

THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING,
INFLUENCERS AND CELEBRITY
ENDORSEMENT ON BRAND LOVE:
THE YOUTUBER'S EFFECT.

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To **my family**, who gave me countless reasons to never give up.

To **my friends**, who were constantly supporting me.

To all those who have been by my side during my academic journey.

‘The people who influence you are the people who believe in you’

Henry Drummond

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Resumo

Brand love é a ligação emocionalmente mais intensa entre consumidores e marcas, sendo considerada uma das ferramentas mais eficientes para manter ambas as entidades juntas. Esta abordagem é crucial, sabendo que o mercado atual tem testemunhado altos níveis de concorrência, com o surgimento de novas marcas, novos produtos e até novas formas de comunicação. Simultaneamente, os gestores também perceberam que o uso de influenciadores ou de criadores digitais como parceiros no processo de disseminação de informação é uma prática efetivamente benéfica. Uma das possíveis plataformas é o YouTube, uma rede social ideal para implementar as tais estratégias de marketing. Esta dissertação procura entender como é que os influenciadores do YouTube contribuem para o processo de *brand love*. Durante o desenvolvimento da pesquisa, surgiu um conjunto de fatores de envolvimento do consumidor: números e resultados; ligação com os seguidores; regularidade; credibilidade; qualidade do argumento; autenticidade; conteúdo visualmente apelativo; relações de longa data; e publicações durante a manhã levam às YouTubers a envolver os seus seguidores. Esses mesmos fatores foram utilizados como elementos de avaliação para perceber que outras características as YouTubers mais fortes a esse nível podem ter. Com isto, esta dissertação concluiu que aspetos como ter uma relação informal com as marcas, apresentar um conteúdo diferente daquele que a indústria oferece ou ter uma relação próxima com os seguidores são respostas à questão principal do estudo, que tenta perceber quais são as características das YouTubers na área da publicidade, *influencers* e endosso de celebridades que contribuem para o *brand love*.

Palavras-chave: *Brand Love*, Envolvimento com a Marca, Marketing Digital, Marketing em *Social Media*, YouTube, Publicidade, Influenciadores, Endosso de Celebridades.

Sistema de classificação JEL: M31; M37.

Abstract

Brand love is the most emotionally intense connection between consumers and brands and it has been considered one of the most efficient tools to keep both entities together. This approach is crucial, as the current market has witnessed high levels of competition, with the new brands, new products, or even new communication ways emergence. At the same time, managers also realized that the use of influencers or digital creators as partners in the information dissemination process is an effectively beneficial practice. One of the possible platforms is YouTube, which is an ideal social network to implement such marketing strategies. The current dissertation aims to understand how YouTube influencers contribute to the process of brand love. During the development of the research, a set of customer engagement factors has arisen: numbers and results; connectedness with followers; frequency; credibility; argument quality; authenticity; visually appealing content; long-time relationships; and posts in the morning lead YouTube influencers to engage their followers. Such factors were also evaluation elements that were used to understand what other characteristics the strongest YouTubers in those factors have. Hence, this dissertation concludes that aspects as having an informal relationship with brands, presenting different content from others in the industry, or having a well-connected relationship with followers, have emerged as responses of the primary question, which try to capture what are the YouTubers' characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that contribute to brand love.

Keywords: Brand Love, Brand Engagement, Digital Marketing, Social Media Marketing, YouTube, Advertising, Influencers, Celebrity Endorsement.

JEL classification system: M31; M37.

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Executive Summary

Managers have faced a set of phenomena that are impactful enough to change the way the market evolves. In the last couple of decades, the emergence of the Internet and social media has proved that people are living in a digital basis. Nowadays, humanity is dependent on digital technologies and devices, such as smartphones, apps, or smart products that people use to demand, search, decide, buy, and give feedback regarding their experiences. Furthermore, some organisations have also relied on such online environment, since they can target, create, sell, and deal with customers on different social networks. One of the most successful platforms is YouTube, which is considered the largest video-sharing site on the Internet. YouTube allows users to post hours of video per minute and the content can be pretty diversified, including tutorials, ads, games, challenges, or even movie trailers. Managers started to realise that such platform could be interestingly beneficial for their information dissemination process. Combining this advantage with their primary objective of engaging customers and keeping them close to the brand and its products, they believe that YouTube is a potential parent in such process. Nonetheless, it was not the only thing that managers concluded. First, they have comprehended that simple engagement sources were not enough and hence, they must make their followers love their brand, facing the phenomenon of brand love. Secondly, they also recognized that they do not have to be the agent responsible to disseminate information, but they rather could use YouTube influencers. Vloggers - YouTube users that produce vlogs - upload videos mentioning products or brands that they use on their personal life. Thus, the question which is remained is 'how YouTube influencers can contribute to the process of brand love'. First of all, it was important to see what are the engagement factors that could lead the brand love: numbers and results; connectedness with followers; frequency; credibility; argument quality; authenticity; visually appealing content; long-time relationships; and posts in the morning lead YouTube influencers to engage their followers. These factors were also used to capture the YouTubers who are stronger in terms of engagement factors and consequently would better enhance the process of brand love. Hence, the article at hand concluded that aspects as having an informal relationship with brands, presenting different content from others in the industry, or having a well-connected relationship with followers, have emerged as responses of the primary question, which try to capture what are the YouTubers' characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that contribute to brand love.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

With the rapid development of information technology and the digital revolution, technological standards have an increasingly important effect on the success of many new products and services. Moreover, digital technologies and devices such as smartphones, smart products, the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence, and deep learning all promise significant transformations of consumers' lives in the near future (Kannan & Li, 2017). The growth of the digital usage has been followed by technological innovations, such as the increasing penetration of home Internet and affordable high-speed broadband connections, the development of social media platforms such as Facebook, and widespread consumer adoption of “smart” mobile devices (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The necessary foundation of Web 2.0 is that users play the primary role in information creation, as with Web 2.0 technology, data becomes more reliable with the collaboration of large number of users resulting in credible co-creation, openness, wisdom, and collective intelligence (Alam & Khan, 2019). An important characteristic that distinguishes the digital marketing environment from the traditional one is the ease with which customers can share their opinions, relying on word of mouth information, not only with a few close friends but also with strangers on an extended social network. In the digital environment, customers can post reviews on products, services, brands and firms at firms' websites as well as third-party websites and social networks (Kannan & Li, 2017).

Although social media have changed the practices of marketing, its principal goal remains the same, which is to attract and retain customers. Other specific objectives may include raising brand awareness and improving the brand image perception (Alam & Khan, 2019). Thus, since brands are under pressure of rapid developments in digital environments and have the desire to build personal connections with consumers, they are increasingly seeking to engage with customers on digital platforms (Eigenraam *et al.*, 2018). As online shopping evolves being primarily transactional to being more relational, sellers aim to form online relationships (Kozlenkova *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, liking and satisfaction are methods that are no longer sufficient to retain customer loyalty over time and thus, marketers are encouraged to find ways to make their brands loved by customers (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). Actually, brand love is the most emotionally intense connection between consumers and their brands (Schmid & Huber, 2019) and has been considered one of the most efficient approaches to keep customers close to the brand.

Eigenraam and colleagues (2018) added that there are different engagement practices on different digital platforms, such as reading and writing customer reviews, or watching, liking, and sharing brand videos. Thus, advertisers are integrating social media into their advertising programs to drive digital engagement (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). Brands which are able to engage customers with social media will have a competitive advantage and loyal customers as well (Alam & Khan, 2019), as the promotion of products online and advertising on social networking have proven to be efficient (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Using social media, consumers can quickly and easily access user-generated content, like product reviews and information (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Nonetheless, social media should not be treated as a whole, since not all platforms are created equal and hence, each platform must be studied separately (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018).

One website that has rapidly become a key hub for sharing user-generated videos is YouTube (Loechner, 2008 *in* Paek *et al.*, 2011). More recent studies have claimed that YouTube is considered the largest video-sharing site on the Internet (Feng *et al.*, 2019). Researchers who study new media have noted that YouTube is creating new viewing patterns, social interactions and communication dynamics between message producers and receivers (Paek *et al.*, 2011). The rise of influencer marketing makes YouTube an ideal media platform to implement such marketing strategies (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). However, it is important to refer that when brand managers seek to incorporate YouTube influencers into their marketing strategies, they should consider the target audience when choosing such vlogger - digital video creators (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

However, marketers must understand that communications related to their brands will no longer be generated only by themselves, but consumers will also play a leading role in generating such communication on social media, due to their interest in using such platforms (Alam & Khan, 2019). Nowadays, social network influencers play an important role in the market by introducing products to their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Actually, in the last decade, user-generated content networks have become abundant and now capture a substantial part of the social media sphere (Lanz *et al.*, 2019). Such content has significant influence on consumers' brand perceptions (Lee & Watkins, 2016). In the specific case of YouTube, video content influencers are being courted by marketers who seek to leverage the relationship between these YouTubers and their followers (Xiao *et al.*, 2018).

Consequently, it is important to connect both market situations – the need to engage customers and the intensive use of digital platforms - and understand how brands follow this digital trend and how they engage and retain their customers through current successful tools also based on the digital environment, and that is why the future dissertation aims to study:

The Role of Advertising, Influencers and Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Love: The
YouTuber's Effect.

Hence, the study developed a whole process to actually conclude how YouTube influencers contribute to the brand love phenomenon. It relied on a methodology which defended that the study must collect not only a set of engagement factors that would further be the brand love drivers as well, but also data from YouTube individuals, who could provide insights from the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement. When combining and working on both information types, the study provided a set of YouTube influencers' characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that may lead to brand love. Aspects as having an informal relationship with brands, presenting different content from others in the industry, or having a well-connected relationship with followers, have emerged as responses of the primary question, which try to capture what are the YouTubers' characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that contribute to brand love.

1.1 Theme

Having introduced the dissertation, it is straightforward to comprehend what is the theme at hand. A vast amount of empirical research has been accumulated in the literature review, in order to support what the current study aims to explore. Two different main aspects have been presented in the topic of this dissertation: brand love and the YouTuber. Brand love is a complex term, but it has been treated as the most emotionally intense connection between consumers and brands (Schmid & Huber, 2019) and it is considered one of the most efficient tools to keep customers close to the brand.

Furthermore, the article at hand embraces the agents of YouTubers, that were evaluated under the perspective of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement. Sokolova and Kefi (2019) have stated that social network influencers play an important role in the market by introducing products to their audience and the rise of influencer marketing makes YouTube an ideal media platform to implement such marketing strategies (Xiao

et al., 2018). Therefore, the theme of the study is based on the role of such agents in their ability to lead to the phenomenon of brand love.

1.2 Research Problematic

Before running the principal research, it is crucial to identify why this theme under analysis - The Role of Advertising, Influencers and Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Love: The YouTuber's Effect - is relevant, interesting, and also to whom.

The world has changed in its majority of dimensions. The way people communicate, eat or order food, dress, read, drive, search, or even learn is not the same as some decades ago. However, these differences have not occurred only within people. Organisations are also witnesses to these tremendous changes since nowadays they can rely on different methods of communication, production, recruitment, or competition. Getting into this environment makes it direct to comprehend that markets have also changed. In other words, the way people demand, search, decide, buy, and give feedback and the way an organisation targets, creates, sells, and deals with customers have shown remarkable alterations during the last dozens of years. Actually, humanity already deals with the commercial use of the Internet for almost a quarter-century (Kannan & Li, 2017). The same authors verified this experience did not come alone since nowadays consumers' lives are dependent on digital technologies and devices such as smartphones, smart products, the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence, and another vast of trends which have revolutionized the interaction between the organisation and its customer.

Actually, marketing academics witness that over the past decade, it has seen a major transformation of marketing (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The point is that everything is becoming digital and organisations have to deal with that, not only in terms of ways they sell but also of ways they communicate. There are a lot of possible platforms to rely on digital or mobile marketing, like apps, text messages, online marketing, or even social media marketing (Keller, 2016). This study focuses on the last one, since sharing online is an integral part of modern life (Buckley *et al.*, 2012) and there are tremendous possibilities for consumer engagement in social networks (Precourt, 2014). Some researchers focused on the important motivation question: *why do people contribute on social media?*, getting two possible answers: (1) intrinsic utility, the direct utility of posting content and (2) image-related utility derived from the perception of others (Kannan & Li, 2017). Thus, on the one hand, there are organisations who need to

communicate in social media to reach their customers and the truth is that a lot of them recognize this fact since today, many firms allocate considerable portions of their advertising budget to the online channel (Lobschat *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, there are customers who are living in a world which has become more and more digital, so they spend their time in such environment. There is a match: demand and supply in the same field. However, having a set of possible social networks, why the focus on YouTube? The truth is that users are watching more web-based video ads than ever (Li & Lo, 2015) and YouTube is the most popular online video community in the world (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2012). YouTube has already been used by a variety of business entities, from entertainment companies to charitable organisations. Furthermore, since people may associate YouTube with videos produced by people who are similar to themselves rather than by issue experts, they are more likely to respond positively to peer-produced videos delivered via this type of websites (Paek *et al.*, 2011).

Moreover, it is important to understand why to take the subject of brand love. In today's market scenario, organisations are living under the pressure of intense competition (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Thus, it becomes crucial to have a large set of loyal customers, who can even become brand ambassadors, or brand lovers, since they are associated with positive word of mouth, brand loyalty, increased willingness to pay a price premium, and forgiveness of brand failures (Batra *et al.*, 2012), fighting against possible competition.

To conclude, and having contextualised the whole research, it is possible to realise why this becomes so relevant. The study is dealing with the fact that this world is becoming even more and more digital, relying on a vast number of social media to communicate, share, promote, or even know something else, and marketing is not an exception of that fact's victims. Moreover, organisations are facing high levels of competition, so they need to guarantee loyal customers, using techniques who lead to the phenomenon of brand love. This research tries to correlate these two facts, trying to know how the specific agents of a social network, YouTubers, can generate an effect on brand love. It becomes relevant not only for organisations which intend to rely on the platform of YouTube to promote its brand, knowing how they can engage even more customers, but also for YouTubers, in order to make them aware of possible techniques to be used to make their followers believe and trust them, creating a reliable image of trustworthiness, which can provide a set of advantages, like ease to engage followers or subscribers for what they create. As Sokolova and Kefi (2019) said, on the one hand, businesses need to understand the influencer phenomenon to make the right investment in influencers marketing. On the

other hand, influencers need specific insights to be more persuasive while working with brands and products, while promoting to their followers.

1.3 Dissertation Goals

The overall objective of this dissertation is to shed light on the role of the YouTuber in the process of brand love. Here, the emphasis will be placed on the characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that YouTubers may have to help organisations and make their followers love the brands they are promoting, which will consequently answer the crucial question of the research: 'how YouTube influencers can contribute to the process of brand love', namely according to their characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement. This will be investigated in order to provide a set of favourable insights not only to managers, but also to influencers, since both entities can profit from the current marketing trend of using YouTube influencers on advertising strategies.

1.4 Structure

In order to achieve the presented goals, this thesis will follow a specific structure in its development. This report starts by highlighting what are the real motivations for this study and why it is important to take its subject.

Furthermore, the study presents the literature review where each concept that supports the research will be developed and explained. It follows the funnel perspective. In other words, to understand what YouTube is and what are its advantages, the study needs to look at what is behind that, which is the social media marketing, which has digital marketing as antecedent. Also, to comprehend the concept of brand love, it is important to previously study what is engagement and how it can emerge, as this is one of the brand love factors.

Next, the research relies on a methodology which describes the whole process of the investigation, including the rising of different articles that were used to support the literature review, the creation of the interview, how the framework was established, or even how the whole research was conducted. Then, the study faces the set of results that the investigation provided, where raw and managed data is provided, to support the final chapter. The conclusions will not only describe every deduction that the research achieved, but also provide theoretical and managerial contributions, limitations, and future research.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

2.1 Digital Marketing

Over the past decade and a half, marketing academics and their experts have witnessed a major transformation of marketing (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The 21st century is experiencing a communication revolution and when condensing a set of marketing studies, the very first conclusion is that today the world of marketing is digital (Rohm *et al.*, 2019). Kumar, in 2018, has defined this phenomenon as transformative marketing, which refers to ongoing changes among consumers, markets, and marketing departments. It has been nearly a quarter-century since commercial use of the internet and the World Wide Web began. During this time the business landscape has changed at a frenetic pace (Kannan & Li, 2017). The Internet has become the most significant disruptive force influencing consumer behaviour, marketing practice, and marketing education (Rohm *et al.*, 2019). Actually, geographical boundaries are increasingly blurred, and technology has emerged as a powerful integrator of markets (Kumar, 2018). Therefore, the digital transformation of marketing over the past 15 years is reflected in the ways that firms and customers have embraced new technologies and most interestingly, how technology has facilitated novel market behaviours, interactions, and experiences (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Hence, digital marketing and social media marketing have gained greater prominence in the marketing area and studies (Cole *et al.*, 2017). All this contextualisation leads to the concept under analysis, digital marketing.

To better enhance the study, it is important to understand what digital marketing really means. Going through the roots of the expression and dividing both concepts, digital is what suffered the effect of digitalization, which is the conversion of analogue information in any form such as text, images, sound or physical attributes to a digital format, allowing the information to be processed, stored, and transmitted through digital circuits, devices and networks (Ng & Wakenshaw, 2017). The same authors also mentioned this digital aspect of the information enables it to become a dynamic and transportable resource, adding that this whole new approach can create engagement and transactions not merely about the product function but also the state, action, and description of the product itself, together with the consumer interacting with it.

On the other hand, the marketing concept is known for being complex and vast. Nevertheless, Kotler, Armstrong, Harris, and Piercy, in 2013, defined marketing as a philosophy that holds that achieving organisational goals depends on knowing the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions better than competitors do.

Since both concepts have been separately explained, it is straightforward to get what digital marketing really is. The term has started describing the marketing of products and services using digital channels, having moved to an umbrella term describing the process of using digital technologies to acquire customers and build customer preferences, promote brands, retain customers and increase sales. Digital marketing may be seen as activities, institutions, and processes facilitated by digital technologies for creating, communicating, and delivering value for customers and other stakeholders (Kannan & Li, 2017). Other authors added some information to the definition, stating that digital marketing represents those activities executed through digital and online platforms, including the company website, virtual communities, blogs, vlogs, social media, mobile apps, and so on (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Moreover, such processes enabled by digital technologies are able to create value through new customer experiences, having the case of co-creation, and through interactions among customers. Digital marketing itself is permitted by a series of adaptive digital touch points encompassing the marketing activity, institutions, processes and customers (Kannan & Li, 2017). Since brands do trust this trend, they have devoted more and more attention to earned media, in which consumers are the communication channel, rather than focusing on paid media, in which a brand pays to advertise. Thus, the more consumers share a piece of content, the greater its reach and that is why *virality* has become the holy grail of digital marketing (Akpınar & Berger, 2017).

It is undisputed that digital marketing has become an inevitable tool for brands' marketing strategies, since its rise has altered the advertising landscape (Cole *et al.*, 2017). Actually, the results of such market trend can be confirmed by any agent. Two years ago, for the first time, spending on digital and social media formats has passed advertising expenditures on television (Cole *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the risks to companies that do not adapt fast enough to the digital environment are significant. Since the beginning of the century, over half of the companies listed in the Fortune 500 have either gone

bankrupt, been acquired, or ceased to exist as a result of digital disruption (Rohm *et al.*, 2019).

These phenomena occur because companies cannot realise all the advantages of digital marketing. This new approach can be translated into more opportunities to precisely design and deliver marketing messages, to offer better products, to offer better value proposition through multiple channels, to provide better financial performance, to establish personalised means of communication, and to produce changes in the immediate business environment, such as through data technology, and privacy factors (Kumar, 2018). As referred, this technological method can lead to a better financial performance, as digital content marketing costs 62% less than traditional marketing efforts, while generating three times as many sales leads (Bicks, 2016, *in* Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Also, digital approaches help businesses to be more competitive, stable, and lasting (Cole *et al.*, 2017), empowering the interactions among stakeholders, all the while placing customers at the centre of the organisation (Kumar, 2018).

