



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

INTERNSHIP REPORT

INFLUENCER MARKETING IN THE YOGA INDUSTRY

Analyzing the Impact and Effectiveness of Social Media

Strategies in Lisbon.

Internship Report submitted to Universidade Católica
Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in Communication
and Digital Transformation.

Elisa Degasperi

Universidade Católica Portuguesa

September 2024



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Under the supervision of Carla Ganito

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Abstract

[EN]

This research explores the role of influencer marketing, with a specific focus on Lisbon, Portugal. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews with yoga studios' social media managers, teachers and practitioners, the researcher was able to examine how yoga studios in Lisbon are incorporating influencer marketing strategies in their communication and marketing plan, and to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts in attracting and retaining clients. From this research arises the preference to collaborate with yoga teachers that also have a large presence online and/or a strong following, rather than lifestyle influencers, in order to maintain authenticity and foster genuine community engagement.

Moreover, findings suggest that while influencer marketing - specifically if in collaboration with influencers that are also yoga teachers - can boost the studio visibility and drive short term engagement, when it comes to long-term loyalty, it is more important to work on personal connections and in-person experiences.

In conclusion, influencer marketing, when aligned with the values of authenticity and personal connection that define the yoga community, can be a good tool for the promotion of yoga studios. However, it is very important for yoga studios to be cautious in navigating the tension between maintaining the holistic nature of the yoga practice and the commercial nature of digital marketing.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Yoga Industry, Authenticity, Social Media Strategy, Community Engagement.

Resumo

[PT]

Esta pesquisa explora o papel do marketing de influenciadores, com um foco específico em Lisboa, Portugal. Através de entrevistas semiestruturadas em profundidade com gestores de redes sociais de estúdios de yoga, professores e praticantes, a investigadora foi capaz de examinar como os estúdios de yoga em Lisboa estão a incorporar estratégias de marketing de influenciadores nos seus planos de comunicação e marketing, e de avaliar a eficácia desses esforços na atração e retenção de clientes.

Da pesquisa surge a preferência por colaborar com professores de yoga que também têm uma forte presença online e/ou um grande número de seguidores, em vez de influenciadores de lifestyle, de forma a manter a autenticidade e fomentar o envolvimento genuíno da comunidade.

Além disso, os resultados sugerem que, embora o marketing de influenciadores – especificamente em colaboração com influenciadores que também são professores de yoga – possa aumentar a visibilidade do estúdio e gerar um envolvimento a curto prazo, no que toca à lealdade a longo prazo, é mais importante trabalhar as ligações pessoais e as experiências presenciais.

Em conclusão, o marketing de influenciadores, quando alinhado com os valores de autenticidade e conexão pessoal que definem a comunidade de yoga, pode ser uma boa ferramenta para a promoção de estúdios de yoga. No entanto, é muito importante que os estúdios naveguem com cautela na tensão entre manter a natureza holística da prática de yoga e a natureza comercial do marketing digital.

Palavras-chave: Marketing de Influenciadores, Indústria do Yoga, Autenticidade, Estratégia de Redes Sociais, Envolvimento da Comunidade.

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Introduction

Social media and digital marketing are becoming more and more present in the day to day life of the majority of the people (Jung et al., 2022). Nowadays, it is almost impossible to disconnect social media and young people's lives, since these platforms are easily accessible everywhere (Jung et al., 2022). People dedicate a great amount of their everyday life on social media (Jung et al., 2022): "social media usage has been so extensively integrated with our daily lives that nearly 90% of young adults reported using at least one social media platform to some degree" (Azhari et al., 2022, p.1).

Within this significant growth, another leading phenomenon that can be observed is influencer marketing. It was defined by Singh as "a technique that employs social media (content created by everyday people using highly scalable technologies such as blogs, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis and vlogs) and social influencers (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs" (Singh, 2009, p. 19). This phenomenon is becoming extremely important when it comes to marketing strategies due to the level of trust that can arise between influencer and reader: that is in fact very hard, if not almost impossible for a brand to build alone with the customer (Biaudet, 2017). The main reason why this happens is that the influencers are perceived as much closer than the brand: they are consumers themselves in the first place, and they can convey a sense of authenticity, being very passionate about who they are promoting, using honesty, not perfection, to engage with their community (Haenlein et al., 2020).

This idea of the strong connection that arises between the influencer and the follower, has its roots in the concept of parasocial relationship: "parasocial relationships are socio-emotional connections that people develop with media figures such as celebrities or fictional characters. Parasocial relationships mirror offline relationships in many ways, even though individuals' perceived intimacy with media figures is not reciprocated. [...] They can promote healthy attitudes and behaviors and lower health-related stigma, but may adversely impact mental health through negative self-comparison. Parasocial relationships can also enhance feelings of connection and community, facilitate coping for personal development and identity exploration, and reduce prejudice" (Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p.1). Nowadays, this

concept is widespread on social media platforms, since they allow fans to have momentary peeks into both the personal and professional life of their celebrities or favorite influencer (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). In fact, as it is possible to observe in previous literature, parasocial relationships with celebrities or specifically with social media influencers, are able to originate feelings of friendliness and sense of identification. This phenomenon is even stronger when it comes to micro-influencers: in fact, literature recognizes that this type of influencers create a higher level of trust with their followers (Conde & Casais, 2023).

Another important phenomenon is the spread of the yoga practice in the western world: “yoga selfies & photos of yoga products are being shared online. There are many various models and entertainment personalities who actively practice Yoga as a lifestyle, which pushes the yoga craze to greater heights worldwide. The accessibility of this wellness practice is a contributing factor to its popularity. There is practically a yoga school in every city today. That’s just a small slice of the pie. You see, billions of dollars are being spent on Yoga nowadays. And Yoga’s popularity is not going away anytime soon” (Jeong, 2024, <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/unstoppable-trend-yoga-infographic-business>). In fact, it is possible to observe that, starting from the nineties, yoga transformed itself into a business of millions of dollars: sequences and positions became franchising or have been used to sell different kinds of products such as cellphones or yogurt (Mark, 2019). It has been studied that in 2008 yoga practitioners in the US spent around \$5,7 billion for yoga classes, retreats and yoga products (Mark, 2019).

Moreover, an interesting concept that arises from the spread and growth of this practice worldwide that the researcher was interested in studying, it’s the idea of cultural appropriation: “linguistically, ‘cultural appropriation’ is a term derived from the Latin word ‘cultura’, meaning cultivation or growth, and ‘appropriare’, signifying to make one’s own. Thus in its most basic sense, it denotes the act of taking elements from another culture and making them one’s own” (Kunst et al., 2024, p.2). On the other hand, this expression has taken another layer of negative meaning: in fact, Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines it as “the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture”. The researcher wanted to understand if in this scenario we can actually talk about cultural appropriation, since it is important not to confuse it with the concept of cultural adoption, that on the other hand, is an authentic cultural change: “such adoption often signifies cultural change among individuals genuinely valuing

the learning experience from other cultures they consider equal to their own. Nonetheless, sincere interest alone is insufficient to guard against cultural appropriation. It is paramount that the cultural group being emulated grants their consent to this process. This distinction is important as ‘cultural adoption’ can also happen at the automatic or unconscious level, which may be relatively detached from ideological motivations” (Kunst et al., 2024, p.6).

In order to reach this goal, the researcher analyzed the existing literature, creating a literature review divided in two chapters:

1. Social media and influencer marketing: a leading tool in nowadays way to do marketing
2. The evolution and impact of yoga in our modern western society

The first chapter is the longest and it focuses on one hand on the different aspects of social media, its definition, its latest expansion, and, on the other hand, it defines influencer marketing, the different categories of influencers and its economical impact. Moreover, in this chapter the researcher also focused on the differences between Generation Y and Generation Z and the concept of parasocial relationship.

The second chapter, started with a quick definition of the yoga practice and its roots, and continues with its spread around the world, how much the practice changed in this process, arriving to talk about what we can define as ‘modern yoga’. In addition, the researcher addressed that we might be facing a process of cultural appropriation or cultural adoption, and concluded with the expansion of the yoga practice online and in the city of Lisbon.

The researcher posed the following research question:

RQ1: How do yoga studios in Lisbon utilize influencer marketing to promote their services?

Moreover, the following subsidiary research questions were generated:

RQ2: What impact does influencer marketing have on the brand awareness and customer engagement in yoga studios in Lisbon?

RQ3: How do yoga studio managers, yoga teachers and practitioners perceive the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the yoga industry?

RQ4: What guidelines can be developed to optimize the use of influencer marketing for yoga studios in Lisbon based on current practices and outcomes?

The method that was used for this research was a qualitative method approach with semi-structured interviews. In fact, after analyzing the differences between quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research approaches, the researcher believes that the most suitable one for the present research is the qualitative method. In point of fact the purpose of this research is to understand how the influencer marketing in the yoga niche, affects young women between 18 and 24 and 25 and 34 years old, therefore is more inclined to understand the mechanism behind the phenomena and the opinions of the participants, more than the amount of people affected by it. “The primary goal of a qualitative study, which is by definition exploratory, is to dig into people’s behaviors, opinions, perceptions, and experiences that are difficult to answer through quantitative research. [...] Qualitative study has the potential to explore in-depth the points of interest to achieve specific research objectives” (Mulisa, 2021, p.124).

It is important to underline that, since, according to the statistics that were analyzed in the literature review, the two age brackets that use Instagram the most are the people between 18 and 24 and between 25 and 34 (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.), and that the people who practice yoga the most are women between 30 and 49 years old (Yoga statistics, Who practices yoga? | Jeong, 2024b, <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/unstoppable-trend-yoga-infographic-business>), the researcher decided to focus this study on women between 18 and 34 years old, therefore Generation Z and Generation Y.

Literature review

Chapter 1

Social media and influencer marketing: a leading tool in nowadays way to do marketing

1.1 Defining social media

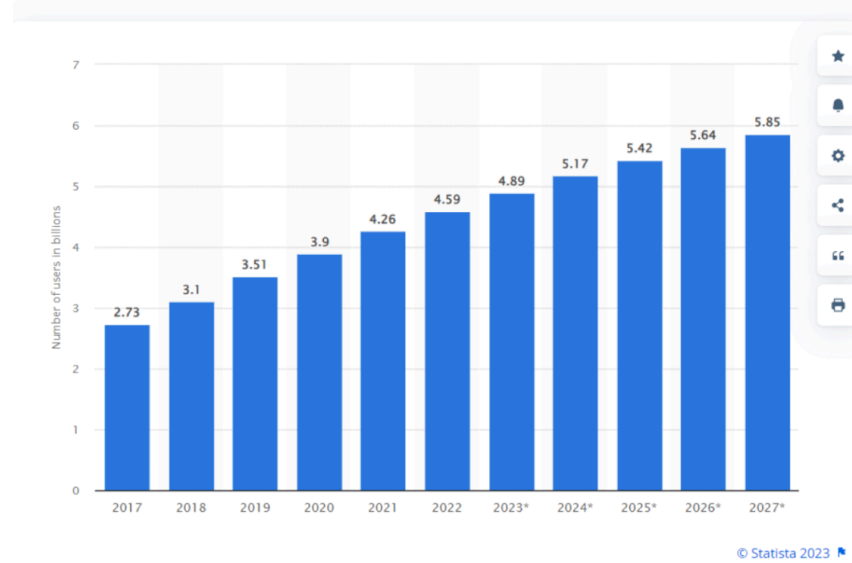
Before starting this research, social media need to be defined.

“Social media, also known as social networks, are identity, community, and application platforms that provide users with opportunities to connect with online communities by sharing, exchanging, and creating information. Typical examples are Instagram, Facebook, WeChat, and Twitter. These media platforms intensify offline social interactions or transform them into visual equivalents” (Liu et al., 2023, p.2).

1.1.1 Social media usage

Nowadays, social media is an intrinsic part of young people’s lives in every part of the world, indeed, due to the fact that these platforms are easily accessible, people dedicate a great amount of their everyday life to social media (Jung et al., 2022): “social media usage has been so extensively integrated with our daily lives that nearly 90% of young adults reported using at least one social media platform to some degree” (Azhari et al., 2022, p.1). During the last decades we faced a rapid growth of users of these platforms: in 2023 the statistics counted 4.89 billion, with a rise of 6.5% form the previous year (Geysler, 2023).

Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027
(in billions)



Source: [statista.com](https://www.statista.com)

Figure 1 - Number of Worldwide Social Network Users 2027 | Statista, 2023

1.1.2 Current research on social media

Due to this expansion, researchers have started to delve into whether this technology can have negative effects on people using it (Fardouly et al., 2017). “Sociocultural theories of body image emphasize the role of societal factors in the maintenance of negative body image” (Jung et al., 2022, p.1). It has already been found that Facebook usage is related to young women’s self-objectification and body image concerns, “which is concerning because both self-objectification and body dissatisfaction are important predictors of disordered eating and depression among young women” (Ibidem, 2018, p.1381). Posts on social media can be edited, selected and readapted in a way that represents an idealized physical appearance (Ibidem, 2018); “social media, in particular, are thought to transmit socio cultural symbols that are unrealistic and unachievable for most individuals, as well as the notion that the body is inherently malleable and that body-work is both normal and required” (Jung et al., 2022, p.1). As research has found, being exposed to media representations of the body-ideal in television and magazine images can bring the viewer to internalize the thin-ideal and to make appearance comparisons, which can lead to body image concerns and disorder eating (Cohen et al., 2017). “Body surveillance, the behavioral manifestation of self-objectification, involves continuous self-monitoring of the body’s appearance and is a risk factor for eating disorders” (Ibidem, 2017, p.1). Thus, as it is possible to read in literature, these platforms can be a real

danger for the mental health of young people, bringing the users to depression, higher anxiety levels, poor sleep, low self-esteem and body image concerns (Royal Society for Public Health, 2017). “In girls, specifically, thin ideal internalization was found to mediate the association between social media use and body dissatisfaction” (Jung et al., 2022, p.2). Users between 15- to 24-year-old outlined a greater feeling of anxiety after using these kinds of platforms, and, on top of it, the higher the level of anxiety the more prone the individual will be to using social media because of the need for human connection (Azhari et al., 2022). “A prominent theory that has been posited to explain the robust link between social media use and anxiety is fear of missing out (FoMO), which refers to anxiety that stems from not being included in social experiences with others” (Ibidem, 2022, p.2).

On the other hand, these platforms are not only a bad influence, on the contrary, they can be even beneficial for the users depending on the type of usage that the single person is making (Liu et al., 2023): however, since this relationship extends beyond media consumption, to the variations in each type of usage, the connection between social media usage and individual psychological well-being ain't easy to understand (Kingsbury et al., 2021). Indeed, “individuals using social media benefit from communicating with other people and meeting their need for attention, achievement, identity, and belonging; [...] their use can strengthen the connection between individuals, communities, and the outside world, increasing the possibility of receiving emotional support and promoting individuals' psychological health development by expanding their horizons and improving their social capital skills. Furthermore, the social compensation hypothesis suggests that proper online interactions can compensate for low levels of social networking, especially for those who are introverted and have low self-esteem” (Liu et al., 2023, p.2), alleviating symptoms connected to depression and encouraging an emotional growth (Liu et al., 2023). “In explanation, it may be that social media are diverse, allowing for a range of purposes and motivations in social media usage, which in turn weakens any association with body image outcomes” (Jung et al., 2022, p.2). Studies have also shown that instead of talking about time spent on social media, it is better referring to the intensity of the usage of such kind of platforms: intensity as the frequency of social media use, that is to say how much these platforms are integrated in the user's daily life activities (Ibidem, 2022). “Intensity of social media use has been shown to be associated with poorer psychological well-being, including more negative body image” (Ibidem, 2022, p.2). The same principle can be applied to the impact of social medial on the

quality of sleep: if the user is able to regulate properly the usage of the platforms to their needs and values, social media can be seen as another pastime that doesn't interfere with sleep (Meyerson et al., 2023); but the problem can arise "when an individual is not able to regulate their social media usage; this problematic relationship with social media presents much as substance use disorders with using social media longer than intended and even causing problems in one's life" (Ibidem, 2023, p.2).

1.1.3 Instagram

When it comes to Instagram, it is important to underline that this platform is one of the most appearance-focused social media, and, furthermore, it is also very popular amongst young users, especially women (Cohen et al., 2017).

"Instagram is a site for selling and promoting 'health', where people are 'taught' they can 'easily' change their behavior, body, and life situation, and consume health and happiness" (Bailey et al., 2021, p.829). "Instagram could be described as an appearance focused media platform" (Fardouly et al., 2018, p.1389).

It is among the most popular social media platforms and one of the fastest growing, in fact it is possible to count over 400 million active users every month (Smart Insights, 2016), and extraordinarily popular between young women that tend to spend at least 30 minutes a day on this platform (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). Moreover, it is important to highlight the nature of Instagram: unlike other platforms such as Facebook where the content is more varied, Instagram was created with the only purpose of sharing and posting images (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2016; Holland and Tiggemann, 2016). Furthermore, "social comparison theory suggests that people have an innate drive to compare themselves with others in order to determine their progress and standing on various aspects of their lives" (Fardouly et al., 2018, p. 1381); this aspect is particularly relevant knowing that social media bring to body dissatisfaction mainly through two roots: embodiment of the ideals of beauty of society and the inclination to compare the self with others (Van den Berg et al., 2002). Especially when it comes to Instagram, the perception of the self can be highly influenced: first, because, as stated before, this social media is image-based "with over 80 million images uploaded [...] every day" (Fardouly et al., 2018, p.1382) giving a lot of chances to the people using it to compare themselves with who they are following; second, the big use of filters that are

provided by the app reinforce the beauty ideals given by society and can bring the users to feel less attractive than the people in the pictures (Myers and Crowther, 2009; Vandebosch and Eggermont, 2012). “Images posted on Instagram can be carefully selected, edited, and enhanced and may contain idealized representations of women’s physical appearance. Thus, viewing images on Instagram might enhance the salience of the societal beauty ideal ultimately, thereby increasing the extent to which women internalize that beauty ideal” (Fardouly et al., 2018, p.1390).

“Another unique feature of Instagram is the prominence of ‘fitspiration’ images (the term fitspiration is a combination of the words fitness and inspiration), which are images designed to motivate people to exercise and eat healthily” (Fardouly et al., 2018, p.1382). These kinds of images can bring people towards a healthier lifestyle, but, on the other hand, since they are focused on body appearance, they can bring to greater body dissatisfaction (Myers and Crowther, 2009). Most images that have been found connected to this trend, show only a body type that is thin and toned (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016, p.1003), not taking into consideration the wide range of body types existing across users (Krane et al., 2001). This type of body representation can have strong consequences on the people making regular use of this kind of content: “For example, it carries the strong implication that only a certain body type can be fit and healthy, whereas in fact a diverse range of body types can enjoy fitness and health” (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016, p.1008).

1.2 Defining an influencer

“An influencer is someone who has the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience” (Geysler, 2023b), or “one who has a following in a distinct niche with whom he or she actively engaged” (Ibidem, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

In fact, the word “influence” is defined as the power to affect a person (Brown & Hayes, 2008) and an Influencer is “a third party who can significantly shape the customer’s purchasing decision but may ever be accountable for it” (Brown & Hayes, 2008, p. 50). They are individuals who were able to create credibility through their knowledge and mastery of a specific subject (Geysler, 2023b). They regularly share content regarding this subject on their

favorite platform, in order to attract specific and engaged followers (Ibidem, 2023b). This is why they are extremely important for brands and their marketing: they have the capability to initiate trends and influence their followers to buy the products they like the most (Ibidem, 2023b).

Table 1
Definition and characteristics of micro, macro and mega-influencers.

	Micro-influencers	Macro-influencers	Mega-influencers
Followers	1,000 – 100,000	100,000 – 1,000,000	> 1,000,000
Characteristics	Strong voice in one community or niche; local authority Uniform audience with whom they establish a close relationship Perceived as highly credible by their audience	Substantial number of loyal followers A more diverse audience in comparison with micro-influencers	More famous on the Internet Globally recognized Their status is similar to traditional celebrities
Advantages	Loyal audience; higher levels of trust Excellent engagement rates Authenticity; their recommendations are similar to Word-Of-Mouth Lower cost	Higher reach in specific markets Better Return On Investment in comparison with micro-influencers Accessibility; easier to contact compared to micro or mega-influencers	Able to reach masses High visibility and recognition Halo effect; they create global trends Professionalism Easier to measure Return On Investment
Disadvantages	Lower reach and visibility Large-scale activation is harder Less control over output; volatile and harder to measure Return On Investment	Engagement rates around 5 to 25 % – smaller than micro-influencers They charge more than micro-influencers	Charge premium rates The audience may be tired of commercials Less engagement

Table 1 - Conde, R., & Casais, B. (2023). Micro, macro and mega-influencers on instagram: The power of persuasion via the parasocial relationship. *Journal of Business Research*, 158, 113708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113708>

There are several different ways to categorize influencers (Geyser, 2023b):

1. By followers number
 - mega-influencers
 - macro-influencers
 - micro-influencers
 - nano-influencers
2. By type of content
 - Bloggers
 - YouTubers
 - Podcasters
 - Social posts only
3. By level of influence
 - Celebrities
 - Key opinion leaders

“*Mega influencers* are the people with a vast number of followers on their social networks.

Although there are no fixed rules on the boundaries between the different types of followers, a common view is that mega-influencers have more than 1 million followers on at least one social platform” (Geyser, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

The majority of them are celebrities who have built their fame offline such as, for example, movie stars, athletes, musicians and reality TV personalities, even though it is possible to find those that were able to create their community through online activities (Ibidem, 2023b). Collaborations with this kind of influencers are worth it for big brands for two main reasons: they are really expensive, arriving to ask even 1 million dollars per post, and also very selective on who they are working with (Ibidem, 2023b).

“*Macro-influencers* are one step down from the mega-influencers, and maybe more accessible as influencer marketers. You would consider people with followers in the range between 100,000 and 1 million followers on a social network to be macro-influencers” (Geyser, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

It is possible to divide the group in two distinct categories: celebrities that were never able to achieve widespread fame and, the most beneficial for marketing, experts that became successful online but with a larger following compared to micro-influencers (Ibidem, 2023b). Collaborations with macro-influencers are important because, thanks to their prominent online presence, they are good in building awareness; moreover, they are usually more compared to mega-influencers making it easier for brands to find a better fit (Ibidem, 2023b). On the other hand it is important to be careful since they could have bought their followers, making them prone to influencer fraud (Ibidem, 2023b).

