

**MASTER  
MARKETING**

# **How Consumers Respond to Editorial Communication Strategies: Is Content Marketing Replacing Publicity?**

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HOW CONSUMERS RESPOND TO EDITORIAL COMMUNICATION  
STRATEGIES: IS CONTENT MARKETING REPLACING PUBLICITY?

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## **Abstract**

With the advent of Web 2.0 and the fact that brands can now communicate directly with consumers – instead of using the media channel – the academy has been suggesting that content marketing is replacing publicity. However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous study has supported this proposition. The purpose of this confirmatory study is to test this theory, drawing a comparative study on how consumers respond to both approaches. Having the literature review as a starting point, hypotheses were formulated, and data was collected from a sample of 400 consumers. The effects of content marketing and publicity on message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention were analyzed, as well as the impact of consumers' antecedents on these indicators, using statistical formulas such as T-tests and Analysis of Variance. The hypotheses were not supported, and the results match only partially what has been suggested by the academy. While the growing power of content has been confirmed, overall research findings seem to indicate that publicity is still relevant and is not being replaced by content marketing. This research contributes to the lack of knowledge about the dynamics between editorial communication strategies – namely, content marketing and publicity – especially in what concerns the consumers' perspective. From a managerial point-of-view, it validates the importance of the media relations sector and also provides relevant insights into how content must be used to serve consumers' needs more effectively.

**Key-words:** content marketing; publicity; public relations; editorial communication; message credibility; attitude toward the brand; purchase intention.

## Resumo

Com o advento da Web 2.0 e o facto de, atualmente, as marcas poderem comunicar diretamente com os consumidores – ao invés de utilizarem o canal mediático – a academia tem vindo a sugerir que o marketing de conteúdo está a substituir a assessoria de imprensa como estratégia de comunicação editorial. No entanto, que os autores tenham conhecimento, até à data, nenhum estudo confirmou esta proposição. O objetivo da presente investigação é testar esta teoria, desenvolvendo um estudo comparativo sobre a resposta dos consumidores a ambas as abordagens. Tendo a revisão da literatura como ponto de partida, hipóteses foram formuladas e dados foram recolhidos de uma amostra de 400 consumidores. Os efeitos do marketing de conteúdo e da assessoria de imprensa na credibilidade da mensagem, na atitude para com a marca e na intenção de compra foram analisados, assim como o impacto dos antecedentes dos consumidores nestes indicadores, utilizando fórmulas estatísticas como Testes T e Análises de Variância. As hipóteses não foram suportadas e os resultados correspondem apenas parcialmente ao que tem vindo a ser sugerido pela academia. Ainda que o poder crescente do conteúdo tenha sido confirmado, os resultados globais parecem indicar que a assessoria de imprensa continua a ser relevante e não está a ser substituída pelo marketing de conteúdo. Esta investigação contribui para a falta de conhecimento acerca das dinâmicas entre estratégias de comunicação editoriais – nomeadamente, o marketing de conteúdo e a assessoria de imprensa – especialmente no que diz respeito à perspetiva do consumidor. Do ponto de vista da gestão, o estudo valida a importância do setor das relações com os *media* e revela como o conteúdo pode ser utilizado de modo servir mais eficazmente as necessidades dos consumidores.

**Palavras-chave:** marketing de conteúdo; assessoria de imprensa; relações públicas, comunicação editorial; credibilidade da mensagem, atitude para com a marca; intenção de compra.

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# 1. Introduction

The digital world is linked intrinsically to the development of the content strategy (Pophal, 2015). In 2004, an expression that would change our lives forever was used for the first time. Web 2.0 marked the beginning of a new digital and interactive era and opened the door for companies to interact with their consumers in new and meaningful ways (Durkin *et al.*, 2014). Indeed, the possibility of a constant and less expansive dialogue has facilitated the creation and development of a relationship between brands and their existent – but also potential – clients (Zhang & Lin, 2015). The internet became the number one place to search and evaluate information (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016) and consumers became more demanding, expecting to be provided with the exact type of content they look for at all times (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015).

As content marketing gives companies the opportunity to communicate straight with their audience and be wherever their customers are, the academy has been suggesting that all kinds of non-media brands are taking over what used to be the space for public communication (Verčič & Verčič, 2016; Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). Some authors point out the low success rate of mass media (Hetch *et al.*, 2017), others highlight the fact that brands can now act as their own gatekeepers (Andaç *et al.*, 2016), and it is suggested that the communication model based on mass media – namely, publicity – does not work anymore (Pulizzi, 2012; Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous study specifically compares publicity and content marketing as editorial strategies and analyzes their effects on consumers. The objective of this study is to fill in this gap, exploring the dynamics between the two strategies and assessing if content marketing might be – or not – replacing publicity as an editorial communication strategy.

In this context, the research question was defined as “how do consumers respond to content marketing and publicity editorial communication strategies?” and it was answered by measuring the impact of the two strategies on three indicators, dissecting these comparisons back-to-back with complementary consumers' content consumption habits information. It should be noted that this study is not only relevant for the academy – as a first step to assess if content marketing is, indeed, replacing publicity, as suggested – but it is also crucial from a managerial point-of-view, as it concerns the present and the future of the public relations sector and consequently the careers of thousands of publicists all around the world.



As the purpose of this study is to verify if the observed phenomena confirm a theory (Gelo *et al.*, 2008), a quantitative deductive methodology was selected. The research selection was guided by the work of Zerfass *et al.* (2016), namely a study about how European practitioners perceived the rise of new mediatized companies and organizational practices on the public relations sector. Considering that the research found highly significant differences between Northern and Southern Europe – meaning that different cultural contexts had an impact on how practitioners from different locations perceived these new collaboration practices –, the need for country-specific research became apparent. Moreover, the authors pointed out the single-perspective of the study as a limitation, suggesting that future works should include the point-of-view of other relevant stakeholders, such as consumers. In Portugal, although previous research has been conducted about how communication agencies are embracing content marketing practices (see Machado & Gonçalves, 2014), there is no known study which focuses particularly on the consumers' point-of-view. Therefore, Portuguese consumers were defined as an appropriate research population.

A survey was made available, and 400 participants were selected using a mix of quota sampling and snowball sampling. The objective of the questionnaire was to evaluate the impact of content marketing and publicity on message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention ratings given by respondents. Statistical data analysis was conducted, and the results did not fully support what has been proposed by the academy. Research findings indicate that media relations strategies are still successful and thus are not being replaced by new content marketing approaches. On the other hand, the growing power of content matches what has been suggested and denotes that editorial communication strategies must be used complementarily.

From an academic perspective, this study fills in the lack of comparative research on content marketing and publicity, particularly in what concerns the consumers' responses. It highlights new directions and therefore leads the way to further investigations. This research is also useful for the industry, as it proves the relevance of the publicity approach and also unveils interesting findings that might guide the marketers and publicists' development of strategies based on content.

The present dissertation is structured in five main sections: literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion. The literature review draws a theoretical framework

regarding publicity – its definition, main techniques, the persuasion effect and the new digital trends – and content marketing – namely its emergence, concept and objectives, the influence of Marketing 4.0 and the importance of social media and user-generated content. This section also establishes a comparison between the two strategies based on editorial content, raising some questions about the future dynamics between them. The methodology unveils the objective and the research question of this study. This section also includes the hypotheses development and conceptual framework, the sample selection, the data analysis procedure and, lastly, the statistical analysis performed. The results chapter is divided into three subsections: sample characterization – based on descriptive statistics that provide a better understanding of the studied population –, group differences, in which the authors describe the impact of every independent variable (i.e., consumer antecedents) on the indicators for both content marketing and publicity and, thirdly, hypotheses testing. The discussion section builds a bridge between the results and the literature review to answer the research question and it is followed by a conclusion and a limitations acknowledgment, which also includes future research suggestions.

## **2. Literature Review**

The following section explores the history, concepts, and state of the art regarding publicity and content marketing, as well as some related topics – such as public relations, online journalism, marketing 4.0, user-generated content or social media. It is furthermore established a comparison between the two strategies, exploring the future dynamics between them.

### **2.1. Publicity**

#### **2.1.1. The emergence of publicity**

The birth of publicity is generally associated with the beginning of the twentieth century, when the journalist Ivy Lee released a declaration of principles that his publicity firm would follow (Zoch *et al.*, 2014) and other similar companies started to appear (Ribeiro, 2015). However, while Lee's declaration was a landmark in the history of publicity and public relations, it happened after almost 200 years of practice: in fact, publicity might exist for as long as there has been journalism (Zoch *et al.*, 2014).

It is argued that two main motivations led to the emergence of publicity: a partial journalistic system that resulted in the lack of representation and/or false reporting regarding some societal actors, and the fact that these actors (either government, companies or organizations) could not reach the public anymore without the intermediation of mass media (Schönhagen & Meißner, 2016). Other authors claim that publicity was a response to the fast mediatization of society – in which journalists earned power acting as middlemen between organizations and the general public –, having publicists to intermediate the relationship between mass media and organizations (Verčič & Verčič, 2016). The First World War was also a turning point in what regards the growth of media and public relations, as the USA needed a favorable public opinion regarding the country's involvement in the conflict (Ribeiro, 2015).

#### **2.1.2. Definition and techniques**

Publicity and public relations are often used as interchangeable terms, but it is crucial to highlight that these concepts are not the same. Bernays – one of the most important personalities in the development of public relations – defined the concept as “the relation of an individual, association, government or corporation with the publics they all need to take

into consideration to fulfill their social functions” (Rüdiger, 2014). On the other hand, publicity may be defined as the management of the relationship between organizations and the mass media (Verčič & Verčič, 2016) or, more specifically, as a type of communication that, for promotional objectives, gets editorial space in mass media without identifying the sponsor (Eisend & Kuster, 2011). In this sense, it can be concluded that publicity is just a part of public relations, but it is assuredly a crucial one (Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). Not only is publicity the most active field in the sector, but it is also perceived by many nonpractitioners as the exclusive function of public relations (Verčič & Verčič, 2016).

In practice, a publicist is a professional whose functions are issuing information, interacting with the media, counseling and advising, producing content and generating publicity, in order to spread information and to influence the media agenda (Macnamara, 2014; Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). One of the main techniques used by publicists is the creation and diffusion of press releases. A press release is a text similar to a news story, which is sent to journalists in the hope that they transform it into actual news, thus generating publicity (Ribeiro, 2015). Press releases are often referred to as information subsidies, that are defined as content produced by the organizations in order to secure time and space in the media, to convey their messages and promote themselves (Hetch *et al.*, 2017).

### **2.1.3. The persuasion game**

Since information subsidies do not disclose the source, they create the perception of objectivity. In this sense, the legitimacy and ethics of this technique are often called into question, as it is considered that without revealing the source of the message, publicists are violating principles of transparency and the consumers’ right to be informed by whom they are being persuaded (Nelson & Park, 2015). Indeed, publicity has always suffered from an “image problem” (Zoch *et al.*, 2014): the discussion about public relations tends to emphasize the possible damage caused to society (Halff & Gregory, 2015) and not the fulfillment of the social functions proposed by Bernays.

