Punchlines or Heartstrings? How Tone of Voice and Format Shape Brand Awareness and Consideration on Instagram – Vodafone Portugal Case Study

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Abstract

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Advertising has become increasingly relevant in digital environments, requiring brands to focus not only on message content but also on how messages are delivered to capture attention and shape early consumer responses. This thesis examines the effects of tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional), content format (Reels vs. static posts), and their interaction on early-stage brand awareness on Instagram. Using a 2×2 experimental design, the study analyzes real advertising content from Vodafone Portugal, a brand operating in the highly competitive telecommunications sector. Grounded in dual-process theories of cognition and established advertising response models, brand awareness is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing both perceptual and interpretative processing stages. Results show that humorous tone and Reels independently generate higher attentional awareness, confirming their effectiveness as perceptual triggers in fast-paced, scroll-based environments. However, neither tone of voice nor content format significantly influenced engagement intention or message clarity, and no interaction effects were observed. These findings suggest that expressive cues mainly affect initial attention rather than deeper cognitive or behavioral responses. An exploratory analysis indicates that emotional storytelling and engaging formats are perceived as the most influential communication characteristics during brand consideration. From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that while humor and dynamic formats can enhance visibility for Vodafone Portugal, emotionally grounded communication may play a more important role in shaping evaluative judgments and longer-term brand preference. Key limitations include reliance on self-reported measures, a single-brand context, and controlled exposure conditions, highlighting opportunities for future research using behavioral data and real-platform testing.

Sumário

Título: *Punchlines ou Emoções? Como o Tom de Voz e o Formato Moldam a Notoriedade e a Consideração da Marca no Instagram – Estudo de Caso Vodafone Portugal*

Autora: Leonor Abreu

Palavras-chave: Storytelling, Humor, Narrativas Emocionais, Publicidade

A publicidade digital assumiu um papel central na comunicação das marcas, tornando a forma de comunicar tão relevante quanto o conteúdo das mensagens. Neste contexto, esta tese analisa o impacto do tom de voz (humorístico vs. emocional) e do formato do conteúdo (Reels vs. publicações estáticas), bem como da sua interação, na notoriedade da marca em fases iniciais no Instagram. O estudo recorre a um design fatorial 2×2 e utiliza conteúdos publicitários reais da Vodafone Portugal. Com base em teorias de processamento dual da cognição e em modelos de resposta à publicidade, a notoriedade da marca é conceptualizada como um conceito multidimensional que integra processos percetivos e interpretativos. Os resultados mostram que o tom humorístico e os Reels, de forma independente, aumentam a atenção, evidenciando a sua eficácia em contextos de navegação rápida. Contudo, não se verificam efeitos significativos do tom de voz ou do formato na intenção de interação nem na clareza da mensagem, nem efeitos de interação entre as variáveis. Uma análise exploratória indica que o storytelling emocional e formatos envolventes são particularmente relevantes na fase de consideração da marca. Em termos práticos, os resultados sugerem que, embora o humor e formatos dinâmicos reforcem a visibilidade da Vodafone, a comunicação emocional assume maior relevância na construção da preferência de marca a longo prazo. As principais limitações prendem-se com o uso de medidas auto-reportadas, o foco numa única marca e o contexto de exposição controlado, apontando para investigação futura baseada em dados comportamentais e testes em ambiente real.

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1. Introduction

Communication is one of humanity's oldest and most powerful tools. Through words, stories, and shared meaning, people have built relationships, established cultures, and given life to ideas. In today's interconnected world, communication remains just as vital, not only for individuals, but also for brands. The way a brand speaks has become as meaningful as what it says. In a world filled with messages, tone of voice allows a brand to stand out, shaping how it is perceived, recalled, and trusted. As consumers become increasingly selective about the brands they engage with, authenticity and emotional resonance have emerged as key drivers of brand preference (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Within this context, advertising represents one of the most structured and visible forms of brand communication. While traditionally focused on information delivery, advertising has progressively evolved toward emotional expression and relationship building. In this sense, marketing and communication professionals increasingly recognize that effective advertising is no longer only about conveying functional attributes, but about evoking emotion and creating meaningful connections with audiences (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2021). This shift has elevated tone of voice from a stylistic choice to a strategic communicative tool through which brands express identity and purpose.

Tone of voice plays a central role in shaping how advertising messages are interpreted. It guides emotional framing, signals relational intent, and influences the cognitive and affective responses elicited by brand communication. One of the primary ways in which tone of voice is enacted in contemporary advertising is through storytelling. Stories allow brands to translate abstract values and functional offerings into human experiences. As Woodside, Sood, and Miller (2008) argue, individuals naturally process information in narrative form, and storytelling enhances memory, emotional engagement, and identification with brands. When aligned with a coherent tone of voice, storytelling enables advertising to move beyond functional persuasion toward emotional meaning-making.

Social media has become the primary environment in which this form of advertising unfolds. Platforms such as Instagram have transformed brand communication into a continuous, interactive dialogue, where tone, visuals, and narrative cues converge within fast-paced, scroll-based consumption contexts. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of advertising but active participants who shape brand meaning through engagement behaviors such as likes, comments, and shares (Ashley & Tuten, 2014). In this environment, advertising functions as a

sequence of micro-narratives, where each post or video contributes to an ongoing brand story through cumulative associative learning (Herr, Aaker & Biel, 1993; Batra & Keller, 2016).

Within this digital context, the telecommunications industry offers a particularly relevant setting for examining tone of voice in advertising. Built fundamentally around the idea of connection, telecommunications brands must communicate not only technological competence but also emotional proximity and trust (Vodafone, 2021). In Portugal, major operators increasingly rely on expressive communication strategies to convey values, mission, and relational meaning alongside service offerings.

Vodafone Portugal illustrates this dynamic clearly. Its advertising communication on Instagram frequently alternates between humorous and emotional tones across different content formats, drawing on everyday situations, relationships, and shared experiences. Some executions adopt a light, playful tone, while others emphasize warmth and emotional connection. This tonal flexibility makes Vodafone Portugal a suitable case for examining how tone of voice operates within digital advertising contexts.

Building on this setting, the present study examines how tone of voice (humorous vs**.** emotional) and content format (Reels vs. static posts) influence early-stage brand awareness on Instagram, while exploratorily assessing their perceived role in brand consideration. Using real advertising content from Vodafone Portugal, the study investigates whether these expressive choices, individually or in combination, shape consumers' initial responses to brand communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Advertising and Foundation of Early Consumer Response

Advertising has long been defined as a persuasive communication activity aimed at increasing awareness, shaping attitudes, and influencing consumer behavior (Mueller, 2024). While early advertising primarily served an informational role, it progressively evolved toward storytelling and relationship building, allowing brands to convey identity, values, and symbolic meaning beyond functional attributes (Herr, Aaker & Biel, 1993). As a result, effective advertising is now understood as operating simultaneously at cognitive and emotional levels, generating both understanding and affective connection across consumer touchpoints (Batra & Keller, 2016).

Given the complexity of advertising effects, scholars have developed stage-based models of consumer response to explain how individuals move from initial exposure to more evaluative

responses and eventual action. One of the earliest and most influential of these frameworks is the AIDA model (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action), represented in Figure 1, originally attributed to Elias St. Elmo Lewis, 1889.

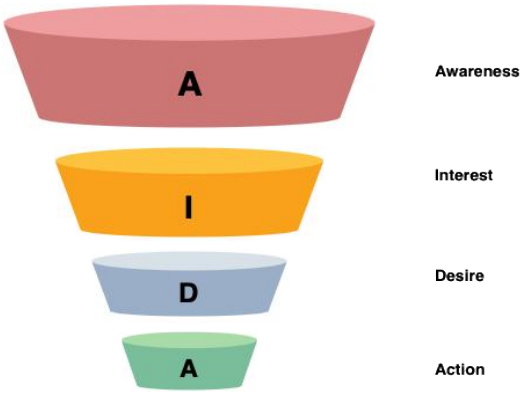

Figure 1 - AIDA Funnel

AIDA conceptualizes consumer response as a linear funnel, in which advertising first generates attention and awareness, laying the groundwork for later evaluative and behavioral outcomes. Given this foundational role of awareness, the present study focuses on the early stages of the consumer response process, examining how advertising stimuli contribute to brand awareness and, in an exploratory manner, to brand consideration.

Within this context, brand awareness refers to the extent to which individuals notice, recognize, and interpret brand-related information (Keller, 2013). In advertising research, awareness can be therefore understood as a multidimensional process that encompasses both perceptual detection and interpretative understanding.

To better understand how individuals respond to advertising stimuli at these levels, it is useful to draw on dual-process theories of cognition. Kahneman's (2011) framework, from the book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, distinguishes between fast, automatic processing, called System 1, and slower, more deliberate processing, System 2, highlighting that consumer responses may emerge either through intuitive perception or through reflective interpretation. This distinction provides a conceptual basis for differentiating between early, perceptual forms of awareness and more interpretative forms that involve meaning construction.

The earliest manifestation of awareness is perceptual awareness, referring to the moment a brand stimulus is detected within the communication environment. At this stage, the stimulus

is noticed but not yet actively interpreted, marking the transition from mere exposure to cognitive registration. This form of awareness is driven by fast, intuitive processing, aligning with System 1. In advertising terms, this corresponds to attention, operationalized in this study as attentional awareness, which represents the first necessary condition for brand awareness to occur.

As processing continues, awareness may develop into interpretative awareness, involving the comprehension of the advertising message and the attribution of meaning to the brand stimulus. This stage reflects more deliberate cognitive processing, consistent with System 2, through which individuals form associations related to brand identity, values, or intent.

Building on this interpretative processing, awareness may further manifest through engagement intention, defined as an individual's predisposition to respond to brand-related content. Engagement intention represents an advanced expression of awareness, indicating that the message has been noticed and understood, while remaining prior to more evaluative judgments associated with brand consideration (Ashley & Tuten, 2014; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014).

Following awareness, brand consideration reflects a more selective stage of consumer response, in which exposure to brand communication leads a brand to be perceived as sufficiently relevant or familiar to be contemplated among alternatives, prior to more elaborate evaluative judgments (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004).

2.2 From Traditional to Digital Advertising

The transition from traditional to digital media fundamentally reshaped how advertising operates. Digital media, enabled by internet-based technologies, allow content to be created, shared and consumed in real time, often with immediate opportunities for interaction. This shift moved advertising away from passive exposure through mass media toward faster, more interactive, and continuously accessible forms of brand communication (Eisend, 2018). As a result, users are no longer merely exposed to advertising but actively decide what content to engage with and what to ignore, increasing competition for attention and making the earliest moments of exposure particularly critical. This shift has reinforced the strategic importance of awareness and early consumer response in digital advertising contexts.

In response to these changes, more recent models such as McKinsey's consumer decision journey move beyond linear stage-based frameworks, as AIDA, and adopt circular representations that better reflect the digital, always-on consumption pattern (Court et al.,

2009). Yet, despite this shift in structure, the role of awareness remains unchanged. Even with more complex frameworks, brands must first be noticed before they can be meaningfully evaluated or considered.

