NARRATIVE AESTHETICS AND INTEGRATED ADVERTISING: AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT BY CHILEAN LIFESTYLE INFLUENCERS ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract
This study examines the narrative and aesthetic construction of brand and product integration in Instagram Reels associated with Chilean lifestyle influencers. A descriptive content analysis combines categorical coding with an interpretive reading of audiovisual and textual resources. The initial collection contains 5,196 records associated with 150 users; the selected corpus comprises 1,008 records associated with 23 usernames. Two analytical periods, labelled 2024 (n = 415) and 2025 (n = 593), organize the comparison. These labels represent grouped periods rather than calendar-year-only samples. Brands or products appear in 87.4% of selected records, 56.4% show medium or high narrative integration, and 91.2% contain explicit or implicit testimony. Clear advertising disclosure is coded in 23.1%, while absent or ambiguous disclosure accounts for 76.8%; one record is uncoded. The findings describe how products are incorporated into routines, personal experience and visually curated scenes. They also identify a gap between product visibility and explicit disclosure. Commercial clarity and authenticity are coding judgments about content, rather than measurements of audience recognition or persuasive effects. The study contributes a content-based account of the relationship between narrative integration, testimonial strategies and advertising transparency in short-form audiovisual communication.

Keywords: influencer marketing, Instagram Reels, integrated advertising, lifestyle, disclosure.

1. Introduction

Instagram has become a relevant platform for the analysis of contemporary visual culture. Rather than merely serving as a space for the circulation of images, it constitutes an environment that organizes ways of seeing, self-presenting, consuming, and relating to others [1]. Within this context, Reels occupy a central position, as they form part of the rise of short, vertical, mobile video across platforms such as Instagram Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts [2]. As an audiovisual format, Reels condense resources such as music, fast-paced editing, subtitles, on-screen text, filters, transitions, close-up shots, voice-over, and calls to action. These features are characteristic of a visual culture marked by repetition, imitation, and the rapid circulation of content [3]. Their logic is embedded in an attention economy, in which the first few seconds are decisive for capturing users' attention and preventing them from scrolling to another piece of content [4, 5].

In this scenario, social media have reconfigured traditional forms of advertising communication. Part of commercial persuasion has shifted from openly promotional formats toward content integrated into personal experiences, everyday narratives, and practices of self-presentation. Influencers operate as intermediaries between brands and audiences, not only because of their reach, but also because of the credibility, proximity, and trust they build with specific communities [6–8]. This figure can be understood as an evolution of earlier forms of digital microcelebrity, associated with the management of visibility, performative intimacy, and continuous interaction with networked audiences [9]. Such visibility involves relational labor, aesthetic production, and the management of a consumable identity [10]. Thus, everyday life becomes a space of symbolic, commercial, and affective value, in which the advertising message does not necessarily appear as an interruption, but rather as part of the everyday experience narrated by the creator [11].

This transformation must be understood within a platform economy. Social media do not operate as neutral spaces, but as infrastructures that organize visibility, hierarchize content, and shape specific forms of cultural and commercial production [12, 13]. On Instagram, the circulation of Reels depends on creative decisions, audience interaction, formats promoted by the platform, and algorithmic dynamics. Consequently, content is not produced solely for followers, but also for recommendation systems that reward particular rhythms, visual styles, and levels of engagement [14].

1.1 Integrated Advertising, Branded Content, and the Naturalization of the Commercial Message

Integrated advertising is a form of commercial communication in which a brand, product, or service is incorporated into content in a narrative, aesthetic, or experiential manner, rather than being presented as an external or clearly separate message. In this sense, it is linked to hybrid forms of persuasive communication, in which the boundaries between information, entertainment, and commercial promotion become less evident to audiences [15]. This logic is related to native advertising and branded content, as it seeks to adapt the advertising message to the format, tone, and

style of the content in which it appears, thereby reducing the perception of interruption typically associated with traditional advertising [16, 17].

In content produced by digital creators, this integration acquires a particular dimension: the brand is not only inserted into an audiovisual piece, but also into an identity, a routine, and a pre-existing relationship of trust with the audience. For this reason, commercial communication can draw on proximity, perceived authenticity, and the continuity of the digital narrative, fostering a more organic reception of the message [8]. However, precisely because advertising is integrated into content that appears everyday or spontaneous, it may become less recognizable as persuasive communication, especially when disclosure is not clear or visible [17–19].

The naturalization of the commercial message occurs when the brand appears as a logical part of the profile's narrative universe. This operation is close to product placement, insofar as the brand acquires meaning within a scene and not merely as an isolated promotional object [20]. In these contents, this logic is reinforced because the presence of the product is associated with desirable experiences, recognizable emotions, and identities with which the audience may identify. Thus, the more natural the brand appears within an everyday scene, the more easily it may be interpreted as a personal recommendation rather than as a commercial imposition [8, 11, 21, 22].

