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Video and Language Use in Instagram Marketing for Multilingual Markets

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1. Introduction

The omnipresence of English in the business world is undeniable. In addition to its role in their internal communication, an increasing number of companies tend to use it as a part of their external communication. (Hornikx et al., 2010; Neeley, 2012; Sing, 2017). This can take several forms, one of which has increasingly gained in popularity: the video (Krishnan & Sitaraman, 2013; Sheldon, 2013).

As the uses of English and videos have gained momentum, advertising has begun to resort to both. Thanks to this method, marketers can hope to reach a significant audience. It is especially true for one advertising medium: the internet. There, approximately 565 million people use English (Neeley, 2012). Videos play a substantial role on the medium. In 2013, half of the Internet traffic was related to them. This proportion was expected to exceed 85% by 2016 (Krishnan & Sitaraman, 2013: no page number).

To better understand the place of videos and English in advertising, this dissertation will aim at exploring their uses in the external communication of firms. In this regard, the strategies which companies develop to capture prospective clients' and customers' attention will be analysed. On the one hand, the use of videos, in comparison with other formats, will be investigated. On the other hand, language use will be addressed. Moreover, a specific focus will be adopted. To better compare the use of English with other languages, this dissertation will explore the use of the latter in relation with several national languages. Thus, this dissertation will collect data from companies operating in multilingual countries: Belgium and Switzerland. The former has three national languages, i.e. Dutch, French and German; the latter, four, i.e. German, French, Italian and Romansh.

Previous research has extensively addressed the use of videos in marketing (e.g. Gao et al., 2021; Krishnan & Sitaraman, 2013; Wang et al., 2020). The advantages, disadvantages and challenges of the format have thus been highlighted. The use of English in advertising has also largely been explored (e.g. Hornikx et al., 2010;

Kozlova, 2020; Nederstigt & Hiberink-Schulpen, 2018). Its emergence as an international language and its aura have been discussed. Other studies have emphasised the upsides of local language use in contrast with the use of English (e.g. Hornikx et al., 2010; Noriega, 2006; Steurs, 2020).

However, the uses of languages and communication strategies on social media have scarcely been analysed conjointly, which has been underlined by De Bock (2016) and Vermeulen (2018). Although the literature on videos and language use in advertising provide an interesting panorama, this work will complement these approaches by supplying a more comprehensive view. To address the research gap regarding social media marketing and language policies, this dissertation will thus adopt a holistic approach and analyse both the format and language(s) of Instagram posts.

To do so, this dissertation aims at answering the following questions: (1) To what extent do companies use videos? (2) To what extent do companies use English in comparison with local languages? (3) Do these variables correlate? To gain a more precise insight into the uses of videos and English, the visual characteristics of posts as well as their content will be analysed. Relationships between post formats and their visual identity will be investigated. In addition, correlations between languages and the content which they share will be tackled. In the context of this dissertation, the words *correlate* and *correlations* are used to mean *connection* and do not refer to statistical measures.

To answer the above-mentioned research questions, companies' social media, and, more precisely, their Instagram accounts will be investigated. Instagram spreads both pictures and videos; this research will thus provide an insight into the extent to which these formats are used. The Instagram accounts of telecommunications companies will be the focus of this work. These firms offer services which seem indispensable in a significant part of our current societies; it thus appears interesting to observe how they distinguish themselves from their competitors and spur

customers to use their services. Additionally, as their services are specific to and used by the entirety of a national market, these firms target the whole of it, independently of different groups' mother tongues. Two Belgian (Proximus, Orange) and two Swiss firms (Wingo, Salt) will be under investigation. The posts which they published in December 2022 will be examined.

The data retrieved from the Instagram accounts of the above-mentioned firms will then be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The former analysis will determine the frequency with which companies use videos and English in comparison with other formats and languages. The latter will provide an insight into brands' visual and thematic strategies. Then, both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be examined together so as to answer the research questions of this dissertation. Finally, these findings will be reviewed in light of previous research.

This dissertation will be articulated around several chapters, matching the different steps of this study. As an initial step, the existing literature on the topics at the heart of this work will be reviewed. On the one hand, the theoretical framework of this work will tackle marketing and the place of videos. On the other hand, language use in advertising will be addressed. As a second step, the method adopted to collect and analyse the data used will be presented. The data will then be analysed. The findings from the analysis will also be discussed. They will, subsequently, be interpreted with the help of the findings highlighted in the theoretical framework. Finally, a general conclusion will round off the study.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the nature of marketing, the place of videos in advertising and the relationships between marketing and languages. As this dissertation focusses on video marketing strategies for multilingual markets, social media advertising videos and marketing language policies will be at the centre of this work. However, as previously underlined by research, both aspects have rarely been studied from a holistic perspective. For example, De Bock (2017: 29) states: "An aspect of language

policy that is still underdeveloped by scholars, is language use on social media. There are numerous studies about social media strategies, but they hardly elaborate on organisations with a multilingual following". Vermeulen (2018: 10), underlines a "lack of research conducted on language selection in content marketing". As a result, the theoretical framework of this dissertation will be divided in two main parts. On the one hand, a literature overview on marketing and the place of advertising videos will be provided. On the other hand, advertising language policies will be investigated.

2.1. Marketing and Advertising

To better understand marketing and the place of videos, this section will provide an overview of the nature of advertising, social media marketing and video advertising.

2.1.1. Nature of Advertising

First of all, this section will look into the definitions and histories of the marketing and advertising concepts.

Although both marketing and advertising are concerned with the promotion of a brand's products and/ or services, they do not exactly refer to the same steps of the operation. The American Marketing Association indicates: "In basic terms, marketing is the process of identifying customer needs and determining how best to meet those needs. In contrast, advertising is the exercise of promoting a company and its products or services through paid channels. In other words, advertising is a component of marketing."¹

Adverts are the means through which advertising is performed. While exploring the "nature of advertisement", Rehman et al. (2019) highlight several features that characterise it. Firstly, an advertisement is a paid form of non-personal

¹ <https://www.ama.org/pages/marketing-vs-advertising/#:~:text=In%20basic%20terms%2C%20marketing%20is,is%20a%20component%20of%20marketing.>

Last consulted on 25th February 2023

communication. Its aim is to promote goods and services by a specific sponsor, which is realised through various media (newspapers, radio, television, social media, etc.). The absence of feedback, lack of personalisation of the given information and a targeted audience are other elements defining the advertising phenomenon.

In *Advertising History*, Richards et al. (2009) complete this definition and introduce concepts that have been central to marketing since the 1890s. The first one is *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)*. In the framework of marketing, this means that brands should advertise while highlighting the unique features that differentiate their products or services from their competitors. However, this approach is compromised, as an increasing quantity of products are commercialised. These products often display similarities, which makes it difficult to advertise on their uniqueness. As a result, marketing strategies evolve and focus on the consumer. Brands set out to reach a specific group of customers, called the target market, rather than advertising their products to a large audience. As a consequence, marketers adapt their message to the particular market which they wish to reach. This strategy is called *Market Segmentation*. Throughout the years, this market segmentation strategy has been increasingly easy to put into practice. With the development of television stations, e-mails and the Internet, brands have been able to efficiently target specific audiences. A third approach, *Positioning*, combines *USP* and *Market Segmentation*. In this framework, brands place their products in a determined context responding to their target audience's values and present a *Unique Selling Proposition* matching it.

In a nutshell, marketing and advertising are to be distinguished. While the former refers to the identification of and strategies to satisfy consumers' needs, the latter revolves around ads, which aim to promote products and services. Techniques to do so, as well as marketing strategies, have evolved throughout time. The following section will focus on a rather new marketing form.

2.1.2. Social Media Marketing

As stated above, marketing, and more precisely advertising, can take many forms and is performed through a variety of media. This dissertation zooms in on social media marketing. In their review of the existing research on the phenomenon, Alves et al. (2016), point out that most papers do not provide a precise definition of social media marketing. Therefore, the concept can be viewed as “a transposition of the marketing concept applied to social media with no author highlighting any particularities to applying the marketing concept in this domain” (Alves et al., 2016: 1031).

Alves et al. (2016: 1029) provide quite an extensive definition of social media: “We understand social media as including all Internet-based technological applications, in accordance with the principles of Web 2.0 and providing the creation and exchange of user-generated content, while also facilitating interaction and collaboration between participants (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Such applications also include blogs and microblogs (such as Twitter), social networking sites (such as MySpace and Facebook), virtual worlds (such as Second Life), collaborative projects (such as Wikipedia), content community sites (e.g., YouTube, Flickr), and sites dedicated to feedback (e.g. online forums; Chan & Guillet, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).” With the help of this definition, it is easy to understand how important the social media phenomenon is. Investigating how it influences market dynamics, and more specifically advertising in the present case, thus seems worthy of consideration.

Social media influence on consumers’ behaviour has changed some market features. Customers have been provided with new ways to search, evaluate, choose and order goods or services (Albors, Ramos & Hervas, 2008, as cited in Alves et al., 2016). Another significant feature of social media is feedback. Not only do they enable brands to communicate with their customers and reciprocally, but they also give consumers the opportunity to interact with each other. Both characteristics contribute to creating brand loyalty (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, as cited in Alves et al.,

2016). Besides, the interactions between customers are profitable to companies and help them increase brand awareness, brand recognition and brand recall (Gunelius, 2011, as cited in Alves et al., 2016).

In their analysis of research regarding social media marketing, Alves et al. (2016) hint at various state-of-the-art aspects. Firstly, they highlight the “growing importance” of social media marketing. Their analysis of articles dating back from 2010 to 2015 showed that the majority of these were published in the last two years of the studied period of time. Secondly, they distinguished two different topics of research. The first one focusses on the consumer and how social media influence their relation to a brand. The second one is concerned with marketing content and how social media influence it. This dissertation will look into both approaches, with a special focus on languages. Not only will the influence of advertising language on the customer-brand relationship be investigated, but also how companies choose (a) language(s).

To sum up, social media marketing revolutionised classical advertising. Incidentally, brands are provided with their customers’ feedback. Consumers are given new ways to search, form an opinion and even order products. In the literature, the rising social media marketing phenomenon has mostly been studied from two perspectives: its influence on the consumer-brand relationship and its impact on marketing content.

2.1.3. Advertising Videos

As the scope of social media marketing is quite extensive and given the focus of this dissertation, this section deals with advertising videos. Thus, critical video ad features as well as the evolution of the format will be tackled.

Firstly, Alves et al. (2016) state that personalisation plays a capital role in the success of an ad. Besides, they emphasize the importance of opinion leaders. These spread the majority of the information that can be found on social media. Their potential role in any marketing campaign should, therefore, not be ignored.

Appel et al. (2020) confirm this statement and stress that advertising through influencers is a more efficient way to engage customers. Advertising is, in this case, performed through person narration, which distinguishes it from more conventional ads. This is perceived as a more personal and warmer approach.

In the same line of thought, Appel et al. (2020) underline the shifts that have marked social media history. In the beginning, most social media solely enabled their members to publish texts. They then made possible to post pictures and even videos. Some even emerged especially as vectors to share these specific formats (e.g. Instagram and Pinterest for pictures; Instagram and SnapChat for short videos). The transition from texts to pictures and videos can also translate a desire for more personal and warmer touch, which explains why Pittman and Reich (2016) (as cited in Appel et al., 2020) formulate the hypothesis that image-based posts denote larger social presence.

Another element that explains the efficiency of video marketing is the amount of time spent on the Internet. In 2013, an NBC News journalist (Weaver, 2013, as cited in Sheldon, 2013) stated that people between 13 and 24 years spend approximately 16.7 hours a week on the Internet whereas they tend to watch TV 13.6 hours a week. This trend also concerns traditional media such as news, entertainment and sports and these media operated a shift and are now present on the Internet as well (Krishnan & Sitaraman, 2013). Another noteworthy element related to the use of the Internet regards the most popular form of the medium. Back in 2013, Krishnan & Sitaraman (2013, no page number) reported that "more than half of the consumer traffic on the Internet today is related to videos and that fraction is expected to exceed 85% in 2016". Therefore, the importance of the Web as a marketing medium is significant. Sheldon (2013: 5) even describes it as follows: "Online video advertising is the present most effective, diverse, and intuitive marketing option for businesses." The researcher contrasts former advertising forms, where reading and long texts prevailed, with video marketing and underlines different features that have

contributed to the rise of videos as such an effective advertising tool. Among them, there are creativity, excitement, helpfulness and the desire to be captivated. Furthermore, Sheldon (2013) points out the versatility of videos. They can be published and viewed in the whole WorldWideWeb, which does not even require using a computer. Nowadays, the Internet can be accessed via laptops, tablets, mp3 players and, of course, smartphones. In addition, videos can be shot by anyone, any firm, be it big or small.

However, as highlighted by Gao et al. (2021), this abundance of videos may trigger viewers' distraction. Capturing their attention then becomes a challenge. As a reaction to this phenomenon, short videos began to emerge. Krishnan & Sitaraman (2013, no page number) observe that: "completion rate of an ad decreases with increasing ad length". Completion rate concerns the fact that a viewer watched the whole of an ad and did not quit in the middle of it. Short videos distinguish themselves from other videos by their limited length; they do not exceed 30, 20 or 10 seconds. An upside of this format is its convenience. The filming and editing of such short videos can be performed on mobile devices. Moreover, short videos can also be directly shared through social media platforms.

Yet, the shortness of the format does not guarantee capturing the prospect consumer's attention. Gao et al. (2021: 2) subsequently introduce the concept of "customer inspiration", which can be defined as "cognitive activation and intention driver, which describes the internal activation state that encourages the attention of the consumer and new ideas for practice (Thrash and Elliot, 2003, 2004; Böttger et al., 2017)". In other words, this phenomenon triggers a positive emotional experience, which will give the potential customer the desire to purchase the products or services featured in the ad.

In the history of video marketing, two different strategies have been adopted to reach the consumer. The first one is called the informational route. In this case, advertisements feature objective descriptions of the product or service which they

promote. Although these ads can sometimes appear as dull and boring, they are usually viewed as less manipulative. The second strategy, the emotional route, is rather concerned with content that creates emotion. This type of advertisements seems to have more powers of persuasion. Several elements contributing to emotion building are drama, plot, characters, surprise (Tellis et al., 2019, as cited in Gao et al. 2021), mood, music (Yoo & MacInnis, 2005, as cited in Gao et al., 2021), effective editing of rhythm, sequence and sound (Liu et al., 2018, as cited in Gao et al., 2021).

In their study, Gao et al. (2021) explored how these marketing strategies could be used. Although they, as well as Wang et al. (2020), highlight viewers' own personality or involvement as a factor influencing the degree of customer inspiration, Gao et al. (2021) examined advertisement features which could lead to customer inspiration and could influence its intensity. They distinguished three categories of ads content characteristics: informational, emotional and commercial components. Thanks to their survey, the researchers uncovered that informational content characteristics favouring customer inspiration were richness (multiplicity of displayed scenarios), reliability (credibility), vividness and fluency (of the product presentation). As for emotional content features, Gao et al. (2021) found that fun, novelty, and narrativity provided customers with inspiration. However, commercial content characteristics, such as a brand logo, were proven to inhibit customer inspiration.

Yet, Henderson et al. (2003: 297-298) underline that: "Visual stimuli are a critical part of any branding strategy [...] and can assist in building strong brands by differentiating products [...]". Logos thus appear as central to visual branding strategies. However, the role of colour as a branding tool is not to be neglected. Cunningham (2017) showed that 85 percent of the participants in her study were able to identify brands by colour. Other research indicates that "while certain colors trigger specific emotions, the brand association with the same color is not that congruent as suggested by color emotion studies" (Sharma, 2021: 19). As a result, colour appears as a powerful marketing tool enhancing brand identification.

