

EXPLORING INDIVIDUALS PERCEPTION OF NON-
SPONSORED BRANDED USER GENERATED CONTENT, THE
EFFECT ON ITS USE AND THE OUTCOME OF DIGITAL
ENGAGEMENT ON INSTAGRAM

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“If we knew what it was we were doing,
it would not be called research, would it?”

Albert Einstein

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Resumo

Com a ascensão da importância das redes sociais veio o crescimento do utilizador e do seu papel no mercado. Os utilizadores tornam-se atores, conselheiros, críticos, defensores e revelam a sua verdadeira voz. Este estudo propõe examinar o papel do user generated content (UGC) e a sua influência na rede social, Instagram. Com base na literatura existente, esta pesquisa propõe uma conexão entre três dimensões, o valor, o uso e o do user generated content e o seu compromisso digital na rede social, Instagram. Mais especificamente, o modelo proposto estabelece que dependendo do valor que cada indivíduo atribui ao conteúdo não patrocinado gerado pelos utilizadores (UGC) levará a diferentes tipos de utilização. Estas formas de utilização de conteúdo poderão levar a dois possíveis efeitos de compromisso digital no Instagram. Usando os dados das 402 respostas obtidas, o modelo foi testado usando PLS-SEM e conclusões foram retiradas. Todas as hipóteses testadas foram validadas e os resultados confirmam a existência de uma conexão positiva entre as três dimensões, valor, uso e compromisso digital. Consequentemente os resultados revelam, também, que as relações mais significativas ocorrem entre o valor social do UGC e a contribuição para esse conteúdo, seguido pelo o valor funcional do UGC e o subsequente consumo desse conteúdo. No final da pesquisa, é proposta uma justificação para os resultados alcançados e são deliberadas as possíveis futuras investigações neste assunto.

Palavras-chave: conteúdo gerado pelos usuários; social media; Instagram; valor do conteúdo gerado pelos usuários; utilização do conteúdo gerado pelos usuários; compromisso digital; comunidade

JEL Classification System:

M3 – Marketing and Advertising

M31 - Marketing

M39 – Other

Abstract

With the rise of social media importance came the rise of the user and its role in the market. Users become actors, advisors, critiques, advocates and they reveal their non-sponsored branded voice. This study proposes an examination of the User Generated Content (UGC) and its influence on the social media platform Instagram. Regarding the existent literature, this research suggests a connection between three dimensions, value, use and digital engagement on social media platform, Instagram. More specifically, the proposed model established that depending on the value each individual attributes to non-sponsored branded UGC, it will lead to different types of usages. These types of use will then lead to two possible digital outcomes on Instagram. Using the data gathered from the 402 responses, the model was tested using PLS-SEM and conclusions were drawn. All the hypothesis tested were validated and results confirmed that there is a positive connection between all three dimensions, UGC value, UGC use and digital engagement. Consequently, results also indicated that the most significant relationship is between the social value of non-sponsored branded UGC and UGC contribution, followed by the functional value of non-sponsored branded UGC and UGC consumption. In the end of the research, the meaning of the findings and the future possible research were deliberated.

Keywords: User generated content; Social Media; Instagram; UGC Value; UGC Use; Digital Engagement; Community; Engagement

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1. Introduction

With the technological advances, social media became a constant feature in today's society. Nowadays it is impossible not to use Instagram or Facebook or even YouTube during the 24 hours in a day. All of these social media platforms allow users to communicate, share content, discover new products and it builds a habit relationship with them. Because of that, social media platforms become dissemination vehicles where everyone has a voice and a higher capacity to achieve a greater audience. As a result, the concept of user generated content (UGC) was born and started to be discussed.

In Marketing literature, UGC is just starting to be observed and explored. There is clear gap in the literature regarding the possible effects of UGC, its value perceptions and even a well-defined designation globally approved. These are relevant issues which need to be addressed since UGC is now perceived as a necessary notion to comprehend and to investigate. UGC can assume many shapes (images, video, comments) and have multiple meanings, therefore it can lead to significant consequences. It can be divided in two categories, sponsored-branded UGC and non-sponsored branded UGC. Just like the names indicate, the first suggests a type of content that is created by individuals who are paid to do so and the second reflects a scenario where individuals don't possess any incentive but they still create, consume and/or contribute to the content. This research will focus on the second category of UGC and will examine this type of content on the social media platform Instagram. Instagram is a rich UGC platform that prides itself on being community oriented and the creator of many UGC trends. Furthermore, this research starts by gathering and revising the existent literature and proposes three questions, "How is non-sponsored branded UGC valued on Instagram?", "How does the value of non-sponsored branded UGC influence its use on Instagram?" and "How does the use of non-sponsored branded UGC affect digital engagement on Instagram?". In order to successfully answer these questions a model was developed and seven hypotheses were tested.

The current research is divided in four parts. First, the literature review will present an introduction to the theme, reveal three possible UGC antecedents and provide a clear examination of each dimension and its specific constructs in order to explain how the model was formulated and the hypothesis created. Second, the methodology will demonstrate how the questionnaire was created and how the data was gathered and what procedures were used to analyse that data. Third, the results and their analysis will be exhibited. Fourth, the conclusions will be presented as well as the limitations encountered and the possible future direction of this research.

2. Literature Review

“The social Web represents a paradigm shift in marketing communications—indeed, communication as a whole” (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012: 53). The internet is a continuously growing substance that allows everyone to be instantly connected. When the Internet evolved from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, it opened many doors for the emergence of opportunities related to business, creativity and engagement. Web 2.0 comprises elements of affordability, fastness, capability, dynamic gadgets and portability which allowed the expansion of the participatory culture. In the past, marketing activities reflected public relationships, reward programs and direct marketing which portrayed the consumer as mere receivers of those activities and the companies as the holders of the brand expansion mechanism. Nowadays, the process has changed. Consumers are now seen as co-creators of brand messages that can generate viral effects (Jahn & Kunz, 2012).

Kozinets (1999) referred to the rise of Internet platforms as e-tribes and underlined the importance of no boundaries regarding time and space as a main element to connecting different people in different places. Individuals are able to create, participate and share content as opposed to just consume what is developed by organisations. Admittedly, the growth of Web 2.0 led to the development of a user driven, participatory world in which millions of common individuals produce and publish their own content, creating a new phenomenon, the user-generated content. The Interactive Advertising Bureau in the United States (2008) describes it as “any material created and uploaded to the Internet by non-media professionals.” UGC can have many shapes, including audio, picture, video and text, which can be posted across a variety of media platforms, including social media. In fact, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) described UGC as “the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social Media.” Throughout the years, social media platforms have increased their popularity as well as their importance. Nielsen (2016) reports that adults (18+) spend 25:07 hours on all media on a weekly basis. Nowadays, Facebook isn’t just a platform to find and reach your friends, YouTube isn’t just a space for funny cat videos and Instagram isn’t just used to apply pretty filters to newly captured photos. Each one of these virtual spaces has found its commercial and economic value.

Llodra –Riera et al. (2015) demonstrated that the various Internet platforms generate various effects on individuals. This has empowered a lot of new sources of information in many subjects. However, while organisations have increased their value and space in the online world, individuals have also become more active and with greater capacity to communicate with each

other, and with organisations. Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) propose that individuals and firms eliminate the firm-centric view of value creation and replace it with the co-creation perspective. It is possible to infer that Web 2.0 was able to shift the paradigm of power between consumers and organisations on account of being more accessible, user centred and active. Consequently, consumers became more empowered with such tool and developed a new facet, they became actors. Actors who question the policies of the organisations, its credibility, its values and if they are not happy with what they uncover, they move on to the next company (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Furthermore, these elements led to the spread of user generated content or consumer created content and made it an everyday action.

The next section proposes three antecedent concepts of UGC, prosumption, co-creation of experiences and working consumers.

2.1. User Generated Content Antecedents

2.1.1. “Prosumption”

The concept of UGC started to arise in 2005 and has since then been the focus of some research. Nevertheless, its origin goes back to 1980 when Alvin Toffler developed the idea of Prosumer. Toffler’s futuristic thinking allowed him to design a concept in which people generated their own goods and services, giving less attention to the marketplace. The author separates production and consumption into three waves described in history.

The First wave regards agriculture as the leading activity and the majority of the individuals are prosumers. The Second wave refers to the Industrial Revolution Era in which most work was made in factories, meaning that most individuals didn’t create anything by them and for them. This encouraged individuals to become more consumers than producers and the high job specialisation made them incapable to perform other tasks well. Lastly, the Third wave is where there is a clear shift into the producer-consumer paradigm and individualisation is relevant. The author presents six reasons for this transformation, namely, higher education, the increase in the cost of skilled labour (plumbers, painters, etc.), the need for physical activity (since most jobs are done sitting at a desk in front of a computer), the idea that the products available in the market are lacking quality, etc. The significance of this research is proven by today’s society where the “do it yourself” (DIY) philosophy is quite valued. Kotler’s (1986) take on “prosumption” is that it might reflect some Marketing challenges, since it can affect the 4 P’s of the Marketing Mix. Kotler predicted that consumers would be more involved in the

design and production stages, goods and services would have lower prices, retail would be dispersed and decentralised and promotion would have to be more individualised and segmented. Today, it is possible to observe most of these features since certain brands allow you to personalise and customise their products (ex: Nike). Given the big range of products in some sectors, prices are lower and certain markets are so segmented that they identify an individual's problem and aim at solving it. These streams of prosumption and the development of Web 2.0 have gathered the elements required to expand user generated content. Nowadays, fixing a plumbing problem can be taught on YouTube, learning can be done through the Internet with online courses, cooking can be improved by simple online tips, blog posts tell individuals what's hot and what's not, pictures express the beauty of different locations, etc. All this content can be created by users and directed to other users, thus showing the importance of this concept today.

“UGC is changing the character of open society by enabling the production, distribution, and sales of content, rebirthing users as “prosumers” who perform active roles in content production, and creating an era of one-person-media” (Kim *et al.*, 2012: 306). The expansion of prosumption and Web 2.0 led to the development of the participatory culture as well as the participative web, since both concepts are interconnected and co-dependent.

Participatory culture can be defined as “a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices (...) is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2006: 3). Whereas participative web is described as “based on an Internet increasingly influenced by intelligent web services that empower the user to contribute to developing, rating, collaborating on and distributing Internet content and customising Internet applications” (OECD, 2007: 4). These two notions not only provided an understanding of UGC, but also displayed the elements that shape it and the characteristics that drive it. Both authors focus on elements of sociability and connection with others, creativity exposure and digital enhancement.

2.1.2. Co-creation of experiences

In 2004, Prahalad and Ramaswamy delved into an emerging concept in the market, the firm-consumer interaction. They proposed a renovation of the traditional method of communication in which the market was separated from the value creation. This method was

being questioned by communities of linked, knowledgeable, legitimate and progressive individuals who had certain expectations for the market and the organisations that composed it. The authors introduce the notion of co-creating experiences whereby consumers and firms interact and produce value to the market. The idea is that the more engaged the individuals are, the more involved they become with the organisations and the more value can be extracted. This notion is structured around four imperative factors that enable the existence of co-experiences, the DART (Dialogue, access, risk-benefits and transparency). Dialogue is one step towards commitment, interactivity and joint decisions, however, it can't be practised if there isn't a similar level of access and transparency for both parties. Traditionally, the organisations always had more information and were always very opaque. Nevertheless, the advent of Web 2.0 made it possible for individuals to be more connected and more informed, contributing to a bigger access to the organisation's information and increasing their transparency. These factors contribute to a greater understanding of the potential risks-benefits consumers might face and create a more informed and rational decision. In sum, the co-creation of experiences led to a regular dialogue between consumers and organisations as well as consumers to consumers, facilitating the creation of communities and re-shaping relationships.

The co-creation outcomes result from particular brand engagement platforms combined with a specific environment that will potentiate those experiences. These platforms are components of the brands capability ecosystem and they enhance value creation. Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2016) propose Nike as an illustrative example and display a thorough analysis on the matter. "Through a digitalized brand engagement platform, NikeID, the Nike enterprise has now opened up the creative design of the shoe to customers and enthusiasts" (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016: 101). This initiative enhanced the engagement and the commitment to the brand as it allowed individuals to further personalise their shoes, from the colour to the style, to the fabric, etc. Nike has also developed other platforms that drive community interactivity, social media content sharing (partnership with Instagram for Nike PHOTOiD in 2013), accessible data connections and self-improvements, but more than that, it has empowered individuals to share their experiences with the products and the brand. This Nike example highlights Füller (2010) claims that the innovation of virtual co-creation is intensified by the individual's ability to share their creativity and problem solving talents. The author develops his research based on the three elements that compose the concept of interaction such as, the content, the process and the people and connects it to the individual's personal characteristics and their motives to produce. The basis of the co-creation argument is that, by interacting with each other, all the parties engaged

will gain a more profound knowledge of each side and facilitate the creation of more original and improved experiences (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010).

2.1.3. Working Consumers

Within this line of research, Cova and Dalli (2009) introduced the idea of working consumers as the next step in marketing theory. Their work depicts consumers not entirely as producers because they don't receive any profit from the market but as participants in the value creation process. "Working consumer concept as a way of describing both the sociocultural and the socioeconomic dimensions of contemporary consumers' new role" (Cova and Dalli, 2009: 316). With the emergence of technology, the increasing will to participate and the individual's creative skills, there is a clear convergence towards Generation C (the C stands for content) and the growth of user generated content. UGC develops into an equivalent competitor to traditional media, entertainment, news and craft. Moreover, many compare UGC to eWOM, however, research indicates that the concepts are different. In UGC, the content is produced, as opposed to eWOM in which the content is transmitted. UGC can relate more to entertainment and creativity, while eWOM generally refers more to recommendations and advices. Nonetheless, both of these practices reflect brands and consumers, have no commercial goals and are not regulated by companies (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

2.2. User Generated Content

Munar describes UGC as "the information that is digitalized, uploaded by the users and made available through the internet" (Munar, 2011: 292). UGC is considered a new form of consumer engagement and a new instrument in which consumers express their individuality to others, as well as, interact with each other. "It is what is produced in the moment of being social, as well as the object around which sociality occurs" (Smith *et al.*, 2012). The creation of UGC content can be an individual work or a group work and UGC can be altered, shared and consumed by many. Due to the rise of Web 2.0, UGC has evolved faster and is now seen as a tool of consumer insights and brand dialogues. Despite its developments, it is still a rather new concept, therefore, there isn't an accepted universal definition (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016; Malthouse *et al.*, 2016).

In the UGC predicament, Burmann (2010) reveals that there are two main approaches: the sponsored vs. the non-sponsored branded UGC. UGC mostly refers to branded related content that can either be created because marketers and brand managers stimulated it (e.g.

contests, voting, games, etc.) or because individuals naturally and without any agenda decide to create content. Daughtery *et al.*, (2008) revealed that individuals who engage with UGC are more prone to share opinions about brands and products and also to act as brand advocates. This can be well observed in social media, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube where there is an apparent line of sponsored vs. non-sponsored content. Christodoulides *et al.*, (2012) characterise non-sponsored brand related UGC as a concept composed by co-creation, empowerment, community and self-concept. These four factors constitute an incentive to create and disseminate UGC. Their research involves connecting these components of UGC to the construct of involvement which will then relate to brand equity. Results show that the stronger the brand equity, the bigger and more positive are the effects of co-creation, empowerment and community. Nevertheless, its research and potential effects are rather small and demanding more investigation.

OECD (2007) classify UGC as the “rise of the amateur creator” and place the notion as one of the major elements in the participative web. The authors introduce three key concepts to define UGC, such as publication requirement, creative effort and creation outside of professional routines. It has four main drivers: the technological, social, economic and institutional/legal, which powers UGC and allows it to be stimulating, interesting and current. Stoeckl *et al.*, (2007) also provided three main characteristics to describe UGC, which is the fact that consumers are now producers, the creation originates without immediate profit and it is mass media oriented. According to Valcke and Lenaerts (2010), because UGC involves using, participating and sharing, it has created a form of collective intelligence with positive and negative outcomes described in the table below.

