

VISUAL RHETORIC ANALYSIS OF ADIDAS PHILIPPINES' PERSUASION IN INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

Instagram has been used by many different brands for persuading consumers. The motivations or the satisfaction that these users derive from such interactions need to be queried using Visual Rhetoric Theory as its main function is to communicate through visuals. The researchers conducted the study to a total of 88 participants that were specified as Instagram users. The study investigated how Visual Rhetoric Theory affects the persuasion of a brand Adidas in the Filipino consumers aged 18-24 from 5 different colleges and universities. The researchers analyzed the interpersonal communication motives that drive them to be persuaded by the selected brand of the study. The result of the study indicated that caption and audio are essential to understand the visuals as well as its color and quality. Also, it was found out that there is significance to the quality of the photos and videos posted by Adidas Philippines to re-gramming as behavior of the consumers due to interpersonal boundaries posed by materialism and possession attachment through expanding the collective extended self and reflection of personalities and preferences.

Keywords: *Social Networking Sites (SNS), Instagram, Visual Rhetoric, Interpersonal Communication, Persuasion, Internet Commerce, Adidas*

INTRODUCTION

Visual rhetoric, in a simple definition, refers to how one is persuaded by the things he or she sees. Rhetoric, particularly in the field of communication, often refers to language, whether written or oral, that is used properly and strategically to convince people to believe or act in certain manner (Newbold, 2014). For some, they infer visual rhetoric as a method of manipulating image to twist the way people perceive things. But it is so much more than image manipulation. In fact, it refers to how people interpret and make meaning out of anything they see.

In this study, the researchers used Instagram as a medium in studying how Adidas Philippines' persuade people since it is known and most used app for visuals in the Philippines as well as the brand. Adidas

is known not just in sportswear but also in different apparels. The said brand is now recognized as one of the leading products in fashion and sports industry after it has been placed as second best brand in the world and in the Philippines after Nike (Haymarket, 2015). The researchers chose Adidas because Nike does not have an active and legitimate Instagram account in the Philippines. Besides, Adidas has more than 278,000 followers that is why the researchers analyzed how Adidas Philippines use Instagram in establishing its image and persuading the people using photos and texts.

The researchers present a descriptive research design and a theoretical perspective to help them understand the persuasion of Adidas PH using Instagram. The paper also introduced a visual rhetoric based framework to analyze visual displays in order to conclude more visually and rhetorically effective materials for audiences from different cultures.

The researchers also intend to analyze how Visual Rhetoric Theory is used by the said brand in influencing the selected population of Filipino community and how it shapes the mind of these people, the influence it holds on their interpersonal communication, and the relationship it has in promoting computer mediated communication.

The study is conducted to find out how graphic expressions and visual language can be used for persuasion. It will also help people, entrepreneurs, online sellers, other business aspirants, and researchers to better understand the visual and rhetorical impacts that a brand can cause in social media, specifically Instagram.

This study is limited to the analysis of Adidas Philippines' persuasion using visual materials and texts via Instagram. The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First is a definition of rhetoric for the entire study is provided while dismissing common misconceptions of what rhetoric is. Second, the researchers will present a theoretical model of Visual Rhetoric Theory that will help in gathering data for the study. Lastly, the usefulness of the model in the field of visual rhetoric will be discussed.

According to Mullin (2010), rhetoric refers to the study or implementation of a process of invention, arrangement and production of words to create a planned effect on a particular audience, purposeful use of voice, tone, performance and visual effect creative ideas as rhetorical communicative practices, expression and effect - creative arts. The said definition of rhetoric can be considered to be the factors that affect the persuasion of Adidas Philippines in Instagram. The surface of these factors rely on a non- face-to-face interactions between the Adidas Philippines' Instagram account and its audience. The researchers used this definition to further develop the understanding of the study.

Another matter related to visual rhetoric is discursive and non-discursive. Discursive is comprised of communicative and mediating genres and “created strategically using specialized discourse, visuals, sounds, and other forms of rhetoric” (McNely, 2012).

Discursive and non-discursive rhetorics are essential in analyzing the visual elements of every post since these are also important tools for communication and arguments. The Internet is rapidly becoming more image-sound than text-oriented (Blair, 2012). Scholars must proceed in evaluating readability of both texts, sounds, and images on educational websites (Mayes, 2010).

