



Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies

IMPACT OF INSTAGRAMMERS ON CONSUMERS'  
TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR IN THE HOSPITALITY  
SECTOR

Patrícia Duarte Rosa da Fonseca

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IMPACT OF INSTAGRAMMERS ON CONSUMERS'  
TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR IN THE HOSPITALITY  
SECTOR: BRAND AWARENESS, BRAND LOYALTY  
AND PURCHASE INTENTION

Patrícia Duarte Rosa da Fonseca

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## Resumo

Esta dissertação tem como objetivo refletir como é que as inovações na tecnologia têm sido um forte fator que contribuíram para a transformação das categorias tradicionais de informação e, conseqüentemente, transformaram a percepção e experiência prática do turismo. As plataformas de redes sociais são um dos maiores fenômenos derivados dos avanços tecnológicos e têm tido uma adesão mundial extraordinária. Compreender como o novo turista viaja e como é que estes pesquisam por informação é crucial para todas as marcas e marketeers.

Desde modo, a análise de novas tendências no turismo resultantes do uso de redes sociais, em particular da plataforma Instagram e do uso de Influencers em estratégias de marketing, é o ponto fulcral deste projeto dado que estas novas tendências não podem ser ignoradas se um negócio/destino quer manter a sua vantagem competitiva. As razões pelas quais a plataforma Instagram foi a escolhida para ser estudada, serão explicadas adiante, bem como detalhado o funcionamento da plataforma.

Os influenciadores relacionados com o turismo, os *Travel Instagrammers* - também denominados influenciadores digitais - são um dos tipos de *Instagrammers* que existem e que estão agora a ser usados por hotéis e destinos. Perspetiva-se que terão um poder influenciador maior sobre os consumidores do que estratégias tradicionais de marketing e mesmo mais do que celebridades tradicionais. Deste modo, através deste projeto, será possível melhor compreender quem são estes indivíduos que são chamados de influenciadores digitais, a diferença entre eles, o porquê de serem tao influenciadores e, por fim, quais os benefícios para as marcas em trabalharem com eles.

De acordo com os resultados do estudo de caso desta dissertação, influenciadores de viagem aparentam ter um impacto positivo em duas dimensões do comportamento do consumidor, nomeadamente no Brand Awareness e Brand Loyalty. É, no entanto, importante mencionar que esse impacto é sentido em maior escala no conceito de Brand Awareness que na lealdade do consumidor. No entanto, relativamente à intenção de compra, os resultados obtidos não permitem dizer que os Instagrammers têm impactos positivos no comportamento do consumidor. As conclusões que podemos tirar relativamente à intenção de compra do consumidor é que os resultados são apenas parcialmente validados.

De modo geral, os Instagrammers são considerados úteis para estratégias de marketing de hotéis que tenham por objetivo criar uma comunidade online bem como fomentar o reconhecimento da sua marca e alimentar boas relações com os seus clientes.

**Keywords:** Hospitality Industry, Consumer Travel Behaviour, Web2.0, Social Media, Instagram, Digital Influencers, Millennials

## Abstract

This dissertation aims to reflect how innovation in technology has been a major force that has contributed to the transformation of traditional sources of information, thereby redefining the perception and practical experience of tourism. Social media platforms are one of the biggest highlights of the advances in technology and have been increasing in terms of worldwide usage, now more than ever. Understanding how the new tourist travels and how they search for information is a fundamental step for all businesses and marketeers.

As a result, the analysis of new trends in tourism due to the use of social media, specifically Instagram and the use of digital influencers in marketing strategies, is the prevalent theme of this chapter since these new advances cannot be ignored if a hotel aims to keep their competitive advantage. The reasons why Instagram was the chosen platform to be analysed will herewith be justified along with a detailed explanation on how the platform works.

Travel Instagrammers, one type of Instagrammers, also known as digital influencers, are now being endorsed by hotels and destinations and are believed to have a bigger influential power over consumers than traditional marketing strategies or even traditional celebrities. Therefore, this paper strives to give a better understand of who these digital influencers are, the different types of digital influencers that exist, why they are so influential and in what ways they can benefit brands by working with them.

According to the findings of the survey made for this paper, Travel Instagrammers are seen to have a positive impact for two of the three constructs of consumer behaviour. These two constructs are respectively, Brand Awareness and Brand Loyalty. Nevertheless, this impact is higher for the concept of Brand Awareness than for the loyalty of the consumers. However, when it comes to purchase intention the findings were just partly validated and it cannot be affirmed that Instagrammers have a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.

Overall, Instagrammers were found to be a useful marketing strategy for hotels who aim to build a digital community, create awareness of their brand and build a strong relationship with their followers.

**Keywords:** Hospitality Industry, Consumer Travel Behaviour, Web2.0, Social Media, Instagram, Digital Influencers, Millennials

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# CHAPTER I: Methodology

## 1.1 Context and relevance of the subject

As a keen Instagram user with a passion for travelling, the author browses through the platform and encounters various incredible photos, from all over the world, of stunning hotels. The author's curiosity about how people's travel behaviour influences their choice of a hotel has risen, especially now with Instagram being said to be such a powerful tool for planning trips (McMahon, 2016; Yore, 2016). In fact, the hospitality sector is characterized, amongst other features, for its intangibility, as it is a sector that provides a service product. As a result, prior to consumption, it is difficult for the consumer to analyse whether it is a good purchase or not, or whether the quality of the product is worth the price it costs. This explains the importance of certain features of social media in this sector, such as user-generated content, as well as that of digital influencers (Popesku, 2014).

The rise of those Influencers is closely related to the rise of social media, in particular Instagram. This social media platform that stands out today, being the fastest growing social media network and one of the top mobile apps that hundreds of millions of people use daily, surpasses any other social media platform. Focussing on the photo sharing experience, it makes one of the best online platforms for marketing in the hospitality and travel industry (Tuckman, 2012). Like the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words", and as far as travel is concerned, this could not be truer. Visuals do play a big part in the tourism and hospitality sector, thus explaining the popularity of the social media platform, Instagram. Considering all these aspects, marketers will benefit from comprehending that social media platforms should be integrated in their common communication strategies, especially for those who are less likely to consume traditional media. When it comes to Influencers, understanding how they impact the consumer is fundamental as well as what sort of outcome brands can take from using these individuals in their marketing strategies.

In order to support these ideas, this paper will consist of two parts. Firstly, the literature review will address key concepts relevant to the subject of this dissertation that previous authors have already studied intensively. The second part will contain an empirical research, whose main objective is to determine whether Instagrammer strategies attract and retain customers in the hospitality sector. In other words, to conclude if investing in this new type of marketing is positive for hotels.

## 1.2 Problematic

The most recent generations have undergone major consumer personality and buying pattern changes due to technology, amongst other factors. In fact, according to Lin (2011), social media was said to be the main factor disrupting consumers' behaviour. Therefore, brands, who are constantly challenged to find new ways to effectively connect with consumers, now do so with the help of social media, integrating them in their current marketing strategies. These platforms have not only changed the way consumers communicate with one other, but also how they communicate with brands. If before brands would communicate unilaterally with consumers, with the emergence of these social platforms, the consumer is placed in the centre with an active voice (Hashim *et al.*, 2017). This allows consumers to have unlimited access to product information and be able to research before making a purchase. In other words, consumers gain power due to networks and their user-generated capability.

The travel industry is not an exception and nowadays it is more common to book through the internet and have the consumers themselves do the information search and travel planning, which was previously done by travel agents (Rezdy, 2017). Instagram and its opinion leaders are easily found when searching for information and are known to be particularly effective. In other words, Instagrammers, are seen as a form of word-of-mouth recommendation, who translate into genuine and honest brand content knowledge (Wen *et al.*, 2018).

However, while social media is well studied in the literature, little research has been done on the effects of Instagrammers on consumer behaviour and attitudes taking specific industries, like the hospitality sector, into account. Furthermore, since Instagram is a recent phenomenon, many studies need to be carried out to promote more clarification of this phenomenon and its real impacts. Additionally, managers are still divided whether social media is important or not, and those who have not been won over still struggle to fully understand it, namely, how to measure its returns. As these managers still focus on financial results to measure the effectiveness of social media campaigns, this approach represents a narrow view, rooted in traditional mainstream media. It focuses solely on the short term and ignores qualitative objectives, such as meaningful relationships with customers and engagement (Hoffman, D., 2010). Subsequently, understanding the response of consumers towards social media and digital influencers will be a useful input towards this broader subject. Especially now that we live in a world where capturing people's attention is harder

every day, and companies try to overcome this barrier with new methods and techniques (Schivinski, 2016).

Therefore, this master's dissertation aims to study in depth the power of using Influencers on social media, more specifically, to determine the impact of hotels endorsing Instagrammers as part of their marketing strategies on consumer behaviour, translated into three dimensions of consumer attitudes and behaviour: brand awareness, brand loyalty and purchase intention.

### **1.3 Research Question and Objectives**

Since Millennials are now the new travellers and because of them and their activity on social media, the effectiveness of influencer marketing has taken over the sector. So much so that one might say traditional marketing as we knew it is dead since it has become disconnected from consumers (Zyman, 1999). With the number of internet and social media users growing worldwide and being relevant to all age groups (Schivinski, 2016), it is an essential prerequisite in order to leverage brand's social media marketing (Jahn *et al.*, 2012; Hudson, 2014).

In fact, digital influencers have now been used to create deeper and more meaningful relationships between those two players like has never been possible before. Therefore, it is crucial for marketing managers to understand online consumer behaviour and the impact of sponsoring these new social media experts. Consequently, a main research question was defined for this dissertation: "Do Instagrammers positively impact consumers travel behaviour?" More specifically, in three dimensions of consumer behaviour: Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention.

To successfully answer the previous question, four main objectives were defined for this paper (see Table 1). Objectives one and two are related to the new generations, Gen-Y and Gen-Z, even though Gen-Y will be the generation that the paper will focus on the most. Therefore, there is the need to comprehend the characteristics of the new generations as both individuals and as travellers. In addition, there will be a need to understand how these individuals behave as consumers and how their new characteristics impact brands. To sum up, here we categorize Millennials as individuals, consumers and travellers while highlighting how they differ from other generations and what their strengths and weaknesses are.

The second objective is more specific, with the aim of understanding these generations' travel behaviour as it is of extreme importance, especially during the

inspirational, research and planning phase. The paper aims to understand how the changes in personalities and in technology changed the way individuals get inspired to travel, how they research the information available on the internet and, consequently, how they decide and plan their vacation. In other words, what internal and external factors today have an impact on Millennials while they go through all the stages of the travelling process.

Then, the third objective aims to gather information on the impacts that Influencer content on Instagram has on the consumer, when it comes to hospitality. In other words, when an individual on Instagram sees a travel influencer post on the platform, what impact it has on their travel attitude and behaviour, namely in terms of the inspirational, planning and decision-making phases of the traveller.

Finally, the fourth objective focuses on a hotel’s perspective and aims to understand all the possible outcomes a company can achieve by working with these digital influencers as part of their marketing campaigns.

**Table 1 – Research Objectives**

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Source</b>
1	Comprehend the new generation and how they behave as consumers;	Choudhary, 2017
2	Understand consumers’ travel behaviour before going on a trip;	Xiang, 2015
3	Understand if there is an impact on consumer behaviour when viewing sponsored content on Instagram by travel Instagrammers;	Lu, 2014; Uzunoglu, 2014; Hwa, 2017; Laroche 1996, Casaló, 2017
4	Identify the potential outcomes a hotel can achieve by working with Influencers.	Hashim <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Wen <i>et al.</i> , 2018;

*Source – Author’s Elaboration*

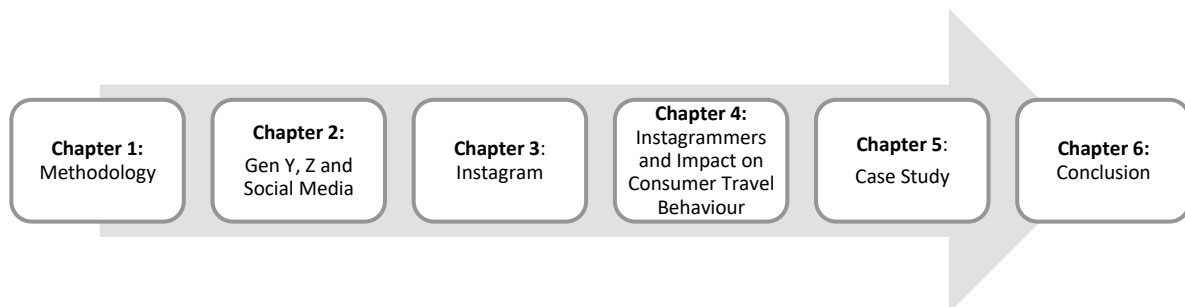
## 1.4 Thesis Structure

This paper is organized according to the guidelines stated by Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril (ESHTE) and, therefore, organized into three main sections: pre-textual, textual and post-textual. The first sector, pre-textual, encompasses the cover, title page, acknowledgments, index and the abstract both in English and in Portuguese. The textual sector is then where the investigation is carried out. Here the reader can find six chapters as follows:

The first chapter in the textual sector presents the methodology carried out by the author, following Quivy's Model (Quivy *et al.*, 1995). This model states the main phases an investigation project should have and how they articulate with the scientific procedure. Here the main purpose of the thesis is explained, as well as the research question and objectives. The research framework and the instruments utilized will also be explained in detail.

The next three chapters consist of a literature review. It is an extensive summary based on other scientific studies carried out on this area of study (Science Direct, B-ON, etc.). Its main purpose is to eliminate any preconceived concepts or ideas that would otherwise corrupt our understanding of things as well as supporting the conceptual framework and hypothesis of this study. Hence, the first chapter of the literature review provides a view into the consumer behaviour of the newest generations, Y and Z and social media. This chapter will serve as an introductory chapter so as to understand the consumer today and how their characteristics justify the appearance of digital marketing and Instagrammers in the tourism and hospitality sector. Thereafter, the following chapter consists of literature focusing on Instagram, its features and how it can be adopted by hotels. Lastly, chapter four focuses on the concept of digital influencers, the new marketing strategies used and their direct impact on consumer behaviour and attitudes. Chapter five is then the case study where the empirical data will be gathered and analysed, mainly through online questionnaires. To end this dissertation, chapter five is the conclusion of the work done as well as some recommendations for future investigations. In this chapter, all the questions defined in the first chapter will be answered as well as some of the limitations of this thesis.

**Figure 1- Thesis Organization**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

## 1.5 Research Model and Research Procedures

The analysis model used for this dissertation is based on the Quivy model, which encompasses three distinct phases: rupture, construction and verification (Quivy *et al.*, 1995). The first phase, the rupture, starts by defining the thesis statement. According to this model, the thesis statement that encapsulates the research must be well defined, objective, clear and relevant. It is, therefore, the road map of the research to be carried out. As previously mentioned in point 1.2, the statement thesis defined for this study is worded as follows: "*Do Instagrammers influence consumer travel behaviour positively in the hotel industry?*".

After formulating the thesis statement, it is necessary to obtain high quality information regarding the object of study (chapters 2 to 4). The importance of this phase, the literature review, must be highlighted. The main goal of this phase is to obtain information from research already carried out by other authors and situate the new contribution this paper aims to make within that scope. From all the studies already carried out on this subject matter, the author elected to highlight the concept of digital influencers on Instagram seeing as it is a recent phenomenon with characteristics that make it worthy of further study in the hospitality sector. The table below now summarizes the main concepts that will be covered:

**Table 2 – Literature Review Overview**

Main Concept	Sub Concepts	Source
Hospitality Sector	Intangibility and need of visual content.	Popescu, 2014
New Generation (Y, Z)	Main socioeconomic characteristics; Main behaviour as consumers nowadays;	Lin, 2011 Labrecque <i>et al.</i> , 2013



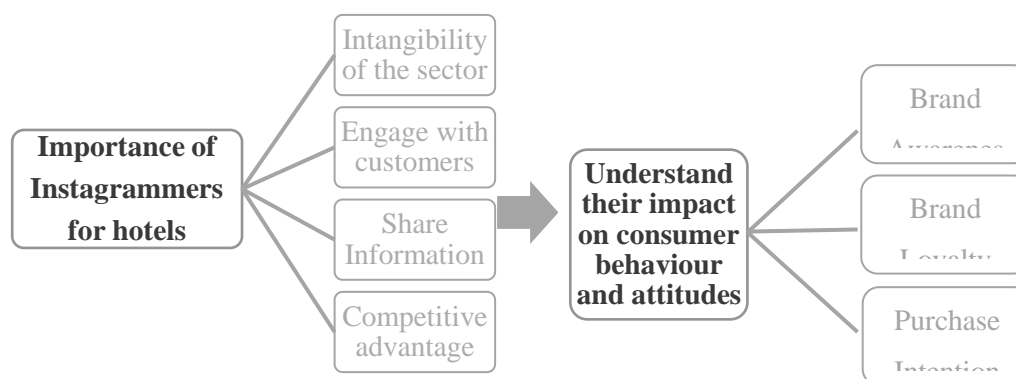
		Choudhary <i>et al.</i> , 2001
New Marketing Strategies	<p>New challenges caused by new generations and technological advances;</p> <p>Creation of new ways to attract consumers;</p>	<p>Uzunogly, 2014;</p> <p>Hwa, 2017</p> <p>Dionisio <i>et al.</i>, 2009</p>
Social Media and Web 2.0	<p>Appearance of Web 2.0 and its consequences;</p> <p>Changes in communication styles and brand/consumers relation;</p> <p>Social media channels</p>	<p>Lin, 2011</p> <p>O'Reilly, 2005</p>
Instagram	<p>Characteristics and growth;</p> <p>New features;</p> <p>A tool for hotels</p>	<p>McMahon, 2016</p> <p>Bashir <i>et al.</i>, 2018</p> <p>Munar <i>et al.</i>, 2014</p>
Digital Influencers	<p>Traditionally, influencers were celebrities; however, due to advances in technology and social media, a new type of influencer arose, who is said to be even more efficient.</p>	<p>McCormick, 2016</p> <p>Harrison, 2017</p>

Impacts on Consumers	Three dimensions of consumer behaviour: Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Purchase Intention	Hoffmann, 2010;  Mangold, 2009;  Labrecque, 2013

*Source – Author’s Elaboration*

Finally, the last phase addresses the problem statement, in other words, "approach or theoretical perspective that we decide to adopt to address the problem formulated in the thesis statement" (Quivy *et al.*, 1995). On analysing the literature, it came to light that the major focus is on Facebook, given that Instagram is a more recent platform. As regards the existing literature on Instagram, it was determined that it focuses largely on the features of the application, which make it so attractive to digital marketing campaigns, or on how to use it to get closer to new generations. When it comes to studies that focus on the effects of digital influencers on consumer behaviour, not much has been done specializing in Instagrammers. Current literature still focuses on traditional celebrities’ endorsements and has not taken the step towards social media influencers. Thus, it was noted there was a lack of literature covering the impact of the new marketing strategy of using digital influencers of Instagram, *Instagrammers*, in the hospitality industry. Within this scope, this paper aims to determine how these are perceived by consumers, and how hoteliers can benefit.

