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Storytelling and social media as tools for brand recognition: the role of digital influencers

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Master's degree in World Internet Studies

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SOCIOLOGIA
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Because who wants to fast forward anyway?

You might miss some of the good parts.

-Lauren Graham

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Resumo

Esta dissertação teve como principal objetivo entender o efeito que o *storytelling* em conjunto com o marketing de influência têm na intensão de compra do consumidor, numa época em que a ligação entre este e a marca é um fator extremamente relevante.

Nos dias de hoje em que a internet veio revolucionar a forma como a comunicação acontece, o setor da publicidade foi também afetado por essas mudanças. As pessoas passaram a procurar informação personalizada e a consumir marcas que correspondam aos seus valores pessoais.

Recorrendo a uma metodologia quantitativa, por meio de inquéritos, esta dissertação pretende avaliar a presença dos portugueses *online* assim como a forma como estes são afetados pelo *storytelling* e pelo marketing de influência.

Como principal conclusão é possível destacar o facto de que os portugueses são, sim, afetados por estas estratégias, no entanto, não de uma forma igual. A idade revelou-se, ao longo deste estudo, como um fator determinante.

Palavras-chave: *storytelling*, marca, influenciador digital, rede social, marketing de influência.

Abstract

This dissertation's main goal was to understand the effect storytelling and influencer marketing have on the consumers' purchase intention, in a time when the connection between consumer and brand is extremely relevant.

In recent times the internet came to change the way communication happens, these changes affected the advertising sector as much as any other. Giving the amount of information available online, the consumers' profile changed too. People are searching for personalized information and brands that match their personal values.

By using a quantitative methodology, surveys, this dissertation intends to evaluate Portuguese's' presence online as well as the ways in which they are affected by storytelling and influencer marketing.

As a main conclusion it was possible to assess that Portuguese are affected by these marketing strategies, however, not in an evenly way. Age turned out to be an important factor to take in consideration.

Keywords: storytelling, brand, digital influencer, social network, influencer marketing

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Context

We are living in a time where people need to be online to be socially visible. This is as valid for people as it is for brands. These days it's uncommon to find someone who is not on social network sites, and then again, the same happens with brands. Brands realized that most of their target audiences use social network sites, so the best way to connect with them would be using the internet. "Most marketers by now have created a web site presence, and many are using some form of digital marketing in addition to the Web presence. Many new companies today actually launch with a web presence and use digital marketing as a key part of their start-up plan. (Schultz, 2009)"

Brands are feeling the need to rethink their strategies when it comes to selling a product, is no longer enough to advertise something in the classic ways, such as TV or newspapers, and wait for people to buy it. Roland and Barbara (2002) argue that the interaction created by online advertising is more effective than traditional advertising as it increases the level of familiarity with the consumer which leads them to relate to the brand. Today's businesses are focusing more on branding. Not just by keeping consumers loyal but also by creating a legacy to be recognized from. From another perspective, a brand that does not have an online presence can almost be considered out of competition as consumers look for a different kind of proximity. The fact that people can read reviews and share experiences about products online contributes to the possible success of a business. Consumers want to feel like their money was well spent in a company that shares similar values as the ones they believe in. Before even thinking about buying something, consumers research and the first thing they find, most times, is a web site or social media. More than a name, a logotype or a slogan, a brand is the values they share. According to Loreiro et al (2012), the "emotional identification and attachment improves the relationship between the consumer and the brand, strengthens the positive feeling toward a brand".

"Consumers' power is consolidating with improving access to information (...) as a result, consumers have become more demanding." (Deloitte Insight Report, 2014). This means that the development of the internet also made it possible for consumers to have more access to information which makes them pickier and surer of what they want. The fact that brands are now able to communicate in the moment and directly to a specific consumer (McKinsey, 2009) creates the need to search for connections, and, consequently, the need for stories.

These days people tend to do some research before acquiring a product or service and the internet made it possible to share opinions and reviews, creating this way a “safety net” for those who want to purchase something. Consumers are more likely to trust individuals who are closer to them, and brands took advantage of that. Informal advice is seen as more authentic and credible, and because of that, influencers are becoming the bridge between a brand and the final consumer. They are seen as opinion leaders with specific knowledge about the subjects they approach, which makes them trustworthy from the consumers’ perspective.

Influencers tend to use storytelling as a very important part of their job. According to Tach (2010) social media sites are the perfect mean for a tool such as storytelling. It gives influencers the possibility of using photos and video in order to communicate an idea, which is something influencers do to advertise their products. Since stories are ways of getting an idea through since the beginning of times, consumers evaluate each story according to their personal values and life experiences, reason why a connection is created. They feel as if the influencer is a friend or someone close to them who’s opinions they can trust. Influencers associate brands to values like friendship, love, environment awareness, among many others, that make the consumer want to be a part of that world, thus buying the brand’s products.

The main theme of this dissertation is to understand to which degree storytelling as a marketing tool used by influencers can affect consumers’ buying intentions.

Topic relevance and motivation

As Lim, et al. (2017) stated, Instagram had 600 million active users in December of 2016, now, in 2021 is the second most popular social media platform for influencer marketing, that shows how much things are changing in the digital world. Portugal is no exception when it comes to influencer marketing, a tendency that has been growing throughout the years, reaching its peak with the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of 2020 when Covid-19 happened, people became more friendly with online shopping, meaning that the action of going to a store and trying out a product or service decreased, people began searching for reviews and opinions online increasing the importance of digital influencers. According to the SIBS 2021 report on Online Commerce, there was a change on the Portuguese population’s behavior when it comes to online shopping. At the moment, digital commerce represents 18% of online commerce in Portugal, having doubled in comparison with the pre-pandemic period.

Millennials and generation Z are no strangers to the internet, as they use it for almost everything on their daily lives, even for reading and communicating, most times they can tell what information is true and what is fake, which also applies to influencers. Influencer marketing is the right way to communicate with both these generations. According to Bolton (2013), Smith (2011) and Williams and Page (2011), influencer marketing is not considered by Millennials and Gen Zs to be intrusive because they have the choice of following people according to their own tastes and values. They also see influencers as relatable people therefore their opinions are authentic and trustable. It is not enough to place someone in front of a camera saying they recommend a certain product or service, that is unpersonal and doesn't connect to the audience. People want proof and connection, which makes storytelling a golden tool.

Questions and research goals

In a very general way, the main goal of this dissertation is to understand the effect storytelling combined with influencer marketing has on people's purchase intentions, that is, if the fact that they can create a connection to the brand makes them more willing to buy a product.

In order to reach that goal of knowledge, a main question was developed: **What effect does storytelling as a marketing tool used by influencers has on consumers' behaviour?** To properly answer the main question, three objectives were defined to help comprehend the subject.

Objective 1: evaluate the Portuguese's presence on social media and understand how influencer marketing works in people's lives, particularly when it comes to acquiring a product or service.

Objective 2: understand how storytelling is being used as a branding tool

Objective 3: comprehend the role storytelling plays in creating a connection between Portuguese consumers and a brand.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach used in this study can be divided in two phases:

- 1) Data collection: in order to collect quantitative data, a survey was the chosen method. It was available online with free access to the Portuguese population of internet users.
- 2) Data analysis: since raw data is not useful it was necessary to analyse it and sort the data by themes, in order to make it possible to draw conclusions.

Structure and organization

This dissertation was organized in five chapters, being the first one introduction. In this chapter there is a summary of the studied object and the goals that were hoped to get achieved. Secondly there's literature review, this chapter provides a theoretical framework on the main concepts and serves as a guideline to analyse the survey results. The third chapter is methodology in which is described the way data was collected and analysed. After there's result analysis, this chapter contains the data collected from the survey as well as its analysis. Finally, the last chapter is conclusions which contains the information gathered by this research as well as some final considerations on the main theme.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

Social media and digital era in branding

As of mid 2021, there are over 4.66 billion internet users active worldwide, representing 59,5% of the global population. As a consequence of this growing usage of the internet, social networks gained new users. Since 1996, year of its starting point, social media has managed to infiltrate about 3.96 billion people, 50% of the world's population. It is estimated that approximately 84% of internet users are on social media, being the average number of accounts per individual eight. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter are amongst the most used social networks, reason why brands are taking advantage of this. (Statista, 2020)

Social media sites are a way of immediate communication as they have several advantages such as the possibility to connect people within a great distance at very low costs, something that is considered attractive business wise.

