UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

"Sex Sells", But Who's Buying?

The Effect of Sexual Appeals on Purchase Intention in Influencer Marketing

Pedro Francisco de Castro Couto Bastos

Católica Porto Business School

2022

UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

"Sex Sells", But Who's Buying?

The Effect of Sexual Appeals on Purchase Intention in Influencer Marketing

Final Dissertation Work presented to Católica Porto Business School to obtain a Master's degree in Marketing

Pedro Francisco de Castro Couto Bastos

Under the guidance of

Professor Joana César Machado

Professor Carla Martins

Católica Porto Business School

October 2022

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professors Joana César Machado and Carla Martins for their invaluable guidance, support, and feedback throughout this thesis, as well as for their encouragement and patience, for which I will be forever grateful.

I would also like to thank Católica Porto Business School for the opportunity to participate in this Master's degree, as well as to all the professors, colleagues, and everyone who has been part of this journey.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, my sister and Joana, without whose love and unconditional support this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you for believing in me.

Resumo

Na última década, o Marketing de Influência tornou-se parte integrante dos planos de marketing das empresas. De acordo com a literatura académica existente, as colaborações entre marcas e influenciadores digitais são mais persuasivas do que a publicidade tradicional. Contudo, pouco se conhece relativamente aos fatores que determinam a sua eficácia. O aforismo de que "sexo vende" domina a publicidade tradicional e parece perpetuar-se em redes sociais como o Instagram, apesar da falta de fundamentação académica. Este estudo pretende colmatar esta lacuna na literatura ao analisar o efeito de diferentes modos de apresentação do corpo feminino (inconspícua vs. conspícua) na intenção de compra dos consumidores. A análise dos dados recolhidos através de um questionário online administrado a utilizadores portugueses do Instagram sugere a existência de um efeito negativo da exibição conspícua do corpo feminino nas intenções de compra, mediado pela perceção de credibilidade da fonte, atitude em relação à colaboração e à marca. Ao demonstrar empiricamente a existência deste efeito, o presente estudo contribui para o crescente acervo de literatura dedicada ao Marketing de Influência e apresenta diretrizes estratégicas para a seleção e elaboração de parcerias com influenciadores digitais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Marketing de Influência, Influenciadores Digitais, Credibilidade da Fonte, *Endorsement Attitude*, *Brand Attitude*, Intenção de Compra, Instagram

Abstract

Over the last decade, Influencer Marketing has become an integral part of firms' marketing plans. According to extant literature, brands-influencers collaborations may be more persuasive than traditional advertising. However, little is known about the factors that drive its effectiveness. The aphorism that "sex sells" pervades traditional advertising and seems to be perpetuated in social media platforms like Instagram, though little academic evidence supports it. The present study addresses this research gap by examining the effect of different modes of exhibition of the female body (inconspicuous vs. conspicuous) on consumers' purchase intention. The analysis of the data collected through an online questionnaire administered to Portuguese Instagram users revealed that conspicuous exhibition of the female body negatively affects purchase intention. The effect is serially mediated by source credibility, endorsement attitude and brand attitude. By providing empirical evidence for the effect of different modes of self-presentation on attitudinal and behavioral change, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on Influencer Marketing and provides managers with important guidelines to select and design brand-influencers collaboration strategies.

KEYWORDS: Influencer Marketing, Social Media Influencers, Source Credibility, Endorsement Attitude, Brand Attitude, Purchase Intentions, Instagram

Word Count: 9781

x

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Introduction

Traditional advertising has long used female nudity to promote products and services (Reichert et al., 1999; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). The strategy, based on the assumption that "sex sells", has likewise become popular for influencer marketing (IM) (Su et al., 2020) and, overall, among users fighting for visibility on social media (SM) (Bell et al., 2018; Prichard et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2017).

IM refers to the use of social media influencers (SMI), users with influence over a sizeable network of followers (Delbaere et al., 2021), to create and promote branded content among their following - usually the brand's target audiences (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). As consumers increasingly rely on peer-to-peer communications and have, conversely, grown wary of mass advertising and traditional celebrity endorsements (Kotler et al., 2017), SMI endorsements emerged as a viable solution for brands to circumvent the loss of control over brand-related content on social media (SM) and build brand awareness and engagement online (Delbaere et al., 2021).

In recent years, IM has grown to assume a key role in marketing plans and expenditures (De Vries et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2019). Data suggests that IM's global market size more than doubled from 2019 to 2021, reaching a record value of 13.8 billion dollars. IM thrived during the pandemic and is expected to continue growing in upcoming years (Statista, 2021a). At the same time, the popularity of IM encouraged the proliferation of aspiring SMIs (Min, 2019), which created a more competitive and complex environment and made the struggle for visibility more pressing (Abidin, 2016, 2018; Marwick, 2015).

Sexual appealing stimuli (especially depicting the female body) are commonly acknowledged in literature as effective attention-getting mechanisms

(Amyx & Amyx, 2011; Dahl et al., 2009; Reichert et al., 2001; Reichert & Fosu, 2005), which justifies its prevalence in mass media (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). However, there is still mixed evidence for its effectiveness in improving brand attitudes or purchase intentions. If on the one hand, a number of studies found no significant effect on attitudinal or behavioral change (Putrevu, 2008; Wirtz et al., 2017; Wyllie et al., 2014); on the other hand, some studies suggest that these stimuli might even lead to lower purchase intentions (Gramazio et al., 2020; Lull & Bushman, 2015). Similarly, Lindstrom (2008, p. 68) argues that sexual appeals have a vampiric effect, draining all the viewer's focus and blinding them to "all the other information in the ad—even the name of the product itself". Though, research on the subject in the IM context is still scarce (Delbaere et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2019; Majid et al., 2019; Rundin & Colliander, 2021), Su et al. (2020) found that sexual stimuli might undermine perceived trust in an SMI and, therefore, decrease purchase intentions.

Nevertheless, conspicuous body depictions remain appealing for marketers and content creators looking to stand out on SM, especially on Instagram, a photo- and video-sharing application with approximately one billion users worldwide (Bell et al., 2018; Prichard et al., 2018; Slater et al., 2017; Su et al., 2020), two-thirds of which younger than 34 years old (Statista, 2021a; Tankovska, 2021). Despite previous studies on IM focused mainly on Twitter and Facebook, Instagram has recently drawn the attention of academic research (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Evans et al., 2017) for several reasons: first, it is the most popular platform for IM (Statista, 2021b); second, individuals spend more time on Instagram than on similar platforms and consider it more intimate, because it is primarily used for sharing visual content from their personal lives (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016); third, Instagram encourages users to engage more frequently in appearance-related activities than less visual-centric SM (Bue, 2020); finally, despite its algorithms being unaudited, empirical

investigations suggest that Instagram favors content that displays female nudity, with bikini photographs typically yielding considerably higher reach, engagement and number of impressions (Chen, 2021; Kayser-Bril et al. 2020).

Considering this relevant gap in the literature and the fact that the effectiveness of IM on sales performance remains ambiguous (Majid et al., 2019; Voorveld, 2019), this study examined the following research question: "Do sex appeals improve purchase intention on IM?" Grounded on celebrity endorsement literature, and particularly on the source credibility model, we conducted an experimental study to investigate how different modes of an SMI's presentation (wearing a bikini vs. fully clothed) affect perceived source credibility, attitudes (towards endorsement and brand) and purchase intention, with the proposed conceptual model considering a serial mediation.

Following this introduction, section 2 provides the theoretical background underpinning the developed research hypotheses and the proposed conceptual model. The third section includes the research methodology and in the fourth section the pretest results are presented. Section 5 includes the results from the measurement model, hypotheses testing and serial mediation analysis. In the final section, results and managerial implications are discussed, limitations are presented and avenues for future research suggested.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Influencer Marketing

Widespread adoption of SM changed the way individuals behave, communicate, and present themselves (Belk, 2013). SM platforms shifted market dynamics, threatening firms' competitive positioning and empowering consumers at an unprecedented scale (Alves et al., 2016).

SM are "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" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Examples include social-networking sites (Facebook, Instagram), content community sites (Pinterest, YouTube), blogs (WordPress), microblogs (Twitter) or platforms dedicated to feedback (Yelp, TripAdvisor) (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Among Web 2.0 principles, it is worth highlighting user participation, collaboration and interaction, because they enabled users to evolve from passive recipients of information to become active content co-creators (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). SM content is mainly peer-generated: users create personal profiles, share photographs, videos, information, interact with other users, react to their content, write online reviews, and form relationships (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016; Labrecque et al., 2011; Maslowska et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2012). Thus, more than extending more than extending consumers' demand- and information-based power (by providing access to countless retail options and to information that was previously inaccessible or difficult to obtain), SM empowered its users with a stage to voice their opinions and extend their network reach, potentially influencing the markets with their inputs (Labrecque et al., 2013). These new affordances contributed to an horizontalization and socialization of consumer trust (Kotler et al., 2017), as individuals tend to rely

more on their peers, with whom they share greater intimacy - and especially on the *f-factor* (followers, friends, family)-, than on traditional celebrities (De Veirman et al., 2017) or firm-initiated messages (Brown et al., 2007; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010).

Accordingly, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) - "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39) – became the preferred source of information and influence on SM (Boerman et al., 2017; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014). As brands participate as equal actors or nodes in the social network (Peters et al., 2013), their previous authority over the creation and distribution of brand-related content online (Peters et al., 2013), is diminished and shared with other users who generate, modify, and share them with their following (Gensler et al., 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). Using the "marketing pinball" framework, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010) compared marketers' loss of control over brand messages on SM to the ball launch on a pinball game, whose trajectory is unpredictable, accelerated and diverted by "bumpers" in possibly chaotic ways. If a brand's control over brand messages is somewhat reduced to participating in conversations online (Maslowska et al., 2016), they can nevertheless act as "flippers", providing boundary conditions (Gensler et al., 2013), monitoring, influencing and stimulating the spread of favorable brand-related eWOM (Torres et al., 2019). Adapting to this new paradigm, it is imperative for brands on SM to transition from control to influence (Peters et al., 2013), which "is a function of reach, the degree of the person's embeddedness in the social network, and persuasiveness, linked to the relevance of the content the person creates online" (Labrecque et al., 2013, p. 258). Since social power is not uniformly distributed and some users (SMIs) have disproportionate influence over others, endorsing them has become a popular

strategy for brands to regain some of the lost power (Kozinets et al., 2010) and,

most importantly, increase their influence over their target audiences online.

2.2. Social Media Influencers

According to Delbaere et al. (2021, p. 2), SMIs are "third-party users of social media who have achieved micro-celebrity status in the form of large followings on social media platforms and who have a position of influence on their audience". In a sense, SMI are the latest form of celebrity arising from the "demotic turn", a term coined by Turner (2006) to describe the process that started with reality TV and consists on the transition of apparently untalented, ordinary people (Khamis et al., 2016) from the peripheral non-media margins of cultural life to its center: celebrity (Couldry, 2002; Gountas et al., 2012).

SMIs are neither traditional celebrities nor typical consumers, but occupy an intermediate position as *meso-celebrities* (Giles et al., 2018) that makes them particularly effective endorsers (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Trivedi & Sama, 2020). Though their sphere of influence separates them from ordinary SM users, they are nonetheless perceived as peers (Schouten et al., 2020) - status elevation and social distance that is further obscured, for instance, by the fact that their audiences are "followers" rather than "fans" (Abidin, 2016). Extant literature suggests that influencer endorsements might elicit more positive attitudes – here understood as an "individual's internal evaluation of an object such as a branded product" (Mitchell & Olson, 1981, p. 318) - and purchase intentions - "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand" (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 56) - than celebrity endorsements (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Schouten et al., 2020; Trivedi & Sama, 2020), though this edge is still debatable (Delbaere et al., 2021), considering that academic research on IM is still scarce (Rundin & Colliander, 2021; Torres et al., 2019; Voorveld, 2019).

2.3. Self-Presentation Online

SMIs create distinctive public images by engaging in self-branding practices (Khamis et al., 2016), typically curating well-crafted profiles that display content from their personal lives in a compelling manner (Abidin, 2018; Ki & Kim, 2019). This self-disclosure enhances in their audiences the perception of being authentic (Audrezet et al., 2018; Pöyry et al., 2019), relatable (Cheah et al., 2019; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) and trustworthy (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Majid et al., 2019). More than stimulating a sense of identification and similarity, providing a window into their daily lives fosters the illusion of intimacy (Jin et al., 2019; Kim & Song, 2016), giving these interactions a parasocial nature.

Parasocial interactions are a "simulacrum of a conversational give and take" (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 215) between users and media performers: it is an (illusory) experience of the viewer who feels like being in a reciprocal exchange with a performer, rather than in passive observation (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). These interactions are necessarily one-sided, controlled by the performer who suggests reciprocity by directly addressing the audience (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). The concept was developed in relation to the feelings of perceived friendship, intimacy and identification that individuals established with television or radio characters (Dibble et al., 2016; Kassing & Sanderson, 2009; Liebers & Schramm, 2019), but it is just as relevant for SM, where the distance between celebrities and audiences is narrowed and opportunities for more frequent and deeper interactions abound (Chung & Cho, 2017; Lueck, 2012). Successful SMIs represent a role to their followers similar to a distant friend in which recommendations they trust (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). This unprecedented illusory proximity (Aw & Labrecque, 2020; Yuksel & Labrecque, 2016) carries many advantages such as increased loyalty (Labrecque, 2014), resistance to negative information (Um, 2013) and, especially, an heightened

desire and likelihood to imitate (Casaló et al., 2018; Cheah et al., 2019), which constitutes the main mechanism through which SMIs influence behaviors (Ki & Kim, 2019).

One of main determinants for the development of parasocial interactions is physical attraction, increasing the likelihood and motivation for viewers to feel addressed by the performer (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). Therefore, sexual suggestiveness has been commonly used as a shortcut for intimacy (Horton & Wohl, 1956), both in traditional advertising and SM through the use of the so-called "thirst traps" (Chen, 2021) - sexually appealing images. As Kim Kardashian acknowledged when receiving an *Influencer Award*: "I'm shocked that I'm winning a fashion award when I'm naked most of the time" (Karimzadeh & Campbell, 2018). Kardashian's comments are in line with self-presentation theory (Goffman, 1956; Hogan, 2010), which states that individuals on SM try to curate an idealized presentation of the self that generates a positive impression on the audience. Empirical studies (Chen, 2021; Kayser-Bril et al. 2020) show that on Instagram photos containing women wearing bikinis tend to generate substantially more impressions – the number of times a particular content is displayed on other users' feeds – and likes (Chua & Chang, 2016). "Likes" constitute a relevant feedback and validation mechanism that allows viewers to effortlessly provide feedback, and content creators to measure the audience's reaction in an immediate, quantifiable way (Bell et al., 2018). Therefore, it is likely that users feel motivated to post them more frequently (Bue, 2020; Fardouly et al., 2018), not only as a self-branding practice based on the assumption that "sex sells", but also due to the need to adapt to Instagram's algorithms.

2.4. Conspicuousness of Body Display

The premise that "sex sells" has guided advertising at least since the 19th century (Amyx & Amyx, 2011; Wirtz et al., 2017). Brands like *Calvin Klein*, *American Apparel* or *Abercrombie & Fitch* notoriously used provocative, hypersexual imagery to promote their products (Reichert et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2012; Wan & Luk, 2014) – a strategy that lingers on IM (Bell et al., 2018; Fardouly & Holland, 2018).