Over the past 50 years, visual rhetoric of data displays has changed profoundly as the results of researches in display techniques, the application of traditional and emerging rhetorical approaches, and the democratizing effects of data design technology. Conceivably, these changes affected the realm of visual rhetoric data in the notion of clarity; it has been more critical and more contested. Indeed the dominance of rhetorical approaches was initiated by the perceptual or cognitive science of data design, which in seeking to identify optimal and sound perceiving display techniques, nurtured a concern for ethics and induced the universality and minimalism of modernist aesthetics.

These visual rhetoric adaptations highlight the variability of audiences, purposes, and situational contexts, rendered clarity dependent and alterable a moving target that requires continuous attention with accordance to the study of Kostelnick (2010). Social rhetoric which includes advertising communication related researches considered as collective construct, securing clarity to visual discourse communities, convention-building, cultural values, and power (Kostelnick, 2010). The concept of clarity has been further reoriented by the rhetoric participation of audio to visuals, which is fostered by collaborating digital design that enables users to adapt displays according to their needs and interests.

Just like the power of color in the purpose of visuals, in a study of Schloss and Palmer (2011), they claim that in many previous studies of harmony of color combinations had produced confusing results. Schloss and Palmer (2011) then concluded that it affects and influences the viewers as it gives an enticement to their pleasing eye and then responds to the brain that consensus to their feeling of ‘likeness’. Therefore, it somehow can be the reason why an individual is being persuaded when there is a right combination of hues in the ads posted online.

Having said these, the whole study focused on Instagram, which is a media-sharing online platform whose popularity has been rising up to gathering hundred millions users and is used to show a combination of features including social structure, social tagging, and media sharing (Ferrera et al., 2014).

This system of social interactions among users has various dynamics including follower/followee relations and users' communication by means of posts, comments, and shares. Users can upload and tag media such as photos and pictures, and they can hit "like", "comment", and "re-gram or share" each piece of information on the platform.

Liking is basically an act taken when there is a feeling of being pleased with someone or something. In Instagram, it is the most common response to everything being posted on the said app having a double tapping pattern. Now, the main interest on the subject lies in considering and analyzing the motivations behind Instagram likes within social context. Just like in a study conducted by Smith (2013), she said that if famous accounts, organizations, or brands post something, they are consistently getting an impressive amount of likes regardless of picture quality or the actual image. Similar to the effect happened to celebrities, she saw Instagram as a tool not just used for 'liking' pictures, but more to 'like' people and things.

Furthermore, a study conducted by De Ridder and Van Bauwel (2013) shows how youths negotiate sexualities and gender when commenting on pictures on a Social Networking Site (SNS) in general (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). Attention is given to how discourses are constituted within heteronormativity or the belief that people are separated into distinct and complementary genders (male and female) and how the mediated nature of the SNS contributes to resistance.

Re-gramming is similar to 'sharing', it is a fundamental consumer behavior that people tended to overlook or to confuse with commodity exchange and gift giving (Belk, 2010). Sharing is a distinct and increasingly vital consumer research topic that stands on a broad array of consumption issues in the persuasive matter of every post to social media. As part of interactions done in Instagram, a "re-gram" is when an Instagram user re-posted a photo or video from someone else's account to their own. For brands who use re-grams as part of their user-generated content strategy, the benefit is clear and strong.

Re-gramming contents from other users gives brands fresh material to share with their audience. The practice can inspire and enlarge engagement by motivating followers to post content worthy of being re-shared to their own accounts or feeds (Walters, 2016). That is why learning how to re-gram on Instagram is the key to taking different marketing strategies on the photo-sharing platform to the next level.

The study had a theoretical review that distinguishes between sharing in and sharing out, and suggests that sharing in disbands interpersonal boundaries posed by materialism and possession attachment through expanding the collective extended self. However, such sharing is challenged by growing market commoditization. Implications for consumer theory and research are considered. According to Belk (2010), these possessions are major contributors to and reflection of one's identities. Different evidences are presented supporting his simple and compelling premise. Related streams of research are recognized and drawn upon in developing his concept and implications are derived for consumer behavior. In his study, the construct of extended self involves consumer behavior rather than buyer behavior, it seems to be a much richer construct than previous formulations theorizing a relationship between self-concept and consumer brand choice

Objectives of the study

This study aimed to explore the discursive and non-discursive symbols of Adidas Philippines' Instagram account in persuasion and also to describe the visual materials and their impact on people.

