

Forever 21 Data-Based Recommendations & Search Engine Optimization Report

“The \$21 Forever 21”

For Business and Technical Writing 490, May 2018

By Indira Midha and Nora Halleran

Background

Forever 21 is a popular clothing company for women, men and children. They have over six hundred retail stores across the globe and an extremely successful online site. However, many people may not know that the billion-dollar company comes from humble roots. Husband and wife Jin Sook and Do Won Chang, immigrants from Japan, opened Forever 21 in Los Angeles in 1984. Jin Sook and Do Won were young, broke and had no formal college education. They worked menial jobs as maids and janitors, and in their work they realized that many wealthy people worked in the fashion industry. The couple started Forever 21 at age 26, in a 900 square-foot store in LA. Their goal: to offer affordable and fashionable clothing options to average people, like themselves. In the past 34 years, Forever 21 has expanded, evolved and become a household name in clothing.

Forever 21 focuses on providing trendy clothing as it becomes popular. Often trendy clothing can be expensive and inaccessible, but the goal of this company is to bring today's trends to average people's closets. Forever 21 provides customers with the opportunity to buy clothes in stores around the globe. Most malls in the United States have Forever 21 stores, and the Forever 21 website offers even more styles and shipping locations. Offering easy accessibility to everyday people, like the Changs is important, which is why Forever 21 maintains to this day to be a family business. The Changs and their two daughters still are heavily involved in the production and management of the company. Their "Rags to Riches" story is inspirational and has kept them determined to provide affordable clothing for everyone. Over thirty years the fashion industry has seen a significant amount of changes and Forever 21 has successfully adapted and thrived.

Forever 21 began as a women's clothing store, and has expanded to men, children and includes a special department for plus size. Their target demographic is primarily young women. The fashion of the clothing particularly appeals to girls age 15 to 25. The name of the store gives a glimpse at this demographic. Forever 21 strives to offer trendy clothing to youthful women.

Problem Definition

Discrepancy of Prices

Forever 21 is a brand that people rely on to find affordable clothing items. Recently they have strayed from their affordability roots and begun selling high end products that are outside the average Forever 21 shoppers' budget. The prices range from \$5 items to \$150. This large

range is confusing and frustrating for customers who are seeking cheaper items. Selling items at such different price points is not a good business tactic. People like to know what they can expect when they shop at a store, so the discrepancy of prices is something that needs to change.

Confusion of Luxury Brand Incorporation

This brand is meant to be affordable, and for young, trendy people. We do not want the brand to aim to give off a higher-end, luxury-fashion, overall highly expensive image and lose their loyal customer base when the demographic it is tailoring its products toward is not seeking luxury from the brand.

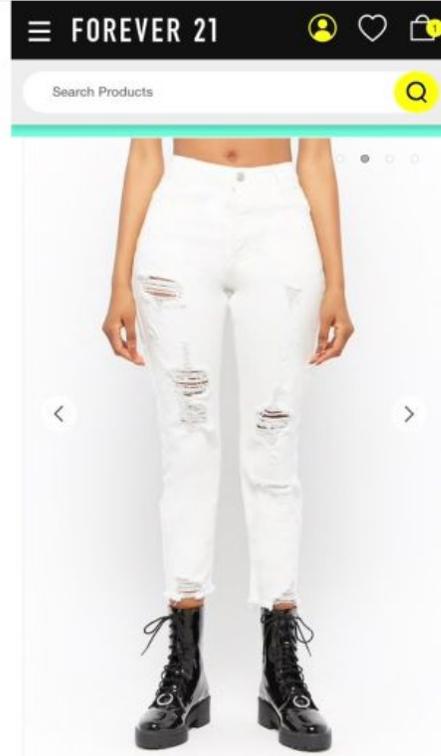
Brands like Levi's are selling their products at Forever 21, which is highly off-brand in terms of average pricing. While having name-brands with positive reputations in association with certain stores is nice, it is counterproductive when there is a dissonance between what the customers seek in purchasing from said store versus said name-brand. This goes for standard name-brands like Levi's, as well as brand partnerships with celebrity influencers, such as the Zendaya shoes that Forever 21 sells.

