

**Growing a Small Business Through Social Media**

A Creative Case Study of New Wave Fashion

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## Introduction

Social media has become the most important advertising tool for brands and small businesses. It now has an estimated 3.8 billion users (hootsuite.com). The leading social media platforms are Facebook with 2.8 billion users and Instagram with 1 billion users (statista.com) and many users have both platforms. Social networking sites are vital for companies to stay relevant with consumers, increase brand awareness or reputation and develop the brand's popularity (Slepneva, 2020). These social networking sites are free platforms where people can interact with others who have the same interests with unlimited reach around the world. The more these platforms are used with a specific strategy will also help with the overall reach of the account and the users that see the brand's posts. Businesses can use social media to expand their customer base and increase brand visibility. Managing social media platforms and content creation is a full-time job. Unfortunately, small business owners are stretched thin balancing their responsibilities, and social media often becomes an afterthought. Often, small business owners don't have an idea on where to begin their social media strategy or have clear goals in mind as it's not their specialty. Having consistent branding and online presence that focus on solving a problem for a targeted consumer will create more engagement in the form of follows, likes, comments, shares and ultimately into more web clicks and purchases. When a company has a consistent branding, ideal audience and present specific solutions, they can be more efficient and effective in the time spent on their social media management. When the owner can be more efficient and effective, they can prioritize their time on other important aspects of managing their business.

This creative case study will follow the branding process, content creation process and social media strategy used to help a small, independent fashion brand, New Wave Fashion, grow their online presence. The use of this creative case study will explore which different methods used for branding and content creation that reach the audience best and analyze the creative elements that were chosen. Once the strategy has been established, executing the strategy will yield results that will either prove or disprove

my hypothesis that a cohesive branding and posts will yield more engagement and ultimately more online sales.

Social media strategy covers a wide range of tasks needed for an effective business account. Some of these tasks include, graphic design, cultivating a community, advertising on the platform, reputation management, developing brand voice, and keeping consistent activity. Keeping a well-balanced strategy containing all these tasks will create a clear brand, effective social media marketing strategy and higher return on investment.

### *Company Overview*

Currently, New Wave Fashion focuses on affordable t-shirts and long sleeves that promote a greater message of positivity, spreading kindness to others and emphasizing positive mental health habits. In 2020 Ron Newsome saw a need for clothing that spreads a positive message of inspiring the younger generations to leave a positive impact on the world. Currently, there are only three styles of graphic t-shirts and long sleeves in colors red, white and black. Each item is available at launch in sizes S to 3XL. Since positivity is a mindset, a large focus is on improving and maintaining a healthy mental health. Phrases and imagery on the clothing are used to inspire and motivate others to accomplish charitable deeds and spread kindness to others. Most people use clothing to express themselves with colors, words and brands. New Wave Fashion saw this as an opportunity to reach an audience that seeks to represent themselves in clothing.

The values, mission and purpose of the company aligns with their goal of inspiring others to prioritize their mental health and live a positive lifestyle. New Wave's mission is to inspire others to prioritize their mental health which then leads an impactful life filled with kindness and positive actions. The vision of New Wave Fashion is to be a leader in the fashion industry that prioritizes people over profit and mental health over appearances. The goal is to help others find healing, vulnerability in sharing

their story and inspiration to continue their journey. New Wave Fashion's company values creativity, transparency, positive outlooks and community.

In the four types of organizational culture, New Wave Fashion is composed mostly of clan and adhocracy. The four types of organizational culture are clan, hierarchy, market and adhocracy. The terms that best describe clan organization are extended family, mentoring, nurturing and participation. The terms that describe adhocracy are dynamic, entrepreneurial, risk-taking and values innovation. In New Wave Fashion, there is a collaboration between Ron Newsome and a few other friends who aid in printing shirts, designs and modeling the shirts. Although they aren't paid collaborators, they make an impact on New Wave Fashion's company culture. It is also an entrepreneurial space as Newsome is a solopreneur who started this business from his dorm in the senior year of college. The company also seeks to nurture relationships through positive leadership. Overall, New Wave Fashion seeks to put relationships and impact over profits and products. Their mission is to create an impact of change rather than fame.



Source: <https://www.runmeetly.com/four-types-organizational-culture>

### *Product Overview*

Before the initiation of the case study, New Wave Fashion released a total of three shirts in various colors. The first launch was of the original logo on a white or black t-shirt. The second launch was of a red t-shirt with a bold type saying 'relentless' and a tiger eye's print on the background. The

third launch was of a graphic design saying 'United We Stand, New Wave Fashion' to support the Black Lives Matter movement in a heather grey color.

*Original Logo Design T-Shirt, First Release:*



*Relentless T-shirt and United We Stand, Limited Edition Releases:*



*Case Study Objectives*

The creative case study will focus on New Wave Fashion to find a specific niche, transform their branding, social media and content strategies to reach a larger audience and hopefully grow sales through Facebook (@newwavefashions) and Instagram (@new.wavefashion). The second objective is to grow an engaging community where brand and client relationships are most important, and followers feel like a part of a community. The third objective is to create an impact outside of the company by engaging in community events, donating a portion of profits to non-profit organizations and starting a culture of change makers. Through all these objectives, it will generate sales from a steady business foundation.

**Background Research**

### *Social Media and Brands*

Often, the level of engagement an audience member gives is dependent on their emotional state. An experiment conducted in Spain used face to face interviews of social media users, then monitored the participant's profiles over a 6-month period. The study concluded that engagement depends on the reader's emotional state on varying degrees of positive or negative emotions. When the mood is extremely negative and unhappy with the brand, they are more likely to leave negative comments and engagement with the posts. When the viewers are bored, unengaged, and overall negative/neutral, there is zero engagement. When the mood is positive, alert and happy, the viewers often engage happily and often leaving comments or likes (Saleem, 2020). Social media gives consumers a powerful voice when it comes to speaking about a brand. Whether it's positive or negative experiences, when a consumer talks about that experience, it is tied into the company's name. This happens especially through comments or reviews on a brand's page. (Sonja, 2013) These opinions and experiences are even more important online since the information is available in real-time, easily spreadable and accessible to everyone.

Social media is also known for their hyper targeted and specific advertisements. About 91% of Instagram users agree that they've bought a product after seeing it on their feeds (hootsuite.com). Although we aren't using ads in this case study, using this hyper focused audience will help with connecting with potential customers.

### *Business on Social Media*

Research shows that small businesses that include effective online marketing strategies increase revenue by three times (CRM Magazine). However, for small businesses, this is hard to do effectively as owners are often preoccupied with other parts of their business. It takes resources, time and experience to run an effective social media account (He, 2014). In today's online run world, businesses must meet their consumers where they are found online and use attention grabbing strategies to keep them engaged. The best way to increase revenue is through community engagement and creating a relationship between the

brand and the customer (Ostyakova, 2020). Firm-generated brand stories aim to create and strengthen consumers' relationship with the brand by providing a theme for conversations between consumers and brand owners or among consumers themselves. For example, the classic CEO's origin story of rags to riches or the story behind a cause of why the brand was created helps to bring the community closer together (Grossberndt, 2012). Creating these relationships is possible through fostering an environment where the customer feels like they belong through a group distinguished name. Most famous artists have names for their fan base, for example Ariana Grande has Arianators, Lady Gaga calls her fans little monsters, and even some brands have the same community aspect such as Tarte Cosmetics customers are called Tartelettes. In the same fashion, New Wave Fashion's supporters are becoming a part of The New Wave Nation or become Wave Makers. I began incorporating these names into the captions or when interacting with followers. By adopting fans into a group name, it enforces a sense of community and brand loyalty. Efficient and cohesive branding is also important to reiterate to consumers the product quality, consumer experience, reliability and trust (Ostyakova,2020).