In line with objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), content analyses suggest that sex remains mainly a female resource as female sexuality is significantly more valued than male's (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004): women routinely see their value reduced to the appearance of their body parts and are substantially more likely to be depicted in a sexualized manner than men (Gramazio et al., 2020; Nelson & Paek, 2008; Reichert et al., 1999). Accordingly, Evolutionary Psychology maintains that in the course of evolution women were conditioned to place more emphasis on physical attractiveness (and men on wealth accumulation) to enhance reproductive success (Singh, 1993), developing intra-sexual rivalry based on physical attractiveness rating (Saad & Gill, 2009)

Moreover, the propensity for women to compare themselves with peers is greater than with ideal figures (Tiggemann et al., 2018). Thus, female users are more prone to engage in self-objectification - "selfie-objectification" (Bell et al., 2018)-, or the internalization of "an observer's perspective as a primary view of their physical selves" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 173), and most objectified depictions on SM are self-images ("selfies").

According to Reichert et al. (2001, p. 14), sexual appeals can be defined as "messages, whether as brand information in advertising contexts or as persuasive appeals in social marketing contexts, that are associated with sexual

information". Sexual information typically includes verbal (e.g. verbal innuendo, explicit copy) and, more commonly, visual (physically attractive models, partial nudity, suggestive posture) elements (Putrevu, 2008; Reichert, 2003). Sexual appeals are usually defined in terms of sexual explicitness (sexually provocative language and actions) or nudity (Reichert, 2003). Nudity refers to the amount of clothing worn by models in ads (Putrevu, 2008) and is one of the most common uses of sexual appeals in advertising (Beetles & Harris, 2005; Reichert, 2003; Wirtz et al., 2017). It has been coded into four different levels, according to the explicitness of attire: demure (e.g. "everyday clothing"), suggestive (e.g. short skirts and shorts), partially clad (e.g. bikini, underwear) and nude (Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Putrevu, 2008).

The use of partially clad women dressed in a way that accentuates their physiques is among the most common types of sexual content in advertising (Reichert et al., 2012), and previous research has frequently used the contrast between fully-clothed models and models wearing bikinis as examples of non-sexualized vs. sexualized depictions, respectively (Bell et al., 2018; Cui & Yang, 2009; Fardouly & Holland, 2018; Wirtz et al., 2017).

If on the one hand, marketers and content creators were eager to adopt sexualized depictions, on the other hand, research is yet to validate the effectiveness of most of its proposed benefits.

2.5. Effectiveness of Sex Appeals

With influencer culture growing at an accelerated pace, marketers and brands are faced with new challenges. Among them are the difficulty to find the most appropriate approach and metrics to measure the success of their strategies (Silva et al., 2020; VanMeter et al., 2018). According to research, the most

commonly metrics are the number of likes, followers, and shares (Borah et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019), since they are readily-available, simple, highly-visible and satisfy the necessity to present top management teams concrete numbers (Silva et al., 2020). However, researchers suggest that focusing on these quantitative indicators might be misleading and counterproductive (John et al., 2016; Peters et al., 2013). First, because likes and followers can be inexpensively bought (Maheshwari, 2017); and second, because "liking" is oftentimes a gratuitous act left indiscriminately by users as they scroll through an infinite stream of content, it does not necessarily translate into genuine engagement, attitudinal or behavioral change (John et al., 2016). Focusing on quantity instead of quality of interactions has proven itself costly (Graham, 2019; Johnson, 2017). Nonetheless, many firms continue to employ tactics that aimlessly generate "vanity metrics" (Rogers, 2018, p. 1), while aspiring SMIs fighting for visibility in the attention economy (Marwick, 2015) employ modes of self-presentation that enhance those indicators.

Academic literature confirms the pervasive assumption that sexually appealing ads are attention-getting, likeable, memorable, improve affect, attitudes and purchase intention (Dahl et al., 2009; Putrevu, 2008; Reichert et al., 2001). While there is some consensus that sexual appeals are attention-grabbing (Dahl et al., 2009; Reichert et al., 2001; Wyllie et al., 2014), some studies suggest that these stimuli can have a "Vampire Effect" (Lindstrom, 2008, p. 67): sexual information is so eye-catching that it might "drain" all the viewer's attention, blinding them to remaining product or brand-related information in the ad (Reichert et al., 2001; Reichert & Fosu, 2005). Accordingly, Putrevu (2008) contends that while there might be an increase in attitude towards the ad, it does not necessarily translate into more favorable brand attitudes. Furthermore, some studies found that sex stimuli either had no effect (Gramazio et al., 2020; Reichert

& Fosu, 2005; Wirtz et al., 2017; Wyllie et al., 2014) or resulted on lower purchase intentions (Gramazio et al., 2020; Lull & Bushman, 2015; Su et al., 2020).

According to the Elaboration-Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), the positive effects of sexual appeals are more strongly felt in low-involvement situations (Putrevu, 2008; Reichert et al., 2001, 2012), since subjects have less motivation to process information and are more easily influenced by peripheral cues like sexual stimuli. Additionally, Evolutionary Psychology and socialization-based models claim that men and women developed different reproductive strategies, which translate in different responses to sexual stimuli (Saad & Gill, 2000). Differences in parental investment (with women investing more resources and bearing greater parental costs) and in the socialization process resulted in women embracing a more relationship-based orientation towards sex when compared to men's more recreational attitude (Dahl et al., 2009). Hence, women tend to be more sensitive to short-term signals such as gratuitous sexual appeals, since these may be interpreted as contrary to relationship-building (Sengupta & Dahl, 2008) leading to reduced trust (Su et al., 2020). Moreover, if the endorsers are female it may also trigger intra-sexual rivalry among female viewers (Saad & Gill, 2009), who consider them less socially attractive and competent (Bell et al., 2018). Though men's short-term mating strategies resulted in an increased tendency to feel aroused by visual stimuli of the female body, and thus, to evaluate and react more positively to female nudity (Black & Morton, 2015; Kenrick et al., 2013; LaTour, 1990), male viewers tend to likewise consider women who present themselves in a sexualized manner as less competent and agentic (Bell et al., 2018). In light of the previous considerations, we assume the following hypotheses:

H1. Conspicuousness of body display has a negative effect on:

a) Source Credibility

b) Endorsement Attitude

c) Brand Attitude

d) Purchase Intention

2.6. Source Credibility

Understanding endorser effectiveness has become a key issue for practitioners and academics. Several models have been developed to assess the effectiveness of endorsement strategies, from which the most well-known are the match-up hypothesis, which contends that endorser effectiveness depends on the congruence between endorser and the endorsed product/brand images (Till & Busler, 2000); the meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989), according to which the effectiveness depends on the meanings an endorser brings to the endorsement process; the source attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985), which maintains that the effectiveness of a message depends on the source's perceived "similarity", "familiarity" and "likability"; and the source credibility (SC) model proposed by Hovland et al. (1953) that claims credibility – a bi-dimensional variable composed by perceived "trustworthiness" and "expertise" - is the main factor predicting source persuasiveness. Building on both models, Ohanian (1990) developed a three-dimensional SC construct comprising "attractiveness", "trustworthiness" and "expertise".

This conceptualization has since been widely adopted and considered a reliable and valid scale to measure SC (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Hughes et al., 2019; Stafford et al., 2002; Till & Busler, 2000). Furthermore, the scale is particularly advantageous for three other reasons. First, it allows researchers to analyze the impact of each component on endorser persuasiveness. Second, its components can be used as predictors of attitude toward endorsed product/brand and purchase intentions. Third, although originally focusing on celebrity endorsements, the scale is easily adaptable to a variety of situations,

making it ideal for experimental studies which require the assessment of the experimental manipulation, and to the evaluation of less famous individuals as spokespeople (Ohanian, 1990), which is typically the case of SMIs.

As literature suggests, the four models are not mutually exclusive, but complementary (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; McCracken, 1989) and have been jointly used (e.g. Liu & Brock, 2011; Schouten et al., 2020; Till & Busler, 1998). Since there is general agreement in research that credibility is a major determinant for endorser selection and effectiveness (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Erdogan, 1999; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Stafford et al., 2002); and due to its attention to the source's characteristics that predict attitudinal and behavioral change, the SC model seems the most suitably applicable to this study.

2.6.1.   Dimensions of Source Credibility

Numerous studies recognize the importance of endorser attractiveness, which is evidenced by the prevalence of physically attractive individuals in advertisements (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Caballero et al., 1989; Chaiken, 1979; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kirmani & Shiv, 1998; Petty et al., 1983; Till & Busler, 1998). Research suggests the existence of a "halo effect", meaning that holistic judgements about an endorser's character are positively influenced by physical attractiveness (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Ohanian, 1990). Good looking people are considered more likeable (Chaiken, 1979; Ohanian, 1990), smarter (Erdogan, 1999), more interesting, friendly (Chaiken, 1979), sensitive and kind (Baker & Churchill, 1977). Thus, physical attractiveness typically has a positive effect on attitude towards the endorsement, the product or brand endorsed (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979; Erdogan, 1999; Kahle

& Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1990; Till & Busler, 1998) and improves purchase intentions (Petty et al., 1983; Torres et al., 2019), especially in conditions of low-involvement (Erdogan, 1999; Petty et al., 1983; Rice et al., 2012; Seno & Lukas, 2007).

Expertise refers to "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions" (Hovland et al., 1953, p. 21). It generally alludes to the competence, knowledge or skills recognized by a target audience in a spokesperson (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Erdogan, 1999; Uribe et al., 2016). Research indicates that expertise positively affects attitude towards endorser, advertisement and brand (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Kapitan & Silvera, 2016; Majid et al., 2019; McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004) and purchase intentions (Hughes et al., 2019; Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004) and that it enhances perceived endorser-brand fit (Till & Busler, 1998). Expertise is a crucial dimension for IM (Ki & Kim, 2019; Majid et al., 2019), as SMI's typically present themselves (Schouten et al., 2020) and are to some extent expected to be knowledgeable in their areas of interest (Delbaere et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019), (e.g., fashion, travel, food or beauty) (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). According to ELM, expertise is an important effectiveness factor in both high and low-involvement categories. In high-involvement categories (e.g. financial, technical and industrial products and services), high-expertise sources tend to be more persuasive because their messages are considered more credible (Hughes et al., 2019; Uribe et al., 2016). Likewise, when there is little motivation for consumers to process brand messages, individuals rely on expertise as a significant peripheral cue (Pornpitakpan, 2004).

Trustworthiness is arguably the most important dimension of SC (Amos et al., 2008; Erdogan, 1999; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Trustworthiness relates to the perceived honesty, integrity and believability of the source (Bower &

Landreth, 2001; Erdogan, 1999; Hussain et al., 2020; Majid et al., 2019; McGinnies & Ward, 1980). Hovland et al. (1953, p. 21) defined it as "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid". Previous studies suggest that trustworthiness positively affects attitudinal change (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hussain et al., 2020; Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004) and purchase intentions (Chung & Cho, 2017; Hussain et al., 2020; Majid et al., 2019; Pornpitakpan, 2004). According to Wang and Scheinbaum (2018), trustworthiness is the most salient dimension of credibility in low-involvement conditions. Moreover, media modality studies show that trustworthy sources are more persuasive in visual media than in radio or written communications (Andreoli & Vorchel, 1978; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Hence, trustworthiness is crucial for IM, especially in visual-centric platforms like Instagram (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Su et al., 2020) where consumers encounter and interpret various symbolic signals to assess an SMI's acceptability (Chung & Cho, 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017; Su et al., 2020). In this sense, the evaluation of SMI's characteristics and projection of them via publications is key for developing consumer trust (Hussain et al., 2020; Su et al., 2020). Moreover, recent investigations emphasize that consumer trust in a SMI leads to higher purchase intentions and more favorable attitudes towards endorsements and brand/products endorsed (Audrezet et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2016; Delbaere et al., 2021; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Kay et al., 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Su et al., 2020). Conversely, SMI posts that jeopardize trustworthiness may lead to negative outcomes. For instance, Su et al. (2020) found that female consumers - typically more relationship-oriented and more skeptical in online environments (Dai et al., 2019) - rated male influencers who conspicuously displayed muscular bodies as less trustworthy, resulting in lower purchasing intentions. Therefore, SMIs should be careful with their self-presentations on SM, as to avoid exhibiting signals that hinder their perceived trustworthiness and the

development of meaningful relationships with their audience. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2. Source Credibility has a positive effect on:

a) Endorsement Attitude

b) Brand Attitude

c) Purchase Intention

2.7. Attitudes and Purchase Intention

Attitudes influence behavior through intentions, or conscious decisions to act in a particular way (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Purchase Intention (PI) has been particularly used by practitioners and scholars as a proxy for actual buying behavior, especially considering the difficulty to measure financial outcomes of IM campaigns (Chandon et al., 2005). Extant literature maintains that attitude toward the Ad is an important mediator of advertising content on brand attitude (AB) and purchase intention (PI) (MacKenzie et al., 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981). Following prior research on IM (Bergkvist et al., 2016; Torres et al., 2019), we will adopt the terminology "attitude towards the endorsement" (AE), since it better reflects the nature of SMI sponsored content. Mackenzie and Lutz (1989, p. 49) defined AE as "a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion". Moreover, research suggests that perceived SC (namely expertise) has a positive effect on AE (Bergkvist et al., 2016; Goldsmith et al., 2000). Previous studies also found sequential effects of AE to AB and PI, suggesting that AE affect AB which, in turn, influence PI (Choi & Rifon, 2012).

The findings were also verified in the context of IM (Torres et al., 2019). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3. Endorsement Attitude has a positive effect on:

a) Brand Attitude

b) Purchase Intention

AB has been defined as "a relatively enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior" (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 55). Literature suggests that SC significantly influences AB (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999; Ohanian, 1990). Considering that AB is commonly acknowledged in literature as an important predictor of consumer behavior (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Till & Busler, 2000), we propose the following hypothesis:

H4. Brand Attitude has a positive effect on Purchase Intention

Moreover, studies on IM suggest that the effect of source conspicuousness on PI is mediated by perceived credibility (Su et al., 2020); and that AE and AB serially mediate the effect of source characteristics on PI (Torres et al., 2019). Therefore, in agreement with several studies that have identified sequential effects of AE to AB and PI (Goldsmith et al., 2000; MacKenzie et al., 1986; Shimp, 1981; Spears & Singh, 2004), we propose the following hypotheses:

H5. The effect of Conspicuousness of Body Display on PI is mediated by:

a) Source Credibility (H1aH2c)

b) Source Credibility and Endorsement Attitude in serial (H1aH2aH3b)

c) Source Credibility and Brand Attitude in serial = (H1aH2bH4)

d) Endorsement Attitude and Brand Attitude in serial (H1bH3aH4)

e) Source Credibility, Endorsement Attitude and Brand Attitude in serial (H1aH2aH3aH4)