1.2 Narrative Aesthetics, Aspirationality, and the Construction of Lifestyle

Lifestyle content can be understood as a form of visual communication in which aesthetics and narration organize the experience of consumption. Lighting, framing, editing rhythm, music, on-screen text, settings, and the arrangement of objects do not function merely as ornamental elements, but as resources for producing meaning, attention, and symbolic value [23–25]. From the perspective of social semiotics, images construct meaning through composition, color, perspective, distance, and visual salience, which makes it possible to observe how a product gains prominence through its placement within the frame, its lighting, its visual repetition, or its appearance in close-up shots [23, 25].

This visual dimension is linked to the aestheticization of everyday life, a process through which ordinary practices—getting dressed, applying makeup, cooking, traveling, or working—are presented as visually curated and culturally meaningful experiences [26]. In consumer culture, lifestyle operates as a form of identity expression and social differentiation, since objects, spaces, and experiences acquire value through the symbolic meanings they communicate [26, 27]. Thus, a beauty routine, a bright room, or a travel experience can function as signs of taste, aspiration, and social recognition [10, 27].

The aspirational dimension of these contents is not constructed solely through the display of luxury, but also through everyday forms of desire: an organized life, a carefully curated image, or an emotionally rewarding experience. This logic is related to the aspirational labor described by Duffy [28], in which creativity, beauty, consumption, and self-realization are presented as pleasurable activities, even though they involve production, editing, commercial negotiation, and audience management. In this way, lifestyle content transforms everyday practices into desirable scenes, often under an appearance of naturalness and spontaneity [21, 28].

The construction of lifestyle can also be understood as a practice of self-presentation. Goffman [29] argues that individuals manage impressions before others by selecting what to show, how to present themselves, and what image to project. In digital environments, this self-presentation is intensified through images, texts, interactions, and decisions about visibility that make it possible to sustain a coherent public presence [10, 30]. Thus, the lifestyle profile organizes a narrated and aesthetically controlled version of everyday life, in which consumption participates in the construction of a recognizable and marketable identity [31, 32].

Authenticity does not imply the absence of strategy, but rather the production of a self-image that appears coherent, approachable, and spontaneous, even when it is shaped by commercial logics [31, 33]. This authenticity is crucial because the credibility of the recommendation depends on the brand appearing compatible with the creator's trajectory, tastes, and aesthetic style [8, 11]. For this reason, persuasion does not rely only on arguments about the product, but on the construction of a visual and affective experience that makes the scene in which it appears desirable [34, 35].

1.3 Digital Testimoniality, Parasociality, and Authenticity

A central dimension of influencer marketing is its testimonial character. The creator does not merely display a product; in many cases, they claim to use it, recommend it, or incorporate it into their own life. This logic is grounded in personal experience: the persuasive value of the message increases when the recommendation appears to emerge from an authentic lived experience rather than solely from a commercial obligation [8, 11, 22]. In this sense, the influencer functions as a situated source of recommendation, whose credibility depends on the perceived coherence between identity, lifestyle, and the promoted product [36, 37].

This testimoniality is linked to the construction of parasocial bonds. Horton and Wohl [38] used the concept of para-social interaction to explain the sense of closeness that audiences may develop with media figures. On social media, this closeness is intensified by publication frequency, the exposure of personal moments, and the possibilities for interaction through comments, messages, or reactions [21, 39]. For this reason, in lifestyle content, the commercial

recommendation may be perceived as part of a shared life, in which the product appears integrated into routines, tastes, spaces, habits, or everyday experiences.

Several studies have shown that perceived similarity, trust, and social attractiveness may influence attitudes toward brands and purchase intention [40, 41]. In this context, authenticity occupies a central place, although it does not imply the absence of strategy. Rather, it is constructed as a performance of coherence: sponsored content must appear compatible with the profile's trajectory, its usual aesthetic, and the audience's expectations [11].

1.4 Transparency, Disclosure, and Ethical Challenges

Advertising transparency constitutes one of the main challenges of influencer marketing. From the perspective of the persuasion knowledge model, Friestad and Wright [42] argue that people interpret commercial messages based on their ability to recognize persuasive intentions. In this case, such identification becomes more complex because promotion is often integrated into a previously established relationship of trust, in which the creator's voice functions as a source of credibility rather than as a clearly differentiated advertising space [8, 19].

In this context, disclosure plays a key role: it signals the existence of a commercial relationship between the creator and the brand. Its presence, clarity, and placement influence the recognition of content as advertising and the activation of audiences' persuasion knowledge [17, 19, 43, 44]. However, its effectiveness depends on factors such as visibility, the language used, the moment at which it appears, and the user's level of attention [43, 45].