Morreale (2022) explored which criteria could impact viewers' perception of video advertisements. When comparing her study with Gao et al.'s research (2021), it can be noted that Morreale (2022) investigates prospect clients' and customer's attitude towards video advertisements with the help of different factors. Interestingly, Morreale (2022) does not directly address advertisements commercial features. However, she focusses on other factors, some of which had already been tackled in Gao et al. (2021)'s study, some of which were not. In addition to the analysis of informative and emotional ad features - criteria used by Gao et al. (2021) as well -, Morreale (2022) explores the entertainment and advertising value characteristics of adverts. In the framework of her study, the former is defined as "the expression of consumers' sense of pleasure related to messages" (Ünal et al., 2011; as cited in Morreale 2022: 25). As for advertising value, it is concerned with viewers' personal appreciation of an ad. Therefore, it provides insight into advertisement effectiveness and plays a role in viewers' overall attitude towards it. (Morreale, 2022).

Although Morreale's findings (2022) corroborate for the most part Gao et al. (2021)'s, they, however, diverge on one point. By contrast to Gao et al. (2021), Morreale (2022) states that informativeness would not have a significant impact on the viewer's attitude. By contrast, entertainment, emotional appeal and advertising value influence viewers' attitude towards advertisements and the extent to which they appreciate the ad or not.

Despite the different above-mentioned strategies to promote products and services, Gao et al. (2021) highlight challenges directly linked to the nature of marketing itself. Due to its persuasive purpose, the target audience often disregards advertising content. In Gao et al. (2021: 3)'s words: "In summary, the higher the intention of video advertising, the lower the willingness of consumers to share".

To thwart this effect, brands have developed native advertising. Wang et al. (2020) explain how our use of social media is indissociable from mobile feeds. These are "customized aggregation[s] of web content" (Wang et al., 2020: 1) which are often

generated by a social medium in relation with its user's preferences. Brands saw in these feeds an opportunity to advertise their products and services. Thus, native advertising aims at building a feed where advertisements and users' preferred content form a coherent whole in the sense that ads appear as a feed element in its own right. Adverts can thus be perceived by the viewer as less intrusive and could foster their readiness to watch ads. Algorithms are, besides, a precious tool that enables firms to share content considered as relevant to their targets, which should increase their engagement.

Native video ads can be an asset for firms. As a matter of fact, they are more positively assessed than their text equivalents. The latter often require the user to click on the post to visualise the entirety of the ad. This often creates a feeling of deception when the viewer realises that the content was not in their feed because of their preferences, but because it was an ad designed to entice them to buy. By contrast, native video ads do not need to be clicked on to be played and are, thus, less likely to be deemed deceitful, which can in turn lead to engagement (Wang et al., 2020).

Wang et al. (2020), however, underline three main challenges for native video ads. First, the area available to display the video is usually fairly limited, as users tend to hold their devices in a portrait position when consulting their feeds. Next, the duration of traditional video ads does not fit the feed format. In fact, they are too long to catch the mobile user's attention, who is used to going through their feed information scrolling quite quickly. Finally, Wang et al. (2020) highlight that mobile feed video ads are, as a general rule, played silently.

To better understand the challenges related to the duration of video ads, Wang et al. (2020) highlight how paradoxical the side effects of video ad duration can appear. The researchers point out that the longer the exposure time to the video, the more likely viewers are to recall its content. Nevertheless, long video ads are perceived as more intrusive than short ones. Consequently, this intrusion feeling can

lead to advertising avoidance, meaning that the user seeks to quit the ad and does not complete the visualisation.

To avoid this phenomenon, firms devote attention to short videos as a means of advertising. To make up for lacking elements, the shortness of the format not permitting an extensive sharing of information, what Wang et al. (2020) call *key elements* are added to the video. These, which include logo and text, play “an important role in capturing users’ attention” (Wang et al., 2020: 3). Research has shown that the presence of a brand logo triggers better recall and understanding of the ad content (Viswanathan et al., 2009, as cited in Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, Li et al. (2016, as cited in Wang et al., 2020) highlight that viewers tend to devote the large majority of their attention to textual elements rather than pictures.

Despite the rising trend of short advertising videos and their advantages, Morreale’s findings (2022) reveal that a longer video ad tends to be better appreciated than a shorter one. The researcher points out that longer video adverts are usually more efficient in terms of informativeness, entertainment, emotional appeal and advertising value. Additionally, Morreale (2022)’s respondents appeared to display a stronger purchase intention towards the product or service featured in longer video advertisements.

Morreale (2022) raises a critical issue. Basing herself on Singh & Cole (1993), she claims that marketers should carefully choose video advertisement formats in compliance with the goal which they wish to reach. Her review of the literature corroborated Wang et al. (2020)’s assertion that longer advertising videos generated a stronger irritation feeling. Thus, Singh & Cole (1993, as cited in Morreale, 2022) claim that shorter video advertisements are perceived as less bothersome than longer ones when the ad’s recurrence rate is high. The more iterative advertising videos are, the shorter they should be to avoid engendering annoyance. Recurrence, therefore, appears as a factor to take into account when deciding on marketing video duration.

Not only for this reason can short video advertisements be deemed a “worthwhile investment” (Morreale, 2022: 50) for firms, but also because of another asset. By contrast to the findings mentioned above, i.e. longer videos usually have a stronger advertising value, Sing & Cole (1993, as cited in Morreale, 2022) found out that a 15-second video triggered a 59% higher brand name recall rate than a 30-second video.

In short, the prominence of advertising videos emerged through the rising importance of the Internet and the viewers’ preference for personalised adverts. Narrative techniques and emotional content have, as a result, been central to marketing. Other crucial advertisement elements include information and visual stimuli, such as logos and colours. Due to the ubiquity of advertising videos, new strategies emerged to reduce the irritation feeling that they may trigger. This led to the emergence of short and native videos. However, both short and long video format have their advantages, and marketers should carefully choose duration in accordance with their goal.

2.2. Language Policies in Advertising

As mentioned above, advertisements are more efficient when designed to address the consumer’s particularities. In the case of multilingual markets, it can however be a challenge for companies to do so. In such markets, different advertising language policies can be observed. A first possibility is for marketing to be published exclusively in English. A second option is concerned with advertising in the different languages of the target market. Another strategy concerns the combination of English and local languages. Although this study will be limited to the analysis of advertising in multilingual markets, it remains interesting to explore language policies in other multilingual environments.

2.2.1. Advertising in English for Multilingual Markets

This section examines the reasons why firms operating in multilingual markets choose to advertise via a *lingua franca*, a language that is adopted as a common

language between speakers whose native languages are different², English, rather than in their target market's languages. To do so, three different dimensions are explored. Firstly, the question of the importance of English as an international language will be raised. Secondly, the reasons why English appears as a valuable tool to advertisers will be tackled. Finally, the status of the English language in multilingual markets will be discussed.

2.2.1.1. The Importance of English as an International Language

To better understand the reasons why advertising in English appears to be a reasonable, or even obvious, choice for companies operating in multilingual markets, it is interesting to consider the importance of English on an international level as well. This section will analyse how English has become a precious tool from a business and economic perspective. It will also provide information about the reasons why English was able to become a central language to business.

Firstly, as highlighted by Neeley (2012) and Zinggeler (2007), English is the business language par excellence as its use facilitates communication between workers who do not share the same mother tongue. Hornikx et al. (2010) argue that the use of English on an international level "provides companies more control over their activities across borders and gives them the full opportunity to exploit good creative ideas in different countries" (Hornikx et al., 2010: 170). In other words, communicating in the same language regardless of the local language enables firms to transmit the exact same guidelines across the globe, preventing misunderstandings. Besides, it favours the quick spread of ingenious processes, reducing the amount of work needed to adapt them to each country. Moreover, the use of a *lingua franca* ensures neutrality over the other languages spoken by employees in the same firm (Neeley, 2012). Like Neeley (2012) and Hornikx et al.

²<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100107474;jsessionid=8479AF0A508CC081A135423716865A85>

Last consulted on 25th February 2023

(2010), Nickerson (2005), underlines the importance of English as an international business language. She focusses on spoken and written communication and distinguishes three main genres in which English is used: negotiations, e-mail and advertising. As advertising is the focus of this dissertation, it will be dealt with below.

Sing (2017) and Hornikx et al. (2010) also underline the economic upsides of English as an international marketing language. Resorting to this *lingua franca* is deemed more cost-effective and functional. Neeley (2012) claims that an English-only language policy enables companies to be competitive in the current globalised business environment. Thanks to this policy, firms would not limit their expansion to markets speaking their mother tongue but could reach other customers. Companies can therefore decide to advertise in English.

However, this would not be possible if the target audience has no knowledge of English. Incidentally, the appeal of English also resides in the fact that it is "spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide – that's one in every four of us" (Neeley, 2012: no page number). Research has even shown that market demands regarding proficiency in English have changed school curriculums, which have started to dedicate more time to English (Sing, 2017; Zinggeler, 2007). The language is then "assumed to be a language that is spoken or at least understood by consumers in large parts of the world" (Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen, 2018: 3).

Kozlova (2020) corroborates Sing's (2017) and Zinggeler's (2007) words and reports that English is largely learnt as a second or foreign language by bilingual Europeans. As factors causing this rising proficiency in the English language, the expert identifies the formation of the EU and, hence, the need for a *lingua franca* in this space.

Not only does Kozlova (2020) underline the importance of English in the European multilingual and multicultural setting, but she also emphasises the rising presence of the language in Asia, and more precisely in China: "The boom of Chinese economy, growth of cities, and English-learning fever stimulated a rapid increase in

bilingual advertising. After 2005, in most radio advertisements, that appear bilingually, the amount of English text prevails over that given in the native language [...]” (Heiquin & Liu, 2010, as cited in Kozlova, 2020: 275). As a consequence, one can conclude that the importance of English as an international language is not to be underestimated. The ubiquity of the English language makes it possible for firms to advertise their products or services to their prospective customers in a tongue which is not even theirs.

To summarise, English was able to become an international language due to the need for a *lingua franca*. From then on, a large part of the world gained proficiency in the language and English developed into the ultimate business language.

2.2.1.2. English as an Advertising Language

Even though resorting to English is favoured by a range of practical reasons (cf. above), other motives urge companies to make use of the language. On the one hand, the symbolic value of English endows brands with a certain image. On the other hand, English is exploited as a resource to make an impact and create strong advertising slogans.

An asset of English is the new dimension which it provides to the brand image. Neeley (2012) highlighted how firms could appear as more international when they included English as a part of their corporate system. Hornikx et al. (2010) as well as Alcnauerová (2013) add that English enables companies to project a global corporate brand image across international markets. Moreover, Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008) demonstrated that slogans from multinationals selling luxury products were evaluated more positively when in English than in the local language. Besides, Nederstigt & Hiberink-Schulpen (2018) add that the use of Shakespeare’s language is associated with modernity and youthfulness.

The symbolic value of foreign languages, and especially English, in marketing is thus not to be neglected. Hornikx et al. (2010) have demonstrated that

advertisements in English were preferred over those in the local language when slogans were easily understandable.

However, Kozlova (2020) raises the question of appreciation concerning adverts in English that would not be understood by their audience and reports that: "up to 40% of the text in English adverts was not understood correctly by the respondents from different European countries, and irrespectively of the reported level of interviewees' proficiency in English" (Kozlova, 2020: 275). Although she hypothesises that viewers who do not understand the ad would not appreciate it, Hornikx et al. (2010) prove her wrong. An interesting finding of their study is concerned with the lack of understanding of slogans in English. In this case, the respondents in Hornikx et al.'s research (2010) did not specifically positively value the ad, but they did not like the advertisement in their mother tongue equivalent better.

The power of the English language aura needs to be underlined. Hornikx and Starren (2006) carried out a study comparing the appreciation of ads in Dutch (their research participants' mother tongue) and ads in French. When slogans in French were easy to understand, they were preferred over advertisements in Dutch. However, when slogans were complex to understand, ads in the respondents' local language were preferred. This was not the case with advertisements in English. The symbolic value of this language is therefore quite substantial, making it an interesting marketing tool.

The use of code-switching (CS) and code-mixing (CM) in advertising also needs to be discussed. Both terms refer to the use of several languages at the same time. The former indicates the shift from one language to another in a certain context. Code-mixing (CM), however, denotes the mixing of words from different languages within the same sentence or utterance (Ardila, 2005, as cited in Alcnauerová, 2013). In advertising, CS and CM can be used as a way to attract the potential consumer's attention. By contrast to advertisements in their mother tongue only, adverts with some words in another language surprise customers and stand out.

Furthermore, Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen (2018) state that processing a foreign language demands a more intense cognitive effort than processing one's own mother tongue. One therefore spends more time on the ad and is more likely to remember it easily. Alcnauerová (2013) notes the same phenomenon but nuances it: the use of a foreign word alone is insufficient to retain prospective customers' attention; advertisements also need to supply their viewers with strong persuasive arguments.

Interestingly, code-mixing and code-switching are so common in our societies that they are sometimes directly depicted and highlighted in advertising. For example, a Toyota Hybrid video commercial outlines the following situation: a son asks his father about the reasons why they have hybrid car. The father explains: "for your future" and elaborates his answer as the hereunder dialogue takes place:

"We spend less because it runs on gas and electrical power. *Mira, mira aquí* [look, look here]. It uses both."

"Like you, with English and Spanish."

"¡Sí!" [Yes!]

"And why did you learn English?"

"For your future."

A noteworthy parallelism between the two occurrences of the phrase "for your future" can, then, be drawn (Alcnauerová, 2013). While the first time it is uttered, the phrase underlines the ecological and economical advantages of hybrid technology, the second use of the utterance highlights how the knowledge of several languages can better one's opportunities in life.

Although, CS and CM are not referred to in such a direct way in most advertisements involving more than one language, Alcnauerová (2013: 43) states that "The hypothesis that CS and CM serve as a persuasive tool in advertising has been proven by the fact that these techniques are sources of original, playful and attractive

slogans. Consumers enjoy being entertained; therefore, they are more open to remember the slogan and the product. After a well-thought-out strategy, CS and CM are equally successful in targeting both monolingual and bilingual consumers”.

English can thus be seen as a resource to create puns. *Homophones*, *homonyms* and *homographs* are often used. Firstly, the term *homophones* designates words which sound the same but do not share the same meaning or written form. For example, a Mexican fast food restaurant created the slogan “Stop in queso emergency!”. Advertisers created a pun exploiting the similar sounds produced by Americans to pronounce the words *case of* and the Spanish word for cheese: *queso*. Therefore, the slogan appears as funny, as it associates hunger with a case of emergency and plays with sounds.

Secondly, *homonyms* refer to words having the same sound and spelling but different meanings. This phenomenon can be exemplified by the slogan “From Madrid to the sky!” by Vueling. Although the meaning is quite transparent in English, and cannot be directly related with homonymy, the slogan refers to the idiom “de Madrid al cielo”. In Spanish, *cielo* can refer to both *heaven* and *sky*. The original expression is used to praise the city of Madrid, comparing it to heaven. Vueling’s free translation, therefore, craftily links heaven with flying from Madrid, from where the company offers flights.

