

THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON
CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS AND BRAND
ATTITUDE: THE INSTAGRAMMERS

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Resumo

A presente dissertação tem como principal objetivo perceber se as publicações dos influencers no Instagram influenciam efetivamente a decisão de compra do público feminino jovem-adulto. Adicionalmente, este estudo visa também averiguar se estas mesmas publicações têm influência na opinião do consumidor sobre um certo produto/serviço – *Brand attitude* - de uma determinada marca.

Para a obtenção dos resultados desta tese foram utilizados dois métodos de pesquisa qualitativa: entrevistas e netnografia. No primeiro método, entrevistámos 30 consumidores do sexo feminino com idades compreendidas entre os 19 e os 30 anos. As entrevistas permitiram não só compreender o impacto dos posts das influencers na decisão de compra das consumidoras e atitude perante a marca, como também outros aspetos importantes acerca dos influenciadores digitais e a sua ligação com a audiência, como por exemplo os fatores que mais influenciam a compra de um determinado produto/serviço, a personalidade, o rácio de seguidores e pessoas seguidas no Instagram, a preferência entre seguir celebridades tradicionais ou bloggers, entre outras. O segundo método utilizado foi netnografia. Nesta análise foram extraídos cerca de 200 comentários do Instagram de cada uma de 5 influencers portuguesas escolhidas: Alice Trewinnard, Helena Coelho, Inês Rochinha, Jessica Athayde e Vanessa Martins. De seguida, no sentido de retirar as conclusões necessárias e utilizando a ferramenta Meaning Cloud como suporte, foram desenvolvidas as duas análises, Global Sentiment Analysis e Topic Sentiment Analysis, o que nos permitiu classificar os sentimentos presentes nos comentários e averiguar os tópicos mais abordados nas interações.

Com a realização desta tese pode-se concluir que as publicações dos influencers no Instagram sobre certos produtos/serviços influenciam significativamente tanto a decisão de compra dos consumidores como a sua opinião sobre uma determinada marca.

Palavras-chave: Influencer Marketing; Instagram; Decisão de compra; Brand attitude.

Sistema de Classificação JEL: M31; M37.

Abstract

The present dissertation aims to conclude if the influencer's posts on Instagram have an impact on consumer's purchase decisions, regarding the young-adult female audience. Additionally, this study also aims to understand if these posts have an influence on consumer's brand attitude, that is, on the consumer's opinion about a product or service of a certain brand.

In order to take conclusions, two qualitative research methods were used: in-depth interviews and netnography. In the first method, 30 participants female consumers were interviewed with ages between 19 and 30 years old. These interviews not only provided information about the impact of influencer's posts on consumer's purchase decisions and their brand attitude, but also other relevant aspects about the digital influencers and their connection with the audience, such as the factors that influence purchase decisions on Instagram the most, the personality, the followers and followees ratio, the preference between following traditional celebrities or bloggers, among others. The second chosen method was netnography. In this analysis, approximately 200 comments were extracted from the Instagram account of each one of the 5 portuguese digital influencers chosen: Alice Trewinnard, Helena Coelho, Inês Rochinha, Jessica Athayde and Vanessa Martins. Afterwards, using the Meaning Cloud tool as support, the two analysis were developed, Global Sentiment Analysis and Topic Sentiment Analysis, which made us able to classify the sentiments attached to the comments and observe the most approached topics on the interactions.

The results of the present dissertation confirm that the influencer's posts on Instagram about a certain product/service have a significant impact both on consumer's purchase intentions and on their opinion towards a brand.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing; Instagram; Purchase Decision; Brand Attitude.

JEL Classification System: M31; M37.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Goals

The way brands and businesses use technology and digital marketing for their marketing strategies has completely changed. Nowadays, the spreading of social media has entirely improved buying and selling procedures. Consumers are now able to comment on their experiences with products and companies and are also able to share them with their friends and family through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Therefore, in order to diminish negative word-of-mouth messages, companies are much more worried in generating positive customer experiences, so their feedback and reputation can be greater. Instead of going to physical shops, people increasingly use digital devices to buy different products or services, as digital marketing campaigns are becoming more predominant due to the effectiveness of the digital platforms.

Considering this digital context that takes presence in every individual daily life, the present dissertation aims to analyze the impact that the digital influencers have on the female consumer's purchase intentions and on their brand attitude in one specific online platform: Instagram. This social network was chosen because nowadays it's the most used platform by individuals in general. Lim, *et al.*, (2017) referred that "Instagram, a photo- and video-sharing mobile-based social media app with over 600 million active users as of December 2016, is currently one of the most popular social media platforms for influencer marketing." (p:4). According to Casaló *et al.*, (2018), it has also been found that the engagement rate is higher on Instagram, unlike other SNS, and this percentage is even greater when it comes to influencers.

Therefore, the main objective of this thesis is to understand how the Influencer/Celebrity posts on Instagram have an impact on female consumer's purchase decisions. Beyond that, the consumer's brand attitude on Instagram will also be analyzed, that is, if the consumer's opinion about a certain brand (products, services, etc.) also changes negatively or positively according to the influencer's posts. This research also aims to help marketing professionals in discovering new digital strategies to their brands/clients by studying the standard behavior of the young-adult female consumers and, hence, increasing their company purchases.

1.2 Methodology

The present dissertation aims to understand the impact of Instagram influencer's posts on customer's purchase decisions, as well as on consumer's brand attitude. Qualitative research was used in this study. According to Malhotra & Birks (2007), qualitative data research is done to achieve the basic idea of the problem, so the researcher will be able, posteriorly, to advance to the more analytical segment of the study. Qualitative data involves thoughts, feelings, intentions and behaviour that took place in the past.

The first chosen method was in-depth interviews, which are, as stated by Malhotra & Birks (2007) a direct, unstructured and personal way of obtaining information. In this type of interview, a single respondent is inquired by a highly skilled interviewer to disclose core motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a certain topic. To do it, it was required to define specific research questions in order to figure it out if and how Instagram influencer's posts make an impact in consumer's purchase intentions and their brand attitude.

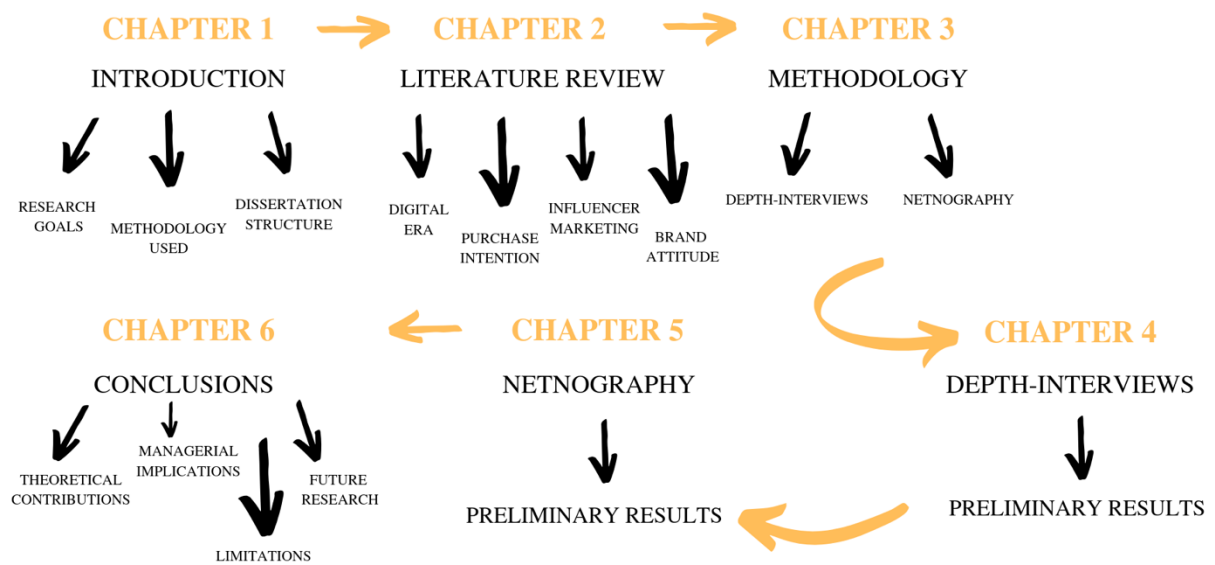
Netnography, which “(...) is a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications.” (Kozinets, 2002: 2-3) was the second chosen method. A Netnography analysis identifies, understands and categorizes the needs and the decision impacts of significant consumer groups using the online information available in the different social networks. On this specific study, a certain number of comments on 5 influencer's Instagram posts were extracted in order to analyze the interactions between the customer and the digital influencer. This analysis was performed through MeaningCloud Software (<https://www.meaningcloud.com>).

1.3 Dissertation Structure

Firstly, the literature review that will cover the digital era topic will be presented, followed by the concepts that are directly related to the theme of the present statement: influencer marketing; brand attitude; purchase process; relation between brand attitude and purchase intention; the Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Intention; Social Media influencers vs Traditional celebrities endorsement and Factors that most influence Brand

Attitude and Purchase Intention On Instagram. Secondly, the methodology that will include a brief explanation of the two used qualitative research methods (in-depth interviews and netnography) will be clarified. The next chapters will include an explanation of how the two methods were used, as well as their preliminary results. Finally, the last chapter of the present dissertation will include the conclusions divided in four subchapters: Theoretical Contributions, Managerial Implications, Limitations and Future Research.

Figure 1 - Dissertation Structure Diagram.