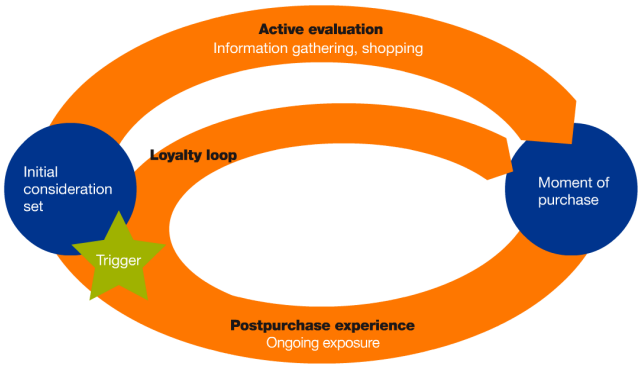

Figure 2 - Consumer Decision Journey by McKinsey

This shift toward digital communication is also reflected in advertising investment patterns across Europe. Digital advertising has become the dominant channel, accounting for approximately two-thirds of total advertising expenditure in Europe in 2024, with spending reaching nearly €119 billion (Navarro, 2025; Appendix A), reinforcing the central role of digital platforms in contemporary brand communication.

2.3 Social Media as Advertising Ecosystems

Within digital media, social media has become one of the focal points for strategic brand communication. These platforms can be understood as web-based services that allow users to create profiles, connect with others, and navigate visible networks of relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Integrated into consumers' everyday routines, these platforms expose individuals to a continuous flow of commercial and non-commercial content, positioning brand communication within an always-on environment rather than isolated moments of exposure (Voorveld, 2019).

A defining characteristic of social media is its participatory and conversational nature. Unlike traditional one-way media, users are partly in control of how information is generated and shared, actively shaping the circulation and visibility of brand messages through ongoing interaction (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). As a result, brand communication on social media extends beyond paid advertising and includes any brand-related content that users can access, engage with, share, or co-create within this interactive environment (Alhabash, Mundel, & Hussain, 2017).

Within this participatory context, user interaction becomes central to how brand messages gain visibility and meaning. Engagement intention therefore becomes observable through platform--specific interaction behaviors. Actions such as liking, commenting on, and sharing brand content represent concrete expressions of users' willingness to actively respond to brand communication rather than merely being exposed to it. In experimental research, these interaction behaviors are commonly operationalized through self-reported likelihood measures, which capture individuals' intention to engage rather than their actual behavior within the platform. Consistent with prior research, these self-reported engagement intentions are treated in this study as a proxy for subsequent behavioral engagement in social media contexts (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014; Bajrami et al., 2022).

2.3.1 Instagram as Advertising Ecosystems

Among the social media ecosystem, Instagram has emerged as a particularly relevant platform for brand communication. With more than 2 billion active users globally and approximately six million users in Portugal (Statista, 2024; Kemp, 2025), Instagram occupies a central position in everyday media consumption. The platform is built around visual formats such as images, short videos, and Stories, which are presented sequentially within a continuous feed. Its design encourages rapid, intuitive processing as users scroll through content in quick succession. Prior research shows that this visual orientation influences user attitudes, perceived authenticity, and early evaluative responses to brand content (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020).

Despite the relatively limited academic research focusing specifically on Instagram, the platform presents a particularly suitable context for examining advertising and awareness effects. Instagram operates within an algorithmically curated environment in which early user responses play a decisive role in determining content visibility. Content that generates immediate engagement intention is more likely to be amplified, increasing its reach and frequency of exposure (Shah, 2025).

Building on the conversational and interactive dynamics previously discussed, as well as Instagram's algorithmic logic, brand communication on the platform must compete to capture attention at the moment of first exposure. This places emphasis not only on what is communicated, but also on how messages are presented. In this context, expressive choices become particularly relevant, with tone of voice and content format forming the focus of this study.

2.4 Tone of Voice in Digital Brand Communication

Tone of voice has become a fundamental tool for shaping brand expression on digital communication. It operates as the linguistic and emotional manifestation through which brands convey personality and relational intent, shaping how messages are perceived in competitive digital environments (Aaker, 1997; Jeong, Chung & Kim, 2022).

Brands use tone strategically to regulate and create the relationship with their audience, guide message interpretation, influence relational perceptions in digital communication contexts (Park & Cameron, 2014). Prior research commonly distinguishes between a corporate tone, described as more formal and informational, and a human tone, characterized by conversational and emotionally expressive cues that enhance social presence and trust (Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal, 2018; Hayes et al., 2020). As brands increasingly communicate in interpersonal ways on social media, communication norms have shifted toward a more human tone, with consumers expecting warmth, spontaneity, and emotional nuance from the brands they follow (Park & Cameron, 2014; Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal, 2018; Hayes et al., 2020).

Yet the human tone is far from uniform. It encompasses multiple tonalities - humorous, emotional, empathetic, inspirational - each selected strategically according to message purpose, target audience, or cultural context. This diversity underscores that tone is not merely stylistic but a thoughtful communicative choice that shapes how audiences infer identity, intention, and meaning.

2.4.1 Humor and Emotional Tone of Voice in Digital Brand Communication

Among the human tonalities used in digital brand communication, humor and emotional tone receive particular attention in prior research. Both are widely examined as persuasive strategies in advertising, yet they are rarely studied in direct comparison. As a result, there is limited understanding of how these tonalities perform relative to one another when used within the same communication context, particularly on social media platforms such as Instagram.

From a practical perspective, humor stands out for the strong consumer preference it attracts: 91% of consumers report favoring brands that use humor, while only 18% of online advertisements incorporate it (McNichols, 2022), highlighting a clear mismatch between consumer preference and brand execution that needs clearer insights.

Although some scholars conceptualize humor as an emotion, treating amusement as an affective response with emotional properties (Sharpe, 1975; Roberts, 1988), advertising research more commonly approaches humor as a tonal strategy. In this view, humor elicits amusement through incongruity, surprise, or playful norm violation, generating positive affect that can become associated with the brand through repeated exposure (Strick et al., 2013). For the purposes of this study, humor is defined as a communication style intended to elicit amusement, whereas emotional tone refers to brand communication that evokes warmth or empathic connection.

These tonalities differ in the cognitive responses they tend to activate. Humor primarily supports intuitive processing, associated with System 1, facilitating immediate attention and early engagement with content (McGraw & Warren, 2010; Eisend, 2009). Meta-analytic evidence shows that humor consistently enhances attention, ad liking, and early-stage brand evaluations, particularly in environments dominated by heuristic judgments (Eisend, 2009). Emotional tone, by contrast, elicits warmer and more relational affective responses, such as empathy or emotional resonance. These responses, which are more closely aligned with System 2, support processing that extends beyond initial attention toward deeper interpretation and meaning construction (Escalas & Stern, 2003; Poels & Dewitte, 2006). In digital brand communication, emotional appeals have been shown to enhance perceived authenticity and social presence, contributing to more evaluative judgments associated with brand consideration (Barcelos, Dantas & Sénécal, 2018; Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023). Rather than representing opposing strategies, humor and emotional tone activate distinct cognitive pathways, making their comparison particularly relevant for understanding how tone of voice shapes consumer responses across awareness and early consideration stages on Instagram.

2.5 Content Format on Instagram: Static Posts vs. Reels

Given that tone of voice on Instagram is expressed through specific content formats, the medium through which a message is delivered also shapes how it is perceived and processed. Content format influences not only attention and emotional impact, but also the time users spend with a message, which in turn affects the depth of cognitive processing (Habibi & Salim, 2021).

Instagram's two dominant formats—static posts and Reels—offer distinct processing conditions. Static posts, including single images and carousels, allow users to pause, observe visual details, and read captions at their own pace. This self-paced exposure supports more

deliberate interpretation and message elaboration, aligning more closely with interpretative awareness and System 2 processing.

Reels, on the other hand, rely on short-form video formats designed for rapid, sequential consumption. Through motion, pacing, sound, and other audiovisual cues, they capture attention immediately and tend to elicit intuitive, affect-driven responses, aligning primarily with perceptual awareness and fast System 1 processing. These sensory elements make Reels particularly effective at generating immediate visibility within scroll-based environments.

At the same time, Reels introduce greater stimulus complexity through the combination of audio, movement, narrative structure, and variable duration. Users generally spend more time engaging with video-based content than with static posts (Platforms & Inc, 2024), and while longer viewing does not inherently imply deeper cognition, it creates conditions under which processing may extend beyond initial perception. When Reels sustain attention through coherent storytelling, emotional cues, or clear message structure, they may engage elements of System 2 processing, supporting interpretation and early evaluative judgments.

2.6 Telecommunication – Vodafone Portugal Case Study

Telecommunications offers a relevant context for examining tone of voice and content format in digital brand communication. As an industry built around connection, its core service proposition has become increasingly standardized across competitors. In mature markets such as Portugal, where operators like Vodafone, MEO, and NOS compete under similar technological and regulatory conditions, differentiation is less dependent on functional performance and increasingly shaped by how brands communicate meaning and relational value (Keller, 2013; ANACOM, 2025).

Within this context, Vodafone Portugal represents a particularly suitable case. Although MEO holds the largest overall market share across fixed and mobile services, Vodafone remains one of the three leading telecommunications providers in Portugal, with a strong and stable presence across both mobile and broadband services (ANACOM, 2025). Vodafone has consistently articulated its brand positioning around the theme of human connection, most visibly through its global platform *Together We Can* (Vodafone Portugal, 2021). Rather than foregrounding technical specifications, the brand frames technology as an enabler of everyday relationships, social participation, and shared experiences, a positioning that has been recurrent in its communication within the Portuguese market.

Importantly for the present study, Vodafone Portugal does not rely on a single, fixed tonal expression. Its communication reflects ongoing tonal variation across moments and audiences, combining warmer emotional narratives at symbolic points in the calendar, such as Christmas, with more humorous and relatable expressions in everyday communication. This sensitivity to tonal adjustment is further illustrated by the existence of its youth-oriented sub-brand Yorn, whose informal and humorous voice is deliberately aligned with younger audiences (Amaral, 2015). Although Yorn is not analyzed directly, it signals a broader strategic awareness of tone of voice as a flexible communicative resource from the main brand.

These tonal dynamics are particularly visible in Vodafone's use of Instagram, which functions as a space for continuous brand presence rather than isolated campaign exposure. The brand maintains regular activity, publishing approximately two to four posts per week across both video and static formats, and engages a community of over 94,000 followers.

In the platform, video content uses short narratives and audiovisual cues to articulate humor and emotion with greater intensity and continuity. This includes humorous sketches built around familiar situations, such as making a phone call in a metro station historically associated with poor signal, now reframed as possible due to network improvements (Appendix B.1). More overtly promotional executions are also present, such as Vodafone TV Play campaigns that dramatize sound quality by placing an orchestra in a living-room, suggesting a cinema-level audio experience at home (Appendix B.2). Video is also used for emotionally oriented communication addressing broader social issues, such as online hate and digital violence, where the emphasis shifts from product attributes to brand values (Appendix B.3).

Static posts, by contrast, tend to rely on more restrained tonal cues. These executions frequently draw on everyday digital habits or current cultural references, using understated humor or emotion to signal relevance without foregrounding service features. For example, references to automatic photo memories resurfacing trivial images from years past subtly associate Vodafone with sufficient mobile storage capacity (Appendix B.4), while visual parallels drawn between Vodafone TV Play campaigns and contemporary cultural moments, such as the release of a new album by Rosalía, implicitly reinforce access to streaming platforms and audiovisual quality (Appendix B.5). In these cases, service attributes are communicated indirectly through culturally embedded cues.

Taken together, Vodafone's Instagram communication illustrates how tonal variation is deployed across formats to sustain presence, and early engagement intention. This structured

but flexible use of tone and content format makes Vodafone Portugal a suitable case for examining how expressive choices shape early consumer response in an always-on digital environment.

