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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-WORD-OF-MOUTH COMMUNICATION ABOUT SMARTPHONES PURCHASE INTENTION: DIGITAL INFLUENCER

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Abstract

This study aims to compare the effectiveness of eWOM on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube for smartphone buying decision, provided by Digital Influencers. For such, a quantitative methodology was adopted using three online questionnaires (one for each social media platform), to be answered by Portuguese adults who use them. This comparison has foundation on the IACM, a model introduced by Erkan and Evans to explore the influence of eWOM on consumer's buying intentions. The results show that, while the eWOM information from Digital Influencers about smartphones has a global consumer receptivity in the three social media platforms considered, that is not happening in a very assertive way for some items (average not greater than 3 (Likert scale 1-5), in a significant statistically way. The research also demonstrate that Youtube or Instagram are more effective than Facebook in the IACM variables "Information Quality", "Information Credibility", "Information Usefulness", "Positive buying intention with Digital Influencer positive information" and "Negative buying intention with Digital Influencer negative information".

Keywords: electronic word-of-mouth, digital influencers, IACM model, social media platforms, information quality, information credibility, information needs, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information adoption, buying intention.

1. Introduction

In their buying decision process, consumers enjoy receiving information from other consumers regarding the product or service that they want to buy (Attia, Aziz, and Friedman, 2012). The communication between two or more consumers about the product or service experience is called word-of-mouth (WOM) (Taylor et al., 2012; Chu et al, 2019), and has an important impact on customer decisions (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007; Magno and Cassia, 2018). When this communication is made through the Internet (e.g., social media platforms) it is called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and is defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former

customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet." (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39).

Park, Lee and Han (2007), Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels (2009) and Erkan and Evans (2016) study how the interpretation of the eWOM information by consumers influences the information usefulness, the information adoption and the buying intention. More research is needed to be made to try to understand this mechanism of information impact through social media and if is similar for all of them or different depending on the characteristics of each social media platform. To address this gap, in the current study we intend to compare the effectiveness of eWOM on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube for smartphone buying decision, provided by Digital Influencers. This comparison is based on the variables included in the Information Acceptance Model (Erkan and Evans, 2016), in order to explore the influence of eWOM communication.

Over the years, individuals have been spending more and more time on the most popular social media platforms, an ever-changing marketplace. A few years ago, Hi5 was a very popular social media platform in Portugal, but the emergence of Facebook caused Hi5 users to switch to Facebook. The study "The Portuguese and Social Networks" conducted by Marktest Consulting in 2019 reveals that 83% of the Portuguese with social media accounts visit them every day. Instagram (67.9% of social media platform users) is the fastest growing social media platform in Portugal, although Facebook continues to be the most popular (95.3%). The number of Youtube users is also raising in Portugal (Marktest, 2018). According to the Marktest (2018a), a decrease of 2.1 million Facebook users under the age of 25 worldwide was expected during 2018. In 2017 Facebook lost about 1.4 million users between the ages of 12 and 17. This decrease in Facebook users by the younger ones occurred mainly due to the fact that they do not feel completely at ease in a social media platform where their parents can also present.

The influence of digital influencers on social media platforms may depend on their engagement with the audience, the number of followers, likes, comments, and sharing. As an example, the more tastes and comments a photograph has, the more likely it is to reach more individuals, and consequently, the higher is their influence on more individuals. In the #Hashoff (2017) Influencer Marketer report, Instagram was considered the first platform to be used in 2018 by more than 80% of the Digital Influencers, followed by Youtube and Facebook, while with one-digit values, Youtube was increasing and Facebook decreasing as a platform considered by Digital Influencers. For this reason, we can argue that Digital Influencers expect that the influence of their eWOM is higher on Instagram and in a less degree on YouTube than on Facebook.

2. Literature review

2.1. eWOM Communication

With the advent of the Internet and social media platforms, eWOM communication has been considered a key influencer element in consumers' buying decisions (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels, 2009) and eWOM marketing is increasingly popular. Bickart and Schindler (2001) find that eWOM has a greater impact on consumers compared to information sources from companies and that the former is more exciting, easier to understand, efficient, appropriate, credible and engaging (Breazeale, 2009; Chu et al., 2019).

That influential impact depends on the character of the informational valence (positive or negative rating assigned by consumers in the review of products), (Liu, 2006; Hu, Min, Han, and Liu, 2020)). While positive eWOM highlights the strengths of a product and encourages consumers to buy it, negative eWOM tend to evidence the weaknesses and problems of a product and therefore has the opposite effect (e.g., Duan, Gu, and

Whinston, 2008; Wakefield and Wakefield, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019), the findings about the positive versus the negative impact on the consumer decisions are not conclusive (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014: Hu et al., 2020). There has been no consensus among researchers about which type (positive or negative) has the most influence on the consumer buying decision (Nascimento et al., 2020).