In light of the previous considerations, we developed the following serial mediation conceptual model based on Hayes' (2013) model 6 (Figures 1 and 2) to investigate the effect of SMI's sexual appeals on PI through SC, AE, and AB:
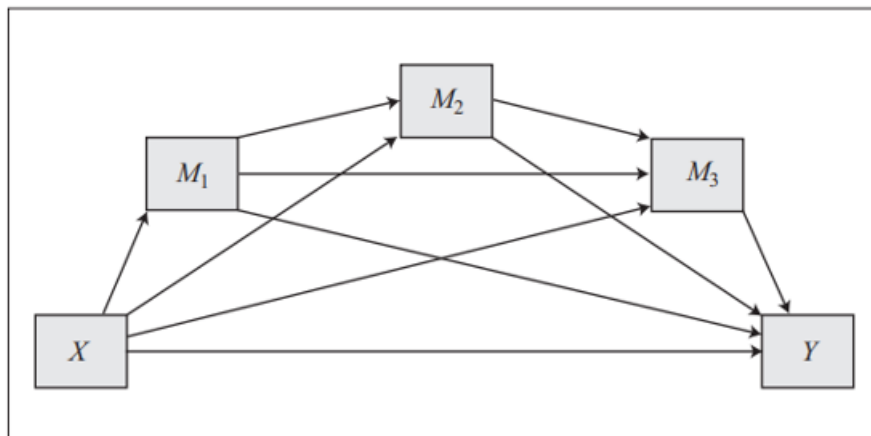
Figure 1 - Conceptual Diagram. Source: Hayes (2013)
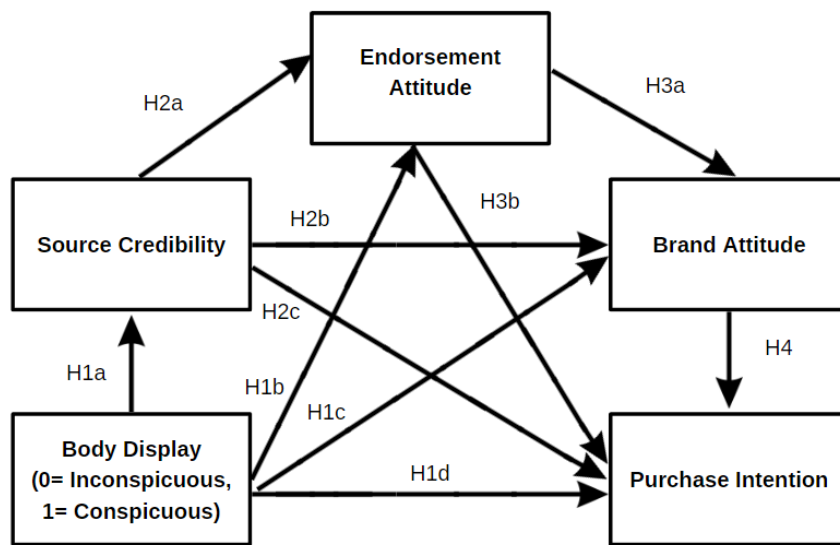
Figure 2 - Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

This study aims to understand the effects of female influencer's conspicuousness of body display on PI, via perceived SC, AE and AB. The research for this dissertation was conducted through quantitative analyses. Data were collected through two online questionnaires: a pretest and the main study. Questionnaires are generally considered the best method to obtain information concerning attitudinal and behavioral intention (Kerlinger, 1966). Online questionnaires are time-efficient and cost-effective (Deutskens, 2006). Moreover, consumers tend to be more sincere since responses are anonymous (Deutskens et al., 2006). The research has an exploratory nature, considering that the subject has not been previously studied in-depth, and an explanatory nature (Jackson, 2009), since an independent variable (conspicuousness) was manipulated to determine whether a cause-and-effect relationship between the variables under study exists.

3.2. Population and Sample

The current research focused on the Portuguese population. According to Hofstede (2001), Portuguese culture scores significantly lower on the individualism, masculinity, and indulgence dimensions, and higher on uncertainty avoidance than US culture, which might influence the results. To eliminate respondent bias and to ensure that respondents met our target specifications, subjects who said they didn't have an Instagram account, were younger than 18 years old, didn't like lemonade or weren't Portuguese were excluded. The data were collected using voluntary response and snowball

sampling techniques, by publishing the questionnaires on SM and asking participants to share them with other people.

3.3. Pretest and Results

3.3.1.Pretest on Attractiveness and Conspicuousness

Prior to the main study, a pretest was conducted to determine appropriate endorsers and stimuli (Appendix 1). The purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of body display (inconspicuous vs. conspicuous) on SC, AE, AB, and PI when the endorser is considered physically attractive. Thus, it was fundamental to ensure that the selected endorsers were considered not only attractive, but also that there were significant differences in the perceived conspicuousness with which the influencer displayed her body between both conditions. The use of fictitious endorsers allows for greater experimental control by minimizing the amount of variation in subjects' knowledge and association set related to the endorser and strengthening the statistical power of the analysis (Till & Busler, 1998; Till & Shimp, 1998). The pictures of both influencers (Figures 13 to 16) were selected from free image databases. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two versions (inconspicuous vs. conspicuous) of the questionnaire. To make our manipulation more realistic, in addition to the highlighted picture, eight other pictures were added to replicate an actual Instagram profile, according to each condition. Picture selection was based on previous research. According to Evolutionary Psychology (Saad, 2004, 2013, 2016; Singh, 1994), women with a waist-to-hip ratio of 0.7 are near-universally considered more attractive. Facial symmetry, light hair, clear skin (Buss & Schmitt, 2019) and a beautiful smile (Liu & Brock, 2011) also contribute to perceived attractiveness. Conspicuousness was controlled by exhibiting pictures

of the influencer either scantily clad (wearing a bikini) or fully-clothed (Bell et al., 2018; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Attractiveness was measured using Ohanian's (1990) 5-item, 7-point Likert Scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (Table 1). The reliability of the scale was measured using Cronbach's Alpha and revealed excellent internal consistency for both stimuli with $\alpha > 0.90$ (Table 2). Subjects were asked to evaluate their level of agreement with conspicuousness of the influencer's body display on a seven-point semantic Likert-scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" ("The influencer displays her body in an evident/conspicuous manner").

Attractiveness	Attractive
	Classy
	Beautiful
	Elegant
	Sexy
Trustworthiness	Dependable
	Honest
	Reliable
	Sincere
	Trustworthy
Expertise	Expert
	Experienced
	Knowledgeable
	Qualified
	Skilled

Table 1 - Source Credibility scale. Adapted from Ohanian (1990)

Attractiveness Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Classification
Stimulus 1	5	.921	Excellent
Stimulus 2	5	.911	Excellent

Table 2 - Cronbach's Alpha for Attractiveness. Source: SPSS Output

3.3.2. Results

A total of 59 responses were collected, with 31 (52,5%) answers for the conspicuous condition and 28 (47,5%) for the inconspicuous. Both influencers were considered attractive (M=5.4860, SD=1.27799) (Appendix 3.1). There was a significant difference (MD=.59298, SEdiff=.22521) between the means for perceived attractiveness for Influencer1 (M=5.7825 ,SD=1.26337) and for Influencer2 (M=5.1895, SD=1.23313), t(112)= 2.536, p<.001. Additionally, the mean difference for perceived conspicuousness between conditions was greater for Influencer1 [(MD=4.433, SEdiff=.371) ;t(55)= -12.427, p<.001] than for Influencer2 [(MD=-3.526, SEdiff= .444);t(55)= -8.277, p<.001]. Results reveal significant differences in perceived conspicuousness for Influencer1 between conditions. Moreover, this difference is greater for Influencer1 than Influencer2. Influencer1 was also considered highly attractive and significantly more attractive than Influencer2. Based on the results, the pictures from Influencer1 were selected for the main study.

3.4. Main Study

3.4.1.Subjects, Materials and Procedures

3.4.1.1.　Product Category

According to literature, the impact of endorser type is more significant for low-involvement than high-involvement product categories (Erdogan, 1999; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Liu & Brock, 2011). Under low-involvement conditions, consumers tend to focus on peripheral cues like the endorser's characteristics (Macinnis et al., 1991; Petty et al., 1983). Accordingly, low-involvement product endorsements are considerably more likely to contain sexual appeals (Reichert et al., 2012) to enhance attention and persuasion (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Furthermore, the mediating effect of AE is especially salient for new brands (Gresham et al., 1985; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). The use of a fictitious brand allows for greater experimental control the minimization of external effects such as preferences, familiarity, and likability. Additionally, SMI endorsements are commonly used to promote new brands (Delbaere et al., 2021). Hence, respondents were presented with a fictitious brand ("Hydra") for a typically low-involvement, non-sex specific product (lemonade). The can's design was partially inspired by the "Tropico" (a Coca-Cola brand targeted at young consumers) design (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - "Tropico" can (left) vs. "Hydra" can (right)

3.4.1.2.   Instagram Influencers

In addition to being the leading SM platform for IM (Statista, 2021b), being a visual-centric platform makes Instagram particularly relevant to conduct appearance-related investigations. To make our manipulation more realistic, an Instagram grid was presented, a "#pub" disclaimer was included, and a can of "Hydra" was edited into the picture. Additionally, the number of likes and user responses were manipulated to simulate an actual micro-influencer (SMIs with a range between ten and one hundred thousand followers), since these tend to be perceived as more trustworthy, authentic and accessible (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). The stimuli were loosely inspired by *Fanta* and *Sumol*'s IM campaigns (Figure 4).
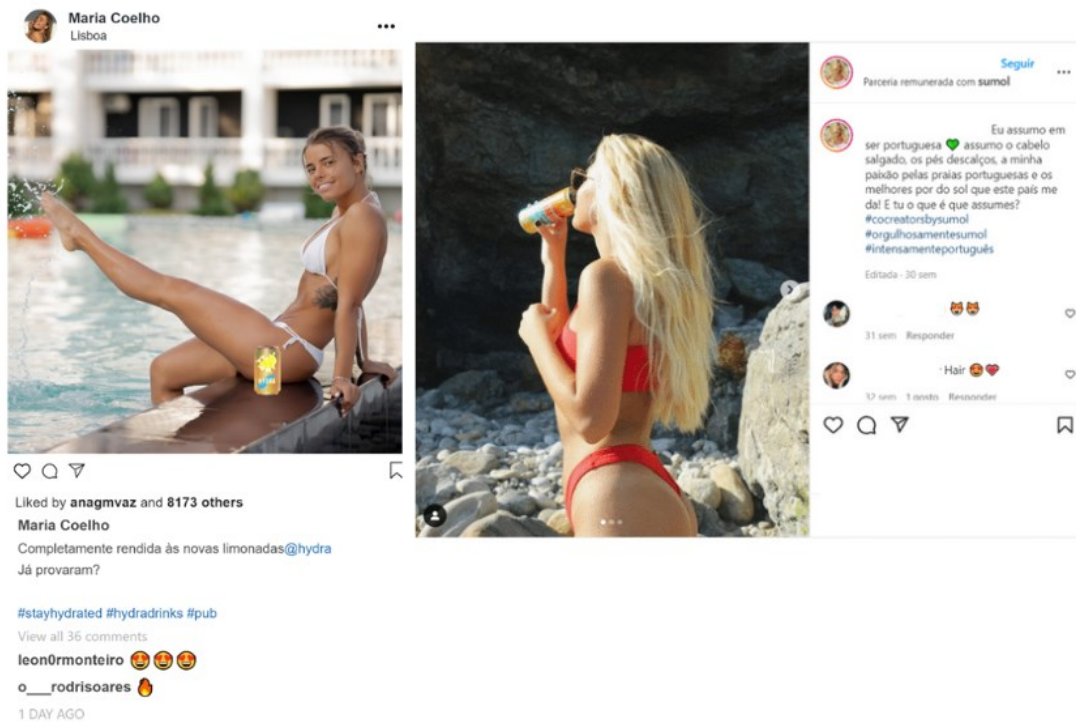
Figure 4 - Instagram sponsored posts: Hydra Mockup (left) vs. Sumol (right). Source: Instagram

3.4.1.3. Study Design

The study employed a between-subjects experimental design to investigate the effects of an influencer's type of body display on SC, AE, AB, and PI. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (body display: inconspicuous vs. conspicuous) in an online questionnaire. The images selected from the pretest's results were used as the main manipulation conditions. A "Hydra" can was inserted in each of the pictures, simulating an actual endorsement post. Moreover, eight more pictures were added to replicate an actual Instagram profile. Both the brand and influencer's presentations included brief descriptions.

3.4.1.4. Questionnaire and Measures

3.4.1.4.1. Questionnaire

Two versions of the questionnaire were developed based on the results from the pretest. The questionnaire was structured as follows: after being directed to one of the versions, respondents were presented with a brief description of the brand, endorsement, and a can image. After viewing the influencer's description, profile and sponsored post mockups, participants were asked to answer questions related to perceived SC, AE, AB and PI. In the last two sections subjects were requested to provide demographic and Instagram usage information (Appendix 2).

3.4.1.4.2. Measures

The variables under study were measured using scales widely adopted in marketing literature. The dimensions of SC (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise) were measured using Ohanian's (1990) 15-items, 7-point semantic differential scales, adapted into 7-point Likert-type scales (Table 1), ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". AE was measured using Mackenzie and Lutz's (1989) three semantic differential scales, AB was measured using items adapted from Simonin and Ruth (1998), and PI was measured using three semantic differential scales adapted from Till and Busler (2000) (see Table 3).

	Bad/Good	
Endorsement Attitude	Unpleasant/Pleasant	MacKenzie & Lutz (1989)
	Unfavorable/Favorable	
	Bad/Good	
Brand Attitude	Negative/Positive	Simonin & Ruth (1998)
	Unfavorable/Favorable	
	Unlikely/Likely	
Purchase Intention	Definitely would not/ Definitely would	Till & Busler (2000)
	Improbable/ Probable	

Table 3 - Endorsement Attitude, Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention scales. Adapted from Mackenzie & Lutz (1989), Simonin & Ruth (1998) and Till & Busler (2000)

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary Analysis

4.1.1. Data collection and screening

An online questionnaire was used to collect data through Google Forms between 21st August 2021 and 20th November 2021. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: inconspicuous vs. conspicuous body display. A total of 206 answers were collected for the two versions of the questionnaire, with 102 answers to the inconspicuous condition and 104 to the conspicuous condition.

After filtering out invalid responses based on screening questions like nationality, age (being over 18 years old), having an Instagram account (to ensure familiarity with the study's context), and liking lemonade; we conducted a multivariate analysis to test for outliers and exclude responses from unengaged participants. The final data set included 190 valid responses.

4.1.2. Demographic Characterization

Respondents' sex was evenly distributed: 51% female and 49% male. The vast majority of the participants (91,6%) were younger than 35 years old (48,9% were aged between 18 and 24 and 42,7% were aged between 25 and 34 years old) (Figure 5).
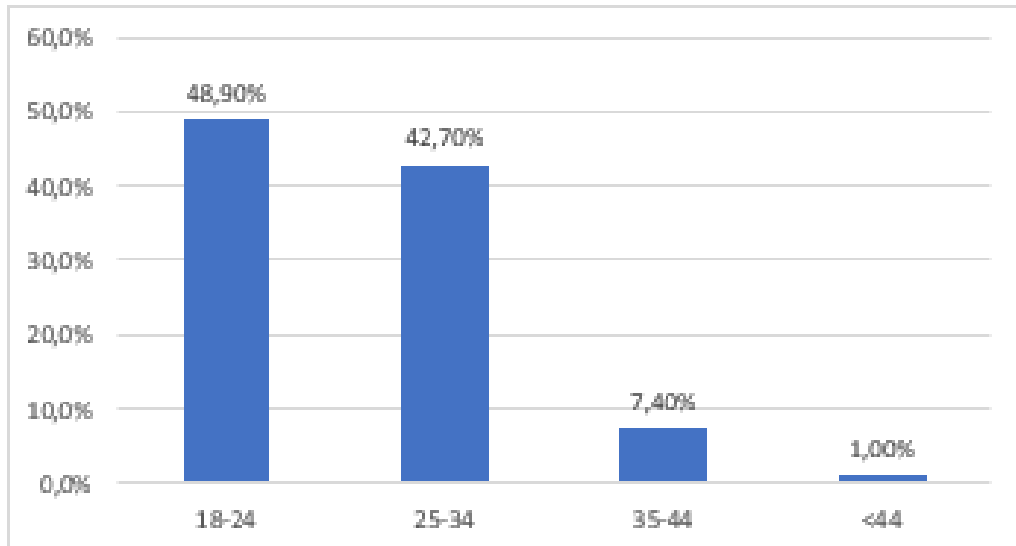
Figure 5 - Total Age Distribution