This issue is especially relevant on visual and fast-consumption platforms such as Instagram, where users may scroll quickly through content and do not always process sponsorship cues in detail. Although tools such as the paid partnership label may facilitate advertising recognition, their effect depends on whether audiences see it, understand it, and consider it relevant when interpreting the message [46].

In Chile, in 2022, the National Consumer Service (SERNAC) issued an Interpretative Circular on native advertising and influencers [47], which recognizes the hybrid nature of these practices and establishes principles applicable to commercial communication on social media. At the platform level, Instagram also requires creators to use its branded content tools to identify paid partnerships [48]. For this reason, transparency should be understood as a communicational, ethical, and regulatory issue. In the case of Reels, this discussion becomes particularly important due to the brevity of the format, the speed of consumption, and the aesthetic integration of the brand into everyday scenes. Transparency, therefore, cannot be reduced to the mere presence of a label; rather, it must consider its clarity, visibility, and effective capacity to inform audiences about the commercial nature of the content.

1.5 Objective of the Study

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze how integrated audiovisual advertising is constructed in Instagram Reels produced by Chilean lifestyle influencers, considering their narrative and aesthetic strategies, their adaptation to the platform, and the ethical challenges associated with the transparency of commercial messages.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. identify the forms of brand presence and integration in the Reels analyzed;
2. describe the aesthetic and narrative characteristics through which the advertising message is articulated;
3. examine the resources used to adapt content to the logic of Instagram as a short-form audiovisual platform;
4. analyze the testimonial and aspirational dimensions of the content; and
5. observe the degree of advertising transparency, clarity, or ambiguity present in the publications.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design

The study uses a descriptive-interpretive content analysis, combining quantitative coding of observable and evaluative content features with an interpretive reading of audiovisual and textual resources. The quantitative component describes distributions and cross-tabulations; the interpretive component examines how the coded resources articulate personal experience, lifestyle and product integration.

The unit recorded in the matrix is a Reel entry, including its audiovisual content and associated caption, hashtags, mentions and link. Frequencies describe the selected corpus. Differences between analytical periods are descriptive and are not presented as statistically significant changes or as evidence of individual creators' development over time. Interpretation addresses the construction of meaning within the content. Terms such as commercial clarity, authenticity and aspirational pressure refer to assessments made using the coding instrument. Audience attention, trust, advertising recognition and purchase intention were not measured.

2.2 Corpus and Selection Criteria

The initial collection contains 5,196 records with Instagram links associated with 150 usernames. The selected worksheet contains 1,008 linked records associated with 23 usernames, of which 1,007 have a content-category code. The initial collection provides a sampling frame rather than a census of Chilean influencer production. The selected

worksheet also includes publications dated in 2026 that are absent from the initial collection; the two sheets therefore do not represent an unchanged sampling frame and its mechanically extracted subset.

Table 1. Temporal distribution of the coded corpus

Analytical period	n	%
2024	415	41.2
2025	593	58.8
Total	**1,008**	**100.0**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Profile selection was purposive and oriented toward lifestyle, fashion, beauty, travel, wellness, gastronomy, decoration and everyday consumption content linked to Chile. The recorded selection is uneven across usernames, ranging from one to 64 entries. Appendix A reports this distribution. The workbook does not record a reproducible follower threshold or a complete log of inclusion decisions; consequently, selection should not be described as probabilistic, balanced across profiles or representative of all Chilean influencers.

For the comparison, the labels 2024 and 2025 denote analytical periods. The first combines one record dated in 2023 and 414 dated in 2024 (n = 415); the second combines 547 dated in 2025 and 46 dated in 2026 (n = 593). The publication dates span December 23, 2023, to March 14, 2026. This grouping preserves the study's two-period organization while making its calendar composition explicit. Period comparisons also reflect differences in the profile composition and volume of selected content.

2.3 Dimensions and Variables of Analysis

The coding instrument was organized into five main dimensions:

1. Integrated advertising. This dimension considers brand presence, type of product or service, mode of integration, product prominence, and the relationship between the brand and the narrative. A distinction was drawn between explicit integration, when the product appears as the central focus of the content, and naturalized integration, when the brand is incorporated into an everyday or aspirational experience.

2. Audiovisual narrative aesthetics. This dimension includes resources related to lighting, framing, editing, rhythm, music, color, settings, clothing, gestures, on-screen text, and narrative structure. It makes it possible to observe how Reels construct a visual experience that is coherent with the influencer's positioning and with the codes of digital lifestyle content.

3. Platform adaptation. This dimension considers the duration of the Reel, the use of trending sounds, fast-paced editing, subtitles, calls to action, hashtags, geolocation, tags, brand collaborations, and interaction resources. It allows for the analysis of how content adapts to the logic of visibility, circulation, and short-form consumption characteristic of Instagram.