Huang and Chen (2006) claim that positive information has a superior impact, while Park and Lee (2009) argue that consumers perceive negative information as more useful and informative rather than positive. Hsieh, Tzu-yin and Yung-kun (2010) also mention that negative WOM is more effective and efficient than positive WOM.

Because negative information is more diagnostic than positive information and can have more weight, the objective valence is different from the subjective valence that considers this weight. It is the perceived mean valence of e-WOM positively that influences decision-making. But while confirming that positive and negative valence of online reviews condition tourists' decision choice, the research conclusion was that even with negative comments about a tourism company, the consumer can remain loyal to it and even after reading a positive comment about a competitor, the consumer may not choose it (López and Sicilia, 2014; Torres, Augusto and Matos, 2019). Doh and Hwang (2009, p.196) argue that "although positive messages should help promote positive attitudes toward the products, a few negative messages within the majority of positive messages are not critically harmful".

For this kind of reason, this type of communication has attracted special interest from marketers, since it is necessary to understand who is producing WOM, in what form and why, since this can positively or negatively affect company sales and profits.

Coyle and Thorson (2001) study the impact of the level of interactivity and the vividness of the websites on consumer decisions. They demonstrate that increases in interactivity and vividness are associated with increasing feelings of telepresence, while increases in vividness are associated with more positive and more enduring attitudes towards the website. The research about information usefulness has a relevant reference on the Bailey and Pearson's (1983) study, about tools to analyse computer users' satisfaction.

Beyond that, over the last few years, there has been decreasing the effectiveness of traditional marketing tools. According to Nielsen (2013), between 2007 and 2013, recommendations from family and friends remain the most credible, increasing that credibility. Trust also has increased across all media recommendations except for press advertisings (ads). Online and mobile ads also increased their credibility. Where there is a higher trust in media, there is also a willingness to act on advertisements.

Nielsen's (2015) study presents further developments in the consumer attitude. This study points out that branded websites are the second-most-trusted advertising format behind recommendations from family and friends, again the most trustful source. Two-thirds trust consumer opinions posted online the third-most trusted format after family and friends and branded websites. The credibility of traditional paid advertising was not eroded by online ad formats, with around six-in-10 saying that they trust TV ads (63%), newspaper ads (60%) and magazine ads (58%).

Millennials (age 24-39), have higher levels of trust in online and mobile formats, near followed closely by Generation X (age 40-55). Generation Z (age 8-23) has a lower level of trust than the two generations that came before them. Millennials show the highest levels of trust in 18 of 19 advertising formats/channels, including TV, newspapers and magazines, not having a higher level of trust only on radio ads. Therefore, we can claim

that most consumers tend to avoid advertising and so they look for consumer reviews on the Internet about a product or service.

Indeed, social media communication has been considered as one of the most influential sources of information ever, and studies reveal that eWOM plays a key role in consumer buying intent along with a positive relationship in a company's sales (e.g., Wakefield and Wakefield, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). This allows marketers to observe consumer feedback and preferences more closely. Marketers are increasingly interested to take advantage of online communication channels that have completely altered consumers' information-seeking habits and encourage them to manifest positive eWOM. To this end, marketers seek to adopt marketing campaigns to stimulate eWOM, instead of relying solely on the spontaneity of consumers, through influencer marketing, that will be addressed next.

2.2. The influence of eWOM on Consumer Buying Intention

The earliest definition of buying intent is the subjective probability of users performing a given behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1972). Some years later, it has changed, and now it refers to the degree to which a consumer would buy a product in the future and recommend it to others. The buying intention is considered one of the most popular variables resulting from eWOM communication (Lee and Lee, 2009).

Social media platforms have become a very popular space where consumers have the possibility to search and gather information about other consumers' products and services before making the buying decision (Kozinets et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2018). This type of communication, as it comes from first-hand experiences of consumers, is perceived by consumers as more credible and accurate than other traditional forms of marketing (Bickart and Schindler, 2001).

Previous studies have revealed that eWOM communication influences consumer behaviour and consumer intention (e.g., Park, Lee, and Han, 2007; Wakefield and Wakefield, 2018; Magno and Cassia, 2018). Kozinets et al. (2010) go further, arguing that this phenomenon influences most consumer buying decisions. More recent studies have revealed some of the factors that influence consumer buying intention, such as information quality (Park, Lee, and Han, 2007), the credibility of information (Prendergast, Ko, and Yuen, 2010) and the information usefulness (Lee and Koo, 2015).