Finally, *homographs* stand for words written the same way, but whose pronunciations and definitions differ (Alcnauerová, 2013). An example of this phenomenon is the slogan: “Asda: It ‘asda be Asda.” As Korčák (2012) analyses it, the Asda Company takes advantage of the similarity between its name and a linguistic variant of the semi-modal *has to* to promote its brand. In informal English, the initial *h* is not necessarily pronounced and the vowel sound of *to* might be shortened. As a result, the pronunciation of the words *has to* approaches the one of the brand name Asda.

In conclusion, English is an interesting resource in advertising. First of all, it can provide brands with a specific identity. Second of all, the language can be used as a tool to attract attention and play with several languages featured in an advertisement.

2.2.1.3. English in Multilingual Markets

Other motives can favour the use of English in advertising. In the case of multilingual markets, for example Belgium and Switzerland, English can appear as a way to remain neutral. Additionally, it enables brands to directly communicate with the different language groups, who do not necessarily understand the other official languages of their country.

In interviews that she carried out with heads of marketing from five different companies operating in Belgium, Vermeulen (2018) uncovered that the use of English was sometimes preferred to local languages. Her interviewees suggested that communicating in English enabled their firm not to choose between the national languages of the country. Therefore, all audiences are treated equally and no language is favoured over the other.

Cheshire & Moser (1994) also address the role of English in a multilingual country and tackle the case of Switzerland. They distinguish three fields in which English plays quite an important role.

Firstly, even though it is not recognised as an official language, English is resorted to in (quasi-) official domains of everyday life. For example, Swiss passports do not only feature the national languages, German, French and Italian, but also English. Cheshire & Moser (1994) postulate that the reason why English performs such a role in official aspects of life in Switzerland is its neutrality. English can be used as a second language for all language groups of the country.

Secondly, its status as a global international language provides English with different functions in Swiss academic and professional lives. On the one hand, the

English language is used as a medium to teach at university. On the other hand, some companies resort to English to foster their relationships with international partners. Others go even further and adopt English-only language policies.

Thirdly, Cheshire & Moser (1994) highlight that English is used among Swiss people from different language groups to communicate with one another. Although the researchers describe this phenomenon as part of trend, highlighting that popular music, films and even short exclamations in English are very frequent, another element needs to be taken into account.

As Cheshire & Moser (1994: 453) put it themselves: "It is worth stressing that it is the *country* which is multilingual, not its inhabitants; [...]". Vermeulen (2018) reinforces this statement in her study about the Belgian multilingual market. The researcher uncovered that English was used as a *lingua franca* between Dutch- and French-speaking interlocutors. For example, a head of marketing whom she interviewed observes that French-speaking customers often switch to English during meetings while they seem to lack language skills in Dutch. Another of Vermeulen's interviewees added that their French-speaking customers refused to be addressed in Dutch when their company temporarily experienced communication problems. However, French- and Dutch-speakers are assumed to be familiar with the use of English, which is, thus, considered to be a bridge language between both language groups members. For these reasons, certain companies choose to only communicate with their clients from multilingual markets in the English language.

To summarise, firms operating in multilingual markets might want to advertise in English for several reasons. Among these, one counts the wish not to favour one language over the other. Another motivation is concerned with the fact that English is usually understood by all target groups, whereas members of one language group do not often master the other official languages.

2.2.2. Local Languages in Advertising

In this section, the upsides of advertising in the prospective clients' and customers' native language will be explored. This section will investigate how ads in local languages trigger better appreciation, remembrance and recognition. In addition, the focus is also on multilingual strategies as a means to help companies grow in various markets. Finally, the various forms that the marketing adaptation approach can take several on multilingual markets will be explored.

Although Hornikx et al. (2010) stress that standardised marketing - addressing an international audience in a similar way - and English-only policies might have numerous benefits, they also highlight that adaptation is crucial. To convince a target market, it is critical to address their cultural values. Ads which fail to do so are deemed less persuasive and are less liked by the public. Additionally, Noriega (2006) claims that adapting advertisements, be it using the target market's native language or any other strategy, is perceived as a sign of acknowledgment, valuation, and respect by the audience.

A critical element to marketing adaptation is, thus, the use of local languages. Steurs (2020: 46) reports that "A European study showed that nine out of ten consumers want to consult a website in their own language." In advertising, the use of prospective clients' and customers' native language enables brands to create stronger ties with their target market. Research (Puntoni, De Langhe, and Van Osselaer, 2008, as cited in Hornikx et al., 2010) has shown that advertisements broadcast in local languages were perceived as more emotional than ads in English. To explain this phenomenon, Noriega (2006: 3) points out the "sociolinguistic differences between cognitively equivalent words across two languages". Some concepts, such as family, religion, and relationships, are not valued in the same way across cultures. A word depicting an idea which is valued in its cultural framework can, therefore, denote a larger social and affective meaning than its equivalent in

another language whose associated culture would not value the same idea in the same way.

In addition, Ahn and La Ferle (2008, as cited in Hornikx et al., 2010) discovered that adverts whose text was written in the local language rather than in English were more easily remembered and recognised. Noriega (2006) states that bilinguals tend to process second language words less easily than words in their mother tongue. By extension, adverts in other languages than the native one could be harder to remember.

Besides, the European Commission (2011, as cited in Vermeulen, 2018: 15) states that "in the following situations, using the customer's native language is considered very important: creating a positive rapport with major customers;

- showing evidence of long-term commitment to their market;
- travelling abroad;
- creating an international ethos within your company or organisation;
- giving a competitive edge;
- increasing the flow of market intelligence and customer feedback"

As a consequence, the most successful companies would be those which adopt a multilingual language policy. The role of English in international business is undeniable, but firms need to adopt strategies that fit their target markets' specificities.

In the same vein, Steurs (2020: 44) claims that "Multilingualism is necessary to let businesses grow and capture new markets". She goes even further and affirms that some companies lose out on substantial markets because they do not invest in translation. She exemplifies her remarks by discussing the case of the French company *Le Palais des Thés*. Steurs (2020) states that the brand does not open any shop in Spain or in the Netherlands because the firm only uses French and English.

Some of Vermeulen's findings (2018) echo these observations. As a matter of fact, one of the latter's interviewees underlines that their interlocutors from Madrid or Paris "really don't feel like using English" and "even refuse to be helped in English" (Vermeulen, 2018: 26).

As this dissertation focusses on multilingual markets, it is worth stressing *Le Palais des Thés's* strategy on the plurilingual Belgian market. Steurs (2020) states that the brand does not sell its products in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. Yet, *Le Palais des Thés* well and truly sells teas on the Belgian market. The brand does have points of sale in the French-speaking part of the country. Therefore, one can conclude that being present on a multilingual market does not necessarily involve addressing the whole of the latter; this presence can also be limited to a certain part of the market.

It is noteworthy that marketing adaptation strategies do not necessarily mean that members of multilingual markets see adverts in the different official languages. For instance, in her research about marketing language policies on the Belgian market, Vermeulen (2018) shows that German is disregarded. As a consequence, she concludes that Belgium is essentially perceived as a bilingual, Dutch- and French-speaking, market. Some firms choose to communicate in both these languages. Others address their audience only in one of those. This is explained by Vermeulen (2018)'s interviewees as an adaptation to the vast majority of their firm target market. Therefore, the researcher highlights that companies whose target audience is divided into language groups of a similar size tend to use these different groups' mother tongues. By contrast, firms whose target market predominantly speaks the same language can afford to only communicate in this one. Nevertheless, Vermeulen (2018) underlines that this practice happens most frequently on companies' social media rather than webpages.

To sum up, the use of local languages in advertising can be profitable to firms. It enables them to address the specificities of their target market while increasing

their chances of being liked, recalled and recognised. Thus, adopting an English-only policy appears to prevent successful growth. Interestingly, marketing adaptation strategies do not always plan to advertise in all the languages of their target market. Sometimes, companies choose to advertise in their specific target audience's language only.

3. Data and Method

This chapter describes the method used to answer the research questions which are at the heart of this dissertation. It also provides information about the collection of the data used and the Belgian and Swiss telecommunications companies from which it was collected.

3.1. Research Questions

This dissertation sets out to analyse two central elements to social media communication campaigns for multilingual markets: the uses of videos and languages. To do so, the following research questions are addressed: (1) To what extent do companies use videos in comparison with other formats? (2) To what extent do companies use English in comparison with local languages? (3) Do these variables correlate? To gain a more precise insight into the uses of videos and languages, the visual characteristics of posts and their content will be analysed.

3.2. Data and Method

To better understand the use of videos, the data will be gathered from Instagram. The social medium offers the possibility to post both pictures and videos and will thus help understand which of the two is preferred in communication campaigns. Due to their multilingual target market, the analysed posts on the social medium will also provide us with insights into how companies make use of their target market's national languages. Thanks to quantitative and qualitative analyses, the data will be thoroughly examined.

3.2.1. Data Collection

Instagram posts were collected over the period of December 2022. The month of December was selected because this month, and the holiday season, are critical periods of time from a commercial point of view. The collected data should offer an interesting and rich panorama.

To make sure the firms under investigation target the whole of a national audience, and not only one specific language group, telecommunications companies were selected. As a matter of fact, their services are needed in the entire target market where they operate and specific to this one.

Thus, data was collected from the Instagram accounts of telecommunications companies from two different multilingual countries, i.e. Belgium and Switzerland. Belgium counts three official languages: Dutch, French and German. They are respectively spoken by 57%, 42% and 1% of the population³. In Switzerland, there are four official languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. 62.6% of the Swiss population speaks German (standard or Swiss). 22.9% of it speaks French; 8.2%, Italian. Romansh is spoken by 0.5% of the country population⁴.

The two Belgian firms under investigation are Proximus and Orange. The two Swiss companies are Wingo and Salt. To contextualise our findings, it is important to briefly describe the companies in the next paragraphs.

Proximus was founded in 1930 and operates in Belgium. At that time, the company was known under the name *Régie des Télégraphes et des Téléphones* (RTT). The firm's activities focussed, at the time, on providing phones to the Belgian

³ <https://www.brussels.info/language/>

Last consulted on 10th May 2023

⁴ https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-us/planning/about-switzerland/general-facts/facts-about-switzerland/language-distribution/?_gl=1*1ktt3pi*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTE2OTE4NzEyMy4xNjgzNzExNzkw*_ga_F6N1LVHY7B*MTY4MzcxMTc4OS4xLjAuMTY4MzcxMTc4OS4wLjAuMA..#Header

Last consulted on 10th May 2023

market⁵. In 1992, the brand changes name and is called Belgacom until 2015, when it becomes Proximus. Nowadays, the company has extended its scope of practice and provides TV, Internet, landline and mobile phones services. In addition, the company counts two subsidiaries, BICS and Telesign, through which it is able to offer reliable and secured communication worldwide⁶.

It is noteworthy that the company owns no less than six Instagram accounts. Four of them are dedicated to specific Proximus services: *pickx* and *pickx+*. Those enable their users to check the programmes that are available on television channels, streaming platforms, and VOD on a single screen. Furthermore, they provide their users with additional television channels dedicated to leisure (sport, cinema, music). The Instagram accounts of these services are each available in Dutch and French. In addition to these accounts, Proximus shares information relating to the company, its values, and actions for a better world via the account *proximusgroup*. This account is in English only. Finally, the Instagram account *proximus* rounds up general information about the brand and its services. For this reason, and to establish a more relevant comparison with Instagram accounts of other companies, the latter account will be the one analysed in the framework of this investigation.

The second firm present on the Belgian market investigated in this dissertation is **Orange**. Orange is one of the main telecommunications companies in Europe and in Africa. In this dissertation, attention will be directed to one of its subsidiaries: Orange Belgium. As its name suggests, it operates on the Belgian market. However, it also provides telecommunications services in Luxembourg through its subsidiary Orange Communications Luxembourg. As a result, Orange Belgium is one of the main

⁵ https://www.proximus.com/fr/our-company/company_history.html

Last consulted on 19th March 2023

⁶ <https://www.proximus.com/fr/our-company/our-profile.html>

Last consulted on 19th March 2023

actors on the telecommunications market in Belgium as well as in Luxemburg⁷. The Orange subsidiary operating in Luxemburg has an Instagram account of its own. It will not be taken into account within the framework of our analysis. As a result, our data collection will include Instagram posts of *orange_belgium*, the only Instagram account of the company for Belgium.

The first Swiss company examined is **Wingo**. It has offered telecommunications services in Switzerland since 2015. Those are supplied using the Swisscom network. Wingo defines itself as pragmatic and focussed on the essential, providing their clients with precisely what they need. The brand mainly sells its products online⁸. The Instagram account of the brand, *wingo_ch*, will be at the heart of this study.

Finally, social media marketing of the telecommunications company **Salt** will be investigated. The brand launched in 2015. In the past, it was known under the name Orange Switzerland. However, the subsidiary was sold in 2012, which provided the buyers with the opportunity to devise a brand-new mark, specifically intended for the Swiss market. This new brand, Salt, is free of a parent company and the constraints which it implies⁹. For our analysis, data from the *saltmobile* Instagram account will be retrieved.

3.2.2. Method

The collected data will be analysed according to two different methods.

On the one hand, a quantitative analysis will help determine to what extent marketing videos, by contrast to other formats, are used. In addition, the number and

⁷ <https://corporate.orange.be/fr/propos-dorange/qui-sommes-nous>

Last consulted on 19th March 2023

⁸ <https://www.wingo.ch/fr/a-propos>

Last consulted on 19th March 2023

⁹ [https://prophet.com/case-](https://prophet.com/case-studies/salt/#:~:text=In%202012%2C%20Orange%20Switzerland%20(now,constraints%20of%20the%20parent%20company)

[studies/salt/#:~:text=In%202012%2C%20Orange%20Switzerland%20\(now,constraints%20of%20the%20parent%20company](https://prophet.com/case-studies/salt/#:~:text=In%202012%2C%20Orange%20Switzerland%20(now,constraints%20of%20the%20parent%20company)

Last consulted on 26th March 2023

proportion of posts in English (in comparison with other languages) will also be calculated.

On the other hand, a qualitative analysis will investigate the content of the posts published by the companies. It will tackle both visual and thematic contents of the publications and thus shed light on how companies communicate with their followers.

Finally, both analyses will be linked. The potential relationship between the formats, languages, thematic and visual contents will be explored. In other words, the study will seek to establish whether certain types of posts tend to be systematically published in a certain language or through a specific visual. As the focus is on both Belgian firms (Proximus, Orange) and Swiss enterprises (Wingo, Salt), the investigation will explore if companies operating in plurilingual countries adopt similar strategies or if these significantly differ.

4. Quantitative Analysis

In this chapter, the collected data will be analysed in a quantitative perspective. A first section will examine the number of publications posted by the companies and their formats. Two of them were identified: picture and reel. The reel is a specific Instagram format which enables the platform user to publish video clips potentially lasting up to 90 seconds (if filmed via the Instagram application)¹⁰ or up to 15 minutes (if uploaded as pre-shot videos)¹¹. In this dissertation, the words *reel*, *video post/ publication* and *video* will therefore be used as synonyms. A second section of this chapter will scrutinise the frequency of use of languages in the publications under study. These data will first be analysed for each company (Proximus, Orange,

¹⁰ <https://help.instagram.com/270447560766967>

Last consulted on 8th August 2023

¹¹ <https://business.instagram.com/instagram-reels>

Last consulted on 8th August 2023

Wingo then Salt). Subsequently, comparisons between the companies' operational mode will be drawn.

4.1. Number and Format of Posts

This section examines the frequency and format of Instagram posts shared by the companies under investigation during December 2022.

