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Influencer Marketing

Social media influencer's credibility on
purchase intention for different levels of
product involvement

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Católica Porto Business School
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Final Dissertation work
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by

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Resumo

O rápido crescimento das redes sociais impulsionou a adoção do marketing de influenciadores, que se tem revelado um importante preditor da intenção de compra dos consumidores. Este artigo tem como objetivo compreender o impacto das diferentes dimensões da credibilidade do influenciador na intenção de compra, analisando o papel moderador do nível de envolvimento com o produto nessa relação, comparando produtos de baixo e alto envolvimento. Esta pesquisa foi realizada através das redes sociais. Considerando apenas influenciadores do sexo feminino, este estudo inclui dezasseis perfis de influenciadores fictícios e dois produtos (um de baixo e outro de alto envolvimento) aos quais foi atribuída uma marca fictícia. A análise dos resultados mostra que todas as dimensões da credibilidade do influenciador têm impacto positivo na intenção de compra do consumidor. Para além disso, os resultados indicam que a confiabilidade tem o maior impacto na intenção de compra, seguida pela percepção de *expertise* e, por último, a atratividade. Não foi possível comprovar que o envolvimento do produto modera a relação entre a credibilidade do influenciador e a intenção de compra. Este estudo contribui para avançar a pesquisa sobre marketing de influenciadores, e para ajudar as marcas a identificarem os requisitos que um influenciador de sucesso deverá preencher, ao enaltecer a relevância das diferentes dimensões de credibilidade de um influenciador, e sublinhando o impacto que as mesmas têm na intenção de compra para diferentes níveis de envolvimento do produto.

Palavras-chave: marketing de influência, credibilidade do influenciador, influenciadores de redes sociais, envolvimento do produto, intenção de compra

Abstract

The rapid growth of social media networks has boosted the adoption of influencer marketing, which has proved to be an important and influential predictor of consumer's purchase intention. This paper aims to understand the impact of different dimensions of influencer credibility on purchase intention, analysing the moderating role of the level of product involvement in this relationship, comparing low and high involvement products. This research was carried out through social media networks. Considering only female influencers, this study includes sixteen fictitious influencers profiles and two products (one of low and other of high involvement) that were assigned to a fictitious brand. The analysis of the results shows that all dimensions of influencer credibility have a positive impact on consumer purchase intention. Furthermore, the results indicate that trustworthiness has the greatest impact on purchase intention, followed by expertise and, finally, attractiveness. It was not possible to prove that product involvement moderates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. This study contributes to the existing research on influencer marketing and helps brands identify the requirements that a successful influencer must fulfil, by enhancing the relevance of the different dimensions of an influencer's credibility, and underlining the impact they have on purchase intention for different levels of product involvement.

Keywords: influencer marketing, influencer credibility, social media influencer, product involvement, purchase intention

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Resumo.....	vi
Abstract.....	viii
Introduction.....	17
Chapter 1.....	20
Theoretical Background.....	20
1. Influencer Marketing.....	20
1.1 Social Media Influencers vs Celebrities.....	21
1.2 Interaction between Influencers and Consumers	21
2. Influencers' Credibility	22
2.1 Trustworthiness	23
2.2 Expertise.....	23
2.3 Attractiveness.....	24
3. Purchase Intention.....	24
4. Product Involvement.....	25
4.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model.....	26
Chapter 2.....	27
Conceptual Model and Hypothesis	27
Chapter 3.....	31
Methodology	31
3.1 Research Approach.....	31
3.2 Pretests and Results.....	32
3.2.1 Pretest on Attractiveness	32
3.2.2 Pretest on Product Involvement.....	34
3.2.3 Pretest Results	35
3.3 Subjects, materials and procedure	37
3.3.1 Study Design	37
3.3.2 Questionnaire	42
3.3.3 Scales	43
Chapter 4.....	46
Results	46
4.1 Preliminary Analysis.....	46

4.1.1 Data Collection.....	46
4.1.2 Demographic Characterization	47
4.1.3 Data Reliability.....	48
4.1.4 Descriptive Statistics	48
4.1.4.1 Descriptive Statistics: Stimuli Comparison.....	49
4.1.5 Correlation Analysis.....	50
4.2 Research Model Test	51
Chapter 5.....	55
Discussion.....	55
5.1 Theoretical Contributions.....	56
5.2 Managerial Implications	58
Chapter 6.....	59
Limitations and Future Research	59
Bibliography	61
Appendices.....	75
Appendix 1 – Pretest	75
Appendix 2 – Questionnaire	79

List of Figures

Figure 1: Research Model.	31
Figure 2: Pretest Stimuli Pictures.	34

List of Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Attractiveness.....	36
Table 2: Attractiveness Paired Samples Tests for selected subjects.	36
Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Product Involvement.	36
Table 4: Product Paired Samples Tests for selected subjects.	36
Table 5: Cronbach’s Alpha for Attractiveness.	37
Table 6: Cronbach’s Alpha for Involvement.	37
Table 7: Cronbach’s Alpha Classification according to Hill & Hill (2005).....	37
Table 8: Expertise and Trustworthiness variables description.	41
Table 9: Captions created for the fictitious Instagram posts.....	42
Table 10: Versions of questionnaires based on different levels of attributes (low/high).	43
Table 11: Expertise, Trustworthiness and Attractiveness Scale. Adapted from Ohanian (1990).	44
Table 12: Product Involvement Scale. Adapted from Schneider and Rodgers (1996).	45
Table 13: Purchase Intention Scale. Adapted from Dodds et al. (1991).....	46
Table 14: Scales’ Reliability Test.....	48
Table 15: Descriptive Statistics.	49
Table 16: Validity Checks.....	49
Table 17: Correlation Analysis.	51
Table 18: Table of Coefficients: Effect of Independent Variables on Dependent Variable.	52
Table 19: Table of Coefficients: Moderation Analysis.	53
Table 20: Descriptive Statistics for the cases of low involvement.	54
Table 21: Descriptive Statistics for the cases of high involvement.....	54
Table 22: Table of Coefficients for low product involvement cases.	55
Table 23: Table of Coefficients for high product involvement cases.	55

Introduction

Globalization, along with technological developments, revolutionized the way people communicate and interact, impacting consumption patterns, preferences and the way consumers make decisions. The emergence of the Internet and, consequently, of social networks triggered new forms of communication between brands and consumers, creating different marketing strategies, namely the increased relevance of social media marketing. Initially, brands took advantage of celebrities' fame and social status to promote themselves, but the rapid growth of social networks has led to an increasing recognition of influencers (Rinka & Pratt, 2018), leading to the boom of influencer marketing. According to a recent study, Instagram is the most popular platform for influencer marketing worldwide, and by 2020 the number of brand-sponsored influencer posts surpassed six million, making the global Instagram influencer marketing a two-billion-dollar business (Statista, 2021b).

When compared to traditional marketing, consumers perceive social networks and influencers as more reliable sources of information about products and services (Foux, 2006), a favourable condition to enhance the diffusion and impact of their messages (de Vermain et al., 2017), which affects consumer's purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2018; Teng et al., 2014). However, one of the biggest challenges for marketers is to identify and select influencers who can have a strong impact on their target audience and to better understand how to collaborate with them to promote different types of products (Momtaz et al., 2011).

The growing, but still scarce, literature on influencer marketing has focused on several streams of research, namely source credibility. However, the level of product involvement has received little attention, since the studies known to date

only analyse its impact on celebrities, who are conceptually different from social media influencers. Understanding the level of involvement is critical to gain insights into consumer decision-making processes (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985), since product involvement contributes to the way consumers process advertising and serves as an antecedent of purchase involvement (Park & Mittal, 1985). Thus, this study aims to understand the role of credibility, that is, the influencer characteristics that lead to successful product endorsement, comparing consumers' purchase intention between two different levels of product involvement (high versus low) on Instagram.

This paper is structured as follows: in the first part, we present the literature on influencer marketing, influencer's credibility, purchase intention and product involvement; second, we present the conceptual model and hypothesis being studied; then, we describe the research methodology, followed by the discussion of the results; finally, we conclude by presenting the theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and future research recommendations.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Background

1. Influencer Marketing

The emergence of Internet-based social media has been changing the way companies communicate and create bonds with consumers. Social media networks integrate services and applications on the Internet that allow users to create content, interact and communicate with other users (Farivar et al., 2021). In recent years, consumers have shifted their consumption from traditional media to online media (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), changing the way people interact, communicate and engage (Zak & Hasprova, 2020). The rise and growing popularity of social media has led to the advent of new marketing approaches, namely influencer marketing (Chetioui et al., 2020; Farivar et al., 2021).

Consumers have always valued the opinions of others when making a decision. However, the phenomenon of social media has amplified the effects of peer recommendations as it has enabled consumers to share their opinions and experiences with others (de Veirman et al., 2017). Thus, influencers are now playing a pivotal role in forming consumers' opinions on a brand's products or services (Chopra et al., 2021). In addition, influencer's audience provides value to marketers by offering (organic) reach (Campbell & Farrel, 2020; Appel et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2021), increased attention (Campbell & Farrel, 2020), engagement (Appel et al., 2020) and specific targeting (Campbell & Farrel, 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019). In fact, the Internet allows for an easy aggregation of consumers with common interests, which facilitates the emergence of influencers that attract relatively niche audiences (Campbell & Farrel, 2020), probably making it more interesting for marketers to promote certain products. In this respect, influencer

marketing has become a fundamental part of the marketing communication mix (Zhou et al., 2021), as it is an important tool to influence buying behaviour (Zak & Hasprova, 2020).

Influencer marketing can be defined as a process of persuasion (Farivar et al., 2021) through which influencers help brands persuade consumers (Belanche et al., 2021) by influencing their brand awareness and/or purchasing decisions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Literature suggests that influencers can shape attitudes and opinions of an audience (de Vermain et al., 2017; Rinka & Pratt, 2018), affecting their hierarchy of values and thus their lifestyles (Nadanyiova et al., 2020).