Table 1 - The outcomes of User Generated Content

Positive Outcomes	Negative Outcomes
Better understanding and cooperation between people and organisations;	Bigger opportunities for hate speech, privacy invasions;
Important role in the democratisation of the news process, it provides different and additional sources of information;	Intellectual property infringements, defamation;
Control of mainstream media;	Pornography and child pornography and other undesirable content such as suicide websites and newsgroups;

Facilitates social networking;	Websites encouraging eating disorders such as anorexia, violent or shocking images or insults to religious groups.
Benefits user autonomy;	
Encourages cultural diversity.	

Source: Valcke and Lenaerts (2010)

Although it displays quite a bit of negative outcomes, the positive outcomes are also quite promising and beneficial. As a result, organisations are taking advantage of this new form of communication and using it in their favour, not only to promote products and services but also to communicate with their consumers by creating a dialogue (creating value together). Therefore, an extensive range of UGC forms has been originated and shared in diverse sites leading to its rapid increase. Research shows that given the fact that anyone can be a content creator, sometimes that content can be perceived as more trustworthy as opposed to the one manufactured by organisations (Kardon, 2007). Christodoulides *et al.*, (2012) also found that UGC can be distinguished as more trustworthy than traditional media which makes it a worthy adversary. Papathanassis and Knolle (2011) offer a possible explanation for this situation, while marketing departments have the tendency to cover negative features, real people will give real and meaningful opinions and reviews. Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) investigation showed that while UGC has the ability to positively influence brand equity and brand attitude, firm-created content can only positively affect brand attitude.

Ghose and Ipeiritis (2009) revealed that UGC has a great deal of economic value because it influences the organisations' pricing power and it helps individuals deal with uncertainty avoidance. They indicate that while consumers might struggle with the perception of quality of a given product, UGC may help shape that perception and turn into a potential purchase. Their results even showed that UGC in the form of reviews with an indifferent connotation can boost sales within the group of risk averse consumers. The explanation goes along the lines that more "real" information is better than less information. Williams *et al.*, (2010) corroborate the existence of negative UGC and describe it as necessary to assist individuals in their product choice and reveal its authenticity.

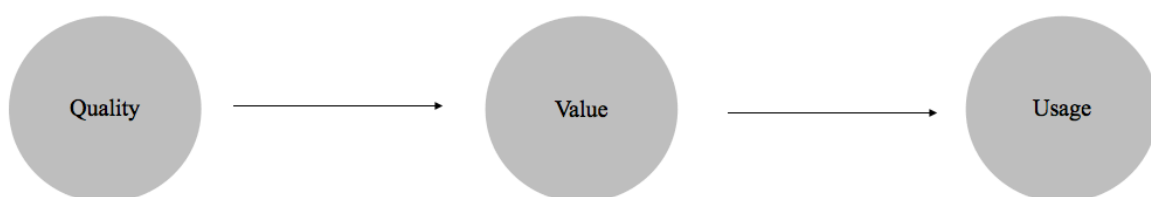
Bernoof and Li (2008) explain the UGC popularity rise by discussing the elements of "listening," "energising," "talking," "supporting" and "managing" as opposed to "research" and "sales" inside organisations. They claim UGC as being infectious to both sides, users will want

to keep doing it and companies will want/will have to keep dealing with it. The authors also detail fundamental advices to deal with UGC, like accepting the lack of control, internal challenges, focusing on the culture and values of the company and expanding objectives. As a consequence, UGC is increasingly being incorporated into organisations' business and marketing plans since most companies have an online presence. Because of that, the quality of UGC has been growing in form and expectations (Valcke & Lenaerts, 2010).

Sun's study (2010) demonstrated that system quality, service quality and information quality influence relationship quality which will reflect positively for the business, more specifically, customer commitment and retention. In addition, Li and Lin (2009) appealed to the significance of content quality by concluding that the higher the quality, the higher the value. UGC is seen as a new form of co-creating value between individuals and organisations which in turn establishes mutual benefits for both parties. Gangi and Wasko (2009) suggest a socio-technical theory to explain UGC attitude and involvement and denote that by using social communications and technical features together, it creates a positive experience that will generate engagement. The authors infer that the more UGC is used, the more value both sides convey to it and the more they acknowledge its benefits "The more users engage, the more valuable the UGC (...)" (Gangi & Wasko, 2009).

Taking into consideration these researches, Kim *et al.*, (2012) proposed a model in which it connects the three main features of UGC, quality, value and use since there is a lack of research on the matter (Ghose & Ipeiritis, 2009; Shim & Lee, 2009; Williams *et al.*, 2010). Given the fact that UGC is rapidly expanding as well as the possible platforms for its application, it is pertinent to comprehend such concept and verify its adaptability to different scenarios. The framework the authors propose is represented below:

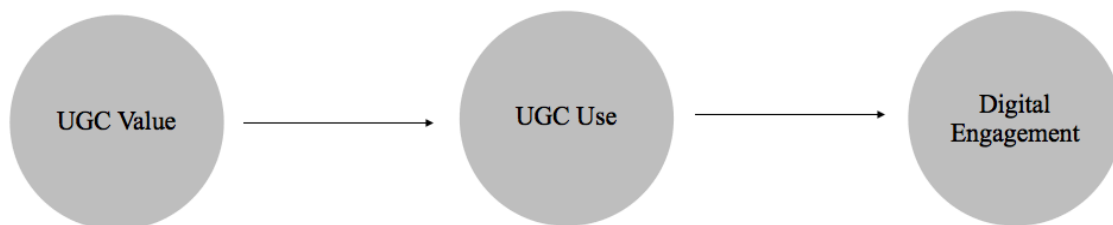
Figure 1 - User perception of the quality, value, and utility of user-generated content research framework



Source: Kim *et al.*, (2012)

The research model tries to relate the three central concepts of UGC and establishes a positive connection. Namely, UGC quality will positively influence UGC value which will positively influence UGC usage. Each element incorporates an X number of components in order to better explain the concept. More specifically, UGC quality includes: content quality, design quality and technology quality, *UGC value* incorporates *functional value, emotional value* and *social value* and lastly, **UGC usage** encompasses **utility**. Based on this research model, this thesis proposes an extension and perhaps a complement to the actual model. By maintaining the two original constructs and adding a few extras, the model will represent a take on the individuals' perceptions of non-sponsored brand-related UGC and its impact on engagement and community.

Figure 2 – Initial Proposed Framework



As seen above, UGC is a result of three essential phenomena: prosumption, co-creation of experiences and working consumers combined with the power and development of the new technologies. This combination has made UGC a new concept but also a natural one. Individuals are used to create content and share it with their family and friends, the Web 2.0 has only potentiated and augmented this transaction.

The next section will analyse the existing literature of each dimension, construct and further deepen the research context. In order to provide a greater understanding of the model, the constructs of UGC quality is still approached however it will not be included in the final framework.

2.3. Dimensions

2.3.1. UGC Quality

Nowadays it is difficult to imagine a world without a Facebook post or a YouTube product-review video, nevertheless, these are rather new media that have promptly become a part of our daily lives. According to Gangi and Wasko (2009), “UGC websites are online environments where users contribute, retrieve, and explore UGC from the organization and fellow users” (Gangi & Wasko, 2009: 1). This translates into an abundance of applications available, accessible social media platforms, increasing digital content contribution and expanding creativity hubs. All the content that is digitally created has three main components associated: content, design and technology. Since there is no doubt that UGC is a digital form of creating content that can be distributed in many formats and online spaces (OECD, 2007) it can be connected to the same components. In turn, these components show a probable connection with one another as well as a clear difference from each other. Generally speaking, content is different from design, design is different from technology and technology is different from content.

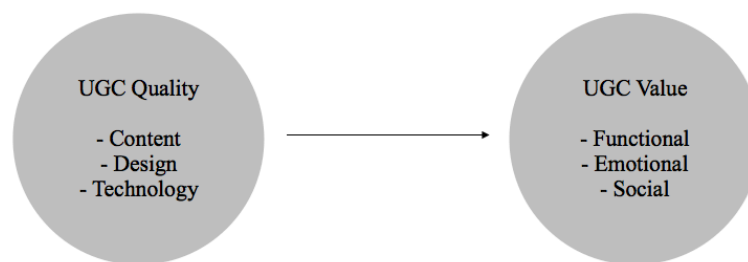
Huizingh (2000) introduces content as the knowledge and the elements displayed (commercial vs. non-commercial information, transaction and entertainment), while design is the framework in which the content appears (navigation structure, search function, protected content, quality, image and presentation style). Kim *et al.*, (2012) view technology as the vehicle that supports content and design and place these three components as the main factors of UGC quality. To slightly deepen the matter of quality, there will be a short description of each component.

The content of UGC is composed by audio, video, text and images (Kim *et al.*, 2012; Valcke & Lenaerts, 2010; OECD, 2007) and arises from two possible streams, creativity and information processing (Feijóo *et al.*, 2007). For instance, Instagram allows users to take a pictures, customise the images and share it on the platform, “Amateur” videos are uploaded every day to YouTube and seen by millions, textual reviews of restaurants and/or hotels are published on different websites to help individuals narrow their choice (e.g. TripAdvisor, Zomato) and, today, creating audio and broadcasting is easier with UGC pages such as SoundCloud and podcasts. To sum up, creating, participating, sharing and interacting with the content that is accessible can add value to that content itself as well as increase the quality of UGC which will in turn increase its success and use (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Dye, 2011).

While the content can be seen as the “what” of UGC, design is the “how”. Design encompasses the structure in which the content is shaped and accessible to all the users. It also allows the consolidation and compatibility of the content components (audio, text, sound and images) (Huizingh, 2000; Kim *et al.*, 2012). UGC design differs from one platform to another akin to the elements of each one. In 2012, Smith *et al.*, (2012) conducted a research on brand related UGC and focused on understanding how UGC varies through the different platforms (Facebook, YouTube and Twitter). The research showed that both content and design were altered to the specifications and the purpose of the sites. To this conclusion, it can be added that the outcome of quality will depend on the chosen design (Huizingh, 2000; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Ma *et al.*, 2009).

To conclude, technology is the “where” of UGC, it is what embraces the formats of UGC and distributes it to everyone, everywhere. All of the digital, blogs, mobile photography, social media, wikis, etc., exist because of the development of technology (Bernoff & Li, 2008; Lai & Turban 2008). Consequently, UGC technologies help to enhance quality but also to create value towards UGC.

Figure 3 - UGC Quality influences UGC Value



2.3.2. UGC Value

There is a vast theory behind the concept of value that can be applied in many scientific fields, such as Economics, Marketing, Philosophy, Politics, Sociology, etc. The concept of perceived value lies on the variation between the advantages and disadvantages of an offering. The offering can become better by adding extra layers of value such as, functional, emotional and social (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Furthermore, the type of value referred in this research

focuses on the importance individuals attribute to UGC and the understanding of that influence. This dimension supports three main constructs that will reflect its meaning. More specifically, these dimensions reflect how the majority of individuals' value non-sponsored branded UGC on social media and if that value can lead to usability. In co-creation literature, value can enhance use (Vargo *et al.*, 2008), this statement can also be made in everyday life, because when a person values a certain brand and/or product she/he will be more inclined to use it.

According to authors Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) the concept of value can be subdivided into five types, functional, conditional, social, emotional and epistemic. A choice or/and an opinion might reflect one value alone or all the possible values together. "For example, a consumer may decide to purchase gold coins as an inflation hedge (functional value), and also realise a sense of security (emotional value) from the investment" (Sheth *et al.*, 1991: 163). For the purpose of this research, only three values will be considered: the functional, emotional and social, following on Kim's *et al.*, (2012) analysis. The table below is meant to deliver an open view of each value, as well as the connection to UGC. This will provide a greater understanding of the constructs, as well as the dimension it is representing.

Table 2 - Types of Value

Types of Value (Sheth et al, 1991)	Types of UGC Value (Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2012)
Functional value is based on the scope of functionality, utilitarianism and physical performance;	UGC functional value is based on the fact that it is accessible, convenient and can enhance the quality of the product and/or service;
Emotional value is achieved when it arises feelings, affective states and satisfaction;	UGC emotional value is connected to the positive and/or negative feelings and level of satisfaction individuals get when they consume either a type of media or goods/services;
Social value is related to positive or negative demographic, social, economic and cultural-ethnic stereotypes. It is about reflecting the "correct" social image as well as the "correct" social ethics;	UGC social values outlooks individuals as social beings with eagerness to connect and maintain relationships but also to identify and demonstrate their social status;

Source : Sheth *et al.*, (1991) and Kim *et al.*, (2012)

Functional value is defined as: “the perceived utility of an alternative resulting from its inherent and attribute-or characteristic-based ability to perform its functional, utilitarian, or physical purposes” (Smith & Colgate, 2007: 8). The functional constructs can have several elements associated that depend on the context. Woodruff (1997) propose three types of functional value, (a) functional value for aesthetics, quality, customisation or creativity, (b) reliability, performance quality, or service-support outcomes and (c) strategic value, effectiveness, operational benefits and environment benefits. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) suggested the creation of two sub dimensions to the functional construct, price/value for money and performance/quality. This was the product of the development of a 19-item measure (PERVAL) that can be used to understand the consumers’ idea of value. There is a significant amount of research on value in different types of scenarios, however, there is a common denominator, most of that research focuses on value resulting from the purchase and use of durable products (Smith and Colgate, 2007). Nonetheless, these streams of research help to shape the methodological path of each construct and dimension.

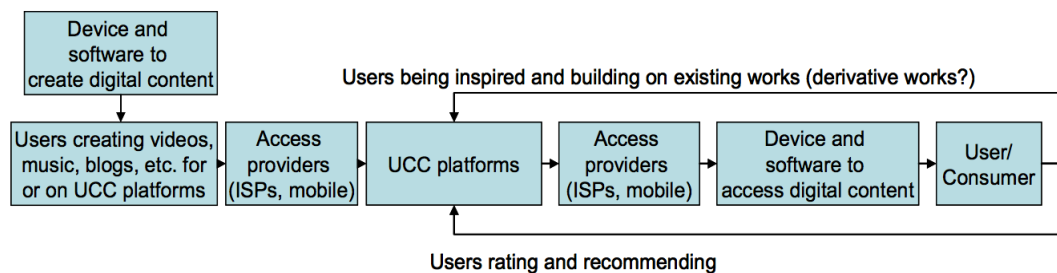
Regarding the emotional value, it can be stated that, “(...) represents the perceived utility acquired by an alternative as a result of its ability to arouse or perpetuate feelings or affective states, such as comfort, security, excitement, romance, passion, fear or guilt” (Smith & Colgate, 2007: 8). According to Sheth *et al.*, (1991), Sweeney and Soutar (2001), the emotional element demonstrates the individual’s affective response to the service. This response changes according to the environment and the outlines presented acknowledging that it’s not just rationality and cognition in the mix. For example, entertainment and travel industries will more likely play with the feeling of fun, pleasure, enjoyment, humour and adventure (Smith & Colgate, 2007). The emotion captured and perceived demonstrates a more compelling and memorable idea and the satisfaction and/or delight help shape an emotional bond (Kotler & Keller, 2012). When it comes to creating content on the Web, the same type of outcomes can arise, since online content can be depicted as entertaining, informational, cultural, etc., which means that it can also trigger emotional feelings.