Specifically, the following objectives will be attained:

1. to know the visual rhetoric using communicative elements and aesthetic response of the audience towards Adidas PH's Instagram posts in terms of:
 - 1.1 caption
 - 1.2 audio
 - 1.3. quality of photo / video
 - 1.4. color
2. to determine the behavior of the audience towards Adidas PH's Instagram posts in terms of:
 - 2.1 liking
 - 2.2 commenting
 - 2.3 re-gramming
3. to know if the communicative elements and aesthetic response of the audience have significant relationships to the behavior of the audience towards Adidas PH Instagram posts

Conceptual framework

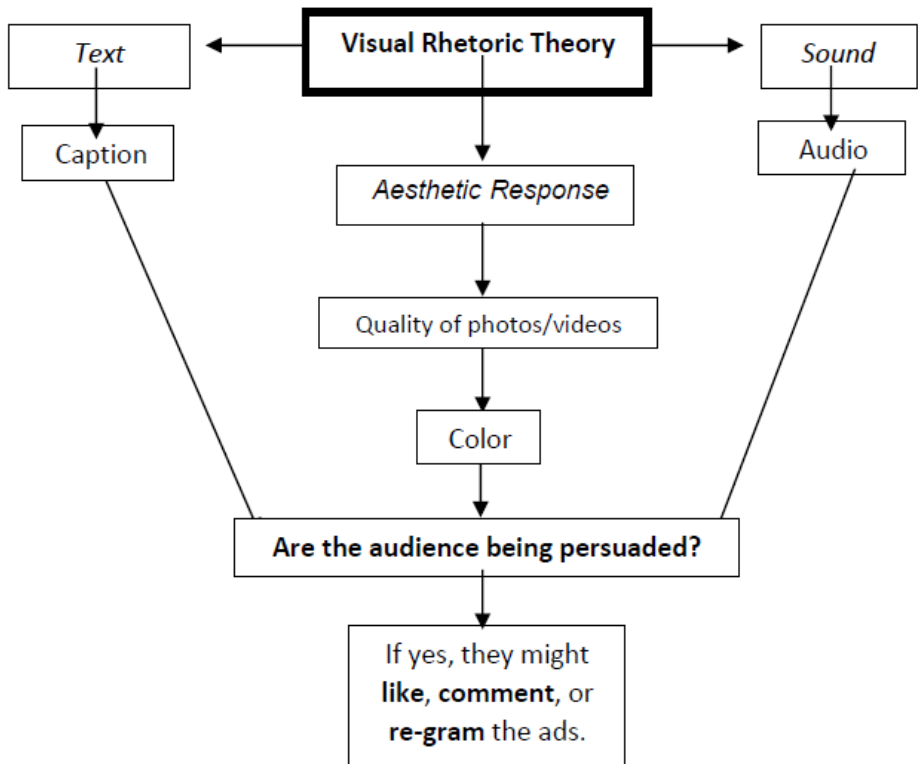


Figure 1. Persuasion diagram using visual rhetoric elements

The variables were from the Visual Rhetoric Theory. Under the first variable which is text, it pertains to the caption of the visuals uploaded in Instagram while the second variable which is sound pertains to the audio of the visuals that can be heard in the posted ads in Instagram. The aesthetic variables pertain to the quality of videos and photos posted in Instagram and the color of each image and video.

Visual rhetoric pertains to the visual or images shown in a product, thus, researchers will conduct the study using these variables to know how Adidas PH's Instagram posts persuade its audience. The study used "caption" as a text communicative element to identify if it affects in the way Adidas PH persuade its audience while, "audio" as a sound communicative element since Adidas PH also uploads videos as its Instagram ads.

Another variables that have been used in the study are liking, commenting, and re-gramming which are terms generally used by Instagram users as ways of response to posted photos and videos. The researchers used these variables as audience's behavior to determine if these also affect the persuasion of Adidas PH in Instagram.