Hollebeek and Macky, in 2019, have added some strengths of digital marketing, saying this tool is not only able to foster brand awareness, engagement, and trust, but also to convert or nurture sales leads, contribute to customer loyalty, or offer enhanced customer service. This customer service improvement comes from the fact that employees are now able to access all their customers' data and information on a point-and-click interface, delivering meaningful content and offerings (Kumar, 2018). Another reason digital sources have grown so rapidly in the current market is the ability to measure results, especially compared to the traditional ones (Cole *et al.*, 2017). Maintaining the comparison between both types of marketing, one of the key advantages of the digital one has been its capacity to target households, as microtargeting lowers advertising costs and raises incremental profits considerably (Deng & Mela, 2018).

These advantages go beyond the company opportunities, and even customers are willing to engage in this online transformation to be welcome in the current market. Digital natives, born after 1995, communicate, shop, and access content in a technology-rich environment (Rohm *et al.*, 2019). Actually, 70% of the world's youth (15-24 years old) was online in 2017 (Kumar, 2018) and the same percentage of consumers has indicated they want to learn about products through digital content, as opposed to traditional advertising (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Online platforms, being more interactive and

having the ability to stimulate one-to-one interaction in a better way as compared to traditional means (Alam & Khan, 2019), allow users to reach out and build relationships with many buyers and sellers (Kozlenkova *et al.*, 2017). Consumers can easily and readily share what they like with others and such sharing can exponentially impact the total number of views of digital content (Tellis *et al.*, 2019).

However, the digital world is not that perfect, since the internet offers so much power in information dissemination that even spreading false information, like fake news, has become easy (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). On the one hand, it is true that relationships that users develop on the internet can be as strong and as deep as the ones offline. On the other hand, there is such a big difference, as digital relationships are more anonymous than offline ones, affecting relationships formation on the digital basis, and hence companies have to look at other cues or signals to reduce uncertainty about potential partners (Kozlenkova *et al.*, 2017).

Nonetheless, apart from the few disadvantages, digital marketing has enabled companies to offer relevant content and personalised messages to specific customers and to improve the customer experience at each touch point along customer's journey (Kumar, 2018). The author added that this recent market approach allows companies to not only create value for their customers, but also generate benefits for all stakeholders by way of increased business activities. Providing a greater flexibility in terms of content length, availability, format, and customisation at relatively low cost (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019), digital marketing requires to be seen as a must for marketers.

Concluding, due to the popularity of smartphones, the Internet, and social media, consumers are spending more time on these platforms than on traditional media (Cole *et al.*, 2017), and hence it is not possible for any firm to maintain its market share just through the traditional method of marketing (Alam & Khan, 2019), as it is obvious this digital adoption has opened new marketing communications and targeting possibilities. One of the factors which have changed how buyers share information with each other and interact with brands is the social media and its ubiquity (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016), and that is why the study must focus on this specific field.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

Over more than the past decade, the media landscape has dramatically changed, with social media sources such as blogs, online discussion forums, and online communities now supplementing traditional media outlets (TMOs) such as newspapers, magazines, and television programs (Stephen & Galak, 2012). Sharing online content is an integral part of modern life. The emergence of social media has changed the ways consumers communicate and bond with one another and with brands (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018). People forward newspaper articles to their friends, pass YouTube videos to their relatives, send restaurant reviews to their neighbours, and share stories, news, and information with peers. One of the reasons why people may do that is because they contain useful information. For example, coupons or articles about good restaurants help people save money and eat better. Consumers may share such practically useful content for altruistic reasons, like to help others, or even for self-enhancement purposes, like to seem knowledgeable. Practically useful content also has social exchange value and people may share it to generate reciprocity. The emergence of social media, like Facebook or Twitter, has boosted interest in word of mouth and viral marketing, which are considered ways of promotion or communication and that is why it is called social media marketing (Buckley *et al.*, 2012).

Nevertheless, going into the accurate 'social media' term, it was created to describe the set of platforms of digital communication that still continually appear in the interactive electronic environment, underlining their participative and collaborative social characteristics (Vernuccio, 2014). Other authors have defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Chiang *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, in the current year, it was added that social media enable their users to connect and publicly exchange experiences, opinions, and views on the Internet (Etter *et al.*, 2019). When applying this concept to marketing, social media marketing surges and it has been defined as the utilization of social media technologies, channels and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organisation and its stakeholders (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018).

Actually, social media marketing has emerged as the most popular and effective tool of marketing and communication (Alam & Khan, 2019), and hence marketing scholars have seen the concept of social media as important and even crucial for the markets and

industries' current situation. Social media are currently a powerful marketing tool for brands, due to its interactive nature, as brands engage with consumers on social media by responding to consumers' posts (Park *et al.*, 2018). Nowadays, they have been trying to identify ways in which it is possible to make profitable use of applications such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, Second Life, and Twitter (Vernuccio, 2014).

Also, while social media were once the domain of younger, tech-savvy consumers who were faster to adopt new technologies, it is now generally considered to have entered the mainstream and covers a broad demographic spectrum (Stephen & Galak, 2012).

These two authors, when defining this term, importantly mentioned that when talking about media, it is critical to retain that there are three types of it, which firms tend to consider when they are developing marketing communications strategies. The first one - the central focus of this research - is the 'earned media' and it refers to the media activity that a company does not directly generate, but rather by other entities such as customers (the case of word of mouth) or journalists, with the case of press mentions in traditional media and online community posts in consumer-generated social media. The second one is 'paid media', or advertising, which refers to media activity that a company or its agents generates. The final one is the 'owned media' that refers to media activity that a company or its agents generates in channels it controls. Common forms of owned media include press releases, brochures, and posts made by company representatives on an official company blog or website (Stephen & Galak, 2012). Actually, earned media is not that new and the popularity of social media and the increased emphasis marketers place on social approaches (word of mouth example) have made it more important for firms to understand how multichannel earned media affects their sales.

The importance of adopting social media in the current marketing strategies is unquestionable (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019), as it has been increasingly used as a branding and engagement tool by individuals and organisations (Sihi & Lawson, 2018), and hence used as a tool to connect, build and develop relationships (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). More than 1.6 billion users worldwide spent an average of 118 minutes a day on social media in 2016, while 77% of them actively engaged with content through likes, comments, shares, and link clicks (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018). It is obvious that social media have become an integral part of consumers' daily lives. For instance, millennials obtain more news from social media than from TV (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). It becomes clear that consumers are losing interest in traditional media such as TV, radio, or magazines, and

hence are increasingly using social media platforms for searching information (Alam & Khan, 2019). Consequently, organisations have to shift their strategies, relying on social media marketing, as its advantages are numerous.

The potential usage of social media when communicating is tremendous (Cole *et al.*, 2017). Online social networks enable direct communications between firms and customers and facilitate secondary mutual interactions among them, highlighting products, and managing the assortment of products offered on its profile (Ansari *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, social media help the creation of electronic word-of-mouth and diffusion of information, which hence influence the purchase intentions of consumers (Alam & Khan, 2019), is inclusive, interactive, accessible, designed for the masses (Park *et al.*, 2018), it helps businesses to become visible, viable, and sustainable (Cole *et al.*, 2017), opens the door for public response alongside an advertisement (Feng *et al.*, 2019), reduces the perceived distance between brands and consumers (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018), generates sales growth, brand profitability, limited costs, co-creative experiences, improved consumer-brand relationships, brand engagement, purchase behaviours and brand loyalty (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019), can grant customers the feeling of knowing the brand intimately, which may enhance their sense of identification with the brand (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018), and allows companies to reach an international audience with less time, effort, and money (Cole *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, social media are believed to play a central role in the formation of organisational reputation, since they not only control the technology that disseminates the information, but also its content (Etter *et al.*, 2019). Also, these platforms can help in reducing preconception and misunderstanding toward brands, increasing brand equity by providing an opportunity to consumers for exchange ideas and information (Alam & Khan, 2019).

Nevertheless, such social impact has an important effect not only on firms and brands, but also on consumers (Buckley *et al.*, 2012), since customers search information on social media before making purchase decisions because social media provide both official information and an interactive communication environment (Dessart *et al.*, 2016, in Chiang *et al.*, 2017), and that is why the article at hand takes both situations, as it is now recognised that social media allowed any individual to act as both advertiser/promoter and consumer for a given brand at any time (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

On the one hand, markets have the firms, which have been allocating considerable portions of their advertising budget to the online channel (Lobschat *et al.*, 2017). Communicating corporate brands through social media implies a new collaborative strategy based on two fundamental approaches: interactivity and openness (Vernuccio, 2014). For those organisations, social media provide the opportunity to engage in timely and direct contact with end-consumers, working as an advertising platform to create and strengthen bonds between both agents: firms and customers (Dao *et al.*, 2014).

However, social media also hold their own disadvantages, because even having recent research showing how social media platforms are increasingly used to promote brands, research also indicates that brand owners are losing control of their content and the reach, frequency, and timing of the distribution of their messages (Fournier & Avery, 2011, *in* Vernuccio, 2014). It happens because companies have relied their promotion on earned media, which has the negative aspect of losing control of what has been said, since consumers are those who are playing the role of promoters. Actually, a negative post has five times the effect of a positive comment (Precourt, 2014).

On the other hand, market faces the second agent, consumer. One form of online customer interactions that has been studied extensively is the online review, like user generated content or even electronic word of mouth (eWOM). This approach embraces customers' knowledge about products, their usage, experience, recommendations, and complaints, and it is normally perceived as trustworthy and reliable. Also, the electronic word of mouth may still have richer content and larger volume than the offline version, and it is much more accessible and easy to share (Kannan & Li, 2017). Thus, firms should find the means to boost customer identification with its own community and improve its quality. Companies must invest in customer-customer interactions and seek the means to empower customers to participate in marketing activities and product development (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). The same authors have defended that firms should develop a reward system and provide incentives for actively engaged customers, for instance motivating customers to become opinion leaders or knowledge contributors. This ideology leads the study for what is called online social community.

Four zones of social media have been considered: social commerce, social entertainment, social publishing and social community (Sihi & Lawson, 2018). The latter takes places in this situation, since sometimes, social media become a place for socialisation and building potential friendships through repeated conversations and exchanges among users

(Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). Channels of social media focused on relationships and the common activities that people participate in with others who share the same interest or identification are known as social community or online brand community (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). These non-geographically bound communities are based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). When users play both professional and personal roles in social communities, boundary issues can arise and create contradictions (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). Nonetheless, fans may feel encouraged to recruit new followers to the network, resulting in a synergistic impact (Ansari *et al.*, 2018). The same authors have added that members of such community can forward internal messages to others or outside users and thereby stimulating new connections not only with the firm, but also with the community. Consequently, those connections can lead to positive results, as user-generated social media brand communications positively influence brand loyalty, perceived brand quality (Park *et al.*, 2018), and the success of new product launch (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018).

Actually, decades of research suggest that interpersonal communication affects attitudes and decision making (Buckley *et al.*, 2012), and thus people tend to seek for similar ones in terms of values and interests, since such identification and consequent influence may impact their decisions. This people's natural need leads them to belong to such communities, as social media content can play an important 'sense-giving' role to community members and help them meet personal psychological and relationship needs (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). Here, social identity takes place, since it is the part of one's self-concept that results from perceived membership in a group and/or one's social roles. Social identity theory indicates that individuals tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories and associate themselves with a group that they would like to be identified with (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, people express their identity using avatars and other indicators and sometimes they are even influenced by others in the social community (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018).

The main point was achieved, as it became clear that social media marketing is currently one of the most powerful communication tools. Following this remarkable trend, content platforms like newspapers, sports websites, and magazines, frequently use social media to disseminate content rapidly to their audiences (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018) and actually, the dissemination of information among the people through social media is much stronger than through traditional media (Keller, 2009, *in* Alam & Khan, 2019). Nevertheless,

success is not only driven by network size but also by network density, meaning that large and well-connected networks are desirable for achieving online success (Ansari *et al.*, 2018).

Voorveld and colleagues, in 2018, suggested that social media should not be treated as an umbrella concept since not all platforms are created equal, and hence advertisers must select the right social medium for their purposes, being cautious with the product type, the advertising goal, and the advertising message. They further stated that each platform should be studied separately and that is why the study will focus on YouTube in the next chapter.

2.3 YouTube

Using the defining characteristics of social media platforms, marketers can adapt content to fit the need of the audience. Therefore, it is important for researchers to study each social network individually (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Synopses, critics' reviews, and viewer ratings are important, but the best way for consumers to evaluate the quality of video content and to determine whether they want to see it is for them to watch a sample. For that reason, video content producers have historically used trailers as their main marketing tool. The sharing of videos across social media channels creates a new opportunity for brands to enlarge their social media influence (Barry & Graça, 2018). Nowadays, this marketing tool has become such a trend that there are trailers not only for movies but also for sitcoms, video games, and even books (Liu *et al.*, 2018). This implies that users are now watching more web-based video ads than ever. Nearly half of U.S. consumers subscribe at least one video streaming service, while millennials spend more time streaming videos than watching live TV (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Online ads are transmitted via online video systems that enable users to watch and even share video content. What really defines an in-stream video ad is the difficulty the user has ignoring them. These ads are designed to attract attention by interrupting the online viewing experience (Li & Lo, 2015), and actually showing that online video-ads in the middle positions lead to higher recall than those in the first or last position (Wang *et al.*, 2019). Regarding that experience, consumers have an increasingly wide variety of options available to entertain themselves. The Internet was the agent who drastically reduced barriers to the distribution of video content, and so online content aggregators are making this vast array of video material available for those consumers who are looking for streaming. Since consumers have a wide variety of options available to entertain themselves, determining how to effectively promote video content is a challenge for those

who create that. For short-format user-generated video, there is YouTube (Liu *et al.*, 2018).

The growing fixation with online video and social platforms enhanced the role of YouTube, which incorporates both streaming and social aspects of media consumption (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). YouTube is a free website service that allows individual internet users opportunities to easily upload and share their original videos (Freeman & Chapman 2008, cited in Paek *et al.*, 2011). The definition has not changed over time, as Lee and Watkins, in 2016, have only added those shared videos reach hundreds of millions of viewers. Actually, YouTube is not only the most popular online video community in the world (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2012), but also the largest video-sharing site on the Internet (Feng *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, it is also the highest scored platform in terms of entertainment, as users indicated that YouTube made them happy and relaxed, allowing them to have a moment for themselves (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). YouTube has already been used by a variety of business entities, from entertainment companies to charitable organisations, since having one communicator is considered to be more popular and influential than channels having multiple speakers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

Therefore, YouTube may provide an alternative channel for engaging target audiences, and enabling them to participate in the activity of generating and spreading concern about social issues (Paek *et al.*, 2011), and that is why YouTube started being seen as a marketing tool, able to promote, communicate, and engage targets. With this phenomenon, in 2010, YouTube began offering “in-stream” advertisements (Precourt, 2014). YouTube advertisements appear in a variety of contexts, like as in-stream pre-rolls and overlays in videos that users watch, on the right-hand side of the video watch page, in search results, and on the home page (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2012). The authors also stated that one of the dominant video advertising formats on YouTube (and elsewhere online) is the simple in-stream video advertisement, in which a short video—much like a television commercial—is played prior to the user-selected video content, which can be ignored in five seconds, and marketers have found this format immensely popular.

The reasons why brands have invested a lot on the new skippable format were to improve user satisfaction with the site by reducing the negative consequences of advertisements (like those users who leave the site early) and also because they do pretend to improve users' overall perception of the site, in order to make them return to the site a day later. And video advertisements - skippable and inert - are just as effective as they always have

been (Precourt, 2014). Nonetheless, the advantages of using YouTube as a promotional tool go beyond the mentioned ones. First of all, advertising exposure is free and unlimited, which allows advertisers to upload as many videos as they wish at a minimum cost (Tellis *et al.*, 2019). Also, the same authors added that there is almost no length restriction on YouTube ads, and hence long ads can tell a story or portray a drama that can arouse strong emotions. Moreover, as a digital platform with extensive social functions, YouTube encourages the interactions between its users (Xiao *et al.*, 2018), and it is important to focus on this aspect.

Actually, YouTube enables users to participate in conversations around video ads shared on the platform, as they are not only consuming content posted by a single broadcaster, but they can also see the comments on the video posted by other users (Walther *et al.*, 2010, in Feng *et al.*, 2019), being the existence of comment sections one of the unique characteristics of YouTube (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Usually, users browse only the first few comments, called top comments, and their content has potential to influence viewers' perceptions of advertising (Feng *et al.*, 2019). The authors also mentioned that there are four types of consumer comments on YouTube: injury, laudation, debate, and flame. Nonetheless, all of them allow the social function of YouTube (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). It is even possible to the own host of the channel to interact with those who commented his videos and such interactions are very likely to shape people's opinions, since some researchers indicate that peer or social power strongly influences the formation of one's opinions, which is the case of such a large number of people who express a similar opinion about something online (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). YouTube is one of the largest channels on which laypeople, or 'people like me', can create, upload and discuss available videos. In addition, since people may associate YouTube with videos produced by people who are similar to themselves rather than by issue experts, they are more likely to respond positively to peer-produced videos, the new famous YouTubers.

Being a platform incorporated in the creativity category of social media (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018), YouTube now has over one billion users worldwide. This impressive reach of audiences cannot be ignored by marketers, who must rely on this platform to disseminate their brand messages. The delivery of those messages is often carried out by the so-called YouTube influencers or YouTubers (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). These people are individuals who produce and upload videos onto the platform and have a group of followers and/or subscribers that tend to watch the content uploaded on the channel. Vloggers - YouTube users that produce vlogs - upload videos mentioning products or brands that they use on

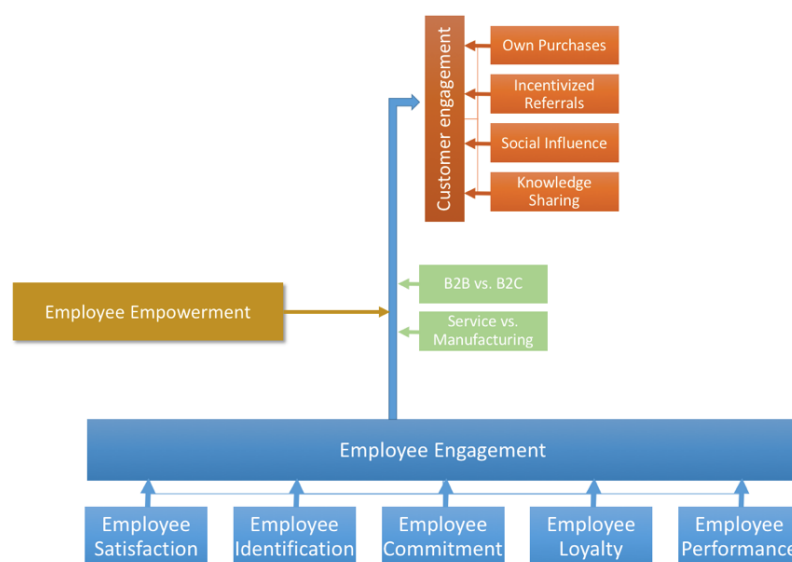
their personal life (Xiao *et al.*, 2018), and hence increasing traffic from subscribers and anonymous viewers, and presenting a unique personality or content, they become to what is referred as YouTube celebrities (Lee & Watkins, 2016). These celebrities are associated with credible sources of information and that justifies why the market has suffered a growth of YouTuber influencer marketing (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Thus, brands have shifted their marketing budget from traditional advertising to online videos. Nevertheless, the publishers on YouTube face a dilemma: on the one hand, they intend to boost revenue by selling more ad slots; on the other hand, too many ads destroy user experience (Wang *et al.*, 2019). When marketers allow users to choose to see or not to see the ad, they are actually increasing this advertising effectiveness by engaging users in the advertising process (Precourt, 2014), and that is why the research is lead to the engagement study.