The rise of the internet brought many changes to the way communication used to be. People use the internet to communicate and share information, it is necessary that brands can keep up with this behavior at the risk of becoming outdated. Individuals are now able to keep themselves up to date with events and news at a rate that was not possible before. According to Nedra et al (2019) and De Valck et al (2009), creating connections has been facilitated by social media, not only by text or video but also through pictures, lives, and status updates.

Since communication has been facilitated, people began searching for information more directed at them and their personal interests, hence why mass marketing began losing place in the business world, people search for content they can identify with. Companies, more than ever, make use of technology to interact directly with the costumers “collecting and miming information about them, and tailoring their offerings accordingly” (Rust et al, 2010). This is also news to the consumers as they never “expected to interact so deeply with companies, and each other, to shape the products and services they use” (Rush et al, 2010).

Since we are living in a digital era, consumers can express themselves in terms of their likings and share their view on products with other users. It also became a common practice to search or read reviews about products before buying them. Companies noticed and picked up on that fact. Due to the possibility of anonymity provided by the internet, users feel comfortable when sharing their views expressing then their true feelings. “Social media gave people the

opportunity to represent, document and explore social behaviours as well as has enabled users to establish and participate in digital communities, as well as it has had a disruptive effect on how individuals consume Internet”. (Caton and Chapman, 2016)

Advertising these days is working more on a word-of-mouth basis but with a digital side. Consumers are more inclined to get information from others as it is perceived as more authentic and credible. This has been a trend for many years now, but with the growing usage of social media the effects were enlarged. In fact, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are essential for this spread.

Although there are many social media users, some people stand out for the number of followers they have, these people are considered opinion leaders who are capable of influencing others. Digital influencers, as they are now known, have the power to quickly spread messages that reach not only their followers but also other people who might see their posts through other sources. It can be considered as a digital word-of-mouth. (Veirman et al, 2017; Boyd et al, 2007; Knoll, 2016)

This group of individuals, that stands out because of the number of their followers, have a bigger impact than regular social media users. Digital influencers use their social media profiles to interact with their followers about everyday aspects of life as well as to promote products from brands they are partnered with. As stated by Dantas (2018), influencers are the social media users that have the capability to, through their content, influence an audience, leading them to acquire a certain product or service. Karhawi (2016) defends that this kind of influence is only possible because of the closeness with the audience, that is, the fact that digital influencers talk from their personal point of view, creating an emotional connection with their followers.

The rise of this new professional group made brands rethink their strategy. Instead of advertising for a general audience, it seemed more valuable to have a person (influencer) advertising for a certain niche that would actually be interested in the products. Brands understood that it would be preferable to have a person advertise for their followers as they would already be interested in products, contrary to a general audience that would see a commercial on tv during the break of the program they would be watching. Contemporary marketing highlights the importance of marketing strategies that are focused on the costumers' needs and not on what a brand wants to sell, hence the importance of hitting the right target. Attracting people to a certain product is becoming a hard mission as now the audience can do

its research before acquiring anything. Instead of having brands reach out to the costumers showing them new products the roles were inverted, co-creation is the new strategy being applied. It consists of “creating a bridge between customer and business through gamification. A practical example would be attracting customers through social media content relevant to their needs or writing article blog posts that have useful information.”. (JDR Group, 2020)

Another aspect of this is the recognition a brand gets from the online engagement between influencer and followers (Dhar et al, 2014). While traditional advertising is vertically oriented in terms of how information flows, social media advertising is at everyone’s reach, meaning that everyone can share their views on a product. Financially speaking, traditional advertising has higher costs, demands knowledge about the area and access to specific means. Online advertising might be costless, and people don’t need any specific knowledge to create content, also, the message of the advertise spreads faster and lasts longer than traditional advertising. According to Zhang and Vos (2015), “social media have various features that enable fast dissemination, including ease of searching, sharing and connecting with other users”.

Brands take this into account when defining their marketing strategies. Social media marketing (or, similarly, influencer marketing) is a subgroup of digital marketing that uses internet and social networks in order to promote their products. (Barefoot et al, 2010)

Social networks, as an attempt to keep up with this new era of advertising, developed specific analytic tools that allow business profiles to have access to useful data such as how many accounts were reached, the number of interactions, number of followers, among many other features that allow social media managers to monitor and optimize strategies (Hafele, 2011).

Brand awareness

Traditional means of communication have been losing their effectiveness as consumers are tired of traditional advertising. Paired with this over-saturation of the traditional means is the fact that consumers perceive advertising as false. “Picture perfect ads with catchy slogans (...) may generate buzz for a few days but ultimately fail to resonate with potential buyers”. (Ruseva, 2020).

A need to find alternative ways to advertise is developing. In this reality brands compete to be seen and, more importantly, to be remembered. Brand awareness gains importance. Keller (2003) describes it as “the customers’ ability to recall and recognize the brand as reflected by their capacity to identify the brand under different conditions and to link the brand name, logo, symbol, and so forth to particular associations in memory.”, in other words, brand awareness is related to the intensity of a brand in a person’s memory. (Farhana, 2012)

According to Hoeffler and Keller (2002), people tend to remember brands’ names if there is a connection between the brand and the consumer need, reason why is so important for brands to reach their target audience. Rossier and Percy (1987) defend that brand awareness is directly related to memorization in the minds of the consumers and this will reflect the consumers’ ability to identify a brand under various conditions. This leads to brands with a higher awareness to be more likely to stand out. When in situations of doubt, consumers tend to do less research (mostly due to the lack of time and availability) and buy the product they remember the most. Therefore, the memory people have of a specific brand will help in the final process of choice of a product. (Pryor and Kriss, 1977). Hence why brand awareness leads to an increase sale-wise, making the brand more valuable.

Since the world of communication is changing, brands face challenges such as how to get their messages through. Product placement is a consequence of that. By definition, influencers have a large number of followers on social media, those followers consider them experts in their own niches and, therefore, their recommendations are taken into account. The main difference between influencers and regular celebrities is the proximity between them and their fans/followers, that allows them to create connections that become very valuable when trying to create brand awareness and work on product placement. This is an attempt to increase brand’s visibility and create an identity at the same time, this can only happen because of the new technologies that allow brands to communicate more directly to their target audiences. (Kotler et al, 2009)

It is wrong to assume that in order to increase brand awareness one must focus on quantity, instead, quality is equality as, if not more, relevant. According to a HubSpot research (2020), “the overload of ads, blog posts, or interactions could resonate as spammy” leading people to lose interest instead of gaining. Having a product being frequently advertised on tv, doesn’t mean that it will sell more, this happens because the people that watch tv might not be the target audience for that product. Nowadays, relevance is the answer. A recommendation

from an influencer is equivalent to a recommendation from a friend as a connection is created between influencer and follower, the latter values their opinions. This shift in communication makes advertising part of everyday life instead of an interruption. Influencers create content they know their followers will consider useful; this establishes a sense of trust.

In an ever-changing society like the one we live in, brands have trouble standing out in a crowded market. It is not enough to make one good advert, brands need to create a long-term connection to make sure they are still relevant and on top of the consumers' minds. Their presence must be steady and relevant, keeping up with people's needs and what they search for. Influencers are an important part of this as they already have a strong audience relationship created throughout the time. They work as a bridge between the brand and the client. Recent research shows that 49% of consumers consider an influencer recommendation more trustworthy than a brand recommendation (Cure media, 2021). By working with an influencer, a brand skips the part of creating a connection as it is already there. This also increases brand awareness because influencers give a visual of the product on their posts, leading to memorization by the audience.

People spend a lot of time online, according to data from Statista, the average social media user spends around 145 minutes online per day, a number that has been increasing since 2012, when people used to spend no more than 90 minutes. This is the reason why it is much harder to reach them with traditional media. By using influencer marketing brands have better chances of getting to their target audience.

Another important aspect of brand awareness is that it could be positive, neutral, or negative. For a brand to grow it is important that it comes off as positive (Xuehua et al, 2010). Collaborating with an influencer could be a step towards positivity as the audience relates to them and trusts them. In the long run, followers will most likely suggest the products to their friends, creating engagement, and this spread of information will lead to digital word-of-mouth.