Lastly, the social value is described as “the perceived utility of an alternative resulting from its image and symbolism in association or disassociation with demographic, socioeconomic and cultural-ethnic referent groups” (Smith & Colgate, 2007: 8). This means that social value represents the utility obtained from the product’s capability to improve self-concept (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). In other words, social value is about how an individual can be perceived but also about the social-relations it can develop. Many companies, toy brands,

service organisations and even business-to-business organisations rely on the social-relationship dynamic to create value (Smith & Colgate, 2007).

OECD (2007) adds a more detailed perspective on the value format and state particular stimulus factors for creating UGC which in turn develops its value. The factors go along the line of connecting with peers, notoriety/prestige, reaching a level of fame (all socially valuable), expressing one’s self (emotionally valuable) and lastly, financial reward (functionally valuable). The authors also infer on UGC’s value chain and compared it to the traditional media chain. As opposed to the traditional difficulties that creators have to deal with (meeting the right person at the right time), in user centric chain it is much easier to push the content throughout the channel. The process consists in accessing a device and software to create the digital content (video, audio, images or text), connect to the providers that will link to the designated UGC platform and then the consumer/user will reach the content. Such individuals can then rate the content, recommend to others and be inspired to also create and develop. Once again, this can be largely associated with the idea of prosumers as consumers are now assuming the role of producers and inserted into the chain of media development and diffusion (Stoeckl *et al.*, 2007). The figure below exemplifies the UGC process.

Figure 4 - Original Internet value-chain for User Generated Content



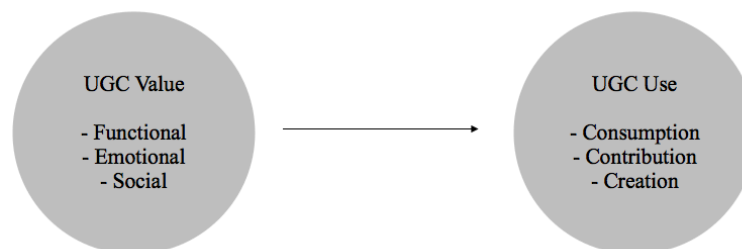
Source: OECD (2007: 22)

Moreover, focusing specifically on content and UGC literature, the functional value lies on characteristics of flexibility of pushing the content to others, authenticity, security and privacy (Jensen *et al.*, 2008), convenience, availability and ease of use (OECD, 2007, Ryu *et al.*, 2010, Harrison 2010, Kim *et al.*, 2012). De Vries and Carlson, J. (2014), refer to the content’s functional value as practical, useful, helpful and functional. The authors propose that if individuals value the content in those terms, then the functional aspect is confirmed and the usage will be higher. This logic reflects the research of Jahn and Kunz (2012) that identified a positive relationship between functional value and usage intensity. Emotional value regards to the feeling and emotion that a content can create. Watching an YouTube video can lead to

enjoyment and fun, reading an online review about a product can create expectations and a Facebook post can be deemed interesting (OECD, 2007; Shao, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2012). De Vries and Carlson, J. (2014) acknowledge this emotional value as a hedonic value and state that in order to satisfy it individuals need to find the content entertaining, fun and exciting. By valuing the content in an emotional way, individuals will use it more strongly and often (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). The social value reflects human behaviour in which one interacts with another to respond to social needs and to create and maintain a social status therefore it is often associated with communities and knowledge sharing (Nov, 2007; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, it has been discussed that the social value of new media can push for higher levels of adoption and usage (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010).

The more UGC evolves, the more it will be utilised and shared, nonetheless, its value won't depend on the quantity of creations but the quality of them (Nov & Ye, 2009). Additionally, such value will be reflected by use and eventful benefits that emerge from it.

Figure 5 - UGC Value influences UGC Use



2.3.3. UGC Use

Usage theories

UGC use can be seen as a new perspective in the spectrum of user generated content. This dimension focuses on dividing and explaining UGC into three possible constructs providing a more complex approach to the concept. The development of mass media and technologic instruments has led to the appearance of many new beliefs as well as new uses and purposes. Liang *et al.*, (2007) address the issue by exploring three main theories (information

overload, user involvement and uses and gratifications theory) and connecting them to the creation of personalised content recommendation and user satisfaction.

Information overload is a consequence of today's society and its exposure to too much data. The theory is based around the idea that because individuals are in contact with so many sources of info their capacity to acknowledge and understand it reduces. The authors argue that user satisfaction will be higher when information load decreases through precise personalised content recommendation.

Secondly, user involvement theory regards the fact that user's satisfaction will be higher if the user has explicit involvement in the making.

Lastly, the uses and gratifications theory (U&G) submitted by Katz (1959) which has been seen as valuable to explain the pertinence of new media, such as, online communities, blogs, internet and social networking (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). The theory states that media audiences access information depending on their intentions and they are actively selective of the content and media they choose to access. The theory suggests an understanding to why individuals use a certain media (motivation/purpose of use), how individuals take advantage of the media to gratify their needs and the positive and negative outcomes of that media use (Katz *et al.*, 1973). This research focus on the purpose of the media use and the outcomes that arise from it. According to Cutler and Danowski (1980), the theory can be divided into two dominant streams, content gratifications and process gratifications. Content gratifications regard the importance individuals assign to the information contained in the media message while process gratifications refer to the experience individuals gain from using certain media. Two of the most important prepositions of the U&G theory are that the individuals are active and they are goal oriented, which means they intentionally search for the most appropriate media to resolve their problem (Chen, 2011).

Ko (2000) denotes that because online communication functions differently from the conventional sender-receiver model, the uses and gratifications theory becomes more applicable and pertinent. Leung (2009) also examined the gratifications of generating content online in which it was based on the uses and gratification theory. His researched follow the line that the more users value and find UGC gratifying, the more they will engage with it. Chen (2011) justifies the use of the theory considering that it explains how individuals pursue a computer mediated medium to gratify a psychological need. The theory also advocates that individuals will select from a diverse choice of media use, which means that if they choose one specifically and stick with it, that media must be satisfying their needs. Thus the choice of media use will be based on what value the media can deliver to each individual (Kim *et al.*, 2012).

This dimension is, therefore, conceptualised on the uses and gratification theory and it is meant to reflect the purpose of non-sponsored branded UGC on social media. Shao (2009) defends that individuals use UGC through UGM (user-generated media) in a variety of ways for diverse ends. Consequently, the author subdivides UGC use into three possible categories, consuming, participating and producing. Firstly, “Consuming refers to the individuals who only watch, read, or view but never participate” (Shao, 2009: 9). Thus, a consumer of UGC is a mere spectator of the media. Secondly, “Participating includes both user-to-user interaction and user-to-content interaction (...). It does not include one’s actual production” (Shao, 2009: 9). User-to-user interactions includes individuals communicating with each other through instant messaging, message boards, chat rooms, etc. User-to-content interactions happens when individuals rate certain contents, save to their favourites, post comments, share with others, etc. These interactions enhance cooperation between individuals as well as satisfy their social needs. In this line of thought, Van Dijk (2006) examined the contrast between traditional and online communications and came up with three main advantages to the latter:

1. users are able to offset the missing key elements in sounds, text, image or other;
2. users are able to aim their attention to the content more accurately;
3. users are able to engage in more casual dialogue and context.

Furthermore, it is important to reflect that in addition to developing social bonds, when individuals participate in UGC it might lead to the creation and conservation of virtual communities (Shao, 2009). Thirdly, “Producing encompasses creation and publication of one’s personal contents such as text, images, audio, and video” (Shao, 2009: 9). In 2016, over 1.8 billion photos were uploaded and shared by individuals on social media daily. Consequently, 350 million photos were uploaded daily just on Facebook, 80 million were posted on Instagram and 432,000 hours of video were shared on YouTube (Smith, 2016). There is a great deal of evidence that supports the premise that individuals are more and more using and taking advantage of UGC, nonetheless it is important to understand how they use it.

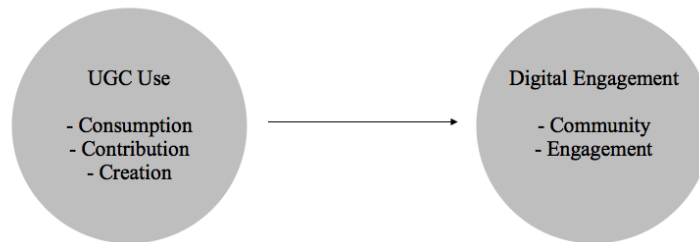
Having Shao’s (2009) research in mind, Muntiga *et al.*, (2011) developed a typology for the different possible usages called, COBRA. This is a behavioural approach that exemplifies the three different levels of activity related to branded-content on social media platforms. The investigation examined the online activities of twenty individuals through the process of instant messaging (IM) interviews which the authors felt it was a good method to express real feelings due to its anonymity properties. The study proposed three activity constructs, individuals can use social media platforms by consuming, contributing and creating, and each construct reflects a higher degree of activity. Much like Shao’s (2009) concept,

consuming via COBRA typology, means having the lowest degree of online brand-related activity. Therefore, consumption implies watching, viewing, reading, downloading branded widgets, playing branded games and sending virtual gifts. Contributing represents the intermediate stage of the COBRA typology which indicates user-to-user communication and user-to-content interplay. Finally, creating represents the highest degree of brand activity in which individuals produce and publish branded-content on social media. Muntiga *et al.*, (2011) provide a good example of these three degree of activities, “Watching brand-related videos on Absolut Vodka’s YouTube channel, talking about IKEA on Twitter and uploading pictures of their new Converse sneakers to Facebook are examples of consumers’ online brand-related activities (COBRAs)” (Muntiga *et al.*, 2011: 14).

Despite Muntiga’s *et al.*, (2011) extensive and innovative research, the authors didn’t formalise it, conceptualise it nor measure it therefore leaving room for improvement. Schivinski’s *et al.*, (2016) research tries to fill this gap in the academic literature and suggests the following interpretation: “A set of brand-related online activities on the part of the consumer that vary in the degree to which the consumer interacts with social media and engages in the consumption, contribution, and creation of media content” (Schivinski’s *et al.*, 2016: 66). The authors describe the constructs based on Muntiga’s *et al.*, (2011) and Shao’s (2009) researches which means that consumption represents the lowest degree of engagement and represents those who don’t participate, nevertheless, it is the most common activity. Contribution comprehends participation in the media without the creation of brand-related content. Lately, this construct has been more investigated by researchers because it contains the act of “Liking” and “Sharing” on social media. Subsequently, the creation construct includes creating and online posting branded-content. It symbolises the highest degree of individual engagement.

To conclude, the three types of usage are explanatorily different however they can be interdependent. Despite not being a generic rule, usually individuals start their connection with UGC as consumers or lurkers, mostly absorbing content of entertainment or news. Subsequently, once they get comfortable with that reality they start participating by communicating with other users and interacting with the content. This contribution will then allow individuals to connect with others and form communities based on their shared interests. Lastly, individuals become relaxed enough and comfortable to start creating content themselves. Hence, these three usages are a course of gradual improvement that may or may not happen depending on the private features of each individual (Shao, 2009; Muntiga *et al.*, 2011; Schivinski’s *et al.*, 2016).

Figure 6 - UGC Use influences Digital Engagement



2.3.4. Digital Engagement

Up until this point, the literature has revised the meaning and the possible antecedents of user generated content. It has proven that there are links between UGC quality, value and use as well as that its usage might facilitate social interactions. As a next step in the research, there is the analysis of the concept of digital engagement. Since UGC is a digital form of content it is possible to interpret its creation and interaction as digital engagement. Despite being a rather new topic of research it is quite pertinent in today's virtually connected world and even more relevant to organisations who invest on the digital field (Scheinbaum, 2016; Bolton, 2011). Therefore, digital engagement is approached as a dimension that encompasses two main constructs, community and engagement.

Scheinbaum (2016) revealed that prosperous branding demands engaging consumers on social media and digital settings. This engagement will then lead to community outcomes and individual's participation and connection with others who share the same interests. "From a consumer-centric standpoint, digital engagement is an online behaviour resulting from a consumer's thoughts, emotional connection, and intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with a brand or its community members in a digital, mobile, or social media setting" (Scheinbaum, 2016: 342). This interpretation of digital engagement reinforces three main ideas, a community and motivation notion, a multifaceted interpretation and essential behaviour intention.

The community part is viewed by the important research of Algesheimer *et al.*, (2005) who set out to explore how diverse conditions of the individuals' relationship with the brand

community will display different behaviours and attitudes. The authors learned that brand communities can arise not only positive outcomes (e.g. engagement) but also negative ones like the pressure to obey the community rules (normative pressure) and reluctance. Today, the idea of community is not limited to a physical place as it can be formed virtually through the Internet (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). This means that community reflects a group of people that share common interests and enjoy discussing it with others. Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) revealed that brand communities are set on three pillars, shared consciousness, rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility. Despite the fact that brand communities are not the particular focus of this research, it is still relevant to understand how these communities function since most of them are now digital communities.

In 2010, Kozinets *et al.*, (2010) asked how communities responded to community-oriented WOM. This is relevant because UGC is often compared to eWOM or said to be an evolution of eWOM however they are different (Cheong & Morrison, 2008). Kozinets *et al.*, (2010) review and synthesise WOM theory and acknowledge that its communities are moved by communal norms that will differ from size, interests, age, lifestyles, etc. The main conclusions are that communities are formed because of social interaction needs, economic stimulus and a demand to balance the basic commercial-communal concern. The authors identified four strategies of knowledge sharing, evolution, embracing, endorsement and explanation. These are methods in which individuals convert commercial information into cultural history. Von Hippel (2001) goes even further on the matter and discusses the concept of innovation communities in which individuals not only share their knowledge but also work together towards developing a new and innovative product. Despite appearing as a foolish idea, the incentives are real, for example, the cost of revealing an innovation are low (cost of diffusion and proprietary intellectual property), it allows the innovation to be exactly as consumers wish (“if you want something done right, do it yourself”) and the potential gains are huge. In line with this thought, Cova and Dalli (2009) argue that communities help cultivate consumer's power and capability. This power and capability can be “transformed” into UGC engagement. A great example of this, is the research of Muñiz and Schau (2007) who explore the concept of vigilante marketing in a brand community based on a discontinued Apple product. Although the product no longer existed, consumers who really loved the Apple Newton Message Pad still got together online and shared their appreciation. They created user content ads, started conversations, helped any new or in need member, told stories about their experience with it and overall allowed the product to live and provided it with extra meaning.

In this research the focus of community doesn't obey the typical brand community structures because it doesn't focus on a specific community, brand or product. The focus, however, is on the sense of community provided by a social media platform, Instagram. It refers to a community of individuals which are non-geographically bound that take advantage of UGC's usability not for a specific brand or product context but for a panoply of circumstances. The concept doesn't encompass the three main pillars of Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) discussed above, more specifically, there isn't a shared consciousness nor rituals and traditions. Instagram allows individuals a freedom to think and act in whatever way they choose to, which may or may not coincide with another individual's ideals but it isn't a normative. The third pillar revolves around moral responsibility which lies on the concepts of duty and obligation towards something and someone. The platform allows individuals the possibility of having a strong voice and expanding it to every corner of the globe, with that they become truth tellers and honesty exposures because they are not connected to a specific brand and/or product. As a result, the content shared on Instagram starts being seen as more trustworthy and reliable than actual ads created by organisations, which in turn make the community grow.

The multifaceted interpretation is analysed through Brodie *et al.*, (2011 & 2014) investigations where the authors infer on customer engagement dimensions. They state that nowadays, customer engagement is about co-creating customer experience and value, which is driven by the constant and increasing importance given by organisations and researchers. The 2011 research focuses on differentiating engagement from involvement and participation and in addition, the 2014 research centres on the conceptualisation of customer engagement and a scale development. Much like UGC, customer engagement is a dynamic concept that involves people, interaction and co-creations. Malthouse *et al.*, (2016) suggest a parallelism between engagement and UGC, as one is connected to the other. Logic follows that the greater the involvement between the brand, its values and the consumers, the bigger will be the experiences they derive from it. Hence, since engaging with non-sponsored branded UGC implies a form of consuming, contributing and creating, it reflects experiences and therefore, engagement.