4. Testimoniality and aspirationality. This dimension considers the type of testimony (explicit, implicit, or non-testimonial), narrated or suggested personal use of the product, perceived authenticity, coherence between the product and the lifestyle represented by the influencer, and the degree of aspirational pressure. It makes it possible to analyze how the commercial recommendation is legitimized through the creator's personal experience.

5. Advertising transparency. This dimension records the presence, absence, placement, and clarity of disclosure. Resources such as the paid partnership label, hashtags such as #ad, #advertising, and #collaboration, mentions in the caption, verbal disclosure within the video, and ambiguous indicators such as "thanks to," "invited by," "together with," or "in collaboration with" were observed.

2.4 Analytical Procedure

The matrix contains publication metadata, interaction counts, duration, 30 categorical analytical variables, and open fields for examples and retention cues. Coding covers five dimensions: brand/product integration, audiovisual narrative aesthetics, platform adaptation, testimoniality/aspirationality, and advertising transparency. The quantitative analysis reports category frequencies and percentages, followed by a cross-tabulation of disclosure and commercial clarity. The interpretive reading connects these distributions with the content features represented by each variable. Illustrative descriptions of formats are distinguished from individually documented cases.

The workbook contains one recorded coding for each entry; it does not provide independent ratings from multiple coders. An intercoder reliability coefficient therefore cannot be calculated from this file. The instrument distinguishes brand visibility, collaboration or brand tagging, and explicit advertising disclosure. These are separate indicators: a tag or visible product does not by itself establish payment, sponsorship or another material connection. Clear disclosure is coded when an explicit advertising signal is present; ambiguous disclosure is retained as a separate category. Claims about undisclosed paid advertising cannot be established solely from product presence.

Percentages in the results use all 1,008 selected records, or the full size of each analytical period, as the denominator. Missing codes are shown separately and are never assigned to substantive categories. Narrative integration has eight missing values; demonstration/use has four; recommendation strategy has three; most other analytical variables have one. Category labels were harmonized by meaning, including two labels for "Other"; the entry "2. Medio" in functional on-screen text was retained at level 2. The nine rows of category options following the linked records were excluded as codebook material.

Two normalized Instagram links occur twice, leaving 1,006 distinct links among the 1,008 selected records. One appears under two usernames, potentially reflecting a shared publication, and the other repeats within the same username. Both entries in each pair are retained to preserve the agreed corpus totals; all results therefore refer to records rather than fully deduplicated unique Reels. This choice is accounted for in the limitations.

3. Results

Results follow the five specific objectives. The analytical periods labelled 2024 and 2025 contain 415 and 593 records, respectively. All comparisons below refer to these grouped periods as defined in the methods.

The corpus comprises 1,008 selected records associated with 23 usernames. The 2024 period accounts for 41.2% and the 2025 period for 58.8% (Table 1). Unequal profile contributions and the differing composition of the periods should be considered when interpreting aggregate differences.

3.1 Forms of Brand Presence and Integration

The first specific objective sought to identify the forms of brand presence and integration in the Reels analyzed. The results show a high presence of brands and products in the corpus, although this presence is not always accompanied by an explicit statement of collaboration or by a clear indication of the commercial relationship. In this sense, the brand may appear in different ways: visibly through the product, verbally mentioned, tagged in the publication, or integrated into the narrative development of the Reel.

Collaboration statements or brand tagging are coded in 52.1% of all records (n = 525); their share is 48.4% in the 2024 period and 54.6% in the 2025 period. This combined indicator records a stated connection or tag and should not be interpreted as the proportion of verified paid collaborations. It is distinct from explicit advertising disclosure.

As an illustration of the coding categories, this situation is clearly observed in *get ready with me* (GRWM) Reels, where the influencer may show clothing, makeup, accessories, or beauty products within a personal routine. In these cases, the brand may be tagged, visible on the packaging, or recognizable through the product itself, but it is not always made explicit whether a commercial collaboration exists. In this way, brand presence is integrated into an everyday scene and may be perceived as a natural part of the creator's routine.

Table 2. Brand or product presence in the video

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Visible or identifiable brand	201 (48.4)	328 (55.3)	529 (52.5)
Visible product, brand not identifiable	166 (40.0)	186 (31.4)	352 (34.9)
No identifiable brand/product visible	48 (11.6)	78 (13.2)	126 (12.5)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

A clearly visible or identifiable brand appears in 52.5% of records (n = 529; Table 2). Including products whose brand is not identifiable raises product/brand presence to 87.4%. Brand identification accounts for 48.4% in the 2024 period and 55.3% in the 2025 period. These figures describe visibility; they do not establish whether every appearance has a commercial agreement behind it.