Influencer marketing and digital influencers

To properly understand influencer marketing, it is important to clarify the concept of digital influencer. There is no doubt that today's advertisement is directly linked to digital influencers, but who are these people capable of making someone want to search or even buy a product? According to Brown and Hayes (2008), influence can be defined as "the power to affect a person, thing or course of event" and it manifests itself in many different ways, from

“direct purchase advice to subtle shifts in perception of a vendor’s credibility”, in other words, it is the capability of affecting another human being’s opinion on a particular subject or product. According to that definition, an influencer is someone capable of affecting someone else’s behavior leading them to a certain end. These micro-celebrities’ (Senft, 2008) importance has been increasing since the growing usage of social networks. They are object of particular interest by brands as they convey the idea of being very “personal, authentic, credible and down-to-earth sources of information” (Harrigan et al, 2021) leading the brand’s audience to an increase. Just like any other business relationship, influencers are interested in gaining something. Considering their number of followers, digital influencers “use this social capital to gain access to financial resources”. (Adidin, 2015)

Contrary to the common user, digital influencers take into account social networks’ algorithms which gives them an advantage in terms of content to post and how to do it reaching more people. (Cotter, 2019)

Although the concept of digital influencer is rather recent, the phenomenon is not. In 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) created the two-step flow communication model. It stated that some people take the role of opinion leaders as they could promptly spread information and influence others simply by giving more meaning and value to said information. This theory can be applied to influencers as this is their exact way of acting.

The same happens with the concept of influencer marketing. Although it is considered new, it had precedents. Before social media made its big change in the world, people were already being influenced by celebrities, mostly through product placement strategies. It was a common practice to have actors promote brands on movies. This continues to happen, but the platform changed. Influencers use social media to promote products, their main goal is to share a message to an audience that is already interested in the subject, hence why there are different categories of influencers (e.g., travel, beauty, lifestyle, etc).

Agrawal in 2016 described influencer marketing as something halfway between a discreet product mention and an official advertise, meaning that influencer marketing intends to advertise a product without being too explicit about it. For brands this type of marketing is a way of achieving exposure and being associated with quality at the same time. Influencers, as per definition, have large bases of followers that are willing to copy their style and follow their recommendations. By collaborating with them, brands benefit from an already established audience making it easier to reach their target.

One of the biggest challenges faced by brands is choosing an appropriate influencer to carry their message to the targeted audience. On a first moment, the main characteristic a brand looks for is a large number of followers, because it is directly connected to the reach of the message: more people, higher spreadability. Influencers, rather than directly promote a product, usually incorporate said product in a post with a captivating story, awakening people's interest. (Sokolova, 2019)

All this evolution led to a shift in the power. Brands are no longer in control of marketing strategies, that became the influencers' work (later to be approved by the brand) and they are now the bridge between consumers and brands, gaining value on the market. (Ge et al, 2018)

Contemporary authors (Belleau et al, 2001; Sudha et al, 2017) claim that there are three aspects to take into account when using influencer marketing: 1) the reach. This one is related to the number of followers an influencer has in a niche/market; 2) relevance. Just like the name says, it is the relevance a certain influencer has to the consumer. It is very important that the influencer knows how to communicate to a certain audience; 3) resonance. The feedback given to the influencer by followers. This last one is particularly important because it demonstrates how strong of a relationship the influencer has with its followers, that is, if the followers trust the opinions.

In this reality brands depend on digital influencers to spread their message, reason why it is important to choose an influencer that represents the brand's values, otherwise the posts will look false.

Now more than ever before, consumer behavior has a central role in marketing strategies. In general terms it can be defined as "the study of how individuals make buying decisions; what motivates them to make a purchase" (Team, 2021). There are several sides of this type of behavior: 1) how the consumer feels about a certain product; 2) what makes the consumer choose one product instead of the other; 3) Which factors affect the consumer's buying decision; 4) how consumer's opinions change when they are alone or in group. But why is this relevant to business? According to recent studies (State of the connected customer, 2020), consumers expect brands to understand their needs and expectations, resulting in quit buying a product if that doesn't happen.

Brands no longer generate their products alone, new strategies like searching for external information are getting more common. Companies want to know what consumers are

thinking and searching for, that is one of the reasons why digital influencers are crucial, they know their audience, therefore, their needs and wants.

Storytelling

Influencer marketing is being used by a large number of brands, each of them trying to stand out from the others and differentiate themselves in a way that makes consumers want to buy, so is not enough to have an influencer saying they recommend a certain product, the connection has to be deeper and truthful. The consumer must feel as if the brand completely understands them. For that to happen, digital influencers need to create a narrative based on their lives, tastes, beliefs, etc, in order to sell. Now, more than ever, the concept of storytelling makes sense, brands are looking for digital influencers who can sell their products and, at the same time, believe in them enough to create a narrative, not only with words but also with videos and photos. Influencers must include the product they are selling in their lives, making it more authentic.

“Whether the brand goals are rooted in search engine optimization (getting found), lead generation (conversion) or leveraging social media tools, none of them will be effective without compelling storytelling. More and more, brands are starting to realize that all the technology tools available are worthless without a content marketing strategy at the center of marketing.” (Pullizi, 2012)

According to a recent Google project, Zero Moment of Truth, consumers are engaging more with online content, leading to a buying decision. In order to properly take advantage of this trend, companies “must ensure that their content is in the mix while these decisions are being made” (Pullizi, 2012). Companies that are not able to keep up with this new content marketing strategy are being left behind by consumers who cannot connect with them. In these digital times, the problems shift, if before advertising and marketing were an obstacle because of its costs, now, the biggest challenge is to create a story that resonates enough to create a connection.

Since the beginning of time, storytelling is a way of humans to interact. It began with ancient civilizations who told stories through drawing (hieroglyphs), later evolved to spoken stories and, after that, written stories (books). Storytelling is not just about sharing facts; it is also a way of sharing a vision of the world. The ability to understand and create stories is something only humans can do, and it is vital for their interactions.

According to the *Healing Through Remembering 2005* report (Kelly, 2005), storytelling can be defined as the act of sharing a story through a variety of ways. “Stories are a medium for sharing and a vehicle for assessing and interpreting events, experiences, and concepts to an audience. Through stories we explain how things are, why they are, and our role and purpose within them. They are the building blocks of knowledge and can be viewed as the foundation of memory and learning.”. Stories can be told through different mediums. Whether is oral, written, or visual what counts is the message.

Storytelling works closely with content marketing in promoting a brand. This marketing technique aims to “create and disseminate content that will engage customers and potential customers by offering them something of value: industry insights and trends, tips and how-to demonstrations, and other relevant information”. (Korosec, 2012). This took new proportions with the growing usage of the internet, now messages spread a lot faster, and companies have the opportunity to share their values with the costumer, making it possible to create a connection. Advertising became more about the story than the product itself. This is a consequence of the oversaturation of the digital world. Brands are competing for attention and the best way to stand out is through creativity. Better content means more attention as people will associate the brand to the content shared.

This leads to the concept of attention economy. According to Crawford (2015) “attention is a resource a person only has so much of it”, with the increasing amount of information online, attention becomes the limiting factor in the consumption of said information. This demonstrates de importance of attention as it is the first stage before acquiring a product or service.

Campaigns can be channeled through a plurality of platforms, from the classic ones such as printed media to the most recent (social media and digital), companies can explore which options captures their target audience better. Social media and digital platforms are among the most used. Content can be shared in the format of pictures, videos or animations, e-books, podcasts, social media posts, and many others. (Jarvinen, 2016)

According to Coker et al (2017) marketers are exploring new ways to connect with consumers through video, something that has been happening for the past few years. Digital influencers are taking over this type of marketing, contributing to its growth. The fact that consumers search for information online way more than they did before, makes brands more

aware of the importance of interacting, if they are able to know who is buying from them, they can adapt the type of advertising they use.

By relying on storytelling as an alternative to straight-selling, brands are trying to pass a message to their audience. The fact that they create a narrative to engage with the consumer gives them the ability to influence people's emotions which brings them several advantages. According to Callahan (2015), stories are an important tool to relate to an audience, brands can share more information through a story (comparing to regular marketing techniques) and there is a better chance of said information to be carved in the consumers' long-term memory, which, once again, takes us back to brand recognition. This type of strategy gives brands an advantage over an overcrowded market. (Chiu et al, 2012)

Another great outcome of storytelling is the way costumers connect with the brand. Authentic and creative stories that go beyond just the functionality of the product create a deeper connection and, therefore, provoke emotional reactions. (Baker et al, 2009) This type of strategy is at everyone's reach, meaning that small brands can benefit from it too at a lower cost than traditional advertising, making them more competitive and putting them in the same league as bigger brands.

Youssef et al (2018) agree that stories are a mean for costumers to understand the benefits they can get from buying from a certain brand, and this contributes for positive associations to a brand.

