative, because it uses a kind of metaphor (life being compared to a chess game) and abstract because it refers to a concept. The comments posted below the post are ironic responses to the content of the post.

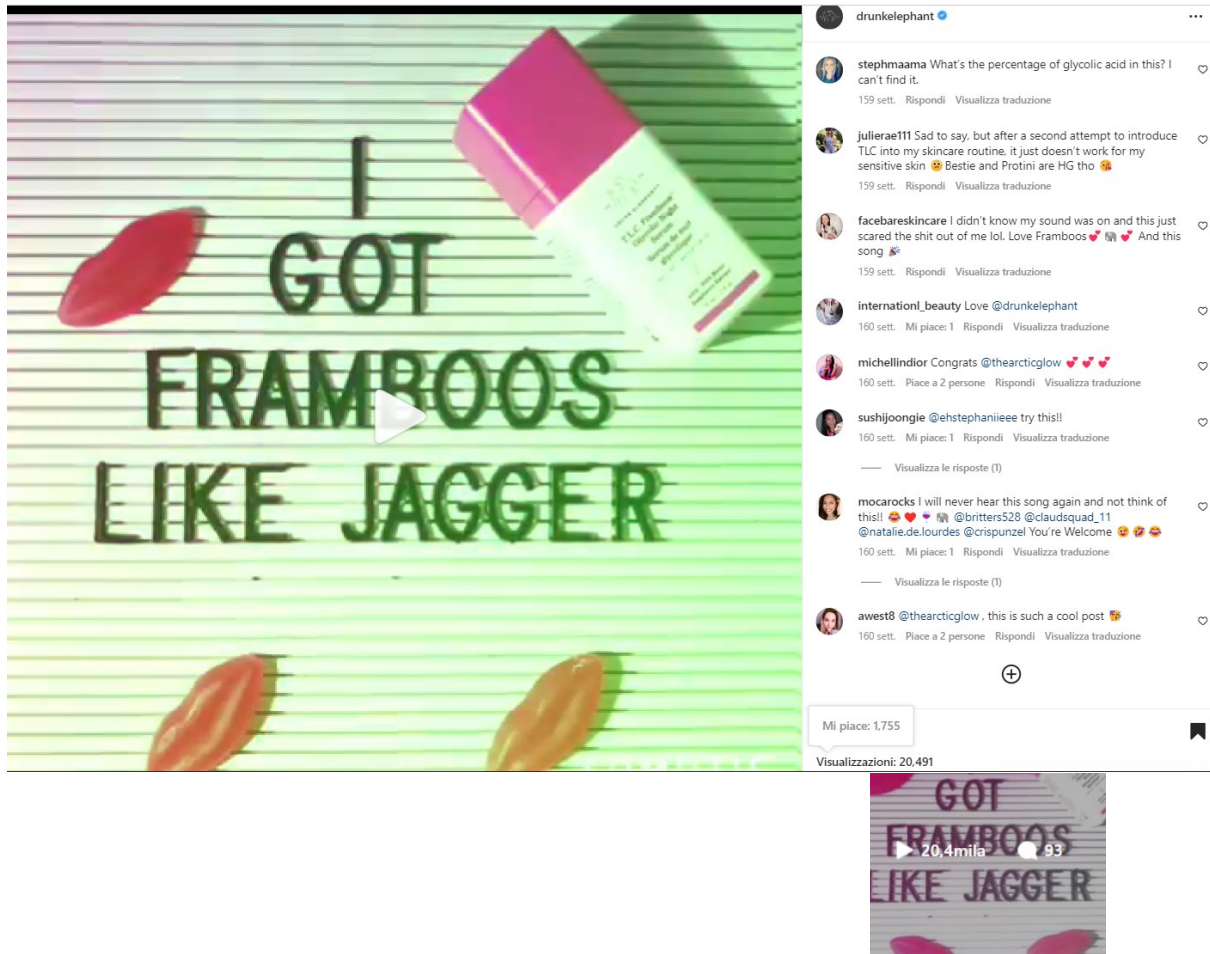
Figure 26: A video of VeraLab sponsoring the product Slim Me Bath



Source: VeraLab Instagram Page

This post published pre-pandemic (11 November 2019) is a video sponsoring a product that dissolves in water while bathing. It allows us to see not only the likes and comments but also the views. From the data, we can see that there is a high number of views 19.9 thousand, only 762 likes and very few comments, 8. The language used is definitely emotional because it evokes an emotion in the user and also figurative. The comments posted below the post shows that the customer not only bought this product but is a regular customer.

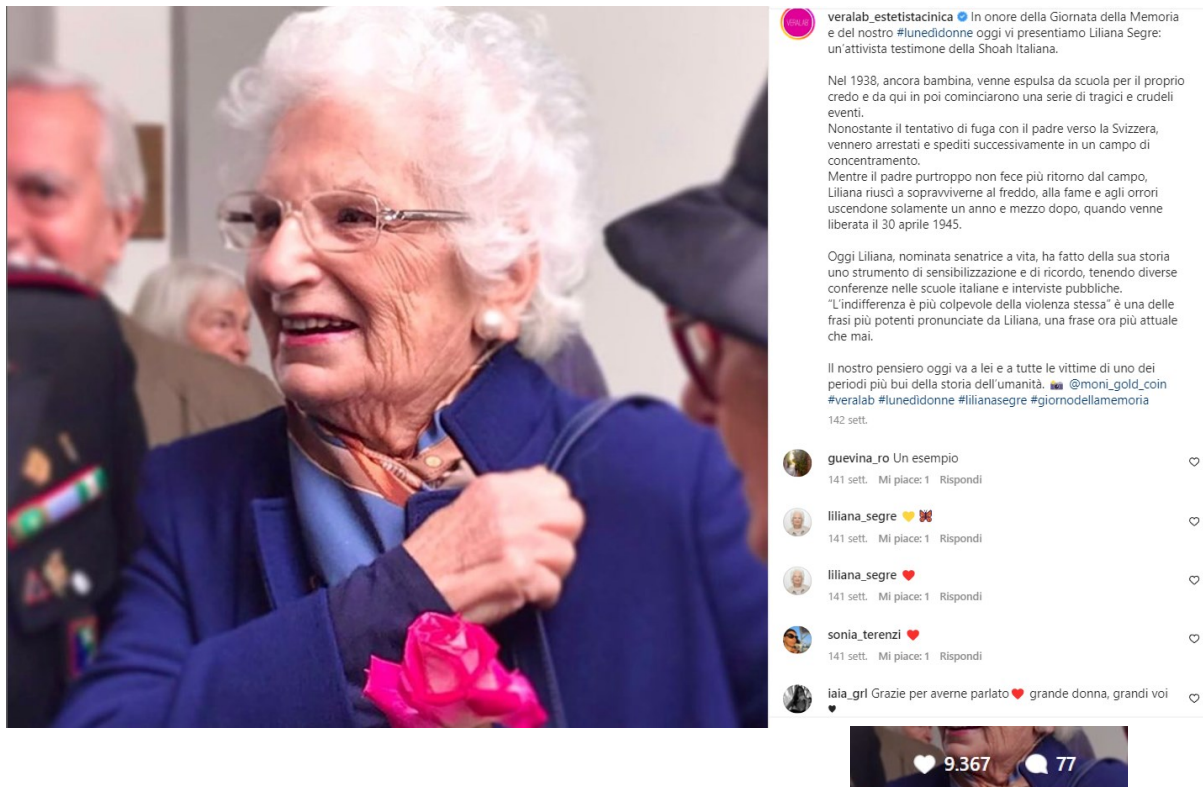
Figure 27: A video of Drunk Elephant sponsoring a product



Source: Drunk Elephant Instagram page

This post published pre-pandemic (19 September 2019) is a video sponsoring a product regularly used by the company's customers. It allows us to see not only the likes and comments but also the views. From the data, we can see that there is a high number of views 20,491 thousand, 1755 likes and 93 comments. The language used is definitely emotional because it evokes an emotion in the user, figurative and abstract. The comments posted underneath the post show that the customer appreciates the company and in this case the post it published.

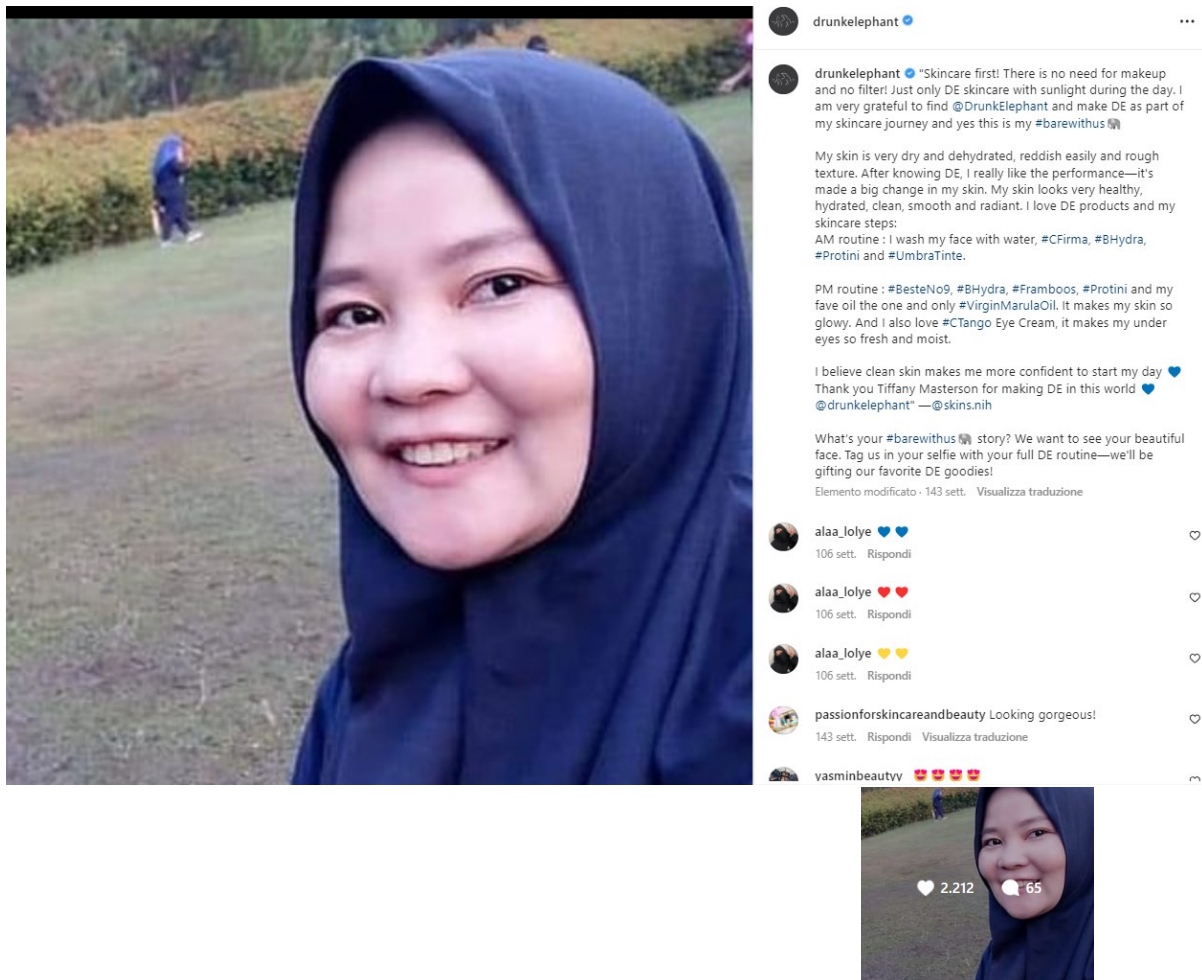
Figure 28: VeraLab's post on #Lunedidonne day



Source: VeraLab Instagram page

In this pre-pandemic post published on 27 January 2020, it is evident how attentive the company is to share and talking about social issues. In addition, every Monday the company publishes a post in which it talks about women who have revolutionized history, from this one #Lunedidonne. In this case, the story of Liliana Segre, Italian Shoah activist, is told on Remembrance Day. From the data we can also see a high interest from users, with 9367 likes, and 77 comments. The language used in this post is, first of all, informational language, because it gives an overview of the senator's story; furthermore, there is also emotional language, because in the last lines it touches the users' emotions on such an important world day. Comments posted below the post underline the company's ability to deal with such sensitive issues.