1.1 Social Media Influencers vs Celebrities

According to Campbell and Farrel (2020), it is possible to distinguish different types of influencers: celebrities, mega influencers, macro influencers, micro influencers and nano influencers.

Although they share some similarities, such as a high level of social presence and a strong influence on audience (Rinka & Pratt, 2018), conceptually, celebrities and influencers are different in nature (Belanche et al., 2021). While celebrities are known for their non-social media related activities, influencers are known for their social media activity, being an alternative to traditional celebrities (Belanche et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019). In fact, the previous use of celebrity endorsers has shifted over the years to using influencers nowadays (Halin, 2020). This happens, in particular, due to the fact that consumers consider influencers as more trustworthy (Kim & Kim, 2021), credible and effective (Nadanyiova et al., 2020; Chopra et al., 2021), accessible, believable and intimate (de Vermain et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) and easier to relate (Grafström et al., 2018), when compared to traditional celebrities.

1.2 Interaction between Influencers and Consumers

Followers seek both valuable information and relational connection in following influencers (Farivar et al., 2021). Influencers spend a great deal of time posting content that is relevant to their followers. Doing so, they provide their followers with insight into their daily lives, including their hobbies, friends, families, interests and activities, making them seemingly everyday people to whom they can easily relate (Ye et al., 2021). By sharing information and advice with their followers on specific topics of common interest, influencers try to establish close relationships that will be maintained over time (de Vermain et al., 2017). Followers get the impression they know the influencers well and they have a personal relationship with them (Ye et al., 2021), since influencers create the illusion of a face-to-face relation (Balaban & Mustătea, 2019). This generates parasocial interactions, which refers to the relations people have with media figures (Ye et al., 2021), through which they are influenced and adopt recommendations (Farivar et al., 2021). This results from the close relationship fans feel they have with influencer due to influencers sharing aspects of their personal lives online (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Feelings of closeness are often strengthened, making the influencers likeable and reliable sources of information (de Vermain et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). As a result, influencers' highly engaged followers may be willing to identify with them and be significantly influenced in their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Ki & Kim, 2019; Casaló et al., 2020), including their attitudes towards brands and products (Ye et al., 2021).

2. Influencers' Credibility

Endorsement effectiveness is often studied by measuring the credibility of the source (Amos et al., 2008), in this case the perceived credibility of the influencer.

“Source credibility” is a term often used to refer to the positive characteristics of a communicator that affect the recipient's acceptance of the message (Ohanian,

1990). According to Hovland & Weiss (1951), the individual's perceived credibility is an important factor in the persuasion process, namely in the attitude towards the advertisement and purchase intentions. Credibility influences the audience through the internalization process, which happens when a receiver shares similar values and attitudes with the speaker (Kelman, 1958; 1961).

Previous research on influencer credibility falls upon two existing models: the source-credibility model proposed by Hovland et al. (1953) and the source-attractiveness model proposed by McGuire (1985).

Hovland et al. (1953) proposed two determinants of source credibility: trustworthiness and expertise. Later, McGuire (1985) proposed a third component of source credibility: attractiveness. Similarly, Ohanian (1990) defined source credibility as a three-dimensional construct, drawing on topics from previous literature based on trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of the communicator.

2.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness corresponds to "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid" (Hovland et al., 1953, p.21), being linked with the perceptions of honesty, integrity, believability (Erdogan, 1999), sincerity and truthfulness (Giffin, 1967) of a source. Trustworthiness is suggested to be a positive indicator of the effectiveness of a message endorsed by a source (Amos et al., 2008; Choi et al., 2005), being an important construct in persuasion and attitude-change research (Ohanian, 1990).

2.2 Expertise

Expertise is "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions" (Hovland et al., 1953, p.21). It refers to the relevant

knowledge, skills and experience that an individual is perceived to have about a particular topic (Erdogan, 1999). This perception comes from the quantity and quality of information, the degree of skill, education and professional achievement, and the validity of the source's judgement (Giffin, 1967). For influencers, this means that expertise can be manipulated by the amount of knowledge they have on the product they endorse. Thus, to signal the experience of an endorser, it is convenient to describe the skills of the source in relation to a specific problem (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). According to Kim & Kim (2021), expertise as source credibility results in opinion agreement and attitudinal change in marketing communication.

2.3 Attractiveness

Attractiveness refers to consumers perceptions regarding the physical attractiveness of the endorser (Ohanian, 1990). According to Patzer (1983), attractiveness can be linked to the degree to which a source is perceived as visually attractive or aesthetically appealing. The source-attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985) contends that the effectiveness of a message depends on source characteristics, such as familiarity, similarity, likability, and attractiveness. The attractiveness of the endorser increases the impact of the communication, generating considerable attention and engagement, since when the communicator is attractive, the audience may be willing to like and accept the communicator's message (Kim & Kim, 2021).

3. Purchase Intention

In this study, the objective is to analyse the impact that influencer credibility has on the purchase intention of products promoted by the influencer, comparing the purchase intention between high and low involvement products.

Purchase intention has been a popular research topic in marketing literature (Ohanian, 1990; Lafferty et al., 2002; Amos et al., 2008; Reinikainen et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). It is an important outcome to examine to determine the return on investment regarding social media endorsement. Naturally, marketers are interested in strategies and approaches that improve consumers' purchase intention (Kay et al., 2020).

Purchase intention can be defined as the possibility or probability of the consumer to buy a certain product (Lou & Yuan, 2019). These are brand-related personal actions trends that represent the motivation of an individual in their conscious plan to make an effort to perform a certain behaviour, in this case, a purchase (Spears & Singh, 2004). These ideas prompt de Magistris & Gracia (2008) to consider that purchase intention precede actual purchase behaviour.

Influencers can be decisive in the decision-making process of their followers, who can effectively be encouraged to adopt their suggestions (Ki & Kim, 2019; Thakur et al., 2016).

4. Product Involvement

Involvement in general refers to the perceived relevance of an object (product involvement) or activity (process involvement) for an individual (Haynes et al., 1994) and can also be defined as the degree of excitement, interest or impulse evoked by a particular stimulus or situation (Bloch & Richins, 1983; Buchholz & Smith, 1991).

Product involvement is the personal meaning of a product to the consumer because of their values, needs and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985), thus covering their thoughts and feelings about the importance of that product (Petty et al., 1983; Ahtola, 1985). It is related to purchase motivation and affects the cognitive effort a consumer will invest before making a purchase decision (Friedmann & Lowengart, 2019). This way, product involvement is considered a prerequisite in

many consumer decisions (Park & Mittal, 1985), namely in purchase intentions (Riedl & Luckwald, 2019).

According to Radder & Huang (2008), high involvement products are those that belong to expensive durable categories and that feature symbolic meaning, psychological satisfaction and image reinforcement. On the contrary, low involvement products are part of low-cost, non-durable categories, representing less subjective consumption that is done more routinely.

4.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) explains how involvement in a persuasive message changes recipient attitudes, proposing that product involvement is one of the key variables that motivates consumers to process advertising (Limbu et al., 2012; Grafström et al., 2018). According to this model, people form attitudes through two distinct routes of reaction to persuasion: the central route and the peripheral route. Factors that determine the type of persuasion that occurs through these routes are the level of motivation and the ability to process a promotional information and, depending on that, elaboration can be high or low, which determines what persuasive path the consumer will take (Peter & Olson, 2004).

When product involvement is high, consumers try to maximize their satisfaction through a conscious decision-making process (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985), and, therefore, they seek and use more information to make their decisions and are more interested in learning about products, buying only after a long and careful consideration (Handriana & Wisandiko, 2017; Belanche et al., 2020). Consumers engage in a broader cognitive decision-making process with more effort in researching information and evaluating alternatives (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Stewart et al., 2019). As involvement increases, consumers will be more motivated to observe, understand and process information related with their

purchases. Hence, they will tend to consider the pros and cons of the message more carefully (Lee & Park, 2014; Handriana & Wisandiko, 2017; Grafström et al., 2018), namely the arguments about the characteristics, attributes and benefits of the brand (Limbu et al., 2012). Thus, the quality of the argument is most effective in changing attitude and behaviour in the central route (Gong, 2021).

When product involvement is low, consumers tend to simplify their choices (Lockshin et al., 2006). Thus, a low involvement product corresponds to a consumable item that does not require a complicated evaluation process prior to purchase, or for which the motivation and/or ability to process product related messages is low (Handriana & Wisandiko, 2017). Celebrities and their credibility are often used as peripheral cues and are important in the persuasion process when consumers are not motivated enough to process the promotional message and pay more attention to tips outside the message content (Limbu et al., 2012; Grafström et al., 2018). In these cases, where the effort devoted to rational processes is less, simple cues, such as the characteristics of the endorser, have more salient effects on changes in attitude and behaviour (Handriana & Wisandiko, 2017; Gong, 2021), being able to have a great impact on persuasion, regardless of the strength of the argument (Lee & Park, 2014).

Chapter 2

Conceptual Model and Hypothesis

Influencers act as a reference group to consumers (Campbell & Farrel, 2020), which plays a significant role in terms of an individual's evaluation, aspiration and behaviour (Rinka & Pratt, 2018). They can influence the purchasing decisions of others due to their personal appeal or connection with consumers, as well as their specialized knowledge and/or authority on a given topic (Lin et al., 2018).

Influencer credibility plays an important role in affecting purchase behaviour (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Literature suggests that purchase intention is dependent of the endorser's credibility (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Chin et al., 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Hayes & Carr, 2015). Consumers are more likely to positively evaluate brands and products endorsed by people they perceive to be credible (Erdogan, 1999; Schouten et al., 2020), that is, credible sources are more persuasive than less credible sources (Ohanian, 1990). Therefore, consumers are likely to have a greater purchase intention when endorser credibility is high (Singh & Banerjee, 2018). Research shows that the characteristics of endorsers – trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness – exert a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention (Lafferty et al. 2002; Lee & Koo, 2015; Balaban & Mustătea, 2019; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Till & Busler, 2000; Tzoumaka et al., 2016).