Just like every story from every fairy tale, there must be a structured narrative. It is necessary that said narrative sounds authentic, otherwise people will not be able to relate to it and, therefore, will not give it any thought. Not using excessive words is also a plus as it could lead to a loss of attention from the consumer. Must be relatable, as consumers need to see their problem and proposed solution reflected, and finally, easy to comprehend, as it pretends to reach all kinds of audiences. (Chiu et al, 2012)

To create a good story, there are four important elements to take into account: 1) the message (clear and with a strategic purpose for the brand); 2) the conflict (important to demonstrate the consumers' emotional needs. The story begins with the character's life in order, then the character faces an incident and, the most important part, the path to the resolution); 3) the characters (consumer has to be able to relate to the characters); 4) the plot (the main events

that lead to a story). There is not a correct formula to use these elements, the creator can organize them as pleased. (Fog et al, 2010)

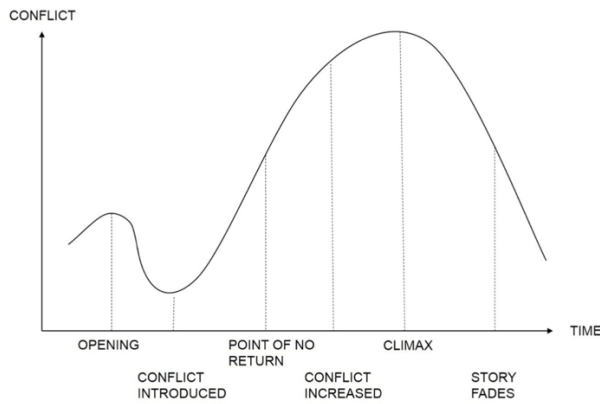


Figure 1: The story model (Fog et al., 2010, pp45)

According to Pullizzi (2012), there are six factors that separate a good story from a great one that will help improve buying intention. The first factor is focused content, brands can't expect to reach different audiences with the same story, it's important to define the target and create a story aimed at it, otherwise, the engagement will not be as high. The second one is the need to adapt the brand's speech and values to match the audience's, in the same way consumers' needs are changing, brands need to have the ability to keep up with that change. The third one is the need for a specific department inside the brand that will create and distribute the story in order to make sure that the content aligns between departments. As for the fourth factor, it's the need to make employers part of the story being created, to convey the feeling of authenticity, if they don't believe in what they are creating, consumers won't either. The fifth aspect is, in order to create attractive content, the brand should be removed from the story as a way of making it look less like advertising and more in search of a connection. The sixth and final aspect is the need to conquer a specific niche of the market as targeting everyone is an impossible task. Besides internal content creators, brands are using external ones, such as influencers, which are a common way of getting to certain audiences.

Traditional storytelling has already an enormous impact on people's emotions, when combined with digital, this impact grows even more. According to Rampton, digital storytelling converts simple narratives into interactive stories (Rampton, 2016). This is particularly important for brands as it increases brand loyalty, creates a sense of trust and allows consumers

to connect on a deeper level. By using digital platforms such as social media brands are making space for consumer engagement.

Digital storytelling it's a creative and compelling way to advertise products, but nowadays most internet users have ad blockers making it harder for the marketing strategies to go through. This is the reason why digital influencers are relevant, they create dialogue with their communities of followers sharing information about brands and its products. Since followers relate in some deeper way to the influencer rather than just sharing some of the same likings, they later manage to increase awareness to the brand. By seeing these posts people trust brands, leading to an increase of the brands' credibility. Reviews and testimonials are important as ways of sharing information.

People are getting more demanding when searching for a product, they want the best, making it difficult to maintain a "relationship", hence why customer engagement tools are an important to measure the audience's reach. Comments, likes and any kind of interaction are indicators of failure or success.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In this chapter I will present the methodology used to collect data and explain how the result analysis was conducted. According to Bruyne (1991), methodology can be defined as the logic of scientific procedures in their genesis and development, meaning that besides explaining the results of the scientific investigation, it also demonstrates the path leading to them.

Research design

The aim of this research study is to understand how social media usage changed the way advertising works, how brands are connecting to consumers through influencers and, most importantly, how does the process of digital storytelling by influencers works. It was important to understand if influencers are capable of generating a connection between a brand and a client through the use of this tool. So, in order to get the consumers' point of view about the subject and understand if, in fact, influencers can make someone whiling to buy a product it was applied a quantitative analysis. This type of methodology uses statistic data to analyze certain phenomenon.

According to Richardson (1989) this method is characterized by the use of quantification both when collecting and analyzing information through statistical techniques. Diehl (2004) defends that the usage of quantitative data helps avoiding possible incorrect analysis and interpretation distortions allowing a greater margin of safety. This type of method is frequently used in studies that aim to uncover and clarify the connection between two variables.

Data collection

There is a plurality of quantitative techniques but the most common one is the survey method (Hymann, 1967), in which is included online survey. This technique is especially helpful when collecting data from large groups of people, reason why it was used in this particular research. Saunders et al (2016) defined primary data as the results obtained for a specific purpose hence why the data collected for this study can be considered as such. Just like regular surveys, online surveys are a collection of questions about a certain matter design to collect answers from a previously stablished group of people.

Online surveys have been available for almost thirty years (Andrews et al, 2003) but the evolution of the internet made them more user friendly. According to Spitz et al (2006) online

surveys are easier and less expensive to administer when comparing to traditional surveys. This method guarantees better quality data as has better control of possible errors not only when collecting responses but, later on, when transferring the data to the database. Andrews et al (2003) agree that the cost per response decreases at the same time as the sample size grows. Internet had a major role in spreading the survey allowing it to reach more people. Glover and Bush (2005) stated that online surveys' responses were more reflected than in-person surveys as people don't have a limited space to answer nor they are influenced by the interviewer's behavior.

Although there are a lot of advantages for this method, there are also some cautions one might have to take. The same authors alert for the length of the online survey as respondents might find it tedious and quit. The traditional principles of designing a survey can also be applied for the online version.

The online survey designed for this study was published on June 20th, 2021, and closed on July 29th, 2021, on the platform Qualtrics. It was published in Portuguese as the target group were Portuguese people.

The answers are part of a convenience sample as the survey was shared by the author through social media and communication apps (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram). Since some respondents also shared the survey, it was used the snowball sampling method.

Survey design

The survey begins with a small introduction explaining the theme of the study and how the collected data was meant to be treated, participants were also informed about the anonymity of their answers and thanked for participating. In total the survey has 24 questions, most of them being closed questions. In order to have a better structured survey blocks were created.

The first one is the demographic profile which was used as the base for generalizing the sample as said sample is not representative of the population. This block consists of four questions (age, gender, zone of residence and level of education). These answers were also used to analyze how different groups would react to one same situation.

Since this is a study concerning social media, individuals were asked about their social networks' use habits (how many hours a day they spend online, which social media apps/sites do they use the most and which sources do they use to search for information when buying products).

The third block consists of six questions about digital influencers: if they follow any digital influencers, to which category said influencers belong, if they search for reviews about a product before buying it, if they ever bought a product because of an influencer's review, and the opposite, if they decided not to buy a product based on an influencer's opinion and whose opinions they value the most when buying a product.

The fourth block introduces the storytelling thematic. Respondents are asked if they are aware of the storytelling concept, which format of reviews they prefer and they are given a list of characteristics and asked to identify which of them are more relevant in a narrative.

The fifth, and last, block is about the relationship between client and brand. Respondents were given an Instagram post about which they had to answer some questions such as which elements stand out the most, if they feel more connected to a brand that has an online presence and, to end, if the fact that digital influencers work with brands creates a sense of proximity between people and brand.

Research goals

To each of the research questions/objectives presented in the introduction corresponds a set of questions in the survey:

| | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| Objective 1 | From question 1 to 16 |
| Objective 2 | From question 17 to 21 |
| Objective 3 | From question 22 to 25 |

In order to analyze the data provided by the survey a series of steps were followed. First, the data was imported from Qualtrics to Excel and SPSS in order to analyze valid answers and missing values. After, a descriptive analysis was conducted.

Chapter 4 - Results analysis and discussion

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the way storytelling used by influencers can play a part in the consumer's behavior. Missing values are non-existent as incomplete surveys were deleted because they had no statistical use.

Sociodemographic profile

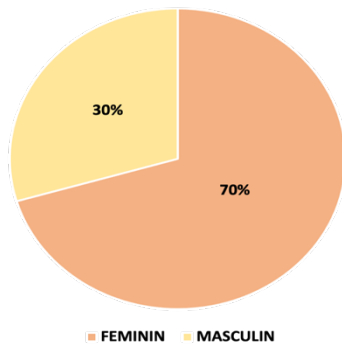


Figure 2: Sample distribution by gender. Source: self-elaboration

The survey had a sample of 450 people, 317 women (70%) and 133 male (30%) between the ages of 16 and 81. Minor's answers were accepted as the data is anonymous and there is no way of identifying them. The average age of the respondents is 35 years-old and the standard deviation is 15,45 which is high because the data is more spread out, meaning that there is a higher range of ages.