Although it is true that publicity aims to persuade the public, information subsidies face multiple gates – such as journalists’ perceptions of newsworthiness, the media’s duty to be independent, economic limitations or even the media outlet’s profile – that can either stop the information flow or let it continue and be published as a news story (Hetch *et al.*, 2017). This power is known as gatekeeping and means that, despite the publicists’ efforts, the

journalists always have the final decision on what concerns the spread of persuasive messages. Moreover, journalism itself maintains a persuasion power, which is enforced through the effects of agenda-setting and framing.

Agenda-setting is considered one of the strongest mass media's effects. This theory states that there is a direct relation between the media agenda and the public agenda: the mass media defines media agenda and, in turn, media agenda set public agenda (Verčič & Verčič, 2016). Framing is based on selection and salience, by making some information more prominent and other subtler (Cole & Greer, 2013). By highlighting certain aspects of a message, media has the historical faculty of molding perceptions and shaping opinions (Senocak, 2017), constructing edited media realities for the public (Verčič & Verčič, 2016). In this context, publicity might be seen as the public's attempt to participate in the construction of the reality.

#### **2.1.4. The internet: an opportunity and a challenge**

Being a communication instrument, public relations are deeply influenced by the information and communication technologies (ICT) evolution (Verčič *et al.*, 2015). Digital public relations – defined as the communication's management between an organization and its audience through the Internet (Huang *et al.*, 2017) – has been the focus of much of the latest research. As most public relations practitioners work as publicists, the digital, social and mobile revolution is generally studied within the scope of media relations (Verčič *et al.*, 2015).

In the last decade, indeed, the digital world has constituted an opportunity for publicity: as the online environment requires instantaneity, journalists had to adapt themselves to 24-hour news cycles and multiple media platforms (Nelson & Park, 2015), which makes it tempting to copy-paste ready-to-wear press releases, without checking the source (Bastos, 2012). Moreover, as the print industry falls and the advertising profits decrease, newsrooms have now fewer reporters and lower resources, being more receptive to the efforts of publicists, who gather information and provide news stories for free (Nelson & Park, 2015).

However, Web 2.0 also brought significant challenges to the industry. Firstly, as journalism struggles to adapt in a digital world, public relations – especially publicity – have to develop new strategies and techniques (Macnamara, 2014) and adapt itself to the expectations and routines of journalism (Verčič & Verčič, 2016). Secondly and more importantly, the

development of the ICT lowered the costs of media creation, production and distribution, allowing companies to bypass traditional mass media organizations and to communicate directly with their consumers (Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). Without the need for mass media intermediation, it can be wondered what the future holds for publicity.

## **2.2. Content Marketing**

### **2.2.1. Early days, concept and objectives**

Despite being a relatively new approach, the first known practical applications of content marketing appeared on the 1890s, when August Oetker start selling baking powder packages with print recipes – and later even published a recipes book –, and John Deere published a magazine that, instead of selling his equipment directly, educated farmers on new technology and helped them to be more successful (Patruti Baltes, 2015). Whilst the trend has been evolving and spreading ever since, the first theoretical frames only appeared in 2007 by the hands of Pulizzi, who created a blog focused on content marketing, that later would lead the way for the foundation of the Content Marketing Institute.

Content marketing can be defined as a marketing approach based on the creation and distribution of free informational or entertainment content (Wall & Spinuzzi, 2018), which allows the company to captivate, obtain and engage a previously defined audience, who might, eventually, carry out a profitable action to the organization (Content Marketing Institute, 2015). In this regard, it should be emphasized that although profit is the ultimate objective of any organization, content marketing is used for other related goals, such as raising brand awareness and improving the company's image (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016), building relationships based on trust, enticing new leads, enlarging the audience, stimulating a need for a specific product or service, developing loyalty or even testing a new product or business model idea (Patruti Baltes, 2015).

In spite of also involving the traditional content formats – as customer magazines or brochures –, content marketing is mostly associated with the digital environment (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). In this sense, content might be created and distributed through multiple forms, such as videos, images, blogs, white papers, social media posts, websites, microsites, webinars (Wall & Spinuzzi, 2018), e-books, animations, infographics, podcasts (Chaffey &

Smith, 2013), among many others. Regardless of the format, there is just one rule: to tell a story that the target audience wants to hear and which is perceived as useful and valuable.

### **2.2.2. Marketing 4.0: focusing on the consumer in a digital world**

The exponential growth of content marketing is intrinsically linked to the consolidation of marketing 4.0. This forth evolution can be characterized by two main changes – the shift from traditional to digital and the absolute focus on the consumer (Kotler, 2017) – which are transversal to content marketing.

Firstly, the digital world surely played a decisive role in the development of the content strategy (Pophal, 2015), as the internet became the place to go in what regards the search and critical assessment of information (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Secondly, the customer-centric side of marketing 4.0 is the main feature of content marketing. Instead of pitching products and services, this strategy focuses on what is relevant for the consumers (Du Plessis, 2017) and offers a solution to a client's or a prospect's problem (CMI, 2015).

The two main characteristics of marketing 4.0 are inseparable: in order to focus on consumers, companies need to know what their audience wants. To this matter, online offers endless opportunities, as brands are able to adapt the content according to the insights provided by their customers (Patruti Baltes, 2015) on multiple platforms. Today, consumers are savvy: they know precisely what information they want to consume, through which format and if the content is trustful or not and, furthermore, they want to be entertained and informed 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015).

### **2.2.3. Social media and user-generated content**

As content marketing follows a consumer-centered philosophy (Kuş, 2016), it cannot be analyzed without mentioning social media. Social media platforms allow and encourage conversations between users about content, which gives an opportunity for brands to step into the discussion and present solutions (Du Plessis, 2017). In this sense, active listening is now a *sine qua non* skill for companies, through customer feedback collecting and social media monitoring (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Brands can subsequently become gatekeepers, generating discussions around relevant content for both the industry and the consumers (Andaç *et al.*, 2016).

On the other hand, mainly through social media, users can now produce their own content and present their own solutions. User-generated content is a broad concept that may be defined according to three criteria: the users must create the content themselves; the content has to be published and accessible in order to allow discussion; and it must be created outside the scope of professional activities (Naab & Sehl, 2017). The phenomenon of co-creation is particularly relevant to content marketing, as user-generated content represents an opportunity to develop positive relationships between the company and its customers and to build trust, as consumers tend to rely more on companies which listen to their ideas and needs (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015).

Considering the power of social media and user-generated content, the academy has recently proposed the concept of a “reverse agenda-setting”, which challenges the original notion of this effect: the mass media is now heavily influenced by social media content, especially user-generated content (Jang *et al.*, 2017). In this line of thought, the public sets public agenda, which, in its turn, sets media agenda.

### **2.3. Publicity and Content Marketing**

Recently, it has been suggested that organizations can now bypass mass media and connect directly with the audience that really interests them (Verčič & Verčič, 2016), a theory that implies that content marketing might be replacing publicity as a communication instrument. In order to explore the validity of this assumption, it is imperative to compare publicity and content marketing, exploring what draws these strategies together and what tears them apart.

The primary resemblance lies in information. In an information-driven decade, customers demand useful information to aid them in the decision-making process. Content marketing is “the art and the science” that answers that request (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). At the same time, a publicist’s function is to work the information (Ribeiro, 2015) and issue informative content to the media (Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). Not only information is the foundation of both strategies, but storytelling also plays a crucial role in this relationship. Regardless of the goal, content marketing cannot be effective without compelling storytelling (Pulizzi, 2012) and, on the other hand, a press release is a story itself (Ribeiro, 2015).

Alongside information and storytelling, “editorial” is also a keyword in both strategies. Nowadays, companies hope to build trust using the power and credibility of editorial content,



often seen as more uncorrupted than commercial content (Cole & Greer, 2013). This kind of content might be either communicated directly by the brand (content marketing) or through the media channel (publicity). Furthermore, content marketing goals include increasing the brand awareness, attracting new leads (Pulizzi, 2012), improving the company's image (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016) and reinforcing its positioning (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015) – objectives that also apply to publicity.

Although both techniques are based on editorial content, content marketing is the communication of relevant content by the brand itself (Pulizzi, 2012), while publicity requires a third-party endorsement (Nelson & Park, 2015). In this sense, companies using content marketing only benefit from signing their contents, whereas the non-disclosure of the source is the soul of publicity. The control over the message is another main difference: while content marketing allows companies to get the complete control over the message – as they speak directly to their audience – in publicity, the final product is often beyond the company's control (Spotts *et al.*, 2015) and the journalist has always the final decision in if or how the message is conveyed (Hetch *et al.*, 2017).

Content marketing and publicity are also distinct in what concerns emotion and interactivity. On the one hand, one of the keys to effective content marketing is how much emotion the message carries, as the customers tend to act – and interact – more upon the content when the emotion is more extreme (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). As mentioned above, interactivity and user-generated content are vital concepts in content marketing. On the contrary, publicity has to respect and adapt itself to the journalist impartiality and objectivity (Ribeiro, 2015), leaving no room for emotions. In addition, although Web 2.0 brought an opportunity to the readers to react and engage with the news, as the source cannot be disclosed, this interactivity might happen between the audience and the media, not including the brand.

As nowadays customers expect to have increasingly customized experiences that reflect their own needs (Light, 2014), personalization is also an interesting topic. While marketers use content marketing (especially digital content marketing) to better personalize contents for consumers (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015), publicity cannot customize news stories, leaning on segmentation to get their messages to the right audience. Furthermore, the context in which the consumers receive the content is also relevant. Push marketing tends to irritate customers because it forces them to receive information, whereas pull marketing gives the consumers

the freedom to choose to search and read (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). Content marketing is considered an inconspicuous pulling technique (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016) but publicity might be considered a mix between the two approaches, depending on whether the reader is looking for the information or not.

### **2.3.1. Future dynamics**

Lately, the boundaries between editorial content, advertising and publicity have been blurring (Zerfass *et al.*, 2016) as new concepts such as native advertising and brand journalism are born. Native advertising can be defined as paying to embed sponsored messages within editorial or entertainment content of online publishers (Hallahan, 2014), whereas brand journalism allows businesses to target customers with relevant, tailored editorial content (Cole & Greer, 2013) by using journalistic skills (Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). Brand journalism plays an important role in the relationship between content marketing and publicity because organizations are now hiring journalists and editors to help coordinate their content marketing strategies (Pulizzi, 2012) and to craft brand stories (Hallahan, 2014). The academy suggests that the future of the marketing department is half marketing and half publishing and that soon the leading journalists in the world may be working for big corporations (Pulizzi, 2012). Should this prophecy come true, we should ask ourselves what will happen to journalism and, consequently, media relations.

Publicity was generally thought to be more credible and more influential than other forms of company-controlled communication because the media were considered to be independent and impartial sources that provide the full story without a hidden intent (Eisend & Kuster, 2011). In the last years, however, some authors have argued that this communication model based on mass media does not work anymore (Pulizzi, 2012). Today, media production is being decentralized from traditional media to all kinds of companies and organizations, and non-media brands are filling in the space for public communications (Verčič & Verčič, 2016).