Ho-Dac, Carson, and Moore (2013) show that positive or negative online comments have a more positive or negative impact on the sales of the weaker brands. In their research, using weight and meta-analysis to synthesise findings from 69 previous studies, Ismagilova, Slade, Rana et al. (2020) consider that valence of eWOM influences consumers' buying intention and that company efforts must be made to encourage consumers to spread positive eWOM.

Regarding information credibility and adoption, Cheung et al. (2009) analyze the effects of perceived eWOM review credibility from both informationally based and normatively based determinants, concluding that it has a significant impact on subsequent adoption. The perceived eWOM review credibility is influenced by three informationally based factors (argument strength, source credibility, and confirmation of prior belief) and both normatively based factors (recommendation consistency and recommendation rating). Godes and Mayzlin (2004) find the same relationship between eWOM and sales that exists in WOM, where positive eWOM may lead to increased sales and negative eWOM may result in a decrease in sales. The impact of positive eWOM communication was investigated and proven in online book sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006) and movie ticket receipts (Duan, Gu, and Whinston, 2008). In addition, eWOM

communication in the form of reviews significantly influences the consumer's intention to buy (Zhu and Zhang, 2010).

Research made by Kim, Kandampully and Bilgihan, (2018) proposes a model to try to clarify the interrelationship among three variables: attitude towards eWOM information, attitude towards the website, and eWOM effectiveness, revealing that while attitude towards eWOM information is not directly related to eWOM effectiveness, it shows an indirect relationship through the evaluation of the website as a trustful source of information. Consumers tend to evaluate the credibility of the reviews considering the relationship of the reviewer with the website.

2.3. Influence Marketing

According to Raposo (2017), influence marketing refers to the creation of a network of influencers that allows brands to communicate on various digital platforms, blogs and social media profiles and to create a consumer environment, making them loyal in a personalized way. Marketers must identify and target the most influential customers for WOM to be effective. In the digital environment not always the people who have more followers are the most interesting to "sell" the product. More important than having an audience, is having the right audience to make a return (e.g., Kim et al., 2018; Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

Messages from this reference group quickly and efficiently spread directly to your audience, translating into increased value for marketing campaigns (Chu et al., 2019). Indeed, a study by Nielsen (2015) show that 83% of consumers globally rely on WOM from people they know and 66% from consumer opinions online. Swant (2016) claim that 49% of consumers rely on digital influencer recommendations when making buying decisions. In addition, approximately 40% of individuals bought an item after seeing

social media influencer advertising and 20% shared with their own friends and family the information about a product that they got to know through digital influencers.

Chu and Kim (2011) explore the understanding of product-related eWOM behaviours considering the social media platforms, finding a notable difference between eWOM via social media and other online platforms such as product reviews and emails. From this, they claim that social media platforms provide an essential channel for building a consumer–brand relationship, satisfying consumer needs (like information), advising marketers to identify 'social influencers' in social media platforms and encourage users of social media platforms to spread positive eWOM, regarding selected brands and discourage them from sharing negative information with their personal networks.

As the digital influencer reaches a greater number of individuals on social media platforms, the more likely it is to generate profit from brand "partnerships" and "collaborations", as well as through affiliate links. Initially, most brands when working with influencers did not show this relationship to consumers in social media, i.e., digital Influencers shared Instagram publications, YouTube videos and other content that promoted branded products without revealing that they were being sponsored. In the USA (in the year 2017), these lucrative promotional activities, considered as sponsorship, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) which it is authorized to regulate under section 5 of the FTC Act, require clear disclosure that the influencer is being sponsored when there is a relationship material between the influencer and a brand (Bladow, 2018). To do this, most digital influencers place #ad or #sponsored in their publication, thus protecting consumers from misleading advertising practices. On Instagram, this process is relatively simpler, since this social media platform has the option to put the content as sponsored.

Hence, affiliate marketing arises in order to evaluate the return on the investment made in this type of marketing (a subset of influencer marketing). In this case, the brand, instead of remunerating a value for a sponsored image published on Instagram that does not effectively guarantee sales, only remunerate the influencer when it effectively realizes a sale for the brand. One of the most common practices is the assignment of unique promotional codes to influencers to share with their audience (e.g., Kim et al., 2018). In this vein, each time a consumer uses the code of an influencer, a commission can be directly assigned to that influencer. Another very popular technique is to assign a referral link to the influencer. Using it, the brand can monitor how many individuals have accessed the link and identify the most efficient ones (Bladow, 2018).