In order to properly understand the population's distribution throughout the country, respondents were given the following options as their places of residence: North, Center, Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Alentejo, Algarve, Azores and Madeira.

This specific group of options is known as Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics II (NUT II) and it is a standard division used for statistical purposes.

Most of the respondents reside in Lisbon's Metropolitan Area (64%), followed by the center of Portugal (16%), and the rest of the respondents (20%) are from Alentejo, North, Algarve or the islands.

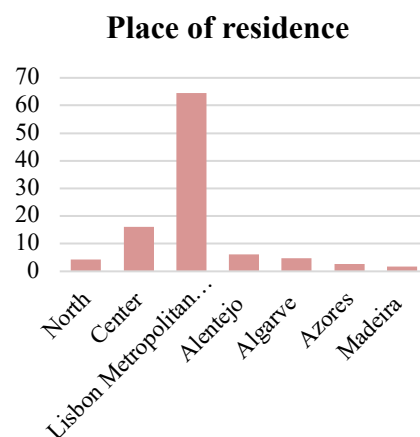


Figure 3: Sample distribution by place of residence. Source: self-elaboration

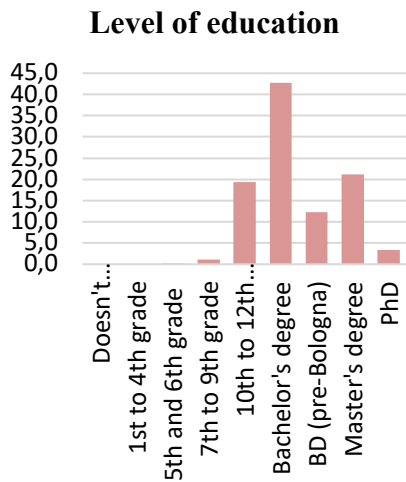


Figure 4: Sample distribution by level of education
Source: self-elaboration

As for the level of education, the responses were fairly unanimous. Since the survey was open for every person in Portugal to answer, it was decided that because of the age range, it would make sense to discriminate the type of bachelor's degree meaning that older people who studied pre-bologna (four-year course) would not have to answer "bachelor's degree" (three year course). In terms of statistics, it was opted to analyze both categories as one.

Most of the respondents are college educated, only 20% don't have college level studies. 54,9% of the population has a bachelor's degree, 21,1% a master's degree and 3,3% a PhD. This indicator alone shows that even though it is a heterogenic population, some characteristics are common to the whole.

Social media usage

In order to understand people's habits relating the time they spend online in a leisure context; respondents were asked about how many hours per day they are on social media or online. 40% claim to spend around one to four hours online, 28% spend four to eight hours, 18% less than an hour, and 14% spend more than eight hours online. This question was particularly relevant to the study to later understand how the time spent online can affect people's decisions about acquiring a product or service. The fact that the sample for this survey is very eclectic in terms of ages affected also affected the answers. People who spend less than an hour online tend to be older than the ones who use the internet for more than eight hours. The average age of the "Less than an hour" respondents is 45 years-old while the "more than eight hours" is 26 years-old.

Time online per day

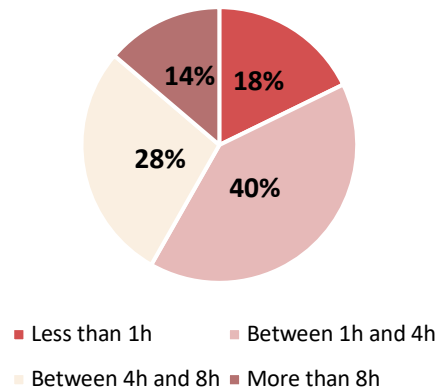


Figure 5: Sample distribution by time spent online per day
Source: self-elaboration

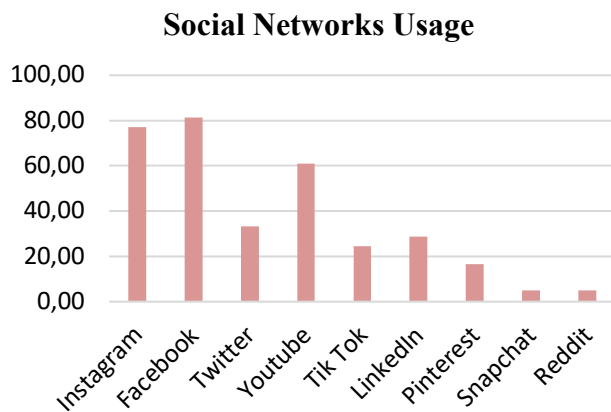


Figure 6: Sample distribution by social networks usage.
Source: self-elaboration

place YouTube 274 (60,8%). Next comes Twitter with 150 (33,3%), LinkedIn with 129 (28,6%), Tik Tok with 110 (24,4%), Pinterest with 74 (16,4%), and, finally, with the same number of votes, and therefore the same percentage, there's Snapchat and Reddit (22 votes, 4,8%).

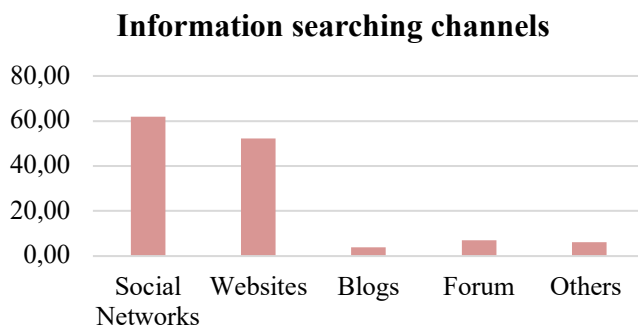


Figure 7: Sample distribution by information searching channels
Source: self-elaboration

in terms of information seeking. 6,2% of the respondents also claimed to search for information in other sources such as newspapers and magazines and physical stores. These answers were influenced, among other factors, by people's ages. While younger people (average age: 28 years-old) are more found of searching for information on social network, older ones prefer traditional means.

Nowadays there are a lot of different social networks and, as previously stated, people usually have accounts in more than one, reason why the percentages of this graph's analysis don't add up to be 100%. Following the world's trend, survey respondents' most used social media app/website is Facebook with 366 respondent users (81,3%), in second place there is Instagram with 347 (77,1%), and in third

Next, respondents were asked about where they get their information from before purchasing a product or service. Since they were allowed to choose more than one option the total percentage is not 100%. The channel most people use are social networks (279 answers, 62%) closely followed by websites (235 answers, 52,2%). Blogs and forums are not very common

Influencers

Follow Influencers

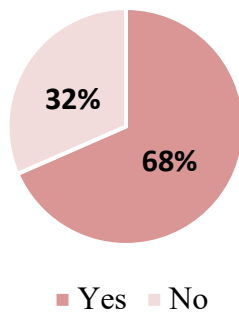


Figure 8: Sample distribution by influencer following

Source: self-elaboration

In order to introduce one of the main aspects of the dissertation, respondents were asked if they follow influencers. 68% answered “yes” and 32% “no”. Considering that the average age of the respondents is 35 years-old, the 68% of “yes” is a rather significant percentage as the concept of digital influencer is usually seen as something recent and modern, more directed to a younger audience. While the average age of respondents for “yes” is 28 years-old, for “no” it’s 49 years-old. The answers to this question are very important when it comes to the rest

of the survey as from here on most questions are related to digital influencers and their influence on people’s behavior.

Influencers categories

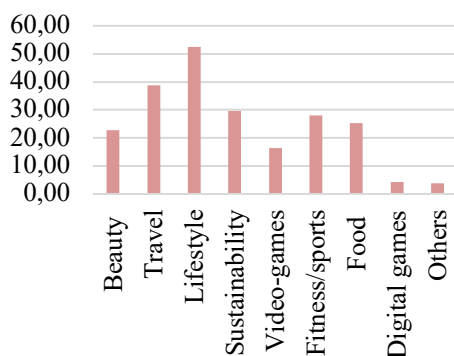


Figure 9: sample distribution by influencer categories

Source: self-elaboration

In this question, people who answered “yes” to the previous one, were asked to choose in which categories the digital influencers they follow are included. The percentages didn’t vary much between categories, but lifestyle stands out with 236 answers (52,44%) followed by travel with 38%, sustainability with 29,5%, fitness and sports with 28%, food with 25,3%, beauty with 22,6%, videogames with 16,4% and digital games with 4,2%. 3,7% of the respondents chose other options such as bookstagramers, health workers, fashion, dogs and technologies. This question is very relevant to show the number of live

aspects influencers are now a part of.