In this context, some questions are being raised. Will the opportunity of communicating directly with the audience via content marketing and social media replace publicity? Or is the third-party endorsement power still worth the gatekeeping and low success rate of mass media (Hetch *et al.*, 2017)?

### 3. Methodology

As seen in the literature review, some authors argue that non-media brands are occupying – through content marketing practices – the communicational and editorial space of mass media (Verčič & Verčič, 2016; Zerfass *et al.*, 2016), which historically belonged to publicity. However, to the authors' best knowledge, no previous study explicitly tests this theory, by comparing the effects of publicity and content marketing. In this sense, this research aims to fill in this gap, developing a comparative study of both strategies and conducting a first attempt to assess if content marketing is replacing publicity as an editorial communication strategy.

Based on the central objective of this study, the research question was formulated as the following: how do consumers respond to content marketing and publicity editorial communication strategies? In order to answer this question, a comparative analysis was employed, regarding the effects of both strategies on three indicators and respectively validated scales – message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention – while also having in consideration consumers' antecedents. Furthermore, a deductive quantitative methodology was selected, since this approach is usually used to verify if the observed phenomena confirm the prediction proposed by a theory (Gelo *et al.*, 2008), through the development of hypotheses, the study of the relationships between variables and, ultimately, the draw of conclusions (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018).

The research population selection was guided by the results and further investigation suggestions of a study by Zerfass *et al.* (2016), about how European practitioners perceived the future of media relations and the rise of new mediatized companies and organizational practices. Firstly, the research found highly significant differences between Western and Eastern Europe, as well as Northern and Southern Europe, meaning that different cultural contexts had an impact on how practitioners perceived these new collaboration practices. These results hence unveil the need for country-specific research. Secondly, the authors suggested that “for a fuller assessment of the upcoming changes” in the sector, the analysis of this new paradigm by the point-of-view of all relevant stakeholders – including consumers – would be needed. In the case of Portugal, previous research has been conducted about how communication agencies are embracing content marketing (see Machado & Gonçalves,

2014), but there is no known study which particularly addresses the consumers point of view. Therefore, Portuguese consumers were defined as an appropriate research population.

### **3.1. Hypotheses and conceptual framework**

In order to achieve a valid comparison between content marketing and publicity, three indicators were analyzed: message credibility; attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. Message credibility is defined as a consumer's perception of the truthfulness and accuracy of the content of communication (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). Attitude toward the brand is a person's internal assessments, which includes some kind of evaluation (good or bad) and is presumed to lead to a certain behavior (Spears & Singh, 2004). Purchase intention represents the possibility that a consumer will acquire a determined brand or product (Li *et al.*, 2018) and is usually defined as "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand" (Spears & Singh, 2004).

As stated in the literature review, the digital realm brought some challenges to journalism. In the middle of 24-hour news cycles (Nelson & Park, 2015), the pressure for instantaneity has been causing the increase of mistakes and, therefore, the loss of media's credibility (Bastos, 2012), which might explain, in part, mass media's low accomplishments (Hetch *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, the interactivity and co-creation between brands and consumers that content marketing allows – and encourages – makes brand content not only entertaining but trustworthy (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). In this sense, the following hypothesis was formulated:

**H1: Content marketing will be associated with higher levels of message credibility than publicity**

As aforementioned, one of the main differences between content marketing and publicity is that the former relies on emotion, which causes the consumers to interact more (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015), while the later needs to follow journalism's objectivity and neutrality (Ribeiro, 2015). Hence, the authors suggest the following hypothesis:

**H2: Content marketing will be associated with more positive attitudes toward the brand than publicity**

As research suggests that attitude toward the brand has a positive effect on purchase intention (Spears & Singh, 2004; Wu & Lo, 2009; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibanez, 2012), the following hypothesis was formulated:

**H3: Content marketing will be associated with higher levels of purchase intention than publicity**

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study, based on the research question and the hypotheses development.

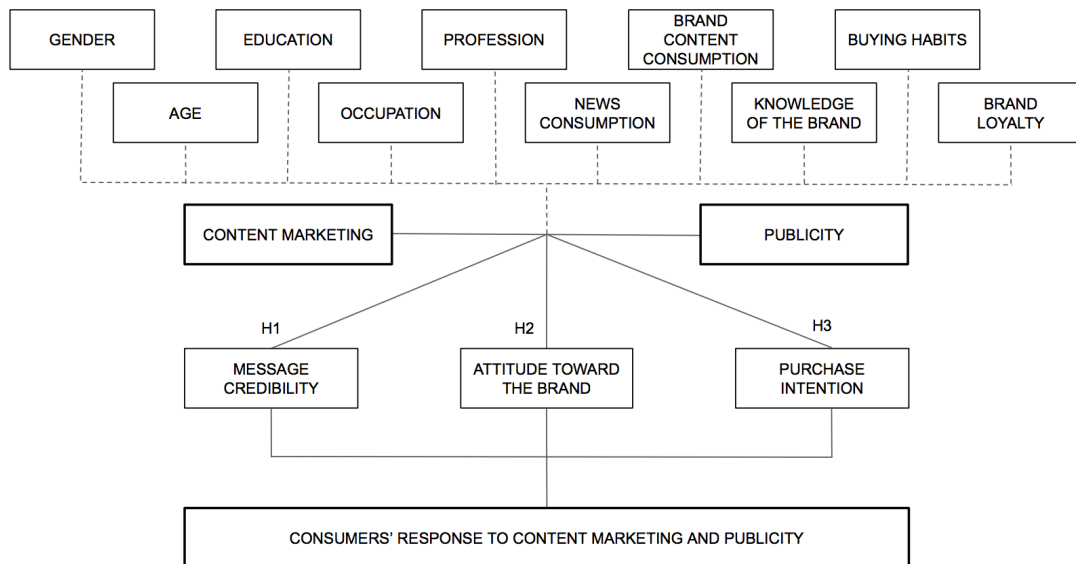


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

### 3.2. Sample selection

In quantitative research, the objective of sampling is to select individuals that are representative of a certain population, so that there is external validity, i.e., the results can be generalized (Gelo *et al.*, 2008). In this sense, the sample approach used was a mix between quota sampling – a nonprobability sampling procedure in which the researcher defines relevant characteristics and determines the distribution of these features in the target population, ensuring the composition of the sample is the same as the composition of the

population, in what concerns the defined characteristics – and snowball sampling – a sampling technique in which the selected participants are asked to identify others who belong to the population of interest (Malhotra, 2008). In this case, the authors considered gender and age as the most relevant features, so the sample replicates proportionally the 2017 national results from Pordata, a database which provides certified statistics about Europe and, more specifically, Portugal. In this sense, 53% (n = 213) of the participants were female and 47% (n = 187) were male. In what concerns the respondents' age, 19% (n = 77) were 19 years old or younger, 11% (n = 43) were 20 to 29 years old, 21% (n = 84) were 30 to 44 years old, 28% (n = 112) were 45 to 64 years old and 21% (n = 84) were 65 years old or older.

Regarding the level of education of the population, there was also a concern to keep the sample fairly representative. Therefore, although the largest slice of the participants had the secondary education (42%) or higher education (30%), there were also respondents who had the basic education (14%), primary education (12%) or no education at all (2%). The majority of the participants were part of the active population (56%), but there was also a significant representation of retired people (22%) and students (20%).

As for the profession, respondents worked on the manufacturing industries (13%), human health and social support activities (11%), wholesale and retail trade (10%), consulting activities (9%), information and communication activities (8%), education (8%), administrative activities and support services (8%), accommodation, catering and similar activities (8%), amongst others. In this regard, it should be noted that professions were defined according to the Portuguese Classification of Economic Activities, provided by Statistics Portugal (Instituto Nacional de Estatística). To further consumer characterization details, see Appendix A.

### **3.3. Data analysis procedure**

To analyze the hypothesized relations, as well as other relevant associations, a questionnaire was designed – following Malhotra's (2008) design process (see Appendix B) – and distributed between May and June 2018. As the participants were Portuguese and the scales were developed in English, the questionnaire was translated, in order to make it accessible and understandable to all age classes and people with different educational backgrounds. A pilot study was held with 233 participants to identify errors, comprehension problems and

to assure the translation's quality. The pilot study revealed some major concerns and all advice has been taken into consideration and integrated into the final version of the survey. This new version was distributed physically, in order to be more accessible to older participants. In total, 488 respondents completed the questionnaire in full, but only 400 were taken into account for analysis, in order to keep the sample representative.

The final questionnaire was divided into three sections (see Appendix C). The purpose of the first one was to assess the respondents' general content consumption habits, namely news consumption and brand content consumption. In the second section, respondents were introduced to a brand – Ikea – and were asked to give information about their relationship with the brand. More specifically, they were asked about their knowledge of the brand and their buying habits – both filter questions – and, when applicable, about their brand loyalty (answering a question drawn from an Action Loyalty scale by Bobâlcă *et al.*, 2012). (1) International presence, (2) high brand awareness, (3) unisex/everyday use, and (4) quality content marketing were the criteria that led the authors to choose Ikea as the research subject.

In the same section, participants were exposed to two different types of content – a brand content piece produced by Ikea and a news piece about the brand, signed by a well-known Portuguese newspaper, *Expresso*. The brand-produced content – retrieved from the Ikea's website – was focused on the “Life at Home Report”, which reveals the home-related fights and frustrations from people all around the world. Among multiple possibilities, this article was selected because the authors considered it was exactly halfway between informational content marketing and emotional content marketing. On the other hand, the news piece focused on the opening of new Ikea stores in Portugal and more generically about the brand's prosperity and success. The newspaper selection criteria were based on its high reputation amongst Portuguese consumers, and the news piece was considered adequate because it did not unveil any evident trace of publicity efforts.

In relation to each one of these content pieces, respondents were then asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with statements which represented the constructs mentioned above – message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention (see table 1).

Table 1

## Constructs

Construct	Scale items	Authors	Recently used by
Message Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate</li> <li>• Authentic</li> <li>• Believable</li> </ul>	Appelman and Sundar (2016)	Willoughby & Liu (2018) Berger (2018) Lee (2018)
Attitude toward the brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unappealing – appealing</li> <li>• Bad – good</li> <li>• Unpleasant – Pleasant</li> <li>• Unfavorable – Favorable</li> <li>• Unlikable – Likable</li> </ul>	Spears & Singh (2004)	McLean (2018) Lim et al. (2018) Yu et al. (2018)
Purchase intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never – Definitely</li> <li>• Definitely do not intend to buy – definitely intend</li> <li>• Very low – high purchase interest</li> <li>• Definitely not buy it – definitely buy it</li> <li>• Probably not – Probably buy it</li> </ul>	Spears & Singh (2004)	Dai & Pelton (2018) Ketron (2018) Hyun and Choi (2018)

Message credibility was measured using three items: (1) authentic, (2) accurate and (3) believable (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). Attitude toward the brand and purchase intention were measured using five-item scales – (1) unappealing-appealing, (2) bad-good, (3) unpleasant-pleasant, (4) unfavorable-favorable, (5) unlikable-likable and (1) never-definitely, (2) definitely do not intend to buy-definitely intend to buy, (3) very low-very high purchase interest, (4) definitely not buy it-definitely buy it and (5) probably not-probably buy it, respectively, both developed by Spears & Singh (2004). In order to facilitate the evaluation and analysis, the items were transformed into seven-point Likert scales, in which 1 = *Completely disagree* and 7 = *Completely agree*. Finally, section three was composed of five questions related to demographics – gender, age, education, professional occupation, and profession – in order to characterize the respondents.