2.4 Engagement

In the market scenario that people live nowadays, where competition is intense and the world has become a unified market due to technological developments and social media, interactions among customers have exponentially increased. Therefore, it is important for firms to keep their customers engaged and loyal, as loyalty is the core concept in relationship marketing (Chiang *et al.*, 2017). This term, engagement, has been studied across fields over the years. Providing some examples, in sociology it has been studied as 'civic engagement', in psychology as 'social engagement', in organisational behaviour or management literature as 'employee engagement' and in marketing, the real basis where this research has been supported, engagement is seen as 'customer engagement' (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Having looked at all these fields, the same authors defined engagement by their own as the attitude, behaviour, and the level of connectedness among customers, between customers and employees, and of customers and employees within a firm. In other words, they summed up by saying that the more positive the attitude and behaviour and the higher the level of connectedness, the higher the level of engagement. Kumar and his colleague, in 2016, still presented a framework where they explain the engagement ideology with moderators (figure 1). There, it is possible to see that both employee and customer engagements depend on several moderators. Basically, the whole process starts with the employee engagement, which suffers the impact of five different dimensions (employee satisfaction, employee identification, employee commitment, employee loyalty, and employee performance), that will directly influence the customer engagement, which faces different influence factors as well, like own purchases, social influence, and others. Additional people who studied the term have clarified that

engagement is a multilevel and multidimensional construct that emerges from the thoughts and feelings about one or more rich experiences involved in reaching a personal goal (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). Actually, customer engagement has become one of the Marketing Science Institute’s research priorities between 2014 and 2016, although engaging customer consistently and correctly is an ongoing challenge (Busalim *et al.*, 2019). The authors have also advanced with a possible definition, stating that customer engagement refers to the level of customer’s cognitive, behavioural, and emotional existence in a brand community, where situations like being interested in a company’s activities, participation in the company’s activities, and feeling positive about a company’s activities correspond to each case respectively.

Figure 1: Engagement Framework with Moderators



Source: Kumar and Pansari (2016)

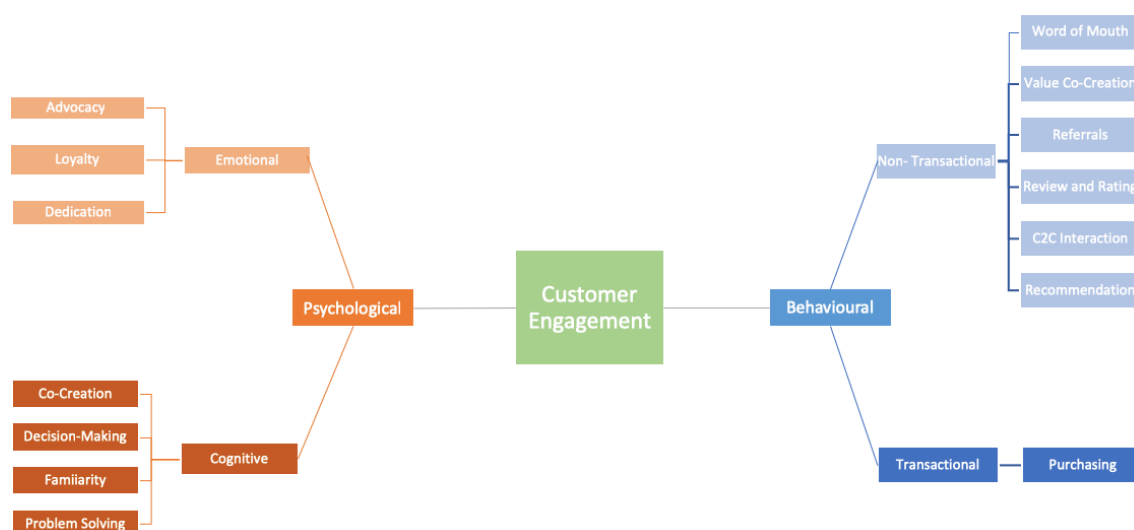
Also, Syrdal and Briggs, in 2018, have referred that customer engagement can also be seen as the intensity of an individual’s participation and connection with the organisation’s offerings or organisational activities, which either the customer or the organisation initiates, leading to a potential higher level of brand loyalty. As stated, those activities that lead to engagement can be initiated by both agents. On the one hand, brands can engage their consumers through responding to their comments, publishing user-generated content on their own pages, and posting interactive content, like quizzes or clickable icons (Park *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, customers can also be the initiator of engagement activities, as they do not only purchase the product, but they also can write reviews, help other customers, blog, provide referrals, spread word-of-mouth

recommendations for a brand or product, or even co-create with the firm (Prentice *et al.*, 2019).

Nonetheless, all these possible activities may be part of the whole process of customer engagement. The journey starts when the firm introduces its products and services to the marketplace, engaging in several marketing activities to create awareness. Such awareness allows customers to identify whether the firm’s products and/or services are able to fulfil a need and to set an expectation of the firm in customers’ mind. After going through this approach, the customer makes the initial purchase, that comprises a ‘customer experience’, which is positive if the firm meets the customer’s expectations. If so, the customer will be satisfied with the firm, inducing repeated purchase. A set of positive experiences then leads to positive emotions. Once a customer is satisfied and emotionally attached to the firm, he or she will be engaged with the firm through those activities mentioned above, like purchases, referrals, influence, or feedback (Gupta *et al.*, 2018).

To better understand the effects of customer engagement, Busalim and colleagues, in 2019, developed a map which clarifies those results, in a form of a tree-base. There, it is possible to see that customer engagement can enhance different activities through psychological and behavioural perspectives, some of them already mentioned above.

Figure 2- Mind map of customer engagement perspectives



Source: Busalim *et al.*, 2019

In this map, it is possible to see that customer engagement can be manifested into two different states, psychological and behavioural. Nonetheless, the authors have said that

when going to a second level of evaluation, those states can be divided into three cases: behavioural, cognitive, and emotional. The first refers to how much energy, effort, and time consumers spend on using a brand, while the second refers to how much consumers think about a brand, and the third to what people feel about a brand (Eigenraam *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, Voorveld and colleagues, in 2018, did focus on how engagement is a multidimensional psychological experience that differs qualitatively and quantitatively as a function of use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Snapchat, Instagram, and Pinterest. Engagement, uniquely, for each of these social media is a multidimensional profile of experience along dimensions like innovation, social interaction, empowerment, practical use, stimulation, and pastime (Rodgers & Thorson, 2018), so this study must pay specific attention to the engagement in social media.

Although there is currently no formally accepted definition of social media engagement (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018), researchers are sure that social media platforms enable companies to engage and build relationships with their customers (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019). Also, engagement with social media and with advertising on social media results from how the medium and the advertising are experienced. Studies have pointed out that there are two different components of an experience: liking and engagement (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). Into their advertising programs, advertisers are enthusiastically integrating social to drive what is called digital or online engagement. The effectiveness of such process is usually assessed with social media monitoring tools providing quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks, as indicators of level of engagement or valence of engagement (positive or negative comments) (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). However, there are other ways that allow customers to contribute to the firm, as discussing the brand on social media (Gupta *et al.*, 2018). Thus, social media advertising engagement is the sum of experiences that people obtain while being confronted with social media advertising on those platforms (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). These authors added to their study a conceptual model of social media advertising engagement (figure 2), which helps marketers to understand how the process really works.

Figure 3- Conceptual model of social media advertising engagement



Source: Voorveld, Van Noort, Myntinga, and Bronner (2018)

Hence, as mentioned before, the study is now focusing on digital engagement, which is broadly defined in terms of customers' interactions with a brand to strengthen emotional, psychological, or physical investments (Chaffey, 2007 in Rodgers & Thorson, 2018). Digital customer engagement is ranked as the highest priority among a list of several possible digital initiatives, being associated with a set of advantages for the firm, like increased sales, increased brand loyalty, and development of positive organisational image and brand equity, while its drivers have been identified as brand identification, brand satisfaction, and brand trust (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). Moreover, nearly 80% of marketers believe consumer engagement with their products on social media will increase revenue and customer retention, and that is why brands often encourage consumers to engage with them across social media platforms (Grewal *et al.*, 2019). Nonetheless, digital engagement is highly dependent on the platform (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018) and that justifies the fact that the article at hand focuses on a specific social network. Even the level of cognitive effort has an impact on digital engagement since online content that requires higher cognitive processing receives increased engagement because of its increased level of cognitive involvement (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018).

Another aspect that influences the level of digital engagement is the number of followers on social media. Forbes magazine has recently presented a study which approached the engagement on social media. There is a myth that states the more followers a person has, the more engagement she gets. Nonetheless, the Forbes' study showed that there are some oscillations in that curve, which are related to the way that some influencers have been growing, namely when they buy some followers that will not contribute to the engagement rate. Therefore, this growth method works until a base of 40 thousand followers or, in some sporadic cases, it is considered reliable up to 100 thousand followers. From that barrier, it is challenging to defraud brands. The only option is growing organically, having high-quality content. Otherwise, the results are not achieved (Leitão, 2019).

Furthermore, Syrdal and Briggs, in 2018, have added that the focal object of social media engagement is actually the content individuals consume while utilising social media, like status updates, pictures, videos, blog posts, and so on, since that content works as a point of contact between the brand and the consumer, representing an opportunity to influence the latter. However this type of influence has suffered some changes, as with social media engagement, the relationship has moved from person-brand to person-person-brand (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019). The same authors have importantly stated that

consumer-consumer interactions significantly contribute to brand engagement. Five distinct types of digital engagement practices have been considered: for fun practices, learning practices, customer feedback, work for a brand, and talk about a brand, where consumer-generated ads and co-creation of products are both examples of working for the brand (Eigenraam *et al.*, 2018). When individuals are associated with a brand, they can also get customers engaged to that same brand through their digital channels, since those environments allow information exchange (the case of communication campaigns), good deals (the case of promotions or coupons), or exhibition of brand-related creations (the case of photos or videos) (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019).

Therefore, the same authors also declared that engaged customers who have favourable beliefs about the brand-hosted social media are emotionally tied to the brand and perceive interactions with the brand as rewarding and fulfilling. With this contextualisation, the social identity theory mentioned in the social media marketing chapter also plays an essential role in the engagement context, as customers who are identified with a brand and its associated communities are more likely to engage with the brand and its community through interacting and communicating with other members, since social identity emphasizes belongingness to and having affiliation to a chosen group or community (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). The authors also said that such engagement is likely to lead to brand purchase and loyalty and the longer the customer participates in the community, the more likely he or she is identified with the brand and the community. The sense of belongingness to the community and connection with the brand-hosted social media may be emerged by group dynamics as liking, sharing, or commenting on posts (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019).

In this context, engagement includes both behaviour (use) and attitudes (evaluation on the attributes), since it is based on digital formats. Under this conceptualisation, engagement is not a feature of usability, but it is equivalent to it because it considers the customer's attitude effect. In the digital world, everything works better with narratives, and engagement is not an exception. Engagement with narratives results from a combination of sender, receiver, and advertising message effects. Narratives create engagement likely by a combination of the effects of empathetic processing, mental stimulation of the narrative's reality, and identification with ad characters (Rodgers & Thorson, 2018). This identification plays an important role, because advertisers need to optimise their efforts on social network to engage consumers effectively, because they are daily confronted with two main challenges when they try to reach customers: scarce

resources and competition for attention (Gavilanes *et al.*, 2018), but when those customers are already identified with the 'brand characters', the engagement process becomes easier, and hence it finds to be more active. Active engagement occurs when customers are willing to invest time, energy, money, or other resources in the brand beyond those expended during purchase or consumption (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). The authors added that when people really invest time and energy in objects and activities, they are actually dealing with loved items. In this phase, the engagement becomes emotional, since it arises from individuals' hedonic and authenticity motives, leading to a higher brand identification (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Concluding, consumers who love a brand are more likely to maintain their engagement over time (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). Thus, organisations must rely on such engagement technique, going beyond the fact of making customers identify themselves with the brand, but leading them to love it, a phenomenon that is called brand love.

2.5 Brand Love

Although Batra and colleagues, in 2012, have said that there is little agreement to what brand love is, the idea has not changed, since the concept is not only pretty new in the marketing world but also too complex, because it relies on the emotion of love, which tends to be describe rather as a prototype. Hence, a prototype refers to a list of attributes that people associate with a particular thing (Batra *et al.*, 2012), which justifies its complexity. Though researchers have studied how consumers form 'like-dislike' attitudes toward brands, in the past few years, both practitioners and academic have showed a huge interest to understand how and why consumers do 'love' brands (Batra *et al.*, 2012). In fact, this interest suggests that brand love is an important marketing topic. Although existing a little disagreement to what it is, brand love has received increasing attention given its potential to enhance customer engagement, brand advocacy, commitment and loyalty (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). The most accurate definition stated that brand love is the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, *in* Palusuk *et al.*, 2019), while Schmid & Huber, in 2019, have added that brand love is the most emotionally intense connection between consumers and their brands, and that explains the reason why consumers only really love a small minority of the total brands they purchase (Batra *et al.*, 2012 *in* Schmid & Huber, 2019).

Recently, it has been documented a growing use of the concept of love in advertising, since companies started realising its positive outcomes, like positive word of mouth,

brand loyalty, increased willingness to pay a price premium, forgiveness of brand failures (Batra *et al.*, 2012), intention to repurchase and reuse the same products or services (Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2018), and favourable public display of affection towards the brand (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019).

Consumers not only become emotionally connected to other people but also build strong and emotional bonds with the products and brands they consume (Schmid & Huber, 2019). Hence, in some researches, brand love has been compared to interpersonal love and thus, Batra and colleagues, in 2012, have found some similarities and divergences between both terms. On the one hand, a relationship based on love can last for decades and involves numerous affective, cognitive, and behavioural experiences, where both love cases are examples. Moreover, the antecedent of love is also the same, since in both situations people fall in love judging that the other part provides something the person wants, needs, or likes. On the other hand, while interpersonal love contains a strong element of altruistic concern for the beloved, that is not found in brand love, as consumers are concerned with what the brand can do for them, not what they can do for the brand. Hence, consumers establish a unidirectional relationship with brands (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). Also, brands themselves do not experience emotions and therefore could not return a person's love in that way (Batra *et al.*, 2012).

The creation of brand love is not always the same among individuals. There are five different trajectories of brand love: slow development, which begins with a natural feeling followed by a relatively slow upward transition; liking becomes love - when people switch from simply like to love the brand; love all the way - where love occurs early on and is maintained throughout the relationship trajectory; bumpy road - a fluctuating path and; turnabout - initiated by a feeling of dislike towards the brand that is positively improved over time (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). Paths that customers can take to fall in love towards a brand are not the only difference among them. For instance, openness of the Big Five personality attributes was found to have a significant predictive role in inducing brand love (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019).

Nonetheless, it was provided a list of common reasons why consumers may become brand lovers over time: attractive brand qualities, values and existential meaning, intrinsic rewards, self-identity, positive affect, passionate desire and fit, emotional bonding and anticipated heartbreak, willingness to invest, frequent thought and use, and length of use (Batra *et al.*, 2012 in Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). The same authors also referred that intimacy,

dream, pleasure, memories, unicity, affection, passion, brand image, and brand personality are considered as important building blocks of brand love. Moreover, love for a brand is not limited to hedonic brands or products and thus, it can also be evoked for brands that are perceived as primarily utilitarian (Schmid & Huber, 2019). Another general trend in the brand love environment is that consumers tend to assign human characteristics to brands, through a process called anthropomorphization, and hence they prefer brands that are congruent with their personality (Schmid & Huber, 2019).

Contextualizing the motives and drivers of brand love, it is obvious that is possible for the brand to engage their customer on a base of love. Nevertheless, the attraction based on emotional factors tends to become more and more rational over time, since after reaching a more mature stage of such relationship, expectations and perceptions become more realistic (Schmid & Huber, 2019). Hence, brand love cannot be taken for granted and if it is not continuously maintained by product quality and permanent satisfaction, negative consequences may arise, and due to the intensity of the felt emotion, it can easily switch from love to hate (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, companies start facing a serious problem called brand hate. In that case, the latter authors suggested that brands can opt for one of the three possible strategies: avoidance-like strategies in response to negative brand perceptions and brand image; attack-like strategies in response to corporate wrongdoings; and approach-like strategies in response to violations of expectations.

It is straightforward to understand that loving consumers are more likely to forgive occasional brand failures (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). Thus, when negative information is spread, firms can count on loving brand-identified customers, who proactively shield the brand and tend to rely in two different protective behaviours: sin of omission and brand defense, as strongly identified consumers consider themselves to be the 'same as the brand' and utilise the brand to communicate their own identity to others. Therefore, they feel personally threatened when the brand is in the same scenario (Dalman *et al.*, 2017). However, the authors also mentioned that when the situation takes an extremely unethical proportion, brand identification tends to disappear, and customers can no longer ignore such negative information, and they will punish the brand even more than other customers.

To conclude, it is important for customers to maintain brand satisfaction to ensure prolonged involvement, where satisfaction and brand liking are the most relevant constructs (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). The same authors have added that such satisfaction leads

to long-term emotional attachment. Therefore, Schmid and Huber (2019) have recommended a successful strategy to brands, which guarantee the ongoing relationship with their customers, hindering the possible negative results seen above: create novel and exciting experiences or other sensory stimulations, such as constantly providing new and diversified information, inviting existing customers to product presentations. This promotion tool, like influencers advertising or celebrity endorsement, has actually gained some relevance in the current market practices and hence the study will focus in such subject.

2.6 Advertising, Influencers and Celebrity Endorsement

After comprehending what digital marketing really is, how its branch of social media marketing is defined and works, specifying on YouTube, and how engagement is processed, in this phase, the study tries to embrace all these aspects and takes those who are able to influence customers, leading to a certain level of engagement, through their social media platforms.

The phenomenon of social influence is considered an important driver of rebroadcasting activity, which refers to the act of sharing content with social peers that is found online (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). From offline studies, researchers already know that social contagion and influence can significantly affect the diffusion process, where influential users have a role in affecting the rebroadcasting decisions of other users. In addition, there exist users who are inherently more influential than other individuals. These users can potentially affect others' decisions to rebroadcast.

2.6.1 Advertising

Starting with its definition, advertising is a form of personalized marketing communication that matches with consumers' preferences and needs, improving content effectiveness by enhancing consumers' propensity to engage with social media content (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018). The same authors have added that advertising is known to increase content engagement by allowing different social platforms to promote specific posts to broader audiences on the basis of demographics, interests, and location. Also, realising the success of such marketing approach, managers should encourage partners to address their network actively during the ongoing brand alliance (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018), relying on what is called viral marketing. This experience refers to the act of propagating marketing messages through the help and cooperation from individual consumers that lead to lower costs, higher credibility, faster diffusion, and better targeting of consumers (Liu-

Thompkins, 2012). The ad creator, who tends to be a personalized, identifiable, and relatable entity, plays a central role in anchoring and shaping reactions (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, online advertising platforms are making an active shift toward sponsored content or streaming advertising, which is able to camouflage the marketing message, as those who are responsible for spreading it look and sound like organic promoters (Wang *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, those sponsored ads can be seen in articles (e.g., Yahoo's News), social media posts (e.g., Facebook), or videos (e.g., YouTube). In such marketing tool, users actively generate and publish multimedia content, including their own opinions on brands and products, and actually such content, also known as user generated content, has proven to be more popular and effective than professional advertisements (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

The advantages of consumer-generated advertising (CGA) are vast. First of all, it benefits from heightened consumer engagement and increased trustworthiness, since individual ads creators are seen as more trustworthy than company ads creators (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013). Then, CGAs generate digital advertising revenue (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018), build brand awareness, increase sales, enhance customer loyalty (Cole *et al.*, 2017), boost the perceived quality, and lead to deeper engagement (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013). Those online ads are also referred as more informative than traditional advertisements (Tsang *et al.*, 2004, *in* Alam & Khan, 2019). Moreover, CGAs are the most watched, the most memorable, and the most-often-talked-about ads (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013). The same authors have also said that consumer-generated communications are more effective than company's, since such messages are independent from the marketer and are perceived as having been created by individuals with no ulterior motives or intentions to manipulate. An important topic that takes place in the advertising context is the whole process that is associated to such marketing tool. One area that marketers may control is how to start the message diffusion process. In this phase, they have to determine how many initial individuals are needed to disseminate a viral message and what types of individuals to choose as promoters (Liu-Thompkins, 2012). The same authors have given an answer to marketers: the larger the number of seeds, the more opportunity there is for a message to reach other consumers and the more likely the message will create an impact, which supports the use of a large number of promoter individuals. Nevertheless, they have also said that there is a consequent trade-off between using many individuals and maintaining a low campaign cost. They concluded by stating that the main consideration in such strategy is to have enough individuals to ensure that the propagation does not stop early,

adding also that what really affects viral marketing success are message characteristics, individual (sender or receiver) characteristics, and social network characteristics.