3. Research Question

Building on the processing literature discussed in the previous sections, there is still limited understanding of how tone of voice and content format operate jointly within the same brand and platform to shape early-stage consumer response.

This gap is particularly relevant in industries such as telecommunications, where brand differentiation depends less on functional attributes and increasingly on expressive communication choices. As discussed in Section 2.6, Vodafone Portugal provides a suitable empirical context to address this gap, given its consistent use of both humorous and emotional tones across static posts and video formats on Instagram.

Figure 3 summarizes the conceptual framework guiding this study**.**

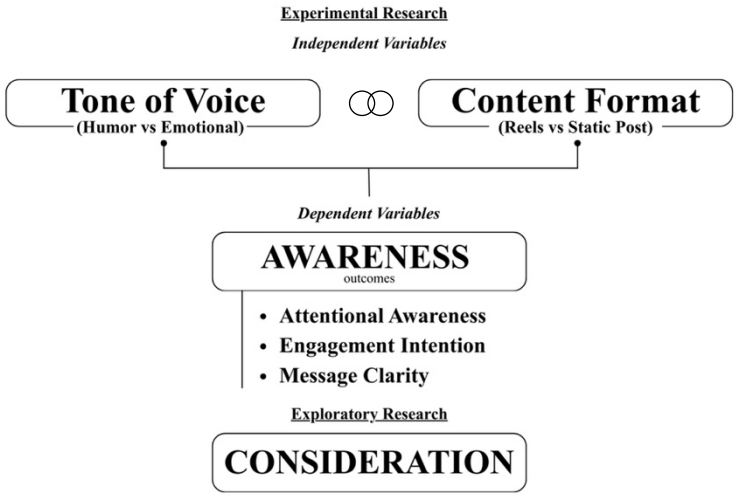

Figure 3*- Conceptual Framework of Tone of Voice and Content Format Effects on Early Consumer Response*

The framework models tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional) and content format (Reels vs. static posts) as the two independent communication variables in the experimental component of the research. Their individual effects as well as their interaction effect are examined in relation to early-stage consumer response on Instagram. Drawing on the awareness framework developed in Section 2.1, brand awareness is operationalized across three dimensions:

attentional awareness, engagement intention, and *message clarity*, which function as the dependent variables and capture both perceptual and interpretative stages of processing.

In addition, an exploratory research question examines which content characteristics consumers perceive as most influential during the brand consideration stage, when more reflective and evaluative judgments about Vodafone Portugal are formed.

Accordingly, the following research questions and hypotheses are proposed:

RQ1: Does a humorous tone of voice prove more effective than an emotional tone in generating brand awareness on Instagram?

This question explores the effect of each tone of voice (Humorous vs Emotional) on generating brand awareness within the three stipulated dimensions.

H1: Humorous tone creates higher attentional awareness than emotional tone.

H2: Humorous tone generates higher engagement intention than emotional tone.

H3: Humorous tone leads to higher message clarity than emotional tone.

RQ2: Does content format (Reels vs Static Posts) influence brand awareness outcomes on Instagram?

This question aims to understand the impact of content format on Instagram on generating brand awareness towards Vodafone Portugal, once again within the same dimensions as RQ1.

H4: Reels create higher attentional awareness than Static Posts.

H5: Reels generates higher engagement intention than Static Posts.

H6: Reels leads to higher message clarity than Static Posts.

RQ3: Does the interaction between tone of voice and content format influence awareness outcomes on Instagram?

This question examines whether tone of voice and content format interaction influences to shape awareness towards the brand. The aim is to determine whether certain combinations (such as humorous Reels or emotional static posts) reinforce or weaken awareness outcomes, and whether this interaction should influence Vodafone Portugal's digital communication strategy.

H7: There is a significant interaction between tone of voice and content format on awareness outcomes.

RQ4: Which content characteristics (authenticity, humor, emotional storytelling, engaging formats) are perceived as most influential in consumers' consideration of Vodafone Portugal?

This research question differs from the previous ones by adopting an exploratory focus. Rather than testing causal hypotheses, its aim is to provide broader insight into which communication characteristics- such as authenticity, humor, emotional storytelling, and engaging formats - consumers perceive as most influential when considering Vodafone Portugal.

4. Methodology

4.1 Survey Design

To ensure the validity of the results and reduce potential cultural bias, this study focused on Portugal as the research context. Accordingly, the survey began with a filter question to guarantee that only individuals who were Portuguese or currently living in Portugal were permitted to continue. A second filter question ensured that all respondents were active Instagram users, given that the platform is central to the experimental manipulation.

After this initial screening, respondents were exposed to a 2×2 experimental design developed to examine how different tones of voice interact with content format in shaping brand awareness on Instagram. The experiment included two independent variables: tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional), and content format (static post vs. Reels).

To conduct this experimental research, authentic content retrieved from Vodafone Portugal's official Instagram account was used as the stimulus material. Four stimuli were therefore prepared, each representing one of the experimental conditions:

Tone of Voice/Content Format
Humorous/Reels
Humorous/Static Post
Emotional/Reels
Emotional/Static Post

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the four stimuli differed not only in tone and format but also in duration. The Reels stimuli contained short video sequences with audio and motion with different durations, while the static posts were single-image formats viewed passively. These differences reflect real-world platform characteristics but may also influence attention and engagement independently of tone of voice.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions using Qualtrics' randomization function, which ensured a balanced allocation across conditions. Before viewing the stimulus, two brief questions were included to understand respondents' general preferences toward tone of voice (humorous, emotional and inspiring, informative or other) and content formats (short videos/reels, static posts, stories or other). These were positioned early in the questionnaire to avoid priming effects and to reduce potential bias during exposure. In addition, respondents were asked about their familiarity with Vodafone Portugal and whether they followed the brand on Instagram, allowing the study to account for pre-existing brand perceptions.

Each participant was then shown one stimulus with the instruction to view it "as they normally would while scrolling through their Instagram feed.". Since the objective was to replicate a natural Instagram browsing experience, no minimum viewing time was imposed. Although the stimuli varied in length, participants were free to view each stimulus for as long or as little as they wished, mirroring real platform behavior. This approach ensured a more realistic experience, though it also implies that any differences in attention or engagement may partly reflect the inherent temporal characteristics of each format.

Following exposure, participants indicated whether they had seen the content previously. If they had, they were asked to specify the platform of prior exposure, acknowledging that Vodafone Portugal often repurposes content across channels such as television, YouTube, and other social media platforms, creating a broader understanding if this sample was being targeted on the platform under analysis or not.

To assess the impact of tone and format on early-stage brand responses, participants were then presented with a structured set of questions. Using five-point Likert scales, respondents evaluated initial awareness and message processing indicators whether the content captured their attention, made them stop scrolling, and appeared clear and easy to understand. Tone recognition was assessed through agreement with statements characterizing the content as humorous/funny or emotional/sentimental, functioning as a manipulation check.

To measure another dimension of awareness, behavioral engagement intention was explored through a seven-point Likert scale that asked respondents how likely they would be to like, comment on, share, or save the post if encountered organically on Instagram.

To complement these measures, a block of statements assessed whether different aspects of Vodafone's Instagram communication—such as authenticity, humor, emotional storytelling, or visual format—would influence participants' consideration of switching to or remaining with Vodafone Portugal as their telecommunication provider. This block was included for exploratory purposes, aiming to capture broader evaluative perceptions associated with brand consideration rather than to test causal effects of tone or format. An option indicating that none of these factors would impact consideration was included to avoid forced responses.

A control question was incorporated to ensure data reliability. The questionnaire concluded with demographic and contextual questions including current telecommunications operator, daily time spent on Instagram, gender, age, education level, and occupation. The full survey and set of stimuli can be found on Appendix K.

4.2 Data Collection Method

The survey was conducted from the 1st of November 2025 to 12th of November 2025, using, as previously stated, the Qualtrics platform. To reach a diverse and representative sample, the survey link was distributed across multiple channels, including personal social media platforms (Instagram and WhatsApp Groups) as well as an academic research platform, SurveyCycle.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and all responses were collected anonymously for academic purposes only. The survey introduction clarified the objectives of the study, the estimated completion time (approximately 5–7 minutes).

4.3 Sampling

The survey initially collected 303 responses, reflecting the broad and rapid reach of the questionnaire once shared online. As participation was based on voluntary access to the survey link, the study employed convenience sampling, which is efficient for exploratory research but does not ensure representativeness of the broader population. However, not all of these were eligible for analysis. Because the study focused exclusively on individuals living in Portugal or holding Portuguese nationality, as well as active Instagram users, respondents who did not meet

these criteria were automatically excluded (n = 22). In addition, a considerable number of participants (n = 73) abandoned the questionnaire before completion, and seven respondents failed the control question, indicating insufficient attention and inconsistent answering behavior. After applying these exclusion criteria, a final sample of 201 valid responses was obtained. The sample consisted of 69,2% female respondents and 30,8% male respondents (Appendix C.1). In terms of age groups 42,8% of the sample were between 18-24 years old, 31,3% were between 25-34 years old, 10,4% were between 35-44 years old, 11,4% were between 45-54 year old and the remaining 4% were over 55 years old (Appendix C.2). Regarding education levels, 38.3% of respondents held a bachelor's degree and 31.8% a master's degree. A further 26.9% reported having completed high school, while 2% held a doctorate or other professional degree. The remaining 1% either did not have a formal diploma or chose not to disclose their educational background (Appendix C.3). In terms of occupation, most of the respondents reported being employed (employed full-time, employed part-time or self-employed) representing 68,7% of the sample. Students accounted for 27,4%, while 3% unemployed and 1% retired (Appendix C.4).

In terms of telecommunications providers, as can be seen on Appendix C.5, the sample was largely concentrated among the three main national operators: MEO (35.8%), NOS (31.3%), and Vodafone Portugal (31.8%). Only 1% of respondents reported using other providers. Regarding respondents' daily use of Instagram, the results reflected a sample that is generally active on Instagram. The majority reported spending 1–2 hours per day on the platform (35.3%), followed by 30 minutes to 1 hour (26.9%). A smaller portion indicated using Instagram for 2–3 hours daily (14.9%), while 10.4% reported spending 15–30 minutes. Only 7.5% used it for 3–4 hours, 3% for less than 15 minutes, and 2% exceeded 4 hours per day (Appendix C.6).

Following the 2×2 factorial structure of the survey, respondents were divided into four experimental conditions, each representing a specific combination of tone of voice and content format. In this way, each participant was exposed to only one of the four possible tone–format combinations (Appendix K, block 2):

Stimulus Material	Participants (N)
Humor/Reels	51
Humor/Static Post	49
Emotional/Reels	46
Emotional/Static Post	55

Analysis of prior exposure demonstrated that 35.8% of respondents had already been exposed to the specific content on social media platforms or on television, whereas 64.2% were seeing the stimulus for the first time within the context of this study (Appendix E).

4.4 Method of Analysis

To prepare the data for analysis, reliability tests were first conducted for the attention and engagement items. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which confirmed that the items within each construct measured the same underlying dimension. This allowed the attention and engagement items to be aggregated into composite indices, which were subsequently used as dependent variables in the inferential analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant demographics and generate preliminary insights, and a significance level of 5% was adopted for all inferential tests.

Independent-samples t-tests were employed for two reasons: first, they allow comparison between two group means, making them appropriate for assessing whether the tone-of-voice manipulation (humor vs. emotional) was successful. Second, because several hypotheses involved comparisons between only two independent groups, t-tests provided a direct and statistically efficient method for detecting mean differences. In addition to statistical significance, effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d in order to assess the magnitude and practical relevance of observed differences, allowing statistically significant results to be interpreted in terms of substantive impact.