### 3.4. Statistical analysis criteria

How Likert scales should be used and analyzed has been discussed for decades, and it is an issue that still divides researchers. There are two major views: the *ordinalist* and the *intervalist* views. *Ordinalists* claim that Likert scales are ordinal and, consequently, must be analyzed with non-parametric tests, even though they generally considered less sensitive and less powerful



than parametric tests (Carlifo & Perla, 2008). *Intervalists* defend that although Likert questions or items are, in fact, ordinal, the Likert scales – which consists of the sum of many items – are interval variables and thus can be analyzed with parametric tests, benefiting from the authority that is associated with this type of analysis (Carifio & Perla, 2008).

In what concerns the assumption of normal distribution associated to parametrical tests, it is highlighted that, when the samples are greater than 30, the T-distribution with  $v$  degrees of freedom is approximately normal; likewise, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) is robust to violations of normality (minimal consequences in type I and II errors), except when the distribution is really skewed or the sample size is very small (Norman, 2010; Pestana & Gageiro, 2014). Authors also add that that non-normal distribution does not have a significant impact in large sample sizes (Schmidt & Finan, 2018) and while non-parametric tests are absolutely useful for small samples, used in large samples they may provide wrong or confusing answers (Fagerland, 2012).

Having reviewed the literature, the authors opted to follow the *intervalist* view – recoding the single items means into the three correspondent indicators – message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention – and analyze the data parametrically, even though the assumption of normality was not fulfilled (see Appendix D). In this context, negative items were recoded and rescored into positive ones.

Cronbach's alpha test was first carried out in order to verify the internal consistency of the new latent variables. The majority of the items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted. The only relevant exception was message credibility's item 2 (see table 2) which would considerably increase the alpha from  $\alpha = 0.68$  to  $\alpha = 0.80$  regarding content marketing evaluations and from  $\alpha = 0.63$  to  $\alpha = 0.79$  in what concerns publicity. In this context, the authors chose to delete this item in both scales (message credibility motivated by content marketing and driven by publicity) in order to increase their internal consistency.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention scale items

Strategy	Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha	Items	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Content Marketing	Message credibility	0.684	(1) The message is authentic	0.467
			(2) The message is not accurate	0.797
			(3) The message is believable	0.461
	Attitude toward the brand	0.775	(1) The brand is appealing	0.722
			(2) The brand is good	0.688
			(3) The brand is unpleasant	0.762
			(4) The brand is favorable	0.697
			(5) The brand is unlikable	0.783
	Purchase intention	0.827	(1) I will never buy this brand's products	0.816
(2) I definitely intend to buy this brand's products			0.764	
(3) I have high purchase interest in this brand's products			0.768	
(4) I will definitely not buy this brand's products			0.829	
(5) I will probably buy this brand's products			0.777	
Publicity	Message credibility	0.632	(1) The message is authentic	0.373
			(2) The message is not accurate	0.788
			(3) The message is believable	0.354
	Attitude toward the brand	0.795	(1) The brand is appealing	0.749
			(2) The brand is good	0.731
			(3) The brand is unpleasant	0.781
			(4) The brand is favorable	0.722
			(5) The brand is unlikable	0.785
	Purchase intention	0.825	(1) I will never buy this brand's products	0.829
(2) I definitely intend to buy this brand's products			0.765	
(3) I have high purchase interest in this brand's products			0.761	
(4) I will definitely not buy this brand's products			0.828	
(5) I will probably buy this brand's products			0.752	

To test the hypotheses, a Paired Sample T-Test was used, as it is frequently used when a subject is analyzed twice (usually before and after some type of intervention), forming pairs of observations whose differences are tested. It is also appropriated to analyze two different groups which have a common characteristic and therefore might be compared (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014).

Additionally, and to better answer the research question, parametric statistical tests were used to compare groups and analyze if there were statistically significant differences amongst the consumer descriptive variables on the indicators for both content marketing and publicity. More specifically, Independent T-tests and one-way ANOVAs were performed, to compare the mean score of the indicators – message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention – amongst 10 independent groups (1) gender, (2) age, (3) education, (4) professional occupation, (5) profession, (6) news consumption habits, (7) brand content consumption habits, (8) knowledge of the brand, (9) buying habits and (10) brand loyalty – on the dependent variables. Post hoc analysis was then performed to establish a more detailed comparison between groups when statistically significant differences were found. The Bonferroni test was used to analyze small numbers of comparisons, and Tukey H.S.D was employed to assess differences between a large number of comparisons (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014).

The statistical analyzes were performed using SPSS, version 24. The statistical significance value was set at  $p < 0.05$  and, when applicable, at  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.001$ .

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Sample characterization**

In what concerns news consumptions habits, 59% of the participants consumed news proactively, and 39% of the respondents did it passively. Results indicated that television was undoubtedly the consumers' favorite news channel (74%) followed by the digital world, namely online newspapers (49%) and social media (42%). Press was used by 38% of the participants who consume news and radio seemed to be consumers' least favorite channel, being referred by only 35% of the respondents.

Regarding brand content consumption, the majority of participants stated that they usually consume content produced by brands (58%). For these consumers, information was by far the leading motivation (81%), followed by entertainment (53%). On the other hand, only 15% of the participants indicated "sense of belonging/proximity to the brand" as a consumption motivation.

Concerning the knowledge of the brand, almost 95% of the participants knew the brand. Amongst these consumers, 35% of the participants claimed to buy Ikea once a year, 34% two or three times a year and 25% had never bought the brand products. The analysis indicated that only 5% of the participants usually bought Ikea products on a monthly basis and just 1% on a weekly basis. As for brand loyalty, 50% of the buyers indicated that Ikea was their first choice when they wanted to buy home-related products (for detailed descriptive statistics about the consumers' content consumption habits and previous relationship with the brand, see Appendix E).

### **4.2. Group differences**

In order to understand how consumers respond to content marketing and publicity, parametric statistical tests were used to compare groups and analyze if the impact of these editorial communication strategies statistically differed among the indicators.

#### **Gender comparisons across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 2 (gender) Independent T-test was held to determine if participants from distinct genders have differently responded to content marketing and publicity. The analysis

revealed that gender had an impact on consumers' attitude toward the brand after reading the brand content ( $t_{(398)} = -2.03, p < 0.05$ ). More specifically, women were associated with more positive attitudes than men (see Appendix F).

### **Age comparisons across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 5 (age) one-way ANOVA was performed and results showed that consumer's attitude toward the brand (content marketing:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 5.39; p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 3.30; p < 0.05$ ) and purchase intention (content marketing:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 5.90; p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 7.36; p < 0.001$ ) after being exposed to both content marketing and publicity statistically differed among age classes. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the 65 or more years old group presented significant lower ratings in every category than other age classes ( $p < 0.05$ ) (see Appendix G).

### **Education comparisons across different indicators**

Regarding the participants educational background, a 3 (indicators) x 5 (education) ANOVA results showed that there were statistically significant differences between the groups ratings of purchase intention motivated by both strategies (content marketing:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 3.00; p < 0.05$  | publicity:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 3.63; p < 0.01$ ). Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that there was a significant difference between the participants with primary education and higher education after being exposed to both content marketing ( $p < 0.05$ ) and publicity ( $p < 0.01$ ). Consumers with higher education exhibited higher levels of purchase intention than respondents with primary education (see Appendix H).

### **Professional occupation comparisons across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 5 (professional occupation) one-way ANOVA was also employed to compare the mean score of the indicators amongst different professional occupations (see Appendix I). Results unveiled statistically significant differences between groups in what regards the consumers' attitude toward the brand after being exposed to content marketing ( $F_{(4, 395)} = 2.67; p < 0.05$ ). Nevertheless, further post hoc analysis did not confirm this suggestion ( $p > 0.05$ ). ANOVA results also revealed that purchase intention significantly differs accordingly to professional occupation, regarding both strategies (content marketing:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 4.11; p < 0.01$  | publicity:  $F_{(4, 395)} = 4.97; p < 0.01$ ). A Bonferroni post hoc test

further unveiled that retired participants showed significantly lower levels of purchase intention than workers, after being exposed to both content marketing and publicity ( $p < 0.01$ ) and also significantly lower ratings than students after reading the news piece ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### **Profession comparisons across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 18 (profession) ANOVA results showed that there were statistically significant differences between professional groups regarding consumers' attitude toward the brand motivated by content marketing ( $F_{(17, 207)} = 1.97; p < 0.05$ ). However, Tukey H.S.D post hoc test did not support this result ( $p > 0.05$ ). ANOVA mean comparisons also unveiled significant differences on purchase intention scores, after the consumers have been exposed to both content marketing ( $F_{(17, 207)} = 2.08; p < 0.05$ ) and publicity ( $F_{(17, 207)} = 2.12; p < 0.05$ ). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey H.S.D test indicated that wholesale and retail trade professionals showed higher purchase intention levels than the participants who worked on extractive industries, after reading both types of content ( $p < 0.05$ ). The wholesale and retail trade professional group was also associated with higher levels of purchase intention motivated by content marketing and publicity than the transport and storage professionals ( $p < 0.05$ ) (see Appendix J).

### **News consumption habits comparisons across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 3 (news consumption habits) one-way ANOVA was held to compare the impact of news consumption habits on message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention regarding both strategies (see Appendix K). The results displayed significant differences between groups concerning the news piece's message credibility ( $F_{(2, 397)} = 8.60; p < 0.001$ ) and also regarding attitude toward the brand motivated by content marketing ( $F_{(2, 397)} = 3.45; p < 0.05$ ). A Bonferroni post hoc test further indicated that a significant difference existed between participants who proactively consume news and the ones who do it in a passive way. Proactive consumption was associated with higher levels of the news piece's message credibility ( $p < 0.001$ ) and also with more positive attitude toward the brand related to content marketing ( $p < 0.05$ ) than passive consumption.

### **Brand content consumption habits across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 2 (brand content consumption habits) Independent T-test showed that there were statistically significant differences between brand content consumers and participants who do not usually consume content created by brands, transversal to every indicator and both strategies (see Appendix L). Brand content consumers displayed significant higher levels of message credibility (content marketing:  $t_{(398)} = -3.16$ ;  $p < 0.01$  | publicity:  $t_{(398)} = -3.32$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), attitude toward the brand (content marketing:  $t_{(341,71)} = -3.91$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $t_{(398)} = -2.61$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and purchase intention (content marketing:  $t_{(398)} = -4.37$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $t_{(398)} = -3.50$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) concerning both strategies.