“*Micro-influencers* are ordinary everyday people who have become known for their knowledge about some specialist niche. As such, they have usually gained a sizable social media following amongst devotees of that niche. Of course, it is not just the number of followers that indicates a level of influence; it is the relationship and interaction that a micro-influencer has with his or her followers. Although views differ, you could consider micro-influencers as having between 10,000 and 100,000 followers on a single social platform” (Geyser, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

For a micro-influencer it is crucial that the brand they are collaborating with is aligned with their values: arriving also to advertise the brand in exchange for nothing if they like and make use of the product themselves, they must agree with the brand ethic (Ibidem, 2023b). This necessity of alignment between the influencer and the brand often brings the former to be very picky about collaborations, however, once it is possible to establish a good connection, this type of influencers are usually the one with the better engagement with their followers, thus their audience will be more likely to purchase what they are using and advertising (Ibidem, 2023b).

“The newest influencer-type to gain recognition is the *nano-influencer*. These people only have a small number of followers, but they tend to be experts in an obscure or highly specialized field. You can think of nano-influencers as being the proverbial big fish in

a small pond” (Geysler, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

Nano-influencers, as it is possible to understand from the name itself, have a relatively small group of followers: usually between 1.000 and 10.000 people. (Ibidem, 2023b). What makes them valuable is the fact that their followers are usually very engaged and value the ideas and ethics of the influencer, making them really valuable especially in niche products (Ibidem, 2023b). Nevertheless, this type of influencers, for most companies, might not be of substantial influence: for some categories of products, it would be necessary to collaborate with hundreds of nano-influencers (Ibidem, 2023b).

“*Bloggers* (predominantly micro-bloggers) have the most authentic and active relationships with their fans. Brands are now recognizing and encouraging this. Blogging has been connected to influencer marketing for some time now. There are many highly influential blogs on the internet. If a popular blogger positively mentions your product in a post, it can lead to the blogger’s supporters wanting to try out your product” (Geysler, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

Most of the bloggers grew a big following within specific niches, such as: personal development and finance to music, health or blogging itself; what they all have in common is a deep respect from their readers (Ibidem, 2023b). In order to collaborate with a blogger, a brand can either ask them to directly write about the product they want to sponsor, or another option is engaging in guest posting: publishing an article on the blogger’s website as a guests; this practice allows the brand to keep the control over the content, and typically to include a direct link to their product (Ibidem, 2023b). One last option is a sponsored posts: as it is possible to understand from the name, this resource requires a financial investment but enables the brand to manage better what the blogger will write in the post and Generation Z showed to be unaffected by the label that indicate that this specific product has been sponsored (Ibidem, 2023b).

“Another favorite type of content is video. In this case, rather than each video maker having their own site, most create a channel on *YouTube*. Brands often align with popular YouTube content colors” (Geysler, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

“Podcasting is a relatively recent form of online content that is growing in popularity. It has made quite a few household names now, possibly best epitomized by John Lee Dumas of *Entrepreneurs on Fire*” (Geyser, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

“Of course, bloggers, podcasters, and YouTubers rarely rely solely on their existing audiences to just turn up to their site, hoping there is new material. They usually promote new *posts or videos heavily on social media* - which makes most of these bloggers and content creators micro-influencers as well” (Geyser, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

Indeed, the majority of influencers establish their fame through Instagram: even though influencers can be found on a wide variety of platforms, Instagram has notably emerged in the last few years (Ibidem, 2023b).

“Celebrities were the original influencers, and they still have a role to play, although their importance as influencers is waning” (Geyser, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

Influencer marketing owes its growth to celebrity endorsement; in fact, businesses noticed a big rise in sales whenever a celebrity promoted or supported one or more of their products (Ibidem, 2023b). The problem that arises is that there are not so many of them willing to collaborate in a campaign to promote a certain brand if they don't already use their products and like them, and, even in this case, most of the times they ask for a very high payment that usually brands are not able to afford (Ibidem, 2023b). Moreover, even though their follower base on social media is very wide allowing them to reach a substantial market share, the actual weight of their influence is impossible to know (Ibidem, 2023b).

Key opinion leaders “can also be considered influencers and hold an important position for brands. Industry leaders and thought leaders gain respect because of their qualifications, position, or experience about their topic of expertise. Often, this respect is earned more because of the reputation of where they work. For instance, a journalist at a major newspaper is probably no expert on the subjects he writes a news report on, but he is respected for being a good enough writer to work as such a prestigious publication” (Geyser, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>).

This category includes: journalists, academics, industry experts and professional advisors (Ibidem, 2023b). A business can make use of this type of people gaining the attention of a journalist, for example, and making him write an article about a specific product, having the bonus that the journalist would probably do it for free (Ibidem, 2023b).

1.3 Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is indeed a very powerful and leading to use phenomena when talking about marketing (Perry et al, 2013).

1.3.1 Influencer marketing definition

It was defined by Singh as “a technique that employs social media (content created by everyday people using highly and scalable technologies such as blogs, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis and vlogs) and social influencers (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization’s marketing and business needs” (Singh, 2009, p. 19). This phenomenon is becoming one of the most important ways, or even the most important approach to do marketing since the build in level of trust that arise between influencer and reader: this is in fact essentially impossible for a brand to build alone with the customer (Biaudet, 2017). This happens because influencers are consumers themselves, and they should be authentically passionate about who they are promoting, using honesty, not perfection, to engage with their community (Haenlein et al., 2020). In fact, what matters is not the size of the follower base but how an influencer can connect to his or her community and inspire the followers to take action based on his or her recommendations (Haenlein et al., 2020).

1.3.2 Economical impact

In 2020 it was possible to count a \$10 billion industry for influencer marketing, and it is also becoming of increasing importance for many firms, particularly for those in a business to consumer environment (Haenlein et al., 2020). Nowadays only a few firms in the fashion, beauty, travel, food, or beverage industries are making marketing campaigns that do not include, at least to some share, a collaboration with influencers on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Ibidem).

Consumers are increasing their knowledge about media and, therefore, they are becoming more critical of commercial messages (Perry et al, 2013). They spend more time on social media so it's really hard for brands to stand out among the others (Newman & Daniel, 2015). The new generation prefers Netflix to watching TV, Spotify to the radio and Reddit to common magazines, and this change toward Instagram and TikTok, as well as Snapchat and Twitch has brought to the arise of a new industry of social media influencers and influencer marketing strategies (Haenlein et al., 2020). The numbers show this process: 65% of companies are using influencer-based marketing campaigns and bloggers for influencer marketing is one of the most effective tools used by the majority (*Digital Influence Report*, 2013). "The influencer marketing industry is forecast to reach \$9.7 billion in 2020 or about 5% of the total online advertising market of approximately \$250 billion. In response, two-thirds of firms plan to increase the amount spent on influencer marketing within the next year, and 80% forecast to spend at least 10% of their marketing budget on it" (Haenlein et al., 2020, p.6).

Over the course of the last years, the advent of certain circumstances such as the pandemic of Covid-19, the global economic downturn and increasing inflation rates, should have brought to the decrease in the use of influencer marketing and therefore also of the popularity of influencers, but they didn't (Geysler, 2023a). On the contrary, "successful businesses understood the importance of marketing, including influencer marketing, in tough times, and increased their expenditures on this, even when they had to cost-cut expenses elsewhere. From a mere \$1.7 billion at the time of this site's beginning in 2016, influencer marketing grew to have an estimated market size of \$16.4 billion in 2022. Furthermore, this is expected to jump a further 29% to an estimated \$21.1 billion in 2023" (Geysler, 2023a, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report/>).

Influencer Marketing Market Size

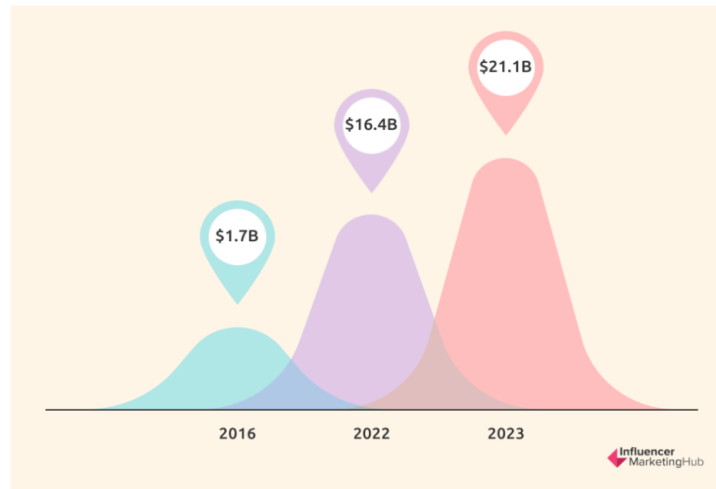


Figure 2 - Influencer Marketing Market Size 2023 | Geysler, 2023a,
<https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report/>

1.3.3 Reasons behind its growth

Influencer marketing is becoming so popular and important in the marketing industry since customers are more prone to trust this kind of recommendations from a third party rather than directly from the brand itself: the influencer can, in fact, be thought of as a friend and is perceived as closer (Matthew & Kristen, 2013). “Luxury brands used to speak in monologues. News about their latest collections flowed one way—from the boardroom, via billboards and editorial spreads in glossy magazines, to the buyer. In the age of social media, the buyers are talking back. One group, in particular, is getting through to fashion bosses: influencers. These individuals have won large followings by reviewing, advertising and occasionally panning an assortment of wares. Their fame stems not from non-digital pursuits, as was the case with the a-list stars who used to dominate the ranks of brand ambassadors, but from savvy use of Instagram, Snapchat or TikTok. Their posts seem frivolous. Their business isn’t” (The Economist, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/business/2022/04/02/the-business-of-influencing-is-not-frivolous-its-serious>).

As the Co-founder and CEO of Monochrome says, “often companies set up a message which they want to communicate to the consumer and the consumer just receives the message and there is no space for reaction and conversation, while in influencer marketing, the

company uses a person who is kind of a consumer him or herself.” (Biaudiet, 2017, p. 31). “For consumers, influencers are at once a walking advert and a trusted friend” (The Economist, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/business/2022/04/02/the-business-of-influencing-is-not-frivolous-its-serious>). For brands themselves they are becoming a good connection to millennial and Gen-z consumers, who nowadays are responsible for about 70% of the \$350bn in global spending (The Economist, 2022). Brands use the social influence theory to be more effective on their customers: “social influence involves intentional and unintentional efforts to change another person's beliefs, attitudes, or behavior. Unlike persuasion, which is typically intentional and requires some degree of awareness on the part of the target, social influence may be inadvertent or accidental. Social influence often operates via peripheral processing. Hence, the target may be unaware of the influence attempt. Unlike compliance gaining, which is usually goal directed, social influence is often non goal directed and the outcomes may be inconsistent with, or unrelated to, a communicator's goals. Social influence encompasses such strategies as indebtedness or reciprocity, commitment, social proof, liking and attractiveness, authority, and scarcity” (Gass, 2015, p.348).

1.3.3.1 Parasocial relationships

When it comes to the level of trust that builds between influencers and their followers, the researcher believes that is essential to address the concept of parasocial relationships.

“Parasocial relationships are socio-emotional connections that people develop with media figures such as celebrities or fictional characters. Parasocial relationships mirror offline relationships in many ways, even though individuals’ perceived intimacy with media figures is not reciprocated. [...] They can promote healthy attitudes and behaviors and lower health-related stigma, but may adversely impact mental health through negative self-comparison. Parasocial relationships can also enhance feelings of connection and community, facilitate coping foster personal development and identity exploration, and reduce prejudice” (Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p.1).

Nowadays, parasocial relationships arise on social media platforms, since these tools allow fans to have momentary peeks into both the personal and professional life of their celebrities

or favorite influencer (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). These socio-emotional connections accelerate and get stronger based on different factors, such as (Hoffner & Bond, 2022):

- the frequency in which the celebrity or influencer is publishing on the social platform;
- the perceived authenticity of the media figure;
- interpersonal engagement that can happen directly between the follower and the media figure, such as for example, influencers reposting a story they were tagged in or answering to a fan comment.

However, what is important to underline is the fact that “the enduring bond that lasts beyond the social media moment is still one-sided, by definition, parasocial in nature” (Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p.1).

This said, keeping in consideration that these bonds are similar to offline social relationships, “media figures with whom people maintain parasocial bonds may influence well-being just as offline friends do” (Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p.1). This phenomenon can arise in different areas of the day-to-day life (Hoffner & Bond, 2022):

- mental and physical health: people can be more prone to go to the doctor or go to regular check-up if they see their favorite influencer or celebrity doing that;
- social relationships: one of the key factors why social media are so popular is that they create the possibility to develop and maintain social relationships that can be reciprocal or one-sided, as for example parasocial relationships;
- coping: if a person is going through a difficult moment of her or his life, they can find a feeling of connection and being supported through sharing what is happening on social media.

Therefore, “parasocial relationships are important of people’s perceived social worlds. The accessibility, frequency of self-disclosure, and perceived intimacy and authenticity of social media have altered engagement and connection with favorite media personae similar to offline friendships. Evidence indicates that social media platforms afford the opportunity for parasocial relationships with media figures to beneficially influence multiple dimensions of well-being, but adverse outcomes for well-being may also occur” (Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p.4).

It is shown in literature that parasocial relationships with celebrities or specifically with social media influencers can rise sentiments of friendliness and sense of identification;

specifically when it comes to micro-influencers: in fact, literature recognizes that this type of influencers create a higher level of trust with their followers (Conde & Casais, 2023). Moreover, the term “social media influencer” is connected to an honest, consistent and genuine description of the day to day life of a specific figure, but also, and more importantly, with a strong and caring relationship with their followers: literature shows that the persuasiveness of social media influencers is highly connected with the relationships that they build with their audience (Conde & Casais, 2023). “Social media influencers are actively committed to persuade their followers that they are able to access their personal lives by sharing genuine or ordinary moments of their daily lives. The features of social media reinforce this perception of intimacy by allowing several forms of individual interactions” (Conde & Casais, 2023, p.2). This is why parasocial relationships can have a big influence on followers: “the parasocial relationship is fostered by posts that promote perceptions of intimacy, access to the social media influencer’s personal life and existence of dialogue, thus validating the notion that, in the context of social networks, the parasocial relationship can be seen as a vehicle for advertising. Among other factors pointed out as explanatory of these relations are the following: (1) practice of self-disclosure, which contribute to perceptions of greater authenticity; (2) feeling of social presence; (3) social identification” (Conde & Casais, 2023, p.3). When it comes to the number of followers, studies show that the power of parasocial relationships is not affected positively by it, “since this decreases the predictive effect of opinion leadership on the formation of intention” (Conde & Casais, 2023, p.8). However what the researcher believes is very important to underline is the fact that “the parasocial relationship has a direct effect on the intention to adopt social media influencers recommendations, and this is of such importance that its impact is similar to that of attributed opinion leadership. It appears, therefore, that the social media influencer strongly depends on emotional aspects” (Conde & Casais, 2023, p.8). This reinforces the idea that micro-influencers have a bigger power of persuasion when it comes to their followers since their relationship with them is stronger (Conde & Casais, 2023).

“The obtained results validate the existence of a positive relationship between the number of followers and the intention to adopt social media influencers recommendations through both proposed mediators. [...] The moderating effect of the parasocial relationship established with the social media influencer is thus evidenced, which overall reduces the impact of the number of followers on the influencer’s power of persuasion, by reducing the predictive effect of opinion leadership. At the same time, it was shown that the parasocial

relationship has a direct and positive effect on the intention to adopt social media influencer recommendation” (Conde & Casais, 2023, p.8).

1.4 The two generations: Y and Z

The age range that the researcher decided to focus on for this study is young women between 18 and 24 and between 25 and 34 years old. For a better understanding of the research’s results, it is important to start with the analysis of the two generations that are part of this age range: that is to say, Generation Y, also known as The Millennials, and Generation Z, or Zoomers.

1.4.1 Generation Y

In the literature about Generation Y there are different ideas when it comes to decide in which time frame these people were born: Bolton (2013) identifies Generation Y with individuals that were born between 1982 until the year 2000; following Williams (2015), Millennials would be associated with all those people born 1980 and 1995, whether Lyons (2017), identifies them with anyone born between 1980 and 1994. On one hand, since they grew up in close contact with technology, they are described as the lazy and self-involved generation that is not able to live without a smartphone (Lyons, 2017). On the other hand though, they are also defined as creative, very flexible and open minded and with a great attention for being environmentally friendly (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). In fact, they wish to have a good work-life balance and to be able to contribute to society and the environment (Bolton, 2013). Unlike Generation Z, Millennials, grew up with technology but not with social media specifically; therefore, they discover fashion trends through these kinds of platforms and can be much more influenced by advertisement, being more prone to purchase compared to other generations (Loeb, 2020). Moreover, they are known for buying products that can give them positive experiences instead of focusing on more practical investments (Bump, 2023).

1.4.2 Generation Z

Generation Z or Zoomer, are categorized as someone born between the late 1990s and 2010 (Turner, 2015), or anyone born after 1996 (Williams, 2015) or 1997 (Duffett, 2017).

What is sure, is that these people grew up with social media (Williams, 2015), but there are different ideas on what was the consequence of it: Finch (2015) considers them youths that are extremely addicted to their phones and in lack of attention, whether Duffett (2017) describes them as very informed people, very adaptable, plan-oriented and diverse. In fact they are a very accepting and inclusive community towards biracial and multiracial people, with a growing percentage within the LGBTQ+ community, as they perceive sexual orientation differently compared to previous generations (Turner, 2015). Most of them were born already having social media profiles created for them or, if not since the very first day, at least at a pretty young age (Duffett, 2017). Therefore, they are not so influenced by advertisement as Millennials are, in fact, it is particularly easy for them to select the information that they receive through socials and focus their attention on brand messages that are more creative, unique and interesting for them (Duffett, 2017): this characteristic made them to be described as a very authentic generation that doesn't excessively follow trends, but rather prefers to show their identity through products that are in line with their beliefs (Ibidem, 2017). Moreover, it is more common for them to be online or more specifically directly through their mobile phones (Bump, 2023).

It is important to underline that both these generations, Z and Y, are becoming more and more hard to influence through marketing activities, especially via Social Media (Duffett, 2017).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher decided to keep in consideration what was decided to be the official time span for Generation Y by the Pew Research Centre (2023), that is between 1981 and 1996, meaning that Generation Z would start from 1997.

1.5 How spread is the internet and social media use

1.5.1 Essential digital headlines

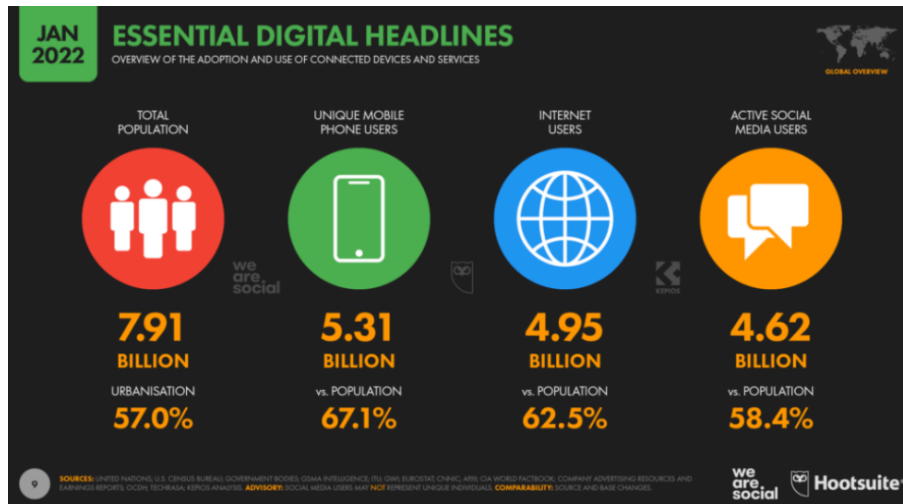


Figure 3 - Overview of the adoption and use of connector devices and services | Hannahcurrey, 2023,

<https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>

The year 2022 showed a big growth in the numbers of people using the internet and social media arriving at “12 1/2 trillion hours spent online, a new milestone in internet adoption, and new records for social media use” (Hannahcurrey, 2023, <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>).

Compared to the previous year, in 2022 there were 95 million new mobile users (1.8% more than 2021): that is, 67.1% of the world’s population, meaning more than two-thirds, uses a cellphone (Hannahcurrey, 2023). When it comes to internet users, it is possible to see that the number arrived to 4.94 billion users at the start of the year, or rather 62.5% of the world's population: “data show that internet users have grown by 192 million (+4.0 percent) over the past year, but ongoing restrictions to research and reporting due to COVID-19 mean that actual growth trends may be considerably higher than these figures suggest” (Hannahcurrey, 2023,

<https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>).

And specifically regarding social media users the growth is not less impactful: “there are 4.62 billion social media users around the world in January 2022. This figure is equal to 58.4 percent of the world’s total population, although it’s worth noting that social media users may not represent unique individuals. Global social media users have grown by more than 10 percent over the past 12 months, with 424 million new users starting their social media journey during 2021” (Hannahcurrey, 2023, <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>).

1.5.2 Internet users over time

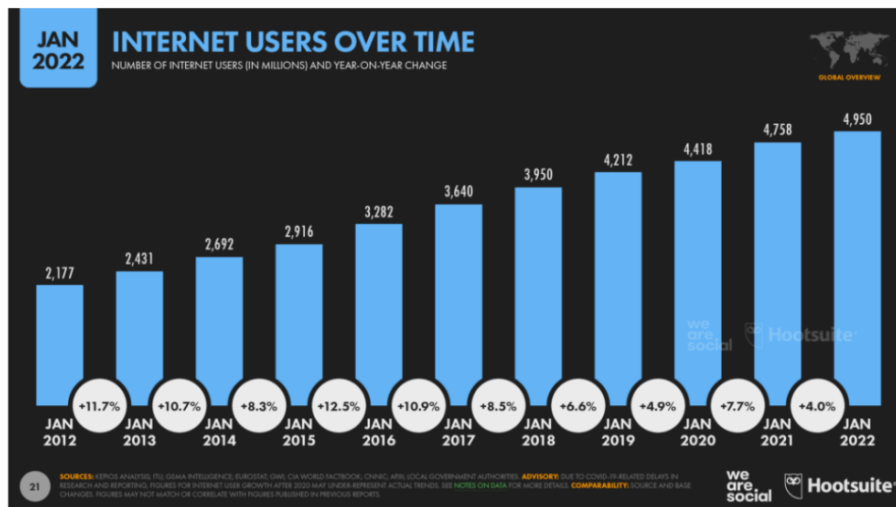


Figure 4 - Number of internet users (in million) and year-on-year change | Hannahcurrey, 2023,

<https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>

As it is possible to see from the former picture, the number of internet users “have more than doubled over the past 10 years, climbing from 2.18 billion at the start of 2012, to 4.95 billion at the start of 2022. That results in a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.6 percent for the past decade as a whole, but annual growth rates have fluctuated meaningfully from one year to another” (Hannahcurrey, 2023, <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>).