2.4. Opinion Leaders and Digital Influencers

According to Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), opinion leaders are regarded as individuals capable of influencing others in their immediate environment. They are characterized as individuals with a broad set of personal connections. They are also considered as a credible source of information and therefore play an influential role in the decision-making process.

Following the two-step flow theory introduced by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1965), some individuals who are recognized as opinion leaders interpret the information they receive from the media and pass it on to other individuals, with the purpose of increasing the impact of the media message. This theory reinforces the idea that interpersonal communication is the most powerful way of influencing individuals' attitudes, largely bypassing the mass media.

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1965) point out that the influence of opinion leaders is based on three common characteristics: personality (who is); competence (what he knows); and the social group (who knows). The first dimension relates to the traits and values of

opinion leaders, competence expresses the level of expertise on certain subjects, and finally, the social group concerns the size of their audience.

In recent years, with the growing popularity of social media websites (e.g., as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, blogs) has appeared the concept of digital influencers. These are individuals with a strong online presence, with above-average knowledge in certain categories (e.g., technology, beauty, fashion) and recognized as Instagrammers, "instafamous", bloggers, vloggers and YouTubers (Chahal, 2016). In addition, they stand out for their authenticity and efficiency in reaching their audience by creating strong engagement with it.

Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández (2019) claim that digital influencers have significance in online branding. That is because when followers feel influenced by influencers, they develop engagement with the recommended brands and generate greater expectations of value and intention to purchase. Additionally, they add that digital influencers contribute to the value creation process, rising the appreciation of the brand's utility and value and in the end, eWOM opinion leaders create value.

Lou and Yuan's (2019) research about the influence of digital influencer branded posts on brand awareness and buying intention concluded that the informative value of the content generated by the digital influencer, the trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity to the followers positively affect followers' trust in that influencers' branded posts.

Lim et al. (2017) regard that compelling social media influencers exert a positive impact on consumers' buying intention, validating the mediating effect of consumer attitude between the effectiveness of social media influencers and buying intention. Because consumer attitude has a bigger influential effect on buying intention, its critical

to select an appropriate social media influencer to increase consumer attitude as well as influence purchase intention.

When considering several social media platforms, recent research created an influencer index across social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, while not analysing the relative importance of the different social media platforms. Arora et al. (2019) mention that engagement, outreach, sentiment, and growth play a key role in determining the influencers.

2.5. Information Acceptance Model (AICM)

According to Erkan and Evans (2016), the factors influencing consumers buying intention are divided into two parts, the informational characteristics and the factors that involve consumers' behaviour in relation to other information she/he gets. They found that Information Quality, Information Credibility, Information Needs, Information Attitude, Information Use, and Information Adoption are the determinants of eWOM information that influence consumers' buying intentions.

Erkan and Evans (2016) introduce the Information Acceptance Model (IACM), based on the integration of the Information Adoption Model (IAM) and related components of the Theory of Rational Action (Theory of Reasoned Action - TRA). The related components of TRA -translated into consumer behaviour in relation to eWOM information- were added to the IAM model, since the characteristics of the eWOM information did not appear to be sufficient to determine the influence of eWOM communication on consumer buying intention. The IAM explains the characteristics of eWOM information that influence the adoption of the information, while the related components of the TRA represent consumer behaviour in relation to eWOM information.

Thus, the IACM model expands the notion of adoption of information through the inclusion of consumer behaviour; and explains how this process influences behavioural

intent. It offers a more comprehensive approach in that it considers consumer behaviour together with the characteristics of the information in the same model. Information Quality, Information Credibility and Information Needs have a positive influence on Information Usefulness. Attitude Towards Information has not shown to have an influence on Information Usefulness. Information Usefulness positively influences Information Adoption and finally, that the Information Adoption and the Attitude Towards Information showed to have a positive influence on the Buying Intention of consumers.

Considering the factors that influence buying decision and the results of the #Hashoff (2017) report, where digital influencers show that their main work platform is Instagram and as distant second and third position Youtube and Facebook, revealing where they consider their influence is higher, we present the eight hypotheses in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

3.Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

Three online questionnaires were used to collect data, each designed to study a social media platform, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Since this research is about the influence of word-of-mouth online communication on consumer buying intention, it made sense that the data collection was performed through online questionnaires, not only because the subject matter of the study concerns the environment online, but also by the ability to reach individuals more quickly and economically.