However, the main hypotheses involved multiple factors simultaneously, specifically tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional) and content format (static post vs. Reels). In these cases, a t-test would be insufficient, as it can only compare two means at once and cannot account for interaction effects. For this reason, two-way ANOVAs were conducted. ANOVA is appropriate when comparing more than two groups or when examining whether the effect of one factor depends on the level of another. In this study, the two-way ANOVA enabled the testing of both

the main effects of tone and format and their interaction, determining whether the impact of tone differed depending on content format.

Finally, the exploratory research question on brand consideration did not rely on experimental manipulation and was therefore examined using descriptive statistics to observe general patterns in respondents' evaluations of different content strategies. The following sections present each analysis and its results in detail.

5. Results

5.1 Preliminary Descriptive Insights

To gain a clearer picture of how respondents typically interact with content on Instagram, the survey first explored their preferences in terms of content format, preferred tone of voice, and their familiarity with Vodafone Portugal. These questions were examined through simple descriptive frequencies, offering an initial snapshot of what users tend to enjoy and pay attention to on the platform in general.

A clear pattern emerged regarding preferred content formats: Short videos or Reels were chosen by 59.7% of respondents, making them by far the most popular option. Stories followed at 24.4%, while only 14.9% selected static posts (Appendix D.1)

When asked about tone preferences, respondents showed a marked preference for entertainment: 42.8% indicated that humorous content is the tone they enjoy most on Instagram. Emotional and inspiring content was preferred by 24.4%, while 24.9% favored informational content (Appendix D.2). This shows that although humor stands out as the favorite, there is still a sizeable group that appreciates posts that either evoke emotion or simply explain something useful.

Regarding brand familiarity, the sample showed a high level of familiarity towards Vodafone Portugal. Over 65% of respondents reported being either "very familiar" or "extremely familiar" with the brand, whereas only 3% indicated no familiarity at all (Appendix D.3). Despite this strong baseline knowledge, only 15.9% follow Vodafone Portugal on Instagram (Appendix D.4).

5.2 Manipulation Check

5.2.1 Tone of Voice

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to verify whether participants perceived the intended tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional) in the stimuli they were exposed to. Participants in the humorous condition rated the item *"The content uses a humorous and funny tone"* (M = 4.12, SD = 0.76) significantly higher ($p < .001$) than participants in the emotional condition (M = 2.33, SD = 1.19) (Appendix F.1). As expected, those exposed to the emotional stimulus rated the item *"The content uses an emotional and sentimental tone"* substantially higher (M = 4.31, SD = 0.78) than participants in the humorous condition (M = 2.41, SD = 1.09), $p < .001$ (Appendix F.2). This strong and statistically significant contrast demonstrates that both manipulations were highly effective and correctly interpreted by participants.

5.3 Hypothesis Testing

RQ1: Does a humorous tone of voice prove more effective than an emotional tone in generating brand awareness on Vodafone's Portugal Instagram?

H1: *Humorous tone creates higher attentional awareness than emotional tone.*

To assess attentional awareness, two items were included in the questionnaire: one measuring whether the content made participants stop scrolling on Instagram, and another evaluating whether they found the content catchy and attention-grabbing (Appendix K, Question 8) . Because both items were intended to capture the same underlying construct, a reliability analysis was conducted to determine whether they could be combined into a single index. The results indicated good internal consistency and strong reliability, Cronbach's $\alpha = .802$ (Appendix G.1). These findings confirm that the two items effectively measure the same dimension of attentional awareness and were combined into a single variable, "attention_index", representing participants' overall attentional awareness of the stimulus.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to test H1, comparing attention scores between the humorous and emotional tone conditions. In this analysis, tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional) served as the independent variable, while attentional awareness (attention_index) served as the dependent variable.

The descriptive statistics showed that participants exposed to the humorous tone reported significantly higher attentional awareness (M = 3.79, SD = 0.82) than those in the emotional

condition (M = 3.31, SD = 1.29). This difference was statistically significant, $p<.05$ ($p = .002$). The effect size was moderate (Cohen's d = 0.44), indicating that the humorous tone produced a meaningful advantage in capturing attention and therefore supporting H1. (Appendix G.2)

H2: ***Humorous tone generates higher engagement intention than emotional tone.***

To measure engagement intention, the survey asked participants how likely they would be to like, comment on, share, or save the content (Appendix K, Question 10) when encountered it on Instagram. Since these four actions reflect the same behavioral construct, a reliability test was carried out to see whether they could be combined. The scale showed strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .823$), allowing the items to be merged into a single "engagement_index" for further analysis (Appendix G.3).

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to examine whether a humorous tone of voice generated higher engagement intention than an emotional tone, same method used in H1. In this analysis, tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional) served as the independent variable, while the "engagement_index" functioned as the dependent variable. Descriptively, participants exposed to the humorous stimulus reported slightly higher engagement intention (M = 3.36, SD = 1.62) compared to those in the emotional condition (M = 2.99, SD = 1.64). However, this difference did not reach statistical significance ($p = .107$). The effect size was small (Cohen's $d \approx 0.23$), indicating that the practical difference between conditions was minimal. Accordingly, humorous tone did not reliably increase participants' willingness to like, comment on, share, or save the content. Therefore, H2 was not supported. (Appendix G.4)

H3***: Humorous tone leads to higher message clarity than emotional tone***

The hypothesis that the humorous tone enhances message clarity more than emotional tone was tested using an independent sample t-test, as previous analyzed on H1 and H2. Tone of voice (humorous vs emotional) was kept as the independent variable and message clarity as the dependent variable.

Descriptive results showed no difference between the humorous and emotional conditions in terms of message clarity, with both groups reporting the same mean score (M = 4.20). Consistent with these descriptive findings, the independent-samples t-test indicated no statistically significant difference between conditions ($p = .989$). The effect size was negligible

(Cohen's d ≈ 0.00), indicating the absence of any meaningful practical difference between tones (Appendix G.5). Therefore, H3 was not supported.

RQ2: Does content format (Reels vs Static Posts) influence brand awareness outcomes on Instagram?

H4: ***Reels create higher attentional awareness than Static Posts*****.**

Following the methodology of H1, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to examine whether Reels generated higher attentional awareness than static posts, using the previously created attention_index as dependent variable and the content format (Reels vs Static Post) as independent variable.

Levene's test for equality of variances was non-significant (p = .499), indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met. Therefore, the standard t-test assuming equal variances was used.

The results showed that participants exposed to Reels reported higher attentional awareness (M = 3.74, SD = 1.10) than those exposed to static posts (M = 3.37, SD = 1.08). This difference was statistically significant, t(199) = –2.45, p = .015, with the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranging from –0.680 to –0.074.

However, the magnitude of this effect was small (Cohen's d = 0.35). While the difference reached statistical significance, the effect size suggests that the practical relevance of the effect is limited, indicating that Reels provide only a modest advantage over static posts in capturing attentional awareness (Appendix H.1).

Taken together, these findings provide statistical support for H4, but they also suggest that the observed effect, although reliable, is small in practical terms.

H5: ***Reels generates higher engagement intention than Static Posts.***

To analyze H5, an independent-samples t-test was conducted using the same procedure as in H4. Content format (Reels vs. static posts) served as the independent variable, and the *engagement_index* introduced in H2 was used as the dependent variable. The descriptive results showed that participants exposed to Reels reported higher engagement intention (M = 3.38, SD = 1.79) than those who viewed static posts (M = 2.97, SD = 1.47).

However, this difference did not reach statistical significance under the conventional two-tailed criterion ($p = .076$). The effect size was small (Cohen's $d = 0.25$), indicating that the magnitude of the difference between formats was limited in practical terms. Together, these results suggest that while the effect is directionally consistent with the hypothesis, it lacks sufficient robustness under conservative statistical criteria (Appendix H.2). Accordingly, H5 was not supported.

H6*: Reels leads to higher message clarity than Static Posts.*

To analyze H6, an independent-samples t-test was conducted following the same procedure used in H4 and H5. Content format (Reels vs. static posts) served as the independent variable, and message clarity as the dependent variable. The results showed that message clarity ratings were nearly identical across both conditions. Participants who viewed static posts reported a mean clarity of 4.22, while those who viewed Reels reported a mean of 4.18.

Given how close the means are, it was similarly unlikely, just as in H3, that any statistically significant difference would emerge. This was confirmed by the t-test result ($p = .752$). In line with this, the effect size was negligible (Cohen's $d \approx 0.04$), indicating an absence of any practically meaningful effect of format on clarity perception. Moreover, the confidence interval included zero, further reinforcing that the observed difference was attributable to random variation rather than a systematic effect (Appendix H.3). Thus, H6 was not supported.

RQ3: Does the interaction between tone of voice and content format influence awareness outcomes on Instagram?

H7: *There is a significant interaction between tone (humor vs emotional) and format (Reels vs static posts) on awareness outcomes.*

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether tone of voice (humorous vs. emotional) and content format (static posts vs. Reels) interacted in shaping the awareness outcomes. In this analysis, tone of voice and content format served as the two independent variables, while the three components of brand awareness identified in the previous research questions were treated as dependent variables.

Attentional Awareness

Although both tone and format showed significant main effects—humorous content generated higher attention than emotional content (H1), and Reels outperformed static posts (H4)—these effects operated independently. The interaction effect was not significant ($p = .158$), indicating

that humorous Reels did not produce greater attention than what would be expected from simply adding the individual effects of humor and Reels. (Appendix I.1)

Engagement Intention

For engagement intention, as in the earlier single factor analysis (H2 and H5) neither tone nor format significantly affected participants' likelihood of liking, commenting, sharing, or saving the content. While Reels and humorous tone showed slightly higher descriptive means, these differences were not statistically meaningful. The interaction effect was also non-significant ($p = .312$), meaning that format did not alter the influence of tone in generating engagement. (Appendix I.2)

Message Clarity

Message clarity showed the same patter identified previously in H3 and H6. Perceptions of clarity were consistently high across all conditions, and neither tone nor format produced meaningful variation. The interaction between them was likewise non-significant ($p = .593$), confirming that clarity depends more on message structure than on tone or format.

Overall, these findings show that H7 was not supported. Tone and content format do not interact in shaping awareness outcomes. Instead, their effects, when present, operate independently. (Appendix I.3)

RQ4: Which content strategies (authenticity, humor, emotional storytelling, engaging formats) are perceived as most influential on consideration of Vodafone Portugal?

To explore which content strategies most influence consumer consideration of Vodafone Portugal, descriptive statistics were calculated for the four strategy items and for the opt-out statement ("None of these would influence my consideration").

Across the 201 respondents, emotional storytelling emerged as the strongest driver of consideration ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.18$). This was followed closely by engaging formats such as Reels and interactive posts ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.12$). Humor in social media communication ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.16$) and authentic, relatable brand communication ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.20$) also had positive but slightly weaker effects.

The opt-out option ("None of these would influence my consideration") received the lowest rating (M = 2.95, SD = 1.49), indicating that most participants felt that at least one content strategy meaningfully affects their consideration of Vodafone Portugal (Appendix J).

6. Discussion

Based on the finding of the previous chapter, this section aims to discuss them and connect them within the broader literature on tone of voice, content format, and early consumer response in digital environments. The results are interpreted considering the awareness framework developed earlier, considering both experimental effects and participants' broader perceptions of what drives brand consideration (exploratory research). Particular attention is given to how these dynamics unfold in the context of Vodafone Portugal's Instagram communication, allowing the findings to be discussed not only in theoretical terms but also in relation to the brand's existing communication practices.