When developing this process ideology, the timing of advertising and posting also plays a central role. Content with high information value has proven to perform well online, since it elicits higher cognitive processing, fulfilling consumers' self-enhancement goals and generating social exchange value (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018). However, its acceptance depends on diurnal variations. Working memory availability is highest in the morning, lowest in the mid-afternoon and moderate in the evening, as Kanuri and colleagues as stated, in 2018. Their study focused on this theme and thus, it has found out that posting content in the morning results in an 8.8% increase in link clicks than doing in the afternoon or evening. In the morning, people are more alert, attentive, curious, deliberative, and informative seeking in electronic environments. Then, as the day progresses, people take on more tasks or accumulate more stress, which has direct impact on memory availability. The authors have concluded that limited availability of memory impairs their desire to engage with social media content and hence the desire to engage with such content will likely be highest in the morning.

Another aspect that marketers must control when running an advertising strategy is the message that individuals are spreading. It is important to maintain a high-quality message, which is considered as creative, entertaining, informative, or socially valuable (Liu-Thompkins, 2012). The ultimate goal of marketers when creating a message is having it as shared as possible and what definitely affect sharing are positive emotions of amusement, excitement, inspiration, and warmth (Tellis *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, managers must provide clear guidelines to their partners and carefully communicate their brand's values, image, and style through briefings or meetings (Becker *et al.*, 2019). Also, they should offer concrete guidance for how to promote, providing scripts, for instance (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018). These authors have also mentioned that the success of the whole process may depend on the essence of other posts, as those which mention other activities can detract from the alliance. Thus, unrelated posts should be limited during the launch phase of the product.

In the advertising subject, it is also noteworthy to know what leads individuals to promote. Tellis and colleagues (2019) have named a set of motivations, including self-serving motivation, when they share content that benefits themselves without directly considering

benefits to others; to foster information by others (reciprocity) and to learn from others in the future; to express or signal uniqueness; to show empathy for others; to try to help others; to talk about new products; to provide and get information regarding high-priced products; or just because they find the act of sharing to be enjoyable. Nonetheless, not all individuals are driven by the same motivation types. While some of them are creating content motivated by love of the brand or enjoyment of the craft, others are promoting to profit economically or professionally (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013). However, the same authors advanced those individuals who are motivated by self-gain are generally perceived as less authentic and more false, as perceptions of economic motives damage the perceived trustworthiness of the ad and its creator.

When marketers are in the advertising field, they seek to know what are the best metrics to evaluate the promotion and consequent engagement. As it was seen in the social media marketing chapter, Voorveld and colleagues (2018) referred that “*the effectiveness of such digital engagement programs is usually assessed with social media monitoring tools providing quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks, as indicators of level of engagement or valence of engagement*“. Furthermore, for advertisers the pay-per-click scheme dominates online ad platforms and thus, click-through rate (CTR) and conversion rate (CVR- conversion per click) are considered key performance metrics (Wang *et al.*, 2019).

The last point to be mentioned in the advertising chapter is the relationship between an ad and the customer. The higher the level of knowledge about advertising, the greater is the customer's level of scepticism toward advertising, which is necessary to protect consumers from corrupt and misleading tactics by advertisers and to make them aware of the most beneficial product available (Cole *et al.*, 2017). The same authors have even said that although only about one third of consumers believe that advertising is informative and truthful, those consumers believe the benefits of advertising outweigh the disadvantages.

2.6.2 Influencers

The current success of the social networks has led to the enhancement of user-generated social media communication (Alam & Khan, 2019). This trend invites brands and customers to engage in collaborative processes of knowledge and product-related information sharing. Those customers can be active creators of online content, providing

opinions, recommendations, experiences (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018), personal stories, ideas, reviews, feelings, or emotions (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). As the same authors have added, those digital creators may become opinion leaders and their posts can impact brands and products and influence potential customers, being therefore referred as influencer, who is responsible for the new form of marketing: influencer marketing. Consumers who participate in brand-related content creation are expected to be brand advocates. Hence, the information they spread about a product or brand can be relevant for customers, who consequently get involved with the brand, leading to a positive impact on brand equity (Alam & Khan, 2019). Actually, social networks influencers play an important role in marketing by introducing products to their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019) and also because their advantageous impact on three main fields: organisations, customers and themselves.

First of all, user-generated content on social media has significant impact on hedonic brand image, whereas firm-created one does not (Alam & Khan, 2019). Furthermore, influencers do not only have the ability to either accelerate or block an information dissemination process (Lanz *et al.*, 2019), but they also seem to have stronger persuasiveness and credibility, as followers are more able to relate to them (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). The truth is that information from other members is perceived as more objective and helpful than information provided by the company (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). Another clear advantage of influencers is their positive financial impact, since they simply generate sales. A study developed by the Forbes magazine, in 2019, has proved that for each euro a brand spends in an influencer, it receives 7,65 euros back (Leitão, 2019).

One of the most important topics when approaching influencer's theme is the set of characteristics that define an influencer. Several studies have explored this issue and they concluded that brand should understand the values that are conveyed by the influencer, in order to have an efficient promotion (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). One of the traits that arise more controversial opinions is the influencer's physical attractiveness. While Lee and Watkins, in 2016, have settled that physical attractiveness had positive influence on para-social interactions, and Xiao and colleagues, in 2018, reinforced the idea by stating that physical attractiveness of the advertising spokesperson significantly influence the perceived information credibility, Sokolova and Kefi, in 2019, have stated that such trait

is negatively related to para-social relationship, as the purchase intention could be affected by a similarity of a style and not by the beauty per se of the blogger.

Credibility has been pointed out as one of the strongest influence drivers and although both expertise and trustworthiness are considered the keys that determine the effectiveness of a credible message, trustworthiness is a more impactful factor of source credibility than expertise (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). The authors have developed each term, saying that expertise refers to the extent to which a communicator is seen as a source that can make good assertions, and trustworthiness refers to the apparent integrity of the source and the perceivers' confidence in the source to communicate valid and honest assertions. Other aspects that Xiao and colleagues (2018) have named as credibility sources were the interactivity between influencers and their followers, and the similarity in attitudes between message receivers and senders, which has more impact than other types of similarity such as gender or appearance.

Along with credibility, argument quality also influences the participants' perception of product reviews and purchase intentions, as the evaluation of information credibility is highly dependent upon the quality not only of the content, but also of the message. Moreover, issue involvement and prior knowledge about the information are two prominent factors influencing customers' interpretations (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). The same authors concluded their analysis by saying that all these characteristics positively influence consumers' attitudes towards the advertiser, the advertisement, and the brand. Furthermore, other influencers' characteristics have surged among different studies. Syrdal and Briggs (2018) found out that consumers find content more engaging when they perceive it to be more authentic. In other words, people look at influencers who are fresh and relevant, rather than those who create content to be sold and distributed. Becker and colleagues (2019) develop the theme of authenticity in advertising, since they have realised that authenticity is an essential element for effective advertising and it has become one of the most prevalent buzzwords in the advertising industry. They firstly said that an authentic advertisement is a genuine, real, and true one, and hence it stimulates brand trust, helps consumers connect with the brand, initiates feelings of sympathy or empathy, and helps overcome consumer scepticism toward ads. Afterwards, they also declared that there are four dimensions that constitute authentic advertising: preserving the brand essence; honouring brand heritage; showing a realistic plot; and presenting a credible advertising message.

Back to Syrdal and Briggs (2018), both authors have also mentioned that aesthetic qualities of the digital content affect the level of engagement, as people get more engaged when the content is visually appealing. Tellis and colleagues (2019) have also touched in this topic and they stated that receivers are likely to feel more positively motivated to socialise with those influencers who make them feel good. The authors named drama ads as enjoyable because the storyline, since the greater the surprise, the greater the enjoyment and thus the more likely the content will arouse emotions and engagement. Humor also came as an influencer characteristic, as it may dissuade social media participants from posting comments (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). Content is more positively received when humor dominates and actually the use of such communication style is a distinguished characteristic of the content shared by leading influencers (Barry & Graça, 2018). These same authors have developed the emotional approach when promoting and they concluded that emotionally charged content is shared more often than any other kind of social content. Tellis and colleagues, in 2019, reinforced this idea stating that emotional-focused ads generally have more impact than information-focused ones. Finally, influencers' demographics were also considered when listing what are the characteristics of an influencer. Researchers have found that female and younger influencers tend to exert more influence on their targets and to be more susceptible to viral influences than male and older consumers (Liu-Thompkins, 2012).

Furthermore, other topic to be at hand when studying influencers is the relationship that they have with their followers. Para-social interactions, considered as a 'friendship' with a media personality, explain the relationship between media personalities and media users (Lee & Watkins, 2016) and are positively related to purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). The latter authors also mentioned that the relationship between influencers and their followers is not unidirectional, as users are able to add comments and discuss the content, while the digital creator has the opportunity of replying to the messages and comments related to that content. Actually, reciprocation is the critical step in relationship formation, as stronger and more committed bonds then yield many benefits, including relationship growth loyalty and the desire to reward the partner directly or indirectly (Kozlenkova *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, followers who are attached or even addicted to the influencer are more likely to purchase than less attached ones, and long-time followers of influencers who care about their followers, show expertise on the subject, and are perceived as trustworthy are also more likely to purchase the featured products (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Also, vivid and interactive posts yield strong levels of consumer

engagement, while relevance, message clarity, tone, and other post's content characteristics also have an impact on engagement (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018).

Nonetheless, social influencers are neither traditional celebrities, like famous actors or athletes, nor are their posts the traditional advertisements (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Thus, the study requires to get into the celebrity endorsement field.

2.6.3 Celebrity Endorsement

As previously seen, managers frequently seek strategies to profit from social media and scholars have stated that forming a brand alliance from a partner is a method to acquire an installed social media base and consequently boost the sales (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018). In this chapter, it was already shown that the partner does not have to be necessarily another brand and here it takes the form of a character. Characters can be everyday people, celebrities, animals, babies, or cartoons (Tellis *et al.*, 2019). This study gets focused on celebrities, who help in attracting a new audience base outside of a content platform's current reach (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018).

Celebrity status can arise from talent and skills in a particular area such as music, acting, or sports; from a person's lineage and his/her family; or self-generated media attention or associations with other celebrities (Winterich *et al.*, 2018). In fact, celebrities use social networks to increase their influence and deliver promotional content (Boeuf & Darveau, 2017), relying on a marketing tool called celebrity endorsement. Throughout modern history, celebrity endorsements have been an important form of advertising, referring to a form of advertising strategy in which a famous or well-known person uses her or his social status to promote a good, service, or idea (Winterich *et al.*, 2018). The same authors added that celebrity endorsers offer various benefits for brands by drawing attention to the marketing communication, raising brand awareness, defining the brand image, and increasing sales. As the advantages of such practice are myriad, organisations tend to rely on a set of criteria that helps them to decide who are the best celebrities or influencers to fit with their objectives.

Brands believe that celebrities captive the audience when they are appealing, attractive, similar to the audience, and likable, leading to more positive emotions, views, and shares (Tellis *et al.*, 2019) and thus, they tend to look at this type of celebrities or influencers. The similarity with the audience is actually important, as Sokolova and Kefi, in 2019, have said that people are more easily influenced by social figures that are perceived to be

similar to them. This phenomenon can be verified among millennials, for instance, who are more likely to buy a product endorsed by someone matching their self-image. Millennials tend to identify themselves with celebrities, adopting some aspects of their personalities. Actually, the impact of an action of a celebrity can be even greater when the audience perceives him or her as someone on whom they can rely (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

Another aspect that organisations tend to check when hiring a promotion partner is the number of followers. Marketing managers who are trying to build and increase their follower base usually make decisions with very little information, and hence rely on the network size of the influencer (Lanz *et al.*, 2019). The same authors added that macro influencers, those with more followers, are actually greater in terms of reach and that results in far more clicks on videos and consequently in higher revenues, comparing with smaller influencers, but this does not mean a higher influence than others. Indeed, people aim to form ties with macro influencers due to their network size and thus, individuals with more followers or higher level of physical attractiveness are commonly targeted as endorsers. Nonetheless, it was showed that those individuals are not automatically the most influential. The truth is that macro influencers are characterized by self-focused, self-serving behaviour, and are associated with very low responsiveness level, whereas micro influencers are associated with much higher responsiveness (Lanz *et al.*, 2019).

Most managers apparently look at only follower numbers, rather than actual posting behaviours (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018). Those behaviours and frequencies when posting are effectively essential, as repeated exposure to a celebrity vlogger can elicit similar feelings of relationship enhancement and hence, fans will start to see the vlogger as a trusted source of information and seek out their advice (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

Therefore, a brand manager must use both the size and activity of a prospective partner (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018). These authors have also importantly mentioned that managers are advised to put special emphasis on product-related social media power of the celebrity or influencer. Other influencer's characteristic that authors have cited as important for brands was the interaction between the agent and his or her followers, which stresses one's social media power. Furthermore, Becker and colleagues (2019) have also said that managers find value in seeking entertainment with pots that are far from real life and amuse the consumer, while Lawrence and colleagues (2013) pointed out that authenticity and creativity are rated as more important in terms of influencer's characteristics.

An important topic that deserves special attention in the celebrity endorsement context is to know how much the influencer is and should be involved with the brand since consumer responses to customer-firm interactions will depend on how the individual refers to the firm (Packard *et al.*, 2018). Thus, previous studies have based such integration level on two different indicators: what is the role that the influencer feels he or she is playing when promoting and how the influencer refers to the brand. Regarding the first aspect, when an individual makes an effort to co-create with a firm, like brand-related content creation, he or she becomes a partial employee (Chiang *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, when agents can separate both identities, the firm's and theirs, using pronouns like 'I' or 'they' rather than 'we', they are actually increasing customers' perceptions that they feel and act on their behalf and thus, those perceptions lead to increased customer satisfaction, purchase intentions, and purchase behaviour (Packard *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the idea behind an effective endorsement is having a celebrity or influencer who acts as an employee and refers to the brand as 'they' when promoting or advertising. Actually, this relationship between brands and influencers has to be strongly established, since user-generated content requires careful monitoring and agile firm response (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). When relationships are not that close, individuals feel free to endorse products or services for profit without using or buying them or even to falsify reviews. This phenomenon is called cyber shilling (Thakur *et al.*, 2018). Such behaviour has the improvement of the social perception of the entity that is shilled as final goal and it can have positive or negative intentions. In the first case, it is related to brand love or reward, while regarding the second case, it may be associated to desire for revenge or perceived betrayal (Thakur *et al.*, 2018). The same authors have explained each reason of cyber shilling, saying that brand love is '*the customer's feelings of bonding with the brand*', reward is '*the compensation given or promised to be given to an individual by the company for posting deceptive online reviews*', desire for revenge is '*the intention of the customer to take action, punishing the firm for the damages the customer believes it caused*', and perceived betrayal is '*the customer's hatred toward the firm when they believe a firm has taken advantage of them and violated their trust*'. Thakur and colleagues (2018) have also mentioned that desire for revenge and brand love are those factors that directly lead to customers' involvement with cyber shilling, due to the upset or angry facet of the customer against the company and to the high desire to help the firm succeed respectively, while willingness to fall into cyber shilling increases when some sort of reward is received.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Market research is the systematic gathering and interpretation of information about individuals or organisations using statistical and analytical methods and techniques of the applied social sciences to gain insight or support decision making. Furthermore, in a more specific environment, Marketing Research is the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). Apart from its clear findings and conclusions, any research suffers some limitations, even in practical terms, such as the formulation of the problem, the design of the process, the definition of the sample, how to analyse data, or others. This fact hence justifies the importance of a methodology in any research activity. Thus, in this section, it is supposed to describe procedure of the research and the different statistical methods used for data analysis (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014).

The methodology works as a guide for the whole research, guaranteeing that the process has been the right one. Hence, this current topic will disclose and detail how the study was developed and constructed, highlighting the stages, approaches, methods, and tools undertaken along the research.

3.1 Research Approach

Before running into the two types of data that the research relied on and how it took both approaches, it is fundamental to understand the real purpose of the study. Research can, according to Sarstedt and Mooi (2014), be classified into the following three categories: exploratory, descriptive, and causal. The same authors also added that exploratory research, as its name suggests, has the objective of exploring a problem or situation. Also, descriptive research is all about describing certain phenomena, characteristics or functions. Finally, causal research is used to understand the effects of one variable on another variable. Nevertheless, studies can only design its research and opt for its source of the investigation after formulating its problem, since they are both related. Thus, it is essential to highlight the real purpose of the whole study, as stated before.

This study aims to explore how YouTube influencers can contribute to the process of brand love. Thus, it is straightforward to understand that an exploratory study is faced. Therefore, in order to identify proper reasons for the process under analysis, i.e. brand love due to YouTubers' impact, some in-depth interviews to these digital content creators must be conducted. In-depth interviews are unique in that they allow for penetrating on a

one-to-one basis, fostering interaction between the interviewer and the respondent (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). Interviews were then applied to collect qualitative data, which are the most usual type of data for exploratory research, even when there is no single “right” way to engage in qualitative analysis (Saldana & Omasta, 2018, *in* Raskind *et al.*, 2019). Actually, there is a set of advantages of opting for collecting qualitative data, the one which is not presented in values, called as “raw”. The main advantage of qualitative data is that it is very rich (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). Furthermore, Raskind and her colleagues, in 2019, added four other benefits of conducting this sort of analysis. They are: (1) prompting the use of a broader array of available methods, (2) improving the ability of readers and reviewers to critically appraise findings and contextualise them within the broader literature, (3) improving opportunities for replication, enabling future research in an easier way, and (4) enhancing the rigor of qualitative research paradigms.

Besides, the same authors have highlighted another point, which was the fact that the possible methods available in this type of analysis put the qualitative researcher in an more innovative position. They also advanced that qualitative analytic methods are far less likely to have standardized, widely agreed on definitions and procedures (Raskind *et al.*, 2019).

3.2 Primary and Secondary Data

First of all, it is important to refer that the exercise in its entirety was based on two types of data, primary and secondary data. While primary data are data that a researcher has collected for a specific purpose, secondary data are collected by another researcher for another purpose (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). As these authors have also defended in 2014, any research should begin with secondary data support. In such a way, the research did follow this process, as it was possible to be seen, in order to have first a theoretical support of what was about to be studied.

3.2.1 Secondary Data

It was needed to get a set of ideologies, theories, and terms that have already been taken in previous studies as this one does, to make sure that all concepts were clarified. This approach leads the investigation to surge in a form of literature review, called secondary data. Once these notions were elucidated, the study was able to go through the primary one. Secondary data is usually quick to access, much cheaper, and it is also easier to compare to other research that uses the same data (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). Thus, this line relied on information retained from previous articles provided by journals which are

ranked in quartile 1 or 2, based on SJR- Scimago Journal & Country Rank. Under these assumption, some journals like Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Advertising, or even Journal of Marketing Communications just came out.

Having touched and explained the different topics this study relies on, as it was perceived in the last chapter, the research could move to the primary data collection.