METHOD

The research was a descriptive type of study and was conducted from March 2016 to August 2016. The study was conducted to know how persuasive Adidas PH in promoting and establishing its image to young adults.

Data were gathered from 88 different participants in selected universities and colleges in Calamba, Los Baños, and Cabuyao who are Instagram users aged 18-24 only. Data were gathered using a modified survey questionnaire composed of three parts. The first part was a test about the visual rhetoric's verbal and non-verbal elements in Adidas PH's Instagram posts/ads. The second part was a test about the aesthetic response affecting persuasion of Adidas PH's Instagram posts/ads. The third and last part was a test for Instagrammer's behavior towards Adidas PH's Instagram posts/ads. It contained formulated and adapted questions related to the theories and variables of the study. The collected data were tabulated using the G- Power software which has an effect size of 0.3, alpha error of 0.05, and power of 0.95.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table shows the mathematical analyses of the data that the researchers gathered in analyzing how Visual Rhetoric Theory helps Adidas PH in persuading people through Instagram. The data was arranged from highest weighted mean to lowest. This part also discusses the researchers' understandings about the numerically expressed findings of the study.

Table 1 shows the mean evaluation of sound in the posted ads in terms of audio. These results approved the study of Blair and McNely (2012) that sounds as discursive rhetorics have an involvement in the communicative aspect of persuasion through visuals as it provides convenience in the understanding of visuals especially nowadays where people are more image-sound than text-oriented. Similar to Kostelnick's (2010) study, it was found out that sounds enable users to adapt displays according to their needs and interests.

In this case, one of the needs of Instagram users in supposing that one product is interesting or not is the audio. Also, Instagram users' *strongly agreed* that audio display of Adidas PH's posted ads can easily be understood. It means that Adidas PH arranged and organized the audio of its ads well that it created an effect to its audience; to give them an interesting and understandable advertisement. This result values the study of Mullin (2010) about rhetors in the implementation of a process of invention, arrangement, and production of words. It aligns the purposeful use of voice, tone, performance and visual effect as rhetorical communicative practices, expression, and effect in terms of creative arts.

Table 1. Mean evaluation of sound in the posted ads in terms of audio

Statements	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1. The audio makes the product	1.44	Strongly
2. The audio can easily be understood.	1.45	Strongly Agree
3. The volume of the audio is fine.	1.48	Agree
4. The audio is clear.	1.51	Agree
5. The audio provides necessary information about	1.51	Agree
Average	1.48	Agree

Legend: 1-1.49 – SA, 1.50-2.49 – A, 2.50-3.49 – D, 3.50-4.0 – SD

Results suggest that the study of Pepper et al. (2016) is true that texts in any manner help visuals in communicating meanings and understandings to the audience. Based from the results, the researchers inferred that Instagram users also believe that captions of the posted ads did not just help them understand the product/s well but they also *agreed* that these were catchy, have connection to the visual posts, and better than other brands that make them consider to buy Adidas in Philippines either online or in retail stores.

Table 2. Mean evaluation of text in the posted ads in terms of caption

Statements	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1. The caption of the photo/video helps me understand more about the product/s.	1.49	Strongly Agree
2. The caption of the photo/video is catchy.	1.56	Agree
3. The caption of the photo/video is better than the ads of other brands.	1.57	Agree
4. The caption of the photo/video has all the data connected to the post.	1.58	Agree
5. After reading the caption of the photo/video, I would consider purchasing the product.	1.68	Agree
Average	1.56	Agree

Legend: 1-1.49 – SA, 1.50-2.49 – A, 2.50-3.49 – D, 3.50-4.0 – SD

Most of the respondents *strongly agreed* that the posts/ads of Adidas PH are appealing to the eyes. It is stated in the study of Schloss and Palmer (2011) that visuals can be produced attractively with good harmony of color combinations and it relies strongly on the component color of the visuals though the judgement will still depend on the eyes of the viewers. In this case, Instagram users from selected colleges and universities *strongly agreed* that Adidas PH's posted ads have balanced colors. It is also agreeable that these colors give recognition to authenticity of Adidas as a brand since the participants had been pleased by the colors of their posted ads in their Instagram account.