6.1 Theoretical Implication

RQ1: Does a humorous tone of voice prove more effective than an emotional tone in generating brand awareness on Instagram?

The results show that humor outperformed emotional tone in capturing attentional awareness, supporting H1. Participants exposed to humorous content reported significantly higher attention, consistent with prior research identifying humor as particularly effective at attracting notice through incongruity and surprise (Eisend, 2009; Strick et al., 2013). This finding is consistent with System 1 processing, as early reactions to Instagram content tend to be driven by intuitive mechanisms, making humor's salient cues particularly effective.

Interestingly, when examining the two attention items individually, the effect was driven primarily by the perception that humorous content was more "catchy," while differences in scroll-stopping behavior were smaller. This suggests that humor primarily enhances perceptual salience rather than overt behavioral interruption, meaning it stands out instantly, even if it does not always cause users to physically pause their feed.

However, this attentional advantage did not extend to the other dimensions of awareness. Although humorous content generated slightly higher engagement intention, the difference was not statistically significant. This distinction reinforces the conceptual separation between attention and engagement. While humor may dominate the perceptual stage of awareness,

engagement intention appears to require deeper relevance or emotional resonance, more associated with System 2, which extends beyond momentary cognitive disruption (Batra & Keller, 2016; Poels & Dewitte, 2006). The lack of significant difference in engagement intention therefore indicates that the cognitive surprise elicited by humor may be too short-lived to influence behaviors such as liking, commenting, or sharing.

A similar pattern emerged for message clarity. Both humorous and emotional conditions received identical clarity ratings (M = 4.20), making any significant difference statistically implausible. This transmits the idea that clarity is less dependent on tone and probably more closely tied to structural characteristics of the message, such as how information is organized, how simple the wording is, and how visually coherent the layout appears. In this sense, tone of voice may influence how a message feels, but not necessarily how clearly it is understood.

Overall, the findings provide a nuanced understanding of humorous communication. Humor is highly effective at generating immediate visibility, yet this effect does not translate into deeper engagement intentions or clearer message interpretation. This indicates that humor may be best suited as a perceptual trigger and should be complemented by other communication strategies to build interaction or comprehension. Emotional tone, while not outperforming humor in any awareness dimension, remains a relevant style associated in prior literature with relational meaning—though such effects were not evidenced empirically in the present study.

RQ2: Does content format (Reels vs Static Posts) influence brand awareness outcomes on Instagram?

The results of the second research question indicate that content format influences brand awareness only at the level of attentional awareness, with no significant effects observed for engagement intention or message clarity.

Reels generated significantly higher attentional awareness than static posts, suggesting that dynamic audiovisual features such as motion, sound, and pacing are effective in capturing initial attention in scroll-based environments. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that video-based formats interrupt habitual scrolling and prompt rapid perceptual processing (Habibi & Salim, 2021; Li & Xie, 2020). However, the effect size was small, indicating that while Reels offer a reliable attentional advantage, the magnitude of this advantage is limited in practical terms.

In contrast, content format did not significantly influence engagement intention. Although participants exposed to Reels reported slightly higher willingness to like, comment, share, or save the content, this difference was not statistically robust and was associated with a small effect size. This suggests that while format can attract attention, engagement intention depends more strongly on interpretative factors such as perceived relevance and message meaning rather than on the delivery format itself (Batra & Keller, 2016; Poels & Dewitte, 2006).

Message clarity, as in RQ1, showed no meaningful variation across formats. Once again the independent variables (content format) received nearly identical clarity ratings, suggesting that participants understood the message equally well regardless of the medium. This mirrors theoretical perspectives that associate clarity with linguistic simplicity, structural coherence, and message design rather than with audiovisual stimulation (Batra & Keller, 2016). Since the verbal content and storyline were held constant across all stimuli, the lack of difference is theoretically coherent: format changes how a message is encountered, not necessarily how it is interpreted.

RQ3: Does the interaction between tone of voice and content format influence awareness outcomes on Instagram?

The results for RQ3 indicate no significant interaction between tone of voice and content format across any of the awareness dimensions examined. While humorous tone increased attentional awareness and Reels enhanced perceptual visibility, these effects did not combine or amplify one another when presented together. Instead, they appear to operate largely independently.

This finding is consistent with the awareness framework developed in the literature review. Both content format and tone of voice can contribute to attentional awareness by increasing the perceptual salience of brand stimuli and facilitating initial notice. However, they do so through distinct mechanisms. Content format primarily supports stimulus-driven attention through visual and sensory cues, whereas tone of voice attracts attention through affective and semantic cues, such as humor or emotional framing.

Beyond this initial stage, and as suggested in RQ1, tone of voice plays a more pronounced role in shaping interpretative awareness. Nevertheless, when examined in combination with content format, this influence did not translate into stronger or additional awareness outcomes.

In addition, the uniformly high message clarity scores across all conditions reinforce the view that comprehension is driven primarily by linguistic simplicity and message structure rather

than by stylistic features such as tone or audiovisual form (Batra & Keller, 2016). Since all stimuli conveyed the same core information, tone–format combinations were unlikely to produce meaningful differences in clarity.

Taken together, these findings suggest that tone of voice and content format function as parallel but independent mechanisms in early consumer response. Format primarily enhances perceptual visibility by increasing the likelihood that brand stimuli are noticed, while tone of voice can additionally activate affective and cognitive associations once attention has been secured. As such, awareness outcomes do not depend on specific tone–format pairings, but rather on how each element independently supports the intended stage of early consumer response.

RQ4 (Exploratory): Which content strategies (authenticity, humor, emotional storytelling, engaging formats) are perceived as most influential on consideration of Vodafone Portugal?

Unlike the previous research questions, which tested specific causal effects, RQ4 adopted an exploratory approach to understand which communication characteristics consumers associate with brand consideration. Rather than focusing on experimentally manipulated outcomes, this question captures participants' perceptions of what types of content feel most influential when evaluating Vodafone Portugal.

The results reveal a clear pattern: emotional storytelling emerged as the most influential factor, closely followed by engaging or immersive formats such as Reels. This tendency is consistent with existing literature showing that emotional narratives enhance personal relevance, empathy, and memory associations—mechanisms that are central to brand consideration and preference formation (Batra & Ray, 1986; Escalas, 2004). Engaging formats may reinforce these effects by sustaining attention for longer periods and creating more immersive experiences.

Humor and authenticity were also perceived positively, though to a lesser extent. This aligns with the broader discussion in the literature: humor excels at capturing immediate attention (as confirmed in RQ1), but consumers may not view it as a decisive cue in forming long-term evaluations. Authenticity, while valued in principle, tends to exert its strongest influence when it is reinforced consistently across multiple brand touchpoints over time, rather than through isolated exposures, which may help explain why it appeared less influential in this single-exposure context (Morhart et al., 2015).

The fact that the "none of these" option received the lowest rating indicates that participants believe communication style does play a meaningful role in shaping their evaluation of a telecommunications brand. Although these insights are not causal, they complement the experimental findings by revealing that consumers tend to associate emotionally resonant and experientially rich communication with deeper evaluative outcomes, such as brand consideration.

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical insights for Vodafone Portugal's communication strategy on Instagram. When interpreted alongside the discussion, they reveal that tone of voice and content format do not function as interchangeable creative choices, but rather as distinct strategic levers that contribute differently across the stages of brand awareness. In a Portuguese telecommunications market defined by strong competition (mainly with NOS and MEO), limited product differentiation, and high consumer expectations for trust and reliability, these distinctions carry important managerial implications.

A first implication concerns the differentiated role of humorous and emotional communication. The results from RQ1 highlight that humorous content is more effective at capturing attentional awareness, suggesting that humor serves as an effective mechanism for interrupting scrolling behavior in a fast-paced digital feed and grab attention. However, the absence of significant effects for humor on engagement intention or message clarity indicates that its influence remains largely at the perceptual level. Emotional storytelling, by comparison, was identified through the exploratory question as the most meaningful driver of consideration. This finding is particularly relevant in a high uncertainty-avoidance context (99) such as Portugal (The Culture Factor, n.d), where consumers tend to rely strongly on reassurance, reliability, and credibility when evaluating service providers. Although humor is effective at capturing attention, prior research shows that humorous or overly informal tones may reduce perceived credibility in categories where consumers expect seriousness and trustworthiness (Grétry et al., 2017; Eisend, 2009; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). In this sense, while humorous content can serve as an effective visibility trigger, emotionally grounded communication may be better positioned to convey stability, warmth, and trust, attributes that are valued in high-risk or high-commitment service industries such as telecommunications. As such, humorous content may effectively "hook" attention, but other voice tone such as emotional content that carries the potential to "anchor" the brand in consumer preference. Vodafone Portugal should therefore

continue to use humor as a tactical tool for visibility, but integrate emotional communication more consistently throughout the year, not only in seasonal campaigns such as Christmas, when the objective extends beyond simple awareness.

The second implication relates to the role of format. Findings from RQ2 consistently show that Reels outperform static content in capturing attention, confirming the importance of dynamic, motion-based formats in environments where visibility is increasingly algorithm-dependent. For Vodafone Portugal, this validates the continued shift toward video-first communication on Instagram. Nevertheless, the results also show that format alone does not shape deeper dimensions of awareness, such as engagement intention or message clarity. This reinforces that Reels should be treated as accelerators of visibility rather than as substitutes for strong narrative content. A visually stimulating Reels may draw attention, but the quality of the storytelling, independently of the tone used (informational, humorous, emotional), remains the central determinant of whether consumers process and remember the message. For Vodafone, this means that dynamic formats should be used consistently, but always supported by clear, concise, and coherent messaging.

A third implication emerges from the absence of an interaction effect between tone and format (RQ3). The fact that humorous Reels did not produce outcomes beyond the additive effects of humor and Reels independently suggests that Vodafone does not need to treat certain tone–format combinations as obligatory. From a managerial perspective, this introduces valuable operational flexibility: humorous content can be deployed effectively even in static formats, and emotional storytelling can benefit from dynamic video without requiring humor. This modularity means that creative decisions can be driven by campaign objectives, timelines, and available resources rather than by the assumption that tone and format must be paired in specific ways.

The exploratory findings (RQ4) also help refine how Vodafone Portugal should balance its tone choices throughout the year. While humor remains valuable for visibility, participants clearly associated emotional storytelling with stronger consideration. This suggests that Vodafone should not reserve emotional tone only for seasonal moments such as Christmas but integrate it more consistently into its regular content calendar. Emotional stories can be built naturally around Vodafone's existing touchpoints, such as its music festival presence or initiatives centered on connection and community, allowing the brand to reinforce "Together We Can" in a way that feels authentic to Portuguese consumers. Humor and authenticity should still play a

role in building approachability, but they are most effective when complemented by emotionally grounded messages that help translate attention into preference.

Taken together, these insights advocate for a balanced, layered communication approach in which humor and dynamic formats serve as high-frequency tools to strengthen visibility and maintain top-of-mind presence, while emotional storytelling functions as the foundation of Vodafone's long-term brand-building efforts. Crucially, the findings also highlight that clarity, which scored consistently high across conditions, should remain a priority regardless of creative execution. In the Portuguese telecommunications sector, where consumers often perceive competing offers as similar, clarity and emotional resonance together create the conditions under which trust, and preference can develop.

7. Limitations & Future Research

As with any study, several limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings. These limitations do not undermine the results but help clarify the boundaries of the conclusions and highlight meaningful directions for future work.