As an illustration of the coding categories, this presence is not limited to the passive display of the product. In beauty Reels, for example, the influencer may show packaging directly to the camera, apply the product in a close-up shot, and end with the final result. In fashion Reels, the brand may appear associated with a specific garment within a sequence of preparation or outfit changes. In both cases, the brand gains relevance through its visibility, its position within the frame, its relationship with the influencer's body, and its participation in a narrated transformation or experience.

Direct verbal brand mention accounts for 41.3% of records, with shares of 33.5% and 46.7% in the two periods. Verbal naming can make the brand more explicit within the narrative, while advertising disclosure addresses a different issue: whether a commercial relationship is expressly signalled.

Table 3. Narrative integration of the product

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
High integration	109 (26.3)	237 (40.0)	346 (34.3)
Medium integration	109 (26.3)	114 (19.2)	223 (22.1)
Low integration	70 (16.9)	72 (12.1)	142 (14.1)
Attached product	0 (0.0)	9 (1.5)	9 (0.9)
No product/advertising as central axis	126 (30.4)	154 (26.0)	280 (27.8)
Missing / not coded	1 (0.2)	7 (1.2)	8 (0.8)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Medium or high narrative integration is coded in 56.4% of all records (n = 569; Table 3). High integration accounts for 26.3% in the 2024 period and 40.0% in the 2025 period. Eight records have no integration code. The category describes the product's role in organizing the story, rather than an observed effect on viewers.

As an illustration of the coding categories, in a travel or event Reel, for example, the brand may organize the entire sequence: arrival at the place, tour, use or consumption of the service, personal reaction, and closing recommendation. In these cases, the product or service does not function as an accessory element, but as the central axis of the narrated experience. A similar logic can be observed in beauty or fashion Reels, where the product is integrated into a transformation: before and after, preparation for an outing, outfit styling, or a self-care routine.

3.2 Aesthetic and Narrative Characteristics of the Advertising Message

The second specific objective sought to describe the aesthetic and narrative characteristics through which the advertising message is articulated in the Reels analyzed. The results show that the content is mainly concentrated in categories associated with lifestyle, fashion, beauty, and experiences, confirming that integrated advertising is largely constructed through everyday and aspirational scenes.

Table 4. Content category by analytical period

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Lifestyle	157 (37.8)	198 (33.4)	355 (35.2)
Outfit/styling	125 (30.1)	120 (20.2)	245 (24.3)
Beauty	55 (13.3)	99 (16.7)	154 (15.3)
Event/travel	32 (7.7)	89 (15.0)	121 (12.0)
Advice	14 (3.4)	24 (4.0)	38 (3.8)
A day in my life	3 (0.7)	20 (3.4)	23 (2.3)
Giveaway	2 (0.5)	10 (1.7)	12 (1.2)
Haul/unboxing	7 (1.7)	3 (0.5)	10 (1.0)
Other	20 (4.8)	29 (4.9)	49 (4.9)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Lifestyle, outfit/styling, beauty and event/travel together account for 86.8% of selected records (Table 4). The thematic concentration situates product integration within appearance, self-care, leisure and everyday experiences. These categories describe content settings rather than independently verified sponsorship arrangements.

Table 5. Everyday storytelling

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Complete narrative	37 (8.9)	157 (26.5)	194 (19.2)
Micro-narrative with progression	126 (30.4)	185 (31.2)	311 (30.9)
Routine/minimal scene without progression	207 (49.9)	171 (28.8)	378 (37.5)
No narrative	45 (10.8)	79 (13.3)	124 (12.3)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Complete narratives account for 19.2% of records and micro-narratives with progression for 30.9% (Table 5). Including routines or minimal scenes without progression, 87.6% exhibit some narrative or scenic organization. The distinction matters because an everyday scene can provide a setting for a product without developing a complete story. As an illustration of the coding categories, a frequent example can be observed in outfit/styling Reels, where the content may begin with a scene in front of the mirror, continue with fast cuts of garments and accessories, and end with the complete look. In these cases, the product is integrated into a sequence of preparation and personal transformation. A similar pattern appears in beauty Reels, where the product is associated with a routine of use, application, and final result. The brand acquires meaning within the visual development of the content, rather than through an extensive advertising explanation.

Table 6. Aspirational aesthetics/visual curation

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Very high	33 (8.0)	37 (6.2)	70 (6.9)
High	299 (72.0)	480 (80.9)	779 (77.3)
Medium	83 (20.0)	75 (12.6)	158 (15.7)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

High or very high visual curation is coded in 84.2% of records (Table 6). High curation alone reaches 80.9% in the 2025 period. The coding captures stylistic coherence in lighting, framing and editing; it does not measure the audience's aesthetic evaluation or desire for the product.