Trustworthiness is an important variable in the pursuit of persuasion and attitude change (Ohanian, 1990), as there tends to be a greater change in opinion when the source is highly trustworthy (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Influencers need high levels of trustworthiness to build a strong perception on their credibility (Belanche et al., 2021; Saima & Khan, 2021; Seiler & Kucza, 2017), which has positive effects on consumers' purchase intentions (Balaban & Mustătea, 2009; Saima & Khan, 2021; Seiler & Kucza, 2017; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021).

In order to be perceived as highly credible, influencers also need high levels of expertise (Belanche et al., 2021). Expertise is an important characteristic of more persuasive sources (Singh & Banerjee, 2018), stimulating more positive ad perceptions (Saima & Khan, 2021), and building followers trust, which should lead them to build more positive product perceptions (Kim & Kim, 2021). Thus, previous research demonstrates that expertise has positive effects on purchase intentions (Seiler & Kucza, 2017; Wiedman & von Mettenhein, 2021).

Physically attractive influencers are usually perceived as kind, interesting, sociable and responsive, and these perceptions increase their credibility and the acceptance of the message by their followers (Kim & Kim, 2021). Thus, attractive communicators are more appreciated and have a positive impact on the products they endorse (Ohanian, 1990), which occurs particularly in purchase intentions (Balaban & Mustătea, 2019; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021).

Consumer involvement plays a decisive role in generating a change in consumer attitude towards advertising, brands and purchase intentions (Arora et al., 2019). Depending on consumer's level of involvement with the product category, the endorser who is promoting the product can be evaluated differently (Munnukka et al., 2016). Thus, there are likely to be differences in consumer behaviour towards endorsements for low and high involvement products (Halin, 2020). Indeed, prior research suggest that product involvement moderates the influence of endorser characteristics on endorsement effectiveness (Te'eni-Harari et al., 2009; Pornpitakpan, 2003), and it is associated with consumer confidence expectations, which in turn influence purchase intentions (Hong, 2015).

According to Petty & Cacioppo (1981), non-content factors are most important in the persuasion process, which may be typically governed by peripheral cues, such as source characteristics. Celebrity influence increases as the level of involvement decreases (Sternthal et al., 1978), suggesting that celebrity endorsement is most effective and prevalent for the promotion of low involvement products (Choi et al., 2005; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). A study conducted by Andrews & Shimp (1990) showed that for participants in a low involvement condition, a favourable source induced more attitudes change than an unfavourable one. In contrast, under conditions of high involvement, the impact of celebrity on purchasing diminishes (Kahle et al., 1981; Johnson & Scileppi, 1969; Rhine & Severance, 1970). McGarry & Hendrick (1974) research showed that when consumers are highly involved, source credibility does not

affect persuasion, because in these contexts the decision-making passes through the central route. Thus, it is possible to conclude there is an inverse relationship between involvement and the strength of celebrity influence on purchase intention (Kahle et al., 1981).

The aim of this study is to understand the impact of influencer's credibility on consumers' purchase intentions for two different levels of product involvement. Considering the findings of previous studies, we assume that influencer's perceived trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness have a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention of the product promoted by the influencer. However, peripheral cues - in this study, the different dimensions of influencer's credibility - will be more influential in affecting consumers' purchase intention for a low involvement product. Following this line of thought, the influencer's credibility dimensions will work as independent variables, the level of product involvement as a moderator variable and purchase intention as a dependent variable. Consequently, we formulate the following research hypotheses:

H1: Influencer's perceived trustworthiness has a positive impact on consumer's purchase intention of the product promoted by the influencer.

H1a: The positive impact that influencer's perceived trustworthiness has on consumer's purchase intention is higher for low-involvement products.

H2: Influencer's perceived expertise has a positive impact on consumer's purchase intention of the product promoted by the influencer.

H2a.: The positive impact that influencer's perceived expertise has on consumer's purchase intention is higher for low-involvement products.

H3: Influencer's perceived attractiveness has a positive impact on consumer's purchase intention of the product promoted by the influencer.

H3a: The positive impact that influencer’s perceived attractiveness has on consumer’s purchase intention is higher for low-involvement products.

Considering the theoretical background previously discussed and the hypotheses formulated, we propose the research model presented in figure 1.

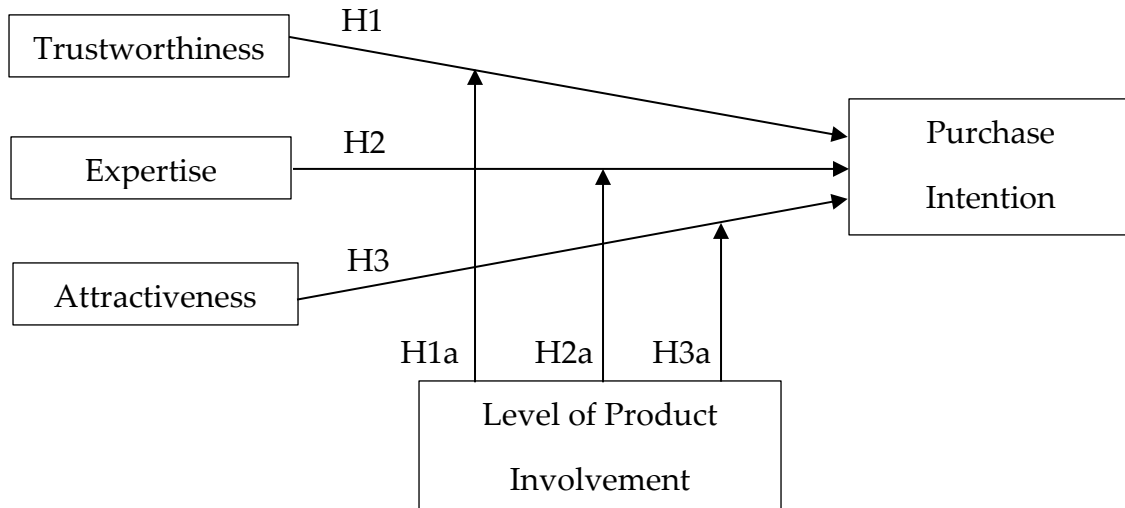


Figure 1: Research Model.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study focuses on understanding the impact that influencers’ credibility on social media has on consumers’ purchase intentions, comparing low and high product involvement. The research is going to be developed based on an initial qualitative research and a final quantitative study. First, secondary data derived from existing literature is used to understand the concepts under analysis and support the formulation of the hypotheses, followed by primary data collected from the exploratory phase of the study through pretests and an online

questionnaire. Although this study has an exploratory nature since the impact of influencer marketing is a relatively new field and there is still a lack of empirical studies on this topic – this is an explanatory study given that, ultimately, its purpose is to explain outcome variables based on a set of explanatory variables.

3.2 Pretests and Results

Before the main study, a pretest was made to select the influencers and the products to be used in the study, by assessing the importance that those products have in consumers' lives and understand whether they are considered high or low involvement. The pretest allowed to choose the stimulus materials for the main study.

According to Statista (2021a), over the course of 2019, an analysis of more than three million Instagram posts worldwide was done, revealing that 84% of influencer creating sponsored posts on Instagram were women. The biological sex of the influencer is not a variable of this study, hence, due to lack of time and resources, we decided to only use female influencers in order to reduce the scope of this dissertation.

3.2.1 Pretest on Attractiveness

To select appropriate pictures of attractive and unattractive female individuals, pretests were carried out where participants were presented with pictures of the faces of unspecified individuals in order to determine which pictures would be used for the influencer profile in the main study. All pictures were selected from free image databases. Participants rate the attractiveness of the fictitious influencers on a 5 item 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree", adapted from Ohanian (1990), represented in table 11 in the "Attractiveness" line, the same used in the main study.

In order to choose the pictures to represent (un)attractive female influencers we based ourselves in the literature review, mainly in the study conducted by Moreira (2021), whose criteria used to measure attractiveness were the same as those mentioned in the research of Liu & Brock (2011) and Fink et al. (2004). According to these previous authors, a female endorser is perceived as physically attractive when she has a good body shape, fancy facial features, a beautiful smile, long light-coloured hair and is wearing light makeup. However, these standards were only applicable in studies related with athletes, so we decided not to consider the characteristics as exactly as they were described in these articles. We left out the body shape and hair colour attributes. Bearing in mind the growing concern with body positivity and real beauty, we believe that body shape should not be a determining trait to distinguish between attractive and unattractive influencers. Regarding the hair colour, we opted to include a picture of a blond and a brunet girl for each (un)attractive influencer and verify in the pretest if light-haired women are actually considered more attractive than dark-haired ones.

Thus, four pictures of women have been selected for the pretest according to the previously mentioned criteria. Stimuli 1 and 3 represent an attractive influencer with the following characteristics: long hair, light and natural makeup, fancy face, beautiful and friendly smile, and posing in a relaxed way. Stimuli 2 and 4 represent an unattractive influencer with short hair, strong makeup, plain face, no smile, and posing in a rigid and static way (see figure 2).



Figure 2: Pretest Stimuli Pictures.

3.2.2 Pretest on Product Involvement

As the aim of this research is to understand the impact of influencer credibility on consumers' purchase intention for different levels of product involvement, in the pretest participants were presented with four products, two considered high involvement products (a laptop and a mobile phone) and two considered low involvement products (a shampoo and a cream). We decided to select for each involvement level two products from the same category – technology for high involvement and beauty/personal care/cosmetics for low involvement – in order to understand what are the differences in the importance given by consumers to those products. According to literature, computers (Friedman & Lowengart, 2019; Stewart et al., 2019) and mobile phones (Handriana & Wisandiko, 2017;

Arora et al., 2019; Gong, 2021) are considered high involvement products, while personal care products (Gong, 2021) are considered low involvement products.

Participants rated the importance of the four given products on a 7 item 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (7) “strongly agree”, adapted from Schneider and Rodgers (1996), the same used in the main study, as we can see in table 12.