### **Knowledge of the brand comparisons across different indicators**

Regarding the knowledge of the brand, a 3 (indicators) x 2 (knowledge of the brand) Independent T-Test was employed and the results exposed statistically significant differences on the indicators mean scores between participants who knew the brand and the ones who were not familiar with the brand (see Appendix M). Participants who knew the brand were associated with higher scores of message credibility (content marketing:  $t_{(398)} = -5.34$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $t_{(398)} = -3.55$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), attitude toward the brand (content marketing:  $t_{(398)} = -3.74$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $t_{(398)} = -3.94$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and purchase intention (content marketing:  $t_{(398)} = -3.69$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $t_{(398)} = -3.28$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ) after reading both the brand content and the news piece than the ones who were not familiar with the brand.

### **Buying habits comparisons across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 5 (buying habits) one-way ANOVA was performed in order to compare the impact of buying habits on message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention adopting both strategies (see Appendix N). The results portrayed statistically significant differences between groups in what regards message credibility (content marketing:  $F_{(4, 373)} = 4.80$ ;  $p < 0.01$  | publicity:  $F_{(4, 373)} = 2.75$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), attitude toward the brand (content marketing:  $F_{(4, 373)} = 10.26$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $F_{(4, 373)} = 7.76$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and purchase intention (content marketing:  $F_{(4, 373)} = 18.78$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $F_{(4, 373)} = 15.04$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Bonferroni post hoc analysis further unveiled that participants who had never bought the brand were associated with lower levels of message credibility than consumers who usually buy the brand once a year ( $p < 0.05$ ) and once a week ( $p < 0.01$ ) after reading

brand's content. In what concerns the impact of buying habits on the news piece's message credibility, post hoc comparisons did not confirm the relation ( $p > 0.05$ ). Participants who had never bought the brand were also associated with a less positive attitude toward the brand than consumers who usually buy the brand once a year ( $p < 0.01$ ) or two or three times a year ( $p < 0.001$ ) after being exposed to both strategies. Non-buyers also exhibited lower ratings of purchase intention than participants who usually buy the brand's products once a year ( $p < 0.001$ ), two or three times a year ( $p < 0.001$ ) and once a week ( $p < 0.05$ ) after being exposed to both editorial communication strategies.

### **Brand loyalty comparisons across different indicators**

A 3 (indicators) x 2 (brand loyalty) Independent T-Test was held and the results showed that there were statistically significant differences between loyal customers and non-loyal customers in what regards message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention motivated by both strategies (see Appendix O). More specifically, loyal consumers were associated with higher ratings of message credibility (publicity:  $t_{(282)} = -3.12$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), attitude toward the brand (content marketing:  $t_{(282)} = -3.29$ ;  $p < 0.01$  | publicity;  $t_{(284)} = -3.39$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and purchase intention (content marketing:  $t_{(282)} = -5.88$ ;  $p < 0.001$  | publicity:  $t_{(282)} = -5.79$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) driven by both strategies than participants who claimed that the brand was not their first choice.

### **4.3. Hypothesis testing**

Since, in this case, each dependent variable was measured twice – in order to evaluate the effects of the two strategies (content marketing and publicity) – a Paired Sample T-Test was performed, to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two means. The correlation between the two variables was estimated at  $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for message credibility, at  $r = 0.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for attitude toward the brand and at  $r = 0.81$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for purchase intention, confirming that the Paired Sample T-test is appropriate in this case (see table 3).



Table 3

Paired Sample T-Test for message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention, adopting two different strategies

	Strategy (n = 400)					Paired Sample T-Test	
	Content marketing		Publicity		Correlation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Message credibility	4.59	1.53	5.01	1.43	0.52 ( $p < 0.001$ )	-5.91	<0.001
Attitude toward the brand	5.37	1.05	5.39	1.05	0.70 ( $p < 0.001$ )	-0.55	0.58
Purchase intention	5.39	1.21	5.33	1.19	0.81 ( $p < 0.001$ )	-1.76	0.08

A Paired Sample T-Test showed a statistically significant increase in message credibility scores from content marketing strategy ( $M=4.59$ ,  $SD=1.53$ ) to publicity ( $M=5.01$ ,  $SD=1.43$ ),  $-t_{(399)} = -5.91$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Since publicity was, in fact, associated with higher levels of message credibility than content marketing, **H1 was not supported**.

H2 assumes that content marketing is associated with more positive attitudes toward the brand than publicity. However, participants rated the brand as more positive after reading the news piece ( $M=5.39$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ) than the brand content ( $M=5.37$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). The Paired Sample T-test means comparison for attitude toward the brand motivated by content marketing and by publicity disclosed that this difference was not significant ( $t_{(399)} = -0.55$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), meaning that, statistically, content marketing and publicity were equally associated with positive attitudes toward the brand. Therefore, **H2 was rejected**.

Regarding purchase intention, respondents rated purchase intention at average at 5.39 ( $SD=1.21$ ) when exposed to content marketing and at 5.33 ( $SD=1.19$ ) after reading the news piece. Although this could come in line with the hypothesis that content marketing is associated with higher levels of purchase intention than publicity, no statistically significant difference was found between the two variables' means ( $t_{(399)} = -1.76$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Consequently, **H3 was also not supported**.

## 5. Discussion

In the last few years, the academy has been advocating that companies can now interact straightforwardly with their consumers through content marketing, eliminating the need for publicity's mediation. Since no known study had tested this theory, the purpose of this research was to give a first step towards finding out if content marketing is, indeed, replacing publicity. After reviewing the literature, hypotheses were defined based on the power of content marketing over publicity. It was therefore expected that the first approach was associated with higher levels of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. However, data collection through a questionnaire answered by 400 Portuguese consumers and subsequent statistical analysis has not supported any of the hypotheses.

The first hypothesis was that content marketing would be associated with higher levels of message credibility. Nonetheless, the news piece's message credibility proved to be significantly higher than the brand content. This result does not come in line with the low success rate of mass media suggested by Hetch *et al.* (2017). In order to achieve a better understanding of this outcome, it is crucial to consider the descriptive statistics regarding the sample's news consumption habits. In fact, 98% of the respondents stated that they consume (read/watch/listen to) news and the majority of participants said that they did it in a proactive way (59%). This significant news consumption tendency might suggest that Portuguese consumers trust media outlets; otherwise the news consumption levels would most certainly be lower.

These results also do not disclose any apparent loss of credibility that Bastos (2012) predicted could occur due to the proliferation of online journalism. Although television is still Portuguese consumers' favorite news channel (selected by almost three out of four respondents), the digital world comes up second, either via online newspapers or social media, which are used by 49% and 42% of the respondents, respectively. While these numbers might not seem relevant, they are particularly interesting if we have in mind that almost one-quarter of the sample was constituted by senior people (65 or more years old). Overall, the results do not indicate that the public space communications that belong to mass media are being taken by non-media brands, as suggested by Verčič & Verčič (2016).

The second hypothesis stated that content marketing would lead to more positive attitudes toward the brand than publicity. Since several authors (Spears & Singh, 2004; Wu & Lo, 2009, Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibanez, 2012) agree that attitude toward the brand comes hand in hand with purchase intention, the third hypothesis also stated that content marketing would be associated with higher levels of purchase intention than publicity. However, the results indicated that there were no significant differences between the two indicators' means for both content marketing and publicity.

Analyzing descriptive statistics regarding the participants' brand content consumption habits, we can see that the majority (58%) of the respondents stated that they usually consume content produced by brands. This number is especially relevant having in consideration that the sample was constituted by participants from all age groups and with different educational backgrounds and confirms the proposition that brands are now communicating directly with consumers, as suggested by Zerfass *et al.* (2016). Information and entertainment were appointed as the main motivations for brand content consumption, which comes in line with the authors' definition of content marketing, that highlights the distribution of free informational or entertainment content – proposed by Wall & Spinuzzi (2018) – as one of its core functions.

However, the outcomes showed that information has a far more significant power – being indicated by 81% of the participants who usually consume content produced by brands, against just approximately half of the respondents who selected entertainment as a motivation. These results validate the starting point of this comparative study, supporting the authors' claim that “information is the foundation of both strategies”. They show that information is not only the basis for the whole publicist scope of action – as highlighted by Ribeiro (2015) – but it is also the main content marketing's attraction factor for Portuguese consumers. On the same line of thought, one can note that just 15% of brand content consumers indicated “sense of belonging/proximity to the brand” as a consumption motivation, which might suggest that, in general, Portuguese consumers do not use content so much as a way to establish a closer relationship with the brand or to reach higher levels of interaction, as indicated by Kee & Yazdanifard (2015). This background information might actually explain why content marketing and publicity displayed similar attitude toward the brand and purchase intention scores. It can be suggested that, regarding these two

indicators, Portuguese consumers reacted similarly to both approaches, because they both satisfy one common need: information.

The group differences seem to support this theory, as respondents who proactively consume news were associated with not only higher news' message credibility levels – which could be expected – but, were, simultaneously, linked to a more positive attitude toward the brand motivated by content marketing than passive consumers. Likewise, after being confronted with both strategies, brand content consumers rated all three indicators higher than participants who do not usually consume content created by brands. These results come in line with the works of Patruti Baltes (2015) – who claimed that it is the quality of the content the most important part of digital marketing – and might, indeed, indicate that consumers look for great content, regardless of the channel.

In what concerns the statistical comparisons between groups, it should be underlined that women were associated with a more positive attitude toward the brand after reading the brand content than men. Since – to date and to the best of the author's knowledge – there are no previous studies which measure the impact of gender on content marketing effectiveness –, the authors consider that content selection might explain this outcome. Although one of the specific criteria to choose Ikea as a brand was its unisex/familiar character (alongside international presence, high brand awareness, and quality content marketing), it can be argued that the chosen content appealed more to the feminine public, culturally more associated with the "Life at home". This theory is in agreement with the works of Ribeiro *et al.* (2015), which concluded that women in Portugal continue to assume the workload associated with traditional gender roles.

The statistical tests have also shown noteworthy outcomes regarding the impact the knowledge of the brand, buying habits and brand loyalty on how Portuguese consumer respond to content marketing and publicity. Participants who did not know the brand and non-loyal buyers exhibited significantly lower scores in every indicator after reading the two different contents. Also, non-buyers were associated with a less favorable attitude toward the brand and with lower levels of purchase intention than the groups of buyers. These results might imply that editorial strategies are more useful and powerful to maintain ongoing conversations with consumers, as proposed by Wall & Spinuzzi (2018), and build relationships based on trust (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015), than attracting new leads, as

indicated by Patrutiu Baltas (2015). This proposition should be explored by marketers and publicists, in order to create and develop more efficient content-based strategies. On the other hand, however, it could be argued that these scores display that consumers' preconceptions about the brand influence the way they respond to both strategies.