Lastly, the behavioural intentions portrayed in the definition above, are reflected by Bolton (2011), which comments on the opportunities and threats of consumer engagement (CE). "Although many organizations consider CE important, this term has different meanings for different people" (Bolton, 2011: 272). Furthermore, it demands action from both sides of the market, the consumers and the organisations.

So the term digital engagement integrates these three analysis reviewed above. In addition, Scheinbaum (2016) suggests an even more operationalised notion since it results from

a subjective perspective of felt connection, observed as an online behaviour. The author states that digital engagement is composed by thoughts, emotional connections and/or consumer actions, for example, feedbacks, opinions, commentaries, likes, shares and clicks. The so called, consumer actions are the online action portrayed by individuals with certain apps, videos, sponsored content and advertisements. Digital engagement is important for both sides of the market since both can take advantage of its perks. This research focus on the consumer side and the authors distinguishes four relevant elements (seen on the table below).

Table 3 - Components of Digital Engagement

Cognitive	Social identity	Social comparison	Extended digital self
“(…) entails the consumer's thinking, learning, or knowledge-acquisition aspect associated with digital engagement in social media.” (Scheinbaum, 2016: 342)	“(…) consumer's perceived fit, or sense of belonging to a group—a key component of a consumer's social identity.” (Scheinbaum, 2016: 342)	“natural tendency for consumers to compare themselves with other social media users in terms of the status or quantity of connections, "likes," comments, or other indicators of consumer-based digital engagement.” (Scheinbaum, 2016: 343)	“Services, goods, and brands always have been a part of a consumer's extended self; now, however, the digital dimension includes the consumer's digital engagement with brands.” (Scheinbaum, 2016: 343)

Source: Scheinbaum (2016)

The pertinence of this concept lies on the fact that similar to UGC, it also allows individuals to have a bigger role in the dialogue between organisations and consumers and it helps individuals connect with others. Measuring digital engagement is now becoming an important activity for organisations as well as understanding how they can raise online engagement. Individual's comments, reviews, shares, etc., may reflect an advice, an opinion or a reassessment of a given brand or location. This means that individuals become ambassadors of any cause with a tremendous influential power (Scheinbaum, 2016). The fact that UGC is a digital and online activity it may stimulate digital engagement and it can be characterised as a component of digital engagement or as a consequence of such. The table 8 in the annex provides an overall view of the constructs analysed in this research as well the related items.

3. Social Media Platform: Instagram

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) defined Social Media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” Undoubtedly, there is a link between UGC and social media, as one is a part of the other.

“Social media platforms have emerged as a dominant digital communication channel via which consumers learn about, share information on, and interact with brands they consider, purchase, and evaluate” (Hudson *et al.*, 2016: 27). Consequently, individuals are taking more and more advantage of social media for brand and product information and consumer opinions because of its immediate connection and easy accessibility (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). These recent changes force marketers to adapt quickly to new trends and recognise the importance of social media to the progress. This research focuses its attention to social media platform, Instagram which is the fastest platform to expand today. It has reached 500 million users, it gets around 3.5 billion likes a day, has an average of 80 million photos shared every day and it’s usage has doubled over the last two years. Nevertheless, there is very little academic investigation since most researchers turn their attention to Facebook (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Instagram was launched in 2010 by two Stanford college students with the goal to allow people to share photos with different types of filters. It can be described as “an online, mobile phone photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social network service (SNS) that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and then share them on other platforms” (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016: 89). Generally speaking, an individual as an account, that requires a mini biography (name, location, likes, dislikes, favourite quotes), then he/she sees something he/she likes, takes a picture with his/her mobile phone, adds the appropriate filter and posts it on his/hers feed. Normally, with each photo posted, individuals post a number of hashtags (#) according to the theme of the photo so that other users can see the photo. The “main” objective of each account (a part from posting photos) is to gain followers. Unlike Facebook, Instagram works on a foundation of following and being followed. Commonly, those who have better and more interesting photos will have a larger number of followers. Instagram describes itself as a “community built on the power of visual storytelling” (Business Instagram, 2016) and many users and brands have committed to this premise. Considering only the top 100 brands in the world, 90% have an Instagram account and the engagement with the brands is 10 times higher than Facebook, 54 higher than Pinterest and 84 higher than Twitter (Smith, 2016). Instagram’s

success can be related to the fact that despite being a social media platform it is still different from any other. It is based on creativity, forcing brands and individuals to express a more unique side and rewarding them for it.

4. Instagram Community and Engagement

Both concepts of community and engagement have been addressed in this research as a form of synthesising the literature and demonstrating the importance and amount of work researchers have developed regarding these topics. Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) established that UGC can build compelling and dynamic communities, that social media can promote one-on-one communication, stimulate brand conversation and empower individuals.

This investigation views community and engagement as a consequence of two actions. Firstly, the value action and secondly, the usage reaction. The premise follows the logic that if individuals value non-sponsored branded UGC on Instagram then they will gather a pre-disposition to consume, contribute and even create UGC and therefore, leading to two possible consequences, community and engagement on Instagram.

The UGC field of research is rather limited, nonetheless, there are some studies that identified the term community as an UGC motive (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012), another research defined community as an UGC precursor (Krishnamurthy and Dou, 2008). Thus, there isn't a specific and correct method of overlooking at the notion of a community in the UGC literature, therefore this investigation focuses on community as a consequence of having individuals viewing, discussing and creating content on Instagram. Community on Instagram is about the act of connecting with others and the possibility of getting free assistance with any product/brand issue. In Muñiz and Schau (2007)'s research about Vigilante Marketing, the Apple product connected every user of that community and allowed them to share stories, experiences and creative projects. The individuals who participated were encouraged to shared, comfortable enough to ask questions and were complimented by their entertaining content. Smith (2009) spoke of the social media revolution and underlined how this is an era of the listening economy in which building communities is an opportunity that increases engagement and sharing opinions is a normal activity inside these communities. De Vries and Carlson (2014) explain that in the social media atmosphere individuals can actively co-create value for themselves and for brands by giving and obtaining feedback, sharing and engaging with the brand and communicating. Gangadharbatla (2008) investigated UGC platforms on social media and college students' attitude and willingness towards them. The author's premise was that the

need for cognition, the need to belong, collective self-esteem and Internet self-efficacy begin to explain why individuals participate in these communities. Overall, the sense of community can be interpreted by the affinity and connection individuals feel for each other inside the community and with the content in question (Keller, 2013).

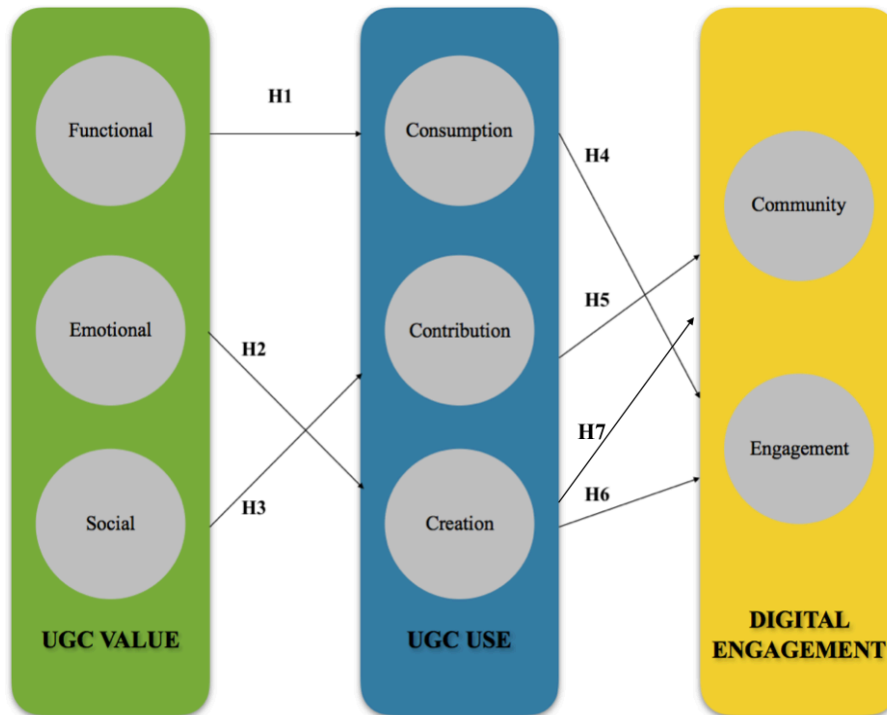
The construct of engagement is a rather wide concept that incorporates involvement, interactivity and user awareness but also encourages a behavioural participation (Ksiazek *et al.*, 2016). Keller (2013) describes it as the notion of active engagement in which it assumes that individuals are engaged when they are predisposed to devote their time and resources to advocate a brand/product. This occurs whenever an individual extends the act of buying to participating in a discussion about the brand/product, when he/she starts following the brand/product updates, when he/she create content related to that brand/product, etc. According to Lehmann *et al.*, (2012), “User engagement is the quality of the user experience that emphasises the positive aspects of the interaction, and in particular the phenomena associated with being captivated by a web application, and so being motivated to use it” (Lehmann *et al.*, 2012: 164). The authors assume the proposition that the more individuals interact and use, the more engaged they are.

Engagement on Instagram is analysed through the user’s interaction with the platform. From an observer’s perspective, engagement on Instagram is illustrated by the same Facebook logic, click-based involvement. In order to be on Instagram individuals need to create an account that contains all the basic information (name, e-mail), once that is set they can start to engage.

5. Proposed Framework

Subsequently to the literature analysis, the following framework is proposed.

Figure 7 - Proposed Framework



As it is possible to observe, the model suggests three main dimensions, UGC Value, UGC Use and Digital Engagement. Just like it was explained in the previous chapters, each dimension holds an X number of independent constructs. The main idea of this framework is that, depending on the value each individual places on the content it should lead to different types of usages. Those forms of use will then lead to two types of outcomes. On that note, seven hypotheses will be studied:

- **H1: UGC functional value positively influences UGC consumption;**

The UGC functional value lies on characteristics of flexibility of pushing the content to others, authenticity, security and privacy (Jensen *et al.*, 2008), convenience, availability and ease of use (OECD, 2007, Ryu *et al.*, 2010, Harrison 2010, Kim *et al.*, 2012). This value is meant to establish how individuals feel about non-sponsored branded UGC and whether it will motivate consumption of UGC. Valuing the content in a functional way describes a less sentimental action and a more analytical process. UGC consumption regards the minimal degree of

engagement, therefore, it reflects only viewing, watching and reading the content. So, the premise is that the more functional UGC is, the more it will be consumed. Literature supports this hypothesis given the fact that it has been established that the functional value of the content can positively influence usage intensity (Jahn and Kuntz, 2012; De Vries and Carlson, J.,2014).

- **H2: UGC emotional value positively influences UGC creation;**

The emotional value in this research reflects the idea presented by Katz *et al.*, (1983) which define emotion as an affective state. This emotion is related to the feelings of the experience, to the pleasure of the exposure to it and the strong aesthetics demonstrated (Katz *et al.*,1983; Khan, 2017). Therefore, watching a YouTube video can be amusing, a Facebook post can be entertaining and reading an online review about a product can generate anticipation (OECD, 2007; Shao, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2012). This hypothesis tries to uncover whether those emotional feelings can motivate and stimulate creation. Is the emotional value of non-sponsored branded UGC strong enough to make individuals create UGC? Creation is a form of UGC use and literature has shown that the hedonic value of content can have a significant positive impact on usage intensity (Jahn and Kuntz, 2012; De Vries and Carlson, J.,2014).

- **H3: UGC social value positively influences UGC contribution;**

Human beings have certain social needs and social status that they can achieve and maintain with being active on social media. OECD (2007), argue that because UGC is a collaborative process it will stimulate the action of sharing and knowledge creation. It can also develop relationships among users, make them a part of a community and shape social perceptions about them (Nov, 2007; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2012). So, hypothesis three suggests that by valuing non-sponsored branded UGC socially, it will motivate users to contribute to the content by liking, sharing and commenting on the posts.

- **H4: UGC consumption positively impacts engagement;**

Instagram engagement is described as the interaction individuals have with the platform. As a consequence, the more motivated to consume non-sponsored branded UGC, the more individuals will interact with the platform. Despite the fact that consumption represents the lowest degree of engagement it is still the most common form of use on social media (Khan, 2017) which supports this hypothesis.

- **H5: UGC contribution positively impacts community;**

Given the fact that UGC contribution reflects the social motivations of participating, this hypothesis reinforces the social component of the research. Community is a very important construct on Instagram. They emphasise it by sharing different individual's accounts stories, every weekend Instagram promotes a sharing contest (Weekend Hashtag Project, #WHP) for

every user to participate. Individuals from all over the world get to know each other because they share at least one common denominator, the love for photography and Instagram. Just like the emphasis on Muñiz and Schau (2007)'s research, individuals on Instagram are encouraged to share, comfortable enough to ask questions and can be praised by their entertaining content. Consequently, it will motivate users to develop relationships with each other, feel a part of a community and derive social utility. Hence, contribution can lead to community.

- **H6: UGC creation positively impacts engagement;**

The more motivated to create and upload non-sponsored branded UGC, the more engaged individuals will be to the platform. Creation involves the actual activity of producing and posting content online hence it describes the highest degree of engagement.

- **H7: UGC creation positively impacts community;**

Muntiga *et al.*, (2011) concluded that individuals create for integration, social integration and starting conversations thus, this hypothesises the fact that the more an individual creates the more it feels a part of a community. With Instagram's weekly contests, individuals who create and are acknowledged for creating become a part of the community. It is an observable phenomenon that happens every time Instagram or its users recognise the created content as valuable.

The next section reveals and reflects the methodological procedure of this research that led to the final results and conclusions.

6. Methodology

The previous sections addressed the literature review which presented UGC antecedents, presumption, co-creation of experiences and working consumers, a review of each possible UGC dimension as well as a description of each construct. Despite the fact that the original framework by Kim *et al.*, (2012) incorporated the dimension of quality (content, design and technology), this research chose not to do so. The main reason lies on the fact that the relationship between quality and value has already been explored several times (Kim *et al.*, (2012), Williams *et al.*, (2008), Gangi & Wasko (2009)) however there is a gap regarding value creation and usage (Kim *et al.*, (2012), Shao (2008)).

This research focuses on individuals who commonly use the Instagram platform and as a result are in contact with non-sponsored branded UGC. According to latest statistics by the NapoleonCat (2017), in Portugal there are 2.4 million Instagram users in which 33% are between the age of 18-24 and 26% are between the ages of 25-34. Statistics also show that there isn't a significant difference between male and female usage (46% and 54% respectively). Therefore, this investigation's analysis depends on individuals who use social media and in particular, Instagram, who are in the age brackets of 18-24 and 25-34 and are from Portugal.

The data was obtained through the created survey. The questionnaire is based on a multi-item scale because it has multiple items and each item is an assertion to be evaluated. The measurement scale applied was the Likert scale which is a broadly utilised rating system that allows the respondents to demonstrate their level of agreement or disagreement. The questions were all closed to simplify statistical analysis but also to provide the respondents a more direct and quick approach. In order to successfully reach pertinent conclusions, the questionnaire was translated into the respondents' native language, Portuguese. This translation was carefully conducted so that there weren't any errors in meanings and every question was fully understood (see appendix Table 9) (Malhotra, 2009). The translation was made by an individual with a proficiency level in English to guarantee the minimum rate of error. Moreover, every item was randomized so that response bias would be lower. The survey was sent via e-mail and put on social media platforms such as, Facebook and Instagram in order to obtain a larger number of responses. Nowadays, these social media platforms are a great source of data collection and provide honest feedback from the users.