Social media growth was even greater throughout the years compared to the more general one about internet users: in fact, social media have been growing at a compound annual growth rate of 12% in the last ten years, arriving to a total of 4.62 billion users, “3.1 times higher than the 1.48 billion figure we published in 2012” (Hannahcurrey, 2023, <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>), as we can observe in the figure below.

1.5.3 Social media users over time

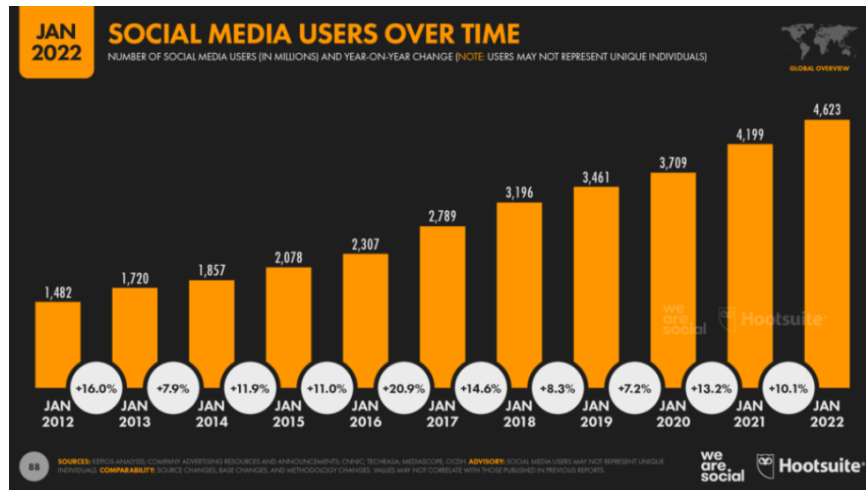


Figure 5 - Number of social media users (in millions) and year-on-year change | Hannahcurrey, 2023,

https://datareportal.com/essential-instagram-stats?utm_source=DataReportal&utm_medium=Country_Article_Hyperlink&utm_campaign=Digital_2022&utm_term=Portugal&utm_content=Facebook_Stats_Link

1.5.4 Internet and social media use in Portugal

Shifting the focus on Portugal, it is possible to observe a big growth in the number of people using the internet and social media too: “there were 8.63 million internet users in Portugal in January 2022” (Kemp, 2022, https://datareportal.com/essential-instagram-stats?utm_source=DataReportal&utm_medium=Country_Article_Hyperlink&utm_campaign=Digital_2022&utm_term=Portugal&utm_content=Facebook_Stats_Link), this means that between the year 2021 and the year 2022, there was an increase of +2.9% (245 thousands) in internet users (Kemp, 2022). When it comes to the use of social media, at the beginning of 2022, users in Portugal were equivalent to 83.7% of the total population (the population in January 2022 was 10.15 million): “social media users in Portugal increased by 700 thousand (+9.0 percent) between 2021 and 2022” (Kemp, 2022, https://datareportal.com/essential-instagram-stats?utm_source=DataReportal&utm_medium=Country_Article_Hyperlink&utm_campaign=Digital_2022&utm_term=Portugal&utm_content=Facebook_Stats_Link).

1.5.5 Global Instagram use

Taking a closer look at Instagram specifically, it is possible to observe that is one of the most popular platforms, with 1.628 billion users across the world in April 2023: this means that nowadays, 25.9% of people above 13 years old use this platform (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.). In the last 12 months, Instagram’s advertising audience grew by 12.2%, that means, if we put it into perspective, advertisers have now the possibility to reach 176 million more users compared to the year 2022 (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.). The countries that have the most Instagram users in 2023 are the following:

1. India with 326.6 million active users
2. The United States of America with 168.6 million active users
3. Brazil with 132.6 million active users
4. Indonesia with 106.0 million active users
5. Turkey with 56.4 million active Users
6. Japan with 54.7 million active users
7. Mexico with 43.8 million active users
8. Germany with 33.8 million active users
9. The United Kingdom with 33.5 million active users
10. Italy with 30.3 million active users (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.)

From a demographic point of view, 49.4% of Instagram global users are female, 50.6% male, and the age bracket of people that use the platform the most is between 18 and 24 (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.). Regarding how many users does Instagram have in every age group, the data are the following:

1. 131.1 million users in the age bracket 13 to 17 (8.1% of the total audience)
2. 517.7 million users in the age bracket 18 to 24(32.0% of the total audience)
3. 488.7 million users in the age bracket 25 to 34 (29.6% of the total audience)
4. 246.3 million users in the age bracket 35 to 44 (15.3% of the total audience)
5. 132.2 million users in the age bracket 45 to 54 (8.2% of the total audience)
6. 68.2 million users in the age bracket 55 to 64 (4.2% of the total audience) (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.)

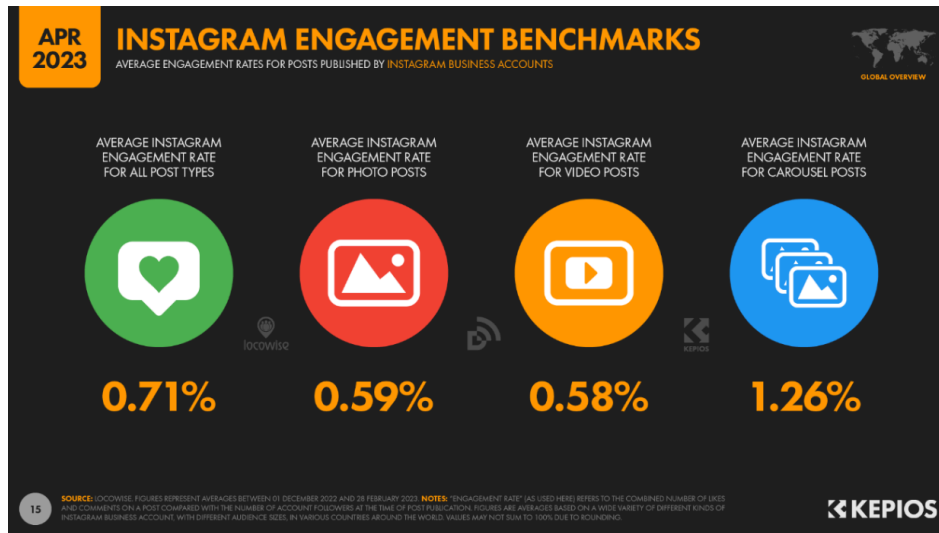


Figure 6 - Instagram engagement benchmarks | Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, n.d., https://datareportal.com/essential-instagram-stats?utm_source=DataReportal&utm_medium=Country_Article_Hyperlink&utm_campaign=Digital_2022&utm_term=Portugal&utm_content=Facebook_Stats_Link

In the image above it is possible to see the average Instagram engagement rate (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, n.d.*). However, it is important to keep in mind that the Instagram engagement rate can have big changes depending on the follower base of the profile publishing a certain post, as we can observe in the following picture (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, n.d.*).

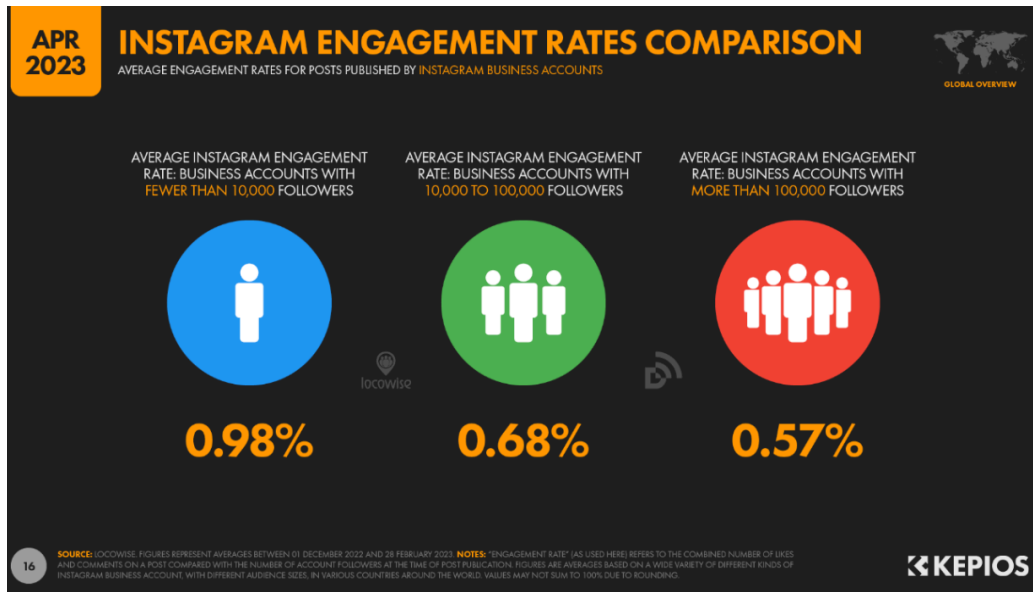


Figure 7 - Instagram engagement rates comparison | *Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More* — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, n.d.,

https://datareportal.com/essential-instagram-stats?utm_source=DataReportal&utm_medium=Country_Article_Hyperlink&utm_campaign=Digital_2022&utm_term=Portugal&utm_content=Facebook_Stats_Link

1.5.6 Instagram use in Portugal

When it comes specifically to Portugal, it is possible to observe that at the beginning of 2022 the country had 5.40 million users; this means that 53.2% of the population was using this social media (Kemp, 2022). Another important aspect to notice is that the use of Instagram in this country is more spread among women compared to men: “in early 2022, 51.9 percentage of Instagram’s ad audience in Portugal was female, while 48.1 percent was male” (Kemp, 2022, https://datareportal.com/essential-instagram-stats?utm_source=DataReportal&utm_medium=Country_Article_Hyperlink&utm_campaign=Digital_2022&utm_term=Portugal&utm_content=Facebook_Stats_Link).

1.6 The known effects of influencer marketing on your age demographic

After an in-depth review, the researcher is aware that there are no relevant studies regarding the effects of influencer marketing in Portugal on young women, especially when it

comes to the niche of yoga. It is possible to find “several studies regarding the categorization of social media influencers. Several literature reviews were found about influencer marketing, social media marketing and social media. Studies focusing on how influencers impact products, platforms, age cohorts, etc. have also been found. However, no relevant studies seem to exist regarding specifically how categories of social media influencers affect one or more similar age cohorts, specifically in an age group that currently is divided into two age cohorts. Additionally, [...] there is currently no ongoing research on how categories of influencers affect people throughout Instagram, in regard to one or more generations. There are also very few studies in Portugal about young women and how social media impacts their lives. Since in Portugal most social media users are women and the largest age cohort specifically for Portuguese Instagram users is 18-24, this is a specific target that should be studied.” (Correia de Sousa, 2020, p. 40).

1.6.1 Impact of different types of influencers on young women in Portugal

The study that Correia de Sousa (2020) conducted about the effects that different kind of influencers can impact young women in Portugal shows that one of the most cited platforms by the users when it comes to influencers especially, is Instagram: on this social media, people spend most of the time scrolling through aesthetic and beautiful pictures, arriving to deciding which person, friend, influencer or brand to follow based on how their feed looks. Instagram has a large amount of advertisement and marketing promotions, making it one of the most consumerist inciting platforms (Correia De Sousa, 2020).

Most of the participants in the study affirmed that they perceive advertisements made by influencers as not particularly reliable and honest, not knowing if the person is making it because they truly believe in that specific product or just for a matter of money; but it is actually quite the opposite, in fact viewers are more likely to purchase something if it's marketed by an influencer they like and follow: “though there seems to be a lot of negative opinions on influencers, if a certain product is recommended by an influencer, viewers might be more - subconsciously - inclined into believing and perceiving the content as authentic and thus trustworthy. Likewise, if an influencer's tone of voice is similar to their followers' usual tone of voice, they will be perceived as more authentic and genuine, thus followers might eventually trust that particular influencer more” (Correia de Sousa, 2020, p. 85).

The greatest conclusion that Correia de Sousa (2020) could draw from her study is that most of the people are in fact very much influenced by influencers and influencer marketing:

“more specifically, the most influential Influencer Tier Category is the mid tier influencer, with about 50.000 to 100.000 followers, these influencers are large enough to incite some sort of trust and reliability, but small enough to understand that they have not yet become overly used for advertising motives. This information, however, contradicts the gathered evidence in the literature review that stated how lower tier influencers have a larger impact on consumers due to the authenticity they exert and due to their diminished contact with advertising and marketing activities” (Correia de Sousa, 2020, p. 86).

Resume chapter 1

The first chapter of this study allowed the research to learn more about important topics that are going to be essential later on during the methodological part of the work.

1.1 Social media

The researcher started the chapter with the definition of what is considered as a social media: “social media, also known as social networks, are identity, community, and application platforms that provide users with opportunities to connect with online communities by sharing, exchanging, and creating information. Typical examples are Instagram, Facebook, WeChat, and Twitter. These media platforms intensify offline social interactions or transform them into visual equivalents” (Liu et al., 2023, p.2). Afterwards the amount of time that people spend on these kinds of platforms in their everyday life was addressed, noticing, in the year 2022, a rise of 6.5% in the use compared to the previous year (Geysler, 2023).

Due to these numbers, researchers started to be interested in how much this technology is affecting the people using it (Fardouly et al., 2017), finding a strong correlation between excessive social media use and disorders such as, for example, self-objectification and body image concern, eating disorders and continuous self-monitoring of the body’s appearance (Jung et al., 2022), due to the fact that all the images and videos that are accessible on these platforms can be easily edited and selected, creating a body type that is unrealistic and unachievable for most people (Jung et al., 2022).

It is important to underline that social media can be also a beneficiary for the users depending on the way the individual approaches them (Liu et al., 2023). In fact, these

platforms have the power to strengthen the connection between people, communities and the outside world, arriving even to improve their social skills (Liu et al., 2023). Furthermore, it might get easier to make connections for introverted people, alleviating symptoms such as depression and encouraging emotional growth (Liu et al., 2023), but it is really important that the user is able to properly regulate their use to their needs and values (Meyerson et al., 2023).

Instagram specifically came out to be one of the most appearance-focused platforms and very popular especially among young women that tend to spend at least 30 minutes a day on it (Cohen et al., 2017 and Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). It is very fast growing and it was created with the specific purpose of sharing and posting images (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2016; Holland and Tiggemann, 2016), making it the perfect setting for people to compare themselves with other users (Van den Berg et al., 2002). “Images posted on Instagram can be carefully selected, edited, and enhanced and may contain idealized representations of women’s physical appearance. Thus, viewing images on Instagram might enhance the salience of the societal beauty ideal ultimately, thereby increasing the extent to which women internalize that beauty ideal” (Fardouly et al., 2018, p.1390).

1.2 Defining an influencer

Afterwards, the researcher focused on the definition of an influencer, that is addressed by Geyser (2023b) as “someone who has the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience” or “one who has a following in a distinct niche with whom he or she actively engaged”. They are categorized in several different groups, as follows:

1. By followers number
 - mega-influencers
 - macro-influencers
 - micro-influencers
 - nano-influencers
2. By type of content
 - Bloggers
 - YouTubers
 - Podcasters
 - Social posts only

3. By level of influence
 - Celebrities
 - Key opinion leaders (Geyser, 2023b)

1.3 Influencer marketing

Analyzing the influencer marketing phenomena is also really important for the goal of this study. In 2020, the influencer marketing industry was valuable \$10 billion, this means 5% of the total online market advertisement that in this year was around \$250 billion (Haenlein et al., 2020): these data shows that this new way of doing marketing is becoming one of the most used by the majority of brands since it is very effective with the audience because of the level of trust that there is between an influencer and his or her followers (Biaudiet, 2017). Since people are spending a big amount of hours on social media, it's becoming harder and harder for brands to stand out (Newman & Daniel, 2015) and the practice of influencer marketing is helping the marketing industry (Haenlein et al., 2020): influencers are in fact perceived as closer or even as friends by the audience (Matthew & Kristen, 2013). This is because of the concept of parasocial relationship: "Parasocial relationships are socio-emotional connections that people develop with media figures such as celebrities or fictional characters. Parasocial relationships mirror offline relationships in many ways, even though individuals' perceived intimacy with media figures is not reciprocated. [...] They can promote healthy attitudes and behaviors and lower health-related stigma, but may adversely impact mental health through negative self-comparison. Parasocial relationships can also enhance feelings of connection and community, facilitate coping forster personal development and identity exploration, and reduce prejudice" (Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p.1).

1.4 The two generation: Y and Z

Since the age ranges that the researcher decided to study are young women between 18 and 24 and between 25 and 34, the two generazion that are taken in consideration are Generation Y, also known as Millennials, and Generation Z, or Zoomers.

This decision was taken because these two brackets of age are the ones that spend the most time on Instagram (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.).

People that were born between 1981 and 1996 (43-28 years old) are considered Millennials, and whoever was born after the year 1997 is part of the Zoomer generation (27 years old and younger) (Generation Y by the Pew Research Centre, 2023).

On one hand, individuals from Generation Y show characteristics such as being self-involved and not able to spend the day without a cellphone (Lyons, 2017), but on the other hand, they are also considered very creative, flexible, open minded and very attentive to the environment (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). Since they grew up with technology but not with social media, they are easier to be influenced and more prone to purchase online compared to other generations (Loeb, 2020).

Generation Z is made up of individuals that used social media since a very young age and, therefore, they seem to be very addicted to their phones and with a severe lack of attention (Finch, 2015) but also with a good amount of positive characteristics such as the ability to be very informed people, adaptable, plan-oriented and diverse (Duffet, 2017). Since they were in close contact with social media from the beginning of their life, it is becoming harder and harder to influence them (Duffett, 2017).

1.5 How spread is the internet and social media use

In 2022 it was possible to see an very big growth in the numbers of people using internet and social media, and also the amount of time that they spend online, arriving to reach “12 1/2 trillion hours spent online, a new milestone in internet adoption, and new records for social media use” (Hannahcurrey, 2023, <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2022/01/digital-2022-another-year-of-bumper-growth-2/>), with 95 million new mobile users more compared to the previous year (Hannahcurrey, 2023).

The social media growth through the years was even bigger than the one in internet users: it has been growing at a rate of 12% in the last ten years, reaching the amount of 4.62 billion users (Hannahcurrey, 2023). Specifically in Portugal at the beginning of 2022, social media users were 83.7% of the total population, that was 10.15 million people (Kemp, 2022).

Instagram came out to be one of the most popular platforms with 1.628 billion users across the world in April 2023, that is 25.9% of the total population above 13 years old (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.). Portugal, at the beginning of 2022 had 5.40 million instagram users with a majority between women (51.9%) (Kemp, 2022).

1.6 The known effects of influencer marketing on your age demographic

After an in-depth analysis, the researcher came to the conclusion that there are not relevant studies regarding the effects of influencer marketing specifically in Portugal and on young women, especially for a small niche as it is influencer marketing in yoga.

Chapter 2

The evolution and impact of yoga in our modern western society

For the purpose of this study, it is important to analyze the practice of yoga and its development throughout the years.

2.1 Beginning of the practice

Since this practice is very ancient it's difficult to define precisely when it developed but we can state that one of the most important authors for the history of yoga is Patañjali, father of the book *Yoga-Sûtra*. It is thanks to him that yoga shifted from mystical tradition to philosophical system: this particular kind of yoga is the most known in the West (Eliade, 2020).

From an etymological point of view, the meaning of the word yoga was interpreted in different ways depending on the Era (Eliade, 2020). What has led to different interpretations, is the fact that the “bond” to which the world refers to, is the unification of the spirit: the final goal of this discipline is to abolish dispersion and automatisms that are peculiar to the profane conscience (Eliade, 2020). The stress is put on human effort, self-discipline, and the capacity to resist temptations (Eliade, 2020).

2.2 Yoga growth

“Yoga selfies & photos of yoga products are being shared online. There are many various models and entertainment personalities who actively practice Yoga as a lifestyle, which pushes the yoga craze to greater heights worldwide. The accessibility of this wellness practice is a contributing factor to its popularity. There is practically a yoga school in every city today. That’s just a small slice of the pie. You see, billions of dollars are being spent on Yoga nowadays. And Yoga’s popularity is not going away anytime soon” (Jeong, 2024, <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/unstoppable-trend-yoga-infographic-business>).

2.2.1 Spread of yoga around the world

In the last few years, the growth of yoga has been fast and considerable: this practice is becoming more and more popular, and its ascent is not slowing down (“Quanto Vale La Spiritualità Dello Yoga,,” 2021). Until now they count 300 million of yoga practitioners in the world and the yoga industry has an annual value of \$80 millions (Ibidem). Between now and 2027 the discipline market will grow at a rate of 9,6% a year and in 2027 the number of practitioners will be 350 million (Ibidem).

Starting from the nineties, yoga transformed itself into a business of millions of dollars: sequences and positions became franchising or have been used to sell different kinds of products such as cellphones or yogurt (Mark, 2019). It has been studied that in 2008 yoga practitioners in the US spent around \$5,7 billion for yoga classes, retreats and yoga products (Mark, 2019).

This massive growth “is mainly due to the fact that yoga practice improves health and is relatively safe” (“Benefits and Adverse Effects Associated With Yoga Practice,,” 2020, p.1) as it is possible to see in a survey on the benefits and adverse effects associated with yoga practice from the Patanjali Research Foundation in India (2020): 3.135 people completed the survey and 95.5 percent of them affirmed they had benefited from yoga practice in mostly three ways that are improvement of physical fitness, a better mental state and greater cognitive functions, such as an improvement in attention, concentration, learning and memory.