Source: Own Elaboration.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Digital Era

Nowadays, there are over 3.6 billion Internet users in the contemporary digital era, representing nearly 50% of the world's population. Mass marketing is not as predominant as it used to be with the rise of the Internet and the marketing techniques that come with it, being that in today's era, a very high number of people communicate and share information via this medium. It is imperative to keep up with the emerging Internet user behavior, in order to comprehend the changes taking place in Internet consumption, as Internet technologies continue to grow. The flows of information and communication have significantly increased due to the Internet technologies. Hence, the way individuals keep themselves up-to-date with news and events has completely changed. Networking and communication are now facilitated by social media through texts, videos, blogs, pictures and status updates on social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, LinkedIn or microblogs like Twitter (Nedra *et al.*, 2019; De Valck *et al.*, 2009).

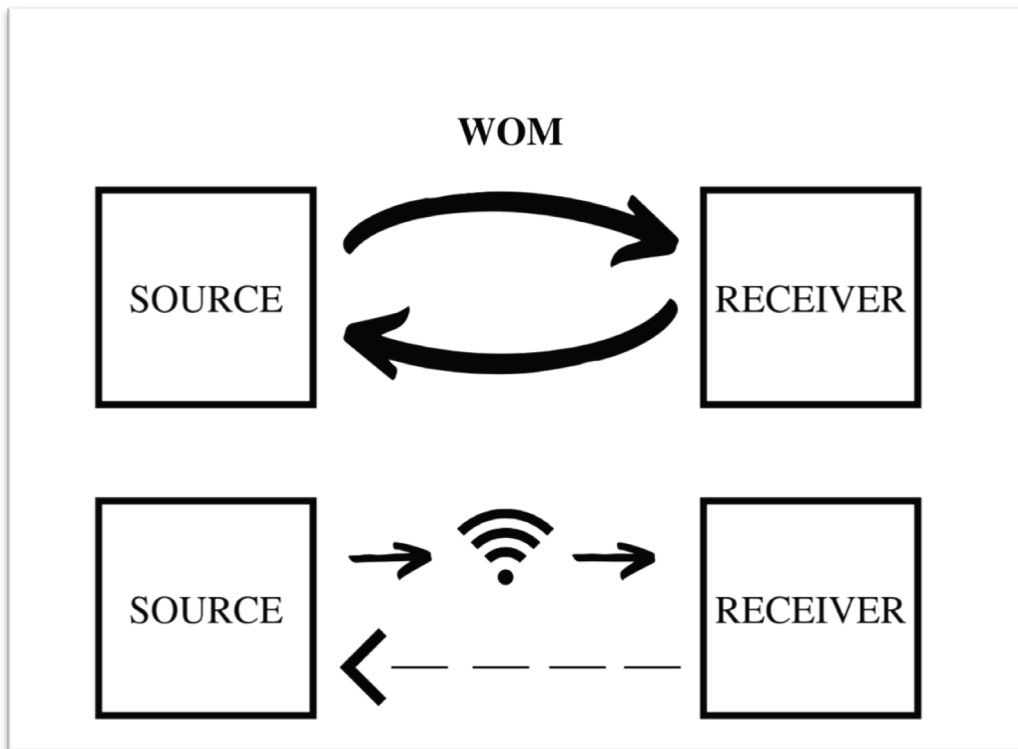
As stated by Nedra *et al.* 2019, due to this new digital era, the customers have a better opportunity to express their opinions and share their views, instant thoughts and experiences with their friends via social media. Before making purchase decisions, customers also use this technology to collect information about companies and their products. Furthermore, they feel more comfortable expressing themselves, since the anonymity and security provided by social media allows people to feel more confident in conveying their true feelings about the brands they interact with: *“Social media gave people the opportunity to represent, document and explore social behaviors as well as has enabled users to establish and participate in digital communities, as well as it has had a disruptive effect on how individuals consume Internet (Caton and Chapman, 2016).”* (Nedra *et al.*, 2019: 21)

It is well known that eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth), or the information consumers obtain from interpersonal sources, has stronger effects on consumer's decision-making in comparison to traditional advertising techniques. A certain message is perceived as more authentic and credible when it's conveyed by another consumer himself, compared to a message transmitted by an advertiser. Consumers have always appreciated each other's opinions, yet, the arrival and still rising popularity of social media has enlarged the effects of peer recommendations, as

it allowed consumers to share their opinions and experiences among themselves. As consumers can freely produce and spread brand-related info and willingly present their brand preferences to others through their social connections, social media websites such as Facebook or Instagram currently represent an ideal instrument for eWOM. The identification of opinion leaders, who exercise a disproportionate quantity of influence on others, is essential to the diffusion of eWOM. Through their social media actions, today's digital influencers are able to guide the outlooks, decisions and behaviors of their followers. Also, as messages can be dispersed quickly and easily, a viral effect or buzz might be produced. Therefore, their influence does not only drift to their followers, but it can also spread among others as they share the viral messages in their social networks (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Boyd & Allison, 2007; Jansen *et al.*, 2009; Knoll, 2016).

As stated by Dhar & Jha (2014), nowadays brands can have a greater promotion and recognition due to the increase of online engagement on social media sites. Furthermore, companies are trying to discover new ways to use social media to make profits, instead of just focusing on using digital platforms for brand recognition. To promote their products and services, organizations generally use social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Flickr, Google Plus, and YouTube. These social networks that include blogs, social media websites, content communities, online advertising platforms, and virtual social worlds are definitely the new sources of customer engagement. Companies use these social media outlets for marketing and advertising of their products or services. The purchase intention happens due to positive online experiences, recommendations from peer groups, quality of information about product and brand or eWOM – Eletronic Word-of-Mouth (Dhar & Jha, 2014). Unlike traditional WOM (Word-of-Mouth), which happens in a simultaneous and bidirectional conversation face to face between source and receiver, eWOM is a process in which the conversation does not have to be in real-time and bidirectional. In e-WOM, the source writes an opinion/recommendation on the Internet that can stay there for a long time, being that costumers are able to see this statement and choose to reply to the source, or not. (Fig. 2). It's also very common to find that the source and the receiver remain both anonymous, which makes this process more biased and less trustworthy (Pihlaja *et al.*, 2017; Brown & Reingen, 1987).

Figure 2 – WOM vs. eWOM Process



Source: Own Elaboration

2.2 Influencer Marketing

The term “influencer marketing” is relatively recent, although there are already some different definitions from dissimilar authors.

According to Sudha & Sheena (2017), influencer marketing is the process of identifying and activating people who have an influence over a particular target audience or medium, so they can be part of a brand's campaign, hence increasing reach, sales, or engagement through their visibility and personality. Actually, concurring with these authors, influencer marketing is an extension to the original notion of word-of-mouth marketing, focusing on a social context and achieved in a more professional way. For the brands that look to expand and increase their audience, influencer marketing is very useful in building a solid relationship with customers, through trust and authenticity. Influencer marketing can usually be practiced in two ways: earned influencer marketing, which consists in any type of influence that hasn't been paid for

(genuine recommendations to catch brand's attention, etc.) or paid influencer marketing, which consists in marketing campaigns that take the form of sponsorship, pre-roll advertising or testimonial messaging. This type of content can appear at any of the influencer's posts and budgets vary widely, generally based on audience reach.

As stated by, influencers are content creators who grew by collecting a high number of followers. They give their followers an insight into their personal, everyday lives, their experiences and opinions through blogging, vlogging or creating short-form content like Instagram or Snapchat. By involving opinion leaders, (e.g. by offering to test a product, organizing an exclusive event, or simply paying them), brands aim to encourage them to endorse their products, thus building their image up among influencers' often huge base of followers, a practice called influencer marketing. The same authors reported that influencer marketing consists of identifying and targeting influential users and stimulating them to support a brand or certain products over their social media activities. The main challenge of this marketing strategy is the identification of an appropriate opinion leader or influencer. The higher the number of followers, the larger the reach of the message. Assessing the number of followers or one's audience size has frequently been put forward as a first step to see who the true opinion leaders are. A roadmap was elaborated to identify online opinion leaders in virtual communities in which the first phase is finding out who are active users with a large follower base. there are several sectors that influencers take interest in: health and fitness, fashion and beauty, food, high-tech, etc. YouTube, Instagram and Facebook influencers usually show the consumers the products they have experienced, providing their opinion or simply promoting them online. Typically, these posts are original images or videos with content related to the product/service of a certain brand (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; De Veirman *et al.*, 2017).

Influencer Marketing has become an important paradigm on social media. The same authors claim that marketing on social media has changed from involving a stabilizing force (i.e. firms' integrated pattern of decisions concerning products and services) to implementing destabilizing forces. In other words, firms do not control marketing strategies anymore as consumers are increasingly responsible for making these marketing decisions. Due to this considerable change, the relationships between organizations and their consumers go beyond the conventionally defined firm–customer dyad (Ge & Gretzel, 2018). Therefore, digital influencers are increasingly valued by the world of marketing, being the bridge between firms and consumers and contributing to its success.

Influencer marketing can be practiced taking into account 3 aspects: reach, relevance and resonance. Reach is related to the measure of audience size, since an influencer has a certain average of followers in an exact niche or market. This first aspect allows the digital influencers to reach masses of consumers through their social channels. On the other hand, relevance concerns the degree of relevance to the reader/consumer. It's very important that the influencers know the best and most original way to promote a product/service in order to make it relevant for the audience. Finally, the resonance counts the amount of activity that an influencer produces by posting content. This number can be higher if the influencer has strong relationships with their public, which are built with trust and transparency (Sudha & Sheena, 2017; Belleau & Nowlin, 2015).