3.3 Adaptation to the Logic of Instagram as a Short-Form Audiovisual Platform

The third specific objective sought to examine the resources through which the Reels analyzed adapt to Instagram's audiovisual logic. The results show a high degree of adaptation to the format, especially through the use of verticality, music, opening hooks, retention cues, and calls to action. These elements indicate that the content not only presents products or brands, but also organizes their presence within a dynamic of rapid, mobile, and visually engaging consumption.

Medium or strong opening hooks are coded in 90.3% of all records. Strong hooks account for 31.8% in the 2024 period and 40.6% in the 2025 period. The variable describes observable opening devices intended to attract attention, rather than measured attention or viewing completion.

An optimized vertical format is coded in 97.5% of records. This indicates a widespread adaptation to the mobile video format, within which bodies, products and settings are composed for a vertical frame.

Music or audio is coded in 89.3% of records. Clearly functional music accounts for 22.9% in the 2024 period and 33.2% in the 2025 period. Functional use refers to its coded contribution to rhythm, atmosphere or emotion; it does not establish algorithmic promotion or audience response.

Retention cues occur in 60.1% of records: 54.2% in the 2024 period and 64.2% in the 2025 period. These include devices such as rapid cuts, visual progression and narrative anticipation. Their presence indicates a formal strategy, while retention itself would require viewing analytics.

Table 7. Commercial call to action (CTA)

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Reinforced CTA	2 (0.5)	14 (2.4)	16 (1.6)
Direct CTA	13 (3.1)	92 (15.5)	105 (10.4)
Soft CTA	155 (37.3)	202 (34.1)	357 (35.4)
No CTA	245 (59.0)	284 (47.9)	529 (52.5)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Direct commercial CTAs account for 3.1% in the 2024 period and 15.5% in the 2025 period (Table 7). Across the corpus, 52.5% have no CTA, and 47.4% contain a soft, direct or reinforced CTA. Commercial calls should be distinguished from general engagement requests when interpreting the coding categories.

3.4 Testimonial and Aspirational Dimensions of the Content

Clearly narrated or suggested personal use is coded in 90.2% of records. Clearly narrated use accounts for 48.9%, suggested use for 41.3%, and no evidence of personal use for 9.7%. These codes describe how experience is represented in the content; they do not verify actual consumption or product efficacy.

Clearly narrated use accounts for 44.3% in the 2024 period and 52.1% in the 2025 period. The descriptive difference indicates a larger share of explicit experiential narration in the latter group, without establishing a within-person change in creators' practices.

Table 8. Type of testimony

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Explicit testimony	190 (45.8)	330 (55.6)	520 (51.6)
Implicit testimony	183 (44.1)	216 (36.4)	399 (39.6)
Non-testimonial	42 (10.1)	46 (7.8)	88 (8.7)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Explicit or implicit testimony is coded in 91.2% of records (Table 8). Explicit testimony accounts for 45.8% in the 2024 period and 55.6% in the 2025 period. Testimoniality refers to statements or representations of personal experience that can function as recommendation resources.

High or medium coded authenticity accounts for 84.8% of records: 44.0% high and 40.8% medium. High authenticity is coded in 35.9% of the first period and 49.7% of the second. "Perceived" authenticity here denotes the coding assessment of the represented experience, rather than a rating provided by audiences.

High product–lifestyle coherence is coded in 97.8% of records, compared with 1.9% medium and 0.2% low coherence. The distribution describes compatibility within the represented lifestyle. It does not establish that every product appearance is paid advertising.

Product–lifestyle compatibility provides a basis for interpreting how a recommendation is made plausible within the creator's narrative. The relationship between such compatibility and actual credibility or advertising recognition remains a question for audience research.

Low aspirational pressure accounts for 66.1%, medium for 29.7%, and high for 4.2%. Medium or high pressure together reaches 33.8%. These codes concern the intensity of idealization represented in the content, rather than measured psychological pressure on viewers.

3.5 Advertising Transparency, Clarity, and Ambiguity

The fifth specific objective sought to observe the degree of advertising transparency, clarity, or ambiguity present in the publications. This is one of the study's most relevant findings, because there is a wide gap between the presence of brands and the clarity of disclosure.

Table 9. Advertising disclosure

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Present and clear	85 (20.5)	148 (25.0)	233 (23.1)
Present but poorly visible/ambiguous	104 (25.1)	155 (26.1)	259 (25.7)
Absent	226 (54.5)	289 (48.7)	515 (51.1)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Clear disclosure is coded in 23.1% of records (n = 233; Table 9). Disclosure is absent in 51.1% and ambiguous or poorly visible in 25.7%. Together, absent or ambiguous disclosure accounts for 76.8%; one record is uncoded. These findings describe signalling in the selected content and cannot by themselves establish the number of undisclosed paid partnerships.