The questionnaires were shared on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. The questionnaires remained available from December 10, 2017 to January 22, 2018. Table 2 presents the scales and respective items used in this study.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

All items have a 5 points Likert-type scale ((1) Totally disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Do not agree or disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Totally agree). The last part of the questionnaire contained the socio-demographic variables. The anonymity and confidentiality of the questionnaire were guaranteed. As Erkan and Evans (2016), this study does not consider a specifi digital influencer or smarthphone brand to not induce participants to a specific situation and allow the generalization. Even so, we assure through the initial introduction of the questionaires that participants use smarthponhes and understand the meaning of digital influencer. Regarding the type of recommendations, this study ask participants to answer the same set of questions for positive and negative recommendations. In the beginning of the set a sentence clarify "When considering positive information about a smartphone shared by digital influencers on…" or "When considering negative information about a smartphone shared by digital influencers on …".

3.2. Sampling and Pre-test

The sample covers Portuguese citizens over the age of 18 and users of social media websites, Facebook, Instagram or YouTube. A sample of 623 individuals were gathered, of which 123 correspond to the Facebook questionnaire, 127 to Instagram and 123 to YouTube. Sample profile is presented in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The final version of the questionnaires was only completed after a pre-test. According to Malhotra (2001), it consists of introducing the questionnaire to a small sample of individuals with the objective of improving, identifying and eliminating possible problematic issues. The pre-test was run for two days and was conducted with a convenience sample of fifteen individuals. The feedback was considered, and the

necessary changes were made in order to facilitate the understanding of the questions inserted in the questionnaires.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The analysis of descriptive statistics allows us to understand how participants' responses are distributed throughout the three online questionnaires, designed to study a social media platform (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) and to obtain some clues about research results. The descriptive statistical with mean and standard is present in Table 4.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Regarding the Information Quality and the Information Credibility, Youtube is considered by the respondents as the best social media platform followed by Instagram. In the Information Needs, Instagram satisfies better the respondents comparing with the others social media. Attitude Towards Information get better values in average in Instagram. In Information Usefulness and Information Adoption, Youtube is also the first choice of respondents.

Considering the Buying Intention when Positive or Negative information about a smartphone is provided by the Digital Influencers on Youtube, Instagram and Facebook, the first social media has better averages than than the others. . Overaal, we can say that consumers tend to be more influenced by the eWOM information coming from the Digital Influencers on YouTube and Instagram than on Facebook.

By contrast, the #Hashoff (2017) report showed that Digital Influencers prefer to use the Instagram platform, with a distant but rising Youtube leaving Facebook in third place, in what seems a difference in platform preferences between Digital Influencers and users. For many items, the effectiveness of the Digital Influencer on the consumer seems to be

not very strong in any social media platform, averages not greater than 3 in a statistically significant way.

4.2. Scales Internal Consistency Analysis

According to Malhotra (2001), a multi-item scale must be evaluated for its accuracy and applicability. Considering this, the reliability of the scales was evaluated. This coefficient corresponds to the average of all possible separation coefficients resulting from the different ways of dividing the scale items and ranges from 0 to 1. A value greater than 0.6 generally indicates an acceptable internal consistency, above 0.8, good reliability. Table 5 shows Cronbach's alpha coefficients are higher than 0.827, so there is a good internal consistency of the scales used for the information coming from Digital Influencers.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

4.3. Digital Influencers influence in the social media:ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis analysis

Before proceeding to the ANOVA analysis, the Levene's test of variances equality was made, confirming that the Information Needs and Attitude Towards Information, Information Usefulness, Information Adoption, Positive Information Buying Intention and Negative Information Buying Intention verified the assumption of the homogeneity of variances given $p<0.05$. However, the variables Information Quality and Information Credibility did not verify the assumption of the homogeneity of variances, and therefore the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. The normality of the variables was checked through the Normal Q-Q Plot. Data were normally distributed because the points are on or very close to the line. Following the Central Limit Theorem and consider that each sample size is higher than 100, then the assumption of normality is assumed (Hair et al., 2009).

Central Limit Theorem

As can be seen in Table 6, the variables Information Needs, Attitude Towards Information, Information Adoption and Negative Information Buying Intention show a Sig.>0.05, which means that there are no statistically significant differences in the average of these variables in different social media sites. Therefore, the hypotheses H3, H4, H6 and H8 were rejected. On the other hand, the variables Information Usefulness, Positive Information Buying Intention had a Sig. <0.05. Therefore, we can conclude that there are significant differences in the average of these variables according to the social media site where the information from the Digital Influencers is shared.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