2.3 Brand Attitude

Foroudi (2019: 272) claims that “*Attitudes towards brand can be thought of as consumers’ general liking or lack thereof. Advertising helps firms develop strategic positions to differentiate themselves and provide goodwill from consumers and stakeholders.*” According to Foroudi (2019) attitudes toward brand vary depending on the consumer and can be impacted by different associations and beliefs, which create reputation towards brand. The term brand attitude corresponds to the expression of an individual's evaluation of a brand and it manifests in consumer brand opinions, that is, their preferences and choices. In other words, the individual's perceptions and evaluations of a certain brand (brand name, etc.) are the source for their behavioural intentions. Therefore, consumers' decisions to choose a certain brand are determined by their brand attitudes. Consequently, brand attitude is an established psychological construct to predict sub-sequent consumer behaviours (Liu *et al.*, 2017; Batra *et al.*, 2012; Fournier, 1998).

2.4 Purchase Process

On the current social network platforms, consumers can take feedback from the users of products since they are always interacting with their favorite brands. Consumer engagement, brand perception, among others, are factors that lead to the consumer's purchasing decision (Dhar & Jha, 2014). As stated by Karimi *et al.* (2018), consumer online purchase decision-

making is a dynamic process that includes different phases. The traditional model of purchase decision-making process comprises five stages: problem recognition; information search; evaluation of alternatives; purchase decision; and post-purchase behavior. This model has been usually used in consumer research and is the most used framework regarding consumer purchase behavior, being that its elements are treated as separate stages, and customers move from one stage to the next, ultimately making a purchase decision. Nevertheless, the literature related to decision-making articulates that individuals are flexible and create decision-making processes as they adapt and respond to decision tasks. Adaptive decision-making changes the structure of the decision problem and makes each consumer conceive different processes, so the process becomes more and more complex with dissimilar paths. Therefore, it's important to keep in mind that the stages do not actually represent clearly distinct steps of the process due to the iterations between stages. The process is not linear, consumers frequently move between stages, which leads to a chaotic panorama without a clear structure. To sum up, this traditional model does not exactly represent the complexity of the actual decision-making processes of consumers, since the stages theory is too simplistic and does not represent variations in the process flow. For that reason, it becomes important to discover better ways of modelling and studying purchase decisions. (Karimi *et al.*, 2018)

2.5 Relation between Brand attitude and Purchase Intention

“The attitude toward the purchase intention is determined by the celebrity endorsement considerations. Brand attitudes enhance purchase intentions among the consumers as their motivation gets increased.” (Singh & Banerjee, 2018: 1625) Some studies related to the consumer behaviour emphasize the importance of brand attitude in consumers' decision-making processes (Fourodi, 2019). According to Singh & Banerjee (2018) the consumers' pre-purchase notion increases due to celebrity endorsement since these influencers help in making brands more visible to the public. Moreover, it can generate sales of a long-standing product that needs a boost and enhance the effects of a specific product. Furthermore, the 'elaboration likelihood model' states that brand purchase intention is a function of brand attitude. As a further matter, the 'technology acceptance model', and the 'Hierarchy of Effects Model' also emphasize the view of brand attitude leading to purchase intention. Thus, there is effectively a positive relationship between attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. These outcomes are in congruence with previous research, which concluded that attitude towards the brand increases purchase intentions among the consumers as their motivation is enhanced.

Consequently, a positive attitude towards a brand will boost the purchase intention among consumers (Singh & Banerjee, 2018; Mackenzie & Spreng, 1992; Petty *et al.*, 1983; Dean, 1999).

2.6 The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Intention

“Brands and businesses are increasingly interested in finding ways to leverage ‘popular figures’ as brand ambassadors on social media, and those are not necessarily famous singers, actors or athletes.” (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019: 1). According to Sokolova & Kefi (2019), it became crucial for many brands to create and cultivate relationships with social media influencers, as reported by an recent study conducted by Business Insider. Concurring with the same study, investments in this area are poised to reach between \$5 billion and \$10 billion in 2022 (that is a five-year compound annual growth rate of 38%), particularly in the sectors of beauty, fashion, parenting and tourism. Consumers actively produce and publish multimedia content, also known as User Generated Content, about their opinions among different brands and other situations. Such content has demonstrated to be more popular and effective than professional advertisements.

Nowadays, it's a fact that influencer marketing has a notable impact on consumers' purchase intentions, through their products/services recommendations, reviews, etc. Casaló *et al.* (2018, p: 1) claims that *“(...) among the several social networking sites (SNS) currently available, Instagram is experiencing a steady increase in the number of active users related to the fashion industry (Yesmail, 2015) and fashion brands have significantly more followers and interactions than other types of brands (Socialbakers, 2016).”* Due to the feeling of immediacy that is created and because of its creation of communities, Instagram is the most used platform by opinion leaders and, apparently, this trend will continue in the near future. It has also been revealed that the engagement rate is higher on Instagram, as opposed to other SNS, and this percentage is even greater in the case of influencers (Casaló *et al.*, 2018).

“According to a Nielsen marketing survey, influencer marketing yields “returns on investments” (ROI) 11 times higher as compared to digital marketing (Tapinfluence 2017).” (Lim, *et al.*, 2017: 20). As reported by Media Kix marketing, approximately 80% of online marketers stated that social media influencers are potential endorsers who boost their online businesses to higher levels. These statistical data can effectively validate the usefulness of

social media influencers in motivating consumers' purchase intentions. Furthermore, recent influencer marketing reports also revealed that an estimated 50% of the brands earmarked an uptick fund allocation in contracting social media influencers to promote their brands. (Lim *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, as stated by Singh & Banerjee (2018), previous studies have discovered that the presence of a celebrity in an advertisement produces higher purchase intentions. “*Consumers sometimes purchase a product only because they appreciate a specific celebrity supporting the product (Verma & Kapoor, 2004). A significant interaction effect for purchase intention is supported by Ilicic and Webster (2011) in their study.*” (Singh & Banerjee, 2018: 1624). Celebrities play a crucial role in advertisements, constituting a deciding factor in the consumers’ attitude formation and purchase intention. Moreover, it was noted that the partnerships between companies and celebrities have an advantageous effect on the expected future companies’ profit. Celebrity endorsements impact the market in a way that the correlation between stock market value and celebrity endorsements has generated a reasonably persistent return (Singh & Banerjee, 2018).

As stated by Casaló *et al.* (2018), opinion leadership impacts consumer’s behavioural intentions in several ways. On one hand, it serves to increase the consumer's will to interact with the respective Instagram account and recommend it to others, benefiting the opinion leader. This means that followers are involved in a practice which is called the value-creation process – they can contribute with their knowledge if they interact with the account, and the number of followers may increase if they recommend it to others. Consequently, this buzz between the consumers may increase the value of the opinion leader, which is a central aspect of the new dominant logic for marketing. Also, according to Casaló *et al.* (2018), this whole process may have an impact on companies' sales, due to the fact that consumers have the tendency to follow the fashion advice posted on the account, and hence may trust the opinion leader's posts because of their product experience and perceived knowledge. This influence is even more effective when the consumer perceives that the content posted on the account matches his/her personality and interests, which conveys more credibility.

According to Ge & Gretzel (2018), firms are, increasingly, accepting the fact that influencer marketing is a successful way to reach the consumers, and engage with them, influencing their purchase decisions. “*The capabilities of social media influencers in effectively creating and translating marketing messages underline their important role in understanding social media marketing rhetoric.*” (Ge & Gretzel, 2018: 1277) Digital Influencers, due to their proficient

social media language skills, are capable of using a very persuasive language, since they deeply understand what followers want to read. A very good knowledge of customer's interests and values is needed to persuade the audience using words in an effective way. Also, social media Influencers understand consumer needs and wishes. They can create a special connection with their followers by speaking their language (emojis, etc.), and by presenting intriguing contents and topics. Therefore, the tendency for a bigger consumer purchase intention is higher (Ge & Gretzel 2018).

2.7 Social Media influencers vs Traditional Celebrities endorsement

As stated by Lim *et al.* (2017), social media influencers play a highly significant role in creating product engagement and brand loyalty as they are efficient in communicating to a niche segment, even though celebrity endorsements are more useful in raising brand awareness among consumers. In fact, social media influencers as brand endorsers have grown especially among new and small online businesses. According to the same authors, based on the principles of influencer marketing, companies generally invite social media influencers such as bloggers with thousands of followers in their social media accounts as their brand ambassadors. The content announced by social media influencers is usually seen as more reliable and compelling to consumers, and have been corroborated by 82% of followers' polls, in which consumers are reported to be more likely to follow their favourite influencers' recommendations. In comparison to the celebrity endorsement marketing strategy, the use of social media influencers is seen as more credible, trustworthy and knowledgeable due to their empathy in building connections with consumers, especially for businesses that target the younger generations (Lim *et al.*, 2017). Distinctly different than mainstream celebrities, social media influencers are considered to be accessible, believable, intimate and hence easy to relate to, as they share the personal, usually inaccessible aspects of their life with their followers and interact with them directly. This may produce para-social interaction, which has been defined as the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with an influencer and makes consumers more vulnerable to their opinions and behaviour (De Veirman *et al.* 2017; Abidin, 2016; Schau & Gilly 2003).