3.2.3 Pretest Results

The pretest was conducted on Google Forms in Portuguese and was distributed online via social media platforms. A total of 89 participants answered to the pretest (66,3% female) with a mean age of 26,18 (SD = 6,885). 63 of the respondents follow influencers on social media platforms (70,8%), of which 47 are women. Most of the female respondents answered the influencers they follow are only women, mostly women, and men and women in equal proportion. Only male respondents reported that they follow mostly men or only male influencers.

Two paired-samples *t-tests* have been conducted on SPSS, one for the pretest on attractiveness and the other for the pretest on product involvement, in order to identify the most (un)attractive female stimulus objects and the products with the highest and lowest involvement.

The *t-test* for the attractiveness stimulus subjects was significant ($p < 0.001$). The stimuli with the highest mean difference (MDiff = 1.728; SD = 1.372) were stimulus 3 (M = 4.571; SD = 1.482) and stimulus 4 (M = 2.843; SD = 1.410), hence, those have been selected as the attractive (stimulus 3) and unattractive (stimulus 4) stimuli for the main study. This information is presented in tables 1 and 2.

Attractiveness	Mean	Standard Deviation
Stimuli 1	4.560	1.354
Stimuli 2	3.191	1.436

Stimuli 3	4.571	1.482
Stimuli 4	2.843	1.410

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Attractiveness.

Differences	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P-value
Stimuli 3 & Stimuli 4	1.728	1.372	11.886	<.001

Table 2: Attractiveness Paired Samples Tests for selected subjects.

The *t-test* for the product involvement stimulus subjects was significant ($p < 0.001$). The stimuli with the highest mean difference (MDiff = 1.682 ; SD = 1.964) were stimulus 3 (M = 4.803; SD = 1.687) and stimulus 4 (M = 3.120; SD = 1.697), hence, those have been selected as the high involvement (stimulus 3) and low involvement (stimulus 4) stimuli for the main study. This information is presented in tables 3 and 4.

Involvement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Product 1	3.990	1.643
Product 2	3.311	1.489
Product 3	4.803	1.687
Product 4	3.120	1.697

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Product Involvement.

Differences	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P-value
Product 3 & Product 4	1.682	1.964	8.081	<.001

Table 4: Product Paired Samples Tests for selected subjects.

To measure the reliability of the scales used in the pretest, we calculated the Cronbach's Alpha developed by Lee Cronbach (1951). According to Hill and Hill (2005) classification (table 7), this analysis indicated an excellent internal

consistency for attractiveness and product stimulus, as we can see in tables 5 and 6.

Attractiveness	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Classification
Stimulus 1	5	0.937	Excellent
Stimulus 2	5	0.965	Excellent
Stimulus 3	5	0.953	Excellent
Stimulus 4	5	0.975	Excellent

Table 5: Cronbach's Alpha for Attractiveness.

Involvement	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Classification
Product 1	7	0.952	Excellent
Product 2	7	0.940	Excellent
Product 3	7	0.976	Excellent
Product 4	7	0.978	Excellent

Table 6: Cronbach's Alpha for Involvement.

Cronbach's Alpha	Bellow 0.6	Between 0.6 – 0.7	Between 0.7 – 0.8	Between 0.8 – 0.9	Above 0.9
Classification	Unacceptable	Bad	Acceptable	Good	Excellent

Table 7: Cronbach's Alpha Classification according to Hill & Hill (2005).

3.3 Subjects, materials and procedure

3.3.1 Study Design

The study had a 2 (high versus low attractiveness) x 2 (high versus low expertise) x 2 (high versus low trustworthiness) x 2 (high versus low product involvement) experimental design.

According to Caballero et al. (1989), men show greater intentions to buy from men endorsers while women have greater intentions to buy from women

endorsers. Existing research shows women are more susceptible than men to social opinions and tend to follow the decisions of others they trust (Eagly, 1983; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Morton (2020) demonstrated that purchase behaviour of female participants appeared to be more influenced by recommendations of influencers, as the majority reported having made a purchase based on their recommendations, unlike the majority of men who stated never having made a purchase following an influencer's recommendation. Thus, considering this information together with the results obtained in the pretest, we decided that the study would only be conducted with female consumers.

The manipulation occurred by means of an influencer Instagram post endorsing a laptop or a body cream.

For this study, fictitious influencers were created, since this brings several advantages over experimental control (Till & Busler, 2000), namely, to avoid external effects, such as preferences, likeability and familiarity of consumers. With the use of familiar endorsers, there can be a significant amount of variation in the participant's knowledge and attitude towards that familiar individual (Till & Busler, 2020). Thus, the influencer credibility dimensions (attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness) were manipulated (high versus low).

To avoid the effect on previous brand familiarity or liking on evaluations, the brand name for both products in this study was fictitious, namely "Fusion Tech" (for the laptop) and "Bloom Cosmetics" (for the body cream). We also created and applied a logo and packaging on products mockups from free image databases in order to make the scenarios as realistic as possible.

To manipulate attractiveness, the pictures of the attractive and unattractive female individuals selected in the pretest were used as influencers profile pictures and then on the fictitious Instagram post.

Expertise, in this case, relates to the endorser’s ability to accurately give good reviews and advice on technological products, or to select and recommend good skin and body care products. According to the aforementioned elaborations on expertise, this requirement can be manipulated by means of the influencer’s education and profession. Hence, high expertise in technology was signalled by revealing that the influencer studied Creative Technologies in IADE, an institution that aims to bridge the gap between creativity and the technological world. As for the high expertise in personal care, the influencer was presented as a dermatologist, whose work has already been recognised by the prestigious magazine Forbes. For low expertise, we switched the description of the influencers.

Trustworthiness was manipulated by describing the influencer as honest, sincere and trustworthy (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). A central factor of trustworthiness is altruism (Walster et al., 1966), so the influencer is described as someone who tries to present a fair, honest and balanced view of the product, either through positive or negative reviews. Contrastingly, untrustworthy influencers were described as egoist, as they make excessively positive comments about products to please brands.

Expertise and trustworthiness variables manipulation description is presented in table 8.

Description	
Expertise	
Expert	
In technology (laptop)	In addition to being a content creator, (influencer’s name) as a bachelor’s degree in Creative Technologies by IADE, which allowed her to start a career as a freelancer in areas such as Web, Mobile and Software

Developer, so she is always up to date with the latest technologies to deliver the best content to her followers and customers.

In beauty
(body cream)

(influencer's name) is a dermatologist and decided to start sharing information about skin, hair and body care. In 2021, her profile was considered one of the most influential in the area of beauty by Forbes.

Non-Expert

In technology
(laptop)

The same description of the influencer expert in beauty (body cream).

In beauty
(body cream)

The same description of the influencer expert in technology (laptop).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthy

She always seeks to give a true opinion about the products she tries, whether positive or negative, and she also regularly responds to the comments and messages she receives. Therefore, she is considered honest and sincere by her followers.

Untrustworthy

She usually exaggerates in the comments of the products or brands she tries, without ever mentioning negative aspects, so it is not always easy to believe in

her reviews, which seem forced to please brands and get as many free products or possible monetary return.

Table 8: Expertise and Trustworthiness variables description.

To give more realism to the study, we created four fictitious Instagram posts, two for each influencer endorsing each of the two products. However, everything in these posts needed to be fixed in all surveys, that is, the posts presented should be exactly the same in all stimuli (number of likes: 1989, number of comments: 23 and the caption, presented in table 9), except in the experimental conditions. In these posts what varied was the influencer’s username (carolina.castro and mariana_duque), the profile picture and the post’s picture. To avoid interference of other variables that could affect the participants’ response, we tried to use/manipulate the same image so that the stimulus was as similar as possible only differing in the face of the influencer in question.

Captions	
Laptop Instagram Post	Body Cream Instagram Post
<p>The elegance of Fusion Tech’s new HeroBook 13 laptop leaves no one indifferent: thinner, lighter and incredibly compact! It’s an essential tool for my daily life (emoji) Work, study or entertain yourself anywhere with @fusiontech.pt</p>	<p>Have you pampered yourself today? Self-love is also taking care of ourselves and our skin. The new Bloom Beauty Ultimate Smooth Skin is a fluid milk with rapid absorption that gives huge comfort to the skin. I’m using it so much! Is has a soft scent and allows you to wear your clothes immediately. Hyaluronic acid formula helps repair and protect skin</p>

	barrier – and my skin has been loving it (emoji) @bloombeauty
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Table 9: Captions created for the fictitious Instagram posts.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

Regarding the structure of the questionnaire, participants were initially asked questions linked with the requirements that will made them eligible to participate in this study. Firstly, we wanted to guarantee that they met the target audience: only females who use social media platforms, namely Instagram, and that follow influencers. Therefore, the first four questions served as a filter to eliminate participants who did not meet the necessary conditions to proceed with the study. Only if the respondents replied in a positive way to those questions, they were taken to the next section of the questionnaire, which included statements related to influencer marketing.

Then, each participant was randomly selected to respond only to one of the sixteen questionnaire versions (see table 10) to avoid comparisons between profiles.

Questionnaire	Attractiveness	Expertise	Trustworthiness	Involvement
1	High	High	High	High
2	High	High	High	Low
3	High	High	Low	High
4	High	High	Low	Low
5	High	Low	High	High
6	High	Low	High	Low
7	High	Low	Low	High
8	High	Low	Low	Low
9	Low	High	High	High

10	Low	High	High	Low
11	Low	High	Low	High
12	Low	High	Low	Low
13	Low	Low	High	High
14	Low	Low	High	Low
15	Low	Low	Low	High
16	Low	Low	Low	Low

Table 10: Versions of questionnaires based on different levels of attributes (low/high).

We started by making a manipulation check in order to guarantee that what we were considering, for instance, as a high (low) involvement product, based on the pretest, was also considered as such by the participants. Each participant only saw one product.

Then, they were shown the profile of an influencer that conveyed one of the sixteen combinations of attractiveness (high versus low), expertise (high versus low) and trustworthiness (high versus low), as described previously. Based on the stimulus material viewed by the participants, they were asked to assess the influencer’s level of attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness (for manipulation checks).

After they read a brief description of the profile of the chosen influencer, participants were asked to view an Instagram post, just as if they were viewing a post from an influencer they usually follow. Once the post was seen, participants answer some questions referring to the dependent variable of the study.