Table 3. Mean evaluation of aesthetic response in terms of color

Statements	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1. The post is appealing to the eyes.	1.44	Strongly Agree
2. The posted product looks good and in quality.	1.47	Strongly Agree
3. The combination of colors are complementary.	1.51	Agree
4. The color of the posted ads show the brand's authenticity.	1.61	Agree
5. The color of the posted ads are too bright and it irritate my eyes.	3.13	Disagree
Average	1.84	Agree

Legend: 1-1.49 – SA, 1.50-2.49 – A, 2.50-3.49 – D, 3.50-4.0 – SD

The results of the study supported the study of McNely (2012) as it was stated that Instagram quite simply uses images to communicate visions and in a way, it also establishes one's image by looking at its uploaded photos. Adidas PH, despite its competitors and the emergence of new breed, powerful, and sophisticated customers, can still attract its market by uploading and providing them clear and quality visuals (either photo or video) on its official account.

Table 4. Mean evaluation of aesthetic response in terms of quality

Statements	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1. The branding of the posted product is clear.	1.44	Strongly Agree
2. The quality of the photo/video is not pixelated or blurred.	1.51	Agree
4. The quality of the photo/video is on HD.	1.52	Agree
4. The quality of the photo/video does not change the color of the product.	1.66	Agree
5. The quality of the photo/video does not affect the way I see their product.	1.84	Agree
Average	1.84	Agree

Legend: 1-1.49 – SA, 1.50-2.49 – A, 2.50-3.49 – D, 3.50-4.0 – SD

Liking the photos and videos posted by Adidas PH on their

Instagram is one of the tools that can help them determine the consumers' wants and needs because liking is a way of connecting to audience's satisfaction. These results agree to the study of Neti (2011) because he said that social media like Instagram is among the 'best opportunities available' to a brand or product per se for connecting with the probable consumers.

Table 5. Mean evaluation of audience behavior in terms of liking

Statements	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1. I like the photo because it satisfies me.	1.65	Agree
2. I like the photo because I know that the seller is legit and has no scamming issue.	1.67	Agree
3. I like the photo because it has all the information I need in ordering online.	1.73	Agree
4. I like the photo posted by the seller because the product is appealing to me.	1.77	Agree
5. I sometimes accidentally like the ads by browsing through their feed.	1.94	Agree
Average	1.75	Agree

Legend: 1-1.49 – SA, 1.50-2.49 – A, 2.50-3.49 – D, 3.50-4.0 – SD

Chung and Austria's (2010) study approves the results because social media like Instagram provide its marketers and consumers an interactive communication. It also gives opportunities for them to create relationship with the consumer and another opportunity to enhance its product and services. Thus, commenting is a good factor for establishing an interacting communication.

Table 6. Mean evaluation of audience behavior in terms of commenting

Statements	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1. I usually comment on the post for me to know more about the seller and the product/s they sell.	1.89	Agree
2. I always comment on the posted ads to tag my friends.	2.01	Agree
3. I usually comment on the ads to give my insights and feedback.	2.03	Agree
4. I always comment on the post to clarify some info about the product/s that the sellers sell	2.13	Agree

5. I always comment on the post because I knew the seller personally and I already established a good communication with him/her.	2.17	Agree
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Average	2.05	Agree
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Legend: 1-1.49 – SA, 1.50-2.49 – A, 2.50-3.49 – D, 3.50-4.0 – SD

The results were related to the study of Belk (2010) which states that re-gramming or “sharing” in common term, is a distinct and increasingly vital in the consumer-seller relationships as it stands on a broad range of consumption issues in the persuasive matter of posts to social media. It just means that re-gramming of the posted ads can help a brand like Adidas to be known by more audience since most of the Instagram users re-gram or share their posts on their respective accounts for believing that the ads are worthy of this response.