2.8 Factors that most influence Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention on Instagram

There are several factors that contribute to the consumer's purchase intention, as well to its change or creation of an opinion towards a brand, product or service. Usually these aspects are characteristics of an influencer but can also apply to customers. The explanation of the fundamental ones is exposed below:

Credibility & Creativity

“Credibility could be defined as the degree of the trustworthiness and reliability of the source (Rogers and Bhowmik, 1970).” (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019: 2) The credibility concept is related to the perception of communication quality by each member of the audience. Digital influencers have a positive impact in their audience through the internalization process: individuals share similar values and attitudes with the speaker. One of the main factors of credibility, besides trustworthiness and goodwill, is expertise, which represents the experience and knowledge the person has in a certain field. While trustworthiness concerns to the perceived honesty of the speaker, the goodwill suggests his/her perceived caring about his/her audience. Therefore, if the spokesperson is considered trustworthy, attractive and seen as an expert by their audience, it can certainly influence the attitude and behavior of individuals, including purchase intention. (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

According to Lim *et al.* (2017: 21): *“Trustworthiness and expertise are two elements that are discussed within source credibility. Information presented by a credible source (e.g. social media influencers) can affect consumers’ beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviours (Wang et al. 2017).”* Also, research by Haron *et al.* (2016) has provided evidence that, despite having original content, the quality and reliability of the message is also very important and can significantly increase the consumer's purchases. That is, trustworthiness and the information quality shared by the opinion leaders/influencers do have a positive influence on purchase intention.

As stated by Singh & Banerjee (2018), the level of consumers' purchase intention is better when the influencer credibility is very high. The advertisements that are based in credible sources are more likely to influence convictions, assessments, attitudes and/or behaviors of a

consumer, making him/her motivated to accept the impact (information) as truthful and use it. Furthermore, it has been considered that a positive brand personality guarantees an increase in purchase intention and, later, the products gain the value of differentiation. The endorsement featuring an influencer/celebrity with higher credibility leads to a positive impact on the consumers' attitude towards the advertisement (Singh & Banerjee, 2018). Hence, this situation will influence positively the attitude towards the brand (brand attitude) since consumers will have a better opinion about the company.

Casaló *et al.* (2018) confirms that the main factors that lead a poster to be perceived as an opinion leader on Instagram are originality and uniqueness instead of quality or quantity. Thus, aspects such as creativity, or being one of a kind, seem to also be fundamental in becoming a digital influencer.

Image Congruence

Image Congruence is another essential factor that is directly and significantly related to credibility, brand attitude and purchase intention growth. According to Paul & Bhakar (2018: 155) "*Image congruence (IC) has been defined as a similarity between the image of celebrity, public figure, sports personality, or other endorser, and the image of the brand being endorsed (Kamins & Gupta, 1994).*" Usually, advertising agencies elect a celebrity/endorser/influencer according to certain elements such as the celebrity's credibility, the match between the influencer and the brand, the image of the celebrity among the multitudes, etc. IC between the celebrity and the brand being publicized is one of the most important criteria that increases the celebrities' trustworthiness, product evaluations by customers, and other aspects of advertisement and communication success. (Paul & Bhakar, 2018; Bejaoui *et al.*, 2012; Hemamalini & Kurup, 2014)

Para-social interaction

According to Sokolova & Kefi (2019: 3) "*the theory of para-social interaction (PSI) defines the relationship between a spectator and a performer with an illusion of intimacy as for the 'real' interpersonal relationships (Dibble et al., 2015).*" Actually, nowadays is very common for young women to follow various celebrities on Instagram and be influenced by them. Despite this, digital personalities seem to have more persuasiveness and credibility than

traditional celebrities since followers are more capable of relating to them. Typically, the accounts that give the most support to their followers, by encouraging them to do worthy things for themselves and providing them positive reviews, are the most appreciated ones. A study conducted in China revealed that para-social interaction is influenced by empathy and the low self-esteem of the follower, also being positively related to purchase intention. PSI is directly related to the concept of similarity, which was found to be a persuasion accelerating factor, especially if the similarity is significant to the message conveyed. People who have similarities generate a higher level of trust among each other, in this case, similarities between the speaker and the audience member. Therefore, the social cognitive theory proposes that people are easily influenced by celebrities/digital influencers with whom they can relate to. Actually, concurring with Sokolova & Kefi (2019) millennials are more likely to buy a product endorsed by someone with a similar self-image to them: “*The similarity between interacting individuals in terms of beliefs, education and social status is called attitude homophily (Prisbell and Andersen, 1980)*” (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019: 3). This idea is related to the similarities the individuals have with each other and the number of interactions that results from it. The higher the number of interactions, the bigger the number of relationships that are developed and, in the case of influencers, it’s called para-social relationship, which is strongly connected to the identification process. However, an opposite effect can also happen if the public perceives a person as a non-expert, especially regarding factual matters (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Colliander & Dahlén 2011; Knoll *et al.* 2015).

Extrovert/introvert type of personality

According to Dhar & Jha (2014), the costumer’s personality can be divided into two types: introverted and extroverted, being that these two types can effectively influence the user’s behaviors concerning their engagement and involvement on social media sites. The same authors stated that the human personality plays a significant role in online purchasing decisions. It was perceived that people with an extrovert personality are more social in nature and more involved toward social media activities, while introvert personality people are less involved toward social media activities. Therefore, targeting extrovert populations will definitely increase brand attitude and, hence, the chances of product purchasing trends.

Followers and followees ratio

A high number of followers merged with a low number of followees can be an indicator of a false account created for advertising intents. These profiles might cause perceptions that the “(...) *influencer is mainly aiming at commercial collaborations, thus being less authentic, whereas authenticity should be precisely the strength of collaborating with influencers.*” (De Veirman, *et al.*, 2017: 813). Also, according to the same study, when a product with a divergent design is recommended by an influencer with a high number of followers, perceptions of uniqueness and attitudes towards the brand are lower compared to when it is endorsed by an influencer with a moderate number of followers. A high number of followers generated the idea that the product is not that exclusive after all, as many others are interested in it. Thus, the influencer’s number of followers can effectively change consumer’s perceptions and, hence, affect their brand attitude and purchase intentions (De Veirman *et al.* 2017; Cresci, *et al.* 2015).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Qualitative research was used in this study. According to Malhotra & Birks (2007), qualitative data research is done to achieve the basic idea of the problem, so the researcher will be able, on a later stage, to advance to the analytical segment of the study. Qualitative data involves thoughts, feelings, intentions and behaviour that took place in the past.

A variety of procedures in qualitative methods can be used in obtaining data for research classified as direct and indirect. The first type chosen in this qualitative research was the direct one: *“A direct approach is not disguised. The purpose of the project is disclosed to the respondents or is otherwise obvious to them from the questions asked. Focus groups and depth interviews are the major direct techniques.”* (Malhotra & Birks, 2007: 145). The present analysis was made by in-depth interviews, which are a direct, unstructured and personal way of obtaining information. In this type of interview, a single respondent is inquired by a highly skilled interviewer to disclose core motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a certain topic. Unlike focus group, in-depth interviews are conducted on a one-on-one basis and usually take from 30 minutes to over an hour (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Regarding the advantages of in-depth interviews in comparison to focus group, these can find better depth of insights than focus group. Furthermore, as opposed to focus group, where it's often hard to determine which participant made a particular response, in-depth interviews attribute the answers directly to the respondent. Therefore, in-depth interviews allow a free exchange of evidence because there is no social pressure to conform to group response, which may not happen in focus group. Nevertheless, there are also some disadvantages of in-depth interviews, like, for example, the difficult and expensive work in finding interviewers capable of conducting this type of interviews. The results are more susceptible to the interviewer's influence due to lack of structure and the quality and completeness of the results depend deeply on the interviewer's abilities. Also, sometimes, the questioners can't do this work alone because of the difficulty to analyse and interpret the data, so skilled psychologists are typically required for this purpose (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

In order to complement the in-depth interviews and to further investigate the topic under analysis in this dissertation was decided to undertake a Netnography (Kozinets, 2002), which can be describe as “(...) *a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications*” (Kozinets, 2002: 2-3). Netnography, as a marketing research technique, identifies, understands and categorizes the needs and the decision impacts of significant consumer groups using the online information available in the different social networks. This new concept, in comparison to traditional and market-oriented ethnography, is less time consuming and less complex. Furthermore, netnography is much more capable of being conducted in a low-profile approach than traditional and market-oriented ethnography. Moreover, netnography is far less evident than focus groups and personal interviews, conducted using observations of consumers which are not elaborated by the marketing researcher himself. Besides, it can provide information in a way that is less costly and more time-efficient than focus groups and personal interviews. Therefore, Netnography provides marketing researchers public word-of-mouth discussions between consumers and, hence, common behaviors on certain online communities (Kozinets, 2002).

Chapter 4: Study 1: In-depth Interviews

The present in-depth interviews included 30 female participants between ages 19-30, all of them consumers. The topics analysed in this study are: the product/service purchases due to an influencer's post on Instagram; introvert/extrovert personality; the social media platforms most used and the most followed type of influencers; the Influencer style most followed and the greatest inspiration on Instagram; the change/creation of a brand attitude due to an influencer's post on Instagram; and lastly the influence of followers and followees ratio on Instagram in Brand attitude.

The product/service purchase due to an influencer's post on Instagram (type of decision, expectations and main purchase's motives)

This study shown us that, from the 30 female participants, 19 bought a product/service due to an influencer's post on Instagram. Concerning the factors that influenced the purchase, 15 replied that were influenced by the opinion leader's credibility, other 3 by the creativity of the post and one girl was influenced by the large message reach due to multiple recommendations. All these 19 participants affirmed that they bought the product/service also due to their similarities (personal characteristics) with the digital influencer.

Introvert/extrovert personality

In this study, it was observed that from the 30 participants, 19 bought something due to an influencer's post on Instagram and all of them affirmed that they are very involved in social media happenings: they always pay attention to an influencer's post related to a product/service advertising and they follow different types of influencers on Instagram. These 19 participants considered themselves extrovert people, which indicates that there is some relation between the type of personality and the online purchase decision. Moreover, from the 11 participants that never bought anything because of an influencer's post, 9 considered themselves introverts.