Figure 29: A post by Drunk Elephant for the initiative #barewithus



Source: Drunk Elephant Instagram page

In this pre-pandemic post published on 14 January 2020, it is evident how attentive the company is to share and talking about social issues. The company periodically publishes posts shared by people who have used Drunk Elephant products for the #barewithus initiative and show how the company's products have improved their skin. In this case, the woman states that there is no need to wear make-up, but just use Drunk Elephant products. The data also shows a fairly high interest from users, with 2212 likes and 65 comments. The language used in this post is both figurative, as it extols the qualities of the product by saying that 'my skin looks very healthy, hydrated, clean, smooth and radiant' and abstract. Users in the comments posted below the post appreciate this post.

4.3 Posts related to the pandemic period

Below, a series of posts that both companies have published, during the pandemic period, on their Instagram pages will be listed (figure 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37).

Figure 30: VeraLab's post on the product Olio Denso

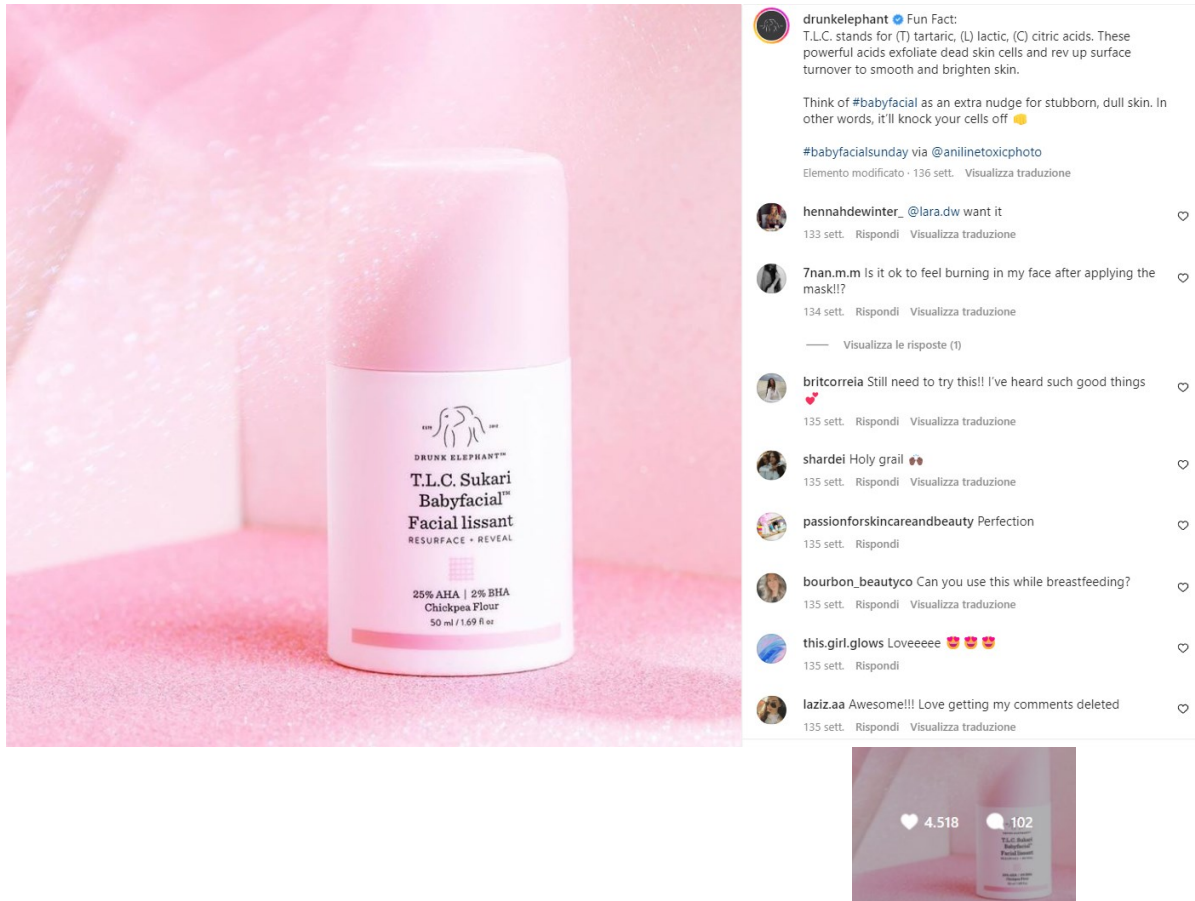


Source: VeraLab Instagram page

This post published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (21 April 2020), it is a post advertising one of the products most used by consumers, but with a different package than usual, in a tin with a much larger size than the usual product. It is possible to note a considerable increase in the number of likes and comments under the post, compared to the others published pre-pandemic: 12.9 thousand likes and 514 comments. The language used is an emotional one because it uses a language that makes the community feel close to the brand

and the product. The comments that are written under the post are from consumers who are satisfied with the product, who would appreciate a format with more product.

Figure 31: Drunk Elephant's post on the product T. L. C. Sukari Babyfacial

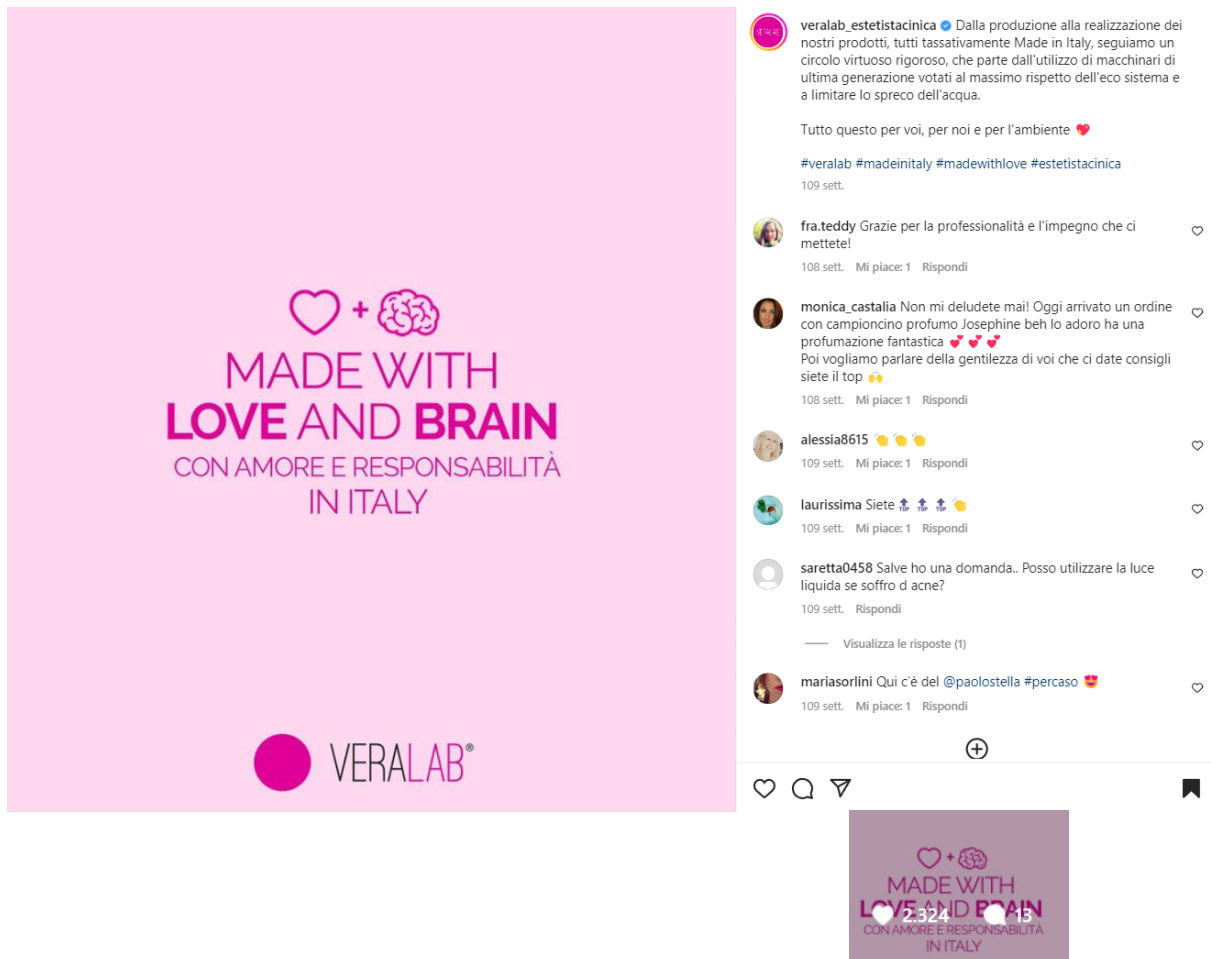


Source: VeraLab Instagram page

This post published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (8 March 2020), it is a post advertising a very specific product that is widely used by consumers. Despite this, the number of likes and comments is not very high, namely 4518 likes and 102 comments. In the description of the post, informational language is used because it describes exactly the product with its characteristics and ingredients, explaining how the product should be used. Furthermore, language used is very concrete. In addition, literal type language is used because it describes the characteristics of the product in a very objective way, without further

connotations. The comments posted below the post testify that the product is one of the best of the Drunk Elephant brand and that the consumer has heard of this product but has not yet tested it.

Figure 32: VeraLab's general post

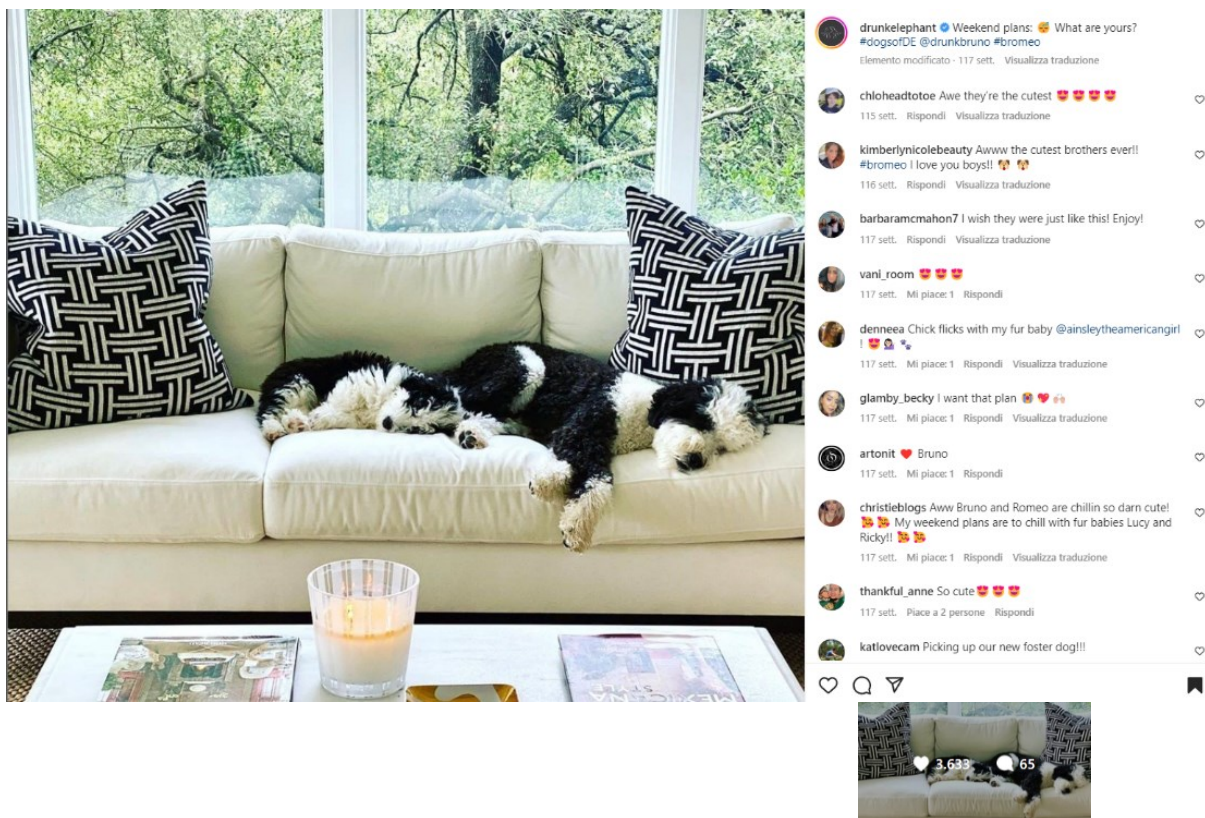


Source: VeraLab's Instagram page

This post was published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (14 July 2020), and is not a post advertising a product, but explaining how the products are created and that everything used is all made in Italy, starting with the machinery and everything is based on respect for the ecosystem. The number of likes (2,324) and comments (13) is not high, perhaps because the post is very generic and does not highlight the quality of the product. The

language that is used is a literal language because it objectively describes how the product is created, but figurative language is also used because it uses words that exaggerate the meaning of the phrase "maximum respect", "strict virtuous circle". In the last sentence, the language is also emotional because it addresses the user by saying that all this is done for them and the environment around them. The comments below the post always praise the work the company and employees do and the commitment they put into their work.