**Figure 2 – Problem Statement**



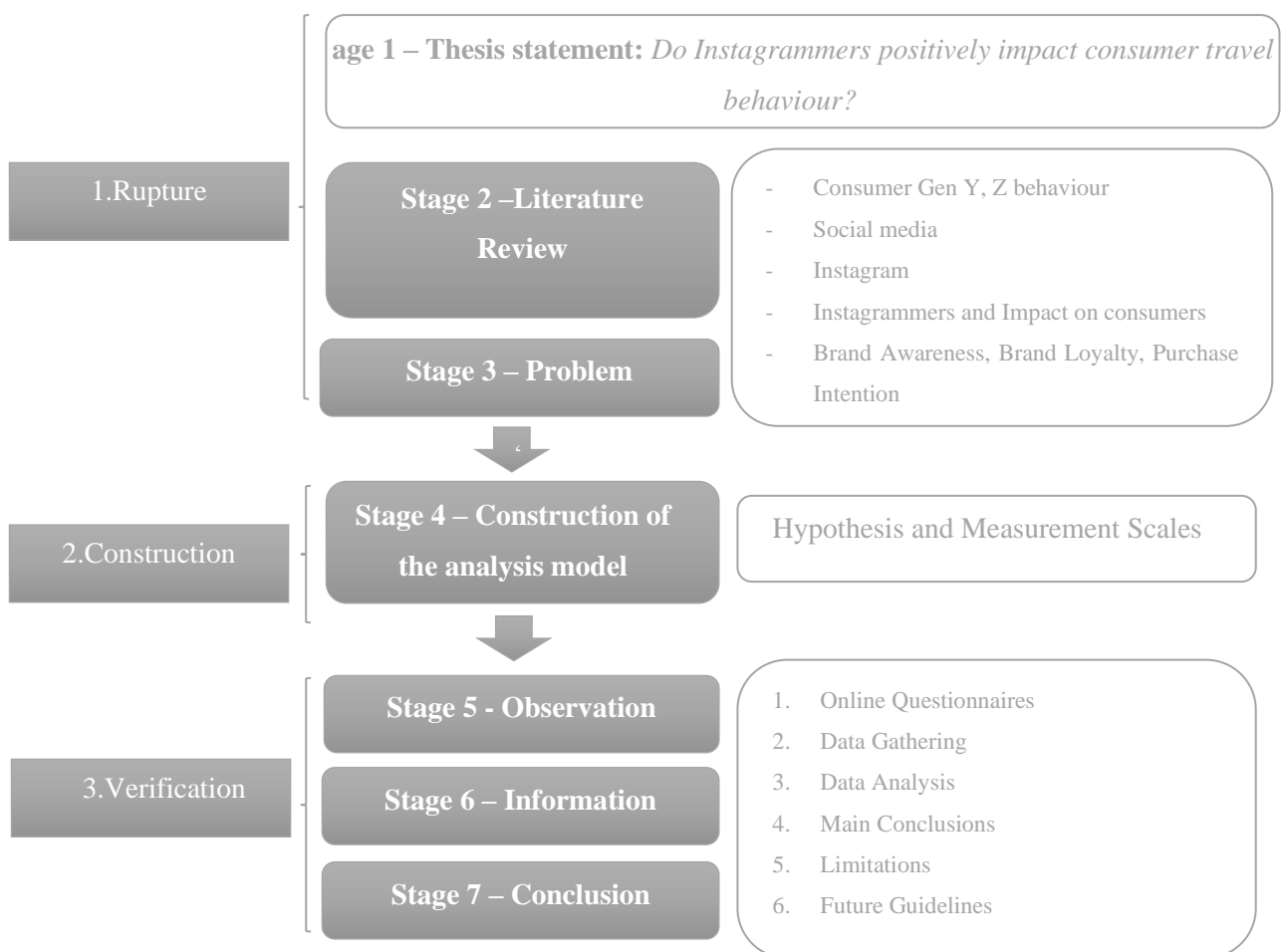
*Source: Author's Elaboration*

The second phase, the Construction, is based on Quivy's scientific process and consists of the construction of an Analysis Model that aims to translate the author's statement and ideas into a hypothesis scheme, which allows for data collection and the respective analysis. Only this way can the rupture be carried out in an efficient way. In short, this phase is composed of a set of concepts and hypotheses closely related to each other to form a coherent analytical framework. Without this theoretical framework, there would be no experimental validation. From the author's point of view, the best way to conduct the research is to centre it around the hypotheses. The said hypotheses will be discussed in more detail in section 1.5 as will be the measurement items. Finally, the third phase or the verification. The first step of this stage is observation, i.e. a set of operations through which the analysis model is confronted with observable data, according to Quivy. At this stage, three questions need to be answered, "Observe what?", "Whom?" and "How?" To answer the first question, "Observe what?", the author determines the data that are necessary to verify the hypotheses, i.e. the indicators of the variables. "Observe whom" represents the field of empirical analysis in a geographical, social and temporal context. Finally, in order to answer the last question, "How?", the focus will be on the observation and data collection tools. This stage will be further elaborated upon in point 1.6.

Next comes the information analysis stage, i.e. the information obtained is processed through observation. The objective of this process is to present the information of the results observed in order to compare them with those expected from the hypotheses. The last stage of verification is the conclusion. In this part of the paper, the reader is immediately able to assess the interest that the research holds for them, so it is necessary

to include research information which is useful for potential readers. According to Quivy, three sub-parts are present in the conclusion. First, a review of the framework of the procedure followed, accompanied by a detailed presentation of the contribution of this study to the current pool of knowledge and, finally, practical considerations. To sum up, all the three previous phases are working mutually together as opposed to independent stages of the process. Hence, to effectively carry out this investigation, the respective seven stages were also respected throughout this paper (fig. 3).

**Figure 3 - Quivy's Model**



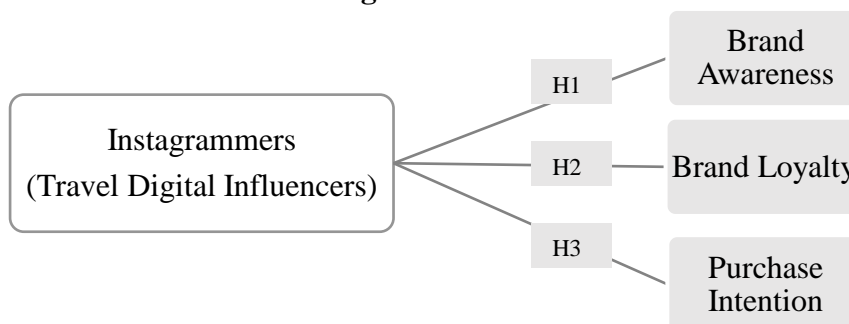
*Source: Adapted from Quivy's Model*

## 1.6 Hypotheses to be studied

According to Quivy, a hypothesis is a proposition that predicts a relationship between two terms that can be concepts or phenomena. They are, therefore, a provisional proposition that must be verified. These, in turn, will be confronted with the observation data, at a later stage of the research. For this dissertation, the research framework is defined as per figure 4. As already proved by several authors, marketing strategies aim to have a direct impact on consumers, and the incorporation of digital influencers is no exception, thereby having an impact on consumers' behaviour and attitudes (Uzunoglu, 2014; Hwa, 2017). The concepts of Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention are frequently mentioned as measurements for social media marketing campaigns and are used to correlate the relationship between them and consumers (Hoffman, 2010; Mangold, 2009; Labrecque, 2013). What is more, digital influencers are often said to be similar and even more efficient than traditional celebrity endorsements, whose impacts on customers have been proven to be positive both on consumer attitudes and purchase intention (McCormick, 2016).

However, there are still no specific studies based on the effects that digital influencers of the Instagram platform (Instagrammers) have on consumer behaviour in the hospitality industry. Also, as has been discussed by different scholars, brand managers should gain a full understanding of the unique characteristics of social media in order to gain a successful presence online (Uzunoglu, 2014). Bearing this in mind, the research framework was designed to validate the hypotheses created.

**Figure 4 – Research Framework**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

**H1: Instagrammers impact consumer brand awareness positively in the hospitality sector**

It is crucial to understand if when consumers see content posted on Instagram by Instagrammers, it has a direct impact on consumer awareness. In fact, according to Foroudi (2018), brand awareness is one of the stepping-stones in the customer purchasing process. The higher the degree of awareness in consumers, the higher the possibility of purchasing a product or service. Hypothesis 1 was then created with the purpose of recognizing the significance that Instagrammers posts have in term of generating awareness on consumers.

**H2: Instagrammers impact consumer loyalty positively in the hospitality sector**

Considering that only loyal customers re-purchase the same brand several times, it is crucial to understand if customers feel more committed towards a brand after seeing a sponsored post on Instagram (Hwa, 2017). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was created with the purpose of recognizing the significance that Instagrammers posts have in term of generating brand loyalty.

**H3: Instagrammers impact consumer purchase intention positively in the hospitality sector**

Similarly, it is important to understand if looking at sponsored content created by Instagrammers on Instagram has an impact on the consumer’s future purchase intention. Purchase intention is, in fact, key when measuring the success of an advertisement (Dehghani 2016). For this reason, hypothesis 3 was created with the objective of understanding to which extent these types of posts on Instagram affect consumers’ purchase decision.

**Table 3 – Research Hypotheses**

<b>Research Hypotheses</b>
H1: Instagrammers impact consumer brand awareness positively in the hospitality sector
H2: Instagrammers impact consumer loyalty positively in the hospitality sector

H3: Instagrammers impact consumer purchase intention positively in the hospitality sector

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

## **1.7 Observation and Data Gathering Tools**

The observation stage requires the aid of information gathering tools capable of producing all the information necessary to test the hypotheses. For this tool to be effective, it should contain questions about each of the previously defined indicators, which are formulated as accurately as possible. For this dissertation, the most appropriate tool is a method of indirect observation, with the use of a questionnaire survey. According to Quivy, these types of surveys of a sociological nature are different from opinion surveys because they are more complex, since they aim to verify theoretical hypotheses and analyse the correlations that these hypotheses suggest. More specifically, the questionnaire will be created online (see Attachment) because, according to author Quivy, to understand the behaviour of online consumers, internet marketing research is more useful than any offline method.

### **1.7.1 Universe and Sample**

The group of individuals which are expected to participate on the online questionnaire and draw conclusions from are known as the universe of the study (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). As for this study, "Individuals who use Instagram and have seen at least one content about a hotel made by an Instagrammer" are the universe considered. Since this dissertation focuses on the effects of sponsored content created by Instagrammers on individuals, the universe needs to gather people that use Instagram and are aware of this type of content. The study will be available to all different nationalities and ages.

The sampling method used was non-probability, which means that the respondents are chosen randomly to answer the research questionnaire. The main objective for the sample was of 500 individuals in order to make sure there would be a considerable amount of opinion and variety. Also, a high number of individuals will allow a margin of error, bearing in mind that some of the answers will be excluded.

### 1.7.2 Procedure and Instrument Construct

The chosen instrument for data collection was an online questionnaire as mentioned before. The questionnaire was developed with Qualtrics software, which facilitates the creation of the same. All the questions were written in English as it is a universal language and respondents from different countries will be able to understand. The respondent was then invited to do the survey, with a small introduction text providing information about the topic of the study and suggesting that they could share the link with friends who share the same interest in social media. After clicking on the link, the respondent had access to an introductory text and the questions. The first question is known as a screening question to ensure that the respondents had an Instagram profile. Later on in the questionnaire, another screening question is found, asking whether the individual has ever seen an Instagrammer content about a hotel. To summarize, the screening questions in this questionnaire were:

(1) “Do you have an Instagram Profile?”

(3) “Have you ever seen an Instagrammer post on a hotel?”

The respondents who did not make it through the screening questions were not allowed to continue the questionnaire.

The questionnaire then makes use of both open and closed questions and the concepts used based on literature review and explained to the respondents. It will then be published in different online platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Email, LinkedIn - following the snowball technique. In addition, this method also allows for a significant statistical number to be obtained at virtually no cost.

When analysing the questionnaire, one understands that it is divided into two sections. Firstly, in part I, the aim is to understand the respondent’s habits on Instagram and their understanding of hotels within this social media. In this part, three tables will be presented that focus on the three consumer behaviour dimensions that were chosen to be analysed: Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. All these dimensions are measured based on the hotel that the respondent answered in questions 8 and 9, as follows: “Have you ever seen an Instagram post with sponsored content about a hotel?” and “If yes, which hotel was it?”. To measure the variables, brand awareness, brand equity and purchase intention a multiple, five-point, Likert-type items scale (strongly disagree to



strongly agree, or very dissatisfied to very satisfied) was selected.

The following table explains the relationship between the concepts covered by the hypothesis and its corresponding items, as well as the source of support. This table will support the construction of the questions in the questionnaire (Attachment).

**Table 4 – Questionnaire Matrix**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Scale Item</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Screening Question</b>	<p>A1. Do you have an Instagram profile?</p> <p>A2. Have you ever seen a sponsored content of a hotel on Instagram?</p>	<p>Part I</p> <p>Questions 1 and 6</p>	<p>Schivinski <i>et al.</i>, 2016</p>
<b>Respondent's Instagram Usage Profile</b>	<p>B1. How often do you go on Instagram per week?</p> <p>B2. How much time do you spend on Instagram per day?</p> <p>B3. How many influencers do you follow?</p> <p>B4. How many of those influencers are related to travel?</p> <p>B5. Have you ever discovered a hotel on Instagram?</p>	<p>Part I</p> <p>Questions 2 to 5</p>	<p>Piveca <i>et al.</i>, 2019</p>

<p align="center"><b>Brand Awareness</b></p>	<p>C1. I can recognize the hotel among competing brands;</p> <p>C2. I am aware of the hotel;</p> <p>C3. I can recall the symbol or logo of the hotel;</p> <p>C4. When it comes to product category, I recall the brand of the hotel;</p> <p>C5. I have difficulty in imagining the hotel;</p> <p>C6. I know what it looks like</p>	<p>Part I</p> <p>Questions 7, 8, 9, 10</p> <p>Question 11</p>	<p>Foroudi, P. (2018);</p> <p>Lu <i>et al.</i>, (2014)</p> <p>Yoo <i>et al.</i>, (2000);</p> <p>Loureiro et al., (2011)</p>
<p align="center"><b>Brand Loyalty</b></p>	<p>D1. This hotel will be my first choice</p> <p>D2. I will not buy other hotels if this hotel has room.</p> <p>D3. Compared to other hotels that have similar features, I am willing to pay a higher price for this hotel</p> <p>D4. I believe this hotel has credibility</p>	<p>Part I</p> <p>Questions 7, 8, 9, 10</p> <p>Question 12</p>	<p>Foroudi, P. (2018)</p> <p>Yoo <i>et al.</i>, (2000);</p>
<p align="center"><b>Purchase Intention</b></p>	<p>E1. I would consider buying this product/brand</p>	<p>Part I</p>	<p>Lu <i>et al.</i>, (2014)</p>

	<p>E2. I have no intention of buying this product/brand</p> <p>E3. It is possible that I would buy this product</p> <p>E4. I will purchase this next time I need it</p> <p>E5. If I needed it, I would buy it</p>	<p>Questions 7, 8, 9, 10</p> <p>Question 13</p>	<p>Schivinki <i>et al.</i>, 2016</p>
<p><b>Respondent's Socio/Economic Profile and Travelling Habits</b></p>	<p>F1. Age</p> <p>F2. Gender</p> <p>F3. Nationality</p> <p>F4. Education Level</p> <p>F5. Professional Situation</p> <p>F6. Level of Income</p> <p>F7. Type of Vacation preferred</p> <p>F8. Type of accommodation preferred</p> <p>F9. How often they travel</p> <p>F10. Solo travelling or in Group</p>	<p>Part II</p> <p>All questions</p>	<p>Lim et al, (2017)</p>

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

It is important to mention that prior to releasing the questionnaire, a **pre-test** was done to test the final instrument of measurement. The author ensured she had a total of 12 answers from individuals with diverse backgrounds and ages. This is a fundamental step since it helps avoid and minimize errors in que survey. The main objectives were to see if the respondents understood everything that was asked, collect feedback and adjust what

would be necessary. Taking into consideration all the inputs received, some changes were made, namely adding some additional questions related to the respondents travelling habits, rephrasing some sentences to help clarify what was being asked and correcting some settings of questions.

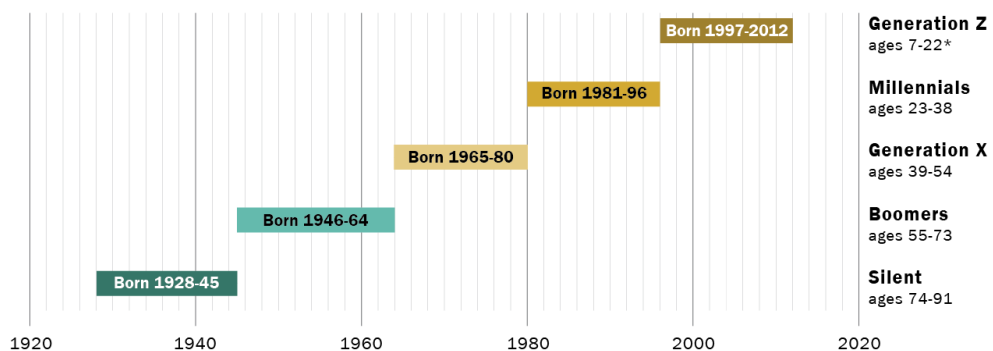
## CHAPTER II: New Generations and their decision-making process

The advances of society and technology have led to changes in personality and behavioural attitudes. Thus, for marketing campaigns to be successful, they depend on the specific consumer group brands are trying to reach. Consequently, marketing segmentation is essential, and despite the many ways of doing so, demographics has been considered as most important (Choudhary *et al.*, 2017). It can provide a way to understand how different formative experiences such as technology, economics and social shifts, interact with the life-cycle and aging process to shape people's views of the worlds For this dissertation, generations Y will be highlighted in greater detail as they are the ones with more demographic and buying power today and the ones with higher importance for this thesis (Ordun, 2015; McCormick, 2016).

### 2.1 Gen-Y and Gen-Z as individuals

When it comes to defining the year Gen-Y were born, different authors will state different year ranges, so it can be concluded that there is not one common definition established yet. This is because generational cut-off points are not an exact science but a primary tool, which allows analysis to be done. Nevertheless, as an example, according to Pew Research Center, Millennials were born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 23 and 38 in 2019). Fig. 5 will then graphically demonstrate the birth years of each generation until today for a better understanding.

Figure 5 – The Generations Defined



\*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group. For this analysis, Generation Z is defined as those ages 7 to 22 in 2019.

Source: Pew Research Center

As per the figure above, Gen-Y is the generation that follows Gen-X and Boomers and is only followed by Gen-Z. They are also called ‘Millennials’ and are individuals that lived mostly the same worldwide events that could have potentially shaped them into what they are today. Some of these events include the 9/11 terrorist attacks, where many were old enough to comprehend the historical importance of that moment, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that shaped the current political environment and the 2008 election, where the first black president was elected. This is likely related to the fact why Millennials are the most racially and ethnically diverse adult generation in the nation’s history, just followed by Gen-Z (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Besides politics, Millennials also entered the workforce in the peak of an economic recession. This might be related to the fact that these individuals have the tendency to increasingly postpone the transition to adulthood, such as marrying and starting families much later. Scholars have also noticed that priorities have changed and drifted from family and home ideologies (McCormick, 2016; Monaco, 2018).

Technology, in particular the rapid evolution of the internet, communication and interactions, is another generation-shaping factor. Millennials were the first generation connected by the internet and social media and are thus cutting-edge technology enthusiasts. As stated by Ordun, these innovations are not just a source of information or entertainment, but a new platform for social lives. What is more, more than half of Millennials have created social media accounts, are likely to engage online, and spend less time with television and radio.

Throughout the internet, one encounters different articles and sites talking about Millennials and their positive and negative characteristics. They have been described as being more open-minded, and more supportive of gay rights and equal rights for minorities. They are said to be confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and receptive to new ideas and ways of living. However, on the less positive side, they are sometimes referred to as being lazy and narcissistic, and for having unrealistic expectations of working life. They are also perceived as placing more importance on intrinsic values such as money, fame and image, which leads them to being called the ‘me generation’.

On the other hand, Gen-Z, or as they are commonly called, the “Net Generation”, the “Post-Millennials” or even iGeneration, are much younger individuals. They are the last generational category up to date, born in 1996 or later (Priporas, 2017), meaning in 2019 they were only 22 years old or younger and are, therefore, likely not in the market force yet. Thus, little is still known about this generation, their characteristics and

behaviours (Haddouche, 2018). Nevertheless, they are the most educated, mobile and connected individuals to date, being the true digital natives. In fact, Gen-Z are unique in that they grew up with all the technological advances from previous generations. In other words, while Baby Boomers grew up with television, Gen-X with computers, Gen-Y with the internet, Gen-Z were growing up with the appearance of the iPhone, Wi-Fi and social media, where all the previous innovations were already part of their lives since they were born.

However, what is not known yet is whether these are lasting generational imprints or characteristics of teenagers that will become more muted over the course of their adult lives.

To sum up, while much is still not known about them, these individuals are already defined as the most highly conscious, tech-savvy and particularly innovative to date (Chaney, 2017).

## **2.2 Gen-Y as travellers**

For the purpose of this dissertation, it is important to try to define and get to know Millennials as social participants of the tourism industry. According to the UNWTO forecast, by 2020 there will be 370 million youth travellers spending over USD 400 billion. However, due to the numbers and multitudes of nationalities they include, it is easily accepted that there is not only one type of Millennial traveller.

Nevertheless, Millennials, as travellers will be defined as being more resilient, meaning they visit destinations that are under socio-political or environmental stress, avoid travel and accommodation costs to spend more on destination and, finally, are said to spend three times more than an average tourist on a major trip (Cavagnaro, 2018). They are also seen as natural travellers, making 4-5 trips a year.

This is, in part, due to the fact that tourism and leisure time are no longer a residual part of life but, instead, a highly valued activity that contributes to the construction of identity of individuals. These individuals have different life properties compared to their parents, rejecting traditional achievements, placing a higher importance on intangible, life-enriching moments, such as travel (Monaco, 2018).

Therefore, the main motivational factors for this generation to travel have been studied and some points were highlighted, namely the need for novelty, the need to try different lifestyles, to have new experiences, and acquire new knowledge. From this perspective, travelling for Millennials means living an experience of personal development

centred on the individual tourist. They see it as a necessity, becoming an integral part of their lives. Travelling is also a great opportunity to develop life and work skills and is a new social currency. However, travelling for millennials is also framed with reference to traveller's peer-group, embracing the need to take part in these social trends.

They are looking for new travel destinations and extraordinary activities that give their holidays a unique feel and, although they still visit the top sights of a city, they will want to ensure an authentic experience by getting to know the destination by going to local bars and restaurants. Millennials are also known for their different style of travelling, where they will be more comfortable backpacking through some remote location, away from the mainstream. Typically, their trips also last longer. In fact, in 2016, according to American Society of Travel Agents, Millennials took 44% more holiday time and trips than the average Baby Boomer.