One important limitation concerns the sample and research context. Because the study relied on convenience sampling and focused exclusively on Portuguese Instagram users, the sample is relatively young, digitally active, and concentrated among the three major national telecommunications operators. While this profile is suitable for examining Instagram communication in the Portuguese market, it limits the findings to other countries, cultural contexts, and less digitally engaged populations.

A further limitation relates to the stimulus material. To maintain ecological validity, all stimuli were real posts taken from Vodafone Portugal's Instagram account. it also means that the experimental conditions differed not only in tone of voice and content format but also in content-related characteristics, particularly in the case of Reels. Variations in duration**,** pacing, sound design, narrative rhythm, and visual complexity may have influenced how participants processed the content. These audiovisual features are known to affect attention, emotional response, and cognitive load in digital environments, making it more difficult to isolate the pure effects of tone and format. Moreover, since the content was published before the study, any perceived image towards the brand and the stimuli was not taken under consideration. In future research, stimuli could be more tightly standardized, or several variations of posts could be used in each condition to reduce stimulus-specific influences. It

may also be beneficial to recruit participants who do not already hold perceptions about the brand or to use a fictional company to minimize brand-related biases

Another limitation concerns the measurement approach and the artificiality of the exposure context. The study does not measure actual user behavior on Instagram; instead, all dependent variables capture perceptual and cognitive responses based on self-reported evaluations following a single exposure to the stimuli. Attentional awareness, engagement intention, and message clarity therefore reflect subjective judgments rather than observable behaviors such as actual likes, comments, shares, saves, or viewing duration. While this approach is consistent with prior experimental research in advertising, it limits the direct translation of the findings to real-world engagement outcomes.

Moreover, although participants were instructed to view the posts "as they normally would," exposure occurred within a survey environment rather than within a live, algorithm-driven Instagram feed. Real engagement on social media is shaped by contextual factors such as timing, competing content, sound settings, and platform curation, which are difficult to replicate experimentally. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating behavioral data from platform analytics, experimental tools such as eye-tracking, or field experiments conducted directly on Instagram to observe how humorous and emotional content performs under natural viewing conditions.

The handling of brand consideration represents another important boundary. Consideration was not experimentally manipulated but assessed through an exploratory perception-based question, meaning the results provide directional rather than causal insights. Addressing this limitation would require designs in which consideration is treated as an outcome variable with controlled manipulations of tone and format, supported by validated measurement scales or behavioral choice tasks.

Finally, it is also worth noting that the study explored only two tonalities—humorous and emotional—and two formats—Reels and static posts. Other tones, such as informational, corporate, ironic, or empathetic, and other formats, such as Stories, carousels, or long-form video, were not included, restricting the range of insights and the different combinations possible between tone and format.

Taken together, these considerations point toward several promising avenues for future research. By diversifying samples, standardizing stimuli, incorporating behavioral measures,

expanding tonal and format conditions, and moving closer to real-platform testing, future studies can offer a more comprehensive understanding of how tone of voice and content format shape early-stage brand responses in digital environments.

8. Conclusion

This thesis examined how humorous and emotional tones of voice, combined with different Instagram content formats, shape early-stage brand awareness for Vodafone Portugal. By focusing on three key dimensions: attentional awareness, engagement intention, and message clarity, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how brands can communicate effectively in fast-paced digital environments.

The results show that humor significantly enhances attentional awareness, confirming its strength as a perceptual trigger in visually saturated feeds. However, this effect does not extend to engagement intention or message clarity, suggesting that humor's impact remains primarily at the surface level. Content format demonstrated a similar pattern: Reels generated higher attention than static posts, but format alone did not influence deeper processing or behavioral intent. Importantly, the study found no interaction between tone and format, indicating that each operates independently rather than amplifying the other. Considered through a dual-process lens (Kahneman, 2011), these findings indicate that humor and dynamic format cues are especially effective in activating fast, intuitive processing at first exposure. As processing continues, outcomes such as engagement intention and message evaluation rely increasingly on more reflective cognitive mechanisms rather than on immediate stimulus features alone.

The exploratory findings highlight that participants perceive emotional storytelling and engaging formats as more influential on brand consideration, suggesting that while humor helps capture visibility, emotionally grounded content may play a greater role in shaping longer-term evaluations. Although this was not tested experimentally, it reinforces the broader literature that links emotional meaning with trust, relevance, and preference.

These insights carry practical implications for Vodafone Portugal. Humor and dynamic formats such as Reels can be used strategically to boost visibility, while more emotive and narrative-driven content may help strengthen connection and perceived value. The absence of interaction effects also suggests that brands have flexibility in combining tones and formats, selecting each according to communication objectives rather than fixed pairings.

Despite offering relevant contributions, the study presents limitations, including the use of real stimuli with unavoidable variation, reliance on self-reported measures after single exposure, and a convenience sample predominantly composed of young Portuguese users.

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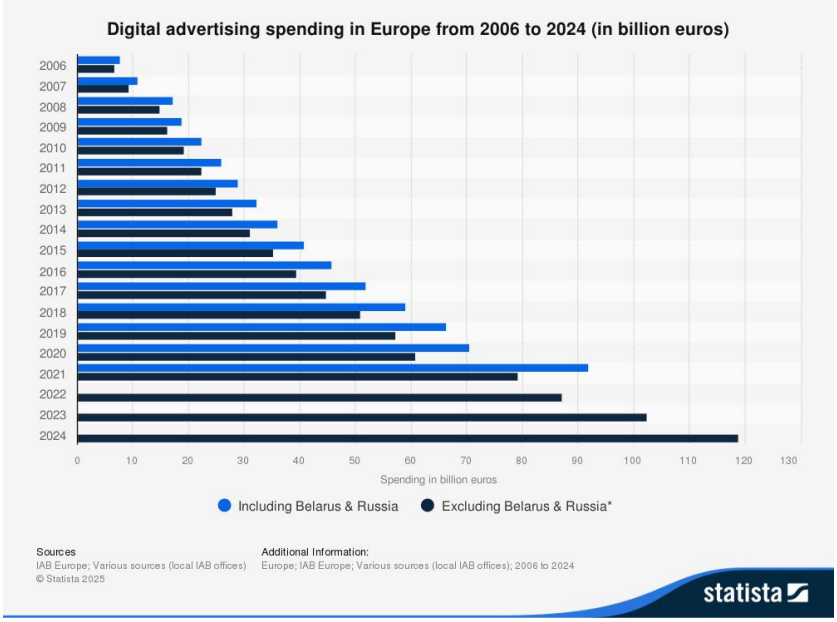
Appendix

Appendix A - Digital Advertising Spending (2006-2024)



Appendix B – Vodafone Case Study

B.1. Humorous sketch improved connection on Portuguese Metro Stations

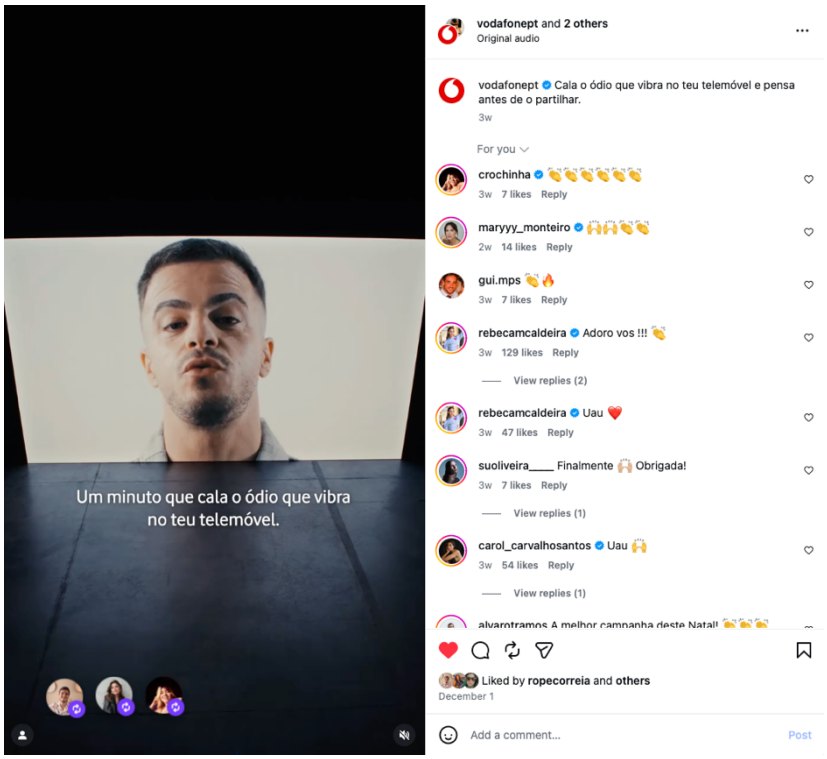
Watch video here.

B.2 Vodafone TV Play Commercial

Watch video here

B.3 Campaign against digital Violence

Watch video here



B.4 Storage Capacity of Vodafone Mobile

B.5 Vodafone TV PLAY with Rosalia new Album

Appendix C – Demographics

C.1. Gender

Please specify your gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	139	69.2	69.2	69.2
	Male	62	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

C.2. Age

How old are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24 years old	86	42.8	42.8	42.8
	25-34 years old	63	31.3	31.3	74.1
	35-44 years old	21	10.4	10.4	84.6
	45-54 year old	23	11.4	11.4	96.0
	Over 55 years old	8	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

C.3. Education Level

Please select your highest level of education completed.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor's Degree	77	38.3	38.3	38.3
	Doctorate or Professional Degree	4	2.0	2.0	40.3
	High School	54	26.9	26.9	67.2
	Master's Degree	64	31.8	31.8	99.0
	No school Diploma	1	.5	.5	99.5
	Prefer not to respond	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

C.4. Occupation

What is your occupation?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed full-time	122	60.7	60.7	60.7
	Employed part-time	5	2.5	2.5	63.2
	Retired	2	1.0	1.0	64.2
	Self-Employed	11	5.5	5.5	69.7
	Student	55	27.4	27.4	97.0
	Unemployed	6	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

C.5. Telecommunication Provider

Who is your current mobile (telecommunications) service provider?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	MEO	72	35.8	35.8	35.8
	NOS	63	31.3	31.3	67.2
	Other	2	1.0	1.0	68.2
	Vodafone Portugal	64	31.8	31.8	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

C.6. Daily Instagram Usage

On average, how much time do you spend on Instagram per day?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1–2 hours	71	35.3	35.3	35.3
	15–30 minutes	21	10.4	10.4	45.8
	2–3 hours	30	14.9	14.9	60.7
	3–4 hours	15	7.5	7.5	68.2
	30 minutes - 1 hour	54	26.9	26.9	95.0
	Less than 15 minutes	6	3.0	3.0	98.0
	More than 4 hours	4	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Appendix D - Preliminary Descriptive Insights

D.1. Format of content on Instagram that catches attention

When you browse Instagram, which type of content from brands usually catches your attention the most?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Short videos or Reels	120	59.7	59.7	60.7
	Static image posts	30	14.9	14.9	75.6
	Stories	49	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

D.2. Tone that disrupts scrolling behavior

Which Type of content is more likely to make you stop scrolling?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Content that feels emotional/sentimental or inspiring	49	24.4	24.4	24.4
	Content that gives me useful information	50	24.9	24.9	49.3
	Content that makes me laugh or smile	86	42.8	42.8	92.0
	None of the above	10	5.0	5.0	97.0
	Other	6	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