Figure 33: Drunk Elephant's general post



Source: Drunk Elephant Instagram page

This post was published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (14 September 2020), and is not a post advertising a product, but a nice image is posted asking users what their plans are for the weekend. The likes on this post are also not very high (3633), as are the comments (65). The sentence written below the post is very short and simple and the

language used is emotional because it addresses the user directly in a colloquial manner. The comments below the post show the appreciation of the post.

Figure 34: A video of VeraLab sponsoring the product Hydra Pop

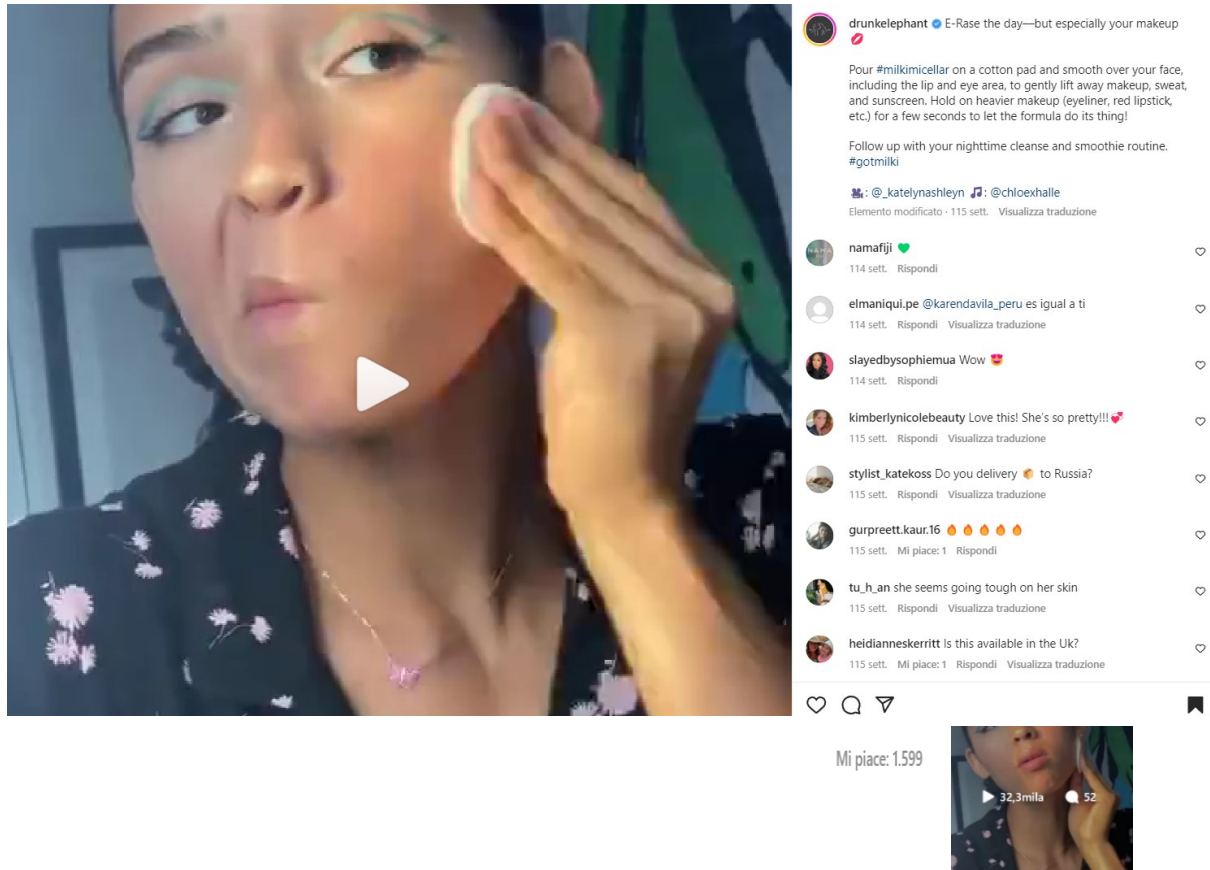


Source: VeraLab's Instagram page

This post was published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (28 November 2020) is a video advertising the launch of a new body product. It allows us to see not only the likes and comments but also the views. From the data, we can see that there is a very high number of views 115,000, not many likes (8,361) and a high number of comments (214). The language used is an emotional language that speaks confidentially to users and touches their emotions directly. Furthermore, it uses figurative language because it uses

metaphors to describe the product. Below the post there are several comments extolling the qualities of the new product.

Figure 35: A video of Drunk Elephant sponsoring the product Milki Micellar



Source: Drunk Elephant's Instagram page

This post was published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (2 August 2020) is a video showing how skincare should be done. It allows us to see not only the likes and comments but also the views. From the data, we can see that there is a low number of views (32.395), few likes (1599) and very few comments (52). The language used is literal language that explains to users how to use the product in detail, explaining the different steps; it also uses informational language, which gives some information about the product, without using emotional and figurative language. Below the post there are several comments confirming the qualities of the product.

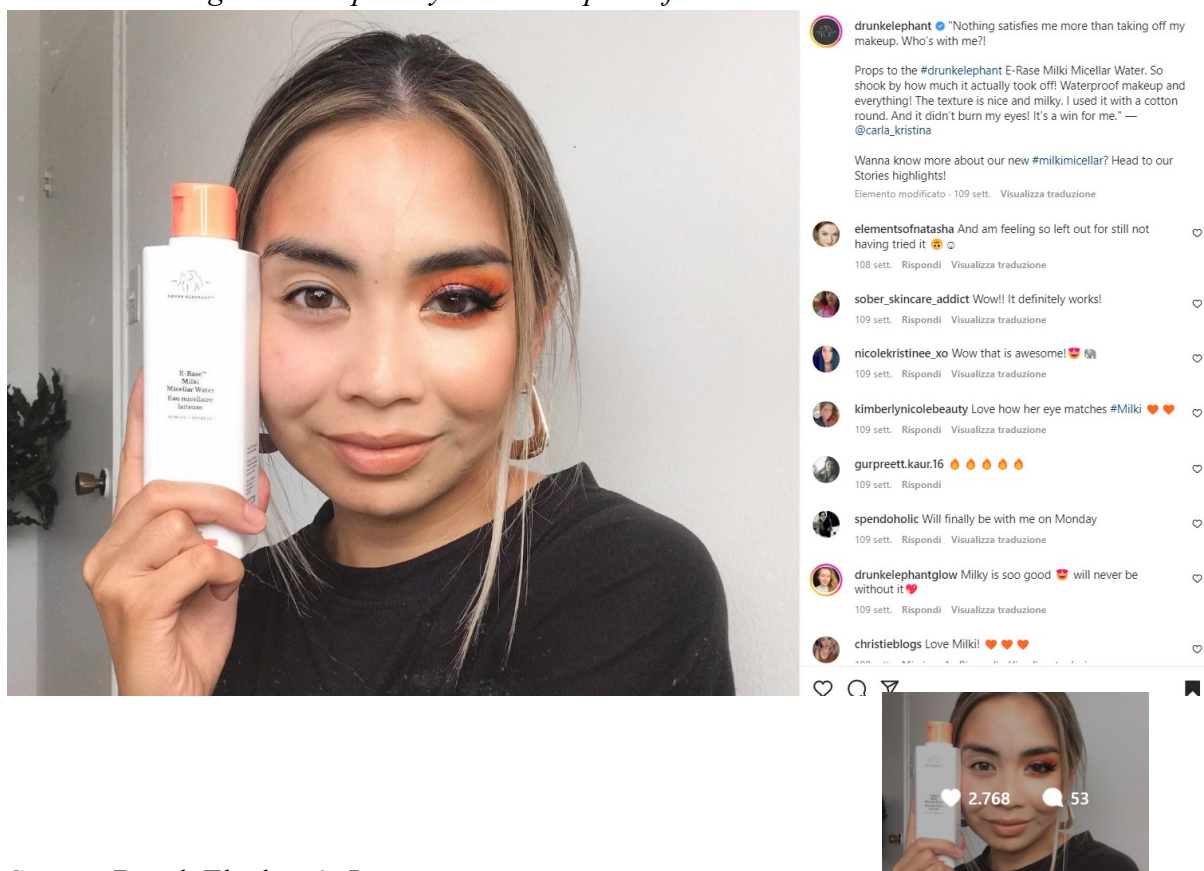
Figure 36: VeraLab's post on #Lunedìdonne day



Source: VeraLab's Instagram page

This post was published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (21 September 2020), is a post where it is possible to see how attentive the company is to share and talking about social issues. In addition, every Monday the company publishes a post in which it talks about women who have revolutionized history, from this one #Lunedìdonne. In this case, the story of Vanessa Incontrada, an Italian actress, who has been the victim of bodyshaming for a few months now. Therefore, it is reported how the woman is trying to defend herself against the insults coming from the web. From the data we can also see a high interest from users, with 3750 likes, and 38 comments. The language used in this post is, first of all, informational language, because it gives an overview of Vanessa's story; furthermore, there is also emotional language, because in the last lines it touches the users' emotions on such an important and sensitive issue today. The comments posted below the post underline the company's ability to deal with such sensitive issues and encourage the actress not to give in to these prejudices.

Figure 37: A post by Drunk Elephant for the initiative #barewithus



Source: Drunk Elephant's Instagram page

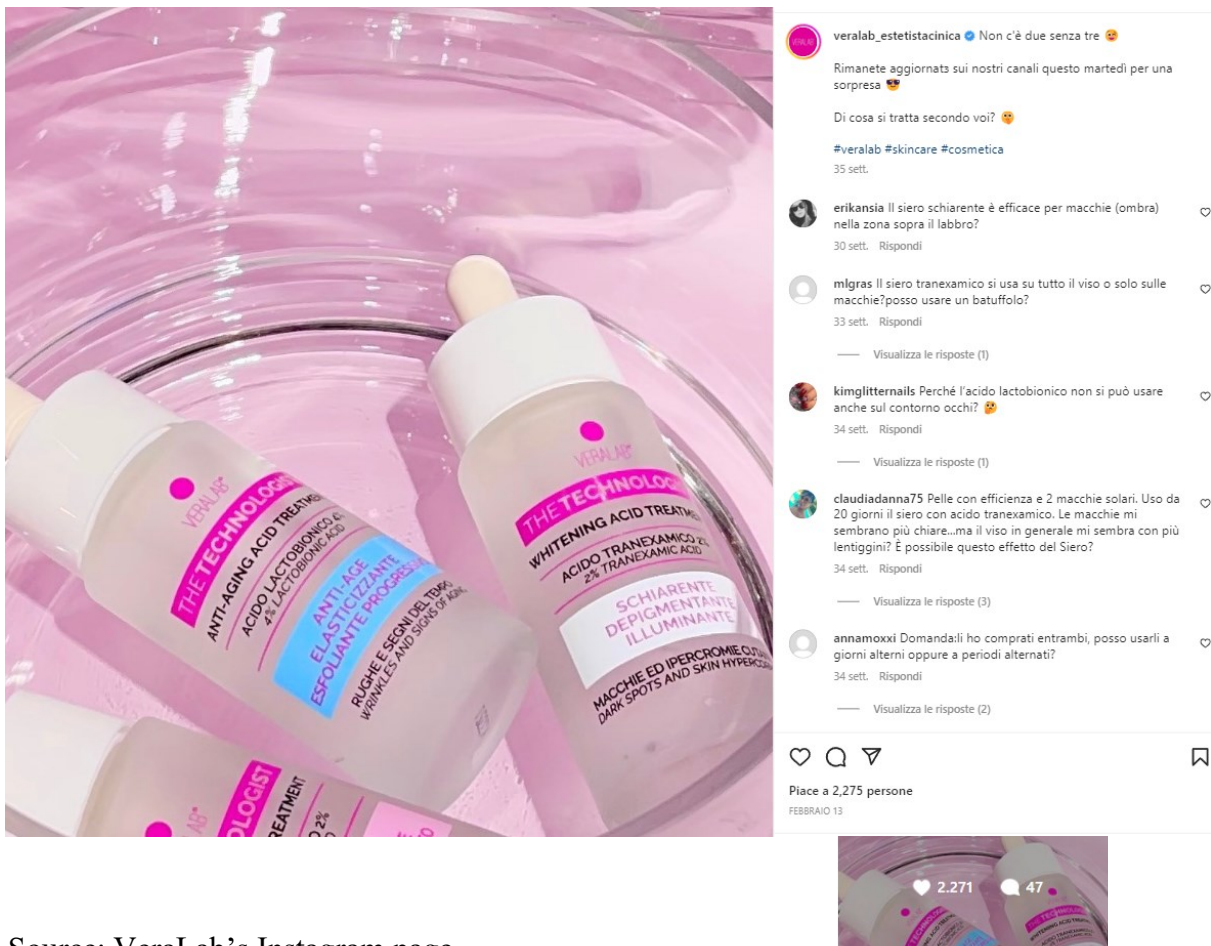
This post was published at the height of the pandemic, during the lockdown (11 September 2020) and it is evident how attentive the company is to share and talking about social issues. The company periodically publishes posts shared by people who have used Drunk Elephant products for the #barewithus initiative and show how the company's products have improved their skin. In this case, the woman states that it is wonderful to remove make-up with a Drunk Elephant product. Therefore, the company sponsors a product through this woman. The data also shows a fairly high interest from users, with 2768 likes and 53 comments. The language used in this post is emotional because it asks the opinion of the consumers who use that product, drawing their attention and emotions; it also uses figurative language, because it

enhances the qualities of the product. The comments below the post are from consumers who appreciate this post.