4.1.1. Proximus

Proximus published no less than 19 posts. Sixteen of them were shared through a specific Instagram format: the reel. However, it is not the only way which the telecommunications company used to post videos. The Proximus Instagram account displays two posts which appear as a collection of pictures. Yet, once swiping through the publications, it turns out that three of the four parts of the posts are video clips. In other words, the publication is not a video as such, but it mostly uses this medium. As a consequence, the post format does not seem to be the most convenient. To watch all the videos and see the entire posts, viewers need to press the little arrow on the right of their screen. Otherwise, all that the viewer sees is the picture or a video being played on a loop. However, with this hybrid format, the number of Proximus posts exploiting the video technology amounts to 18. In other words, the brand resorted to videos at a rate of 94.7% regarding their December 2022 publications. Only one post was a picture. (cf. Table 1).

Proximus' Posts (19)		
Reels (Videos)	Picture & Videos	Picture
16	2	1

Table 1: Format of Proximus' Posts

4.1.2. Orange

During December 2022, the Belgian subsidiary Orange shared seven posts. All of them were videos.

4.1.3. Wingo

The Swiss telecommunications company Wingo posted eight publications. Half of these are videos. The other half is composed of pictures. (cf. Table 2).

Wingo's Posts (8)	
Reels (Videos)	Pictures
4	4

Table 2: Format of Wingo's Posts

4.1.4. Salt

Among the 7 publications shared by Salt in December 2022, none featured videos. The brand resorted to the use of pictures in all the posts under investigation.

4.1.5. Comparison between the Companies

As is clear from the findings presented above, the communication campaigns under investigation show significant differences. On the one hand, the analysis highlights a large discrepancy in the number of posts published. Orange, Wingo, and Salt shared content in similar proportions and respectively published seven, eight and seven posts. By contrast, Proximus posted 19 publications, that is to say the brand shared between two and three times more content than the other companies under investigation. On the other hand, the companies resorted to several publication formats in different proportions. The December 2022 feeds of Proximus, Orange, Wingo and Salt were respectively composed of 94.7%, 100%, 50% and 0% of videos. The remaining percentages refer to posts in a picture format.

4.2. Language Use

A variety of language policies can be observed in communication campaigns. Throughout these, brands can choose to consistently use languages, and apply a one-language-only policy, or they can use languages according to different patterns. In this section, the use of languages in the communication campaigns of Proximus, Orange, Wingo and Salt is examined.

To better analyse language use in the brands' Instagram posts, the content of these posts has been divided into three categories, which do not necessarily feature the same language: main component, captions, and subtitles (cf. Figure 1). The *main component* refers to the visual and/ or auditive content of the publications. *Captions* are the comments which the companies provide to add information about the main component. *Subtitles* only appear in videos and are displayed on a banner. They provide information when the audio does not, transcribe or translate what the speakers say.

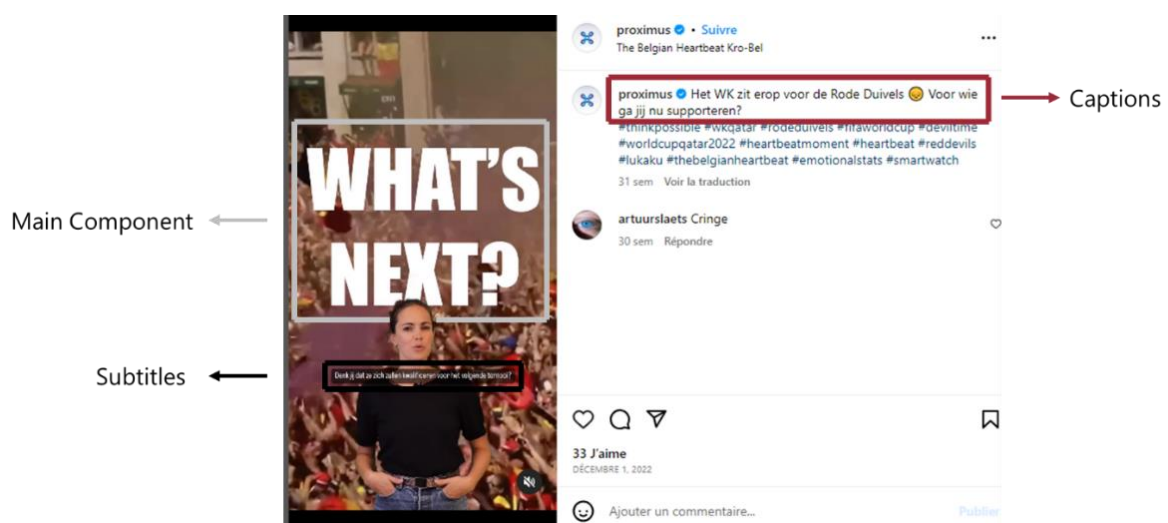


Figure 1: Example of a main component, captions, and subtitles

4.2.1. Proximus

In December 2022, Proximus resorted to three different languages: English and two local languages, Dutch and French. These were used either individually, in which case the main component, captions, and sometimes subtitles featured only one language, or either in combination with one another. In the latter case, the main component was in English, and captions were provided in Dutch and French. Interestingly, two posts designed in Dutch included a few words in English. (cf. Table 3). When subtitles were displayed, they used the same language as the main component. As their use simply serves as an illustration of the main component, table 3 does not reference subtitles.

Language Use in Proximus' Posts (19)						
Posts Predominantly in one Language (15)				Posts Combining Languages (4)		
	English	Dutch	French		English	Dutch & French
Main component & captions	5	6 → 2 of which marginally use English	4	Main component	4	-
				Captions	-	4

Table 3: Language Use in Proximus' Posts

Five publications (i.e. 26.3% of all the December 2022 Proximus posts) were completely published in English. Their main components and captions were both provided in this language (cf. Figure 2).

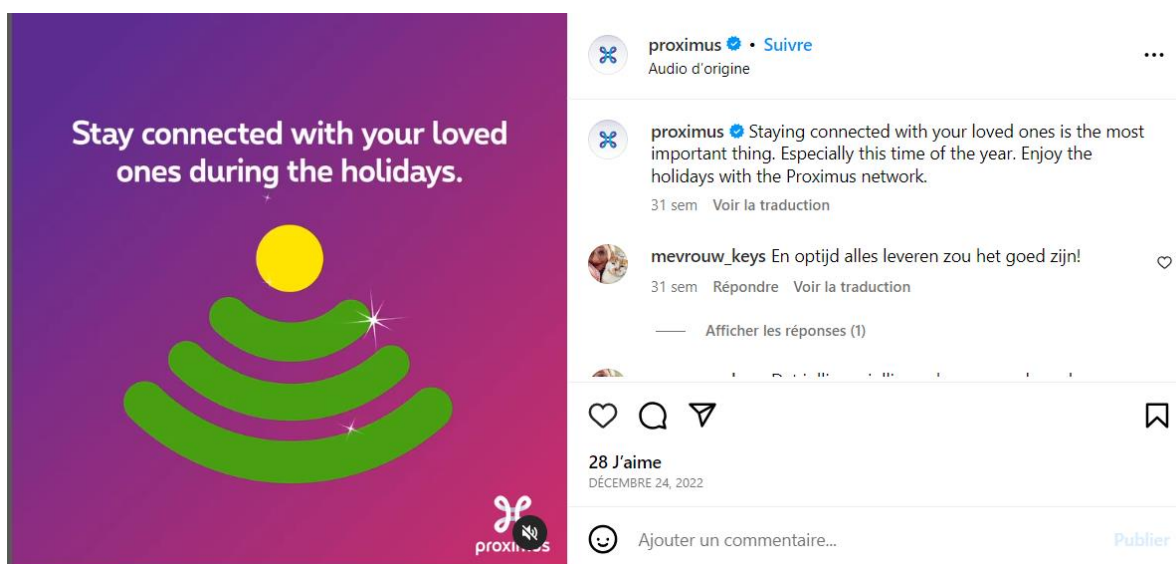


Figure 2: Proximus Post in English only

Four posts out of the total 19 publications (21% of all the December 2022 Proximus posts) used English in combination with local languages. In those instances, the main component was always written in English. Nevertheless, captions were provided in both French and Dutch (cf. Figure 3).



Figure 3: Proximus Post in English, Dutch, and French

Proximus also published posts only in Belgian local languages, i.e. Dutch and French. The brand shared six posts (31.6% of its feed) specifically targeted at a Dutch-speaking audience while 21% of its December 2022 feed, or four posts out of 19, featured French only.

Two reels (10.5% of all the December 2022 Proximus posts) whose main components, captions and subtitles were in Dutch included English words. For example, one of them showed a background on which the utterance “What’s next?” was written in thick white capital letters (cf. Figure 1, p.33). Another shot of the reel displayed the English words “Stress level” (cf. Figure 4). However, the words were not pronounced.



Figure 4: Post in Dutch and some English

By contrast, the combination of languages appeared in the speaker's speech in the other reel posted in Dutch and, to some extent, English. It was thus a case of code-mixing. This phenomenon was also visible thanks to subtitles provided by Proximus (cf. Figure 5). Incidentally, sentences (1) and (2) below are a compilation of those. Italics (my emphasis) were, however, added to distinguish English from Dutch. The different subtitles forming the sentences are separated by hyphens. In the reel, utterances (1) and (2) can, therefore, be heard and read:

- (1) "Ik ben verrast over hoe klein en licht hij is - Maar *size doesn't matter* - Want hem gebruiken is echt kinderspel!"
- (2) "Goed nieuws voor op *lazy days* - Want dor de ingebouwde *smart tv* - Hebben we toegang tot alle *streaming* platformen - Of dromen we een beetje weg onder de sterren"



Figure 5: Code-mixing in Dutch and English in a Proximus Post

4.2.2. Orange

All the publications of the telecommunications company Orange featured content and captions in English. The Belgian national languages were never used, except for two links redirecting users to the French- and Dutch-speaking versions of an Orange webpage and the Dutch word *kroketjes* appearing in a reel (cf. Figure 6).



Figure 6: Code-mixing in English and Dutch in an Orange Post

4.2.3. Wingo

Wingo extensively resorted to two of the Swiss national languages: French and German. Those were used in the captions of seven out of the eight analysed posts of the brand. They were associated to posts whose main component was in German (three publications), in German and French (two publications) or featured no language (two publications). Solely one publication was in German only. English is present in 50% of the Wingo December 2022 feed. Indeed, the subtitles of videos in which speakers expressed themselves in German were provided in English. A reel also featured code-mixing. Although the speaker talked German with a strong Swiss accent throughout the video, she uttered the words “Why not!” in English (cf. Table 4).

Language Use in Wingo's Posts (8)				
	No language	English	German	German & French
Main component	2	-	4 → 1 of which marginally uses English	2
Subtitles (in the 4 video posts only)	-	4	-	-
Captions	-	-	1	7

Table 4: Language Use in Wingo's Posts

4.2.4. Salt

The seven December 2022 posts of the telecommunications company Salt featured three official languages of Switzerland in the captions, i.e. German, French and Italian. The main components featured no language, except for two publications. One of them displayed German while the other was in English.

English words were present in three posts of the company, i.e. 42.9% of the investigated publications. Thus, *Good vibes*, *Dark Mode* and *Team* were respectively visible in French, German and both German and Italian sentences. Although German and Italian borrowed the English word *Team*, the words *bonnes ondes* and

Dunkelmodus could have been featured instead of English words in the other posts (cf. Table 5).

Language Use in Salt's Posts (7)				
	No language	English	German	German, French & Italian
Main component	5	1	1	-
Captions	-	-	-	7 → 3 of which marginally use English

Table 5: Language Use in Salt's Posts

4.2.5. Comparison between the Companies

The analysis reveals that the companies under investigation use different linguistic strategies. English can be used on its own (Proximus, Orange), in combination with local languages (Proximus, Wingo, Salt) or even as words borrowed by a local language (Salt). Local languages can be used separately, and posts then display one of them only (Proximus, Wingo). They can also be used together, and publications show several local languages (Wingo, Salt). Interestingly, publications can feature no language in their main components (Wingo, Salt).

A widely spread phenomenon was also highlighted: the use of a few words from another language than the one in which the content was predominantly designed. It appears in all the campaigns under investigation (cf. Table 6).

Marginal Use of a Language in Content Predominantly Designed in another Language	
Proximus	10.50%
Orange	14.29%
Wingo	12.50%
Salt	42.90%

} of the posts under investigation

Table 6: Marginal Use of a Language in Content Predominantly Designed in another Language

5. Qualitative Analysis

In this section, data will be analysed through a qualitative perspective. In this regard, the visual characteristics and topics of posts will be scrutinised.

5.1. Visual Characteristics of Posts

To understand how companies build their communication campaigns, an insight into their visual strategies is provided. Consistent and divergent use of visual elements will be analysed. Finally, a comparison between the companies' strategies will be drawn.

5.1.1. Proximus

In the Proximus 2022 December feed, two main types of publications can be distinguished: those with a purple background and those with a white background (cf. Figure 7). The red edge on figure 7 separates the analysed publications from others.

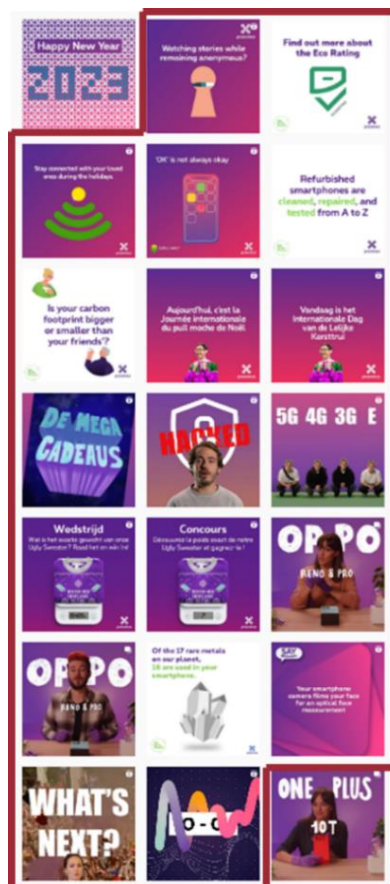


Figure 7: Proximus' December 2022 Feed

5.1.1.1. Posts with Purple Backgrounds

Ten reels, 52.6% of the Proximus December 2022 feed, continuously displayed a gradient purple background. This gradient sometimes varied, going from purple to more or less intense red-pink hues. In two of these publications, however, the gradient featured orange and green. One post showed a gradient purple background only in its final shot. The two posts presented as a collection of pictures also showed a purple background, but not a gradient one.

Among the ten reels published with a gradient purple background, six showed the Proximus logo in white in the lower right-hand corner. One publication displayed the brand logo in its upper right-hand corner. One post did not show the Proximus logo but featured a "SAY Whuuut?!" speech bubble in its upper left-hand corner. In the last two reels with a gradient purple background, no brand logo was present. This may be due to the presence of speakers.

One of the reels with a purple background is part of a specific series of posts. It is called "Say Whuuut?!" and presents news related to the use of smartphones. To distinguish this series of posts from other publications, Proximus created a specific design. This one consists in a background where numerous moving triangles can be observed. They are coloured in a gradient purple frequently used by the brand. In addition, a speech bubble, in which the words "Say Whuuut?!" are written, is located in the upper left-hand corner. The speech bubble edge and its text are purple (cf. Figure 8). To emphasise the series identity, the whole of its posts also feature the same music.



Figure 8: Design of the Say Whuuut?! background by Proximus

Specific purple backgrounds were used in two other publications. They presented a particular design to indicate that they were part of a special series of posts: *The Belgian Heartbeat*. This name could be read on the upper part of the background. It was written in a gradient purple colour, which is another Proximus visual specificity. However, these backgrounds do not show the Proximus logo (cf. Figure 9).