D.3. Familiarity with Vodafone Portugal

How familiar are you with the brand Vodafone Portugal?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely familiar	55	27.4	27.4	27.4
	Moderately familiar	47	23.4	23.4	50.7
	Not familiar at all	6	3.0	3.0	53.7
	Slightly familiar	17	8.5	8.5	62.2
	Very familiar	76	37.8	37.8	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

D.4. Vodafone Portugal followers

Do you follow Vodafone Portugal on Instagram?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	169	84.1	84.1	84.1
	Yes	32	15.9	15.9	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Appendix E – Prior Exposure to Stimuli

Have you seen this content before?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	No	129	64.2	64.2	64.2
Valid	Yes	72	35.8	35.8	100.0
	Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Appendix F – Manipulation Check

F.1. Tone of Voice - Humor Perception

Group Statistics

	Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Humor perception	Emotional	101	2.33	1.193	.119
	Humor	100	4.12	.756	.076

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Humor perception	Equal variances assumed	47.484	<.001	-12.719	199	<.001	<.001	-1.793	.141	-2.071	-1.515
	Equal variances not assumed			-12.746	169.435	<.001	<.001	-1.793	.141	-2.071	-1.516

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Humor perception	Cohen's d	.999	-1.794	-2.120	-1.465
	Hedges' correction	1.003	-1.787	-2.112	-1.459
	Glass's delta	.756	-2.373	-2.800	-1.939

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

F.2. Tone of Voice - Emotional Perception

Group Statistics

	Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Emotional Perception	Emotional	101	4.31	.784	.078
	Humor	100	2.41	1.093	.109

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Emotional perception	Equal variances assumed	14.951	<.001	14.151	199	<.001	<.001	1.897	.134	1.633	2.161
	Equal variances not assumed			14.129	179.500	<.001	<.001	1.897	.134	1.632	2.162

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Emotional Perception	Cohen's d	.950	1.996	1.656	2.334
	Hedges' correction	.954	1.989	1.649	2.325
	Glass's delta	1.093	1.736	1.366	2.101

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Appendix G – Tone of Voice & Awareness

G.1. Attentional Awareness - Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.802	2

G.2. Tone of Voice & Attentional Awareness

Group Statistics

	Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attention_Index	Emotional	101	3.31	1.289	.128
	Humor	100	3.79	.820	.082

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Attention_Index	Equal variances assumed	38.886	<.001	-3.106	199	.001	.002	-.473	.152	-.774	-.173
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.112	170.061	.001	.002	-.473	.152	-.773	-.173

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper
Attention_Index	Cohen's d	1.080	-.438	-.717	-.158
	Hedges' correction	1.084	-.436	1.649	-.157
	Glass's delta	.820	-.577	1.366	-.287

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

G.3. Engagement Intention – Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.823	4

G.4. Tone of Voice & Engagement Intention

Group Statistics

	Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Engagement_Index	Emotional	101	2.9851	1.63700	.16289
	Humor	100	3.3575	1.62456	.16246

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Engagement_Index	Equal variances assumed	.117	.733	-1.618	199	.054	.107	-.37235	.23006	-.82602	.08132
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.619	198.999	.054	.107	-.37235	.23005	-.82601	.08130

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper
Engagement_Index	Cohen's d	1.63083	-.228	-.505	.049
	Hedges' correction	1.63701	-.227	-.504	.049
	Glass's delta	1.62456	-.229	-.507	.050

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

G.5. Tone of Voice & Message Clarity

Group Statistics

	Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Message Clarity	Emotional	101	4.20	1.158	.115
	Humor	100	4.20	.876	.088

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Message Clarity	Equal variances assumed	6.622	.011	-.014	199	.495	.989	-.002	.145	-.288	.284
	Equal variances not assumed			-.014	186.213	.495	.989	-.002	.145	-.288	.284

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Message Clarity	Cohen's d	1.027	-.002	-.278	.275
	Hedges' correction	1.031	-.002	-.277	.274
	Glass's delta	.876	-.002	-.279	.274

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Appendix H – Content Format & Awareness

H.1. Content Format & Attentional Awareness

Group Statistics

	Format content (0 = Static; 1 = Reels)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attention_Index	Static	104	3.37	1.078	.106
	Reels	97	3.74	1.102	.112

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Attention_Index	Equal variances assumed	.458	.499	-2.451	199	.008	.015	-.377	.154	-.680	-.074
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.449	197.321	.008	.015	-.377	.154	-.680	-.073

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Attention_Index	Cohen's d	1.089	-.346	-.624	-.067
	Hedges' correction	1.094	-.345	-.622	-.067
	Glass's delta	1.102	-.342	-.622	-.060

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

H.2. Content Format & Engagement Intention

Group Statistics

	Format content (0 = Static; 1 = Reels)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Engagement_Index	Static	104	2.9712	1.46534	.14369
	Reels	97	3.3840	1.78684	.18143

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Engagement_Index	Equal variances assumed	6.561	.011	-1.796	199	.037	.074	-.41287	.22985	-.86613	-.04039
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.784	185.997	.038	.076	-.41287	.23143	-.86944	-.04371

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Engagement_Index	Cohen's d	1.62838	-.254	-.531	.025
	Hedges' correction	1.63455	-.253	-.529	.024
	Glass's delta	1.78684	-.231	-.509	.048

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

H.3. Content Format & Message Clarity

Group Statistics

	Format content (0 = Static; 1 = Reels)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Message Clarity	Static	104	4.22	1.070	.105
	Reels	97	4.18	.979	.099

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Message Clarity	Equal variances assumed	.670	.414	.317	199	.376	.752	.046	.145	-.240	.332
	Equal variances not assumed			.318	198.930	.376	.751	.046	.145	-.239	.331

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Message Clarity	Cohen's d	1.027	.045	-.232	.321
	Hedges' correction	1.031	.045	-.231	.320
	Glass's delta	.979	.047	-.230	.323

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Appendix I – Tone of Voice x Content Format & Awareness

I.1. Tone of Voice x Content Format & Attentional Awareness

Descriptive Statistics
Dependent Variable: Attention_Index

Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	Format content (0 = Static; 1 = Reels)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional	Static	3.05	1.104	55
	Reels	3.62	1.427	46
	Total	3.31	1.286	101
Humor	Static	3.71	.941	49
	Reels	3.85	.688	51
	Total	3.78	.820	100
Total	Static	3.37	1.078	104
	Reels	3.74	1.102	97
	Total	3.55	1.103	201

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

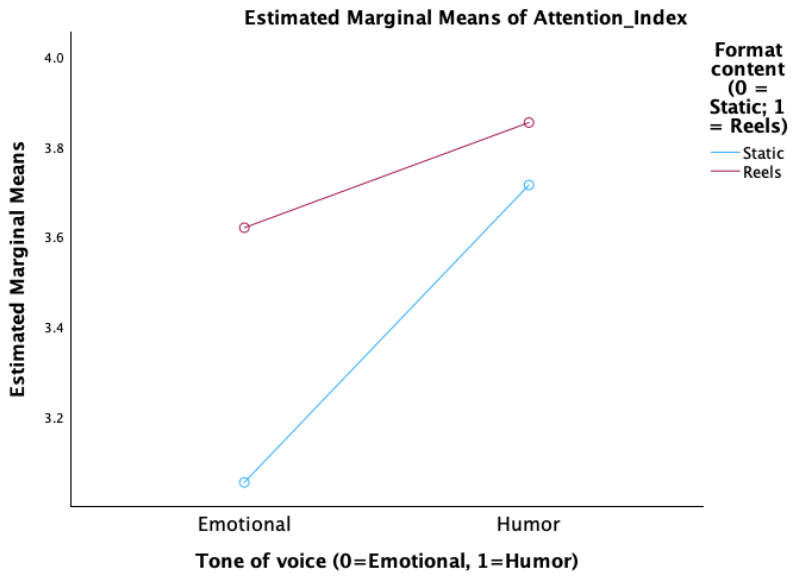
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Attention_Index	Based on Mean	15.778	3	197	<.001
	Based on Median	10.861	3	197	<.001
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	10.861	3	168.306	<.001
	Based on trimmed mean	15.079	3	197	<.001

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.
a. Dependent variable: Attention_Index
b. Design: Intercept + Tone + Format + Tone * Format

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects
Dependent Variable: Attention_Index

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	19.725[a]	3	6.575	5.794	<.001	.081
Intercept	2537.196	1	2537.196	2235.607	<.001	.919
Tone	9.979	1	9.979	8.792	.003	.043
Format	6.194	1	6.194	5.458	.020	.027
Tone * Format	2.274	1	2.274	2.004	.158	.010
Error	223.576	197	1.135			
Total	2772.500	201				
Corrected Total	243.301	200				

a. R Squared = .081 (Adjusted R Squared = .067)



I.2. Tone of Voice x Content Format & Engagement Intention

Descriptive Statistics
Dependent Variable: Engagement_Index

Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	Format content (0 = Static; 1 = Reels)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional	Static	2.7000	1.37891	55
	Reels	3.3261	1.85882	46
	Total	2.9851	1.63700	101
Humor	Static	3.2755	1.51318	49
	Reels	3.4363	1.73626	51
	Total	3.3575	1.62456	100
Total	Static	2.9712	1.46534	104
	Reels	3.3840	1.78684	97
	Total	3.1704	1.63742	201

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Engagement_Index	Based on Mean	3.040	3	197	.030
	Based on Median	3.180	3	197	.025
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.180	3	193.127	.025
	Based on trimmed mean	3.131	3	197	.027

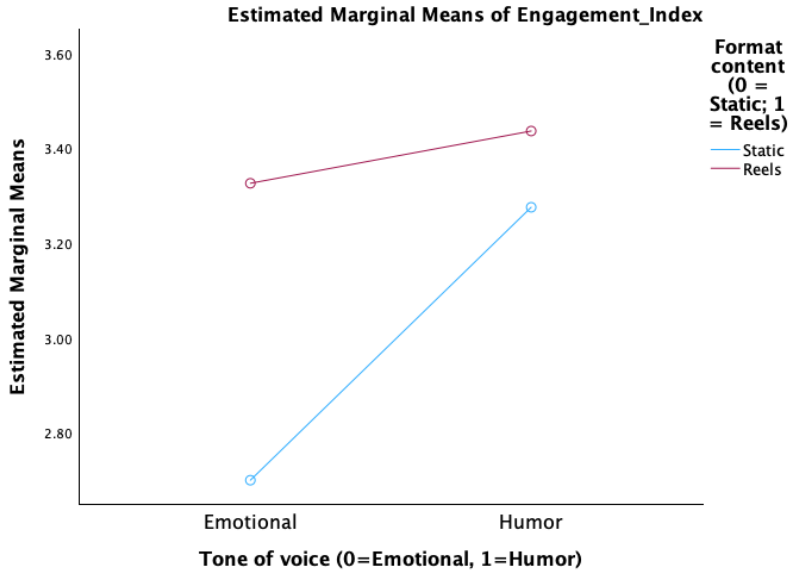
Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.
a. Dependent variable: Engagement_Index
b. Design: Intercept + Tone + Format + Tone * Format

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Engagement_Index

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	17.432[a]	3	5.811	2.206	.089	.033
Intercept	2029.767	1	2029.767	770.756	<.001	.796
Tone	5.882	1	5.882	2.234	.137	.011
Format	7.745	1	7.745	2.941	.088	.015
Tone * Format	2.709	1	2.709	1.029	.312	.005
Error	518.795	197	2.633			
Total	2556.563	201				
Corrected Total	536.226	200				

a. R Squared = .033 (Adjusted R Squared = .018)