3.2.2 Primary Data

Primary data tend to be highly specific because the researcher can influence what the research comprises, being precise to the purpose and consequently they are richer (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). The study is based on the grounded theory, that refers to the qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation or theory of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a larger number of insights (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). Thus, the idea behind this segment of the study was to collect data directly from those who could explain and clarify the impact and process of influence on YouTube. Thus, it was pretended to get information that could enhance what are the sources of advertising or other possible tools that YouTubers use to exert enough influence power to lead their followers to create an emotional relationship with brands, namely to what is called brand love. Since it was supposed to rely on qualitative data, the study conducted in-depth interviews to reach the richest insights.

The interview phase was started with a whole research process based on a set of articles which enabled to find some questions that could help to explore the areas the study pretends. The major part of the questions was obtained from questionnaires of scientific articles and lately adapted to the interview approach, in order to achieve the character which was supposed. Since the study counted on open-questions, it was crucial to make them fit in the YouTube line. Hence, the initial questions were adapted not only to the interview approach but also to the YouTube scope. After having a set of possible questions, it was necessary to select those which better touch the research points, but also could enable interviewees to provide other interesting types of information.

3.3 Interview Construction

The interview process was divided into two main phases. In the first one, it was intended to obtain some demographic data, which relied on ten closed-questions (Appendices 1-22). They were: *Name or YouTube channel name, Category of videos, Number of subscribers, Number of followers on social media, Years of service, How regularly do you post videos?, What is the usual schedule for posting videos?, Is there any seasonal variation?, Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?*. After running through all these pre-interview questions under a survey attitude, the second phase was handled. Here, seven open-questions took place to study the three elements under attention.

The first element taken into account was **advertising**. The idea behind its questions was to understand how connected the YouTuber and the idea of a promotion really are, comprehending the whole process of the partnership between the brand and the YouTuber, exploring the entire process of the promotion. Hence, the first question was:

How is processed the whole promotion sequence, from the brand/company contact until the post-action feedback?

Lamberton and Stephen, in 2016, when studying a thematic exploration of digital, social media, and mobile marketing: research evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an agenda for future inquiry, under the topic of collective behaviour, took a question which was *how does crowdsourcing work?*. Nevertheless, the idea in this study was to apply the question to the advertising and promotion environment. To accomplish the objective of the first element's questions under analysis, it was necessary to understand what is behind the process, namely what are the motives that make the YouTuber accept the partnership. Thus, the second question of the interview was:

What leads you to accept promoting a product, a service or a brand? What about the monetary referral benefits?

This question was obtained and adapted from a study about the Competitive Advantage Through Engagement, in 2016, when Kumar and Pansari developed a questionnaire that aimed to evaluate the customer engagement. One of the items considered in a Likert-type scale survey of the Kumar and his colleague's analysis was *I promote the brand because of the monetary referral benefits provided by the brand.*

The second element under analysis is **influencer**. Here, the intention was to find out not only how the influence itself occurs, but also what allow the agents of the study to be real influencers, namely in terms of traits, of results of the influence, and of relationship with followers. Thus, it was firstly supposed to understand what are the characteristics that make the YouTuber an influencer with the question:

Which characteristics of yours make you an influencer?

In 2014, it was developed a study to go deeper in the social media advertising value where a few scale items tested some elements like entertainment, credibility, or perceived value of advertisements. In this context, question contents like *advertisements are credible*, *advertisements are trustworthy*, *advertisements are believable*, *advertisements are useful*, *advertisements are valuable*, and *advertisements are important* were under evaluation (Dao *et al.*, 2014) and they were also adapted to the current study, seeking for traits which allow YouTubers to become influencers.

Moreover, it was also intended to comprehend the results post-promotion and their effects. In other words, the second question meant to understand what really happens after the influence impact:

Which are the clear results of the promotion? Do you feel that you really motivate your viewers to know the product, service, or brand and possibly opt to purchase?

This question came up from a study that was supposed to test the engagement with social media and social media advertising. One of the items under test was empowerment, where one of the statements to be evaluated said *made me feel that I had influence on others* (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018).

The final question regarding the *influencer* was designed to discover how the YouTuber, as an influencer, deals with her followers:

How would you describe your relationship with your followers?

Back to 2016 Kumar and Pansari subject, when they looked at customer engagement, they did consider the indicators *I love talking about my brand experience* and *I discuss the benefits that I get from this brand with others* which worked as insights for such question of the interview.

The third and last element of this study is **celebrity endorsement**, where its questions were made not only to understand the relationship between the YouTuber and the brand, but also to comprehend the reasons and choice criteria used by companies under influencer's perceptions, to enhance the endorsement approach and its essence. Thus, the first question touches the initial intention:

From those characteristics that you mentioned, which are the ones that led brands to choose you as promoter?

In 2015, Erfgen, Zenker, and Sattler developed an investigation under the question *When do celebrity endorsers harm brand recall?* The three colleagues measured four latent constructs: attractiveness of the endorser, brand familiarity, endorser/brand congruence, and strength of the cognitive link between the endorser and the brand. The current study decided to have these aspects as support, but it went deeper trying to get what really makes the brand to elect that specific YouTuber as its own promoter, designing the first question in terms of celebrity endorsement.

The last question of the interview aimed to capture how the YouTuber deals with the brand he promotes:

How would you describe your relationship with the brands you promote and work with?

The idea behind this question arises from Kumar and Pansari (2016) research *Competitive Advantage Through Engagement* where was designed an engagement framework, which also considered the employee engagement. There, some items were rated in surveys to evaluate such element. Statements like *The organisation is like a family to me; When I talk about this organisation, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they';* or even *This organisation has a great deal of meaning for me* were grouped and resumed by the question mentioned above.

3.4 Criteria for the sample

Since the whole interview was produced, it was imperative to define a specific criterion regarding the YouTubers to be interviewed, in order to know which type of content creator the study would consider. The criteria applied to them were 'Portuguese female YouTubers who create content in lifestyle category'. The first criterion was to consider

only Portuguese YouTubers, not only because it was easier to contact them in the same language, but also because the author was more familiar with the type of content provided in Portugal and he knew where and how to reach them, due to his networks. The second aspect taken into consideration was female content creators. This choice came from the fact that female and younger consumers tend to exert more influence on their targets and to be more susceptible to viral influences than male and older consumers (Liu-Thompkins, 2012). The last characteristic the YouTuber must meet is producing videos in the lifestyle category. This criterion is justified not only by the fact that it is the wider area of YouTube but also because consumers are most likely to engage with media, charities, fashion and other sources of lifestyle content (Batra & Keller, 2016).

3.5 Interview Process

After the interview's construction and the criteria being chosen, YouTubers were contacted, mainly via Instagram or e-mail. The idea was to convince them to participate in the study without giving highlights of what was intended to find out, otherwise some results could be biased. The message that was sent to YouTubers was designed under these assumptions and said "Hi (name). My name is David and I am Marketing master's student at ISCTE Business School and I am currently developing my dissertation. My study seeks to focus on the possible effects of young Portuguese YouTubers as influencers and I would like to know if you are willing to help me out, by allowing me to interview you. The interview is composed by seven open questions and it aims to create a whole comfortable and enriching conversation. It is supposed to occur via phone call, via Skype, or face-to-face if it is feasible. I await your response, thank you in advance. Best regards, David Raposo".

Once YouTubers answered, a new message was sent. The idea then was to make sure they had already promoted any brand or product in their videos, so it was exactly what the second message stated: "Would you mind to tell me if you ever had promoted any brand, product, or service on your YouTube channel?". Those who had so were the YouTubers that the interview must be applied. They provided their phone number and interviews were done via phone call.

In the first phase, two first YouTubers were contacted in order to test the interview and its questions and to check if the type of answers provided were what was pretended to be

accomplished and enriching enough to collect a set of data that would be able to conclude any fact. Once it was confirmed, the interview was qualified to be run through several YouTubers. Majority of them was found on Instagram, while a small portion was recommended by other YouTubers, and a few ones were contacted due to the author's network. More than one hundred of YouTubers and three influencers' agencies received the planned message, always guaranteeing that all of them could fulfil the criteria under assumptions.

Twenty-two YouTubers were interviewed. Interviews were conducted over the telephone. Each interview lasted, on average, twenty minutes and then, they were reproduced into paper. Data collection lasted until it was reached data saturation and no new themes emerged, meaning that is not possible to conclude anything else. Moreover the analyst in processing large quantities of data and drawing credible conclusions are tasks that are challenging for the brain to complete when the text is in extended form (Miles *et al.*, 2014, *in* Raskind *et al.*, 2019).

3.6 Research Process and Framework

When all the interviews were collected and transcribed to the paper, they were coded based on a specific coding presented in appendix 23, and hence each interview got a set of codes that helped in the cluster creation.

Having concluded the literature review and collected primary data, the study is ready to follow a whole process which leads to the answer of the main question: 'how YouTube influencers can contribute to the process of brand love'. The idea behind the process is sustained by a framework presented in figure 4.

From this point, the research started by realizing what is the major antecedent of brand love, relying on the literature review. Brand love is formed through sense of community and brand identification (Wang *et al.*, 2018), that justifies why the study interviewed YouTubers to get insights from communities' influencers. Furthermore, brand love surges from an enhanced level of customer engagement (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019), that gives justification to the fact of considering engagement drivers. Once again, relying on the literature review, it is straightforward to mention all the engagement sources.

First of all, social media per se are considered an engagement tool (Sihi & Lawson, 2018); (Park *et al.*, 2018); (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019). Furthermore, users worldwide engage with digital content through likes, comments, shares, and link clicks (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018), and actually the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks are indicators of level of engagement (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). Hence, brands and influencers can engage their audience through responding to their comments, publishing user-generated content on their own pages, and posting interactive content like quizzes or clickable icons (Park *et al.*, 2018). Kupfer and colleagues (2018) reinforced this idea by stating that vivid and interactive posts yield strong levels of consumer engagement. Also, consumer-consumer interactions greatly contribute to brand engagement (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019), and such interaction can be the one between the influencer and his/her followers, as the higher the level of connectedness, the higher the level of engagement (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Credibility, argument quality, trustworthiness, expertise (Xiao *et al.*, 2018), and authenticity (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018) are factors of customer engagement. The latter authors have also said that people get more engaged when the content is visually appealing. Tellis and colleagues (2019) mentioned that drama ads, that lead to surprise and enjoyment, arouse engagement. Moreover, long-time followers are also more likely to engage and even purchase the promoted product (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Finally, the desire to engage with digital content will likely be highest in the morning and thus, posting in the morning leads to a higher level of engagement (Kanuri *et al.*, 2018).

Therefore, the research has considered nine different engagement factors: *numbers and results*, including number of likes, comments, shares, followers, opens, views, and link clicks; *connectedness with followers*, including consumer-consumer interactions, influencer-follower interaction, comments and messages response, and interactive posts; *frequency*, including social media frequent posts, *credibility*, which includes trustworthiness and expertise; *argument quality*; *authenticity*; *visually appealing content*, including surprise and enjoyment elements; *long-time relationship with followers*; and *posts in the morning*.

Since engagement antecedents and YouTubers insights were available, the research combined both elements to find out what are the YouTuber data that contribute to customer engagement, basing on the coding that was created (Appendix 23). Therefore, to each engagement factor was attributed a set of coded-answers, in order to be further evaluated.

At this phase, the point was to discover what were the coded-answers that YouTubers have responded and consequently understand what were the engagement factors that each YouTuber was related to. Thus, if a YouTuber had answered a set of responses associated with a specific engagement factor, such YouTuber would be automatically related to that factor.

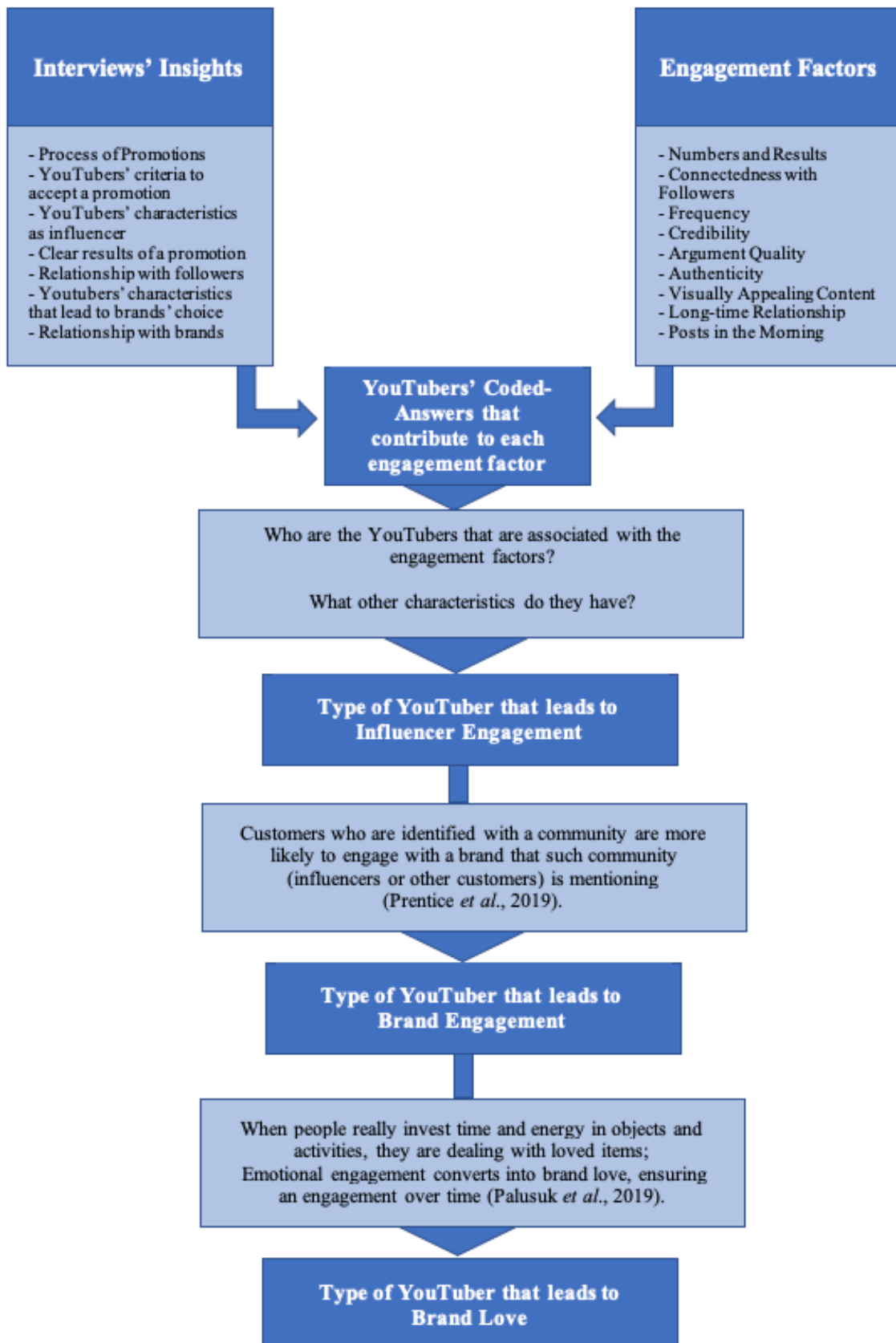
From there, the study could understand not only the relation between different factors, but also what were the YouTubers that better lead to a higher engagement level. The research at hand did consider that YouTubers that better engage their followers are those who were associated with three or more engagement factors. Then, the study would only consider those YouTubers to realise what other characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement they have in common. At such point, the research had found out what characterize a YouTuber that better enhance engagement. Nonetheless, having insights from YouTuber's experience, the customer engagement was related to the influencer and not exactly to the brand, but literature review supported that when people are engaged to an individual, they will be directly or indirectly engaged to the products that such agent promotes or endorses. Actually, customers who are identified with a community are more likely to engage with a brand that such community (influencers or other customers) is mentioning (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). Due to the fact that people associate YouTube with videos produced by people who are similar to themselves rather than by issue experts, they are more likely to engage and respond positively to peer-produced videos (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, nearly 80% of marketers believe customer engagement with their products on social media will increase customer engagement with the brand (Grewal *et al.*, 2019). Helme-Guizon and Magnoni (2019) have mentioned that consumer-consumer interactions seriously contribute to brand engagement. They have also said that engaged customers with the influencer's social media will be consequently tied to the brand the influencer promotes and they would perceive interactions with the brand as rewarding and fulfilling.

Then, the research had at hand what are the YouTubers that better lead to brand engagement. Thus, to answer to the initial question: 'how YouTube influencers can contribute to the process of brand love', the study must be supported by a literature review to know that brand engagement may become brand love. Actually, when customer is already identified with the brand and its characters, the engagement process becomes easier, and hence it finds to be more active. Active engagement refers to the investment

in time, energy, money or other resources in the brand beyond those expended during purchase or consumption (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). The authors also said that when people really invest time and energy in objects and activities, they are dealing with loved items. Hence, the engagement becomes emotional, since it surges from individuals' hedonic motives (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). At this point, the emotional engagement converts into brand love, ensuring an engagement over time (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019).

Therefore, looking at its results, the study would further find out what are the YouTubers that contribute to brand love and what characterize them in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement, answering to the primary question of the research (Figure 4).

Figure 4- Research Framework



Source: Own Elaboration.

Chapter 4 - Results

The aim of the current dissertation is to discover the role of YouTubers on brand love, namely how such agents contribute to that emotional connection. Hence, from the 22 interviews, a set of results has emerged.

4.1 Interviews Results

Since the interview was based on seven questions, then seven main clusters were found out and consequently they worked as different areas of the study: process of promotions; YouTuber's criteria to accept a promotion; YouTuber's characteristics as influencer; YouTuber's clear results of any promotion as influencer; YouTuber's relationship with her followers; YouTuber's characteristics that lead to brands' choice; and YouTuber's relationship with the brands she works with. After these seven main groups, a set of demographics were also provided by interviewees.

Regarding the first area, process of promotions (Table 1), the answers were pretty similar, as they created a set of sub-groups. The first was the YouTuber's situation in the industry, namely if she was in any agency, signed in an influencers' platform, or working on her own (A1-A3 in coding). Only three YouTubers were signed in an influencers' platform, while half of them were working on their own, and eight were in an agency. The second area was the way that the contact between the YouTuber and brand was established, including via social networks, via e-mail, or if it was the YouTuber who initiated the contact (A4-A6). Here, ten of the interviewees have stated that they were contacted by brands via social-networks, other ten via e-mail and only four have mentioned that they were the initiator of such contact, knowing then that some of the YouTubers have relied on more than one process. Afterwards, they talked about the relationship that they have created with brands, namely if it was for sporadic promotions or for a contractual partnership (A7-A8). In this case, the biggest part of YouTubers (19/22) has said that they were not contacted for contractual partnerships.

Then, it has surged a group of answers that developed the situation of belonging to an agency or to a platform (A9-A11), where nine YouTubers mentioned that such agents work as an intermediary between the YouTuber and brands. Moreover, it was emerged the point of testing or not the product before promoting this (A12-A13), showing that almost all YouTubers denied the fact of testing the product before promote (19/22). Also,

interviewees also mentioned where the promotion was done (A14-A16), and excepting one YouTuber, all the others mentioned that promotions run on YouTube and on Instagram simultaneously. Regarding the next sub-group of answers, it was found that every YouTuber received a briefing from the brand to be promoted (A17-A18). Afterwards, interviewees talked about the evaluation process, knowing if the campaign was evaluated before or after it runs (A19-A22), and here the responses were balanced.