4.4 Posts related to the post-pandemic period

Below, a series of posts that both companies have published, in the post-pandemic period, on their Instagram pages will be listed (figure 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 45).

Figure 38: VeraLab's post on some products

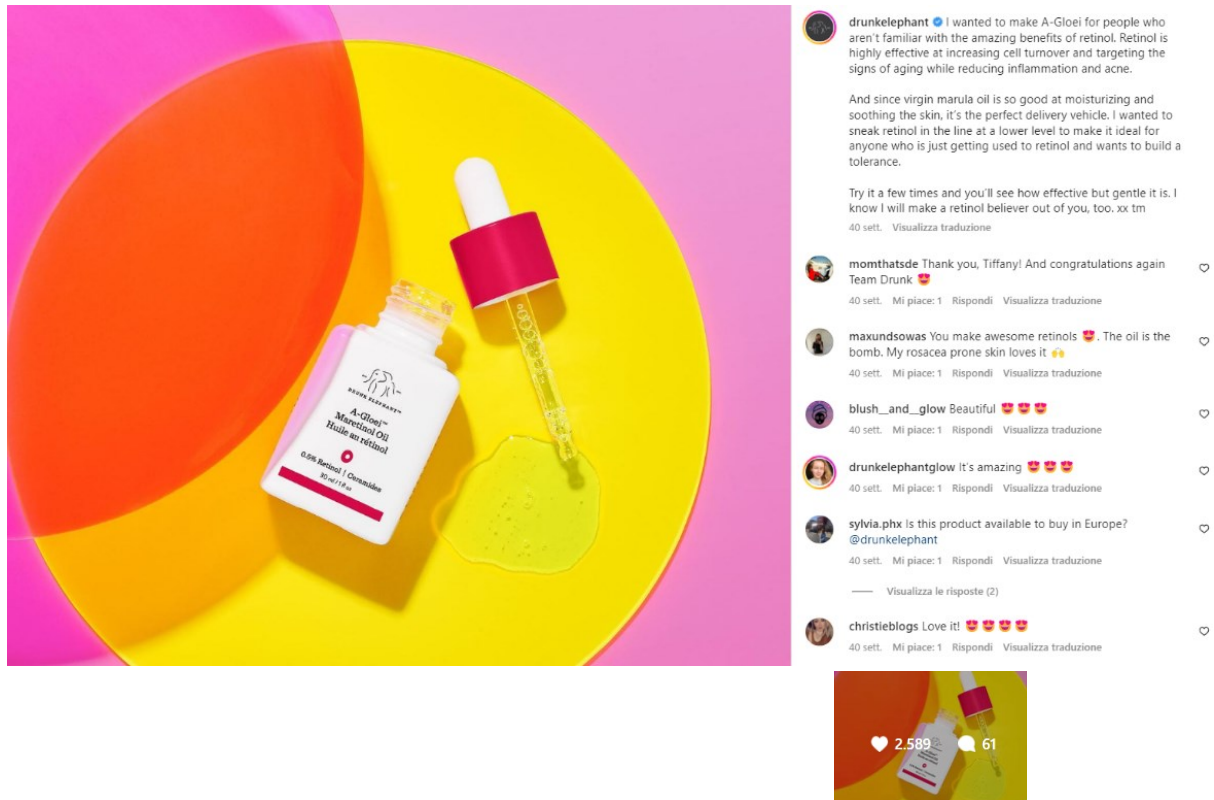


Source: VeraLab's Instagram page

This post was published after the pandemic (13 February 2022) sponsors the launch of a third product (as opposed to those in the photo) that would have taken place a few days after the publication of the post. We can see that there is not a very high number of likes (2271) nor

comments (47). The language that is used is an emotional one because it keeps consumers in suspense and asks what consumers think this product is. In some comments posted, the functionality of the product to be launched is asked.

Figure 39: Drunk Elephant's post on the product A- Gloei



Source: Drunk Elephant's Instagram page

This post was published after the pandemic (4 January 2022) and advertises a very important product of the company. The number of likes (2589) and comments (61) is not very high. The language used is mostly literal, as it explains without any emotional or figurative connotation the product, its ingredients and how it should be used. Furthermore, the language is informational because it gives information about the product in a very objective way. The last sentence addresses the consumer using emotional language, saying that the reader will be a

fan of this product. The comments posted below this post extolling the qualities of the product.

Figure 40: VeraLab's general post



Source: VeraLab's Instagram page

This post was published after the pandemic (6 February 2022) and represents a cute picture, on the day of the epiphany, of a Fagiana (the name by which the VeraLab community identifies itself) flying on a broom. In this case we have a high number of likes (9825) and a high number of comments (37). The language used is definitely an emotional language, which touches the emotions of the community and is also figurative, as it uses metaphors in the description. The comments posted below this post are comments appreciating the post that the company published during this day.

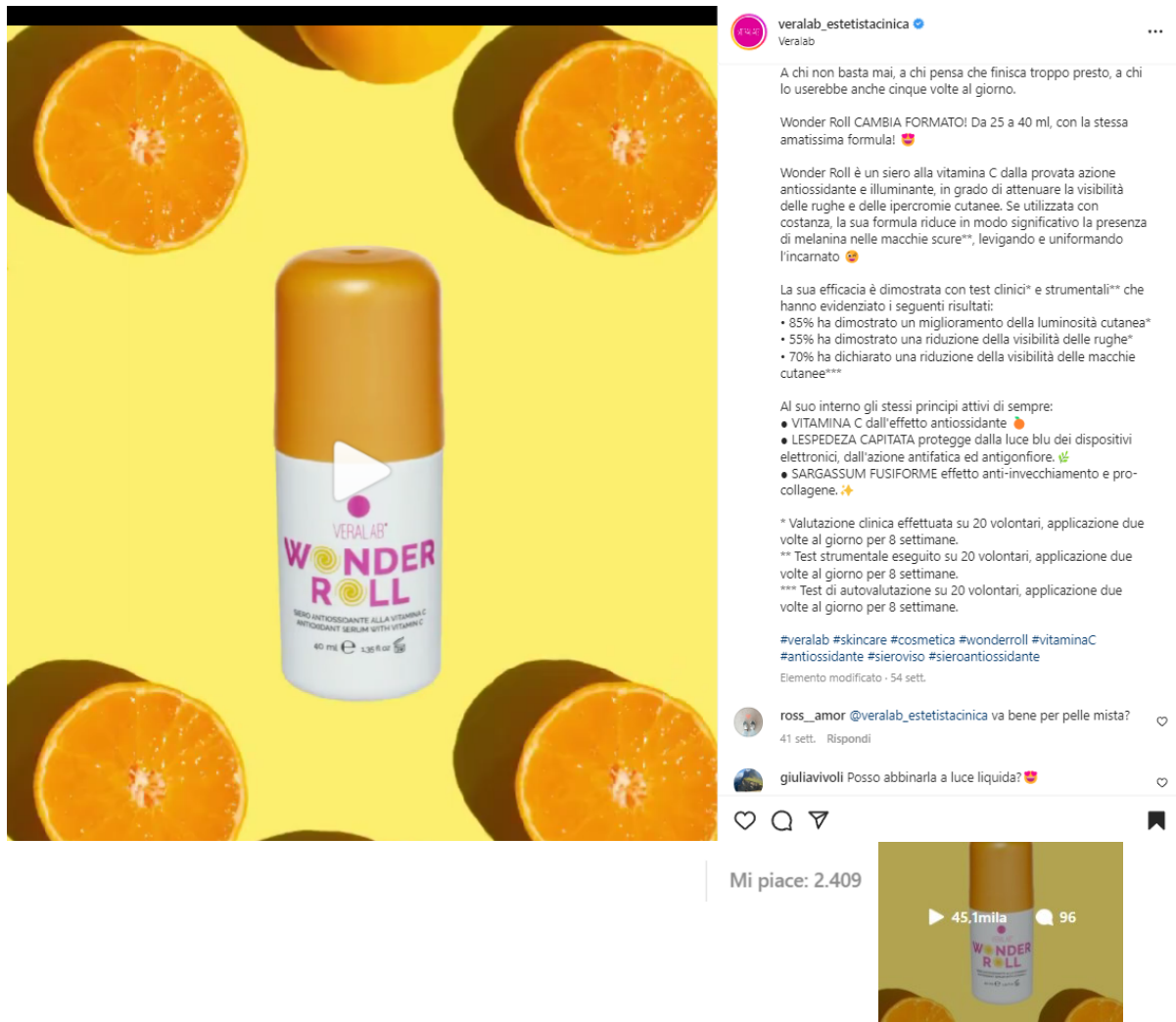
Figure 41: Drunk Elephant's general post



Source: Drunk Elephant's Instagram page

This post was published after the pandemic (17 January 2022) quotes a very important quote by Martin Luther King. The number of likes (1138) and comments (20) is not very high. The language is emotional because it tries to touch the emotions of consumers. The comments posted below this post praise the great figure of Martin Luther King.

Figure 42: A video of VeraLab sponsoring the product Wonder Roll



veralab_estetistica
Veralab

A chi non basta mai, a chi pensa che finisca troppo presto, a chi lo userebbe anche cinque volte al giorno.

Wonder Roll CAMBIA FORMATO! Da 25 a 40 ml, con la stessa amatissima formula! 🍷

Wonder Roll è un siero alla vitamina C dalla provata azione antiossidante e illuminante, in grado di attenuare la visibilità delle rughe e delle ipercromie cutanee. Se utilizzata con costanza, la sua formula riduce in modo significativo la presenza di melanina nelle macchie scure**, levigando e uniformando l'incarnato 🍷

La sua efficacia è dimostrata con test clinici* e strumentali** che hanno evidenziato i seguenti risultati:

- 85% ha dimostrato un miglioramento della luminosità cutanea*
- 55% ha dimostrato una riduzione della visibilità delle rughe*
- 70% ha dichiarato una riduzione della visibilità delle macchie cutanee***

Al suo interno gli stessi principi attivi di sempre:

- VITAMINA C dall'effetto antiossidante 🍷
- LESPEDEZA CAPITATA protegge dalla luce blu dei dispositivi elettronici, dall'azione antifatica ed antionfiore. 🌿
- SARGASSUM FUSIFORME effetto anti-invecchiamento e pro-collagene. ✨

* Valutazione clinica effettuata su 20 volontari, applicazione due volte al giorno per 8 settimane.
** Test strumentale eseguito su 20 volontari, applicazione due volte al giorno per 8 settimane.
*** Test di autovalutazione su 20 volontari, applicazione due volte al giorno per 8 settimane.

