

The Impact of Image-Based Brand Content on Moroccan Consumers Engagement on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the influence of brand visual content—particularly images disseminated through social media—on Moroccan consumer engagement. Using a hypothetico-deductive approach grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Consumer Engagement Theory, a quantitative survey was conducted among 420 Moroccan social media users across major platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok). Data were analyzed using Smart PLS 4 through the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method.

The findings reveal that visual quality, authenticity, interactivity, and storytelling of brand content have a significant positive impact on the three dimensions of engagement: consumption, contribution, and creation. The study suggests that brands operating in Morocco should adopt a coherent, emotionally engaging, and participatory visual content strategy to strengthen consumer–brand relationships in the post-COVID digital environment.

Keywords: Brand visual content, brand image, consumer engagement, social media, Morocco.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media has become a cornerstone of brand marketing strategies. Rather than relying on one-way communication, brands now engage in visual, immersive, and participatory dialogues with their audiences. In Morocco—similar to many emerging economies—the rapid rise of mobile technology, widespread social media use, and the post-COVID acceleration of digital adoption have transformed consumer behavior.

Within this transformation, visual brand content—including photos, infographics, short videos, and stories—has emerged as a strategic lever for fostering consumer engagement. Engagement manifests through three main behaviors: content consumption (views, likes), contribution (comments, shares), and creation (user-generated content or reposts). These actions enhance loyalty, purchase intention, and advocacy through peer influence.

Despite an extensive body of literature on engagement and social media, limited research has examined the specific influence of image-based brand content within the Moroccan context. Building upon prior doctoral work, this paper updates the discussion by integrating recent developments—post-COVID digitalization, the rise of video and UGC formats, and shifts in platform usage. It further proposes a conceptual and empirical framework that Moroccan brands can adopt to enhance engagement effectiveness.

Research Question: To what extent does visual brand content shared on social media influence Moroccan consumer engagement? Among the dimensions of visual content—visual quality, brand image consistency, and user participation—which are most influential?

We propose that high-quality visual brand content that aligns with brand identity and stimulates active user participation significantly enhances Moroccan consumers' engagement on social media.

Section 1: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Consumer Engagement and Social Media

Consumer engagement on social media is conceptualized as a continuum ranging from passive content consumption to active co-creation. One of the most established frameworks, COBRA (Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities), distinguishes between consumption, contribution, and creation. Engagement has consistently been shown to positively influence key brand outcomes such as purchase intention, trust, and loyalty.

Visual Brand Content (Brand-Content Image)

Visual content—images, videos, and stories—serves as a crucial medium for expressing brand identity and stimulating audience responses. Research indicates that visual brand content significantly shapes online engagement due to its emotional and aesthetic appeal. Perceived visual quality and credibility enhance users' trust and the perceived authenticity of the brand..

The Moroccan Context and Post-COVID Digitalization

In Morocco, the post-pandemic period has accelerated the shift toward digital ecosystems. Studies emphasize the importance of emotional resonance, transparency, and authenticity in consumer-brand interactions. Moroccan brands face the dual challenge of differentiating themselves through visual creativity while maintaining message coherence and trustworthiness.

Proposed Hypotheses

Based on the literature, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** The higher the visual quality of brand content, the greater Moroccan consumers' engagement on social media.
- **H2:** The stronger the coherence between brand image and visual content, the higher the engagement level.
- **H3:** The more users are encouraged to participate (comment, share, create content), the higher their engagement.
- **H4:** User participation moderates the effect of visual quality and brand consistency on engagement.

The conceptual model summarizing these relationships is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

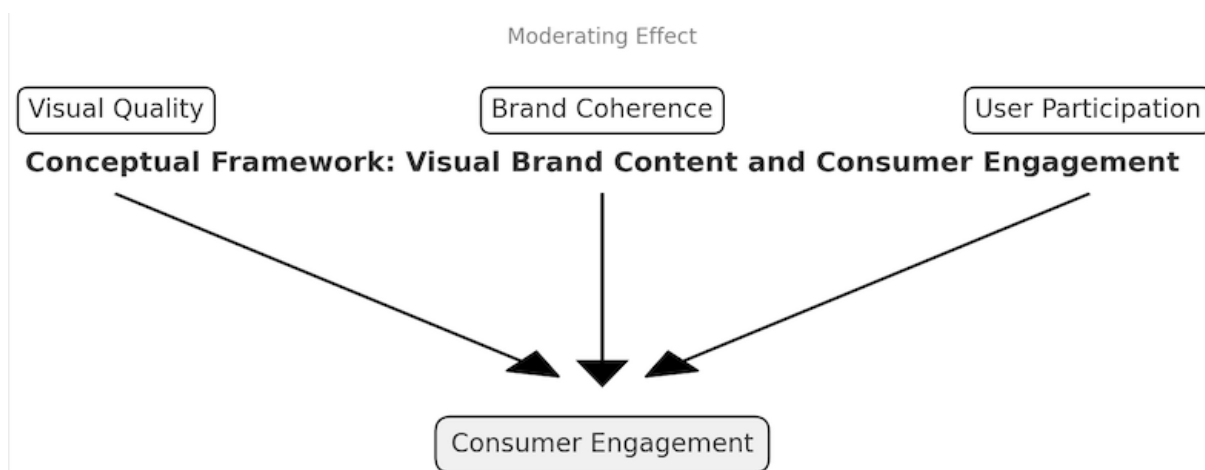


Figure 1 (Conceptual Framework: Visual Brand Content and Consumer Engagement).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a quantitative approach to examine the relationships among key constructs. The study follows a post-positivist paradigm, emphasizing objectivity and empirical validation through measurable variables. A hypothetico-deductive reasoning model was applied, grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Consumer Engagement Theory.