Regarding education (Figure 6), 45,3% of the respondents have a college degree, 36,3% completed high school, 14,7% have a Master's degree, 1,10% a PhD, 1,10% finished elementary school and 1,60% answered other (MBA, vocational technical school, etc.). Porto was the most common district of residency (31%), followed by Lisbon (6,8%) and Aveiro (4,7%).
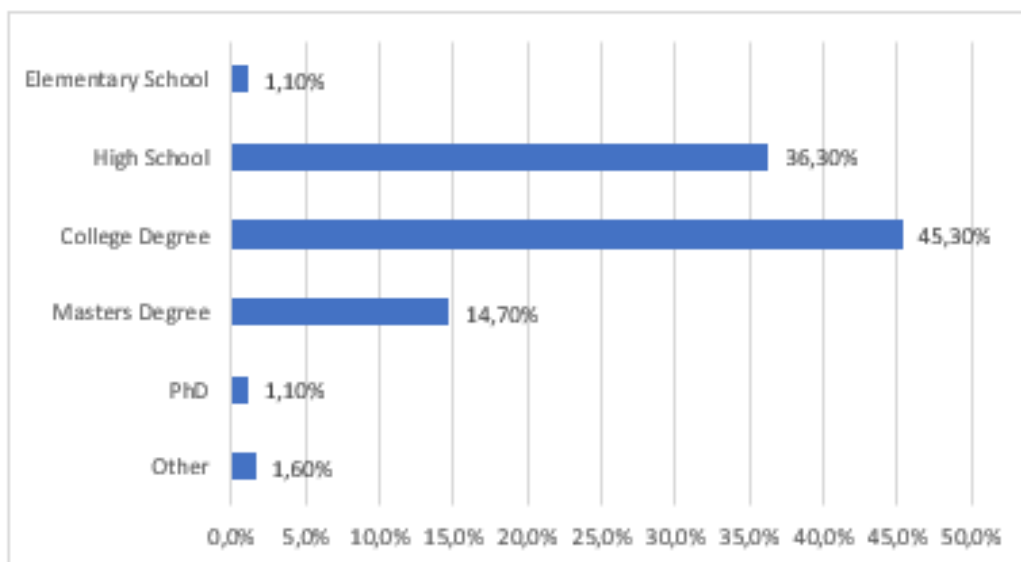
Figure 6 - Education level distribution

Most participants admitted using Instagram often, with 44,7% using 1 to 2 hours, 18,4% using 2 to 4, 10% more than 4 hours and only 26,8% using less than 1 hour per day. 90,5% of the respondents use the application at least once a day, and 58,9% more than once a day (Figures 7 and 8).
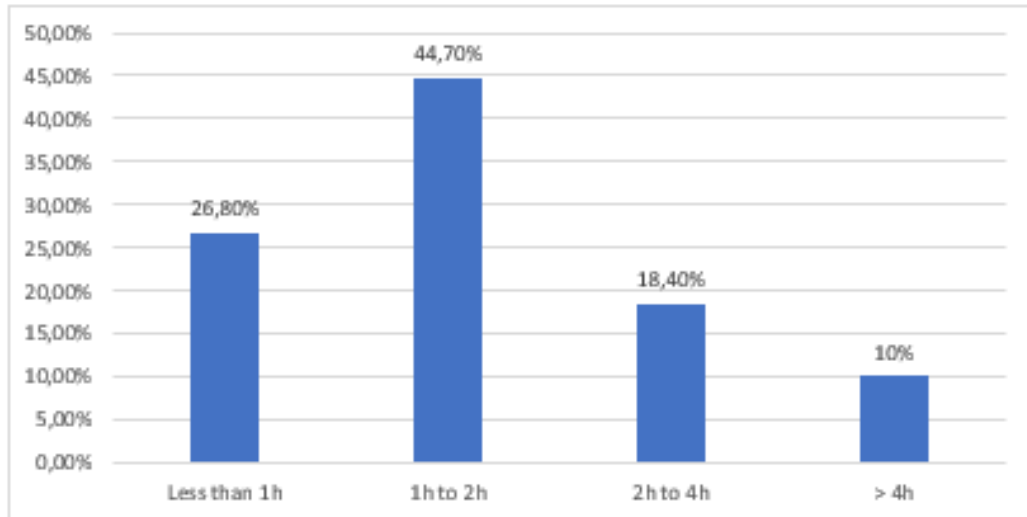
Figure 7 - Instagram usage distribution (hours)
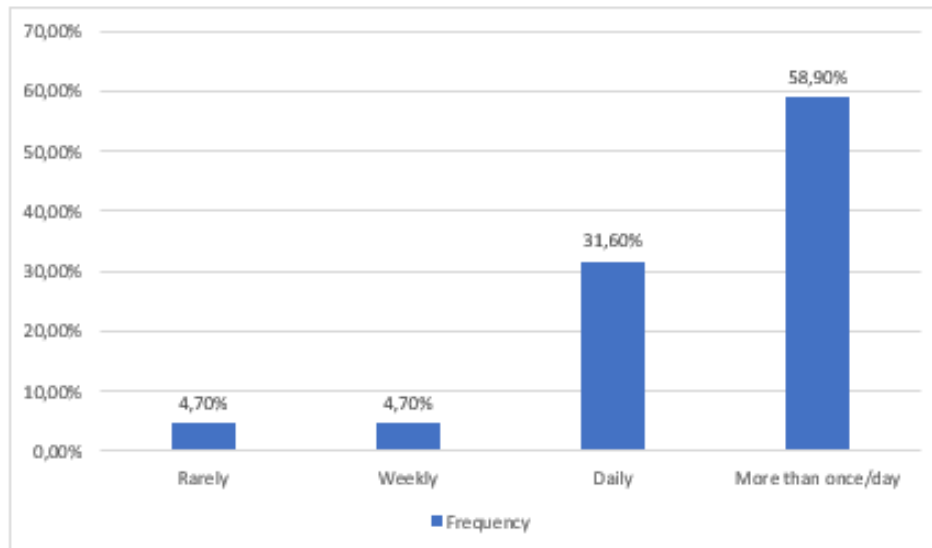
Figure 8 – Frequency of Instagram usage distribution

Finally, 87,4% of the respondents followed at least 1 influencer (Figure 9), with 41,1% following 1 to 10; 27,4 % following 10 to 20; 12,10% 20 to 50; 6,8% more than 50 and 12,6% following none.
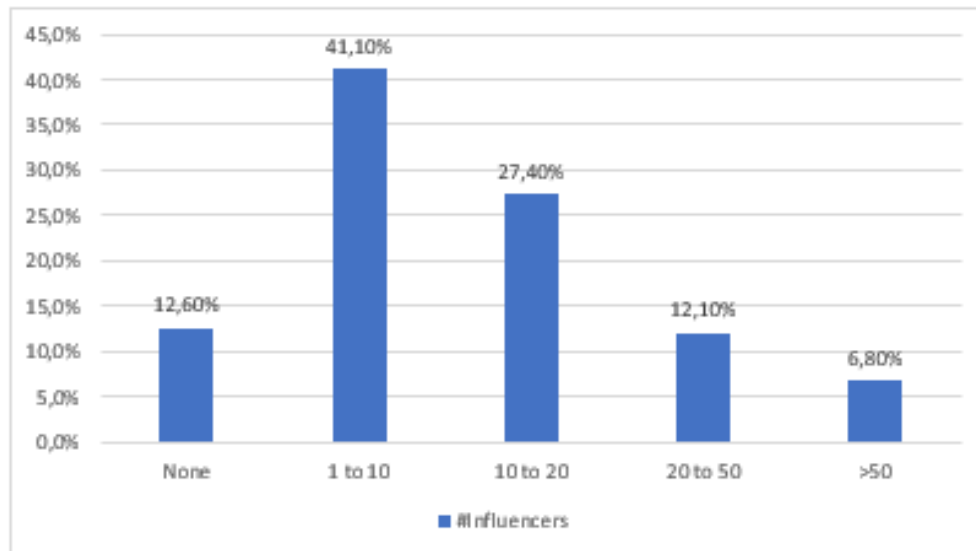
Figure 9 - Influencers followed distribution

4.1.3. Reliability

The reliability of the scales used was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (Table 4). The results confirm the reliability of the scales, with all the constructs having excellent reliability ($\alpha > 0.90$).

		Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Source Credibility	Attractiveness	.945	5
	Trustworthiness	.982	5
	Expertise	.968	5
	Endorsement Attitude	.936	3
	Brand Attitude	.967	3
	Purchase Intention	.981	3

Table 4 - Scales Reliability Test. Source: SPSS Output

4.1.4. Descriptive Statistics: Means

The dimensions were evaluated on scales from 1 to 7. As expected, since attractiveness was manipulated, its average evaluation was high (M=5.1274, SD=1.4499) (Appendix 3.2.1). The remaining SC variables had more moderate means with perceived trustworthiness averaging 3.7811 (SD= 1.7097) and expertise 3.4874 (SD= 1.6815). The overall mean of the construct SC was 4.1319 (SD=1.3884). AE, AB, and PI were likewise evaluated on scales from 1 to 7. Average AE was 4.8351 (SD=1.3624). The AB mean was 5.0140 (SD=1.3894), while PI had an average mean of 4.3193 (SD= 1.7487).

4.1.4.1. Descriptive Statistics: Mean Differences

Various independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the results for the variables attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, SC, AE, AB and PI for the conspicuous and inconspicuous stimuli. The overall scores (Appendix 3.2.2) for the construct SC indicate a significant difference between the means for inconspicuous (M= 4.7369, SD= 1.2343) and conspicuous stimuli (M= 3.5519, SD= 1.2809), t(188)=6.489, p=<.001 (Table 5). The results indicate no

significant differences in the scores for attractiveness, despite inconspicuous stimuli (M=5.2903, SD=1.3327) attaining higher scores than conspicuous (M=4.9711, SD= 1.5448), t(188)= 1.522, p= .147. The scores for trustworthiness, contrarily, showed a significant difference between inconspicuous (M= 4.6473, SD= 1.5448) and conspicuous stimuli (M= 2.9505, SD= 1.5816), t(188)= 7.862, p= <.001. Regarding expertise, the results also indicate a significant difference between inconspicuous (M=4.2731, SD= 1.5333) and conspicuous (M=2.7340, SD= 1.4636), t(188)=7.079, p=<.001.

	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attractiveness	.31919	.147
Trustworthiness	1.69680	<.001
Expertise	1.53910	<.001
Source Credibility	1.18503	<.001
Endorsement Attitude	.62491	<.001
Brand Attitude	.96944	<.001
Purchase Intentions	1.22802	<.001

Table 5- Independent samples t-test: Differences between stimuli. Source: SPSS Output

The results for AE also indicate a significant difference between the means for the inconspicuous (M= 5.1541, SD= 1.3026) and conspicuous (M= 4.5292, SD= 1.3546) stimuli, t(188)= 3.239, p=<.001. AB scores suggest a significant difference between the means for the inconspicuous (M= 5.5090, SD= 1.3202) and conspicuous stimuli (M=4.5395, SD= 1.2905), t(188)=5.118, p<.001. Finally, PI scores also indicate a significant difference for the inconspicuous (M=4.9462, SD=1.5293) and conspicuous stimuli (M= 3.7182, SD=1.7416), t(188)= .122, p<.001. Moreover, the highest mean difference in absolute values between the scores for both stimuli was found in perceived trustworthiness (MD= 1.69680, SEdiff= .21583), followed by Expertise (MD= 1.53910, SEdiff= .21742), PI (MD= 1.22802, SEdiff=.23818), SC (MD= 1.18503, SEdiff= .18262), AB (MD= .96944, SEdiff=

.18941), AE (MD= .62491, SEdiff= .19294), with the lowest mean difference corresponding to perceived attractiveness (MD=.31919, SEdiff= .20970). These findings suggest that when the influencer exhibits her body conspicuously in an endorsement, respondents are more likely to perceive her as less trustworthy, knowledgeable, and credible, have lower endorsement and brand attitudes, which results in lower PI for the endorsed product (Figure 10).
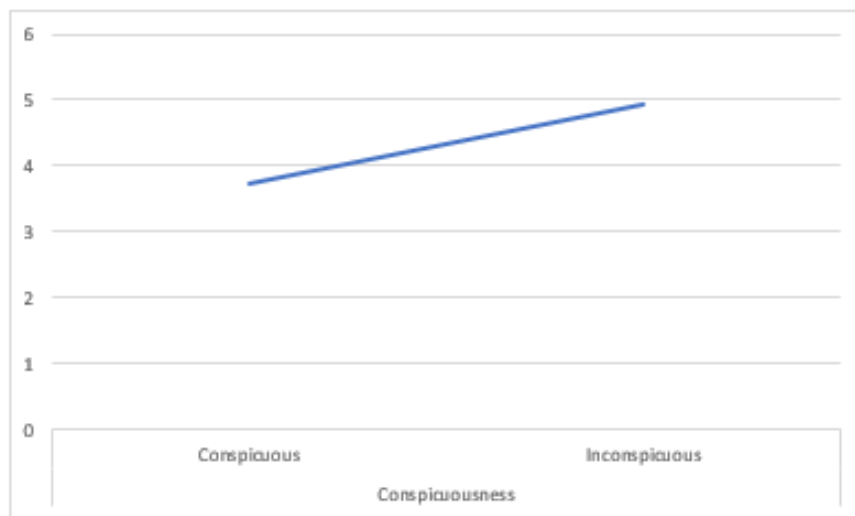
Figure 10 - Effect of conspicuousness on purchase intention. Source: SPSS Output

4.1.4.2.   Descriptive Statistics: Sex Comparison

Building on our literature review, we expected no significant correlation between respondent's sex and the variables under study (except possibly for perceived attractiveness and AE, with male respondents being more likely to yield higher scores than female respondents) according to the type of body display.

The result of the overall scores shows a non-significant difference between the means (Appendix 3.2.4), despite male respondents (M=5.17, SD= 1.25973) perceiving the influencer as being more attractive than did female respondents

(M=5.09, SD=1.61707), with a mean difference of 0.083 (SEdiff= .21090), t(188)=0.395, p=.696 in both conditions. The results also reveal a non-significant difference in the means for AE, despite male respondents yielding higher scores (M= 4.97, SD=1.34077) than female (M= 4.70, SD=1.37646), with a mean difference of 0.274 (SEdiff= .19724), t(188)=1.389, p=.159.

As expected, male respondents' scores for perceived attractiveness (M=5.22, SD= 1.24826) and endorsement attitude (M=4.70, SD=1.34783) were higher than female's in the conspicuous stimuli: [(M=4.66, SD= 1.81975) and (M=4.32, SD= 1.34902), respectively. However, the results for the mean differences of 0.56 (SEdiff=.31221) for attractiveness and 0.380 (SEdiff=.27559) for AE were not statistically significant [t(95)=1.787, p=.086 and t(95)=1.378, p=.162]. Moreover, the scores for male respondents' perceived trustworthiness, expertise, AB, and PI in the conspicuous stimulus were all lower than female respondents' scores, although none of the mean differences was statistically significant (see Table 10). For the inconspicuous stimulus, female respondents' scores (M=5.43, SD=1.35927) were higher than male's (M=5.10, SD=1.28071) for attractiveness, but no significant difference between the means of the sample was detected (MD=-.32, SEdiff=.27954), t(91)=-1.157, p=.221. For the remaining variables, male respondents scores were higher than female's but the difference was also non-significant.