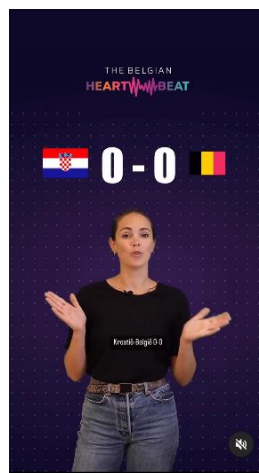


Figure 9: The Belgian Heartbeat background by Proximus

Another reel also distinguished itself from other Proximus publications. By contrast to all the analysed posts, it displayed a *Safeonweb.be* logo in the lower left-hand corner of the screen. The transitional textual effects also seemed to differentiate the video from other Proximus publications. Thus, the text did not appear sliding

from one of the screen sides, but it seemed as though it materialised and vanished rotating around a cylinder. The last two shots also only appeared in this reel. They consist in a plain purple background on which a white Proximus logo appears. The brand logo then seems to disappear into the distance and the video ends on the Proximus motto: Think possible (cf. Figure 10).



Figure 10: Particular Features of the Proximus Post about Cybercriminality

5.1.1.2. Posts with White Backgrounds

As in the majority of publications with a purple background, a Proximus logo was visible in the four posts with a white background. To contrast with this colour, the logo was in purple. Three of the publications displayed it in a plain purple, whereas one post, the only picture of the December 2022 Proximus' feed, featured a gradient purple-blue logo. Interestingly, all these publications also showed green. (cf. Figure 7, p.40).

In addition, they all displayed a sign in the lower left-hand corner. It features the three words *use*, *reuse* and *recycle* written in a green font one underneath the other. These are inscribed in a circle composed of three arrows, denoting the idea of circular use and, therefore, the *use – reuse – recycle* motto (cf. Figure 11). Publications with white backgrounds were thus all dedicated to sustainability.



Figure 11: Post dedicated to Sustainability by Proximus

5.1.1.3. Posts Featuring Human Protagonists

Proximus publications with human protagonists, five of the 19 that were analysed, suggest that visual consistency matters to Proximus as elements which are not directly related to the brand, such as sceneries or clothes, did not feature Proximus' colours but were all in neutral colours not to clash with these.

On the one hand, when the background of a publication was not a gradient purple one, sceneries were composed of neutral colours, mostly white and wooden elements. Plants were also displayed. (cf. Figure 12).



Figure 12: Use of neutral Colours in Post Sceneries

On the other hand, the protagonists all wore neutral-coloured clothes. These range from black to beige and from grey to white (cf. Figures 12 and 13). This consistency was even more striking in one post, displayed on the right of figure 13. There is a certain symmetry in the men’s appearance as the ones crouching at the extremities (under the 5G and E writings) wear white T-shirts and dark trousers. The most obvious differences lie in the colour of their shoes and a black strap worn by the ‘5G’ person. The ‘4G’ and ‘3G’ people both wear black sweaters and dark trousers. Once again, they can be distinguished through the colour of their shoes and strap worn by the ‘4G’ man.

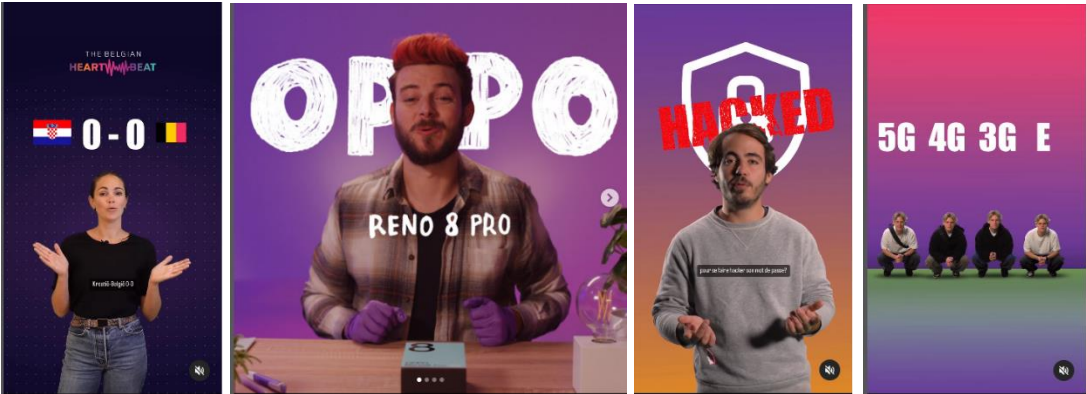


Figure 13: Use of Neutral Colours in Clothing by Proximus

5.1.1.4. Proximus’ Visual Brand Identity

To sum up, Proximus showed consistent patterns in the use of backgrounds, brand logos, scenery elements and protagonists’ clothing. Except for the publications with white backgrounds, which contrasted with the rest of the brand feed, even specific series of posts (*The Belgian Heartbeat, Say Whuuut?!*) featured the brand colour. As a result, two main visual identity conveyors were pinpointed: the purple colour and the brand logo, which were used in a vast majority of posts (cf. Table 7).

Frequency of Use of Brand Identity Conveyors	
Purple background	73.68%
Proximus logo	57.89%

Table 7: Frequency of Use of Brand Identity Conveyors by Proximus

5.1.2. Orange

From a visual perspective, one notices the use of a consistent colour code across Orange's December 2022 posts. Orange, white and black were employed in all posts, and even all video shots, be it as a background or as a writing colour. However, the people present in those publications wore clothes whose colour arguably did not match the visual brand identity (cf. Figure 14).

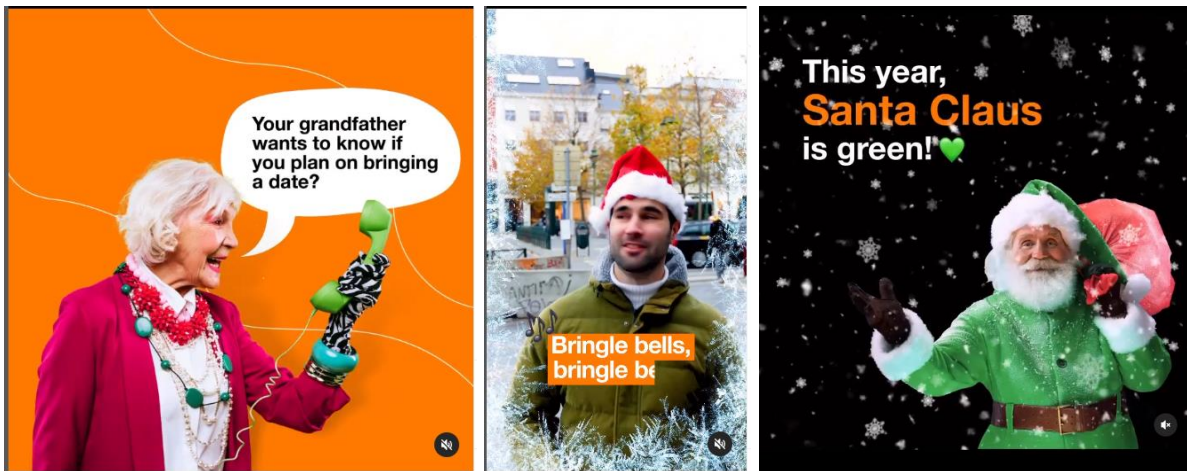


Figure 14: The Use of Colours by Orange

Another interesting element concerns the use of transitional effects. Orange resorted to the same windy or splashing effect across its publications (cf. Figure 15). Only two posts, 28.57% of the December 2022 feed, did not feature this signature effect.



Figure 15: The Signature Transitional Effect of Orange

In addition, the analysis reveals that Orange resorted to emoticons in all its posts. Several of them were often included in the same video shot. They always appeared next to a textual element and illustrated it. (cf. Figure 16).

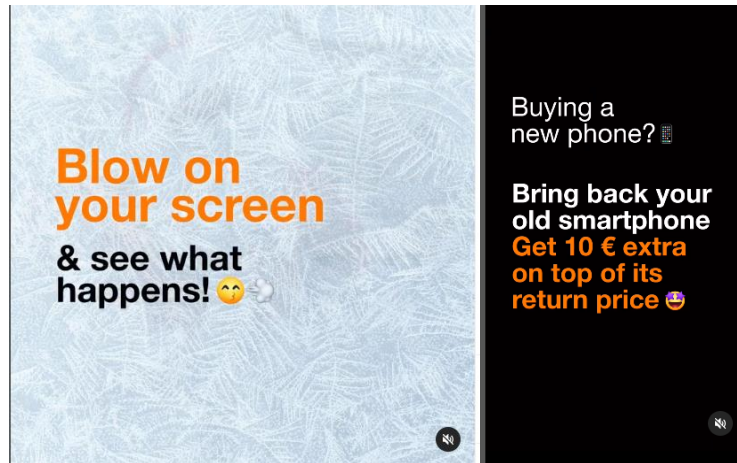


Figure 16: The Use of Emoticons by Orange

5.1.3. Wingo

Although the Wingo December 2022 feed seems quite heterogeneous (cf. Figure 17), seven posts out of the eight published by the telecommunications company featured an element recalling brand identity. The red edge on figure 17 separates the analysed publications from others.

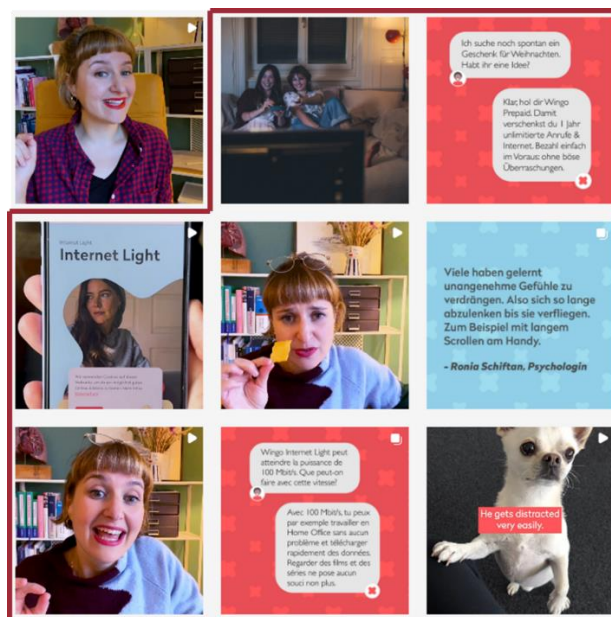


Figure 17: Wingo's December 2022 Feed

Two picture posts displayed a background in the colour of the brand: light red. To emphasise brand identity, the background also included Wingo logos. Interestingly, both publications depicted a conversation chat.

The same background with Wingo logos was used in another publication. In this instance, it, however, appeared in blue.

In all its reels, four posts out of eight, Wingo included a wavy effect to introduce the video's last shots (cf. Figure 18). A light red background then appeared with a message to spur the viewers of the reels to follow Wingo on Instagram.



Figure 18: Wavy effect by Wingo

In three out of the four reels, Wingo displayed subtitles in the colour of the brand. The subtitles of the last reel did not appear on a light red banner. Interestingly, except for the subtitle banners, the last shots of videos and their transitional effects, Wingo reels showed neutral sceneries. In the videos featuring a psychologist, she seems to be at home or in her office; a shelf with books stands behind her. In the other reel featuring another person, she also seems to be at home. Another reel shows an office.

The analysis therefore reveals that Wingo made use of at least one element recalling brand identity in seven of the investigated publications. These include the brand's light red colour, its logo, and a signature wavy effect. They were respectively

used in 75% (always as a background and sometimes also in subtitles banners), 37.5% and 50% of Wingo’s December 2022 Instagram feed (cf. Table 8).

Frequency of Use of Brand Identity Conveyors		
Light red colour	Subtitle banners	37.5%
	Backgrounds (picture posts & last shots of the reels)	75%
Wingo logo in the background	37.5%	
Wavy transitional effect	50%	

Table 8: Frequency of Use of Brand Identity Conveyors by Wingo

5.1.4. Salt

Visual brand identity appears as a central element to the Salt Instagram communication campaign. Salt resorted to black and green in all the publications under investigation. Although it might not be obvious in two publications, dedicated to #WomenInTech, the background featured a greenish hue. Besides, the women on the pictures wore black clothes. (cf. Figure 19). The red edge on figure 19 distinguishes the analysed publications from others.

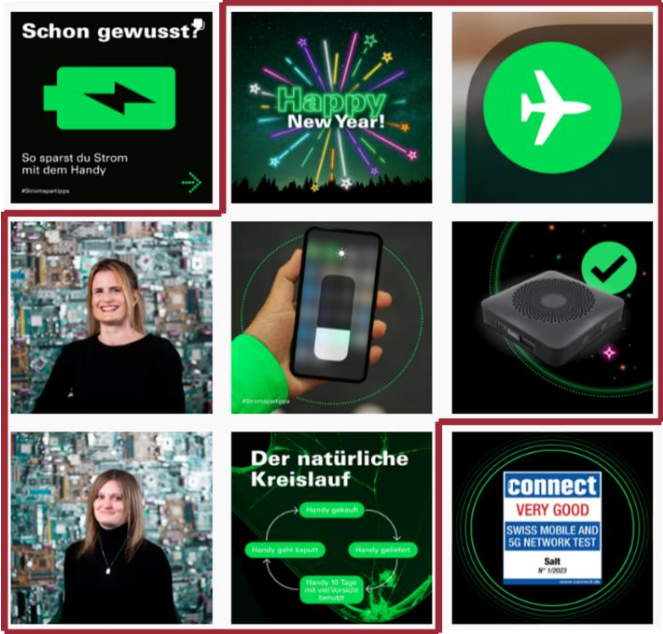


Figure 19: Salt’s December 2022 Feed

5.1.5. Comparison between the Companies

All companies displayed a visual brand identity across their publications. To do so, they consistently used colours associated to their company. In addition, Proximus and Wingo incorporated their logos in backgrounds. These were respectively used in 57.89% and 37.50% of the firms' Instagram feeds. Transitional effects in videos were also pinpointed as brand identity conveyors in two companies under investigation. Orange used a signature effect in 71.43% of its December 2022 publications. Wingo made use of one in 50% of its. In addition to displaying elements shaping the visual identity of their brands, three firms arguably featured elements familiar to the viewers of the posts. Proximus showed neutral sceneries (including wooden and white components and plants) in 10.53% of its December 2022 feed. Orange used emoticons in all of its. Wingo, by depicting offices, living rooms or conversation chats, tapped into its posts' viewers' daily lives in 87.5% of the analysed publications.

5.2. Content of the Posts

In this section, the content of the posts published by the companies under investigation is analysed. Two main categories were identified: publications (1) related to the telecommunications field and (2) unrelated to the telecommunications field.

The posts of the first category promoted products, services or provided tips to use them better. To clearly distinguish products and services, the following definitions of the Collins dictionary serve as references. "A **product** is something that is produced and sold in large quantities, often as a result of a manufacturing process."¹² In the sector of telecommunications, smartphones are a typical example of product. "**Services** are activities such as tourism, banking, and selling things which are part of a country's economy, but are not concerned with producing or manufacturing

¹² <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/product>
Last consulted on 24th July 2023

goods.”¹³ In the sector of telecommunications, Internet and data connections are common services.

The posts which were not related to telecommunications dealt with more diverse subjects, such as the holidays, contests, lifestyle, or women’s role in the company.