### *Instagram*

Instagram is primarily used for connecting with strangers, sharing photos and can have a much larger organic reach through hashtags and now the new features in Reels. On Instagram, the Explore Page is a curated feed of new content from related hashtags the algorithm believes you want to see. It uses your preferences to show you new creators or brands. Instagram is a platform that began by sharing photographs in 2010 but has now transitioned over to emphasizing video content in 2021.

The new 2020 feature, Reels is also being pushed out to accounts that have never seen your content previously. Reels are 15 to 30 second videos that often use lip-sync style audio for educational, inspirational or entertainment types of content. This feature had previously been seen on TikTok when Instagram made an adaptation of it as a direct rival (Marikar, 2020). These two features allow Instagram to have the most organic growth from the two social media platforms. Reels have more of an organic

reach as the main page for reel features content from people you might not be following. Therefore, more strangers can see your video content as it is more likely to show up on their feed.

### *Facebook*

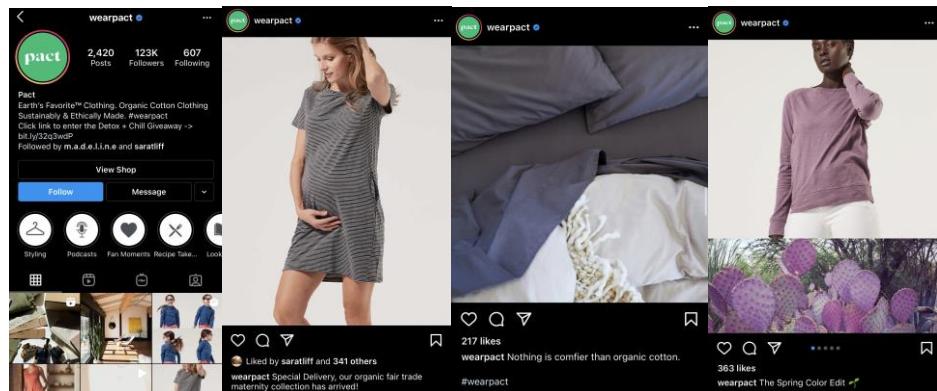
Facebook is about community and connecting with friends and family over brands or celebrities and sharing your thoughts. On Facebook, you must allow a person to friend you or manually follow someone to see their posts. Not many features on Facebook allow for organic growth since most viewers must be added as a ‘friend’. The only feature that allows for stranger's interactions is through Facebook Groups which act similar to group forums for posts. On Facebook, the largest demographic, about 19%, is made of males from the ages of 19-23 that are the most interactive with ads. Videos on Facebook also receive the most engagement than photos or posts. This could be because video content on Facebook begins to play automatically without audio until the user decides to click on it and watch more. Approximately, 85% of users watch videos in silence for the first couple seconds ([hootsuite.com](https://hootsuite.com)). Each social network has its unique features and purposes for connecting users. Keeping in mind all these features on both platforms, it explains how difficult it is for small business owners to stay consistent in using each feature and staying relevant online.

### *Competitor Brand Analysis*

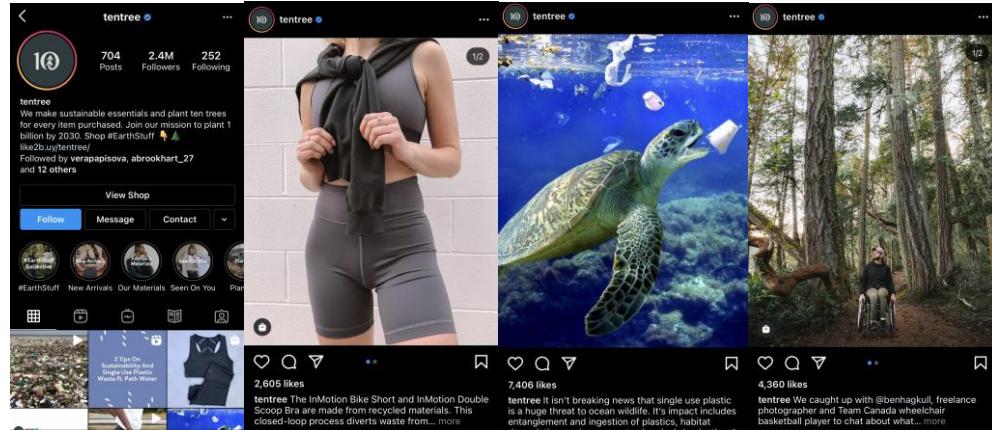
It is important to evaluate how New Wave Fashion compares to larger t-shirt brand companies that specialize in a certain demographic or a unique marketing niche. In this case, New Wave Fashion is comparable to brands like Pact, Ten Tree and Self-Care is for Everyone. Each one has their own branding that helps them stand apart and brings a unique customer experience to their consumers.

Pact, located in Colorado, uses organic ethically sourced and fair-trade cotton for their athletic and casual wear. Overall, you can tell their target audience are athletic and ethically mindful consumers looking for investing in high quality clothing. Their branding focuses on green and earthy colors with a men's t-shirt price range from \$30 to \$35. Branding color choice is important to correlate with your target

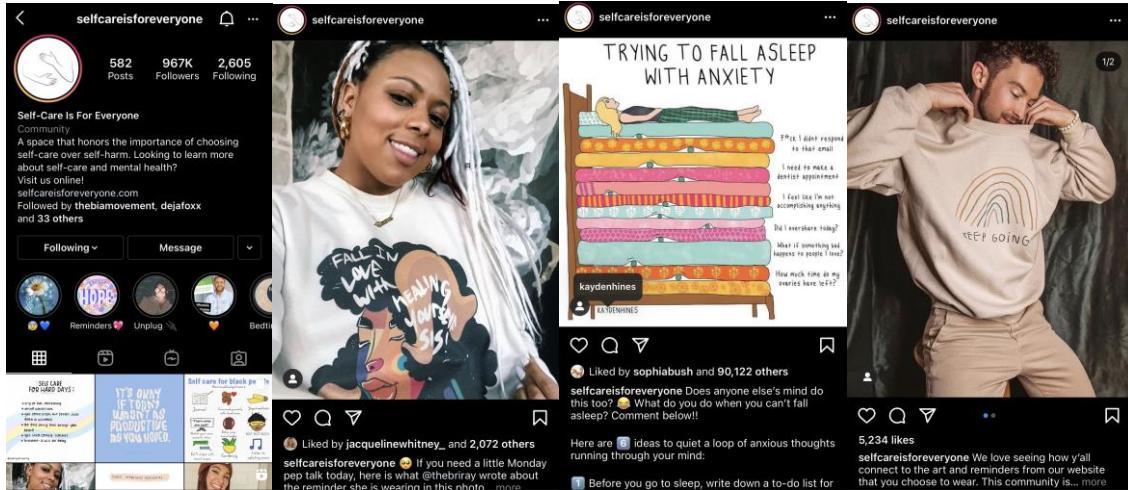
audience's interests and price range, which theirs seems to be an adventurous younger demographic in a medium income bracket. Their Instagram has 121k followers (@wearpact) and features recipes, sustainability tips, look book inspiration and features podcasts that the CEO guest speaks on. Their highlights are resourceful features for the viewers to use. The main feed is mostly of models featuring their clothing items and featuring partners who tag them in posts. However, they do not make use of the new Instagram feature Reels or keep their IGTV updated.