Table 7. Mean evaluation of audience behavior in terms of re-gramming

Statements	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1. I re-gram the post because the product is really good and worthy to share.	1.96	Agree
2. I re-gram the post because the concepts is creative.	1.98	Agree
3. I re-gram the post because I trust the seller and the product/s that he/she sell.	2.04	Agree
4. I re-gram the post because the seller will give discount to me.	2.08	Agree
5. I re-gram the post because I want to share the products to my friends.	2.11	Agree
Average	2.03	Agree

Legend: 1-1.49 – SA, 1.50-2.49 – A, 2.50-3.49 – D, 3.50-4.0 – SD

Table 8 shows that in terms of the quality as aesthetic response and re-gramming as behavioral response is significant with each other. Quality and re-gramming are the only variables significant with each other. It means that quality as aesthetic response affects the way the audience re-gram as behavioral response. They usually check on the quality of the posted ads before they share because it will reflect to their personality and preferences in life. It also disbands interpersonal boundaries posed by materialism and possession attachment through expanding the collective extended self as what Belk (2010) suggests.

Re-gramming is similar to 'sharing' and sharing is a distinct and increasingly vital consumer research topic that stands on a broad array of consumption issues in the persuasive matter of every post to social media (Belk, 2010). This also means that when the quality of the product is appreciative, the audience tends to re-gram the posted ads, and when the audience re-grams the post, the means of advertising of the product will increase due to the multiple audiences who can also view the ads being re-grammed or shared by the other audience.

Table 8. Relationships of communicative elements and aesthetic response to the behavior response towards Adidas PH's Instagram posts

Variable	Rho-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
Audio vs. Liking	.003	.974	Not Significant
Audio vs. Commenting	.097	.370	Not Significant
Audio vs. Re-gramming	.017	.875	Not Significant
Caption vs. Liking	.120	.267	Not Significant
Caption vs. Commenting	.106	.325	Not Significant
Caption vs. Re-gramming	.195	.069	Not Significant
Color vs. Liking	.069	.100	Not Significant
Color vs. Commenting	.078	.471	Not Significant
Color vs. Re-gramming	-.062	.564	Not Significant
Quality vs. Liking	.206	.055	Not Significant
Quality vs. Commenting	-0.28	.794	Not Significant
Quality vs. Re-gramming	.239*	.025	Significant

If p-value is < .05 then, there is significant relationship between variables. If p value is > .05 then, there is no significant relationship between variables.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Respondents of the study are Instagram users from five different colleges and universities around Calamba, Los Baños, and Cabuyao, aged 18-24. The findings of the study revealed that most of the Instagram users *strongly agreed* that audio in Adidas PH's posted ads makes them interesting and it helps them understand more about it. This includes different agreeable statements such that it is clear, understandable, information-loaded, has a fine volume, and an interesting sound that lead to persuasion. Similar to caption which resulted to be an essential element of every visuals since participants of the study *strongly agreed* that it really helps them understand more about the posted products. Participants also approved that Adidas PH's captions in its posted products are catchy, understandable, and have connection to the visuals. Moreover, they also *agreed* that after reading its caption, they have the thought or consideration to buy the posted products since they found it effective and better than the other brands.

The researchers also figured out if there are significant relationships between the communicative elements, aesthetic response, and behavior response of Instagram users towards Adidas PH's posts. It resulted that only quality and re-gramming are significant with each other and the rest of the variables are not.

Moreover, the study proves that elements of Visual Rhetoric Theory have a lot to do with the persuasion as function in the posted visuals of Adidas PH in Instagram. Its elements including sound, text, color, and quality determined variety of reasons and factors why Instagram users do respond such as liking, commenting, and re-gramming. Based from the results, all statements under different elements are agreeable dissimilar to behavioral response where there is only one out of six variables is significant. Therefore, the researchers concluded that Visual Rhetoric or the use of visuals, audio, and texts have different functions in the persuasion of Adidas PH to Instagram users.

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the researchers recommend to future researchers to focus only on one SNS to see how a specific brand use persuade people, organization, or consumers. Since social media nowadays are also used in Internet commerce as ways of communication, it would be a great help for the future researchers to find the data they might need. Just like in this study, researchers used Instagram account of a specific brand which is Adidas PH with the help of visual rhetoric as theory, it helped the researchers analyze how its elements affect the persuasion of the brand. Future researchers can also use other type of social media that can also

proceed to similar study not just Instagram because there are other social media sites now that can also measure and determine how visuals and its other elements affect the persuasion of any brand, personality, and or organization to people.

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