Search before buy

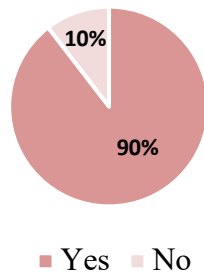


Figure 10: sample distribution by searching before buying
Source: self-elaboration

Buy a product recommended

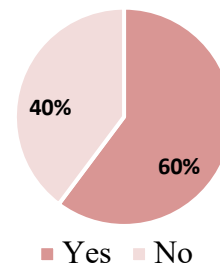


Figure 11: sample distribution by buying per influencers recommendation
Source: self-elaboration

In order to understand people's habits when buying a product, respondents were asked if they search for reviews of a product before acquiring it. It's possible to conclude that most people (90%) search for reviews before buying, and only 10% don't.

Another practice that has been increasing over the time is to buy products or services recommended by digital influencers, 60% of the survey respondents admitted having done such thing, 40% didn't. Since this is something rather recent, it is more common among the younger audiences. While the average age of respondents who bought a product recommended by an influencer is 27 years-old, the average of those who didn't is 47 years-old.

Quit buy a product

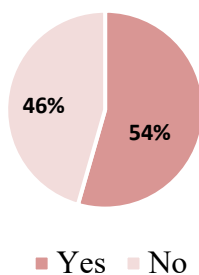


Figure 12: sample distribution by quitting buying a product
Source: self-elaboration

On the other hand, when asked if they chose not to acquire a product based on an influencers' negative review, 54% of the respondents said they did and 46% said they didn't. This shows that even though influencers are gaining importance, there is still an age group that doesn't trust their opinions. Millennials, gen Z, and gen alpha are more willing to accept these opinion leader's choices than baby-boomers or gen X who are still reticent to the digital influencer phenomenon.

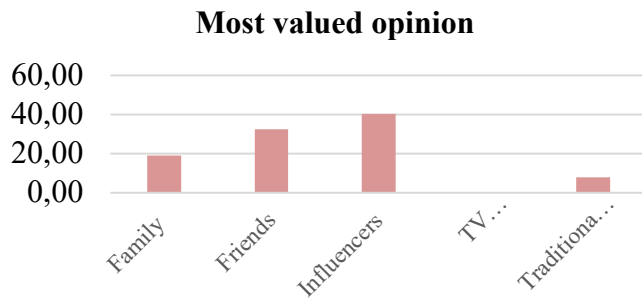


Figure 13: distribution by most valued opinion
Source: self-elaboration

susceptible to influencers (average age of 24 years-old), while older ones rely on friends and traditional advertising (average age of 58 years-old) to get opinions about a service or product.

Storytelling

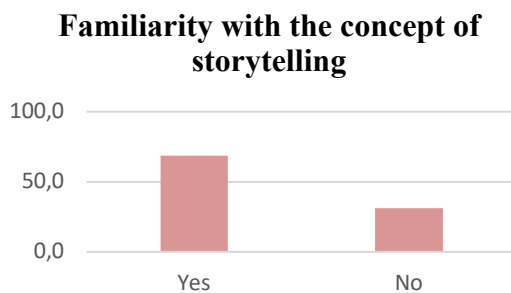


Figure 14: distribution by familiarity with storytelling
Source: self-elaboration

When asked if they are familiarized with the concept of storytelling, 69% of the respondents said they are, 31% are not. Even though 141 people answered “No”, the real meaning is that they don’t recognize the process of storytelling and its implications because everyone, in a situation or another, made use of the storytelling too, to do exactly what the name suggests: tell a story. These answers reflect what has been a tendency in terms of age in the

previous questions.

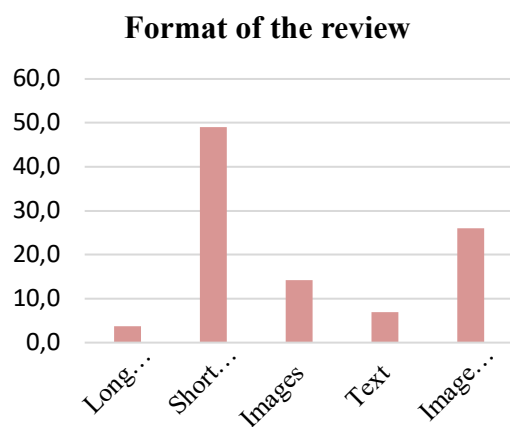


Figure 15: distribution by format of the review
Source: self-elaboration

As for the format of the reviews or posts most people prefer short videos (49%) and photos with text (26%). 14% of the respondents prefer images, 6,9% text and the least favorite are long videos (3,8%). These results are a sign of the short attention span people in today’s society have. Everything, particularly advertising, has to be short, captivating and straight to the point in order to reach for the right target without tiring it too much but still enough that they get

some brand recognition. According to Morgans (2017), this phenomenon is called attention economy and describes the “supply and demand of a person’s attention” which is the modern “product” traded online.

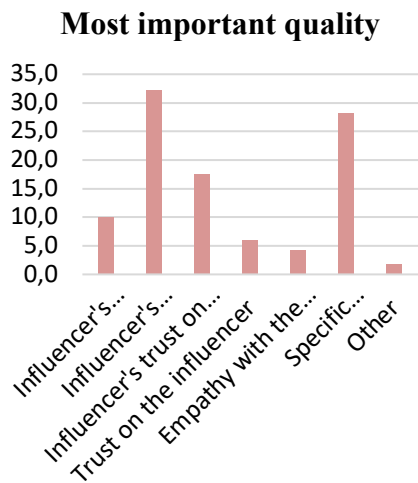


Figure 16: sample distribution by importance of quality Source: self-elaboration

As for the most important characteristic when watching/reading a review, 32% of the people highlighted the influencer’s communication skills, 28,2% chose the product’s specific features, 17,6% chose the influencer’s trust on the product, 10% selected the influencer’s knowledge of the product, 6% trust on the influencer, 4,2% the empathy and 1% chose other options such as knowledge and trust on the influencer’s tastes and their own opinion as a consumer.

Shares influencers' reviews

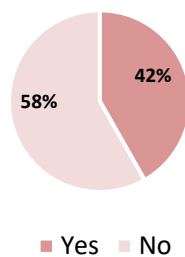


Figure 17: sample distribution by sharing influencers' reviews Source: self-elaboration

One of the most important parts of today’s advertising is the easiness to spread content. Advertisers and brands take advantage of technology and people’s willingness to share content. What was previously known as word of mouth (the action of spreading information from peers to peers via personal communication) evolved to e-word of mouth meaning that people, consumers, began to share with their peers their product recommendations. When asked if they share influencer’s recommendation, most respondents said they don’t (58,2%), 41,8% said they do. This 16,4% difference shows that EWOM is still

evolving, not yet being considered a universal practice, it is also more common between younger audiences, the average age of people who share influencers’ reviews is 25 years-old, and the ones who doesn’t is 42 years-old.

Most important characteristic in a narrative

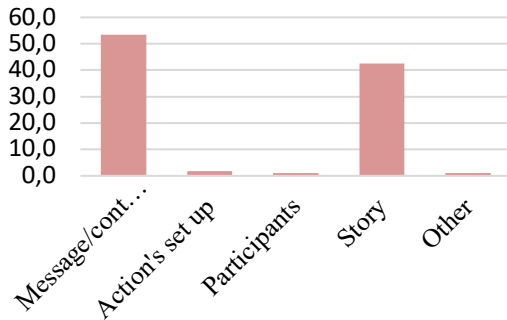


Figure 18: sample distribution by importance of characteristic
Source: self-elaboration

As for the characteristics participants consider to be the most important when constructing a narrative about a certain product or service the top choices are 53,6% for content/message and 42,4% for the narrative created to sell the product/service. This question alone demonstrates the importance storytelling has in people's lives, they want to connect and feel close to what they chose to buy as well as where they buy from. Only 1,8% chose the set up in which the action takes place, 1,1% chose the

participants and five other people answers with other options such as the sense of veracity the post/review transmits.