Other factors to keep in mind when talking about the Millennial traveller is the fact that they have not reached their peak earning period, their budget for travelling is not the same as older generation's. However, this just makes them more strategic in the way they book their flights, accommodations or activities, getting the most value for money. They shop for the best deals and forego hotels for hostels. Travelling does not need to be complicated or expensive for the Millennials.

It is also important to highlight that social media is also a key influential factor on how and where to travel to and replacing, to some extent, traditional sources of information (see 2.5 for further discussion). Their travel plans are largely influenced by what they see on social media. In addition, having grown up with smartphones and ready access to the internet, this allowed them to make their own bookings and many times last minute. In other words, the millennial traveller is spontaneous in the way they book travel. The bottom line is that mobile and social have become so intertwined and that they are viewed as a single channel (MDG Advertising).



## 2.3 Gen-Y consumer's behaviour and their decision-making process

After reflecting on the new generations, getting to know Millennials in depth as individuals and as travellers is important to understand how these individuals behave as consumers and how they formulate their decision-making process.

To this end, consumer behaviour will be defined as “a consumer’s attitude, decisions, activities, ideas or experiences in using, purchasing, evaluating and searching of products and services that satisfy their needs” (Seyidov *et al.*, 2016). In other words, it translates how individuals make decisions to spend their assets on buying things. **As customers**, Millennials are extremely volatile and high maintenance. They are characterized, amongst other features, by their desire for immediate information and their ability to filter it, no matter how many sources it comes from. As a matter of fact, more than half of them will research products before they consider a purchase. Their ability to be information savvy makes them no longer easily manipulated by brands as before. Thus, they place more trust in the opinion of those who appear to be similar to themselves, making them more powerful than any marketing pitch could ever be. Consequently, if they follow influencers on social media, who endorse products, they are more likely to pay attention (McCormick, 2016). Other characteristics that are often highlighted are the fact that they are demanding, highly unlikely to become brand loyal, social-media sociable, addicted to technology and immune to traditional marketing channels (Schroer, 2015).

On the other hand, when talking about decision-making it is important to start by defining it. Hence, it can be defined as “the process of recognizing and choosing from among available solutions to a problem according to the demands of the circumstances” (Seyidov *et al.*, 2016). Or according to Sproles&Kendall (1986), a consumer’s decision-making style is defined as “a patterned, mental, cognitive orientation towards shopping and purchasing, which constantly dominates the consumer’s choice, resulting in a relatively-enduring consumer personality.” Therefore, decision-making happens when a solution to a problem is found. For the purposes of this paper, decision-making styles are defined as a mental orientation that determines a tourist’s approach to making decisions regarding various trip components.

Normally, the decision-making process is divided into 5 stages, namely: problem recognition, alternative information search, alternative evaluation and selection, selection and purchase, and post purchase (Neuhofner, 2017). However, decision-making models continue to be criticised as they are unable to capture the complexity of decision-making

in tourism, which comes from the unique context in which travel decision are made (Cohen *et al.*, 2014).

Nevertheless, decision-making styles receive a lot of attention lately because they are inextricably linked to decision outcomes, segmentation and targeting. However, there is still a lack of studies on how travellers’ decision-making styles influence their trip planning behaviour. If decision-making styles have an influence on trip planning behaviour, differences in styles should be taken into account when creating and marketing information services to travellers. And one cannot ignore the importance of trip planning as it is an essential stage since it not only reduces uncertainty and risk, but also increases satisfaction through added excitement, expectation, foreseeable enjoyment and anticipation (Zalatan, 1996).

Nevertheless, according to Choudhary, 2017, Millennials’ decision-making styles were defined, and, after empirical testing, it emerged that travel decision-making is a complex process. As illustrated in table 5, this model incorporates seven different decision-making styles that can characterize Millennials.

**Table 5 – Millennials Decision-Making Styles**

<b>Decision-making styles</b>
Quality conscious
Price conscious
Novelty conscious
Recreational
Impulsive
Habitual
Confused by over-choice

*Source: Choudhary, 2017*

A deeper analysis of the table presented above shows how Millennials differ from past generations when it comes to travelling and even how they differ among themselves. The first decision-making style is Quality Conscious, where the individual prefers well-planned trips and chooses destinations for their quality features. Secondly, Price conscious, where the individual is likely to choose places that will give them the best value for their money. Novelty conscious is related to individuals that look more into destination styles and like to try new things. Recreational are the travellers that simply enjoy the experience of travelling. On the other hand, Impulsive travellers have no reason to travel and are very random in choosing a destination and prefer to make quick decisions. Habitual, where they frequently visit the destinations they like and finally, confused by over-choice, where Millennials find it hard to choose a destination due to information overload from the many different option that exist.

These changes also reflect a specific decision-making and purchasing behaviour such as last-minute decisions, the search for opportunities, the use of word-of-mouth recommendation sources and increasing use of low-cost services.

Understanding the new consumers' decision-making process and their main characteristics is of extreme importance for any competitive business that wishes to adapt to the fast-changing needs of its consumers. Specially now, when Gen Y and Z are redefining life stages and lifestyles (Sima, 2016).

## **2.4 Theory of case-based vacation planning**

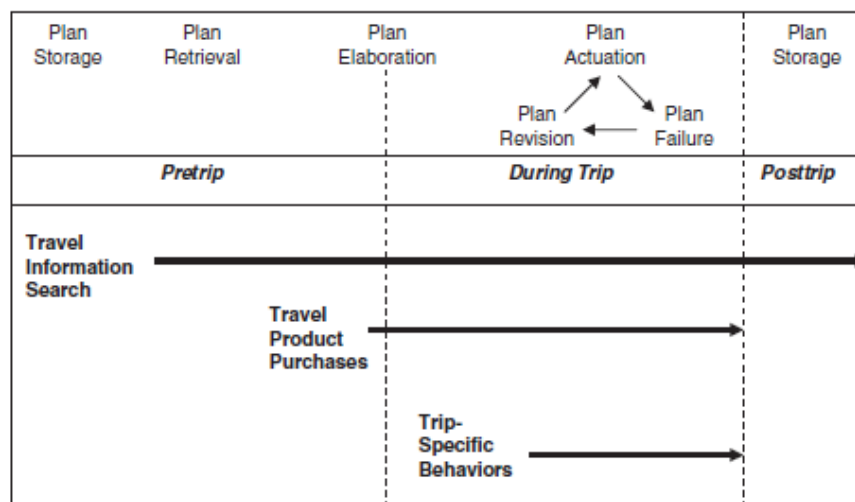
The case-based vacation planning theory was developed with the aim of understanding the complex travel behaviours and it denotes planning as remembering and learning (Jun *et al.*, 2007). Jun (2007) defined this as a process including information search behaviour, information use and applications, purchase behaviours, actual trip behaviour and the learning process from all these experiences.

In other words, individuals practise this model by storing this data in their memories, which then serves as the initial knowledge on which a new plan is based. This model reflects the advances nowadays, since it incorporates the web environment, where the internet allows the process of information search to be more efficient as well as encouraging consumers to purchase travel products before leaving on vacation. In fact, the internet has been studied in order to fully understand its impact on travel planning and it has been proven to be one of the most effective means for trip planning (Wang *et al.*, 2016).

All in all, the case-based vacation planning model suggests that plans elaborated by

the tourist are constantly changing as they are actuated, that people plan more than they actuate and that travel products are searched for and purchased differently. Figure 5 below illustrates the model, separating travel behaviour into three stages (pre-trip, during trip and post-trip) which are sequential and interrelated. The model demonstrates that travel information search, travel product purchase and trip specific behaviours are different and that they are an ongoing process.

**Figure 6 – Case-Based Vacation Planning Model**



Source: Stewart, Susani

Several authors now suggest that travel-planning theories are more suitable to explain complex travel behaviours compared to decision-making theories since this model represents the actions carried out to achieve multiple, interrelated and sequential goals, rather than being solely concerned with how individuals weigh alternatives and evaluate options (decision-making styles) (Juan *et al.*, 2007).

## 2.5 Gen y and their travel information search process

The process of information search is a core element in the consumer's decision process, since tourists search for information before they make their final decision of where to travel, where to stay and what to do. While the reasons why people travel have not changed much, the paths people go through before they travel have been transformed.

Seeing as tourism and technology are two of the most dynamic and largest sectors in the world today, it is understandable that the internet has had profound impacts on the sector in many ways (Xiang, 2015). As a matter of fact, technological innovations in communication and in digital media have been the major force that contributed to the

transformation of traditional categories information, thereby redefining the perception and practical experience of tourism (Monaco, 2018). If before consumers could only count on offline sources, such as offline travel agents, travel guidebooks, travel brochures, magazines, TV and radio, today the internet has allowed users to be completely autonomous. The internet has been a major player in defining the travel planning process and, in particular, the travel information search process, since it is comprised of a huge amount of information internet users rely heavily on. Search engines are ideal tools to look for travel products, being an ideal source for customers to gain travel information (Qian *et al.*, 2015).

Millennials and Post-Millennials are used to interacting daily with new technology and the internet, making them the best individuals to make use of these technological advances and incorporating them into the travel field. In a recent study, findings show that the penetration rate of the internet has remained constant, where respondents answered that “*all their travel planning was done using the internet*”, increasing from 23.3 percent in 2007 to 35.4 percent in 2012, almost half of the population (Xiang, 2014).

Therefore, today, travellers are able to count on a broad variety of websites, such as online travel agency sites like Expedia, travel company websites like hotel websites, general search engines like Google, destination sites, interest sites and social media networking platforms. In fact, the same study shows that in 2012 most activities done online regarding travel planning were, respectively, information about a particular destination, hotels and places to stay, airline fares and schedules, printed out maps and directions, things to do at a destination and car rentals.

When it comes to travel products purchased online, the first category that showed was lodging, followed by air tickets, car rentals and entertainment activities. When it comes to the distribution channels used to make reservations, the two big players still remain the supplier itself, followed by OTAs.

However, according to Monaco, 2018, it is important to highlight that the latest generation, Gen-Z, uses the web almost exclusively to find the information they need to make purchase decisions and to make reservations, while Gen-Y still makes use of offline sources.

All in all, online information search has brought many positive aspects to travellers, leading them to claim less uncertainty, more satisfaction, to save time and money, as well as highlighting the ease of information share (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Qian, similarly, states

that the internet has had a structural transformation in the balance of power between the suppliers and consumers in the travel industry.

## **2.6 Travel Information Search within Social Media**

Social media is increasingly playing a more important role in the area of online information searches in the context of tourism (Qian *et al.*, 2015). After the commercialization of the internet in 1993, a few years passed by before Web 2.0 appeared in the mid-2000s, when users started to be able to count on more diverse sites, such as opinion sites like TripAdvisor and Social Networking Platforms (SNSs) like Facebook and Instagram. In other words, traditional sources of information have been replaced by social media (Varkaris *et al.*, 2017). Note that the concept of Web 2.0 will be explained more in depth in the next chapter.

Social media platforms stand out as an information tool because their core relies on content created by other users (UGC) and eWOM (electronic word of mouth) (see point 2.6 for further explanation). As a matter of fact, according to Qian 2015, the decision to purchase is influenced by online recommendations and comments; thus, information gathered from different sources influences the traveller's decision at different levels. Travellers today gather and rely on recommendations not only from friends and relatives but also from online comments and then get information from a third party. Commercial information now comes last in the spectrum of importance which is a consequence of the development of Web 2.0. Therefore, social media is becoming travellers' preferred source of travel information and more and more important in the area of online travel (Choudhary *et al.*, 2001; Hashim *et al.*, 2017).

These platforms are used by travellers for a variety of purposes, from sharing their travel-related experiences and connecting with others to buying travel-related products and services (Varkaris *et al.*, 2017). The phone is in fact, the hub of planning, experiencing and sharing every trip. According to Anderson, 66% of Millennials books their trips via smartphone and 97% post on social networks and share their experience while travelling.

This is especially true for the hotel sector, where hotel-related decision making has changed as social media is used in every stage of the consumer's decision-making process. While these platforms are used to assist consumers in terms of inspiration, limiting choices and verifying decision, hotel reviews are used to form a consideration set of possible choices (Monaco, 2018). Opinion sites, however, are not always viewed as a credible source since often the information posted is anonymous. Thus, social media network sites,

with visible personal profiles, gain even more power (Yen *et al.*, 2015).

Consequently, some authors even state that social media has become an important search engine (Pesonen *et al.*, 2017). Apart from their function as information sources, social media enables storytelling, usually for post-travel activity, on a 24/7 basis to large audiences as well as providing a sense of belonging to a virtual travel community. According to Monaco (2018), social media is also commonly used due to choice overload, leading younger travellers to be more active on SNS, as are those who are highly price-conscious and those who are low on the habitual scale.

To sum up, both Millennials and Post-Millennials benefit from the internet because not only do they benefit from the available content, but also from product information, turning them into the leading players of the tourist industry. These combined with the information generated by tour operators complete the description of travel destinations.

For competing brands, these generations are a prime target for online marketing. Selling to them will therefore require a strong online and social media presence where hotels need to communicate truthfully and take into account what is said about them in non-official communication channels, never forgetting the importance of opinions and reviews. Finally, communication through instant messaging channels, such as Instagram, is crucial to activate a good communication system with consumers, taking into consideration that they like getting information in real time (Monaco, 2018).

## **2.7 User generated content and electronic word-of-mouth**

In this section, the concepts of user-generated content (UGC) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) will be explained in order to ensure that they are used correctly and not confused.

UGC is defined as “media content created by members of the general public and includes any form of online content created, initiated, circulated and consumed by users” (Kim *et al.*, 2016; Ladhari *et al.*, 2015). The same authors then state that user-generated content often includes brand-related subject matter. All in all, this term is related to any type of content that has been created (brand or non-brand related) and put out there by unpaid contributors in the form of new content, e.g., comments, picture, videos, testimonials, podcasts, reviews, articles, tweets, blog posts, etc, resulting in a huge flow of electronic word of mouth. However, when the content is related to brands, it can be seen as the act of users promoting a brand rather than the brand itself.

eWOM will be defined as “electronically delivered statements about a product,

service or brand made by potential, actual or former customers” (Kim *et al.*, 2016). Understandably, eWOM, a part of UGC, has a significant impact on consumer behaviour.

One can now understand how these two terms differ – although UGC presents a broader scope than eWOM, both terms are often used interchangeably when UGC is related to brand content.

**Table 6 – Different Types of eWOM Platforms**

<b>eWOM</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Blog	Blogger.com
Consumer Review Sites	Epinions.com
Discussion Forums	Lonelyplanet.com
Shopping Websites	Amazon.com
Social Media Websites	Facebook.com

*Source: Hoszowska, 2014*

Thanks to the power of the internet and connectivity, the influence of eWOM is greater than traditional WOM as now messages can reach global audiences faster and more easily as opposed to what happened in the past, by mouth-to-mouth. If before people had to meet in person or have a phone call to be able to share their news, talk, gossip, etc. with someone else, the birth of the internet, Web 2.0 and social media allowed consumers to easily go on the internet and speak their minds. Today the consumer is empowered, thanks to the possibility of generating their own content electronically.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that UGC which is related to brands and shared on social media may have more influence than other sources as it is transmitted by trustworthy sources in a consumer’s personal network. This concept can similarly be stated as ‘user-generated content marketing’ with immense benefits for the buying decision of consumers, both in the online and offline environments (Hoszowska, 2014).



It is of high importance to notice that when it comes to the hospitality sector, it is one of the most strongly influenced by eWOM as products and services are of an experiential nature. A purchase decision for any intangible product depends greatly on the information available, whether it be online or offline.

## CHAPTER III: Social Media and Instagram

### 3.1 Definition of Social Media and Web 2.0

Whilst carrying out research, one comes across the interchangeable usage of the terms “Social Media (SM)” and “Web 2.0”. Despite these two terms being closely related, they are not exactly synonymous. While Social Media is the main concept of this dissertation, the term Web 2.0 will be briefly discussed so as to prevent the misuse of these two terms. *Web 2.0* refers to World Wide Web Website that emphasizes user-generated content, usability and interoperability for the end user. It refers to changes in the way the web pages are designed and used, also known as the next step of Web 1.0. Individuals can now create their own websites and blogs, post videos, and fill the web with user-generated content. The core idea of Web 2.0 is that of many-to-many content (O'Reilly, 2005).

Social media (SM), on the other hand, fits perfectly under the concept of Web 2.0, particularly under the easy-to-use platforms that allow users to generate content. But what makes it unique within Web 2.0? According to Technopedia, it is the introduction of web-based sharing, since before the only way to do so, was through email. But with the introduction of social media, this process has become easier and faster, simplifying it to the click of a button. SM can therefore be defined as a “computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, information and the building of virtual networks and communities” (Dollarhide, 2019). Social media allows users to easily electronically communicate their personal information and other content. It offers a variety of activities, from photo sharing, blogging, social gaming, social networking, video sharing, business networks, virtual worlds to reviews. Any user can access these social platforms through a computer, tablet or smartphone, via web-based software or web applications.

To conclude, Web 2.0 came first, and social media arose from it, as an innovation of Web 2.0. The opposite, however, would not be true as it would be ignoring all its fewer social aspects, such as blogs, YouTube and so on.

### 3.2 Types of Social Media

When categorizing social media platforms, there are a few ways of doing so, depending on the scope, such as user interest or technology features. Each of these platforms have provided unique features and experiences to individuals and entities, for marketers and consumers, in the social media sphere. For this dissertation, three types of social media will be presented, as recognized by Jacobsen (2014).

**Table 7 – Types of Social Media**

Type	Description
<b>Social Networking Sites (SNSs)</b>	Creation of a profile that contains personal information and allows connection with other people (ex: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn).
<b>Media Sharing Networks</b>	Platforms to find and share photos, videos, live videos and other media online (ex: Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Vimeo).
<b>Messaging Sites</b>	Apps that enable messaging, many of which started around SNS (ex: WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat).
<b>Wikis (ex: Wikipedia), Blogs (ex: Twitter), review sites (ex: TripAdvisor) and voting sites (ex: Digg)</b>	

*Source: Adapted from Jacobsen (2014)*

The power of social networking is such that the number of worldwide users is expected to reach 3.02 billion monthly active social media users by 2021, around a third of Earth’s entire population (Statista, 2018). As of July 2018, as recognized by *Kemp (2018)*, the social networks with the **highest number of active users**, and most popular were, respectively:

**Table 8 – Social Networks active users**

	<b>Network Name</b>	<b>Number of Users</b> <small>(in millions)</small>
<b>1</b>	Facebook	2.186
<b>2</b>	YouTube	1.900
<b>3</b>	WhatsApp	1.500
<b>4</b>	Facebook Messenger	1.300
<b>5</b>	WeChat	1.040
<b>6</b>	Instagram	1.000
<b>7</b>	QQ Chat	806
<b>8</b>	Qzone	563
<b>9</b>	Tik Tok	500
<b>10</b>	Sina Weibo	411

*Source: Adapted from We are Social, 2018*

Social networks are now so well established, that there is a core “top 5” social networks that do not change much from year-to-year, as recognized by Smart Insights, however, with differences in popularity depending on the country and demographics (Chaffey, 2018). Facebook clearly remains at the top of the most popular social media platforms around the world. WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are also on the list, being the top messenger apps used worldwide. Following these apps, we have WeChat, one of the most important apps in China, considered a version of Facebook. YouTube, on the other hand, whose core is video sharing, is often considered the new TV for new generations, maintaining a strong position, just second on the list (Ford, 2014). In sixth place, we have Instagram, with a strong global user base that shows no signs of slowing down. This platform is currently one of the most popular of its kind. If we exclude Chinese and messaging types of social media, Instagram is the second largest social media site

(following Facebook). While it continues to grow, Facebook faces a growth with a slower pace and is arguably losing its popularity among youngsters, whereas Snapchat and Twitter have reached their peak.

### **3.3 Instagram**

The word Instagram, which stands for instant camera and telegram, aims to transmit its main purpose as a social media that differentiates itself since it focuses on sharing visual content. Unlike other social networking sites, Instagram is dedicated to mobile experiences, where images are uploaded through mobile devices only, although there is a web version. The reason behind this is to control spam and low-quality images from other sources (Instagram 2014).

Instagram is, therefore, a mobile, desktop and internet-based photo and video sharing application and service. In other words, it is an application that allows users to take, manipulate and upload photos/videos and enables them to share and interact with one other by liking or commenting on others' posts.

Being one of the most successful of all the major social platforms in terms of reach and widespread appeal, Instagram has seen exponential growth, from one million users during the first two months on the market, to 1 billion monthly active users in June 2018 (Richter, 2018). In addition, a key indicator to understand the power of this social media, is the number of people who repeatedly use the app daily. On a daily usage, the app saw the number doubling from 100 million in October 2016 to 500 million in September 2017, with signs that its daily active users equal its total number of users (Dogtiev, 2018).