As several languages appear in this section, free translations into English will be provided. My translations are in italics in the examples provided below.

5.2.1. Proximus (19 posts)

Proximus published 13 posts related to the telecommunications field. Four of them promoted products, four them showcased services and five of them provided tips related to the use of products or services. Six posts shared content that is unrelated to telecommunications (cf. Table 9).

Topics of Proximus’ Posts			
Telecommunications-Related	Products	21.05%	68.42%
	Services	21.05%	
	Tips	26.32%	
Telecommunications-Unrelated	2022 Football World Cup	10.53%	31.58%
	Ugly Christmas Sweater	21.05%	

Table 9: Topics of Proximus’ Posts

5.2.1.1. Telecommunications-Related Posts (13)

5.2.1.1.1. Posts Promoting Products (4)

Two publications showcased a new product: the smartphone Oppo Reno8 Pro. One post was in Dutch only; the other one, in French only. Interestingly, a man promoted the smartphone to the Dutch-speaking audience while a woman presented

¹³ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/service>
 Last consulted on 24th July 2023

it to the French-speaking followers. Another difference lay in the fourth part of the posts. In the post in Dutch, the person who presents the phone simply points at it. In the post in French, the protagonist appears with a broad smile, taking a selfie. Besides, effects had been added: a sparkle on her teeth emphasises her smile and a white screen furtively appears, so as to mark the moment when she takes the picture.

Proximus showcased another product and published a video to present a projector that its clients could win by participating in a contest.

A publication highlighted a way by which the company can help its customers behave sustainably. Proximus gives them the opportunity to acquire refurbished smartphones. To promote these products, the firm showed the different steps required before offering a refurbished smartphone for sale.

5.2.1.1.2. Posts Promoting Services (4)

In a video post, Proximus spurred its Instagram followers to enjoy their families for Christmas with the text "Stay connected with your loved ones during the holidays." As the post visual showed a Wi-Fi icon (cf. Figure 2, p.34), Proximus craftily links one of its services to the Christmas spirit.

Proximus showcased one of its services in a fun and entertaining manner. The brand illustrated the advantages of good network quality and data connection. To do so, it established a parallelism between these features and the speed with which characters begin to speak.

A reel was dedicated to a unit of measurement which expresses one's impact on the environment: the carbon footprint. The firm took advantage of this video to shed light upon one of its services: *MyProximus App* gives its users the possibility to assess their phones' carbon footprint.

A post provided information about Eco Rating and one's smartphone consumption in CO₂.

5.2.1.1.3. Posts Providing Tips (5)

One publication highlighted the work of a Belgian start-up, which makes it possible for their customers to analyse their heartbeat using their smartphone camera. As there is no direct link redirecting Instagram users to the website of the start-up, the post appeared to shed light upon a feature that one's smartphone could have rather than to promote a partnership between Proximus and another company.

Proximus dedicated a reel to cybersecurity and gave tips to its French-speaking followers. A male speaker taught a few tricks to avoid being hacked.

Another post warned against cybercriminality and the downloading of applications which do not come from the official Google Play or App Store providers.

One reel showed how to watch Instagram stories without its sender seeing it.

The only Proximus picture post highlighted how challenging it is for the smartphone industry to be sustainable. It indicates: "Of the 17 rare metals on our planet, 16 are used in your smartphone". The captions (in French and Dutch) go on: *This is why extending the use and the lifespan of smartphones is so important! Think about recycling them, too!* Thus, Proximus spurred its customers to act sustainably and provided them with some tips to do so.

5.2.1.2. Telecommunications-Unrelated Posts (6)

A reel provided information about the heartbeat, calories loss and decibels emitted by Belgian people during the 2022 football World Cup match between Belgium and Croatia. Supporters were given the opportunity to download an application which would connect their smartwatches, recording data about their heartbeat, calorie loss and decibels, to a Proximus database. Proximus was then able to share how the supporters experienced matches in which the Belgian national football team played. In this case, the match opposing Belgium and Croatia.

Another reel was dedicated to the 2022 football World Cup. It compared the data retrieved from supporters’ smartwatches during various matches in which the Belgian team played and highlighted the differences in people’s reactions.

Proximus shared two posts celebrating the International Ugly Christmas Sweater Day. One was designed for its Dutch-speaking followers. The other targeted a French-speaking audience.

Proximus also organised contests for its followers in order for them to win an ugly Christmas sweater of the company. As for the previous Ugly Christmas Sweater post, a publication was shared in Dutch and another one in French.

5.2.2. Orange (7 posts)

Orange shared four publications linked to the telecommunications sector. Two of them spurred followers to buy products in the shops of the firm. One post promoted a service and one post provided tips. Three publications were not related to telecommunications (cf. Table 10). Interestingly, two of these publications nevertheless promoted a service of Orange. It is called *Orange Thank You* and gives clients of the brand the opportunity to receive gifts or get discounts.

Topics of Orange’s Posts			
Telecommunications-Related	Products	28.57%	57.14%
	Services	14.29%	
	Tips	14.29%	
Telecommunications-Unrelated	<i>Orange Thank You</i>	28.57%	42.86%
	Christmas Wishes	14.29%	

Table 10: Topics of Orange’s Posts

5.2.2.1. Telecommunications-Related Posts (4)

5.2.2.1.1. Posts Promoting Products (2)

A video shed light upon the sale of refurbished smartphones. It showed the verification process which devices undergo before being offered for sale.

To further promote sustainability, the telecommunications company showcased a temporary offer. It invited its customers to bring back their old smartphone by giving them ten euros in addition to their device return price. With this offer, the brand invited its followers to buy products in their shops.

5.2.2.1.2. Posts Promoting Services (1)

In another publication, Orange depicted family conversations and illustrated how the holiday season furthers them. For the occasion, the firm presented a special offer to support its clients by providing them with more data. The firm claimed: "With Go Intense Special edition, you get 22 GB for only 22 €!"

5.2.2.1.3. Posts Providing Tips (1)

The company supplied its customers with a tip to use their Instagram application better and upload two pictures in one story (a short video temporarily available on the social medium). Noteworthy, this advice did not address the whole of the clientele, but only iPhone users.

5.2.2.2. Telecommunications-Unrelated Posts (3)

Orange shared a video showcasing its service *Orange Thank You*. The following textual elements: "Orange Thank You brings you presents all year round!", "Free movies tickets", "Free mobile data", "Discounts for family trips, concerts & more" and "Crazy contests" succeeded each other on the screen.

A publication provided an overview of an event organised by the brand in the framework of an *Orange Thank You* contest. This one took place in Pairi Daiza, a Belgian animal park.

Orange wished a merry Christmas to its customers. To do so, it showed Santa Claus dancing and a Christmas tree in the colours of the brand.

5.2.3. Wingo (8 Posts)

Wingo shared an equal ratio of publications related and unrelated to telecommunications. The former (four posts) showcased products or services of the

company. The latter (four posts) depicted everyday life situations. Three of these posts also provided advice to better handle them (cf. Table 11).

Topics of Wingo's Posts			
Telecommunications-Related	Products	12.50%	50%
	Services	37.50%	
Telecommunications-Unrelated	Life at the Office	12.50%	50%
	Psychology/ Lifestyle Advice	37.50%	

Table 11: Topics of Wingo's Posts

5.2.3.1. Telecommunications-Related Posts (4)

5.2.3.1.1. Posts Promoting Products (1)

The Swiss telecommunications company took advantage of the holiday season to put one of its products, a prepaid phone card, in the spotlight.

5.2.3.1.2. Posts Promoting Services (3)

Wingo chose to advertise one of its services through a picture format. The two parts of the post present the same layout but address different audiences: a French-speaking one and a German-speaking one (cf. Figure 20).



Figure 20: Post Promoting the service Wingo Internet Light

In English, the content of the post could be translated as:

- *Wingo Internet Light can reach until 100 Mbits/s. What can one do with such a speed?*
- *With 100 Mbits/s, you can for example work in Home Office without any problem and quickly up- and download data. Watching movies and series is also no problem.*

The only Wingo reel promoting a service depicted an everyday life situation. The video protagonist watched an Instagram reel which froze due to a poor Internet connection. She then asked a friend if her connection was also slow. The friend recommended Wingo services and the video ended with the following information: "Better network? Get Wingo Internet Light now. @wingo_ch."

Wingo dedicated a post to wishing its customers happy holidays and giving them information about its closing days. The post main component showed two friends enjoying themselves while the captions, originally in German and French, indicated: *Christmas is just around the corner! 🎄 Our customer service will be almost always reachable, except for the 25th December and the New year. As usual, you will also be able to freely get help on our channels and on social media. We wish you happy holidays! 😊* (cf. Figure 21).



Figure 21: Post Wishing Happy Holidays and Informing of Wingo's Closing Days

5.2.3.2. Telecommunications-Unrelated Posts (4)

The four publications unrelated to telecommunications technology showed life at the office, psychology- or lifestyle-related advice.

Wingo tried to bond with its clients showing how a dog brings joy to its offices.

A video showed the psychologist Sonia Schiftan as she gave advice on stress and emotion regulation.

A picture post displayed a sentence uttered in the reel mentioned hereabove. The sentence was translated as follows in the reel: "Many of us have learned to suppress negative emotions because they're unpleasant. We don't admit them and find distractions instead until the negative emotions have gone away. For example, we spend time scrolling on our cellphone." In the picture publication, there are two parts: one displaying the sentence in German; the other, in French (cf. Figure 22).

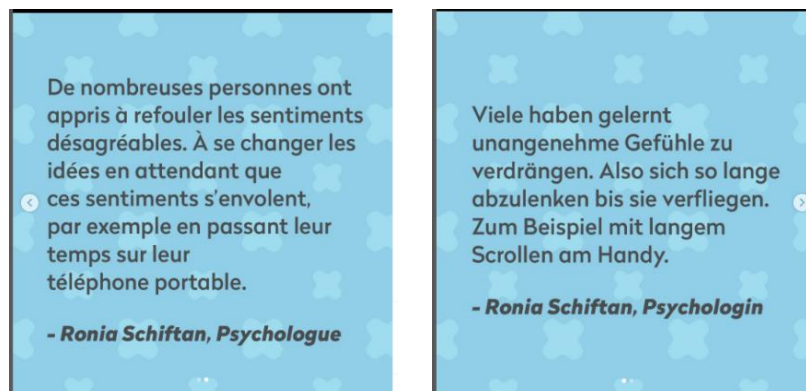


Figure 22: Digital Wellbeing by Wingo

Ronia Schiftan, the same psychologist who gave advice in a former video post, provided new tips. These were about emotional eating.

5.2.4. Salt (7 Posts)

Among Salt's December 2022 publications, two main types can be distinguished. A first part of the posts presented brand products, services or tips related to their use. A second part of the posts dealt with more societal topics. Salt

gave pride of place to women working in the firm by painting their portraits. The company also wished its customers a happy new year (cf. Table 12). As the main component of posts usually featured no text, the analysis will supply the post captions to investigate which topics they address.

Topics of Salt's Posts			
Telecommunications-Related	Products	14.285%	57.14%
	Services	28.57%	
	Tips	14.285%	
Telecommunications-Unrelated	#WomenInTech	28.57%	42.86%
	New Year Wishes	14.29%	

Table 12: Topics of Salt's Posts

5.2.4.1. Telecommunications-Related Posts (4)

5.2.4.1.1. Posts Promoting Products (1)

A publication promoted Fiber boxes while referring to the holiday season. Thus, Salt claimed: *The little goblins work hard to prepare your orders Salt Home. We have Fiber Box stocks and can deliver one to you in no time 🎄👴 order now on salt.ch/home.*

5.2.4.1.2. Posts Promoting Services (2)

Salt showcased one of its services and claimed: *Be it in case of an expensive reparation, fraudulent call charges or a broken/ stolen smartphone, with the option Care, you are covered. Good vibes included 😊📱.* To illustrate the relevance of its service, the brand provided a visual depicting a smartphone life cycle. From the top and going clockwise, one can read in German what could be translated as: *Phone bought, Phone delivered, Phone used with much caution for 10 days, Phone going broken* (cf. Figure 23).



Figure 23: The Natural Life Cycle by Salt

Salt also praised the quality of its network. The brand stated: *The only way to escape from our network. Turn on the airplane mode for a well-deserved break during the holidays ✈️*. The captions were accompanied by the picture provided in figure 24, which enabled the reader to understand the first sentence of the captions.

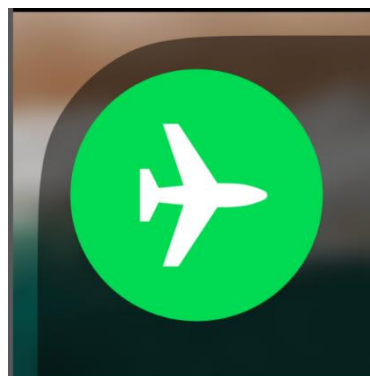


Figure 24: Airplane mode by Salt

5.2.4.1.3. Posts Providing Tips (1)

A post offered tips to reduce one's smartphone energy use. One could read in three of the Swiss national languages, i.e. German, French and Italian: *Phone screens have become increasingly bigger these last years, more and more energy is therefore needed to light them 💡 it is however possible to reduce this consumption thanks to a few simple adjustments. The brighter the screen is, the more energy it consumes. One*

can therefore reduce the screen luminosity to save energy. The dark mode is very efficient and also makes it possible to make energy savings 😊.

5.2.4.2. Telecommunications-Unrelated Posts (3)

Salt publications which did not directly tackle telecommunications can be classified into two categories. On the one hand, two posts were dedicated to women working in the firm. They are part of a series of posts called #WomenInTech. On the other hand, a publication celebrated the new year.

In December 2022, two posts of the series #WomenInTech were published (cf. Figure 25).



Figure 25: Salt December 2022 #WomenInTech

In both publications, captions provided information about who the women are. These were supplied in German, French and Italian. Although the majority of hashtags present in the captions were featured in the followers' language, the #WomenInTech and #SaltFemaleRoleModels were provided in English in the three German, French and Italian versions of the captions.

To introduce the woman on the left of figure 25, Salt gave the following information: #WomenInTech 17: *Lisa has a Master's in International Business Development from the @unineuchatel. She works as a Marketing Communication Manager and co-manages the national campaigns of Marketing and Communication. - #Languages? FR, DE & GB. - #SaltIn3Words? Dynamic | Disruptive | Stimulating –*

#CurrentPhone? iPhone 12 Pro. – #FavouriteApp? Calendar and Health to keep in mind what matters. – #CoffeeOrTee? Both. - #AdviceForYoungWomen? Be optimistic and curious, do not ever stop learning. [This portrait is a part of our series #SaltFemaleRoleModels, follow us to discover more]

As for the woman on the right of figure 25, she was described as:

#WomenInTech 18: Belinda performed a commercial apprenticeship then passed a higher professional exam in Communication, which enabled her to get a Federal Diploma qualifying her as an expert in her field of activity. She is now a Tactical Sales Manager. In her function, with her team, she plans all the sales activities outside the classic channels. #Languages? DE, FR & GB. – Saltin3Words? Quick | Solution-oriented | Efficient - #CurrentPhone? Oppo Find X3 Neo. - #AdviceForYoungWomen? Listen to the advice which is given to you and put it into practice, but never try to play a role, be yourself! [This portrait is a part of our series #SaltFemaleRoleModels, follow us to discover more].