The incorporation of upscale brands into a store's selection that is aimed to provide variety at a lower price point creates an issue specifically when the pricier products are placed at the top of the page when beginning to scroll through items in a certain purchasing category. If somebody is in the market for a \$28 pair of jeans, [like these ones from the Forever 21 brand](#), and they are greeted by a \$42 independently branded pair of jeans, [like these](#), in the first row of results under the women's jeans category, they will likely be turned away from the page if

their main aim in terms of selecting a place to shop is to find one within an affordable price-range.



High-Rise Skinny Jeans
\$27.90



Distressed Skinny Ankle Jeans
\$42.00

We conducted a short survey of 40 self-reported Forever 21 shoppers who are also college-students (falling within the ages of 18 and 24, which is the target age demographic centering around the age of 21 in the store's name) asking them about their motives for shopping at the store. We found that doing so would make our claims all the more credible, as we were collecting from a sample of current consumers, asking them what would maintain their consumption and enjoyment of the store's products. Below are the survey questions we proposed.

1. Which of the following is the main reason that you choose to shop at Forever 21?

- Affordability
 - Fashionableness
 - Prestige associated with the brand name
-

2. How would you describe your current budget?

- Tight – not able to afford high-end brand-name products
 - Flexible – able to afford a few high-end brand-name products
 - Luxurious – able to easily afford high-end brand-name products regularly
-