#veralab #skincare #cosmetica #wonderroll #vitaminaC #antiossidante #siero viso #sieroantiossidante

Elemento modificato · 54 sett.

ross_amor @veralab_estetistica va bene per pelle mista? 41 sett. Rispondi

giulivivoli Posso abbinarla a luce liquida? 🍷

Mi piace: 2.409

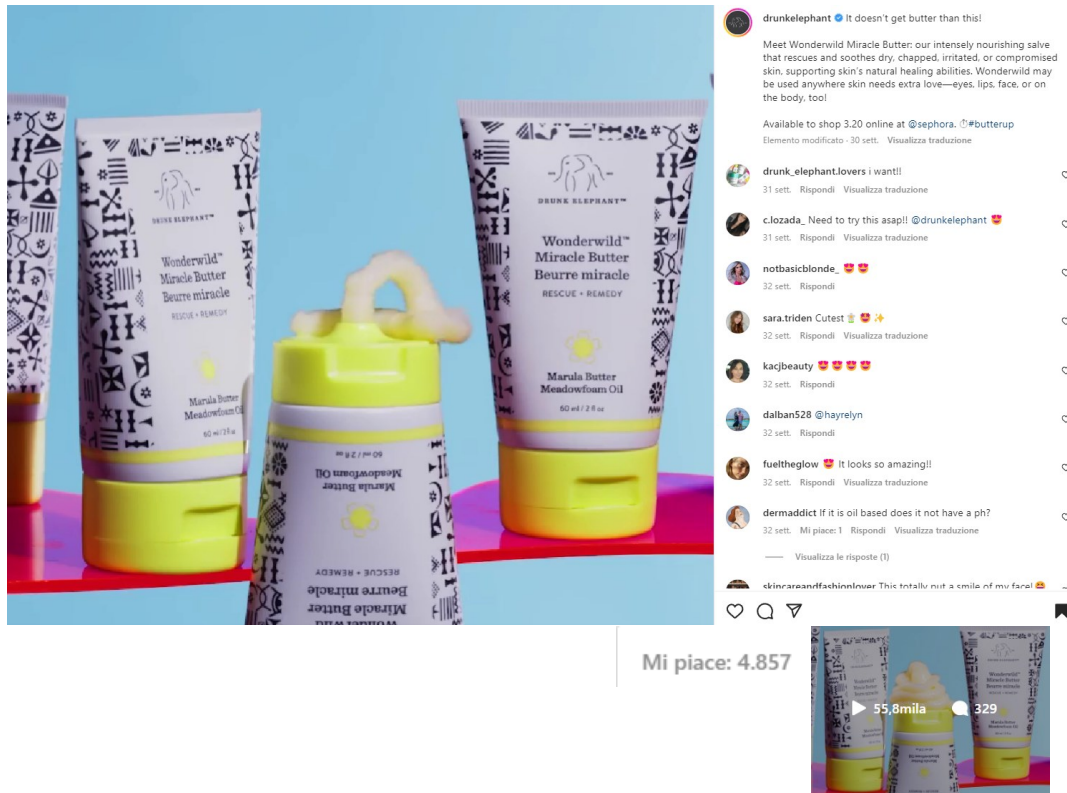
45,1mila 96

Source: VeraLab's Instagram page

This post was published after the pandemic, (5 October 2021) is a video advertising the change of the Wonder Roll product format, from 25 to 40 ml. It allows us to see not only the likes and comments but also the views. From the data, we can see that there is a very high number of views 45.1 thousand, not many likes (2.409) and a high number of comments (96). The language used is literal language that explains to users what the ingredients of this product are, how it should be used and what its possible results on the skin are. In addition, it also uses informational language because it also highlights some percentage data that allow the user to get a well-rounded overview of the product. Below the post there are several comments

extolling the qualities of the new product and especially that the product went out of stock immediately.

Figure 43: A video of Drunk Elephant sponsoring the product Wonderwild



Source: Drunk Elephant's Instagram page

This post was published after the pandemic, during the lockdown (1 March 2022) is a video describing some characteristics of the product. It allows us to see not only the likes and comments but also the views. From the data, we can see that there is a high number of views (55mila), many likes (4857) and many comments (329). The language used is literal language that explains to users how to use the product and what its possible results on the skin are; it also uses informational language, which gives some information about the product, without using emotional and figurative language. Below the post there are several comments saying that this product is of great interest to the consumer.

Figure 44: VeraLab's post on #Lunedidonne day



Source: VeraLab's Instagram page

This post was published after the pandemic (20 December 2021), is a post where it is possible to see how attentive the company is to share and talking about social issues. In addition, every Monday the company publishes a post in which it talks about women who have revolutionized history, from this one #Lunedidonne. In this case, the story of Ornella Vanoni, an Italian singer, which achieved all the goals. From the data we can also see a low interest from users, with 1110 likes, and 7 comments. The language used in this post is, first of all, informational language, because it gives an overview of Ornella's story; furthermore, there is also emotional language, because a quotation from her is inserted. Some comments posted below the underline the greatness of the woman to be so natural.

Figure 45: A post by Drunk Elephant for the initiative #barewithus



Source: Drunk Elephant's Instagram page

This post was published after pandemic (10 February 2021) and it is evident how attentive the company is to share and talking about social issues. The company periodically publishes posts shared by people who have used Drunk Elephant products for the #barewithus initiative and show how the company's products have improved their skin. In this case, the woman, who is a nurse, says that it is very important for her to do a good skincare after so many hours spent wearing a mask. Therefore, the company sponsors some products through this woman. The data also shows a low interest from users, with 924 likes and 67 comments. The language used in this post is emotional because it touches the emotions of consumers after such a bad time for the world; it also uses figurative language, because it enhances the qualities of the product.

The comments below the post are from consumers who appreciate this post and are grateful for the work that nurses do every day.

4.5 Comparison of companies' social communication

The tables 2, 3 and 4 below compare the above posts according to the type of post (product sponsorship, general posts, videos and company initiatives) and to the period (pre-pandemic, during pandemic and post-pandemic) in which they were published.

From the results presented in the previous paragraphs, it is possible to make a comparison between the two companies and to notice how the communications made by the two companies on social media are very different from each other. On the one hand, the VeraLab company carries out a communication that is more effective, given the numbers of interactions under the different posts published in the three different periods; on the other hand the communication of Drunk Elephant is clearly at a disadvantage, because its communication is simply based on selling the product, but does not involve the customer in the various activities. In fact, their communication carried out on social media, and specifically on Instagram posts, is already different in terms of the language they both use to communicate and interact with their consumers.

Therefore, based on the results and on the detailed description that was made of the two company in the previous chapter, it is possible to state that the communication model used by VeraLab fully involves the consumer in all the different processes (starting from the advertising of products up to the time of sale). Precisely for this reason, the VeraLab communication model (which perfectly combines the offline channel with the offline one) should serve as an example for all those companies that want to try to combine the two channels in the best possible way.

Table 2: Comparison of pre-pandemic period posts

Product sponsorship (posts in figures 22 and 23)	General posts (post in figures 24 and 25)	Videos (posts in figures 26 and 27)	Company initiatives (posts in figure 28 and 29)
<p>Companies advertise a product in posts in different ways. While Drunk Elephant decides to use a product review using concrete and figurative language, VeraLab decides to touch the emotions of its community. Although not many, the comments and likes of Drunk Elephant are slightly higher.</p>	<p>The likes and comments on Drunk Elephant’s post are clearly superior to those of VeraLab. Both in this case use an emotional language, which allows the proximity between customer and company, as well as the figurative language used by Drunk Elephant allows you to feel part of a brand.</p>	<p>In general, the two posts are very similar in the way they are presented. Also, in terms of views, they have more or less the same numbers. What does change is the number of likes and comments, which are higher in Drunk Elephant’s post. The type of language is also very similar in both posts.</p>	<p>In general, a high level of user involvement in social issues can be seen in these two posts. The numbers of likes and comments simply change: VeraLab has more likes and comments than the other company. And it can be seen that VeraLab in #MondayWomen talks about the social issue specifically, while Drunk Elephant only sponsors the product and talks about the testimonies some women have made about the product.</p>

Table 3: Comparison of pandemic period posts

Product sponsorship (posts in figures 30 and 31)	General posts (post in figures 32 and 33)	Videos (posts in figures 34 and 35)	Company initiatives (posts in figure 36 and 37)
<p>In general, it can be seen that during the pandemic, data from the VeraLab company increased markedly in relation to previous posts, but also in relation to the Drunk Elephant company. VeraLab often use emotional language to talk about and advertise its product, whereas the other company use more objective language. The degree of customer satisfaction is always the same for both companies.</p>	<p>In general, these two types of posts do not achieve a high number of likes and comments perhaps because they do not directly advertise a product, but nevertheless they do increase user engagement on social media by inducing them to respond and probably stay on the page. The number of likes and comments does not make much difference between one company and the other.</p>	<p>The two videos published by both companies are very different and also the language is very different. VeraLab prefers to use emotional and figurative language, this is not the case for Drunk Elephant because it uses informational and literal language. It is easy to see the success of this post for VeraLab because the data provided (views, comments and likes) are very high and far exceed those of Drunk Elephant.</p>	<p>In general, a high level of user involvement in social issues can be seen in these two posts. The numbers of likes and comments simply change: VeraLab has more likes and Drunk Elephant has more comments than the other company.</p>

Table 4: Comparison of post- pandemic period posts

Product sponsorship (posts in figures 38 and 39)	General posts (post in figures 40 and 41)	Videos (posts in figures 42 and 43)	Company initiatives (posts in figure 44 and 45)
<p>In general, the two posts are very similar in terms of the category of post, but not in terms of language. These posts do not achieve a high number of likes and comments. The number of likes and comments does not make much difference between one company and the other.</p>	<p>In general, the two posts are similar, although VeraLab’s likes and comments are significantly higher than Drunk Elephant’s, perhaps because the community has identified with the image in VeraLab’s post. The language used is the same, the emotional one.</p>	<p>The two videos published by both companies are quite similar to each other, and the language they use is the same in this case. The number of views is slightly higher than that of Drunk Elephant, as are the likes. As for the number of comments, those of Drunk Elephant are significantly higher.</p>	<p>In general, we can see that there is no high user involvement in these two posts. The numbers of likes and comments simply change: VeraLab has more likes and Drunk Elephant has more comments than the other company. And it can be seen that VeraLab in #MondayWomen talks about the social issue specifically, while Drunk Elephant only sponsors the product and talks about the testimonies some women have made about the product.</p>

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 General discussion

After presenting the two companies VeraLab and Drunk Elephant and after analyzing the different posts on the social media Instagram in the previous chapter, we will now proceed with a general discussion of the results obtained, paying more attention to the language used to communicate. This will allow us to understand how certain marketing techniques, particularly in this case the communication techniques used by different companies, can influence the consumer's involvement and behavior.

This study verifies the involvement of consumers (higher for VeraLab) through the number of likes, comments and views, important elements to determine how active a company is on social media and if its communication is suitable for its consumers or not. Particular attention was paid to the analysis of the different posts in the pre-pandemic, during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods and to the analysis of the different types of language used in the posts in order to communicate directly with consumers. Furthermore, the types of posts that were taken from the Instagram pages of the two companies are varied. For example, an analysis was made of posts that simply advertise a product, or the analysis of videos that are published on the page (this was done in order to particularly understand the views that post received). Another type of post analyzed is a post about initiatives that companies put in place to increase their social value and to show that they are committed to pursuing certain objectives that affect the community. Finally, general posts, which do not fall into any of the previous categories, also play an important role in keeping the user, i.e., the consumer, active on company pages.

The analysis conducted in the following research shows that consumer interactions on the Instagram pages of the two companies, and in particular on the posts, have increased significantly since the pandemic period. The period just after was a time when people had more time to themselves and were much more informed about the products they were buying, both to better understand the qualities of the products, but also to try to save money.

In general, the languages that the two companies use most are emotional, abstract, and figurative languages, therefore languages that touch the emotional sphere of the consumer and make him feel part of the company itself. On the one hand, the VeraLab company differs precisely in the use of emotional and figurative language, because, for example, it uses many references in the descriptions that immerse the consumer in the description proposed below the post. VeraLab always refers to its community with the term "Fagiane", a term with which all consumers of VeraLab products identify themselves. However, at other times it also uses an informative and literal language with regard to the publication of some products, in which the fundamental characteristics of the products and the way in which they must be used are emphasized, for example, but always maintaining an emotional language that makes the consumer feel an integral part of that community. Or, even during the day #Lunedìdonne, the day in which the company publishes posts relating to some famous women (mostly Italian), in which it uses not only an informative type of language used to talk about women's lives (this is the case by Ornella Vanoni, figure 45), or to talk about some women whose role in society is very important (Liliana Segre, figure 29) or some women who are facing some hardships (Vanessa Incontrada, figure 37). The company, in addition to using this information type language, and therefore, in addition to giving this kind of information, also uses an emotional, figurative and abstract language, which allows consumers (women in most cases) to identify with that post, mostly prompting them to comment and leave a like. This weekly commitment

that the company has had for some years now, allows these posts to receive high numbers of likes and comments, which have increased especially since 2020.