Furthermore, as mobile users worldwide currently only use about ten apps a day, Social Networking and Media apps being the dominating ones, Facebook, together with Instagram, are still dominating the mobile space. According to Pew Research Centre, there were 52 million photos posted on Instagram daily in 2018 and over 35% of Instagrammers post several times a day, while 24% do it only once a day.

### 3.3.1 App Navigation, Features and Tools

In this section, we will explore Instagram’s features and how it works for the end user, covering all its different sections and what they are for.

The platform has five main sections within the app’s main page – ‘Home’– located on the lower part of the screen, which the user can access for different purposes: **Home, Search & Explore, Upload, Activity** and **Profile** (Fig.7).

Firstly, when opening the application, the Home page is displayed and shows the user the latest pictures/videos from accounts that the user follows. Here the user interacts with the content he sees by liking, commenting or sharing. In this same page, on the top part of the screen, the user can see the ‘stories’ the people he follows created – a different type of content to the pictures and videos normally posted.

Stories on Instagram are similar to the concept of Snapchat. This feature was launched in 2016 and allows users to take videos or photos, and add effects and layers, which they subsequently add to their Instagram story. This content expires after 24 hours, enhancing even more the “storytelling” effect of the app. This feature can also be used to create “live-video” content.

**Figure7- Instagram's Main Sections**



Source: Authors adaptation

When it comes to searching for specific content, users can browse by hashtag, by username or location on the “*search & explore tab*”. On the other hand, when looking for random content, in the same page, there are photos and videos that are displayed according to the user’s habits, or content that is highly popular or created nearby. Unlike the Home feed, these are not *posts* of accounts that the user follows, but suggestions from the algorithm of Instagram. This is a very important feature of Instagram, which gives the user the possibility of finding endless new content that is relevant to them depending on their likes. As an example, someone that is greatly into travelling, when on this section of the platform, will be presented with endless content related to travelling, of images/videos of destinations and hotels. This content belongs to other users that are nearby or that are highly popular within the category of travel.

As for uploading photos and videos, the user goes to the page “*Upload*”, where the content can be edited with various filters, other people can be tagged, hashtags can be added, location information can be set, and augmented reality objects and graphical stickers can be used. The pictures posted can be taken live with the phone camera, or the user can go to the phone’s gallery to upload pictures previously taken. This gives the platform the concept of being the easiest, fastest and most convenient way of showcasing content.

On the “*activity page*”, the user can then see all the activity related to their account and will be notified every time something new happens, such as friends’ requests, messages and new likes/comments.

Lastly, the “*Profile page*” displays the user’s personal account. This account can be defined as private, thereby allowing only the user’s followers to see its content and requiring that the user approve any new follower requests; or public, depending on the reach desired. Here, the user and their following can see how many posts the user has posted, how many followers they have and how many people they follow. In this same page, there is also an area where the user can insert a description or add external links. Finally, the user’s stories will be highlighted in a different area as well as all the videos or photos they have posted so far.

Instagram can also be connected to other social networking sites, allowing the user to share uploaded photos/videos to those sites at the same time.

As the platform grows, changes are always being made, and some features are altered with the objective of giving the user the best user-experience possible and always being innovative.

### 3.3.2 *Instagram Marketing for Hotels*

When analysing Instagram's benefits for hotels, many advantages arise according to several different authors (Hashim *et al.*, 2017; Wen *et al.*, 2018; Moreno *et al.*, 2018). Besides benefiting the traveller as a planning tool, as seen before, Instagram is a useful tool for hotel operators to engage with potential customers and build brand commitment. **Brand commitment** will be defined as "a persistent longing to sustain a valued relationship with a brand", and it can be established at an economic, emotional and psychological level of attachment. Consumers that have a positive experience with a brand will continue to support it, being one of the primary goals of using Instagram. In other words, Instagram will facilitate strong brand commitment and, therefore, lead to brand loyalty, support of brand vision and advocacy for the brand (Wen *et al.*, 2018).

Engaging with customers is also extremely important as it is one of the crystal ways to maintain continuous effective relationships with the customers and to ensure the hotel's online presence and sustainability. For the purpose of this dissertation, **customer engagement** will be defined as "the communication between customers and the hotel operators using social media" (Hashim *et al.*, 2017).

Through Instagram, hotels can also understand the needs of their customers by analysing comments and their activity on the platform.

Taking into consideration that the hospitality industry is very visual, with so many features to show off, whether it be the inside or the outside of the hotel, the rooms, the restaurant and even the surrounding towns and scenery, Instagram makes it the best tool to showcase, in a way that was not possible before, say with Twitter or Facebook (Wen *et al.*, 2018). By sharing photos and videos that are authentic and relevant to the hotel, creating a visual story that complements the brand, using captions and enhancing the photos with filters and other tools of the app, it will contribute to capture the consumers' attention and make their brand pop. In addition, Instagram is a powerful tool for evoking the feeling of wanderlust through pictures, making it the ideal choice for marketing. This can help a hotel develop a meaningful, emotional attachment with the consumer as well as standing out from the competition and create its unique style. Instagram is now used as a marketing tool as well as a main communication channel.

As for the consumer, now more than ever, they want to stay somewhere unique and special, therefore, Instagram, is a great way to showcase special features and show the possible future guest what their facilities look like and what makes them different (Bashir



*et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, the consumers' perception of a hotel's activity on Instagram leads to higher levels of appeal, engagement and empowerment, influencing positively consumers commitment to the brand and enhancing its commercial value (Hashim *et al.*, 2017). The reason is that using images makes the abstract and intangible concrete and memorable, helping the consumer to perceive the brand and its message when it comes to purchasing. Studies also demonstrate that images are influential to consumers' preference of a product or service. Having a strong content game will ensure a positive and enjoyable experience among Instagram users and develop their commitment to the brand (Wen *et al.*, 2018).

Similarly, it will encourage customers to share their own pictures in their profiles and creating content with their followers (Hashim *et al.*, 2017). The hotel can then choose to repost pictures taken by their clients, helping the hotel to create content, saving time and effort (Munar *et al.*, 2014).

The platform also stands out as being free, and easy to create while requiring relatively low maintenance. Similarly, Instagram is recognized as being uncluttered and effective as it offers a simple, clean feed with minimal advertising. More recently, the platform announced a new action button that will allow users to book a hotel room directly within the app. This new feature creates a new level of convenience for the user and will have direct impacts in the hospitality sector (Herzfeld, 2018).

### ***3.3.3 Example of Hotels' Instagram Accounts***

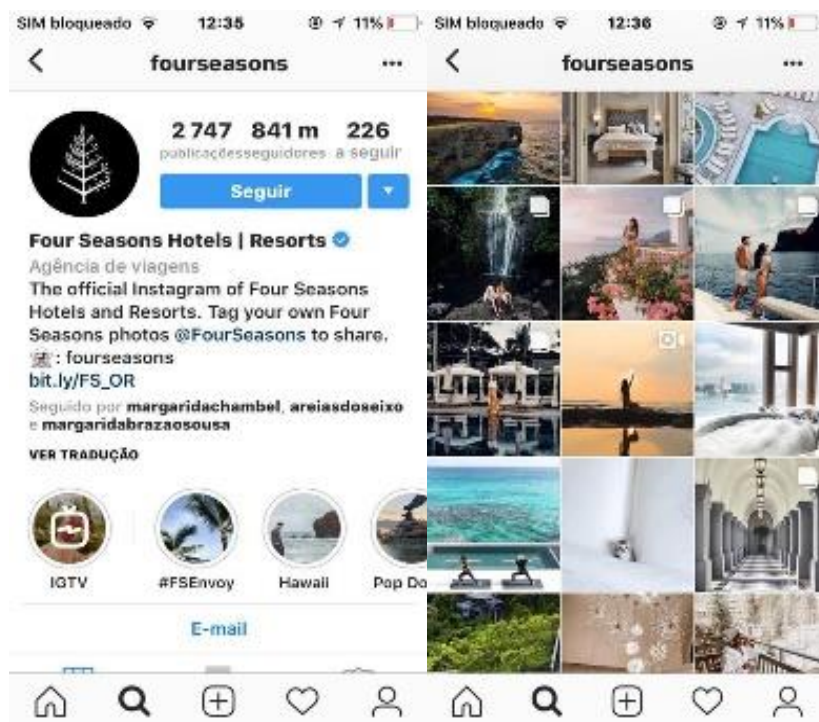
Brands and hotels are nowadays challenged to implement changes that will ensure their survival with Generation Y as well as future generation Z. This can come as a challenge since many chain hotels have standardised and globalized products and renovations can come at high costs.

As each new generation seems to seek more personalized hotel experiences, more style yet affordable options, as well as technology advances, these are the major focus brands today should have (Sima, 2016). An Instagram account can therefore fulfil some of these new demands. As to better comprehend how hotels can benefit from social media, both chain, independent and budget hotel's Instagram accounts will be presented as examples.

Firstly, we highlight the brand Four Seasons, as it is one of the best examples because it has more interactions on Instagram than any other luxury hotel brand (Vines,

2018). The Instagram account has 841K followers, 7 posts per week on average, 5,000 likes per post on average and more than 60 comments per post. They create their content with both their own imagery and user-generated content. Followers are also encouraged to tag their posts #FourSeasons, and the best make their feed. This brand frequently makes use of Instagrammers as part of their marketing strategy while posting pictures and tagging these individuals (Fig. 8).

**Figure 8 – Four Season’s Instagram Accounts**



*Source: Instagram Accounts*

Another hotel chain with a strong Instagram account is Marriot. In fact, Marriot has now understood how to target the younger traveller and has adapted to target both leisure and business Gen-Y customers. A case in point is the Instagram account of one of their brands, Moxy Hotels, which is the perfect example of a brand targeting younger guests and defining their identity through visual content that will appeal to their target. They have 24,7K followers and post several times a week. Marriot is a great example of a brand attempting to target the leisure generation Y traveller with a new budget hotel (Fig. 9).

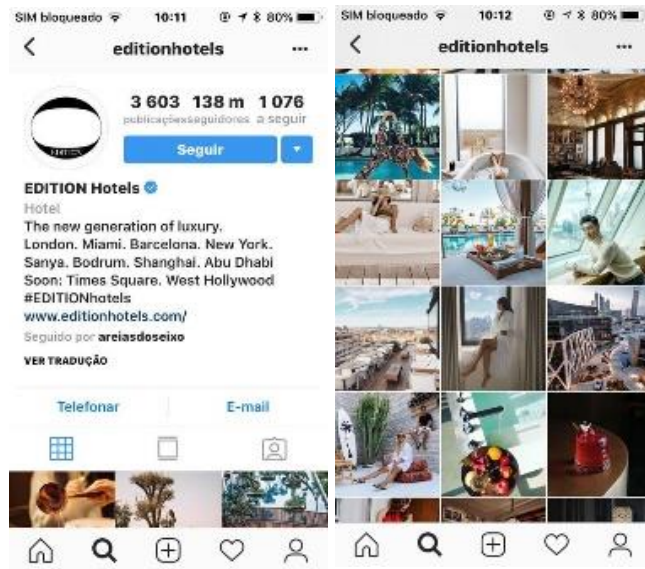
**Figure 9 – Moxy’ Instagram Accounts**



*Source: Instagram Accounts*

Independent hotels with a reduced number of properties like Edition Hotels can also thrive on Instagram and create their online presence. This hotel has garnered 114K followers and has created a strong engagement with them. This brand differentiates itself with a successful feed with fashionable, aspirational photos of travellers enjoying their hotels. More affordable hotels, glamping accommodation options and even hostels are also very actively present on Instagram.

**Figure 10 – Edition Hotels’ Instagram Accounts**



*Source: Instagram Accounts*

On the other hand, budget hotels, glamping and even hostels, such as Dreamsea Surf Camp, and Selina Hostels, are good examples of cheaper options targeting the new traveller, with similarly stunning Instagram feeds helping their business thrive and position itself.

**Figure 11 – Dreamsea and Selina’s Instagram Accounts**



*Source: Instagram Accounts*

## CHAPTER IV: Digital Influencers and their impact on the consumer's behaviour

The following section will conceptualize and present a literature review regarding the definition of the different types of digital influencers in today's world, specifying those who are active participants of the social media platform Instagram and whose core is the travel sector. Thereafter, a brief explanation will be given regarding influencer marketing in order to better understand the scope of this new marketing trend. Section 3.5 will then focus on the impacts these travel Instagrammers have on consumers' behaviour and attitudes. The three dimensions of the consumer's behaviour that were chosen for this paper were Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention.

### 4.1 Definition of Digital Influencers

Digital Influencers can be seen and defined as 'internet celebrities' since this concept is only possible due to the age of ubiquitous internet and the prevalence of online social networks. If before influencers referred to what we know as traditional celebrities, today the concept of digital influencers refers to influencers that can be found online. However, before going into detail about the different types of Influencers, the concept of Brand Influencer and Brand Ambassador will be explained, as they are often wrongly used.

A **Brand Ambassador** is an individual hired by a business to work under a contract that is normally long term (several months or even years) to help them achieve specific goals such as increasing brand awareness and sales. They represent the brand and the lifestyle associated and have a deep knowledge of the business. However, they do not necessarily need to be an Influencer prior to becoming an ambassador. On the other hand, a **Brand Influencer** is an individual that has a following within a specific niche, that they engage with regularly and have the power to impact their purchase decisions. Brand influencers can even be categorized into Micro-influencers, Celebrity Influencer, Blog Influencer, Social Media Influencer and Key Opinion Leader (KOL) (Baker, 2019).

Even though Social Media Influencers are the main theme of this paper, all the types of digital influencers will be briefly discussed. As regards the term '**Social Media Influencers**', one has to comprehend that this concept includes all individuals who have recognition and respect in their chosen niche and consequently have a big following on their social media accounts. They are then known to be able to influence their followers

into potentially making decisions. These influencers are usually experts on matters like health, fitness, diet, outdoor activities, travel, fashion, art, beauty and interior design. Uzunoglu (2014) refers to this group of people as individuals that are characterized as having a wide set of personal connections, who play a key influential role. The author then explains that they are “the individuals who were likely to influence other persons in their immediate environment”. As stated by Casaló (2017), they are seen to have public recognition and should have at least one of the following characteristics: be considered an expert on a product or service; be an active member of an online community; participate frequently and make substantial contributions; and lastly, be regarded by others as having good taste in relation to purchasing decisions. The bottom line is that social media influencers are individuals with a big following and a set of specific characteristics that use a variety of social media platforms to express their opinions on specific brands or products with the aim of influencing their captive audience. An example of a social media influencer is Joy Bauer, a nutritionist, with 157K followers on Twitter.

Another definition is that they are beyond media and industry celebrities; in fact, they can range from popular speakers to niche industry experts and even to current customers, employees and members of the media (TopRank Marketing). In other words, they are ‘normal’ people who are representative of the general public, speaking honestly to their following and not necessarily having a big following.

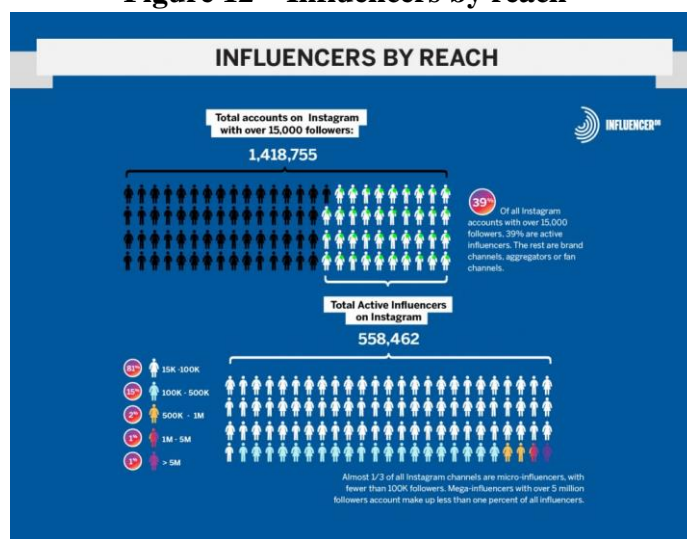
When thinking of social media influencers, the individuals that come to mind are often groups of highly followed social media stars with millions of followers. However, someone more approachable and relatable, with a smaller, yet immensely dedicated following (15k-100k) are also capable of influencing. These individuals are therefore denominated as ‘**Micro-Influencers**’ and are said to have appeared in the second half of 2015. As an example, @Sydneyloveleigh is an Instagram Micro-Influencer that shares content about health, fitness and travel and has 21.4K followers on Instagram. These Micro-Influencers are, in fact, often more effective as they work more closely with brands and have high engagement rates with their followers (Wissman, 2018).

Similarly, it is of high importance to mention the concept of ‘engagement rate’ as it is closely related to digital influencers and their work. This is a fundamental metric that is used in social media marketing to measure the performance of the content on these platforms. They define the success of a campaign and the capacity of engagement of a certain influencer. This metric is calculated by the engagement on a certain content (likes, comments, views and shares) divided by the number of users following the influencers’

account (Hopper).

As per the image below, one will comprehend the power that was mentioned in relation to Micro-Influencers, taking into consideration that in 2019 Instagram has more than 14 million accounts with more than 15k followers and that 39% of all those Instagram accounts are active influencers (the rest being accounts of brands, fan channels or meme accounts) and that Micro-influencers make up almost 1/3 of all Instagram channels. In fact, only 1% of all influencers' accounts belong to the super-influencer category (with more than 5M followers). What is more, Micro-influencers are accountable for the majority of sponsored posts on Instagram. (Hellenkemper, 2019).

**Figure 12 – Influencers by reach**



*Source: Influencer DB, 2019*

As for ‘**Celebrity Influencers**’, this is a concept that has been around for many years and was the first form of Influencers. They are famous people with a large following (normally millions), who are widely recognized in different industries. Because they are well-known, they have the potential to be very influential towards their target following. As an example of a Celebrity Influencer, Kendall Jenner can be pointed out. Famous for her TV show and modelling career, she works closely with different brands to promote products.

On the other hand, a ‘**Blog Influencer**’ is an individual who has a recognizable established blog, with thousands or millions of subscribers and readers. An example of a Blog Influencer is Hannah Bronfman of HBFIT, a very well-known blogger for writing about health, beauty, fitness and creating a life that makes people feel happy and good.

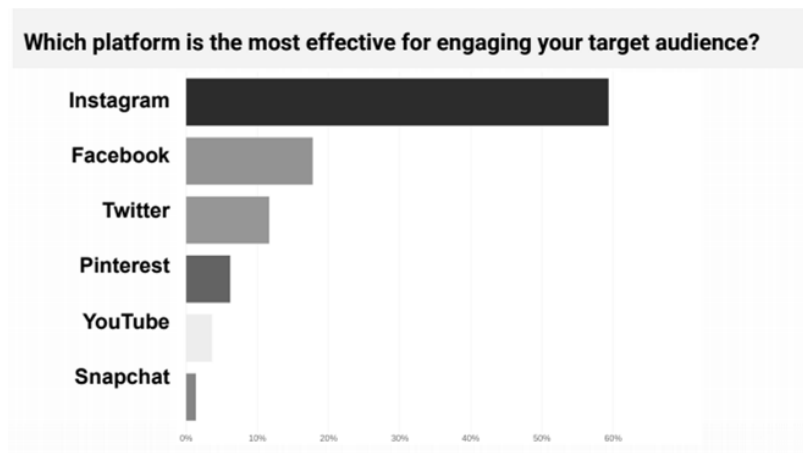
Finally, **Key Opinion Leaders** are individuals that are high-level experts on a specialized topic within a particular field. A Key opinion leader can, for example, be specialized in makeup application, like Kandee Johnson. She is a makeup artist that is considered an expert on makeup application, allowing her to have 3.9 subscribers on YouTube and 1.8 million followers on Instagram.

## 4.2 Influencers on Instagram related to the Travel industry

Social media digital influencers, who are said to honestly review and discuss products or services utilising their authority, knowledge, authenticity and leverage, build relationships of trust with their audience across a variety of social media platforms. These platforms include popular sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, the tools that best reach the market whose decision-making process is influenced by what they see online (Hwa, 2017; Xu, 2018).

However, Instagram is today one of the best options for Influencer Marketing. Instagram does outgrow all other social media networks due mostly to its massive reach, high engagement rates and being influencers' preferred choice (Barker, 2019). Additionally, one cannot forget that Instagram is one of the platforms with the most daily active users, making it one of the most popular social networking sites. This also means that there is a huge audience for brands to market to. Figure 9 graphically represents what was just said, where Instagram leads the chart, followed by Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube and Snapchat of the platforms that are most effective at engaging with the audience.