3. If you were to buy 1 clothing item from F21, what is the highest price you would pay?

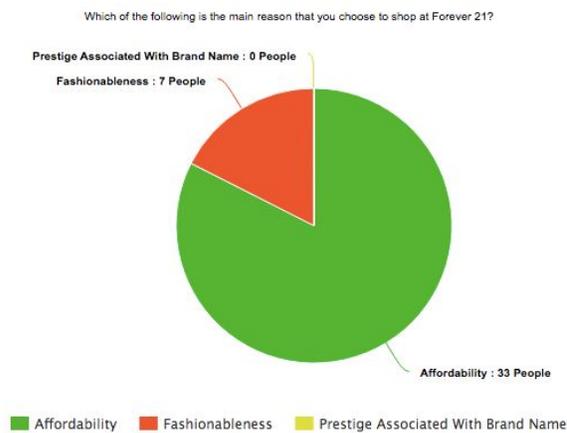
- \$10
- \$15
- \$20
- \$25

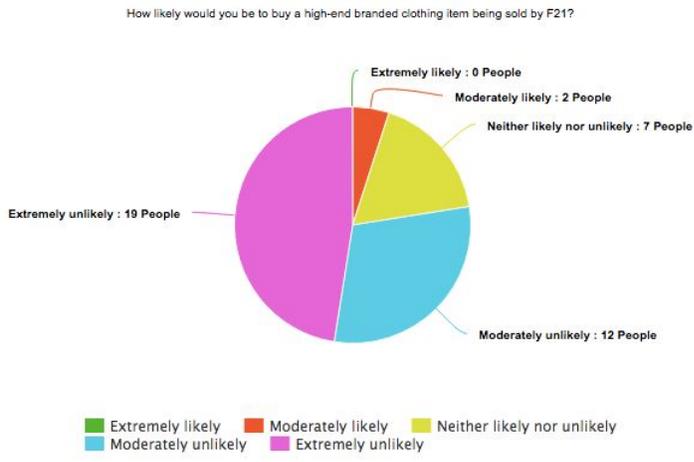
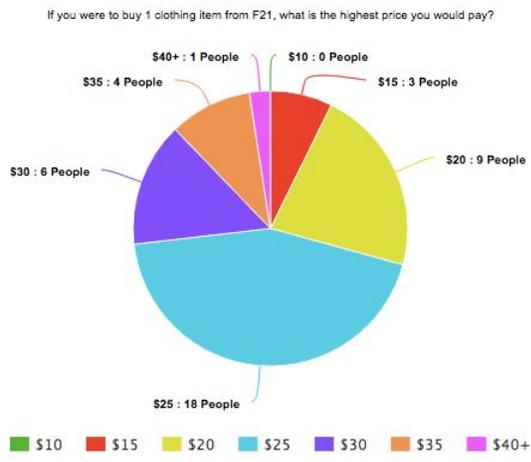
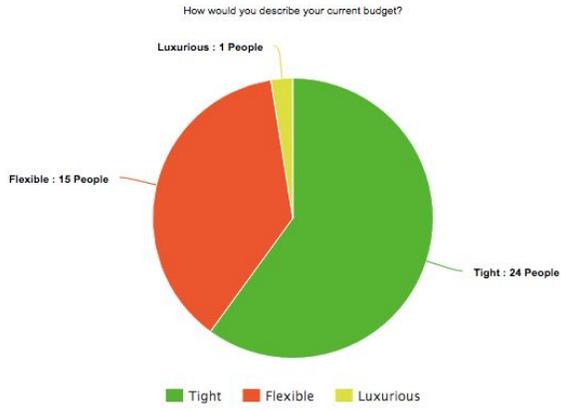
- \$30
- \$35
- \$40+

4. How likely would you be to buy a high-end branded clothing item being sold by F21?

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Here are the results that we found:





Based off of the results of this survey, we decided that it would be a good idea to not only center the targeted age demographic around 21, but the average price of a product from the store to be around the

amount of 21 dollars. Aside from being a sleek idea in terms of branding, centering everything to do with the brand around the number 21 makes great sense in terms of keeping all product prices on brand for a demographic that clearly values a tight-budget-friendly shopping experience above name-brand prestige. This will help from turning away new customers who may expect a tight-budget-friendly experience, yet may be under the impression that they will not receive that with Forever 21 because they may see the exceptions to the rules, such as an expensive pair of non-F21 branded jeans.

Social Media Post Analysis

Forever 21 has an overwhelmingly large and engaged following of 14.5 million users on Instagram (as of April 2nd, 2018). They are posting on Instagram multiple times a day, which is appropriate for a brand with that large of a following. The average amount of likes on an image posted is in the large range of 35 and 95 thousand likes. Videos posted on the page within the last month (similarly in the previous months as well) have received at a minimum 150 thousand views. Some videos are even approaching 3 quarters of a million views within a few weeks of viewing!

Something that we found effective was Forever 21 posting fun, non-product heavy content one to two times a week. These posts fare extremely well, and they are something that a Forever 21 shopper who follows the Instagram page would be likely to send a friend. If the friend finds this [dog photo](#) (this one has close to 164,000 likes in a matter of just one day, as of May 7th, 2018) great and appealing, they are more likely to click through Forever 21's page, and they may stumble upon the other majority of the page's posts featuring the store's merchandise. A well-deserving round of applause is due to the people who run the Forever 21 Instagram.

"Hey, I'll be there in 5, you ready?"

Me:



21 forever21 • Follow

forever21 Sorry not sorry 😞😞
@mytherapistsays #LifeWithF21
Load more comments

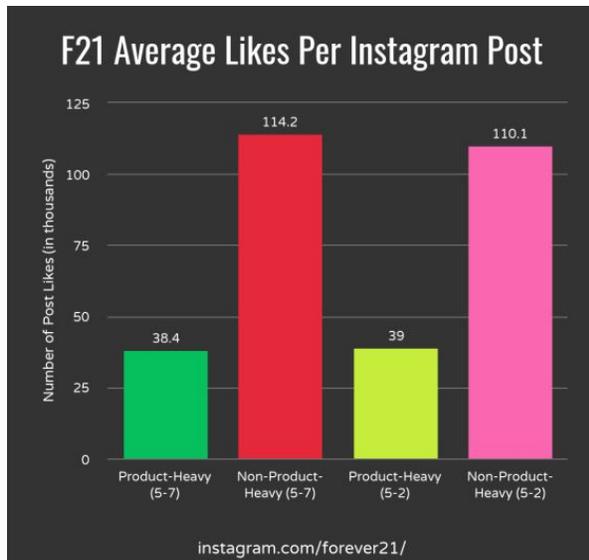
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👍 🗨️
163,993 likes

1 DAY AGO

Log in to like or comment.