2.2.2 Gender comparison

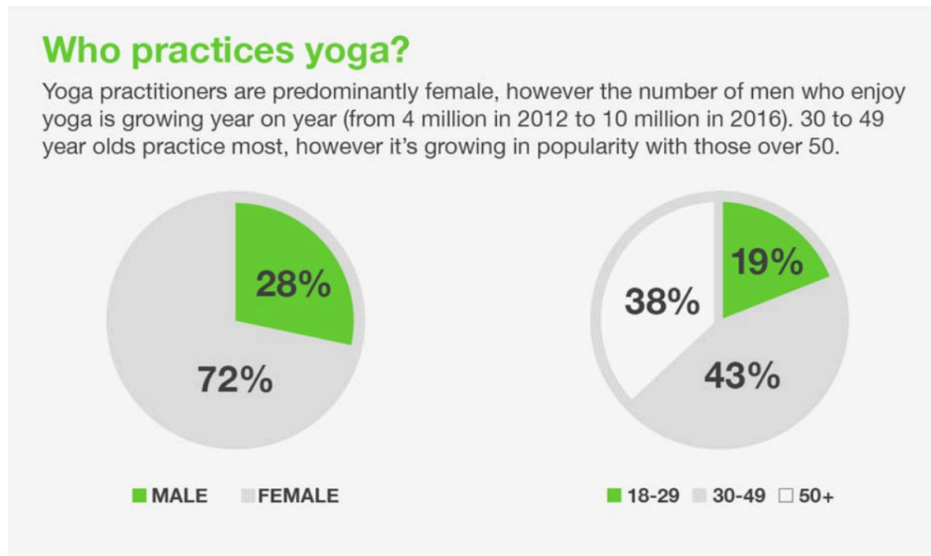


Figure 8 - Yoga statistics, Who practices yoga? | Jeong, 2024b,

<https://www.yogitimes.com/article/unstoppable-trend-yoga-infographic-business>

As it is possible to notice in the previous picture, most of the worldwide yoga practitioners are women, with a percentage of 72% compared to men that are only 28% (Jeong, 2024b). There are 36 million Americans that practice yoga regularly, and the number of practitioners in the last 10 years has doubled (Jeong, 2024b). This means that one person out of 10 Americans is committed to this practice “making the United States one of the most popular countries for the discipline” (Jeong, 2024b, <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/unstoppable-trend-yoga-infographic-business>). One of the reasons why yoga became so popular, is that, unlike other physical activities, this practice is open to every age and every body-type; in fact, there are 14 million practitioners over 50 years old (Jeong, 2024b). Even though it is not so popular among younger people, whether it is for its slow pace or because they don’t feel the need to improve their flexibility yet, it is still possible to count around a million children that practice yoga only in the United States (Jeong, 2024b). An important fact to notice is that the great majority of yogis are extreme beginners: “only 12% of yogis have more than ten years of expertise and practice in Yoga - and - the majority of persons who practice Yoga are extreme beginners (37%), followed by intermediates (22%) and beginners (27%)” (Jeong, 2024b, <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/unstoppable-trend-yoga-infographic-business>). Yoga is practiced for very different reasons: most people do it to relieve stress and to improve

physical and emotional health, but there are also other reasons such as being able to keep a distance from technology, avoiding loneliness and taking care of the self (Jeong, 2024b).

2.3 Modern yoga

The massive growth of the interests in yoga and its spread around the globe have inevitably brought to a new way of practice. As we saw, this discipline was not a sport at the time of Patañjali, but a philosophical system with all its complexity (Mark, 2019). In fact, this ancient practice found its space in modern society becoming an object of marketing, a brand, a promise of well-being (Ibidem), and it fits perfectly since our society is characterized by a consumer who searches for emotional experiences, quality of life, good brands, immediacy and communication (Lipovetsky, 2007).

Nowadays the stress is mainly on the benefits that come with the practice of asana (yoga poses), all the great moments that a person can experience through yoga retreats and themed experiences, and a wide range of beautiful and very expensive clothes and prompts (Mark, 2019).

Today, the word yoga is used as a synonym for the practice of asana (yoga poses) and postural yoga classes that are possible to find in every west city; postural yoga is in its full expansion (Mark, 2019). “Yoga has been found to promote a positive subjective experience of the body connection and comfort, agency, functionality, self-care, subjective inhabiting, and passion; known as positive embodiment” (Hinz et al, 2021, p.1).

An example of a postural yoga system is Anusara Yoga, founded by John Friend in 1997 in The Woodlands that quickly became one of the most popular yoga systems in the world (Jain, 2012). It's interesting to underline that for Friend, yoga is a consumable product and his brand, Anusara, is synonymous with better quality (Ibidem). “Anusara Yoga is particularly illustrative of contemporary yoga branding not only because of its success as a result of brand image management, but also because of ways in which it illustrates gaffes in brand image in brand image management” (Jain, 2012, p. 4).

2.3.1 Yoga branding

Numerous twentieth-century events and individuals were significant proponents of yoga branding since “the increase in access to information about worldviews and practices combined with the decreasing stigma around choosing from a plurality of worldviews and

practices resulted in a competitive marketplace” (Jain, 2012, p. 4). It is important to stress that the greater access to information regarding the different types of practices around the world was an important part of the evolution of this new practice (Jain, 2012).

Change is not a new variable in yoga history, “what differs today is the extent to which the media saturates consumer cultures, which bring consumers into near-constant contact with advertising and causes yoga products and services to change at a rate never seen before in its history [...] consequently, yoga entrepreneurs must manage their brand images in ways that make consumers feel personally connected to them” (Jain, 2012, p. 7) and, nowadays, the best way in which brands can create this deeper connection with their customers is through influencer marketing (Perrey & Spillecke, 2013).

2.3.2 Yoga tourism

As the interest in yoga grew, many people decided to start traveling to practice this activity (Connell, 2006). “The trend quickly evolved into the phenomenon of yoga tourism, which today is an important and profitable component of the wellness of the tourism industry” (Telej & Gamble, 2019).

In 2019, India was the most popular yoga destination and it secured itself the position presenting this place as the “one where achieving holistic well-being is easier than anywhere else in the world” (Telej & Gamble, 2019, p.795). In this context, yoga appears to target Western visitors who are expecting relaxation and a luxury environment (Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010) since in India, yoga experiences are usually sold in a package that contains wellness-related activities such as spa or gourmet food (Brandyopadhyay R. & Morais D., 2005).

“Another method of marketing yoga in India has been to promote it as a greatly beneficial to people’s health: [...] yoga is being marketed as a way to achieve a healthier self with emphasis on physical benefits that it can offer” (Telej, 2019, p.796). This idea fits perfectly with the Western consumers who often see yoga as an effortless activity to the typical gym experience (Ibidem) and the incorporation of wellness-related approaches used by India can be regarded as an ultimate goal to attract a wide range of yoga tourists (Ibidem).

2.4 Yoga online

2.4.1 Yoga expansion online

If we focus on online yoga, we can read about its growth in several studies, such as: “The demand for online fitness content increased predictably alongside the restrictions to physical activity necessitated by Covid-19 pandemic” (Cording, 2020, p.2), “When it comes to the availability of specifically yoga-related video content across digital mediums, it has suggested that the Covid-19 related restrictions also facilitated a rapid industry shift towards the online delivery and promotion of yoga” (Rawling, Pollen, 2020, <https://jennirawlingsblog.com/blog/the-rise-of-online-yoga>), “Online health and fitness providers have noted unprecedented growth in the use of their yoga content during 2020” (Danvalos, 2021, p.3), “This popularity was also reflected on social media with yoga being the Instagram topic most discussed by influencers in 2020” (Baklanov, 2024, <https://hypeauditor.com/blog/what-topics-are-growing-fast-on-instagram-and-what-topics-become-uninteresting-and-lose-followers/>), “Within the first half of 2020, the purchase of yoga equipment increased to 154% above that of the previous five-year period total”(Research, 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/yoga-equipment-market-insights-players-forecast-till-2030-03hle/>).

2.4.2 New content

This demand has brought changes also in the content being produced: fitness influencers said that they had to start creating video content instead of stylized still images, in order not to lose the engagement of their viewers (Godefroy, 2020). In a study on YouTube it was found that video content helps to create deeper relationships between viewer and content creator, and a longer consumption of the content (Sokolova, Perez, 2021). In fact, today “social media platforms such as Instagram continue to develop technologies that encourage users to share videos, as videos have been shown to receive 50% more engagement than static images” (Michalski, 2023, <https://www.quintly.com/blog/instagram-study-2019>).

Furthermore, it was found that, even if the practice can theoretically be adapted to any individual need (Singleton, 2019), “the current representation of yoga is far from diverse and appears to have become increasingly more idealized and objectified across commercial media” (Hinz et al, 2021, p.2). Today, the majority of yoga practitioners on Instagram are toned, young females in their young age (20s or 30s), thin, white and while doing very challenging yoga poses that may not be accessible for a lot of body types (Ibidem).

2.5 Cultural appropriation

An important concept that arises when talking about a culture adopting certain elements from another culture is the idea of cultural appropriation opposed to cultural adoption (Kunst et al., 2024).

It is possible to define the concept of cultural appropriation as following: “linguistically, ‘cultural appropriation’ is a term derived from the Latin word ‘cultura’, meaning cultivation or growth, and ‘appropriare’, signifying to make one’s own. Thus in its most basic sense, it denotes the act of taking elements from another culture and making them one’s own” (Kunst et al., 2024, p.2). On the other hand, this expression has taken another layer of negative meaning: in fact, Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines it as “the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture”. Cultural appropriation it’s associated with the idea that there are subordinated cultures that can be treated as a resource, that can be consumed; with the result of bringing various harms. (Kunst et al., 2024). “Such commodification of minority-group cultures often strips cultural elements of their original contexts, fetishizes them, and assigns them new meanings that are at odds with those of the originating culture and disapproved by its members. Thus, cultural degradation occurs when the appropriation distorts and decontextualized the heritage of the exploited culture, thereby damaging the group’s cultural identity” (Kunst et al., 2024, p.3)

It is important to underline that for cultural appropriation to occur there is the need for the group of the culture that is adopted to oppose this process (Kunst et al., 2024).

On the other hand, ‘cultural appropriation’ must not be confused with the idea of ‘cultural adoption’ (Kunst et al., 2024). The latter is in fact, a genuine cultural change: “such adoption often signifies cultural change among individuals genuinely valuing the learning experience from other cultures they consider equal to their own. Nonetheless, sincere interest alone is insufficient to guard against cultural appropriation. It is paramount that the cultural group being emulated grants their consent to this process. This distinction is important as ‘cultural adoption’ can also happen at the automatic or unconscious level, which may be relatively detached from ideological motivations” (Kunst et al., 2024, p.6).

However, the researcher believes that to assert with certainty if we are observing a cultural appropriation process as opposed to cultural adoption, there would be the need for further research.

2.6 Overview of the yoga market in Lisbon

In the last years in Lisbon a lot of Yoga Studios were born. In April 2024 we can count 12 of them (*Local Services*, n.d.):

1. Yoga Room Lisbon situated in R. Dr. António Cândido 15B, 1050-137, opened 2 years ago.
2. Shankara Yoga situated in Largo de São Sebastião da Pedreira 31 2º Andar, 1050-205 Lisboa, opened 7 years ago.
3. The Kind Space situated in Atelier, Tv. do Noronha 17, 1250-171 Lisboa, opened in 2023.
4. Ministry of Yoga situated in R. das Portas de Santo Antão 27 Floor 1, 1150-264 Lisboa, opened 7 years ago.
5. Little Yoga Space situated in R. da Assunção 42, 1100-044 Lisboa, opened 10 years ago.
6. Jaya Aerial lab situated in Rua da Escola de Medicina Veterinária 15, 1150-174 Lisboa.
7. Lisboa Yoga Loft situated in Rua Nova de São Mamede, 56, 4º esq, 1250-173, opened 7 years ago.
8. Om Iyengar Yoga Av. Marquês de Tomar 38, 1050-055 Lisboa.
9. Agora Yoga situated in Rua Rafael de Andrade 23, 2nd floor, 1150-274 Lisboa.
10. Yoga Espaço Prana situated in Rua Rafael de Andrade 23, 2nd floor, 1150-274 Lisboa.
11. Yoga Lisboa situated in R. Actriz Palmira Bastos 12B porta c, 1900-802 Lisboa.
12. Yoga Lisboa Sivananda Vedanta situated in Av. de Madrid 11B, 1000-194 Lisboa.

Resume chapter 2

In this second chapter the researcher focused her attention on the yoga practice, its development and its rapid growth in the last year, with the goal of better understanding the impact of yoga on the modern western society.

2.1 Beginning of the practice

Since this practice is very ancient it's difficult to define precisely when it developed but we can state that one of the most important authors for the history of yoga is Patañjali, father of the book *Yoga-Sûtra*. It is thanks to him that yoga shifted from mystical tradition to philosophical system: this particular kind of yoga is the most known in the West (Eliade, 2020).

2.2 Yoga growth

Yoga had great expansion in the last years, both on social media with a big amount of selfies and photos that have been shared, and in everyday life with a remarkable number of new yoga studios in almost every city (Jeong, 2024). Nowadays, the yoga market counts 300 million practitioners and an industry of \$80 millions dollars (“Quanto Vale La Spiritualità Dello Yoga,,” 2021).

There are several reasons why this practice is becoming so popular such as the fact that it can improve health and it is safe (“Benefits and Adverse Effects Associated With Yoga Practice,” 2020), and it can give a better mental state and cognitive functions, increasing concentration, learning and memory (Patanjali Research Foundation in India (2020). Moreover, this practice is supposed to be open to every body-type and every age-range, it can reduce stress and, therefore, improve emotional health and it gives the possibility to keep a distance from technology (Jeong, 2024b).

The majority of practitioners worldwide are women with a percentage of 72% compared to men that are only 28% (Jeong, 2024b), and they are extreme beginners: “only 12% of yogis have more than ten years of expertise and practice in Yoga - and - the majority of persons who practice Yoga are extreme beginners (37 percent), followed by intermediates (22%) and beginners (27%)” (Jeong, 2024b, <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/unstoppable-trend-yoga-infographic-business>).

2.3 Modern yoga

This big expansion inevitably brought the practice to a big change in the way people approach this discipline: yoga it's a very ancient practice, a philosophical system that nowadays became an object of marketing, a brand and a promise of well-being (Mark, 2019). The focus is on the benefits that a person can achieve through the performance of the asana (yoga poses), and the great moments that it is possible to experience through yoga teacher trainings and retreats (Mark, 2019). "Yoga has been found to promote a positive subjective experience of the body connection and comfort, agency, functionality, self-care, subjective inhabiting, and passion; known as positive embodiment" (Hinz et al, 2021, p.1). Change is not a new variable in yoga history, "what differs today is the extent to which the media saturates consumer cultures, which bring consumers into near-constant contact with advertising and causes yoga products and services to change at a rate never seen before in its history [...] consequently, yoga entrepreneurs must manage their brand images in ways that make consumers feel personally connected to them" (Jain, 2012, p. 7) and, nowadays, the best way in which brands can create this deeper connection with their customers is through influencer marketing (Perrey & Spillecke, 2013).

2.4 Yoga online

The expansion of the practice happened in person but also online, mainly thanks to the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic: "when it comes to the availability of specifically yoga-related video content across digital mediums, it has suggested that the Covid-19 related restrictions also facilitated a rapid industry shift towards the online delivery and promotion of yoga" (Rawling, Pollen, 2020, <https://jennirawlingsblog.com/blog/the-rise-of-online-yoga>). This fact encouraged a representation of yoga that is very diverse from the original: more idealized and objectified across commercial media(Hinz et al, 2021).

2.5 Cultural appropriation

An important concept that arises when talking about a culture adopting certain elements from another culture is the idea of cultural appropriation opposed to cultural adoption (Kunst et al., 2024).

It is possible to define the concept of cultural appropriation as following: "linguistically, 'cultural appropriation' is a term derived from the Latin word 'cultura', meaning cultivation or growth, and 'appropriare', signifying to make one's own. Thus in its most basic sense, it

denotes the act of taking elements from another culture and making them one's own" (Kunst et al., 2024, p.2). On the other hand, this expression has taken another layer of negative meaning: in fact, Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines it as "the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture". Cultural appropriation it's associated with the idea that there are subordinated cultures that can be treated as a resource, that can be consumed; with the result of bringing various harms. (Kunst et al., 2024). "Such commodification of minority-group cultures often strips cultural elements of their original contexts, fetishizes them, and assigns them new meanings that are at odds with those of the originating culture and disapproved by its members. Thus, cultural degradation occurs when the appropriation distorts and decontextualized the heritage of the exploited culture, thereby damaging the group's cultural identity" (Kunst et al., 2024, p.3).

It is important to not confuse cultural appropriation with genuine cultural adoption, that can be defined as a genuine cultural change (Kunst et al., 2024).

However, the researcher believes that to assert with certainty if we are observing a cultural appropriation process as opposed to cultural adoption, there would be the need for further research.

2.6 Overview of the yoga market in lisbon

It is possible to observe the same kind of growth in the yoga market also in Lisbon, where in the last ten years it is possible to count the opening of 12 yoga studios (*Local Services*, n.d.).

Descriptive narrative of the internship at Mae Yoga Studio, Karlsruhe

Chapter 3

3.1 Why did I choose this topic to connect to the internship

For a better understanding of how this research started it is important to underline the reason why I decided to choose this topic.

I first decided to choose this internship because of my big passion for yoga: what I wanted to do since the beginning of this master was to be able to incorporate my knowledge about yoga as much as I could into my two years and hopefully managing to do an internship in a yoga studio or in general in a yoga-related reality so that I could make use of the skills learned throughout the first year of my master's degree.

I had the chance to work with Vanessa already in the summer of 2022 for the two months of May and June, right before starting at Catòlica in September, as a yoga teacher; coming back with a completely different role within the company was an amazing experience for me. I was able to explore everything that was in the behind the scenes of the studio, more connected to its organization, the social media, the website creation and so on.

My first idea was to research how influencer marketing is currently used by yoga studios in Germany, but since I knew I needed to come back to Lisbon for the last semester of my master's, I preferred to study the market in Portugal, and more specifically Lisbon for 2 reasons:

1. I would love to stay in the city if I manage to find a job related to yoga and communication, therefore it made more sense to make a study that I could put into practice once the master's is over.
2. I knew it would have been harder to do research in a city I'm not living in, especially since I decided to use a qualitative approach and to run interviews.

3.2 *The company, mission, vision and values*

“Driven by dreams and visions: with courage, strength, humor and passion: This is Us. A community of yoga teachers who are writing their own story with yoga, meditation and more. In all facets, always there: Heart & Soul. Despite the different yoga training, styles and ways of life, one thing unites us above all: the love of bringing ourselves and other people into their fullness. Whether through sweaty flows or deep meditation sessions.” (*About | MAE Yoga Studios Karlsruhe*, n.d.).

This is how Mae Yoga studio is defined on their website: a strong community of teachers and a place where everyone can find their space.

The studio was founded four years ago in 2020 by Vanessa Laura-Sardo in Akademiestraße 32, 76133 Karlsruhe, Germany: “in the unique vaulted cellar on Akademiestraße, just a few steps from Europaplatz, you can leave a little more everyday life behind you with every step down. The vault and the unmistakable charm create a sense of security and a feeling of protection and immersion. Perfect for your yoga practice, where you can leave stress completely outside” (*About | MAE Yoga Studios Karlsruhe*, n.d.). Recently, in July 2023, Vanessa decided to expand the business and open a second studio in Ebertstraße, Karlsruhe: “the light-flooded, green oasis in the southwest of the city (formerly Yoga Kula) creates the perfect complement to the secure vaulted cellar: with a spacious lounge to relax in, a sun terrace and a garden, you can breathe deeply, connect with the community and switch off” (*About | MAE Yoga Studios Karlsruhe*, n.d.).

Even though the two studio look very different, the mission of the brand is one:

“At Mae Yoga, we have followed a yoga life path full of curiosity and love of freedom in order to discover ourselves outside of social contexts and social roles.

The question of why yoga and meditation are so emotional and profound motivated us. On our global quest, from India to Mexico, Canada, New Zealand and beyond, we have moved freely and haphazardly, always seeking adventure and human connection. We wanted to understand how people live, function and who we really are. Ultimately, we realized that the answers cannot be found outside, be it in an Indian temple in

Rishikesh or on the summit of Concepcion in Nicaragua. It doesn't have to be exotic, "Instagrammable" or the white Walla Walla dress with braided hair on the beach.

The real processes take place under different conditions: in security, connection, community and trust... and then letting go. Thanks to our many years of in-house practice, we not only bring our own wealth of experience, but also extensive know-how in teaching” (*About | MAE Yoga Studios Karlsruhe*, n.d.).

3.3 Description of the activities in the internship and trainee’s role

My internship at Mae Yoga started on the 1st September 2023 until the 31st January 2024 and it allowed me to put into practice the knowledge that I acquired during my master’s degree at Catòlica, and to understand the dynamics behind the organization of a yoga studio. I have already worked with Vanessa, the previous as a yoga teacher, but being able to see and be part of the behind the scenes of the studio gave me a much deeper and valuable understanding of how to run and organize such a business and, since I would like to continue working in this field not just as a yoga teacher but also connecting it to what I have studied in these two years at Catòlica University, these 5 months were for me extremely important and precious.

My role within the company was characterized by its adaptability, consistently evolving to meet the demands of the moment rather than being confined to a static position. I mainly worked side by side with Vanessa, my internship supervisor and owner of the company, and my first tasks encompassed the initial development phase of a new online yoga platform that Vanessa wanted to open for quite a while. During our meetings we organized the different phases of these new project as following:

1. first stage

Researching existing online platforms and deciding which one would be the best fit for Mae studio, therefore I had to analyze and compare the prizes, the different features, how user friendly they were and how compatible with our product. Furthermore, I had to investigate the competitors: what they were offering, the pricing, their networking and their positioning in the market, not only for the German area but also for the english speaking market in order to have more inspiration. The last task of this stage consisted in making an analysis of what the people are searching for when they want to practice yoga online in Germany, in order to create a more effective product to talk

with the teachers from the studio in order to find who would be interested in teaching those courses.

2. second stage

This stage was more technical. In fact, my role was to meet with the cameramen and Vanessa in order to decide which would have been the best setup for the camera, the lighting and the background in the studio. At a later stage I researched about who could work on the post production of the videos and arranged a few meetings with Jana (website designer) about how to implement the platform inside the existing website. Moreover I worked on brainstorming together with Alessandra (social media manager) to find a good strategy to promote this new project on instagram.

Alongside this project, another great task that I had was finding strategies to bring more people into the studio. After brainstorming and proposing my different idea to Vanessa, we opted for the following ones:

A. Feedbacks

I noticed that the students didn't have a way to communicate what they like or they don't like within the studio, therefore creating a space for feedback was a good opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the business. After Vanessa approved my idea, I had to create a survey with different questions about the studio, how the people felt, about the classes, etc.

The survey was structured in the following way:

“We are a team and in order to grow we need your help! Please, fill out this form to let us know what is working and on what we can improve in order to create the best yoga experience for you and the other yogis. This solution is completely anonymous so you have the freedom to be as honest and direct as you want. Thank you very much for taking the time.