Salt also wished its customers a happy new year. By contrast to the majority of the brand's posts, the picture post contained text (cf. Figure 26). Captions in three Swiss national languages completed this visual: 3, 2, 1 🕒 *The Salt Team wishes you a happy new year 🥳.*



Figure 26: Happy new year by Salt

5.2.5. Comparison between the Companies

The analysis reveals that all companies under investigation shared two main types of publications (cf. Table 13). Some were directly related to the telecommunications field. They showcased products, services or tips to use them. Other posts tackled more diverse topics, such as the holidays, contests, lifestyle, or women's role in the company.

Companies' Rate of Telecommunications-Related and -Unrelated Content		
	Telecommunications-Related Content	Telecommunications-Unrelated Content
Proximus	68.42%	31.58%
Orange	57.14%	42.86%
Wingo	50%	50%
Salt	57.14%	42.86%

Table 13: Companies' Rate of Telecommunications-Related and -Unrelated Content

Interestingly, Orange created a special service offering its clients advantages unrelated to the telecommunications sector: *Orange Thank You*. These include, for example, cinema tickets and discounts. As a consequence, the brand promotes one of its services, *Orange Thank You*, even when its posts do not tackle topics directly related to telecommunications.

Except for Wingo, all firms shared content to spur their customers to act sustainably. Proximus published four posts (21.05% of its 2022 December feed) related to this topic. Orange dedicated two posts, 28.57% of its feed, to it; Salt, one post, 14.29% of its feed.

6. Results

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses will be summarised and examined together. Relationships between the publication formats, language(s), their thematic and visual contents will therefore be explored. The answers to the following research questions (1) To what extent do companies use videos in comparison with other formats? (2) To what extent do companies use English in comparison with local languages? (3) Do these variables correlate? will thus

be provided. The results will first be supplied for each company and will then be analysed altogether.

6.1. Proximus

Proximus published 19 posts during December 2022, 94.7% of which used the video technology. Interestingly, the posts published as pictures showed the same characteristics as videos (colours, textual elements). The firm used languages according to four patterns and shared publications in: (1) English only (26.3% of the December 2022 feed), (2) English in combination with Dutch and French (21%), (3) Dutch (only or predominantly) (31.6%) and (4) French only (21%). Three different series of posts visually distinguished themselves from other publications. These visual particularities, however, do not seem to be related to languages with one exception. Correlations between the visuals of posts and their topics seem stronger.

Four out of the five posts published in **English only** tackled topics related to the use of smartphones. The other publication dealt with Belgian supporters' reactions during the 2022 World Cup football match between Croatia and Belgium. Two of the five publications in English only displayed a particular visual: one was a part of the Proximus *Say Whuuut?!* series of posts (Figure 8, p.42); the other one; a part of the *The Belgian Heartbeat* series (cf. Figure 9, p.42). The other posts featured a gradient purple background characteristic of the brand.

Half of the posts targeted at a **Dutch**-speaking audience were related to Proximus' products and services, the other half were not. Thus, three videos out of six directly showcased products and services: one presented the new Oppo smartphone, one compared different data connections and one illustrated the use of a projector. Three posts tackled more societal events: the football World Cup, ugly Christmas sweaters and a contest to win the Proximus one. Visually speaking, no element differentiated the posts in Dutch from publications in other languages. One reel displayed the same *The Belgian Heartbeat* background (cf. Figure 9, p.42) as a post in English. Both publications tackled the 2022 football World Cup, which suggests that

the relationship between the topics of posts and their visuals might be stronger than the relationship between the languages of posts and their visuals.

Half of the posts in **French only** were related to Proximus products and services, the other half were not. One post was directly linked to a product which can be bought from Proximus: the Oppo Reno8 Pro. One publication provided tips on how to avoid being hacked. Two videos focussed on the Proximus ugly Christmas sweater. No visual element distinguished the publications in French from posts in other languages.

Content published in **English with captions in Dutch and French** seemed to tackle only one theme: sustainability. Language use was not the only consistent element regarding the posts dealing with sustainability. The brand supplied them with a visual identity of their own. In contrast to other Proximus posts, they displayed a white background and a purple Proximus logo in the lower right-hand corner and, in the lower left-hand corner, a sign to mark the identity of the post series dedicated to sustainability. (cf. Figure 27).



Figure 27: Visual Characteristics of the Sustainability Series of Post by Proximus

As a result, the analysis suggests that there is no correlation between the format of the posts and their visual characteristics. The latter rather conveyed brand identity in its use of colour. Besides, some specific series of posts were identified and highlighted the topic which they dealt with (e.g. *The Belgian Heartbeat*, cf. Figure 9, p.42 or the series dedicated to sustainability, cf. Figure 27). Although the series

dedicated to sustainability consistently displayed the same languages, the *The Belgian heartbeat* series included a post in English only and one predominantly in Dutch. Correlations between content and visual therefore seem more significant than those between visual and language. Language appears, however, to be related to content. Topics unrelated to telecommunications tend to be included more often in publications in local languages.

6.2. Orange

Orange shared its seven December 2022 publications in the same format, i.e. the video, and the same language, i.e. English. All posts also showed the same visual characteristics. The analysis therefore cannot reveal any correlation between these factors and the topics of posts.

6.3. Wingo

Wingo published eight posts and resorted to different linguistic strategies. Those differ in accordance with the format of the posts. Thus, the reels published by the brand all made use of English in their subtitles. German was spoken in three of them and one featured no language in its main component. The captions of the four reels were provided in German and French. None of the four picture publications featured English. One of them used German only. One publication displayed no language in its main component and addressed the brand’s followers in German and in French in the captions. Two picture posts made use of German and French in both their main components and captions. (cf. Tables 14 and 15).

Language Use in Wingo’s Video Posts (4)				
	No language	English	German	German & French
Main component	1	-	3	-
Subtitles	-	4	-	-
Captions	-	-	-	4

Table 14: Language Use in Wingo’s Video Posts

Language Use in Wingo's Picture Posts (4)			
	No language	German	German & French
Main component	1	1	2
Captions	-	1	3

Table 15: Language Use in Wingo's Picture Posts

Interestingly, three out of the four videos did not showcase services of the brand. Their sceneries were neutral and showed everyday life offices. The scenery of the other video post, which, by contrast, promoted a service, also displayed a familiar place: a living room. All the videos ended with a signature transitional effect introducing a background in the colour of the brand.

Two out of the four picture posts directly promoted a service provided by Wingo. They shared the same background: a light red one on which brand logos were featured. Besides, they illustrated a familiar situation to the viewer: a conversation chat (cf. Figure 20, p.56). However, they did not share the same languages. One of them displayed German only while the other also used French.

A third publication showed a background with Wingo logos. Nevertheless, it was not in the colour of the brand, but in blue (cf. Figure 22, p.58). This might mark the brand's will to distinguish the picture-formatted publications directly promoting their products from others. The post with a blue background gave advice on emotion regulation. It was provided in German and in French.

The last picture post showed a neutral setting and gave information about the closing days of the customer service. German and French were only used in captions (cf. Figure 21, p.57).

6.4. Salt

The use of languages and formats did not vary across the seven December 2022 publications of Salt. The company always shared picture posts whose captions

were written in German, French and Italian. Other elements distinguished different types of publications. Posts related to products and services of the brand displayed a consistent design: they all featured a black background and green elements. Two publications showed these elements but more discreetly: they did not promote services but put employees in the spotlight (cf. Figure 19, p.49).

6.5. Comparison between the Companies

Except for the Proximus series of posts dedicated to sustainability, language use and the topics dealt with in publications show no correlation. The analysis suggests, however, that language use and post format might be related. Wingo resorted to English in videos only, which could lead to believe that English is more often used in videos than in picture posts and that local languages appear more frequently in picture publications than in videos. This hypothesis might be corroborated by the facts that Orange shared all its posts, which were videos, in English and that Salt extensively resorted to local languages across its publications, which were all pictures. Further research and the analysis of a larger sample of companies' posts are, however, needed to confirm or infirm this hypothesis.

A more striking relationship is the one between the content and the visual of posts. Three companies designed specific layouts for particular series of posts. Proximus created ones dedicated to posts about the 2022 football World Cup and about sustainability; Wingo used a chat conversation to promote its services and Salt distinguished its publications devoted to #WomenInTech by displaying a different design.

It is noteworthy that these visuals included elements reminiscent of the brand identity, which can be seen in a vast majority of posts, independently of their formats. Proximus shared its picture publication in a design similar to the video posts of the series to which it belonged. Wingo included subtitles in the light red colour of the company in the majority of its reels. The firm also displayed this colour in all its reels as a closure shot.

7. Discussion of the Findings

To complement the findings of this study, this chapter sets out to interpret them in relation with previous research discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The different variables analysed in this dissertation will be examined individually. The use of videos, their connections with the visual characteristics of posts, the use of languages and their relationship with the content of posts will thus be reviewed.

7.1. The Use of Videos

The four companies under investigation, Proximus, Orange, Wingo and Salt, respectively resorted to video technology in 94.7%, 100%, 50% and 0% of their Instagram posts in December 2022.

The Belgian companies Proximus and Orange both extensively published video posts, presumably capitalising on what Appel et al. (2020) see as the warmer touch of the format and the possibility of sharing more personalised content.

The Swiss telecommunications firms Wingo and Salt, however, seemed more cautious about the challenges inherent in the video format. As underlined by Wang et al. (2020), including videos in an Instagram feed might be challenging, but not necessarily rewarding. To fit the feed, the video must be shot vertically and ideally feature text, as it will probably be played silently (Wang et al., 2020). Wang et al. (2020) and Krishnan and Sitaraman (2013) also underline that viewers do not often watch the entirety of advertising videos. Besides, Wang et al. (2020) and Gao et al. (2021) highlight that viewers tend to dislike advertising content due to its persuasive nature. These elements may explain Salt's choice not to use the video format. Wingo shared videos but, probably capitalising on Wang et al.'s (2020) and Gao et al.'s (2021) findings and arguably aiming at thwarting the feeling of intrusion caused by the nature advertising, three out of the four reels analysed did not promote products or services.

7.2. Visual Characteristics of Posts

The visual characteristics of posts and the creation of a brand identity differ in accordance with the analysed companies. The various strategies observed can be related to findings from previous studies. Henderson et al. (2003) claim that visual stimuli, such as logos or colours, are a central part of branding strategies. Wang et al. (2020) stress the importance of *key elements*, such as logos or texts, in drawing viewers' attention and fostering better recall of the ad (Viswanathan et al. (2009, as cited in Wang et al. (2020)). Cunningham (2017) and Sharma (2021) also highlight the role of colour in brand identification. However, Gao et al. (2021) indicate that brand identity conveyors could inhibit customer inspiration, i.e. their purchase intention. All the companies under investigation, nevertheless, created a visual brand identity across their publications, independently of the formats which they used.

All the companies under study reminded their audience of their identity with the same method: by using specific colours. Proximus used purple and white in the whole of its December 2022 publications. Orange did the same with orange, black and white. Except for one post, Wingo always displayed light red. Salt consistently used black and green.

Proximus and Salt went even further. They respectively dressed the people featured in their videos and pictures either in colours matching with their brand colours (cf. Figures 12, p.44 and 13, p.45) or either in their brand colours (cf. Figure 25, p.61). By contrast, Orange showed people wearing clothes whose hues arguably clashed with their colours (cf. Figure 14, p.46).

Although Wingo also used a specific colour as a brand identity conveyor, it appears slightly less blatantly than the other brands' colours. Arguably, Wingo strove to find a balance between visual brand identity and familiar settings to mitigate the effect of dislike related to the nature of advertising (Wang et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2021). By showing elements familiar to the viewer, the brand also seemed to adapt its content and personalise it to its target audience, which, according to Alves et al.

(2016), participates in the success of advertisements. In three out of the four investigated reels, the brand displayed an office, without any element characteristic of the brand. Only the subtitles of the videos and a closing shot were reminiscent of the brand identity. The former appeared in banners in the brand colour: a light red; the latter showed a transitional signature effect and the brand colour. This effect was also featured in the fourth reel. In its picture posts, Wingo showed a light red background with brand logos twice. On them, the brand depicted a visual familiar to the viewer of the post: a conversation chat (cf. Figure 20, p.56). The brand might have used this layout so that its posts would not be directly identified as advertisements. As explained by Gao et al. (2021), the persuasive purpose of advertising appears to inhibit customer inspiration, i.e. their purchase intention. Wingo might therefore have wanted to reduce this inhibiting effect. In another publication, the inhibiting effect was arguably reduced by changing the background colour: it was blue. The other picture post featured no brand colour.

Proximus and Orange also sought to provide their posts with components familiar to their followers. Thus, Proximus used neutral (white and wooden) sceneries in a couple of posts while Orange displayed emojis as illustrations of textual elements in all its publications. By incorporating such components into their posts, both brands might have aimed at customising their content to match their audiences' environments and habits. This strategy might capitalise on Alves et al.'s postulate (2016) that personalisation increases receptivity to an ad.

Visual identity was also present in videos through transitional effects. Orange and Wingo resorted to wavy effects, both unique and easily recognisable (cf. Figures 15, p.46 and 18, p.48). Proximus used more discreet effects, but they were so numerous that it clearly appeared as a brand decision.

The use of brand logos as part of backgrounds was more nuanced across the analysed publications. Proximus was the only company to display logos throughout the majority of its reels (cf. Figure 7, p.40). The firm also included it in its only picture

post. Wingo used this strategy in three out of the four picture posts under investigation (cf. Figures 20, p.56 and 22, p.58). Orange and Salt did not display their logos in their designs.

Another visual element worth discussing concerns textual elements. As underlined by Wang et al. (2020), social media users tend to consult their feed by rapidly scrolling its content. Videos are then usually played silently (Wang et al., 2020). The companies under investigation seem to have understood this challenge as all used textual elements or subtitles in their videos to share information with their followers. Textual elements are of great importance in advertisements, independently of their formats. In this regard, Li et al. (2016, as cited in Wang et al., 2020) assert that viewers pay more attention to textual elements than pictures. Proximus (cf. Figure 11, p.44) and Wingo, in three out of four instances, (cf. Figure 17, p.47) used text as a central part of their picture posts. However, Salt chose a completely different strategy and published five posts out of seven without text (cf. Figure 19, p.49).

7.3. Language Use

In the literature, two schools of thoughts were identified: one highlighting the advantages of using English in advertising; the other stressing the upsides of using local languages. The former underlines that the use of a *lingua franca* enables firms to be neutral with respect to different linguistic groups (Neeley, 2012). Using English is also deemed more practical and economic (Sing, 2017, Hornikx et al., 2010). Due to market demands, English has integrated school curriculums (Sing, 2017; Zinggeler, 2007), which explains why English is spoken by many people worldwide and might seem an advantageous tool in advertising. However, other research highlights that local languages enable companies to create stronger relationships with their customers and show long-term commitment to their market (European Commission, 2011, as cited in Vermeulen, 2018). Noriega (2006) reports that adapting advertisements to one's target market generates positive reactions, as the audience feels acknowledged, valued, and respected. Besides, Ahn and La Ferle (2008, as cited

in Hornikx et al., 2010) claim that the use of local languages fosters remembrance and recognition. In addition to these two schools of thoughts, research also focusses on the mixing of words from different languages (Ardila, 2005; Alcnaueová, 2013) and the use of English in local languages (Cheshire & Moser, 1994).