3.3.3 Scales

To measure the constructs specified in the proposed model, appropriate multi-item scales from previous studies were selected making some modifications to fit the current research context. All scales have been adapted into 7-point Likert-

type scales, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (7) “strongly agree”, in order to understand the respondents’ positions for each item.

According to Ohanian (1990), the credibility construct is composed by three dimensions – expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness – where each dimension is measured through a 5-item scale and, consequently, leading to a 15-item scale (table 11).

Expertise	Expert	Ohanian (1990)
	Experienced	
	Knowledgeable	
	Qualified	
	Skilled	
Trustworthiness	Dependable	Ohanian (1990)
	Honest	
	Reliable	
	Sincere	
	Trustworthy	
Attractiveness	Attractive	Ohanian (1990)
	Classy	
	Beautiful	
	Elegant	
	Sexy	

Table 11: Expertise, Trustworthiness and Attractiveness Scale. Adapted from Ohanian (1990).

Furthermore, it was important to control if the products chosen to appear in the survey belonged to a low or high involvement category. Thus, product involvement is measured using a 7-item scale adapted from Schneider & Rodgers (1996) in order to understand the importance given by the participants to the products presented (table 12). After reviewing the dimensionality of the two most commonly used scales to measure the involvement construct – the

Zaichkowsky's (1985) Personal Involvement Inventory, and Laurent & Kapferer's (1985) Consumer Involvement Profile – the authors proposed this new subscale designed to measure “Importance”, a construct not encompassed by the aforementioned scales and which is essential in our study, as it includes aspects of purchase involvement.

	Choosing a (...) is a big decision in one's life.	
	I attach great importance to selecting a (...).	
	I usually get overly concerned about selecting a (...).	
Product Involvement	Which (...) I choose really matters to me.	Schneider & Rodgers (1996)
	Choosing a (...) takes a lot of careful thought.	
	Decisions about selecting a (...) are serious, important decisions.	
	It means a lot to me to have a (...) to use.	

Table 12: Product Involvement Scale. Adapted from Schneider and Rodgers (1996).

Purchase intention is measured using a scale adapted from Dodds et al. (1991), composed by 3 items (table 13).

	I intent to buy the product promoted by the influencer.	
Purchase Intention	It is likely that I would consider buying the product promoted by the influencer.	Dodds et al. (1991)
	I am willing to buy the product promoted by the influencer.	

Table 13: Purchase Intention Scale. Adapted from Dodds et al. (1991).

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

4.1.1 Data Collection

The data collection of this study was conducted in Portuguese between 19th March 2022 and 31st March 2022 through digital platforms.

First, 877 respondents initiated the survey (71,4% were female). After answering the first filter question about gender, only 626 participants (females) proceed to the next question. Of these, 608 (97,1%) claimed to use social media platforms. Regarding those social media platforms, Instagram was mentioned as the most used by 549 participants, followed by Facebook mentioned 346 times and YouTube had 322 answers. Since study participants were required to use Instagram, 549 proceeded to the last filter question about whether or not they follow influencers on social media to which 450 (82%) answered yes. Therefore, a combined total of 450 valid answers were collected from the sixteen versions of

the questionnaires, with 27 answers to version 1, 27 answers to version 2, 27 answers to version 3, 27 answers to version 4, 27 answers to version 5, 29 answers to version 6, 28 answers to version 7, 27 answers to version 8, 28 answers to version 9, 27 answers to version 10, 28 answers to version 11, 29 answers to version 12, 31 answers to version 13, 29 answers to version 14, 28 answers to version 15 and 31 answers to version 16.

4.1.2 Demographic Characterization

The final sample is composed by 100% female respondents. In terms of age distribution, the majority of answers (58%) came from individuals with ages between 18 and 24 years old, followed by 24,7% between 25 and 34 years old, 8% over 44 years old, 6,2% between 35 and 44 years old and 3,1% under 18 years old. The analysis of the education level shows that 47,6% of the participants have a bachelor's degree while 34,9% have a master's degree and 15,6% of them are high school graduated. In addition, 0,7% have a PhD and 0,4% are elementary school graduated. We had responses from all Portugal's districts, with most respondents being from Porto (51,8%), followed by Lisbon (16,2%) and Braga (12,2%). Regarding the gender of the influencers' followed by participants, the majority follow mostly women (68%), 22,7% follow only women, 7,8% follow both men and women in equal proportion, and only 1,6% follow mostly men. In terms of the number of influencers they follow, 33,6% follow between one and five, 30,2% between six and ten, 12,2% follow between eleven and fifteen, 6,4% follow between sixteen and twenty, and 17,6% follow over twenty social media influencers. Considering the category in which the influencers the respondents follow fall into, the most mentioned was Fashion (315 times), followed by Lifestyle (311 times), Travel (254 times) and Beauty (214 times). When asked if they ever purchased a product/service recommended by an influencer, 62,4% answered positively.

4.1.3 Data Reliability

To measure the reliability, that is, the internal consistency of the scales used, we calculated the Cronbach Alpha developed by Lee Cronbach (1951). The results for each scale are represented in table 14. Considering the classification by Hill & Hill (2005) (see table 7), all scales have excellent internal consistency, as they presented a value greater than 0.9, confirming the reliability of all scales.

Scales	Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Credibility	Attractiveness	5	0.920
	Expertise	5	0.967
	Trustworthiness	5	0.975
Product Involvement		7	0.958
Purchase Intention		3	0.934

Table 14: Scales' Reliability Test.

4.1.4 Descriptive Statistics

Analysing the results on table 15, on average, the dimensions of credibility present moderate levels since they were evaluated on scales from 1 to 7. The mean of the variable influencer perceived attractiveness was 4.183 (SD = 1.350), of perceived expertise 3.528 (SD = 1.678) and of perceived trustworthiness 3.676 (SD = 1.610). The mean of product involvement was high (M = 4.570, SD = 1.646) while for the purchase intention was low (M = 2.808, SD = 1.488), considering these variables were also measured through a scale from 1 to 7.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
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Attractiveness	4.183	1.350
Expertise	3.528	1.678
Trustworthiness	3.676	1.610
Product Involvement	4.570	1.646
Purchase Intention	2.808	1.488

Table 15: Descriptive Statistics.

4.1.4.1 Descriptive Statistics: Stimuli Comparison

We conducted four independent samples *t*-tests in order to verify if there is, effectively, a difference between the means of the variables of the research model that we manipulated as high and low: attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness and product involvement.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P-value	Mean Difference
Attractiveness	4.183	1.350			
High	4.763	1.093	9.814	<0.001	1.130
Low	3.633	1.342			
Expertise	3.528	1.678			
High	4.256	1.563	9.904	<0.001	1.423
Low	2.833	1.480			
Trustworthiness	3.676	1.610			
High	4.562	1.311	13.963	<0.001	1.771
Low	2.791	1.378			
P. Involvement	4.570	1.646			
High	5.411	1.200	12.541	<0.001	1.675
Low	3.736	1.606			

Table 16: Validity Checks.

As illustrated in table 16, the difference between the two sample sets for each variable was significant ($p < 0.001$). The highest mean difference occurs between high and low trustworthiness (MDiff = 1.771), followed by high and low product involvement (MDiff = 1.675), high and low expertise (MDiff = 1.423) and, finally, high and low attractiveness (MDiff = 1.130).

4.1.5 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation is a statistical method used to measure the relationship between two variables with values range between -1 (strong negative relationship) and 1 (strong positive relationship).

In this study, we initially conducted a Pearson correlation test to explore relationships between the independent variables (attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness), the dependent variable (purchase intention of the product endorsed by the influencer) and the moderator variable (product involvement). This information is synthesized in table 17.

The analysis shows that the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variable are positive and significant. The strongest correlation happens between purchase intention and trustworthiness (0.438), followed by expertise (0.406) and lastly attractiveness (0.282).

The correlations between the source credibility dimensions are also positive and significant. The strongest correlation happens between trustworthiness and expertise (0.575), followed by attractiveness and trustworthiness (0.400) and lastly attractiveness and expertise (0.246).

When analysing the correlation between the independent variables and the moderator variable it is possible to verify that expertise and product involvement do not present a significant correlation, while attractiveness (0.174) and trustworthiness (0.145) present a positive and significant correlation with product involvement.

	Attract.	Trust.	Expertise	P. Involv.	P. Intention
Attractiveness	1	0.400**	0.246**	0.174**	0.282**
Trustworthiness		1	0.575**	0.145**	0.438**
Expertise			1	0.075	0.406**
P. Involvement				1	-0.034
P. Intention					1

** Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 (2-tailed).

Table 17: Correlation Analysis.

4.2 Research Model Test

The analysis was divided into two main parts. The first part was dedicated to analysing whether the credibility dimensions impact consumer's purchase intention, and the second part was dedicated to knowing in which group of involvement (low versus high) the impact of the credibility dimensions was significant to influence purchase intention.

Firstly, a multiple linear regression was computed on SPSS to analyse the direct effects of the credibility dimensions on the purchase intention of the product promoted by the influencer. Influencer perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise are the predicting variables, while purchase intention is our outcome variable. As illustrated in table 18, our model is statistically significant, and 24% of the variance in purchase intention of the product endorsed by the influencer is explained by the variance of the independent variables (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.235$). All independent variables have a positive and significant impact on purchase intention, making them good predictors of the dependent variable. Based on the analysis, we can conclude that influencer perceived trustworthiness is the credibility dimension with the biggest impact on the purchase intention, followed by influencer perceived expertise.

Attractiveness is the credibility dimension with the lowest impact, yet its effect on the dependent variable is still positive and significant. These results allow us to accept H1, H2 and H3.

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention					
	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.653	0.219		2.980	0.003
Attractiveness	0.136	0.050	0.123	2.740	0.006
Trustworthiness	0.238	0.049	0.257	4.823	<0.001
Expertise	0.202	0.045	0.227	4.505	<0.001
<i>F(3, 446 df) = 46.873</i>			<i>p < 0.001</i>		
Adj. $R^2 = 0.235$					

Table 18: Table of Coefficients: Effect of Independent Variables on Dependent Variable.