Ten Tree, based in Canada, present themselves as being a revolutionary brand that plants 10 trees per item bought to lower their carbon footprint. The ideal consumer for Ten Tree would be mindful consumers who care about their carbon footprint and the environment. The marketing is cohesive and encourages users to spend money where their impact can make a difference. The main feed (@TenTree) is a mix of quotes, lifestyle shots, models with the clothing, and outdoor activity inspiration. They keep up with trends and important topics such as Earth Day, Woman's Month, supporting black owned businesses, and more. Instagram highlights are used here as main folders for new arrivals, user's posts, and mission statement. Ten Tree does use all of Instagram's features including Guides, Reels and IGTVs.



Self-Care is for Everyone is a brand that focuses on ending mental health stigmas through trendy graphic design t-shirts that start at \$30. They feature the artwork of other artists and have hundreds of designs to choose from. Their Instagram (@selfcareisforeveryone) is used more as a resource for self-care practices and education around mental health issues. The ideal audience is likely younger consumers under 35 since many of their clothing items are bright and childish designs. The ideal customer also cares deeply about mental health issues and wishes to start conversations based on the clothing they wear. There is no planned aesthetic to their feed, but they make use of bright colors, digital art, hand drawn quotes and models with their shirts. It seems like the t-shirt brand is secondary to their main goal of raising awareness, offering support and inspiring others to act in kindness. The account uses most features like Reels and IGTV to cater more important interviews and resources to followers. Their Reels give tips for managing anxiety, self-care practices and awareness for mental health disorders. Their audience is also more likely to share, on stories or repost, these types of valuable content because of relatability or to educate their own audiences. By using sharable content, Self-Care is for Everyone can increase their reach on social media.



## Branding Process

Branding plays a huge role in the effectiveness of content and social media strategy that can lead to sales. In order to properly brand your content, you must know your target audience and their needs. It's important to designate a problem and provide the solution. Then, you must find where your target audience is on social media using a hashtag strategy. A hashtag strategy is used to get your content in front of your audience by using tags they might search for or that the algorithm uses to appear in their discover page. An example of a hashtag strategy would be out of 30 hashtags, 5 are locational (#rockymount), 10 are product focused (#comfytshirts), 10 are audience focused (#collegeapparel), and 5 are topic based (#mentalhealthadvice). By knowing your audience, then you can begin to choose your branding which will be attractive to them. The logo and creative elements give the audience something to make a snap judgement on. It can provide subliminal messaging that gives clues to the audience of the purpose of the brand. When the colors and fonts also come together in a cohesive brand, it can bring the vision and purpose of the brand to life. When a physical product is not in front of the consumer, they must rely on other online cues to figure out the quality, necessity and desire for the product. Branding serves to reassure the consumer that the product is reliable, recognize the product, and creates an atmosphere of desire for them to purchase it (Saleem, 2020).

## Marketing Niche & Customer Personas

New Wave Fashion is in a unique area in fashion where the importance is put on the consumer's mental health and accessibility to the products. The owner of New Wave Fashion hopes that by making products more financially affordable, it will help lower-income consumers still be able to benefit from the positive influences of New Wave Fashion and feel like a part of a community. The designs are minimalistic while still being comfortable for everyday wear. Newsome's plans are to launch a catalogue that uses more pastel colors rather than neutrals, hoping that the bright tones will brighten up customer's wardrobes while staying simplistic.

New Wave Fashion's Give Back program also focuses on donating a part of the profits for bettering the local community of Rocky Mount and participating in volunteer days. By having this additional interactive portion with the outside community, it helps customers feel as though their purchases also make a bigger difference than a one-time purchase. By knowing 10% of profits go towards other organizations that the consumer cares about, it will encourage them to support not only a small business but these non-profit organizations. In April of 2021, Newsome, CEO, donated \$500 to The Barefoot Mile fundraiser that uses profits towards eliminating human trafficking in the United States.

Customer personas are important to the foundation of a brand's voice, imagery and content. By knowing who their target audience is, you can better create marketing materials that will catch their attention. Customer Personas help distinguish what your brand represents, who it is meant for and where to focus your efforts rather than applying to a broad audience. By focusing the marketing on a certain type of customer, the consumers will see the branding and materials and identify closely with it, therefore more likely to lead to a sale. When brands try to apply to a general population instead, it doesn't convert as many customers because it isn't aligning with their core values (Sailer, 2017).

#### *Customer Persona 1*

The first ideal New Wave Fashion consumer is a middle to lower-class male or female from the ages of 15-25 who's mission in life is to impact others through their positive actions. This consumer

knows that their outlook on life, kindness to others and charitable acts, make the world a better place. This consumer is mindful of their consumption and chooses to buy clothing with an additional purpose than just to wear it. When they see New Wave Fashion, they appreciate how the brand cares about their customers through great customer service, appreciates their Give Back Program, and enjoys the designs that spark a conversation for them to encourage someone else. This consumer has battled mental health issues in the past but is on a mission to create more healthy habits while inspiring others around them to do the same.

### *Customer Persona 2*

The second ideal New Wave Fashion consumer is the activist in their community. They see the needs of many people around them and are fighters for equality. You can find this consumer volunteering often and needs comfortable clothing that keeps up with their active lifestyle. They shop with integrity and choose to support small business especially highlighting their support of black owned businesses. Overall, they want to avoid spending at large corporations. They want their morals to align with the brands they support and are quick to tell their friends about the brands they love. These consumers are often middle to upper-class and range in ages from 20-40 years old.

### *Logo, Colors, Typography and Elements*

#### *Logo*

Before this creative case study began, new Wave Fashion had an old logo that was very misleading and unaligned with the brand's mission. The old logo featured a Fleur-de-lis which has origins in the French monarchy. The banner surrounding the Fleur-de-lis also didn't have much meaning or connection with the brand. The brand was established in 2020; however, with new brands, novelty shows inexperience of the brands and doesn't show authority in the fashion industry. When the re-branding process began, the most important element was the logo and how it correlates with our mission, brand name and target audience. When creating a first impression of a brand, the logo is often at the forefront

due to the frequency of use. A logo that doesn't have a purpose or meaning loses the chance to be more impactful.



When we started to re-create the logo, we took into consideration our younger demographic and customer personas. Their ideal client is a younger generation that cares strongly about humanitarian topics and is an activist in their communities. Tapping into the name of the brand as well, we choose a single wave tied into a rising sun. It gives a visual representation of the company name as well, which contrasts how disconnected the last logo was. This symbolizes the waves of change that each person can make in their communities. The sun also represents the rising of the new day. There are alternative logos which can be used as watermarks on marketing materials and minimal design to aid in brand recognition over time. Our goal is for our community of New Wave Fashion supporters to become a part of a group that seeks to make change through positive actions and supporting others through difficult times. The symbolization of the wave also emphasizes as one wave crashes onto the shore, another begins, and as an opportunity might end in our lives that disappoints us, another opportunity is coming soon that will give us hope and joy in our lives. Waves are also an endless source of energy and ties into environmental sustainability. This is also why the community supporting New Wave Fashion is being a part of The Wave and the individuals are referenced as Wave Makers.



## Colors

Visual branding for small business is very important to create an immersive customer experience that flows across all platforms. The colors chosen for New Wave Fashion play off the name ‘New Wave’ and inspire thoughts of the beach using bright and happy colors. By using tropical inspired hues, it also helps to elicit a response that most consumers have while visiting the beach, such as tranquility, happiness, sunshine, waves and warmth. Since New Wave Fashion’s mission is to spread positivity to the outside community, having this feeling of happiness engrained in the branding will help get that message across subconsciously.