1. You identify yourself as*

- Male
- Female
- Diverse
- Prefer not say

2. Your age is between*

- 15-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- More than 60

3. What do you do?*

- I'm a student
- I work
- Other: _____

4. How would you define yourselves when it comes to yoga?*

- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- Professional (I am a yoga teacher)

5. Why do you practice yoga?*

- To improve physical health and fitness
- To improve flexibility
- To improve strength
- To recover from an injury
- To relax
- To deepen my spirituality
- Other: _____

6. Which is the main reason you practice with us?*

7. How many days a week do you practice in our studio?*

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-7
- Every day
- More than once a day

8. Is there anything that could motivate you to come more often? If yes, what?*

9. Which is your favorite class here at Mae?*

10. What do you like the most about it? *
- The sequencing
 - I connected with the teacher
 - The music
 - Hands on assist
 - I can connect to myself during the practice
 - Other: _____
11. Is there any style/practice that you would like to find at Mae or you would like to have more?*
- Pranayama (breath techniques)
 - Meditation
 - Yin
 - Jivamukti
 - Other:
12. What are the things that you like the most about the Mae space?*
13. Is there something we can improve?*
14. Which are the characteristics that you like the most in our yoga classes?*
15. What do you like the least?*
16. Which criteria do you use to choose your lesson?*
- Day
 - Time
 - Teacher
 - Style
17. What topics are you interested in for workshops in 2024?*
18. How did you find us?*
- Social media
 - Google research
 - Friends
 - Other: _____ -
19. Is there something else you would like to add?

Thank you for your effort!”

B. Social media challenge

Another idea I had, to create a more engaged community, was to implement two challenges for the practitioners at the studio. The first one was an online challenge that me and Vanessa developed in the following way: the goal was to practice in order to achieve or progress in *Kakasana* (the crow pose). The challenge took place in the second part of January over the course of six days: the first five were dedicated to how to prepare, warm up and open up each part of the body in order to be ready to attempt the *asana* (pose), and the last day was the full tutorial. We created one short video (reel) for each day to post on the studio's Instagram page. In order to participate, people needed to post themselves trying to attempt crow pose or practicing a warm up, tagging Mae Instagram page. The winner who was drawn randomly won a Mae hoodie with the logo of the yoga studio.

C. In person challenge

The other challenges that we created will take place in the studio in March 2024. Participants are encouraged to practice more throughout the month: if they attend 10 classes they get a drop-in for a class for free, or, if they reach 20 classes they get a five-pass as a prize. Every person that will take part in the challenge, will get a little journal where they can write about their progress and how they feel to create a better sense of awareness. Moreover, one board will be hung in each of the two yoga studios, where the people can draw an X on the day they practiced to keep track of how many classes they took. On the 31st of the month, a special class will take place, open only to those who joined the challenge: a two hour practice, followed by some time together in the yoga studio, as an occasion to get together and create a stronger community between the practitioners and a greater connection between students and teachers.

Methodology

Chapter 4

4.1 Research question

One of the most important, if not the most important part of a research is the development of a good research question (Lipowski, 2008). The research question has to address a narrow issue that is challenging and will be solved with an analysis (Lipowski, 2008).

The researcher noticed a big expansion in the yoga market both online and in person in the last years. This inevitably led to a growth of marketing and influencer campaigns focused on yoga in a world where social media are already very present in the everyday life of the majority of the people.

Therefore the researcher was interested in finding an answer to the following research question:

RQ1: How do yoga studios in Lisbon utilize influencer marketing to promote their services?

Moreover, as previously observed in the literature review, it is possible to observe that the age brackets that make use of social media the most and therefore are more exposed to influencers marketing campaigns are Generation Y (25-34 years old) and Z (18-24 years old). On top of it, it was noticeable that the majority of the yoga practitioners around the world are women, therefore the following subsidiary research questions were generated:

RQ2: What impact does influencer marketing have on the brand awareness and customer engagement in yoga studios in Lisbon?

RQ3: How do yoga studio managers, yoga teachers and practitioners perceive the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the yoga industry?

RQ4: What guidelines can be developed to optimize the use of influencer marketing for yoga studios in Lisbon based on current practices and outcomes?

4.2 Research approach

After crafting the research question, the researcher has to decide whether, for the purpose of the research, it is better to use a quantitative, qualitative or mixed method approach. This decision has to be made depending on the type of results the researcher wants to gather. In order to better understand which method should be used for this research, it is important to get a closer look at the development of these different research methods, the similarities and the differences.

Since the foundation of a specific research approach changes depending on the areas of studies, it appears not to be so easy to identify when they developed (Mulisa, 2021). For a long period of time, until the 1990s, most researchers had the strong belief that these two methods couldn't be used together (Burke & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). At the beginning of the 90s, a group of scholars started to support the idea of using qualitative and quantitative research methods together (Burke & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

“Before determining whether one of the three research approaches would be suitable, it appears important to consider the fundamental distinction between qualitative, quantitative” (Mulisa, 2021, p. 116) and mixed methods approaches. It is possible to state that quantitative research tends to be presented in the form of numbers and to be analyzed through mathematical operations, “solely based on numerical data and driven by stringent statistical rules” (Mulisa, 2021, p. 116); on the contrary, qualitative research is presented through narration, pictures, artifacts (Mulisa, 2021, “is guided by a greater degree of dialectics and adaptability” (Mulisa, 2021, p.116). Least but not last, mixed method is the combination of the two: “mixed research is a study that involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected currently or sequentially, are given priority and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research” (Gunasekare, 2015, p. 362). Therefore, it is possible to state that “the true

distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is seen in the type of data used” (Mulisa, 2021, p.116). Another very important factor to keep in mind while choosing the research method is the final purpose of the study the researcher is conducting, in fact, when it comes to confirmatory purposes like testing hypotheses and validating theories, it is advisable to make use of a quantitative approach, whereas, whether the research is more for exploratory purposes, to grasp the nature of the phenomenon, a quantitative approach to the research appears to be more appropriate (Mulisa, 2021).

After analyzing the differences between quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research approaches, the researcher believes that the most suitable one for the present research is the qualitative method. In point of fact the purpose of this research is to understand how the influencer marketing yoga campaign affects young women between 18 and 24 and 25 and 34 years old, therefore is more inclined to understand the mechanism behind the phenomena and the opinions of the participants, more than the amount of people affected by it. “The primary goal of a qualitative study, which is by definition exploratory, is to dig into people’s behaviors, opinions, perceptions, and experiences that are difficult to answer through quantitative research. [...] It has the potential to explore in-depth the points of interest to achieve specific research objectives” (Mulisa, 2021, p.124). Maxwell and Reybould (2015) pinpointed four main conditions that bring a researcher to be prone to using a qualitative method:

1. if the study focuses on the way people make sense of a specific phenomena, preferring meaning over behavior or attitudes
2. if the study is focused not only on the phenomena but also on the context in which it arises
3. if it focuses on the importance of the process more than products, how the variable works rather than the degree of correlation
4. if the research takes in consideration that there is a certain amount of subjectivity

Therefore, a qualitative approach “is suitable when considering flexibility, exploring new concepts, developing new theories, and constructing conceptual frameworks; [...] when the purpose of the research is to describe the kind and quality of phenomena using narrations to explain the findings” (Mulisa, 2021, p.125). The last element to take in consideration after the data and the purpose is the number of participants; in point of fact, a qualitative method is more suitable when the number of participants is limited to a small group (Mulisa, 2021).

4.3 Interviews

For the purpose of this study the researcher believes that the best way to collect the data is through interviews.

“An interview is a specific type of interaction in which - usually and predominantly - a researcher asks questions about someone’s life experience, opinions, dreams, fears and hopes and the interview participant answers the question. [...] Interviews provide a space for extended conversations that allow the researcher insights into how people think and what they believe” (Knott et al., 2022, p.1).

More specifically, the researcher decided to use one of “the most common types of interview: one researcher taking a semi-structured approach to interviewing one participant using a topic guide” (Knott et al., 2022, p.1).

As Knott et al. (2022), there are several steps to follow in order to create a well structured way to structure this type of interview; the main ones are the following (Knott et al., 2022):

1. Research design

- Participant selection: it is important that the researcher “defines the people or social groups being studied” (Knott et al., 2022, p.1). This usually means shifting from more of a theoretical question to an empirical one, explaining exactly why these people’s characteristics were chosen to research the thesis topic. “The criteria must be based on demographic variables, like race and gender, but they may also be context-specific, for example, years of experience in an organization. [...] Researcher should be clear about what characteristics would make an individual a candidate for inclusion in the study (and what would exclude them)” (Knott et al., 2022, p.2).
- Study design: when it comes to deciding how many people should be interviewed, the number might change a lot depending on many different factors; for example if the researcher aims to interview the same people more than once and maybe even over the course of several years, he/she would probably have a smaller sample of people to interview compared to a researcher that is interviewing his/her participants only one time. Moreover, “researchers often stop interviewing when the interviews confirm findings

from earlier interviews with no new surprising insights” (Knott et al., 2022, p.2).

2. Data collection: “semi-structured interviews are typically organized around a topic guide comprised of an order set of broad topics (usually 3-5). Each topic includes a set of questions that form the basis of the discussion between the researcher and the participant. These topics are organized around key concepts that the researcher has identified” (Knott et al., 2022, p.2).
 - Topic guide: usually the way these topics guides are structured is by starting relatively broad with the question, to narrow it down to more specific ones the more the interview goes on. This happens mostly because “abstract questions are often easier for participants to answer once they have been asked more concrete questions” (Knott et al., 2022, p.2). An important factor to always keep in mind is the fact that the question shouldn’t be posed in a way that influences the participant, both in a positive or negative way. Moreover, the researcher should feel that he/she can’t get out of the topic guide; in fact this is more of a way to stay on track with the questions but usually the order and even the questions themselves can change throughout the course of the interview.
 - Optimizing the interview: it is very important to run the interviews in a place where all the participants and the researcher can feel at ease, where the interview can continue the whole time without interruptions, noises and other distractions. Moreover, the recording device must be good enough so the researcher can easily go through it afterwards. It is highly recommended for the researcher to listen to the recordings and read the notes as soon as possible after the interviews, so that the information are still fresh.
3. Ethics and reflexivity: “all elements of an in-depth interview can raise ethical challenges and concerns” (Knott et al., 2022, p.4); therefore, it is important for the researcher to to keep them in consideration while running the interviews.
 - Ethical consideration prior to interview: “before conducting interviews, researchers should consider harm minimization, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and reflexivity and positionality” (Knott et al., 2022, p.4). The researcher should know beforehand how to obtain the consent to use the information that arises from the interview (oral or written). This consent must also keep in consideration how the interview will be recorded, reminding the

practitioners that they can stop the interview at any time and decide not to answer specific questions. “In terms of anonymity and confidentiality, it is standard practice when conducting interviews to agree not to use (or even collect) participants’ names and personal details that are not pertinent to the study [...]. Regardless of what a researcher decides, decisions around anonymity must be agreed with participants during the process of gaining informed consent and respected following the interview” (Knott et al., 2022, p.5).

- Ethical consideration post-interview: in case the participants have been guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, these must be respected through a data storage that doesn’t compromise what there was an agreement on. “For example, researchers should consider removing names and any other unnecessary personal details from the interview transcripts, password-protecting and encrypting files using pseudonyms to label and store all interview data” (Knott et al., 2022, p.5).

4.4 Asking for consent for interviews

Before proceeding with the interview the researcher asked for oral consent.

“Hi [Name], thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and it will last approximately 40 to 60 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

participant response

Thank you. Therefore let's proceed with the interview. Please let me know if you want to stop at any time.

4.5 Social groups under study

For the purpose of this study, the researcher decided to conduct interviews on three different groups of people:

1. Yoga studio managers/social media managers
2. Yoga teachers
3. Yoga practitioners

All of them are based in Lisbon.

The first group keeps in consideration two categories of people: studio managers and/or social media managers; this because the yoga community in Lisbon started to grow only very recently, in the last few years. Therefore, it is possible for small businesses that can't actually afford a team member that is only doing social media management; what can happen is that the studio manager takes care also of this part of the organization. But when this figure is present inside the studio, the researcher prefers to talk directly with her/him since the purpose of the research is highly connected with social media.

The second group of people is composed of yoga teachers in Lisbon that are also active online: they teach in presence but they promote their classes, events and trainings on Instagram, therefore they can be considered influencers.

The third and last group is composed by practitioner with that must have specific characteristics:

- They need to be women
- They need to be in an age range between 18 and 34 years old
- They need to practice yoga in Lisbon in presence

The reason why the researcher decided to focus only on women is because, as we can see previously in the statistics listed in the second chapter, most of the practitioners nowadays are

female with a percentage of 72%, compared to men that are only 28% (Jeong, 2024b). Regarding the age range 18 to 34, the researcher decided to focus on Gen Y and Gen Z, respectively, people between 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 (Pew Research Centre, 2023), since these are the two generations that statistically use Instagram the most (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.).

4.5.1 Social media/Yoga Studios managers - table 2

<i>Question</i>	<i>Author/source</i>
Can you describe your overall marketing strategy and how influencer marketing fits into it?	Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020
Could you describe the latest influencer marketing campaign you run? If you do run campaigns, what portions of your budget is allocated to influencer marketing?	Haenlein et al., 2020 Geyser, 2023a
If you don't make use of influencer marketing campaigns, do you make use of yoga influencers in other ways? For example, yoga teachers that also have a strong presence online? If yes, could you describe better how and when was the last time (goals and outcomes)?	Geyser, 2023b
What challenges have you faced in working with this type of influencers?	Perry et al, 2013
Do you think they impacted the growth of your studio? Why yes or Why not? If yes, in which way?	Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020 Matthew & Kristen, 2013

What type of content do you find the most effective when it comes to working with yoga influencers/teachers?	Matthew & Kristen, 2013 Fardouly et al., 2018 Van den Berg et al., 2002 Myers and Crowther, 2009 Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2012
How do you choose the type of yoga teachers influencers you want to work with?	Biaudet, 2017
Do you gather feedback from your customers about these campaigns/events? How?	Biaudet, 2017
How do you plan to use influencers in your future marketing strategies?	Gass, 2015
How do you stay updated with the latest trends in influencer marketing within the yoga industry?	Haenlein et al., 2020
Is there anything you would like to add?	

4.5.2 Teachers - table 3

<i>Question</i>	<i>Author/source</i>
Do you make use of social media to promote your classes, events and trainings?	Perry et al, 2013 Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020

How many followers do you have?	Geyser, 2023b
Do you consider yourself an influencer? Why?	Geyser, 2023b
What is the content that you like to share the most?	Fardouly et al., 2018 Van den Berg et al., 2002 Myers and Crowther, 2009 Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2012 Myers and Crowther, 2009
What is the content that has the highest engagement rate on your profile?	Bailey et al., 2021 Fardouly et al., 2018
What is the content that attracts the most people in person?	Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020
Which people do you attract the most (age and gender)?	Jeong, 2024 Jeong, 2024b Mark, 2019
What do you think about using influencer marketing for the promotion of yoga related events/classes/training?	Mark, 2019 Lipovetsky, 2007
Do you believe influencers can bring benefits to yoga studios? Why? If yes, which ones? Could you make concrete examples?	Perry et al, 2013 Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020

Do you believe that this phenomenon has an impact on the practice of yoga? Why?	Bailey et al., 2021 Hinz et al, 2021 Jain, 2012 Connell, 2006 Telej & Gamble, 2019 Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010 Bandyopadhyay R. & Morais D., 2005 Rawling and Pollen, 2020 Danvalos, 2021 Godefroy, 2020 Kunst et al., 2024
Is there anything you would like to add?	

4.5.3 Practitioners - table 4

<i>Question</i>	<i>Author/source</i>
How old are you?	Jeong, 2024b <i>Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal — Global Digital Insights, n.d.</i>
Do you use the social media platform Instagram? (If yes, how much daily?)	Kemp, 2022

	Cohen et al., 2017 and Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015
Do you follow yoga influencers profiles? (If yes, which one is your favorite and what do you like the most about it?)	Kemp, 2022
How often do you engage with yoga related content on social media?	Kemp, 2022 Bailey et al., 2021 Fardouly et al., 2018
Do you prefer content from professional yoga instructors or lifestyle influencers? Why?	Correia de Sousa, 2020
Have influencer recommendations ever influenced your loyalty to a particular yoga studio or brand?	Correia de Sousa, 2020 Perry et al, 2013 Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020
What do you find most valuable in the content shared by influencers? (es. tips, personal stories, product recommendations?)	Perry et al, 2013 Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020
Do you follow some pages of yoga studios in Lisbon?	Kemp, 2022
What kind of content do you like to see the most on yoga studio pages?	Kemp, 2022 Bailey et al., 2021 Fardouly et al., 2018

Do you practice yoga in Lisbon? (If yes, where? How often?)	Jeong, 2024 Jeong, 2024b
What brought you to the studio?	Hinz et al, 2021 Jain, 2012
When it comes to joining a new class in a studio, what affects your decision the most? More specifically, where do you search for it? In the studio schedule or on social media? If the latter, where specifically?	Perrey & Spillecke, 2013 Perry et al, 2013 Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020
And when it comes to more structured experiences such as yoga retreats or teacher trainings? If yes, have you ever signed up to a class or event because it was promoted by a yoga influencer? If so, what made you decide to go for it? Has the class matched the expectations set by the yoga teacher/influencer?	Correia de Sousa, 2020 Perrey & Spillecke, 2013 Perry et al, 2013 Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020
If you encounter a yoga event promoted by an influencer/yoga teacher on Instagram do you consider it trustworthy? Why/why not?	Correia de Sousa, 2020 Perry et al, 2013 Singh, 2009 Biaudet, 2017 Haenlein et al., 2020
Is there anything you would like to add?	

Analysis

Chapter 5

Social Media Manager

Can you describe your overall marketing strategy and how influencer marketing fits into it? If you don't make use of influencer marketing campaigns, do you make use of yoga influencers in other ways? For example, yoga teachers that also have a strong presence online? If yes, could you describe better how and when was the last time (goals and outcomes)? How do you plan to use influencers in your future marketing strategies?

The overall marketing strategy of Yoga Room does not include influencers in the sense of lifestyle influencers: but they worked with yoga teachers with a big follower base to attract more people at the studio and to create more visibility online. Therefore, they use influencer marketing to achieve the business needs. In fact, influencer marketing is “a technique that employs social media (content created by everyday people using highly and scalable technologies such as blogs, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis and vlogs) and social influencers (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization’s marketing and business needs” (Singh, 2009, p. 19).

Even though they haven't started using different types of influencers yet, they want to start a specific program that focuses on their use in their marketing strategy.

Being aware of the importance of social influence for a brand is essential. In fact, brands use the social influence theory to be more effective on their customers: “social influence involves intentional and unintentional efforts to change another person's beliefs, attitudes, or behavior. Unlike persuasion, which is typically intentional and requires some degree of awareness on the part of the target, social influence may be inadvertent or accidental. Social influence often operates via peripheral processing. Hence, the target may be unaware of the influence attempt. Unlike compliance gaining, which is usually goal directed, social influence is often non goal directed and the outcomes may be inconsistent with, or unrelated to, a

communicator's goals. Social influence encompasses such strategies as indebtedness or reciprocity, commitment, social proof, liking and attractiveness, authority, and scarcity” (Gass, 2015, p.348).

Could you describe the latest influencer marketing campaign you run? If you do run campaigns, what portions of your budget is allocated to influencer marketing? What challenges have you faced in working with this type of influencers? Do you think they impacted the growth of your studio? Why yes or why not? If yes, in which way?

We didn't run an influencer campaign, but what we did was hosting a big name in the online yoga community: Patrick Beach. He came to Lisbon and did his training in the studio. Therefore, there was no budget allocated by Yoga Room for this event, they only offered the studio. He promoted himself but his presence at the studio and online tagging the place was very beneficial for the business: economically because the training was fully booked and he was renting the place, so part of those money went to Yoga Room, and online since as soon as his name was connected to the Yoga Room studio, their metrics when up really fast and they were able to reach a wide range of accounts.

Patrick Beach falls into the category of macro-influencers: “*Macro-influencers* are one step down from the mega-influencers, and maybe more accessible as influencer marketers. You would consider people with followers in the range between 100,000 and 1 million followers on a social network to be macro-influencers” (Geysler, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>). It is possible to divide the group in two distinct categories: celebrities that were never able to achieve widespread fame and, the most beneficial for marketing, experts that became successful online but with a larger following compared to micro-influencers (Ibidem, 2023b). Collaborations with macro-influencers are important because, thanks to their prominent online presence, they are good in building awareness; moreover, they are usually more compared to mega-influencers making it easier for brands to find a better fit (Ibidem, 2023b). On the other hand it is important to be careful since they could have bought their followers, making them prone to influencer fraud (Ibidem, 2023b).

The only challenge that came out with this collaboration is that Patrick's profile got hacked so, this year, since they wanted to recreate the same event, they had to remake all the posts and marketing that was done the previous year.

The studio didn't have instant growth, but it had a very big visibility. Most of the people that joined the training were traveling so they will not buy a monthly pass, but if they come back to the city they will remember the place and come practice here again, or they will recommend it to people they know. Therefore it is more of a long term growth.

What type of content do you find the most effective when it comes to working with yoga influencers/teachers?

The posts that worked the most were the ones made in collaboration between the two accounts. But it was important to notice that it was mostly about timing: the posts that had a higher engagement were the ones at the very beginning or when getting closer to the date of the training.

How do you choose the type of yoga teachers influencers you want to work with? Do you gather feedback from your customers about these campaigns/events? How?

The criteria that they use to choose with which yoga teacher collaborate is definitely the size of the follower base, but also if they resonate with their style of teaching and what they are promoting through their classes, if they would like to participate in their events in the first place.

Regarding gathering feedback, they didn't do anything formal but they got an idea of how much the people liked the training from the stories and posts that they would publish.

How do you stay updated with the latest trends in influencer marketing within the yoga industry?

They stay updated mostly going through the search page on Instagram and looking at what the other studios in the city and not only are doing. If there is a specific topic, then they concentrate on looking into what other people are doing for that niche, through hashtags as well, for example.

Teachers

Do you make use of social media to promote your classes, events and training? How much?

Social media marketing is becoming one of the most important ways to do marketing due to the build in level of trust that arises between an influencer and their follower base (Biaudet, 2017; Perry et al, 2013), the researcher wanted to understand to what extent yoga teachers in Lisbon make use of social media platform and whether they can be defined as influencers.

All the teachers that were interviewed for the purpose of this study affirmed that they make use of social media to promote their classes, events and training. They all make use of the social media platform Instagram and most of them use it multiple times a week especially to promote their class schedule. The minority of them use it with less intensity, on a monthly average.