On the other hand, however, the Drunk Elephant company uses a language more anchored to simple product descriptions and how they should be used. So, Drunk Elephant's favorite language is certainly literal and informative, but in some posts, the company also prefers to use a more emotional language. This is the case of the posts of the #barewithus initiative, an initiative according to which the company periodically publishes posts shared by people who have used only Drunk Elephant products and show how the company's products have improved their skin. Therefore, the description of these posts is made up directly of the reviews that the women have made. Therefore, the language is emotional and figurative, because they express total gratitude towards the products and the brand in general that they have used and that have helped them to solve some skin problems.

In addition, the general posts that companies publish are certainly noteworthy, those posts that simply allow you to keep the user active on the page. The VeraLab post (figure 25), in which the community is asked what the plans for next weekend are. Although it is not a post about the full activity of the company, there are enough likes and comments in which users are keen to leave their comments on what the plans will be for the weekend. Obviously, even in this case, the language used is emotional and certainly abstract, because it leaves the user's imagination free. All this ensures that the company maintains the active involvement of the user even with simple posts. From this point of view, the Drunk Elephant company also publishes this kind of products. In the figure 26, in which a completely figurative language is used in the photo, because a metaphor is used to describe what life is like. Also in this case, users comment on the post or leave a like to show their approval that their principles are in line with those of the company. So, although this is not advertising a product or a full company activity, under the post there are enough likes and comments.

As we mentioned before, an analysis was made of user interactions under the posts of the two companies in different periods: pre-pandemic period, during the pandemic and post-pandemic period as can be seen in the tables 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Table 5: Likes and comments from the three periods on the product posts

	Pre-pandemic	Pandemic	Post-pandemic
VeraLab	Likes: 1281 Comments: 48	Likes: 12.9 thousand Comments: 514	Likes: 2271 Comments: 47
Drunk Elephant	Likes: 4483 Comments: 71	Likes: 4518 Comments: 102	Likes: 2689 Comments: 61

Starting from the comparison of VeraLab’s posts concerning the product sponsorship in the three different periods (figures 23, 31 and 39), it can be seen that there was a peak of interactions during the pandemic, when the number of likes went from 1280 to 12.9 thousand, and then back to 2,271, but there was still a clear improvement. The same phenomenon can also be seen in the comments. Regarding the company Drunk Elephant, on the other hand, the number of likes and comments, concerning the sponsorship of a product (figures 24, 32 and 40), remained the same, without any kind of change, except for a slight increase in the comments (from 71 to 102 during the pandemic period). Thus, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that, as far as the VeraLab company is concerned, for product sponsorship, the pandemic period was the time when there was more interaction from users under its posts, compared to Drunk Elephant, which saw no improvement.

Table 6: Likes and comments from the three periods on the general posts

	Pre-pandemic	Pandemic	Post-pandemic
VeraLab	Likes: 979 Comments: 29	Likes: 2324 Comments: 13	Likes: 9825 Comments: 37
Drunk Elephant	Likes: 6247 Comments: 147	Likes: 3633 Comments: 65	Likes: 1138 Comments: 20

Regarding the general posts published by VeraLab in the three different periods (Figures 25, 33 and 41), it can be seen that there was an increase in interactions during the pandemic, when the number of likes rose from 979 to 2324 thousand, and then increased significantly in the post-pandemic period to 9825. The same phenomenon can also be seen in the comments. As for Drunk Elephant, on the other hand, the number of likes and comments, under the general posts (figure 26, 34 and 42), decreased with likes starting at 6247, and ending at 1138 in the post-pandemic period. The same decrease occurs in comments (from 147 to 20 during the post-pandemic period). It can therefore be concluded that, as far as VeraLab is concerned, for general posts, there has been an increase in interactions since the pandemic with a greater peak in the post-pandemic period, compared to Drunk Elephant, which has seen no improvement, if not a worsening.

Table 7: Likes, comments and views from the three periods on the video posts

	Pre-pandemic	Pandemic	Post-pandemic
VeraLab	Likes: 762 Comments: 8 Views: 19,9 thousand	Likes: 8361 Comments: 214 Views: 115 thousand	Likes: 2409 Comments: 96 Views: 45.1 thousand
Drunk Elephant	Likes: 1755 Comments: 93 Views: 20.4 thousand	Likes: 1599 Comments: 52 Views: 32.3 thousand	Likes: 4857 Comments: 329 Views: 55.8 thousand

Regarding the posts including a video published by VeraLab in the three different periods (Figures 27, 35 and 43), it can be seen that there was a peak in likes, comments and views during the pandemic, when the number of likes rose from 762 to 8361; comments from 8 to 214 and views from 19.9 thousand to 115 thousand. During the post-pandemic period there is a decrease, but in general there was still an increase. As for Drunk Elephant, on the other hand, the number of likes, comments and views, under posts that include videos (Figures 28, 36 and 44), remained constant, with a slight increase in the post-pandemic period, where the number of likes is 4857, comments 329, and a peak in views (55.8 thousand). It can therefore be concluded that, as far as VeraLab is concerned, for posts containing a video, there was an increase in interactions especially in the pandemic period. Drunk Elephant, on the other hand, saw slight increases in the post-pandemic period.

Table 8: Likes and comments from the three periods on the company initiatives posts

	Pre-pandemic	Pandemic	Post-pandemic
VeraLab	Likes: 9367 Comments: 77	Likes: 3750 Comments: 38	Likes: 1110 Comments: 7
Drunk Elephant	Likes: 2212 Comments: 65	Likes: 2768 Comments: 58	Likes: 924 Comments: 67

Finally, regarding the posts about #Lunedidonne, published by VeraLab in the three different periods (Figures 29, 37 and 45), it can be seen that there was a peak of likes and comments and views in the pre-pandemic period, but a decrease during the other two periods. The same phenomenon can be seen with comments, which started at 77 in the pre-pandemic and dropped to 7 in the post-pandemic. As for Drunk Elephant, on the other hand, the number of likes and comments, under the posts about the #barewithus initiative (Figures 30, 38 and 46), had a slight increase during the pandemic with 2768 likes, but an increase in comments in the post-pandemic period. It can therefore be concluded that, as far as VeraLab is concerned, there was a decrease in likes and comments. Drunk Elephant, on the other hand, recorded slight increases during the pandemic period.

5.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, it could be said in general that communication is a very important factor for the competitiveness of a company, therefore the way in which communication is done is relevant. Recently, especially considering the effects of Covid-19 on daily life of individuals around world, online communication and social media communication become essential to raise awareness of the company, its values, and its products. However, it is necessary that this type of communication on is quite varied and considers different types of content. For example,

the content of a video can in fact communicate information about the product or entertain and the user with the aim of increasing his emotional involvement. In particular, a post can influence users' perception of the brand in different ways (in the form of likes, comments, reactions and / or shares).

A 'captivating' post can facilitate the formation of a positive consumer attitude towards the brand using textual and / or visual persuasion tools for the user. In particular, a brand can increase the level of engagement through the use of particular types of posts (videos / photos). In addition, an engaging post helps generate positive feelings about the brand in the consumer. This is achieved through the dissemination of posts other than those of an informative nature, which generate intense emotions and a consequent positive attitude of the consumer towards the brand.

As in the case of the two companies that were considered in this research, they use two different ways of communicating and above all the language they use is mostly different. This is because the language that is used by companies to address consumers has an important role in the field of communication is the language. From the analysis of the posts, it emerged that if VeraLab uses a more emotional, abstract, and figurative language in the descriptions of its posts, on the other hand Drunk Elephant uses a more informative, literal, and concrete language. Precisely in this lies the difference in their communication. Although VeraLab is an Italian company, born a few years ago, and which works especially with Italian consumers (as far as abroad, it only delivers to Great Britain), it is a reality that boasts 558k followers on Instagram, a number that for a small company, with few employees, is quite a high number, considering the fact that its stores are a mono-brand and does not sell them within chains such as Sephora, for example. In addition, the company also bases its communication strategy on experiential marketing, that is, it tries to make the customer live as many experiences as possible that allow him to be loyal to the brand. On the other hand, it must be considered that

the number of followers of the Drunk Elephant company (1.3 million) is normal, considering that it is a brand born in the United States, a country that boasts a high number of inhabitants and that sells its products in stores like Sephora. Therefore, one might think that Drunk Elephant is a better-known brand than VeraLab, but before stating it, we should consider all the variables described above.

From the discussion of the posts, it emerges that VeraLab began to receive more interactions during the period of the pandemic, starting from 2020, the period in which its climb began. The company has made a lot more turnover than a company might have expected to be invoicing during that time and has continued to invoice for the past two years as well. Instead, for Drunk Elephant user interactions have been the same from 2019 to present, with no notable pikes during the pandemic, if not a few slight increases. It is in this case that it is possible to talk about the strength of communication and the language that is used to address consumers, seen as actors of the entire sales process and not just as protagonists to whom the sale is addressed

5.2.1 Theoretical implications

The research contributes to enrich literature by providing evidence of how digital communication strategy and in particular social media communication allows to increase the relationship with target through a well-defined communication style which comprises the use of a certain language. Communication to the consumer can take place in a differently and above all based on the product/service that the company intends to offer to its customer. Just as it is important to sponsor an initiative in which the company participates (such as, for example, in the case of VeraLab, the initiative in which it participated to restart tourism after the Covid period) up to the end of the sponsorship of the simple product. The way it is presented makes all the difference.

After the detailed presentation of the results emerged from the analysis, in the previous chapter, it is also important to discuss them in terms of social media (Instagram) communication strategies and style that both companies do differently. VeraLab has distinguished itself in the skincare field in recent years precisely because of its different way of communicating. Its communication is not just about selling its products but is focused on developing a successful two-way communication between company and consumer. Moreover, the communication is not just done by the company, but by its founder Cristina Fogazzi, who always tries to keep the consumer's involvement on the two Instagram pages high. She shows herself in a totally natural way while doing her skincare routine in the morning, which overshadows her product advertising; or she tells many anecdotes from her life on her Instagram page. Furthermore, when new products are launched, she tries to explain the functionality and ingredients contained in the products through live streams on Instagram in which consumers ask questions that Fogazzi answers directly. Therefore, theoretically, the use of an emotional, figurative and abstract, allow to increase both the interactions with company's customer targets, as well as to assure emotional and informative inputs.

In Italy, few companies do this kind of communication, but in the field of skincare this is really an exception. Her communication is easily distinguishable from the communication that other companies do, starting with the involvement of the customer at every stage, that is very important for a company. VeraLab has experienced a significant increase in interactions since 2020, when it started to carry out more sophisticated and customer-focused communication, which has enabled it to reach its current levels. This is one of the main reasons why VeraLab has decided to provide constant help to consumers both on the website and on social networks, through customer support. Being close to the consumer, especially during the sale of skincare products that require particular attention in their choice, is very important: leading them to the choice that best suits their needs, offers the consumer extra security during

the purchase phase. But, above all, it is important to convince a customer to buy a product by demonstrating first-hand how it is used, what ingredients are used and what the benefits are for the skin: it is only in this way that the customer will be able to trust the brand.

In addition, all those initiatives promoted by VeraLab to increase consumer involvement and make the consumer an actor in the whole process are noteworthy: the “Circo Cinico”, the “Sagra della Fagiana”, for example. On the other hand, as far as the Drunk Elephant company is concerned, its communication is simply for selling products, it never promotes any kind of initiative to involve the consumer.

In addition, as we have already mentioned above, language also plays a very important role in consumer communication, because it all depends on how a company manages to convey a certain message to its customers/potential customers and, above all, how they manage to perceive it in terms of concreteness and abstractness. The types of languages that were considered in this research are: concrete or abstract, literal or figurative, informative or emotional language. It is important to emphasize that these languages are not mutually exclusive, but in most cases coincide with each other and allow the company to carry out communication that is rich in emotional, figurative or abstract meaning or communication that is rich in information that is more concrete and literal. It all depends on the message the company wants to communicate and how it wants to communicate it.

The languages that have been used by both companies are varied and no single language has prevailed. For example, VeraLab often used emotional, figurative, and abstract language, always following the logic of being close to the consumer and making him or her feel part of the brand; however, the use of these three languages did not preclude the company from using the other languages (literal, informative and concrete) in a detailed description of the product.

Instead, the Drunk Elephant company most often used literal, informative, and concrete language, not only, therefore, in the product description, which is more detached from the

consumer. Therefore, it can be said that, also from this point of view, the communication carried out by VeraLab is more effective, because it reaches the consumer directly, trying to alternate the different languages.