At first, I had chosen another set of colors and branding for New Wave Fashion, but ultimately decided against it as it gave the wrong impression of the target audience we were searching for (ex: bright social people with a desire to brighten a stranger’s day). The second choice of colors were muted Earth tones. These were darker colors which gave the sense of sophistication, seriousness, and academic inspiration. This was not what we wanted to strive for, as our mission is to inspire positive thoughts and mental health awareness, the use of bright and happy colors was a priority. Thus, we decided against this color pallet.

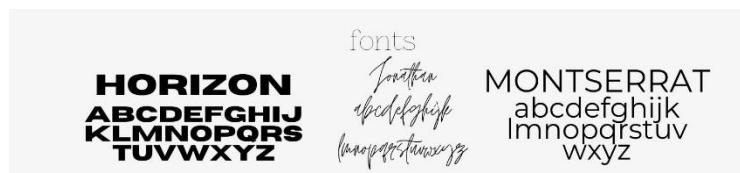


## Typography

The main typography of the branding is a casual bold font called Chonburi. The boldness gives a feeling of authority, with the modern lines and tick marks around the edges. The subheading font, Znikomit, follows the same straight modern lines with tick marks but is a very thin and subtle font that can add details to quotes and signage. The accent font, Holiday, is a playful medium thick font with round edges that can be used for short statements or words that need to stand out from the other typography.

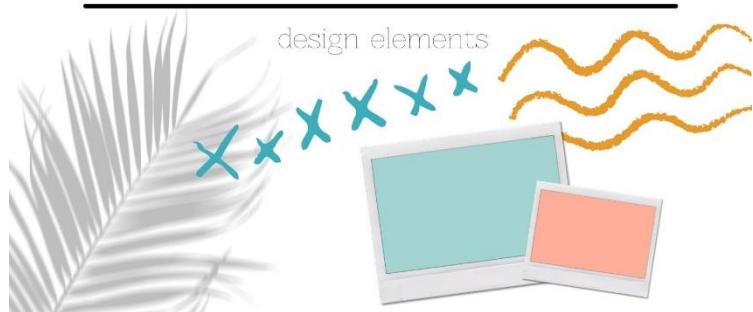


Before settling on these font choices, I had pitched an alternative that would keep Newsome's original goal of developing a darker and more serious aesthetic. These included Horizon which is an all-over bold font with straight lines and no accent marks. The font Jonathan was intended for stylistic elements, but I thought that it was too much of a tight script font and hard to read from far away. The font Montserrat is bold but uses thin lines which can be seen from far away and accompanies the Horizon font well. These fonts, however, gave a more serious tone to the work than intended.



### *Elements*

The elements of a palm tree leaf, an abstract wave pattern, x markings and polaroid frames to tie the branding together. The colors of these elements can be changed to fit different documents and color schemes. These elements can be coordinated to the same beach inspiration of young adventurers and friends making memories on the beach.



The alternative design elements which we decided not to go with played more into the serious, dark and studious theme. The coffee mug stain and the ripped paper can conjure memories of studying for many students. The dark film style frame also gives an antique impression which fits well altogether but was not the ultimate inspiration we were going for. Hence, why we choose the upbeat, bright and beachy aesthetic.



## Creative Materials

### *Photoshoot Example Shots*

The goal for the photoshoot was to provide branded content that would fit in well with the overall branding of New Wave Fashion and use it for social media posts. Due to location availability, not many locations would fit into the bright and colorful beach theme we had planned to use. Instead, we choose to shoot at The Rocky Mount Mills, a location that is innovative, modern and often where younger generations congregate. A goal for the photos was to capture emotion and happy faces laughing with

friends. By having photos of friends laughing together, the goal is to inspire audiences to envision themselves with friends and enjoying themselves more because of wearing New Wave Fashion. The same contrast, brightness and saturation was used across all photos to keep a consistent edited theme. At the time, New Wave fashion only had one new release long sleeve t-shirt to feature which we used for the entire photoshoot.



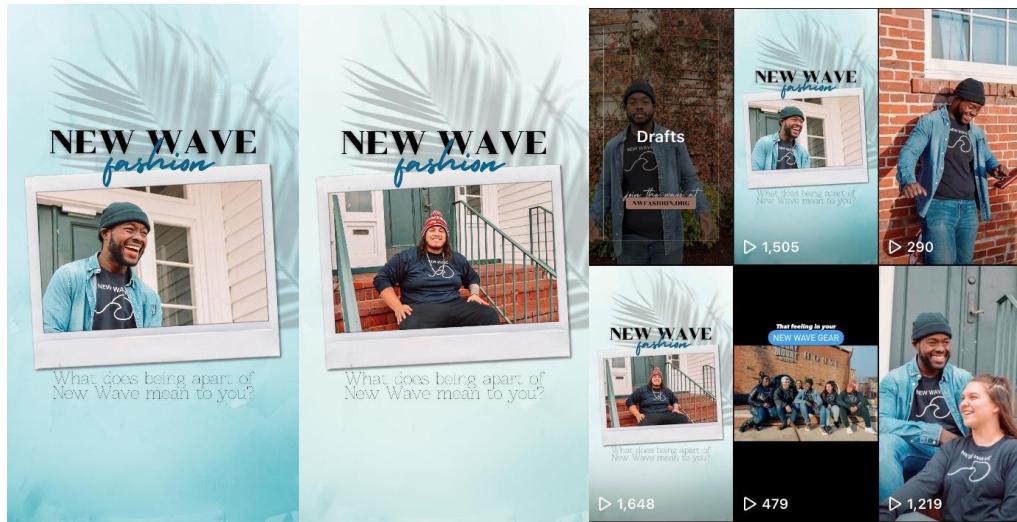
### *Video Content*

The video content I focused on for Instagram were Reels. Reels are a short video ranging from 15 seconds to 30 seconds that engage with the audience and are shared through a separate feed than a person's main feed. The main feed is only composed of people you have chosen to follow. Reels, however, are chosen based on the algorithm and are often people you do not follow. Thus, Reels can be exposed to a multitude of people who are not following the account. The algorithm suggests content that aligns with the user's previous likes.

For the covers of these Reels, I chose to use the elements from the branding kit to help grab the attention of viewers and tie it into the main feed and look cohesive on the main profile. The background colors also align with New Wave Fashion's brand colors. The cover can be seen on the Reels tab on your profile.

Overall, the Reels had a much larger reach than normal static posts on the main feed. The five Reels I posted varied in the number of views from 290; 479; 1,219; 1,505; and 1,649. The three Reels that performed the lowest were photos that were made into a gif to add some movement and added music on

top but were not moving videos. The top two performing Reels were participants being interviewed about what being a part of the ‘New Wave’ meant to them. Even though the Reels that were photos didn’t perform as well, they still performed better than still photographs posted on the main feed instead of inside of Reels.