In what regards the impact of content marketing and publicity on different professions, means comparisons showed that wholesale and retail trade sector was associated with higher purchase intention levels than the extractive industries and transport and storage sectors motivated by both strategies. It can be suggested that these results might be explained by the proximity factor: professionals working in commerce-related functions deal more often with content than the production and logistics professionals, being more predisposed and perceptive to this kind of approach. This finding also seems to come in line with the work of Järvinen & Taiminen (2016), who revealed how content marketing strategies might be combined with selling processes, putting an end to the conflicts between marketing and sales department. These results, therefore, might convey that new productive relationships between content marketing, publicity, and the commerce sector should be cultivated.

This research also provides other useful insights to marketers. The fact that the 65+ age group exhibited significantly lower ratings in every category than other groups matches the overall lower scores attributed by retired respondents and, also, with participants who selected primary education as their educational level, after reading both types of content. In light of these results, it could be suggested that literacy difficulties constitute one of the reasons that might explain the older respondents' lack of interest in the brand content and the news piece. However, it also raises an interesting point that should be discussed.

As described in the literature review, content marketing is fundamentally related to the digital world (Pophal, 2015) and public relations professionals are now managing the organization-public communication through the Internet (Huang *et al.*, 2017), adapting themselves to the new routines of 24h online journalism (Verčič & Verčič, 2016). In this case – although the questionnaire was distributed physically, precisely to reach the older population –, the portrayed contents were created for online platforms and retrieved from websites, therefore following a specific digital language and visual codes, which senior people might not be familiar with. In this context, it is essential to ask: is there a place for senior consumers in the content world? How can brands better reach this segment, with contents that match their

wishes and needs? Even in the highly digital environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these results indicate that marketers and publicists must consider offline approaches, which is already being done successfully in Portugal, as pointed out by Moreira (2017).

To sum up, this research suggests that the Portuguese paradigm does not match what has been suggested by Pulizzi (2012), Verčič & Verčič (2016) and Zerfass *et al.* (2016) regarding the failure of the mass media communication model: in Portugal, media outlets seem to still be considered unbiased sources that report the story without covert purposes (Eisend & Kuster, 2011). However, it does come in line with Patrutiu Baltes (2015), who claimed that is the content's quality the most important feature of the digital strategies.

## 6. Conclusion

With the new digital trends that allow companies to use their own power of gatekeeping (Andaç *et al.*, 2016) – communicating directly with their audience –, the academy been suggesting that, through content marketing, companies are dominating the mass media's public communications sphere (Verčič & Verčič, 2016; Zerfass *et al.*, 2016). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous study specifically had tested this theory, comparing the effects of content marketing and publicity on consumers. In this sense, this research's objective was to determine if content marketing might be indeed replacing publicity as an editorial communication strategy.

To answer the research question – how do consumers respond to content marketing and publicity editorial communication strategies? – a quantitative methodology was used, data was collected from 400 questionnaires, and hypotheses were formulated based on the literature review. Whilst confirming the undeniable importance of content, statistical analysis did not support any of the formulated hypotheses and overall results do not completely match what has been suggested by the academy.

Firstly, the message credibility of the news piece proved to be significantly higher than the content created by the brand. Consumer antecedents' analysis suggested strong news consumption habits by Portuguese consumers, mainly in a proactive way and also through digital platforms. This result is in disagreement with the aforementioned theory that online journalism could lead to loss of credibility.

Secondly, no statistically significant differences were found between the impact of content marketing and publicity on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention, meaning that both strategies had similar effects on consumers. Descriptive statistics showed that brand content consumption's main motivation was information and group differences also unveiled strong connections between news consumers and content marketing and brand consumers and journalism/publicity.

In this sense, while coming in line with academy's suggestions in what concerns the proliferation of content marketing – on this matter, it should be regarded that the majority of participants already consumes content created by brands –, this study indicates that, in Portugal, this strategy is not replacing publicity, as proposed. Results imply that, in this

country, media outlets maintain the credibility that makes publicity a valid and useful approach and in what regards the personal assessments of the brand and the potential buying interest, both strategies had similar effects on consumers. This finding not only validates the whole purpose of this comparative study but also constitutes one of its most important conclusions: consumers seem to want information and quality content, be it through the media channel or directly through the brand.

This study also led to relevant insights regarding consumers' response to editorial communication strategies. One of them has to do with the impact of the knowledge of the brand, buying habits and brand loyalty on the effectiveness of these approaches. Results indicate that consumers who did not know the brand, non-buyers, and non-loyal customers displayed significantly lower overall scores than people who knew the brand, regular buyers and loyal customers, respectively. To understand this outcome, the authors propose two potential explanations: (1) consumers' preconceptions and previous experiences impact the effects of content marketing and publicity; (2) these editorial communication strategies are more useful in the development and maintenance of a relationship with customers than to attract new leads. Both propositions are pertinent – not only to the academy but also to the everyday practice of content marketing and publicity – and should be explored more in-depth by academics and professionals.

Another interesting finding, especially for the industry, is related to the significantly low ratings given by older consumers (65+) transversally to all categories of both strategies. This result has led to pertinent reflections about the place of senior consumers in the world of content – typically digital – and encourages brands to rethink their approaches and embrace traditional strategies, whenever necessary, to reach this segment. From a managerial point-of-view, this study also indicates that synergies between content marketing, publicity and the wholesale and retail trade sector should be created and explored by professionals.

To the academy, this study contributes to the lack of research about the dynamics between content marketing and publicity and, to the best of the authors' knowledge, it is the first that compares these strategies, from theory to their practical effects. What is more, this research also answers the expressed need for research about consumers' perspective (Zerfass *et al.*, 2016; Moreira, 2017) – particularly in what concerns content marketing. Overall, this study



highlights new directions, proving the ever-changing dynamics of marketing and leading the way to further investigations.

From a managerial point-of-view, this research proved to be relevant as it not only validated the importance of publicity and media relations but provided critical insights of how content can be used to answer the Portuguese consumers' needs more efficiently as well. It also showed marketers should not disregard either of the strategies but must instead use them together and complementarily focusing on what consumers truly want: great quality content.

## **7. Limitations and future research**

In what concerns the limitations of this research it should be acknowledged that – despite the authors' best efforts to choose the most impartial brand possible – the results seem to indicate that some participants might have been influenced by the characteristics of the content or by their preconceptions about the brand. Thus, a different brand and content selection could produce different conclusions. In this sense, future comparative studies should explore the impact of consumers' antecedents and prejudices on the success of content marketing and publicity.

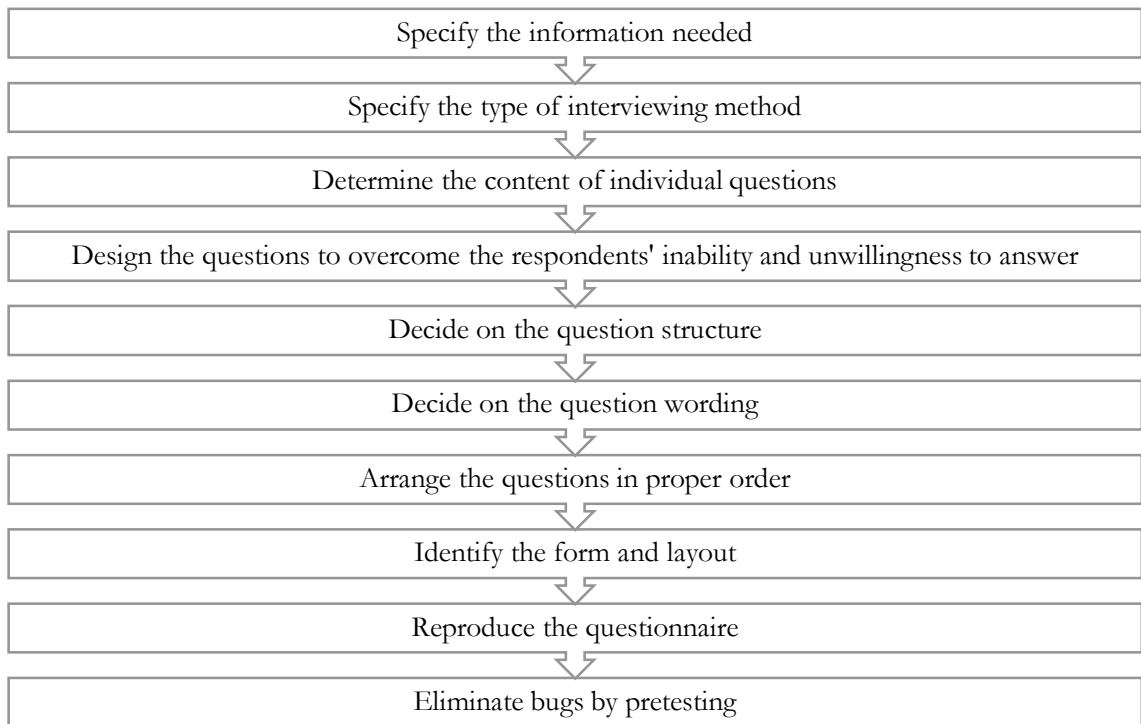
Regarding future investigations, this study represents a first step in assessing if content marketing is replacing publicity and, therefore, studies in other countries are strongly encouraged. Upcoming researches should also explore the more appropriate functions of editorial communication strategies, namely, their effectiveness in feeding relationships versus in attracting new leads. The potential benefits of synergies among content-based approaches and the commerce and trade sector is another suggested topic.

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Consumers' characterization

Variables		Frequencies	
		<i>F</i>	<i>f</i>
Gender	Male	187	47%
	Female	213	53%
Age	≤ 19	77	19%
	20-29	43	11%
	30-44	84	21%
	45-64	112	28%
	65 ≥	84	21%
Education	No education	8	2%
	Primary education	48	12%
	Basic education	58	14%
	Secondary education	167	42%
	Higher education	119	30%
Professional occupation	Worker	225	56%
	Student	78	20%
	Retired	87	22%
	Unemployed	6	1%
	Stay-at-home	4	1%
Profession	Agriculture, livestock, hunting, forestry and fishing	4	2%
	Extractive industries	6	3%
	Manufacturing industries	29	13%
	Electricity, gas, steam, hot water and cold hair	3	1%
	Construction	7	3%
	Wholesale and retail trade	23	10%
	Transport and storage	10	4%
	Accommodation, catering and similar	18	8%
	Information and communication activities	19	8%
	Financial and insurance activities	6	3%
	Real estate activities	4	2%
	Consulting activities, technical and similar	21	9%
	Administrative activities and support services	18	8%
	Public administration and defense, social security	2	1%
	Education	18	8%
	Human health and social support activities	24	11%
	Artistic, entertainment, sports and recreational activities	6	3%
	Other	7	3%

**Appendix B:** Questionnaire design process (adapted from Malhotra, 2008)



## Appendix C: Questionnaire

### Hábitos de consumo de conteúdo: opinião sobre a marca IKEA

O presente questionário insere-se no âmbito de uma investigação de dissertação do Mestrado em Marketing da Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto. O objetivo é perceber os hábitos de consumo de conteúdo informativo e de entretenimento por parte dos consumidores portugueses, assim como a sua opinião perante diferentes peças de comunicação, nomeadamente da marca IKEA. O questionário é anónimo e tem a duração aproximada de 10 minutos. Muito obrigada!