How many followers do you have? Do you consider yourself an influencer?

The teachers that were interviewed have a follower base between 1.000 and 8.000 followers. They are defined by Geysers (2023b) as “The newest influencer-type to gain recognition is the *nano-influencer*. These people only have a small number of followers, but they tend to be experts in an obscure or highly specialized field. You can think of nano-influencers as being the proverbial big fish in a small pond”. This type of influencers are characterized by “having a strong voice in one community or niche, [...] uniform audience with whom they establish a close relationship, and they are perceived as highly credible by their audience” (Conde, R., & Casais, B., 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113708>). On one hand these characteristics bring some advantages such as having an audience that is very loyal and with a high level of trust, a strong engagement rate and lower costs for those who want to work with this type of influencers (Conde, R., & Casais, B., 2023). On the other hand, it is important to underline they also present some disadvantages such as: “lower reach and visibility, large-scale activation is harder, less control over output, volatile and harder to measure” (Conde, R., & Casais, B., 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113708>).

However the teachers that were interviewed had different ideas regarding whether they would consider themselves influencers: they either don't consider themselves influencers at

all, or only partially. Whereas, if we look at the definition of influencers they can definitely be considered as such. In fact “an influencer is someone who has the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience” (Geysler, 2023b), or “one who has a following in a distinct niche with whom he or she actively engaged” (Ibidem, 2023b, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/#toc-0>). The word “influence” is defined by Brown & Hayes (2008) as the power to affect a person and an Influencer is “a third party who can significantly shape the customer’s purchasing decision but may ever be accountable for it” (Brown & Hayes, 2008, p. 50). These individuals are capable of creating a high credibility about their knowledge of a specific topic, by regularly sharing about it on a social media platform and creating a follower base consisting of people who are drawn to this topic (Geysler, 2023b).

What is the content that you like to share the most? What is the content that has the highest engagement rate on your profile? What is the content that attracts the most people in person?

When it comes to the type of content that yoga teachers in Lisbon share and like to share the most, we can see positive outcomes connected to it. In fact, What they all affirmed answering these three questions is that they mostly publish spontaneously about their life, yoga related movement, but everything without too much of a structure or trying to show only one specific part of their life. This can be extremely important if we connect it to the problems that can arise from posting pictures and videos that are too edited and follow a specific aesthetic. Research started finding correlation between the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, and problematics such as self-objectification and body image concerns, eating disorders and continuous self monitoring of the body's appearance, due to the strict selection and all the editing that is usually done on the images that are shared on Instagram. The researcher believes that this more spontaneous way of posting could weaken these side effects, but she is aware this affirmation needs further investigations.

Moreover, one of the teachers affirmed that, when it comes to the post that attracts people in person, he believes that that is the content shared by other students. This reconnects to the idea that is conveyed by Liu et al. (2023), that social media are a place to create connections between people, communities and the outside world when used in the right way and connected to the needs and values of the follower (Meyerson et al., 2023).

Which people do you attract the most (age and gender)?

The teachers that were interviewed affirmed that the people that they attract the most are women between 25 and 45 years old. These statistics follow what Jeong (2024b) affirmed: in fact it is possible to observe that 72% of the yoga practitioners worldwide are female and, when it comes to age, 43% of the yogis are between 30 and 49 years old.

What do you think about using influencer marketing for the promotion of yoga related events/classes/training? Do you believe influencers can bring benefits to yoga studios? Why? If yes, which ones? Could you make concrete examples?

In response to this question the researcher observed very different types of answers. The majority of them affirmed that They don't believe that making use of influencers campaign for the promotion of yoga studios could be beneficial; this is because they think that in order to bring people and make them stay, the most important thing is creating a real connection with them and being passionate about what you are teaching. Another answer that the researcher got is completely the opposite: that is the idea that influencer marketing would actually work because the practitioners would be happy to meet their favorite influencer in person. Everyone, though, agreed on the idea that an influencer campaign could work to bring people in the studio but not so much to keep them on the long term. Therefore it depends on the goal of the studio.

It is interesting to observe that the importance of the connection and bond that arises between the teacher and the student, it's what really creates loyalty towards, in this case a yoga studio, but in general a brand (Biaudet, 2017).

Do you believe that this phenomenon has an impact on the practice of yoga? Why?

Every teacher affirmed that using social media marketing and influencer marketing for the promotion of yoga studios. This is because what is shown on social media is just a little part of the wholeness of the yoga practice: that is to say only the yoga poses, as opposed to all the philosophy, history and teachings that are part of yoga. "Instagram could be described as an appearance focused media platform" (Fardouly et al., 2018, p.1389), and this is also the focus

that people use when it comes to yoga on social media: “Instagram is a site for selling and promoting ‘health’, where people are ‘taught’ they can ‘easily’ change their behavior, body, and life situation, and consume health and happiness” (Bailey et al., 2021, p.829).

Furthermore, the researcher noticed that none of them addressed the concept of cultural appropriation in any way. As previously mentioned it is important to underline the difference between the idea of cultural appropriation and the one of cultural adoption (Kunst et al., 2024), but unfortunately this topic would need further research, in relation to yoga, in order to be able to distinguish between the two.

Practitioners

How old are you? Do you use the social media platform Instagram? (If yes, how much daily?)

The participant that were chosen for this research are between 18 and 34: this because, according to the two age brackets that use Instagram the most are the people between 18 and 24 and between 25 and 34, the researcher decided to focus this study on these people (*Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, n.d.). Moreover, the biggest percentage of the practitioners (43%), are between 30 and 49 years old (Jeong, 2024b); therefore, the researcher wanted to focus also on this group.

When it comes to the use of the social media platform Instagram, the participants affirmed that they use it on a daily basis between 30 minutes and 2 hours on average. These numbers follow the statistics given by Cohen et al., 2017 and Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015), that affirm that instagram is becoming very popular especially among young women that tend to spend at least 30 minutes a day on it.

Do you follow yoga influencers profiles? (If yes, which one is your favorite and what do you like the most about it?) How often do you engage with yoga related content on social media? Do you prefer content from professional yoga instructors or lifestyle influencers? Why? What do you find most valuable in the content shared by influencers? (es. tips, personal stories, product recommendations?)

The majority of the participants affirmed that they follow yoga influencers profile and that they consider yoga teachers that are active online also influencers. The ones that they like to follow the most are those who share about the philosophy, that can convey through social media how passionate they are about the practice, their views on yoga and overall how this blends into their life. Multiple times there was the idea of this research of connection that came up during the interviews: followers and practitioner want to feel connected to their teacher mostly, want to be able to practice with them in person and use Instagram as one more tool to keep themselves updated about what their favorite teacher is offering at the moment and in general what is happening in their private life as well.

This idea fits perfectly with the definition of social media marketing by Singh (2009, p. 19): influencer marketing is “a technique that employs social media (content created by everyday people using highly and scalable technologies such as blogs, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis and vlogs) and social influencers (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization’s marketing and business needs”.

Regarding whether they engage with these profiles, most of the participants affirmed that they are passive users.

Have influencer recommendations ever influenced your loyalty to a particular yoga studio or brand?

The majority of the practitioners affirmed that their loyalty towards a specific studio or brand was never influenced by a yoga influencer. That the process was the opposite, they were practicing at the studio before they got to know the teachers/influencers.

The researcher is aware that the research is lacking when it comes to the effects that social media influencers have on young women in Portugal: there are “several studies regarding the categorization of social media influencers. Several literature reviews were found about influencer marketing, social media marketing and social media. Studies focusing on how influencers impact products, platforms, age cohorts, etc. have also been found. However, no relevant studies seem to exist regarding specifically how categories of social media influencers affect one or more similar age cohorts, specifically in an age group that currently is divided into two age cohorts. Additionally, [...] there is currently no ongoing research on

how categories of influencers affect people throughout Instagram, in regard to one or more generations. There are also very few studies in Portugal about young women and how social media impacts their lives. Since in Portugal most social media users are women and the largest age cohort specifically for Portuguese Instagram users is 18-24, this is a specific target that should be studied.” (Correia de Sousa, 2020, p. 40).

Do you follow some pages of yoga studios in Lisbon? What kind of content do you like to see the most on yoga studio pages?

All the practitioners affirmed that they follow the pages of the yoga studios where they practice, but at the same time they are not really interested in what they are publishing.

Do you practice yoga in Lisbon? (If yes, where? How often?) What brought you to the studio?

Every practitioner affirmed that they practice at a studio in Lisbon, some of them regularly, others more sporadically. Most of them stated that what brought them to the studio were either recommendations from friends or other practitioners, or the distance from their house. The minority is influenced by the teachers.

When it comes to joining a new class in a studio, what affects your decision the most? More specifically, where do you search for it? In the studio schedule or on social media? If the latter, where specifically?

The majority of the practitioners affirmed that they look up for the classes on the website or the app (in cases where the studio offers one). What influences their decisions is mostly the location, the time and the style. If they like the studio as well of course and just one stated that the teachers are the most important part.

And when it comes to more structured experiences such as yoga retreats or teacher trainings? If yes, have you ever signed up to a class or event because it was promoted by a yoga influencer? If so, what made you decide to go for it? If you encounter a yoga event promoted by an influencer/yoga teacher on Instagram do you consider it trustworthy? Why/why not?

All the practitioners affirmed that when it comes to more structured experiences what matters the most is the teacher that is running the course or retreat: therefore they were never influenced by a lifestyle influencer that was promoting an event, but they were definitely influenced by one of the teachers they liked promoting it. Furthermore, they don't consider a promotion of an event if it's not made by a good yoga teacher: all of them said that the amount of followers doesn't have an impact at all on their final decision. What they want to see is whether they like the teacher, their style and what they are going to get out of this training or retreat. And this is also what is going to influence their decision: how good is the content that they publish, if it is aligned with their values and what they believe about the yoga practice.

These information are partially aligned with the current literature. In fact, studies about how young women in Portugal perceive influencer marketing show affirmed that advertisements made by influencers as not perceived as reliable and honest, not knowing if the person is making it because they truly believe in that specific product or just for a matter of money; but it is actually quite the opposite, in fact viewers are more likely to purchase something if it's marketed by an influencer they like and follow: "though there seems to be a lot of negative opinions on influencers, if a certain product is recommended by an influencer, viewers might be more - subconsciously - inclined into believing and perceiving the content as authentic and thus trustworthy. Likewise, if an influencer's tone of voice is similar to their followers' usual tone of voice, they will be perceived as more authentic and genuine, thus followers might eventually trust that particular influencer more" (Correia de Sousa, 2020, p. 85).

Moreover, participants affirmed that they don't care about aesthetically good pictures, but what they are searching for is mostly good content. This finding is completely opposed to previous research; as it is possible to observe in the study that Correia de Sousa (2020) conducted about the effects that different kind of influencers can impact young women in Portugal: one of the most cited platforms by the users when it comes to influencers especially, is Instagram. On this social media, people spend most of the time scrolling through aesthetic and beautiful pictures, arriving at deciding which person, friend, influencer or brand to follow based on how their feed looks. Instagram has a large amount of advertisement and marketing

promotions, making it one of the most consumerist inciting platforms (Correia De Sousa, 2020).

Conclusions

This research focuses on the intersection between social media, influencer marketing and the yoga industry, with a focus on the city of Lisbon in Portugal. Through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews with social media managers at yoga studios, teachers and practitioners, the researcher was able to find answers for the four research questions that were set as goals at the beginning of the study, providing key insights into the effectiveness, challenges and potential of the use of influencer marketing within this niche.

The research question that were set at the beginning of the study were the followings:

RQ1: How do yoga studios in Lisbon utilize influencer marketing to promote their services?

RQ2: What impact does influencer marketing have on the brand awareness and customer engagement in yoga studios in Lisbon?

RQ3: How do yoga studio managers, yoga teachers and practitioners perceive the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the yoga industry?

RQ4: What guidelines can be developed to optimize the use of influencer marketing for yoga studios in Lisbon based on current practices and outcomes?

Influencer marketing's role in the yoga industry in Lisbon

Even though influencer marketing has become a dominant force in various sector when it come to marketing a business because of the level of trust that arises between the influencer and her/his followers (Biaudet, 2017), yet its adoption within the Lisbon yoga industry still appears to be more selective and nuanced. Differently from other sectors where influencer marketing is heavily used to drive sales and brand awareness, yoga studios in Lisbon show a more cautious approach.

A trend that arises from the interviews with both teachers and the social media manager, is that, at the moment in Lisbon, it is common to collaborate with yoga teachers that also have a

wide following online, rather than with yoga lifestyle influencers. This approach reflects a very good understanding of the target audience's values and preferences: in fact, what came out after interviewing yoga teachers and practitioners, is the fact that yogis are usually drawn to the practice for the connection they can build with, on one hand, the community around them, and, mainly, on the other hand, with their favorite teachers. Therefore, through these collaborations with yoga teachers who are respected within their community, yoga studios have the possibility to tap into an existing network of trust and credibility. These teachers usually fit in the category of micro or nano-influencers, and, consequently, have a smaller but more engaged following. Their influence is built on personal relationships and a shared deep passion for the yoga practice, which can resonate better with potential clients, compared to the broader, less personal appeal of lifestyle influencers.

This strategy highlights the fact that in the yoga industry, the quality of the connection between the influencer and their audience is far more important than the quantity of the followers. Moreover, this focus on authenticity over reach, suggests that yoga studios in Lisbon are focusing on long-term relationships with their clients, rather than on short-term ones.

Teachers as influencers: perception and impact

Through the interviews with yoga teachers in Lisbon, the researcher was able to see that most of them make use of social media for their work and act as yoga influencers in their community, showing characteristics of nano-influencers. With a follower base that can go from 1.000 people to 8.000, they maintain a very strong and loyal following, within this specific niche. Although their influence in the community is strong and wide, most of them don't self-identify as influencers, since they connect the idea of influencers with commercial gain: instead their goal is to create a strong and real connection with their students. The researcher believes this to be one of the core concepts of this research: the critical tension that is present in the yoga industry, that is to say, the balance between maintaining authenticity, perceived as a key factor from both teachers and practitioners, and engaging in effective marketing for the promotion of yoga events and classes.

It was also interesting to observe the sharp contrast between the content that is usually published on Instagram and the one that is published by these teachers: in fact, the latter appears to be spontaneous and authentic, mostly reflecting their daily life, their ideas on yoga

and their personal practice. The common type of post is usually a highly curated and edited image or video, far from the reality; whereas, this more spontaneous and unedited nature of yoga teachers' posts is more appealing to this kind of follower base, who's seeking for a genuine connection with their teachers, instead of an unattainable image of yoga.

This concept of authenticity is particularly crucial since we are facing an industry that is promoting personal growth, spiritual development and a sense of belonging to a community. Moreover, publishing real and unedited content, despite creating a higher level of trust, also fits in a broader concept that is emphasized by the yoga industry, that is self-acceptance and mindfulness.

Practitioners' engagement with influencers

In order to provide additional context for a better understanding of the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the yoga industry, a third group of people was interviewed by the researcher: yoga practitioners. Most of them affirmed that, while they follow some lifestyle influencers and appreciate their content, their loyalty to a specific brand or yoga studio is not much influenced by these figures. The most important factors that make them go and stick to a specific place, are personal recommendations and convenience's of the studio's location.

These findings underline the idea that influencer marketing might not have a big impact on the decision-making process of yoga practitioners: in fact, influencers might create a first interest in the practitioner's mind but, at the same time, might not be so effective in creating long-term loyalty or client retention.

This set of interviews also underlined how much personal connection is important in the yoga industry: in fact, practitioners affirmed that they are more likely to stay loyal to a place where they feel a sense of belonging and a connection on a personal level with at least one of the teachers. This personal connection, can be, secondly, brought also online and on social media, but it is firstly established in person, through live interactions. Therefore, while social media can be a good tool for creating attraction, when it comes to retention the biggest part happens inside the studio itself.

Therefore, the researcher believes that, when it comes to the yoga niche, the concept of parasocial relationship becomes even more essential in the promotion of yoga events, classes and studios.

“Parasocial relationships are socio-emotional connections that people develop with media figures such as celebrities or fictional characters. Parasocial relationships mirror offline relationships in many ways, even though individuals’ perceived intimacy with media figures is not reciprocated. [...] They can promote healthy attitudes and behaviors and lower health-related stigma, but may adversely impact mental health through negative self-comparison. Parasocial relationships can also enhance feelings of connection and community, facilitate coping foster personal development and identity exploration, and reduce prejudice” (Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p.1).

It was possible to observe how much this sense of community and connection is essential to build long-term relations between a practitioner and a yoga studio. Consequently, the trend of using yoga teachers that are already affirmed in the community and have a presence online as influencers, might be the best option for this particular niche.

Moreover, when it comes to social media content, most of the practitioners affirmed to be more interested in the more practical aspects of yoga, such as: class schedule, teachers expertise and the community atmosphere at the studio.

In conclusion, influencer marketing can hold significant potential in the yoga industry in Lisbon, but its success depends on careful alignment with the core values of authenticity, community and personal connection. Yoga studios that manage to navigate between the challenges of digital marketing, while staying true to the essence of yoga, are most likely to see results in the long term. As the industry continues to evolve, those who will effectively manage to integrate influencer marketing into a broader, multi-channel approach that keeps in consideration both online marketing and the importance to create retention in the studio through in-person connections, will be well-positioned to thrive in a competitive market.

Limitations

It is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this study to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research findings. This chapter has the goal to supply the limitations that researcher encountered during this study, such as, for example, constraints related to methodology and data collection. By addressing these limitations, the researcher wants to offer full transparency over the factors that may have influenced the interpretation and applicability of the findings.

Regardless of the careful planning and execution of the study, some constraints were unavoidable. This research primarily aimed to understand whether and how Influencer Marketing is used by Yoga studios in Lisbon, and while this focused allowed for an in-depth analysis, it also showed some limitations that are essential to address.

The first limitation, that the researcher considers the most important, is connected to the number of the interviews that were run to draw the conclusions: three different groups were interviewed but, while it was possible to find multiple participants for the yoga teacher and yoga practitioners groups, the researcher was able to find only one person that agreed on participating to the study for the social media managers group. This happened for several reasons: first of all, the yoga community in Lisbon is still really recent and since most of the studios just opened, they didn't have the data to provide for the interview; moreover, some people didn't want to participate and gave a negative response when asked to participate in this study. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to have a wider variety of influencers since the ones that were interviewed can all be allocated in the category of nano-influencers. It would have been ideal to also have influencers with a bigger follower base, but all the responses were negative in this case as well.

Suggests for further investigations

This chapter aims to outline possible directions for future research that could expand from the findings that were previously shown in the conclusions.

This study brought up important findings related to current use of influencer marketing by yoga studios in Lisbon and its effectiveness, contributing to the existing body of research about the use of this practice in different types of businesses. However, the complexity of the topic suggests that deeper investigation would be important for a more comprehensive understanding.

Keeping in consideration the limitations discussed in the previous chapter and the arising trends observed the following areas could be further investigated:

1. Widen the research regarding the concept of cultural appropriation. In fact, despite it being explicit that we can observe one culture using specific ideas of a different culture, the researcher believes that to assert with certainty if we are observing a cultural appropriation process as opposed to cultural adoption, there would be the need for further research. This difference is in fact related to multiple factors that have not been covered yet by the current literature on this specific topic.

2. Deepen the investigation on whether a more spontaneous use of social media by the influencers, that is to say a less structured way of posting, including more spontaneous and real moments and less use of filters or modified images, could weaken the side effects that might arise from social media usage.

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Appendix

Practitioners

Nele - 20/05/2024

Researcher: Hi Nele, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

N: Yes, I understand and I give my permission.

R: How old are you?

N: I'm 27.

R: Do you use the social media platform Instagram? (If yes, how much daily?)

N: Like only Instagram, I would say one or two hours a day, one and a half.

R: Do you follow yoga influencers profiles?

N: No, I don't.

R: Do you follow some pages of yoga studios in Lisbon?

N: Yes, Yoga Room.

R: What kind of content do you like to see the most on yoga studio pages?

N: I pay the most attention about the promotions they share regarding new passes of special classes that they offer.

R: Do you practice yoga in Lisbon? (If yes, where? How often?)

N: I went to the Yoga Room but I didn't take a membership, I just went there a few times.

R: What brought you to the studio?

N: I had a special pass with an offer.

R: When it comes to joining a new class in a studio, what affects your decision the most? More specifically, where do you search for it? In the studio schedule or on social media? If the latter, where specifically?

N: I usually look on the website to see what I may like or not. I just try one class, see how I feel about it and how I like it. And usually I prefer a studio that is not too big.

R: And when it comes to more structured experiences such as yoga retreats or teacher trainings? If yes, have you ever signed up to a class or event because it was promoted by a yoga influencer? If so, what made you decide to go for it? Has the class matched the expectations set by the yoga teacher/influencer?

N: I've never been to one of these events but in case I would try to figure out if it's like a good teacher, good, like. Since I have some friends that are practicing yoga, I would also like to listen to recommendations because they have tried and they know what to expect. Make

sure that it's a good training or retreat, because I've heard many things about yoga teachers that are not really good. Like I think there's a big difference in the quality, so I would ask people that have more knowledge about it, because I don't know enough about it to know what is the best.

R: If you encounter a yoga event promoted by an influencer/yoga teacher on Instagram do you consider it trustworthy? Why/why not?

N: I think it really depends on the content that they share. I wouldn't like necessarily think that the one that is on social media channel and is very active on it and has many followers that it's necessarily a better one, because I think you have many influencers then that don't necessarily have skills because, personally there is a difference between being a good influencer than to being a good yoga teacher. If it looks like a professional account, I would also look at the description and how they talk, how they promote themselves, and what kind of vibe they give. So definitely I would rather look at the content instead of how many followers. Maybe it unconsciously helps to some extent if someone has only a few hundred followers that it doesn't look so popular, but I think I would not rely so much on numbers. No, it's, I think it's more about the content. For example, if I would go to a yoga retreat, the quality of the content would be the main thing for me. For me it doesn't matter, if you have all these perfect images of yourself doing yoga. I'm more interested in what their goal is. Like what, what are you going to do exactly? What kind of yoga? I want to know what I'm going to do and what I'm going to get out of it. And I don't care about their perfect pictures on social media of perfect girls, you know. I'm interested in yoga and I want to see, and want to know more about it. I feel like it's more reliable to follow people that are actually yoga teachers and have knowledge about it.

R: Is there anything that pops to mind that you would like to add?

N: No, nothing about that. No.

R: Thank you very much!

Reka 22/05/2024

R: Hi Reka, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Reka: Yea, I understand and you have my consent.