5.2.2 Marketing implications

At this point it becomes interesting to outline what companies can derive from the results obtained and certainly the first thing that the following research can serve, is to underline the strategic importance of digital marketing, and how every company should use the new technology to keep up with the times and to be able to communicate with their consumers and increase their loyalty to the brand. It is important that every company is able to implement marketing strategies, based not only on the idea of selling a product, but to use social media to convey certain messages that do not only concern the product, but a much broader sphere (such as the initiatives in which companies participate).

According to traditional marketing, the consumer did not have a prominent position in the entire process of selling a product; instead, with the development of experiential marketing, the customer is at the center of every activity of the company. Using social media is a great way for a company to influence the consumer to purchase a product/service. Above all, it is important that companies implement ad hoc strategies for the products they sell, and this is the case of the two companies that we have decided to analyze in this research.

Therefore, every company should consider using social media channels as much as possible if they want to grow their company significantly and how you play an essential role in sharing that can be equated with traditional word of mouth. With the use of social media, it assists to a complete active involvement of the customer, in which it is not only the passive part of the communication between the company-consumer but takes on an increasingly important role as the undisputed protagonist of the marketing strategies conducted by the

company. It is the consumer who gives his feedback to the company through likes, comments, views, and helps the company to understand if the direction in which it is going is correct or something needs to change. Furthermore, this research can help other companies to understand that the use of certain languages and the way in which companies approach consumers plays a very important role, and it all depends, of course, on the type of message you want to transmit.

The combined use of different languages gives added value to communication and the result is a perfect mix of objective languages (informative, concrete and literal), useful for having an overview of the products and their functionalities and subjective languages (abstract, figurative and emotional), to allow the consumer to find himself within the brand and its values. But especially with this research, companies are advised to consider in their content a language that is closer to the consumer, that tries to make them feel close to the brand. As we have seen, this was demonstrated during the lockdown period, where the pages or companies that had the greatest impact and the most interactions were those that used mostly emotional, figurative and abstract language.

In conclusion, the results can be an excellent starting point for companies in developing communication strategies that are more focused on social media and that use a language that suits the messages they want to convey. This will be helpful in improving the performance of their business and provide a greater incentive to grow their company.

5.3 Limitations and future research

Despite the insights provided by the study and despite the various conclusions reached, it also has research limitations that must be taken into consideration. First, this study was carried out by analyzing the interactions of users belonging to a single social network (Instagram) which is the platform on which the two companies implement the major communication strategies and on which there is more interaction by consumers. Therefore,

subsequent studies could investigate other social networks on which the two companies are active (Facebook, for example), to verify whether the impact of user interactions varies from platform to platform.

Another limitation is that the study was conducted only on some Instagram posts, taking into consideration only some types of posts. Therefore, future research may also consider other types of posts, for example, the first posts of companies. This is to verify how much companies have grown in recent years in terms of likes, comments, and views.

Furthermore, another limitation of the following research is that it has only analyzed the language of the contents on Instagram. Therefore, future research could also take into consideration the website of the two companies, useful to understand if the language used in describing the products on e-commerce, is the same used in the posts on Instagram.

Finally, the following study considers a single case two case studies limited to the skincare sector. In the future it could be interesting to study other business cases in order to confirm the results obtained in the present study.

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RIASSUNTO

Nel presente elaborato si affrontano alcuni concetti principali del marketing digitale, con l'obiettivo di analizzare come, attraverso l'utilizzo di mirate strategie di marketing, piattaforme online e un appropriato linguaggio, un'azienda possa migliorare le proprie prestazioni. Oggigiorno, con le innumerevoli innovazioni tecnologiche, sempre più aziende cercano di essere sempre aggiornate sulle nuove tendenze del mercato. Infatti, molti imprenditori, negli ultimi anni, hanno cercato di adattarsi alla rivoluzione del mondo del marketing tradizionale costituito dalle 4P: prodotto, prezzo, posizionamento e promozione, che è stato ampliato da alcuni canali online (digital marketing) alla cui base ci sono le 4C: cliente, costo, comunicazione e convenienza. Oggi parliamo di un consumatore molto più consapevole, attento, esigente, e riflessivo, che assume nel processo di vendita il ruolo di attore, da cui deriva il nuovo termine 'Consum-Attore', e non più di semplice spettatore. Di conseguenza, anche le strategie di marketing si sono dovute adattare a questa nuova figura, passando da un approccio più tradizionale il cui unico obiettivo era la vendita, a un marketing che cerca di soddisfare qualsiasi esigenza del consumatore e di creare un'autentica esperienza di marketing.

Ormai, le aziende, attraverso l'utilizzo di Internet, e soprattutto attraverso i social media, interagiscono direttamente con i clienti attuali e potenziali, cercando di avviare una comunicazione bidirezionale: da un lato, l'azienda comunica al consumatore quali sono i prodotti e i servizi che offre; dall'altro, il consumatore partecipa attivamente inviando i propri feedback. Il risultato è una relazione bidirezionale tra l'azienda e il consumatore. Il fatto di potersi relazionare in tempo quasi reale con i vari brand e di poter comunicare la propria opinione sui prodotti rende i clienti protagonisti dell'intero processo produttivo e commerciale. Inoltre, una buona strategia di marketing permette alle aziende di espandersi ulteriormente grazie all'unione di canali online e offline. Il punto di partenza per una buona strategia di

marketing è l'analisi (si considera qual è l'attività dell'azienda online, qual è la sua reputazione, come si posiziona sui motori di ricerca, se ha già un sito web o una pagina Facebook e Instagram), seguita dalla definizione della strategia (come raggiungere gli obiettivi prefissati dall'azienda) e dal piano operativo (documento che suddivide le attività dell'azienda in diversi periodi) con la sua attuazione; si prosegue in un ciclo di miglioramento continuo misurando i risultati generati dalle azioni (tendendo in considerazione il ROI: ritorno sull'investimento). Insieme, questi elementi ci permettono di capire meglio qual è il comportamento degli utenti sulle diverse piattaforme digitali e come questo influenzi anche il nostro comportamento offline. Questo processo appena descritto risponde alle 5W: 'chi?', l'azienda deve individuare il target di riferimento; 'perché?', l'azienda identifica i suoi obiettivi che devono essere raggiungibili, misurabili e devono considerare orizzonti a lungo, medio e breve termine; 'dove?', l'azienda deve identificare il mercato e l'ambiente che la circonda; 'quando?', è importante che l'azienda identifichi l'asse temporale; 'cosa?', ci riferiamo ai contenuti generati dalle aziende: testo, immagini, video; 'come?', riguarda la strategia che l'azienda adotterà in base alle risposte alle domande precedenti.

Come già anticipato, anche il linguaggio assume un ruolo molto importante nella definizione della strategia. La funzione principale del linguaggio nella comunicazione è quella di attirare l'attenzione su determinati contesti piuttosto che su altri. Secondo alcune ricerche, esistono diversi linguaggi che vengono utilizzati nel campo delle promozioni di marketing: si va dal linguaggio letterale o figurato, al linguaggio concreto o astratto, al linguaggio emotivo o informativo. La presenza di un linguaggio non preclude l'esistenza dell'altro; possono tutti coesistere, dando al testo sfumature diverse a seconda del tipo di comunicazione che l'azienda vuole utilizzare per raggiungere il proprio target di riferimento. Lo scopo del linguaggio letterale è quello di descrivere le caratteristiche del prodotto, la sua funzione e non fornisce ulteriori connotazioni; mentre il linguaggio figurativo trasmette alti livelli di intensità affettiva

aggiungendo una connotazione al significato letterale, mediante l'utilizzo di varie tecniche linguistiche come metafore, similitudini, iperboli e giochi di parole. In effetti, questo linguaggio viene utilizzato prevalentemente per esprimere esperienze di consumo edoniche, piuttosto che utilitaristiche.

Altri due tipi di linguaggio ampiamente utilizzati nella comunicazione di marketing sono quello informativo e quello emotivo. Il linguaggio emozionale ha lo scopo di permettere al consumatore di sentirsi vicino e parte integrante di quel particolare marchio o prodotto, toccando la sensibilità del consumatore verso quel messaggio pubblicitario. Va dal sentimento di gioia-tristezza, rabbia-paura, disgusto-fiducia a quello di sorpresa-aspettativa. In effetti, nella comunicazione, un messaggio veicolato con un linguaggio emozionale può suscitare immediatamente reazioni positive/negative o di condivisione nel consumatore. Il linguaggio informativo, invece, ha lo scopo di fornire informazioni sul marchio o sul prodotto, proprio come il linguaggio letterale che è un linguaggio usato in modo oggettivo. Quando si parla di linguaggio informativo, è importante che le informazioni trasmesse siano veritiere, credibili e attraenti. In questo modo, il pubblico sarà più attratto e le intenzioni di acquisto aumenteranno.

Infine, il linguaggio concreto si riferisce a cose che sono disponibili ai sensi e possono essere osservate e misurate; mentre, il linguaggio astratto si riferisce a idee o concetti. Inoltre, è stato riscontrato che i consumatori sono in grado di identificarsi maggiormente con il contenuto di una pubblicità quando la sua affermazione è astratta, perché possono collegarla alle loro esperienze e ai loro valori. In questo modo, l'azienda ha la possibilità di trasformare un messaggio standard in un messaggio personalizzato e di aumentare il coinvolgimento e l'interazione dei clienti. Tra i vantaggi della personalizzazione vi è la soddisfazione del cliente e l'aumento dei profitti aziendali. Un'azienda può capire a cosa è interessato un cliente e consigliare prodotti grazie ai dati forniti dal cliente stesso. Alcuni autori identificano la personalizzazione come un processo suddiviso in quattro fasi: identificazione dei clienti

potenziali; determinazione delle loro esigenze e del loro valore per l'azienda; interazione con i clienti per conoscerli; e personalizzazione dei prodotti e servizi per i singoli clienti.

Dunque, per le aziende, la diffusione della tecnologia e di internet ha rivoluzionato il modo di fare business e hanno dovuto iniziare a utilizzare un canale online, oltre a quello offline, per interagire direttamente con i clienti. Una strategia di successo rivolta al consumatore è in grado di coinvolgere i clienti attraverso esperienze diffuse e individuali e di consentire l'interazione digitale sia sul web (sui social media e tramite le applicazioni) sia nei negozi fisici. Infatti, i consumatori possono accedere a molte informazioni in modo più semplice: caratteristiche identitarie sull'azienda, sui suoi prodotti, confrontare i prezzi e, persino, condividere con altri utenti alcune opinioni sul prodotto. Il compito di ogni azienda è quello di attirare l'attenzione del consumatore attraverso una pubblicità che sia efficace, che sia ricordata dai consumatori, ma soprattutto che li conduca all'acquisto. Dunque, una pubblicità deve intrattenere, deve essere credibile e deve fornire informazioni utili al cliente. Infatti, la competitività di un'azienda è strettamente legata alla sua capacità creativa e, quindi, al grado di innovazione che utilizza sul mercato. La creatività è la combinazione di componenti quali la tecnologia, il grado di apertura dell'azienda, la propensione alla creatività dei singoli dipendenti e la loro disponibilità a mettersi alla prova in un ambiente competitivo. La creatività contribuisce in modo significativo al raggiungimento degli obiettivi di marketing e comunicazione, e, soprattutto, permette all'azienda di essere ricordata nel tempo.

I social media, quindi, non sono solo spazi di relazione e comunicazione interpersonale, ma anche mezzi per produrre contenuti. A questo proposito, è necessario parlare del content marketing, ovvero un processo finalizzato alla creazione e alla distribuzione di contenuti rilevanti e di valore con lo scopo di attrarre, acquisire e coinvolgere un target specifico. L'idea alla base del content marketing è di far conoscere il brand al segmento target, creare una relazione privilegiata per aumentare automaticamente la loro fedeltà all'azienda attraverso

l'informazione. Il content marketing è adatto a qualsiasi azienda che voglia aumentare la notorietà del marchio, costruire una relazione basata sulla fiducia con il pubblico di riferimento e attirare nuovi clienti. Ad esempio, il brand avvicina gli individui all'azienda, fornisce una garanzia di affidabilità e sicurezza. Quindi, i compiti principali del marchio sono: identificare, creare fiducia e differenziare. I social media sono una piattaforma interattiva per il dialogo tra i brand e i loro clienti. Pertanto, l'ascolto sui social media è fondamentale per i brand se vogliono soddisfare le richieste degli utenti sui social media e posizionarsi in modo diverso rispetto ai concorrenti.