**Figure 13 – Platforms for Influencers to engage with audience**



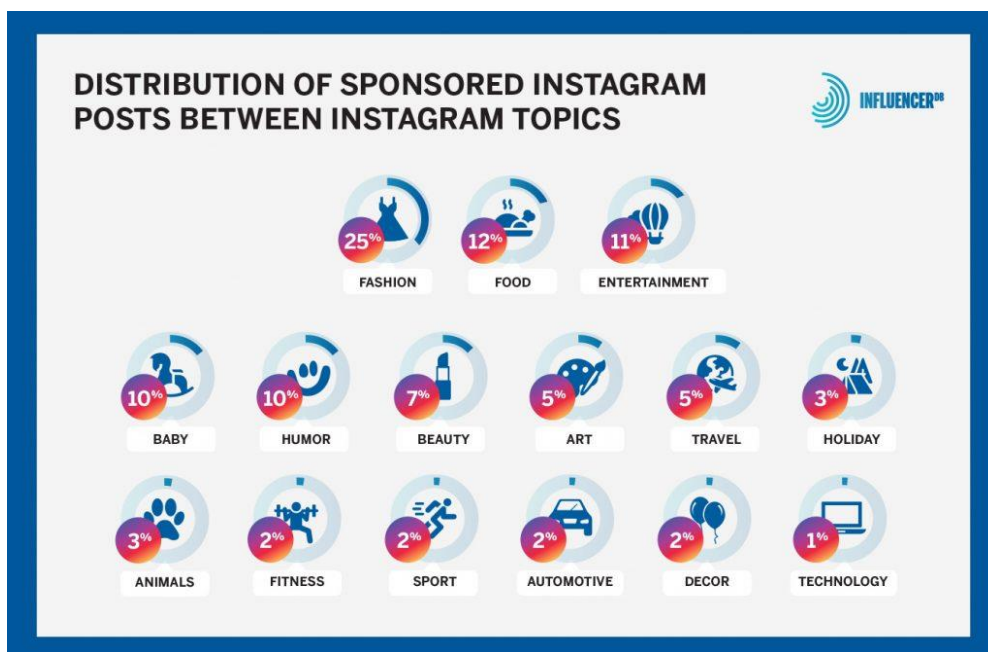
*Source: BlogLoving, 2016*



On top of this, Instagram’s core is to allow the users to group themselves together based on their interests, e.g., fashion lovers will follow their favourite models and designers and follow accounts whose content is fashion-related; foodies will follow great chefs and restaurants or accounts that are related to food and recipes. Amongst all of this, are the leaders of the groups, the influencers who the masses turn to for inspiration, guidance and photos that are pleasing to them. As mentioned before, these individuals specialize in a field of expertise, and for the purpose of this dissertation, only travel Instagrammers will be presented.

When narrowing in on the travelling industry, it is clear that it is amongst the industries that benefit the most by using sponsored content on Instagram, following the fashion and beauty segment, food, entertainment, humour and art (Fig. 14).

**Figure 14 – Sponsored Content Among Instagram Topics**



*Source: BlogLoving, 2016*

Travel influencers on Instagram have now been frequently used over the last couple of years in the tourism and hospitality industry and there have been many successful partnerships. One of the main reasons why this industry benefits greatly from including influencers, as seen before, is that Millennials and non-millennials are likely or very likely to plan a trip based on someone else’s vacation photos or social media updates (Fuxe, 2016). Social media, in particular Instagram, are now outgrowing traditional tourism advertising sources for the new generations. In addition, it is an industry that is greatly visual, making use of content based on photos and videos.

Airbnb and Marriot, one of the two biggest players in the hospitality industry, have publicly affirmed that influencers are now a big part of their social media advertising strategies. Airbnb's CMO, Jonathan Midenhall, said that "Influencers are used in marketing generally to endorse and legitimize a brand" and that "Its impact is phenomenal, because people are interested in the lifestyle of these influencers. If that lifestyle can be authentically associated with staying in interesting Airbnb properties, that is a no-brainer for us". Similarly, Marriot started a marketing campaign where they worked with four popular social influencers to take over their social media accounts once every month in order to reach the younger generations. If these two huge hospitality players are using Digital Influencers, one can assume that it is worth it.

Nevertheless, it is extremely important to find the right travel industry influencers for the hospitality business. One of the first steps to do so is to determine whether they can be categorized into their type of travelling style. Therefore, travel digital influencers can generally be defined as budget travel influencer, luxury travel, couple travel, solo travel and family travel influencer. This will ultimately depend on the suitability between the influencer and the brand image and their ability to generate stunning content, drive bookings, create buzz and accomplish many other marketing goals. To have a better visualisation of what has just been said, some travel influencer Instagram accounts will be shown below.

The first picture will show Lauren Bullen, one of the biggest travel influencers on Instagram that is included in the luxury couple travel category. Karen Ramos, on the other hand, is one of the many micro travel influencers in the category of budget friendly and solo travel. Lastly, in the family category, 'The bucket List Family' Instagram's account will also be analysed.

**Figure 15 – Lauren Bullen Instagram Account**



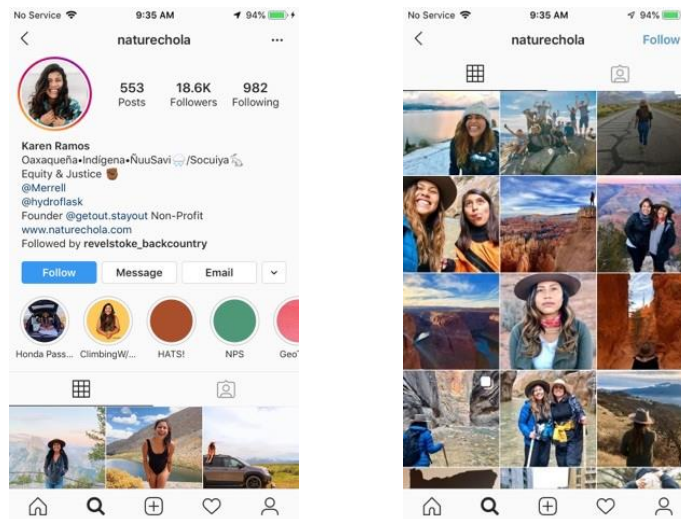
*Source: Instagram Account*

As per Fig.15, Lauren Buller, a couple luxury travel influencer, mostly known as “Gypsea\_just” is one of the most well-known influencers in the travel industry on Instagram, with over 2M followers. She is a true global trotter who has a feed full of breathtaking pictures of landscapes, hotels and restaurants all over the world. Having started as a “normal” Instagram user who would take photos of her travels, she went on to become an important digital influencer today. The pictures also demonstrate how she promotes two hotels, the Four Season in Bora Bora and an independent hotel in Finland. Hotels stimulate tourist arrivals and boost their image by working closely with her. The influencer engages with her followers by answering comments, providing additional information about the hotels and clarifies any questions they might have. In addition to posting content on her wall, the Instagrammer does daily Instagram stories following her day, which usually show where she is currently travelling and staying in a more real and personal way. Nevertheless, this is just one of many users who became travel influencers on the Instagram platform with millions or thousands of followers and, therefore, with huge engagement and influencing power.

When it comes to Micro Travel Influencer on Instagram, i.e. with less than 100K followers, Karen Ramos (@Naturechola) is one of the many that could be mentioned. She is an Indigenous American from Oaxaca that, through her unique perspective, shows her rarely seen or heard of travel experiences. Her Instagram feed is full of culture, nature, natural wonders, adventures, her van life and Indigenous issues. Therefore, she is a great

example of a solo travel influencer that masters the concept of budget travelling. Fig. 16 showcases two images of her Instagram account for a better understanding.

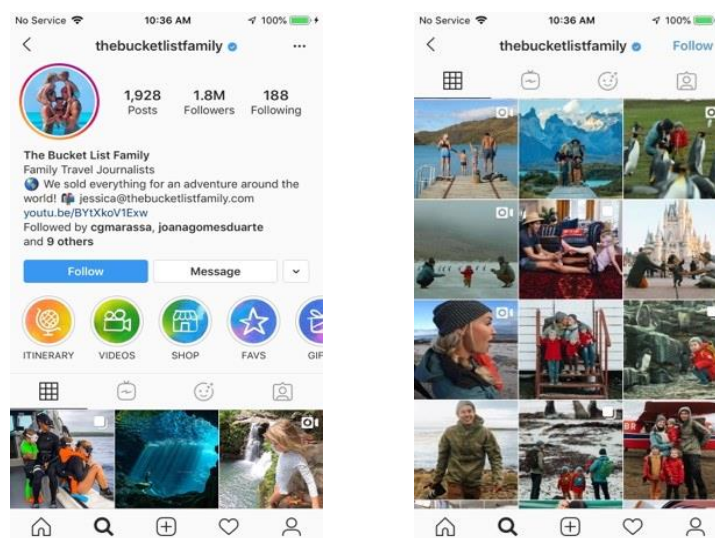
**Figure 16 – Karen Ramos Instagram Account**



*Source: Instagram Account*

Finally, the Bucket List Family is one of the most famous travel Instagram influencer families out there with 1.8M followers. They are a family of 5 from the United States. The youngest member of the family is just 5 months old, followed by a 10-month-old boy and a 3-year-old girl. They have been travelling non-stop for 4 years all around the world and documenting it through their social media platform and engaging with their audience (Fig.17).

**Figure 17 – The Bucket List Family Instagram Account**



*Source: Instagram Account*

### 4.3 Digital Influencer Marketing for Hospitality

Today, where the business environment is highly competitive and consumer loyalty is essential in relationship-building, the concept of engagement becomes crucial for any brand or business.

Also, nowadays, the new generations, Gen-Y or Millennials, enjoy a growing buying power and, because they are social consumers, an advertising technique that may have an impact on them is the use of digital influencer endorsement, a form of word-of-mouth marketing (Uzunoglu, 2014; McCormick, 2016). As previously stated in this paper, social media plays an important role in influencing people's travel choices where reviews and recommendation from travel industry influencers are highly effective. Therefore, travel industry influencers can benefit hospitality businesses immensely.

When talking about the advantages of digital influencers as part of marketing campaigns on Instagram for the travel industry, many different advantages arise. This part of the paper will now summarize the advantages that have been highlighted the most through different studies and marketing and hospitality websites.

The first advantage that comes from this marketing strategy is related to the concept of **brand image**. This concept has many definitions that have evolved over the years, since it was first studied in 1957. The simplest definition of Brand image is as follows: "Brand image is the consumer's understanding and evaluation of the product" (Lessing and Friedman, 1987). Similarly, it can be defined as "a constellation of pictures and ideas in people's mind that sum up their knowledge of the brand and their main attitudes towards it" (Levy, 1978); Brand image "is not simply a perceptual phenomenon affected by the firm's communication activities alone." (Park et al., 1986). Ultimately, it's both a concrete and abstract expression that occurs when a consumer makes a conceptualization of a brand, through the consumer's interpretation, whether reasoned or emotional, that is moulded by marketing activities, by context variables and by the characteristics of the perceiver (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990).

This concept is highly important for every company as it helps fulfil their business objectives. It helps to generate higher profits as new customers are attracted to the brand. Although people that already follow the business account already know it, using social media to drive sales from repeat customers, to raise their confidence and to retain them is also key. Therefore, reaching audiences who are unfamiliar with the business through influencers will create a fresh stream of leads. It will then, for example, enhance the facility

of introducing new products under the same brand. Lastly, it fuels a stronger business-customer relationship.

Digital influencers are therefore said to help achieve a strong brand image since their main purpose is to review the product/service on their accounts. They also help brand image insofar as that when businesses leverage these individuals on the business social media account or in advertisements as models, this makes them more relatable and authentic. The influencers will also establish trust and credibility in the brand, as people tend to trust more content that is shared by 'normal' people who are a seemingly unbiased source rather than by brands. Showcasing pictures/videos of the influencers experiencing their services lends more authenticity to the content promoted.

In addition, Influencer's posts have their followers build up momentum around the brand by interacting online when sharing their thoughts. However, this has a flip side and the brand must be aware of negative comments and reviews.

Additionally, this marketing strategy is also said to **increase bookings**. When trusted travel influencers recommend a hotel, their followers are likely to consider it as a good option while making their travel plans. A popular strategy can be to offer discounts for stays at the hotel. Besides driving bookings, it is also a useful form of promotion when influencers post about it. Influencers can also be asked to include a link to the hotel's website or social media account, which might drive traffic and increase chances of bookings.

Digital influencers can also be used to promote events or launches and generate excitement, increase **brand awareness and drive the brand's message**. Brand awareness will be a concept that will be explained in further detail in the next chapter. Financially wise, this strategy also has its benefits, particularly for **the digital marketing department**. Content marketing is a fundamental component for the marketing team and collaborating with influencers will help create content in a cost-effective way. This will happen when the influencers are invited to stay at the hotel and write reviews, post pictures and videos or by inviting them to events that they will cover on social media (Grin, 2018).

But why are influencers so influential? In the field of psychology, we find the concepts of cognitive biases and social learning theory, basing an individual's behaviour on that of another individual. In other words, an individual derives motivation and consequently favourable attitudes from socialisation agents via either direct or indirect social interaction. Below, the principal factors making these influencers so influential will be explained in further detail (Fastenau, 2017; Hwa 2017):

- **Credibility and Social Proof:** Influencers' credibility will depend on their level of trust, expertise, attractiveness and similarity. In other words, the perceived power they have. This position of authority is strengthened by their number of followers, shares and likes. If other people value their opinion, they must be doing something right.
- **Attractiveness:** As part of human nature, an attractiveness bias will influence people into thinking an attractive person has many other qualities. Leading, in many cases, to a positive association between the person and the brand, influencing the viewer when faced with a product-related decision. Therefore, consumer attitude can be highly influenced by the attractiveness of the influencer.
- **Relatability with Millennials:** The biggest factor making influencers so powerful, as compared to other types of endorsements, is their relatability. Despite having a large following, they are perceived as normal people. They communicate and engage with their followers by responding to their comments, answering questions and creating content that is relevant. This level of accessibility is not possible with celebrities. As a result, when these influencers endorse a product or service, their followers take it as a recommendation as if it were from a friend or family member. In psychology, the social identity theory explains this phenomenon, where individuals view themselves as being a part of a group of similar people.
- **Authentic:** Authenticity is a factor that cannot be underestimated. Individuals know when a message is not sincere. Transparency, therefore, is an important factor at all times when it comes to influential marketing.
- **Interaction:** The ability to create connection between the followers and the influencers.

McCormick (2016), emphasises what has been said, affirming that endorsing these individuals does bring credibility to the advertised message and consequently, make the communication with consumers more effective. He then lists other factors that contribute to the acceptance of influencers message. These factors are based on similarity, familiarity and liking of the endorser. Physical attractiveness is also a factor highlighted and that it even helps generate higher purchase intention and positive attitudes towards the brand. Lastly, the “match-up” of the unique qualities of the endorser with that of a product is a

concept that has also been investigated, where the higher perceived fit between the influencer image and the brand, the more persuasive the advertisement will be.

To sum up, digital influencers, opinion leader or Instagrammers, no matter what term is used, are important sources of publicity for brands in social media and an important new marketing strategy, rather than concentrating solely on traditional media. In fact, the growing numbers of influencers and influencer marketing budgets prove that this new marketing strategy is becoming very effective specially in the travel industry.

Nevertheless, there are some aspects that should be highlighted now because they can certainly have a strong impact when talking about the advantages of this new type of marketing strategies and their effectiveness when working with brands. What cannot be ignored today is the fact that there are **'less genuine' influencers** out there. To start with, it is important to reflect on what the numbers of followers actually mean. The number of followers a digital influencer claims to have might not mean a lot today. This is because buying likes, follows and video watches is very easy, therefore making it difficult to know if the follower base an influencer has is real or even relevant for the brand offered to promote. This number might be hiding a significant number of fake followers, bots or even people that happen to only be interested in one specific piece of content and therefore follow the Instagram but are not interested in all of their other content. This line of thought might lead to the idea that numbers do not mean a lot. Companies working with digital influencers need to pay attention to this issue and figure out whether an influencer has signs of having a fake follower base. This can be done through certain applications or looking at numbers and comparing them to benchmarking numbers. As an example, when looking for 'unusual numbers' one of the first steps is to look at the influencer's engagement rate. As stated by Influencer Marketing Hub, a quality influencer will have an engagement (likes and comments) of 1.5-3%, e.g., if the Instagrammer has 100,000 followers, he/she should have 1,500-3,000 likes and comments on an average post. Another example is noticing a lot of action for a few days on an Instagrammer's account and then stopping. A genuine influencer will have a steady growth in their numbers and not a massive burst of followers in a short period of time. Lastly, another useful tip is to check the comments on pictures and analyse their content. Comments made by bot accounts are generic and lack substance, e.g., "good picture, and even though they are technically engagement, they have no value for brands.

Secondly, when talking about coverage it is important to carefully analyse and measure what social media is most relevant for the brand to use, since today we live in a



culture of multiple social media and new trends that arise almost daily. In other words, is it more beneficial to engage with an influencer that does content on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or a website? If they do a blog, post pictures, videos or directs? Lastly, when it comes to measuring how much business was generated by working with a particular influencer, the answers are not that clear. Affiliate links and special discounts are the most trending option. However, laws all over the world require influencers to use the word “Advertisement” or let the public know that the content is “sponsored” or “in collaboration with”, making the consumer doubt the authenticity of what was supposed to be a recommendation. When influencers are offered free products and services or, in some cases paid, it is highly unlikely that they will not recommend it or give a not so favourable opinion.

The main thought here, from a business point of view, is that not all influencers have a way to prove they ‘influence’ and brands need to be realistic about what they will gain from the collaboration. They can increase awareness and exposure, but to whom exactly? They can generate more sales, but how can they prove it is from a specific collaboration with an influencer? There is also always the chance that a specific collaboration might cause damage if the brand works with an influencer that is not suitable for the brand or even be involved in a scandal (Cohen, 2018).

## 4.4 Instagrammers impact on the consumer's behaviour

The growing power of digital influencers to influence their network has emerged as a new communication venue for brands, since influencer recommendation posts are a useful marketing communication tool and a vital reference source in the process of consumer purchase decision making and their actions (Lu, 2014; Uzunoglu, 2014; Hwa, 2017; Laroche 1996, Casaló, 2017). As any other form of marketing, influencer marketing is expected to have a direct effect on consumer's actions. According to different authors, it can have substantial advantages for brands when it comes to the **consumer's awareness** (Foroudi, Lu, Yoo, Loureiro, Dehghani, Castronovo, Hoffman, Mangold), **consumer's loyalty** (Foroudi, Yoo, Chaudhuri, Loureiro, Labrecque, Castronovo) and **purchase intention** (Lu, Putrevu, Dehghani, Castronovo, Mangold).

This enhances the fact that brands are in fact capable of generating an outcome on the consumer when using digital influencers as part of their marketing campaigns. Taking this into consideration, it will be important to start by exploring the notion of these three concepts, Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention.

To sum up, the purpose of this section is to investigate to what extent these social media digital influencers do influence the consumers' behaviour, in particular that of Millennial consumers, and aide in favourable attitudes towards the brand and their sponsored content.

### 4.4.1 Brand Awareness

When trying to define the concept of brand awareness, several definitions can be found from many different authors. Nevertheless, according to Lu (2014), brand awareness is part of brand knowledge and therefore, if consumers have knowledge about a brand, their brand awareness towards a certain product/service is high. As per many different authors (Keller, 1993; Romaniuk et al., 2004; Yoo, 2001), brand awareness is commonly divided into two different dimensions, **brand recognition** and **brand recall**.

Firstly, brand recognition is when individuals have the ability to identify a brand when given the brand name as a clue. On the other hand, brand recall refers to the individual's ability to recall a brand when given the product category. However, brand recall may require the consumer to have greater effort to retrieve the brand from memory than brand recognition. Therefore, brand awareness can also be defined as the ability of a buyer to recognize or recall that a specific brand name is a member of a certain product category (Lu, 2014).

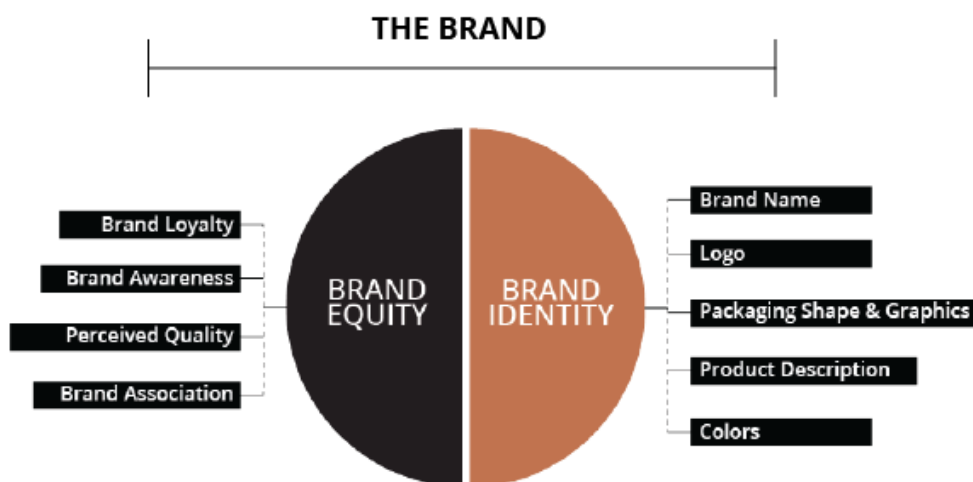
To sum up, brand awareness represents how familiar the brand’s target audience is with it and how they recognize it. It is also possible to say that brands with high brand awareness are referred to as ‘trending’ or ‘popular’.