We also conducted a multiple linear regression with the moderator variable to verify if there was a moderation or not. First, the predictors (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise) and the moderator (product involvement) were standardized to avoid multicollinearity. Then, a product term for the predictors and the moderator variable was created (attractiveness x product involvement, trustworthiness x product involvement, expertise x product involvement). The results are presented in table 19. It is possible to conclude that there is no significant moderation in the model of our study. However, the model is still statistically significant, and when the moderator variable was added the Adjusted R^2 increased from 0.235 to 0.244.

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention					
	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.000	0.258		3.882	<0.001
Attractiveness	0.154	0.050	0.140	3.074	0.002
Trustworthiness	0.253	0.051	0.274	5.009	<0.001
Expertise	0.193	0.046	0.217	4.216	<0.001
Prod. Involv.	-0.100	0.038	-0.111	-2.614	0.009
Attract * PI	0.069	0.063	0.049	1.106	0.269
Trust. * PI	-0.041	0.082	-0.030	-0.505	0.614
Exp. * PI	0.058	0.080	0.040	0.721	0.471
<i>F</i>(7, 442 <i>df</i>) = 21.656			<i>p</i> < 0.001		
Adj. <i>R</i>² = 0.244					

Table 19: Table of Coefficients: Moderation Analysis.

Secondly, as the aim of this study is to evaluate if the impact of influencer’s credibility on purchase intention differs across two product involvement groups, we used a multiple linear regression on SPSS for each involvement group. For this model, the variables influencer attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness were entered as the independent variables, and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Product involvement was entered as a selection variable and it was computed as a dummy/binary variable, assuming values of “0” if the respondent belonged to a low involvement group and “1” if the respondent belonged to the high involvement group.

As we can see on tables 19 and 20, the descriptive statistics for the independent and the dependent variables vary according with the involvement group in which subjects were included.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Purchase Intention	3.118	1.562	226
Attractiveness	4.105	1.427	226
Trustworthiness	3.620	1.636	226
Expertise	3.616	1.673	226

Table 20: Descriptive Statistics for the cases of low involvement.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Purchase Intention	2.500	1.341	224
Attractiveness	4.261	1.266	224
Trustworthiness	3.734	1.584	224
Expertise	3.440	1.682	224

Table 21: Descriptive Statistics for the cases of high involvement.

A summary of the multiple linear regressions for each involvement condition is presented in tables 21 and 22. Analysing the results on table 21, we can conclude that our model is statistically significant and 29% of the variance in purchase intention is explained by the variance in the independent variables, when the involvement with the product is low (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.293$). Contrary, although our model is statistically significant, the results on table 22 show that only 19% of the variance in purchase intention is explained by the variance in the independent variables, when product involvement is high (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.194$).

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention					
	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.599	0.302		1.982	0.049

Attractiveness	0.182	0.067	0.166	2.720	0.007
Trustworthiness	0.218	0.077	0.229	2.849	0.005
Expertise	0.272	0.071	0.291	3.851	<0.001
<i>F(3, 222 df) = 32.095</i>			<i>p < 0.001</i>		
Adj. R² = 0.293					

Table 22: Table of Coefficients for low product involvement cases.

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention					
	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.624	0.301		2.074	0.039
Attractiveness	0.126	0.071	0.119	1.787	0.075
Trustworthiness	0.255	0.061	0.302	4.158	<0.001
Expertise	0.111	0.055	0.139	2.004	0.046
<i>F(3, 220 df) = 18.885</i>			<i>p < 0.001</i>		
Adj. R² = 0.194					

Table 23: Table of Coefficients for high product involvement cases.

Considering the different dimensions of influencer credibility, in the low involvement condition all variables (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise) have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. However, by analysing the results related to the high involvement condition, it is possible to verify that trustworthiness and expertise have a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable, unlike attractiveness ($p = 0.075$).

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study examined how each dimension of influencer credibility affects purchase intention of the product promoted by the influencer. Moreover, we also studied the moderating effect of two different levels of product involvement (high versus low) in the relationship between influencer perceived attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness, and consumer purchase intention.

In the following sections, we present the theoretical and managerial contributions of our research.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

Although there is previous literature dedicated to the perceived credibility of celebrities and influencers, several studies on purchase intention and some research on the relationship between both, there are no other studies focusing on this relationship applied to the social media context, namely Instagram, in the Portuguese environment and studying the differences within the level of product involvement. Thus, our study is relevant as it extends the current literature on influencer marketing by integrating a new variable: product involvement.

Results show that brands and managers should focus on all three dimensions of influencer credibility when considering implementing an influencer marketing campaign through Instagram, as all the dimensions have a significant effect on purchase intention.

First, regarding influencer perceived trustworthiness, we conclude that a more trustworthy influencer will provide better outcomes in terms of consumers' purchase intention. As previously mentioned, this was the credibility dimension that presented the biggest impact on purchase intention. The relevance of trustworthiness was higher in the high involvement condition since the purchase of a product as a laptop involves more risks when compared with a product as a body cream. These findings are consistent with previous literature.

Secondly, although influencer perceived level of expertise is not the dimension that has the strongest effect on purchase intention, its impact is still significant and positive.

Third, our study shows that attractiveness is the credibility dimension with the least positive impact on purchase intention, but its effect is still significant.

This paper also contributes to a better understanding of the role that product involvement has on consumer's purchase intention. Although, we could not prove that product involvement moderates the relationship between influencer's credibility and purchase intention, the multiple linear regressions made for each involvement condition provide an interesting result regarding attractiveness and its relationship with product involvement.

The influencer perceived attractiveness was significant in the low involvement condition (body cream), but not in the high involvement condition (laptop). According to Mudambi & Schuff (2010), product category significantly affects the credibility of online reviews and consumer electronics is the most reviewed product category (Chan & Ngai, 2011). Before purchase, consumers feel the need to go through product reviews to avoid making any wrong purchase decision which makes online reviews an important factor for brand evaluation in the context of consumer electronic products, as a laptop. This finding is consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model that states that when product involvement is high, consumers will be more motivated to process information directly related with their purchases (such as the characteristics, attributes and benefits of the brand), making attractiveness an irrelevant parameter in the decision-making process. On the contrary, when the consumer is considering the purchase of a body cream, a low involvement product, influencer attractiveness has a significant effect. In this particular case, since the product belongs to the beauty category, the endorser's physical appearance stands out as an important element influencing purchase intentions.

5.2 Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, this study also provides relevant information, as little empirical research has examined influencers' success requirements and the relationship between influencers' credibility and product involvement.

This study provides marketers with tactical guidance on influencer selection criteria. Identifying how consumers perceive influencers' credibility and the way it impacts their purchase intentions is an important factor when deciding and planning marketing strategies. The prevalence of social media channels and the continued popularity of influencer marketing suggest that such a potent force for a brand's communication strategy should not be ignored.

From the literature review it was possible to conclude that influencer credibility plays a major role on purchase intention of the product being promoted and our findings reinforce that idea. According to our results, trustworthiness is the credibility dimension that brands should pay more attention when selecting an influencer for a campaign on Instagram, as it is the variable with the biggest impact on purchase intention. The second dimension that marketers should consider is expertise, as it also reveals to be an important predictor of purchase intention. Finally, attractiveness should also be considered when choosing an influencer, although it is the least significant dimension influencing purchase intention. However, our study shows the importance of the level of product involvement and its relationship with attractiveness, since this credibility dimension was only significant in a condition of a low involvement product, in this case one directly related with beauty and physical appearance. Understanding the level of involvement a consumer has with a certain product may help marketers to choose the right influencer to promote their products. Having the right influencer endorsing the right product is crucial to achieve a successful marketing and communication strategy.

Chapter 6

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the findings obtained, this study is not exempt from limitations that open the opportunity for further research.

A major limitation of this study is the sampling procedure, since a non-probabilistic convenience sample was used, which cannot, therefore, be considered as representative of the population (Malhotra, 2019). Thus, a more extensive data collection and with a larger and more diversified sample would be recommended to better represent the population and explore deeply the results obtained in this study. Another limitation regarding the data collection is that it was collected only in Portugal, and the questionnaires were built only with female influencers and answered by female participants, so the results may not be generalizable. Therefore, cross-national and cross-cultural comparative studies can provide an interesting path for future research, along with the use of male influencers and participants.

The use of fictional influencers (and brands) rather than real-life influencers (and brands) is another limitation of this investigation. As previously mentioned, the use of fictitious endorsers has advantages regarding experimental control (Till & Busler, 2000). Although, careful attention has been paid to ensure as much realism as possible, future studies with real influencers (and brands) may reveal that other variables not studied in this research, such as consumers' preferences, likeability and familiarity, may have a significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Similarly, many studies have proposed other source credibility dimensions, besides the ones considered in this research. In this sense, it could be interesting studying other credibility dimensions that might have a significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions, such as popularity, authenticity and similarity.

The fact that this study focuses only on Instagram is another limitation. Since there are several social media networks with different characteristics, future research should explore whether our research model differs from other popular social media platforms. This study also features only one type of social media post – a static post – and while this is a popular style of posting on Instagram, it is not the only option available. Instagram also allows carousel photo posts, video post and stories which can be photos or videos. Understanding the different effects of these type of posts would be beneficial to understand if the results of the post type differ.

This study is based on high and low involvement products, considering only the two extremes of product involvement. However, in practice, several products can be in an intermediate place, that is, of medium involvement. Thus, it may be interesting to explore the impact of influencers on consumer behaviour, considering the three stages of product involvement. Furthermore, the area of application of this study is limited, as only two types of products were investigated that are substantially different (technology versus beauty).

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pretest

O presente questionário insere-se no Trabalho Final de Mestrado do Mestrado em Marketing da Católica Porto Business School e pretende avaliar 1) a atratividade de um conjunto de potenciais influencers e 2) a importância de determinados produtos na vida do consumidor.