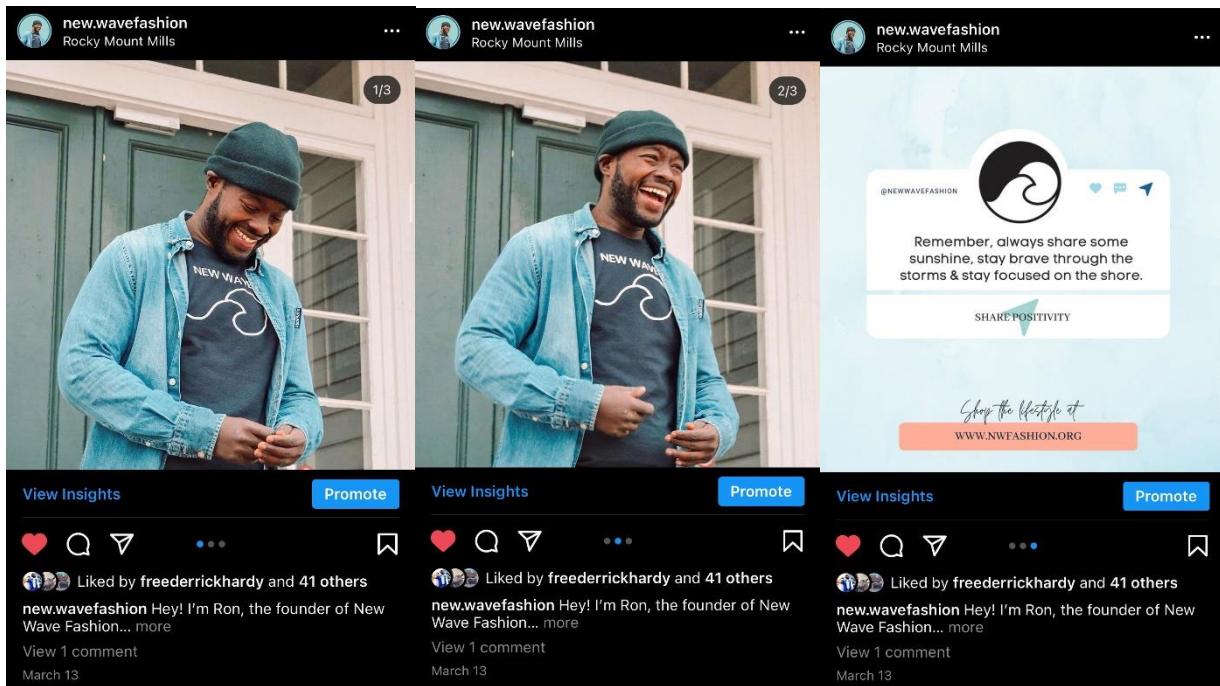


### *Instagram Carousel Feature*

This example is of a carousel feature. The three dots at the bottom of the photo and the 1/3 symbol at the top right corner of the photograph tells users there is more than one photo featured in this carousel. In this feature on Instagram, when a follower scrolls past the first photo without liking it, the next photo will appear again to the same follower in case they find that photo more appealing and hopefully giving a like. This is important for content creators to use because there is no other feature on Instagram that offers more than one exposure on the same piece of content. Therefore, even if the follower doesn’t like it on the first try, creators have another chance to win that like again.

In this carousel example, I used two smiling photos of the CEO, Ron Newsome, and at the end included a sharable graphic which anyone could re-share to their account. By using this happy imagery, it would hopefully help people feel more personable with Ron. The sharable graphic is also available for anyone who wishes to share New Wave Fashion or felt strongly about the quote, to share it on their page

and invite others to read it too. By using sharable content like this, it invites the followers into more of a dialogue and an opportunity for them to feel like a part of the community.



There are two goals usually on social media, to nurture an existing audience and to expand your audience to new viewers. To nurture and engage a pre-existing audience into a paying audience is through the carousel feature which showed almost three times the likes than static posts. This is also likely because when a user scrolls past the first photo featured in a carousel post without liking it, later, the algorithm will show the same post again but with the second photo to entice the follower to like it. Therefore, even if the follower didn't like it on the first exposure, they might like the second photo in the carousel and send another exposure.

## Social Media Strategy

### *Posting Strategy*

Creating a posting strategy for small businesses is important for consistency. The social media strategy plan is used to help grow the account and spread content to more viewers. The algorithm for Facebook and Instagram changes very often, and there are no definitive requirements to follow expressed by the companies. However, we know that these platforms value when users create material for all their different features and interact with their audiences, thus spending more time on the platform. For Instagram, there are 6 different features: static photo posts, carousel posts, Reels, IGTV, live broadcasts, guides, interactive stories, creating story filters and interacting in direct messages. For the sake of New Wave Fashion and growing their audience, we focused on static posts, carousel posts, Reels and interacting with others in direct messages. These 3 specific types of posts have more of a chance to be shared or reach the discover page to find other users. The other types of content are mostly to interact and nurture the audience you already have. On Facebook, there are feed posts including photos and videos, live streams, and Facebook groups. For the purpose of the content, photos and video will be our focus.

On Instagram from March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the goal will be to post three times a week with two Reels a week. On Facebook, most materials will be re-used except for the Reels. For the purpose of this case study, the quantity of posts isn't the focus, but the quality and audience interaction are the focus. It is best to have a consistent posting schedule rather than to have long periods of time between posts which could cause an audience to lose interest.

### *Engagement Strategy*

When brands lack a strategy, often owners 'post and ghost' which means they release their content hoping users will interact but have no intention of interacting with others' posts. The goal of our engagement strategy on Instagram is interact with users on our feed and explore page with other's posts for five minutes before and after the content goes live. For example, this could look like intentionally

liking and commenting on other pages with the same target audience and leaving meaningful interactions. By doing so, other Instagram users can find your account as well. The amount of time isn't a rule, but staying active helps tell Instagram that you are contributing to their platform. The goal of your explore page is to also have it mirror the niche you are in by following and interacting with similar accounts. This lets the algorithm know more about what you are as an account and push your content to those who are most likely wanting to see it and can relate to the same material. Therefore, on New Wave Fashion, new accounts we followed were Christian fashion brands, mental health brands, male and female fashion influencers and mental health advocates as described in customer persona number one.

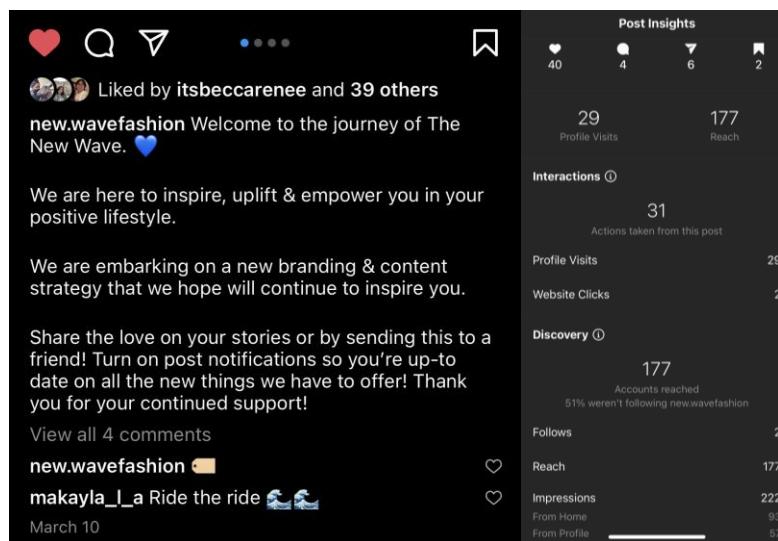
### *Caption Strategy*

The goal of captions on social media is to capture the reader's attention then prompt them to take an action at the end. The first sentence must grab their attention in order to keep them from scrolling away. Then the body of the caption must add value to the viewer. It should either inspire, educate or entertain. The last part of the caption should include a call to action (CTA) which prompts them to either like, comment, share or save the post. By having more comments on the earlier the post, the more likely Instagram will share the content with more people on their feed as it deems it important.