Instagram Likes Comparison Graph



We compiled the data for the chart above from the following tables accounting for the number of likes per post in two back-to-back 30-post cycles on [Forever 21's Instagram](#) page.

	Product-Heavy (# of likes)	Non-Product-Heavy (# of likes)
7-May	8.1k	
	12.5k	
		53.9k
	29.3k	
	55.5k	
		124k
	20.6k	
	47.3k	
	22.4k	
	63.1k	
	54.3k	
	49.5k	
		164k
	46.9k	
	30.8k	
	64.3k	
	51.3k	
	37.1k	
	50k	
	44.5k	
	32.2k	
		74.3k
	27.3k	
	40.9k	
	36.4k	
		155k
	24.8k	
	29k	
	32.1k	
3-May	50.8k	
Average	38.4k likes per post	114.2k likes per post

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	39.6k	
	20.2k	
	25.5k	
	27.7k	
	27.3k	
		99.7k
	60.3k	
	86.3k	
	28.7k	
	39k	
	73.5k	
	18.7k	
	29.4k	
	35.9k	
	33.3k	
	31k	
	59.7k	
	31.5k	
		89.2k
	33.4k	
	20.3k	
30-Apr	55.7k	
Average	39.0k likes per post	110.1k likes per post

We found that, while they are much less frequent, Forever 21 posting fun, non product-heavy content every once in a while fares well in terms of page engagement on the Instagram account. While these posts don't seem to affect the following posts in any consistent manner, they are still beneficial in increasing account traffic, and helping attract new customers, as we discussed above.

If we look into the Forever 21 Instagram page, their most engaging social platform, we will see that the product-related photos are set in casual, young, and fun settings like at beaches, swimming pools, music festivals, and parties. The clothing is not being portrayed in serious, formal situations in which prestige and name-dropping is related to status, such as at fashion shows or celebrity black-tie events. We believe that the current social media practices of the brand are perfect for the image that fits a demographic of young adults enjoying life in trendy clothing. We believe that social media practices should continue on the same path towards growth that they are on, and what needs to be altered is the implementation of expensive, brand-name products into the item availability each season.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths: Forever 21 has trendy clothing readily available to the public. They stay on top of trends and often launch trends that other stores follow. Being ahead of the curve on trends and popular cultural phenomena is vital to their brand. Forever 21 successfully incorporates what is happening in pop-culture with their clothing, accessories and products. They are Forever 21 is a household name, it is in malls across the country and has loyal customers for over thirty years. Having such a well-known store gives Forever 21 an advantage over other stores selling similar product. Forever 21 has a strong web presence and a successful online site. They have a fully functioning website that works well and efficiently.

Weaknesses: Forever 21 sells very affordable clothing and products and they do not emphasize this price discrepancy from department stores and boutiques who sell similar product at a much more inflated price. Forever 21 offers safe and reliable outlets to purchase affordable clothing efficiently, rather than many websites that either are a scam or take months to ship. The reputation of the company is having relatively cheap and affordable clothing, however they have slightly shifted into selling more expensive products, which has caused confusion in customers. The expensive items are significantly outnumbered by the affordable ones, yet Forever 21 advertises and promotes their more expensive pieces more frequently. Bringing the brand back to its roots based in affordability and accessibility to all is key.