#### A. Hábitos de consumo

##### 1. **Consome/lê notícias?**

- Sim, de forma proativa (procura informação)
- Sim, de forma passiva (recebe informação sem procurar)
- Não

##### 1.1. **Se respondeu sim à pergunta A1, através de que canais? (indique um ou mais)**

- Televisão
- Rádio
- Imprensa

Online:

- Sites de jornais/revistas
- Redes sociais de jornais/revistas

##### 2. **Tem por hábito consumir/ler conteúdos criados por marcas (revistas, *blogs*, redes sociais ou outros):**

- Sim
- Não

##### 2.1. **Se respondeu sim à pergunta A2, o que procura? (indique um ou mais)**

- Informação
- Entretenimento
- Sentimento de pertença/proximidade com a marca
- Outro. Qual? \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. Opinião sobre a marca IKEA

##### 1. **Conhece a marca IKEA (empresa especializada na venda de móveis a baixo custo)?**

- Sim
- Não

##### 1.1. **Se respondeu sim à pergunta B1, compra a marca IKEA?**

- Sim, uma vez por semana
- Sim, uma vez por mês
- Sim, duas ou três vezes por ano
- Sim, uma vez por ano
- Nunca

1.2. Se respondeu sim à pergunta B1.1, a IKEA é a sua primeira escolha quando quer comprar produtos para a casa?

- Sim
- Não

2. Leia, por favor, o seguinte excerto de um conteúdo produzido pela IKEA.

### A VIDA EM CASA

A IKEA lança o terceiro Relatório A Vida em Casa anual, que explora a forma como as pessoas vivem em suas casas em todo o mundo. As conclusões baseiam-se numa combinação de um novo questionário quantitativo, antigos questionários IKEA e de outros estudos publicados. Este ano, vamos aprofundar um pouco mais, para saber o que as pessoas acham que faz de uma casa, uma casa. O objetivo deste relatório é aumentar o conhecimento e estimular a discussão sobre o que significa um melhor dia a dia.

As pessoas dizem que a casa está onde está o coração. Mas, o que é que realmente faz de uma casa, uma casa? E o que nos faz sentir que um determinado lugar é a nossa casa?



**17%** das pessoas queixaram-se das intrusões ao espaço pessoal em casa.

**Conclusões do Relatório Vida em Casa (Life At Home IKEA)**



**40%** das pessoas afirmam viver com objetos que detestam, mas que não podem deitar fora por pertencerem a outras pessoas.



**46%** das pessoas dizem que a sala é o espaço mais comum para ocorrerem os conflitos em casa.



**44%** das pessoas acham "errado" estabelecer o seu próprio espaço quando alguém se muda para a casa de outra pessoa.

Com base no excerto acima, refira o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações, em que 1 = Discordo totalmente e 7 = Concordo totalmente.

	1: Discordo totalmente	2	3	4	5	6	7: Concordo totalmente
A mensagem é autêntica							
A mensagem não é precisa							
A mensagem é confiável							
A marca é apelativa							
A marca é boa							

A marca é desagradável							
A marca é favorável							
A marca é detestável							
Nunca vou comprar produtos desta marca							
Definitivamente tenciono comprar produtos desta marca							
Tenho muito interesse em comprar produtos desta marca							
Definitivamente não vou comprar produtos desta marca							
Provavelmente vou comprar produtos desta marca							

3. Leia, por favor, um excerto de uma notícia do jornal Expresso *online* sobre a IKEA.



ECONOMIA

## Ikea quer crescer em Portugal com lojas pequenas e na internet



**A** IKEA está a adaptar-se em Portugal às tendências do retalho e o próximo ano vai ser dedicado à abertura de lojas de menor dimensão e ao desenvolvimento do comércio eletrónico com pontos de recolha físicos.

Helen Duphorn, que é a nova diretora-geral da empresa sueca em Portugal, não avança datas nem os investimentos envolvidos nos novos projetos. “Talvez tenhamos no próximo ano um ponto de levantamento onde se pode ir buscar o que se comprou online, não é uma loja. Mas também acredito em formatos de menor dimensão, lojas de cidade, que será interessante testar em Lisboa e talvez no Porto”, avança, garantindo que estes formatos ainda não estão fechados. “Não sei se será um showroom físico ou digital, estou muito aberta e é indiferente, é o consumidor quem irá decidir o que prefere e nós iremos atrás”, refere.

No total, a IKEA Portugal faturou €397 milhões no ano fiscal entre 1 de setembro de 2016 e 31 de agosto de 2017, com cinco lojas. Braga e Loulé são as duas aberturas mais recentes, e em ambos os casos, apesar de serem lojas fronteiriças, os clientes espanhóis representam apenas 3% dos clientes. “Não são a maioria dos clientes. Em Loulé, por exemplo, o que conta mais são os portugueses com casas de férias no Algarve, mas também muitos ingleses, escandinavos, alemães, entre outros, com segundas casas”, explica Helen Duphorn. A nível internacional, por seu lado, o IKEA Group vendeu €34,1 mil milhões no ano fiscal de 2017, com 355 lojas em 29 países.

**Com base na notícia acima**, refira o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações, em que 1 = Discordo totalmente e 7 = Concordo totalmente.

	1: Discordo totalmente	2	3	4	5	6	7: Concordo totalmente
A mensagem é autêntica							
A mensagem não é precisa							
A mensagem é confiável							
A marca é apelativa							
A marca é boa							
A marca é desagradável							
A marca é favorável							
A marca é detestável							



Nunca vou comprar produtos desta marca							
Definitivamente tenciono comprar produtos desta marca							
Tenho muito interesse em comprar produtos desta marca							
Definitivamente não vou comprar produtos desta marca							
Provavelmente vou comprar produtos desta marca							

### C. Caracterização do consumidor

#### 1. Género

- Masculino
- Feminino

#### 2. Idade

- 19 ou menos
- 20-29 anos
- 30-44 anos
- 45-64 anos
- 65 ou mais

#### 3. Escolaridade

- Sem escolaridade
- Ensino primário
- Ensino básico
- Ensino secundário
- Ensino superior

#### 4. Situação profissional

- Exerce atividade profissional

Não exerce atividade profissional:

- Estudante
- Reformado(a)
- Desempregado(a)
- Doméstico(a)
- Outro. Qual? \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4.1. Se exerce atividade profissional, indique, por favor, em que área.

- Agricultura, produção animal, caça, floresta e pesca
- Indústrias extrativas
- Indústrias transformadoras
- Eletricidade, gás, vapor, água quente e ar frio
- Construção
- Comércio por grosso e a retalho
- Transporte e armazenagem
- Alojamento, restauração e similares
- Atividades de informação e comunicação

- Atividades financeiras e seguros
- Atividades imobiliárias
- Atividades de consultoria, científicas, técnicas e similares
- Atividades administrativas e serviços de apoio
- Administração pública e defesa, segurança social obrigatória
- Educação
- Atividades de saúde humana e apoio social
- Atividades artísticas, de espetáculos, desportivas e recreativas
- Outra. Qual? \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D:** Normality tests of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention

Strategy	Indicators	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	<i>p</i>	Statistic	<i>p</i>
Content marketing	Message credibility	0.09	<0.001	0.96	<0.001
	Attitude toward the brand	0.07	<0.001	0.97	<0.001
	Purchase intention	0.09	<0.001	0.95	<0.001
Publicity	Message credibility	0.11	<0.001	0.95	<0.001
	Attitude toward the brand	0.07	<0.001	0.97	<0.001
	Purchase intention	0.09	<0.001	0.95	<0.001

**Appendix E:** Descriptive statistics for content consumption habits and previous relationship with the brand

Variables		Frequencies	
		<i>F</i>	<i>f</i>
News consumption	No consumption	10	2%
	Passive consumption	156	39%
	Proactive consumption	234	59%
News channel	Television	294	74%
	Press	150	38%
	Radio	141	35%
	Online newspapers	196	49%
	Social media	169	42%
Brand content consumption	Yes	230	58%
	No	170	42%
Brand content consumption motivations	Information	190	81%
	Entertainment	123	53%
	Sense of belonging/proximity to the brand	34	15%
	Other	3	1%
Knowledge of the brand	Yes	378	95%
	No	22	5%
Buying habits	Never	94	25%
	Once a year	132	35%
	Two or three times a year	128	34%
	Once a month	20	5%
	Once a week	4	1%
Brand loyalty	Loyal	143	50%
	Non-loyal	141	50%

**Appendix F:** Results of an Independent T-Test of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by gender

		Gender (n = 400)				Independent T-Test	
Strategy	Indicators	Male (n = 187)		Female (n = 213)		<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Content marketing	Message credibility	4.44	1.50	4.72	1.54	-1.85	0.07
	Attitude toward the brand	5.26	1.12	5.47	0.98	-2.03	<0.05
	Purchase intention	5.28	1.27	5.49	1.14	-1.79	0.07
Publicity	Message credibility	4.89	1.50	5.12	1.35	-1.59	0.11
	Attitude toward the brand	5.33	1.11	5.45	0.99	-1.07	0.29
	Purchase intention	5.25	1.23	5.39	1.15	-1.19	0.23

M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

**Appendix G:** Results of a one-way ANOVA of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by age group

Strategy	Indicators	Age (n = 400)										ANOVA		Bonferroni Post hoc
		G1: 19 or less (n = 77)		G2: 20-29 (n = 43)		G3: 30-44 (n = 84)		G4: 45-64 (n = 112)		G5: 65 or more (n = 84)				
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	
Content marketing	Message credibility	4.74	1.26	4.63	1.49	4.68	1.45	4.53	1.63	4.40	1.70	0.64	0.63	
	Attitude toward the brand	5.45	0.88	5.44	0.91	5.66	1.05	5.40	1.10	4.95	1.08	5.39	<0.001	G5 < G1 & G3 & G4
	Purchase intention	5.51	1.03	5.47	1.42	5.70	1.14	5.44	1.19	4.87	1.19	5.90	<0.001	G5 < G1 & G3 & G4
Publicity	Message credibility	5.25	1.21	5.05	1.42	5.13	1.33	4.84	1.48	4.89	1.63	1.21	0.31	
	Attitude toward the brand	5.46	0.86	5.40	0.88	5.59	1.17	5.46	0.98	5.05	1.17	3.30	<0.05	G5 < G3
	Purchase intention	5.45	1.03	5.47	1.32	5.60	1.20	5.43	1.09	4.73	1.20	7.36	<0.001	G5 < G1 & G2 & G3 & G4