Social media platforms most used and Most followed type of influencers

From the 30 participants, 21 answered that the social media platform most used in a daily basis is Instagram, 7 responded YouTube and 2 replied Facebook. Concerning the most followed type of influencers, from the 30 participants, 27 follow at least one type of influencer on Instagram, being that 23 answered that they simultaneously follow youtubers, instagrammers (in this study it was defined “instagrammers” as persons with a considerable number of followers who work and create content just on Instagram through different kind of post and does not have a youtube channel or a blog) and bloggers and 4 prefer to follow traditional celebrities (actors and singers). The 23 girls that prefer the first group affirmed that this is because of the transparency and authenticity conveyed through their content, for example, Instagram stories where they try out the products/services they received for themselves. This way, they have a high level of trust in this type of influencers because they can see the usage of the product in real time.

Influencer style most followed and the greatest inspiration on Instagram

From this study, 18 of the 30 participants answered Fashion style (including make-up, beauty and clothing), 7 replied Travels, 4 said Gastronomy and 1 went for Sports. Regarding the greatest inspiration on Instagram, from the 30 participants, 17 stated that what inspires them the most on Instagram are the appealing photographs that aim to pass a message in a dynamic way (reference to colors combination, presets, etc.); 6 of them claimed that feel inspired by seeing others share spontaneous moments in Instagram stories; 2 participants like to obtain ideas for hairstyles and clothing; 1 said gastronomy; 1 answered gossip; 1 wants to “be aware of new products and promotions” ; another one likes “the fact that you can keep track of everything in just one network” and the last one enjoys “the fact that people can easily move up with their content creation”.

The brand attitude change/creation due to an influencer’s post on Instagram (factors that were the most influential)

From the 30 inquired, 20 already changed/created an opinion toward a brand due to an influencer’s post on Instagram, being that 13 participants changed their opinion positively, 3 changed it negatively, 3 created a positive opinion and 1 created a negative opinion. The factors

that were the most influential were the credibility of the influencer (15), the creativity of the post (3), the message reach (1) and the statement of the facts (1).

Followers and followees ratio

From the 30 participants, 18 answered that the followers and followees ratio effectively influences brand attitude on Instagram, saying that an influencer with a low number of followers is more credible and an influencer with a high number of followers and a low number of followees tends to do the product/service advertising for money and commercial reasons. Some participants even said that these accounts may be false and therefore they don't think about buying the product because of the lack of authenticity.

The other 12 participants stated that the followers and followees ratio does not influence Brand Attitude on Instagram, answering that if they really like the type of the product/service, the ratio loses its importance regarding the purchase decision. Furthermore, these participants affirmed that they are more influenced by the way that the opinion leader communicates the message (type of content, creativity, credibility, etc.) and they tend not to believe in the influencers that use Instagram only to promote/advertise products or services.

4.1 Preliminary Results

From this analysis, the following conclusion can be reached: “introvert/extrovert people”, “credibility”, “creativity” and “followers and followees ratio” are core independent variables, and “Brand Attitude” and “Intention to Purchase” are dependent ones.

Regarding the independent variable “introvert/extrovert people”, there is a significant connection between the type of personality and the dependent variable “intention to purchase”, since extrovert people tend to purchase more due to online influencers' posts. These results confirm a study developed by Dhar & Jha (2014) where it is observed that the human personality plays a significant role in online purchasing decisions. It was perceived that people with an extrovert personality are more social in nature and more involved toward social media activities, while introvert personality people are less involved toward social media activities. Therefore, targeting extrovert populations will definitely increase the chances of product purchasing trend.

Also, concurring with the results, there is a strong connection between the independent variables “credibility” and “creativity” and the two dependent ones, “intention to purchase” and “brand attitude”. Credibility and creativity were the main purchase motives in the topic “The product/service purchase due to an influencer post on Instagram” and were also the factors that mostly influenced brand attitude in the “The brand attitude change/creation due to an influencer post on Instagram” topic. These outcomes corroborate a research by Casaló *et al.* (2018), which provided evidence that perceived originality and uniqueness of an Instagram post are the fundamental factors that lead a poster to be perceived as an opinion leader in this social network. Moreover, according to Lim *et al.* (2017): “*Trustworthiness and expertise are two elements that are discussed within source credibility. Information presented by a credible source (e.g. social media influencers) can affect consumers’ beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviors.*” Likewise, concurring with Haron *et al.* (2016), the quality and reliability of the message is as important as its content and these can significantly increase the consumer’s purchases. Therefore, trustworthiness and the information quality shared by the opinion leaders/influencers do have a positive influence on purchase intention.

Additionally, the independent variable “followers and followees ratio” has an important relation to the dependent variable “brand attitude”, since the brand attitude on Instagram decreases if an influencer account on Instagram has a high number of followers and a low number of followees, agreeing with the interview results. These outcomes follow the statement “*A high number of followers combined with a low number of followees can be an indicator of a false account created for advertising purposes or might elicit perceptions that the influencer is mainly aiming at commercial collaborations, thus being less authentic, whereas authenticity should be precisely the strength of collaborating with influencers.*” (De Veirman, *et al.*, 2017, p. 813).

Chapter 5: Study 2 - Netnography

On this dissertation, netnography will be used in the analysis of the comments made by followers/consumers (mostly female) in certain influencer's posts on Instagram in order to see how they interact with each other, regarding purchase intentions and brand attitude. The five chosen digital influencers were Alice Trewinnard, Helena Coelho, Inês Rochinha, Jéssica Athayde and Vanessa Martins.

At the first step, to collect data from Instagram, it was necessary to use a text mining technique capable to extract, examine, and transpose the results of users' interactions into valuable insights. Thus, the data extraction was conducted by an online platform – www.exportcomments.com - which was used on this online study to collect all the data from consumers' interactions on the chosen platform – Instagram - into spreadsheets (one for each influencer). Each spreadsheet contains the influencer post link; the post-date; the username of the customer that interacted with the influencer post; the user page link and the comment written by the user on the influencer's post.

The next step of this process, after collecting five different files of data, one for each influencer, consists in a Sentiment Analysis, which is very helpful in order to understand the consumer's feelings towards these influencers, performed through a text-mining software (<https://www.meaningcloud.com>). Thus, this analysis provided two important investigations: Global Sentiment Analysis and Topic Sentiment Analysis, which were crucial to determine, through users' interactions, the impact of influencer posts in the consumer purchase intentions and consumer brand attitude.

The first stage, Global Sentiment Analysis, categorized customers' comments in each influencer community as positive, negative or neutral sentiment, i.e., it identified the polarity of each interaction by detecting a certain sentiment in each sentence. The sentiments classification differs between 1 and 5, being that 1 corresponds to strong negative and 5 corresponds to strong positive (Table 1). In addition to this evaluation, the sentiment analysis was helpful to identify the levels of: Irony (when customers intend to say the opposite of what they have stated on the comment); Agreement (identification of contradictory or ambiguous opinions) and Subjectivity (whether the comment is a fact or an opinion) of each interaction

(Table 2). Therefore, each follower comment analyzed on this research was classified according to its sentiment polarity scale by the Meaning Cloud tool.

The second stage, Topic Sentiment Analysis, allowed the creation of conversation clusters, i.e., the main topics approached by the customers at the online brand community. The tool selected to perform this investigation (Meaning Cloud) is capable of detecting organization names, products, people’s names, dates, contacts (e-mails, phone numbers), hashtags etc., among the comments of the influencer’s followers. It also enables the identification of the frequency at which each topic is mentioned.

Table 1 - Polarity Scale Numerical Conversion

Sentiment	Conversion
Strong Positive	5
Positive	4
Neutral	3
Negative	2
Strong negative	1

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2 - Examined metrics at Global Sentiment Analysis

Irony	Subjectivity	Agreement
Ironic	Subjective	Agreement
Nonironic	Objective	Disagreement

Source: Own elaboration

5.1 Preliminary Results

5.1.1 Alice Trewinnard



Born and raised in Lisbon, this 29 year old digital influencer is a Hairstylist, dietician and vlogger, being mostly well known for her YouTube channel, where she has earned more than 150,000 subscribers creating beauty videos, travel vlogs and more. In addition to vlogging about hair and beauty, she is also the founder of Golden Locks, an online hairstyling company.

Table 3 – Sample size and characteristics of Alice Trewinnard analysis

Sample Size and Characteristics
N = 207 Comments
Influencer
Alice Trewinnard
Type of Content
Fashion, beauty and healthy living
Number of Followers
176.000
Online Brand Community
Instagram
Community Users
Followers of Alice that have interacted with her during the Sample Research Period
Sample Research Period
April 2019

Source: Own elaboration

The present analysis, supported by the Meaning Cloud tool, provides data about the feelings associated with the interactions between the influencer and their followers. Firstly, as previously explained on this process description, the sentiment analysis accomplished identified the polarity of each interaction, i.e., if the sentiment associated with the follower’s comment is strongly positive (5), positive (4), neutral (3), negative (2) or strongly negative (1) (Table 4).

Table 4 – Alice Followers Interactions Polarity Scale

Scale	Sum
5	6
4	88
2	8
1	1
0	104
Total	207

Source: Own elaboration

As shown in the Table 4, it is visible that most of the comments posted on Alice’s Instagram account have a positive sentiment during the research period. Amongst the interactions analyzed, 6 reveal a strong positive sentiment, 88 a positive sentiment, 8 negative sentiment and 1 a strong negative sentiment. There were no comments with a neutral sentiment.