The use of English largely varied across the companies under investigation. Orange appeared to deem this language a valuable marketing tool and only used English in its December 2022 Instagram communication campaign. Proximus used English, without combining it with local languages, in five out of 19 publications (26.3%). Although it might be a practical and economical choice (Sing, 2017; Zinggeler, 2007), this might actually reflect the will of the brand to remain neutral with respect to the various Belgian linguistic groups, as suggested by Neeley (2012). At the very least, it is the neutrality of English which seems to explain why the other companies under study used it. Wingo only displayed English in the subtitles of its videos. The language seemed to be chosen because it would be understood by both German- and French-speaking followers without favouring one group over the other. Salt probably included the English words "Happy New Year" in the visual of a post for the same reason. Both Wingo's and Salt's publications had captions in local languages.

Interestingly, the Swiss companies Wingo and Salt appear to have opted to be neutral while addressing their audiences in some of their local languages. Except for one publication in German only, Wingo always wrote captions in German and in French and picture posts provided a German version and a French version of the textual element in the picture. Salt included captions in German, French and Italian in all the posts under investigation. However, the two Swiss firms never used Romansh and Wingo did not resort to Italian. In four of its posts (21% of its December feed), Proximus also resorted to captions in its target audiences' main languages, Dutch and French, but the visual of the posts featured textual elements in English.

When using local languages independently of each other and of English, Proximus distinguished itself from Wingo (the brand's post in German only seemed to be an exception) and Salt. Instead of sharing posts in several languages, Proximus addressed each of its two main target groups individually. Six posts were designed for a Dutch-speaking audience (31.6% of the brand feed); four publications were in French only (21%). As underlined by research (European Commission, 2011, as cited in Vermeulen, 2018), this strategy can be seen to show the brand's commitment to its clients. Proximus went even further in doing so than the approach adopted by Wingo or Salt, because it provided each target group with personalised content.

Although publications were classified according to the main language they featured, it is noteworthy that they sometimes displayed a few words in another language. For example, the Dutch word *kroketjes* (English: croquettes) appeared in a video in English by Orange. Using this word, the Belgian company might have aimed at addressing its followers' cultural background, which would make them more receptive to the ad (Hornikx et al., 2010). Orange evoked an end-of-year tradition, since potato croquettes are often present on Belgian Christmas tables. Moreover, the use of the word *croquette* in the mother tongue of the Dutch-speaking part of Orange's audience might trigger a more intense affective response to the ad (Noriega, 2006). *Kroketjes* being arguably associated with good end-of-year memories in the viewers' psyche, the word would remind them of this tradition and its associated memories in a stronger way than a translation of it in a foreign language, in which the tradition would not have the same value. Orange might have wanted to include the word *croquette* in Dutch to underline that it was adapting to its target market. The word *croquette* being used in French and in English, the emphasis on the followers' culture would have been less marked if Orange had used it.

In contrast to Orange, English words were used in utterances in local languages in the three other companies under investigation. As underlined by Cheshire & Moser (1994) and Alcnaurova (2013), the ubiquity of English is such that

it appears in everyday use of local languages. Thus, Salt wished its customers a “Happy New Year” although the brand did not usually include text in English in its publications. In the same vein, three posts included English words: *Good vibes*, *Dark Mode* and *Team*. Wingo included the interrogation “Why not?!” in a speech in German. In addition, Proximus showed a similar use of English in content otherwise in Dutch only. The following sentences, in which English words are in italics (my emphasis), were featured:

- (1) “Ik ben verrast over hoe klein en licht hij is - Maar *size doesn't matter* - Want hem gebruiken is echt kinderspel!”
- (2) “Goed nieuws voor op *lazy days* - Want dor de ingebouwde smart tv - Hebben we toegang tot alle *streaming* platformen - Of dromen we een beetje weg onder de sterren”

Proximus also used English words in the visual of another post designed for a Dutch-speaking audience (cf. Figure 1, p.33 and Figure 4, p.36).

7.4. Language Use and Content

To better determine the reasons why companies used English or local languages, the results of this investigation will be explained with the help of Richards et al.’s (2009) and Nederstigt & Hiberink-Schulpen’s (2018) works. Richards et al. (2009) distinguished two marketing components: unique selling proposition (USP) and market segmentation. The one promotes products highlighting strengths which differentiate them from other goods; the other focusses on the target market and arguments that match its values. Marketing then appears personalised, which largely contributes to the success of adverts (Alves et al., 2016). The two approaches can be combined, this is positioning. In the framework of this study, exploring whether firms use a certain language to perform one or the other strategy would be highly relevant. Another interesting factor lies in the aura that languages convey. Research has shown that the use of English could give companies a more international (Neeley, 2012), global (Hornikx et al., 2010) or youthful and modern (Nederstigt & Hiberink-

Schulpen, 2018) image. In the case of telecommunications companies, the latter effect appears to be particularly pertinent. However, adaptation strategies and the use of local languages denote acknowledgement, value and respect (Noriega, 2006).

The large number of posts published by Proximus (19) might be explained by its will to share content that is personalised to the brand's different target audiences. The company shared six posts designed for a Dutch-speaking audience (an amount comparable to the number of posts published by the other firms under investigation, i.e. 7, 8 and 7). Four publications featured French only. This number might be smaller because the posts target a smaller audience. 42% of the Belgian population is estimated to speak French while 57% is reported to speak Dutch¹⁴. Besides, the analysed data was collected from a one-month period, the percentages of posts dedicated to one and the other language group might even out if one considered data collected over a longer period of time.

Although some posts appeared identical and only differed in the language in which they were shared, others supplied personalised content which was not translated for the other target group. In addition, while half of the content published in local languages was related to telecommunications, the other half was not. In other words, 50% of the content published in local languages especially focussed on followers and their potential interests. It, therefore, seems as though the company attached great importance to creating a close relationship with its followers, on the one hand, by using their mother tongues (Noriega, 2006) and, on the other hand, by offering them personalised content (Richards et al., 2009; Alves et al., 2016). Besides, Proximus included human protagonists in posts predominantly in Dutch and in some publications in French only. According to Appel et al. (2020), this participates in the personalisation of content, as it is shared through person narration. Although the neutrality of English (cf. above) might have spurred Proximus to share five posts

¹⁴ <https://www.brussels.info/language/>
Last consulted on 10th May 2023

(26.3% of the brand December 2022 feed) in this language, the modern aura of the language might also have influenced Proximus' choice. Four of the five posts are related to telecommunications technologies and how to use them. Interestingly, four posts tackled sustainability and featured both English and local languages. In this context, the use of English might indicate the brand's will to raise awareness about the global consequences of unsustainable behaviour. The use of local languages, by creating a closer relationship with the follower, may aim at fostering more engagement to the environmental cause.

Orange published content both related and unrelated to telecommunications. This seems to reflect the intention of the brand not to only advertise its products and services, but also to offer its followers content matching their values (segmenting the market) and provide them with personalised content (Richards et al., 2009; Alves et al., 2016). However, the company did not include local languages to reinforce the relationship which it was building with its followers. All publications were in English, which might imply that the brand wished to convey a modern and youthful image (Nederstigt & Hiberink-Schulpen, 2018) throughout its publications.

Wingo used English in four video publications. Three of them did not showcase products or services. This strategy seems contradictory in the sense that, while sharing personalised content, i.e. unrelated to the telecommunications sector and sometimes even including a speaker, the company addressed its customers in a language that is not theirs. By contrast, the majority of the content related to brand services was in local languages. One picture post showed Wingo's will to bond with their clients on both linguistic and thematic levels.

Like Orange, Salt provided both telecommunications-related and -unrelated content while consistently using the same language policy. However, Salt always used three Swiss local languages, arguably reflecting its intention to closely bond with customers.

7.5. Correlation between Post Formats, their Visual Characteristics, and Languages

Although research on language use in social media marketing is scarce (De Bock, 2017), this section sets out to examine the relationship between video and language use on Instagram. The analysis suggests that the uses of videos and English may be related. Two elements highlighted by research can explain this phenomenon: (1) videos offer a limited space to share content (Wang et al., 2020); (2) English appears as a neutral *lingua franca* (Neeley, 2012).

As previously highlighted, neutrality seems to play a significant role in at least three of the communication campaigns under investigation. Orange published posts in English only seemingly not to favour one Belgian linguistic group over another; Wingo and Salt consistently used local languages in the captions of their posts.

A striking feature of the Wingo campaign is its use of English. The language only appeared in video posts. As the brand provided content in German and in French in the visual (post main component) of two picture posts, the use of English seems to result from a lack of space inherent in the video format. Thus, Wingo needed to provide subtitles so that its videos could be played silently (cf. Wang et al., 2020). Not to favour one linguistic target group over the other, a neutral language was needed: English.

To some extent, the strategy adopted by Proximus reinforces this hypothesis. The company is the only one under investigation to share visual content (post main components) in English and combine them with captions in local languages. Although it might be to benefit from the auras of the different languages (cf. above), English may have been chosen because it enabled the firm to share content in the limited space of a smartphone screen while remaining neutral towards its two targeted linguistic groups.

Including English in video posts therefore appears as the most practical way to remain neutral while using the video format. This would explain why Orange only

shared content in English and why Salt did not share videos. To avoid the use of English and to favour local languages as much as possible, the picture format appears advantageous. Thus, Salt usually shared pictures without any textual elements, which seems surprising since Li et al. (2016, as cited in Wang et al., 2020) assert that textual elements largely attract viewers' attention. However, it enabled Salt to publish only one picture without favouring a language group over the other while addressing all of them.

8. Conclusion

This dissertation aimed at providing a comprehensive insight into the use of social media video marketing and the language(s) employed in it. The following research questions were thus identified: (1) To what extent do companies use videos? (2) To what extent do companies use English in comparison with local languages? (3) Do these variables correlate?

The theoretical framework of this dissertation offered an overview of the use of two elements present in marketing campaigns: videos and languages (English and/ or local languages). A research gap was nevertheless identified: both topics have rarely been holistically approached. This dissertation therefore intended to address this gap and to analyse the uses of videos and languages in social media communication campaigns.

To do so, Instagram communication campaigns were analysed. The social medium spreads both pictures and videos, which provides an insight into the use of each format. The frequencies of use of videos and pictures were therefore measured and compared with each other. To better understand the use of English in relation with local languages, communication campaigns of telecommunications companies operating in multilingual markets were selected. These companies provide services to the whole of a national market, independently of the languages spoken in it. For this reason, they were chosen as the object of this study.

With the help of quantitative and qualitative analyses, this dissertation analysed both format- and languages-related aspects of social media marketing. Different (audio)visual strategies and language policies were scrutinised. To better explore the use of videos in comparison with pictures, the visual characteristics of posts were analysed. Their thematic content was also tackled in order to establish whether it was related to language use.

More precisely, the Instagram communication campaigns of the Belgian companies Proximus and Orange and of the Swiss firms Wingo and Salt were examined. This dissertation investigated their Instagram publications during a specific period of time: the month of December 2022. To analyse these data, a quantitative analysis provided information about the number of posts published during this extent of time and their formats. Additionally, the proportion in which English was used, in comparison with national languages, was established. A qualitative analysis examined the visual characteristics of posts and the different topics of the publications.

The results of these individual analyses were then combined to make it possible to explore relationships between the formats of posts and their visual characteristics. The correlation between language and content of publications was also investigated. In addition, a connection between post formats and language use was examined. The findings of the study were then analysed in light of the research discussed in the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

The analysis revealed that the marketing strategies used by companies in the multilingual countries under investigation are not homogenous but quite varied. Be it regarding their use of publication formats or languages, significant discrepancies were highlighted.

It emerged that videos could be used exclusively, in combination with other formats or not all. The two Belgian companies under investigation, Proximus and Orange, largely based their Instagram campaigns on videos and used them in 94.7% and 100% of their December 2022 publications. The two Swiss companies of this

study used them in 50% and 0% of their posts. This choice might result from the direct impact of the format on visual identity, an important factor of branding strategies (Henderson et al., 2003). The two companies which consistently used videos (Proximus, Orange; cf. Figures 7, p.40 and 14, p.46) and the one which only shared pictures (Salt; cf. Figure 19, p.49) showed a more uniform visual identity than the one which published half of its content in a video format and the other half of it as pictures (Wingo; cf. Figure 17, p.47).

The companies under investigation (Wingo included, even though it might be less blatant than the other firms) appeared to display a consistent visual identity through their use of distinctive colours, logos, transitional effects, and textual elements. By differentiating themselves from the competition, they might have aimed at strengthening their places on the market (Henderson et al., 2003). However, visual features did not only shape brands' visual identity, but some of them tapped into companies' followers' daily lives. Proximus, Orange and Wingo showed elements familiar to their viewers such as emojis, conversation chats, offices and neutrally decorated rooms. By doing so, the companies might have wished to reduce the effect inhibiting customers' purchase intention caused by the persuasive nature of advertising (Gao et al., 2021). As they are familiar to the target market, these elements, moreover, personalise content, which appears to contribute to the success of advertisements (Alves et al., 2016).

As for videos, the use of English varied from one extreme to another. One company designed its communication campaign in English only (Orange), one firm resorted to it marginally (Salt) and two used it in combination with some of the local languages of their target markets (Proximus, Wingo). In posts themselves, English could also be employed on its own, in combination with Belgian or Swiss national languages, or not at all. Although using English as a *lingua franca* (Neeley, 2012) might appear as a practical and economical choice (Hornikx et al., 2010), three companies out of four (Proximus, Wingo, Salt), nevertheless, extensively shared

content in local languages. This arguably enables them to create stronger ties with customers (European Commission, 2011, as cited in Vermeulen, 2018; Noriega, 2006). All companies showed this will to closely bond with their followers by also sharing content unrelated to telecommunications. These posts seem to capitalise on Appel et al.'s (2020) and Gao et al.'s (2021) findings, respectively: personalisation appears crucial to the success of an ad and the persuasive purpose of ads seems to hinder their viewers' receptivity. By contrast to advertisements enticing to buy products or services, the focus of the publications unrelated to telecommunications is the target market of the brand. Content is then personalised and adapted to the market's values.

Exploring the uses of videos and English, the analysis seemed to reveal a correlation between the two. When sharing videos, companies faced a challenge: their posts had to fit the limited space of a smartphone screen. Providing content that would be understood by the whole of the targeted language groups was therefore arduous. In this context, companies seemed to take advantage of the *lingua franca* status of English (Neeley, 2012). Orange, which only published videos, addressed its customers in English only. This language was used by Wingo solely when it spread videos. Interestingly, Proximus shared video publications in English only. This may reflect the intention of the company to be neutral (Neeley, 2012) or to provide its content with the modern aura associated with English (Nederstigt & Hiberink-Schulpen, 2018). A series of posts, nevertheless, corroborates the hypothesis that English as a *lingua franca* is a valuable tool in videos. Proximus usually shared content in one language only but did not do so in four publications. While using English in the visual of videos, the posts displayed captions in Belgian local languages, which seems to indicate the will of the brand to address its customers in their mother tongues.

Although this dissertation provided an insight into the uses of videos and languages, further research is needed to complement its findings. The Belgian

companies under investigation seemed to resort more to videos and to English than the Swiss ones. Further research might investigate whether this is related to cultural motives. Measuring the appreciation of posts in accordance with their format and the language in which they were shared could also help to better understand the impact of each factor on followers. In the same vein, an insight into the companies' community management and their (un)official language strategies would be highly relevant. Interviews with community managers could reveal the reasons why companies chose to use certain publication formats and languages over others. In addition, replicating the study on posts from a longer period of time could provide a wider picture and determine whether the identified strategies are consistently used or whether changes appear over time. The uses of videos, local languages and English could also be explored in other social media and in other companies to gain a better insight into communication strategies across multilingual markets. Besides, investigating these elements in firms operating in another field than that of telecommunications could help uncover other marketing strategies and/ or confirm the prevalence of the ones observed in this dissertation.

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