To comprehend this marketing concept in more depth, it is important to highlight that brand awareness is commonly associated to **brand trust** and this is because when putting a proverbial face to the brand’s name, consumers trust easier. Brand trust, another highly used marketing term is, as per many studies, a notable factor for a business’s success. It can be defined as “the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of a brand to perform its stated function.” (Kabadayi and Alan, 2012). And trust is fundamental between brands and consumers, specially today when individuals rely on extensive research and other’s opinions before making a purchase. Once the consumer is bonded to the brand, they are more likely to repeat the purchase, bridging the gap between trust and loyalty (concept that will be view in the next point).

What is more, brand awareness is also related to help develop **brand equity** (Su and Tong, 2015). Brand equity refers to the value that the brand generates from their product/service with a recognizable name (Investopedia, 2019). Mostly this includes the brand to be memorable, easily recognizable and superior in quality and reliability.

Fig. 18 shows a brand model that represents the two constructs that create a brand (brand equity and brand identity) and their sub-concepts, namely brand awareness. A positive brand identity can result in adding more value to brand equity.

**Figure 18 – The Brand Model**



*Source: Pulse Marketing*

Brand name, a sub-concept of Brand Identity, is another important term that plays a crucial role in the sphere of brand awareness, since it is the dimension of brand awareness that stays in the mind of consumers. In other words, a well-known brand name is directly related to high brand awareness levels (Chi, 2009). Brand identity has to do with how the minds of the target consumers perceive the brand itself and it is not just about the image but also about the personality, emotional attributes, relationships and even culture that can be perceived from the brand.

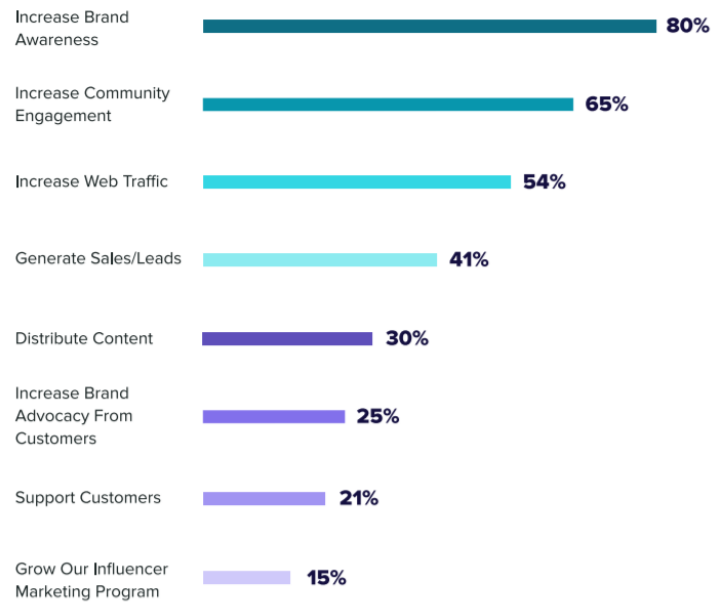
All in all, these marketing terms used, e.g., brand image, brand awareness, brand identity, brand equity, brand personality, etc., are many branding terms related to the concept of Brand, which encompass multiple elements that contribute to a business's overall branding strategy and the impact a brand makes on its target audience. Therefore, being imperative to have clarified them briefly in this paragraph (Rivers ,2018).

The bottom line is that brand awareness has been proved to have impact on consumers' confidence towards the brand since the more consumers are familiar with a brand, the more confident they feel and the more likely they will be to trust that brand. In addition, consumers tend to use brand awareness as a heuristic (brand association) when choosing a product because they feel that a well-known brand is more reliable than some unknown one.

After comprehending the importance of brand awareness for businesses, it is important to note that this does not happen overnight and is the result of multiple simultaneous efforts that go beyond trying to get paying customers. Among all the strategies possible, **making sharing easy** is one of the most important points. This is in line with what has been said before, for any industry or marketing strategy, it is very important to make it easy for the audience to share the business content, whether it is in the form of blog posts, sponsored content, or pictures/videos on social media. Additionally, word-of-mouth is the most effective way to establish trust and familiarity amongst customers. Therefore, digital influencers are one of the most popular strategies today when talking about boosting brand awareness. If a brand is having difficulties connecting with their target audience, reaching them through their favourite influencers is key as they trust recommendations from them more than traditional advertisements or even celebrity endorsements (Walgrove, 2019).

Figure 19 confirms what has been said, as it represents social media's biggest marketers' goals in 2018. We can see that brand awareness is the goal that comes first, followed by community engagement. Last but not least, growing influencer programs is also part of the goals.

**Figure 19 – Social Media Goals**



*Source: Sprout's 2018 Social Index*

#### **4.4.2 Brand Loyalty**

Loyalty is crucial for brands to build a strong consumer base that will serve as a tool to maintain their competitive advantage, which is required to succeed in the marketplace. This is because today there are more choices than even before and companies have to constantly come up with new ways to try and get as many eyes on the product/service as possible. That is precisely the main reason that establishing a brand loyal customer base is essential. Furthermore, most established brand name products/services exist in a highly competitive market with new and old competing brands, many of them barely distinguishable. As a result, brands tend to put in practice tactics to allow consumers to develop a sense of loyalty and an emotional connection.

When defining brand loyalty, it can be seen as “the attachment that a customer has to a brand” (Aaker, 199). As mentioned by Yoo, 2001 it can be seen as a tendency to be loyal to a specific brand, which is showed by the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice. In other words, brand loyalty is the positive association consumers attach to a particular product or brand. The consumer has the perception that the particular brand has the qualities that will meet their expectations and identifies with them at a personal level. Not only will they feel like they belong, but they will also be excited to represent the brand

in some ways. Furthermore, brand loyalty is known for having two distinct dimensions: **behavioural and attitudinal loyalty** (Dick *et al.*, 1994; Amine, 1998). The first refers to the action of repeating a purchase, i.e. only taking into consideration the behavioural aspect. On the contrary, the dimension of attitudinal loyalty refers to a psychological involvement with the brand, without necessarily repeating a purchase. Thus, both dimensions of loyalty are required to complete brand loyalty.

When consumers are loyal, they are more likely to purchase a brand routinely and resist switching to another brand (Loureiro, 2011). In addition, they will also be less sensitive to price changes. Consumers that exhibit brand loyalty are devoted to a product/service and will not be lured away despite competitors' efforts. Alongside this, loyal consumers are likely to act as brand ambassadors and spread brand awareness. The brand will, therefore, be able to increase their customer base.

The bottom line is that loyalty will benefit a business as it leads to repeat purchases by consumers, higher revenues and customer referrals. It is equally important to note that brand loyalty can disappear when consumer trends change but the product/service doesn't, placing a big emphasis on brands to keep up with trends and new generations at all times.

Corporate responsibility and social media are two major practices that will fuel consumer loyalty. As for the first, consumers have a greater desire nowadays for accountability. As for social media, customer service is vital, as it makes the process more accessible for helping clients or receiving complaints. On the other hand, brand loyalty implies trust of the brand and transparency. As seen before, influencers boost trust and are, therefore, likely to promote loyalty as a consequence (Sprout Social).

#### ***4.4.3 Purchase Intention***

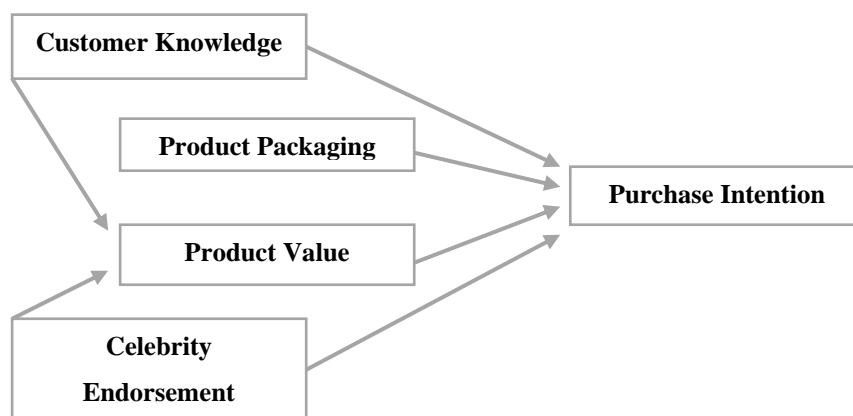
Hwa (2017) explains that purchase intention is a widely used marketing tool to estimate the effectiveness of a marketing strategy, which can be used to predict sales and market share. It is understandable that for a business this concept is crucial since as long as customers want to buy your products despite the availability of a similar one, the business can flourish with steady growth. Nevertheless, before a business is able to build purchase intention of their products/services, they need to establish themselves as a reliable and trustworthy brand in the market.

To define purchase intention, Lu (2014) explains that "purchase intention is a consumer's objective intention toward a product". Purchase Intention can also be defined as a consumer's conscious intention to buy a given product at a specific time or in a specific

situation (Spears, 2004, as mentioned by Lu, 2014). In addition, it can also be the need of a product which is driving the customer towards the purchase. At this moment, they are at the “Evaluation of alternatives” stage, where retaining such customers is very important as they are likely to shift immediately to other brands.

However, it is complex as it is a concept that depends on several variables. Many factors affect the consumer’s intention while selecting the product/service, and the ultimate decision depends on the consumer’s intention and how external factors affect him. In other words, the intention can change either in favour or against the business with the slightest change in any one of the factors that affect it, such as price, perceived quality and value. Other modules state that customer knowledge, product value, product packaging and celebrity endorsement are also key factors (Younus et al., 2015).

**Figure 20 – Purchase Intention Model**



*Source: Younus, Rasheed, Zia (2015)*

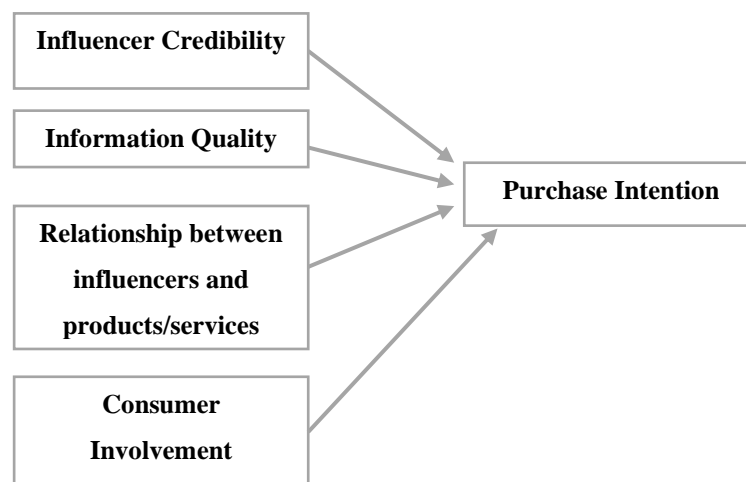
The bottom line is that there are several models that try to explain this complex concept of decision-making, a consumer’s reason for buying a particular brand.

To understand the concept of purchase intention, it is important to highlight other concepts that are related. Firstly, purchase intention is known to be closely related to **customer satisfaction**. This term is described as how customers assess production after utilizing a product as well as how they estimate the services of production by comparing it with products from other brands that are in the same industry. Secondly, purchase intention is responsible for assessing whether a product meets **customers’ expectations**. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that customer will be more satisfied when the field of production and services meet the customers’ expectations (Xiao et al., 2018).

When it comes to digital influencers and purchase intention, it is stated that a

favourable attitude towards a specific influencer is a dominant predictor that can lead to consumers' purchase intentions. This is because consumers that believe the content of a sponsored recommendation on social media are more likely to form a purchase intention regarding the product recommended by an influencer they like, admire and trust (Hwa, 2017). According to Dimitrova (2013), credibility is the first most important factor, followed by information quality, the relationship between influencer and products and lastly, consumer involvement (fig. 21).

**Figure 21 – Dimitrova's Consumer Purchase Intention Model Related To Influencers**



*Source: Dimitrova, 2013*

In an online environment, there are many factors affecting the consumer's purchase decision, so credibility is imperative as well as good quality and positive information about the product/service, which are much more trustworthy and the relationship between influencer and product, where the individual needs to embody the brand. Consumer involvement states that consumers that regularly seek a friend's advice and recommendation and acquire information about products will be more easily affected by social media content than others.



## CHAPTER V: Survey Analysis

### 5.1. Data Analysis and Procedure

The first step was to compile all the questionnaire data on Qualtrics site into the SPSS platform. Once all the data was in the system, a clean-up was mandatory in order to assure that the analysis would not be compromised later.

The initial sample encountered 372 answers. However, after the data clean up, where invalid answers were excluded, the final sample size was of 296 respondents. Once the data was well organized in the system, the first analysis to be done was a sample characterization. This first step aims to get to know the sample in depth with a simple frequency analysis represented in charts and pie graphs, summarizing demographic information, Instagram usage behaviour as well as travel behaviour.

The next step of the data analysis is a dimension reduction and scale validity process with the use of a factorial analysis that aims to understand if the items were representative of each construct.

Subsequently, to be able to understand in more depth the respondent's answers to the specific constructs, a descriptive analysis needed to be carried out for the three constructs—brand awareness, brand loyalty and purchase intention.

To conclude the data analysis, the last process to be done is the hypothesis testing to validate each premise. However, before choosing the best test to use, a normality test is needed to see if the samples' distribution is normal or not. The test chosen will then be able to measure if the median of a variable is statistically and significantly higher than the test value that was previously defined. The test value defined was 3.5 since the measurement was made with a 5-point Likert Scale, where 3 is the neutral answer. This will allow to understand whether Instagrammers have an impact on consumers' behaviour in the three constructs defined.

## 5.2 Data Analysis and Results

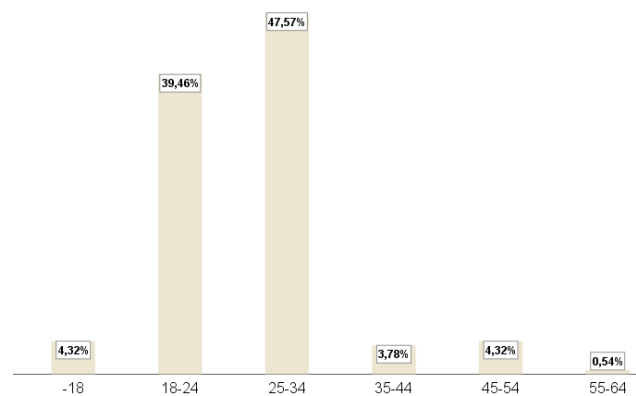
### 5.2.1 Sample Characterization

This section will focus on the characterization of the sample. The sample size, as mentioned before, is of 296 respondents. To start with, this section will analyse the sample according to demographics, highlighting the sample's age range, gender, nationality, education level and professional situation. Following the demographics analysis, the paper will focus on the Instagram usage behaviour of the sample as well as their travelling behaviours.

#### Demographics

Regarding the age distribution of the sample, as shown below, the main age range is from 25-34 (47,57%) followed by 18-24 (39,46%) years old. This means that 87,03%, more than half of the respondents, belong to generation Y. The other age ranges corresponding to other generation groups, such as Baby Boomers and Gen-Z, do not have enough expression in this study to be included in the analysis.

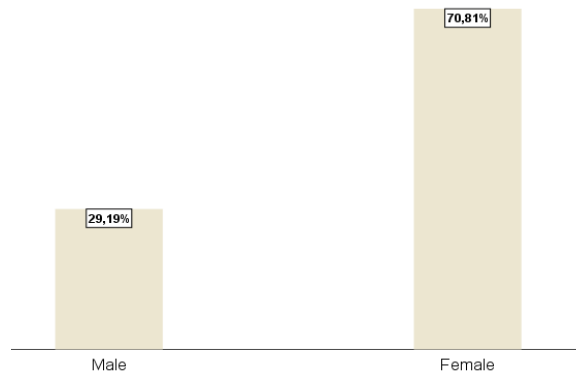
**Figure 22 - Age**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

In respect to the respondents' gender, the results show a great discrepancy, where 70,81% of the respondents are female and only 29,19% are male (figure 23).

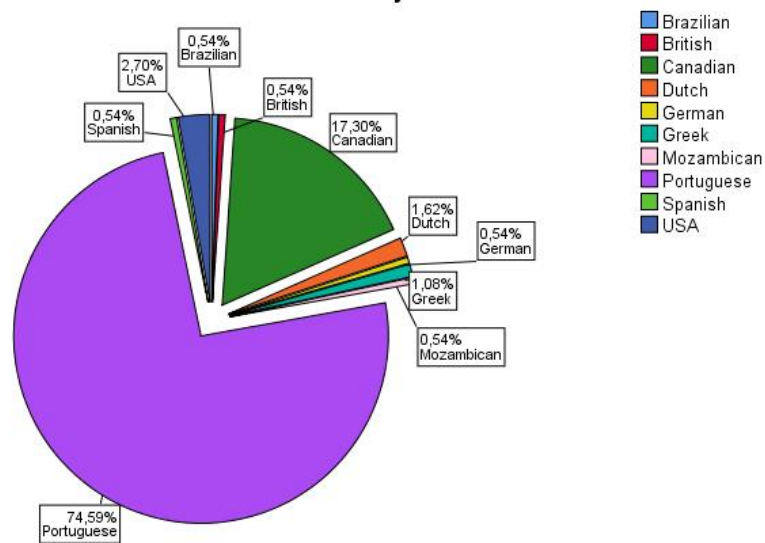
**Figure 23 - Gender**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

When it comes to nationality, Portuguese was the nationality with most respondents, with 74,50%. In fact, Portuguese respondents account for more than half of the population of this study. Canadian respondents are the nationality that follows, with a percentage of 17,30. Other nationalities with less expression include respondents from Brazil, Britain, Germany, Greece, Mozambique, Spain, USA and Holland (figure 24).

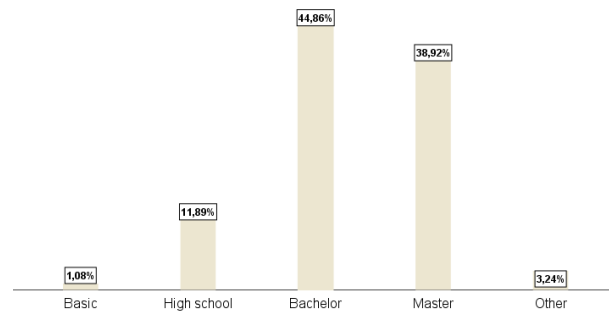
**Figure 24 - Nationality**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

With respect to the respondents' education level, the results show that most of the respondents have a high level of education, with 44,86% with a bachelor's degree and 38,92% with a masters (figure 25). Only 11,89% of the respondents left school after high school. On the other hand, 3,24% claim to have a post-graduation or specialized diploma specific to their countries' educational system.

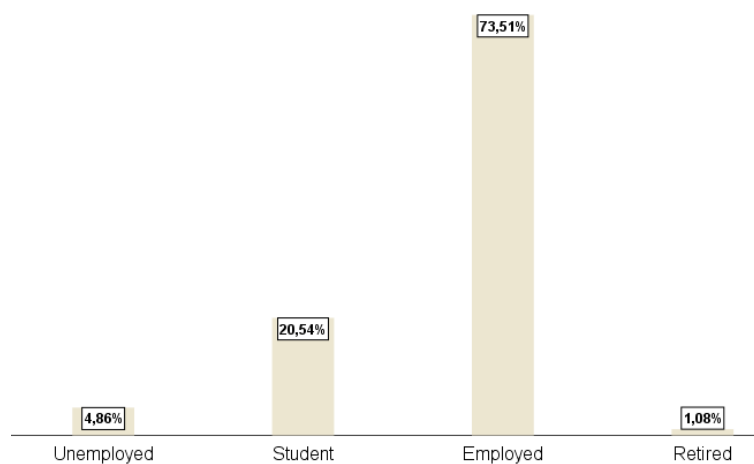
**Figure 25 – Education Level**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

Regarding the professional situation of the sample (figure 26), more than half of the respondents are employed (73,51%) followed by students (20,54%). A small minority are unemployed (4,86%) and retired (1,08%).

**Figure 26 – Professional Situation**

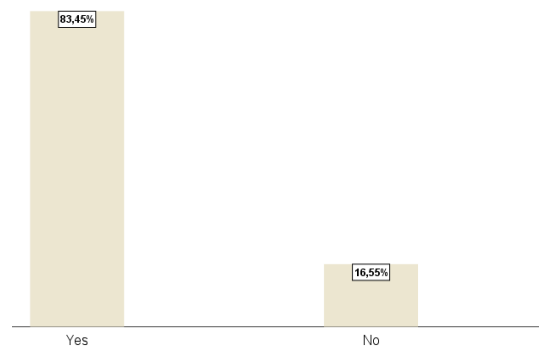


*Source: Author's Elaboration*

## Instagram usage

After getting to know the sample in terms of demographic data, their Instagram usage behaviour must be highlighted in order to know certain aspects, such as how much time they spend on the platform daily, if they follow Instagrammers and, if so, if they follow travel Instagrammers, as well as if they see Instagram as a tool for inspiration and travel planning.