Since the main focus of this research is social media platform, Instagram, the survey started by asking the respondents whether or not they had an account. If answered "no" the questionnaire would end immediately, if answered "yes" then it would continue. An important

part of Instagram is the followers an individual is able to obtain, therefore, the next question was the number of followers and how often was the Instagram usage. If respondents answered “daily”, “at least once a week” and “at least once a month” they would be able to continue the questionnaire. “Occasionally” and “never” answers were automatically discarded. The next section displayed questions regarding Instagram and reflected the community and engagement aspects. To analyse the construct Community and Engagement, four items were used for each construct. The items used were conceptualised by Keller (2013) and tested by Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen (2010). These items best reflected the concepts of engagement and the sense of community on Instagram. Furthermore, the respondents were presented two examples of non-sponsored branded content on Instagram (one from Starbucks and one from TAP, the idea was not to focus on one particular market sector, nor brand). The two images displayed were to provide context to the respondent but also to understand whether or not that type of non-sponsored branded content was common on Instagram. The examples were chosen to purposefully portray two completely different brands and sectors so that respondents wouldn't think a specific brand or market was being analysed. If respondents answered “yes”, they were able to continue, if the answer was “no”, the survey ended. The last two section of questions reflected the value and use of the UGC. The value items were gathered from the literature, the functional and emotional value constructs were conceptualised and tested by De Vries and Carlson (2014), Jahn and Kunz (2012), and Voss *et al.*, (2003). The social value construct was conceptualised and tested by Kim *et al.*, (2012). Lastly, the usage constructs items reflect the research of Schivinski, *et al.*, (2016) and Tsai and Men (2013). To conclude the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide demographic information (sex, age, level of education, employment situation and location). Table 4 provides an overall view of the constructs analysed in this research as well the related items and table 9 (in the appendix) demonstrates the used items.

Table 4 - Overall view of the constructs and items

	Definition	Dimensions		Items
		Woodruff (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct, accurate, appropriate features, functions, attributes or characteristics; • appropriate performances; • appropriate outcomes or consequences; 	
		Sweeney & Soutar (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price/value for money: “the utility derived from the product due to 	“is reasonably priced;” “offers value for money”

Functional Value	Functional value is the utilitarian benefit/advantage provided by UGC.		<p>the reduction of its perceived short term and longer term costs” (p.211)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance/quality: “the utility derived from the perceived quality and expected performance of the product” (p.211) 	<p>“would be economical;” (...)</p> <p>“would perform consistently;”</p> <p>“would not last a long time;”</p> <p>“is well made;”</p> <p>“has an acceptable standard of quality;” (...)</p>
		Jensen <i>et al.</i> , (2009)	flexibility; authenticity; security; privacy;	
		OECD (2007); Ryu <i>et al.</i> , (2010); Harrison (2010); Kim <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	convenience; availability; ease of use	
		Jahn & Kunz (2012)		<p>“The content of the fan page is helpful for me.”</p> <p>The content of the fan page is useful for me.”</p> <p>“The content of the fan page is functional for me.”</p> <p>“The content of the fan page is practical for me.”</p>
		Kim <i>et al.</i> , (2012)		<p>“The UGC provides convenient functions.”</p> <p>“The UGC properly satisfies users’ needs.”</p> <p>“The availability of the UGC is high.”</p> <p>“The UGC provides ease of use”.</p>
		De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J. (2014)		<p>“The content of the Facebook brand page is helpful for me.”</p> <p>“The content of the Facebook brand page is useful for me.”</p> <p>“The content of the Facebook brand page is functional for me.”</p> <p>“The content of the Facebook brand page is practical.”</p>
		Smith & Colgate (2007)	comfort; security; excitement; romance; passion; fear; guilt.	
Sweeney and Soutar (2001)	enjoy; feel relaxed; pleasure; feel good.			
Kotler & Keller (2012)	delight; satisfaction; compelling; memorable.			
Jahn & Kunz (2012)		<p>“The content of the fan page is fun.”</p> <p>“The content of the</p>		

Emotional Value	Emotional value reflects the sentiment/hedonic feeling felt by individuals when they value UGC.			<i>fan page is exciting.</i> <i>"The content of the fan page is pleasant."</i> <i>"The content of the fan page is entertaining."</i>
		OECD (2007); Shao (2009); Kim <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	feel good; enjoyment; interesting; expectations.	
		Kim <i>et al.</i> , (2012)		<i>"I enjoy using the UGC."</i> <i>"I have some expectations from the UGC "</i> <i>"The UGC is interesting."</i> <i>"I feel good when I use the UGC."</i>
		De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J. (2014)		<i>"The content of the Facebook brand page is fun."</i> <i>"The content of the Facebook brand page is exciting."</i> <i>"The content of the Facebook brand page is pleasant."</i> <i>"The content of the Facebook brand page is entertaining."</i>
Social Value	Social value of UGC reflects individuals disposition to connect and relate to others through UGC value	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)	help me feel acceptable; make a good impression; social approval.	
		Smith & Colgate (2007)	network benefits; bonding; connectedness; personal interaction; trust; commitment.	
		OECD (2007); Nov, (2007); Christodoulides <i>et al.</i> , (2012); Kim <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	become closer to people; more sociable; social connections increase; a part of a community.	
		Kim <i>et al.</i> , (2012)		<i>"The use of the UGC affects me socially."</i> <i>"I become close to other people by using the UGC."</i> <i>"The UGC encourages my social connections."</i> <i>"I feel at one with people who use the UGC."</i>
		Shao (2008)	for watching; reading; viewing.	
		Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , (2016)		<i>"I read posts related to Brand X on social media."</i> <i>"I read fan page(s) related to Brand X on social networking sites."</i> <i>"I watch pictures/ graphics related to Brand X."</i> <i>"I follow blogs related</i>

Consumption	Consumption is an action displayed on various social media platforms in which individuals only observe.			<i>to Brand X.</i>
				<i>"I follow Brand X on social networking sites."</i>
		Khan (2017)	viewing; reading comments.	
		Muntiga <i>et al.</i> , (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewing brand-related video; • Listening to brand-related audio; • Watching brand-related pictures; • Following threads on online brand community forums; • Reading comments on brand profiles on social network sites; • Reading product reviews; • Playing branded online videogames; • Downloading branded widgets; Sending branded virtual gifts/cards 	
	Tsai & Rita Men (2013)		<i>"Watching videos on companies' Facebook pages"</i> <i>"Viewing pictures on companies' Facebook pages"</i> <i>"Reading companies' posts, user comments, or product reviews"</i>	
Contribution	Contribution is an action displayed on various social media platforms in which individuals engage by liking, commenting, sharing and chatting.	Shao (2008)	user-to-user interaction; user-to-content interaction; ranking; adding playlists; sharing; posting comments.	
		Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , (2016)		<i>"I comment on videos related to Brand X."</i> <i>"I comment on posts related to Brand X."</i> <i>"I comment on pictures/graphics related to Brand X."</i> <i>"I share Brand X related posts."</i> <i>"I 'Like' pictures/graphics related to Brand X."</i> <i>"I 'Like' posts related to Brand X."</i>
		Khan (2017)	like; dislike; comment; share	
		Muntiga <i>et al.</i> , (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rating products and/or brands • Joining a brand profile on a social network site • Engaging in branded conversations, e.g. on online brand 	

			community forums or social network sites • Commenting on brand related weblogs ,video , audio, pictures, etc.	
		Tsai & Rita Men (2013)		<p><i>“Liking/joining a companies’ Facebook pages”</i></p> <p><i>“Engaging in conversations on companies’ Facebook pages (e.g., commenting, asking, and answering questions)”</i></p> <p><i>“Sharing companies’ Facebook posts on my own Facebook page (e.g., video, audio, pictures, texts)”</i></p>
Creation	Creation is the action of generating and uploading content to the social media platform.	Shao (2008)	creation of content; publication of content.	
		Schivinski, et al., (2016)		<p><i>“I initiate posts related to Brand X on blogs.”</i></p> <p><i>“I initiate posts related to Brand X on social networking sites.”</i></p> <p><i>“I post pictures/ graphics related to Brand X.”</i></p> <p><i>“I post videos that show Brand X.”</i></p> <p><i>“I write posts related to Brand X on forums.”</i></p> <p><i>“I write reviews related to Brand X.”</i></p>
		Khan (2017)	upload.	
		Muntiga et al., (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a brand-related weblog • Uploading brand-related video, audio, pictures or images • Writing brand-related articles • Writing product reviews 	
		Tsai & Rita Men (2013)		<i>“Uploading product-related video, audio, pictures, or images”</i>
		Kozinets et al., (2010)	social interaction needs; economic stimulus; knowledge sharing; advocacy.	
		Von Hippel (2001)	knowledge sharing; collaboration ambition; interaction appeal.	
		OECD, (2007)	economic stimulus	
		Muñiz and Schau (2007)	social connections; interaction need; free assistance; recognition crave.	
		Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen (2010)		<i>“Do you feel like you belong to a ‘club’ with other users of/BRAND/?”</i>

Community	Community refers to the sense of community individuals can develop from interacting with a certain media			<p><i>“Do you identify with people who use/BRAND/?”</i></p> <p><i>“To what extent is/BRAND/used by people like yourself?”</i></p>
		Smith (2009)	opinion sharing; listening community.	
		Gangadharbatla (2009)	cognition needs; need to belong; collective self-esteem; ease of use	
		Keller (2013)	connection and identification with the content and the individuals.	<p><i>“I really identify with people who use this brand.”</i></p> <p><i>“I feel as if I almost belong to a club with other users of this brand.”</i></p> <p><i>“This is a brand used by people like me.”</i></p> <p><i>“I feel a deep connection with others who use this brand.”</i></p>
		Sundar & Limperos (2013)		<p><i>“I can connect with others”</i></p> <p><i>“It allows me to expand my social network”</i></p> <p><i>“It makes me realise that I am part of a community”</i></p> <p><i>“It allows me to build social capital.”</i></p>
Engagement	Engagement is interpreted as the individual’s interaction with a certain media.	Ksiazek <i>et al.</i> , (2014)	involvement; interactivity; awareness.	
		Keller (2013)	advocacy; creating content; interested to learning about the brand.	<p><i>“I really like to talk about this brand to others.”</i></p> <p><i>“I am always interested in learning more about this brand.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would be interested in merchandise with this brand’s name on it.”</i></p> <p><i>“I am proud to have others know I use this brand.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like to visit the Web site for this brand.”</i></p> <p><i>“Compared with other people, I follow news about this brand closely.”</i></p>
		Lehmann <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	time spent on website; frequent usage.	
		Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> , (2014)	cognitive processing; affection; activation.	
		Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen (2010)		<p><i>“To what extent do you follow news about/BRAND/?”</i></p> <p><i>“How often do you talk about/BRAND/to others?”</i></p>

				<p>“How often do you visit the/<i>BRAND</i>/web site?”</p> <p>“Would you be interested in buying merchandise with the/<i>BRAND</i>/name on it?”</p>
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Procedures

Regarding the procedures, this analysis was conducted through SEM (structural equation modelling) using Partial Least Squares (PLS) which has been gaining more and more dominance in the marketing research paradigm. According to Hair *et al.*, (2012), researcher’s increasing interest in SEM reflects its capacity to appraise connections between a construct and its observed indicators (measurement model/outer model) but also the possibility to establish connections between the constructs themselves (structural model/inner model). SEM can be divided into two categories, co-variance based SEM (CBSEM) and variance based SEM (VBSEM). CBSEM has a tendency to clone the real covariation amid measures therefore, is seen as a confirmatory method led by theory as opposed to practical results. VBSEM’s objective is to forecast the actions of the relationships between constructs and to provide further investigation on the hypothetical concepts. Thus, it is grounded on theory but guided by data so that it can be prognosticative and supply new information, arguments and logics behind a research paradox (Davicik, 2014). Currently, VBSEM has gain a bigger role in the research field, more specifically, the partial least squares path modelling (PLS) which as been applied in various different areas, such as marketing, strategic and operations management, organisational behaviour and information systems research (Henseler, 2017). The method of PLS-SEM was designed and created to provide an alternate option to co-variance SEM as well as an option that could highlight prediction and be less demanding in terms of relationship specificities and data. “PLS-SEM maximizes the explained variance of the endogenous latent variables by estimating partial model relationships in an iterative sequence of ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions” (Hair *et al.*, 2012: 415). Because PLS-SEM takes advantage of OLS regressions to estimate, it is able to loosen the multivariate normality needed for maximum likelihood assumption. Moreover, it also has less requirements regarding sample size (for instance, smaller samples (less than 500 responses)) and overall can obtain a great statistical significance. Consequently, it is more appropriate when analysing predictive connections of a new “built” model, like understanding the effect of UGC value, on UGC use and digital engagement.

This analysis was conducted on the statistical software SmartPLS 3 (Ringle *et al.*, 2015) which is a common vehicle for SEM analysis. After importing the data into the software, each indicator is combined to the correct construct and then each construct is connected with the proposed path in the framework. The results estimate two models, the measurement (outer) and the structural (inner). The measurement model reveals the connection between the construct and its indicators which is analogous to principal component analysis. The structural model reflects the connection between the constructs themselves (De Vries & Carlson, 2014).

7. Results

7.1. Sample Profile

The survey was put online at the beginning of July on Facebook and Instagram and it achieved a total of 402 responses. Given the fact that Facebook bought Instagram in 2012 it is common that individuals who have a Facebook account also have an Instagram account thus the logic behind putting the questionnaire on the two main social media sites. In this sample, 71,6% (288 respondents) were female and 28,4% were male (114 respondents). The predominant age range was 21-25 with 61,2% (246 respondents), followed by the age range of 26-30 with 14,4% (58 respondents) and lastly, the age range of 15-20 reflected 12,7% (51 respondents). The age gap reflects the nature of the sample which are students or/and young adults which coincides with the biggest percentage of Instagram users in Portugal (see figure 10 in the appendix). Hence, this sample gathers conditions to pursue this investigation and theories behind it. Respondents were asked whether or not they had an Instagram account, 93,3% (375 respondents) answered yes which showed that only a small percentage of the sample 6,7% (27 respondents) didn't have an Instagram account. In addition, respondents were asked their frequency of Instagram use which revealed that 85,6% (321 respondents) use it daily, 10,1% (38 respondents) use it some days a week and 3,2% (12 respondents) use it occasionally. An important aspect to denote is that of those 375 respondents who have an Instagram account there wasn't a single individual who responded "never" to the question of frequency of use. Another relevant element is the number of followers each individual has since Instagram functions on a basis of gaining/losing followers. Respondents indicated that the most common bracket is between 401-1000 followers (33,9% - 127 respondents), followed by the 1.001-3.000 bracket (20,3% - 76 respondents) and the 201-400 bracket (18,9% - 71 respondents). Interestingly, the brackets with the smallest percentage are 3.001-5.000 (3,2% - 12 respondents) and 5.001-10.000 (4,3% - 16 respondents). Lastly, in order to fully understand

how individuals value and use non-sponsored branded UGC, they were presented with two examples of real non-sponsored branded UGC posted by users on Instagram. One example regarded the Starbucks brand and the other the TAP brand. The examples were chosen to purposefully portray two completely different brands and sectors so that respondents wouldn't think a specific brand or market was being analysed. Individuals were asked if they had ever encountered this type of content and results showed that 97,8% of the respondents answered “yes” and only 2.2% answered “no” revealing that non-sponsored branded UGC is indeed present and relevant on Instagram.