Opportunities: Being a billion-dollar company, Forever 21 has a plethora of opportunities. A large well known company, like Forever 21, has the opportunity to work with powerful and relevant people. Forever 21 does collaborations with popular celebrities and influencers and utilizes this brilliant business tactic to draw in customers and fans. They use these important people in pop culture to show that average people can attain a fashion wardrobe and lifestyle similar to these icons by purchasing products from their store.

Threats: As previously stated department stores and boutiques sell similar products at a much higher rate, so to stay competitive Forever 21 must maintain and promote its affordability. Forever 21's biggest threat is online shopping sites. There are multiple sites selling trendy clothing at a ridiculously low price. Many of these sites are often scams and not legitimate or are real but take weeks to months to actually receive, but people still try the risk. Forever 21 should take advantage of the unsafe nature of these sites and promote their reliability. They should emphasize their standard shipping, customer service and access to person stores.

“The \$21 Forever 21”

A Concept we designed and think will be an effective campaign for Forever 21 is “The \$21 Forever 21” We believe that restructuring Forever 21 and making \$21 its central price point is an effective way to bring affordability, in a clever and catchy way, back to the store. Items should cost between \$10 and \$30. Maintaining a price consistency will bring in more customers because they will feel comfortable knowing what to expect. This campaign can be implemented online and in store.

A social media campaign would be used to spread the word to Forever 21's large following of over 14 million people. Using influencers will be key to promoting this new campaign. Influencers that already work with Forever will be asked to become new promoters for this campaign. A cool idea would be to make average customers promoters as well.

Beginning in the month of June, each day in the morning an item (within the price range) will be posted with the hashtag #21Forever21.

Encourage customers to use the hashtag with their purchases and get the chance to be reposted and featured on the Forever 21's Instagram. Each evening a randomly selected winner will be reposted on Instagram featuring a Forever 21 item that they are wearing or using. Making the

average customer feel special is important to Forever 21 and shows how the store cares for customers.

Recommendations

We have a few key recommendations for Forever 21. This is a comprehensive list of recommendations that we have stated throughout the report. We recommend that Forever 21 enact these changes at the beginning of the new Summer season. Effectively utilizing the broad social media, as they already do, is key to bringing the brand back to affordability and letting customers across the globe know.

Emphasize affordability

What makes Forever 21 stand out is its affordable pricing. They offer clothes that average people can afford. Promoting sales and low prices on social media is an effective way to show the broad following base what the company offers.

Emphasize the background and reputation

Many people do not know the background of Forever 21. People simply know the store as a billion-dollar corporation. Promoting the “Family” side of the business may draw in customers and give people a feeling of pride shopping from a store that has cared about family values since its beginning. Also the rags to riches immigrant story is so impressive and should be shared. The history of Forever 21 is unique and perfectly captures many people’s sense of the American Dream. People like to shop for places that they find respectable because it makes them feel good purchasing products from a store that promotes values.

Keep individual item prices within ten dollars of a central 21 dollar item price.

Our survey showed that affordability is a key to the appeal of Forever 21 as a brand to the demographic of 18-24 year-olds. Keeping the individual prices at an average range of \$11 to \$31 keeps up with the brand's promise to provide trendy, affordable clothing at a price that younger people on tighter budgets can commit to.

Continue on with social media posting pattern of using models that fit into the brand's key demographic.

Forever 21 has an extremely successful social media following, specifically on Instagram. We encourage following the patterns that the company is currently using in the content that they are posting, the people who they are featuring in the posts, and the fun, young aesthetic that they portray.

“Finding Forever 21”

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION REPORT

Website Design

The menu design is effective in terms of the fact that it has the different categories of clothes well organized and it is clean at the top of the site. It is functional. That being said, I think there is way too much going on in the menu. The menu at the top of the desktop site is separated into the categories of “women,” “accessories,” “plus size,” “men,” “girls,” and

“sale.” This division is well-organized, but when you hover the mouse over “women,” for example, the menu is divided into 3 overarching categories, “shop by category,” “shop by edit,” and “shop by brand.” I would make it so that customers could filter through edits (ex. “the basics shop”) and brands on the category page that they click, not within the homepage menu. The graphic design and visual display features bright colors and is in theme with the design of the images featuring the products. It gives off a youthful, fun, adventurous, trendy vibe – which is tailored perfectly to the target consumer.