Table 10. Commercial clarity of the message

Category	2024, n (%)	2025, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Clearly commercial	131 (31.6)	213 (35.9)	344 (34.1)
Semi-ambiguous	111 (26.7)	107 (18.0)	218 (21.6)
Highly ambiguous	31 (7.5)	102 (17.2)	133 (13.2)
Commercial intent not directly apparent	142 (34.2)	170 (28.7)	312 (31.0)
Missing / not coded	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.1)
Total	**415 (100.0)**	**593 (100.0)**	**1,008 (100.0)**

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Commercial intent is coded as clear in 34.1% of records (Table 10). It is coded as not directly apparent in 31.0%, while semi-ambiguous and highly ambiguous categories together account for 34.8%. This variable represents an analytical judgment about message clarity, not observed audience recognition.

Table 11. Advertising disclosure and coded commercial clarity, n (row %)

Disclosure	N	Clearly advertising	Semi-ambiguous	Very ambiguous	Not directly perceived as advertising
Present and clear	233	217 (93.1)	11 (4.7)	5 (2.1)	0 (0.0)
Present but poorly visible/ambiguous	259	101 (39.0)	114 (44.0)	43 (16.6)	1 (0.4)
Absent	515	26 (5.0)	93 (18.1)	85 (16.5)	311 (60.4)
Valid total	1,007	344 (34.2)	218 (21.6)	133 (13.2)	312 (31.0)

Source: Author's coding matrix. Percentages may differ from 100 because of rounding.

Among the 233 records with clear disclosure, 217 (93.1%) are also coded as clearly commercial (Table 11). Among the 515 with absent disclosure, 311 (60.4%) are coded as not directly apparent as advertising. This is a descriptive correspondence between related coding dimensions. It does not establish a causal effect of disclosure or independently measure viewers' recognition.

4. Discussion

The results show that integrated advertising in lifestyle Reels does not operate solely as a product promotion strategy, but rather as a complex form of cultural, visual, and commercial production. The brand is incorporated into scenes of everyday life, articulated through personal narratives, supported by an aspirational aesthetic, and circulated within a platform logic that privileges brevity, retention, and interaction. In this sense, the Reels analyzed show that commercial communication is designed to be integrated into the everyday flow of content and presented as a natural part of the influencer's lifestyle.

Product/brand visibility (87.4%) and collaboration statements or brand tags (52.1%) describe different features of the content. Their coexistence with a lower share of clear disclosure (23.1%) supports examining how brands are integrated and signalled. However, visible products, tags and confirmed commercial relationships should remain analytically distinct. This distinction sharpens the connection with research on native advertising and hybrid persuasive messages [16, 17].

Medium or high narrative integration occurs in 56.4% of selected records. This supports interpreting the product as a component of narrated experience in a substantial share of the corpus. The higher proportion of high integration in the second analytical period describes a difference between groups; uneven profile contributions prevent interpreting it as proof that the same creators progressively adopted more sophisticated strategies.

The aesthetic dimension is fundamental to understanding this process. 84.2% of the Reels present high or very high aesthetic curation, while 90.3% use a medium or strong opening hook. These data support the claim that visuality is not a secondary aspect, but a central condition of advertising integration. From the perspective of Kress and van Leeuwen [23], images produce meaning through composition, salience, framing, distance, and the relationship with the viewer. In lifestyle Reels, products acquire value not only through their functional characteristics, but also through the way they are lit, framed, musicalized, and placed in relation to desirable bodies, spaces, and routines.

This aesthetic is directly linked to the aspirational construction of lifestyle. The dominant categories—lifestyle, outfit/styling, beauty, and event/travel—account for 86.8% of the corpus. This shows that commercial communication is mainly deployed in scenes where consumption is associated with well-being, appearance, mobility, enjoyment, self-care, and social recognition. In dialogue with Duffy [28], it can be argued that these contents are part of aspirational labor, in which everyday life is edited, beautified, and transformed into a commercial resource. From this perspective, Reels do not only sell objects, but also ways of inhabiting, presenting oneself, and being recognized in the digital environment.

Testimoniality reinforces this process. 91.2% of the Reels contain explicit or implicit testimony, and 90.2% show narrated or suggested personal use. This suggests that commercial recommendation is represented through the influencer's subjective experience. The product appears as something tried, used, preferred, or incorporated into everyday life. This strategy is consistent with studies on authenticity in influencer marketing, which show how the credibility of content depends on the coherence between the product, the creator's identity, and the relationship of trust with the audience [11, 49].

Authenticity is interpreted here as a representational resource. Product–lifestyle coherence can help situate a recommendation within a plausible everyday narrative. Whether this coherence increases credibility or reduces advertising recognition depends on viewers' interpretations and requires reception research. The coded coherence and authenticity indicators identify content features relevant to that question, without measuring their effects.