| Questions | TOTALLY DISAGREE | DISAGREE | NEUTRAL | AGREE | TOTALLY AGREE | TOTAL |
|--|------------------|----------|---------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | % | | | | | |
| I am satisfied with the post a saw | 4,7 | 5,1 | 35,3 | 36,9 | 18,0 | 100 |
| I liked the way the brand was integrated as part of the post | 5,6 | 6,9 | 23,6 | 43,8 | 20,2 | 100 |
| I trust the information on the post | 5,1 | 10,0 | 28,4 | 40,0 | 16,4 | 100 |
| I could base my opinion on this post to buy a product | 14,2 | 14,2 | 20,0 | 34,9 | 16,7 | 100 |
| I want to be/will continue being a consumer for this brand | 4,9 | 3,3 | 28,4 | 42,9 | 20,4 | 100 |
| I feel connected to the brand after seeing this post | 17,6 | 11,3 | 24,4 | 30,4 | 16,2 | 100 |
| This post meets my personal values | 6,2 | 5,6 | 28,0 | 44,0 | 16,2 | 100 |
| I would buy the product because of this post | 18,9 | 15,8 | 20,9 | 27,6 | 16,9 | 100 |
| I would give postivie feedback to the brand based on this post | 15,1 | 14,9 | 20,7 | 32,7 | 16,7 | 100 |
| I would recommend this brand to a friend/family | 10,4 | 6,9 | 24,0 | 38,4 | 20,2 | 100 |
| This post meets my expectations about this brand | 5,8 | 7,1 | 28,7 | 39,8 | 18,7 | 100 |
| I would give this brand feedback because of this post | 16,2 | 14,7 | 23,8 | 26,9 | 18,4 | 100 |

Figure 19: Sample distribution by level of agreement with each sentence.
Source: self-elaboration

To properly understand the effects of storytelling in an audience, the respondents were presented with an example of said tool in a real-life Instagram post. The image and description were taken from a Portuguese influencer's Instagram (@apipocamaisdoce) and the respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with certain sentences about the post. The common denominator in every option was that most of the respondents agree with each sentence. The percentages of people who "totally agree" are also higher than percentages of people who "totally disagree" or "disagree", in most of the options. The "neutral" level has high percentages which can be analyzed as personal preferences, meaning that even though they somehow don't feel connected to this particular post or influencer, the principal still stands, they are not the targeted audience for this specific post. It is also important to highlight some numbers such as

the 44% of respondents that agree that this post meets their values and the 43,8% who liked the way the brand was integrated on this post.

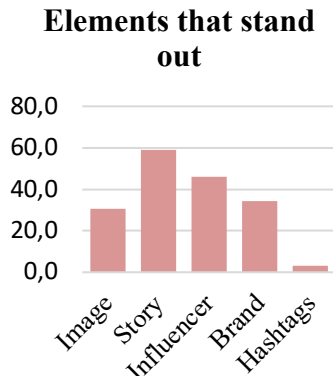


Figure 20: sample distribution by elements
Source: self-elaboration

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of elements which ones stand out on the post from the previous question, they were allowed to choose more than one. 59,1% of the sample agreed that the story was the most relevant element, the influencer came in second place with 46% of the sample's votes. Then, with 34,4%, the brand, 30% for image, and the hashtags only had 3,1% of the population.

It is once again possible to understand the influence a good story has on people's emotions and buying intentions.

Connection to the brand

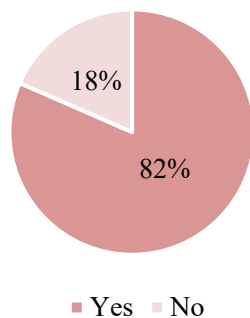


Figure 21: sample distribution by connection to the brand
Source: self-elaboration

Sense of proximity

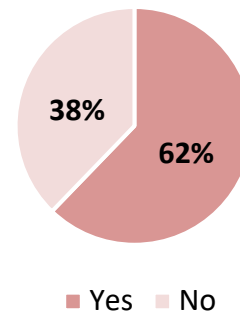


Figure 22: sample distribution by sense of proximity
Source: self-elaboration

The answer was very unanimous when respondents were asked if the story or narrative made them feel more connected with a brand. 81,6% answered yes and 18,4% answered no. The group that answered no has an average age of 42 years-old which means it's older than the average age of the respondents. This fact is relevant for the analysis as older people are used to traditional advertising that would be the same for the whole population. Influencer marketing intends to target a specific audience by relating to them.

When asked if they feel closer to a brand because said brand works with influencer marketing, the majority said “yes” (62,2%), and 37,8% answered “no”. This might have happened because people associate influencers’ values to their own, therefor, if they feel represented or connected with the influencer and the brand choses to work with that particular person, then, the brand probably shares the same values, becoming appealing to that targeted audience. The answers were also affected by the respondent’s age as the 37,8% have an average age of 46 years-old, older than the average age of the sample.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions

Main conclusions

The aim of this research is to understand the effect storytelling used by influencers as a marketing tool has on consumers' buying intentions. In order to try to comprehend that three objectives were defined:

- **Objective 1:** evaluate the Portuguese's presence on social media and understand how influencer marketing works in people's lives, particularly when it comes to acquiring a product or service.

Most of this survey's sample spends between one to four hours online and uses platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. According to the 2020 Statista report, Instagram is the most used social media platform for brand collaborations. From the 450 respondents of this survey, 347 use Instagram which makes them part of a targeted audience. Most people search for information before buying, which supports the theory that people are getting more demanding when it comes to acquiring a product or service.

From this sample of 450 people, 308 follow digital influencers on social media, and 271 have already bought something recommended by them, that is 60% of the whole population which shows the importance this type of marketing has been gaining over the past few decades. Respondents value influencers' opinions more than friends' and traditional advertising is barely acknowledged by them.

Content marketing created a revolution in terms of people's demands, they are much more likely to buy something if someone they "know" and sympathize with recommends it. There is always some influencer they can relate to, and audiences consider them to be experts on what they talk about.

- **Objective 2:** understand how storytelling is being used as a branding tool

Stories are seen as ways of getting an idea to an audience and, therefore, a toll for creating emotions which will lead to engagement. There are different means of telling a story and consequently brands can be represented in more than one way. If a brand has more than one product and wants to reach different targets the communication strategies must differ from one another awaking different emotions.

Every good story needs to follow a similar recipe, incorporating five key components (the story model by Fog et al, 2010): the introduction, the introduction of the conflict, the point

of no return, the climax and, finally, the resolution. Each of these stages follow the audience's steps and intend to show them how acquiring a product or service can solve their problems. The audience creates a connection between the story and their own lives, feeling as if they are the characters. This happens unconsciously most times. Storytelling is one of the most powerful marketing tools because if companies can relate to their audiences, then they can convince said audience that the product/service is exactly what they need.

Storytelling's first goal is to evoke emotion and, therefore, create a connection. By making the audience feel the story, they are influencing them to take an action, that in this case would be to acquire a product or service. Since internet made advertising cheaper and easier an enormous amount of competition was created for brands. As Seth Godin once said: "marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell".

According to data from the Worldometers, "5,3 trillion ads are shown online each day" which makes it impossible for the consumer to absorb them all, by appealing to people's feelings, brands are trying to stablish a connection that, hopefully, will lead to loyalty from the consumers.

- **Objective 3:** comprehend the role storytelling plays in creating a connection between Portuguese consumers and a brand.

Most of this survey's respondents are familiarized with the concept of storytelling, which shows the growing importance this tool gained. When searching for reviews most people prefer the ones with visual effects, that is saying that respondents want to see the product the is being presented to them. There is also a clear preference for the short video format as it makes the audience feel closer to the influencer. As for the way the story is told there was an agreement in saying that both the story and the message being passed across are the most important features. More than the influencer or even the scenario, respondents want a narrative they can relate to in order to feel closer to a brand, which 82% of the sample said to be true when there is a story/narrative behind a product or service. Finally, 62% of the population claimed to feel closer to a brand that works with influencer marketing. This supports the tendency that has been seen around the world.

In conclusion, even though storytelling and influencer marketing play a part in people's buying intention, this part is not even. As demonstrated by the results of the survey, the variable age has a major influence. Using the average age of the respondents, 35 years-old, it's possible to compare the effects influencers and this new way of advertising have in each category. Older

people (meaning people over 35 years old) are not as susceptible to modern advertising, as they do not identify themselves with the influencers. People under the age of 35 tend to feel represented and connected with the influencers, reason why their suggestions and reviews have a bigger impact on this part of the sample.

According to Reinikainen (2020), “the youth has a strong and very interactive relationship with influencers, which seems to build trust. The age group aged 55+ does not have that kind of relationship with influencers so the trust doesn’t necessarily develop” this means that younger people are used to interact with digital influencers and this new professional group became part of their life, young consumers trust them whereas older ones who are more critical and not so familiarized with them don’t pay as much attention. This fact is entirely related to the characteristics different generations have. While baby-boomers and gen Xs know what life was like without internet, Millennials and the following generations grew up with technology around them, hence why creating a connection with someone over the internet is not uncommon.