After confirming the existence of significant differences between social media sites, it is necessary to identify where the differences lie. For this, the Post Hoc Tukey HSD test was performed. Since the size of the observations of each sample is different, Facebook (n = 123), Instagram (n = 127) and YouTube (n = 123). The Tukey HSD test revealed that the perception of the eWOM Information Usefulness on smartphones from Digital Influencers on YouTube is higher than on Facebook (Sig.=0.029 <0.05), so the H5 was not rejected. In the variable Positive Information Buying Intention, differences between groups were verified, however, they are minimal. For this reason, the Tukey HSD test did not verify significant differences between the groups (Sig.=0.072). Thus, the more rigorous Post Hoc, LSD test, was performed to study the Positive Information Buying Intention variable. Significant differences between the groups exist for Facebook and YouTube. The buying intention, considering positive information from Digital Influencers, tends to be higher when the information is shared on YouTube compared to Facebook. Therefore, the positive information and buying intention present significant differences in the groups, and therefore, the H7 was not rejected.

Since the variables Information Quality and Information Credibility did not verify the assumption of homogeneity of variances, we proceeded for the Kruskal-Wallis test. We intended to compare the medians of the distributions of these two variables in the three social media sites (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube). Table 7 shows that the variable Quality of Information of Digital Influencers and Credibility of Information of Digital Influencers indicate a Sig. <0.05. From these results can be concluded that there are statistically significant differences in the perception of the quality and credibility of the information of the digital influencers about smartphones in the different groups.

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

After verifying the existence of differences in the groups, it is important to understand where these differences are. For this, we proceeded to the multiple comparisons of means of the orders. When we look at Table 8, there are statistically significant differences in the perception of the quality of the eWOM information about smartphones coming from the Digital Influencers in the different groups, with ranks average of 291.31 for Facebook, 328.36 for Instagram and 357.86 for YouTube. The Kruskal-Wallis test also showed that there are statistically significant differences in the perception of the credibility of the information about smartphones coming from Digital Influencers in the different groups (Sig.<0.05) with the average ranks of 295.71 for Facebook, 333.07 for Instagram and 339.65 for YouTube.

INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

Through this analysis, it is verified that there are differences in the perception of eWOM information coming from Digital Influencers in different social media sites. The results show that the perception of information quality and credibility coming from Digital Influencers tends to be higher on Youtube and Instagram, followed by Facebook. Thus, the hypotheses H1 and H2 were not rejected.

5. Conclusions and Implications

This research about the different levels that digital influencers exert considering different social media platforms. The study focuses particularly on the smartphone sector, a very competitive market with large investments involved. While without significantly high results (all items with an average of less than 4 in a 1-5 Likert-type scale), we can conclude that the digital influencers' information about smartphones through Facebook, Youtube and Instagram has an impact on the social media users, contributing to add to the literature on the topic.

Considering the hypotheses and regarding the differences between these social media platforms, the perception of the Information Quality, Information Credibility, and Information Usefulness of eWOM information from Digital Influencers on Instagram and on YouTube has been found to outweigh the provided by digital influencers on Facebook (Table 9). Buying Intention also tends to be higher after considering positive information from Digital Influencers on Instagram and YouTube. It follows that Digital Influencers should consider these two social media sites as priority sites to share their content, given their greater efficiency. This finding is in line with the conclusion of the questionnaire conducted by #Hashoff (2017), that the platform nº1 for Digital Influencers is Instagram, even if the results of this research showed that for almost all items Youtube has a somewhat greater impact on the user. By contrast, the hypotheses considering the Information Needs, Attitude Towards Information, Information Adoption and Negative Information and Buying Intention were rejected because the results didn’t show statistically significant differences between the Instagram, Facebook and Youtube. Taken

all together the above aspects contribute to the literature, since they open to the clarification of differences among social media platforms.

INSERT TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

Nowadays, understanding the behaviour of users in social media platforms and their involvement with eWOM communication is one of the great challenges of marketers (e.g.., Kim et al., 2018; Chu et al., 2019). The great influence of eWOM communication from digital influencers on consumer buying intention is one of the main reasons why marketers are interested in broadening their understanding of this type of communication and then using it as a new communication tool (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Thus, the findings may help marketers understanding how digital influencers communication influence the process of adoption of information and the intention of consumers to buy (quality of information, credibility of information, need of information, attitude toward information, usefulness of information and adoption of information), considering three different social media platforms.

The concept of digital influencers -despite growing popularity- is still a fairly recent subject, and for this reason, the literature about the subject is still limited. For the present study, relevant information was gathered in order to carry out a review of the literature related to the marketing of influencers and the impact of the digital influencers on the intention to buy in their public. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this study are expected to be the basis for future research on the subject.

6. Research Limitations and Further Research Suggestions

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions that the present study identifies in the marketing research field, it is also important to recognize and identify its main limitations, which may serve as suggestions for future studies related to the subject in question.