Furthermore, we compared intra-sex results for each of the stimuli and found significant differences between the means of the sample for all variables with at least a 0.05 level of significance (AE and PI) or 0.01 (trustworthiness, expertise, SC, AB), except for perceived attractiveness. While the mean difference for female respondents' scores for attractiveness between stimuli (MD=.77, SEdiff= .31863) was significant at a 0.05 level of significance [t(95)=2.371, p=0.018], the mean difference for male respondents' scores was non-signficant (MD=-.11595, SEdiff=.26589), t(91)=-.436, p=.648. Thus, perceived attractiveness did not

differ significantly for male respondents across stimuli as it did for female respondents, which revealed a higher likelihood of perceiving the influencer as more attractive in the inconspicuous condition. Finally, a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to determine if sex is associated with any of the variables under study in the overall scores, and for each type of body display. The results revealed no correlation between sex and attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, SC, AE, AB and PI; both on the overall scores and on each stimuli. These findings suggest that sex is not associated with any of the variables, with both male and female respondents being more likely to perceive the influencer as more trustworthy, expert, and credible overall, and to have better AE, AB and PI when the SMI's body display is inconspicuous (Figure 11).
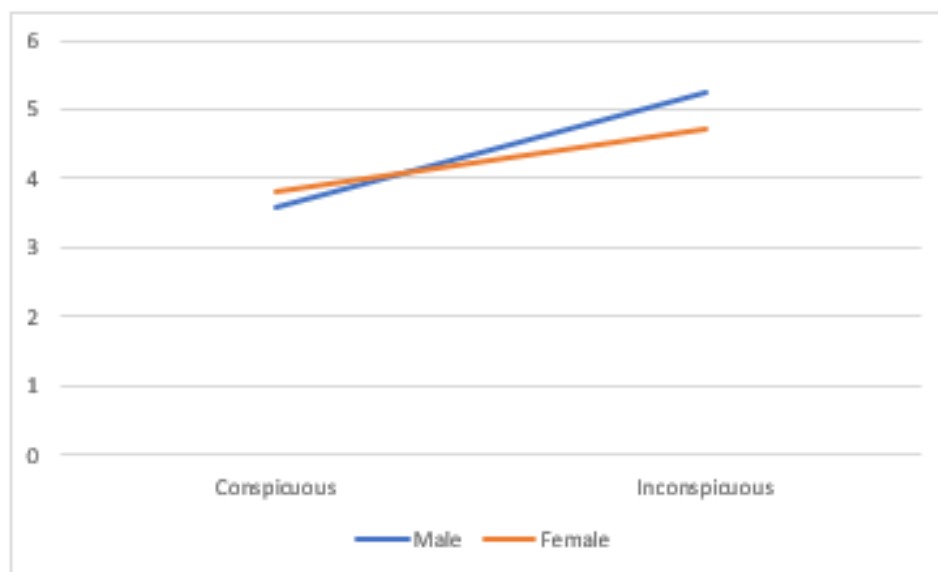
Figure 11 - Effect of conspicuousness on purchase intention by respondent's sex. Source: SPSS Output

4.1.5. Correlation Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Pearson r correlation to determine if there is a relationship between type of body exposure, SC (and the dimensions attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise), AE, AB (independent variables) and PI (dependent variable) (Appendix 3.2.3).

Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise, SC, AE and AB have positive, significant correlations with PI, while conspicuous (vs. inconspicuous) body display has a negative significant correlation with PI (r=-.352). Conspicuous body display has a negative significant correlation with all the other variables except attractiveness (r=-.110), with the strongest correlation found between body display and trustworthiness (r=-.497), followed by expertise (r=-.459), SC (r=-.428), PI (r=-.352), AB (r=-.350) and finally EA (r=-.230). Therefore, H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d are supported. As hypothesized, SC has a strong positive correlation with AE (r=.638), AB (r=.638) and PI (r=.615). H2a, H2b and H2c are supported. AE has a strong positive correlation with AB (r=.714) and PI (r=.698), confirming H3a and H3B. Finally, the strongest positive correlation is found between AB and PI (r=.801). Therefore, H4 is supported.

4.2. Serial Mediation Analysis (PROCESS)

A serial mediation analysis was performed using Hayes' (2013) SPSS PROCESS Macro (Model 6, 5000 bootstrap samples) to examine the impact of conspicuous (vs. inconspicuous) body display on PI as serially mediated by perceived SC, AE and AB. PI was defined as the dependent variable (Y) for analysis and type of body display as the predictor or independent variable (X)

(Appendix 3.2.5). SC (M1), AE (M2) and AB (M3) were defined as mediator variables. The results reveal that conspicuous body display negatively predicts SC, B=-1,19, t(188)= -6,4890, p <.001. SC, in turn, positively predicts AE, B=,65, t(187)= 10,6273, p<.001. AE positively predicts AB, B= .54, t(186)=8.4794, p<.001. AB positively predicts PI, B=.71, t(185) = 8,8115, p<.001 (Figure 12).
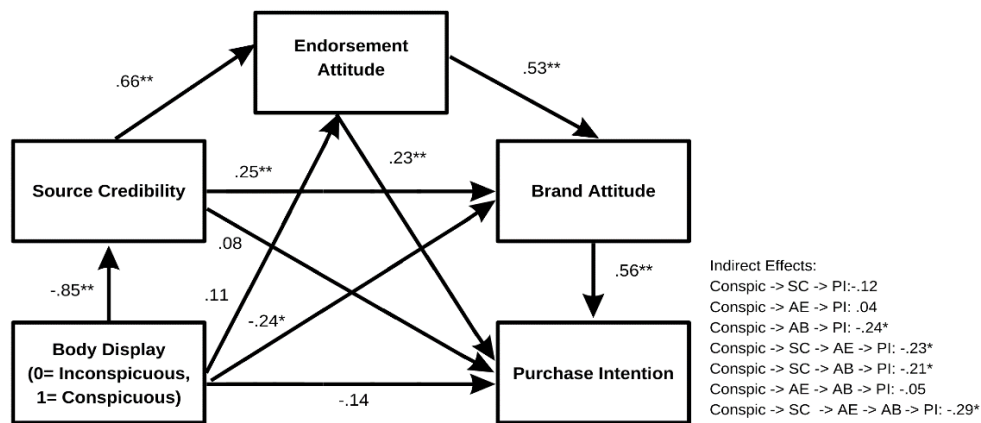
Figure 12 – Serial Mediation model results. *p<.05, **p<.01.

Analyzing the indirect effects, results reveal that SC did not mediate the relationship between body display and purchase intention, bH5a=-.12, SE=0.10, 95%CI [-.3200, .0597]; nor did AE and AB in serial, indirect = .05, SE= 0.07, 95% CI [-.0692, .1927]. Thus, H5a and H5d are rejected. Contrarily, SC and AE in serial mediated the relationship between the predictor and the outcome variable, indirect=-.23, SE= 0.09, 95% CI[-.4328, -.0893]; as did SC and AB in serial = -.21, SE= 0.08, 95% CI [-.3845, -.0685]. Therefore, H5b and H5c are supported.

Finally, results show that type of body display negatively predicts PI, B=-1.23, t(188)= -5.1559, p<.001. As theorized, this effect was serially mediated by M1, M2 and M3. The indirect pathway of the effect of conspicuous body display on

PI via M1, M2 and M3 was significant as our confidence intervals did not contain zeros: B=-.29, SE= 0.08, 95% CI [-.4523, -.1604]. This pathway fully accounted for the overall impact of conspicuous body display on purchase intention, with the direct effect being non-significant in the presence of the mediator variables [B=-.24, t(188)=-1.4691, p=.1435] (Table 6). Thus, H5e is supported.

	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Total	-1.2280	.2382	-5.1559	.0000	-1.6979	-.7582
Direct	-.2383	.1622	-1.4691	.1435	-.5582	.0817

Table 6 - Total and Direct effect of Conspicuousness on Purchase Intention. Source: SPSS Output

Hence, the results suggest that there is full mediation between body display and purchase intention, since when accounting for the mediating roles of M1, M2 and M3 no significant direct effect persists. Importantly, results reveal that 68% of the variance in purchase intention is explained by the model [F (4; 185) = 99.978, p <.001, R^2=.68].

4.3. Results Discussion

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of different types of influencer body display in endorsed posts on PI. Moreover, we analyzed the sequential mediating effect of SC, AE and AB on PI. Results revealed that conspicuous (vs. inconspicuous) body display negatively affects PI. This effect is fully mediated by perceived SC, AE, and AB. Furthermore, the study provides additional evidence that AE and AB mediate the effect of SC on purchase intention. Perceived SC positively affects AE, which in turn positively affects AB, and AB positively affects PI. Our findings also suggest that conspicuousness of body display is an important predictor of SC, mainly through trustworthiness and expertise. The impact of type of body display on attractiveness was not significant, which may be due to the fact that the influencer was selected based on perceived attractiveness, and therefore results of attractiveness were high in both conditions. Finally, no significant effect was found for respondent's sex on any of the variables under study.

5. Discussion

Understanding the drivers of IM strategies' effectiveness is of great importance for both academics and practitioners. Despite its relevance for brands and managers, it is still a relatively understudied phenomenon. While there is some skepticism surrounding IM, it is possible that its full potential remains largely untapped. This research contributes to the understanding of the drivers of IM campaigns' success by examining whether sexual appeals affected purchase intention of SMI-endorsed products. The major theoretical contributions and managerial implications are discussed in the following sections.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The current research makes several contributions to the growing body of IM literature. First, though the effect of male SMIs' muscle display on female respondents' purchase intentions has been previously studied (Su et al., 2020), to the best of our knowledge this study is among the first to examine the impact of modes of female influencers' body exhibition on source credibility, endorsement, brand attitude and purchase intention for both female and male consumers.

Second, our study questions the general assumption that sexual appeals lead to more favorable sales outcomes. The results show that despite the prevalence of scantily clad women in Instagram sponsored content, nudity might not always result in increased endorsement/brand attitudes nor purchase intention for the product endorsed, providing empirical evidence that "sex" might not always sell. On the contrary, posts containing pictures of the SMI fully

clothed generated better brand attitude and purchase intention. The same applies for endorsement attitude, which is explained by the fact that both men and women perceived the fully clothed SMI as being more trustworthy and knowledgeable. Surprisingly, although men displayed better endorsement attitude than women when the SMI was partially nude, the difference between both sexes was not significant. These findings corroborate insights from literature that state that while men tend to appreciate pictures containing female nudity, both men and women perceive women who present themselves in a sexualized manner as less competent, with women perceiving them also as less socially and physically attractive (Bell et al., 2018).

Third, our study adds to existing literature on endorser effectiveness, by testing and applying constructs commonly used in traditional celebrity studies to the IM context, such as source credibility, endorsement attitude, brand attitude and purchase intention. In agreement with previous studies, our findings suggest that high perceived source credibility leads to better endorsement attitude, which in turn leads to increased brand attitude and, consequently, purchase intention. The results not only suggest that type of body display is an important predictor of perceived source credibility, but also that, in line with previous studies, that the effect of body display on purchase intentions is fully mediated by source credibility, endorsement attitude and brand attitude. Moreover, drawing on extant literature, a conceptual framework was developed to assess the impact of source-based characteristics on purchase intention, via source credibility, endorsement, and brand attitude effects.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the understanding of IM on Instagram, which despite its prevalence among practitioners remains largely understudied when compared to platforms like *Facebook* or *Twitter*.

Finally, the results emphasize the impact of different modes of female influencers' self-presentation on Instagram, suggesting that the effectiveness of a

SMI endorsements is contingent upon the quality of the relationships SMIs are able to develop with their following, which is largely affected by perceived credibility. Thus, in agreement with literature (Tuten & Solomon, 2018), our study suggests that to fully seize IM's potential, it is imperative that SMIs are perceived as credible, authentic and relevant.

5.2. Managerial Implications

The research findings provide strategic guidance for managers when planning IM campaigns. First, our findings emphasize the need to carefully consider intended campaign objectives when selecting SMIs and providing orientations for the endorsements. Contrary to popular belief, sexual appeals might not always improve sales performance and might even lead to harmful outcomes that affect not only purchase intentions, but also attitudes towards the endorsed brand. If the goal is to generate awareness, nudity might be effective as it tends to increase number of impressions, likes and followers. These metrics appeal to managers as they are readily-available and can be objectively assessed, but do not always reflect genuine engagement nor buying intentions. Conversely, if the aim is to increase brand attitudes and purchase intention, marketers should strive more for persuasiveness than popularity, focusing on SMIs' perceived credibility and the strength of consumer-influencer relationships. Notwithstanding, as long as they are aware of boundary conditions, brands can still capitalize on the positive effects of an SMI's physical attractiveness and mitigate its vampiric effect by exhibiting it inconspicuously (e.g., through fitted clothing). These guidelines are also relevant for SMIs' self-branding practices. When crafting their Instagram profiles, SMIs must acknowledge the perils of conspicuous self-presentation, balancing the display

of attractiveness with the nurture of meaningful relationships with their following.

Furthermore, our research underlines the importance of screening and selecting SMIs whose audiences align with the brand's target audiences. For instance, promoting typically feminine products through an SMI whose audience consists mainly of male users could prove to be counterproductive, as the endorsements fail to reach the brand's intended audience. Furthermore, for brands to fully build a relationship and earn the trust of an SMI's audience, it might be preferable to establish enduring partnerships with trusted SMIs as brand ambassadors, more than advertising outlets. Though a relationship-based approach is more resource and time-consuming, for brands like *L'Oreal* and *Asos* (Audrezet & Kerviler, 2020), developing long-term collaborative partnerships with selected influencers has proven to be a remarkable success.

Overall, our findings suggest that audiences are more receptive to endorsed messages proceeding from more credible SMIs. It follows, then, that content that hinders the development of trust (such as gratuitous sexual appeals) should be used cautiously. If IM provides an opportunity for brands to bypass the loss of consumer trust, marketers should avoid deploying strategies consumers have grown wary of in traditional advertising.

6. Limitations and Further Research

This study has some limitations that provide opportunities for future research. One key limitation is that it was conducted in an experimental fictitious setting. Fictitious endorsers allow for greater experimental control. However, considering the importance of parasocial relationships for IM, studies conducted

with real SMIs could reveal that other elements such as familiarity, affection or the strength of the consumer-influencer relationship might influence attitudinal and behavioral change. Accordingly, using real brands (like *Coca-Cola* or *Red Bull)* instead of a fictitious brand might reveal relevant nuances, namely by controlling consumer brand loyalty.

Moreover, this study used a product from low-involvement category. Future research should investigate the persuasiveness of influencer endorsements on high-involvement products (such as cars or computers). Furthermore, the product category was not sex-specific. Future research should investigate the effects of using sexualized imagery on product categories where sex is a salient dimension.

Endorsement effectiveness was measured using brand attitude and purchase intention. However, several studies have suggested that sexualized imagery might have a "vampiric effect" on consumers' attention. As such, future research should investigate the effects on other outcomes, as brand awareness, recognition, and recall. Additionally, building on the match-up hypothesis, it would also be relevant to investigate the potential differences in product/brand-influencer congruence.

Another limitation for this study is the sample size and the fact that it was administered to the Portuguese population exclusively. Further studies could replicate this study with different sample sizes and for different populations, investigating country-specificities. Finally, future studies should also include the SM platform "TikTok", considering that it is growing remarkably and is increasingly popular among young consumers.