Then, YouTubers also talked about the level of freedom that they can rely on when promoting the brand or product, namely in terms of the number of photos to share, the video time dedicated to talking about the brand and so on (A23-A24), where the majority part of them has confirmed that they could consider themselves as free when promoting. The topic of values and prices was also mentioned during the interviews (A25-A26) and the remuneration is usually already established before the contact between the YouTuber and the brand. They have also talked about the use of a script in a campaign or a photo's description (A27-A28), stating that the use of a script does not tend to occur (14/22). Furthermore, YouTubers have commented about the evaluation of the partnership or promotion, i.e., if they rely on a detailed evaluation of all the terms of such partnership before accepting it (A29-A30). Fourteen in twenty-two interviewees have confirmed such method. Finally, YouTubers talked about the situation after promotion, namely if they share results and statistics with the brand, or if they run more partnerships together (A31-A34), having a set of varied answers.

The second area was related to the criteria that YouTubers use to accept or reject a promotion. In this question, answers were actually diversified (Table 2). Nonetheless, there are some answers that have emerged more often. For example, nine YouTubers have said that they accept a promotion if they identify themselves with the brand (B1). Also, nine of them accept a promotion if they like the product (B3). Moreover, eight YouTubers have declared that they accept the promotion if they identify themselves with the product (B2), while other eight of them mentioned that accepting a promotion depends on how much the product fits in their channel's content (B5). Furthermore, seven interviewees confirmed that they accept a promotion if their followers like the product (B15). In the last part of this question, YouTubers have discussed the impact of monetary referral benefits in such criteria (B18-B25), where ten of them stated that such benefits have some impact on the acceptance of a promotion, other ten said that those benefits do not have impact at all, and only two of them have considered that monetary benefits have much impact on the acceptance. However, nine YouTubers have said that if they were bigger

in terms of numbers, the impact of monetary referral benefits would be stronger. Finally, four of the interviewees stated that they are not paid in cash, but they are rather paid in products that they receive to promote.

Table 1- Absolute Frequency of 'Process of Promotions' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
A1	8	A18	0
A2	3	A19	10
A3	11	A20	13
A4	10	A21	10
A5	10	A22	7
A6	4	A23	15
A7	19	A24	7
A8	3	A25	8
A9	9	A26	14
A10	1	A27	8
A11	3	A28	14
A12	3	A29	14
A13	19	A30	8
A14	0	A31	12
A15	1	A32	9
A16	20	A33	11
A17	22	A34	10

Source: Own Elaboration.

Table 2- Absolute Frequency of 'Criteria to accept a promotion' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
B1	9	B14	2
B2	8	B15	7
B3	9	B16	3
B4	4	B17	3
B5	8	B18	2
B6	1	B19	10
B7	2	B20	10
B8	3	B21	4
B9	3	B22	9
B10	1	B23	0
B11	1	B24	0
B12	1	B25	4
B13	3		

Source: Own Elaboration

Since the third question tried to understand what are the characteristics that make each YouTuber an influencer, the third area refers to the different characteristics that allow such transformation. Actually, answers were clearly diversified (Table 3), even having a set of them that was mentioned more repeatedly. For example, eleven YouTubers consider themselves as influencers because they see themselves as different from the others in the industry (C17). Other eleven of them have stated that they are influencers because they create bonds with their followers (C21). Moreover, ten YouTubers said the fact of being honest makes them an influencer (C4), while nine of them argued that it was because they are real (C5), and other nine claimed it was because they are trustworthy (C7).

Table 3- Absolute Frequency of 'Characteristics as influencer' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
C1	3	C14	3
C2	3	C15	3
C3	1	C16	1
C4	10	C17	11
C5	9	C18	4
C6	2	C19	4
C7	9	C20	2
C8	5	C21	11
C9	6	C22	2
C10	2	C23	3
C11	0	C24	2
C12	4	C25	4
C13	3	C26	1

Source: Own Elaboration

The data collected from the fourth question, which refers to the results of any promotion, can be easily aggregated into five different sub-groups (Table 4). The first one refers to how hard the YouTuber finds to measure a promotion (D1-D2). Only 3 respondents have touched in such point, having two of them said that promotions are hard to measure. Afterwards, YouTubers mentioned if promotional posts are seen as posts with a lower, higher, or normal number of likes, creating the second sub-group (D3-D5). The most repeated answer confirmed that YouTubers see campaigns as a post with a lower number of likes (3/22). The third sub-group refers to the metrics that the YouTuber uses to measure the promotion, having three different answers: platforms' metrics, discount codes, or the inexistence of such metrics (D6-D8). There, seven YouTubers stated that

they use YouTube and Instagram metrics to measure the promotion’s effect (D6). The fourth sub-group is also associated with possible effect, but specifically with the number of followers. In other words, YouTubers mentioned if they lose, gain, or keep the number of followers/subscribers when they promote a brand or a product (D9-D11). Only one YouTuber touched in this issue, stating that she loses followers every time she promotes (D9). The final sub-group refers to the direct feedback of promotional posts, namely if YouTubers receive comments or messages from their followers, or direct feedback from the brand (D12-D14). In this aspect, nineteen YouTubers have confirmed that they receive messages from their followers when they promote a product (D13), being questions about products’ effectiveness, acknowledgments for the advices, or simply photos of them using the referred product. Other ten YouTubers have also said that they receive comments on their posts (D12).

Table 4- Absolute Frequency of ‘Results of promotions’ Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency
D1	2
D2	1
D3	3
D4	2
D5	2
D6	7
D7	0
D8	5
D9	1
D10	0
D11	0
D12	10
D13	19
D14	6

Source: Own Elaboration

Furthermore, the fifth major cluster that arose from interviews refers to the statements associated with the relationship between YouTubers and their followers (Table 5). Twenty YouTubers carefully mentioned that they have a close relationship with their followers (E1), thirteen of them have said that they tend to receive feedback from their followers (E3), and the same portion of interviewees also stated that they tend to talk virtually with their followers (E5). One of the sub-groups that have emerged in the set of

answers is the reaction of face-to-face situations with followers (E7-E12). Ten YouTubers have alleged that they think it is awkward when they meet their followers face-to-face (E10), while seven of them like when that happens (E12). It was also possible to find another sub-group, which refers to the YouTuber's response rate to her followers' messages (E13-E15). Fourteen interviews claimed that they always respond to all their followers' messages (E13). The way that the YouTuber sees her followers was also considered a sub-group (E17-E18), where thirteen interviewees see them as friends (E17).

Table 5- Absolute Frequency of 'Relationship with Followers' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
E1	20	E12	7
E2	0	E13	14
E3	13	E14	2
E4	0	E15	0
E5	13	E16	4
E6	0	E17	13
E7	6	E18	1
E8	6	E19	5
E9	1	E20	1
E10	9	E21	3
E11	5	E22	2

Source: Own Elaboration

Additionally, a set of diversified answers was arose from the sixth question of the interview, that approached the YouTuber's characteristics that lead to the brand choice (Table 6). Actually, only a few responses were more repeatedly given. The fact of having the know-how was cited by nine YouTubers (F17), while eight of them have said that they are a good choice due to their quality work (F23). Both of the facts of having communication skills (F2) and being trustworthy (F7) were mentioned by seven YouTubers. Furthermore, nine respondents have commented the fact that brands are too focused on numbers and results of YouTubers in general terms (F27).

Table 6- Absolute Frequency of 'Characteristics of influencer that lead to brands' choice'
Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
F1	2	F15	2
F2	7	F16	3
F3	2	F17	9
F4	1	F18	1
F5	5	F19	2
F6	1	F20	0
F7	7	F21	3
F8	2	F22	7
F9	3	F23	8
F10	1	F24	3
F11	6	F25	2
F12	1	F26	1
F13	3	F27	9
F14	1		

Source: Own Elaboration

The last open-question referred to the relationship between YouTubers and brands, whose answers were divided into six different sub-groups (Table 7). The first one provided information regarding the type of relationship (G1-G6), being considered as good by five YouTubers (G1), as informal and tranquil by eight of them (G4), and as informal and tranquil with some brands and professional and formal with others by other eight (G5). The second sub-group aggregated insights that were related to the cycle of the relationship (G7-G8), where fifteen YouTubers have claimed that the relationship with brands is maintained over time (G8). The third aspect reunited information about the role that the YouTuber feels she plays when promoting (G9-G11). Nine YouTubers feel like an employee when promoting (G9), paralleling to seven of them who said they feel like a customer when promoting (G10), and while six as considered themselves as mix between both roles (G11). Regarding the fourth sub-group, it has agglomerated answers associated with the way that the YouTuber refers to the brand, namely if it is as "we" or "they". Eighteen YouTubers alleged that they refer to the brand as "they" (G13), while only four of them refer to the brand as "we" (G12). The fifth and sixth sub-groups have reunited information regarding the type of contract (G15-G16) and the duration of the relationship (G17-G18) respectively. In terms of the first aspect, the biggest part of YouTubers said

that the relationship is not contractual (15/22), while the time of relationship had balanced answers.

Table 7- Absolute Frequency of 'Relationship with Brands' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
G1	5	G11	6
G2	0	G12	4
G3	3	G13	18
G4	8	G14	5
G5	8	G15	5
G6	1	G16	15
G7	5	G17	10
G8	15	G18	9
G9	9	G19	3
G10	7		

Source: Own Elaboration

Moreover, it was also collected a set of data regarding demographic characteristics, namely the number of subscribers, number of followers on social media, years of service, how regularly the YouTuber posts videos, what is the usual schedule for posting videos, the existence of season variation, and how many promotions the YouTuber has already done. In relation to the first aspect (Table 8), nine YouTubers have more than 10.000 subscribers (H4), while only two have less than 1.000 subscribers (H1).

Table 8- Absolute Frequency of 'Number of subscribers' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency
H1	2
H2	7
H3	4
H4	9

Source: Own Elaboration

Regarding the number of followers on social media (Table 9), the answers were really diversified, having only one YouTuber that has less than 1.000 followers on her social media (I1).

Table 9- Absolute Frequency of 'Number of followers on social media' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency
I1	1
I2	5
I3	5
I4	4
I5	2
I6	5

Source: Own Elaboration

In terms of the time in service, measured in years (Table 10), the answers were concentrated among one, two, and three years of service, having six YouTubers in service for one or two years (J2 and J3), and five of them have been active on YouTube for three years (J4).

Table 10- Absolute Frequency of 'Years of service' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency
J1	2
J2	6
J3	6
J4	5
J5	0
J6	1
J7	2

Source: Own Elaboration

Furthermore, the frequency of posting was also studied (Table 11), where half of the respondents post content on YouTube weekly (K4), while eight of them tend to post twice a week (K3).

Also, the fifth demographic characteristic was related to the schedule of posting on YouTube, namely if the YouTuber tends to post during the morning ([7am - 12 noon]), the afternoon ([12 noon - 7pm]), or during the night ([7pm - 11pm]) (Table 12). Results show that YouTubers tend to post during the afternoon (L2) and/or during the night (L3).

Table 11- Absolute Frequency of 'Posting Frequency' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency
K1	0
K2	1
K3	8
K4	11
K5	2
K6	0
K7	0
K8	0
K9	0

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 12- Absolute Frequency of 'Usual Schedule' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency
L1	4
L2	10
L3	11

Source: Own Elaboration

YouTubers have also alleged if they suffer season variation or not in terms of posting during the whole year (Table 13). Seventeen YouTubers mentioned that they feel such variation (M1), while five of them have denied the phenomenon.

Finally, YouTubers also provided information regarding how many times they have already promoted a product, a service, or a brand (Table 14), where answers were truly diversified.

Table 13- Absolute Frequency of 'Season variation' Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency
M1	17
M2	5

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 14 - Absolute Frequency of ‘Number of Promotions’ Coded-Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
N1	2	N11	0
N2	0	N12	1
N3	1	N13	0
N4	1	N14	0
N5	2	N15	1
N6	4	N16	2
N7	3	N17	0
N8	1	N18	0
N9	0	N19	0
N10	3	N20	1

Source: Own Elaboration

4.2 Engagement Factors

Relying on the literature review, nine different engagement factors were arose: numbers and results; connectedness with followers; frequency; credibility; argument quality; authenticity; visually appealing content; long-time relationship with followers; and posts in the morning. Hence, using the coding that was applied to the interviews, each engagement factor got its specific coded-answers, as it is possible to see on the table 15, that were used to evaluate each YouTuber in terms of engagement level.

Table 15- Coded-Answers per Engagement Factor

Engagement Factors
Numbers and Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D4: The YouTuber finds campaigns as posts with a higher number of likes • D10: The YouTuber gains followers/subscribers anytime she promotes a product/brand • D12: The YouTuber receives comments from her followers related to the promotion • D13: The YouTuber receives messages from her followers related to the promotion • F21: The YouTuber has favourable numbers and results • H3: The YouTuber has between 5.000 and 10.000 subscribers • H4: The YouTuber has more than 10.000 subscribers • I4: The YouTuber has between than 10.000 and 15.000 followers on social media • I5: The YouTuber has between than 15.000 and 20.000 followers on social media • I6: The YouTuber has more than 20.000 followers on social media
Connectedness with Followers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C21: The YouTuber create bonds with her followers • E1: The YouTuber has a close relationship with her followers • E3: The YouTuber tends to receive feedback from her followers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E5: The YouTuber tends to talk virtually with her followers • E7: The YouTuber tends to have a normal conversation with her followers when she meets them face-to-face • E12: The YouTuber likes when she meets her followers face-to-face • E13: The YouTuber always responds to all her followers' messages • E16: The YouTuber and her followers talk a lot privately (direct messages) • E17: The YouTuber sees her followers as friends or known people • F22: The YouTuber has a good relationship with her followers
Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C23: The YouTuber cares about her frequency on social networks • F14: The YouTuber is regular on YouTube • K1- The YouTuber tends to post daily • K2- The YouTuber tends to post three times a week • K3- The YouTuber tends to post twice a week • K4- The YouTuber tends to post weekly
Credibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B7: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she considers the brand credible • B8: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she considers the product credible • C7: The YouTuber is trustworthy • C26: The YouTuber has the know-how • F7: The YouTuber is trustworthy • F17: The YouTuber has the know-how
Argument Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C3: The YouTuber is consistent • C18: The YouTuber explains how things really work • F2: The YouTuber knows how to communicate (communication skills) • F13: The YouTuber is consistent
Authenticity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B10: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she has the possibility to share what is real • C4: The YouTuber is honest • C5: The YouTuber is real • C8: The YouTuber is natural • F10: The YouTuber is loyal to herself
Visually Appealing Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F23: The YouTuber presents a work with quality
Long-time Relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E19: The YouTuber has a lasting relationship with her followers • J4: The YouTuber has 3 Years of Service • J5: The YouTuber has 4 Years of Service • J6: The YouTuber has 5 Years of Service • J7: The YouTuber has more than 5 Years of Service
Posts in the Morning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1- The YouTuber usually posts during the morning [7am-12pm]

Source: Own Elaboration

4.3 Engagement Factors per YouTuber

Since all the engagement factors were associated with a set of coded-answers, it was possible to understand what were the engagement factors that each YouTuber was related to. The results can be seen on the Table 16:

Table 16- YouTubers and Engagement Factors

YouTuber	Engagement Factors
Inês de Alaya	Argument Quality
Mariana Bossy	Posts in the Morning Authenticity
Catarina Ferreira	Credibility
Joanna Pratas	No Factors
Ânia Westwood	Connectedness with Followers Visually Appealing Content Credibility
Catarina Wijik	Argument Quality Visually Appealing Content
Rute Dias	Connectedness with Followers Posts in the morning
Filipa XipaXups	Connectedness with Followers
Raquel Jorge	Frequency
Iara Tavares	Connectedness with Followers Long-time Relationship Numbers and Results
Carolina Ferreira	Connectedness with Followers Visually Appealing Content Authenticity
Maria, Miúda das Artes	Authenticity Connectedness with Followers Numbers and Results Posts in the Morning
Zahra Omarji	Visually Appealing Content
Mariana Ferreira	Authenticity Connectedness with Followers Argument Quality Long-time Relationship Credibility

Joana Rita	Posts in the Morning Visually Appealing Content Authenticity
Isabel Lopes	Connectedness with Followers Visually Appealing Content
Inês Machado	No Factors
Ana Lobo	Connectedness with Followers Credibility
Neuza Mariano	Authenticity Connectedness with Followers Credibility Long-time Relationship Visually appealing Content
Geovana Rodrigues	Frequency Credibility Connectedness with Followers Numbers and Results
Laura Ferreira	Credibility Connectedness with Followers Authenticity
Daniela Pires	Authenticity

Source: Own Elaboration

The results show that two of the interviewees, Joanna Pratas and Inês Machado, are not associated with any engagement factor, while also two of them, Mariana Ferreira and Neuza Mariano, are related to five engagement sources. Additionally, while two other YouTubers, Maria, Miúda das Artes and Geovana Rodrigues, rely on four different engagement factors, seven interviewees are associated with only one factor. The factor that is more often confirmed among all the YouTubers is Connectedness with Followers, where twelve of the interviewees are associated with such factor. On the other hand, Frequency is the least shared factor among the YouTubers, as only two of them confirm such fact.

4.4 Relationship among Factors

The research crossed the data from the previous results to understand how related engagement factors are to each other (Table 17). From the table, it is possible to see that the attribute that is more associated with other engagement factors is Connectedness with Followers, as six YouTubers who are related to such factor are also related to credibility. Also, five YouTubers that are connected to their followers are also considered as authentic. Four connected YouTubers are also associated with visually appealing content.

Frequency and Posts in the Morning are the factors that are less associated with other engagement sources since both of them are only related to other three factors. Nonetheless, Posts in the Morning has stronger relationships with its pairs than Frequency does. Furthermore, there are several pairs of factors that are not related at all, as the same YouTuber is not associated with both of those factors simultaneously.

Table 17 - Relationships among Engagement Factors

	Numbers and Results	Connected. Followers	Credibility	Argument Quality	Authenticity	Visually Appealing Content	Long-time Relationship	Posts in the Morning	Frequency
Numbers and Results		3	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Connectedness with Followers	3		6	1	5	4	3	2	1
Credibility	1	6		1	3	2	2	0	1
Argument Quality	0	1	1		1	1	1	0	0
Authenticity	1	5	3	1		3	2	3	0
Visually Appealing Content	0	4	2	1	3		1	1	0
Long-time Relationship	1	3	2	1	2	1		0	0
Posts in the Morning	1	2	0	0	3	1	0		0
Frequency	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	

Source: Own Elaboration

4.5 YouTubers' characteristics

The final part of the research was based on the raising of those YouTubers who are associated with three or more engagement factors (Table 18) to find out what other characteristics they have in common in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement, based on their communal coded-answers (Table 19). It is possible to see that eight of the nine YouTubers that are related to more engagement factors are connected to their followers. Moreover, Frequency and Argument Quality are factors that have appeared only once among those YouTubers. Furthermore, from the Table 18, the study has faced thirty-eight different characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers,

and celebrity endorsement that are common to those YouTubers who are associated with higher level of engagement from their followers.