7.2. Measurement Model

Instruments:

This research proposes the analysis of eight constructs/latent variables. They were measured as a reflective model which is a common strategy in behavioural research. Reflective measurement means that the variance of a group of indicators is able to be correctly interpreted through the presence of one unobserved variable and individual random error (Henseler *et al.*, 2016). This assessment tests for internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Thus, every construct was examined in terms of reliability. “The amount of random error in construct scores should be acceptable, or in other words: the reliability of construct scores should be sufficiently high” (Henseler *et al.*, 2016: 10). The software, SmartPLS 3, administers three reliability constructs, Dijkstra-Henseler’s rho (ρ_A), Composite reliability (ρ_C or ω) and Cronbach’s alpha (α). Dijkstra-Henseler’s rho (ρ_A) represents the most valuable measure since it is the only one that measures PLS construct scores. Composite reliability (ρ_C or ω) and Cronbach’s alpha (α) reveal a sum score measurement instead of construct scores. In addition, Cronbach’s alpha (α), which measures how adequately a group of items assesses a single variable (Davcik, 2014), is often believed to depreciate the real reliability (Henseler *et al.*, 2016). The generic “rule” discloses that the reliability indicators should have a minimum of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The table below displays some data results.

Table 5 - Measurement Results

<u>Constructs</u>	<u>Mean</u> <u>(Standard Deviation)</u>	<u>Latent Variables Index</u> <u>Values</u>	<u>Item Loadings</u>
Functional Value	—	4.316	—
- Is practical?	4.544 (1.544)	—	0.823
- Is useful?	4.479 (1.574)	—	0.935
- Is necessary?	3.656 (1.549)	—	0.751
- Is functional?	4.485 (1.557)	—	0.857
Emotional Value	—	3.875	—
- Is pleasant?	4.079 (1.544)	—	0.924
- Is entertaining?	4.135 (1.719)	—	0.795
- Is exciting?	3.566 (1.571)	—	1.020
- Is fun?	3.797 (1.646)	—	0.866
Social Value	—	3.247	—
- I become close to other people	3.509 (1.716)	—	0.831
- Encourages my social connections	3.279 (1.723)	—	0.902
- I feel at one with people	3.186 (1.607)	—	0.920
- Affects me socially	2.946 (1.719)	—	0.638

Consumption	—	4.380	—
- I read posts related to Brand X on social media	4.375 (1.516)	—	0.822
- I watch pictures related to Brand X.	5.628 (1.491)	—	0.719
- I read fan page(s) related to Brand X on social networking sites	3.194 (1.516)	—	0.693
- I watch graphics related to Brand X	4.254 (1.527)	—	0.691
Contribution	—	2.560	—
- I “Like” graphics related to Brand X	3.428 (1.527)	—	0.862
- I share Brand X related posts	1.535 (0.983)	—	0.485
- I comment on posts related to Brand X	1.865 (1.164)	—	0.741
- I “Like” pictures related to Brand X	3.603 (1.726)	—	0.759
Creation	—	1.664	—
- I post videos that show Brand X	1.515 (1.067)	—	0.873
- I write posts related to brand X	1.628 (1.129)	—	0.876
- I post pictures related to Brand X	1.946 (1.430)	—	0.760

Community	—	4.543	—
- To what extent is Instagram used by people like yourself?	5.113 (1.494)	—	0.406
- Do you identify with people who use Instagram?	4.983 (1.309)	—	0.842
- Do you feel a deep connection with others who use Instagram?	4.317 (1.409)	—	0.886
- Do you feel like you belong to a 'club' with other users of Instagram?	3.672 (1.792)	—	0.693
Engagement	—	3.473	—
- To what extent do you follow news about Instagram?	3.353 (1.707)	—	0.657
- How often do you visit the Instagram web site (feed)?	3.518 (1.977)	—	0.594
- Would you be interested in buying merchandise with the Instagram name on it?	2.273 (1.458)	—	0.597
- How often do you talk about Instagram to others?	4.901 (1.513)	—	0.507

Functional Value (FV): in order to measure the non-sponsored branded UGC functional value, it was enforced the Jahn & Kunz (2012) and De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J. (2014) 4-item scale which reflected how individuals valued UGC in a functional manner. Respondents were asked if it was “Practical”, “Useful”, “Necessary” and “Functional” and they evaluated with a 7 point Likert scale (1-Completely disagree; 4-Neither disagree, nor agree; 7-Completely agree). Construct reliability demonstrates that FV is, indeed, a reliable construct with $(\rho_A) = 0.913$; $(\rho_C) = 0.908$; $(\alpha) = 0.907 (>0.7)$.

Emotional Value (EV): in order to measure the non-sponsored branded UGC emotional value, it was enforced the Jahn & Kunz (2012) and De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J. (2014) 4-item scale which revealed how individuals valued UGC in an emotional manner. Respondents were asked if it was

“Pleasant”, “Entertaining”, “Exciting” and “Fun” and they evaluated with a 7 point Likert scale (1-Completely disagree; 4-Neither disagree, nor agree; 7-Completely agree). Construct reliability demonstrates that EV is a reliable construct with values of, $(\rho_A) = 0.955$; $(\rho_C) = 0.947$; $(\alpha) = 0.948 (>0.7)$.

Social Value (SV): in order to measure the non-sponsored branded UGC social value, it was applied the Kim *et al.*, (2012) 4-item measurement and it demonstrated how individuals value UGC in a social manner (“I become close to other people”; “Encourages my social connections”; I feel at one with people” ; “Affects me socially”). It was evaluated through a 7 point Likert scale (1-Completely disagree; 4-Neither disagree, nor agree; 7-Completely agree). Construct reliability demonstrates that SV is a reliable construct with values of, $(\rho_A) = 0.912$; $(\rho_C) = 0.897$; $(\alpha) = 0.889 (>0.7)$.

Consumption: in order to measure the non-sponsored branded UGC consumption, this research used the Schivinski *et al.*, (2016) 5-item measurement however only used 4 items because it was more appropriate for the Instagram scenario. The consumption items revolve around “I read posts related to Brand X on social media”; “I watch pictures related to Brand X”; “I read fan page(s) related to Brand X on social networking sites”; “I watch graphics related to Brand X”. It was evaluated through a 7 point Likert scale (1-Never; 4-Sometimes; 7-Always). Construct reliability demonstrates that consumption is a reliable construct with values of, $(\rho_A) = 0.827$; $(\rho_C) = 0.822$; $(\alpha) = 0.822(>0.7)$.

Contribution: in order to measure the non-sponsored branded UGC contribution, this research used the Schivinski *et al.*, (2016) 6-item measurement although only used 4 items because it was more appropriate for the Instagram scenario. Contribution was measured through, “I “Like” graphics related to Brand X”; “I share Brand X related posts”; “I comment on posts related to Brand X”; “I “Like” pictures related to Brand X”. It was evaluated through a 7 point Likert scale (1-Never; 4-Sometimes; 7-Always). Construct reliability demonstrates that contribution is a reliable construct with values of, $(\rho_A) = 0.837$; $(\rho_C) = 0.810$; $(\alpha) = 0.803 (>0.7)$.

Creation: in order to measure the non-sponsored branded UGC creation, this research used the Schivinski *et al.*, (2016) 6-item measurement nonetheless, only used 3 items because it was more appropriate for the Instagram scenario. Creation was measured through, “I post videos that show Brand X”; “I write posts related to brand X”; “I post pictures related to Brand X”. It was evaluated through a 7 point Likert scale (1-Never; 4-Sometimes; 7-Always). Construct reliability demonstrates that creation is a reliable construct with values of, $(\rho_A) = 0.880$; $(\rho_C) = 0.876$; $(\alpha) = 0.876 (>0.7)$.

Community: in order to measure the outcome of using non-sponsored branded UGC this research used indicators originally created by Keller (2013) but applied by (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Community was measured by “To what extent is Instagram used by people like yourself?”; “Do you identify with people who use Instagram?”; “Do you feel a deep connection with others who use Instagram?”; “Do you feel like you belong to a ‘club’ with other users of Instagram?” Despite the vast and significant existent research on the matter these indicators were the more suitable for the Instagram scenario. It was evaluated through a 7 point Likert scale (1-Completely Disagree; 4-Neither Disagree nor Agree; 7-Completely Agree). Construct reliability demonstrates that community is a reliable construct with values of, $(\rho_A) = 0.857$; $(\rho_C) = 0.811$; $(\alpha) = 0.815 (>0.7)$.

Engagement: in order to measure the outcome of using non-sponsored branded UGC this research used indicators originally created by Keller (2013) but applied by (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Engagement was measured through 4 indicators that were more appropriate to the Instagram scenario, “To what extent do you follow news about Instagram?”; “How often do you visit the Instagram web site (feed)?”; “Would you be interested in buying merchandise with the Instagram name on it?”; “How often do you talk about Instagram to others?”. It was evaluated through a 7 point Likert scale (1-Never; 4-Sometimes; 7-Always). Construct reliability demonstrates that engagement is not a reliable construct with values of, $(\rho_A) = 0.686$; $(\rho_C) = 0.681$; $(\alpha) = 0.677 (<0.7)$.

Reliability results show that all the constructs except Engagement are reliable since all of them have a reliability higher than 0.7 and also surpass the more rigid rule of having the reliability of 0.8 (Nunnally, 1978). Moreover, the measurement factors shouldn't include a systematic measurement error, therefore the factors must be analysed in terms of convergent

and discriminant validity (Henseler *et al.*, 2016). Firstly, a factor ought to be unidimensional, hence each factor is analysed via convergent validity. Secondly, every pair of factors that represents distinct academic notions ought to be statistically distinct as well, therefore must be tested for discriminant validity. The predominant method for convergent validity is the AVE (average variance extracted). The table 10 in the appendix indicates that every constructs' AVE is higher than 0.5 which is the satisfactory amount. Such values demonstrate that a greater amount of variance was explained. Results indicate the lowest AVE value is the Engagement with 0.349. This means that the Engagement construct doesn't fulfil the AVE requirement (>0.5) therefore it doesn't explain the variance properly. Furthermore, discriminant validity can be determined by the Fornell-Larcker criteria, by the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) and the cross-loadings (Hair *et al.*, 2013; Henseler *et al.*, 2016)

The Fornell-Larcker criterion verifies since the square root of the factor's AVE is bigger than its variable correlations as seen in the table below. The rationale behind this criterion is that each construct should share a higher proportion of variance with its indicators than with other constructs.

Table 6 - Fornell-Larcker Results

	Community	Consumption	Contribution	Creation	Emotional Value	Engagement	Functional Value	Social Value
Community	0,731							
Consumption	0,387	0,733						
Contribution	0,458	0,564	0,725					
Creation	0,374	0,289	0,583	0,838				
Emotional Value	0,314	0,503	0,592	0,330	0,905			
Engagement	0,536	0,448	0,560	0,359	0,342	0,591		
Functional Value	0,367	0,503	0,579	0,262	0,706	0,389	0,844	
Social Value	0,463	0,406	0,612	0,342	0,617	0,514	0,541	0,830

Discriminant validity analysis: the diagonal displays the square root of AVE

The use of HTMT is advised by Henseler *et al.*, (2015; 2016) and the goal is to have the smallest value of HTMT because it means that the constructs are indeed distinct. HTMT values should be lower than 0.9 but even preferably lower than 0.85 (Henseler *et al.*, 2016). The table 11

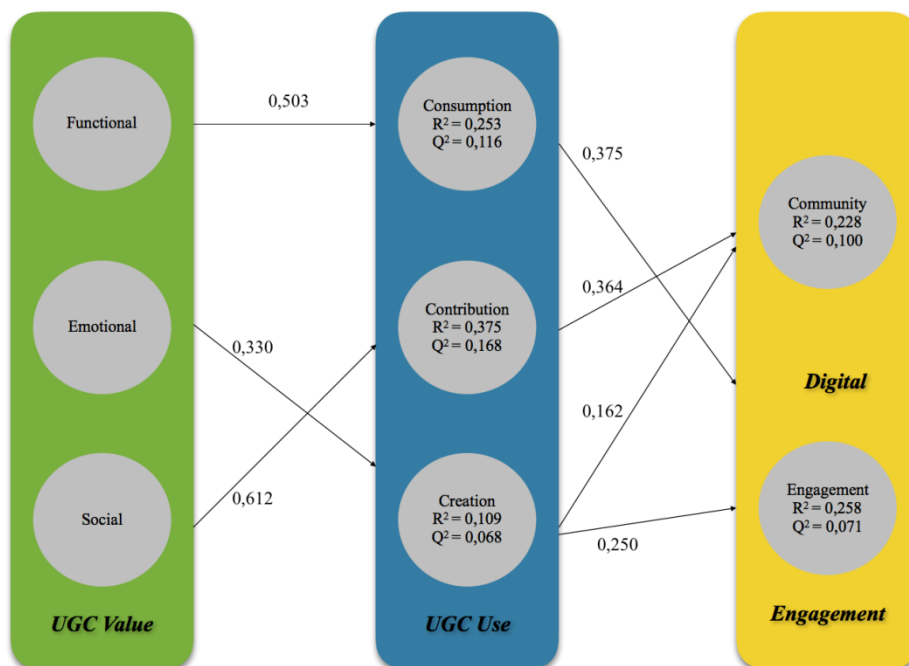
(appendix) reveals that every construct demonstrates a value lower than 0.85 which reveals that discriminant validity has been confirmed between the constructs and they are, indeed, different from each other. Subsequently, the cross-loadings verify whether the indicators are wrongly allocated to the incorrect factor, ergo the loadings should exceed the cross-loadings. It is possible to observe in table 11 of the appendix that this criterion is fulfilled.

To summarise, all the reliability and validity measures befitted the relevant criteria values which means that the measurement (outer) model is pertinent, therefore the structural (inner) model should be evaluated.

7.3. Structural Model

Just like it was mentioned above, the structural model represents how the model’s constructs relate to one another. This investigation employed consistent Bootstrapping, which is a non-parametric technique that is commonly adopted so that a higher level of accuracy could be achieved. Bootstrapping was conducted through 500 sub-samples which is the default and advised number for these cases. “Five-hundred samples sets were created to obtain 500 estimates for each parameter in the PLS model. Each new sample was obtained by a resample process and replacement of the original data set (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Chin, 1998)” (Loureiro *et al.*, 2012: 9). The figure below presents the structural model’s results.

Figure 8 - Structural Results



First and foremost, it is important to denote that the structural model has an SRMR of 0.059. The standardised root mean squared residuals (SRMR) is used to test the model fit and reveals how considerable is the disparity amidst the implicit model correlation matrix and the empirical correlation matrix (Henseler, 2017). Theoretically speaking, lower values, indicate a superior model fit. Current investigations acknowledge a good model fit if the SRMR is higher than 0.06 (Henseler *et al.*, 2014) but because this topic is still a bit ambiguous, the common used value is lower than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Thus, the model's SRMR reports an acceptable fit. Moreover, the structural model exhibits positive Q^2 statistics, therefore shows some predictive relevance (Fornell and Cha, 1994). The Q^2 is a measure of predictive relevance retrieved by using a predictive sample reuse method, that in SmartPLS is called, "Blindfolding". This process expels a portion of the data while doing parameter estimation and after, computes the expelled data using the estimated parameters (Davcik, 2014).

Secondly, the assessment of PLS models resembles multiple regression models in which such are appraise by identifying and comprehending the path coefficient values and the significance of the R^2 (De Vries & Carlson, 2014). The coefficient of determination, R^2 , demonstrates the model's prognostic ability by estimating the amount of variance that can be explained. The figure above discloses that:

- Functional value explains 25.3% of the Consumption's variance;
- Emotional value explains 10.9% of the Creation's variance;
- Social value explains 37.5% of the Contribution's variance;
- Consumption and Creation explain 25.8% of the Engagement's variance;
- Contribution and Creation explain 22.8% of the Community's variance.