The first limitation is due to the fact that the concept of Digital Influencer is very recent and, therefore, doesn't exist a significant amount of scientific research about its influence on the various social media sites and for different kinds of marketing proposals. However, it is believed that it will be the subject of more research as a concept that is increasingly popular and influential nowadays.

The constructs under study were based on the IACM, developed by Erkan and Evan (2016) and tested here in a different context: eWOM information in social media. The present research focused on a convenience sample with the questionnaires shared in social media platforms. Considering this, it may be questionable the generalization of the results achieved. More representative samples, with different characteristics, can result in different findings. It would be interesting to obtain a more representative sample and also conduct a study comparing different countries, finding out potential differences. As the number of users of social media platforms has been increasing, as well as the number of Digital Influencers, it would be relevant to carry out a longitudinal study in order to verify the evolution of consumer behaviour over time regarding the perception of the information of the influencers on social media platforms.

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Hypothesis	Variable	Description
H1	Information Quality (Park et al., 2007)	The quality of information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.
H2	Information Credibility (Prendergast et al., 2010)	The credibility of smartphone information from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.
H3	Information Needs (Chu and Kim, 2011)	The need for information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.
H4	Attitude Towards Information (Park et al., 2007)	The attitude towards information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.
H5	Information Usefulness (Bailey and Pearson, 1983)	The usefulness of information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.
H6	Information Adoption (Cheung et al., 2009)	The adoption of information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.
H7	Positive Information and Buying Intention (Coyle and Thorson, 2001)	The positive buying intention with positive smartphone information from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.
H8	Negative Information and Buying Intention (Coyle and Thorson, 2001)	The negative buying intention with negative smartphone information from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.

Table 1. Proposed hypotheses

Construct		Items
Information Quality (Park et al., 2007)	IQ1	Their information provides sufficient reasons to support their views.
	IQ2	Their information is objective.
	IQ3	Their information is understandable.
	IQ4	Their information is clear.
	IQ5	I generally think that the quality of their information is high.
Information Credibility (Prendergast et al., 2010)	IC1	Their information is strong.
	IC2	Their information is compelling.
	IC3	Their information is credible.
	IC4	Their information is accurate.
Information Needs (Chu and Kim, 2011)	IN1	If I have little knowledge about a smartphone, I usually ask them for information.
	IN2	I often consult their information in order to choose the best smartphone that suits my preferences.
	IN3	I often gather information through them before buying a smartphone.
	IN4	I like to ask them for advice when I consider buying a new smartphone.
Attitude Towards Information (Park et al., 2007)	ATI1	I always read their information when I plan to buy a smartphone.
	ATI2	Their information is useful for my decision making when I plan to buy a smartphone.
	ATI3	Their information makes me confident when buying a smartphone.
	ATI4	If I don't read their information when I plan to buy a smartphone, I'm afraid of my decision.
	ATI5	Their information makes me nervous when I plan to buy a smartphone.
	ATI6	Their information annoys me when I plan to buy a smartphone.
Information Usefulness (Bailey and Pearson, 1983)	IU1	I think their information is generally useful.
	IU2	I think their information is generally informative.
Information Adoption (Cheung et al., 2009)	IA1	Their information contributes to my knowledge about smartphones.
	IA2	Their information makes it easier for me to make a purchase decision regarding a smartphone.
	IA3	Their information increases my effectiveness in making the purchase decision in relation to a smartphone.
	IA4	Their information motivates me to make a purchase decision regarding a smartphone.
After considering the positive or negative information about a smartphone shared by digital influencers on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube…		
Buying Intention (Coyle and Thorson, 2001)	BI1	It is very likely that I buy the smartphone.
	BI2	I will buy the smartphone the next time I need to buy one.
	BI3	I will definitely try the smartphone.
	BI4	I will recommend the smartphone to my friends.