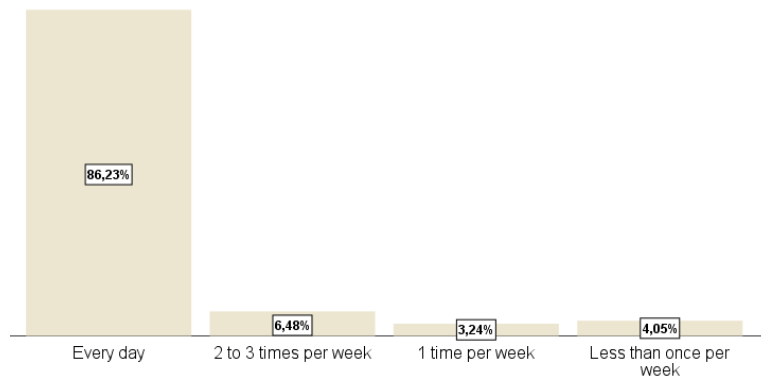
**Figure 27 – Do you have an Instagram account?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

The first question presented in the survey was a screening question, meaning that if the respondents answered negatively, they could not continue the questionnaire, as it meant they did not have the profile to participate in this study. The question asked was a yes or no type of question with the aim of knowing if the respondents had a personal Instagram account. The results showed that 83,45% of the respondents gave a positive answer, therefore claiming to have a personal Instagram account. On the other hand, only 16,55% said that they did not have one. As a result, the people who answered this question in the negative were removed from the study.

**Figure 28 – How often do you go on Instagram per week?**

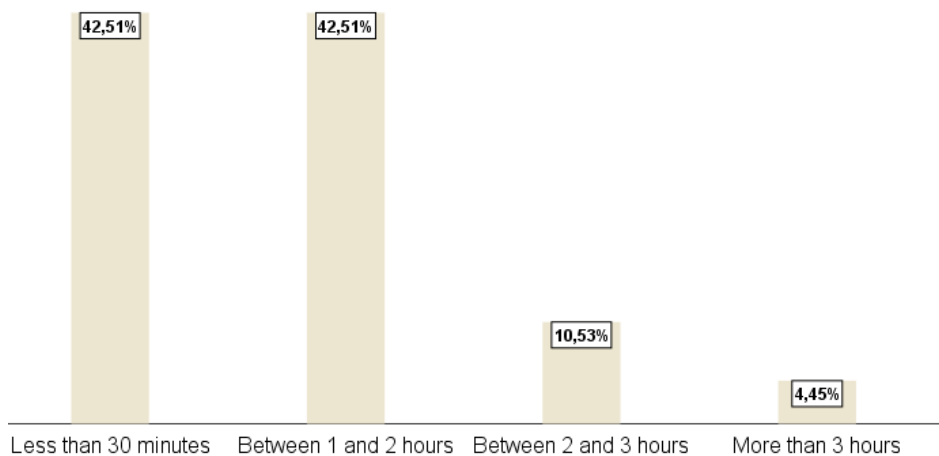


*Source: Author's Elaboration*

When questioning about the frequency of using this platform, the first question made was to know how often the respondents go on Instagram per week. Not surprisingly, more than half of the respondents, more precisely 86,23%, use the platform every day of the week (figure 28). Other responses that claimed to go on Instagram 2 to 3 times a week, once per week or even less than once per week, have very low percentages, from 6,48% to 4,05%

However, the people who said they went on Instagram everyday were then asked how much time they spent on Instagram per day. The two main ranges selected by the respondents were less than 30 minutes and between 1 and 2 hours with 42,51% each.

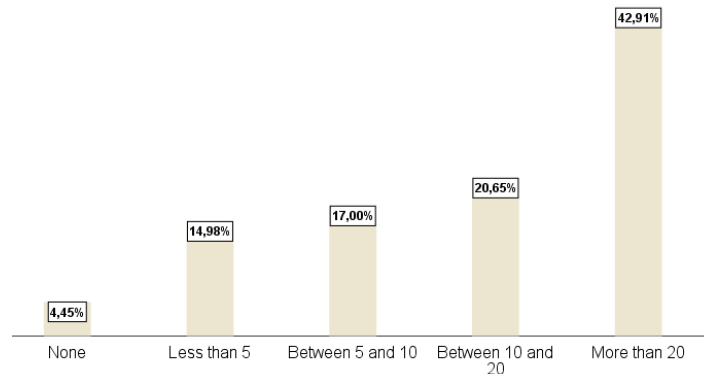
**Figure 29 – How much time do you spend on Instagram per day?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

The next question aimed to know, on average, how many Instagrammers people follow. This question presented a definition of Instagrammer in order to make sure the respondents had no doubt about this concept. As presented in the next chart, most people selected the option “more than 20” (42,91%) followed by option “between 10 and 20” (20,65%). A small minority of only 4,45% claimed to follow no Instagrammers.

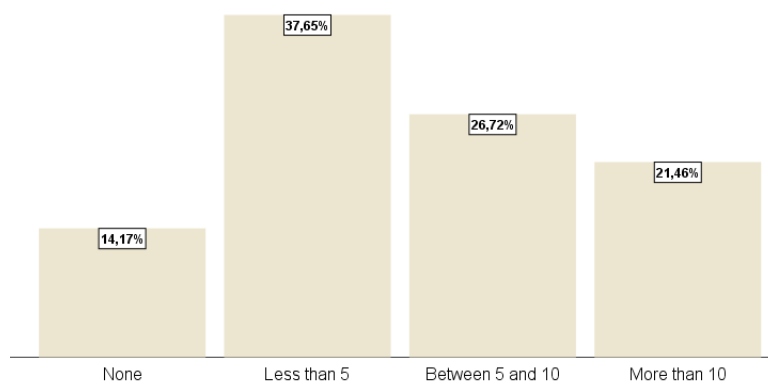
**Figure 30 – How many Instagrammer do you follow?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

Since the focus of this study are travel Instagrammers and their impact on consumer behaviour, it was of big interest to find out how many travel related Instagrammers the respondents followed on Instagram, on average. The figure below shows the results from the survey where 37,65% follow “less than 5”, followed by “between 5 and 10” with 26,72% and “more than 10”, with 21,46%. Only 14,1% claimed to not follow any travel Instagrammers.

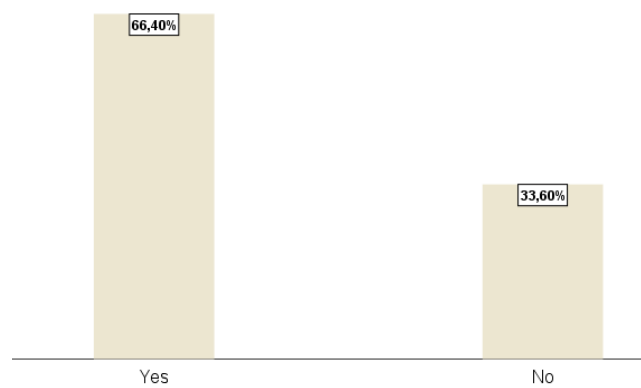
**Figure 31 – How many travel-related Instagrammers do you follow?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

Similarly, it was of extreme importance to understand the opinion of the respondents when asked if they used Instagram as an inspirational and travel planning tool. The results show that more than half of the answers (66,40%) were positive and only 33,60% were negative (figure 32).

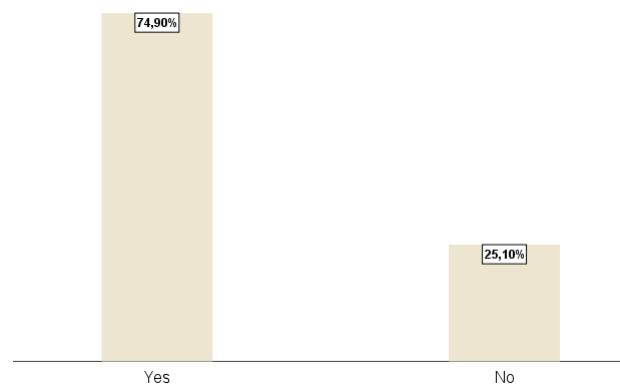
**Figure 32 – Do you use Instagram for inspiration and travel planning?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

Taking into consideration that the research involves the presence of hotels on Instagram posts with travel Instagrammers, it is of extreme importance to assess the interaction between the individuals and this type of content. The first question was then of whether the respondents have ever seen an Instagram post of an Instagrammer in a hotel. Figure 20 clearly shows that more than half of the sample answered positively (74,90%), therefore having seen this type of content on Instagram before. On the other hand, respondents that answered “no” only account for 25,10% of the responses (Fig. 33).

**Figure 33 – Have you ever seen an Instagram post of an Influencer in a hotel?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*



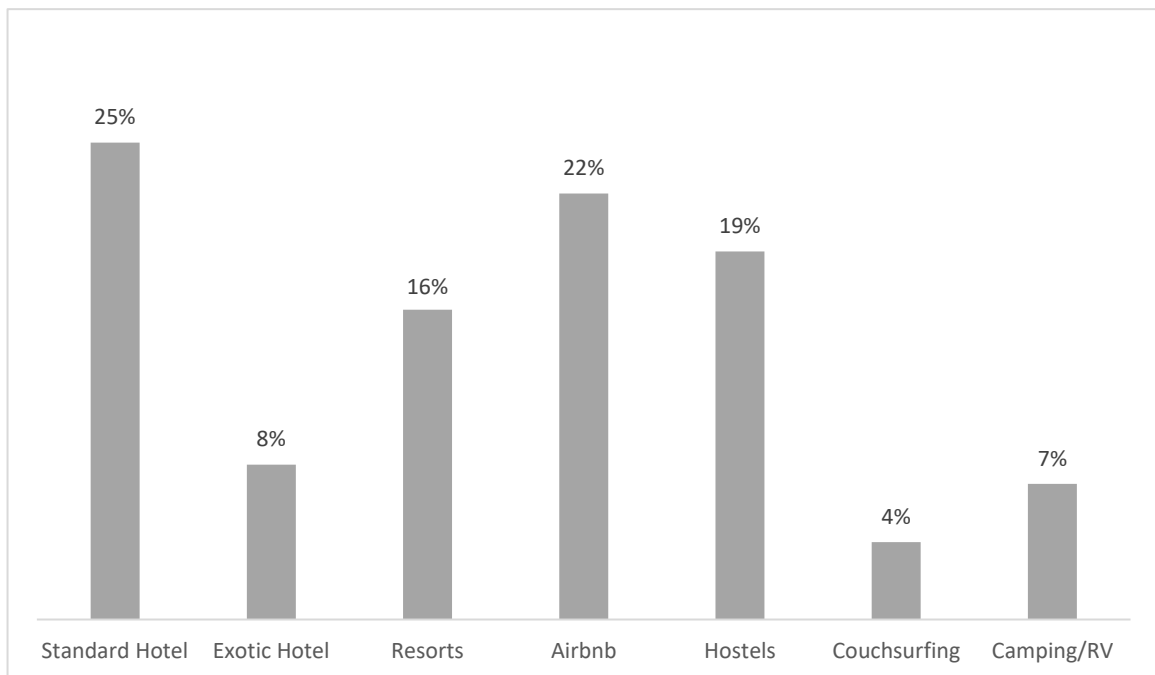
Following this question, the respondents were asked to name the hotel they saw or, if they did not remember the name, to describe what they remembered about it. However, only 18,24% of the respondents were able to name the hotel. Amongst them, there were famous hotels such as the Four Seasons, Vila Galé, SANA, Ritz and Pestana, as well as some fewer known brands and some hostels. For the rest of the respondents, when describing what they remembered about the hotel they mainly mentioned the rooms, views, existence of swimming pools, decoration and location.

**Travel behaviour**

This section aims to help finalize the characterization of the respondents by having an overview of their demographics, Instagram habits and lastly, understanding the respondents’ travel habits in regard to how often they travel per year, what type of vacation they prefer, accommodation options they would choose and if they prefer to travel solo, as a couple or with friends.

The first question in this category aimed to assess the preferred method of accommodation. The results of Figure 34 show that the preferred type of accommodation are the standard hotels (25%), followed by Airbnb (22%), Hostels (19%), Resorts (15%), Exotic hotels (8%), camping/RV (7%) and finally, couch surfing (4%).

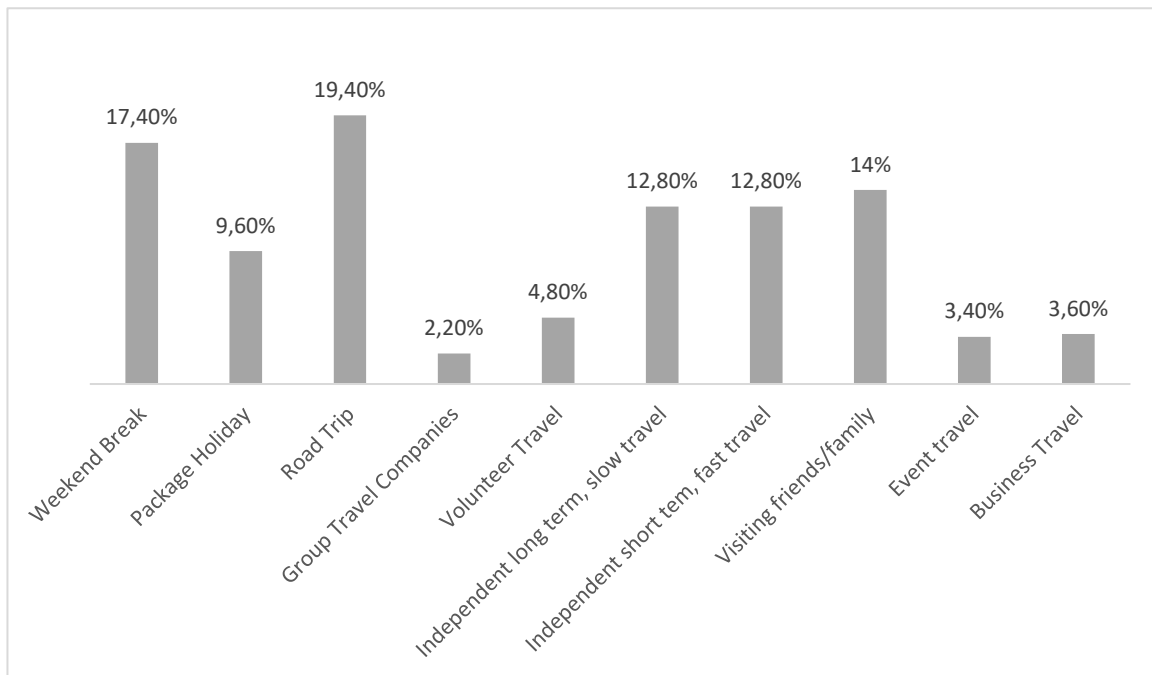
**Figure 34 – Preferred type of accommodation?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

Regarding the type of vacation preferred, the options with most answers were weekend breaks (17,40%), road trips (19,40%) and visiting family and friends (14%). Following these, there were independent long-term travel (12,80%) and independent short-term travel (14%) as preferred. Lastly, inclusive trips (9,60%), volunteer trips (4,80%), events (3,40%) and business trips (3,60%) were the ones with less expression (Fig. 35).

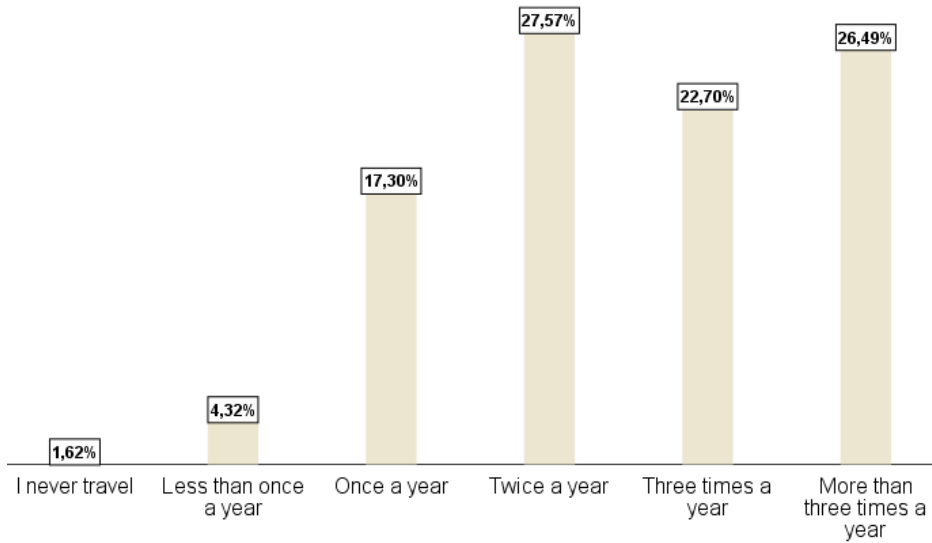
**Figure 35 – Preferred type of vacation?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

When asked how many trips they take per year, the results were distributed evenly though the options. However, most of the respondents answered “twice a year” (27,57%), followed by “more than three times a year” (26,49%), followed by “three times a year” (22,70%). Only 1,62% said they never travelled and 4,32% that they travelled less than once per year.

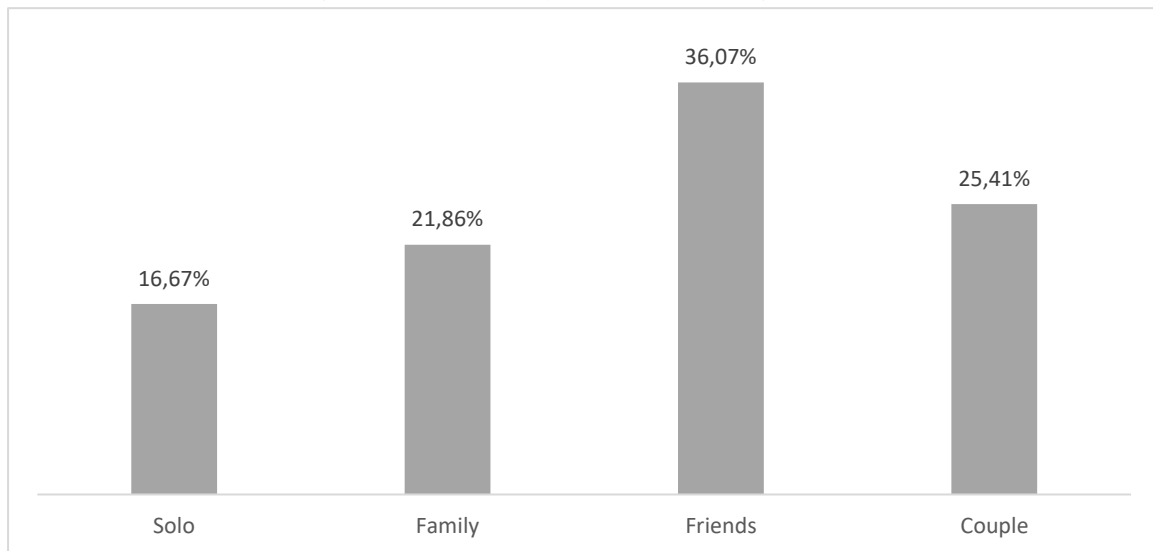
**Figure 36 – How often do you travel per year?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

The last question of the questionnaire asked how the respondents like to travel the most, whether alone, as a couple, with friends or family. Travelling with friends was the most popular option, followed by couple, family and solo. Nevertheless, all options had similar values indicating that the respondents chose many of the options as their favourite.

**Figure 37 – How do you like travelling?**



*Source: Author's Elaboration*

### 5.2.2 Dimension Reduction and Scale Validity

To continue with the analysis of the data and prior to the hypothesis test, there is a need to evaluate the consistency of the scales used and how well organized they are in terms of explaining each specific construct. This is especially true when the research aims to measure clients' satisfaction or opinion.

To do so, a factorial analysis will be carried out using the Principal Components analysis for the three existing constructs: Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. However, prior to the Principal Components Analysis, two tests must be done, namely Bartlett's test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO). The Bartlett's test will measure if the factorial analysis is adequate to the problem, in other words, to verify if there is a strong enough correlation for the factorial analysis to be performed. The KMO test will, on the other hand, measure the adequacy of using the factorial analysis for the respective data base.

For these two tests to be accepted, the KMO test should have a value between 0,5 and 1 and the Bartlett's test should be lower than 0,05. In table 9, it is possible to see that the Bartlett test Sphericity is significant (less than 0,05) and approximates Qui-square distribution; therefore, it can be considered that Qui-square is distributed. Since the aim of this table is to test if the variables are correlated significantly different from 0, we can confirm with confidence that our variables are significantly correlated (p-value is very small).

**Table 9 – KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test		.859
Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Aprox. Chi-Square	1131,169
	df	66
	Sig.	.000

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

The next step consists of the application of the factorial analysis with the main goal of reducing the variables used and group them with fewer factors. The table shows the total percentage of variance that is explained by the factors. These factors should present a cumulative variance of at least 60%.