R: How old are you?

Reka: I'm 24 years old.

R: Do you use social media platforms specifically like Instagram?

Reka: Yes, a lot.

R: How much? if you would quantify it on a daily basis?

Reka: I think on a daily basis I spend like at least an hour on it. Yes, on Instagram at least an hour I think.

R: Do you follow yoga influencer profiles?

Reka: Yes, a couple of ones I think. So I think like three or four.

R: Which one is your favorite and what do you like the most about it?

Reka: Yes, like there is one it's called like she's called Marie Oshner. I'm cheating a bit. But I started... She was the first I started to follow because she's really beginner oriented. So she's posting a lot about how to get into yoga like some basic poses and some basic things you have to pay attention to. Yeah. So I think it's really good. But also she's posting a bit more about lifestyle altogether or just how to take care of your body and just really basic stuff like that. It was super nice to see not only advanced stuff and not some also not some like super deep, deep, deep stuff. But really, it was, I think her profile is really, really beginner oriented. But I really like that. Yeah. because um yeah she had a lot of content like about especially poses and about especially how to practice yoga and how to start and i think it was super super useful

R: Which content do you like the most about what she's posting?

Reka: I would say like, uhm, like this what I kind of mentioned. I don't know if there is one specific pose and that's kind of explained how it is good, why it is good and what you should pay attention to.

R: How often do you engage with yoga related content on social media?

Reka: I don't engage much, but altogether I'm not engaging that much on social media. I just like scrolling. Sometimes I save stuff if I like it or like a post but I'm not usually sharing, commenting and stuff like that but I don't do it for anything.

R: Do you prefer content from professional yoga instructors or lifestyle influencers? Why?

Reka: I think I specifically don't care so I'm not specifically looking for instructors to follow but on the other hand I find their content much more trustworthy. So if I actually want to try out something then I would like to try something that an actual yoga teacher posted, not just someone who's just like picking it up and like visibly or just a lifestyle influencer.

R: What do you find most valuable in the content shared by influencers?

She answered before

R: Have influencer recommendations ever influenced your loyalty to a particular yoga studio or brand?

Reka: No. To be honest, no. Not really.

R: Do you follow some pages of yoga studios in Lisbon?

Reka: Yes, I do.

R: May I ask you which ones?

Reka: From Lisbon Yoga Studios, I follow the kind space only.

R: What kind of content do you like to see the most on their page?

Reka: I follow that because I'm there the most often. So that's why I really like some informative posts about the studio itself. I don't know. If they have some special events, it's super nice to see the post, or if they have some changes in the schedule, but also just kind of promoting their classes as well, like giving descriptions or what they do. So it's really different what I look for in a studio's Instagram page or in a Yoga Influenced Instagram page.

R: Do you practice yoga in Lisbon? (If yes, where? How often?)

Reka: I have been to The Kind Space the most, but I've been to one or two other places, like Yoga Life Academy, I think it was the name, and two other places, I don't remember the names, but mostly I've been to The Kind Space.

R: What brought you to the studio?

Reka: For me, I use Urban Sports, and I found them through that. So for me, it was not really through Instagram or social media.

R: When it comes to joining a new class in a studio, what affects your decision the most? More specifically, where do you search for it? In the studio schedule or on social media? If the latter, where specifically?

Reka: I think maybe it would be like the type, what the practice. Like if I want to try out a new style, and then they have a new style for a beginner course or something like that, then I would try out that. Or also if I have one specific teacher in the studio I like, and she or he has another class, then I would try that.

R: Did you ever signed up to a more structured yoga experience such as a retreat or

Reka: No, I didn't.

R: If eventually you would decide to sign up to one of these events, would you also search on social media for recommendations? Do you think that those would influence your final decision to some extent?

Reka: I think actually yes. So I wouldn't say that if my favorite influencer promoted it, I would sign up for sure, but I think it would probably push me into that direction like, oh, this is super nice. They're promoting it. Let's see what they do? And then I would do more thorough research, but I think it would probably influence me in the beginning as I don't have that extensive knowledge about the different retreats and what is out there.

R: If you encounter a yoga event promoted by an influencer/yoga teacher on Instagram do you consider it trustworthy? Why/why not?

Reka: I wouldn't consider it super trustworthy but I think if I would need to choose an event, the fact that it is marketed by an influencer would definitely have an impact on my decision.

R: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Reka: No, nothing for now.

R: Okay thank you very much for your answers and time!

Anja - 23/05/2024

R: Hi Anja, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

A: Yes, I do. You have my consent.

R: May I ask you how old are you?

A: I'm 31.

R: Do you use social media platforms?

A: Yes, Instagram.

R: How much on a daily basis?

A: I have two accounts, so one is for my yoga teaching and one is for my business. And, yeah, so I use it on a daily basis, probably a couple of hours a day.

R: For work or entertainment?

A: Both. I would definitely say for work, especially the more work-connected account. And then the other account, like, of course, for work and sharing what I do about yoga and things like that, but also for entertainment and scrolling and also, like, getting inspiration. Intuitively, I want to say probably... It's so hard because it's so... It's so connected, right? But probably, like, 60-40. Oh, but then, no, actually 50-50 because then I also work with social media for other clients. So I think that's what drives it to 50-50.

R: Do you follow yoga influencers profiles?

A: Yes.

R: Which one is your favorite and what do you like the most about it?

A: I wouldn't necessarily say I have, like, a super favorite one. So what I've picked up is that I follow more local yoga influencers. And, yeah, you know, I really like about their profile that it's not only about, you know, having pretty yoga poses on their feed, but it's actually about, like, sharing what yoga means to them and why it's part of their lives. So giving this more holistic perspective. And that's why I really enjoy following them. And I know I can practice with them. In the past, I followed many more, like, these big yoga influencers, but I felt it was difficult to have this connection. And I think that's why I'm so excited to follow them. I mean, I know it's social media, but I think there's something about, like, getting a feeling for the person that makes me much more engaged as a follower.

R: Do you engage with yoga related content on social media?

A: Yeah, I definitely engaged with this type of content. So it's to, like, find inspiration, but it's also to, like, learn some things. So I also like to follow, like, schools. Or usually there are teachers that also do training where they explain, like, different poses or what yoga is. Or what yoga means or kind of the perspective between East and West because I'm a Western practitioner.

R: Do you prefer content from professional yoga instructors or lifestyle influencers?

A: Naturally, I would say I've been following teachers who, like, teach yoga. Not lifestyle. Influences that do yoga. Yeah.

R: Have influencer recommendations ever influenced your loyalty to a particular yoga studio or brand?

A: Yes. 100%. To be honest, I go to a studio because of the teachers, not the studio. I mean, for example, Marina. I mean, I would have gone wherever she is in the city. I don't care about the studio. It wasn't like, oh, I want to go to Yoga Room. Great. Marina is there. No, the other way around. It's like, Marina, where do you teach? I want to come to your class. And then also through recommendations from others. So either Marina had recommended another teacher or a friend from Copenhagen had recommended another teacher. So I go because of the teachers.

R: Do you follow some pages of yoga studios in Lisbon?

A: Yes. So I follow mostly the ones that I have been practicing in myself or in the cities that I've been living in. So in Lisbon, obviously, like the Yoga Room, Baraza, The Kind Space, like, you name it, all of these places. And then also in the city that I used to live in Copenhagen, or maybe cities that I would visit London, Berlin, places like that. But they are always connected to the fact that I want to go practice there.

R: What kind of content do you like to see the most on yoga studio pages?

A: I mean, this is very interesting. Like I don't pay that much attention to the studio's content actually. More passively, I would say.

R: Where do you practice the most?

A: I mean, now I don't have a subscription anywhere anymore. But I would say I was mostly at Baraza from a convenience perspective, because I could just walk there within like 25 minutes. And some of the good teachers are there. And then at Yoga Room. But it's convenient for me.

R: So you go to the studio mostly for the teachers and where it is located in the city, right?

A: Yes, a hundred percent. And then recommendations. Like people say, oh, I want to go there. It's a good studio to go to the, the, the, yeah, the teachers.

R: And when it comes to more structured experiences such as yoga retreats or teacher trainings? If yes, have you ever signed up to a class or event because it was promoted by a yoga influencer? If so, what made you decide to go for it? Has the class matched the expectations set by the yoga teacher/influencer?

A: So that's how I did my very first teacher training. I really loved Yin yoga. And then I went to Yin yoga classes in Copenhagen and I loved the teacher. And then she mentioned her teacher is coming. And that's really why I signed up. And then it resonated with me, of course, the offering and, and things like that, but it's the teacher. And the recommendations that come with it. And I would say another factor that plays into it when I go for a long time, I also want to be in a place, ideally, I also care about the place. And if there's a community that I can build through that experience.

R: Would you say it matters the size of the follower base they have?

A: No, I don't care about that. I care about their, how they teach. So I want to practice with them ideally before I commit to a training with them, or they just come highly recommended through other teachers and other students or people who did their training. I really don't care about the following at all. Sure. I will probably check out Instagram if it resonates, but yeah.

R: If you encounter a yoga event promoted by an influencer/yoga teacher on Instagram do you consider it trustworthy? Why/why not?

A: I feel like it depends so much on. Whether, you know, that teacher personally, and if he, he or she comes recommended through other teachers and people you like, then I don't care about the following if they have 200 or 200.000, but of course, if it's maybe someone that I feel a little bit like more or less resonance with, I would for sure check out their social media to see if I get a feeling for them. And then, you know, I think I can fall into that. But thinking

theoretically that, oh, they have a big following, there must be a good teacher, but then I'm also like, nah, it's actually a trap, you know? So it's much more about do I resonate with what they share?

R: Is there anything you would like to add?

A: Nope.

R: Thank you very much for your collaboration and time!

Heloise - 27/05/2024

R: Hi Heloise, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

H: Yes I understand and give you my consent to proceed.

R: May I ask you how old are you?

H: I'm 34.

R: Do you use the social media platform Instagram? (If yes, how much?)

H: Yes you know what i can check right now my phone because i don't know... I'm opening instagram so, I spend 30 minutes daily on average.

R: Do you follow yoga influencers profiles? (If yes, which one is your favorite and what do you like the most about it?)

H: Yes absolutely. The thing is to be honest i follow them but i'm not really interested in the yoga content um so maybe it's yeah different than other yoga teachers i follow them but um yeah i'm not watching the content I'm more watching um inspirational quotes or excerpts from podcasts so not really from the yoga world to be honest but yeah of course I follow a lot of yoga accounts but yeah because i don't really care about the alignment of the postures uh i don't care to be honest it's nice to see my feed but I'm more interested into the the philosophy maybe the lifestyle of the yogis. But the postures in themselves I don't care I would say no I mean maybe the food but not really it was before, no it's mostly the philosophy really the concepts of yoga yeah and me you know inspirational content with a lot of nature yeah spiritual stuff more than yoga stuff.

R: Do you engage with yoga related content or is it more of a passive use?

H: No it's a passive use.

R: Have influencer recommendations ever influenced your loyalty to a particular yoga studio or brand?

H: yeah no because for example for Yoga Room I was going to your practice there before following any of the teachers so no yeah I mean yeah but saying you know.

R: Do you follow some pages of yoga studios in Lisbon? And what kind of content do you like to see the most on yoga studio pages?

H: I watch the content just to know what's up with them, the events that they have just to look a bit you know what's happening there like a benchmark.

R: Do you practice in Lisbon?

H: Yeah, I go to Yoga Room almost every day when I can, so I would say five days a week.

R: What brought you to the studio?

H: Let's say that it's been very it's because when I moved here I was looking for the same type of studio that I had in London so a big studio with a lot of classes and a friend of mine sent me the yoga room account it was about to open in May and I arrived in January so that's how I knew ok this is my studio.

R: When it comes to joining a new class in a studio, what affects your decision the most? More specifically, where do you search for it? In the studio schedule or on social media? If the latter, where specifically?

H: I'll go first for the style no no no that's not you first I am watching at the time I'm looking at the time then the style and then the teacher no I use the yoga room app yeah because I don't want to be bothered to go in other studios because I like that one so yeah I think it has the most things to offer in Lisbon so to me that's why I'm very thankful to that studio for variety of classes.

R: And when it comes to more structured experiences such as yoga retreats or teacher trainings? If yes, have you ever signed up to a class or event because it was promoted by a yoga influencer? If so, what made you decide to go for it? Has the class matched the expectations set by the yoga teacher/influencer?

H: It was because I like the teacher and it was a good fit in my calendar. It's because I knew the teachers and I wanted to know more about the practice. For example with Kundalini I didn't know the teacher but I wanted to know more about the practice and with the vinyasa the yin and pranayama I just knew Rebecca and Marina.

R: If you encounter a yoga event promoted by an influencer/yoga teacher on Instagram do you consider it trustworthy? Why/why not?

H: The funny thing is that um I didn't know a lot about the yoga world before being a teacher and I still don't know a lot I don't know the stars I didn't know Patrick Beach until last year and it doesn't really appealing it's not really appealing to me so I'd rather know the teacher first and then going to his or her training I feel that yeah it's better to do it that way so you know that you have maybe a connection with the teacher or the way he or she teaches um no maybe just um I'm not the regular yoga teacher because I don't really um uh care about the alignment or uh yeah the stars the yoga stars maybe I will someday you know I'm not closing the door but at the moment I'm more interested into the experience. So someone like Patrick Beach for example for example I don't know I don't even know what he does to be honest I know he's saying because he's been to yoga room but I don't know who he is and I don't know the big stars or following a guru I don't like that so yeah maybe that I mean all you get teachers they have like a certain charisma and it's normal you're a teacher but just because it's Patrick which it doesn't mean that I'm going to do his training do you know what I mean I need to to know him... to know him to follow his account or whatever and I'd rather you know I'm not following a guru I don't like that so yeah maybe that I mean I need to to know him yeah to know him to follow his account or whatever and I'd rather my teacher being someone normal than than him but again I don't know him at all I don't know what he's doing so maybe I'm just like projecting something in my mind. I understand that yoga is a business so it's good for business so of course if I would be the owner of the studio I would want Patrick to come you know but me just as a student because it means that you have I mean you I can have access to that kind of training in Lisbon where I live instead of traveling somewhere else so it's convenient for me it's just convenient oh a big star is coming you know it's just like when your favorite singer is going to to tell you're like oh it's good I mean of course you can travel but it's nice when it's going it's going into your town so really that's just it.

R: Is there anything you would like to add?

H: No, nothing.

R: Thank you very much!

Teachers

Marina 21/05/2024

R: Hi Marina, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

M: Yes, I understand and I give my permission.

R: Okay thank you, so let's start. Do you make use of social media to promote your classes, events and trainings?

M: Yes, very much.

R: How much?

M: I would say that at least weekly, if not two to three times a week, my social media is being engaged to promote my weekly classes and any other events and things I have going on.

R: How many followers do you have?

M: I think almost five thousand. I'm going to check. Yeah, almost five thousand.

R: Do you consider yourself an influencer?

M: No, not at all.

R: Why?

M: I just guess my understanding of social media influencers is somebody that is getting paid to use social media to promote certain brands or things. And really, I just feel like my social media is a place where I can interact with people that for the most part, I actually know them or I've interacted with them. I've met them and it's a way to stay connected. So I see it as more of a connection tool. Yeah. And so I think like the people that are influencing, they're like saying, oh, you know, I use this for my hair and then they get paid for that. And I'm not doing that at all. If anything, I think it's the opposite. I'm just trying to let people that I've met somewhere know what I'm doing in my life.

R: What is the content that you like to share the most?

M: I think the content that's most natural is when I'm just talking about my own personal life. In relation to my yoga practice or relation to being a yoga teacher or relation to my life, because I feel like my entire life revolves around my yoga life, like it's like the same life. So it's usually when I'm talking about my own practices or training, I'm doing something that I'm excited about. So that's what I prefer to share about.

R: What is the content that has the highest engagement rate on your profile?

M: It's usually that same content. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. And I will say that, like, if I post one photo of me and my husband doing nothing, just hanging out, that I get the most engagement on that photo. I don't have to even say anything. It's just like, here we are, existing. And yeah, I think it's, yeah, it's probably the same. And usually I find that more specifically, if I post a video of me doing a practice, that's usually what works. It will get the most engagement from people. But it also depends on the type of practice and it depends on where. So if I post a video that I'm doing a practice in some place that is different, not in like my house, then it'll get the most engagement.

R: What is the content that attracts the most people in person?

M: A mix of both. So I think like sometimes people, let's say I'm doing a training and it's four days, five days or even longer, they're very interested in the initial stages. They're captivated by that if it starts to get repetitive for too long, they don't really care. But like the first couple of days or the first initial post are very engaging, especially if there's a lot of people and it looks dynamic or like they're doing something interesting, then people usually tend to inquire.

R: What people do you attract the most when it comes to age and gender?

M: Females, definitely. And I would say my demographic of age is probably 30 to 45.

R: What do you think about using influencer marketing for the promotion of yoga related events/classes/training?

M: Mm hmm. I don't know, I feel like it's really hard for me to think that that would work because I feel like the most amount of promotion that works is like organic marketing. Right. So that means that these influencers, it's not like I'm sending them an outfit and they're putting it on like they would actually have to experience the yoga class or experience the teacher training in order to be able to talk about it. And that's kind of difficult because it's like saying to somebody, hey, listen, will you come and do this whole training and then just tell other people how great it was as an exchange and the type of way that I work in yoga and what I believe in, is that I don't want anybody coming to any training or class or anything that isn't already interested. You know, I want them to come because they feel like there's something there for them. And I want them to come and learn about themselves or to explore. And then they talk about it because it's just naturally coming out of them, not because it's like part of some exchange or some agreement, you know, or let me come and let me take notes of things that I'm going to make a story about, you know. It's quite difficult, I think, in that sense, personally. Because it's not a quantifiable experience. It's not like, oh, I wore this outfit and I can give you practical practical information about whether it doesn't fit well here or it has a different cut. This is like an experience. You know, everything with yoga is so subjective to the individual.

R: Did you ever have people joining your courses or training without knowing you before?

M: Yes.

R: Do you know why this might have happened?

M: I think it was more about something with location, something with time of year. So it's usually location based and also dates. People look for things. So I've had people come on retreats that didn't know me. I've had people do teacher trainings that didn't know me. And that's because they were looking for training. They were looking for a retreat and the timing fit perfectly and the location was desirable for them.

R: Do you believe influencers can bring benefits to yoga studios? Why? If yes, which ones? Could you make concrete examples?

M: I don't think it can. I don't think it can hurt either, but I do think that the influencer would have to be somebody that's very much connected to this field, not just like health and wellness, because I also think that that can be more like fitness and exercise. If it's a yoga studio that's about transformation and about offering experiences and you have somebody that's influential in that space, then, yeah, I think it can be very influential. But if it's somebody that's just a fitness person. Maybe not because they will unless they commit to it. People that are following them are going to just see it as something that they go try and then that's it.

R: Do you believe that this phenomenon has an impact on the practice of yoga? Why?

M: Yeah, but I think that that's always going to be the case. People usually come to yoga. They come in one door and they end up leaving through a different door or not leaving. They end up. The door they came in through is not the door that they initially thought it was. Right. So people usually come to yoga through a more physical experience. Because that's the most accessible for people. They want to use their bodies. Their doctor tells them that they should meditate or they should calm down or whatever perception people have of yoga. So then they come to move their body to feel good. But usually after about four or five years, if somebody is still doing yoga, it's because they're no longer just doing the physical asana practice. People

that are just doing yoga that they do for 10, 15, 20, 25 years and they're just doing physical practice. They're either somebody that's very much committed to us reaching certain physical goals. There are practices like a stronger and different practice that it's like always like more to get to. But if you've stayed longer than I would say, four or five years, you start to realize, well, if I'm trying to get really, really fit, it's not yoga that's going to do it for me. There's other things. But what yoga is offering me is something else to consider. And then I think that those people usually have to leave yoga and then new people come. Or they move on and they go to the next phase. So I think this is a normal thing. I think it's always going to be this way. There's always going to be people coming, thinking that yoga is this one thing and then if they're lucky, they will meet a teacher or a few teachers that actually expose them to something else and that something else awakens for them another part of their yoga experience, or they start to become uninterested in yoga because it's no longer this trendy, fun thing. It actually gets very difficult or very boring or very mundane. That's actually what happens. The high from doing chaturangas and being sweaty, it fades away. And those people go looking for another, another high. If you talk to a lot of older people that have been doing yoga for a long time, you know, even myself, or there's people that are like, yeah, I did yoga for a long time, and then I took a break and I started doing other things. I was running, I was weightlifting and I came back to yoga. There's sometimes that coming back as well.

R: Is there anything you would like to add?

M: Yeah. I think the world is an interesting place right now because previous to COVID people weren't really doing that much yoga online. Like it was there, but it wasn't like so much. And I think in COVID, I remember people were doing like Instagram yoga, like Instagram live yoga. And actually the first teacher training I ever did, the girl that did the training with me, she was one of the first people that ever had like a million followers on Instagram. And it was from doing yoga. She was very popular on Instagram, very popular because she would post these pictures. She had a professional camera and she would take pictures of herself doing ridiculous poses, acrobatics, and handstands. They were all still photos. This was like before reels, it's like still photos. But then I remembered that she tried to sell a workshop and she actually couldn't get anybody to come because it was all just a perception, right? Nobody... everybody can have a hundred people liking an image that they see, but it doesn't actually mean that it's resonating with them or that it's making any influence at all. It's just a response. So I remember seeing that and thinking like, so this doesn't actually

equate to you being a good teacher. I mean, I knew from the beginning, it didn't mean that you were a good teacher just because you had a fancy practice. But also, like, it doesn't mean that you're actually going to be connecting with people. It just means that you're going to have a bunch of people liking your photo or following you on Instagram. But the translatable number of that into people in a room that want to learn from you or that want to be around you or that want to connect with you is not direct. So, yeah, that's all I have.

R: Thank you very much!

Lena 22/05/2024

R: Hi Lena, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

L: Yes, I consent that you record me and you can include that in your thesis. You can also name me if you wish.

R: Thank you very much. So the first question is, do you make use of social media to promote your classes, events and training? And if yes, how much?

L: Yes, I do. But I just started doing this actually because I have a little bit of aversion to using social media. Because it's too much algorithm, too many trends you have to follow and

some kind of fit into a certain scheme that the algorithm can distribute it. So far I've not really benefited or, you know, use it to my advantage, maybe as much as I would. But then it's not authentic to me.

R: So you said you just started, but if you could quantify how much you use it, like how many posts you publish weekly...