Adaptation to Instagram also shapes the form this communication takes. 97.5% of the Reels use an optimized vertical format, 60.1% present retention cues, and 47.4% incorporate some type of commercial CTA, whether soft, direct, or reinforced. These resources show that the content is designed for a brief, mobile, and visually intense mode of consumption. As Cotter [14] argues, influencers participate in a "visibility game" in which they must negotiate both audience expectations and the platform's conditions of circulation. In this context, the commercial message must not only be persuasive, but also entertaining, brief, visually attractive, and technically adapted to the Reel format.

Clear advertising disclosure appears in 23.1% of selected records; absent or ambiguous disclosure accounts for 76.8%, with one uncoded record. This distribution makes explicit signalling an important dimension of the analysis. Its implications must be assessed in relation to evidence of commercial connections, because the selected corpus also includes product appearances whose sponsorship status is not independently established.

The disclosure–clarity cross-tabulation shows substantial descriptive correspondence: 93.1% of entries with clear disclosure are coded as clearly commercial, while 60.4% of those without disclosure are coded as not directly apparent as advertising. The persuasion knowledge model provides a theoretical basis for studying recognition of persuasive intent [42]. In this study, however, the two codes partly share conceptual content, so their correspondence should not be treated as independent evidence of persuasion knowledge activation.

The contribution is to connect narrative integration, audiovisual form, testimonial representation and disclosure within one content analysis. The observed configuration provides hypotheses for audience studies about how everyday narratives and advertising signals are interpreted. It also supports examining transparency separately from product visibility, rather than treating every visible brand as evidence of a paid promotion.

5. Conclusion

This study describes brand and product integration in 1,008 selected Instagram Reel records associated with Chilean lifestyle content. The findings connect everyday narrative settings, visual curation, testimonial experience and adaptation to short-form video. The conclusions concern the selected records and their coded characteristics.

For the first objective, product/brand presence is widespread (87.4%), while collaboration statements or brand tags occur in 52.1%. These indicators capture visibility and stated connections, respectively. Clear disclosure is a separate measure and should not be inferred from either one.

For the second objective, lifestyle, outfit/styling, beauty and event/travel account for 86.8% of the corpus, and high or very high visual curation for 84.2%. These patterns situate product integration within carefully represented practices of appearance, self-care, leisure and everyday consumption. Their persuasive implications remain interpretive rather than experimentally demonstrated.

Regarding the third objective, the results reveal a strong adaptation to Instagram's logic as a short-form audiovisual platform. Verticality, opening hooks, editing rhythm, music, retention cues, and calls to action show that Reels contain resources oriented toward capturing and sustaining attention in a fast, mobile, and visual consumption environment. In 2025, there is a greater presence of strong hooks, retention cues, and direct CTAs, suggesting a more marked orientation toward interaction, retention, and commercial action.

For the fourth objective, explicit or implicit testimony appears in 91.2% of records and narrated or suggested personal use in 90.2%. The findings show how experience is represented as a recommendation resource. Coded authenticity and lifestyle coherence concern the construction of the message, rather than authenticity or trust as assessed by viewers.

For the fifth objective, clear disclosure occurs in 23.1% of records and absent or ambiguous disclosure in 76.8%, with one uncoded case. Disclosure and coded commercial clarity correspond closely, but their conceptual overlap limits the inference that can be drawn from their cross-tabulation. The results support a distinction between explicit signalling, brand visibility and verified commercial relationships.

The study contributes an integrated description of the formal and narrative resources through which products become part of lifestyle content. Its practical implication is the value of clear advertising signalling when a commercial relationship exists. Future research can test how different audiences interpret these resources and distinguish sponsored recommendations from organic product appearances.

Limitations concern the purposive selection, uneven numbers of records across usernames, grouped analytical periods and missing codes. The corpus includes two repeated links, and three usernames contribute only one or two entries; the selection history should be clarified before treating every username as an equivalent sampled profile. Multiple records from the same creator also limit independence between observations. The available workbook does not

support estimating intercoder reliability or identifying all material connections with brands. Illustrative audiovisual interpretations are not a separately documented qualitative subsample. Future work can use deduplicated samples, independently coded cases and audience research to examine recognition and persuasive effects.

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Appendix A. Distribution of selected records by username

Counts describe the usernames recorded in the selection worksheet. They include repeated links and do not establish that each username was recruited as an equivalent sampling unit.

Recorded username	Records
vaimonroe	64
skarleeeeeeeeeth	59
mrs_carvalho	57
daniride	50
judith.mj	50
maitephillips	50
manriquez_benja	50
mgcatador	50
soyladyganga	50
tatiifernandez	50
k3lcalderon	50
vestalugg	50
consultoradeimagen	49
ellaesmanuela	49
ivisimunovic	49
jorgechaconh	49
rainbowflawless	49
turbangirll	49
beabravocuadra	48
shinipan_	32
angiechiappini	2
jorgepichara	1
lauriturri	1
Total	**1,008**