Table 2. Scales employed

Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Time spend on the Internet
Facebook Female: 51.2% Male: 48.8%	18-24: 70.0% 25-34: 20.4% 45-55: 5.1% >55: 1.6%	Less than high school /professional: 0.8% High school: 23.1% Bachelor: 47.2% Master or PhD: 29.0%	Student:42.1% Self-employed:11.5% Retired:7.5% Employed by others:35.8% Unemployed: 2.7%	<30min: 21.2% 30min.-1h:24.7% 1h-3h:37.0% 3h-6h:13.1% >6h:4.0%
Instagram Female: 52.0% Male: 48.0%	18-24: 69.3% 25-34: 23.6% 45-55: 5.5% >55: 1.6%	Less than high school /professional: 1.6% High school: 24.4% Bachelor: 39.8% Master or PhD: 34.1%	Student:40.9% Self-employed:12.6% Retired:4.7% Employed by others:40.9% Unemployed: 0.8%	<30min: 20.5% 30min.-1h:20.5% 1h-3h:33.1% 3h-6h:18.9% >6h:7.1%
YouTube Female: 51.2% Male: 48.8%	18-24: 65.9% 25-34: 24.4% 45-55: 7.3% >55: 2.4%	Less than high school /professional: 1.0% High school: 22.0% Bachelor: 47.0% Master or PhD: 30.0%	Student:39.8% Self-employed:11.4% Retired:7.3% Employed by others:39.8% Unemployed: 1.6%	<30min: 30.1% 30min.-1h:22.8% 1h-3h:24.4% 3h-6h:18.7% >6h:4.1%

Table 3. Participants socio-demographic profile.

Construct	Social Media Platform					
	Facebook		Instagram		YouTube	
	Mean deviation	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std.
Information Quality (Park et al., 2007)	3.31	0.99	3.50	1.03	3.60	0.78
Information Credibility (Prendergast et al., 2010)	3.31	0.99	3.52	1.03	3.55	0.85
Information Needs (Chu and Kim, 2011)	3.04	1.25	3.12	1.31	3.02	1.36
Attitude Towards Information (Park et al., 2007)	2.71	1.12	2.79	1.17	2.73	1.17
Information Usefulness (Bailey and Pearson, 1983)	3.30	0.99	3.34	1.02	3.55	0.85
Information Adoption (Cheung et al., 2009)	3.25	1.11	3.34	1.17	3.43	1.20
Positive Information and Buying Intention (Coyle and Thorson, 2001)	3.13	1.10	3.30	1.17	3.35	1.11
Negative Information and Buying Intention (Coyle and Thorson, 2001)	2.12	1.09	2.06	1.06	2.17	1.17

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics – Digital Influencers

Construct	Alpha de Cronbach	Reliability
Information Quality	0.932	Very High
Information Credibility	0.914	Very High
Information Needs	0.936	Very High
Attitude Towards Information	0.827	High
Information Usefulness	(construct with only 2 items)	-
Information Adoption	0.943	Very High
Positive Information and Buying Intention	0.891	High
Negative Information and Buying Intention	0.911	Very High

Table 5. Digital Influencers scales (Cronbach Alpha)

Construct		Square Sum	Df	Mean Square	F	*Sig.*
Information Needs	Between Groups	0.718	2	0.359	0.257	0.773
	Within Groups	864.962	620	1.395		
	Total	865.680	622			
Attitude Towards Information	Between Groups	0.652	2	0.326	0.465	0.629
	Within Groups	434.803	620	0.701		
	Total	435.454	622			
Information Usefulness	Between Groups	5.564	2	2.782	3.284	0.038
	Within Groups	525.176	620	0.847		
	Total	530.740	622			
Information Adoption	Between Groups	3.078	2	1.539	1.375	0.254
	Within Groups	693.865	620	1.119		
	Total	696.943	622			
Positive Buying Intention	Between Groups	5.954	2	2.977	3.173	0.043
	Within Groups	581.710	620	0.938		
	Total	587.664	622			
Negative Buying Intention	Between Groups	0.684	2	0.342	0.354	0.702
	Within Groups	598.676	620	0.966		
	Total	599.359	622			

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA Test – Digital Influencers Influence in different social media sites

Construct	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
Information Quality	14.147	2	0.001
Information Credibility	7.834	2	0.020

a. Grouping Variable: *Social media sites*

Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis test

Construct	Social media Sites	N	Mean Rank
Information Quality	*Facebook*	373	291.31
	Instagram	127	328.36
	YouTube	123	357.86
	Total	623	
Information Credibility	*Facebook*	373	295.71
	Instagram	127	333.07
	YouTube	123	339.65
	Total	623	

Table 8. Post Hoc Kruskal-Wallis Ranks test

Hypothesis	Confirmation
H1: The quality of information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	~~Accepted~~ Not rejected
H2: The credibility of smartphone information from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	Not rejected
H3: The need for information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	Not rejected
H4: The attitude towards information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	Not rejected
H5: The usefulness of information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	Not rejected
H6: The adoption of information about smartphones from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	Not rejected
H7: The positive buying intention with positive smartphone information from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	Not rejected
H8: The negative buying intention with negative smartphone information from Digital Influencers is higher on Instagram and YouTube than on Facebook.	Not rejected

Table 9. Hypotheses Test Results