Despite the fact that the general amount of R^2 values appear to be rather small, the scientific community proposes a standard higher than 0.10 (10%) (Falk and Miller, 1992). Chin (1998) recommended three "stages" of R^2 measurement, 0.63 (substantial), 0.33 (moderate) and 0.19 (weak). Additionally, and more recently, Vock *et al.*, (2013) advocated that for consumer behaviour researches an amount of 0.20 would be sufficiently good.

Thirdly, the path coefficients symbolise the proposed connections between the constructs (i.e. the model hypothesis) and therefore provide a clear view of the model's connections. They are commonly compared to standardised betas and demonstrate the strength of the relationships between the constructs (Loureiro *et al.*, 2012). The figure above shows the paths coefficients calculated through the consistent PLS algorithm and such values must be

comprehended between -1 and 1 . If the paths values are closer to 1 , than the relationship between those constructs is positive and will presumably be significant. Lower values than 0 reflect the opposite situation. Whether a construct's relationship is significant or not depends on the bootstrapping method because it provides the standard error. Such standard error permits the estimation of the empirical t -values. Every single path coefficient was found significant both at the 0.05 (critical t -value = $|1.960|$) and at 0.01 (critical t -value = $|2.57|$) (hypothesis 7 barely qualified, nevertheless it achieved a higher value). Furthermore, every path coefficient fits the lower and upper confidence interval (bias corrected). This suggests that the relationship between the proposed constructs can be verified.

Table 7 - Final Results

	Structural Paths	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Statistics	P-Values
Consumption \rightarrow Engagement	0,375	0,380	0,066	5,662	0,000
Contribution \rightarrow Community	0,364	0,369	0,072	5,081	0,000
Creation \rightarrow Community	0,162	0,162	0,062	2,603	0,010
Creation \rightarrow Engagement	0,250	0,248	0,064	3,887	0,000
Emotional Value \rightarrow Creation	0,330	0,326	0,048	6,808	0,000
Functional Value \rightarrow Consumption	0,503	0,504	0,058	8,745	0,000
Social Value \rightarrow Contribution	0,612	0,613	0,043	14,319	0,000

The SmartPLS algorithm also provides the indirect effects statistics and, as expected, the effect of emotional value to community (through creation) is the lowest and would be reject at 0.01 .

Lastly, the effect size (f^2) was analysed and the results were consistent with what was already reported. Cohen's f^2 confirms how significant a direct effect is, thus, the highest values are hypothesis 3 ($0.600 > 0.35$: strong effect), hypothesis 1 ($0.15 < 0.339 < 0.35$: moderate effect) and hypothesis 4 ($0.15 < 0.174 < 0.35$: moderate effect) which coincide with the highest path coefficients. The table below exemplifies the results, hence, social value has a strong effect on contribution, functional value has a moderate effect on consumption and consumption has a moderate effect on engagement.

Table 8 - Effect Size

	Community	Consumption	Contribution	Creation	Emotional Value	Engagement	Functional Value	Social Value
Community								
Consumption						0,174		
Contribution	0,113							
Creation	0,023					0,077		
Emotional Value				0,122				
Engagement								
Functional Value		0,339						
Social Value			0,600					

8. Conclusions

In 2006, Time (magazine) elected “You” as person of the year. This is a prestigious award that acknowledged the rise of the user generated content era (Grossman, 2006). Individuals have the ability and power to consume, contribute and create all sorts of content. Consequently, it manifested many changes in the consumer-brand paradigm. Today, individuals have more power because they are not only able to respond, complain and love (e.g. a brand; a product; a service) but they are also expected to do so. Although brands push for digital engagement it is a complicated and sometimes misunderstood concept with many variables in action (Scheinbaum, 2016).

This investigation highlighted prosumption, co-creation and working consumers as the antecedents of user generated content. All of these theories are a continuous improvement of one another, as well as an adaption to the innovation surroundings. They promote the fact that “You” the user have the power to create value, use it and share it but with time and technological development they become more clear and understandable. Technological innovation allowed the recognition of individuals as users and not mere spectators of Marketing activities. Munar said that UGC is “the information that is digitalized, uploaded by the users and made available through the internet” (Munar, 2011: 292). Despite the lack of a global definition, Munar’s interpretation is one of the finest because it summarises the most important aspects. UGC is the content that users consume, contribute to and create on the Internet that can pose as a critique, as review, as an entertainment form and as an information enlightenment.

The “rise of the amateur creator” (OECD, 2009) is here to stay given the fact that there is a constant development of social media abilities and functions. Burmann’s (2010) suggest to divide UGC into two types, simplified its interpretation. While sponsored branded UGC is similar to a traditional advertisement but created by top social media users, non-sponsored branded UGC is the novelty. Any user can say, write, create and share anything that regards a brand and/or a product and it can go viral. This statement demonstrates the relevance of this topic and the urgency to understanding it. To the positive outcomes Vackle and Lenearts (2010) propose (see table 1) it can be added, the possibility to communicate directly to brands, the ability to acquire more information about any brand and/or product, the capability to interact with other users that will allow the creation and nurture of a relationship and the prospect of starting a career as a social media influencer.

This UGC research was based on the model proposed by Kim *et al.*, (2012) and provided an extension of it, it proposed a practical application of the constructs suggested by Schivinski

et al., (2016) and an outcome theorised by Scheinbaum (2016). It analysed the relationship between three dimensions, UGC value, UGC use and Digital Engagement. Its premise revolved around the idea that if individuals value non-sponsored branded UGC (functionally, emotionally and socially) they will use it in a specific way (consuming, contributing and creating) and they will be digitally engaged (community and engagement). The proposed model was examined in a particular digital environment, more specifically, on social media platform, Instagram. The main reasons for the usage of this platform was the lack of research on it and the bigger propensity concerning UGC since many user trends that exist today originated from Instagram. Non-sponsored branded UGC's existence was confirmed by the fact that 97.8% of the respondents acknowledged its presence on Instagram.

The value of non-sponsored branded UGC can be observed on the responses of each individual. For each value construct there were four items measuring it. The biggest score corresponds to the item that best reflects its construct. Non-sponsored branded UGC's functional value is best described by its "functional value" item, emotional value is correctly explained by "entertaining" item and social value is better characterised by "I become closer to other people" item. Non-sponsored branded UGC value results' showed that every relationship was significant, which means that functional value has a positive impact on consumption, emotional value has a positive impact on creation and social value has a positive impact on contribution. Hence, it is possible to affirm that UGC value has a positive impact on UGC use. Since UGC's functional value can be perceived as more trustworthy than traditional media (Kardon, 2007; Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012) the results reflect an expecting significance. The more individuals value the non-sponsored branded UGC in a functional way, the more they will consume it. The same logic applies to the emotional and social value analysed. These results are also parallel to those of De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J. (2014) which in turn are similar to the results of Jahn & Kunz (2012). The authors identified that functional value and emotional value have a significant effect on usage intensity but disregard the social value significance. This study provides evidence of a strong impact between social value and use (contribution), in particular, it is the strongest structural path. The social value represents the potential that non-sponsored branded UGC has to not only connect individuals but also to allow them to communicate their social position and self-concepts (Nov, 2007; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, all the proposed hypothesis regarding UGC use tested positive, which exposes the fact that consumption has a positive impact on engagement, contribution has a positive impact on community and creation has a positive impact on both engagement and

community. These results go along the lines of what was initially suggested by Shao (2009), explored by Muntiga *et al.*, (2011) and tested by Schivinski *et al.*, (2016). The highest structural path results are consumption to engagement and contribution to community. Thus, individuals who consume non-sponsored branded UGC have a propensity towards engaging with the platform, Instagram. Given the fact that consumption is the most common form of UGC use (Schivinski *et al.*, 2016) it makes sense that the results indicate a high level engagement. Similarly, individuals who contribute will more likely form/enter a community on Instagram. From an observer's perspective the social activities proposed and implemented by Instagram supports these results. Not only can users communicate with each other through the platform but Instagram, itself, promotes this connection and creates one big community. Thus, it is foreseeable that contributing for non-sponsored branded UGC could connect individuals, make them feel a part of a "club" and allow individuals to identify with others. Instagram's latest Weekend Hashtag Project (#WHP) was on the 25 of August 2017 and it was named #WHPImagine. Users had to create something that would evoke imagination and a fantasy land. The image below demonstrates one of the many entrees and exposes a non-sponsored branded UGC that exhibits consumption, contribution and creation.

Figure 9 - Instagram Example of UGC





The user, @genevastone, created two forms of non-sponsored branded user-generated content. First, the picture reveals an incredible “caramel frappe drip cake” and secondly, the caption provides information about the brand that its allusive to. Contribution is displayed by the total of likes in each picture (575 likes) and all the adjacent comments. Consumption can’t be quantified but assuming that 575 users liked these pictures, it means that at least 575 individuals visualised it. This is only one example in a panoply of possible cases. The owner of the account, Geneva Stone, is a cake decorator and pastry chef that posts her creations on Instagram. She was not sponsored by Starbucks but she willingly designed the cake to show the brand.

Finally, results also show that creating UGC won't encourage community formation nor addition but it can push for engagement. Creating is the most significant form of non-sponsored branded UGC because it means that individuals like the brand and/or product so much that they are willing to talk about it (Keller, 2013). For this reason, it is expected to have some influence on engagement but surprisingly, very little influence on community. To sum up, UGC use has a positive impact on digital engagement.

In conclusion, the three dimensions that were analysed and examined proved to be connected. Results showed that there is, indeed, a positive impact between all three of them. UGC value positively impacts UGC use which in turn positively impacts digital engagement. This thesis contributed to Marketing by extending the literature on UGC, by proving that there is a relationship between the dimensions and by acknowledging the importance of UGC value and use today and the nearby future.

8.1. Managerial Implications

In June of 2017, *Marketeer* magazine released a report regarding the power of the micro-influencers (“O poder dos micro-influenciadores”) and it stated that individuals were paying more attention to those who are similar to them. This underlines the importance of this thesis’ investigation. It is common for brands to use celebrities to advertise their products and it has always worked. If brands invest on the right celebrity (someone who correctly represents the brand) , the turnover can be gigantic. However, in the past couple of years brands have been focusing more on bloggers and YouTubers, which have successfully created a new Marketing category for themselves. The digital influencer, is someone that has a type of functioning platform (blog, YouTube channel) in which he/she can communicate and influence. Nevertheless, once they achieve a certain number of followers, views or/and clicks they start being approach by brands and their influence begins to feel like a direct advertisement. Consequently, there is the rise of the micro-influencers by the use of non-sponsored branded UGC. These are individuals who have up to 1000 followers and can obtain an engagement five times higher than those digital influencers who have over 1000 thousand followers. The micro-influencers also connect and respond more often to their followers which is highly valued by them (Rios, 2017). They are not sponsored by brands nor do they share any of the brand’s message which reflects a clear and truthful opinion about anything.

Micro-influencers appear to be the next Marketing wave because of their growing influence. Anyone can consume it, contribute to it and create it. This thesis provides a look at how the non-sponsored branded UGC is valued, how that value affects use and how use can induce engagement and community in the platform (Instagram). It is a relevant proposition for brands and Marketing in general since it is important to understand this micro-influence and recognise its existence. Rios (2017) also adds that the real value is in the content uploaded as opposed to the audience, reflecting once again, the importance of comprehending User Generated Content.

Another important managerial conclusion is that UGC is here to stay and Marketers need to value it and understand how it works. UGC means that anything can be written, said and published about a certain brand/or product which means brand managers have to apply the correct strategies to the correct situations. Bernoof and Li (2008) illustrated that if organisations switch the vocabulary of “sales” and “research” and try “listening”, “talking”, “supporting”, etc., the results will be better. The authors propose that organisations acknowledge UGC’s existence and that they should consolidate it with the official Marketing plans. According to

Ghose and Ipeirotis (2009), UGC's economic worth is incredibly relevant in decision making because it supplies more information. Hence, using UGC properly is a request and an obligation nowadays.

8.2. Limitations and Future Research

The present thesis exhibits some limitations. First, the number of responses doesn't qualify the conventional minimum proposed by Malhotra (2009). Despite all the efforts, this thesis only achieved a total of 402 responses. Second, results may be perceived as biased because the questionnaire was applied on both Facebook and Instagram platforms. Despite the fact that having an Instagram account doesn't necessarily mean that individuals are active on Instagram it may provide bias results. Third, this research might appear ambiguous because it doesn't reflect a particular brand or sector. It is concluded in a more generic approach in order to provide guidelines for future research. Fourth, there is a clear lack of user generated content literature and research (OECD, 2009; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012; Scheinbaum, 2016) which could demonstrate difficulties in properly explaining some concepts. Because UGC is both intangible and yet large concept sometimes it is complicated to understand it and explain it. Fifth, the considered constructs are also intangible and as a result they can be challenging to access. Both engagement and community are constructs that are quite representative in Marketing literature however, this analysis doesn't envision those constructs exactly as they are described. It is better reflected as a collection of existing concepts. Sixth, because the questionnaire was put on online platforms it reached a greater number of Portuguese cities, thus it doesn't exemplify patterns of a particular city. Hence, there might be a relevancy dissipation in the results. Seventh, this investigation was administered only in one country (Portugal), yet, social media is a global phenomenon therefore, such results might not be representative (Schivinski *et al.*, (2016)).

With everything considered, future research should aim towards obtaining a higher number of responses so that the sample will be a better representation of the population as well as defining a particular city to understand its social media pattern. Different methods of data collection should be employed (e.g. interviews, online focus group, netnography) to deepen the research regarding UGC value and UGC use. Muntiga *et al.*, (2011) used instant message interviews and took advantage of the anonymity of such method. Schivinski *et al.*, (2016) implemented a five stage study, complementing interviews, focus groups, netnography and questionnaires. In addition, researchers could employ the proposed framework across different

sectors (e.g. food vs. beverages) and/or across different brands (e.g. alcoholic beverages). Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct broader research on micro-influencers and non-sponsored UGC. More specifically, understanding the motivations to share non-sponsored content and how and why that content can be so influential. To conclude, since the research of UGC is at its infancy there is a lot of room to grow and a lot of scenarios too explore. Whichever investigation follows it will be pertinent considering that UGC is an unexplored phenomenon with a great deal of potential.

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10. Appendix

Figure 10 - Instagram users in Portugal

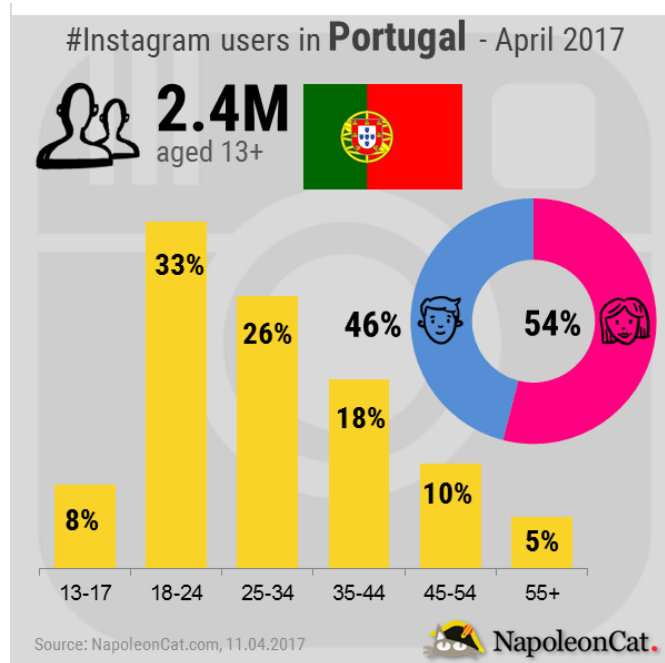


Figure 11 - Questionnaire

Conteúdos do Instagram

O meu nome é Rita Nascimento e sou finalista do Mestrado em Marketing do ISCTE Business School.