Bibliography

Abidin, C. (2016). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia, 161*(1), 86–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16665177

Abidin, C. (2018). "What Is An Internet Celebrity Anyway?" *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1108/9781787560765

Alves, H., Fernandes, C., & Raposo, M. (2016). Social Media Marketing: A Literature Review and Implications. *Psychology & Marketing, 33*(12), 1029–1038. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20936

Amos, C., Holmes, G., & Strutton, D. (2008). Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness: A quantitative synthesis of effect size. *International Journal of Advertising, 27*(2), 209–234. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2008.11073052

Amyx, D., & Amyx, K. (2011). Sex and Puffery in Advertising: An Absolutely Sensational and Sexually Provocative Experiment. *International Business and Management, 2*(1), 01–10. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.ibm.1923842820110201.001

Andreoli, V., & Vorchel, S. (1978). Effects of Media, Communicator, and Message Position on Attitude Change. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 42*, 59–70. https://doi.org/10.1086/268429

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Guidry Moulard, J. (2018). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research, July*, 0–1. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008

Audrezet, A., & Kerviler, G. (2020, September 23). *How Brands Can Build Successful Relationships with Influencers.* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2019/04/how-brands-can-build-successful-relationships-with-influencers

Aw, E. C. X., & Labrecque, L. I. (2020). Celebrity endorsement in social media contexts: understanding the role of parasocial interactions and the need to belong. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 37*(7), 895–908. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-10-2019-3474

Baker, M. J., & Churchill, G. A. (1977). The Impact of Physically Attractive Models on Advertising Evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research, 14*(4), 538–555. https://doi.org/10.2307/3151194

Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2004). Sexual economics: Sex as female

resource for social exchange in heterosexual interactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *8*(4), 339–363. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0804_2

Beetles, A. C., & Harris, L. C. (2005). Consumer attitudes towards female nudity in advertising: An empirical study. *Marketing Theory*, *5*(4), 397–432. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593105058822

Belk, R. W. (2013). Extended self in a digital world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *40*(3), 477–500. https://doi.org/10.1086/671052

Bell, B. T., Cassarly, J. A., & Dunbar, L. (2018). Selfie-Objectification : Self-Objectification and Positive Feedback (" Likes ") are Associated with Frequency of Posting Sexually Objectifying Self-Images on Social Media. *Body Image*, *26*, 83–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2018.06.005

Bergkvist, L., Hjalmarson, H., & Mägi, A. W. (2016). A new model of how celebrity endorsements work: Attitude toward the endorsement as a mediator of celebrity source and endorsement effects. *International Journal of Advertising*, *35*(2), 171–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2015.1024384

Black, I. R., & Morton, P. (2015). Appealing to men and women using sexual appeals in advertising: In the battle of the sexes, is a truce possible? *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 37–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2015.1015108

Boerman, S. C., Willemsen, L. M., & Van Der Aa, E. P. (2017). "This Post Is Sponsored": Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure on Persuasion Knowledge and Electronic Word of Mouth in the Context of Facebook. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *38*(May 2018), 82–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2016.12.002

Bower, A. B., & Landreth, S. (2001). Is beauty best? Highly versus normally attractive models in advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, *30*(1), 10–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2001.10673627

Brown, J. O., Broderick, A. J., & Lee, N. (2007). Word of Mouth Within Online Communities: Conceptualizing the Online Social Network. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *21*(3), 2–20. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir

Bue, A. C. C. (2020). The looking glass selfie: Instagram use frequency predicts visual attention to high-anxiety body regions in young women. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *108*(February), 106329. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106329

Buss, D. M., & Schmitt, D. P. (2019). Mate Preferences and Their Behavioral Manifestations. *Annual Review OfPsychology*, *11*(34), 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-103408

Caballero, M. J., Lumpkin, J. R., & Madden, C. S. (1989). Using Physical Attractiveness as an Advertising Tool: An Empirical Test of the Attraction Phenomenon. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *August*, 16–22.

Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons*, *63*(4), 469–479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2018). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. *Journal of Business Research*, *July*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005

Chaiken, S. (1979). Communicator physical attractiveness and persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *37*(8), 1387–1397. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.37.8.1387

Chandon, P., Morwitz, V. G., & Reinartz, W. J. (2005). Do Intentions Predict Really Behavior? Validity in Survey Effects. *Journal of Marketing*, *69*(2), 1–14.

Cheah, J.-H., Ting, H., Cham, T. H., & Memon, M. A. (2019). The effect of selfie promotion and celebrity endorsed advertisement on decision-making processes promotion. *Internet Research*. https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-12-2017-0530

Chen, J., Teng, L., Yu, Y., & Yu, X. (2016). The effect of online information sources on purchase intentions between consumers with high and low susceptibility to informational influence. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(2), 467–475. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.05.003

Chen, T. (2021, March 2). *Young women say being featured on Instagram's Explore page has led to brand deals and a pressure to become influencers and post "thirst traps."* Business Insider. Retrieved June 3, 2021, from https://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-explore-algorithm-featured-young-women-face-pressure-become-influencers-2022-2?international=true&r=US&IR=T

Choi, S. M., & Rifon, N. J. (2012). It Is a Match: The Impact of Congruence between Celebrity Image and Consumer Ideal Self on Endorsement Effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing*, *29*(9), 639–650. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar

Chua, T. H. H., & Chang, L. (2016). Follow me and like my beautiful selfies: Singapore teenage girls' engagement in self-presentation and peer comparison on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *55*, 190–197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.09.011

Chung, S., & Cho, H. (2017). Fostering parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media: Implications for celebrity endorsement. *Psychology and*

Marketing, *34*(4), 481–495. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21001

Colliander, J., & Dahlén, M. (2011). Following the fashionable friend: The power of social media weighing the publicity effectiveness of blogsversus online magazines. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *51*(1), 313–320. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-51-1-313-320

Constantinides, E., & Fountain, S. J. (2008). Web 2.0: Conceptual foundations and marketing issues. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, *9*(3), 231–244. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.dddmp.4350098

Couldry, N. (2002). Playing for Celebrity: Big Brother as Ritual Event. *Television & New Media*, *3*(3), 283–293. https://doi.org/10.1177/152747640200300304

Cui, G., & Yang, X. (2009). Responses of Chinese consumers to sex appeals in international advertising: A test of congruency theory. *Journal of Global Marketing*, *22*(3), 229–245. https://doi.org/10.1080/08911760902845031

Dahl, D. W., Sengupta, J., & Vohs, K. D. (2009). Sex in advertising: Gender differences and the role of relationship commitment. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *36*(2), 215–231. https://doi.org/10.1086/597158

Dai, W., Arnulf, J. K., Iao, L., Wan, P., & Dai, H. (2019). Like or want? Gender differences in attitudes toward online shopping in China. *Psychology and Marketing*, *36*(4), 354–362. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21183

Daugherty, T., & Hoffman, E. (2014). eWOM and the importance of capturing consumer attention within social media. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *20*(1–2), 82–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.797764

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, *36*(5), 798–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeflang, P. S. H. (2017). Effects of traditional advertising and social messages on brand-building metrics and customer acquisition. *Journal of Marketing*, *81*(5), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0178

Delbaere, M., Michael, B., & Phillips, B. J. (2021). Social media influencers: A route to brand engagement for their followers. *Psychology and Marketing*, *38*(1), 101–112. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21419

Deutskens, E. (2006). Comparing the Generalizability of Online and Mail Surveys in Cross-National Service Quality Research. *Marketing Letters*, 2, 119–136. https://doi.org/10.1007/sl

Deutskens, E., De Ruyter, K., & Wetzels, M. (2006). An assessment of equivalence between online and mail surveys in service research. *Journal of Service Research*, *8*(4), 346–355. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670506286323

Dibble, J. L., Hartmann, T., & Rosaen, S. F. (2016). Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship: Conceptual Clarification and a Critical Assessment of Measures. *Human Communication Research*, *42*(1), 21–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12063

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior, 68*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009

Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2019). 'Instafamous'–credibility and self-presentation of micro-celebrities on social media. *Information Communication and Society*, *22*(10), 1432–1446. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438491

Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The Psychology of Attitudes*. Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *15*(4), 291–314. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870379

Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing Instagram Influencer Advertising: The Effects of Disclosure Language on Advertising Recognition, Attitudes, and Behavioral Intent. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *17*(2), 138–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2017.1366885

Fardouly, J., & Holland, E. (2018). *Social media is not real life : The effect of attaching disclaimer-type labels to idealized social media images on women ' s body image and mood*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818771083

Fardouly, J., Willburger, B. K., & Vartanian, L. R. (2018). Instagram use and young women's body image concerns and self-objectification: Testing mediational pathways. *New Media and Society*, *20*(4), 1380–1395. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817694499

Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. A. (1997). Objectification Theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *21*(2), 173–206. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x

Gensler, S., Völckner, F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing brands in the social media environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *27*(4), 242–256. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.004

Ghaznavi, J., & Taylor, L. D. (2015). Bones, body parts, and sex appeal: An analysis of #thinspiration images on popular social media. *Body Image, 14*, 54–61. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2015.03.006

Giles, D. C., Giles, D. C., & Edwards, L. (2018). 8. Instagram and the Rise of the Social Media 'Influencer.' *Twenty-First Century Celebrity: Fame In Digital Culture*, 155–173. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78743-708-120181012

Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4279016

Goldsmith, R. E., Lafferty, B. A., & Newell, S. J. (2000). The impact of corporate credibility and celebrity credibility on consumer reaction to advertisements and brands. *Journal of Advertising, 29*(3), 43–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673616

Gountas, J., Gountas, S., Reeves, R. A., & Moran, L. (2012). Desire for Fame: Scale Development and Association with Personal Goals and Aspirations. *Psychology & Marketing, 29*(9), 680–689. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20554

Gramazio, S., Cadinu, M., Guizzo, F., & Carnaghi, A. (2020). Does Sex Really Sell? Paradoxical Effects of Sexualization in Advertising on Product Attractiveness and Purchase Intentions. *Sex Roles, 2018*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01190-6

Gresham, L. G., Shimp, T. A., & Shimp, T. A. (1985). Attitude toward the advertisement and brand attitudes: a classical conditioning perspective. *Journal of Advertising, 14*(1), 10–17.

Hartmann, T., & Goldhoorn, C. (2011). Horton and Wohl Revisited: Exploring Viewers' Experience of Parasocial Interaction. *Journal of Communication, 61*, 1104–1121. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01595.x

Hayes, A. F. (2013). Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18*(1), 38–52. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.10073

Hennig-Thurau, T., Malthouse, E. C., Friege, C., Gensler, S., Lobschat, L., Rangaswamy, A., & Skiera, B. (2010). The impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research, 13*(3), 311–330. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510375460

Hofstede, G. (2001). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Hogan, B. (2010). The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *30*(6), 377–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893

Holland, G., & Tiggemann, M. (2016). A systematic review of the impact of the use of social networking sites on body image and disordered eating outcomes. *Body Image*, *17*, 100–110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2016.02.008

Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction. *Psychiatry*, *19*(3), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049

Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelley, H. H. (1953). *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change*. Yale University Press.

Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *15*(4), 635–650. https://doi.org/10.1086/266350

Hughes, C., Swaminathan, V., & Brooks, G. (2019). Driving Brand Engagement Through Online Social Influencers: An Empirical Investigation of Sponsored Blogging Campaigns. *Journal of Marketing*, *83*(5), 78–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919854374

Hussain, S., Melewar, T. C., Priporas, C., Foroudi, P., & Dennis, C. (2020). Examining the effects of celebrity trust on advertising credibility, brand credibility and corporate credibility. *Journal of Business Research*, *109*(November 2019), 472–488. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.079

Jackson, S. L. (2009). *Research Methods and Statistics: A Critical Thinking Approach*. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, *37*(5), 567–579. https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2018-0375

Kahle, L. R., & Homer, P. M. (1985). Physical Attractiveness of the Celebrity Endorser: A Social Adaptation Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *11*(4), 954. https://doi.org/10.1086/209029

Kamins, M. A., & Gupta, K. (1994). Congruence between spokesperson and product type: A matchup hypothesis perspective. *Psychology & Marketing*,

11(6), 569–586. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220110605

Kapitan, S., & Silvera, D. H. (2016). From digital media influencers to celebrity endorsers: attributions drive endorser effectiveness. *Marketing Letters*, *27*(3), 553–567. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-015-9363-0

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, *53*(1), 59–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Karimzadeh, M., & Campbell, N. (2018, December). *Kim Kardashian West Takes Home Influencer Award*. CFDA. https://cfda.com/news/kim-kardashian-west-takes-home-influencer-award

Kassing, J. W., & Sanderson, J. (2009). "You're the kind of guy that we all want for a drinking buddy": Expressions of parasocial interaction on Floydlandis.com. *Western Journal of Communication*, *73*(2), 182–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570310902856063

Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020). When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *36*(3–4), 248–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1718740

Kayser-Bril, N., Duportail, J., Richard, E., & European Data Journalism Network. (2020, June 15). *Undress or fail: Instagram's algorithm strong-arms users into showing skin*. AlgorithmWatch. Retrieved May 4, 2021, from https://algorithmwatch.org/en/instagram-algorithm-nudity/

Kenrick, D. T., Saad, G., & Griskevicius, V. (2013). Evolutionary consumer psychology: Ask not what you can do for biology, but... *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *23*(3), 404–409. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2013.04.003

Kerlinger, F.N. (1966). Foundations of behavioral research. Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York.

Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2016). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers. *Celebrity Studies*, *8*(2), 191–208. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292

Ki, C. W. 'Chloe,' & Kim, Y. K. (2019). The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic. *Psychology and Marketing*, *36*(10), 905–922. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21244

Kim, J., & Song, H. (2016). Celebrity's self-disclosure on Twitter and parasocial relationships: A mediating role of social presence. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *62*, 570–577. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.083

Kirmani, A., & Shiv, B. (1998). Effects of source congruity on brand attitudes

and beliefs: The moderating role of issue-relevant elaboration. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *7*(1), 25–47. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp0701_02

Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2017). *Marketing 4.0*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Kozinets, R. V., De Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. C., & Wilner, S. J. S. (2010). Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of Marketing*, *74*(2), 71–89. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.2.71

Labrecque, L. I. (2014). Fostering consumer-brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *28*(2), 134–148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.003

Labrecque, L. I., Markos, E., & Milne, G. R. (2011). Online Personal Branding: Processes, Challenges, and Implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *25*(1), 37–50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2010.09.002

Labrecque, L. I., vor dem Esche, J., Mathwick, C., Novak, T. P., & Hofacker, C. F. (2013). Consumer power: Evolution in the digital age. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *27*(4), 257–269. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.002

Lafferty, B. A., & Goldsmith, R. E. (1999). Corporate credibility's role in consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions when a high versus a low credibility endorser is used in the Ad. *Journal of Business Research*, *44*(2), 109–116. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(98)00002-2

LaTour, M. S. (1990). Female nudity in print advertising: An analysis of gender differences in arousal and Ad response. *Psychology & Marketing*, *7*(1), 65–81. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220070106

Liebers, N., & Schramm, H. (2019). Parasocial interactions and relationships with media characters - An inventory of 60 years of research. *Communication Research Trends*, *38*(2), 4–31.

Lindstrom, M. (2008). *Buy-ology: Truth and lies about why we buy*. Doubleday.