I.3. Tone of Voice x Content Format & Message Clarity

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Message Clarity

Tone of voice (0=Emotional, 1=Humor)	Format content (0 = Static; 1 = Reels)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional	Static	4.25	1.142	55
	Reels	4.13	1.185	46
	Total	4.20	1.158	101
Humor	Static	4.18	.993	49
	Reels	4.22	.757	51
	Total	4.20	.876	100
Total	Static	4.22	1.070	104
	Reels	4.18	.979	97
	Total	4.20	1.025	201

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Message Clarity	Based on Mean	2.937	3	197	.034
	Based on Median	1.140	3	197	.334
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.140	3	150.301	.335
	Based on trimmed mean	2.283	3	197	.080

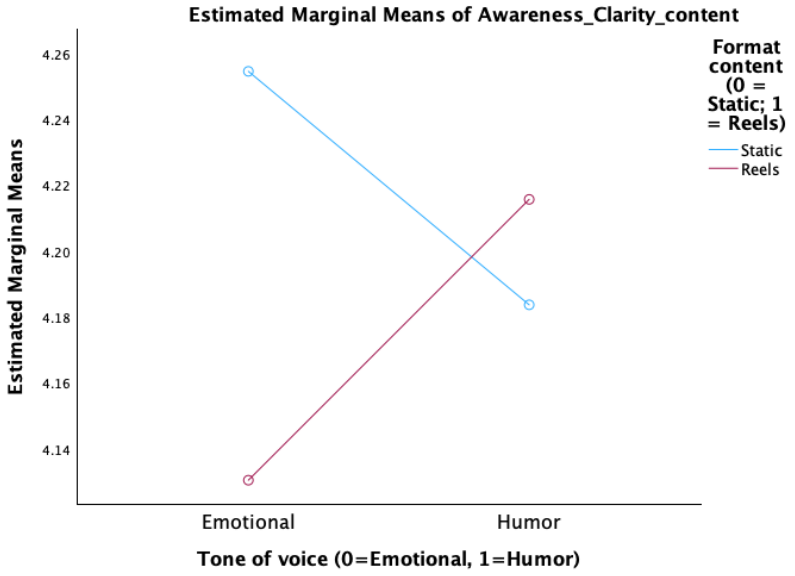
Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.
a. Dependent variable: Awareness_Clarity_content
b. Design: Intercept + Tone + Format + Tone * Format

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Awareness_Clarity_content

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.412[a]	3	.137	.129	.943	.002
Intercept	3524.203	1	3524.203	3311.903	<.001	.944
Tone	.003	1	.003	.002	.961	.000
Format	.106	1	.106	.100	.753	.001
Tone * Format	.305	1	.305	.287	.593	.001
Error	209.628	197	1.064			
Total	3754.000	201				
Corrected Total	210.040	200				

a. R Squared = .002 (Adjusted R Squared = -.013)



Appendix J – Consideration Factors

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Authentic & Relatable Communication	201	1	5	3.25	1.200
Humorous Communication	201	1	5	3.28	1.158
Emotional & Inspiring Communication	201	1	5	3.43	1.182
Engaging Content (Reels/Interactive Formats)	201	1	5	3.40	1.123
None Influences	201	1	5	2.95	1.487
Valid N (listwise)	201				

Appendix K – Questionnaire

Introduction

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project, conducted as part of my Master's Thesis at Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics. This study aims to explore how consumers perceive brand communication on Instagram, focusing on the case of a Portuguese telecommunication brand. Your input will help us better understand how telecommunication brands can communicate more effectively with their audiences. Please note that all responses are completely anonymous and confidential and will be used exclusively for academic purposes. The survey should take approximately 5 to 7 minutes to complete. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and your honest opinions are highly valued — they are essential to the success of this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at s-mlmabreu@ucp.pt.

Thank you very much for your time and contribution!

Filter Questions

1. Are you currently living in Portugal or are you Portuguese?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

2. Do you use Instagram?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Block 1: Preliminary Descriptive Insights

3. When you browse Instagram, which type of content from brands usually catches your attention the most?

- ○ Short videos or Reels
- ○ Static image posts
- ○ Stories
- ○ None of the above
- ○ Other

4. Which Type of content is more likely to make you stop scrolling?

- ○ Content that makes me laugh or smile
- ○ Content that feels emotional/sentimental or inspiring
- ○ Content that gives me useful information
- ○ None of the above
- ○ Other

5. How familiar are you with the brand Vodafone Portugal?

- ○ Not familiar at all
- ○ Slightly familiar
- ○ Moderately familiar
- ○ Very familiar
- ○ Extremely familiar

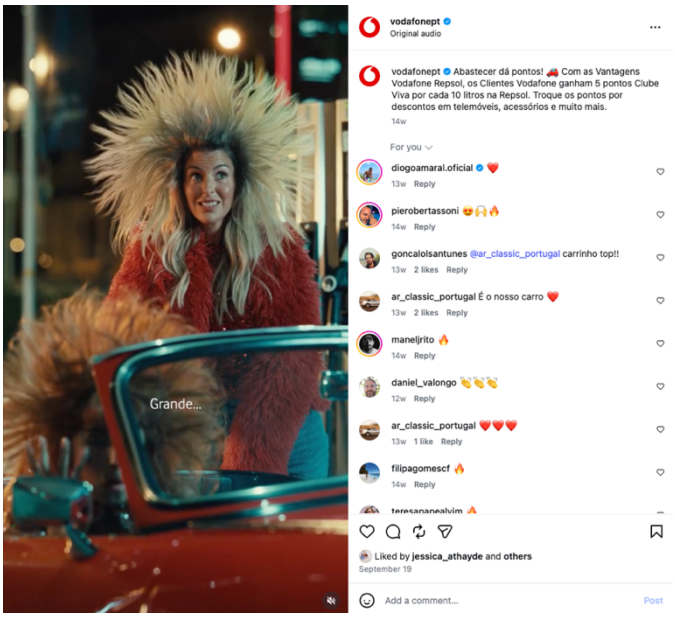
6. Do you follow Vodafone Portugal on Instagram?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Block 2: Exposition to Stimuli

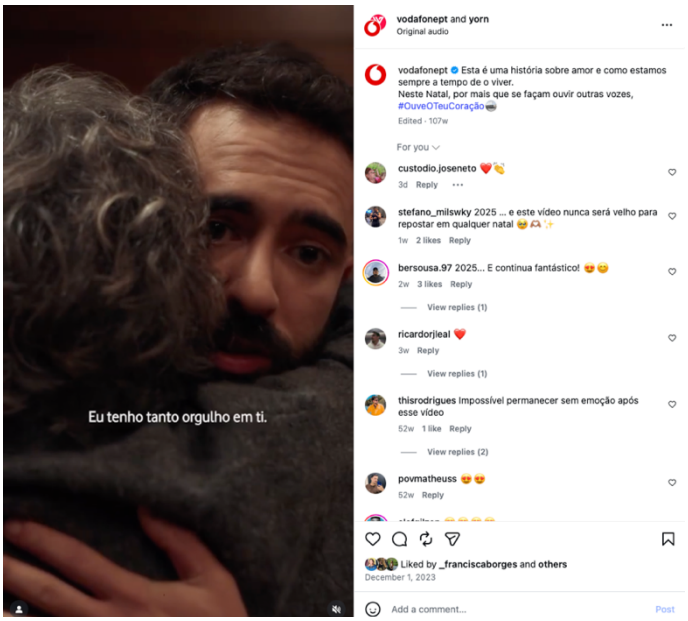
Imagine you are scrolling through your Instagram feed, and the following Vodafone Portugal post appears. Please watch it as you normally would if it appeared on your feed. (If the video does not appear immediately, please scroll down and click play to watch it)

1. ***Stimulus Reels/Humor - Watch here***



Imagine you are scrolling through your Instagram feed, and the following Vodafone Portugal post appears. Please watch it as you normally would if it appeared on your feed. (If the video does not appear immediately, please scroll down and click play to watch it)

2. ***Stimulus Reels/Emotional – Watch here***



Imagine you are scrolling through your Instagram feed, and the following Vodafone Portugal post appears. Please look at it as you normally would if it appeared on your feed.

3. Stimulus Static Post/Humor

Imagine you are scrolling through your Instagram feed, and the following Vodafone Portugal post appears. Please look at it as you normally would if it appeared on your feed.

4. Stimulus Static Post/Emotional

Block 3: Pre-exposition towards the stimuli

7. Have you seen this content before?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes:

7.1 Where did you see this content? (Select all that apply)

- ○ Facebook
- ○ Instagram
- ○ Youtube
- ○ TikTok
- ○ Television
- ○ Other

Block 4: Awareness

8. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements

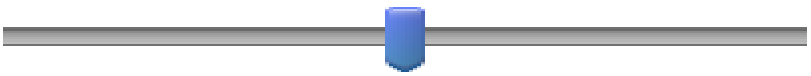
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This content would make me stop scrolling on Instagram	○	○	○	○	○
I found this content catchy and attention grabbing	○	○	○	○	○
The message or offer in this content was clear and easy to understand	○	○	○	○	○

9. How would you describe the tone used in the content you have been exposed to?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The content uses humorous and funny tone	○	○	○	○	○
The content uses an emotional/sentimental tone	○	○	○	○	○

10. If you saw this content on Instagram, how likely would you be to...

(Please rate on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = Very unlikely and 7 = Very likely.)

	Very unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
	1	2 3	4	5 6	7
... like the post					
... comment on it					
... share it with someone					
... save it to see later					

Block 5: Exploratory Research – Consideration

11. How much do you agree with the following statements? I would consider switching to or staying with Vodafone Portugal if…

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
… the brand communicated in a more authentic and relatable way online.	○	○	○	○	○
... Vodafone used humor more often in its social media communication	○	○	○	○	○
...Vodafone shared emotional or inspiring stories about real people	○	○	○	○	○
... its Instagram content was more engaging (e.g. Reels, interactive formats,...)	○	○	○	○	○

Block 6: Control Question

12. For control purposes, please select the answer "Yes".

- ○ No
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Yes

Block 7: Demographics

Thank you for taking part in our survey so far. As we approach the conclusion, we have a few final demographic questions. Please note that your answers will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and are essential to complete our research.

13. Who is your current mobile (telecommunications) service provider?

- ○ MEO
- ○ Vodafone Portugal
- ○ NOS
- ○ DIGI
- ○ NOWO
- ○ Other

14. On average, how much time do you spend on Instagram per day?

- ○ Less than 15 minutes
- ○ 15–30 minutes
- ○ 30 minutes - 1 hour
- ○ 1-2 hours
- ○ 2-3 hours
- ○ 3-4 hours
- ○ More than 4 hours

15. Please specify your gender.

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary / third gender
- ○ Prefer not to say

16. How old are you?

- ○ Under 18 years old
- ○ 18-24 years old
- ○ 25-34 years old

- ○ 35- 44 years old
- ○ 45-54 years old
- ○ Over 55 years old
- ○ Prefer not to respond

17. Please select your highest level of education completed.

- ○ No school Diploma
- ○ High School
- ○ Bachelor's Degree
- ○ Master's Degree
- ○ Doctorate or Professional Degree
- ○ Prefer not to respond

18. What is your occupation?

- ○ Student
- ○ Employed full-time
- ○ Employed part-time
- ○ Self-Employed
- ○ Unemployed
- ○ Retired
- ○ Prefer not to respond