Este questionário é relativo à minha tese de mestrado sobre o Instagram e os seus conteúdos. Os vossos pontos de vista e a vossa opinião sincera são importantíssimos para esta investigação.

Todos os dados referidos serão tratados de forma anónima.

O questionário demora menos de 5 minutos.

Muito obrigada pela ajuda!

* Required

1. Tem uma conta no Instagram? *

Mark only one oval.

- Sim
- Não *Skip to question 13.*

2. Quantos seguidores tem? *

Mark only one oval.

- 0 - 200
- 201 - 400
- 401 - 1,000
- 1,001 - 3,000
- 3,001 - 5,000
- 5,001 - 10,000
- + 10,001

3. Com que frequência usa o Instagram? *

Mark only one oval.

- Diariamente
- Alguns dias por semana
- Algumas vezes por mês
- Ocasionalmente *Skip to question 13.*
- Nunca *Skip to question 13.*

Por favor, leia as seguintes afirmações referentes ao INSTAGRAM e diga de que maneira concorda com elas.

Considere:

1= Discordo Totalmente

7= Concordo Totalmente

4. Relativamente ao Instagram, *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1= Discordo Totalmente	2	3	4= Nem discordo, nem concordo	5	6	7= Concordo Totalmente
Sente que o Instagram é usado por pessoas semelhantes a si?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifica-se com as pessoas que utilizam o Instagram?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sente uma grande conexão com as pessoas que usam o Instagram?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sente que pertence a um "clube" com os outros usuários do Instagram?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Por favor, leia as seguintes afirmações referentes ao INSTAGRAM e diga de que maneira concorda com elas.

Considere:

1= Nunca

7= Sempre

5. Relativamente ao Instagram, *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1= Nunca	2	3	4= Às vezes	5	6	7= Sempre
Costuma seguir notícias sobre o Instagram?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visita frequentemente a galeria do próprio Instagram?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Estaria interessado em comprar merchandise do Instagram?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
É frequente falar do Instagram a outras pessoas?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

No Instagram, é comum que as pessoas publiquem posts onde referem marcas. Para tal podem usar texto, imagem ou também vídeo, tal como nos exemplos abaixo:



phoenix.noel

Seguir

phoenix.noel The cherry blossom tree in front of my local Starbucks is perfection! 🌸 ✨💕 I'm loving the Iced Coconut Milk Mocha Macchiato!

#Starbucks
#IcedCoconutMilkMochaMacchiato
#CherryBlossom #Spring #dairyfree
#coconutmilk

phoenix.noel @starbucks is where it's at 🍷

starbucks Hi @phoenix.noel! We love your photo and are sending you a DM about it. Please check your Instagram inbox when you have a moment. Thanks!

mrsmlc Best drink they have!!!

cws2la Starbucks reposted 🥰

mollv onthefly YUMMM this looks so



167 gostos

3/3

Inicia sessão para gostar ou comentar ...



airside_spotter

Seguir

airside_spotter TAP M&E, more than 70 years taking good care of our babies! 🤗✈️
#Embraer #E195 #TAP #tapportugal #tap
#Airplane #Avgeek #Airport #Aviation
#Lisboa #LPPT #Lisbon
#AeroportoLisboa #Humbertodelgado
#Instaviation #Spotting #Spotter
#Airplanespotter #Portugal #picoftheday
#photooftheday #airport #details #close
#engine #plane #flight #Ilovethis #love
#maintenance

serniofernandes83 Foto muito boa amigo!



261 gostos

24/4

Inicia sessão para gostar ou comentar ...

6. Já se deparou com este tipo de conteúdo? *

Mark only one oval.

Sim

Não Skip to question 13.

Em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações sobre o conteúdo acima referido.

Avalie numa escala entre:

1= Discordo totalmente

7= Concordo totalmente

7. Considero o conteúdo relativo a marcas publicado pelos usuários do Instagram *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1=Discordo totalmente	2	3	4= Nem discordo, nem concordo	5	6	7= Concordo Totalmente
Como prático	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Como útil	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Como necessário	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Como funcional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Considero o conteúdo relativo a marcas publicado pelos usuários do Instagram *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1= Discordo Totalmente	2	3	4= Nem discordo, nem concordo	5	6	7= Concordo Totalmente
Como agradável	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Como entretenimento	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Como empolgante	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Como divertido	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Considero que o conteúdo relativo a marcas publicado pelos usuários do Instagram *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1= Discordo Totalmente	2	3	4= Nem discordo, nem concordo	5	6	7= concordo totalmente
Aproxima-me dos usuários que o publicam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incentiva-me a conectar mais com os outros	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Permite tornar-me mais próximo dos outros	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afeta-me socialmente	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

O uso do conteúdo

Por favor, leia as seguintes afirmações.

Considere:

1= Nunca

7= Sempre

10. Com que frequência costuma realizar as seguintes atividades em relação ao conteúdo publicado por usuários no Instagram sobre marcas *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1= Nunca	2	3	4= Às vezes	5	6	7= Sempre
Leio os "posts"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visualizo as fotografias	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leio os comentários	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visualizo os vídeos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Com que frequência costuma realizar as seguintes atividades em relação ao conteúdo publicado por usuários no Instagram sobre marcas *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1= Nunca	2	3	4= Às vezes	5	6	7= Sempre
Coloco "Like" nos vídeos que mostram a marca x	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partilho esse conteúdo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Escrevo comentários aos posts que mostram a marca X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coloco "Like" nas fotografias que mostram a marca X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Com que frequência realiza as seguintes atividades no Instagram? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1= Nunca	2	3	4= Às vezes	5	6	7= Sempre
Posto vídeos sobre a marca X no meu feed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Escrevo comentários sobre a marca X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Posto fotografias sobre a marca X no meu feed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dados Demográficos

13. Sexo *

Mark only one oval.

- Feminino
 Masculino

14. Idade *

Mark only one oval.

- 15 - 20
 21 - 25
 26 - 30
 31 - 35
 36 - 40
 + 41

15. Nível Académico *

Mark only one oval.

- Ensino Básico
- Ensino Secundário
- Licenciatura
- Mestrado
- Doutoramento

16. Ocupação *

Mark only one oval.

- Estudante
- Empregado
- Desempregado

17. Cidade onde vive *

Figure 12 – Results: Do you have an Instagram account?

Tem uma conta no Instagram?

402 responses

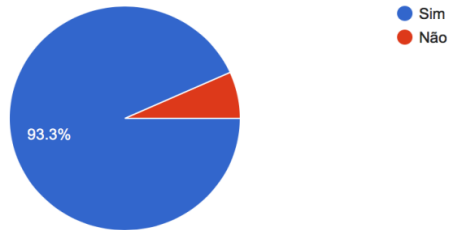


Figure 13 - Results: How often do you use Instagram?

Com que frequência usa o Instagram?

375 responses

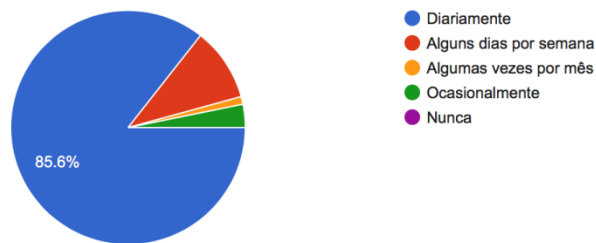


Figure 14 – Results: How many followers do you have?

Quantos seguidores tem?

375 responses

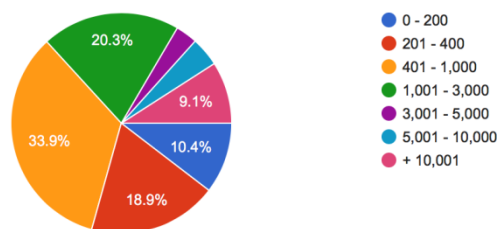


Figure 15– Results: Have you ever encountered UGC on Instagram?

Já se deparou com este tipo de conteúdo?

363 responses

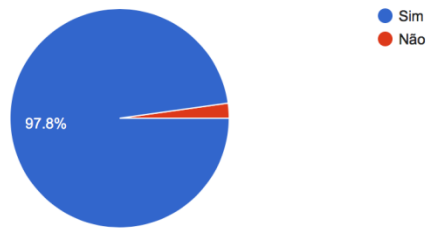


Figure 16 - Results: Age

Idade

402 responses

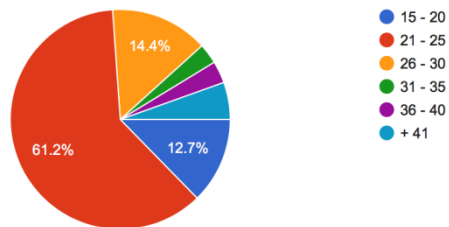


Figure 17 – Results: Gender

Sexo

402 responses

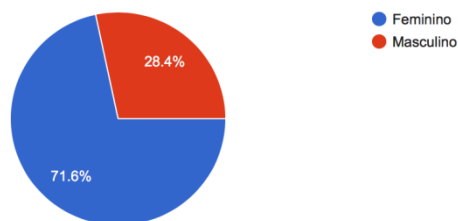


Table 9 - Questionnaire Items

COMMUNITY1	Sente que o Instagram e usado por pessoas semelhantes a si? To what extent is Instagram used by people like yourself? (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)
COMMUNITY2	Identifica-se com as pessoas que utilizam o Instagram? Do you identify with people who use Instagram? (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)
COMMUNITY3	Sente uma grande conexao com as pessoas que usam o Instagram? Do you feel a deep connection with others who use Instagram? (Keller, 2013)
COMMUNITY4	Sente que pertence a um "clube" com os outros usuários do Instagram? Do you feel like you belong to a 'club' with other users of Instagram? (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)
ENGAGEMENT1	Costuma seguir noticias sobre o Instagram? To what extend do you follow news about Instagram? (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)
ENGAGEMENT2	Visita frequentemente a galeria do proprio Instagram? How often do you visit the Instagram web site (feed)? (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)
ENGAGEMENT3	Estaria interessado em comprar merchandise do Instagram? Would you be interested in buying merchandise with the Instagram name on it? (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)
ENGAGEMENT4	É frequente falar do Instagram a outras pessoas? How often do you talk about Instagram to others? (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010)
FV1	Como prático? Is practical? (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
FV2	Como útil? Is useful? (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
FV3	Como necessário? Is necessary? (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
FV4	Como funcional? Is functional? (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
EV1	Como agradável? Is pleasant?

	(Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
EV2	Como entretenimento? Is entertaining? (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
EV3	Como empolgante? Is exciting? (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
EV4	Como divertido? Is fun? (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; De Vries, N. J., & Carlson, J., 2014)
SV1	Aproxima-me dos usuários que o publicam. I become close to other people. (Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2012)
SV2	Incentiva-me a conectar mais com os outros. Encourages my social connections. (Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2012)
SV3	Permite tornar-me mais próximo dos outros. I feel at one with people. (Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2012)
SV4	Afeta-me socialmente. Affects me socially. (Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2012)
CONS1	Leio os posts. I read posts related to Brand X on social media. (Schivinski <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CONS2	Visualizo as fotografias. I watch pictures related to Brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CONS3	Leio os comentários. I read fan page(s) related to Brand X on social networking sites. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CONS4	Visualizo os vídeos. I watch graphics related to Brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CONT1	Coloco "Like" nos videos que mostram a marca X. I "Like" graphics related to Brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CONT2	Partilho esse conteúdo. I share Brand X related posts. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CONT3	Escrevo comentários aos posts que mostram a marca X. I comment on posts related to Brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CONT4	Coloco "Like" nas fotografias que mostram a marca X. I "Like" pictures related to Brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CREAT1	Posto videos sobre a marca X no meu feed. I post videos that show Brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)

CREAT2	Escrevo comentarios sobre a marca X. I write posts related to brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)
CREAT3	Posto fotografias sobre a marca X no meu feed. I post pictures related to Brand X. (Schivinski, <i>et al.</i> , 2016)

Table 10 - Construct Reliability and Validity Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Community	0,815	0,857	0,811	0,535
Consumption	0,822	0,827	0,822	0,538
Contribution	0,803	0,837	0,810	0,526
Creation	0,876	0,880	0,876	0,702
Emotional Value	0,948	0,955	0,947	0,819
Engagement	0,677	0,686	0,681	0,349
Functional Value	0,907	0,913	0,908	0,712
Social Value	0,889	0,912	0,897	0,690

Table 11 - Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Community	Consumption	Contribution	Creation	Emotional Value	Engagement	Functional Value	Social Value
Community								
Consumption	0,405							
Contribution	0,454	0,568						
Creation	0,355	0,291	0,606					
Emotional Value	0,321	0,507	0,592	0,327				
Engagement	0,546	0,452	0,576	0,357	0,351			
Functional Value	0,387	0,503	0,571	0,264	0,710	0,403		
Social Value	0,475	0,414	0,621	0,344	0,624	0,530	0,544	

Table 12 - Cross Loadings

	Community	Engagement	Functional Value	Emotional Value	Social Value	Consumption	Contribution	Creation
Community1	0,690	0,221	0,295	0,213	0,243	0,288	0,222	0,081
Community2	0,873	0,324	0,317	0,257	0,326	0,336	0,363	0,284
Community3	0,876	0,386	0,267	0,239	0,369	0,241	0,352	0,335
Community4	0,749	0,352	0,183	0,205	0,354	0,200	0,273	0,264
Engagement1	0,332	0,796	0,197	0,174	0,320	0,258	0,304	0,233
Engagement2	0,234	0,723	0,106	0,097	0,211	0,238	0,259	0,204
Engagement3	0,237	0,685	0,274	0,280	0,323	0,238	0,340	0,207
Engagement4	0,384	0,643	0,322	0,254	0,312	0,228	0,315	0,144
FV1	0,239	0,278	0,898	0,624	0,391	0,376	0,460	0,208
FV2	0,289	0,306	0,915	0,605	0,463	0,428	0,490	0,217
FV3	0,337	0,281	0,831	0,564	0,480	0,344	0,418	0,228
FV4	0,289	0,224	0,890	0,542	0,417	0,392	0,418	0,181
EV1	0,248	0,241	0,637	0,920	0,467	0,391	0,504	0,286
EV2	0,224	0,241	0,576	0,922	0,499	0,419	0,507	0,246
EV3	0,302	0,278	0,629	0,936	0,580	0,414	0,472	0,316
EV4	0,273	0,266	0,605	0,940	0,591	0,440	0,491	0,268
SV1	0,371	0,349	0,459	0,553	0,878	0,342	0,466	0,257
SV2	0,355	0,389	0,479	0,517	0,934	0,313	0,505	0,300
SV3	0,384	0,356	0,481	0,537	0,947	0,309	0,515	0,297
SV4	0,315	0,323	0,267	0,382	0,697	0,261	0,357	0,201
CONS1	0,289	0,302	0,398	0,392	0,307	0,845	0,380	0,203
CONS2	0,246	0,248	0,360	0,326	0,244	0,832	0,351	0,135
CONS3	0,290	0,273	0,320	0,365	0,331	0,732	0,399	0,269

CONS4	0,223	0,262	0,328	0,358	0,254	0,818	0,390	0,192
CONT1	0,355	0,351	0,516	0,528	0,512	0,478	0,879	0,356
CONT2	0,178	0,257	0,214	0,261	0,304	0,262	0,624	0,375
CONT3	0,337	0,417	0,355	0,380	0,417	0,327	0,804	0,528
CONT4	0,331	0,315	0,464	0,467	0,438	0,393	0,848	0,356
CREAT1	0,302	0,247	0,209	0,294	0,281	0,222	0,424	0,878
CREAT2	0,289	0,274	0,217	0,286	0,293	0,228	0,489	0,920
CREAT3	0,281	0,225	0,204	0,227	0,246	0,212	0,427	0,886