### *Post Example 1*

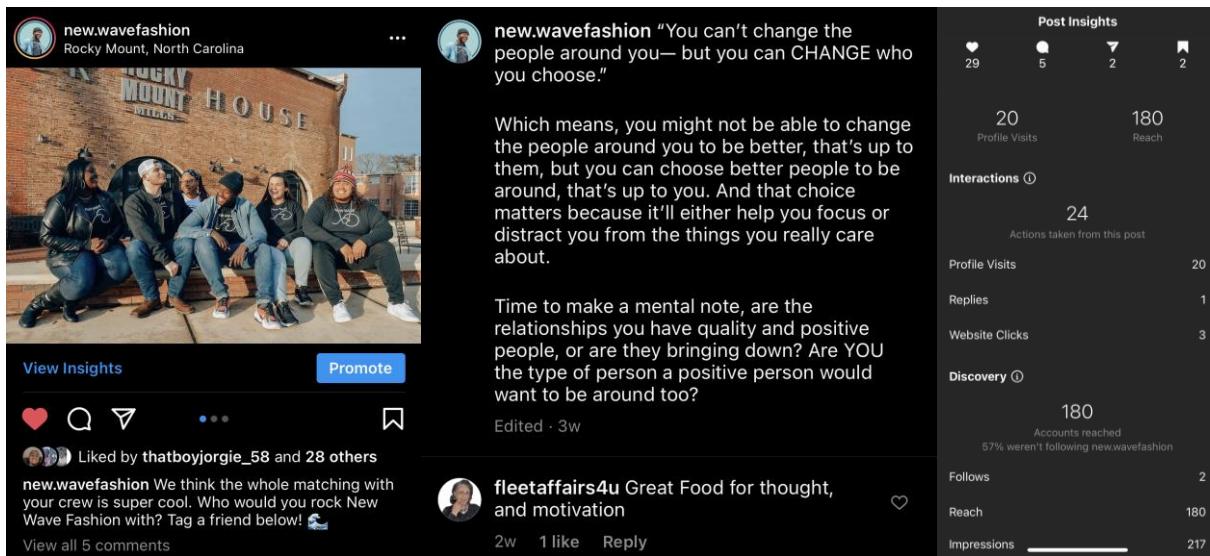
In the first example, when we introduced the new branding style, logo and strategy, we asked our viewers to share the post on their stories and turn on post notifications. This was the first photo I had included for the case study and used the carousel feature where users can scroll to see the full photo which performed the best out of all my content. Although you cannot tell who turns on post notifications, you can tell how many people shared the post. There was a total of 4 shares from outside accounts (excluding 2 shares to feature on New Wave's Stories and a share to my personal account), 40 likes, 2 comments (excluding the comments which contained the hashtags) and 2 saves. The overall reach of this post was 177 with 51% of accounts not following New Wave Fashion. There were 29 clicks to visit New

Wave Fashion's main profile and 2 website clicks. The shares is a good indicator that followers did listen to the CTA and reposted the content onto their pages or shared with friends. The save option also means followers thought the content or photos were meaningful enough to save to their folders.



### Post Example 2

This was the second-best performing piece of content which showcased the group of friends during the photoshoot smiling and laughing together. It was also a carousel post with multiple slides of the same location and pose with variation as the models moved while laughing. The caption was meant to add value through inspiration and introspection if the quality of friends surrounding you are positive influences. The CTA for this post is an open-ended question where the audience can comment their thoughts. A total of 29 likes, 20 profile visits and 3 website clicks. There were 3 comments total from other followers. The two shares were for internal use, but the two saves were from followers as well.



## Final Analytics

### *Before Case Study*

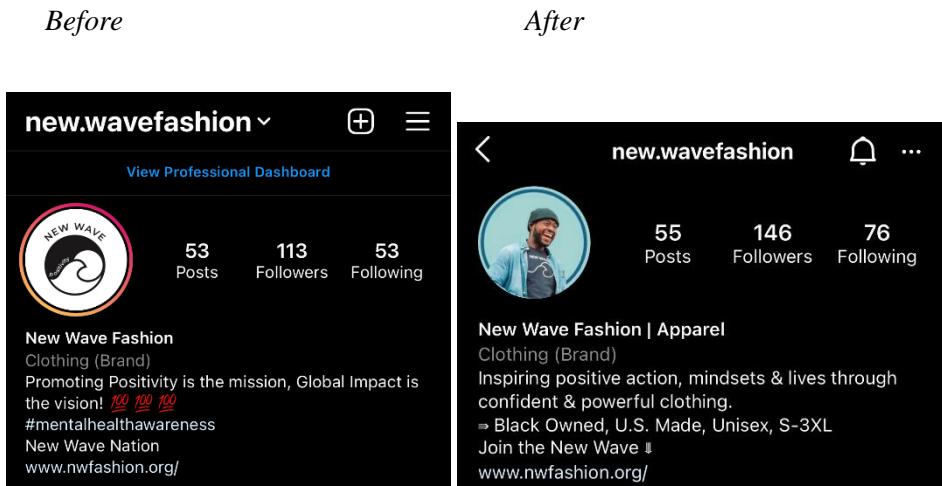
#### *Biography Update*

Before the case study, the Instagram biography was not efficient or inviting for new followers.

The profile photo also wasn't eye catching which could help new followers find the account through stories or comments on other profile's pages. By updating the biography, it would help keep new followers on the page longer and hopefully click the follow button.

To change the profile photo, I created a transparent icon of the CEO, Ron Newsome. I chose this photo because it is important in a community for followers to know who they are supporting. By using a recognizable face, customers are more likely to trust and get to know Ron, which is particularly important because people buy from businesses they like, know and trust. Using the blue circle around his photo also correlates with the red circle feature usually found around the profile photo icon to show stories have been updated on the account. The header in the biography is important to include what kind of service the company offers, which in this case, is providing apparel. Now, when Instagram users search for the word

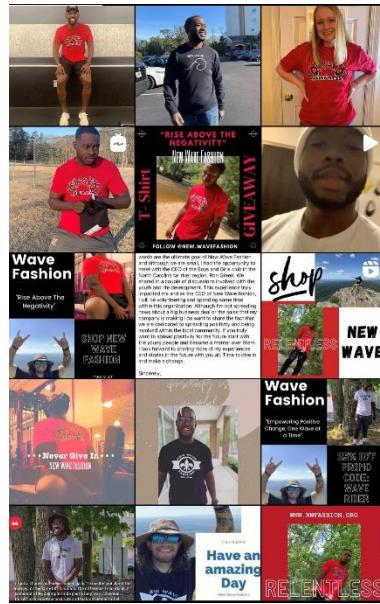
apparel, New Wave Fashion is more likely to show up on results. Next, using the biography limited space of 160 characters is important to draw in the potential follower and keep them reading longer. The first line answers, what does New Wave Fashion do? They inspire positive action, mindsets and lives through confident and powerful clothing. This is what our ideal audience is looking for in their clothing choices. Next, the biography features the main attributes of the company and clothing features, such as that the company is black owned which can gain traction in the current shop black owned movements. It also highlights that these items are made and printed in the U.S. to support small businesses in the United States. All items are unisex for any customer and fit any body type from size S to 3XL. Then there is a call to action, which invites new followers to ‘Join the New Wave’ by clicking the link in the bio and ordering a shirt. To join the wave means to take part in the movement of inspiring positive action and mindsets through clothing which is the goal of New Wave Fashion.