The site is organized effectively. Each photo does have a comment or title. The photographs show forever 21 clothing that is for sale. Most pictures are accompanied with the price. However, I think all items should be labeled with the price. There are only brief captions so there are no real paragraphs and the sentences are short and concise. Everything is spelled correctly with no errors. This is a shopping website, so people are not coming to it to read paragraphs. The content is and must be short blurbs of necessary information or one to two word descriptions of a piece. Forever 21 does the short descriptions effectively, but they could expand their use of descriptive words. Currently frequent words are “Trending”, “Occasion”, “Best Seller” and “Sale”. I think they can also use keywords like “College Style”, “Affordable”, “Budget-Friendly,” “Chic” etc. Using these keywords is important for rankings on search engine result pages.

While the website offers visual and written content, it also offers the option to play videos. I think making the videos an option is important, but they must be placed at a strategic place in the user’s trajectory when experiencing the site. When somebody visits the website if they are bombarded with a video that they did not visit the website to watch they may be inclined to exit the site. The content has variety and it does periodically change. The shopper has the option to watch videos

showcasing new clothes. There are links to interact with the company's social media accounts and even to see tagged normal shoppers wearing these clothes as well. The website is effectively organized so if the shopper was looking for Women's Shoes they can interact with the categories and find the selection fairly quick.

Appealing To Target Audience

The Forever 21 website has beneficial visual content that makes the products look appealing to potential buyers. Once a shopper comes to the website page they immediately see multiple photos of a variety of clothing, shoes, accessories and more. The photos range in clothing for different sizes and genders. It offers images of a wide variety of style as well. There are photos of casual and formal clothing. Including a variety is important to appeal to a variety of shoppers. If the site only included photos promoting one style, for one gender and for one body type, this would turn people away. The variety is enticing for everyone to continue to stay on the site and shop around.

However, the written content can be targeted better. I think placing a stronger emphasis on affordability and trends would benefit the website. Forever 21 is a brand that offers trendy clothing at a price that is reasonable for the average college student. A combination of visual and written content seems best. Offering a photo with a short caption promoting the price is key. The content could be more effective if it placed emphasis on being inexpensive for a younger budget, as well as fashionable. The content is correctly formatted and grammatically correct. Continuing to use short and direct phrases will fare well.

Search Engine Discoverability

The URL is quite sleek and easy – just forever21.com does the job perfectly. It is easy to remember for customer retention. That being said, we had issues finding Forever 21 under the categories of “college clothes,” “cheap clothes,” or “trendy clothes” when we searched on Google. We did not find the store linked within the first 50 results on the Google search other than in the “shop” section, not within the actual linked results. The website can be accessed easily if you know that you want to get to Forever 21, which is effective for current customer retention, but lacks in terms of gaining new customers outside of through social media. The page titles are seemingly accurate and reflective of the content that customers are able to purchase on each page. The issue here is that we want the site to be bumped up on the Google searches in the above-mentioned categories. We suggest making alterations to make the site easily accessible. A goal upon improvement would be to come up within top 15 Google search results for “trendy clothing,” “cheap clothing,” “affordable clothing,” and “college clothing.”