Table 18- YouTubers with three or more Engagement Factors

YouTuber	Engagement Factors
Ânia Westwood	Connectedness with Followers Visually Appealing Content Credibility
Iara Tavares	Connectedness with Followers Long-time Relationship Numbers and Results
Carolina Ferreira	Connectedness with Followers Visually Appealing Content Authenticity
Maria, Miúda das Artes	Authenticity Connectedness with Followers Numbers and Results Posts in the Morning
Mariana Ferreira	Authenticity Connectedness with Followers Argument Quality Long-time Relationship Credibility
Joana Rita	Posts in the Morning Visually Appealing Content Authenticity
Neuza Mariano	Authenticity Connectedness with Followers Credibility Long-time Relationship Visually appealing Content
Geovana Rodrigues	Frequency Credibility Connectedness with Followers Numbers and Results
Laura Ferreira	Credibility Connectedness with Followers Authenticity

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 19- Engagement Factors in common

Engagement Factors in common
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A3: The YouTuber works on her own • A7: The YouTuber is invited by the brand for a promotion • A13: The YouTuber does not test the product before promoting it • A16: The promotion is done on YouTube and on Instagram • A17: The brand provides a briefing • A28: There is not a script for the promotion

- A29: The YouTuber evaluates the partnership or promotion
- A31: The YouTuber and the brand share results and statistics
- B1: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she identifies herself with the brand
- B5: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if the product fits in her channel's content
- B19: Monetary referral benefits have some impact on the acceptance of a promotion
- B20: Monetary referral benefits do not have impact on the acceptance of a promotion
- B22: Monetary referral benefits would have more impact if the YouTuber was bigger
- C17: The YouTuber considers herself different from the others in the industry
- D6: The YouTuber uses YouTube and Instagram's statistics to measure the promotion's effects
- E10: The YouTuber thinks it is awkward when she meets her followers face-to-face
- F27: The YouTuber believes that brands are too focused on numbers
- G4: The YouTuber has an informal and tranquil relationship with the brands she works with
- G8: The type of relationship tends to be maintained over time
- G9: The YouTuber feels like an employee when promoting
- G13: The YouTuber refers to the brand as "they"
- G16: The relationship between the YouTuber and the brand is not contractual
- H3: The YouTuber has between 5.000 and 10.000 subscribers
- H4: The YouTuber has more than 10.000 subscribers
- I4: The YouTuber has between than 10.000 and 15.000 followers on social media
- I5: The YouTuber has between than 15.000 and 20.000 followers on social media
- I6: The YouTuber has more than 20.000 followers on social media
- J4: The YouTuber has 3 Years of Service
- J5: The YouTuber has 4 Years of Service
- J6: The YouTuber has 5 Years of Service
- J7: The YouTuber has more than 5 Years of Service
- K1- The YouTuber tends to post daily
- K2- The YouTuber tends to post three times a week
- K3- The YouTuber tends to post twice a week
- K4- The YouTuber tends to post weekly
- L2- The YouTuber usually posts during the afternoon [12pm-7pm[
- L3- The YouTuber usually posts during the night [7pm-11pm[
- M1- The YouTuber suffers season variation

Source: Own Elaboration

Chapter 5- Conclusions

Data analysis is one of the most important and most powerful stages of the qualitative research process (Raskind *et al.*, 2019). The authors have also mentioned that during this phase, extensive investigation and illustrative data are transformed into substantive and actionable conclusions. This study is not an exception, whereas its results being exposed, it is able to achieve a set of conclusions. The current market is constantly being witness of drastic variations in the way people communicate, search information, buy, sell, promote, or even discuss products' efficacy. Actually, in the last decade it was faced the major transformation of marketing (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016), as every action is becoming digital. On the other hand, the competition that has been present in the market reinforces its level throughout the years (Kumar & Pansari, 2016) and hence, brands have to seek methods to engage their customers as long as possible. Thus, advertisers are integrating social media into their advertising programs to drive digital engagement (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). Nonetheless, marketers have to realize that communications related to their brands will no longer be generated only by the organisation, but it is also consumers themselves who will play a very central role in generating such content on social media (Alam & Khan, 2019). The common use of third-party brand endorsement, like influencers, as a branding strategy verifies the power of social influence in marketing (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). However, Voorveld and colleagues (2018) have also said that social media should not be treated as an umbrella concept and so each digital platform must be treated separately. The article at hand got focused on the largest video-sharing site on the Internet (Feng *et al.*, 2019), YouTube. The rise of influencer marketing makes YouTube an ideal media platform to implement such marketing strategies (Xiao *et al.*, 2018).

Regarding the potential brand engagement that has been considered as a must in the current market situation, simple sources like liking and satisfaction are no longer sufficient to retain customer loyalty over time, so marketers are encouraged to find ways to make their brands loved by customers (Palusuk *et al.*, 2019). Researchers understand that brand love may be one of the most efficient tools to keep customers engaged to the brands they like, as brand love is the most emotionally intense connection between consumers and their brands (Schmid & Huber, 2019).

Therefore, this study aims to combine both situation: how the success of YouTube and its influencers can actually lead to brand love. Hence, to understand that relationship,

twenty-two YouTubers were interviewed in order to provide solid insights that could positively contribute when studying engagement on such platform. The results of the research have helped to understand that some YouTubers' characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement, like working on their own, having an informal relationship with the brands, or offering different content in the industry may lead to a higher level of engagement and directly to brand love.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

The present research has theoretically contributed in different aspects. Essentially, the dissertation at hand emerged in a sense to support, to complete, or to discuss what was already verified in previous studies. On the one hand, the results of this study can be beneficial for brands, who may notice what is happening with the digital environment and also how important is to establish affiliate relationships with YouTube influencers, according to their characteristics that better contribute to a higher engagement level. On the other hand, these contributions can also help YouTube influencers, since they can understand how to adopt more persuasive behaviours and what type of characteristics they may improve to be a choice not only for brands, but also for an extensive online audience, while creating the content and collaborating with brands.

First of all, the raw data that came from the interviews underline some facts that have been occurring with Portuguese YouTubers nowadays. Half of the industry is working on its own, while the other half is signed in an influencers' platform or in an agency. Also, almost no YouTuber tests the product before promoting it. Only three of them have stated that they prefer to provide a tested and supported information to their followers, while the other nineteen YouTubers do not test the product that will be mentioned in their videos or photos. Moreover, these digital creators tend to be contacted to sporadic promotions, and not to a contractual relationship, proving that brands do not look at an YouTuber as a promotion tool for a long term strategy. Regarding the control that brands tend to exert on promotions, all the YouTubers receive a briefing before any campaign. Nonetheless, having a script is not that common, as YouTubers like to feel a certain level of freedom when promoting. Since every YouTuber has other social networks, like Twitter or Instagram, her promotions go beyond YouTube and may reach different audience in different platforms. In terms of their motivations, monetary benefits are not significantly important for the creators and thus, their criteria tend to be more varied, like identifying with the product or with the brand. Furthermore, YouTubers believe they play the role of influencers when they are different from the others in the industry and when they create

bonds with their followers, which are truly important to understand the real impact of a promotion, as YouTubers receive a lot of messages whenever they run a campaign. This relationship with followers was even more developed when YouTubers were asked to describe how it works. Almost all of them have alleged that they have a close relationship with their followers, who give constant feedback. On the other part of the relationship, influencers see their followers as friends and tend to respond to all their messages. Also, Portuguese YouTubers claimed that brands are too focused on numbers and results, and one of the criteria that is applied to them is how much know-how they have regarding a specific product area. Although relationships with brands are not contractual, YouTubers tend to maintain those contacts overtime and when they are promoting, they always refer to the brand as they, concluding that YouTubers make an effort to keep a barrier between both entities. From the raw interviews, it was also concluded that Portuguese YouTubers tend to post at night or during the afternoon.

Afterwards, when engagement factors got involved in the research, it was possible to comprehend what were the factors that were more present among Portuguese YouTubers. It was concluded that they are really connected with their followers, since half of the digital creators has been related to such factor. Furthermore, Portuguese YouTubers are also associated with authenticity, credibility, and visually appealing content. This aspect may justify with these four factors are so related to each other, as they are those which are more common among Portuguese YouTubers. Additionally, it also leads to the reason why frequency and posts in the morning are factors that are less associated with Portuguese YouTubers, and consequently less related to other factors.

Moreover, it is also important to discuss what was advanced along the research and confront such conclusions with what other studies have said. Becker and colleagues (2019) have said that managers must provide clear guidelines to their partners and carefully communicate their brand's values, image, and style through briefings or meetings. Actually, in the current research, it was seen that this practice is really common, as all Portuguese YouTubers receive briefings when they are supposed to promote a product. Also, brands should also offer concrete guidance for how to promote, providing scripts (Kupfer *et al.*, 2018). Nonetheless, Portuguese YouTubers do not tend to rely on this approach and they rather prefer to feel a certain level of freedom when promoting. Kupfer and colleagues (2018) also said that the success of the whole process may depend on the essence of other posts. Thus, unrelated posts should be limited during the launch phase of the product. The truth is that this method was not repeatedly mentioned by

YouTubers. Only Daniela Pires, one of the interviewees, has stated that she is not allowed to accept a promotion of a competitor while the campaign is running.

Regarding the topic that specify the reasons why a YouTuber accepts a promotion, it was previously concluded that influencers may share content to help others (Tellis *et al.*, 2019) or even for self-enhancement purposes, like to seem knowledgeable (Buckley *et al.*, 2012). The altruistic approach is not very common, since only seven YouTubers accept a promotion if their followers like the product. Tellis and colleagues (2019) also said that digital creators are motivated to talk about new products, but once again, the current research does not confirm such motivation, as only three YouTubers accept the promotion once the product is new in the market. Firms should develop a reward system and provide incentives for actively engage possible influencers to promote their brands (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). However, while some of them are creating content motivated by love of the brand or enjoyment of the craft, others are promoting to profit economically or professionally (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013). The current study does not support such conclusion. Actually, Portuguese YouTubers consider that monetary benefits are not significantly impactful in their decision criteria.

Another theme to be discussed is the set of characteristics that define an influencer. There were controversial opinions about physical attractiveness being considered as an influencer characteristic. While Lee and Watkins, in 2016, have settled that such attribute has positive influence on para-social interactions, and Xiao and colleagues (2018) reinforced the idea by stating that physical attractiveness of the spokesperson significantly influence the perceived information credibility, Sokolova and Kefi, in 2019, have said that such trait is negatively related to para-social relationship. The results of this study agree with the perspective of Sokolova and Kefi (2019), as only one YouTuber, Daniela Pires, has said that she considers herself an influencer due to her physical image. Credibility, which is determined by trustworthiness and expertise, was another characteristic that Xiao and colleagues (2018) associated with any influencer. Actually, credibility was one of the engagement factors that was related to a higher number of YouTubers. This research also supports what Xiao and colleagues (2018) said, as they have mentioned that credibility and connectedness with followers are two characteristics that are related to each other. Authenticity was also referred as a typical influencer's trait (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018) and the current dissertation witnessed that such engagement factor is the second most related to Portuguese YouTubers. Another aspect that this study agrees with the statements from the latter authors is that visually appealing content really

defines an influencer.

Furthermore, one of the advantages of the growth of digital sources is the ability to measure results (Cole *et al.*, 2017). Nonetheless, only the YouTuber Iara Tavares finds promotions easy to measure. Previous studies defended that the success of a promotion is usually assessed with social media monitoring tools providing quantitative metrics, such as the number of likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). Actually, Portuguese YouTubers normally receive feedback from their followers, receiving a lot of messages and comments, using YouTube and Instagram statistics to measure the promotion's effects.

In terms of the relationship with followers, Sokolova and Kefi (2019) have said that the relationship between influencers and their followers is not unidirectional, since while users are able to add comments and discuss the content, digital creators gave the opportunity of replying to the messages and comments related to that content. In this research, twenty out of twenty-two Portuguese YouTubers have claimed they have a close relationship with her followers, since more than half of them alleged to talk virtually with followers and to respond to all their messages. Nonetheless, while previous research noted that long-time relationship with followers is also beneficial (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019), only five YouTubers have said that they have a lasting relationship with their followers, even when eight digital creators are in service for three or more years.

The next point to be discussed is the brand criteria to select the YouTubers under analysis. Ansari and colleagues (2018) cited that large and well-connected networks are desirable for achieving online success and, in the next year, Lanz and colleagues (2019) reinforce the same idea by saying that organisations tend to check the number of followers when hiring a promotion partner. Actually, this current research also support this ideology, as almost half of the YouTubers commented that brands are too focused on numbers and results. Frequency and repeated exposure to a vlogger were also stated as favourable YouTuber's characteristics for brands. Nonetheless, only Raquel Jorge claimed that her frequency on YouTube is a reason that encourages brands to choose her. Furthermore, Kanuri and colleagues (2018) stated that the best time to post on social media is during the morning. However, only four YouTubers rely on this technique, while the majority of YouTubers prefer to post at night or during the afternoon, proving that while brands believe that at the morning is the best time to promote a product, YouTubers do prefer to post any content at other hours.

The final aspect to discuss is the relationship with brands. As cited previously, user-generated content requires careful monitoring and agile firm response (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019), since when relationships are not too close, individuals feel free to endorse products or to falsify reviews (Thakur *et al.*, 2018). Actually, Portuguese YouTubers prefer to rely on informal and tranquil relationships with brands, which allow a more comfortable contact between both entities and a quick firm response. When previous researches studied the relationship between brands and influencers, they tried to understand if the second agent tends to feel like a customer or an employee when promoting. When an individual makes an effort to co-create with a firm, he or she becomes a partial employee (Chiang *et al.*, 2017), and actually the dissertation at hand supports this idea, as YouTubers tend to feel like an employee when they are spreading information regarding a brand or product, rather than like a customer. Also, other indicator of the relationship level is identifying if the influencer refers to the brand as 'they' or 'we'. When influencers are able to separate both identities, using pronouns like 'I' or "they", rather than 'we', they are actually increasing customers' perceptions that they feel and act on their behalf (Packard *et al.*, 2018). The current research strongly supports such theory, as almost all YouTubers refer to the brand as 'they'.

Finally, to conclude the research, it is crucial to respond to the initial question 'how YouTube influencers can contribute to the process of brand love'. When the study reached the last phase of the process, it faced a set of characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that YouTubers who better contribute to brand love may have. First of all, YouTubers who better lead to such phenomenon are those who work on their own, not being in agencies or on influencers' platforms, and making a own early evaluation of the promotion. They must be invited for sporadic promotions and not for contractual partnerships. Such online creators normally promote on more than one social network, but do not test the product before do that. Nonetheless, they need some monitoring from the brand, like a briefing, but not a script, as they like to feel a certain level of freedom when they are talking about a product. After any promotion, they also tend to share results and statistics with brands. Regarding their criteria to accept a promotion, they only accept it if they can identify themselves with the brand and if the product fits in their channels' content. Monetary benefits are not significantly impactful for such criteria, but they believe that if they were bigger, that impact would be stronger too. They see themselves as influencers because they consider themselves different from the others in the industry. Since they promote on different platforms, they also use their

metrics to evaluate the promotion's effects. In terms of the relationship with their followers, those YouTubers think it is awkward when they meet them face-to-face, and hence they prefer to keep a digital relationship with them. With regard to the relationship with brands, such YouTubers have an informal and tranquil relationship with the brands they work with, and such relationships tend to be maintained over time, which means that they do not tend to become professional or formal. They normally feel like employees and refer to the brand as 'they' when promoting. In terms of demographics, they have 5.000 or more subscribers and 10.000 or more followers on social media, since is from that number that individuals are able to share links on their Instagram stories, for instance. They also have three or more years of service, post weekly or even more frequently, during the afternoon or at night. Finally, they also suffer season variation, being more assiduous in specific moments of the year, such as Christmas, summer, or back to school.

5.2 Managerial implications

The current dissertation provides practical implications for marketing managers who are looking for a digital approach in their promotion strategies. Actually, this study allows managers to understand what has surged in the current marketplace. Brands are facing several changes in such environment, as everything has become more technological and people are living on a digital basis. Sometimes, brands find hard to adapt to dynamic trends, not only because they do not know what to do, but also because they believe that they do not have enough resources to be present in the modern market.

The current research clarifies that one key point to keep brands alive and to maintain their market share is engaging customers. Customers are constantly being attacked by new brands, new products, new relationships, and new communication ways. Simple methods like satisfaction are not enough to retain consumers and hence, brands need to touch in the emotional essence of their customers to keep them close and interested in the product. This emotional approach is tremendously beneficial for brands, as brand love is related to a set of positive outcomes, such as positive word of mouth, brand loyalty, increased willingness to pay a price premium, forgiveness of brand failures, intention to repurchase and reuse the same products or services, and even favourable public display of affection towards the brand. Nevertheless, this emotional engagement does not to be necessarily induced by brands themselves.

Actually, brands started to notice that they can rely on a third-party brand endorsement to spread messages and consequently engage customers. Those partners can come from

different areas, but one of the most common methodologies is using influencers. Such individuals can be active creators of online content, providing opinions, recommendations, experiences, personal stories, ideas, reviews, feelings, or even emotions. The current dissertation also helps managers, providing a set of advantages of such technique. Influencers have the ability to either accelerate or block an information dissemination process. Also, they have stronger persuasiveness and credibility, as followers are more able to relate to them. Moreover, such digital creators have also positive financial impact, since their costs are highly compensated by their revenues.

Since the study focuses on YouTube, it alerts brands to different benefits that they can take advantage when they rely on YouTube influencers as promotional partners. Importantly, the research at hand provided to managers a set of characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that a YouTuber has to better enhance customer engagement.

Therefore, if managers want to make their customers love the brand, they must look at non-contractual, informal, and tranquil relationships with YouTubers who work on their own, present different content, promote in other platforms besides YouTube, identify themselves with the brand, and share results and statistics with the brand after any promotion. Furthermore, managers must provide briefings to YouTubers, but not scripts to the speech, nor for photos' descriptions. Also, managers must make YouTube influencers to feel like an employee when promoting and make them refer to the brand as 'they'. Finally, managers need to negotiate with YouTubers who have a considered high level of followers and subscribers, who have some time of service, who are frequent on social media, and who post at night or during the afternoon.

5.3 Limitations

Despite the conclusions of the present research and its subsequent contributions, the study still presents some limitations which require to be deliberated. First of all, the sample size is relatively restrictive, as the research relied on the data provided by twenty-two YouTubers. Although the number of interviews is already considerable and the data collection lasted until it was reached data saturation and no new themes emerged, the results would be better consolidated if the sample was bigger.

Moreover, the study only considered Portuguese YouTubers. Actually, the dissertation's results may be different in other countries and cultures. Thus, the study can only be useful

for brands who pretend to use Portuguese YouTubers as promoters, since it gives specific characteristics in the area of advertising, influencers, and celebrity endorsement that must be confirmed by digital creators in Portugal.

Furthermore, the research only considered female YouTubers, and hence, it did not analyse if the impact of YouTube content is the same among genders. Male and female agents have different attributes and consequently different influence results. Therefore, their characteristics as influencers may also differ between both genders.

Finally, the study did not take into account the insights from followers, who could offer a different perspective and probably discuss or consolidate conclusions that were faced. Then, the study could also interview a set of followers of each YouTuber, in order to confirm the level of connectedness, or even why they consider such individual an influencer.

5.4 Future Research

Taking into account the limitations that were arose in the previous section, a set of future researches would possibly consolidate and improve the study at hand.

First of all, it was noteworthy to apply the investigation to a higher number of YouTubers, in order to get an easier generalization of the results. The saturation of data was reached, but is it maintain with a larger sample? It would be a question to be answered in further researches.

Also, since the study only interviewed Portuguese YouTubers, future research may analysed foreign YouTubers, in order to understand if the same results are verified through different countries and cultures.

Furthermore, although researchers have found that female influencers tend to exert more influence (Liu-Thompkins, 2012), it was interesting to apply the study to male YouTubers, to see if the conclusions may depend on the gender. On YouTube, agents are well represented by both male and female creators and hence, applying the same criteria and the same interview to both of them, it would be gratifying to realize how results may or not diverge.

Finally, in a future study, researchers could seek for insights from each YouTuber's followers. They are those who could confirm the level of influence and consequent engagement motives.

Chapter 6- Bibliography

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Chapter 7 - Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre Interview of Inês de Ayala

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- *Inês De Ayala/ moibyines*

YouTube Category:

- *Lifestyle*

Number of subscribers:

- *1.258*

Number of followers on social media:

- *10.895 (Instagram and Facebook)*

Years of Service:

- *3 years*

How regularly do you post videos?

- *1 video per week (last year)-weekly vlog; currently it is spontaneous*

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- *At night, around 7pm*

Is there seasonal variation?

- *Yes. I mainly post during spring and autumn*

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- *Yes. One was paid and a few ones were spontaneous*

Appendix 2: Pre Interview of Mariana Bossy

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- *Maria Malhado/ marianabossy*

YouTube Category:

- *Lifestyle*

Number of subscribers:

- *20.165*

Number of followers on social media:

- *20.800 on Instagram*

Years of Service:

- *1 year*

How regularly do you post videos?