### *Instagram Feed Aesthetics*

Before the new content, the old feed was mismatched, chaotic and hard to read. Not many things pulled in the viewer’s attention. There were only uses of static posts and one reel. The fonts were not cohesive, and although there is a lot of red, that is simply due to the launching of a certain t-shirt for the brand rather than intentionally designing content to embrace a consistent color palette. Most of the captions were also only about purchasing the products and not enhancing the relationship with the

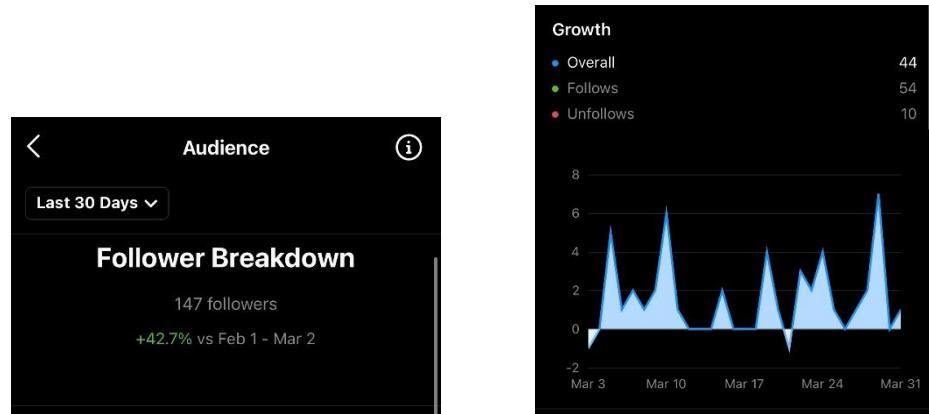
follower. The old logo was also not very visible or used in the branding. Words were very crowded in some graphics which made it hard to read from far away.



### *After Case Study*

#### *Instagram Follower Count*

Using the in-app analytics available on Instagram, it shows the follower growth from the previous 30 days compared to February 1, 2020 through March 2, 2020. Since nothing was posted following March 2<sup>nd</sup> and when I began their new content on March 8<sup>th</sup>, it gave a good break in engagement to show the trends. From March 8<sup>th</sup> to April 8th, New Wave Fashion's Instagram began at 100 followers grew by 42.7% with a net gain of 44 new followers for a new total of 144 followers. This net gain includes a total of 10 unfollows. Unfollows are common on Instagram because a tactic used by some social media managers is the follow and unfollow method. This method is where the account follows thousands of people to get their attention, and when they either follow back or don't, the account unfollows them to start the process over again. This means that these unfollows are not necessarily a sign of bad content, but ghost followers that wouldn't necessarily contribute to the overall engagement of the account anyways.



### *Instagram Feed Aesthetics*

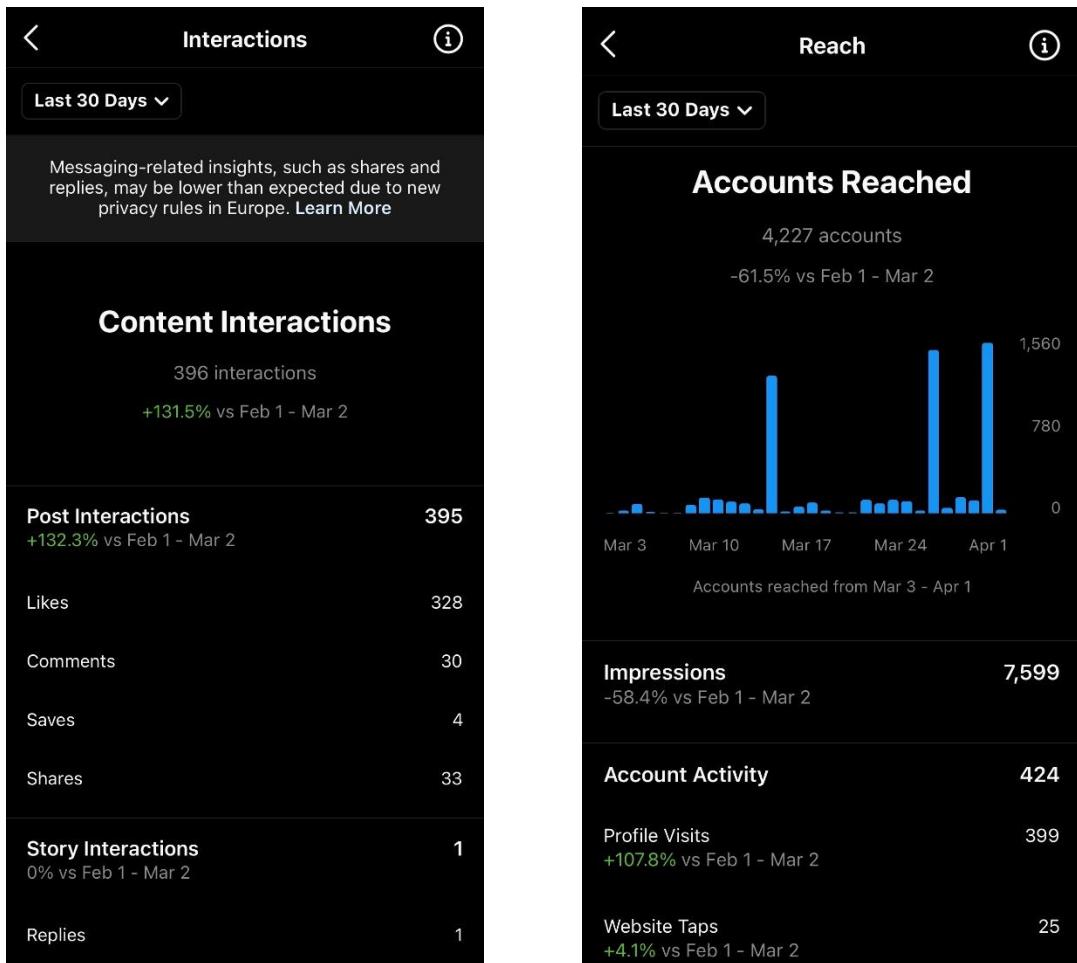
A contribution to these new followers could be due to the focused style of content that aligned with the brand's image. Using photos from the photoshoot and design elements from the branding kit helped to keep a cohesive feed. A variety of content was also produced in the form of static photos, infographics, using the carousel feature and Reels. Using the same filters also helped the photos to stay cohesive. By varying these types of content, it took advantage of most of Instagram's features thus telling them that this content was useful.



### *Overall Instagram Reach Growth*

Over the last 30 days, there was a 131.5% increase in content interactions with a total of 395 likes, 30 comments, 4 saves and 33 shares. This is compared to February 2020, until the new content rolled out in March 2020. This is a huge increase in engagement and interactions with followers or new exposures. The number of shares is an especially important measure because that means followers felt the content was quality enough to share on their own pages for their followers to see.

Along with this interaction growth, there was a total reach of 7,599 accounts. This seems to be down further by -58.4% than from the previous month. This is an interesting statistic, to have the impressions decrease, but the interactions be increased. This could mean that the posts called for more engagement from the loyal followers already exposed to the current followers but did not get exposed to many new accounts not following New Wave Fashion. However, these exposures that did occur, resulted in an increase in profile clicks. There were 399 profile inspections which meant that more strangers clicked the profile which led by an increase of 107.8%. In another positive aspect, there were 25 website visits which is where we ultimately want to lead the consumer to purchase the t-shirts.



On social media, the engagement rate is calculated by the number of likes divided by the number of followers and multiplied by 100. This is important when deciding which posts performed better in order to adjust future content based on what the audience wants to see. Using Tanke website engagement calculator, overall, the engagement rate for New Wave Fashion's Instagram as of April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 it is 14% with an average of 1 comment per post and 20 likes per post.