Some meta tags that we suggest are “college-clothing,” “college-outfits,” “going-out-clothes,” “affordable-clothing,” and “trendy-clothing.” The current meta description is as follows, *“Forever 21 is the authority on fashion & the go-to retailer for the latest trends, must-have styles & the hottest deals. Shop dresses, tops, tees, leggings & more.”* We created a revised suggested meta description with only slight changes, *“Forever 21 is the authority on fashion that won’t break the bank & the go-to retailer for the latest trends, must-have styles & the hottest deals. Shop dresses, tops, tees, leggings & more.”*

Include and emphasize the price of each item in the photographs. Really emphasize the affordability aspect but also the trendy aspect. Forever 21 offers the newest trends at reasonable prices and that is what many people in their demographic are searching for. The site should target

“21” year olds, and ages surrounding 16-25. Emphasis should be placed on college (a place where many 21-year-olds are at in their life), going out clothing, and the affordability of it all so that it is appealing to this demographic.

Social Media

Shoppers have the ability to access Forever 21 through website on a computer, laptop, tablet and phone. Also there is an app. The format across these varies slightly, but overall it is user friendly. The website loads quickly, which is key in user friendliness, so we would not make too many changes or else this may be affected.

THE FOLLOWING ARE OUR IDEAL KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI'S) FOR SOCIAL MEDIA IMPROVEMENTS.

- Increase Twitter following to 4 million in 1 month while posting more often and expanding upon solely product-centric content
- Increase twitter conversion rate by 15% in 1 month campaign while posting more often and expanding upon solely product-centric content
- Steady increase in Instagram conversion rate by 5% in 1 month (already doing quite well, so we would like to continue to do this steadily) – indicative through more purchases from users directed to the site through Instagram, as well as more images of people wearing and styling the products tagging Forever 21 in the image
- Steady increase in Facebook conversion rate by 5% in 1 month (already doing quite well, so we would like to continue to do this

steadily) – indicative through more purchases from users directed to the site through Facebook

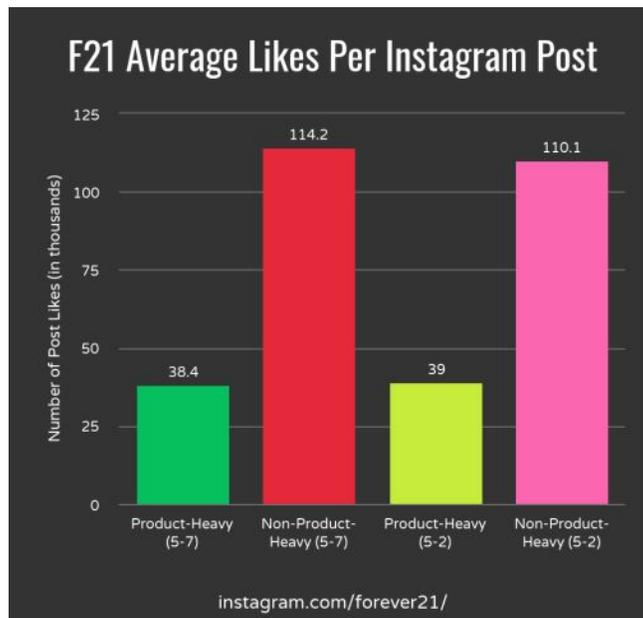
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	30.8k	
	64.3k	
	51.3k	
	37.1k	
	50k	
	44.5k	
	32.2k	
		74.3k
	27.3k	
	40.9k	
	36.4k	
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	27.3k	
		99.7k
	60.3k	
	86.3k	
	28.7k	
	39k	
	73.5k	
	18.7k	
	29.4k	
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seem to affect the following posts in any consistent manner, they are still beneficial in increasing account traffic, and helping attract new customers, as we discussed above.

2.3 million is the current following on Twitter for Forever 21. This page is posted on at least once a day, which is something I think should be increased. The Twitter page is also mostly just product-heavy content. Incorporating the same strategy as the company has done on Instagram, posting fun memes and videos, would make Twitter users more likely to retweet posts drawing attention to the brand, and their page. People on Twitter are always looking for a good meme. There are 15.2 million likes on the Facebook page. The page is being posted on multiple times a day, which is appropriate for the large following size. I would, however, suggest similar content updates like the ones suggested for Twitter in order to continue growing the following size.