Fashion Conversations on Instagram

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Abstract. Fashion industry reflects the cultural norms and traits of the society it belongs to. The emergence of social media has revolutionized the fashion industry by enabling new ways to find and disseminate fashion information, which fundamentally affects the production processes (design, manufacturing) as well as the operation processes (sales, marketing). In this light, analyzing the public conversations on fashion in social media helps us understand what kinds of fashion information people retrieve and to what extent they are important.

In this research, we analyze the textual and visual content of fashion conversations on Instagram, which is a prominent platform for sharing fashion information. Our goal is to characterize the fashion-related posts and examine the user perception, where we find:

1. Visual categories: Based on grounded theory, we classified around 3,160 images of fashion posts and determine five major visual cues as follows: body snap (23%), marketing shots (22%), product-only (20%), selfies (18%), and non-fashion (17%). The last category had discrepancy between visual and textual description.

2. User perception: Based on user survey, we learned that natural looking images (body snaps and selfies) to be a more effective form fashion conversation that affects future purchase decisions than stylized images (high quality marketing shots or product-only). Interestingly, fashion brands often posted stylized images than the public.

3. Prevalence of clickbaits: Our classification process identified a number of fashion spams, where posts mention popular brand names or show brand items to lure people into clicking on irrelevant posts. These fashion clickbaits often mentioned multiple mega brand names and appeared most frequently with selfies or meme-like images.

Our analysis of fashion conversations on Instagram captures how social media is used to generate discussion and enable brand recognition on a daily basis. We are able to gain an understanding of what are the key visual features forming the fashion culture on social media. By participating in this workshop, we would like to share our insights on handling fashion data and our plans to build vision techniques to classify fashion images.