Liu, M. T., & Brock, J. L. (2011). Selecting a female athlete endorser in China: The effect of attractiveness, match-up, and consumer gender difference. *European Journal of Marketing*, *45*(7), 1214–1235. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561111137688

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *19*(1), 58–73.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

Lueck, J. A. (2012). Friend-zone with benefits : The parasocial advertising of Kim Kardashian. *Journal of Marketing Communications, December*, 37–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2012.726235

Lull, R. B., & Bushman, B. J. (2015). Do Sex and Violence Sell? The Effects of Violent Advertisements, Sexual Programs, and Program/Advertisement Congruity on Brand Memory, Brand Attitudes, and Product Selection. *Psychological Bulletin, 141*(5), 1022–1048. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/bul0000018

Macinnis, D. J., Moorman, C., & Jaworski, B. J. (1991). Enhancing and Measuring Consumers' Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability to Process Brand Information from Ads. *Journal of Marketing, 55*(4), 32–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299105500403

MacKenzie, S. B., & Lutz, R. J. (1989). An Empirical Examination of the Structural Antecedents of Attitude toward the Ad in an Advertising Pretesting Context. *Journal of Marketing, 53*(2), 48. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251413

MacKenzie, S. B., Lutz, R. J., & Belch, G. E. (1986). The Role of Attitude toward the Ad as a Mediator of Advertising Effectiveness: A Test of Competing Explanations. *Journal of Marketing Research, 23*(2), 130–143. https://doi.org/10.2307/3151660

Majid, S., Lopez, C., Megicks, P., & Lim, W. M. (2019). Developing effective social media messages: Insights from an exploratory study of industry experts. *Psychology and Marketing, 36*(6), 551–564. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21196

Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons, 52*(4), 357–365. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002

Marwick, A. E. (2015). Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy. *Public Culture, 27*(1), 137–160. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2798379

Maslowska, E., Malthouse, E. C., & Collinger, T. (2016). The customer engagement ecosystem. *Journal of Marketing Management, 32*(5–6), 469–501. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1134628

McCracken, G. (1989). Who Is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16*(December), 315–349. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-558702-0.50017-0

McGinnies, E., & Ward, C. D. (1980). Better Liked than Right: Trustworthiness

and Expertise as Factors in Credibility. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *6*(3), 467–472. https://doi.org/10.1177/014616728063023

Mitchell, A. A., & Olson, J. C. (1981). Are Product Attribute Beliefs the Only Mediator of Advertising Effects on Brand Attitude? *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(3), 318–332. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224377301000402

Nelson, M. R., & Paek, H. J. (2008). Nudity of female and male models in primetime TV advertising across seven countries. *International Journal of Advertising*, *27*(5), 715–744. https://doi.org/10.2501/S0265048708080281

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, *19*(3), 39–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191

Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A. M., Ognibeni, B., & Pauwels, K. (2013). Social media metrics - A framework and guidelines for managing social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 27*(4), 281–298. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.007

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *19*(C), 123–205. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60214-2

Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Schumann, D. (1983). Central and Peripheral Routes to Advertising Effectiveness: The Moderating Role of Involvement. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *10*(2), 135–146. https://doi.org/10.1086/208954

Pornpitakpan, C. (2004). The Persuasiveness of Source Credibility: A Critical Review of Five Decades' Evidence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *34*(2), 243–281. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02547.x

Pöyry, E., Pelkonen, M., Naumanen, E., & Laaksonen, S. M. (2019). A Call for Authenticity: Audience Responses to Social Media Influencer Endorsements in Strategic Communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *13*(4), 336–351. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2019.1609965

Prichard, I., McLachlan, A. C., Lavis, T., & Tiggemann, M. (2018). The Impact of Different Forms of #fitspiration Imagery on Body Image, Mood, and Self-Objectification among Young Women. *Sex Roles*, *78*(11–12), 789–798. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0830-3

Putrevu, S. (2008). Consumer Responses Toward Sexual and Nonsexual Appeals : The Influence of Involvement , Need for Cognition (NFC), and Gender. *Journal of Advertising*, *37*(2), 57–70. https://doi.org/10.2753/JOA0091-3367370205

Reichert, T. (2003). The Prevalence of Sexual Imagery in Ads Targeted to Young Adults. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, *37*(2), 403–412. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6606.2003.tb00460.x

Reichert, T., Childers, C. C., & Reid, L. N. (2012). How Sex in Advertising Varies by Product Category: An Analysis of Three Decades of Visual Sexual Imagery in Magazine Advertising. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, *33*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2012.675566

Reichert, T., & Fosu, I. (2005). Women's Responses to Sex in Advertising. *Journal of Promotion Management*, *11*(2–3), 143–153. https://doi.org/10.1300/J057v11n02_10

Reichert, T., Heckler, S. E., & Jackson, S. (2001). The Effects of Sexual Social Marketing Appeals on Cognitive Processing and Persuasion. *Journal of Advertising*, *30*(1), 13–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2001.10673628

Reichert, T., Larnbiase, J., Morgan, S., Carstarphen, M., & Zuzwirn, S. (1999). Cheesecake and beefcake: no matter how you slice it, sexual explicitness in advertising continues to increase. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *76*(1), 7–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909907600102

Rice, D. H., Kelting, K., & Lutz, R. J. (2012). Multiple endorsers and multiple endorsements: The influence of message repetition, source congruence and involvement on brand attitudes. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *22*(2), 249–259. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.06.002

Robinson, L., Prichard, I., Nikolaidis, A., Drummond, C., Drummond, M., & Tiggemann, M. (2017). Idealised media images: The effect of fitspiration imagery on body satisfaction and exercise behaviour. *Body Image*, *22*, 65–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.06.001

Rubin, R., & McHugh, M. (1987). Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *31*(3), 279–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158709386664

Rundin, K., & Colliander, J. (2021). Multifaceted Influencers: Toward a New Typology for Influencer Roles in Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, *50*(5), 548–564. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1980471

Saad, G. (2004). Applying evolutionary psychology in understanding the representation of women in advertisements. *Psychology and Marketing*, *21*(8), 593–612. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20020

Saad, G. (2013). Evolutionary consumption. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *23*(3), 351–371. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2013.03.002

Saad, G. (2016). On the Method of Evolutionary Psychology and Its

Applicability to Consumer Research. *Journal of Marketing Research*. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.14.0645

Saad, G., & Gill, T. (2000). Applications of Evolutionary Psychology in Marketing. *Psychology and Marketing*, *17*(12), 1005–1034. https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6793(200012)17:12<1005::AID-MAR1>3.0.CO;2-H

Saad, G., & Gill, T. (2009). Self-ratings of physical attractiveness in a competitive context: When males are more sensitive to self-perceptions than females. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *149*(5), 585–599. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540903232332

Schivinski, B., & Dabrowski, D. (2014). The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *July*, 37–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.871323

Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2020). Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit. *International Journal of Advertising*, *39*(2), 258–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898

Sengupta, J., & Dahl, D. W. (2008). Gender-related reactions to gratuitous sex appeals in advertising. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *18*, 62–78. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2007.10.010

Seno, D., & Lukas, B. A. (2007). The equity effect of product endorsement by celebrities: A conceptual framework from a co-branding perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, *41*(1–2), 121–134. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560710718148

Sheldon, P., & Bryant, K. (2016). Instagram: Motives for its use and relationship to narcissism and contextual age. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *58*, 89–97. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.059

Shimp, T. A. (1981). Attitude toward the ad as a mediator of consumer brand choice. *Journal of Advertising*, *10*(2), 9–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1981.10672756

Simonin, B. L., & Ruth, J. A. (1998). Is a Company Known by the Company it Keeps? Assessing the Spillover Effects of Brand Alliances on Consumer Brand Attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *35*(1), 30–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379803500105

Singh, D. (1993). Adaptive Significance of Female Physical Attractiveness: Role of Waist-to-Hip Ratio. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *65*(2), 293–307. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.65.2.293

Singh, D. (1994). Ideal female body shape: Role of body weight and waist-to-hip ratio. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *16*(3), 283–288. https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-108X(199411)16:3<283::AID-EAT2260160309>3.0.CO;2-Q

Sirdeshmukh, D., Singh, J., & Sabol, B. (2002). Consumer trust, value, and loyalty in relational exchanges. *Journal of Marketing*, *66*(1), 15–37. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.66.1.15.18449

Slater, A., Varsani, N., & Diedrichs, P. C. (2017). #fitspo or #loveyourself? The impact of fitspiration and self-compassion Instagram images on women's body image, self-compassion, and mood. *Body Image, 22*, 87–96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.06.004

Smith, A. N., Fischer, E., & Yongjian, C. (2012). How Does Brand-related User-generated Content Differ across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *26*(2), 102–113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.002

Spears, N., & Singh, S. N. (2004). Measuring attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, *26*(2), 53–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164

Statista (2021a). "Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of October 2021, by age and gender", available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/248769/age-distribution-of-worldwide-instagram-users/

Statista (2021b). "Leading platforms for influencer marketing worldwide as of January 2020", available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1241723/platforms-influencer-marketing/

Su, Y., Kunkel, T., & Ye, N. (2020). When abs do not sell: The impact of male influencers conspicuously displaying a muscular body on female followers. *Psychology and Marketing*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21322

Tankovska, H. (2021, February 10). *Instagram: distribution of global audiences 2021, by age group*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/

Tiggemann, M., Hayden, S., Brown, Z., & Veldhuis, J. (2018). The effect of Instagram "likes" on women's social comparison and body dissatisfaction. *Body Image, 26*, 90–97. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2018.07.002

Till, B. D., & Busler, M. (1998). Matching products with endorsers: Attractiveness versus expertise. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 15*(6), 576–586. https://doi.org/10.1108/07363769810241445

Till, B. D., & Busler, M. (2000). The match-up hypothesis: Physical attractiveness, expertise, and the role of fit on brand attitude, purchase intent and brand beliefs. *Journal of Advertising*, *29*(3), X–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673613

Till, B. D., & Shimp, T. A. (1998). Endorsers in advertising: The case of negative celebrity information. *Journal of Advertising*, *27*(1), 67–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1998.10673543

Torres, P., Augusto, M., & Matos, M. (2019). Antecedents and outcomes of digital influencer endorsement: An exploratory study. *Psychology and Marketing*, *36*(12), 1267–1276. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21274

Trivedi, J., & Sama, R. (2020). The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Brand Admiration and Online Purchase Intentions: An Emerging Market Perspective. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, *19*(1), 103–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2019.1700741

Turner, G. (2006). The mass production of celebrity: "Celetoids", reality TV and the "demotic turn." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *9*(2), 153–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877906064028

Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2018). *Social Media Marketing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Um, N.-H. (2013). Celebrity Scandal Fallout: How Attribution Style Can Protect the Sponsor. *Psychology & Marketing*, *30*(6), 529–541. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20625

Uribe, R., Buzeta, C., & Velásquez, M. (2016). Sidedness, commercial intent and expertise in blog advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(10), 4403–4410. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.102

Voorveld, H. A. M. (2019). Brand Communication in Social Media: A Research Agenda. *Journal of Advertising*, *48*(1), 14–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1588808

Wang, S. W., & Scheinbaum, A. C. (2018). Enhancing brand credibility via celebrity endorsement trustworthiness trumps attractiveness and expertise. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *58*(1), 16–32. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2017-042

Wirtz, J. G., Sparks, J. V, Zimbres, T. M., & Wirtz, J. G. (2017). The effect of exposure to sexual appeals in advertisements on memory, attitude, and purchase intention: a meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Advertising*, *0487*(June). https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1334996

Wyllie, J., Carlson, J., & Rosenberger, P. J. (2014). Examining the influence of

different levels of sexual-stimuli intensity by gender on advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *30*(7–8), 697–718. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2013.838988

Yuksel, M., & Labrecque, L. I. (2016). "Digital buddies": parasocial interactions in social media. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, *10*(4), 305–320. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-03-2016-0023

Zimmerman, A., & Dahlberg, J. (2008). The sexual objectification of women in advertising: A contemporary cultural perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *48*(1), 71–79. https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849908080094

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pretest

O presente questionário enquadra-se no projecto de investigação no âmbito do Trabalho Final de Mestrado do Mestrado de Marketing da Católica Porto Business School e pretende avaliar a atratividade de um conjunto de potenciais influencers. O questionário é anónimo e as suas respostas serão tratadas de forma confidencial, utilizadas exclusivamente para fins de investigação científica.

A conclusão do questionário demora aproximadamente 2 minutos.

Obrigado pela participação!

Section 1

1. Sexo:

◦ Masculino

◦ Feminino

2. Idade ____

3. Nacionalidade:

◦ Portuguesa

◦ Outra

Por favor, selecione um dos seguintes símbolos para dar início ao questionário (este passo é necessário para que lhe seja atribuída uma versão aleatória do mesmo):

◦ ►

◦ ▲

Section 2:

4. Avaliando por este conjunto de fotos, considero que esta influencer...

Tendo em conta as imagens seguintes, por favor indique o seu grau de concordância com as características que se seguem, utilizando a escala de 1 a 7, em que 1 significa "discordo totalmente" e 7 "concordo totalmente":

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exibe o corpo de forma evidente							
Atraente							
Elegante							
Tem classe							
É bonita							
É sensual							

Figure 13 - Pretest Stimuli Pictures: Inconspicuous Stimuli, Influencer1

Figure 14 - Pretest Stimuli Pictures: Inconspicuous Stimuli, Influencer2
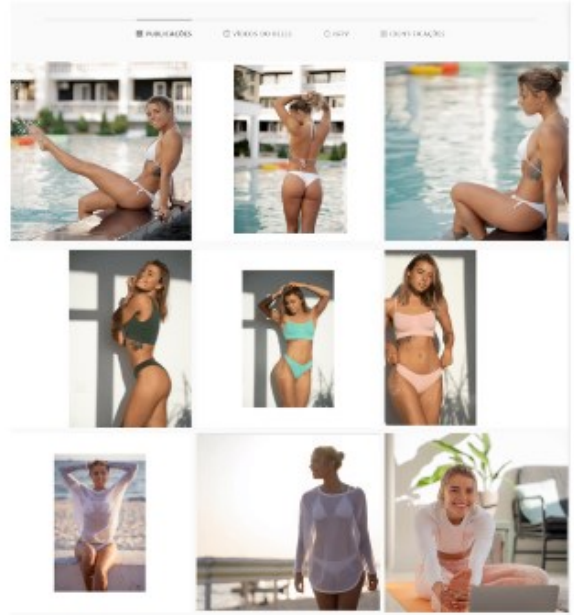
Figure 15 - Pretest Stimuli Pictures: Conspicuous Stimuli, Influencer1
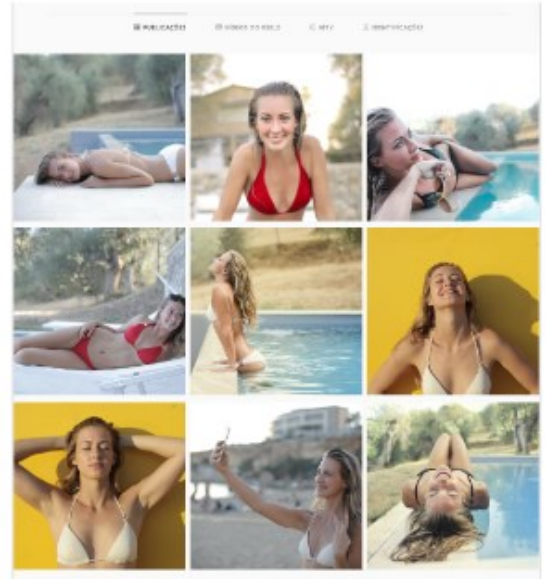
Figure 16 - Pretest Stimuli Pictures: Conspicuous Stimuli, Influencer2

O Impacto dos Influenciadores Digitais no Comportamento do Consumidor

Section 1: Consentimento

O presente questionário enquadra-se no projecto de investigação no âmbito do Trabalho Final de Mestrado do Mestrado de Marketing da Católica Porto Business School e pretende avaliar a atratividade de um conjunto de potenciais influencers.

O questionário é anónimo e as suas respostas serão tratadas de forma confidencial, utilizadas exclusivamente para fins de investigação científica.

A conclusão do questionário demora aproximadamente 3 minutos. Obrigado pela participação!

Por favor, seleccione um dos seguintes símbolos para dar início ao questionário (este é um passo necessário para que lhe seja atribuída uma versão aleatória do mesmo):

- ▶

- ▲

Section 2:

Sobre a Hydra

A Hydra é uma nova marca de bebidas portuguesa. Os seus produtos incluem várias versões da limonada, incluindo a limonada clássica, limonada sem açúcar, limonada com hortelã e limonada de frutos vermelhos. As limonadas são produzidas em Portugal e comercializadas em latas de 330 ml. De acordo com a marca, com esta nova linha de limonadas a Hydra pretende tornar a experiência de uma limonada refrescante (sem gás nem conservantes) disponível em qualquer lugar ou ocasião.

Figure 17 - "Hydra" Can Mockup

Sobre a influencer Maria Coelho:

A Maria Coelho é uma influencer de 25 anos, natural do Porto. Os seus interesses incluem lifestyle, fitness e viagens. Tem cerca de 35 mil seguidores no Instagram e as suas publicações incluem fotos e stories do seu dia-a-dia,

conselhos de lifestyle, de fitness e parcerias com marcas. Na sua bio, onde se apresenta como criadora de conteúdos digitais, lê-se: "lifestyle + travel + fitness // Positive mind, positive vibes".