Contributions of the study

Digital influencers are still a rather recent phenomenon in the parameters we are seeing today, hence why the past research on the subject is nowhere near enough although it does shed some lights on the importance of social media influencers.

There are also not many theoretical approaches on the way influencers make use of tools like storytelling to create a connection, which is exactly the gap this study aims to fill in.

This study can be used by companies as a way to make them review their current strategies and find a closer connection with an audience in need for their products.

Research limitations and future research

This research contributes to a better understanding of the connection between influencer marketing and storytelling, but still has some limitations, being one of them the sample used. Because of the shortness of resources, it was used a convenience sample, which makes it impossible to generalize the results to a bigger population. There were also more female respondents than male respondents which makes it uneven in terms of the sample, both populations should be represented at the same percentage. The study was limited to Portuguese

respondents which also makes it impossible to generalize worldwide, as each population has its own features.

Although the subject was not deeply approach in this dissertation, there are several specific types of influencers, not only in terms of number of follower but also different categories, some of these conclusions might not apply to those niches.

Finally, the last limitation has to do with the survey itself, being the only research method used, the results were merely quantitative leaving out possible important information from the respondents. Being an online survey, it is impossible to make sure that the respondents' interpretation of the questions was the right one, which might have affected some part of the analysis.

As for future research, it would be interesting to understand if influencer marketing and particularly storytelling affect all generations in the same way. This study lightly suggests that younger generations are more permeable to influencer content than older generations. It would also be helpful to apply this theory to individual categories of influencer content instead of the general analysis that was made.

As for the population it would be positive to sort a better sample in order to make it possible to draw general conclusions. This study would be more complete if other types of research methods were applied as well, for example, instead of just an online survey, in-depth interviews with digital influencer's followers would give a better insight on the matter.

This thesis was analysed from the consumers point of view, in the future, a producer point of view would enrich the theme.

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Storytelling e redes sociais como meio de reconhecimento de marca: o papel dos influenciadores

Início do bloco: Introdução

Q1 Este questionário integra-se numa tese de mestrado em World Internet Studies no ISCTE-IUL sobre a importância do storytelling e das redes sociais como ferramentas para reconhecimento de marca.

Pretende-se entender de que modo os influenciadores digitais utilizam storytelling nas redes sociais para criar uma ligação entre o cliente e a marca, com o objetivo de persuadir o cliente a adquirir um produto.

A sua participação neste estudo é voluntária e o questionário foi elaborado unicamente para fins académicos. Os dados recolhidos são anónimos e tratados de forma confidencial.

O preenchimento levará cerca de 5 minutos.

Ao carregar no botão "continuar" está a aceitar as condições.

Agradeço desde já a sua participação.

Catarina Peixe

Fim do bloco: Introdução

Início do bloco: Perfil demográfico

Q2 Idade (em número)

Q3 Género

Feminino (1)

Masculino (2)

Outro (3)

Q4 Zona de residência

Norte (1)

Centro (2)

Área Metropolitana de Lisboa (3)

Alentejo (4)

Algarve (5)

Região Autónoma dos Açores (6)

Região Autónoma da Madeira (7)

Q5 Nível de escolaridade

- Não sabe ler nem escrever (1)
- 1º Ciclo (1º ao 4º ano) (2)
- 2º Ciclo (5º e 6º ano) (3)
- 3º Ciclo (7º ao 9º ano) (4)
- Ensino secundário (10º ao 12º ano) (5)
- Licenciatura (6)
- Licenciatura pré-Bolonha (9)
- Mestrado (7)
- Doutoramento (8)

Fim do bloco: Perfil demográfico

Início do bloco: Utilização de redes sociais

Q6 Quanto tempo por dia costuma passar online (em contexto de lazer)?

- Menos de 1 hora (1)
 - Entre 1 e 4 horas (2)
 - Entre 4 e 8 horas (3)
 - Mais de 8 horas (4)
-

Q8 Das seguintes opções, que redes sociais utiliza?

Instagram (1)

Facebook (2)

Twitter (3)

Youtube (4)

Tik Tok (5)

LinkedIn (6)

Pinterest (7)

Snapchat (8)

Reddit (9)



Q9 Quando pensa na aquisição de um produto ou serviço, através de que canais procura informação?

Redes sociais (Instagram, YouTube, etc) (1)

Sites (das marcas, de revendedores, etc) (2)

Blogues (3)

Fóruns (4)

Outro (5) _____

Fim do bloco: Utilização de redes sociais

Início do bloco: Influenciadores

Q10 Segue influenciadores nas redes sociais?

Sim (1)

Não (2)

Q11 Caso tenha respondido que sim à questão anterior, a que categoria pertence o conteúdo dos influenciadores que segue?

Beleza (1)

Viagens (2)

Lifestyle (3)

Sustentabilidade (4)

Video-jogos (5)

Fitness/desporto (6)

Alimentação (7)

Jogos digitais (8)

Outro (9) _____

Q13 Costuma pesquisar opiniões antes de adquirir um produto ou serviço?

Sim (1)

Não (2)

Q14 Alguma vez adquiriu um produto ou serviço por recomendação de um influenciador?

Sim (1)

Não (2)

Q15 Já deixou de adquirir um produto ou serviço devido a uma avaliação negativa por parte de um influenciador?

Sim (1)

Não (2)

Q16 Que opinião mais valoriza aquando da seleção de um produto ou serviço para compra?

Família (1)

Amigos (2)

Influenciadores (3)

Publicidade na televisão (4)

Publicidade online sem ser por meio de influenciadores (5)

Q17 Está familiarizado com o conceito de storytelling?

Sim (1)

Não (2)

Q18 Que formato de críticas/opiniões prefere ver nas redes sociais?

Vídeos longos (1)

Vídeos curtos (2)

Imagens (3)

Texto (4)

Imagem com texto (5)

Q19 Quando vê/lê uma opinião, qual destas qualidades considera ser a mais importante?

- Conhecimento do influenciador sobre o produto (1)
 - Capacidade de comunicação do influenciador (2)
 - Credibilidade do influenciador em relação ao produto (3)
 - Confiança no influenciador (4)
 - Empatia com o influenciador (5)
 - Características específicas do produto/serviço (6)
 - Outra (7) _____
-

Q20 Costuma partilhar publicações de influenciadores nas suas redes sociais?

- Sim (1)
 - Não (2)
-

Q21 Qual destas características lhe parece mais importante na construção de uma narrativa sobre um determinado produto ou serviço?

- Mensagem/conteúdo (1)
- Cenário em que decorre a ação (2)
- Participantes (3)
- Enredo/história (4)
- Outro (5) _____

Fim do bloco: Storytelling

Início do bloco: Relação emocional com a marca

Nesta secção poderá observar uma campanha relativa a um produto. Para responder às questões seguintes não é necessário que esteja familiarizado/a com o produto em questão na imagem.

Fonte: Instagram @apipocamaismoce publicação de dia 21 de Outubro de 2020

Q22

Em relação a esta publicação, responda às seguintes questões:

| | Discordo totalmente (1) | Discordo bastante (2) | Não concordo nem discordo (3) | Concordo bastante (4) | Concordo totalmente (5) |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Estou satisfeito/a com a publicação que vi (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Gostei da forma como a marca foi integrada na publicação (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Confio na informação presente na publicação (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Poderia basear-me nesta publicação para adquirir um produto (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Quero ser/vou continuar a ser consumidor/a desta marca (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sinto uma ligação à marca após ver esta publicação (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Os meus valores pessoais vão de encontro à publicação (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Compraria o produto devido a esta publicação (8) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Daria um feedback positivo sobre a marca baseado nesta publicação (9) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Recomendaria esta marca a um amigo ou familiar (10) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Vai de encontro às minhas expectativas em | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

relação à marca
(11)

Daria feedback
à marca devido
a esta
publicação (12)

Q23 Quais os elementos que mais se destacam nesta publicação? Escolher até 2 elementos

A imagem (1)

A história (2)

A Influenciadora (3)

A marca (4)

As hashtags (#) (5)



Q24 Na sua opinião, a criação de uma narrativa (história) faz com que se sinta mais ligado a uma marca ou produto?

Sim (1)

Não (2)

Q25 O facto de uma marca colaborar com um influenciador transmite-lhe uma maior sensação de proximidade enquanto cliente?

Sim (1)

Não (2)

Fim do bloco: Relação emocional com a marca