- *Twice or three times a week*

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- *It depends. Working days at 6.30pm. Weekend at 11.30am*

Is there seasonal variation?

- *No, always constant*

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- *Yes. One was paid. Several ones were spontaneous.*

Appendix 3: Pre Interview of Catarina Ferreira

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Catarina Ferreira (*catarinadgferreira*)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 10.582

Number of followers on social media:

- 36.200 on *instagram* and 16.000 on *twitter*

Years of Service:

- 2 months

How regularly do you post videos?

- 1 per week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Saturdays at 12.30pm, normally.

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. More in Christmas and Summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. One paid on YouTube with Garnier. Several ones on Instagram: four or five.

Appendix 4: Pre Interview of Joanna Pratas

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Joanna Pratas (*joanna_pratas*)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 16.001

Number of followers on social media:

- 5.218 on *instagram*

Years of Service:

- 2 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- 2 videos per week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- 6pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. More videos in Summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Only on Instagram.

Appendix 5: Pre Interview of Ânia Westwood

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Ânia Westwood (*aniawestwood*)

YouTube Category:

- *Lifestyle*

Number of subscribers:

- *1.010*

Number of followers on social media:

- *2.094 on instagram*

Years of Service:

- *1 year*

How regularly do you post videos?

- *1 to 2 videos per week*

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- *7pm*

Is there seasonal variation?

- *No. It is supposed to be constant.*

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- *Yes. I do work with three brands.*

Appendix 6: Pre Interview of Catarina Wijk

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Catarina Ferreira (*catarinawijk*)

YouTube Category:

- *Lifestyle*

Number of subscribers:

- *932*

Number of followers on social media:

- *3912 on Instagram, 800 on twitter, 600 followers and 101k views on personal blog*

Years of Service:

- *4 months*

How regularly do you post videos?

- *1 video per week*

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- *Sunday or Wednesday between 8pm and 9.30pm*

Is there seasonal variation?

- *Yes, mainly with hours.*

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- *Yes. I used to promote a lot with my blog.*

Appendix 7: Pre Interview of Rute Dias

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Rute Dias (*arutedias*)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 3.100

Number of followers on social media:

- 4.682 on Instagram, 4.000 on Facebook

Years of Service:

- 2 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- 1 video per week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Sunday at 11am or 9pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. I mainly post during December and September.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. A few ones via Instagram and YouTube for the same brand.

Appendix 8: Pre Interview of Filipa – XipaXups

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Filipa (*XipaXups*)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 1.334

Number of followers on social media:

- 693 on Instagram, 40 on Twitter

Years of Service:

- 1 year

How regularly do you post videos?

- Weekly

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Not a specific day, but always around 6pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. I mainly post during summer and christmas.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. One via YouTube, one via Instagram. Other promotions were in events.

Appendix 9: Pre Interview of Raquel Jorge

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Raquel Jorge (*Rach Up*)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 1.423

Number of followers on social media:

- 2.421 on Instagram, 589 on Facebook

Years of Service:

- 2 year

How regularly do you post videos?

- Weekly or twice a week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Not a specific day, but always around 7pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. I mainly post during summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. A few ones, around half a dozen.

Appendix 10: Pre Interview of Iara Tavares

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Iara Tavares / *missiara*

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 44.648

Number of followers on social media:

- 10.700 on Instagram, 1.614 on Twitter, 5.300 on Twitch

Years of Service:

- 3 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- One per week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Normally on Saturdays. Otherwise, on Sundays. Always around 1pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. I go more often live during summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. Around six or seven.

Appendix 11: Pre Interview of Carolina Ferreira

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Carolina Ferreira / Calif Ferreira / califfornication

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 195

Number of followers on social media:

- 1.200 on Instagram, 200 on Facebook;

Years of Service:

- 1 year and a half.

How regularly do you post videos?

- One per week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Working days, always between 7pm and 9pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. I'm more active during summer, mainly in the beginning and at the end.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. Around four, like partnerships and contracts.

Appendix 12: Pre Interview of Maria, Miúda das Artes

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Maria / Maria, Miúda das Artes

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 8.275

Number of followers on social media:

- 2.799 on Instagram, 700 on Twitter;

Years of Service:

- 3 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- One per week/ twice a week during summer

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Always during the weekends at 11.30pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. It is harder to post videos during school time. To balance, I normally post twice a week during summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. Around seven.

Appendix 13: Pre Interview of Zahra Omarji

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Zahra Omarji/ makeup_lust

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 7.521

Number of followers on social media:

- 18.300 on Instagram

Years of Service:

- 3 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- Eight per month, two per week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Always at 7pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. I post more during winter.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. One paid. A lot of them are spontaneous.

Appendix 14: Pre Interview of Mariana Ferreira

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Mariana Ferreira (marianaipf)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 29.760

Number of followers on social media:

- 4.982 on Instagram, 3.803 on facebook, 613 on twitter.

Years of Service:

- 6 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- Once or twice per month, due to my job. Before this journey, I did post weekly.

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Schedule tend to vary during the year. Lately, around 6pm or 7pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. Normally I post more videos during the summer. It is easier due to holidays.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. A lot of promotions without monetary payment, I just received the product. With remuneration, only one.

Appendix 15: Pre Interview of Joana Rita

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Joana Rita (Jooritaa)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 8.370

Number of followers on social media:

- 8.635 on Instagram;

Years of Service:

- 1 year

How regularly do you post videos?

- Weekly during school time. Twice a week during summer.

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Every Wednesday (school time and holidays) at 6pm and Sunday (holidays) around 11am.

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. As I said, I post more videos during the summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. A lot of promotions without monetary payment, I just received the product. With remuneration, only one.

Appendix 16: Pre Interview of Isabel Lopes

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Isabel Lopes (Béu Lopes)

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 28.094

Number of followers on social media:

- 41.900 on Instagram; 17.300 on twitter.

Years of Service:

- 1 year

How regularly do you post videos?

- One per week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Every Sunday at 2pm (school time); during holidays it is randomly.

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes. I post more videos during the summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. One with contract with Bongo and several ones were spontaneous.

Appendix 17: Pre Interview of Inês Machado

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- *Inês Machado (ines.stm)*

YouTube Category:

- *Lifestyle*

Number of subscribers:

- *16.416*

Number of followers on social media:

- *8.840 on Instagram*

Years of Service:

- *2 years*

How regularly do you post videos?

- *One per week during school time; twice a week during holidays.*

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- *At 6.30pm (school time); At 5.30pm (holidays)*

Is there seasonal variation?

- *Yes. I post more videos during the summer.*

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- *Yes. Between 10 and 20 promotions.*

Appendix 18: Pre Interview of Ana Lobo

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- *Ana Lobo (Ana Lobo)*

YouTube Category:

- *Lifestyle*

Number of subscribers:

- *1.270*

Number of followers on social media:

- *2.697 on Instagram*

Years of Service:

- *3 years*

How regularly do you post videos?

- *One per week.*

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- *Every Friday at 8pm (in Portugal)*

Is there seasonal variation?

- *No, it always tends to be constant*

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- *Yes. One.*

Appendix 19: Pre Interview of Neuza Mariano

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Neuza Mariano

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

-13.479

Number of followers on social media:

- 10.600 on Instagram; 10.153 on Facebook

Years of Service:

- 9 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- Every week. It depends on the creativity level.

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- I don't have specific days, but it is normally at 8pm.

Is there seasonal variation?

- No, it is always constant

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. One.

Appendix 20: Pre Interview of Geovana Rodrigues

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Geovana Rodrigues

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 7.690

Number of followers on social media:

- 11,700 on Instagram, 1754 on Twitter

Years of Service:

-2 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- Twice a week.

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6pm

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes, since I post more during the summer

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. More than 15.

Appendix 21: Pre Interview of Laura Ferreira

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Laura Ferreira/ Casal Marabilha

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 4.115

Number of followers on social media:

- 11,100 on Instagram; 462 on Twitter

Years of Service:

- 1 year

How regularly do you post videos?

- Twice a month, 15 days intervals

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- Sundays or Wednesdays at night

Is there seasonal variation?

- No, I post constantly along the year

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. More than 10, mainly on Instagram.

Appendix 22: Pre Interview of Daniela Pires

Demographics (Pre Interview):

Name/ YouTube Channel:

- Daniela Pires

YouTube Category:

- Lifestyle

Number of subscribers:

- 18.295

Number of followers on social media:

- 4.630 on Instagram; 4.968 on Twitter

Years of Service:

- 5 years

How regularly do you post videos?

- Every week

What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- It depends on the season.

Is there seasonal variation?

- Yes, I post more during the Summer.

Is there already any promotion of brands, products, or services in the videos? If so, how many?

- Yes. More than 15.

Appendix 23: Coding

A - Process of promotions

- A1: The YouTuber is in an agency
- A2: The YouTuber is signed in an influencers' platform
- A3: The YouTuber works on her own
- A4: The YouTuber is contacted by brands via her social networks
- A5: The YouTuber is contacted by brands via e-mail
- A6: The YouTuber contacts the brands for a promotion or partnership
- A7: The YouTuber is invited by the brand for a promotion
- A8: The YouTuber is invited by the brand for a partnership by contract
- A9: The agency works as intermediary between the brands and the YouTuber
- A10: The agency is responsible for choosing the YouTuber
- A11: The brand asks the agency for a specific YouTuber
- A12: The YouTuber tests the product before promoting it
- A13: The YouTuber does not test the product before promoting it
- A14: The promotion is done on YouTube
- A15: The promotion is done on Instagram
- A16: The promotion is done on YouTube and on Instagram
- A17: The brand provides a briefing
- A18: The brand does not provide a briefing
- A19: The campaign is previously evaluated and the YouTuber receives feedback before posting it
- A20: The campaign is not previously evaluated and the YouTuber does not receive feedback before posting it
- A21: The campaign is evaluated and YouTuber receives feedback after posting it
- A22: The campaign is not evaluated and YouTuber does not receive feedback after posting it
- A23: The YouTuber has freedom when promoting
- A24: The YouTuber is controlled when promoting
- A25: There is a remuneration/price/value discussion
- A26: Remuneration is already established
- A27: There is a script for the promotion
- A28: There is not a script for the promotion
- A29: The YouTuber evaluates the partnership or promotion
- A30: The YouTuber does not evaluate the partnership or promotion
- A31: The YouTuber and the brand share results and statistics
- A32: The YouTuber and the brand do not share results and statistics
- A33: The YouTuber and the brand have more partnerships
- A34: The YouTuber and the brand do not have more partnerships

B – YouTuber's criteria to accept a promotion

- B1: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she identifies herself with the brand
- B2: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she identifies herself with the product
- B3: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she likes the product
- B4: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she likes the brand
- B5: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if the product fits in her channel's content
- B6: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she likes to work with the brand's staff
- B7: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she considers the brand credible
- B8: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she considers the product credible
- B9: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she can include the product in her daily life
- B10: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she has the possibility to share what is real
- B11: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if the brand or product has positive reviews
- B12: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if the product can easily come to Portugal
- B13: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if she can take advantage of what the brand may provide (not monetary terms)
- B14: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if it is challenging
- B15: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if her followers like the product
- B16: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if the relationship with the brand is reciprocal
- B17: The YouTuber accepts a promotion if the product is new in the market
- B18: Monetary referral benefits have much impact on the acceptance of a promotion
- B19: Monetary referral benefits have some impact on the acceptance of a promotion
- B20: Monetary referral benefits do not have impact on the acceptance of a promotion
- B21: Monetary referral benefits' impact depends on the brand
- B22: Monetary referral benefits would have more impact if the YouTuber was bigger
- B23: Monetary referral benefits would have less impact if the YouTuber was bigger
- B24: Monetary referral benefits would be indifferent even if the YouTuber was bigger
- B25: The YouTuber does not receive monetary remuneration

C – YouTuber's characteristics as influencer

- C1: The YouTuber finds the word "influencer" as vague and confused
- C2: The YouTuber shows variety
- C3: The YouTuber is consistent
- C4: The YouTuber is honest
- C5: The YouTuber is real
- C6: The YouTuber is humble
- C7: The YouTuber is trustworthy
- C8: The YouTuber is natural
- C9: The YouTuber is relatable
- C10: The YouTuber is straightforward
- C11: The YouTuber is simple
- C12: The YouTuber is funny
- C13: The YouTuber is extrovert
- C14: The YouTuber is spontaneous
- C15: The YouTuber is creative
- C16: The YouTuber has good image
- C17: The YouTuber considers herself different from the others in the industry
- C18: The YouTuber explains how things really work
- C19: The YouTuber talks about what she really likes
- C20: The YouTuber is careful with her words
- C21: The YouTuber create bonds with her followers
- C22: The YouTuber is easily reached by her followers on social networks
- C23: The YouTuber cares about her frequency on social networks
- C24: The YouTuber seeks for changing her followers' opinion
- C25: The YouTuber has committed followers
- C26: The YouTuber has the know-how

D – YouTuber's clear results of any promotion as influencer

- D1: The YouTuber finds promotions hard to measure
- D2: The YouTuber finds promotions easy to measure
- D3: The YouTuber finds campaigns as posts with a lower number of likes
- D4: The YouTuber finds campaigns as posts with a higher number of likes
- D5: The YouTuber finds campaigns as posts with a normal number of likes
- D6: The YouTuber uses YouTube and Instagram's statistics to measure the promotion's effects
- D7: The YouTuber does not have methods to measure results
- D8: The YouTuber has a discount code when promoting
- D9: The YouTuber loses followers/subscribers anytime she promotes a product/brand
- D10: The YouTuber gains followers/subscribers anytime she promotes a product/brand
- D11: The YouTuber keeps her number of followers/subscribers anytime she promotes a product/brand
- D12: The YouTuber receives comments from her followers related to the promotion
- D13: The YouTuber receives messages from her followers related to the promotion
- D14: The YouTuber receives feedback from the brand

E – YouTuber's relationship with her followers

- E1: The YouTuber has a close relationship with her followers
- E2: The YouTuber does not have a close relationship with her followers
- E3: The YouTuber tends to receive feedback from her followers
- E4: The YouTuber does not tend to receive feedback from her followers
- E5: The YouTuber tends to talk virtually with her followers
- E6: The YouTuber does not tend to talk virtually with her followers
- E7: The YouTuber tends to have a normal conversation with her followers when she meets them face-to-face
- E8: The YouTuber tends to have a short conversation with her followers when she meets them face-to-face
- E9: The YouTuber tends to avoid any conversation with her followers when she meets them face-to-face
- E10: The YouTuber thinks it is awkward when she meets her followers face-to-face
- E11: The contact between the YouTuber and her followers is purely digital
- E12: The YouTuber likes when she meets her followers face-to-face
- E13: The YouTuber always responds to all her followers' messages
- E14: The YouTuber tries to respond to all her followers' messages
- E15: The YouTuber cannot respond to all her followers' messages
- E16: The YouTuber and her followers talk a lot privately (direct messages)
- E17: The YouTuber sees her followers as friends or known people
- E18: The YouTuber sees her followers as pure followers or unknown people
- E19: The YouTuber has a lasting relationship with her followers
- E20: The YouTuber has a recent relationship with her followers
- E21: The relationship with the followers has changed over time
- E22: The relationship with the followers has been maintained over time

F – YouTuber's characteristics that lead to brands' choice

- F1: The YouTuber has a good image
- F2: The YouTuber knows how to communicate (communication skills)
- F3: The YouTuber is enthusiastic
- F4: The YouTuber is tranquil
- F5: The YouTuber is creative
- F6: The YouTuber is funny
- F7: The YouTuber is trustworthy
- F8: The YouTuber is versatile
- F9: The YouTuber is spontaneous
- F10: The YouTuber is loyal to herself
- F11: The YouTuber is different in terms of digital content
- F12: The YouTuber can combine the product and the promotion
- F13: The YouTuber is consistent
- F14: The YouTuber is regular on YouTube
- F15: The YouTuber is responsible
- F16: The YouTuber gets committed with the promotion and with the brand
- F17: The YouTuber has the know-how
- F18: The YouTuber seeks for constant improvement
- F19: The YouTuber fits into the brand's DNA
- F20: The YouTuber does not have exclusivity contracts with other brands
- F21: The YouTuber has favourable numbers and results
- F22: The YouTuber has a good relationship with her followers
- F23: The YouTuber presents a work with quality
- F24: The YouTuber does not make obvious promotions
- F25: The YouTuber does not work with many brands
- F26: The YouTuber had already helped other brands to get awareness
- F27: The YouTuber believes that brands are too focused on numbers

G – YouTuber's relationship with the brands she works with

- G1: The YouTuber has a good relationship with the brands she works with
- G2: The YouTuber has a bad relationship with the brands she works with
- G3: The YouTuber has a professional and formal relationship with the brands she works with
- G4: The YouTuber has an informal and tranquil relationship with the brands she works with
- G5: The YouTuber has a professional and formal relationship with some brands she works with and an informal and tranquil relationship with others
- G6: The YouTuber has a relationship somehow informal and formal with the brands she works with
- G7: The type of relationship tends to be changed over time
- G8: The type of relationship tends to be maintained over time
- G9: The YouTuber feels like an employee when promoting
- G10: The YouTuber feels like a customer when promoting
- G11: The YouTuber feels like a mix between an employee and a customer when promoting
- G12: The YouTuber refers to the brand as "we"
- G13: The YouTuber refers to the brand as "they"
- G14: The YouTuber believes that the bigger the brand, the more professional the relationship is
- G15: The relationship between the YouTuber and the brand is contractual
- G16: The relationship between the YouTuber and the brand is not contractual
- G17: The relationship between the YouTuber and the brand is lasting
- G18: The relationship between the YouTuber and the brand is sporadic
- G19: The YouTuber does not have direct contact with the brands she promotes

DEMOGRAPHICS

H – Number of subscribers?

- H1: The YouTuber has less than 1.000 subscribers
- H2: The YouTuber has between 1.000 and 5.000 subscribers
- H3: The YouTuber has between 5.000 and 10.000 subscribers
- H4: The YouTuber has more than 10.000 subscribers

I – Number of followers on social media?

- I1: The YouTuber has less than 1.000 followers on social media
- I2: The YouTuber has between 1.000 and 5.000 followers on social media
- I3: The YouTuber has between 5.000 and 10.000 followers on social media
- I4: The YouTuber has between than 10.000 and 15.000 followers on social media
- I5: The YouTuber has between than 15.000 and 20.000 followers on social media
- I6: The YouTuber has more than 20.000 followers on social media

J – Years of service?

- J1: The YouTuber has less than 1year of Service
- J2: The YouTuber has 1 Year of Service
- J3: The YouTuber has 2 Years of Service
- J4: The YouTuber has 3 Years of Service
- J5: The YouTuber has 4 Years of Service
- J6: The YouTuber has 5 Years of Service
- J7: The YouTuber has more than 5 Years of Service

K – How regularly does she post videos?

- K1- The YouTuber tends to post daily
- K2- The YouTuber tends to post three times a week
- K3- The YouTuber tends to post twice a week
- K4- The YouTuber tends to post weekly
- K5- The YouTuber tends to post twice a month
- K6- The YouTuber tends to post monthly
- K7- The YouTuber tends to post trimester regularly
- K8- The YouTuber tends to post semester regularly
- K9- The YouTuber tends to post yearly

L – What is the usual schedule for posting videos?

- L1- The YouTuber usually posts during the morning [7am-12pm[
- L2- The YouTuber usually posts during the afternoon [12pm-7pm[
- L3- The YouTuber usually posts during the night [7pm-11pm[

M – Is there season variation?

- M1- The YouTuber suffers season variation
- M2- The YouTuber does not suffer season variation

N – How many promotions of brands, products, or services in the videos?

- N1- The YouTuber has already promoted 1 time
- N2- The YouTuber has already promoted 2 times
- N3- The YouTuber has already promoted 3 times
- N4- The YouTuber has already promoted 4 times
- N5- The YouTuber has already promoted 5 times
- N6- The YouTuber has already promoted 6 times
- (...)