The degree of confidence is also determined in this analysis. As we can see in the Table 5, the confidence associated with the polarity results of this research is significant (99,9%), having a standard deviation of 0,78, which demonstrates a low dispersion of these confidence evaluations.

Table 5 - Confidence Analysis of Alice Polarity Interactions

Confidence Mean	Confidence Standard Deviation	Confidence Variance
99,923	0,784	0,615

Source: Own Elaboration

Once the Polarity of the interactions was identified among this investigation’s sample, this Sentiment Analysis allowed the determination of the irony, subjectivity and agreement of the comments of Alice’s followers on Instagram. On this specific case, users did not post ironic

comments since all the interactions (207) are Nonironic (Table 6). Regarding objectiveness (Table 7), the followers are mostly objective in their opinions (196). Concerning the level of agreement verified (Table 8), these users totally agree (207) on their interactions towards Alice’s posts on her Online Community – Instagram.

Metric	Value
NONIRONIC	207
Grand Total	207

Metric	Value
OBJECTIVE	196
SUBJECTIVE	11
Grand Total	207

Metric	Value
AGREEMENT	207
Grand Total	207

Source: Own Elaboration

Afterwards the last analysis was made with a classification of the most approached topics in the comments (topic sentiment analysis). Table 9 demonstrates that the most addressed topic is the person itself (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname). It’s very common to find followers addressing the influencers directly through their own comments by mentioning their names. They usually do this to ask questions, or simply to talk about the opinion leader with friends, publicly. Followers also use hashtags suggested by the influencers related to certain themes.

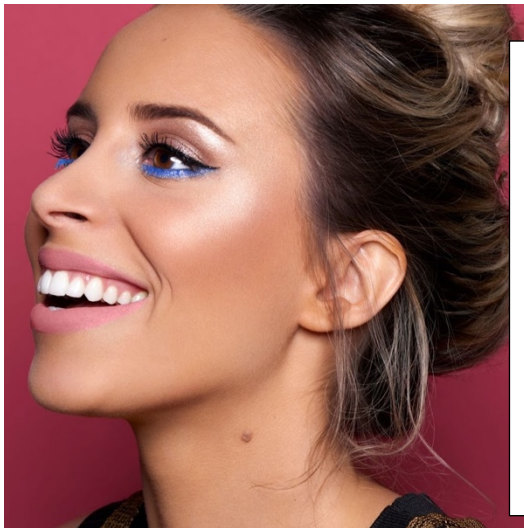
The second most approached topic is Firms (i.e., company, organization), followed by Location (place) and Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool). Issues regarding Measurement units, Animals and Events, although less commented, were also approached.

Table 9 – Topic Sentiment Analysis for comments of Alice’s followers

Dimensions	Sum of Polarity
Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname)	278
Firm (i.e., company, organization)	48
Location (Place)	42
Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool)	28
Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services)	22
Measurement units	12
Animals	4
Events	2
Grand Total	594

Source: Own elaboration

5.1.2 Helena Coelho



Helena Coelho is one of the most successful digital influencers in Portugal. At the age of 26, she had already won the prize of youtuber of the year in fashion and beauty category. Her passion is make up and everything related to it. She influences a huge number of young females only with the products that she uses in her daily-basis.

Table 10 - Sample size and characteristics of Helena Coelho analysis

Sample Size and Characteristics
N = 202
Influencer
Helena Coelho
Type of Content
Fashion, beauty and healthy living
Number of Followers
269.000
Online Brand Community
Instagram
Community Users
Followers of Helena that have interacted with her during the Sample Research Period
Sample Research Period
April 2019

Source: Own elaboration

As shown in the table 11, it is visible that most of the comments made on Helena’s Instagram account have a positive sentiment during the research period. Amongst the interactions analyzed, 8 comments reveal a strong positive sentiment, 104 a positive sentiment, 3 a neutral sentiment, 15 a negative sentiment and 1 a strong negative sentiment.

Table 11 – Helena Coelho Interactions Polarity Scale

Scale	Sum
5	8
4	104
3	3
2	15
1	1
Grand Total	131

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the confidence analysis, as we can see in the Table 5, the confidence associated with the polarity results of this research is significant (99,5%) having a standard deviation of 2,2 which demonstrates a low dispersion of these confidence evaluations.

Table 12 - Confidence Analysis of Helena Polarity Interactions

Confidence Mean	Confidence Standard Deviation	Confidence Variance
99,48148148	2,232717533	4,985027581

Source: Own elaboration

Concerning the irony, the followers did not post ironic comments (Table 13). Regarding objectiveness (Table 14), the followers are mostly objective in their opinions (183). Concerning the level of agreement verified (Table 15), most users (182) totally agree on their interactions towards Helena's posts on her Online Community – Instagram.

Table 13

Metric	Value
NONIRONIC	189
(blank)	13
Grand Total	202

Table 14

Metric	Value
OBJECTIVE	183
SUBJECTIVE	6
(blank)	13
Grand Total	202

Table 15

Metric	Value
AGREEMENT	182
DISAGREEMENT	7
(blank)	13
Grand Total	202

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the Topic Sentiment Analysis (Table 16), it can be demonstrated that the most addressed topic is Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname). The second most approached topic is Location (Place), followed by Firm (i.e., company, organization), Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool) and Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services). Issues regarding Measurement units, Animals and Event, although less commented, were also addressed.

Table 16 - Topic Sentiment Analysis for comments of Helena followers

Dimensions	Sum of Polarity
Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname)	450
Location (Place)	130
Firm (i.e., company, organization)	87
Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool)	61
Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services)	36
Measurement units	20
Animals	6
Event	2
Grand Total	1005

Source: Own elaboration

5.1.3 Inês Rochinha



Inês Rochinha, 26 years old, was one of the first Portuguese women to enter the Youtube world. She created her YouTube channel in 2011 and since then, she's always uploaded regularly. With more than 270,000 subscribers in her YouTube channel, she is particularly renowned for her detailed makeup tutorials, as well as her personal and frequent travel vlog entries. Nowadays, she is also one of the biggest influencers in Portugal.

Table 17 - Sample size and characteristics of Inês Rochinha analysis

Sample Size and Characteristics	
N = 112 Comments	
Influencer	
Inês Rochinha	
Type of Content	
Fashion, beauty and healthy living	
Number of Followers	
242.000	
Online Brand Community	
Instagram	
Community Users	
Followers of Inês that have interacted with her during the Sample Research Period	
Sample Research Period	
April 2019	

Source: Own elaboration

As shown in the Table 18, it is noticeable that most of the comments made on Inês' Instagram account have a positive sentiment during the research period. Amongst the interactions analyzed, 7 comments reveal a strong positive sentiment, 53 a positive sentiment, 3 negative sentiment and 1 a strong negative sentiment. There were no comments with a neutral sentiment.

Table 18 – Inês Rochinha Interactions Polarity Scale

Scale	Sum
5	7
4	53
2	3
1	1
0	48
Total	112

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the confidence analysis (Table 19), the confidence associated with the polarity results of this research is significant (99,9%) having a standard deviation of 0,94 which demonstrates a low dispersion of these confidence evaluations.

Table 19 - Confidence Analysis of Inês Polarity Interactions

Confidence Mean	Confidence Standard Deviation	Confidence Variance
99,875	0,940816207	0,885135135

Source: Own elaboration

Concerning the irony, the followers did not post ironic comments (Table 20). Regarding objectiveness (Table 21), the followers are mostly objective in their opinions (110). Concerning the level of agreement verified (Table 22), most users (111) totally agree on their interactions towards Inês's posts on her Online Community – Instagram.

Table 20

Metric	Value
NONIRONIC	112
Grand Total	112

Table 21

Metric	Value
OBJECTIVE	110
SUBJECTIVE	2
Grand Total	112

Table 22

Metric	Value
AGREEMENT	111
DISAGREEMENT	1
Grand Total	112

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the Topic Sentiment Analysis (Table 23), it can be demonstrated that the most addressed topic is Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname). The second most approached topic is Location (Place), followed by Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services) and Firm (i.e., company, organization). Topics like Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool) Measurement units and Animals although less commented, were also approached.

Table 23 - Topic Sentiment Analysis for comments of Inês followers

Dimensions	Sum of Polarity
Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname)	164
Location (Place)	38
Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services)	28
Firm (i.e., company, organization)	24
Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool)	8
Animals	4
Measurement units	4
Grand Total	270

Source: Own elaboration

5.1.4 Jéssica Athayde



Jéssica Athayde began her career in the popular tv series “Morangos com Açúcar”, which started in 2003. Apart from being an actress, she also has a blog where she shares various episodes of her life related to traveling, healthy living, fashion, motherhood, etc. This 34 year old digital influencer works with many well-known brands, like Danone.

Table 24 - Sample size and characteristics of Jessica Athayde analysis

Sample Size and Characteristics
N = 195 Comments
Influencer
Jessica Athayde
Type of Content
Fashion, beauty and healthy living
Number of Followers
873.000
Online Brand Community
Instagram
Community Users
Followers of Jéssica that have interacted with her during the Sample Research Period
Sample Research Period
April 2019

Source: Own elaboration

As shown in the Table 25, it is noticeable that most of the comments made on Jessica's Instagram account have a positive sentiment during the research period. Amongst the interactions analyzed, 9 comments reveal a strong positive sentiment, 87 a positive sentiment, 1 a neutral sentiment, 14 a negative sentiment and 5 a strong negative sentiment.

Table 25 - Jessica Interactions Polarity Scale

Scale	Sum
5	9
4	87
3	1
2	14
1	5
Grand Total	116

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the confidence analysis (Table 26), the confidence associated with the polarity results of this research is significant (99,4%) having a standard deviation of 2,41 which demonstrates a low dispersion of these confidence evaluations.