Lo scopo del nuovo marketing è quello di fornire un'esperienza al cliente, coinvolgendo i suoi stimoli sensoriali, emotivi, cognitivi, comportamentali e relazionali. Il cliente non valuta il prodotto come elemento a sé stante, ma si chiede come ogni prodotto si inserisca nel contesto generale di consumo e quali esperienze questo contesto offra. Le esperienze che il cliente vive, coinvolgono i sensi, invocano i suoi sentimenti, stimola la sua creatività, lo inducono ad agire e a costruire relazioni con altri consumatori con gli stessi interessi.

Tutta questa letteratura sarà di supporto allo studio condotto su alcuni post tratti direttamente dalle pagine Instagram di due aziende cosmetiche, una italiana VeraLab, e l'altra americana Drunk Elephant. Infatti, la seguente ricerca, si concentrerà sulla differenza delle strategie comunicative messe in atto dalle due aziende, ma soprattutto sul ruolo centrale che assume il linguaggio nell'intero processo di comunicazione.

Al fine di capire quali strategie sono state utilizzate da entrambe le aziende, nella ricerca sono state delineate tutte le attività in cui le due aziende sono coinvolte. Innanzitutto, per quanto riguarda l'azienda VeraLab la sua fondatrice, Cristina Fogazzi, attraverso l'utilizzo dei social media, ha instaurato un rapporto reale con un pubblico virtuale, non solo costruendo una strategia di comunicazione che ruota attorno ai suoi prodotti, ma anche attorno al cliente. Inoltre, l'azienda è coinvolta periodicamente in diverse attività che, a sua volta, coinvolgono il

consumatore e ha la capacità di creare tendenze, di portare novità sul mercato. A partire da ‘Bellezze al museo’, per promuovere la cultura italiana, al ‘Circo Cinico’ che ha visitato molte piazze italiane fino alla ‘Sagra Fagiana’ con le sue giostre e artisti di strada. Ad ogni evento il cliente ha l’opportunità di acquistare direttamente dal Beauty Truck i prodotti e di ricevere consulenze per il viso e corpo dallo staff. Anche le consulenze online sono personalizzate e non sono finalizzate alla vendita esclusiva e necessaria del prodotto. Sono consigli e suggerimenti che vogliono aiutare la persona a creare una propria beauty routine. Le consulenze avvengono principalmente in fase di prevendita (attraverso canali social, live chat o e-mail). Anche il Pink Friday, o le newsletter personalizzate che l’azienda invia ai suoi clienti più fidati, sono delle iniziative degne di nota che aiutano VeraLab a distinguersi tra i suoi concorrenti. Invece, per quanto riguarda l’azienda Drunk Elephant, la sua comunicazione è basata prevalentemente sulla vendita dei prodotti, ma non crea una comunicazione particolare con diverse iniziative volte a coinvolgere il consumatore.

Dopo la raccolta dei dati, si è proceduto all’analisi per raggiungere gli obiettivi della ricerca, ovvero come oggi le aziende comunicano con i loro consumatori, quale linguaggio utilizzano e se le strategie di comunicazione di un’azienda possono influenzare la decisione di acquisto del consumatore. Nella fase di analisi, per analizzare l’impatto che il linguaggio e il tipo di comunicazione possono avere sui consumatori e sulla loro intenzione di acquisto, sono stati esaminati diversi post Instagram, di tre diversi periodi della vita aziendale: pre-pandemia, pandemia e post-pandemia, utili a constatare se le aziende hanno avuto un cambiamento negli ultimi anni. Dunque, si è proceduto a un confronto tra i post delle due aziende (mediante l’uso di tabelle), al fine di valutare come il linguaggio utilizzato nei contenuti, abbia potuto influenzare le interazioni degli utenti sotto ai diversi post. Questo tipo di studio ha permesso di capire se il modo in cui le aziende comunicano e se le loro strategie di comunicazione sono adatte ai consumatori e se aumentano la loro intenzione di acquisto. L’obiettivo è quello di

condurre altre aziende che non hanno ancora deciso di affidarsi al marketing digitale, a valutarlo come possibile fonte di crescita per la propria azienda.

Una volta raccolti tutti i dati, è stata effettuata una descrizione dei risultati ottenuti, evidenziando i dati più significativi. Sono state tratte diverse tipologie di post dalle pagine Instagram delle due aziende. Ad esempio, sono stati analizzati i post che si limitano a pubblicizzare un prodotto, oppure i video che vengono pubblicati sulla pagina (questo per capire, in particolare, le visualizzazioni che quel post ha ricevuto). Un altro tipo di post analizzato è quello relativo alle iniziative intraprese delle aziende per accrescere il loro valore sociale e per dimostrare che si impegnano a perseguire determinati obiettivi che riguardano la comunità. Infine, anche i post generici, che non rientrano in nessuna delle categorie precedenti, svolgono un ruolo importante nel mantenere l'utente, cioè il consumatore, attivo sulle pagine aziendali. L'analisi condotta nella seguente ricerca mostra che le interazioni dei consumatori sulle pagine Instagram delle due aziende, e in particolare sotto i post, sono aumentate significativamente a partire dal periodo della pandemia.

In generale, i linguaggi che le due aziende utilizzano maggiormente sono quelli emotivi, astratti e figurativi; quindi, linguaggi che toccano la sfera emotiva del consumatore e lo fanno sentire parte dell'azienda stessa. Da un lato, l'azienda VeraLab si differenzia proprio per l'uso del linguaggio emozionale, astratto e figurativo; altre volte, però, utilizza anche un linguaggio informativo, letterale e concreto in merito alla pubblicazione di alcuni prodotti, in cui vengono sottolineate, ad esempio, le caratteristiche fondamentali dei prodotti e le modalità di utilizzo, ma pur sempre mantenendo un linguaggio emozionale, facendo sentire il consumatore parte integrante di quella community. D'altra parte, però, l'azienda Drunk Elephant utilizza un linguaggio più ancorato alle semplici descrizioni dei prodotti e al loro utilizzo. Quindi, il linguaggio preferito da Drunk Elephant è certamente quello letterale, informativo e concreto, ma in alcuni post l'azienda preferisce anche utilizzare un linguaggio più emozionale, astratto e

figurativo. Infine, nella seguente ricerca, attraverso l'utilizzo di alcune tabelle, è stato possibile confrontare i numeri delle interazioni (like, commenti e visualizzazioni) degli ultimi 4 anni delle due aziende.

Infine, nella parte finale della tesi, sono state tratte le conclusioni della ricerca, ovvero è emerso che le due aziende utilizzano due modi diversi di comunicare e soprattutto il linguaggio che utilizzano è per lo più diverso. Dall'analisi dei post è emerso che, se VeraLab utilizza un linguaggio più emotivo, astratto e figurativo nelle descrizioni dei suoi post, Drunk Elephant utilizza, invece, un linguaggio più informativo, letterale e concreto. Proprio in questo risiede la differenza nella loro comunicazione. Sebbene VeraLab sia un'azienda italiana, nata da pochi anni, e che lavora soprattutto con i consumatori italiani (per quanto riguarda l'estero, consegna solo in Gran Bretagna), è una realtà che vanta 558k follower su Instagram, un numero che per una piccola azienda, con pochi dipendenti, è piuttosto alto, considerando il fatto che i suoi negozi sono monomarca e non vende all'interno di catene come Sephora, per esempio. D'altra parte, bisogna considerare che il numero di follower dell'azienda Drunk Elephant (1,3 milioni) è normale, considerando che si tratta di un marchio nato negli Stati Uniti, un Paese che vanta un alto numero di abitanti, rispetto all'Italia, e che vende i suoi prodotti in negozi come Sephora. Si potrebbe, quindi, pensare che Drunk Elephant sia un marchio più conosciuto rispetto a VeraLab, ma prima di affermarlo bisogna considerare tutte le variabili descritte sopra.

Dalla discussione dei post, emerge che VeraLab ha iniziato a ricevere più interazioni durante il periodo della pandemia, a partire dal 2020, periodo in cui è iniziata la sua scalata. L'azienda ha realizzato un fatturato molto più alto di quello che un'azienda avrebbe potuto aspettarsi di fatturare in quel periodo, continuando a crescere anche negli ultimi due anni. Per Drunk Elephant, invece, le interazioni degli utenti sono rimaste invariate dal 2019 a oggi, senza raggiungere notevoli picchi durante la pandemia, se non qualche lieve aumento.

Pertanto, come conclusione, si può affermare che questa ricerca può essere un ottimo strumento per le aziende per strutturare le loro strategie di marketing. La seguente ricerca ha sottolineato l'importanza strategica del marketing digitale, e in particolare come ogni azienda dovrebbe utilizzare la nuova tecnologia per stare al passo con i tempi e per poter comunicare con i propri consumatori e aumentare la loro fedeltà al brand. È importante che ogni azienda sia in grado di attuare strategie di marketing, basate non solo sull'idea di vendere un prodotto, ma di utilizzare i social media anche per altri scopi (come, ad esempio, pubblicizzare le iniziative a cui le aziende partecipano).

Secondo il marketing tradizionale, il consumatore non aveva una posizione di rilievo nell'intero processo di vendita di un prodotto; invece, con lo sviluppo del marketing esperienziale, il cliente è al centro di ogni attività dell'azienda. L'utilizzo dei social media è un ottimo modo per un'azienda di influenzare il consumatore ad acquistare un prodotto/servizio. Soprattutto, è importante che le aziende attuino strategie ad hoc per i prodotti che propongono, e questo è il caso delle due aziende che abbiamo deciso di analizzare in questa ricerca. Pertanto, ogni azienda dovrebbe prendere in considerazione la possibilità di utilizzare il più possibile i canali dei social media se vuole far crescere la propria azienda in modo significativo. Con l'utilizzo dei social media, si assiste a un completo coinvolgimento attivo del cliente, in cui non è solo la parte passiva della comunicazione tra azienda-consumatore, ma assume un ruolo sempre più importante come protagonista indiscusso delle strategie di marketing condotte dall'azienda. È il consumatore che fornisce il suo feedback all'azienda attraverso like, commenti, opinioni, e aiuta l'azienda a capire se la direzione in cui sta andando è corretta o se è necessario effettuare alcune modifiche.

Inoltre, questa ricerca può aiutare altre aziende a capire che l'uso di certi linguaggi e il modo in cui le aziende si rivolgono ai consumatori giocano un ruolo molto importante, e tutto dipende, ovviamente, dal tipo di messaggio che si vuole veicolare. Proprio per questo, l'uso

combinato di diversi linguaggi dà un valore aggiunto alla comunicazione e il risultato è un mix perfetto di linguaggi oggettivi (informativi, concreti e letterali), utili per avere una visione d'insieme dei prodotti e delle loro funzionalità, e linguaggi soggettivi (astratti, figurativi ed emotivi), per permettere al consumatore di ritrovarsi all'interno del brand e dei suoi valori. In conclusione, i risultati possono essere un ottimo punto di partenza per le aziende nello sviluppo di strategie di comunicazione più focalizzate sui social media e sul linguaggio che servirà per veicolare i messaggi. Ciò sarà utile per migliorare le loro prestazioni e fornire un maggiore incentivo alla crescita della loro azienda.

In relazione a quanto detto finora, nonostante le varie conclusioni a cui si è giunti, la ricerca presenta anche dei limiti. In primo luogo, questo studio è stato condotto analizzando le interazioni degli utenti appartenenti a un solo social media (Instagram), che è la piattaforma su cui le due aziende attuano le principali strategie di comunicazione e su cui si registra una maggiore interazione da parte dei consumatori. Pertanto, studi successivi potrebbero indagare altri social media (Facebook, ad esempio), per verificare se l'impatto delle interazioni degli utenti varia da piattaforma a piattaforma.

Un'ulteriore limitazione è che lo studio è stato condotto solo su alcuni post di Instagram e prende in considerazione solo alcune tipologie di post. Pertanto, le ricerche future potrebbero considerare anche altri tipi di post, ad esempio i primi post delle aziende; questo per verificare quanto le aziende siano cresciute negli ultimi anni in termini di like, commenti e visualizzazioni.

Inoltre, un altro limite della seguente ricerca è che ha preso in considerazione solo il linguaggio dei contenuti pubblicati su Instagram. Pertanto, una ricerca futura potrebbe prendere in considerazione anche il sito web delle due aziende, utile per capire se il linguaggio utilizzato per descrivere i prodotti sull'e-commerce, è lo stesso utilizzato nei post su Instagram. Infine, il seguente studio prende in considerazione due casi di studio aziendali, limitati al settore

skincare. In futuro potrebbe essere interessante studiare altri casi aziendali per confermare i risultati ottenuti nel presente studio.