Tendo em conta as imagens seguintes, por favor indique o seu grau de concordância com as características que se seguem, utilizando a escala de 1 a 7, em que 1 significa "discordo totalmente" e 7 "concordo totalmente".

1. Avaliando por este conjunto de fotos, considero que esta influencer...							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
É atraente							
É elegante							
Tem classe							
É bonita							
É sensual							

2. Avaliando por este conjunto de fotos, esta influencer parece-me...							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Confiável							
Honesta							
Fiável							
Sincera							
Credível							

3. Tendo em conta a categoria de produto apresentada, esta influencer parece-me…							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Especialista							
Experiente							
Conhecedora							
Competente							
Qualificada							

Section 3:

Em geral, considero a parceria entre a marca Hydra e a influencer Maria Coelho…

Por favor indique o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações que se seguem, tendo em conta as impressões suscitadas pela possível colaboração entre a marca Hydra e a influencer Maria Coelho.

4. Considero a parceria entre a marca Hydra e a influencer Maria Coelho…								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Má								Boa
Desagradável								Agradável
Desfavorável								Favorável

Section 4: Em geral, considero a marca Hydra…

Por favor indique o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações que se seguem, tendo em conta as impressões suscitadas pela marca Hydra a partir desta parceria.

5. Em geral, a minha impressão da marca "Hydra" é…								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Má								Boa
Negativa								Positiva
Desfavorável								Favorável

Section 5:

Por favor indique o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações que se seguem, tendo em conta as impressões suscitadas pela possível colaboração entre a marca Hydra e a influencer Maria Coelho.

6. Qual seria a probabilidade de comprar uma limonada Hydra?								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Dificilmente compraria								Muito possivelmente compraria
Certamente não compraria								Certamente compraria
Improvável								Muito provável

Section 6: Utilização do Instagram

Por favor responda às seguintes questões relativas à utilização da rede social Instagram.

7. Tem ou já teve conta no Instagram?

   ◦ Sim

   ◦ Não

8. Com que regularidade utiliza o Instagram?

   ◦ Nunca

   ◦ Raramente

   ◦ Semanalmente

   ◦ Diariamente

   ◦ Mais do que uma vez por dia

9. Quantas horas por dia dedica ao Instagram (aproximadamente)?

   ◦ Menos de 1 hora

   ◦ Entre 1 e 2 horas

   ◦ Entre 2 e 4 horas

   ◦ Mais do que 4 horas

10. Quantos influencers (em média) segue no Instagram?

   ◦ Nenhum

   ◦ Entre 1 e 10

   ◦ Entre 10 e 20

◦ Entre 20 e 50

◦ Mais de 50

11. Utilizo o Instagram preferencialmente a partir do…

◦ Telemóvel

◦ Computador

◦ Não utilizo o Instagram

Section 7:

12. Idade _____

13. Sexo

◦ Masculino

◦ Feminino

14. Nacionalidade

◦ Portuguesa

◦ Outra

15. Concelho de Residência _____

16. Habilitações Literárias

◦ Ensino Básico

◦ Ensino Secundário

◦ Licenciatura

◦ Mestrado

◦ Doutoramento

◦ Outro

17. Gosta de limonada?

◦ Sim

◦ Não

◦ Não gosto nem desgosto

2.1. Questionnaire Pictures

1. Inconspicuous Stimuli

Figure 18 - Questionnaire Pictures: Instagram Post (Inconspicuous Stimuli)
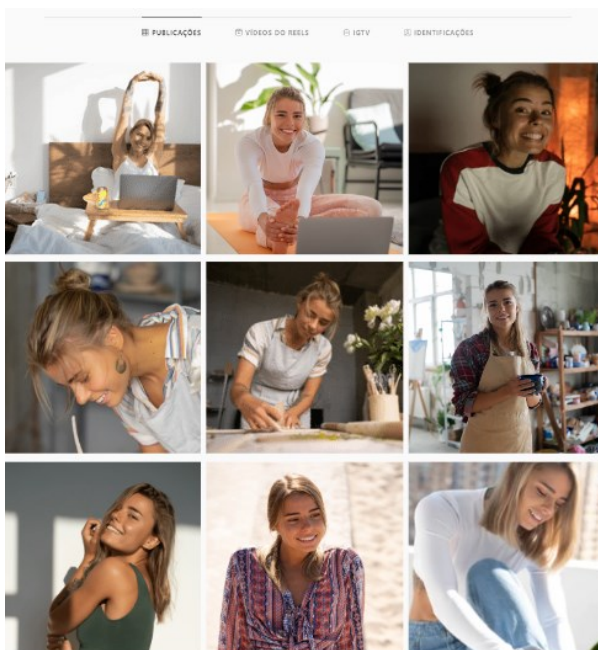
Figure 19 - Questionnaire Pictures: Instagram Grid (Inconspicuous Stimuli)

1. Conspicuous Stimuli

Figure 20 - Questionnaire Pictures: Instagram Post (Conspicuous Stimuli)
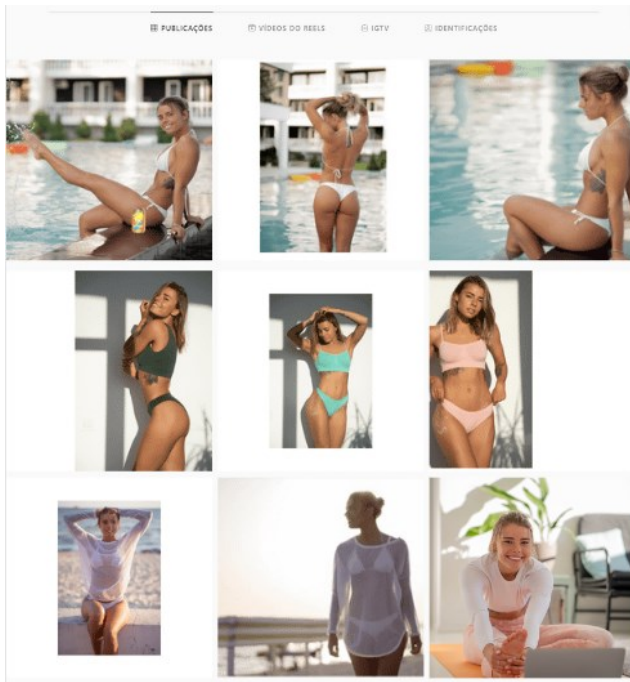
Figure 21 - Questionnaire Pictures: Instagram Grid (Conspicuous Stimuli)

Appendix 3 – SPSS Output

3.1. Pretest

3.1.1. Independent Samples T-Test

	Mean Difference	Sig (2-tailed)	Std. Error Difference	df	t	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Attractiveness	.59298**	.009	.22521	112	2.536	.16395	1.03584
Conspicuousness	-3.980**	<.001	.282	112	-14.175	-4.544	-3.439
ConspicuousnessInf1	-4.433**	<.001	.371	55	-12.427	-5.155	-3.712
ConspicuousnessInf2	-3.526**	<.001	.444	55	-8.277	-4.390	-2.662
**The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level							

Table 7 - Independent Samples T-Test: Differences in Perceived Attractiveness and Conspicuousness between Stimuli

3.1.2. Descriptive statistics for attractiveness and conspicuousness

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attractiveness		
Total	5.4860	1.27799
Influencer 1	5.7825	1.26337
Influencer 2	5.1895	1.23313
Conspicuousness		
Inconspicuous		
Total	1.37	.734
Influencer 1	1.33	.734
Influencer 2	1.41	.747
Conspicuous		
Total	5.35	2.032
Influencer 1	5.77	1.794
Influencer 2	4.93	2.196

Table 8 - Descriptive statistics for attractiveness and conspicuousness. Source: SPSS Output

3.2. Questionnaire

3.2.1. Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations

	Means	Standard Deviation
Attractiveness	5.1274	1.4499
Trustworthiness	3.7811	1.7097
Expertise	3.4874	1.6815
Source Credibility	4.1319	1.3884
Endorsement Attitude	4.8351	1.3624
Brand Attitude	5.0140	1.3894
Purchase Intention	4.3193	1.7487

Table 9 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations. Source: SPSS Output

3.2.2. Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations by Stimuli

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attractiveness		
Inconspicuous	5.2903	1.33270
Conspicuous	4.9711	1.54488
Trustworthiness		
Inconspicuous	4.6473	1.38168
Conspicuous	2,9505	1.58167
Expertise		
Inconspicuous	4.2731	1.53334
Conspicuous	2.7340	1.46365
Source Credibility		
Inconspicuous	4.7369	1.23435
Conspicuous	3.5519	1.28094
Endorsement Attitude		
Inconspicuous	5.1541	1.30269
Conspicuous	4.5292	1.35465
Brand Attitude		
Inconspicuous	5.5090	1.32022
Conspicuous	4.5395	1.29050
Purchase Intentions		
Inconspicuous	4.9462	1.52933
Conspicuous	3.7182	1.74161

Table 10 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations by Stimuli. Source: SPSS Output

3.2.3. Pearson Correlation: Correlation Matrix

	Conspicu ousness	Attractive ness	Trustwort hiness	Expert ise	Source Credibil ity	Endorse ment Attitude	Brand Attitude	Purchase Intention
Conspicuousn ess	1							
Attractiveness	-.110	1						
Trustworthine ss	-.497**	.520**	1					
Expertise	-.459**	.492**	.786**	1				
Source Credibility	-.428**	.760**	.909**	.898**	1			
Endorsement Attitude	-.230**	.392**	.586**	.647**	.638**	1		
Brand Attitude	-.350**	.384**	.584**	.656**	.638**	.714**	1	
Purchase Intention	-.352**	.294**	.586**	.674**	.615**	.698**	.801**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 11 - Correlation Matrix. Source: SPSS Output

3.2.4. Means and Standard Deviations by Respondent's Sex

	Mean		Standard Deviation	
	M	F	M	F
Attractiveness				
Inconspicuous	5.1026	5.4259	1.28071	1.35927
Conspicuous	5.2185	4.6605	1.24826	1.81975
Total	5.1699	5.0866	1.25973	1.61707
Trustworthiness				
Inconspicuous	4.7692	4.5593	1.44334	1.34214
Conspicuous	2,8222	3.1116	1.53975	1.63666
Total	3.6387	3.9175	1.77746	1.63981
Expertise				
Inconspicuous	4.3692	4.2037	1.51174	1.55914
Conspicuous	2.7037	2.7721	1.51557	1.41258
Total	3.4022	3.5691	1.71756	1.65110
Source Credibility				
Inconspicuous	4.7470	4.7296	1.33659	1.16780
Conspicuous	3.5815	3.5147	1.20352	1.38567
Total	4.0703	4.1911	1.38083	1.40035
Endorsement Attitude				
Inconspicuous	5.3590	5.0062	1.24812	1.33253
Conspicuous	4.6975	4.3178	1.34783	1.34902
Total	4.9749	4.7010	1.34077	1.37646
Brand Attitude				
Inconspicuous	5.7265	5.3519	1.30647	1.31977
Conspicuous	4.5062	4.5814	1.41827	1.12474
Total	5.0179	5.0103	1.49344	1.28961
Purchase Intentions				
Inconspicuous	5.2393	4.7346	1.30664	1.65135
Conspicuous	3.6420	3.8140	1.72033	1.78367
Total	4.3118	4.3265	1.74304	1.76316

Table 12 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations by Respondent's Sex. Source: SPSS Output

3.2.5. Serial Mediation Analysis (PROCESS)

Run MATRIX procedure:
Model : 6
　Y : PItot
　X : Conspic
　M1 : SCtot
　M2 : AEND
　M3 : ABRAND

Sample Size: 190

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
　SCtot

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
,4278	,1830	1,5835	42,1068	1,0000	188,0000	,0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	4,7369	,1305	36,3023	,0000	4,4795	4,9943
Conspic	-1,1850	,1826	-6,4890	,0000	-1,5453	-,8248

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
Conspic	-,8535

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
AEND

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
,6399	,4095	1,1079	64,8381	2,0000	187,0000	,0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2,0831	,3089	6,7437	,0000	1,4737	2,6925
Conspic	,1434	,1690	,8483	,3974	-,1900	,4767
SCtot	,6483	,0610	10,6273	,0000	,5280	,7687

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
Conspic	,1052
SCtot	,6607

Test(s) of X by M interaction:

	F	df1	df2	p
M1*X	4,0704	1,0000	186,0000	,0451

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
ABRAND

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
,7601	,5777	,8284	84,8087	3,0000	186,0000	,0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1,5576	,2978	5,2299	,0000	,9701	2,1452
Conspic	-,3372	,1464	-2,3033	,0224	-,6261	-,0484
SCtot	,2507	,0668	3,7530	,0002	,1189	,3825
AEND	,5362	,0632	8,4794	,0000	,4114	,6609

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
Conspic	-,2427
SCtot	,2506
AEND	,5258

Test(s) of X by M interaction:

	F	df1	df2	p
M1*X	,0281	1,0000	185,0000	,8671
M2*X	2,6708	1,0000	185,0000	,1039

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
PItot

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
,8269	,6837	,9881	99,9779	4,0000	185,0000	,0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-,9494	,3484	-2,7252	,0070	-1,6367	-,2621
Conspic	-,2383	,1622	-1,4691	,1435	-,5582	,0817
SCtot	,1019	,0757	1,3459	,1800	-,0475	,2512
AEND	,2960	,0813	3,6404	,0004	,1356	,4565

ABRAND	,7056	,0801	8,8115	,0000	,5476	,8636

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
Conspic	-,1362
SCtot	,0809
AEND	,2307
ABRAND	,5606

Test(s) of X by M interaction:

	F	df1	df2	p
M1*X	,9156	1,0000	184,0000	,3399
M2*X	,6771	1,0000	184,0000	,4117
M3*X	,7149	1,0000	184,0000	,3989

TOTAL EFFECT MODEL
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 PItot

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
,3520	,1239	2,6934	26,5834	1,0000	188,0000	,0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	4,9462	,1702	29,0646	,0000	4,6105	5,2819
Conspic	-1,2280	,2382	-5,1559	,0000	-1,6979	-,7582

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
Conspic	-,7022

TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y
Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps
-1,2280	,2382	-5,1559	,0000	-1,6979	-,7582	-,7022

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps
-,2383	,1622	-1,4691	,1435	-,5582	,0817	-,1362

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	-,9898	,2013	-1,3995	-,5956
Ind1	-,1207	,0952	-,3200	,0597
Ind2	,0424	,0585	-,0532	,1782
Ind3	-,2380	,1225	-,5015	-,0147
Ind4	-,2274	,0873	-,4328	-,0893
Ind5	-,2097	,0816	-,3845	-,0685
Ind6	,0542	,0667	-,0692	,1927
Ind7	-,2907	,0752	-,4523	-,1604

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	-,5660	,1117	-,7842	-,3446
Ind1	-,0690	,0543	-,1819	,0344
Ind2	,0243	,0335	-,0304	,1029
Ind3	-,1361	,0707	-,2874	-,0084
Ind4	-,1301	,0492	-,2462	-,0522
Ind5	-,1199	,0464	-,2197	-,0394
Ind6	,0310	,0382	-,0395	,1102
Ind7	-,1662	,0417	-,2561	-,0931

Indirect effect key:
Ind1 Conspic -> SCtot   -> PItot
Ind2 Conspic -> AEND   -> PItot
Ind3 Conspic -> ABRAND   -> PItot
Ind4 Conspic -> SCtot   -> AEND   -> PItot
Ind5 Conspic -> SCtot   -> ABRAND   -> PItot
Ind6 Conspic -> AEND   -> ABRAND   -> PItot
Ind7 Conspic -> SCtot   -> AEND   -> ABRAND   -> PItot