Table 26 - Confidence Analysis of Jessica Polarity Interactions

Confidence Mean	Confidence Standard Deviation	Confidence Variance
99,40512821	2,414512471	5,829870473

Concerning the irony, as we can see in the table 27, the followers posted, for the most part, Non Ironic comments (111). Regarding objectiveness (Table 28), the followers are mostly objective in their opinions (188). Concerning the level of agreement verified (Table 29), most users (188) totally agree on their interactions towards Jessica’s posts on her Online Community – Instagram.

Table 27

Metric	Value
IRONIC	5
NONIRONIC	190
Grand Total	195

Table 28

Metric	Value
OBJECTIVE	188
SUBJECTIVE	7
Grand Total	195

Table 29

Metric	Value
AGREEMENT	188
DISAGREEMENT	7
Grand Total	195

Source: Own elaboration

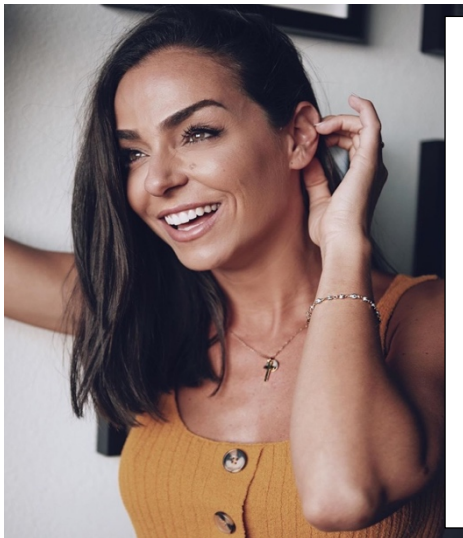
According to the Topic Sentiment Analysis (Table 30), the most addressed topic is Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname). The second most approached topic is Firm (i.e., company, organization), followed by Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool), Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services) and Location (Place). Topics like Measurement, Animals and Event, although less commented, were also approached.

Table 30 - Topic Sentiment Analysis for comments of Jessica followers

Dimensions	Sum of Polarity
Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname)	372
Firm (i.e., company, organization)	86
Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool)	36
Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services)	28
Location (Place)	25
Measurement units	12
Animals	8
Event	6
Grand Total	573

Source: Own elaboration

5.1.5 Vanessa Martins



Vanessa Martins also started her career in the tv series “Morangos com Açúcar”, just like Jessica, but she decided to follow another path. Besides being a blogger, she created her own business, an online platform called “Frederica” where she sells exclusive products related to lifestyle. Currently she uses her Instagram account to influence her audience, who is mostly composed by women.

Table 31 - Sample size and characteristics of Vanessa Martins analysis

Sample Size and Characteristics
N = 189 Comments
Influencer
Vanessa Martins
Type of Content
Fashion, beauty and healthy living
Number of Followers
531.000
Online Brand Community
Instagram
Community Users
Followers of Vanessa that have interacted with her during the Sample Research Period
Sample Research Period
April 2019

Source: Own elaboration

As we can see in the Table 32, it is visible that most of the comments made on Vanessa's Instagram account have a positive sentiment during the research period. Amongst the interactions analyzed, 7 comments reveal a strong positive sentiment, 63 a positive sentiment, 1 a neutral sentiment and 11 a negative sentiment.

Table 32 - Vanessa Interactions Polarity Scale

Scale	Sum
0	107
2	11
3	1
4	63
5	7
Grand Total	189

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the confidence analysis (Table 33), the confidence associated with the polarity results of this research is significant (99,8%) having a standard deviation of 1,35 which demonstrates a low dispersion of these confidence evaluations.

Table 33 - Confidence Analysis of Vanessa Polarity Interactions

Confidence Mean	Confidence Standard deviation	Confidence Variance
99,78	1,347839863	1,816672295

Source: Own elaboration

Concerning the irony, as shown in the table 34, the followers only posted Non Ironic comments (189). Regarding objectiveness (Table 35), the followers are mostly objective in their opinions (185). Concerning the level of agreement verified (Table 36), most users (186) totally agree on their interactions towards Vanessa’s posts on her Online Community – Instagram.

Table 34

Metric	Value
NONIRONIC	189
Grand Total	189

Table 35

Metric	Value
OBJECTIVE	185
SUBJECTIVE	4
Grand Total	189

Table 36

Metric	Value
AGREEMENT	186
DISAGREEMENT	3
Grand Total	189

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the Topic Sentiment Analysis (Table 37), it can be shown that the most addressed topic is Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname). The second most approached topic is Location (Place), followed by Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services) and Firm (i.e., company, organization). Topics like Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool) and Measurement units, although less commented, were also approached.

Table 37 - Topic Sentiment Analysis for comments of Vanessa followers

Dimensions	Sum of Polarity
Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname)	197
Location (Place)	42
Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services)	32
Firm (i.e., company, organization)	25
Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool)	9
Measurement units	2
Grand Total	307

Source: Own elaboration

5.1.6 Digital influencers Integrated Analysis

As shown in the Table 38, it is visible that most of the comments posted on the 5 influencers' Instagram accounts have a positive sentiment during the research period. Amongst the interactions analyzed, 37 comments reveal a strong positive sentiment, 395 a positive sentiment, 5 a neutral sentiment and 51 a negative sentiment and 8 a strong negative sentiment.

Table 38 – Influencers Interactions Polarity Scale

Scale	Sum
5	37
4	395
3	5
2	51
1	8
Grand Total	496

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the confidence analysis (Table 39), the confidence associated with the polarity results of this research is significant (99,7%) having a standard deviation of 1,73 which demonstrates a low dispersion of these confidence evaluations.

Table 39 - Confidence Analysis of Influencers Polarity Interactions

Média de Confidenc	DesvPad de Confidenc3	Var de Confidenc2
99,68161435	1,732886007	3,002893912

Source: Own elaboration

Concerning the irony, as shown in the Table 40, the followers posted, for the most part, Non Ironic comments (887). Regarding objectiveness (Table 41), the followers are mostly objective in their opinions (862). Concerning the level of agreement verified (Table 42), most users (874) totally agree on their interactions towards the 5 influencers' posts.

Table 40

Metric	Value
IRONIC	5
NONIRONIC	887
(blank)	13
Grand Total	905

Table 41

Metric	Value
OBJECTIVE	862
SUBJECTIVE	30
(blank)	13
Grand Total	905

Table 42

Metric	Value
AGREEMENT	874
DISAGREEMENT	18
(blank)	13
Grand Total	905

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the Topic Sentiment Analysis (Table 43), it can be verified that the most addressed topic is Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname). The second most approached topic is Location (Place), followed by Firm (i.e., company, organization), Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services) and Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool). Measurement units, Animals and Events topics, although less spoken, were also approached.

Table 43 - Topic Sentiment Analysis for comments of the 5 influencers

Dimensions	Sum of Polarity
Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname)	1461
Location (Place)	277
Firm (i.e., company, organization)	270
Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services)	146
Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool)	142
Measurement units	50
Animals	22
Events	10
Grand Total	3298

Source: Own elaboration

Given that most of the followers' interactions have a positive sentiment (395), a high level of confidence (99,7%) and most of the comments are non-ironic, objective and in agreement, it means that the Topic Sentiment Analysis for the comments of the 5 influencers is trustworthy. Therefore, as shown in the Topic sentiment analysis table, the most approached topics are Person (i.e., name, identification, tag, nickname), Location (Place), Firm (i.e., company, organization) and Product (i.e., product or service, or professional services) and Trends (i.e., trend, tendency, trendy, cool).

The topic "Person" is very common since the followers of the 5 influencers usually use the name of the influencer in the comments to ask something or to simply express themselves about some field, i.e., "@helenacoelho will it be a limited edition? Or can we buy it whenever we want? 🥰🥰"; @helenacoelho I hope you are ok Helena, I wanted to send you a kiss and a lot of success for the future. 🍷🍷 You help and will always continue helping other women (...); "Hello @helenacoelho what is the iPhone's model? 🤔".

"Location" was also one of the most approached topics due to the questions of the customers about where a certain influencer bought some product/service, etc. Here are some comments demonstrating this situation: "Where can we buy it?"; "Where can we find the product Helena? Thanks 😊"; "How much does it cost? And where can I find it?"; "@helenacoelho where did you buy the lamp?"; "Good morning... where can I buy???" ; "Where can we find this here in Portugal?"; "Where are the creams sold?"; "Where can we find this cream?"; "Where is the dress from?".

The topic "Firm" is also very usual in the comments of the followers, since people are very curious about the firms where the products (make up, clothes, etc) were bought. This topic has similarities with the topic "Location" but it is more specific because a certain firm is always mentioned. Here are some examples extracted from the netnography analysis: "In what Primark did you get this swimsuit?"; "In what color do you use the Fenty beauty foundation 🥰?"; "I love it, I want it! I already have some products of @quemdisseberenicept brand."; "I find the L'Oreal magic shampoo better! It does not let the hair get so white and keeps hair volume (...)."; "Are they better than klorane products? 🤔🤔"; "@mppereira3 in which Worten? I went to the website and I did not find it."

Regarding the topic “Products”, the followers mention this word a lot, since they are interested in what product the influencer is using, how she is using it, where she bought it, or even just praise/recommend it. The following comments are examples of that: “@helenacoelhoo how do you apply the product? With your hands or with a brush/beauty blender?” ; “Love @Uniqfind they make such nice products 😍” ; “Are these beautiful earrings from mango? @alicetrewinnard”

Concerning the topic “Trends”, this theme has also to do with “Products” and “Firm”, since customers see some products of a certain brand as a trend or a tendency, mentioning this in the comments.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

The aim of the present thesis is to figure out, through two qualitative research methods (in-depth interviews and netnography), if and how the Influencer/Celebrity's posts on Instagram have an impact on female consumers' purchase decisions and brand attitude.