O questionário é anónimo e confidencial e a informação recolhida vai ser utilizada apenas para o propósito desta investigação. As suas respostas são essenciais para o desenvolvimento da nossa investigação. O preenchimento deste questionário tem a duração de aproximadamente 5 minutos.

Agradecemos, desde já, a sua disponibilidade e participação neste estudo.

Secção 1

Embora compartilhem algumas semelhanças, as celebridades e os influenciadores de redes sociais (influencers) são conceitos de natureza diferente. Enquanto as celebridades são conhecidas pelas suas atividades não relacionadas com as redes sociais, os influencers são pessoas que ficaram conhecidas e ganharam uma rede considerável de seguidores devido ao seu trabalho nas redes sociais. Neste estudo não são consideradas celebridades (como, por exemplo, o Cristiano Ronaldo ou a Carolina Patrocínio), mas sim apenas influencers.

1. Segue influencers nas redes sociais?

- Sim
- Não

Se o participante responder “Sim”, segue para a próxima pergunta. Caso contrário, vai diretamente para a Secção 2.

2. Os influencers que sigo são

- Só mulheres
- Maioritariamente mulheres
- Homens e mulheres em igual proporção
- Maioritariamente homens
- Só homens

Secção 2

Observe com atenção as imagens abaixo apresentadas de potenciais influencers.

Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as características que se seguem, onde 1 significa “discordo totalmente” e 7 “concordo totalmente”.

Considero esta influencer...

- Fotografia da influencer

Stimulus 1



Stimulus 2



Stimulus 3



Stimulus 4



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Atraente							
Requintada							
Bonita							
Elegante							
Sensual							

Secção 3

Nesta secção são apresentados vários produtos.

Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações que se seguem, onde 1 significa “discordo totalmente” e 7 “concordo totalmente”.

- Considere um telemóvel.
- Considere um champô.
- Considere um computador portátil.
- Considere um creme.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Escolher um... é uma grande decisão na vida de uma pessoa.							

Atribuo grande importância à escolha de um ...							
Normalmente preocupo-me muito em selecionar um ...							
O ... que eu escolho importa muito para mim.							
Escolher um ... requer muito cuidado.							
As decisões sobre a seleção de um ... são sérias e importantes.							
Significa muito para mim ter um ... para usar.							

Secção 4

1. Género

- Feminino
- Masculino
- Prefiro não responder

2. Idade (em números): _____

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

O presente questionário é realizado no âmbito do Trabalho Final de Mestrado em Marketing da Católica Porto Business School, que tem como objetivo analisar o impacto do marketing de influência da resposta dos consumidores a determinados produtos.

O questionário é anónimo e confidencial e a informação recolhida vai ser utilizada apenas para o propósito desta investigação. As suas respostas são essenciais para o desenvolvimento da nossa investigação. O preenchimento deste questionário tem a duração de aproximadamente 5 minutos.

Agradecemos, desde já, a sua disponibilidade e participação neste estudo.

Secção 1

1. Género

- Feminino
- Masculino
- Prefiro não responder

Se o participante responder “Feminino”, segue para a próxima pergunta. Caso contrário, vai diretamente para o final do questionário.

Secção 2

2. Costuma usar plataformas de redes sociais?

- Sim
- Não

Se o participante responder “Sim”, segue para a próxima pergunta. Caso contrário, vai diretamente para o final do questionário.

3. Quais as plataformas de redes sociais que mais usa? (Pode escolher várias opções)

- Facebook

- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- Youtube
- TikTok
- Outra: _____

Se o participante selecionar “Instagram”, segue para a próxima pergunta. Caso contrário, vai diretamente para o final do questionário.

Embora compartilhem algumas semelhanças, as celebridades e os influenciadores de redes sociais (influencers) são conceitos de natureza diferente. Enquanto as celebridades são conhecidas pelas suas atividades não relacionadas com as redes sociais, os influencers são pessoas que ficaram conhecidas e ganharam uma rede considerável de seguidores devido ao ser trabalho nas redes sociais. Neste estudo não são consideradas celebridades (como, por exemplo, o Cristiano Ronaldo ou a Carolina Patrocínio), mas sim apenas influencers.

4. Segue algum influencer nas redes sociais?

- Sim
- Não

Se o participante responder “Sim”, segue para a próxima pergunta. Caso contrário, vai diretamente para o final do questionário.

5. Os influencers que sigo são...

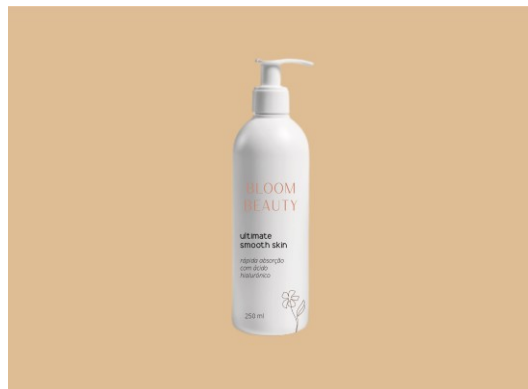
- Só mulheres
- Maioritariamente mulheres
- Homens e mulheres em igual proporção
- Maioritariamente homens

- Só homens
6. Em média, quantos influencers segue nas redes sociais?
- 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - Mais de 20
7. Os influencers que segue enquadram-se em que categorias? (Pode escolher várias opções)
- Viagens
 - Moda
 - Beleza
 - Lifestyle
 - Fitness/Desporto
 - Comida/Receitas
 - Saúde
 - Humor
 - Outro: _____
8. Alguma vez comprou um produto/serviço recomendado por um influencer?
- Sim
 - Não

Secção 3

Nesta secção do questionário, pedimos-lhe que considere a decisão de compra de um computador portátil/creme de corpo.

- Fotografia de um computador portátil ou creme de corpo



Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações que se seguem, onde 1 significa “discordo totalmente” e 7 “concordo totalmente”.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Escolher um... é uma grande decisão na vida de uma pessoa.							
Atribuo grande importância à escolha de um ...							
Normalmente preocupo-me muito em seleccionar um ...							
O ... que eu escolho importa muito para mim.							
Escolher um ... requer muito cuidado.							

As decisões sobre a seleção de um ... são sérias e importantes.							
Significa muito para mim ter um ... para usar.							

Secção 4

A marca de tecnologia “Fusion Tech” / a marca de cosméticos “Bloom Beauty” pretende associar-se a uma influencer para várias campanhas através do Instagram. Observe com atenção o perfil abaixo apresentado e responda às questões que se seguem.

Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as características que se seguem, onde 1 significa “discordo totalmente” e 7 “concordo totalmente”.

- Fotografia da influencer
- Descrição da influencer



1. Considero a influencer apresentada anteriormente...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Atraente							
Requintada							
Bonita							
Elegante							

Sensual							
---------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

2. Considero a influencer apresentada anteriormente...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Confiável							
Honesta							
Fidedigna							
Sincera							
Credível							

3. Tendo em conta a categoria de produto “tecnologia” / “beleza/cuidados pessoais”, considero a influencer apresentada anteriormente...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Especialista							
Experiente							
Com conhecimento							
Qualificada							
Competente							

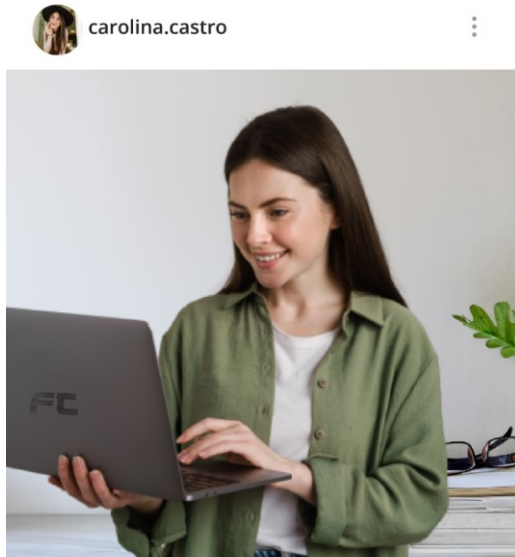
Secção 5

Tendo em conta as respostas dadas anteriormente relativamente ao produto e à influencer em questão, observe agora o seguinte post do Instagram. (Nota: esta é apenas uma ilustração de como a colaboração poderia ser).

Para tornar a sua avaliação o mais realista possível, pedimos-lhe, por favor, para considerar que precisa de comprar um computador portátil/creme de corpo e está a avaliar várias opções de compra. Assim, procure avaliar o produto

anunciado como realmente faria antes de comprar um computador portátil/creme de corpo.

- Post do Instagram



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carolina.castro A elegância do novo portátil HeroBook 13 da Fusion Tech não deixa ninguém indiferente: mais fino, mais leve e incrivelmente compacto! É uma ferramenta essencial para o meu dia a dia 📁 Trabalha, estuda ou entretém-te em qualquer lado com a [@fusiontech.pt](https://www.fusiontech.pt)

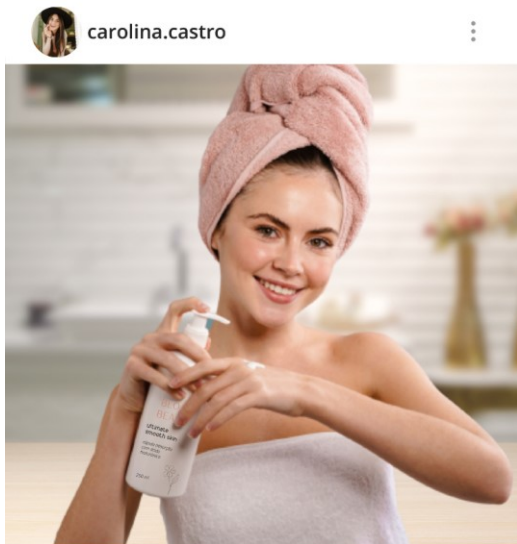
Ver todos os 23 comentários



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mariana_duque A elegância do novo portátil HeroBook 13 da Fusion Tech não deixa ninguém indiferente: mais fino, mais leve e incrivelmente compacto! É uma ferramenta essencial para o meu dia a dia 📁 Trabalha, estuda ou entretém-te em qualquer lado com a [@fusiontech.pt](https://www.fusiontech.pt)

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carolina.castro Já se mimaram hoje? Amor próprio também é cuidar de nós e da nossa pele. O novo Bloom Beauty Ultimate Smooth Skin é um leite fluído de rápida absorção que dá imenso conforto à pele. Tenho usado tanto! Tem um cheirinho suave e permite vestir de imediato. A fórmula com ácido hialurónico ajuda a reparar e a proteger a barreira cutânea - e a minha pele tem adorado 😍 @bloombeauty

Ver todos os 23 comentários



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mariana_duque Já se mimaram hoje? Amor próprio também é cuidar de nós e da nossa pele. O novo Bloom Beauty Ultimate Smooth Skin é um leite fluído de rápida absorção que dá imenso conforto à pele. Tenho usado tanto! Tem um cheirinho suave e permite vestir de imediato. A fórmula com ácido hialurónico ajuda a reparar e a proteger a barreira cutânea - e a minha pele tem adorado 😍 @bloombeauty

Ver todos os 23 comentários

Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações que se seguem, onde 1 significa “discordo totalmente” e 7 “concordo totalmente”.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Possivelmente compraria o produto promovido pela influencer.							
É provável que eu considere comprar o produto promovido pela influencer.							
Estaria disposta a comprar o produto promovido pela influencer.							