### *Post 1 Comparison*

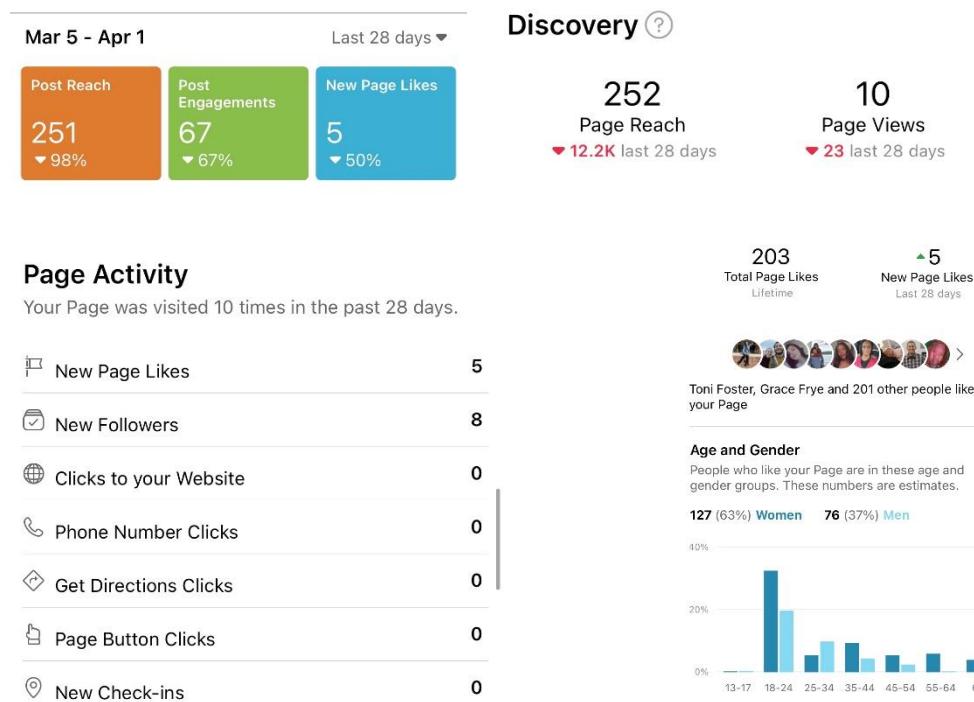
For the first post that was analyzed the total likes were 40 with 147 total followers for an engagement rate on this post of over 27%. This means that this post performed 13% better than the average engagement of other posts. This strengthens the idea that carousel posts perform better than static posts which composed most previous posts created before the case study.

## Post 2 Comparison

The second highest performing post we analyzed had a total of 29 likes with a total of 147 followers for an engagement rate of almost 20%. This post performed 6% better than average posts before the case study. Since this was also a carousel post, it enforces the hypothesis that carousel posts perform better than the static posts from before the case study.

## Facebook Analytics

To keep the social media feeds consistent with branding and to manage time more efficiently, most of the same content was shared onto the New Wave Fashion Facebook page. These included static posts, carousel posts and short videos. However, these pieces of content did not perform as well on Facebook, as they did on Instagram. The reach on Facebook decreased significantly with less reaches, engagements and page likes from the past month. Likes decreased by 50% and only were 5 new likes and 8 new followers over the period of the whole month. The reach decreased by 12.2k from the previous month with only 252 accounts exposed to this content.



## ***Discussion***

### ***Limitations***

New Wave Fashion is a solopreneur-run business; therefore, all the photography and video materials had to be taken and prepared by me. Along with creating the content and posting schedule, it proved a hard task to balance with my other responsibilities. It shows that managing social media is a full-time job. In some cases, I had to adapt my original posting schedule to fit into the allotted time for this case study. Another limitation is that although I have set up the social medias to be as efficient as possible, I had no control over the website design which would secure any possible purchases for New Wave Fashion. By not having a consistent website that matched the warm leads coming from social media, there is a possibility that it lost some customers by not having an effective sales funnel.

### ***For Further Study***

Since New Wave Fashion is a relatively a new name with not much google recognition, future research could observe how to help New Wave Fashion optimize their SEO to be higher up on Google search results and optimize their website and social media captions to fit the qualities consumers are searching for. Since there are some conflicting meanings for ‘new wave’ focusing on SEO is important to fall under the desirable categories of fashion, clothing and small business searches.

Another helpful tool is to take advantage of social media paid ads to help New Wave Fashion specifically target their ideal clientele. By narrowing down the digital ads to age range, likes, location and spending habits, it could increase the ROI. Social media ads take lots of knowledge, research and trial and error to see which proves the best for an increase in sales but is much more efficient than traditional marketing tactics.

## Conclusion

The first few seconds are vital when convincing someone of a first impression online. In order to capture attention and lead to an action such as click a follow button or purchase an item of clothing, the branding, copy and call to action must be effective. When a brand can efficiently share their mission and purpose in providing their products to the consumer, it leaves a lasting impression. The best way to do this is through branding. In re-branding New Wave Fashion, we were able to increase engagement, reach and followers on Instagram which led to more website clicks. Although it didn't quite reach my goal for increasing sales, it did help maintain sales with a slightly insignificant decrease in the amount of one or two shirts.

Organic growth on Instagram is a complicated to balance for solopreneurs looking to increase their engagement and follower counts. It takes consistent, attention grabbing, content in multiple formats to engage an audience. Based on evidence found in this creative case study, the best way to reach a larger audience is through Reels. The Reels we featured in our feed had exposure upwards of over 1,000 accounts rather than a little under 200 for static photo posts.

Another important way for a brand to increase sales is through building an engaged and family-oriented community. By including phrases such as, "Join the New Wave" or calling followers "Wave Makers", it gives the sense of community that people will want to continue to be a part of. When people like and trust a brand, they are more likely to support them long term and build that brand loyalty.

I believe captions also played a large role in engagements and giving the current following a Call to Action (CTA). These CTAs are ways to get the audience more engaged by asking a question, telling them to save this post for later or to share it with a friend. By adding this into the body of the caption, it prompts people to engage with the post more. When more people engage, the more the algorithm pushes the content to more accounts and increases the reach. More comments also show popularity among followers and create a feeling of missing out when they don't comment or participate themselves.

Although Instagram had great growth and showed promising numbers from the past month, Facebook's growth seemed to be less than the previous month. I believe this is due to the CEO's choice to pay for ads on Facebook the month prior which compared to March, looks like a decrease. In the previous month, he chose to boost one post which would have forced the reach over a couple thousand accounts. However, the post was not met with significant positive feedback and did not perform that well with only a few extra likes. This also messed up the data for me to compare organic growth which meant organic growth in likes seemed insignificant to the previous months. A limitation was that I could not go back to previous months of analytics to compare to my case study results.

Examining online sales from February, where there was no social media strategy, to March when this case study took place, online sales reportedly dropped from \$275 gross sales to \$247. Therefore, we can see that sales dropped by \$28. This seems insignificant as its approximately the price of one shirt. The website remained untouched and was not consistent with the branding from the social media. The Instagram analytics reported a 4% increase in website clicks for a total of 25 clicks. Hypothetically, if the online sales all came from Instagram clicks, then approximately 10 people bought shirts, 40% of clicks would have resulted in a sale. The lack of cohesive branding could have led to some people clicking out of the website due to lack of clarity of what New Wave was offering. My hypothesis of a consistent branding and posting on social media did lead to higher engagements on Instagram, less engagement on Facebook, possibly due to the month's prior paid promotions, and a slight decrease in online website sales.

In conclusion, hiring a social media manager who has an inspired eye for branding and understands the mission of the company is vital to the growth and success of the brand. There is a massive amount of knowledge put into creating an effective social media strategy that grows organically and is vital for businesses. The investment of planning a social media strategy will pay off over time but takes many months to increase popularity, create focused branding and cultivate a community.

## Appendix

### Appendix A

Option A- re-branded choice



Option B- non-used branding



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