According to the in-depth interviews, in fact, the influencer's posts on Instagram do have a significant impact on consumer purchase intentions, since from the 30 female participants, 19 bought a product/service due to an influencer's post on Instagram (63% of the total population). This finding contributes to the existing literature on the impact of online posts on consumer purchase intentions (Casaló *et al.* 2018; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Lim, *et al.*, 2017; Singh & Banerjee, 2018; Ge & Gretzel 2018). This first study also revealed that the impact is even bigger on consumer's brand attitude, since from the 30 respondents, 20 already changed/created an opinion towards a brand due to an influencer's post on Instagram (67% of the total population).

Another important finding retrieved from these interviews have to do with the main reasons why customers are persuaded by influencer's posts on Instagram: "credibility" was the keyword to justify either purchase intention or some change on brand attitude, following by the creativity of the post. These outcomes contribute to the existing literature by Casaló *et al.* (2018), which provided evidence that perceived originality and uniqueness of an Instagram post are the fundamental factors that lead a poster to be perceived as an opinion leader in this social network. Moreover, according to Lim *et al.* (2017): "*Trustworthiness and expertise are two elements that are discussed within source credibility. Information presented by a credible source (e.g. social media influencers) can affect consumers' beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviors.*" Likewise, concurring with Haron *et al.* (2016), despite the original content, the quality and reliability of the message is also very important and can significantly increase the consumer's purchases. Thus, trustworthiness and the information quality shared by the opinion leaders/influencers have a positive influence on purchase intention. Credibility also has to do with the concept of Image Congruence that "*(...) has been defined as a similarity between the image of celebrity, public figure, sports personality, or other endorser, and the image of the*

brand being endorsed (Kamins & Gupta, 1994).” (Paul & Bhakar , 2018: 155) A considerable number of participants referred, during the interviews, that they prefer to follow and find credible influencers to promote products/services in which they believe rather than incongruent influencers with a big number of followers. Here are some of the participants’ statements during the interviews: *“I would not follow a vegan influencer promoting a meat product. I can’t find this credible.”* or *“I would not buy a product promoted by an influencer who talks about products that she does not believe in. I don’t care if she has a huge number of followers”*. Then, image congruence is another essential factor that increases purchase intention which contributes to the existing literature of Paul & Bhakar (2018), Bejaoui *et al.* (2012) and Hemamalini & Kurup (2014). Para-social interaction was also found to be an important reason for people to buy a certain product/service, since the all the 19 interview participants that already bought it, also did it due to their similarities (personal characteristics) with the digital influencer. These outcomes contribute to the existing literature on this field (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Colliander & Dahlén 2011; Knoll *et al.* 2015

Regarding customer personality, this research enables to find that extrovert people tend to purchase more due to online influencers’ posts. These results contribute to the existing literature developed by Dhar & Jha (2014) where it is observed that the human personality plays a significant role in online purchasing decisions. It was perceived that people with an extrovert personality are more social in nature and more involved toward social media activities, while introvert personality people are less involved towards social media activities.

The followers and followees ratio was also an important finding on this study. It has an important relation to the customer’s attitude towards a brand, since the brand attitude on Instagram decreases if an influencer account on Instagram has a high number of followers and a low number of followees, agreeing with the interview results. These outcomes follow the statement: *“A high number of followers combined with a low number of followees can be an indicator of a false account created for advertising purposes or might elicit perceptions that the influencer is mainly aiming at commercial collaborations, thus being less authentic, whereas authenticity should be precisely the strength of collaborating with influencers.”* (De Veirman, *et al.*, 2017, p. 813).

Concerning the second study – Netnography - from the comments it’s visible that the consumers show a clear intention of buying the products that the influencers are promoting.

However, there are examples that better show this intention as well as the effectiveness of the influencers in persuading the customers: “I want these lipsticks 🥰” ; “Miniature...woow. I will buy it to try it out... the brand had an excellent idea of manufacturing miniatures...I think it will be a success. Thank you Alice for the promotion.” ; “I need this!!!” ; “I have to have a brush like that 🥰❤” “@alicetrewinnard what do you recommend? This one or the black one? I’m super undecided 🤔🤔” ; “

Besides these situations, there are also some cases where it’s noticeable that the influencers sold out a certain product just due to their posts. Here are some examples: “@helenacoelho everything that you promote runs out in minutes! You should create a brand of yours lol after a few months you would be rich and far away from here 🤔🤔” ; “I’m glad we already have the t-shirt @danielafmoliveira, it must be sold out after this post 🤔” ; “Fortunately we already have this shirt...in hours it must be sold out in every Zara of the country! 🤔🤔🤔” ; “I can’t find this on the website 🤔But I would like to know if they are sold separately or in group!! They are beautiful 🥰🥰”.

To conclude, through both netnography analysis and in-depth interviews, it’s noticeable that the digital influencers’ posts on Instagram actually have an impact in the consumer’s purchase intentions, especially concerning young female consumers. Regarding brand attitude, it is also clear that consumers tend to change their opinion towards a brand (positively or negatively) if a certain influencer promotes/demotes it.

6.2 Managerial Implications

From this dissertation, it can be concluded that influencers’ posts on Instagram have a noteworthy impact on the consumer’s purchase intention as well as in their brand attitude. Therefore, there are some variables that must be taken into account by marketing professionals if they want to succeed in influencer marketing for their brands/companies.

Firstly, according to the interview’s preliminary results, Instagram is the platform most used (from the 30 participants, 21 answered that the social media platform most used in a daily basis is Instagram). Therefore, company managers should invest more on this online platform using its different tools when their goal is to launch a marketing campaign.

Secondly, it was found that consumers find the content and congruence of the influencer's posts much more important than to their number of followers. Besides that, in general, customers consider youtubers, instagrammers and bloggers more credible and trustworthy than traditional celebrities (actors and singers). Thus, marketing specialists should invest more in micro-influencers, who are people that do not have a high number of followers but have a considerable impact on their online communities, Instagram in this case.

Image Congruence is also crucial when a marketing professional is searching for an influencer to promote a product/service, that is, the influencer has to believe in what he/she is promoting to convey credibility and trustworthiness to their audience. Therefore, companies must make sure that there is a match between the lifestyle and the type of content usually published by the digital influencers and their own image when they want to include them in an advertising campaign. The fit between the influencers' audience and the company target audience cannot be forgotten too. The campaign can be completely unsuccessful if this is not done, since users can perceive that the opinion leader is sponsoring that specific product/service only due to the compensation he/she receives, which affects negatively both the influencer and the company.

Besides credibility, posts creativity is also one of the main factors that change consumer purchasing intentions and brand attitude. Thus, company managers should provide briefings of their own campaigns, allowing the development of original and authentic content such as Instagram stories showing product tests , contests, IGTV videos, etc., which will engage their audiences. Essentially, the campaign guidelines given to the opinion leaders require something visual and attractive, since the majority of the interview's participants stated that what inspires them the most on Instagram are the appealing photographs that try to pass a message in a dynamic way (colors combinations, puzzles, etc.)

Therefore, marketers must always consider the match between the type of product they want to promote and the lifestyle and audience of the opinion leader when searching for an appropriate influencer. Although it is tempting to choose an influencer with a high number of followers for any campaign, this would not be the best marketing option for each product type, neither a guaranteed success. As confirmed on the interview's preliminary results, the credibility and creativity of the Instagram posts might be more important to take into account, rather than the audience size.

6.3 Limitations

Despite the theoretical contributions of the present research and the managerial implications it provides, there are some limitations that must be considered. Firstly, concerning the in-depth interviews, the population size and gender is relatively restricted, since only covers 30 female participants. Therefore, to consider a representative part of the population and to allow easier generalizations of the results, a larger number of participants, including those of the male gender, must be considered as well. Besides that, other external aspects were not considered in the interviews, such as culture, education level, social class or incomes.

Also, in the Netnography analysis, only 5 influencers' Instagram comments were considered during a specific period of time. In order to provide more reliable and consistent insights, an extended research period is necessary, as well as a larger number of digital influencers analyzed.

6.4 Future Research

Future Research should also be deliberated. The number of participants and the number of comments extracted are not large enough to have an accurate result. Therefore, in the future, the sample magnitude should be superior (more participants on in-depth interviews and more comments in netnography analysis). Also, the impact of Instagram influencer's posts in male gender only or with the two genders simultaneously can be analyzed, in order to compare the different behaviors of both. This way the study could be deeper and more interesting in terms of content.

Another improvement for a future study could be the expansion to other social networks, such as Facebook, Youtube, LinkedIn, etc. The difference on interactions among the various online platform could be a very insightful study.

Furthermore, considering netnography analysis, forthcoming studies should invest on longitudinal analysis in order to do the comparison of the results on a longer period of time and to analyze the evolution of consumers' interactions towards influencer's posts on Instagram. Likewise, this netnography analysis was performed by using a specific text mining tool (exportcomments.com) and a Sentiment Analysis program (Meaning Cloud). Therefore, it

might be interesting to analyze the same data on different platforms, comparing the insights and testing the reliability of the tools.

Additionally, future authors could focus in the post-purchase behavior of the consumers when purchasing due to an online post, in order to understand if the product/service of a certain brand met their expectations.

Lastly, in order to achieve more consistent and reliable insights, netnography analysis could cover international influencers, since the job of digital influencer/content creator is taken more seriously in other countries.

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