L: It's a monthly. *Laughter* Okay, no, that's... It's like maybe... And there's not really a plan, to be honest. I do it very spontaneously when I have an idea. Or if I have an event planned where I have a location and everything is already ready, then I, you know, start whenever I know that it's happening and start promoting it. And in the last weeks has been a bit more frequent. Like with everyday stories, different content in the stories so that the user is not seeing the same things every time and being like, oh, no, I've seen this already. But yeah, Reels are like once a month, once every three weeks, you know, if I just have an idea and I'm like, okay, I'm going to do it now.

R: And how many followers do you have?

L: It's like 1.300 or something like this.

R: Do you consider yourself an influencer?

L: No, I do not.

R: May I ask you why?

L: Well, let me get back to this. So let me, how do you say, retrieve, take my answer back. So maybe to social media standards, I'm not an influencer, if you put it into this. But if you take away this social media idea of influencer, I would say, yes, I am an influencer because with my work and my classes and everything I'm doing, I'm definitely an influencer. I'm influencing people in a certain way.

R: And what content do you like to share the most?

L: Whatever's on my mind right now. Okay. So that's when the impulses are coming. Usually, it's something around, it's definitely something around movement, about awareness during movement, how can we use movement, how can we individualize the movement because we're all different. Things that I really like are anatomy related in yoga in movement and exercise and also that emotional aspect of movement or how to regulate the nervous system with movement or without movement, and so on.

R: Is there a specific kind of post that has the highest engagement rate on your profile?

L: Probably there is I didn't prepare for that. There are a couple of pose but I feel like the ones where I put the most effort let's say in and where I have a message like oh I'm thinking that's gonna a lot of people will you know see this then I have not so much views and I personally I don't really care about the views but the ones which have a lot of views are usually the ones where I don't want to say sexy is maybe the wrong expression because I'm having always I'm being always dressed and nothing about people who are you know a bit less dressed in front of the camera but I feel like it's really also sometimes yeah what time do I post it and you know but I don't know I cannot really say but it's usually around like 1,500 views or something so but sometimes there's just I mean 500.

R: When it comes to events, is there a certain kind of post that you think it's attracting more people in person?

L: To events ah to events yeah i don't know i just started doing this so i cannot really can't say.

R: Which kind of people do you attract the most in your classes like when it comes to age and

L: age and gender yes, I would say middle age like maybe between 25 and 45 i mean that would be the average. Maybe yes probably I mean there's obviously also a little bit younger and some older but I would say that it would be probably okay yeah and more women.

R: What do you think about using influencer marketing for the promotion of yoga related events? And I mean, with influencer marketing I mean like proper campaigns like not collaborations with teachers.

L: Ah yeah well for me personally i think it's dependent on the people that i'm working with and i think it's dependent on the people that i'm working with and i think it's dependent on what you want as a studio what's your message right um sometimes it's just an influencer and I don't mean it in a bad way but someone who has a lot of followers but doesn't maybe represent the values of that you want to have as a studio so it's a question you know what do you want to do at least in my opinion do I want to have a studio and be true to my values and attract the people that I want to or do I want to have a face to the studio that is representing something I mean I don't know what to do but I want to have a face to the studio. I mean it can be also that is representing my values right but i mean i know a couple of people who would be maybe considered as influencers and I also know that I mean they're not working with studios but I know they are getting people because they have a certain fame or create a certain interest on online and then when they do in-person things everyone wants to go there just to have that sensation of being close to that person i don't know i feel like it's a bit of a it's more powder to the ice maybe i don't know i cannot really say.

R: Did it ever happen to you that people joined your courses without knowing you before at all?

L: Yeah well mainly in studios so obviously when people come to the studio they may not have met me before so they come for the studio and then come to the class um to my events i had actually like couple of times but not a lot people who found random this advertising of a retreat or an event and then just came but usually the people know me at least at the point where is it now okay so you think like engaging with the people in person is more important than um marketing and like marketing your events online like for me definitely because my events mainly now happening in person so if i have some kind of engagement with people online um of course if it's a retreat that might be coming then also to Lisbon where the retreat might happen but my main audience is really like the people know which i can actually there is my marketing like it's in person marketing and that's actually where i'm good at.

R: Another question maybe you said it before but like can you go more specifically into why are you having this push away from social media?

L: Because so there's so many trends on social media that you kind of it feels like you have to follow in terms of getting um visibility and i don't care about a big audience what i want is an um um how do you say like an interaction with the audience right one which is very responsive and um yeah so if i have a lot of followers but no one is really interacting and i know that nowadays that doesn't guarantee or most likely you're not making a lot of sales for example if you have a big following you need this more committed audience. Maybe it's a little bit smaller, but it's very interactive, right? Commenting on the post and this kind of stuff. And I'm trying to do this right now, but then I feel like, okay, I have to follow all these trends in order to signal the algorithm to which person to show my content to. So it's like so much behind the scenes and I just want to share my knowledge. So maybe I create something which not the right person sees. And it's not about the quantity of people. It's about the higher engagement rate. Yes, and then maybe actually have people seeing it who would be really interested. So if it's just one person, right? But it's better than showing it to a thousand who don't really care. But then, you know, I maybe get, most likely not get the messaging right to that constant change of algorithm of what's now trending, like, you know, short reels. Then it's... Then it's faceless reels. Then it's, you know, the time when you're posting and it's just too much, I don't know, organization and kind of, you know, coordination of what you actually need to do to share, you know, your things.

R: Okay, thank you. And so do you think, after what you said before, do you think that influencers can bring benefits to yoga studios in terms of... In terms of numbers of people joining?

L: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I feel there's this kind of like starstruck kind of sensation that people might wanna be with their idols if they see them only online, have the chance of seeing that in person.

R: Do you believe that this phenomenon has an impact on the practice of yoga? Why?

L: Yeah. If the yoga studios are gonna use more of this type of influencer and use influencer marketing, what you're marketing online is definitely probably not the whole

spectrum of the yoga practice. It's a very specific part of it. So more connected to the asanas and nice shapes,

really close like poses and stuff like that. People identify themselves or wanna be like people who are idolizing, right? So if I... I don't know. I could imagine or it happened to me in the past as well. If I see someone doing all those crazy postures, right? Bending themselves and, you know, backbending and folding and whatsoever. And if I'm a person who thinks this is yoga, then I might go to the place where this person is teaching because I wanna achieve similar outcomes. And then... it's kind of creating this only maybe asana-oriented, you know, approach. Which, if you're a yoga studio that wants to do this, there's definitely nothing wrong with it. But I think that is a complete practice of yoga that is also other things that are important and not like shifting the focus only on one aspect. And I believe if you have a person who is standing for... for a certain... style or... I don't know how to... in which word I would say that. For just a certain thing, like their trademark, let's say, right? Having, you know, a person, let's say, who has a... is always doing splits or always backbends, right? And then he's like, oh, I wanna... I wanna be able to do all of this as well. So it might be a bit too... in my opinion, a bit too niche or too one-sided from the whole yoga practice.

R: And since you're teaching in different yoga studios, do you feel like they're most going? Like when you said before you were asking... you were talking about... You said it depends on which kind of clients do they wanna attract.

L: Yes.

R: So do you think now yoga studios in Lisbon have deep values that they try to follow and connect it to the yoga practice or is more about this bringing more and more people and it doesn't really matter how and who?

L: So I feel like there's a variety now. So over the last three years, four years, especially after COVID, there were, you know, a lot of new yoga places opening and a lot of them maybe focusing only on this physical aspect, right? Mm-hmm. Which itself, I think it's okay as long as you are transparent about it and not being like, oh, we're a yoga studio but then focusing only on asana but there are definitely also smaller spaces, you know, which are not really about getting a lot of clients rather than promoting, you know, these values and having

small classes so everyone gets the individual attention. So there's a... there's a mix of everything.

R: Is there anything else you wanna add that pops to mind that I didn't cover with the questions?

L: Nope.

R: Thank you very much.

Manel - 27/05/2024

R: Hi Manel, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

M: Yes, I do. You have my consent.

R: What's your name?

M: Manuel Rodriguez.

R: Do you make use of social media to promote your classes events and trainings

M: I do.

R: Okay and may I ask you how much is it daily?

M: I use um like can how can I give you a reference how much I use uh I mean I put every week I put on the on Instagram the class schedule um also training or I also put it, depends on how well it's being selling. I put it on Instagram like a post and then sometimes I do a story with that post.

R: Okay, so it's weekly you would say?

M: Yeah, weekly.

R: Okay, perfect. And do you know how many followers you have on your account?

M: On Instagram I think it's 8,300.

R: If I ask you if you consider yourself an influencer, which would be the answer?

M: Well, in certain ways I could be, but not 100%, no. I mean I'm much more of a yoga teacher and then through that sometimes I use, I have a sponsor for example, and I'm an influencer for example with a brand or two brands actually. And in that case I do that influencing stuff, but other than that not so much.

R: Okay, so you keep separate your teaching even if you promote your classes online, you keep it separate from, let's say like for you influencers it's more when you are paid to do certain promotions of brands specifically.

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: What is the content that you like to share the most on your profile?

M: As a yoga teacher, content. I'm not very good with Instagram. I'm starting to get a little bit better. I make an effort, but I would say the ones that I like the most are the most natural ones. Sometimes the training ones, I like to share some of the moments. Also some that work very well are anything that I talk about. Any yoga topic like Dharma or, and I like that interaction, five things that create burnout or how to get into a pose, like some guidelines like that.

R: Which kind of post has the highest engagement rate on your profile?

M: It's going to be these same topics usually.

R: And which is the content that you think attracts, if there is one, attracts the most people in person in your events?

M: I'm not sure actually. I think maybe the, maybe I would say, well, I'll only say word of mouth, but because that is not in contact, I would say that is content from students that share, or share a moment in class and people get attracted to also experience that.

R: Okay yeah so in general If I ask you what is the thing that you think attracts the most people is it related also to promotion on social media or is it more the connection that you build with a certain person like in the classes?

M: Yeah for sure in the classes I'm much more in person than on social media. I think people get a wrong idea of why I'm on social media, and I think in class they get a better idea and can go a bit deeper into the practice.

R: Which is the wrong idea that you think people develop?

M: Well I think there's always through social media there's also always a projection as much as you try to demystify that there's a projection that people make. Usually people are very focused on social media on the good things and all the big events and things that they're doing they're there for a reason you know and that's mostly what comes out and then in real life is not like this you know we... I have students and they come in some days in a good mood, some days with pain, some days in a bad mood as well as me and I think when you

deal with people on a regular basis is when you get to know them and there's a real connection. I think social media is a very superficial and projected connection you know so i think most people think that I'm a surfer I'm young you know and maybe when they come to my class they understand that I really dedicated my life to yoga that I'm deep, I'm very human so I think that... that's something you can only experience in real life not through social media

R: Which people do you attract the most when it comes to age and gender in your classes and your events?

M: In terms of age I would say from well I have a very big range but I would say the most would be from 20s to 40s I'll say that range and gender it's been up and down like there's some times that I had men half women now I'm going through a phase with more women mm-hmm but it's been always very balanced men and women.

R: What do you think about using influencer marketing in the studios for the promotion of yoga related events classes and training and when I talk about this I'm not talking just about teachers that also use social media but more like even lifestyle influencers that could make like collaborations with some studios do you think that would be something that would be something that could work?

M: Of course it depends on the type of influencer and to it's really sounds great but to not work in media with a role that you're just fighting with so is that what they learn from your experience yeah and some of the things you might say what are the benefits of intimidating my class he's great you guys come and then he never comes to my class again or he doesn't really like yoga i think for me that could work in terms of getting people in but i don't know how much of that could be in the future I think it's part of the short run could function in front of the long run I don't think it functions because I think um it's very different to have somebody that comes to your class that really believes in you that follows your work and then can speak from that place and then when people come in they can experience what they actually talked about and understand why they're there rather than somebody that sells you and then when they get there it's just it's not accordingly to the experience so i think it really depends it depends if it's somebody that is into yoga I think it works well if it's somebody that's not really into yoga I'm not sure it always works a little bit not as much.

R: Have you ever had people joining your courses or training without knowing you before?

M: Yeah, yes.

R: Okay yes why do you think that happened?

M: Well um as much as I advise people to always meet me before which is something I really recommend to people to come to my class at least once to just get to know me some people don't have opportunity because I have people that come from abroad; other people just trust their friends and the word of mouth um yeah I think most of the times that those are the the main reasons.

R: Do you believe that this phenomenon of like all this yoga online specifically on instagram has an impact on the practice of yoga or how people perceive the practice of yoga?

M: Yeah it does have an influence of course. I think social media has an influence in everything we do. I wonder how I can say this... I think it really depends on the person that comes to class but I would say like I believe that every motive to come to yoga is valid, but not every motive is sustainable meaning you can come to yoga because you think there's a bunch of hot women and men and that might get you through the door and start making your practice but then in the long run you understand that, that's not going to sustain you in the practice; what's going to sustain you is the interest for the practice for the philosophy for what's happening to you so I think it does have an influence in the outcome of how you always perceive in our days there's so much stuff happening that I think all kinds of perceptions of yoga already are made and of course you're always becoming more pop; but I don't consider it good or bad I just consider that's what it is and then we as teachers we be grab from there.

R: Since you work in different yoga studios in Lisbon do you feel like... which is the direction do you think these studios are going towards? Are they interested in working with influencers, are they interested in working with teachers with a wider following, or is it more about what actually the teacher brings, the style, what they bring the connection that they have with the students?

M: Well the studios that I work in at the moment they all choose the teachers and the style and the specific offering based on the knowledge and on the specific offering, you know not a lot are actually influencer-based, none of them actually. So that's for the studios I work with. I mean I believe maybe there's other studios that do that work differently but not the ones I work with.

R: Is there anything that pops to mind that maybe I didn't cover, like whatever reflection comes to mind on the topic from a teacher's perspective, from more of the use of social media in yoga, whatever?

M: Yeah, I mean the only thing I can say is through my experience social media is a great tool. You can get... there's a lot of teachers that have made their name through social media, but what makes them stay in the market for many many years, although you can have social media, the baseline is being good teachers. That's what makes them, I've seen a lot of teachers that have gone very far in their social media and then they went down the ramp because what they have to offer is not really deep or really knowledgeable, you know. So I think like everything in life and even through yoga, using social media in balance and not losing yourself in the social media only or just inside the room teaching, I think you can combine both in a balanced way that I think that's the future anyway.

R: Thank you very much for your time!

M: You're welcome.

Managers

Sara A. 21/05/2024 (Social media manager)

R: Hi Sara, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to ask for your consent. This interview is part of my thesis research on how yoga studios in Lisbon make use of influencer marketing in their business, and will last approximately 30 minutes.

I want to let you know that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can decide to skip any questions and stop at any time. With your permission I will record this interview to ensure accuracy in my notes. The record and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Your name and any other identifying detail will not be included in the final report, unless you give explicit permission.

Do you understand the purpose of this interview and how the information will be used? Do you have any questions before we proceed?

S: Sure no problem, you have my permission.

R: Okay perfect so let's start. The first question is: can you describe your overall marketing strategy and how influencer marketing fits into it?

S: So our overall marketing strategy so I could say for communication basically what we do is try to see what's happening at the studio and maybe what type of events or classes we could offer. Originally it was more focused on getting to know the studio so what does the studio offer or which teacher is better, the community and so on. Then after that get a bit more specific once you start bringing in different events. For marketing it's kind of a similar strategy, so we had some campaigns that would be on like different passes we were offering but we've also done some strategies where it's like okay we'll do like an intro video with a tour of the studio for the people to get to know us. Other ones that we do are about our classes or about our teachers but then always with kind of, uhm, you know join now or this is our current offer at the end. For influencer marketing we haven't done too many set campaigns yet so what we have done is to bring in the studio kind of like bigger names in order for outreach for the studio is to contact yoga teachers that have like wider following or a bigger following and then we offer them to do a class or a master class or workshop at our studio so we offer them the space and also help in like outreaching to the community and then they will, you know, bring their teachings to the studio. In the future we are hoping to build a program with influencers, we have done it slightly before but we want to make more like an outline program, of really like an influencer program so basically reach out to the people in the studio and ask them to come and speak to us and we will be happy to do that so like this is where we are in the next three weeks to a select number of influencers and offer them all a monthly pass

at the studio. And during that time, they have to communicate about the studio on their socials, but they'll get a special promo code that they can give out for people to sign up. And then at the end of the month, we could see how many people use that promo code and based on those metrics, we could keep continuing to give them a pass and we could keep up with the system.

R: Okay, so it can be like lifestyle influencers as well? It doesn't have to be like yoga teachers? Because until now, it was more like, for what I understood just with yoga teachers that also have a big following?

S: Yeah, so we've done mostly with yoga teachers that have a following as something to also bring diversity to the studio, something new like animation and stuff like that. But also, yeah, it's a kind of build the name of the studio. Like we've done other events like being part of MOGA, being part of Wanderlust, all kinds to create visibility for the studio, but also for the teachers because it helps them in their career to get opportunities. So lifestyle influencers though is not something we've really targeted much. Like it's happened a couple of times, but we want to start also, yeah, programs kind of, maybe, you know, bring more new people and just keep putting the name out there and different offers.

R: Could you describe the last time you worked with this kind of teacher with a larger follower base?

S: So, yeah. So the last time we worked with an influencer per se was Patrick Beach, who was coming to the studio in June to do a week long training and he's like a really big name in the yoga community. And we originally just reached out like offering, because what he does is he has a teacher training that he runs online and in different cities around the world. So we offered our space, if he wanted to do one in Lisbon and would like to have that also as a hub. And due to the size of our facilities, it was like one of the places that was possible for him to actually do this. So we just started doing like collaborative posts, you know, putting it on like they put it on their website and then we communicate about it, stories on Instagram newsletters posters but budget wise we ourselves haven't put anything like into a marketing campaign but that's not to say that maybe the influencer themselves since it's their training isn't kind of pushing it more.

R: Which were the outcomes of this event?

S: Yeah so how are the outcomes like yeah so really good like so last year we had Patrick Beach come to the studio and you know we did like a communications plan together in order to kind of record his awareness for it and the transformation for it and then the transfer of money in the early stage. The training ended up being fully booked so that brought a lot of revenue for him and also it brought extra revenue to our studio because they have to rent out the space so that ends up kind of being mutually beneficial because then we have more resources to use. Also our Instagram metrics and went crazy as soon as we used his name so like the amount of accounts reached, the amount of accounts like yeah our visibility on Instagram as soon as it was with his name just really went up and that also happens yeah really anytime we use an influencer's name you see like an instant spike in your metrics so you know you're being seen.

R: Okay so okay a lot of good outcomes on the Instagram part. And was the teacher training per se like packed?

S: Yeah so it was fully booked.

R: Okay and you're doing it again right?

S: We're doing it again so we don't have the numbers yet. It will be in the beginning of June so I can let you know shortly.

laughter

R: Okay amazing thank you. And did you face some challenges with working with him?

S: Well actually the biggest was that they got hacked so this year we had some like a blackout in communication because they lost access to their website and their Instagram and basically had to start from scratch so we actually don't have like our old anything we've done with them in the past neither because they actually aren't able to really look into that anymore so we kind of had to start new.

R: Do you think it also impacted the growth of the studio like day-to-day life and the classes?

S: I don't think it impacts the growth of the studio and the day-to-day per se like instantly but I'd say over time it does because it's not these people that are maybe like traveling that are gonna be members instantly but it gets the name of the studio out more. *Lisbon is a very transient city* that a lot of people travel to. They already have the experience so if they're back or if they know someone it's recommended so I think it's more like a longevity growth than like an instance one.

R: What type of content do you think was the most effective for this event both for online awareness and to bring people in person?

S: There was a story where he was chatting which I think drove a lot of engagement but normally I'd say it's more about timing: so I'd say the first one like when you first put something out and then in the last month so from what I've seen like with other like pushing other activities as well it's either like the engagement is driven instantly or like any hesitation is closer to the dates. But yeah I'd say I guess we haven't done any video posts with them only video stories but collaborative posts of course drive more than just one one-party sharing.

R: Do you have any specific criteria that you used to choose this type of teacher?

S: Obviously like them having a following is what drives attention but it's like okay why do they have a following and like why do people look up to them and then is that something that maybe oh you feel like inspired about as well like think oh it's good metric this is that something I would want to do is it something that I want to try is that someone that I would want to take a class from. But in more metric terms I think both him (Patrick Beach) and Talia Sutra have over 500k followers.

R: Do you gather feedback from the customers after you have these people over?

S: Yes it was really cute like, uhm, we didn't like do anything formal but after the training and during the training like last time we had Patrick Beach, people that were anticipating they had like all kind reviews and there's still one guy that posts like reminiscent stories and videos

once a month saying “oh look at this time...” and so yeah they're all, you know, posting and kind of like reminiscing about it and it seems they really kind of enjoyed their time

R: Do you have a way to stay updated with the latest trends and influencer marketing within the yoga industry?

S: Uhm honestly the explore page is always a good page is always a good thing. So when you kind of like to go on insta and you just explore what other people are doing I think that's a good way to kind of get inspiration. Also if there's a certain topic you can look up specifically like let's say when looking up inspiration for Yin Yoga I looked up different yin yoga trainings maybe what they've done. Also something you can do to keep up maybe not to like drop inspiration but if you want to see what competitors are doing in google and meta both offer free ad library where you can check all of the competitors running ads okay so that's something you can always do just kind of see what are other people marketing putting their money into running campaigns on but I'd see that's for more like local markets but inspiration or creativity wise um on, well yeah, looking at different videos different contents. I also think just like going about things like I've gotten kind of a fascination for fonts so and how they look on a page and it's like the aesthetic of things so I don't know just like depends how open.

R: Do you think if you already have an idea of what it's most effective between these two things? Giving the space or having influencer marketing campaigns?

S: So we have done some events with influencers but yeah I guess that's I kind of forgot to mention so we've done events like let's say for different companies like hey Harper and basically they reach out saying that they want to create an events for local influencers and provide them a yoga class so they ask us to use the studio provide a teacher and invite a lot of influencers to the studio they take a yoga class to get to know the studio and that I think drives more instant engagement versus a big yoga name teacher that isn't from the area drives more like maybe awareness of the studio and more of a globalness so it's a bit different. One might give you like longevity awareness and yeah so I'd say like doing something more local it gives more conversions so that's one of the things we're gonna look into with local influencer is because we've also seen that let's say they're doing like a lower scale is this group of kind of semi Portuguese influencers that their whole friend group comes to the studio already and makes one bring the other one. So I think that drives more conversion

R: Is there anything that we didn't cover that you would like to add?

S: Uhm no I don't think so.

R: Thank you very much!

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