As observed in table 10, two components were extracted. Components 1 and 2

present an Eigenvalue value higher than 1, namely 5,539 and 1,614, therefore the components will be kept. This means that 12 items formed 2 different dimensions, representing an explained variance of 46,156 %, which is a good value in practice and a not so good value of 13,449% of variance.

**Table 10 – Principal Components Analysis**

Componente	Autovalores iniciais			Somadas de extração de carregamentos ao quadrado		
	Total	% de variância	% cumulativa	Total	% de variância	% cumulativa
1	5,539	46,156	46,156	5,539	46,156	46,156
2	1,614	13,449	59,605	1,614	13,449	59,605
3	,961	8,009	67,615			
4	,750	6,253	73,868			
5	,676	5,636	79,504			
6	,576	4,802	84,306			
7	,503	4,192	88,498			
8	,363	3,021	91,519			
9	,331	2,755	94,274			
10	,262	2,184	96,458			
11	,246	2,050	98,508			
12	,179	1,492	100,000			

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

The next table indicates how each of the individual items do in terms of the component. The values are called factor loadings and show how strong the relationship is between the item and the component in the solution. Component 2 does not have such a strong relationship as component 1 since it presents lower loading factors (less than 0.5) and therefore does not load meaningfully in the component.

**Table 11 – Components Matrix**

	1	2
A1	,678	,418
A2	,696	,467
A3	,728	,423
A4	,661	,499
A5	,621	,196
P1	,689	-,251
P2	,691	-,507
P3	,641	-,117
P4	,698	-,515
P5	,698	-,314
L1	,567	-,016
L2	,763	-,237

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

It is also important to highlight, that according to a Rotational Matrix that was ran on SPSS, two factors were removed as they were interfering the study. These two factors were, A5 – “I know what the hotel looks like” – and L3 – “I believe this hotel has credibility”, therefore having left 10 items instead of 12.

### ***5.2.3 Descriptive Statistics***

To analyse in more depth the way the respondents replied to each item, this section will use median and mode as the main measurements for each of the constructs (taking into consideration that the data is ordinal). This section will allow the reader to comprehend which items have the most impact in the overall construct rating.

Firstly, with regard to the construct Brand Awareness, one can see that it has a median value of 3 for all its items, which is considered to be positive since the neutral point of the scale is 3 and above that indicates that the respondents agreed with the affirmation that is presented in the item. This is the most consistent construct, since all its items have the same median value.

Purchase Intention, on the other hand, has a more heterogenous outcome, where the median varies from 2 (disagree) to 4 (agree). P1 and P2 have strong medians, meaning the respondents agree with the affirmation that is presented in the items. However, P3 – “I

stayed at this hotel after seeing the post” - has the lowest score, 2, meaning the respondents do not agree.

Brand Loyalty is, in turn, the construct with the lowest scores, registering only 2 and 3 (disagree and neutral). Item L2 – “I will not book other hotels if this one is available” was the item with the lowest score (2).

When it comes to mode, one can see the items that were answered more frequently. Again, brand awareness is the construct with the highest outcome, where A1 and A2 had strong results (3 and 4, respectively). Purchase Intention had item P1, P2 with strong values (4 and 3, respectively) while P3 was low. Brand Loyalty had item L1 and L3 with the strongest values.

**Table 12 – Median and Mode Table**

		Items	Median	Mode
<b>Brand Awareness</b>	<b>A1</b>	I can recognize the hotel among other competing brands	3	3
	<b>A2</b>	I am aware of the hotel	3	4
	<b>A3</b>	I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the hotel	3	2
	<b>A4</b>	When it comes to hotels in general, I can immediately recall the brand of this hotel	3	2
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	<b>P1</b>	I would consider buying this product	4	4
	<b>P2</b>	I will book this hotel the next time I need one	3	3
	<b>P3</b>	I stayed at the hotel after seeing the post	2	1
<b>Brand loyalty</b>	<b>L1</b>	This hotel will be my first choice	3	3
	<b>L2</b>	I will not book other hotels if this one is available	2	2
	<b>L3</b>	I will recommend this hotel to other people	3	3

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

Analysing each item individually is not statistically representative of the hypothesis created and, therefore, the next section will be based on a statistical test that fully investigates the validity of each research hypothesis.

#### **5.2.4 Hypothesis test**

This section has the main objective of assessing the confirmation of each defined hypothesis. Thus, the first step of this procedure is to test the normality of the sample using

a Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test. As seen in the table below, the significance value (p-value) for all the variables is 0. These values are less than 0.05, which means that the variables are statistically significantly different than a normal distribution. We will reject the null hypothesis and presume that the variables are not normally distributed.

**Table 13 – Normality K-S Test**

<b>Kolmogorov Test</b>			
	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>gl</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
I can recognize the hotel among other competing brands.	0,18	184	,000
I am aware of the hotel.	0,207	184	,000
I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the hotel.	0,222	184	,000
When it comes to hotels in general, I can immediately recall the brand of this hotel.	0,175	184	,000
I would consider buying this product.	0,29	184	,000
I will book this hotel the next time I need one.	0,206	184	,000
I stayed at the hotel after seeing the post.	0,212	184	,000
This hotel will be my first choice.	0,207	184	,000
I will not book other hotels if this one is available.	0,238	184	,000
I will recommend this hotel to other people.	0,204	184	,000

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

Taking into consideration that the sample is not normally distributed and that the dependent variables are ordinary, a non-parametric test needs to be carried out to test the hypothesis created. However, this assumption has not yet reached a common acceptance, and some scholars use parametric tests instead of non-parametric tests.

Nevertheless, the best test for this scenario in the non-parametric test category is the **One-sample Wilcoxon signed rank test**, where the null hypothesis states that the variable median is equal to the chosen test value. The main goal is then to reject the null hypothesis to prove that the variable has a higher median than the chosen test value.

In the table below, the three hypotheses are presented where the tested constructs were Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention.



**Table 14 – One-sample Wilcoxon signed rank test**

Test value of 3,5						
Brand Awareness	Items	Observed Median	t	Standardized Statistic test	Sig.	Decision
<b>A1</b>	I can recognize the hotel among other competing brands	3	4,33	-6,035	,000	Reject
<b>A2</b>	I am aware of the hotel	3	7,033	-2,136	,033	Reject
<b>A3</b>	I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the hotel	3	3,373	-7,321	,000	Reject
<b>A4</b>	When it comes to hotels in general, I can immediately recall the brand of this hotel	3	4,276	-6,117	,000	Reject
Brand Loyalty	Items	Observed Median	t	Standardized Statistic test	Sig.	Decision
<b>L1</b>	This hotel will be my first choice	3	1,79	-9,548	,000	Reject
<b>L2</b>	I will not book other hotels if this one is available	2	736	-10,961	,000	Reject
<b>L3</b>	I will recommend this hotel to other people	3	4,667	-5,586	,000	Reject
Purchase Intention	Items	Observed Median	t	Standardized Statistic test	Sig.	Decision
<b>P1</b>	I would consider buying this product	4	8,617	0,022	,983	<b>Accept</b>
<b>P2</b>	I will book this hotel the next time I need one	3	3,253	-7,564	,000	Reject
<b>P3</b>	I stayed at the hotel after seeing the post	2	1,232	-10,248	,000	Reject

*Source: Author's Elaboration*

**H1: Instagrammers impact consumers' brand awareness positively in the hospitality sector**

The first research hypothesis (H1) aims to see if Instagrammers do in fact have a positive impact on consumers' brand awareness in the hospitality sector. By analysing the table above, it is possible to see that items A1 to A4 have been rejected. In other words, the null hypothesis for those items was rejected. Therefore, H1 is validated and it can be

concluded that Instagrammers do have a positive impact on consumers' brand awareness according to the results of this test.

**H2: Instagrammers impact consumers' brand loyalty positively in the hospitality sector**

The second hypothesis (H2) follows the same principal as the one before, as all items for the construct of Brand Loyalty have been rejected and it is therefore possible to validate H2. According to the test results, it can be affirmed that Instagrammers do have an impact on consumers' brand loyalty in the hospitality sector.

**H3: Instagrammers impact consumers' purchase intention positively in the hospitality sector**

The last hypothesis (H3) which aims to assess whether Instagrammers impact consumers' purchase intention in the hospitality sector has an heterogeneous result. When looking at table 8, it is possible to see that not all items have the same output. P1 is not able to reject the null hypothesis, but P2 and P3 are. Therefore, it can be stated that H3 is partially validated.

**Table 15 – Hypothesis Validation Summary**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>H1:</b> Instagrammers impact consumers' <u>brand awareness</u> positively in the hospitality sector	Validated
<b>H2:</b> Instagrammers impact consumers' <u>brand loyalty</u> positively in the hospitality sector	Validated
<b>H3:</b> Instagrammers impact consumers' <u>purchase intention</u> positively in the hospitality sector	Partially Validated

*Source: Authors elaboration*

# CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

## 6.1 Final Considerations

With the main purpose of understanding the impact of digital influencers of the platform Instagram, aptly named Instagrammers, on consumers' travel behaviour, the previous data must be analysed before conclusions can be drawn. To do so, firstly it is important to understand the demographics and characterization of the population.

As shown in figure 22, more than half of the sample (87,03%) were between 25 and 35 years of age. This age category fits perfectly under the age range for Generation Y, the Millennials, who are the ones that are more avid social media users and the target of this study.

In fact, 83% of the respondents did claim to have an Instagram account, proving what has been said in previous literature reviews, where almost everyone today has a social media profile, Instagram being one of the most popular. What is more, this is a platform that is present in people's daily lives and which plays a central role in our everyday. In fact, when the respondents were asked how frequently they used this platform per week, 86,23% selected the option "once a day". Then, those that stated they went on Instagram every day, when asked how much time a day, and as seen before, the answers ranged from 30 minutes a day up to 3h, which are considerable amounts of time.

To sum up this first idea, one can strongly state that social media, Instagram being one of the best examples, has a strong, secure place in our smartphones and there are no signs predicting that this trend will stop or even slow down any time soon.

Within the world of Instagram, Instagrammers are one of the major phenomena that users have comfortably accepted today. In fact, a big part of the study's population (42,91%) indicated that they follow more than 20 Instagrammers. However, people chose the Instagrammers they followed based on their field of expertise, which goes hand in hand with the users' likes, hobbies and interests. If the user is a big fan of travelling, who likes seeing content related to travel, destinations and hotels, they will most likely follow travel-related Instagrammers. According to the survey, only 14% claimed not to follow any travel related Instagrammer. This, in turn, leads to the idea that mostly everyone today is interested in travel-related subjects, highlighting the importance travel has in people's lives.

In addition, today it is accepted that Instagram is not just a social media platform to socialize with friends but is also a tool for inspiration and travel planning. As stated by the results of the questionnaire, more than half of the respondents affirmed that they used Instagram for that end. This is largely, amongst other benefits already covered before, due to its visual content, its popularity and the fact that it is an uncluttered, user-friendly platform. The travel industry is very visual and having a platform that provides a space to share relevant content about destinations and

hotels is something that is greatly treasured by the traveller.

As regards this study, in order to answer the main research question stated at the beginning of this paper – “Do Instagrammers positively impact consumers’ travel behaviour?”-, the survey asked the user to recall a post of an influencer in a hotel they have seen and answer three table questions related to the three dimensions defined – Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention.

It is important to highlight that more than half of the respondents answered affirmatively to the previous question, as they are individuals who travel frequently. In fact, most of the respondents are avid travellers, going on 2 trips a year or more (76,76%). A very specific characteristic of Millennials is that they tend to spend less money on accommodation options in order to spend more on the destination and the frequency/length of travel. These individuals are travellers who appreciate the sharing economy, Airbnb, and hostels as well as choosing to stay with friends/family when travelling. According to the study’s results, the cheapest travelling options were the choices preferred, a trend that is seen with the emergence of the younger generations and their new ways of making travel accessible.

Coming back to the objective of understanding if Instagrammers impact the three chosen constructs, when analysing the hypothesis created, the first conclusion that can be drawn is that Instagrammers are a source that positively impacts consumers’ brand awareness in the hospitality sector. Therefore, H1 is validated. In other words, when seeing Influencer posts on Instagram about a hotel, consumers will become more aware of the existence of the brand. This confirms the ideology of many authors (Dehghani *et al*, 2016; Castronovo and Huang, 2012; Hoffmann, 2010; Mangold *et al*, 2009), stated in the literature review that affirm that digital influencers are a positive marketing strategy to increase the degree of a consumer’s brand awareness. The name of the hotel, its symbol or its general appearance are amongst the main ideas that the user retains, as well as special features that make them stand out.

Regarding consumers’ brand loyalty, it could also be proved that Instagrammers have a positive effect on brand loyalty. Therefore, H2 can be validated – “Instagrammers have a positive impact on consumers’ brand loyalty”. However, Instagrammers have less impact on brand loyalty when compared with brand awareness.

Lastly, the construct of purchase intention was not able to be completely validated as one of its items did not meet the criteria. Therefore, H3- “Instagrammers impact positively consumers purchase intention” - is only partly validated.

To conclude, endorsing Instagrammers is an extremely popular marketing strategy nowadays where the first and most important step is ensuring that the brand is endorsing the right Instagrammers, that is, the one that fits perfectly under the brand’s values and lifestyle, with the right targeted followers.

## **6.2 Academic, Marketing and Management Implications**

This research study led to conclusions that filled the gap in current research as regards measuring and comprehending the power of digital influencers in the social media platform, Instagram. More specifically how these individuals dictate consumer behaviour in the hospitality sector.

Findings suggest that Instagram is nowadays one of the most popular social media tools, used every day amongst the new generations from different countries.

This implies that hotels and touristic destinations must keep investing and engaging in digital platforms as the way to not only reach new travellers but maintain good relationships with previous clients. Thus, one can say that tourism is entering the era of Marketing 4.0, making use of not only social media platforms but also an important marketing strategy—Digital Influencers. Since these individuals have such power over consumers, more than any other form of communication, hotels all over the world may wish to reallocate some of their marketing budgets and try find the most suitable Influencer to partner with. In other words, influencers whose audience comprises the target consumers they want to reach and attract.

The bottom line is that digital marketing is the new way of doing marketing today, since brands need to be where the consumers are, and today that is on social media. Besides all the other known strategies digital marketing covers, from SEO, SEM and emailing marketing, social media is the new tool to use, highlighting the importance of content marketing and all its different features. Even more, the best and most secure way to lead marketing strategies today is knowing the importance of a multichannel marketing strategy, where a business, in this case a hotel, should worry about not only having their website on Google's first research page, perhaps also having some paid adds, doing some emailing campaigns such as newsletter, but also focusing on social media and all it involves. Today it is known that Google's algorithm uses social media content as one of the tools for ranking a site on its search pages. Therefore, Instagrammers are a great way of creating "buzz" and traffic to one's site.

### **6.3 Limitation of the research**

Notwithstanding all the efforts to minimize potential error and bias, the current study presents some limitations that should be considered. This study proposed to fulfil a gap in the literature review, but conclusions should take into account the following limitations as well as consider the proposed future research directions.

Firstly, taking into consideration that the sampling method used was a non-probability type with a convenience approach, due to the fact that it was the most accessible method for the writer, leads us to realize that the results and findings might not be representative of the universe, thereby understanding that it can only be considered in the context of this particular study sample. In other words, the respondents that participated in this study could be biased, since they are people that are within the writer's circle, and as a consequence, the majority of them are Portuguese citizens (74,59%) and mostly female (70,81%). It could also be said that their travelling habits are, to some extent, similar to the authors' and therefore not representative of all types of Millennial travellers out there today. The type of traveller matters greatly to this analysis, since it reflects on how they get inspired to travel, search for information and what factors affect their decision-making style.

Secondly, the research design adopted was an online survey where the respondents that took the questionnaire did not have the opportunity to clarify any doubts that they might have had, leading perhaps to conditioned answers. Perhaps some questions could have been interpreted in more than one way, leading to biased answers. In addition, it is also important to mention that this method allows a high percentage of random responses. Therefore, a qualitative analysis using interviews could have had been a great tool to comprehend behaviours in a more practical exercise. This is particularly true due to the nature of this study, which is based on consumers' opinions and their type of lifestyle. Therefore, interviews would be an ideal way to get deeper into the answers and analyse them in a broader, more experimental way than just data.

Another study limitation is related to the chosen language. All of the questions in the survey were written in English which could have led to interpretation errors.

An additional limitation is the lack of relevant literature available seeing that digital influencers are a fairly recent phenomenon. Consequently, not many scientific studies have been done or are available on the internet. There are not enough scientific studies that aim to determine the concrete benefits of endorsing these types of individuals for brands. Instagram and Instagrammers are an even more specific scope within this global industry of digital influencers and social media, so it is even more difficult to find relevant articles. Although this paper does have scientific articles that it was based on, websites and other

non-scientific articles were also used.

It is also very important to highlight that the assumption that arise from this study are applied to the chosen industries in which consumers based their responses. Consequently, generalizations for the whole market are not completely accurate.

## **6.4 Future Research guidelines**

Throughout this research, several topics arose that could possibly serve for further investigation.

Firstly, it may well be worth understanding if the power of influencers is the same amongst different nationalities, since this study had greater focus on Portuguese and Canadians citizens. Different nationalities and cultures might have different ways of experiencing travel with different outcomes for brands to be aware of.

Secondly, this research could be extended to additional consumer behaviour dimensions in order to have a bigger understanding of this phenomenon, for instance perceived quality, brand trust and brand reputation. It would be of great importance to study, not only in more depth the three constructs that were used in this paper, but also how they are connected with each other and to other constructs in order to have a big picture of consumer behaviour in the tourism industry, which is such a complex concept.

Lastly, it could be interesting to understand what type of hotels benefit more from this strategy. In other words, if a hotel's star ratings have an impact, or the type of hotel (standard hotel, resorts, boutique hotels, villas, etc.) or even the location of the property. The aim would be to understand what type of traveller and what type of vacations use travel Instagrammers to inspire and plan their vacations the most.



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## Attachments

### Research Questionnaire

Welcome!

I am a master's student in Hotel Management at ESHTE, in Lisbon, Portugal. I am currently elaborating this questionnaire in order to finish my master's dissertation. The main goal of this study is to analyse the impact of using travel Instagrammers in the hospitality sector. All the answers to this questionnaire are anonymous and they will never be release for any other purpose. The estimated time to answer to all the questions is of 10 minutes. Thank you so much for participating!

Patricia Fonseca

### PART I

This first part of the questionnaire aims to understand the respondent's habits and interaction with hotels on Instagram.

1. Do you have an Instagram profile? (If no, don't answer to any more questions)

Yes

No

2. On average, how often do you go on Instagram per week?

Every day

2 to 3 times per week

1 time per week

Less than 1 time per week

3. On average, how much time do you spend per day on Instagram?

Less than 30 minutes



- Between 1 and 2 hours
- Between 2 and 3 hours
- More than 3 hours

4. How many Instagrammers do you follow on Instagram?

Note: Instagrammers are individuals with a high number of followers on their account and produce sponsored content about a certain field of expertise.

- None
- Less than 5
- Between 5 and 10
- Between 10 and 20
- Between 20 and 50
- More than 50

5. How many of those Instagrammers are related to travel?

- None
- Less than 5
- Between 5 and 10
- Between 10 and 20
- More than 20

6. Do you use Instagram as a tool for inspiration and travel planning?

- Yes
- No

7. Have you ever seen an Instagram post with sponsored content about a hotel?

Yes

No

8. If yes, which hotel was it? If you don't remember the name, tell me what you remember about the hotel.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Having in mind the hotel you just mentioned, please select your level of agreement to the following affirmations:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree
I can recognize the hotel among other competing brands					
I am aware of the hotel					
I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the hotel					
When it comes to product, I can immediately recall the brand					
I know what the hotel looks like					

10. Having in mind the same hotel as before, please select your level of agreement to the following affirmations:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree
I would consider buying this product					
I will book this hotel the next time I need on					
I stayed at the hotel after seeing the post					

11. Still having in mind the same hotel, please select your level of agreement to the following affirmations:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree
This hotel will be my first choice					
I will not book other hotels if this one is available					
I believe it has credibility					

I will recommend this hotel to other people					
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## Part II

This last part of the questionnaire aims to understand the profile of the respondents and their travel habits.

1. Age:

- 10-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- +65

2. Gender:

- Female
- Male

3. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Educational level:

- Highschool
- Bachelor
- Master

- Other

5. Professional Situation:

- Unemployed
- Student
- Employed
- Retired

6. Type of **vacation** preferred?

- Weekend break
- Package Holiday (all inclusive)
- Caravan/Road Trip
- Group travel companies
- Volunteer Travel
- Independent long-term slow travel
- Independent short-term fast travel
- Visiting friends/relatives
- Event travel
- Business travel

7. Types of accommodation preferred?

- Standard Hotel
- Exotic Hotels (e.g. ice hotels)
- Hostel (ex: bunk bed style)

- Airbnb
- Resort
- Couchsurfing style
- Camping/RV

8. How often do you travel per year?

- I never travel
- Less than once a year
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Three times a year
- More than three times a year

9. Who do you prefer travelling with?

- Solo
- Family
- Friends
- Couple