G: Group; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

**Appendix H:** Results of a one-way ANOVA of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by education levels

Strategy	Indicators	Education (n = 400)										ANOVA		Bonferroni Post hoc
		G1: No education (n = 8)		G2: Primary education (n = 48)		G3: Basic education (n = 58)		G4: Secondary education (n = 167)		G5: Higher education (n = 119)				
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	
Content marketing	Message credibility	3.50	2.02	4.46	1.88	4.71	1.55	4.57	1.41	4.68	1.47	1.32	0.26	
	Attitude toward the brand	4.78	0.77	5.09	1.23	5.38	1.04	5.37	1.01	5.53	1.05	2.20	0.07	
	Purchase intention	4.90	0.74	5.07	1.17	5.35	1.35	5.32	1.25	5.67	1.11	3.00	<0.05	G2 < G5
Publicity	Message credibility	5.25	1.39	4.73	1.79	4.94	1.48	5.04	1.42	5.11	1.25	0.72	0.58	
	Attitude toward the brand	5.10	0.78	5.21	1.26	5.38	1.00	5.33	1.05	5.59	0.97	1.71	0.15	
	Purchase intention	4.83	1.02	4.95	1.17	5.27	1.12	5.27	1.26	5.62	1.08	3.63	<0.01	G2 < G5

G: Group; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

**Appendix I:** Results of a one-way ANOVA of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by professional occupation

Strategy	Indicators	Professional occupation (n = 400)										ANOVA		Bonferroni post hoc
		G1: Worker (n = 225)		G2: Student (n = 78)		G3: Retired (n = 87)		G4: Unemployed (n = 6)		G5: Stay-at-home (n = 4)				
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	
Content marketing	Message credibility	4.56	1.55	4.71	1.28	4.60	1.70	3.92	0.86	4.38	1.49	0.44	0.78	
	Attitude toward the brand	5.46	1.08	5.46	0.84	5.11	1.11	4.67	1.11	5.30	0.50	2.67	<0.05	G1 = G2 = G3 = G4 = G5
	Purchase intention	5.55	1.18	5.42	1.14	4.95	1.28	5.27	0.64	5.60	1.05	4.11	<0.01	G5 < G1
Publicity	Message credibility	4.99	1.40	5.21	1.28	4.93	1.61	4.67	1.32	5.00	1.78	0.55	0.70	
	Attitude toward the brand	5.48	1.06	5.46	0.82	5.12	1.19	5.20	0.89	5.65	0.75	2.04	0.08	
	Purchase intention	5.47	1.18	5.46	1.01	4.83	1.29	5.33	0.72	5.35	0.77	4.97	<0.01	G5 < G1 & G2

G: Group; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation



**Appendix J:** Results of a one-way ANOVA of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by profession

	Strategy	Content marketing						Publicity						
		Indicators	Message credibility		Attitude toward the brand		Purchase intention		Message credibility		Attitude toward the brand		Purchase intention	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Profession (n=225)	G1 (n=7)	4.43	1.34	5.09	1.23	5.34	0.88	4.50	1.87	5.49	0.94	5.20	0.86	
	G2 (n=4)	3.25	2.87	4.15	0.90	4.50	0.82	6.25	0.96	4.80	0.43	4.35	1.10	
	G3 (n=6)	3.67	2.09	4.43	0.89	4.07	1.50	3.92	1.53	4.27	1.40	4.00	1.89	
	G4 (n=29)	4.36	1.25	5.41	1.00	5.48	1.09	5.01	1.30	5.55	0.99	5.37	1.20	
	G5 (n=3)	4.75	1.32	5.73	0.64	6.20	0.60	4.75	0.65	6.07	0.61	6.07	0.70	
	G6 (n=7)	4.42	2.33	4.97	1.04	5.34	1.21	4.50	2.41	5.11	1.09	5.14	1.19	
	G7 (n=23)	5.04	1.57	5.98	1.11	5.95	0.99	5.48	1.12	5.70	1.21	5.90	0.98	
	G8 (n=10)	4.45	1.66	5.08	1.19	4.42	1.87	4.20	1.99	4.88	1.23	4.38	1.72	
	G9 (n=18)	5.08	1.76	5.40	1.22	5.69	1.13	5.00	1.29	5.48	1.05	5.51	1.22	
	G10 (n=19)	5.00	1.54	5.86	1.03	5.95	0.87	5.21	1.74	5.61	1.31	5.85	1.11	
	G11 (n=6)	4.25	2.04	5.27	1.24	5.03	1.42	4.75	1.97	5.50	0.94	5.33	1.34	
	G12 (n=4)	4.13	2.46	5.90	0.96	5.90	0.87	6.00	1.22	6.10	1.04	5.75	1.27	
	G13 (n=21)	4.71	1.21	5.57	1.07	5.71	1.23	4.83	0.93	5.56	1.05	5.66	1.02	
	G14 (n=18)	4.61	1.58	5.98	0.67	5.76	0.91	4.94	1.36	5.80	0.83	5.74	0.87	
	G15 (n=2)	5.50	2.12	6.20	0.57	6.70	0.42	6.00	1.41	6.70	0.42	6.70	0.42	
	G16 (n=18)	4.58	1.06	5.37	1.07	5.66	0.97	5.14	1.12	5.36	0.94	5.41	1.06	
	G17 (n=24)	4.02	1.47	5.21	0.84	5.54	0.94	4.77	1.27	5.30	0.80	5.39	1.00	
	G18 (n=6)	4.58	1.36	5.20	1.67	5.37	2.22	5.25	1.47	5.57	1.15	5.87	0.98	
ANOVA	<i>F</i>	0.92		1.97		2.08		1.16		1.38		2.12		
	<i>p</i>	0.55		<0.05		<0.05		0.30		0.15		<0.05		
Tukey H.S.D post hoc				G1=G2=G3= G4=G5=G6= G7=G8=G9= G10=G11=G1 2=G13=G14= G15=G16=G1 7=G18			G7 > G3 & G8			G7 > G3				

G: Group; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; G1: Other; G2: Agriculture, livestock, hunting, forestry and fishing; G3: Extractive industries; G4: Manufacturing industries; G5: Electricity, gas, steam, hot water and cold hair; G6: Construction;

G7: Wholesale and retail trade; G8: Transport and storage; G9: Accommodation, catering and similar; G10: Information and communication activities; G11: Financial and insurance activities; G12: Real estate activities; G13: Consulting activities, technical and similar; G14: Administrative activities and support services; G15: Public administration and defense, social security; G16: Education; G17: Human health and social support activities; G18: Artistic, entertainment, sports and recreational activities

**Appendix K:** Results of a one-way ANOVA of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by news consumptions habits

News consumption habits (n = 400)										
Strategy	Indicators	G1: No consumption (n = 10)		G2: Passive consumption (n = 156)		G3: Proactive consumption (n = 234)		ANOVA		Bonferroni post hoc
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	
Content marketing	Message credibility	4.05	1.92	4.40	1.55	4.73	1.48	2.88	0.06	
	Attitude toward the brand	5.18	1.11	5.21	1.05	5.49	1.04	3.45	<0.05	G2 < G3
	Purchase intention	4.88	1.23	5.28	1.20	5.49	1.20	2.29	0.10	
Publicity	Message credibility	4.70	1.53	4.67	1.54	5.26	1.30	8.60	<0.001	G2 < G3
	Attitude toward the brand	5.18	1.29	5.30	1.00	5.47	1.07	1.44	0.24	
	Purchase intention	5.16	1.26	5.23	1.14	5.40	1.21	1.08	0.34	

G: Group; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

**Appendix L:** Results of an Independent T-Test for message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by brand content consumption habits

		Brand content consumption (n = 400)				Independent T-Test	
Strategy	Indicators	No (n = 170)		Yes (n = 230)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Content marketing	Message credibility	4.31	1.51	4.79	1.50	-3.16	<0.01
	Attitude toward the brand	5.13	1.09	5.55	0.98	-3.91	<0.001
	Purchase intention	5.09	1.15	5.61	1.20	-4.37	<0.001
Publicity	Message credibility	4.74	1.46	5.22	1.37	-3.32	<0.01
	Attitude toward the brand	5.24	1.10	5.51	0.99	-2.61	<0.01
	Purchase intention	5.09	1.22	5.50	1.14	-3.50	<0.01

M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

**Appendix M:** Results of an Independent T-Test of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by knowledge of the brand

		Knowledge of the brand (n = 400)					
Strategy	Indicators	No (n = 22)		Yes (n = 378)		Independent T-Test	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Content marketing	Message credibility	2.95	1.62	4.68	1.47	-5.34	<0.001
	Attitude toward the brand	4.57	0.82	5.42	1.04	-3.74	<0.001
	Purchase intention	4.48	1.37	5.44	1.18	-3.69	<0.001
Publicity	Message credibility	3.98	1.74	5.07	1.39	-3.55	<0.001
	Attitude toward the brand	4.55	1.09	5.44	1.03	-3.94	<0.001
	Purchase intention	4.53	1.17	5.37	1.17	-3.28	<0.01

M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

**Appendix N:** Results of a one-way ANOVA of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by buying habits

Buying habits (n = 378)														
Strategy	Indicators	G1: Never (n = 94)		G2: Once a year (n = 132)		G3: Two or three times a year (n = 128)		G4: Once a month (n = 20)		G5: Once a week (n = 4)		ANOVA		Bonferroni Post hoc
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	
Content marketing	Message credibility	4.24	1.44	4.83	1.50	4.79	1.35	4.70	1.63	6.75	0.50	4.80	<0.01	G1 < G2 & G5
	Attitude toward the brand	4.90	1.00	5.46	1.10	5.76	0.82	5.36	1.24	5.70	1.18	10.26	<0.001	G1 < G2 & G3
	Purchase intention	4.72	1.21	5.46	1.19	5.95	0.81	5.23	1.23	6.55	0.57	18.78	<0.001	G1 < G2 & G3 & G5; G2 < G3
Publicity	Message credibility	4.72	1.44	5.21	1.31	5.20	1.30	4.83	1.88	6.00	1.15	2.75	<0.05	G1 = G2 = G3 = G4 = G5
	Attitude toward the brand	5.00	1.05	5.51	1.00	5.72	0.90	5.24	1.16	5.70	1.00	7.76	<0.001	G1 < G2 & G3
	Purchase intention	4.69	1.19	5.45	1.16	5.80	0.95	5.16	1.15	6.30	0.60	15.04	<0.001	G1 < G2 & G3 & G5

G: Group; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

**Appendix O:** Results of an Independent T-Test of message credibility, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention by brand loyalty

		Brand loyalty (n = 284)					
Strategy	Indicators	Non-loyal (n = 141)		Loyal (n = 143)		Independent T-Test	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Content marketing	Message credibility	4.70	1.38	4.93	1.51	-1.37	0.17
	Attitude toward the brand	5.40	0.93	5.78	1.03	-3.29	<0.01
	Purchase intention	5.33	1.01	6.03	1.00	-5.88	<0.001
Publicity	Message credibility	4.93	1.37	5.42	1.30	-3.12	<0.01
	Attitude toward the brand	5.39	0.90	5.78	1.01	-3.39	<0.01
	Purchase intention	5.25	1.06	5.95	0.99	-5.79	<0.001

M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

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