Secção 6

1. Idade (em números): _____

2. Qual é o seu grau de escolaridade?
 - Ensino Básico
 - Ensino Secundário
 - Licenciatura
 - Mestrado
 - Doutoramento
 - Outro: _____

3. Distrito de Residência
 - Aveiro
 - Beja
 - Braga
 - Bragança
 - Castelo Branco
 - Coimbra
 - Évora
 - Faro
 - Guarda
 - Leiria
 - Lisboa
 - Portalegre
 - Porto
 - Região Autónoma da Madeira
 - Região Autónoma dos Açores
 - Santarém

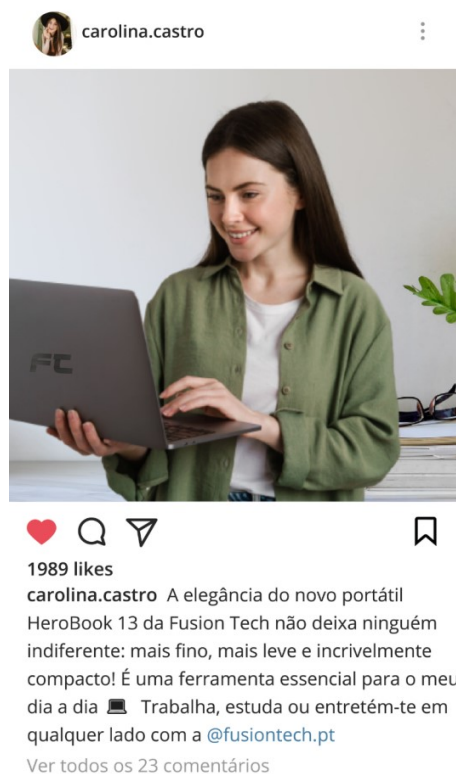
- Viana do Castelo
- Vila Real
- Viseu

Questionnaire Profiles

Profile 1



Para além de criadora de conteúdos, a Carolina é licenciada em Creative Technologies pelo IADE, o que lhe permitiu iniciar uma carreira como freelancer em áreas como Web, Mobile and Software Developer, por isso, está sempre a par das últimas tecnologias para entregar os melhores conteúdos aos seus seguidores e clientes. Procura sempre dar uma opinião verdadeira sobre os produtos que experimenta, quer seja positiva ou negativa e também responde regularmente aos comentários e mensagens que recebe. É, por isso, considerada honesta e sincera pelos seus seguidores.



Profile 2



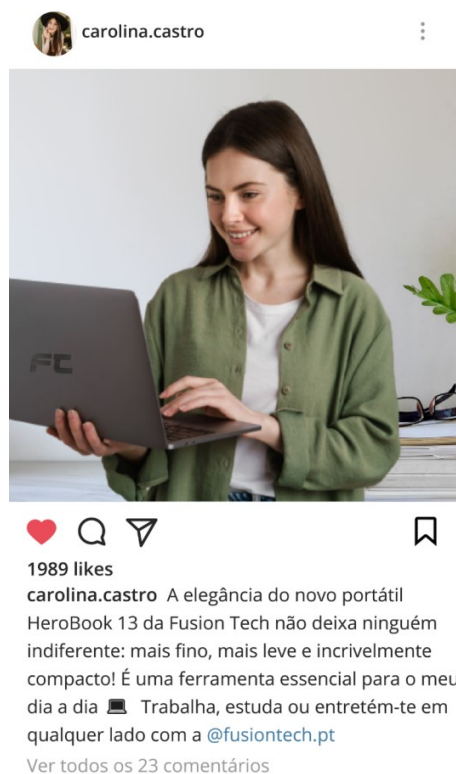
A Carolina é dermatologista e decidiu começar a partilhar informação sobre cuidados com a pele, cabelo e corpo. Em 2021, o seu perfil foi considerado um dos mais influentes na área da beleza pela Forbes. Procura sempre dar uma opinião verdadeira sobre os produtos que experimenta, quer seja positiva ou negativa e também responde regularmente aos comentários e mensagens que recebe. É, por isso, considerada honesta e sincera pelos seus seguidores.



Profile 3



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Profile 4



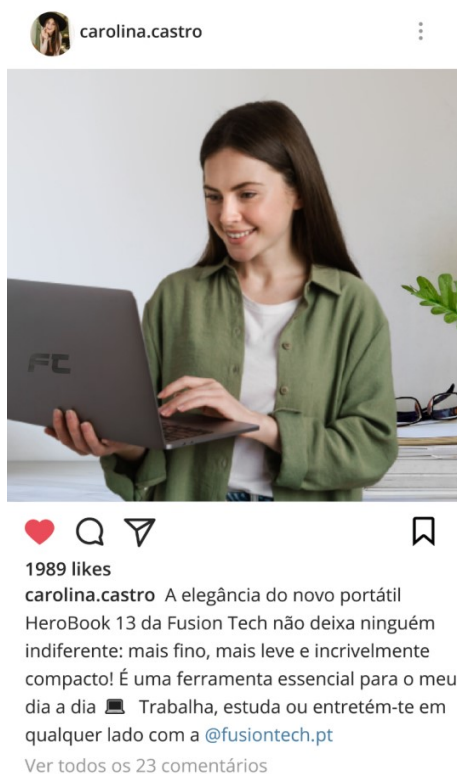
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Profile 5



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Profile 6



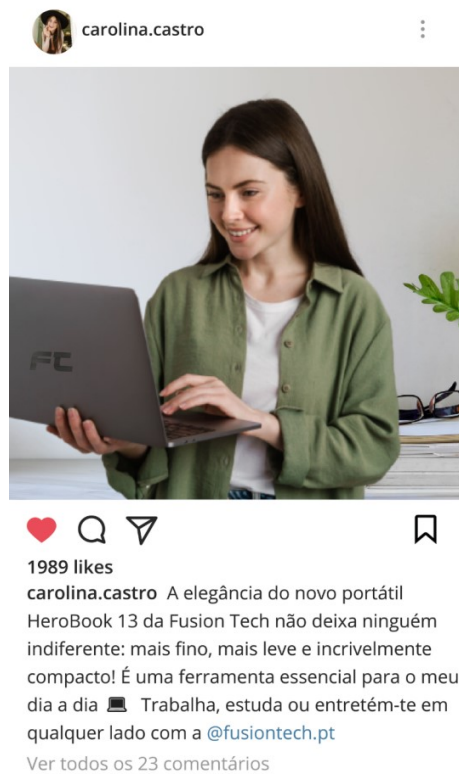
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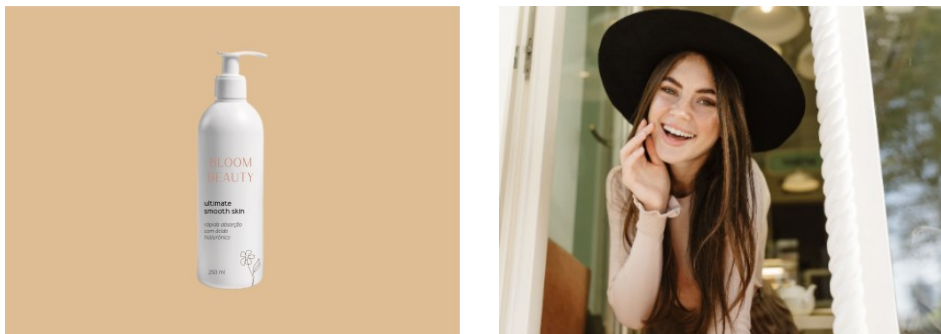
Profile 7



A Carolina é dermatologista e decidiu começar a compartilhar informação sobre cuidados com a pele, cabelo e corpo. Em 2021, o seu perfil foi considerado um dos mais influentes na área da beleza pela Forbes. Normalmente exagera nos elogios aos produtos ou marcas que experimenta, sem nunca referir aspetos negativos, por isso, nem sempre é fácil acreditar nas suas avaliações, que parecem forçadas para agradar às marcas e obter o máximo de produtos grátis ou retorno possível.



Profile 8



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Profile 9



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Profile 10



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Profile 11



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Profile 12



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Profile 13



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Profile 14



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Profile 15



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Profile 16



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mariana_duque



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mariana_duque Já se mimaram hoje? Amor próprio também é cuidar de nós e da nossa pele. O novo Bloom Beauty Ultimate Smooth Skin é um leite fluído de rápida absorção que dá imenso conforto à pele. Tenho usado tanto! Tem um cheirinho suave e permite vestir de imediato. A fórmula com ácido hialurónico ajuda a reparar e a proteger a barreira cutânea - e a minha pele tem adorado 😊 @bloombeauty

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