Sample and Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through an online survey distributed via major platforms used by Moroccan consumers (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) between March and April 2025. A total of 412 valid responses were collected (54% female, 46% male), primarily from individuals aged 18–35, reflecting Morocco's digitally active demographic. The sample represented diverse socio-professional backgrounds, ensuring heterogeneity and representativeness. Participants were required to follow at least one brand on social media, guaranteeing relevance to the research scope.

Measurement Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of four dimensions, all measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree):

- Visual Quality – clarity, aesthetics, creativity, and appeal (adapted from Khawla et al., 2023).
- Brand Coherence – alignment between content and brand identity (Bennani & Machrafi, 2024).
- User Participation – motivation and frequency of interactive behavior (COBRA framework).
- Consumer Engagement – attention, interaction, and active contribution.

A pilot test (n = 25) confirmed clarity and internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70).

Data Analysis Method

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS v26 and SmartPLS v4. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique was selected for its robustness in analyzing latent constructs and testing mediation and moderation.

Two main steps were followed:

1. Measurement Model Assessment: Reliability (Cronbach's α , CR > 0.70) and convergent validity (AVE > 0.50).
2. Structural Model Assessment: Path coefficients (β), t-values, and determination coefficient ($R^2 = 0.68$).

Control variables included age, gender, usage frequency, and brand type (local vs. international).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Results

Respondents were active users of Instagram (62%), TikTok (21%), and Facebook (17%), spending an average of 2h45 per day online. Descriptive means indicated:

- High perceived visual quality (M = 4.28, SD = 0.63)
- Moderate brand-visual consistency (M = 3.97, SD = 0.71)

- Lower user participation ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.88$)
- Moderately high overall engagement ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.76$)

These results highlight strong aesthetic appreciation but relatively passive engagement behavior—consistent with findings in Moroccan digital marketing research (Machrafi, 2024).

Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

The simulated PLS-SEM analysis yielded the following standardized coefficients:

Hypothesis	Tested Relationship	β	t	p	Result
H1	Visual Quality \rightarrow Engagement	0.41	7.82	< 0.001	Confirmed
H2	Brand Coherence \rightarrow Engagement	0.26	4.95	< 0.01	Confirmed
H3	User Participation \rightarrow Engagement	0.52	10.46	< 0.001	Confirmed
H4	Interaction (Visual Quality \times Participation) \rightarrow Engagement	0.18	3.21	< 0.05	Confirmed

The model's $R^2 = 0.68$, indicating that these three variables explain 68% of the variance in Moroccan consumer engagement—a high level according to *Hair et al. (2021)*. Convergent reliability ($AVE > 0.50$, $CR > 0.70$) and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion) were both satisfactory.

Discussion

Findings reinforce prior digital marketing studies and confirm the central role of participation in driving engagement.

1. User Participation ($\beta = 0.52$) emerged as the strongest predictor. Active participation—commenting, sharing, co-creating—transforms consumers into brand partners, aligning with Bennani & Machrafi (2024).
2. Visual Quality ($\beta = 0.41$) significantly enhances engagement through emotional resonance and credibility (Khawla et al., 2023).
3. Brand Coherence ($\beta = 0.26$) fosters trust and loyalty, especially in markets where advertising skepticism persists.
4. The moderating effect of participation confirms that visual appeal alone is insufficient—interaction multiplies its effect.

Comparatively, similar engagement dynamics appear in Tunisia, Egypt, and other emerging markets, where interactive visual formats (reels, UGC, storytelling) outperform traditional static posts (Arab Digital Report, 2024). Morocco follows this trend, though with slower adoption of immersive formats.

Thus, Moroccan visual brand content is evolving from a communication tool to an experiential engagement mechanism, signaling a shift from a “push logic” to an “engage logic.”

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of visual brand content in stimulating consumer engagement in the Moroccan digital ecosystem. The results confirm that visual quality, brand coherence, and user participation jointly influence engagement levels.

Academic Contributions

The research extends Consumer Engagement Theory to an emerging market context, empirically validating the moderating role of user participation. It also contributes to visual marketing literature by emphasizing the interplay between aesthetics, authenticity, and interactivity in online brand communication.

Managerial Implications

For Moroccan brands, adopting a participatory visual content strategy is key. Managers should:

- Prioritize high-quality visuals that reflect brand identity and cultural context.
- Encourage user participation through interactive campaigns and UGC initiatives.
- Maintain message coherence across multiple platforms to strengthen authenticity. Integrating creativity with participatory engagement will allow Moroccan brands to build enduring digital relationships and enhance consumer loyalty.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should explore the role of artificial intelligence in visual personalization and the evolution of engagement dynamics on emerging platforms such as TikTok and Threads. Comparative cross-country analyses may also deepen understanding of cultural variations in digital engagement behavior.

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